

THE NEW JERUSALEM BIBLE

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The introductions and notes of this Bible are, with some variations and revisions, a translation of those which appear in *La Bible de Jérusalem*, published by Les Editions du Cerf, Paris (revised edition 1973). The English text of the Bible itself, though translated from the ancient texts, owes a large debt to the work of the many scholars who collaborated to produce *La Bible de Jérusalem*, a debt which the publishers of this English Bible gratefully acknowledge.

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GENERAL EDITOR'S FOREWORD

Since its publication in 1966 the Jerusalem Bible has become widely used for liturgical purposes, for study and for private reading. Credit both for the idea of the translation of the French *Bible de Jérusalem* and for the great labours involved in its execution belongs to Alexander Jones; it is sad that he did not live to see the full impact of his work. Both as an intelligible modern translation and as a well laid-out and easily manageable book, the Jerusalem Bible set a new standard for versions of the Bible. However, in 1973 a new edition of the *Bible de Jérusalem* was published, which incorporated progress in scholarship over the two decades since the preparation of its first edition. The introductions and notes were often widely changed to take account of linguistic, archaeological and theological advances, and the text itself in some instances reflected new understanding of the originals.

This 1973 revision was important enough to warrant a completely new edition of the English-language *Jerusalem Bible*. In this new edition the introductions and notes are drawn from that revision, with some additional changes especially in the introductions and notes to the New Testament to take into account further recent advances in scholarship. The biblical text of the first edition was occasionally criticised for following the French translation more closely than the originals. In this edition the translation has been made directly from the Hebrew, Greek or Aramaic. Only where the text admits of more than one interpretation has the option chosen by the *Bible de Jérusalem* been followed, unless permission to adopt another view was granted by the editors of that work. The character of the *Jerusalem Bible* as primarily a study Bible has been kept constantly in mind, and for that reason accuracy of translation has been a prime consideration. Paraphrase has been avoided more rigorously than in the first edition; care has been taken that in parallel passages (for example in the first three gospels) the similarities and differences should be mirrored exactly in the translation. Key terms in the originals, especially those theological key concepts on which there is a major theological note, have been rendered throughout (with very few exceptions) by the same English word, instead of by the variety of words used in the first edition. At the same time the widespread liturgical use of this version has been taken into account; while

it is hoped that the translation is fresh and lively, care has been taken to reproduce the dignity of the originals by a certain measured phrasing and avoidance of the colloquial. Considerable efforts have also been made, though not at all costs, to soften or avoid the inbuilt preference of the English language, a preference now found so offensive by some people, for the masculine; the word of the Lord concerns women and men equally.

It has seemed wise to retain the spelling of the proper names traditional in English-speaking lands. Many names in biblical Hebrew have a meaning: for instance 'Adonijah' means 'My Lord is Yah' (Yahweh). Others are given a meaning by a more or less forced pun. Many of these meanings are given in the footnotes. In the rendering of Hebrew words in the footnotes, etc., a more modern system of transliteration is, however, used, thus enabling the reader to come closer to the original sounds. This is often important for onomatopoeia and to understand how textual corruption has occurred.

One acute difficulty was the choice of system when modern equivalents for weights and measures were required. In some English-speaking countries the metric system is rapidly gaining ground, while others, notably the United States, stick firmly to the imperial. Finally it seemed that both systems were needed.

For this edition the alphabetical table of major footnotes has been entirely remade in a way which will, it is hoped, make it more serviceable. Two indexes of proper names have been added, personal and geographical, giving the principal biblical passages in which they occur, as well as important footnotes. The maps have also been completely redesigned.

A list of the original collaborators in the 1966 edition may be found on page 2109. In many instances this translation has used their work widely, but they cannot be considered responsible for the resultant version. The initial draft of almost the whole of the Old Testament was prepared by Mr Alan Neame, and credit for the skilful translation must go to him. The publisher's editors, at first Mr W. H. Saumarez-Smith, and for the major part of the work the Revd Cecil Hargreaves, have done far more than their job; especially the latter has been an exciting partner to work with, whose patience, inventiveness and tact have alike been a joy. The linchpin at the publisher's office, who has co-ordinated all our efforts, has been Mr H. P. Jolowicz; his untiring and painstaking accuracy has ensured the consistency and regularity of this volume. The marginal references throughout the Bible have been reviewed by the Revd David Pope, working under difficult circumstances with impressive patience. A number of consultants who read drafts at an early stage of the work have asked that their names should not be mentioned; to them and even more to the consultants in all five continents who criticised the final drafts, and suggested many improvements, I am most grateful. The names of Professor Kenneth Grayston and Canon Douglas Webster, who worked through the whole Bible, must not go unmentioned. During the whole work my monastic brethren and my students of all ages have provided a constant check and incentive; their criticisms and suggestions have done much to improve both the dignity and the intelligibility of the work. The impatience of the young with obscurity or technicality has been a constant incentive to clarity

of thought, while the love and reverence of seniors for the sacred text has helped to keep at bay anything outrageous or slipshod. Over the five years since he asked me to undertake the work, consultation with Père Benoît of the *Ecole biblique* in Jerusalem, whether in our series of letters or in our meetings at Ampleforth, Rome or Jerusalem, has been one of the pleasures of the project; while we have not always agreed, his openness and still youthful enthusiasm have invariably been a stimulus, and his concern to make this volume worthy of the *Bible de Jérusalem* an inspiration to the highest standards.

Ampleforth Abbey
York
November 1984

Henry Wansbrough

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BOOKS OF THE BIBLE IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER OF ABBREVIATIONS

Ac ..... Acts
Am ..... Amos
Ba ..... Baruch
1 Ch ..... 1 Chronicles
2 Ch ..... 2 Chronicles
1 Co ..... 1 Corinthians
2 Co ..... 2 Corinthians
Col ..... Colossians
Dn ..... Daniel
Dt ..... Deuteronomy
Ep ..... Ephesians
Est ..... Esther
Ex ..... Exodus
Ezk ..... Ezekiel
Ezr ..... Ezra
Ga ..... Galatians
Gn ..... Genesis
Hab ..... Habakkuk
Heb ..... Hebrews
Hg ..... Haggai
Ho ..... Hosea
Is ..... Isaiah
Jb ..... Job
Jdt ..... Judith
Jg ..... Judges
Jl ..... Joel
Jm ..... James
Jn ..... John
1 Jn ..... 1 John
2 Jn ..... 2 John
3 Jn ..... 3 John
Jon ..... Jonah
Jos ..... Joshua
Jr ..... Jeremiah
Jude ..... Jude
1 K ..... 1 Kings
2 K ..... 2 Kings
Lk ..... Luke
Lm ..... Lamentations
Lv ..... Leviticus
1 M ..... 1 Maccabees
2 M ..... 2 Maccabees
Mi ..... Micah
Mk ..... Mark
Ml ..... Malachi
Mt ..... Matthew
Na ..... Nahum
Nb ..... Numbers
Ne ..... Nehemiah
Ob ..... Obadiah
1 P ..... 1 Peter
2 P ..... 2 Peter
Ph ..... Philippians
Phm ..... Philemon
Pr ..... Proverbs
Ps ..... Psalms
Qo ..... Ecclesiastes/Qoheleth
Rm ..... Romans
Rt ..... Ruth
Rv ..... Revelation
1 S ..... 1 Samuel
2 S ..... 2 Samuel
Sg ..... Song of Songs
Si ..... Ecclesiasticus/Ben Sira
Tb ..... Tobit
1 Th ..... 1 Thessalonians
2 Th ..... 2 Thessalonians
1 Tm ..... 1 Timothy
2 Tm ..... 2 Timothy
Tt ..... Titus
Ws ..... Wisdom
Zc ..... Zechariah
Zp ..... Zephaniah

PREFACE

The Hebrew and Greek Bibles

The canon of the Hebrew Bible was fixed by the Palestinian Jews at the beginning of the Christian era and is still maintained by modern Jews. It contains only the Hebrew books, and therefore excludes the books written in Greek and the Greek supplements of Esther and Daniel. It is divided into three parts:

I The Law (the Pentateuch): Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy

II The Prophets:
a) the 'earlier Prophets': Joshua, Judges, Samuel (1 and 2), Kings (1 and 2)
b) the 'later Prophets': Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel; the 'Twelve Minor Prophets': Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

III The Writings (Hagiographa): Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ruth, Song of Songs, Qoheleth (Ecclesiastes), Lamentations, Esther (the last five, read on Jewish feast days, are known as the 'five scrolls'), Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, Chronicles

The Hebrew Bible contains twenty-four books, the 'Twelve Minor Prophets' being regarded as one book.

The Greek Bible, the 'Septuagint', or 'LXX', so called because it was supposedly translated by seventy people, was for the use of Jews of the Diaspora. It includes in addition to the text of the Hebrew Bible:

I Judith, Tobit, 1 and 2 Maccabees, Wisdom, Sira (Ecclesiasticus), Baruch (Baruch Chapter 6 is printed under the separate heading of the 'Letter to Jeremiah'). In Daniel the following parts exist only in Greek: Dn 3:24–90; Dn 13 (Susanna); Dn 14 ('Bel and the Dragon'). These books, commonly referred to as deutero-canonical, are generally regarded as part of the Christian canon.

II Books which, although sometimes used by the Fathers and ancient ecclesiastical writers, have not been accepted into the Christian Canon. These 'apocryphal' works are:
Esdras I (in the LXX the canonical Ezra-Nehemiah is entitled Esdras II)
3 and 4 Maccabees
Odes
Psalms of Solomon
In the LXX, 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings are entitled 'The Four Books of Kingdoms'.

The translation

The translation follows the original Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek texts. For the Old Testament the Massoretic Text is used, that is the text established in the eighth/ninth centuries AD by Jewish scholars who fixed its letters and vowel signs, the text reproduced by most manuscripts. Only when this text presents insuperable difficulties have emendations or the versions of other Hebrew manuscripts or the ancient versions (notably the LXX and Syriac) been used. In such cases the correction made to the Hebrew text, and if possible the sense of the Hebrew, have been given in the notes. For the deutero-canonical books and the New Testament the Greek text established in modern times by critical work on the principal manuscript witnesses to the tradition (also with the help of ancient versions) has been used. When the tradition offers several alternatives, important variants not used in this translation have been indicated in the notes.

Passages considered to be glosses have been put in brackets in the text. In the biblical text this is the only way in which brackets are used.

In this edition an attempt has been made to avoid translating a single term or expression of the original by a variety of renderings. Sometimes it has proved impossible to find a single English equivalent to render all the breadth of meaning and the overtones of a Hebrew or Greek original. Sometimes, also, too literal a translation would, in context, have meant a serious impoverishment of the sense of a phrase or expression. When it has been necessary to make a choice, fidelity to the text has been given preference over a literary quality which the original did not possess.

Verse-numbering

In the Old Testament the division into verses follows the Hebrew except in the few passages where the text is found only in the Septuagint; then the Septuagint numbering is given. Where the numbering of the Vulgate differs from this main verse-numbering, it is given in smaller type. A dot • indicates a verse beginning other than at the start of a line. Occasionally to a verse number is suffixed a letter (e.g. 8:2a; 8:3b; 8:4c) to distinguish earlier or later parts of a verse. In the notes these become $8:2^{a}$; $8:3^{b}$ etc.

Italics

Italics are used for two purposes: normally they indicate a quotation from another book of the Bible; in Esther and Daniel, however, they indicate passages of the Septuagint which do not exist in the Hebrew Bible. In some of the New Testament verses shown in italics (as being quotations from the Old Testament) the New Testament writers have given the Old Testament quotations in a wording different from that of the current text of the Old Testament. They were presumably using a different version, current in their own day.

Footnotes and Indexes

The footnotes of the previous edition of the Jerusalem Bible have been revised and brought up to date in the light of recent research.

The footnotes assume that the reader has already read the Introduction to the book (or group of books) concerned. Frequently the notes are interconnected, in which case the reader is referred to other passages where the note provides supplementary explanations or where a series of marginal references is given. In the case of parallel passages, footnotes are normally given only on the first occurrence of a passage (e.g. in the Synoptic Gospels footnotes explanatory of Mark and Luke are often to be found under the parallel passage in Matthew). A dot • is used in the footnotes to divide separate subjects within the same note. An alphabetical table of the major topics treated in the footnotes is given at the end of the volume. There is also a separate index of personal names, giving the principal biblical references, and, after the maps, a similar index of geographical names.

Marginal references

Where a group of cross-references occurs, the source (if any) of an italicised quotation in the text is always given first. References within the same book are given before those in other books of the Bible. The first reference of a group is set against the line to which the whole group applies. A small space separates references to different words in the same line; a larger space words in different lines. Where there is no room for a space a dot • is used to distinguish two groups.

Transcription of Hebrew

The usual conventions are followed, with these possible exceptions:

he and *het* are represented by		*h*
zain	,,	*z*
tet and *taw*	,,	*t*
kaph	,,	*k*
samek and *sin*	,,	*s*
zade	,,	*tz**

*at beginning of a word represented by *z* alone except if doubled – then *tzz*

The presence of *dagesh lene* in the *begadkephat* letters is shown only in the case of *pe*

More abbreviations, together with symbols and terms used in the notes

OT	Old Testament
NT	New Testament
MT	Massoretic text ('massorah' = 'tradition' in Hebrew), the Massoretic text established in the eighth/ninth centuries AD by Jewish scholars who fixed its letters and vowel signs
LXX	the Greek 'Septuagint', the earliest translation into Greek of the Hebrew Old Testament, dating from the last two centuries before Christ

Al.	Codex Alexandrinus, a manuscript of the fifth century AD
Alex.	Alexandrian text, i.e. the type of Greek text of the New Testament that circulated in the Church of Alexandria and in Egypt in early church times
Aq.	Aquila of Pontus, and the Greek text of the Old Testament according to his recension, early second century AD
Arab.	early versions of the Bible in Arabic
Arm.	Armenian
Gk-Luc.	the Greek text of the Old Testament according to the recension or revision of Lucian of Antioch, early fourth century AD
Hebr.	Hebrew
Lat.	Latin
Q	Qumran: this abbreviation is found in various combinations: e.g. '1 Q' = 'material found in Qumran Cave 1': '1 Q p Hab' = 'the commentary (*pesher*) on Habakkuk found in Qumran Cave 1': '1 Q Is^{a}' = 'the first (a) copy of Isaiah in Qumran Cave 1'
Rec. Luc.	Recension of Lucian (see under 'Gk-Luc.')
Sam.	Samaritan Pentateuch
Sin.	Codex Sinaiticus, a manuscript of the mid-fourth century AD, written in the Alexandrian area but discovered on Mount Sinai
Symm.	Symmachus, and the Greek text of the Old Testament according to his translation or recension, late second century AD
Syr.	Syriac, i.e. the text or rendering of the Syriac versions
Syr. hex.	the Syro-hexaplar version of the Old Testament, from Egypt, early seventh century AD
Targ.	Targum, targums: the ancient Jewish translations into Aramaic of Hebrew writings: they are in fact a combination of text, paraphrase and brief commentary
Text. rec.	*Textus receptus*: or Received text: i.e. the traditional biblical text commonly in use in recent centuries
Theod.	Theodotion, and the Greek text of the Old Testament according to his revision or recension, which transmits first-century material, though Theodotion's date is probably late second century
Vat.	Codex Vaticanus: a manuscript of the mid-fourth century AD, from the Alexandrian area
Vet. Lat.	*Vetus Latina*, or Old Latin version(s): i.e. Latin version(s) of the biblical text earlier than the Vulgate
Vulg.	the Latin Vulgate ('popular' version): the revised

	Latin version of biblical books, made by St Jerome in the late fourth century AD
West.	Western text: a type of Greek text of the New Testament that circulated mainly in the churches of the western Mediterranean and North Africa in early church times
add.	additional words included by some authorities
ch.	chapter
conj.	conjecture or conjectural reading: this may be given in the notes where the original text is uncertain, and especially in the Old Testament where suggested reconstructions of what vowels should be supplied in a Hebrew word may prove helpful
corr.	correction: i.e. a correction of the original text, following an editor or edition of later centuries
dittography	where a copyist has written twice what should have been written once
gloss	an addition to or elaboration of the original text
haplography	where a copyist has written once what should have been written twice
ketib	the Hebrew text as written, and fixed by the consonants
MS, MSS	manuscript(s)
om.	words omitted by some authorities
par.	signifies 'parallel' and points to a passage where other parallels are also indicated
peshitta	'the simple': a fifth-century Syriac version of the Bible, a revision of earlier Syriac versions
qere	the Hebrew text as read, with vowel-provision made by the Massoretes
seq.	and following verse(s)
var.	variant reading
versions	ancient translations of the original biblical language into another language: e.g. into Latin, Coptic
+	this sign against a marginal reference guides the reader to a further marginal reference at the verse indicated
=	parallel passage within the same book
‖	parallel passage in another book
↗	passage later used or quoted at the given reference
▶	a triangle is occasionally used alongside a marginal reference: this signifies that the marginal reference relates not to the lines of text against which it appears, but to the lines at the foot of the preceding page where there was insufficient space for all references

THE
OLD TESTAMENT

THE PENTATEUCH

INTRODUCTION TO
THE PENTATEUCH

§1 Titles, divisions, contents

The first five books of the Bible together constitute a unit in themselves, and the group was known to the Jews as the *torah*, or the 'Law'. The earliest reliable witness to this title is to be found in the preface to the Book of Ecclesiasticus, and when the Christian era opened the term was already in common use, as in the New Testament, Mt 5:17; Lk 10:26; *see* Lk 24:44.

The need to have manageable copies of this vast collection of material dictated the division of its text into five scrolls of approximately equal length. Hence the name given to it among speakers of Greek: *pentateuchos* (*biblos* understood), the 'Book in Five Volumes', transcribed in Latin as *Pentateuchus* (sc. *liber*), whence English *Pentateuch*. Hebrew-speaking Jews, however, called it 'The Five Fifths of the Law'.

That this division into five books dates back to pre-Christian times is attested by the Septuagint. This Greek version of the Hebrew Old Testament designated the books according to their content, and the Church adopted its terminology. Thus the book which opens with the story of the beginning of the world is called *Genesis*; the second, which starts with the departure of Israel from Egypt, is named *Exodus*; *Leviticus* contains the law of the priests of the tribe of Levi; the first four chapters of *Numbers* deal with the census; *Deuteronomy* is so styled from the Septuagint rendering of Dt 17:18: 'the second law'. The Jews, however, used and still use the initial Hebrew word of each book—or its first important word—to indicate the whole.

Genesis falls into two unequal parts. Ch. 1–11 deal with primordial history; they introduce us to the story of salvation, the theme that runs through the whole Bible. They go back to the beginning of the world and survey the whole human race. They tell of the creation of the universe and humanity, of the Fall and its consequences, of the increasing human wickedness which earned the punishment of the Flood. The repopulation of the earth starts with Noah but our attention is directed ultimately to Abraham, father of the chosen people, by way of a series of narrowing genealogical tables. Ch. 12–50 deal with patriarchal history; they portray the great ancestors of Israel. Abraham is the man of faith; God rewards his obedience with a promise of posterity for himself and, for his descendants, possession of the Holy Land (12:1–25:18). Jacob is the man of guile who supplants his brother Esau, tricks his father Isaac into giving him his blessing and outwits his uncle, the unscrupulous Laban. But all his cunning would have been useless if God had not preferred him to Esau before his birth or renewed the promise and

covenant granted to Abraham (25:19 to ch. 36). The career of Isaac, Abraham's son and Jacob's father, is described more in relation to these two than for its own sake; he is a relatively colourless figure. The twelve sons of Jacob represent the ancestors of the Twelve Tribes of Israel. The concluding chapters of Genesis (37–50, except 38 and 49) are entirely devoted to one of them: Joseph, the man of wisdom. The Joseph-cycle, in contrast to the foregoing stories, unfolds without visible intervention on the part of God and without any new revelation; it nonetheless has a lesson to teach, that the virtue of the wise is rewarded and that Providence turns human failings to good advantage.

Genesis is complete in itself, the history of the ancestors. The three books that follow have for their common framework the life of Moses. They recount the formation of the chosen people and show how its social and religious law was constituted.

Exodus is concerned with two main themes: the deliverance from Egypt, 1:1–15:21, and the Sinaitic covenant, 19:1–40:38. A secondary theme, the journey through the desert, connects the two, 15:22–18:27. Moses, having received the revelation of the name of Yahweh on the mountain of God, leads the liberated Israelites there. In a majestic theophany God concludes an alliance with the people and proclaims his laws. The covenant is broken almost as soon as made: the people adore the golden calf. But God forgives the sin and renews the covenant. There follows a list of ordinances controlling the practice of worship in desert conditions.

Leviticus, taken up almost entirely with legislation, breaks the thread of the narrative. Its contents are as follows: sacrificial ritual, ch. 1–7; ceremony of priestly investiture described in terms of the consecration of Aaron and his sons, ch. 8–10; ordinances relating to things clean and unclean, ch. 11–15, concluding with the ritual for the great Day of Expiation, ch. 16; the 'Holiness Code', ch. 17–26, a section which includes a liturgical calendar, ch. 23, and which closes with blessings and curses, ch. 26. By way of appendix, ch. 27 lays down the conditions for redeeming persons and animals and goods vowed to Yahweh.

Numbers resumes the account of the desert journey. A census of the people, ch. 1–4, and the offering of gifts on the occasion of the dedication of the dwelling, ch. 7, form a prelude to the departure from Sinai. The second Passover is celebrated and, leaving the holy mountain, ch. 9–10, the people reach Kadesh after various halts on the way. From here an unsuccessful attempt is made to infiltrate Canaan from the south, ch. 11–14. After a long stay at Kadesh, the people resume their journey, until they reach the Plains of Moab, opposite Jericho, ch. 20–25. The Midianites are defeated and the tribes of Gad and Reuben settle in Transjordan, ch. 31–32. Ch. 33 lists the encampments on the way from Egypt to Moab. Interspersed between these narrative sections are groups of laws either supplementing the Sinaitic code or preparing for the colonisation of Canaan: ch. 5–6; 8; 15–19; 26–30; 34–36.

Deuteronomy has a distinct structure of its own. It is a code of civil and religious laws, ch. 12–26:15, framed within a long discourse of Moses, ch. 5–11 and 26:16–28. All this material is itself preceded by a first Mosaic discourse, ch. 1–4, and followed by a third, ch. 29–30, followed in its turn by

sections dealing with the last days of Moses: the commissioning of Joshua, the canticle and blessings of Moses, his death, ch. 31–34. The Deuteronomic code is a partial restatement of the laws promulgated in the desert. The discourses commemorate the great events of the Exodus, of Sinai and of the beginnings of the conquest, explaining the religious significance of these, emphasising the importance of the Law and exhorting the chosen people to be faithful to Yahweh.

§2 How the Pentateuch came to be written

At least from the beginning of the Christian era, Moses himself was credited with having composed this vast body of literature; nor did Jesus or his apostles question this, Jn 1:45; 5:45–47; Rm 10:5. Nevertheless, the most ancient traditions had never expressly claimed that Moses wrote the entire Pentateuch. Even when the Pentateuch itself uses the expression 'Moses wrote' (as it very rarely does), it is referring only to particular passages. And indeed, modern study of these books has revealed variations of style, and repetitions and contradictions in the narrative, which make it impossible to ascribe the whole work to a single author. At the end of the nineteenth century, after years of laborious effort, one hypothesis won general critical support, a result largely of the works of Graf and of Wellhausen. According to this theory, the Pentateuch is an amalgam of four documents issuing from different places and times but all much later than Moses. Initially there were, it was held, two narrative sources, the *Yahwistic* (J) which, from the story of creation onwards, uses the divine name 'Yahweh' revealed by God to Moses, and the *Elohistic* (E) which designates God by the common noun *elohim*. The Yahwistic source was committed to writing in Judah in the tenth century, the Elohistic in Israel a little later. After the fall of the Northern Kingdom these two documents were combined (JE). After the reign of Josiah, the *Deuteronomic* source (D) was added (JED); and after the Exile, the *Priestly Code* (P), principally containing laws but with some narrative material, was further added to the compilation to give it form and sinew (JEDP).

This classic 'documentary theory', bound up as it was with evolutionist notions about religious ideas in Israel, has often been called into question, some scholars still rejecting it out of hand, others accepting it only with sometimes very far-reaching modifications; no two authors agree altogether as to which texts should be assigned to which of the four 'documents'. All are agreed today, however, that verbal research will not alone suffice to explain how the Pentateuch was composed. To this must be added the study of the literary forms and of the oral and written traditions which preceded the editing of the sources. Each of them, even the most recent (P), contains very ancient elements. The discovery of dead literatures of the Middle East, and the progress by archaeologists and historians in reconstructing ancient civilisations adjacent to Israel, show that many of the laws and institutions in the Pentateuch had extra-biblical parallels far earlier than the dates attributed to the 'documents', and that many of the narratives presuppose conditions other, and more ancient, than those in which these 'documents' are likely to have been compiled. Different traditional material was preserved in different sanctuaries, or was handed down by popular storytellers. This

was first organised into cycles, then written down, as events or individual genius determined. But these first versions were not the final ones: they were revised, added to, and combined with one another to form the Pentateuch as we have it. The written 'sources' of the Pentateuch are exceptional moments in a long development—points at which different traditional elements crystallised, though continuing to develop afterwards.

That there are various currents of tradition is attested by the duplicated passages ('doublets'), the repetitions and the discrepancies, which strike the reader from the opening pages of Genesis onwards: two stories about the creation, 1–2:4a and 2:4b–3:24, two genealogies of Cain/Kenan, 4:17 seq. and 5:12–17, two interwoven accounts of the Flood, ch. 6–8. In the stories of the patriarchs, there are two accounts of the covenant with Abraham, Gn 15 and 17; two dismissals of Hagar, 16 and 21; three versions of the misfortunes of a patriarch's wife in a foreign country, 12:10–20; 20; 26:1–11; two interwoven stories about Joseph and his brothers in the concluding chapters of Genesis. There are, furthermore, two accounts of the calling of Moses, Ex 3:1–4:17 and 6:2–7:7; two water miracles at Meribah, Ex 17:1–7 and Nb 20:1–13; two texts of the Decalogue, Ex 20:1–17 and Dt 5:6–21; four liturgical calendars, Ex 23:14–19; 34:18–23; Lv 23; Dt 16:1–16, and many other examples that could be quoted. Texts related by affinities of language, of style and of outlook set up parallel lines of force which may be detected throughout the Pentateuch; and these correspond to four strands of tradition.

From these text groups we can deduce and distinguish the various streams of tradition. The Yahwistic tradition, so named because it uses the divine name 'Yahweh' from the creation narrative onwards, is lively and vivid in style; pictorially and with real narrative talent, it gives its own profound answer to the most serious questions that human beings can raise; although God is described in human terms the author has a very elevated sense of the divine. As a prologue to the story of the ancestors of Israel, this tradition summarises the history of the human race from the creation of the first man and woman. The tradition originated in Judah and was probably committed to writing, for the main part, during the reign of Solomon. In those texts collectively attributed to it, a parallel strand can sometimes be discerned, with the same origin but reflecting concepts sometimes more archaic and sometimes quite different; this parallel tradition is designated by the initial J^1 (primitive Yahwistic), or *L* ('Lay' source), or *N* ('Nomadic' source). The distinction is drawn on good grounds, but it is hard to know whether this represents an independent strand of tradition, or merely elements which the Yahwist has inserted into his text while preserving their individual characteristics.

The Elohistic tradition (the most obvious characteristic of which is the use of the common noun *elohim* to designate God) is distinguished from the Yahwistic by a more sober, somewhat flat, style, a more exacting moral standard and an insistence on the distance separating human beings from God. It has no primordial history but starts from the time of Abraham. Probably more recent than the Yahwistic tradition, it is commonly associated with the tribes of the north. Some authors do not admit the existence of an independent Elohistic tradition and are content to account for the material in question as additions to, or revisions of, the Yahwistic text. However,

differences in place of origin, and the persistence of parallels with, and divergences from, the Yahwistic tradition from the story of Abraham to the accounts of the death of Moses, suggest that there was a distinct and independent tradition and probably an independent written source.

One important fact must, however, be borne in mind. Despite the characteristics distinguishing them, the Yahwistic and Elohistic traditions substantially tell the same story: the two traditions thus have a common origin. The tribal groups of south and of north shared a common tradition marshalling the people's memories of their history: the succession of the three patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the exodus from Egypt linked to the theophany at Sinai, the making of the covenant at Sinai linked to the settlement of Transjordan—the final step before the conquest of the Promised Land. This common tradition had taken shape in oral, and possibly even in written form, during the period of the Judges, that is to say, when Israel was already beginning to exist as a nation.

The Yahwistic and Elohistic traditions contain only a very few legislative texts, the most considerable being the Code of the Covenant, to which we shall return later. The laws, however, constitute the principal part of the 'Priestly' tradition, which is particularly concerned with the organisation of the sanctuary, with sacrifices and festivals and with the person and functions of Aaron and his descendants. Besides legislative and institutional texts, it also contains narrative material which is deliberately elaborated when serving to express the legalistic or liturgical preoccupations proper to this tradition. To these preoccupations should be added a partiality for computations and genealogies. Its characteristic vocabulary and its generally abstract and redundant style make it easy to recognise. This is the tradition of the priests of the Temple of Jerusalem; it preserves ancient elements, but was codified only during the Exile and not imposed on the Pentateuch until after the return; several editorial layers can be detected. It is hard to tell whether this Priestly tradition ever existed as an independent work of literature, or whether, as seems more likely, one or more editors representative of this tradition added elements from it to traditions already existing, thus giving the Pentateuch its final form.

In the Book of Genesis, it is not difficult to recognise and follow the threads of the three traditions: Yahwistic, Elohistic, Priestly. After Genesis, the Priestly tradition is easy to pick out, especially at the end of Exodus, in the whole of Leviticus and in large sections of Numbers; but it is difficult to decide which part of the remainder belongs to the Yahwistic tradition and which to the Elohistic. After Numbers, and until the original concluding chapters of Deuteronomy, ch. 31 and 34, all three traditions disappear and are replaced by a single tradition: the Deuteronomic. This is characterised by a most distinctive style, ample and rhetorical, in which certain easily recognised formulae recur again and again and in which the same teaching is constantly reaffirmed: that of all the nations in the world, God has, out of pure love, chosen Israel to be his people, but this choice and the pact ratifying it are conditional on Israel's exclusive allegiance to this God and to the prescribed worship to be offered to him in one single sanctuary. Deuteronomy is the culmination of a tradition related to the Elohistic one and to the prophetic movement, and its influence is already discernible in relatively

ancient texts. It may be that the nucleus of Deuteronomy represents northern custom as introduced into Judah by Levites after the fall of Samaria. The Code of Law, already perhaps framed in a discourse of Moses, was stored away in the Temple of Jerusalem. There it was rediscovered during the reign of Josiah and, when promulgated, contributed to the religious reforms of that time. It was re-edited at the beginning of the Exile.

Given these various bodies of tradition, the Pentateuch grew by a series of stages, but it is hard to give a firm date for any of them. The Yahwistic and Elohistic traditions were combined in Judah towards the end of the monarchical period, possibly during the reign of Hezekiah, when we know from Pr 25:1 that ancient literary works were being collected. Before the end of the Exile, Deuteronomy, regarded as a code of law laid down by Moses in Moab, was inserted between the end of Numbers and the accounts of the commissioning of Joshua and the death of Moses, Dt 31 and 34. Possibly the addition of the Priestly tradition or, alternatively, the intervention of the first Priestly editors, occurred shortly afterwards. Be that as it may, the 'Law of Moses' brought back from Babylon by Ezra seems to represent the whole Pentateuch already virtually in its final form.

The relationship between the Pentateuch and the biblical books which follow it, has given rise to contradictory hypotheses. For a long time now, some critics have postulated a 'Hexateuch', that is to say, a work in six books, supposedly containing also Joshua and the beginning of Judges. They detect the continuation of the three sources, J, E, P, in these books and, further, argue that the theme of the 'promise', recurring so often in the narratives of the Pentateuch, requires that similar narratives must have also shown how that promise was fulfilled: in the Conquest of the Promised Land. According to this theory, the Book of Joshua has been detached from its original context, to become the first of the historical books. More recent critics, however, now talk of a 'Tetrateuch', that is to say, a work in four books, not containing Deuteronomy. According to them, Deuteronomy was originally designed to be the introduction to an immense 'Deuteronomic history' running to the end of the Book of Kings. Deuteronomy was perhaps separated from its context when it was decided to gather everything concerning the person and activities of Moses into a single collection, our present Pentateuch. This second opinion is the one which, with reservations, we adopt in the Introduction to the historical books, and which serves as basis for some of the notes. Nonetheless, it is only a theory, as is its rival theory of a Hexateuch.

There is a great deal of uncertainty, therefore, about the way in which the Pentateuch was composed. The process itself lasted for at least six hundred years and reflects changes in the national and religious life of Israel, though the process seems to have been remarkably homogeneous. We have already said that the narrative traditions took shape during the period when the Israelites were becoming aware of themselves as a nation. The same may be said, more or less, about the legislative sections: these consist of civil and religious law, which developed as the community developed which it was meant to govern, but had origins as remote as those of the people themselves. There was a religious basis for this continuity: faith in Yahweh had cemented the unity of the nation, and that same faith united the varying strands of

tradition. Now, the beginnings of Yahwistic religion were dominated by the personality of Moses. Moses initiated the people into that religion and he was their first law-giver. Earlier traditions that converge on him and memories of what happened under his leadership together went to make the national epic. The Mosaic religion set its enduring seal on the faith and practices of the nation; the Mosaic law remained its standard. The modifications required by changing conditions interpreted his mind and became invested with his authority. It does not particularly matter if we cannot attribute the writing of any specific text in the Pentateuch to him, since he is the central personality in it and Jewish tradition was fully justified in calling the Pentateuch the book of the Law of Moses.

§3 Relation of the narratives to history

From such traditions it would be unreasonable to expect the minute precision of a modern historian: they are not lifeless manuscripts but the living heritage of a nation whose spirit of unity they nourish and whose faith they sustain. But it would be equally unreasonable to refuse them any credence on the grounds that this precision is lacking.

The first eleven chapters of Genesis must be considered separately. They give a description in popular style of the origin of the human race; in a simple, pictorial way suited to the mentality of unsophisticated people, they declare the fundamental truths on which the plan of salvation rests. These truths are: the creation by God at the beginning of time, God's special intervention in the making of man and woman, the unity of the human race, the sin of our first parents, the fall from divine favour and the penalties which their descendants would inherit in consequence of sin. All these are truths which have their bearing on theological doctrine and which are guaranteed by the authority of Scripture; but they are also facts, although we cannot know their nature, as they are presented to us in a mythological form consistent with the mentality of their time and place of origin.

The story of the patriarchs is primarily a family history: a collection of memories handed down about Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. It is also a popular history: it lingers over personal anecdotes and piquant details, making no attempt to situate its narratives in a wider historical context. Stories now attached to one great ancestor may well originally have been told of another, and other historical outlines blurred in the course of oral transmission. And lastly, it is history written from a religious standpoint: each turning-point of the story is signalised by a divine intervention, and the hand of Providence is seen in each event—a theological outlook which disregards the play of secondary causes. Moreover, the facts are introduced, explained and grouped together, to demonstrate a religious thesis: there is *one* God, he has trained *one* people and given this people *one* country; this God is Yahweh, this people is Israel and this country is the Holy Land. Nevertheless, the narratives are historical, in the sense that they relate, in their own way, to actual events, and that they give a faithful picture of the origin and migrations of the ancestors of Israel, of their geographical and racial background, of their moral and religious way of life. The old suspicious attitude towards these narratives has had to be abandoned under pressure of

recent discoveries made by historians and archaeologists of the Near East.

The events described in Exodus and Numbers, and referred to in the first chapters of Deuteronomy, take up the story at a very much later period: they begin with the birth of Moses and end with his death. They cover the Exodus from Egypt, the halt at Sinai, the journey to Kadesh, the passage through Transjordan and the settlement on the Plains of Moab. If we deny the historicity of these facts and of the person of Moses, the subsequent history of Israel, its loyalty to Yahwism and its attachment to the Law, defy explanation. At the same time, we cannot but recognise that the importance of these recollections to the people's life, and the way these were echoed in their rituals, endowed the narratives with the proportions of a national epic (e.g. the crossing of the Sea of Reeds) and sometimes of a liturgy (e.g. the Passover). The historical reality behind the biblical figure of Moses remains shadowy. Israel, having become a people, thus enters world history and, although no ancient document mentions it at this point, except for one obscure allusion on the stele of Pharaoh Merneptah, what the Bible says about it is in broad agreement with what texts and archaeology tell us about invasions of Egypt by groups of Semites, about Egyptian administration in the Delta, and about political conditions in Transjordan.

The task of the modern historian is to test these biblical data against the facts of general history. With reservations dictated by the insufficiency of biblical indications and the uncertainty of extra-biblical chronology, we may say that Abraham was living in Canaan in about 1850 BC, that Joseph was active in Egypt and that other 'sons of Jacob' joined him there a little after 1700 BC, though it now seems certain that not all the Hebrew tribes went down to Egypt, *see* Introduction to Joshua. For the date of the Exodus, we cannot rely on the chronological information of 1 K 6:1 and Jg 11:26, which is secondary and produced by artificial computations. But the Bible does contain one decisive piece of information: according to the ancient text in Ex 1:1, the Hebrews worked on the construction of the store-cities of Pithom and Rameses. The Exodus, therefore, took place later than the accession of Rameses II, who founded the city of that name. Building on a grand scale began there at the very outset of his reign and it is probable that the departure of the group led by Moses occurred in the first half or about the middle of this long reign (1290–1224), that is to say, in about 1250 BC or a little before. This was, probably, only one of several groups of Hebrews who went up from Egypt to Canaan at about this time and later united into the 'twelve tribes'. Given the biblical tradition that the Israelites remained in the desert for a whole generation, their settlement of Transjordan should be dated to about 1225 BC. These dates are consistent with general historical information about the residence of the pharaohs of the XIXth Dynasty in the Nile Delta, the weakening of Egyptian control over Syria-Palestine at the end of the reign of Rameses II, and the troubled times throughout the Middle East at the end of the thirteenth century BC. They also agree with archaeological information on the beginnings of the Iron Age, which coincide with the Israelite settlement of Canaan.

§4 The Laws

In the Jewish Bible, the Pentateuch is called the Law, the *torah*, and indeed it embodies that whole complex of regulations governing the nation's moral, social and religious life. To the modern mind, the most remarkable feature of this legislation is its religious character. This quality is also to be found in certain other codes of the ancient East; but we nowhere find a body of law in which the sacred so pervades the profane: in Israel, the Law is dictated by God, it regulates people's duties towards God, its prescriptions are motivated by religious considerations. For the moral prescriptions that make up the Decalogue or for the ritual laws of Leviticus, this may seem natural enough; what is more significant is that civil and criminal laws should be mixed up with religious precepts in the same corpus and the whole set out as the charter of the covenant with Yahweh. Naturally enough, the promulgation of these laws is attached to the narratives of what happened in the desert where that covenant was struck.

Since laws are made only to be applied, these had to be adapted to changing conditions of place and time. This explains why, in the groups we are about to consider, we find ingredients of great antiquity side by side with formulations or provisions which reflect the preoccupations of a later age. Furthermore, in legislative matters, Israel was inevitably influenced by neighbouring cultures. Certain prescriptions in the Code of the Covenant and in the Deuteronomic Code have remarkable counterparts in the Mesopotamian Codes, in the Collection of Assyrian Laws and in the Hittite Code. The similarities are due not to direct borrowing, but either to the influence of foreign legal codes, or to customary law more or less common to the peoples of the ancient Middle East. Moreover, after the Exodus, Canaanite practice exerted a strong influence on the formulation of laws and on the pattern of ritual worship.

The *Decalogue*, or the 'Ten Words' inscribed on the tablets at Sinai, lays down the fundamental Law—which is at once moral and religious—of the covenant. It is recorded in two places, Ex 20:2–17 and Dt 5:6–18, with not inconsiderable textual differences; these two texts derive from a primitive, shorter form against the Mosaic origin of which there is no cogent argument.

The (Elohistic) *Code of the Covenant*, Ex 20:22–23:33 (or more precisely, Ex 20:24–23:9), though inserted between the Decalogue and the end of the Sinaitic covenant, reflects social conditions later than those of the period of Moses. It is the legal code of a community of shepherds and peasants, and the importance it attaches to work-animals, to the raising of crops and vines, and to houses, indicates that a settled, as opposed to nomadic, way of life has already been adopted for some time. Only then was it possible for Israel to know and practise the customary law, from which this code derives so much of its material, and which accounts for exact parallels found in the Mesopotamian Codes. The Code of the Covenant, however, is permeated with the spirit of Yahwism, frequently in reaction against Canaanite culture. It is a collection, unsystematically arranged, of precepts grouped together either by subject-matter or by phrasing, the latter being sometimes 'casuistic' or conditional, and sometimes 'apodeictic' or imperative. The collection originally had an independent existence. It certainly pre-dates Deuteronomy,

since this book draws on it; it contains no reference to the institutions of the monarchy and may therefore date back to the period of the Judges. It had already been inserted into the accounts of Sinai before Deuteronomy was composed.

The *Deuteronomic Code*, Dt 12:1–26:15, forms the central part of the Book of Deuteronomy, the characteristics and literary history of which have been described above. It re-uses part of the laws of the Code of the Covenant, but adapts them to the changes in economic and social life; thus, for the remission of debts and the statute of slaves, compare Dt 15:1–11 with Ex 23:10–11; Dt 15:12–18 with Ex 21:2–11. Even so, from its very first precept, it is in conflict with the Code of the Covenant on one important point: the latter authorised the existence of a large number of sanctuaries, Ex 20:24, whereas Deuteronomy imposes the law that there shall be only one place of worship, Dt 12:2–12; and this centralisation in its turn imposes modifications on the ancient rules governing sacrifices, tithes and festivals. The Deuteronomic Code also contains regulations not to be found in the Code of the Covenant, some of them archaic, derived from unknown sources. But what is proper to itself, indicative of changing social conditions, is its concern for the protection of the weak, the constant insistence on God's rights over his country and over his people, and the hortatory tone pervading these legal prescriptions.

Although *Leviticus* was not given its final form until after the Exile, it contains elements of great antiquity: for example, the dietary laws, ch. 11, and the regulations governing ritual purity, ch. 13–15, while the late ceremonial for the Great Day of Expiation, ch. 16, preserves an ancient purification ritual, overlaid by a highly developed concept of sin. Ch. 17–26 form a unity commonly known as the *Law of Holiness*, which originally existed independently of the Pentateuch. This Law is a collection of various elements, some of which may go back to nomadic times, for instance ch. 18, some still pre-exilic, and some even later. The first collection was made in Jerusalem shortly before the Exile and may have been known to Ezekiel, who exhibits many points of contact in language and thought with the Law of Holiness. But it was published only during the Exile, being inserted in the Pentateuch later by Priestly editors who adapted it to the rest of the material which they had to hand.

§5 Religious significance

The religion of the Old Testament, like that of the New, is a historical religion: it is based on a divine revelation made to definite individuals at definite times and in definite circumstances, on the intervention of God at specific moments in the development of humanity. The Pentateuch, tracing the history of God's relationship with the world, is the foundation stone of the Jewish religion; it became essentially the canonical book, the Law, of Judaism.

In the Pentateuch, the Israelite found the explanation of his destiny. Not only did he find, in the opening chapters of Genesis, an answer to questions shared with every human being: the meaning of the world and of life, the problem of suffering and death, but he also found an answer to his own

particular question: How is it that Yahweh, the only God, is the God of Israel; that among all the nations of the earth Israel should be his people? Because Israel received the divine promise.

The Pentateuch is the book of promises: the promise made to Adam and Eve after their Fall (the 'Proto-evangel', or first good news of the salvation to come), the promise of a new order of things made to Noah after the Flood and, above all, the promise made to Abraham. The promise made to him is renewed to Isaac and Jacob and embraces all their descendants. The promise is immediately concerned with owning the country where the patriarchs lived, the Promised Land, but it implies more than this: it means that a special and unique relationship exists between Israel and the God of the Ancestors.

For Yahweh called Abraham, and in this call the choice of Israel was prefigured. By an act of free choice, by a loving plan conceived from the creation of the world and pursued despite all human infidelity, Yahweh made the descendants of Abraham into a *nation*, and made that nation *his* nation.

The choice and the promise were ratified by a covenant. If the Pentateuch is the book of promises, it is also the book of covenants. There is already a tacit covenant with Adam; there is an explicit covenant with Noah, with Abraham, and finally—through the mediation of Moses—with the whole nation. It is not a pact concluded between equals, since God has no need of pacts and the initiative lies wholly with him; nevertheless, he enters into it, in a certain sense binding himself by the promises which he makes. But in return he demands loyalty from his people; sin, for Israel, is rejection of this loyalty, since this breaks the bond created by God out of pure love.

God himself defines the terms of this fidelity by legislating for the nation which he has chosen. His Law instructs his people in their duties, regulates their behaviour in conformity to the divine will and, by safeguarding the covenant, paves the way for the fulfilment of the promises.

The Promise, the Choice, the Covenant, the Law—these are the golden threads, the warp and woof of the Pentateuch. They run throughout the rest of the Old Testament too. For the Pentateuch is not complete in itself: it tells of promise but not of fulfilment, since it ends before the entry into the Promised Land. It had to remain open-ended, since it was proffering both hope and constraint—hope in the promises, which the conquest of Canaan will apparently fulfil, Jos 23, but which the sins of the people will vitiate, and which the exiles in Babylon will once again call to mind; constraint, by virtue of an ever-exacting Law, set among the Israelites for all time as a witness against them, Dt 31:26.

This lasted until the coming of Christ, the goal in which this salvation-history culminates and by which its obscurities are dispelled. Paul explains the meaning of this, particularly in Ga 3:15–29. Christ concluded a new covenant, prefigured by the old ones, this time with Christians, made heirs of Abraham by faith. The function of the Law had been to safeguard the promises—like a tutor or nursemaid leading people to Christ, in whom the promises are now fulfilled.

The Christian is no longer under tutelage, but is freed from the observances of the Law, though not from its religious and moral teaching. For Christ did not come to do away with the Law, he came to bring it to perfection, Mt 5:17. The New Testament does not cancel the Old but extends it. Not only does

the Church recognise that the realities of the New Law (the sacrifice of Christ, baptism, Easter) are prefigured in the great events of Patriarchal and Mosaic times and in the festivals and rituals of the desert (the sacrifice of Isaac, the crossing of the Sea of Reeds, the Passover), but Christian religion also requires the same fundamental attitude as that prescribed for the Israelites in the stories and laws of the Pentateuch. Furthermore, each individual soul on its journey to God must pass through those same stages of detachment, trial and purification, through which the chosen people had to pass; and hence, can derive instruction from the lessons experienced by them.

What method should we follow in reading the Pentateuch? Start by taking the narratives in the order in which they occur. Genesis, after contrasting the goodness of God the Creator with the ingratitude of sinful humanity, shows, in the stories of the patriarchs, what reward is accorded to faith. Exodus prefigures our own redemption. Numbers represents the time of trial, when God instructs and punishes his children. Leviticus can be read most profitably in conjunction with the concluding chapters of Ezekiel or after the books of Ezra and Nehemiah; it is true that the one sacrifice of Christ has abrogated the Temple ceremonial, but Leviticus also insists on purity and holiness in those who serve God—and this is a lesson for all times. Deuteronomy may profitably be read with Jeremiah, who of all the prophets is closest to this book in time as in spirit.

GENESIS

I: THE ORIGIN OF THE WORLD AND OF THE HUMAN RACE

A: THE CREATION AND THE FALL

The creation of the world [a] 2:4–25

1, 2 **1** In the beginning God created heaven and earth. [b] ·Now the earth was a formless void, [c] there was darkness over the deep, with a divine wind [d] sweeping over the waters. Jb 38–39 Ps 8;104 Pr 8:22–31 ↗Jn 1:1–3 Col 1:15–17 Heb 1:2–3

3, 4 God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light. ·God saw that light was good, Jn 8:12b• 2 Co 4:6

5 and God divided light from darkness. [e] ·God called light 'day', and darkness he called 'night'. Evening came and morning came: the first day.

6 God said, 'Let there be a vault [f] through the middle of the waters to divide the

7 waters in two.' And so it was. ·God made [g] the vault, and it divided the waters

8 under the vault from the waters above the vault. ·God called the vault 'heaven'. Evening came and morning came: the second day.

9 God said, 'Let the waters under heaven come together into a single mass, [h] and 7:11b Pr 8:28

10 let dry land appear.' And so it was. ·God called the dry land 'earth' and the mass of waters 'seas', and God saw that it was good.

11 God said, 'Let the earth produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants, and fruit trees on earth, bearing fruit with their seed inside, each corresponding to its own

12 species.' And so it was. ·The earth produced vegetation: the various kinds of seed-bearing plants and the fruit trees with seed inside, each corresponding to its

13 own species. God saw that it was good. ·Evening came and morning came: the third day.

1 **a.** This narrative, ascribed to the Priestly source, is less concrete and more theological than that which follows, 2:4b–25; it aims at a complete logical classification of beings whose creation is deliberately fitted into the framework of a week which closes with the Sabbath day of rest. These beings come into existence at God's command, in ascending order of dignity: man, God's image and creation's king, comes last. The text makes use of the primitive science of its day. It would be a mistake to seek points of agreement between this schematic presentation and the data of modern science. Using a scenario familiar in the polytheistic myths of the ancient near east, the narrative conveys a revelation of one, transcendent God, existing before the world which he created—a revelation valid for all time.

b. Alternatively, 'When God began creating heaven and earth, the earth being then a formless void, with darkness over the deep, and a divine wind sweeping over the waters, God said . . .' Both translations are grammatically possible; the one we retain here, with all the ancient versions, gives a more coherent rendering of the text. The narrative begins only at v. 2; v. 1 is a title, corresponding to the end of 2:4a. 'Heaven and earth' are the ordered universe, the result of the creation. The latter is expressed by the verb *bara'* which is reserved for the creative activity of God, as distinct from productive human activity. It would be wrong to read the metaphysical concept of 'creation from nothingness' into the text, for this was not to be formulated earlier than 2 M 7:28, although the text does affirm that the world did have a beginning: the creation was not an atemporal myth but an integral part of history, and its absolute beginning.

c. In Hebrew *tohu* and *bohu*, 'trackless waste and emptiness'. With the 'darkness over the deep', the 'wind' and the 'waters', these negative images formed the basis for the later concept of creation *ex nihilo*.

d. This is not a reference to the Spirit of God and his part in the creation. The creation was effected by the 'word' of God, vv. 3 seq. or by his 'act', vv. 7, 16, 25, 26.

e. Light was one of God's creations; darkness, being negative, was not. The creation of light is mentioned first, since the succession of days and nights is to be the frame in which the work of creation takes place.

f. For the ancient Semites the seeming vault of the sky (the 'firmament') was a solid dome holding the upper waters in check; the waters of the Flood poured down through apertures in it, 7:11.

g. To creation by word, 'God said', succeeds creation by act, 'God made' the firmament and the celestial bodies, v. 16, the animals on earth, v. 25, and man, v. 26. In this way the Priestly author integrates into his own more spiritual concept of the creation an ancient tradition parallel to that of the second account, 2:4b–25, in which God 'made' heaven, earth, man and animals.

h. 'mass' Gk; 'place' Hebr.

Is 40:26 Jr 31:35 Si 43:6,7 Ba 3:33–35
God said, 'Let there be lights in the vault of heaven to divide day from night, and 14
let them indicate festivals, days and years. ·Let them be lights in the vault of 15
heaven to shine on the earth.' And so it was. ·God made the two great lights: [f] the 16
Ps 136:7seq.
greater light to govern the day, the smaller light to govern the night, and the stars.
God set them in the vault of heaven to shine on the earth, ·to govern the day 17, 18
and the night and to divide light from darkness. God saw that it was good. ·Evening 19
came and morning came: the fourth day.

Jb 12:7–12
God said, 'Let the waters be alive with a swarm of living creatures, and let birds 20
wing their way above the earth across the vault of heaven.' And so it was. ·God 21
created great sea-monsters and all the creatures that glide and teem in the waters
in their own species, and winged birds in their own species. God saw that it was
good. ·God blessed them, saying, 'Be fruitful, multiply, and fill the waters of the 22
seas; and let the birds multiply on land.' ·Evening came and morning came: the 23
fifth day.

5:1,3;9:6 Ps 8:4–5 Sg 2:33 Si 17:3–4
God said, 'Let the earth produce every kind of living creature in its own species: 24
cattle, creeping things [j] and wild animals of all kinds.' And so it was. ·God made 25
wild animals in their own species, and cattle in theirs, and every creature that
crawls along the earth in its own species. God saw that it was good.

God said, 'Let us [k] make man [l] in our own image, in the likeness [m] of ourselves, 26
and let them be masters of the fish of the sea, the birds of heaven, the cattle, all the
wild animals [n] and all the creatures that creep along the ground.'

↗1 Co 11:7 Ep 4:24 Col 3:10 ↗Mt 19:4par.
God created man in the image of himself, 27
in the image of God he created him,
male and female he created them.

8:17;9:1 Ps 8:5–8 Sg 9:2;10:2 Si 17:2–3 Jm 3:7 ·Ps 104:14seq.
God blessed them, saying to them, 'Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and 28
subdue it. Be masters of the fish of the sea, the birds of heaven and all the living
creatures that move on earth.' ·God also said, 'Look, to you I give all the seed- 29
bearing plants everywhere on the surface of the earth, and all the trees with seed-
bearing fruit; this will be your food. ·And to all the wild animals, all the birds of 30
heaven and all the living creatures that creep along the ground, I give all the foliage
Ps 104:24 Qo 3:11;7:29 Si 39:21,33 Ac 10:15e 1 Tm 4:4
of the plants as their food.' [o] And so it was. ·God saw all he had made, and indeed 31
it was very good. Evening came and morning came: the sixth day.

·Ex 20:8f.,↗11; ·31:12seq. ↗Heb 4:4
2 Thus heaven and earth were completed with all their array. ·On the seventh 1, 2
day God had completed the work he had been doing. He rested on the seventh
day after all the work he had been doing. ·God blessed the seventh day and made 3
it holy, [a] because on that day he rested after all his work of creating.

Jr 10:11seq.
Such was the story [b] of heaven and earth as they were created. 4a

1:1–2:4 **Paradise, and the test of free will** [c]

At the time when Yahweh God made earth and heaven ·there was as yet no wild 4b, 5
bush on the earth nor had any wild plant yet sprung up, for Yahweh God had not
Qo 3:20seq.; 12:7 Ws 15:8,11 ·Jb 33:4; 34:14seq. ·Ps 104:29seq. ↗1 Co 15:45
sent rain on the earth, nor was there any man to till the soil. ·Instead, water flowed 6
out of the ground and watered all the surface of the soil. ·Yahweh God shaped 7
man from the soil of the ground [d] and blew the breath of life into his nostrils, and
man became a living being. [e]

Yahweh God planted a garden in Eden, [f] which is in the east, and there he put 8
the man he had fashioned. ·From the soil, Yahweh God caused to grow every kind 9
Pr 3:18 Rv 2:7;22:14
of tree, enticing to look at and good to eat, with the tree of life [g] in the middle of the
garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Ezk 47:1 Jn 4:1a Rv 22:1–2
A river flowed from Eden to water the garden, and from there it divided to make 10
four streams. [h] ·The first is named the Pishon, and this winds all through the land of 11
Havilah where there is gold. ·The gold of this country is pure; bdellium [i] and 12
cornelian stone are found there. ·The second river is named the Gihon, and this 13
winds all through the land of Cush. ·The third river is named the Tigris, and this 14
flows to the east of Ashur. The fourth river is the Euphrates.

15 Yahweh God took the man and settled him in the garden of Eden to cultivate
16 and take care of it. ·Then Yahweh God gave the man this command, 'You are free
17 to eat of all the trees in the garden. ·But of the tree of the knowledge of good and
evil[j] you are not to eat; for, the day you eat of that, you are doomed to die.'[k] Rm 6:23 Jm 1:15
18 Yahweh God said, 'It is not right that the man should be alone. I shall make him
19 a helper.'[l] ·So from the soil Yahweh God fashioned all the wild animals and all the Qo 3:20
birds of heaven. These he brought to the man to see what he would call them; each
20 one was to bear the name the man would give it. ·The man gave names to all the
cattle, all the birds of heaven and all the wild animals. But no helper suitable for
21 the man was found for him. ·Then, Yahweh God made the man fall into a deep
sleep. And, while he was asleep, he took one of his ribs and closed the flesh up
22 again forthwith.[m] ·Yahweh God fashioned the rib he had taken from the man into ↗1 Co 11: 8–9 ↗1 Tm 2:13
23 a woman,[n] and brought her to the man. ·And the man said:

i. Their names are omitted deliberately: Sun and Moon, deified by all the neighbouring peoples, are here no more than lamps that light the earth and regulate the calendar.

j. 'creeping' or 'gliding', vv. 20–21, or 'moving', v. 28. Here, snakes, lizards, insects and small animals.

k. It is possible that this plural form implies a discussion between God and his heavenly court (the angels, *see* 3:5, 22); our text was thus understood by the Gk version of Ps 8:5 (quoted in Heb 2:7). Alternatively, the plural expresses the majesty and fullness of God's being; the common name for God in Hebrew is *elohim*, a plural form.

l. Collective noun, hence the plural 'be masters of'.

m. 'likeness' appears to weaken the force of 'image' by excluding the idea of equality. 'Image' is a concrete term implying a physical resemblance like that between Adam and his son, 5:3. This relationship with God marks off human beings from the animals; moreover, it involves a general similarity of nature: intellect, will, authority. It paves the way for a higher revelation: the human share in the divine nature by virtue of grace.

n. 'all the wild animals' Syr.; 'the whole earth' Hebr.

o. Description of a golden age when human beings and beasts were at peace with each other, having plants for their food. 9:3 marks the beginning of a new era.

2 **a.** The Sabbath (*shabbat*) is of divine institution: on that day God himself rested (*shabat*). The word *shabbat*, however, is avoided here since, according to the Priestly author, the Sabbath was not imposed until the giving of the law on Sinai, when it then became the sign of the covenant, Ex 31:12–17. Even at the creation, however, God set an example which must be followed, Ex 20:11; 31:17.

b. The Hebr. word means primarily 'lineage', hence the history of an ancestor and his line, *see* 6:9; 25:19; 37:2. By the use of the word here, the creation is meant to be taken out of the dimension of myth and made the first historical event. It was not, as had been the case in Sumer and Egypt, a series of heavenly events.

c. Section 2:4[b]–3:24 belongs to the Yahwistic source. It is not, as has often been said, a 'second creation narrative', followed by a 'narrative of the fall', but consists of two narratives put together and drawing on various traditions: an account of the creation of man, as distinct from the creation of the world, which is made complete only by the creation of woman and the appearance of the first human couple, 2:4[b]–8, 18–24; an account of the lost paradise, the fall and consequent punishment, beginning at 2:9–17 and continued in 3:1–24.

d. Man, *'adam*, comes from the ground, *'adamah*, *see* 3:19. This collective noun was to become the proper name of the first human being, Adam, 4:25; 5:1, 3.

e. The word is *nephesh*, meaning a being animated by the breath of life (manifested also by the 'spirit' *ruah*, 6:17f; Is 11:2c), *see* Ps 6:4c.

f. 'Garden' is translated 'paradise' in the Gk version and the translation has become traditional. 'Eden' is a geographical name but the place cannot be identified; it may originally have meant 'open wastes'. The Israelites, however, understood the word to mean 'enjoyment', deriving it from the Hebr. root *'dn*. The distinction between Eden and the garden, made clear here and at v. 10, later becomes blurred: we read of the 'garden of Eden', v. 15; 3:23, 24. In Ezk 28:13 and 31:9, Eden is the 'garden of God', and in Is 51:3, Eden, the 'garden of Yahweh' is contrasted with the desert and the plain.

g. A symbol of immortality, *see* 3:22g. On the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, *see* v. 17j.

h. vv. 10–14 are a parenthesis, probably inserted by the Yahwist himself, relying on ancient geographical ideas about the configuration of the world. He intends not to identify the place of the garden of Eden but to show that the great rivers which form the vital arteries of the four regions of the world have their origin in paradise. It is no surprise that this geography is incoherent. The Tigris and Euphrates are well known, and their source is in the mountains of Armenia, but Pishon and Gihon are unknown. Havilah, according to 10:29, is a region of Arabia, and Cush elsewhere in the OT designates Ethiopia; but there is no certainty that the two names are here intended in their usual sense.

i. An aromatic gum.

j. This knowledge is a privilege which God reserves to himself and which man, by sinning, will usurp, 3:5, 22. Hence it does not mean omniscience, which fallen creatures do not possess; nor is it moral discrimination, for unfallen man already had it and God could not refuse it to a rational being. It is the power of deciding for himself what is good and what is evil and of acting accordingly, a claim to complete moral independence by which man refuses to recognise his status as a created being, *see* Is 5:20. The first sin was an attack on God's sovereignty, a sin of pride. This rebellion is described in concrete terms as the transgression of an express command of God for which the text uses the image of a forbidden fruit.

k. The same expression is used in laws and verdicts envisaging the death penalty. Eating the fruit did not entail instant death: Adam and Eve survived after doing so, and the condemnation at 3:16–19 speaks of death as only the end of a miserable life. Sin, symbolised by the eating of the fruit, deserves death: the text does not say more, *see* 3:3.

l. The account of the creation of woman seems to come from an independent tradition. In v. 16, 'man' means man and woman as in 3:24; and 3:1–3, which is the continuation of 2:17, assumes that the command has been given to the man and woman.

m. The flesh (*basar*) in its primary sense is the 'meat' or muscle of animals and man, 41:2–4; Ex 4:7; Jb 2:5; whence the whole body, Nb 8:7; 1 K 21:27; 2 K 6:30, and hence members of a family group, Gn 2:23; 29:14; 37:27, hence humanity at large or the aggregate of living beings ('all flesh', Gn 6:17, 19; Ps 136:25; Is 40:5–6). The soul, 2:7e; Ps 6:4b, or spirit, Gn 6:17f, animates the flesh, without any addition to it, by giving it life. Often, however, the 'flesh' stands for what is frail and perishable in humanity, 6:3; Ps 56:4; Is 40:6; Jr 17:5; and gradually a certain antithesis between these two aspects of human beings becomes apparent, Ps 78:39; Qo 12:7; Is 31:3; *see also* Ws 8:19; 9:15f. Hebr. has no word for 'body': the NT later supplies one by developing *soma* side by side with *sarx*, *see* Rm 7:5c, 24*l*.

n. Figurative expression of the close relationship between man and woman, v. 23, which brings them together in marriage, v. 24.

This one at last is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh!
She is to be called Woman, [a]
because she was taken from Man.

This is why a man leaves his father and mother and becomes attached to his wife, 24
and they become one flesh.
Mt 19:5par. Now, both of them were naked, the man and his wife, but they felt no shame 25
↗1 Co 6:16 Ep 5:31 before each other.
Ws 2:24 Jn 8:44 Rm 5:12–21 Rv 12:9;20:2

The Fall

3 Now, the snake [a] was the most subtle of all the wild animals that Yahweh God 1
had made. It asked the woman, 'Did God really say you were not to eat from
any of the trees in the garden?' ·The woman answered the snake, 'We may eat the 2
fruit of the trees in the garden. ·But of the fruit of the tree in the middle of the 3
garden God said, "You must not eat it, nor touch it, under pain of death." ' ·Then 4
2:17;3:22 the snake said to the woman, 'No! You will not die! ·God knows in fact that the 5
Is 14:14+ day you eat it your eyes will be opened and you will be like gods, knowing good
from evil.' ·The woman saw that the tree was good to eat and pleasing to the eye, 6
and that it was enticing for the wisdom that it could give. So she took some of its
fruit and ate it. She also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate it.
Then the eyes of both of them were opened and they realised that they were 7
naked. [b] So they sewed fig-leaves together to make themselves loin-cloths.
The man and his wife heard the sound of Yahweh God walking in the garden in 8
2 S 5:24/ 1 K 19:12 the cool of the day, and they hid from Yahweh God among the trees of the garden.
But Yahweh God called to the man. 'Where are you?' he asked. ·'I heard the 9, 10
sound of you in the garden,' he replied. 'I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid.'
'Who told you that you were naked?' he asked. 'Have you been eating from the 11
tree I forbade you to eat?' ·The man replied, 'It was the woman you put with me; 12
she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.' ·Then Yahweh God said to the 13
↗2 Co 11:3 woman, 'Why did you do that?' The woman replied, 'The snake tempted me and I
ate.'
Then Yahweh God said to the snake, 'Because you have done this, 14

Accursed be you
of all animals wild and tame!
On your belly you will go
Is 65:25 and on dust you will feed
as long as you live.
↗Rv 12:17 I shall put enmity 15
between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and hers;
it will bruise your head
and you will strike its heel.' [c]

To the woman he said: [d] 16

↗Rv 12:2 I shall give you intense pain in childbearing,
you will give birth to your children in pain.
Your yearning will be for your husband,
2:22n and he will dominate you.

To the man he said, 'Because you listened to the voice of your wife and ate from 17
the tree of which I had forbidden you to eat,

Is 11:6e Ho 4:3a Accursed be the soil because of you!
↗Rm 8:20 Painfully will you get your food from it
as long as you live.

18 It will yield you brambles and thistles,
as you eat the produce of the land.
19 By the sweat of your face
will you earn your food,
until you return to the ground,
as you were taken from it.
For dust you are
and to dust you shall return.'

2:7
Jb 34:15
Ps 90:3; 104:29
Qo 3:20;12:7

20 The man named his wife 'Eve' because she was the mother of all those who live. [e] ↗Rm 5:12
21 Yahweh God made tunics of skins for the man and his wife and clothed them.
22 Then Yahweh God said, 'Now that the man has become like one of us in knowing
good from evil, [f] he must not be allowed to reach out his hand and pick from the 2:17j
23 tree of life too, and eat and live for ever!' [g] ·So Yahweh God expelled him from the
24 garden of Eden, to till the soil from which he had been taken. ·He banished
the man, and in front of the garden of Eden he posted the great winged creatures
and the fiery flashing sword, [h] to guard the way to the tree of life. ↗Rv 22:1seq., 14

Cain and Abel [a]

1 4 The man had intercourse with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth
2 to Cain. 'I have acquired a man with the help of Yahweh,' [b] she said. ·She gave
birth to a second child, Abel, the brother of Cain. Now Abel became a shepherd
3 and kept flocks, while Cain tilled the soil. ·Time passed and Cain brought some of
4 the produce of the soil as an offering for Yahweh, ·while Abel for his part brought
the first-born of his flock and some of their fat as well. Yahweh looked with favour Ex 34:19
Lv 3:16
5 on Abel and his offering. ·But he did not look with favour on Cain and his Heb 11:4
6 offering, [c] and Cain was very angry and downcast. ·Yahweh asked Cain, 'Why are
7 you angry and downcast? ·If you are doing right, surely you ought to hold your

o. In Hebrew a play on the words *'ishshah* 'woman' and *'ish* 'man'.

3 **a.** The snake here serves as disguise for a being hostile to God and an enemy of the human race; this being is identified with the Adversary or the Devil (Jb 1:6g) in the Book of Wisdom, in the NT and in all Christian tradition.

b. The arousal of lust, as first manifestation of disorder introduced into the harmony of creation.

c. The Hebrew text, by proclaiming that the offspring of the snake is henceforth at enmity with the woman's descendants, opposes the human race to the devil and his 'seed', his posterity, and hints at ultimate victory; it is the first glimmer of salvation, the *proto-evangelium*. The Gk version has a masculine pronoun ('he', not 'it' will bruise . . .), thus ascribing the victory not to the woman's descendants in general but to one of her sons in particular, and thus providing the basis for the messianic interpretation given by many of the Fathers. The Latin version has a feminine pronoun ('she' will bruise . . .) and since, in the messianic interpretation of our text, the Messiah and his mother appear together, the pronoun has been taken to refer to Mary.

d. The punishment is appropriate to the specific functions of each: the woman suffers as mother and wife, the man as bread-winner. The text does not imply that, without sin, woman would have given birth painlessly or that man would not have had to work with sweat on his brow, any more than that, before sin, snakes had feet, v. 14. Sin upsets the order willed by God: woman, instead of being man's associate and equal, 2:18–24, becomes his seductress, while he for his part reduces her to the role of child-bearer; man, instead of being God's gardener in Eden, has to struggle against a now hostile environment. But the greatest punishment is the loss of intimacy with God, v. 23. These penalties are hereditary. The doctrine of hereditary guilt is not clearly stated until Paul draws his comparison between the solidarity of all in the Saviour Christ and the solidarity of all in sinful Adam, Rm 5.

e. The name Eve, *hawwah*, is here explained by the root *hayah* 'to live'.

f. By constituting himself arbiter of what is good or evil, 2:17j, sinful man has usurped God's prerogative.

g. The tree of life comes from a tradition parallel to that of the tree of knowledge. Man is by nature mortal, *see* v. 19, but aspires to immortality which he will ultimately be granted. The paradise lost by human guilt is the image of the paradise to be recovered by God's grace.

h. Borrowed from Babylonian mythology, *see* Ex 25:18i.

4 **a.** This narrative presupposes a developed civilisation, an established form of worship, the existence of other people who might kill Cain, the existence of a clan that would rally to him. It may be that the narrative originally referred not to the children of the first man but to the eponymous ancestor of the Cainites (*see* Nb 24:21k). The Yahwistic tradition has moved the story back to the period of the beginning, thus giving it a universal significance: after the revolt against God we now have fratricidal strife; against these two evils is directed the double command that sums up the whole Law—the love of God and of neighbour, Mt 22:40.

b. Delight of the first woman who, though the slave of her husband, now finds herself mother of a male child. By a play on words the name Cain (*qain*) is here connected with the verb *qanah*, 'to acquire', 'get'.

c. The younger is preferred to the elder. This theme recurs frequently in Gn (Isaac to Ishmael, 21, Jacob to Esau, 25:23; 27, Rachel to Leah, 29:15–30, and also the children of these last) and throughout the OT, 1 S 16:12; 1 K 2:15. Such preference demonstrates the freedom of God's choice, his contempt for earthly standards of greatness, and his regard for the lowly.

head high! But if you are not doing right, Sin is crouching at the door hungry to get
3:16 you. You can still master him.'[d] ·Cain said to his brother Abel, 'Let us go 8
out'; [e]·and while they were in the open country, Cain set on his brother Abel and
Ws 10:3 killed him.
↗1 Jn 3:12
Yahweh asked Cain, 'Where is your brother Abel?' 'I do not know,' he replied. 9
'Am I my brother's guardian?' ·'What have you done?' Yahweh asked. 'Listen! 10
Jb 16:18 Your brother's blood is crying out to me from the ground. ·Now be cursed and 11
↗Mt 23:25
↗Heb 12:24 banned from the ground that has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood
at your hands. ·When you till the ground it will no longer yield up its strength to 12
you. A restless wanderer you will be on earth.' ·Cain then said to Yahweh, 'My 13
punishment is greater than I can bear. ·Look, today you drive me from the surface 14
of the earth. I must hide from you, and be a restless wanderer on earth. Why,
Nb 35:19c whoever comes across me will kill me!' ·'Very well, then,' Yahweh replied, 15
'whoever kills Cain will suffer a sevenfold vengeance.' So Yahweh put a mark on
Cain,[f] so that no one coming across him would kill him. ·Cain left Yahweh's 16
presence and settled in the land of Nod,[g] east of Eden.

The descendants of Cain[h]

Cain had intercourse with his wife, and she conceived and gave birth to Enoch. 17
He became the founder of a city and gave the city the name of his son
Enoch. ·Enoch fathered Irad, and Irad fathered Mehujael; Mehujael fathered 18
Methushael, and Methushael fathered Lamech. ·Lamech married two women: the 19
name of the first was Adah and the name of the second was Zillah. ·Adah gave 20
birth to Jabal: he was the ancestor of tent-dwelling herdsmen. ·His brother's name 21
was Jubal: he was the ancestor of all who play the harp and the pipe. ·As for Zillah, 22
she gave birth to Tubal-Cain: he was the ancestor of all who work copper and iron.
Tubal-Cain's sister was Naamah.[i]
Lamech said to his wives: 23

Adah and Zillah, hear my voice,
wives of Lamech, listen to what I say:
I killed a man for wounding me,
a boy for striking me.
Mt 18:22par. Sevenfold vengeance for Cain, 24
but seventy-sevenfold for Lamech.[j]

Seth and his descendants[k]

Adam had intercourse with his wife, and she gave birth to a son whom she named 25
Seth, 'because God has granted[l] me other offspring', she said, 'in place of Abel,
since Cain has killed him.' ·A son was also born to Seth, and he named him Enosh. 26
Ex 3:13g.14 This man was the first to invoke the name Yahweh.[m]

1 Ch 1:1–4 **The patriarchs before the flood**[a]

1:26m 5 This is the roll of Adam's descendants: 1
On the day that God created Adam he made him in the likeness of God. ·Male 2
and female he created them. He blessed them and gave them the name Man, when
they were created.
When Adam was a hundred and thirty years old he fathered a son, in his likeness, 3
after his image,[b] and he called him Seth. ·Adam lived for eight hundred years after 4
the birth of Seth and he fathered sons and daughters. ·In all, Adam lived for nine 5
hundred and thirty years; then he died.
When Seth was a hundred and five years old he fathered Enosh. ·After the birth 6. 7
of Enosh, Seth lived for eight hundred and seven years, and he fathered sons and
daughters. ·In all, Seth lived for nine hundred and twelve years; then he died. 8
When Enosh was ninety years old he fathered Kenan. ·After the birth of Kenan, 9. 10
Enosh lived for eight hundred and fifteen years and he fathered sons and daughters.

11 In all, Enosh lived for nine hundred and five years; then he died.
12, 13 When Kenan was seventy years old he fathered Mahalalel. ·After the birth of 4:17h
Mahalalel, Kenan lived for eight hundred and forty years and he fathered sons and
14 daughters. ·In all, Kenan lived for nine hundred and ten years; then he died.
15, 16 When Mahalalel was sixty-five years old he fathered Jared. ·After the birth of
Jared, Mahalalel lived for eight hundred and thirty years and he fathered sons and
17 daughters. ·In all, Mahalalel lived for eight hundred and ninety-five years; then he
died.
18, 19 When Jared was a hundred and sixty-two years old he fathered Enoch. ·After
the birth of Enoch, Jared lived for eight hundred years and he fathered sons and
20 daughters. ·In all, Jared lived for nine hundred and sixty-two years; then he died.
21, 22 When Enoch was sixty-five years old he fathered Methuselah. ·Enoch walked
with God. After the birth of Methuselah, Enoch lived[c] for three hundred years
23 and he fathered sons and daughters. ·In all, Enoch lived for three hundred and Si 44:16; 49:14
24 sixty-five years. ·Enoch walked with God, then was no more, because God
took him.[d] 2 K 2:11
Ws 4:10–11
25 When Methuselah was a hundred and eighty-seven years old he fathered La- ↗Heb 11:5
26 mech. ·After the birth of Lamech, Methuselah lived for seven hundred and
27 eighty-two years and he fathered sons and daughters. ·In all, Methuselah lived for
nine hundred and sixty-nine years; then he died.
28, 29 When Lamech was a hundred and eighty-two years old he fathered a son. ·He
gave him the name Noah because, he said, 'Here is one who will give us, in the
midst of our toil and the labouring of our hands, a consolation out of the very soil
30 that Yahweh cursed.'[e] ·After the birth of Noah, Lamech lived for five hundred and
31 ninety-five years and fathered sons and daughters. ·In all, Lamech lived for seven
hundred and seventy-seven years; then he died.
32 When Noah was five hundred years old he fathered Shem, Ham and Japheth.

d. Approximate translation of a corrupt text which seems to describe the temptation which threatens the ill-disposed.

e. 'Let us go out' versions; Hebr. omits.

f. The 'mark of Cain' is not a brand of shame but a protecting sign: it indicates that Cain is member of a clan that will exact blood for blood.

g. The name of this unidentified country recalls the description of Cain as a 'wanderer', *nad*, in the land of *nod*.

h. Fragment of Yahwistic genealogy. The same names, varying in form, occur in the Priestly genealogy of Seth between the names of Kenan and Lamech, 5:12–28. This list is somewhat inappropriately attached to Cain son of Adam, doomed to a wandering life, for in it Cain appears as the builder of the first city and ancestor of stock-breeders, musicians, smiths and possibly prostitutes, *see* v. 22i, who provide the amenities and pleasures of urban life. Such advances are ascribed by the Yahwist to the lineage of Cain the accursed.

i. 'the ancestor of all who work . . .' Targ., *see* vv. 20–21; 'the forger of all implements' Hebr. The three castes, stock-breeders, musicians and tinkers, are credited with three ancestors whose names are similar and suggest their descendants' occupations: Jabal (*ybl* 'to lead'), Jubal (*yobel* 'trumpet'), Tubal (name of a northern race, 10:2, inhabiting a region famous for its deposits of metal). Cain means 'smith' in other semitic languages. Naamah, 'pretty' or 'beloved' may be the ancestress of another 'profession' which the text forbears to mention.

j. This ferocious song, composed in honour of a desert paladin named Lamech, is recorded here as evidence of the increasing ferocity of Cain's descendants.

k. Fragment of another primitive genealogy.

l. The name Seth (Hebr. *shet*) is here explained by *shat* 'he has granted'.

m. 'This man was the first' Gk; 'It was then that people first' Hebr. • The Elohistic and Priestly traditions put the revelation of the divine name later, in the Mosaic period, Ex 3:14 (*see* Ex 3:13g); 6:2 seq.

5 **a.** This genealogy, from the Priestly tradition, follows on from 2:4[a]. Its purpose is to bridge the gap between Creation and Flood just as Shem's genealogy in 11:10–32 bridges the interval between the Flood and Abraham. Neither history nor chronology is to be looked for here. The names are the fossilised remains of ancient traditions; many of them are to be found also in the Yahwistic catalogue of Cain's descendants, 4:17 seq. In the Samaritan Pentateuch and in the Gk version the numerical data differ considerably from those of the Hebrew text. The earliest patriarchs are said to have enjoyed phenomenal length of life because it was believed that the human span progressively diminished as epoch followed epoch; ages not exceeding 200–600 are found between Noah and Abraham and no more than 100–200 for the Hebrew patriarchs; and this was proportionate to the increase of wickedness (*see* 6:3 in the Yahwistic tradition), since long life is a blessing from God, Pr 10:27, and is to be one of the privileges of the messianic era, Is 65:20.

b. Likeness to God is therefore a quality of human nature, which the first man passes on to his descendants.

c. 'Enoch lived' Gk-Luc.; Hebr. omits.

d. Enoch is distinguished from the other patriarchs in several ways: his life is shorter but his years number those of the days in a solar year, he therefore attains a perfect age; he 'walks with God' as Noah did, 6:9; like Elijah, 2 K 2:11 seq., he vanishes mysteriously, carried off by God. Enoch has a prominent place in subsequent Jewish tradition: he is held up as a model of piety, Si 44:16; 49:14, and certain apocryphal books bear his name, *see* Jude vv. 14–15.

e. The v. is a fragment of a Yahwistic tradition inserted in this Priestly context. The root *nhm* does not in fact explain the name *noah*; perhaps the passage originally referred to some other name like Menahem.

Sons of God and women [a]

6 When people began being numerous on earth, and daughters had been born 1
to them, ·the sons of God, looking at the women, saw how beautiful they were 2
and married as many of them as they chose. ·Yahweh said, 'My spirit cannot be 3
2:7 Si 17:2 Jn 3:5–6 ·Dt 1:28g Si 16:7 indefinitely responsible for human beings, who are only flesh; let the time allowed
each be a hundred and twenty years.' [b] ·The Nephilim were on earth in those days 4
(and even afterwards) when the sons of God resorted to the women, and had
children by them. These were the heroes of days gone by, men of renown.

B: THE FLOOD [c]

↗Ws 14:6–7 ↗Si 16:7 Ba 3:26seq. ↗Mt 24:37 seq.,par. ↗1 P 3:20seq. ·Ps 14:2–3 ·1 S 15:11,35 Jr 18:10; 26:3

The corruption of humanity

Yahweh saw that human wickedness was great on earth and that his heart con- 5
trived nothing but wicked schemes all day long. ·Yahweh regretted having made 6
human beings on earth and was grieved at heart. [d] ·And Yahweh said, 'I shall rid 7
the surface of the earth of the human beings whom I created—human and animal,
the creeping things and the birds of heaven—for I regret having made them.' ·But 8
Heb 11:7 Noah won Yahweh's favour.

This is the story of Noah: 9

Si 44:17 5:22 Noah was a good man, an upright man among his contemporaries, and he
walked with God. ·Noah fathered three sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth. ·God saw 10, 11
that the earth was corrupt and full of lawlessness. ·God looked at the earth: it was 12
corrupt, for corrupt were the ways of all living things on earth.

Preparations for the flood

God said to Noah, 'I have decided that the end has come for all living things, for 13
the earth is full of lawlessness because of human beings. So I am now about to
destroy them and the earth. ·Make yourself an ark [e] out of resinous wood. Make it 14
of reeds and caulk it with pitch inside and out. ·This is how to make it: the length of 15
the ark is to be three hundred cubits, its breadth fifty cubits, and its height thirty
cubits. ·Make a roof to the ark, building it up to a cubit higher. Put the entrance in 16
the side of the ark, which is to be made with lower, second and third decks.

↗2 P 2:5 'For my part I am going to send the flood, the waters, on earth, to destroy all 17
living things having the breath of life [f] under heaven; everything on earth is to
9:9seq. perish. ·But with you I shall establish my covenant [g] and you will go aboard the 18
ark, yourself, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives along with you. ·From all 19
living creatures, from all living things, you must take two of each kind aboard the
ark, to save their lives with yours; they must be a male and a female. ·Of every 20
species of bird, of every kind of animal and of every kind of creature that creeps
along the ground, two must go with you so that their lives may be saved. [h] ·For 21
your part, provide yourself with eatables of all kinds, and lay in a store of them, to
serve as food for yourself and them.' ·Noah did this; exactly as God commanded 22
him, he did.

↗Ws 10:4 ↗2 P 2:5 7 Yahweh said to Noah, 'Go aboard the ark, you and all your household, for 1
you alone of your contemporaries do I see before me as an upright man. ·Of 2
Lv 11:1a every clean animal you must take seven pairs, a male and its female; of the unclean
animals you must take one pair, a male and its female ·(and of the birds of heaven, 3
seven pairs, a male and its female), to preserve their species throughout the earth.
For in seven days' time I shall make it rain on earth for forty days and forty 4
nights, and I shall wipe every creature I have made off the face of the earth.'
Noah did exactly as Yahweh commanded him. 5

Noah was six hundred years old when the flood came, the waters over the earth. 6

7 Noah with his sons, his wife, and his sons' wives boarded the ark to escape the
8 waters of the flood. ·(Of the clean animals and the animals that are not clean, of
9 the birds and all that creeps along the ground, ·one pair boarded the ark with
10 Noah, one male and one female, as God had commanded Noah.)[a] ·Seven days
later the waters of the flood appeared on earth.

11 In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, and on the
seventeenth day of the month, that very day all the springs of the great deep burst Is 24:18; 44:27 Ps 78:15;104
12 through, and the sluices of heaven opened.[b] ·And heavy rain fell on earth for forty
days and forty nights.

13 That very day Noah and his sons Shem, Ham and Japheth boarded the ark, with
14 Noah's wife and the three wives of his sons, ·and with them every species of wild
animal, every species of cattle, every species of creeping things that creep along
the ground, every species of bird, everything that flies, everything with wings.
15 One pair of all that was alive and had the breath of life boarded the ark with
16 Noah, ·and those that went aboard were a male and female of all that was alive, as
God had commanded him.

Then Yahweh shut him in.

The flood

17 The flood lasted forty days on earth. The waters swelled, lifting the ark until it
18 floated off the ground. ·The waters rose, swelling higher above the ground, and
19 the ark drifted away over the waters. ·The waters rose higher and higher above the
ground until all the highest mountains under the whole of heaven were submerged.
20 The waters reached their peak fifteen cubits above the submerged mountains.
21 And all living things that stirred on earth perished; birds, cattle, wild animals, all
22 the creatures swarming over the earth, and all human beings. ·Everything with the
23 least breath of life in its nostrils, everything on dry land, died. ·Every living thing
on the face of the earth was wiped out, people, animals, creeping things and birds;

6 **a.** An obscure passage (from the Yahwistic tradition). The author uses a popular story of a race of giants, in Hebr. *nephilim*, the Titans of eastern legend, born of the union between gods and mortals. The author does not present this episode as a myth nor, on the other hand, does he deliver judgement on its actual occurrence; he records the anecdote of a superhuman race simply to serve as an example of the increase in human wickedness which was to provoke the Flood. Later Judaism and almost all the earliest ecclesiastical writers identify the 'sons of God' with the fallen angels; but from the fourth century onwards, as the idea of angelic natures becomes less material, the Fathers commonly take the 'sons of God' to be Seth's descendants and the 'daughters of men' those of Cain.

b. According to the Yahwistic source this is the maximum henceforth allowed by God; for the Priestly tradition see 5:1a.

c. This section combines two narratives: one Yahwistic which is vivid and picturesque, 6:5–8; 7:1–5, 7–10 (edited), 12, 16[b], 17, 22–23; 8:2[b]–3[a], 6–12, 13[b], 20–22; the other Priestly which is more precise and sophisticated but also more prosaic, 6:9–22; 7:6–11, 13–16[a], 18–21, 24; 8:1–2[a], 3[b]–5, 13[a], 14–19; 9: 1–17. The final editor has left unchanged the two traditional accounts without attempting to smooth out their divergencies of detail. There are several Babylonian stories of the Flood which are in some respects remarkably similar to the biblical narrative. This last does not derive from them but draws on the same source, namely on the memory of one or more disastrous floods in the valley of the Euphrates and Tigris which tradition had enlarged to the dimensions of a worldwide catastrophe. But there is this fundamental difference: the author has used this tradition as a vehicle for teaching eternal truths—that God is just and merciful, that human beings are perverse, that God saves his faithful ones (*see* Heb 11:7). The Flood is a divine judgement which foreshadows that of the latter days, Mt 24:37 seq.; Lk 17:26 seq., just as Noah's salvation prefigures the saving waters of baptism, 1 P 3:20–21.

d. God's 'regret' is a human way of expressing the fact that tolerance of sin is incompatible with his sanctity (1 S 15:29 warns us that the phrase is not to be taken too literally); but in a far greater number of passages the expression means that God's anger has been appeased and his threat withdrawn, see Jr 26:3.

e. The English word 'ark' comes from the Latin translation *arca* ('box', 'chest'). • 'resinous wood', approximate translation. • 'reeds' (as in the basket of Ex 2:3) conj.; 'nests' (compartments?) Hebr.

f. The word *ruah* means primarily the air in motion, whether the breath of the wind, Ex 10:13; Jb 21:18, or breath of the nostrils, Gn 7:15, 22; hence the life force and the thoughts, feelings or passions to which it gives rise, Gn 41:8; 45:27; 1 S 1:15; 1 K 21:5. For human beings, it is a gift from God, 6:3; Nb 16:22; Jb 27:3; Ps 104:29; Qo 12:7; hence the power whereby God acts, whether in creation, Gn 1:2; Jb 33:4; Ps 104:29–30, or in human history, Ex 31:3, particularly through the agency of the prophets, Jg 3:10; Ezk 36:27f, and the Messiah, Is 11:2c; *see* Rm 1:9e.

g. Not an agreement between equals but God's gracious guarantee offered to his chosen ones. This covenant is to be followed by others: with Abraham, 15; 17; with the whole nation, Ex 19:3c; in anticipation of the 'new covenant' concluded in the fullness of time, Mt 26:28f; Heb 9:15i.

h. Human wickedness has affected the whole of creation, 6:13, and for better or worse the destiny of irrational creatures is now associated with human destiny. The thought is close to that of Paul, Rm 8:19–22.

7 **a.** An addition combining both narratives: with the Yahwistic tradition it distinguishes clean from unclean animals; with Priestly, it reckons one pair of each.

b. The waters from above and below burst the barriers set by God, 1:7; chaos returned. According to the Yahwistic narrative, torrential rain was the cause of the Flood, 7:4, 12.

they were wiped off the earth and only Noah was left, and those with him in the ark. ·The waters maintained their level on earth for a hundred and fifty days. 24

The flood subsides

8 But God had Noah in mind, and all the wild animals and all the cattle that 1
were with him in the ark. God sent a wind across the earth and the waters
began to subside. ·The springs of the deep and the sluices of heaven were stopped 2
up and the heavy rain from heaven was held back. ·Little by little, the waters ebbed 3
from the earth. After a hundred and fifty days the waters fell, ·and in the seventh 4
month, on the seventeenth day of the month, the ark came to rest on the mountains
of Ararat. ·The waters gradually fell until the tenth month when, on the first day of 5
the tenth month, the mountain tops appeared.

At the end of forty days Noah opened the window he had made in the ark ·and 6. 7
released a raven, which flew back and forth as it waited for the waters to dry up on
earth. ·He then released a dove, to see whether the waters were receding from the 8
surface of the earth. ·But the dove, finding nowhere to perch, returned to him in 9
the ark, for there was water over the whole surface of the earth; putting out his
hand he took hold of it and brought it back into the ark with him. ·After waiting 10
seven more days, he again released the dove from the ark. ·In the evening, the 11
dove came back to him and there in its beak was a freshly-picked olive leaf! So
Noah realised that the waters were receding from the earth. ·After waiting seven 12
more days, he released the dove, and now it returned to him no more.

It was in the six hundred and first year of Noah's life, [a] in the first month and on 13
the first of the month, that the waters began drying out on earth. Noah lifted back
the hatch of the ark and looked out. The surface of the ground was dry!

In the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth 14
was dry.

They disembark

Then God said to Noah, ·'Come out of the ark, you, your wife, your sons, and 15. 16
your sons' wives with you. ·Bring out all the animals with you, all living things, the 17
birds, the cattle and all the creeping things that creep along the ground, for them to
1:22 swarm on earth, for them to breed and multiply on earth.' ·So Noah came out with 18
his sons, his wife, and his sons' wives. ·And all the wild animals, all the cattle, all 19
the birds and all the creeping things that creep along the ground, came out of the
ark, one species after another.

Then Noah built an altar to Yahweh and, choosing from all the clean animals 20
and all the clean birds he presented burnt offerings on the altar. ·Yahweh smelt the 21
pleasing smell [b] and said to himself, 'Never again will I curse the earth because of
human beings, because their heart contrives evil from their infancy. [c] Never again
will I strike down every living thing as I have done.

As long as earth endures: 22
seed-time and harvest,
cold and heat,
summer and winter,
day and night
will never cease.' [d]

The new world order

1:28 9 God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, 'Breed, multiply and fill the 1
earth. ·Be the terror and the dread of all the animals on land and all the birds 2
of heaven, of everything that moves on land and all the fish of the sea; they are
1:29 placed in your hands. [a] ·Every living thing that moves will be yours to eat, no less 3
Dt 12:15seq. 1 Tm 4:3 than the foliage of the plants. I give you everything, ·with this exception: you must 4
Lv 1:5e not eat flesh with life, that is to say blood, in it. ·And I shall demand account of 5

your life-blood, too. I shall demand it of every animal, and of man. Of man as regards his fellow-man, I shall demand account for human life. Ex 20:13+

6 He who sheds the blood of man,
by man shall his blood be shed,
for in the image of God 1:26m
was man created. [b]
7 Be fruitful then and multiply,
teem over the earth and subdue it!' [c]

8, 9 God spoke as follows to Noah and his sons, •'I am now establishing my covenant [d] 6:18g
10 with you and with your descendants to come, •and with every living creature that
was with you: birds, cattle and every wild animal with you; everything that came
11 out of the ark, every living thing on earth. •And I shall maintain my covenant with
you: that never again shall all living things be destroyed by the waters of a flood,
nor shall there ever again be a flood to devastate the earth.' ↗Si 44:18 ↗Is 54:9–10
12 'And this', God said, 'is the sign of the covenant which I now make between
13 myself and you and every living creature with you for all ages to come: •I now set
my bow in the clouds and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the Si 43:11–12 Ezk 1:28
14 earth. •When I gather the clouds over the earth and the bow appears in the clouds, Rv 4:3
15 I shall recall the covenant between myself and you and every living creature, in a
word all living things, and never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all
16 living things. •When the bow is in the clouds I shall see it and call to mind the
eternal covenant between God and every living creature on earth, that is, all living
things.'
17 'That', God told Noah, 'is the sign of the covenant I have established between
myself and all living things on earth.'

C: FROM THE FLOOD TO ABRAHAM

Noah and his sons [e]

18 The sons of Noah who came out of the ark were Shem, Ham and Japheth—Ham
19 being the father of Canaan. •These three were Noah's sons, and from these the 10:6
whole earth was peopled.
20, 21 Noah, a tiller of the soil, was the first to plant the vine. •He drank some of the
22 wine, and while he was drunk, he lay uncovered in his tent. •Ham, father of

8 **a.** 'of Noah's life' Gk, *see* 7:11; Hebr. omits.

b. An anthropomorphism destined to become part of the technical vocabulary of ritual, *see* Ex 29:18, 25; Lv 1:9, 13; Nb 28:2.

c. The heart is the inward part of a person as opposed to what is visible, and particularly the 'flesh', 2:21m. It is the seat of the faculties and personality, whence proceed thoughts and feelings, words, decisions and actions. God knows it to its depths, be appearances what they may, 1 S 16:7; Ps 17:3; 44:21; Jr 11:20. The heart is the centre of religious awareness and morality, Ps 51:10, 17; Jr 4: 4a; 31:31–33, 31*l*; Ezk 36:26. In the heart is where someone seeks God, Dt 4:29; Ps 105:3; 119:2, 10; listens to him, 1 K 3:9; Si 3:29; Ho 2:16; *see* Dt 30:14; serves him, 1 S 12:20, 24; praises him, Ps 111:1; loves him, Dt 6:5. The simple, upright, pure heart is the one admitting no reservations, no second thoughts, no hypocrisy in relation to God or human beings; *see* Ep 1:18r.

d. The laws of nature are permanently re-established. Aware of continuing human wickedness, God nevertheless preserves what he himself has made and, in spite of human sin, will lead it to the goal that he has determined.

9 **a.** In the beginning man was blessed and was consecrated lord of creation; he is now blessed and consecrated anew, but his rule is tranquil no longer. In this new age man will be at war with the beasts and with his fellows. The peace of Paradise will not return until 'the final days', Is 11:6e.

b. The blood of every creature belongs to God, *see* Lv 1:5e, but man's in particular because man was made to God's likeness. God will avenge human blood, *see* above, 4:10, and delegates this office to man himself to be exercised either through the state or, Nb 35:19c, through the individual 'avenger of blood'.

c. 'subdue' *redu* conj., *see* 1:28; Hebr. *rebu* multiply.

d. The covenant with Noah, the sign of which is the rainbow, involves the whole creation. The covenant with Abraham, the sign of which is circumcision, was to be limited to his descendants only, Gn 17. The covenant with Moses was to be confined to Israel alone and entailed corresponding obligations: fidelity to the Law, Ex 19:5; 24:7–8, and to Sabbath observance in particular, Ex 31:16–17.

e. The first two vv. are the Yahwistic introduction to the table of peoples in ch. 10 from the same source. The names and order of the sons of Noah: Shem, Ham and Japheth, are fixed by tradition, *see* 5:32; 6:10; 7:13; 10:1. The intrusive 'Ham, being the father of Canaan' in v. 18 prepares the way for the narrative in vv. 20–27.

Canaan,[f] saw his father naked and told his two brothers outside. ·Shem and 23
Japheth took a cloak and they both put it over their shoulders, and walking
backwards, covered their father's nakedness; they kept their faces turned away,
and they did not look at their father naked. ·When Noah awoke from his stupor he 24
learned what his youngest son had done to him, ·and said:[g] 25

Accursed be Canaan,
he shall be
his brothers' meanest slave.

He added: 26

Blessed be Yahweh, God of Shem,
let Canaan be his slave!
May God make space for Japheth,[h] 27
may he live in the tents of Shem,
and let Canaan be his slave!

After the flood[i] Noah lived three hundred and fifty years. ·In all, Noah's life 28, 29
lasted nine hundred and fifty years; then he died.

The peopling of the earth[a]

1 Ch 1:5–23 **10** These are the descendants of Noah's sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth, to 1
whom sons were born after the flood:

Japheth's sons: Gomer, Magog, the Medes, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, Tiras. 2
Gomer's sons: Ashkenaz, Riphath, Togarmah. ·Javan's sons: Elishah, Tarshish, 3, 4
the Kittim, the Dananites. ·From these came the dispersal to the islands of the 5
nations.[b]

These were Japheth's sons,[c] in their respective countries, each with its own
language, by clan and nation.

Ham's sons: Cush, Mizraim, Put, Canaan. ·Cush's sons: Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, 6, 7
1 K 10:1a Raamah, Sabteca. Raamah's sons: Sheba, Dedan.

Cush fathered Nimrod[d] who was the first potentate on earth. ·He was a mighty 8, 9
hunter in the eyes of Yahweh, hence the saying, 'Like Nimrod, a mighty hunter in
the eyes of Yahweh'. ·The mainstays of his empire were Babel, Erech and Accad,[e] 10
all of them in the land of Shinar.[f] ·From this country came Asshur, and he built 11
Nineveh, Rehoboth-Ir, Calah, ·and Resen between Nineveh and Calah (this being 12
the capital).[g]

Mizraim fathered the people of Lud, of Anam, Lehab, Naphtuh, ·Pathros, 13, 14
Casluh and Caphtor, from which the Philistines came.[h]

Canaan fathered Sidon, his first-born, then Heth, ·and the Jebusites, the 15, 16
Amorites, Girgashites, ·Hivites, Arkites, Sinites, ·Arvadites, Zemarites and 17, 18
Hamathites. Later, the Canaanite clans spread out. ·The Canaanite frontier 19
stretched from Sidon all the way to Gerar near Gaza, and all the way to Sodom,
Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim near Lesha.

These were Ham's sons, by clans and languages, by countries and nations. 20

Shem too fathered sons, being ancestor of all the sons of Eber and Japheth's 21
elder brother.

Shem's sons: Elam, Asshur, Arpachshad, Lud, Aram. ·Aram's sons: Uz, Hul, 22, 23
Gether and Mash.

Arpachshad fathered Shelah, and Shelah fathered Eber. ·To Eber were born 24, 25
two sons: the first was called Peleg, because it was in his time that the earth was
divided, and his brother was called Joktan. ·Joktan fathered Almodad, Sheleph, 26
Hazarmaveth, Jerah, ·Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah, ·Obal, Abima-El, Sheba, 27, 28
Ophir, Havilah, Jobab; all these were sons of Joktan. ·They occupied a stretch 29, 30
of country from Mesha all the way to Sephar, the eastern mountain range.

These were Shem's sons, by clans and languages, by countries and nations. 31

32 Such were the clans of Noah's descendants, listed by descent and nation. From them, other nations branched out on earth after the flood. 9:1

The tower of Babel [a]

↗Ws 10:5
↗Ac 2:5–12
↗Rv 7:9–10

1 **11** The whole world spoke the same language, with the same vocabulary.
2 Now, as people moved eastwards they found a valley in the land of Shinar [b]
3 where they settled. ·They said to one another, 'Come, let us make bricks and bake them in the fire.' For stone they used bricks, and for mortar they used bitumen.
4 'Come,' they said, 'let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top reaching heaven. [c] Let us make a name for ourselves, so that we do not get scattered all over the world.' Si 40:19

5 Now Yahweh came down to see the city and the tower that the people had built.
6 'So they are all a single people with a single language!' said Yahweh. 'This is only the start of their undertakings! Now nothing they plan to do will be beyond
7 them. ·Come, let us go down and confuse their language there, so that they cannot
8 understand one another.' ·Yahweh scattered them thence all over the world, and
9 they stopped building the city. ·That is why it was called Babel, since there Yahweh confused [d] the language of the whole world; and from there Yahweh scattered them all over the world. 3:22 Is 14:12seq. Jr 51:53 Jn 10:16; 11:52• Col 3:11

The patriarchs after the flood [e]

10 These are Shem's descendants: 1 Ch 1:17–27

When Shem was a hundred years old he fathered Arpachshad, two years after

f. Ham is not mentioned again and Canaan is the one to be cursed in vv. 25–27, so he was evidently the guilty party. His name stood alone in the original narrative set down by the Yahwist, as being the youngest of Noah's three sons, the order of whom, according to this tradition, was therefore Shem, Japheth, Canaan.

g. The blessings and curses of the patriarchs, *see* ch. 27 and 49, are effective words addressed to the first ancestor and worked out in his descendants. Canaan's race is to be subject to Shem, ancestor of Abraham and of the Israelites who are to enjoy Yahweh's special protection, and to Japheth whose descendants will expand at Shem's expense. The historical situation seems to have been that which obtained during the reign of Saul and the early reign of David, when the Israelites and Philistines dominated Canaan and when the Philistines had invaded part of Israel's territory.

h. The Hebrew plays on the words *yaphet* and *yapht* 'may he extend, enlarge'.

i. The Priestly source is now resumed.

10 a. This ch. draws up a Table of Peoples, in the form of a family tree. The principle behind the classification is not so much racial affinity as historical and geographical relationship. The sons of Japheth inhabit Asia Minor and the Mediterranean islands, the sons of Ham people the lands of the south, Egypt, Ethiopia and Arabia, to which is added Canaan in memory of the time when Egypt dominated that country. In the regions between these two groups live the sons of Shem: Elamites, Assyrians, Aramaeans and the ancestors of the Hebrews. The genealogical tree is Priestly with the exception of some Yahwistic elements (vv. 8–19, 21, 24–30) which somewhat modify the data. This table sums up such knowledge of the inhabited world as would be available in Israel in the eighth to seventh centuries BC, and asserts the unity of the human race which has split into various groups from a common stock. This dispersal is regarded, 10:32, as the result of the blessing mentioned in 9:1; the Yahwistic story of the Tower of Babel takes a less complacent view, 11:1–9; these are two complementary aspects of the one complex subject, namely of the history of a world in which both the power of God and human wickedness play their part.

b. The islands and seaboard of the Mediterranean.

c. These words, omitted by Hebr., are restored in accordance with vv. 20 and 31.

d. A character of popular story (v. 9 records a proverb) derived from a Mesopotamian hero of uncertain identity.

e. Accad: a town situated near the site of Babylon. The name is here used to indicate the southern region of Lower Mesopotamia as opposed to the land of Sumer which lies further south; more commonly it indicates the language and semitic population of the southern region as distinct from the Sumerians.

f. 'all of them' *wekullanah* conj.; Hebr. 'and Calneh', an unknown town.

g. If this gloss refers to Calah, it may date from the ninth century BC, when Calah (modern Nimrud) became the capital of Assyria. If it refers to Nineveh, it is later than Sennacherib, who established his capital there.

h. The text of the Hebr. places the people of Caphtor after the 'Philistines', i.e. 'the Philistines and Caphtorim'. But it was from Caphtor that the Philistines came originally, Jos 13:2b.

11 a. This Yahwistic narrative gives a different explanation of the diversity of peoples and tongues: sin occured and this was the punishment; it was a sin of overweening pride (v. 4) like that of our first parents, ch. 3. Unity will be restored only in Christ the Saviour, *see* the Pentecostal gift of tongues, Ac 2:5–12, and the gathering of all the nations in heaven, Rv 7:9–10.

b. Babylonia, *see* 10:10; Is 11:11; Dn 1:2.

c. Tradition has crystallised round the ruins of one of those high, stepped towers built in ancient Mesopotamia to symbolise the holy mountain and resting-place of the deity. The builders were apparently seeking a means of meeting their god. But the Yahwist sees their project as an act of insensate pride. The theme of the tower has been combined with that of the city, to be a condemnation of urban civilisation, *see* 4:17h.

d. 'Babel' is here explained by the root *bll* 'to confuse'; the name actually means 'gate of the god'.

e. vv. 10–27, 31–32 resume the Priestly tradition interrupted after 10:32 and are a continuation of the genealogy in ch. 5. The perspective narrows down to Abraham's direct ancestors.

the flood. ·After the birth of Arpachshad, Shem lived five hundred years and 11
fathered sons and daughters.

When Arpachshad was thirty-five years old he fathered Shelah. ·After the birth 12, 13
of Shelah, Arpachshad lived four hundred and three years and fathered sons and
daughters.

When Shelah was thirty years old he fathered Eber. ·After the birth of Eber, 14, 15
Shelah lived four hundred and three years and fathered sons and daughters.

When Eber was thirty-four years old he fathered Peleg. ·After the birth of Peleg, 16, 17
Eber lived four hundred and thirty years and fathered sons and daughters.

When Peleg was thirty years old he fathered Reu. ·After the birth of Reu, Peleg 18, 19
lived two hundred and nine years and fathered sons and daughters.

When Reu was thirty-two years old he fathered Serug. ·After the birth of Serug, 20, 21
Reu lived two hundred and seven years and fathered sons and daughters.

When Serug was thirty years old he fathered Nahor. ·After the birth of Nahor, 22, 23
Serug lived two hundred years and fathered sons and daughters.

When Nahor was twenty-nine years old he fathered Terah. ·After the birth of 24, 25
Terah, Nahor lived a hundred and nineteen years and fathered sons and daughters.

When Terah was seventy years old he fathered Abram, Nahor and Haran. 26

The descendants of Terah [f]

These are Terah's descendants: 27

Terah fathered Abram, Nahor and Haran. Haran fathered Lot. ·Haran died in 28
the presence of his father Terah in his native land, Ur of the Chaldaeans. ·Abram 29
and Nahor both married: Abram's wife was called Sarai, Nahor's wife was called
22:20–23 Milcah daughter of Haran, father of Milcah and Iscah. ·Sarai was barren, having 30
16:1;17:19–21 no child.

Terah took his son Abram, his grandson Lot son of Haran, and his daughter-in- 31
law the wife of Abram, and made them leave [g] Ur of the Chaldaeans to go to the
land of Canaan. But on arrival in Haran they settled there. [h]

Terah's life lasted two hundred and five years; [i] then he died at Haran. 32

II: THE STORY OF ABRAHAM

↗Ws 10:5
↗Ac 3:25
↗Heb 11:8seq.

The call of Abram [a]

12 Yahweh said to Abram, 'Leave your country, your kindred and your 1
father's house for a country which I shall show you; ·and I shall make you 2
a great nation, I shall bless you and make your name famous; you are to be a
blessing!

↗Si 44:21
↗Jr 4:2
↗Ac 7:35
↗Ga 3:8

I shall bless those who bless you, 3
and shall curse those who curse you,
and all clans on earth
will bless themselves by you.' [b]

So Abram went as Yahweh told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was 4
seventy-five years old when he left Haran. ·Abram took his wife Sarai, his nephew 5
Lot, all the possessions they had amassed and the people they had acquired in
Haran. They set off for the land of Canaan, and arrived there.

33:18–20 Abram passed through the country as far as the holy place at Shechem, the Oak 6
of Moreh. The Canaanites were in the country at the time. ·Yahweh appeared to 7
13:15;15:18; Abram and said, 'I shall give this country to your progeny.' [c] And there, Abram
17:8;26:3seq. Ac 7:5 built an altar to Yahweh who had appeared to him. ·From there he moved on to 8
Rm 4:13f
Ga 3:16 the mountainous district east of Bethel, where he pitched his tent, with Bethel to
23:1a the west and Ai to the east. There he built an altar to Yahweh and invoked the
name of Yahweh. ·Then Abram made his way stage by stage to the Negeb. 9

Abram in Egypt [d]

=20;=26: 1–11

10 There was a famine in the country, and Abram went down to Egypt to stay there
11 for a time, since the famine in the country was severe. ·When he was about to enter
Egypt, he said to his wife Sarai, 'Look, I know you are a beautiful woman.
12 When the Egyptians see you they will say, "That is his wife," and they will kill
13 me but leave you alive. ·Therefore please tell them you are my sister, [e] so that they
may treat me well because of you and spare my life out of regard for you.'
14 When Abram arrived in Egypt the Egyptians did indeed see that the woman was
15 very beautiful. ·When Pharaoh's officials saw her they sang her praises to Pharaoh
16 and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's household. ·And Abram was very well
treated because of her and received flocks, oxen, donkeys, men and women slaves,
17 she-donkeys and camels. ·But Yahweh inflicted severe plagues on Pharaoh and his
18 household because of Abram's wife Sarai. ·So Pharaoh summoned Abram and
said, 'What is this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me she was your
19 wife? ·Why did you say, "She is my sister," so that I took her to be my wife? Now,
20 here is your wife. Take her and go!' ·And Pharaoh gave his people orders about
him; they sent him on his way with his wife and all his possessions.

Abram and Lot separate

1 **13** From Egypt Abram returned to the Negeb with his wife and all he pos-
2 sessed, and Lot with him. ·Abram was very rich in livestock, silver and gold.
3 By stages he went from the Negeb to Bethel, where he had first pitched his tent,
4 between Bethel and Ai, ·at the place where he had formerly erected the altar. 12:8
There Abram invoked the name of Yahweh.
5 Lot, who was travelling with Abram, had flocks and cattle of his own, and tents
6 too. ·The land was not sufficient to accommodate them both at once, for they had
7 too many possessions to be able to live together. ·Dispute broke out between the 36:7
herdsmen of Abram's livestock and those of Lot. (The Canaanites and Perizzites
8 were living in the country at the time.) ·Accordingly Abram said to Lot, 'We do
not want discord between us or between my herdsmen and yours, for we are
9 kinsmen. ·Is not the whole land open before you? Go in the opposite direction to
me: if you take the left, I will go right; if you take the right, I will go left.'

f. The story of the chosen race is about to begin and the genealogical table becomes more detailed with a view to introducing its two parents, Abram and Sarai, whose names were later changed to Abraham and Sarah, 17:5, 15; it also introduces Nahor, Rebekah's grandfather, 24:24, and Lot, ancestor of the Moabites and Ammonites, 19:30–38. vv. 28–30 are from the Yahwistic tradition.

g. '(he) made them leave' versions; '(they) went with them' Hebr.

h. First stage in the journey to the Promised Land. Ur is in Lower Mesopotamia. Haran lies to the north-west of Mesopotamia. The historicity of this first migration is disputed. It is, however, attested by ancient traditions, in 11:28 and 15:7, edited at a time when Ur had fallen into oblivion. It was nonetheless an important centre at the beginning of the second millennium BC and already had religious and commercial ties with Haran. Hence at least the possibility of this first migration must be admitted, though the mention of the Chaldaeans would be an explanatory detail added in the neo-Babylonian period.

i. Only 145 according to the Samaritan Pentateuch; this would mean that Abraham left Haran only after his father had died (*see* 11:26 and 12:4); *see* Ac 7:4.

12 a. Ch. 12–13 are a Yahwistic narrative with some Priestly or editorial additions. • As a result of God's call and promise of posterity Abraham cuts off all earthly ties and with his childless wife, 11:30, sets out for an unknown land. It is Abraham's first act of faith; it will be renewed when the promise is repeated, 15:5–6c, and be put to the test when God asks for the surrender of Isaac who was the fruit of that promise, ch. 22:1a. To Abraham's unquestioning act of faith the chosen people owes its existence and destiny, Heb 11:8–9. Not only Abraham's physical descendants but all who, in virtue of this same faith, become his children will have their share in that destiny, as Paul shows, Rm 4; Ga 3:7.

b. The formula is repeated (with the word 'clan' or 'nation') in 18:18; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14. Its precise meaning is: 'the clans will say to one another: May you be blessed as Abraham was' (*see* v. 2 and 48:20; Jr 4:2); but Si 44:21, the LXX translation and the NT take it to mean 'In you all nations will be blessed.'

c. The Holy Land is here made over to Abraham.

d. The purpose of this Yahwistic narrative (the same theme recurs in ch. 20, Elohistic, where Sarah figures again, and in 26:1–11, Yahwistic, where the story is told of Rebekah) is to commemorate the beauty of the ancestress of the race, the astuteness of its patriarch, the protection that God afforded them. The story reflects a stage of moral development when a lie was still considered lawful under certain circumstances and when the husband's life meant more than his wife's honour. God was bringing human beings to an appreciation of the moral law but this appreciation was gradual.

e. A custom prevalent in Upper Mesopotamia has been adduced in explanation of this. Among the Hurrian aristocracy of Haran (Abraham's 'native land') a husband might legally adopt his wife as his sister, and the latter then enjoyed greater protection and higher social status. Such seems to have been the case with Sarai, and Abram appears to have boasted about this to the Egyptians, who misunderstood what he meant, v. 19. The biblical author, relating the traditional story, evidently did not understand its true significance either.

Looking round, Lot saw all the Jordan plain,[a] irrigated everywhere—this was 10
before Yahweh destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah—like the garden of Yahweh or
the land of Egypt, as far as Zoar.[b] ·So Lot chose all the Jordan plain for himself 11
and moved off eastwards. Thus they parted company: ·Abram settled in the land 12
of Canaan; Lot settled among the cities of the plain, pitching his tents on the
outskirts of Sodom. ·Now the people of Sodom were vicious and great sinners 13
against Yahweh.[c]

Yahweh said to Abram after Lot had parted company from him, 'Look all round 14
12:7c from where you are, to north and south, to east and west, ·for all the land within 15
sight I shall give to you and your descendants for ever. ·I shall make your descen- 16
dants like the dust on the ground; when people succeed in counting the specks of
dust on the ground, then they will be able to count your descendants too! ·On your 17
feet! Travel the length and breadth of the country, for I mean to give it to you.'

So Abram moved his tent and went to settle at the Oak[d] of Mamre, at Hebron, 18
and there he built an altar to Yahweh.

The campaign of the four great kings[a]

14 When Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedor-Laomer 1
king of Elam, and Tidal king of the Goiim, ·made war on Bera king of 2
Sodom, Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, Shemeber king of
Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar),[b] ·all the latter joined forces in the 3
Valley of Siddim (now the Salt Sea).[c] ·For twelve years they had been under the 4
yoke of Chedor-Laomer, but in the thirteenth year[d] they revolted. ·In the four- 5
teenth year Chedor-Laomer arrived and the kings who had allied themselves with
Dt 1:28g him. They defeated the Rephaim at Ashteroth-Carnaim, the Zuzim at Ham, the
Emim in the Plain of Kiriathaim, ·the Horites in the mountainous district of Seir 6
near El-Paran, which is on the edge of the desert.[e] ·Wheeling round, they came to 7
the Spring of Judgement (that is, Kadesh); they conquered all the territory of the
Ex 17:8d Amalekites and also the Amorites who lived in Hazazon-Tamar. ·Then the kings 8
Dt 7:1a of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim and Bela (that is, Zoar) marched out and
engaged them in the Valley of Siddim: ·Chedor-Laomer king of Elam, Tidal king 9
of the Goiim, Amraphel king of Shinar and Arioch king of Ellasar: four kings
against five. ·Now there were many bitumen wells in the Valley of Siddim, and in 10
their flight the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fell into them, while the rest fled
into the hills. ·The conquerors seized all the possessions of Sodom and Gomorrah, 11
and all their provisions, and made off. ·They also took Lot (the nephew of Abram) 12
and his possessions and made off; he had been living at Sodom.

A survivor came to tell Abram; and Aner the Hebrew, who was living at the 13
13:18 Oak of the Amorite Mamre, the brother of Eshcol; these were allies of Abram.
When Abram heard that his kinsman had been taken captive, he mustered his 14
retainers born in his own household, numbering three hundred and eighteen, and
gave chase as far as Dan. ·He and his retainers deployed against them under cover 15
of dark, defeated them and pursued them as far as Hobah, north of Damascus.
He recaptured all the goods as well as his kinsman Lot and his possessions, 16
together with the women and people.

Melchizedek

When Abram returned from defeating Chedor-Laomer and the kings who had 17
been on his side, the king of Sodom came to meet him in the Valley of Shaveh (that
Ps 110:4 is, the Valley of the King).[f] ·Melchizedek king of Salem[g] brought bread and wine; 18
↗Heb 5–7 he was a priest of God Most High. ·He pronounced this blessing:[h] 19

Blessed be Abram by God Most High,
Creator of heaven and earth.
And blessed be God Most High
for putting your enemies into your clutches.

20 And Abram gave him a tenth of everything.
21 The king of Sodom said to Abram, 'Give me the people and take the possessions
22 for yourself.' ·But Abram replied to the king of Sodom, 'I swear by God Most
23 High, [i] Creator of heaven and earth: ·not one thread, not one sandal strap, will I
24 take of what is yours, for you to be able to say, "I made Abram rich." ·For myself,
nothing—except what the troops have used up, and the share due to the men who
came with me, Eshcol, Aner and Mamre; let them take their share.'

The divine promises and covenant [a] =17;12:2,7; 13:14–17

1 15 Some time later, the word of Yahweh came to Abram in a vision:

Do not be afraid, Abram!
I am your shield
and shall give you a very great reward.

2 'Lord Yahweh,' Abram replied, 'what use are your gifts, as I am going on my
3 way childless? . . . [b] ·Since you have given me no offspring,' Abram continued, 'a Ac 7:5
4 member of my household will be my heir.' ·Then Yahweh's word came to him in
reply, 'Such a one will not be your heir; no, your heir will be the issue of your own
5 body.' ·Then taking him outside, he said, 'Look up at the sky and count the stars if Dt 1:10 ↗Heb 11:12

13 **a.** lit. the 'circle', used here as a topographical name to indicate the sunken river valley reaching to the south of the Dead Sea; the Dead Sea is conceived as not yet existing at the time to which the story refers, *see* 14:3; 19:24 seq.

b. At the southern end of the Dead Sea, *see* 19:22.

c. In preparation for 18:20–21; 19:4–11, this is the introduction to a tradition about Lot, originating in Transjordan and centred on the story of Sodom and Gomorrah, ch. 18–19. Originally it was independent of the Abraham cycle. Lot chooses a life of ease and a region where immorality flourishes; for this he will be heavily punished, ch. 19. But Abraham's generosity in leaving his nephew the choice is to be rewarded by a renewal of the promise of 12:7.

d. 'at the Oak', Syr., *see* 18:1–4; Hebr. has plural, as too at 14:13.

14 **a.** This chapter does not belong to any of the three great sources of Genesis. Its importance is diversely assessed; some arguing for its antiquity on syntactical grounds and the authenticity of the names Arioch and Tidal; others regarding it as a late imitation of the antique, since the names of the four kings of the East cannot be identified with known personalities and it is historically impossible that Elam should ever have dominated the towns to the south of the Dead Sea or have led a coalition consisting of an Amorite king (Amraphel), a Hurrian king (Arioch) and a Hittite king (Tidal). According to the latter, the story is intended to site Abraham in world history and add military glory to his other impressive attributes.

b. For Sodom and Gomorrah, *see* ch. 19; for Admah and Zeboiim, Dt 29:22; Ho 11:8.

c. The author represents the Dead Sea as not yet in existence, *see* 13:10; or else the narrative reflects an awareness that the Valley of Siddim (the name is not met with elsewhere) occupied only what is now the southern part of the Dead Sea, a depression of relatively recent formation, *see* 19:25g.

d. 'the thirteenth year' versions; 'thirteen years' Hebr.

e. Rephaim, Zuzim (or Zamzumim), Emim, Horites: ancient legendary peoples of Transjordan, *see* Dt 2:10b and 2:12d; their towns lie at intervals along the highway that goes down towards the Red Sea.

f. Mentioned in 2 S 18:18; according to Josephus it lay within a quarter-mile of Jerusalem.

g. Ps 76:2, the whole subsequent Jewish tradition, and many of the Fathers identify Salem with Jerusalem. Its priest-king Melchizedek (the name is Canaanite, cf. Adoni-Zedek, king of Jerusalem, Jos 10:1) worships the Most High God, El-Elyon, a compound name, each element of which is attested as a name of gods in the Phoenician pantheon. Elyon is used in the Bible (especially Psalms) as a divine title. In this passage, v. 22, El-Elyon is identified with the true God of Abraham. Melchizedek makes a brief and mysterious appearance in the narrative as king of that Jerusalem where Yahweh will choose to dwell, as priest of the Most High before the levitical priesthood was established. Ps 110:4 represents him as a figure of David, who is himself a figure of the Messiah who is both king and priest; the application to Christ's priesthood is worked out in Heb 7. Patristic tradition has developed and enriched this allegorical interpretation: in the bread and wine offered to Abraham it sees an image of the Eucharist and even a foreshadowing of the Eucharistic sacrifice. • Here vv. 18–20 are additional and later than the rest of the ch., Melchizedek being shown with the characteristics of a post-exilic high priest, heir to the prerogatives of the monarch and head of the priesthood, to whom Abraham's descendants pay their tithes (tenth part).

h. A blessing is an effective, 9:25g, and irrevocable, 27:33d; 48:18d, word which, even when pronounced by a man, produces the effect which it expresses, since God confers the blessing, 1:27, 28; 12:2; 28:3–4; Ps 67:1; 128:5. But human beings too in turn bless God, praising his greatness and goodness even in the hope of seeing these confirmed and increasing, 24:48; Ex 18:10; Dt 8:10; 1 S 25:32, 39. Here both types of blessing are brought together. The Israelite liturgy contained both, Nb 6:22; Dt 27:14–26; Ps 103:1–2; 144:1; Dn 2:19–23; *see* Lk 1:68; 2 Co 1:3; Ep 1:3; 1 P 1:3.

i. Before 'God' we omit 'Yahweh' with Gk and Syr.

15 **a.** Yahwistic narrative in which perhaps are embedded the earliest recognisable elements of the Elohistic tradition. Abraham's faith is put to the test: there is delay in the fulfilment of the promises which are then renewed and sealed with a covenant. The promise of the country takes first place. To these promises made to the Patriarchs, in which God pledged his compassion and constancy, the NT was later to link the person and work of Jesus Christ, *see* Ac 2:39z; Rm 4:13f.

b. Text uncertain, v. 3[b], which is additional, gives the general sense. The first time Abram answers God, he does so to express his uncertainty.

you can. Just so will your descendants be,' he told him. ·Abram put his faith in 6
1 M 2:52 ↗Rm 4 Yahweh and this was reckoned to him as uprightness. [c]
↗Ga 3:6seq. ↗Jm 2:23 He then said to him, 'I am Yahweh who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldaeans 7
·11:31 to give you this country as your possession.' ·'Lord Yahweh,' Abram replied, 'how 8
can I know that I shall possess it?' ·He said to him, 'Bring me a three-year-old 9
heifer, a three-year-old she-goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove and a young
pigeon.' ·He brought him all these, split the animals down the middle and placed 10
each half opposite the other; but the birds he did not divide. ·And whenever birds 11
of prey swooped down on the carcases, Abram drove them off.

Now, as the sun was on the point of setting, a trance fell on Abram, and a deep 12
dark dread [d] descended on him. ·Then Yahweh said to Abram, 'Know this for 13
↗Ac 7:6–7 certain, that your descendants will be exiles in a land not their own, and be
enslaved and oppressed for four hundred years. ·But I shall bring judgement on 14
Ex 12:40 Jdt 5:9seq. ↗Ac 13:20 ↗Ga 3:17 the nation that enslaves them and after this they will leave, with many possessions.
For your part, you will join your ancestors in peace; you will be buried at a happy 15
old age. ·In the fourth generation they will come back here, for until then the 16
iniquity of the Amorites will not have reached its full extent.' [e]

When the sun had set and it was dark, there appeared a smoking firepot and a 17
flaming torch passing between the animals' pieces. [f] ·That day Yahweh made a 18
covenant with Abram in these terms:

12:7c Ex 23:31m
'To your descendants I give this country,
from the River of Egypt to the Great River,

Nb 24:21k Dt 7:1a
the River Euphrates, ·the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, ·the Hittites, 19, 20
the Perizzites, the Rephaim, ·the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, 21
and the Jebusites.'

The birth of Ishmael [a]

21:8c
16 Abram's wife Sarai had borne him no child, but she had an Egyptian 1
slave-girl called Hagar. ·So Sarai said to Abram, 'Listen, now! Since Yah- 2
weh has kept me from having children, go to my slave-girl. Perhaps I shall get
children through her.' [b] And Abram took Sarai's advice.

Thus, after Abram had lived in the land of Canaan for ten years, Sarai took 3
Hagar her Egyptian slave-girl and gave her to Abram as his wife. ·He went to 4
Hagar and she conceived. And once she knew she had conceived, her mistress
=21:10–19 counted for nothing in her eyes. ·Then Sarai said to Abram, 'This outrage done to 5
me is your fault! It was I who put my slave-girl into your arms but, now she knows
that she has conceived, I count for nothing in her eyes. Yahweh judge between me
and you!' ·'Very well,' Abram said to Sarai, 'your slave-girl is at your disposal. 6
Treat her as you think fit.' Sarai accordingly treated her so badly that she ran away
from her.

Ex 15:22 The angel of Yahweh [c] found her by a spring in the desert, the spring on the road 7
to Shur. ·He said, 'Hagar, slave-girl of Sarai, where have you come from, and 8
where are you going?' 'I am running away from my mistress Sarai,' she replied.
The angel of Yahweh said to her, 'Go back to your mistress and submit to her.' 9
The angel of Yahweh further said to her, 'I shall make your descendants too 10
numerous to be counted.' ·Then the angel of Yahweh said to her: 11

Now, you have conceived and will bear a son,
and you shall name him Ishmael,
for Yahweh has heard [d] your cries of distress.
A wild donkey of a man he will be, 12
his hand against every man, and every man's hand against him,
25:12–18 living his life in defiance of all his kinsmen. [e]

Hagar gave a name to Yahweh who had spoken to her, 'You are El Roi,' by 13

14 which she meant, 'Did I not go on seeing here, after him who sees me?'[f] ·This is why the well is called the well of Lahai Roi; it is between Kadesh and Bered. Ex 33:20i

15 Hagar bore Abram a son, and Abram gave his son borne by Hagar the name ↗Ga 4:22
16 Ishmael. ·Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore him Ishmael.

The covenant and circumcision[a] =15

1 17 When Abram was ninety-nine years old Yahweh appeared to him and said, 9:9d
2 'I am El Shaddai.[b] Live in my presence, be perfect, ·and I shall grant a 5:22,24; 6:9
3 covenant between myself and you, and make you very numerous.' ·And Abram bowed to the ground.

4 God spoke to him as follows, ·'For my part, this is my covenant with you: you
5 will become the father of many nations. ·And you are no longer to be called Ne 9:7 ↗Rm 4:17
Abram; your name is to be Abraham,[c] for I am making you father of many nations.
6 I shall make you exceedingly fertile. I shall make you into nations, and your issue
7 will be kings. ·And I shall maintain my covenant between myself and you, and your descendants after you, generation after generation, as a covenant in perpetuity, to
8 be your God and the God of your descendants after you. ·And to you and to your descendants after you, I shall give the country where you are now immigrants, the 12:7c
entire land of Canaan, to own in perpetuity. And I will be their God.'

9 God further said to Abraham, 'You for your part must keep my covenant, you
10 and your descendants after you, generation after generation. ·This is my covenant ↗Rm 4: 11–12
which you must keep between myself and you, and your descendants after you:
11 every one of your males must be circumcised.[d] ·You must circumcise the flesh of ↗Ac 7:8
your foreskin, and that will be the sign of the covenant between myself and you.
12 As soon as he is eight days old, every one of your males, generation after Lv 12:3+
generation, must be circumcised, including slaves born within the household or

c. The faith of Abraham is an act of trust in a promise which, humanly speaking, could never be realised. God acknowledges that this act is worthy of reward (*see* Dt 24:13; Ps 106:31), accrediting it to Abraham's 'uprightness', namely to that sum of integrity and humble submission which makes someone pleasing to God. Paul uses this text to prove that uprightness depends on faith and not on the works of the Law; but since Abraham's faith was the mainspring of his conduct, the letter of James cites this same text when it condemns 'dead' faith, i.e. faith without the works that spring from it.

d. 'dark' is possibly a gloss intended to explain the rare word for 'darkness' in v. 17.

e. vv. 13–16 are an ancient addition to the Yahwistic narrative.

f. An ancient covenantal ritual (Jr 34:18): the contracting parties passed between the parts of the slaughtered animals and called down on themselves the fate of the victim, should they violate the agreement. The flame symbolises Yahweh (cf. the burning bush, Ex 3:2; the pillar of fire, Ex 13:21; the smoke of Sinai, Ex 19:18); he alone passes between the parts because his covenant is a unilateral pact, a divine initiative, *see* Gn 9:9d, a solemn promise sealed with an imprecatory oath (his moving between the parts of the animals).

16 a. Yahwistic narrative with some elements from the Priestly source (vv. 1[a], 3, 15–16).

b. According to Mesopotamian law a barren wife could present one of her female slaves to the husband and acknowledge the issue as her own. The same was to happen with Rachel, 30:1–6, and Leah, 30:9–13.

c. In the most ancient texts the angel of Yahweh, 22:11; Ex 3:2; Jg 2:1; etc. or the angel of God, Gn 21:17; 31:11; Ex 14:19, is not a created being distinct from God, Ex 23:20, but God himself in visible form. v. 13 identifies the angel with Yahweh. In other texts the angel of Yahweh is the one who executes God's avenging sentence, *see* Ex 12:23j; *see also* Tb 5:4b; Mt 1:20g; Ac 7:38k.

d. The word *ishma'el* means 'May God hear!' or 'God hears'.

e. Ishmael's descendants are Arabs of the desert who are as intractable and vagrant as these wild creatures, *see* Jb 39:5–8.

f. *'El roi* means 'God of Vision'; the text of Hagar's words is certainly corrupt. *Lahai roi* may mean: the well 'of the Living One who sees me'. Isaac was to stay there, 24:62; 25:11.

17 a. Another covenant narrative, from the Priestly tradition. The covenant confirms the same promises as in the Yahwistic tradition of ch. 15 but this time imposes obligations of moral perfection, v. 1, a religious relationship with God, vv. 7, 19, and a positive prescription, circumcision. Compare, in the same source, the covenant with Noah, 9:9d.

b. An ancient divine name of the patriarchal period, 28:3; 35:11; 43:14; 48:3; 49:25, preserved mainly in the Priestly tradition, *see* Ex 6:3, rarely used outside the Pentateuch (except Job). The usual translation 'Almighty God' is inaccurate. The meaning is uncertain; 'God of the Mountain' from Accadian *shadu* has been suggested; but perhaps 'God of the open wastes' would be preferable, from Hebr. *sadeh*, and the secondary meaning of the Accadian word. It seems to have been a divine name brought from Upper Mesopotamia by the ancestors of the race.

c. For the ancients a name did not merely indicate but actually made a thing what it was, and a change of name meant a change of destiny, *see* v. 15 and 35:10. *Abram* and *abraham*, it seems, are in fact two dialectal forms of the same name, meaning 'he is great by reason of his father, he is of noble descent'. Here, however, *abraham* is interpreted on the strength of its assonance with *ab hamon*, 'father of a multitude'.

d. Circumcision was originally a rite initiatory to marriage and to the life of the clan, 34:14 seq.; Ex 4:24–26; Lv 19:23. Here it becomes a 'sign' which, like the rainbow of Gn 9:16–17, is to remind God of his covenant and human beings of the obligations deriving from belonging to the chosen people. Nevertheless, the legislative texts allude to this injunction only on two occasions, Ex 12:44; Lv 12:3; *see also* Jos 5:2–8. It is only at the Exile and after that it receives its full prominence, *see* 1 M 1:63; 2 M 6:10. Paul explains it as the 'seal of the uprightness of faith', Rm 4:11 On the 'circumcision of the heart', see Jr 4:4a.

bought from a foreigner not of your descent. ·Whether born within the household 13
or bought, they must be circumcised. My covenant must be marked in your flesh as
a covenant in perpetuity. ·The uncircumcised male, whose foreskin has not been 14
circumcised—that person must be cut off from his people: he has broken my
covenant.'

=18:9–15 Furthermore God said to Abraham, 'As regards your wife Sarai, you must not 15
call her Sarai, but Sarah.[e] ·I shall bless her and moreover give you a son by her. I 16
shall bless her and she will become nations: kings of peoples will issue from her.'
18:12;21:6,9 Jn 8:56s Abraham bowed to the ground, and he laughed,[f] thinking to himself, 'Is a child 17
to be born to a man one hundred years old. and will Sarah have a child at the age of
ninety?' ·Abraham said to God, 'May Ishmael live in your presence! That will be 18
enough!' ·But God replied, 'Yes, your wife Sarah will bear you a son whom you 19
must name Isaac. And I shall maintain my covenant with him, a covenant in
perpetuity, to be his God and the God of his descendants after him.[g] ·For Ishmael 20
too I grant you your request. I hereby bless him and will make him fruitful and
25:13–16 exceedingly numerous. He will be the father of twelve princes, and I shall make
him into a great nation. ·But my covenant I shall maintain with Isaac, whom Sarah 21
18:14 will bear you at this time next year.' ·When he had finished speaking to Abraham, 22
God went up from him.

Then Abraham took his son Ishmael, all the slaves born in his household or 23
whom he had bought, in short all the males among the people of Abraham's
household, and circumcised their foreskins that same day, as God had said to him.
Abraham was ninety-nine years old when his foreskin was circumcised. ·Ishmael 24, 25
his son was thirteen years old when his foreskin was circumcised. ·Abraham and 26
his son Ishmael were circumcised on the very same day, ·and all the men of his 27
household, those born in the household and those bought from foreigners, were
circumcised with him.

The apparition at Mamre[a]

18 Yahweh appeared to him at the Oak of Mamre while he was sitting by the 1
entrance of the tent during the hottest part of the day. ·He looked up, and 2
↗Heb 13:2 there he saw three men standing near him. As soon as he saw them he ran from the
entrance of the tent to greet them, and bowed to the ground.[b] ·'My lord,' he said, 3
'if I find favour with you, please do not pass your servant by. ·Let me have a little 4
water brought, and you can wash your feet and have a rest under the tree. ·Let me 5
fetch a little bread and you can refresh yourselves before going further, now that
you have come in your servant's direction.' They replied, 'Do as you say.'

Abraham hurried to the tent and said to Sarah, 'Quick, knead three measures of 6
best flour and make loaves.' ·Then, running to the herd, Abraham took a fine and 7
tender calf and gave it to the servant, who hurried to prepare it. ·Then taking 8
curds, milk and the calf which had been prepared, he laid all before them, and they
ate while he remained standing near them under the tree.

=15:2–4 =17:15–21 •↗Rm 9:9 'Where is your wife Sarah?' they asked him. 'She is in the tent,' he replied. 9
Then his guest said, 'I shall come back to you next year, and then your wife Sarah 10
will have a son.' Sarah was listening at the entrance of the tent behind him. ·Now 11
Abraham and Sarah were old, well on in years, and Sarah had ceased to have her
monthly periods. ·So Sarah laughed[c] to herself, thinking, 'Now that I am past the 12
age of childbearing, and my husband is an old man, is pleasure to come my way
again?' ·But Yahweh asked Abraham, 'Why did Sarah laugh and say, "Am I really 13
Lk 1:37 going to have a child now that I am old?" ·Nothing is impossible for Yahweh. I 14
shall come back to you at the same time next year and Sarah will have a son.'
Sarah said, 'I did not laugh,' lying because she was afraid. But he replied, 'Oh yes, 15
you did.'

Ex 32:11e Jm 5:16 **Abraham intercedes for Sodom**

From there the men set out and arrived within sight of Sodom, with Abraham 16

17 accompanying them to speed them on their way. ·Now Yahweh had wondered,
18 'Shall I conceal from Abraham what I am going to do, ·as Abraham will become a great and powerful nation and that all nations on earth will bless themselves by
19 him? ·For I have singled him out to command his sons and his family after him to keep the way of Yahweh by doing what is upright and just, so that Yahweh can
20 carry out for Abraham what he has promised him.' ·Then Yahweh said, 'The
21 outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great and their sin is so grave, ·that I shall go down and see whether or not their actions are at all [d] as the outcry reaching me would suggest. Then I shall know.'

Am 3:7
Jn 15:15
12:3b
4:10

22 While the men [e] left there and went to Sodom, Yahweh remained in Abraham's
23 presence. ·Abraham stepped forward and said, 'Will you really destroy the upright
24 with the guilty? ·Suppose there are fifty upright people in the city. Will you really
25 destroy it? Will you not spare the place for the sake of the fifty upright in it? [f] ·Do not think of doing such a thing: to put the upright to death with the guilty, so that upright and guilty fare alike! Is the judge of the whole world not to act justly?' [g]
26 Yahweh replied, 'If I find fifty upright people in the city of Sodom, I shall spare the whole place because of them.'

27 Abraham spoke up and said, 'It is presumptuous of me to speak to the Lord, I
28 who am dust and ashes: ·Suppose the fifty upright were five short? Would you destroy the whole city because of five?' 'No,' he replied, 'I will not destroy it if I
29 find forty-five there.' ·Abraham persisted and said, 'Suppose there are forty to be found there?' 'I will not do it,' he replied, 'for the sake of the forty.'

30 Abraham said, 'I hope the Lord will not be angry if I go on: Suppose there are only thirty to be found there?' 'I will not do it,' he replied, 'if I find thirty there.'
31 He said, 'It is presumptuous of me to speak to the Lord: Suppose there are only
32 twenty there?' 'I will not destroy it,' he replied, 'for the sake of the twenty.' ·He said, 'I trust my Lord will not be angry if I speak once more: perhaps there will only be ten.' 'I will not destroy it,' he replied, 'for the sake of the ten.'

Jr 5:1
Ezk 22:30

33 When he had finished talking to Abraham Yahweh went away, and Abraham returned home. [h]

e. *Sarah* and *sarai* are two forms of the same name, which means 'princess': Sarah is to be the mother of kings, v. 16.

f. Abraham's laughter is to be echoed by Sarah's, 18:12, and Ishmael's, 21:9 (*see also* 21:6); each is an allusion to the name Isaac, abbreviated form of *yitzhq-el* which means 'May God smile, be kind' or 'God has smiled, has been kind'. Abraham's laughter is a sign not so much of unbelief as of surprise at the extraordinary announcement; his mention of Ishmael, heir-presumptive to the Promise, is an implicit request for reassurance.

g. lit. 'to be his God and that of' with some Gk MSS; Hebr. omits.

18 a. In its definitive form this Yahwistic narrative recounts an apparition of Yahweh (vv. 1, 3, 10 seq. 13, 22) accompanied by two 'men' who, according to 19:1, are angels. As the variants of the Gk and Sam. show, the text is frequently uncertain in its choice of singular or plural. In the three men, whom Abraham addresses in the singular, many of the Fathers of the Church saw a foreshadowing of the mystery of the Trinity, a doctrine not revealed until the NT. The story prepares the way for that in ch. 19, the Yahwist having used and transformed an old legend about the destruction of Sodom in which three divine persons took part. This story formed the nucleus of a Lot cycle, later attached to the Abraham cycle.

b. Not a religious act of adoration but simply a mark of respect. At first, Abraham sees his guests as mere human beings and welcomes them warmly; their superhuman character is only gradually revealed, vv. 2, 9, 13, 14.

c. Allusion to the name Isaac, *see* 17:17f. Sarah does not yet know who her guest is; in v. 15 she guesses, and is frightened.

d. 'at all' *kullah* conj.; Hebr. *kalah*, 'destruction'.

e. i.e. the two 'men', as opposed to Yahweh who stays with Abraham. We shall be told later, 19:1, that they are angels. In the MT the scribes inverted the names of God and Abraham from motives of respect: a human being ought to remain in God's presence and not vice versa.

f. A perennial problem: must the good suffer along with, and because of, the wicked? The conviction of collective responsibility was so strong in ancient Israel that the question does not arise here as to whether the upright may be spared individually. God will, in fact, save Lot and his family, 19:15–16; but the principle of individual responsibility is not deduced until Dt 7:10; 24:16; Jr 31:29–30; Ezk 14:12 seq. and ch. 18, *see* notes. Abraham, therefore, supposing that all are to share a common destiny, asks that a few upright people may win pardon for the many wicked. Yahweh's answers attest the part the saints have to play in saving the world. But Abraham's bid for mercy does not venture below the number ten. According to Jr 5:1 and Ezk 22:30, God would pardon Jerusalem even if only one upright person could be found there. Finally, in Is 53 it is the suffering of the one servant that is to save the whole race, a prophecy which the NT sees as being fulfilled in Christ.

g. *see* Rm 3:6. It would be more unjust to condemn the innocent few than to spare the many guilty.

h. Abraham returns the following day to see what has happened, 19:27.

The destruction of Sodom [a]

19 When the two angels reached Sodom in the evening, Lot was sitting at the 1
gate of Sodom. As soon as Lot saw them, he stood up to greet them, and
bowed to the ground. ·'My lords,' he said, 'please come down to your servant's 2
house to stay the night and wash your feet. Then you can make an early start on
your journey.' 'No,' they said, 'we shall spend the night in the square.' ·But he 3
pressed them so much that they went home with him and entered his house. He
prepared a meal for them, baking unleavened bread, and they had supper.

Jg 19:22–24 They had not gone to bed when the house was surrounded by the townspeople, 4
the men of Sodom both young and old, all the people without exception. ·Calling 5
out to Lot they said, 'Where are the men who came to you tonight? Send them out
Lv 20:13 to us so that we can have intercourse with them.' [b]

Lot came out to them at the door and, having shut the door behind him, ·said, 6, 7
'Please, brothers, do not be wicked. ·Look, I have two daughters who are virgins. 8
I am ready to send them out to you, for you to treat as you please, [c] but do nothing
to these men since they are now under the protection of my roof.' ·But they 9
retorted, 'Stand back! This fellow came here as a foreigner, and now he wants to
play the judge. Now we shall treat you worse than them.' Then they forced Lot
back and moved forward to break down the door. ·But the men reached out, 10
pulled Lot back into the house with them, and shut the door. ·And they dazzled 11
2 K 6:18 those who were at the door of the house, one and all, with a blinding light, so that
they could not find the doorway.

The men said to Lot, 'Have you anyone else here? Your sons, [d] your daughters 12
and all your people in the city, take them away, ·for we are about to destroy this 13
place, since the outcry to Yahweh against those in it has grown so loud that Yahweh
has sent us to destroy it.' ·So Lot went off and spoke to his future sons-in-law who 14
were to marry his daughters. 'On your feet!' he said, 'Leave this place, for Yahweh
is about to destroy the city.' But his sons-in-law thought he was joking.

When dawn broke the angels urged Lot on, 'On your feet! Take your wife and 15
your two daughters who are here, or you will be swept away in the punishment of
the city.' ·And as he hesitated, the men seized his hand and the hands of his wife 16
and his two daughters—Yahweh being merciful to him—and led him out and left
him outside the city.

When they had brought him outside, he was told, 'Flee for your life. Do not look 17
Mt 24:15seq. behind you or stop anywhere on the plain. Flee to the hills or you will be swept
away.' ·'Oh no, my lord!' Lot said to them, ·'You have already been very good to 18, 19
your servant and shown me even greater love by saving my life, but I cannot flee to
the hills, or disaster will overtake me and I shall die. ·That town over there is near 20
enough to flee to, and is small. Let me flee there—after all it is only a small place—
and so survive.' ·He replied, 'I grant you this favour too, and will not overthrow 21
the town you speak of. ·Hurry, flee to that one, for I cannot do anything until you 22
reach it.' That is why the town is named Zoar. [e]

The sun rose over the horizon just as Lot was entering Zoar. ·Then Yahweh 23, 24
rained down on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire of his own sending. [f]
He overthrew those cities and the whole plain, with all the people living in the 25
Ws 10:7 ↗Lk 17:32 cities and everything that grew there. [g] ·But Lot's wife looked back, and was turned 26
into a pillar of salt. [h]

18:16–33 Next morning, Abraham hurried to the place where he had stood before 27
Yahweh, ·and looking towards Sodom and Gomorrah and the whole area of the 28
Is 34:9–10 ↗Rv 14:10–11 plain, he saw the smoke rising from the ground like smoke from a furnace.

Thus it was that, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, he did not forget 29
Abraham and he rescued Lot from the midst of the overthrow, when he overthrew
the cities where Lot was living. [i]

The origin of the Moabites and the Ammonites [j]

30 After leaving Zoar Lot settled in the hill country with his two daughters, for he
dared not stay at Zoar. He lived in a cave, he and his two daughters.
31 The elder said to the younger, 'Our father is an old man, and there is no one
32 here to marry us in the normal way of the world. ·Come on, let us ply our father
with wine and sleep with him. In this way we can preserve the race by our father.'
33 That night they made their father drunk, and the elder slept with her father
34 though he was unaware of her coming to bed or of her leaving. ·The next day the
elder said to the younger, 'Last night, I was the one who slept with our father. Let
us make him drunk again tonight, and you go and sleep with him. In this way we
35 can preserve the race by our father.' ·They made their father drunk that night too,
and the younger went and slept with him, though he was unaware of her coming to
36 bed or of her leaving. ·Both Lot's daughters thus became pregnant by their father.
37 The elder gave birth to a son whom she named Moab; and he is the ancestor of the
38 Moabites of our own times. ·The younger also gave birth to a son whom she named
Ben-Ammi; and he is the ancestor of the Bene-Ammon of our own times. [k]

Abraham at Gerar [a] =12:10–20; =26:1–11

1 **20** Abraham left there for the region of the Negeb, and settled between
2 Kadesh and Shur. While staying in Gerar, ·Abraham said of his wife Sarah,
3 'She is my sister,' and Abimelech the king of Gerar had Sarah brought to him. ·But
God visited Abimelech in a dream one night. 'You are to die,' he told him,
4 'because of the woman you have taken, for she is a married woman.' ·Abimelech,
however, had not gone near her; so he said, 'Lord, would you kill someone even if
5 he is upright? [b] ·Did he not tell me himself, "She is my sister"? And she herself
6 said, "He is my brother." I did this with a clear conscience and clean hands.' ·'Yes,
I know,' God replied in the dream, 'that you did this with a clear conscience and I
myself prevented you from sinning against me. That was why I did not let you
7 touch her. ·Now send the man's wife back; for he is a prophet [c] and can intercede
on your behalf for your life. But understand that if you do not send her back, this
means death for you and all yours.'
8 Early next morning, Abimelech summoned his full court and told them the
9 whole story, at which the people were very much afraid. ·Then summoning

19 **a.** This narrative is connected with ch. 18; 18:16–32 leads up to it. The same atmosphere of mystery surrounds the principal figures; the two 'angels' of 19:1 are the 'men' who parted from Yahweh in 18:22 after the visit of the 'three men' to Abraham, 18:2, but in the rest of the chapter (except in v. 15) they are still called 'men'. At times they speak or are spoken to in the plural, at other times the singular is used because they are representatives of Yahweh who does not appear in person. The moral character of Israelite religion and the universal power of Yahweh are already asserted in this ancient text. The dreadful lesson was often recalled, *see especially* Dt 29:22; Ws 10:6–7; Is 1:9; 13:19; Jr 49:18; 50:40; Am 4:11; Mt 10:15; 11:23–24; Lk 17:28 seq.; 2 P 2:6; Jude 7.

b. The unnatural vice that takes its name from this incident was an abomination to the Israelites, Lv 18:22, and was punished with death, Lv 20:13; but it was rife among their neighbours, Lv 20:23; *see* Jg 19:22 seq.

c. At that period the honour of a woman was of less account, 12:13, *see* 12:10d, than the sacred duty of hospitality.

d. Before 'your sons' the Hebr. text actually inserts 'son-in-law', but this is probably a later addition suggested by v. 14.

e. The name Zoar is here related to *mitze'ar* 'a trifling thing'. The town lay to the south-east of the Dead Sea, 13:10; Dt 34:3; Is 15:5; Jr 48:34. In the Roman period another earthquake occurred and the town was flooded; it was rebuilt higher up the shore and inhabited until the Middle Ages.

f. Here a gloss adds 'from heaven'.

g. The text enables us to locate the catastrophe (an earthquake accompanied by an eruption of gas?) in the southern part of the Dead Sea. The subsidence of the southern half of the Dead Sea bed is known to be recent as geologists reckon, and the whole district is still geologically unstable. The doomed cities, besides Sodom and Gomorrah (Is 1:9, 10; Am 4:11), were Admah and Zeboiim (Gn 14; Dt 29:22; Ho 11:8).

h. A popular explanation of some oddly shaped boulder or column of rock-salt.

i. v. 29 is an editorial addition.

j. This appendix reproduces a Moabite and Ammonite tradition; these peoples may have prided themselves on having such antecedents. Like Tamar, Gn 38, Lot's daughters are not represented as shameless: their ruling motive is to perpetuate the race. v. 31 assumes that Lot and his daughters are the sole survivors of the catastrophe. The story of Sodom, destroyed because of the sins of its inhabitants, may originally have been a Transjordanian parallel to the story of the Flood.

k. Popular etymologies: *moab* is here explained from *me 'ab*, 'from a (my) father'; *ben 'ammi*, 'son of my kinsman', is associated with *bene 'ammon*, 'the sons of Ammon'.

20 **a.** An Elohistic doublet of 12:10–20, softened down by several indications of a more mature morality.

b. Text emended: before 'someone . . . upright', we omit 'nation', dittography.

c. In the wider sense: one of privileged standing before God and therefore inviolable, Ps 105:15, and a powerful intercessor, *see* Nb 11:2; 21:7; Dt 34:10.

Abraham, Abimelech said to him, 'What have you done to us? What wrong have
I done you, for you to bring such guilt on me and on my kingdom? You had no
right to treat me like this.' •Abimelech then said to Abraham, 'What possessed 10
you to do such a thing?' •'Because', Abraham replied, 'I thought there would be 11
12:13e no fear of God here and that I should be killed for the sake of my wife. •Anyway, 12
she really is my sister, my father's daughter though not my mother's, besides being
my wife. •So when God made me wander far from my father's home I said to her, 13
"There is an act of love you can do me: everywhere we go, say of me that I am your
brother." '

Abimelech took sheep, cattle, men and women slaves, and presented them to 14
Abraham, and gave him back his wife Sarah. •And Abimelech said, 'Look, my 15
land is open to you. Settle wherever you please.' •To Sarah he said, 'Look, I am 16
giving your brother a thousand pieces of silver. This will allay suspicions about
you, as far as all the people round you are concerned; you have been completely
vindicated.'[d] •Abraham then interceded with God, and God healed Abimelech, 17
his wife and his slave-girls, so that they could have children,[e] •for Yahweh had 18
made all the women of Abimelech's household barren on account of Sarah,
Abraham's wife.

The birth of Isaac[a]

21 Yahweh treated Sarah as he had said, and did what he had promised her. 1
Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the time God 2
had promised. •Abraham named the son born to him Isaac, the son to whom Sarah 3
↗Ac 7:8 had given birth. •Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, 4
17:12 as God had commanded him. •Abraham was a hundred years old when his son 5
Isaac was born to him. •Sarah said: 6

God has given me cause to laugh!
17:17f All who hear about this will laugh with me![b]

She added: 7

Whoever would have told Abraham
that Sarah would nurse children!
Yet I have borne a son in his old age.

=16 **The dismissal of Hagar and Ishmael**[c]
↗Jn 8:31–37
↗Ga 4:22–31 The child grew and was weaned, and Abraham gave a great banquet on the day 8
Isaac was weaned. •Now Sarah watched the son that Hagar the Egyptian had borne 9
to Abraham, playing[d] with her son Isaac. •'Drive away that slave-girl and her son,' 10
she said to Abraham, 'this slave-girl's son is not to share the inheritance with my
son Isaac.' •This greatly distressed Abraham, because the slave girl's child too was 11
his son, •but God said to him, 'Do not distress yourself on account of the boy and 12
your slave-girl. Do whatever Sarah says, for Isaac is the one through whom your
↗Rm 9:7 name will be carried on. •But the slave-girl's son I shall also make into a great 13
↗Heb 11:18 nation, for he too is your child.' •Early next morning, Abraham took some bread 14
and a skin of water and, giving them to Hagar, put the child on her shoulder and
sent her away.

1 K 19:3–4 She wandered off into the desert of Beersheba. •When the skin of water was 15
finished she abandoned the child under a bush. •Then she went and sat down at a 16
distance, about a bowshot away, thinking, 'I cannot bear to see the child die.'
Sitting at a distance, she began to sob.

16:7c God heard the boy crying, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven. 17
'What is wrong, Hagar?' he asked. 'Do not be afraid, for God has heard[e] the boy's
cry in his plight. •Go and pick the boy up and hold him safe, for I shall make him 18
into a great nation.' •Then God opened Hagar's eyes and she saw a well, so she 19
went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink.

20 God was with the boy. He grew up and made his home in the desert, and he
21 became an archer. •He made his home in the desert of Paran, and his mother got
him a wife from Egypt.

Abraham and Abimelech at Beersheba [f] =26:15–33

22 About then, Abimelech and Phicol, the commander of his army, said to Abraham,
23 'Since God is with you in everything you do, •swear to me by God, here and now,
that you will not act treacherously towards me or my kith and kin, but behave with
the same faithful love to me and the land of which you are a guest as I have behaved
24 to you.' •'Yes,' Abraham replied, 'I swear it.'
25 Abraham then reproached Abimelech about a well that Abimelech's servants
26 had seized. •'I do not know who has done this,' Abimelech said. 'You yourself
have never mentioned it to me and, for myself, I heard nothing of it till today.'
27 Abraham then took sheep and cattle and presented them to Abimelech, and the
28 two of them made a covenant. •Abraham put seven lambs of the flock on one side.
29 'Why have you put these seven lambs on one side?' Abimelech asked Abraham.
30 He replied, 'You must accept these seven lambs from me as evidence that I have
31 dug this well.' •This was why the place was called Beersheba: because there the
two of them swore an oath.
32 After they had made a covenant at Beersheba, Abimelech and Phicol, the
33 commander of his army, left and went back to Philistine territory. •And Abraham
planted a tamarisk at Beersheba and there he invoked the name of Yahweh. 4:26m
34 Abraham stayed for a long while in Philistine territory. Is 40:28

Abraham's sacrifice [a] ↗Ws 10:5 ↗Si 44:20 ↗Heb 11:17 seq. ↗Jm 2:21–22

1 **22** It happened some time later that God put Abraham to the test. 'Abra-
2 ham, Abraham!' he called. 'Here I am,' he replied. •God said, 'Take your
son, your only son, your beloved Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, [b] where you 31:11;46:2• Ex 3:4 1 S 3:4seq.
are to offer him as a burnt offering on one of the mountains which I shall point out
to you.'
3 Early next morning Abraham saddled his donkey and took with him two of his
servants and his son Isaac. He chopped wood for the burnt offering and started on
4 his journey to the place which God had indicated to him. •On the third day
5 Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. •Then Abraham said to his
servants, 'Stay here with the donkey. The boy and I are going over there; we shall
worship and then come back to you.'

d. 'you . . . vindicated' trans. conj.; Hebr. uncertain. The gift of money was an act of reparation.

e. Abimelech and his harem had been struck with impotence and sterility. • v. 18 is a gloss.

21 a. At this point, the three traditions are fused together: vv. 1^a, 2^a, 7 follow on from 18:15 and are Yahwistic; vv. 2^b, 5 follow on from 17:21 and are Priestly; vv. 1^b, 6 are Elohistic.

b. The same play on the name Isaac, *see* 17:17f, but now the laughter expresses joy.

c. Were this narrative a continuation of ch. 16, we should have to conclude from 16:16 and 21:5 that by now Ishmael would be more than fifteen years old; but in fact this passage represents him as a child scarcely older than Isaac. This story is an Elohistic parallel to the Yahwistic narrative of ch. 16. Both are concerned with a well in the desert of Beersheba and explain the bonds of relationship between the Ishmaelites and the Israelites descended from Isaac, but the circumstances of Hagar's dismissal and the attitudes of all the persons involved are different.

d. Another allusion to the name Isaac, *see* 17:17f; the one verb means 'to laugh' and 'to play'. • 'with her son' Gk; Hebr. omits.

e. Allusion to the name Ishmael, see 16:11d.

f. Elohistic narrative (except v. 33), combining two explanations of the name Beersheba: 'the Well of the Oath' or 'the Well of the Seven (Sheep)'; *see also* 26:33. The mention of the Philistines in vv. 32, 34, is an anachronism, *see* Jos 13:2b.

22 a. The narrative is commonly credited to the Elohistic stream of tradition but includes Yahwistic elements: vv. 11, 14, 15, 18 and the name *moriah* in v. 2. Originally it may have been a foundation-story, illustrating the difference between an Israelite shrine, where human sacrifice did not take place, and Canaanite ones where it did. The story as it stands justifies the ritual prescription for the redemption of the first-born of Israel: like all 'first-fruits' these belong to God; they are not, however, to be sacrificed but bought back, 'redeemed', Ex 13:12. Lying behind the story, therefore, is the condemnation, so frequent in the prophets, of child-sacrifice, see Lv 18:21h. vv. 11 seq. add a more advanced spiritual lesson: the example of Abraham's faith, here at its climactic point. In the sacrifice of Isaac the Fathers of the Church saw a prefiguring of the Passion of Jesus, the only-begotten Son.

b. 2 Ch 3:1 identifies the land of Moriah with the hill on which the Temple was later built in Jerusalem. Subsequent tradition adopted this identification, but the text speaks of a 'land of Moriah', of which the name is otherwise unattested; the site of the sacrifice is unknown.

Jn 19:17 Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering, loaded it on Isaac, and carried in 6
his own hands the fire and the knife. Then the two of them set out together. •Isaac 7
spoke to his father Abraham. 'Father?' he said. 'Yes, my son,' he replied. 'Look,'
he said, 'here are the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt
offering?' •Abraham replied, 'My son, God himself will provide the lamb for the 8
burnt offering.' And the two of them went on together.

When they arrived at the place which God had indicated to him, Abraham built 9
↗Jm 2:21 an altar there, and arranged the wood. Then he bound his son and put him on the
altar on top of the wood. •Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to 10
kill his son.

But the angel of Yahweh called to him from heaven. 'Abraham, Abraham!' he 11
said. 'Here I am,' he replied. •'Do not raise your hand against the boy,' the angel 12
said. 'Do not harm him, for now I know you fear God. You have not refused me
Ex 20:20 your own beloved son.' •Then looking up, Abraham saw a ram caught by its horns 13
Dt 6:2a
Jn 3:16 in a bush. Abraham took the ram and offered it as a burnt offering in place of his
Rm 8:32
↗Heb 11:17 son. •Abraham called this place 'Yahweh provides', and hence the saying today: 14
1 Jn 4:9 'On the mountain Yahweh provides.' [c]

The angel of Yahweh called Abraham a second time from heaven. •'I swear by 15, 16
my own self, Yahweh declares, that because you have done this, because you have
12:2;15:5; not refused me your own beloved son, •I will shower blessings on you and make 17
16:10;32:13
•24:60 your descendants as numerous as the stars of heaven and the grains of sand on the
Is 14:12
seashore. Your descendants will gain possession of the gates [d] of their enemies.
12:3b All nations on earth will bless themselves by your descendants, because you have 18
obeyed my command.'

Abraham went back to his servants, and together they set out for Beersheba, 19
and Abraham settled in Beersheba.

The descendants of Nahor [e]

It happened some time later that Abraham received word that Milcah, too, had 20
now borne sons to his brother Nahor: •Uz his first-born, Buz his brother, Kemuel 21
24:15;25:20; father of Aram, •Chesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlaph, Bethuel •(and Bethuel was the 22, 23
28:2
father of Rebekah). These were the eight children Milcah gave Nahor, Abraham's
brother. •He had a concubine named Reumah, and she too had children: Tebah, 24
Gaham, Tahash and Maacah.

The tomb of the patriarchs [a]

23 The length of Sarah's life was a hundred and twenty-seven years. •She died 1, 2
at Kiriath-Arba—now Hebron—in the land of Canaan, and Abraham pro-
ceeded to mourn and bewail her.

33:19 Then rising from beside his dead, Abraham spoke to the Hittites, •'I am a 3, 4
2 S 24:18seq.
↗Heb 11:13 stranger resident here,' he said. 'Let me have a burial site of my own here, so that
↗1 P 2:11 I can remove my dead for burial.' •The Hittites replied to Abraham, •'Please listen 5, 6
to us, my lord, we regard you as a prince of God; bury your dead in the best of our
tombs; not one of us would refuse you his tomb for you to bury your dead.'

At this, Abraham rose and bowed low to the local people, the Hittites, •and 7, 8
pleaded with them as follows, 'If you consent to my removing my dead for burial,
you must agree to intercede for me with Ephron son of Zohar, •for him to let me 9
have the cave he owns at Machpelah, which is on the edge of his field. Let him sell
it to me in your presence at its full price, for a burial site of my own.' •Now Ephron 10
was sitting among the Hittites, and Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham in the
hearing of the Hittites, of all the inhabitants of his town. •'No, my lord, listen to 11
me,' he said. 'I give you the field and the cave in it; I make this gift in the presence
of my kinsmen. Bury your dead.'

Abraham bowed low to the local people •and, in the hearing of the local people, 12, 13
replied to Ephron as follows, 'Be good enough to listen to me. I will pay the price
of the field; accept it from me and I will bury my dead there.' •Ephron replied to 14

15 Abraham, •'Please listen to me, my lord. What is a plot of land for four hundred
16 shekels of silver between me and you? Bury your dead.' •Abraham agreed to
Ephron's terms, and Abraham weighed out for Ephron the silver he had stipulated
in the hearing of the Hittites, namely four hundred shekels of silver, according to
the current commercial rate.
17 Thus Ephron's field at Machpelah, facing Mamre—the field and the cave in it
18 and all the trees anywhere within the boundaries of the field—passed •into Abra-
ham's possession in the sight of the Hittites, of all the inhabitants of his town.
19 And after this, Abraham buried his wife Sarah in the cave of the field of
20 Machpelah, facing Mamre—now Hebron—in the land of Canaan. •And so the
field and the cave in it passed from the Hittites into Abraham's possession as a
burial site of his own.

The marriage of Isaac [a]

1 **24** By now Abraham was an old man, well on in years, and Yahweh had
2 blessed Abraham in every way. •Abraham said to the senior servant in his 12:2–3
3 household, the steward of all his property, 'Place your hand under my thigh: [b] •I 47:29
am going to make you swear by Yahweh, God of heaven and God of earth, that
you will not choose a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites among Tb 4:12
4 whom I live •but will go to my native land and my own kinsfolk to choose a wife for 28:1seq.
5 my son Isaac.' •The servant asked him, 'What if the girl does not want to follow me
to this country? Should I then take your son back to the country from which you
6 come?' •Abraham replied, 'On no account are you to take my son back there.
7 Yahweh, God of heaven and God of earth, [c] who took me from my father's home,
and from the land of my kinsfolk, and who promised me on oath, "I shall give this 12:7c
country to your descendants"—he will now send his angel ahead of you, so that
8 you can get a wife for my son from there. •If then the girl refuses to follow you, you
9 will be quit of this oath to me. Only do not take my son back there.' •And the
servant placed his hand under the thigh of his master Abraham, and swore to him
that he would do it.
10 The servant took ten of his master's camels and, carrying all kinds of gifts from
11 his master, set out for the city of Nahor in Aram Naharaim. [d] •In the evening, at
the time when women come out to draw water, he made the camels kneel outside
12 the town near the well. •And he said, 'Yahweh, God of my master Abraham, give 29:2 seq.
Ex 2:16 seq.
13 me success today and show faithful love to my master Abraham. •While I stand by 1 S 14:10c•
14 the spring as the young women from the town come out to draw water, •I shall say
to one of the girls, "Please lower your pitcher and let me drink." And if she
answers, "Drink, and I will water your camels too," let her be the one you have
decreed for your servant Isaac; by this I shall know you have shown faithful love to
my master.'
15 He had not finished speaking when out came Rebekah—who was the daughter
of Bethuel son of Milcah, the wife of Abraham's brother Nahor—with a pitcher on

c. The end of the v. seems to have been retouched. We follow Gk, *see* v. 8; MT reads 'On Yahweh's mountain, he (Yahweh) appears', referring to the Temple, *see* v. 2b.

d. i.e. their towns, as the Gk understands; *see* 24:60.

e. Yahwistic list of Aramaean tribes, associated with the twelve 'sons' of Nahor, 11:29; *see* the twelve sons of Ishmael, 25:13, and of Jacob, 29:32–30:24; 35:22 seq. A different tradition is recorded in 10:23.

23 a. Yahwistic narrative (excluding v. 1), but making use of a document of greater antiquity. Abraham acquires proprietary rights in Canaan: the promise of the Land, 12:7; 13:15; 15:7, is beginning to come true. • On the Hittites, *see* Dt 7:1a.

24 a. In the Yahwistic tradition this narrative brought the story of Abraham to a close. vv. 1–9 presume that the patriarch is on his deathbed, *see* 47:29–31. The original narrative must have made mention of Abraham's death but this has been removed to make room for the inclusion of 25:1–6. A further change has been made: according to v. 48, Rebekah was the daughter of Nahor, Abraham's brother, and this agrees with 29:5; but according to another tradition she was the daughter of Bethuel, 25:20; 28:2, 5, son of Nahor, 22:22–23; hence Bethuel has been inserted at vv. 15, 24, 47, 50. Laban however acts as head of the family; he was Rebekah's brother, v. 29, and son of Nahor, 29:5.

b. The same gesture as in 47:29; contact with the genital organs is intended to make the oath inviolable. Tradition identifies the unnamed servant with Eliezer, *see* 15:2, but that text is corrupt.

c. 'and God of earth' Gk, *see* v. 3; Hebr. omits.

d. i.e. 'Aram of the Rivers': Upper Mesopotamia, site of Haran, the home of Abraham's kinsfolk, 11:31.

her shoulder. •The girl was very beautiful, and a virgin; no man had touched her. 16
She went down to the spring, filled her pitcher and came up again. •Running 17
towards her, the servant said, 'Please give me a sip of water from your pitcher.'
She replied, 'Drink, my lord,' and quickly lowered her pitcher on her arm and 18
gave him a drink. •When she had finished letting him drink, she said, 'I will draw 19
water for your camels, too, until they have had enough.' •She quickly emptied her 20
pitcher into the trough, and ran to the well again to draw, and drew for all the
camels. •All the while, the man stood watching her, not daring to speak, wondering 21
whether Yahweh had made his journey successful or not.

When the camels had finished drinking, the man took a gold ring weighing half 22
a shekel, and put it through her nose,[e] and put two bracelets weighing ten gold
shekels on her arms, •and said, 'Whose daughter are you? Please tell me. Is there 23
room at your father's house for us to spend the night?' •She replied, 'I am the 24
daughter of Bethuel, the son whom Milcah bore to Nahor.' •And she went on, 'We 25
have plenty of straw and fodder, and room to spend the night.' •Then the man 26
bowed down and worshipped Yahweh • saying, 'Blessed be Yahweh, God of my 27
master Abraham, for not withholding his faithful love[f] from my master. Yahweh
has led me straight to the house of my master's brother.'

The girl ran to her mother's house to tell what had happened. •Now Rebekah 28, 29
had a brother called Laban, and Laban ran out to the man at the spring. •As soon 30
as he had seen the ring and the bracelets his sister was wearing, and had heard his
sister Rebekah saying, 'This is what the man said to me,' he went to the man and
found him still standing by his camels at the spring. •He said to him, 'Come in, 31
blessed of Yahweh, why stay out here when I have cleared the house and made
room for the camels?' •The man went to the house, and Laban unloaded the 32
camels. He provided straw and fodder for the camels and water for him and his
companions to wash their feet.

They offered him food, but he said, 'I will eat nothing before I have said what I 33
have to say.' Laban said, 'Speak.' •He said, 'I am Abraham's servant. •Yahweh 34, 35
has loaded my master with blessings, and Abraham is now very rich. He has given
him flocks and herds, silver and gold, men and women slaves, camels and donkeys.
Sarah, my master's wife, bore my master a son in his old age,[g] and he has made 36
over all his property to him. •My master made me take this oath, "You are not to 37
choose a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites in whose country I
live. •Instead, you are to go to my father's home and to my own kinsfolk to choose 38
a wife for my son." •I said to my master, "Suppose the girl will not agree to come 39
with me?" •and his reply was, "Yahweh, in whose presence I have walked, will 40
send his angel with you and make your journey successful, for you to choose a wife
for my son from my own kinsfolk, from my father's House. •Then you will be quit 41
of my curse: if you go to my family and they refuse you, you will be quit of my
curse." •Arriving today at the spring I said, "Yahweh, God of my master Abraham, 42
please grant a successful outcome to the course I propose to take. •While I stand 43
by the spring, if a girl comes out to draw water and I say to her, 'Please give me a
little water to drink from your pitcher,' •if she replies, "Drink by all means, and I 44
will draw water for your camels too," let her be the girl whom Yahweh has decreed
for my master's son." •I was still saying this in my mind when Rebekah came out, 45
her pitcher on her shoulder. She came down to the spring and drew water. I said to
her, "Please give me a drink." •Quickly she lowered her pitcher saying, "Drink, 46
and I will water your camels too." •I asked her, "Whose daughter are you?" She 47
replied, "I am the daughter of Bethuel, whom Milcah bore to Nahor." Then I put
this ring through her nose and these bracelets on her arms. •I bowed down and 48
worshipped Yahweh, and I blessed Yahweh, God of my master Abraham, who
had led me by a direct path to choose the daughter of my master's brother for his
son. •Now tell me whether you are prepared to show constant and faithful love to 49
my master; if not, say so, and I shall know what to do.'

Laban and Bethuel replied, 'This is from Yahweh; it is not for us to say yes or no 50

51 to you. ·Rebekah is there before you. Take her and go; and let her become the
52 wife of your master's son, as Yahweh has decreed.' ·On hearing this, Abraham's
53 servant bowed to the ground before Yahweh. ·He brought out silver and gold ornaments and clothes which he gave to Rebekah; he also gave rich presents to her brother and to her mother.
54 They ate and drank, he and his companions, and spent the night there. Next
55 morning when they were up, he said, 'Let me go back to my master.' ·Rebekah's brother and mother replied, 'Let the girl stay with us for ten days or so; then she
56 can go.' ·But he replied, 'Do not delay me, since Yahweh has made my journey
57 successful; let me leave and go back to my master.' ·They replied, 'Let us call the
58 girl and find out what she has to say.' ·They called Rebekah and asked her, 'Will
59 you go with this man?' She replied, 'I will.' ·Accordingly they let their sister
60 Rebekah go, with her nurse, and Abraham's servant and his men. ·They blessed Rebekah and said to her:

Sister of ours, from you may there spring
thousands and tens of thousands!
May your descendants gain possession 22:17d
of the gates of their enemies!

61 And forthwith, Rebekah and her maids mounted the camels, and followed the man. The servant took Rebekah and departed.
62 Isaac meanwhile had come back from the well of Lahai Roi and was living in the 16:13–14
63 Negeb. ·While Isaac was out walking[h] towards evening in the fields, he looked up
64 and saw camels approaching. ·And Rebekah looked up and saw Isaac. She jumped
65 down from her camel, ·and asked the servant, 'Who is that man walking through the fields towards us?' The servant replied, 'That is my master.' So she took her
66 veil and covered herself up. ·The servant told Isaac the whole story.
67 Then Isaac took her into his tent.[i] He married Rebekah and made her his wife. And in his love for her, Isaac was consoled for the loss of his mother.

The descendants of Keturah[a]

‖1 Ch 1: 32–33

1, 2 **25** Abraham married another wife whose name was Keturah; ·and she bore
3 him Zimram, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak and Shuah. ·Jokshan was the father of Sheba and Dedan, and the descendants of Dedan were the Asshurites,
4 the Letushim and the Leummim. ·The descendants of Midian were Ephah, Epher, Hanoch, Abida and Eldaah. All these were sons of Keturah.
5, 6 Abraham left all his possessions to Isaac. ·To the sons of his concubines Abraham made grants during his lifetime, sending them away from his son Isaac eastward, to the Land of the East.

The death of Abraham

7, 8 The number of years Abraham lived was a hundred and seventy-five. ·When Abraham had breathed his last, dying at a happy ripe age, old and full of years, he
9 was gathered to his people. ·His sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of
10 Machpelah facing Mamre, in the field of Ephron the Hittite son of Zohar. ·This was the field that Abraham had bought from the Hittites, and Abraham and his 23
11 wife Sarah were buried there. ·After Abraham's death, God blessed his son Isaac. Isaac settled near the well of Lahai Roi. 24:62

e. 'and put it through her nose' added as in Sam., *see* v. 47.

f. The expression *hesed we'emet*, *see* v. 49; 32:11; 47:29; Ex 34:6; Jos 2:14; 2 S 2:6; 15:20, lit. 'faithful love and fidelity (or loyalty)', denoting the faithful love, the irrevocable benevolence of God for humanity, the persevering piety of humanity towards God, or the loving loyalty of one human being for another, *see* Ho 2:21u.

g. 'in his old age' Sam., Gk, 'in her old age' Hebr.

h. A word found only here; meaning uncertain.

i. Here the text adds 'his mother Sarah', a gloss originally intended for the end of the verse.

25 a. This and the next two paragraphs are supplementary to the story of Abraham; vv. 1–6, 11[b], 18 are Yahwistic; the rest is Priestly. From Keturah are descended the peoples of Arabia: among them, the Midianites (Midian), *see* Ex 2:15, the Sabaeans (Sheba), *see* 1 K 10:1–10, and the Dedanites (Dedan), *see* Is 21:13.

The descendants of Ishmael [b]

These are the descendants of Ishmael son of Abraham by Hagar, Sarah's Egyptian 12
|1 Ch 1: 29–31 slave-girl. ·These are the names of the sons of Ishmael by name and line: Ishmael's 13
first-born was Nebaioth; then Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam, ·Mishma, Dumah, Massa, 14
Hadad, Tema, Jetur, Naphish and Kedemah. ·These are the sons of Ishmael, 15, 16
and these are their names, according to their settlements and encampments, twelve
chiefs of as many tribes.

The number of years Ishmael lived was one hundred and thirty-seven. When he 17
breathed his last and died, he was gathered to his people.

He lived in the territory stretching from Havilah-by-Shur just outside Egypt on 18
16:12 the way to Assyria, and he held his own against all his kinsmen.

III: THE STORY OF ISAAC AND JACOB

The birth of Esau and Jacob [c]

This is the story of Isaac son of Abraham. 19

Abraham fathered Isaac. ·Isaac was forty years old when he married Rebekah 20
24:1a the daughter of Bethuel the Aramaean of Paddan-Aram, and sister of Laban the
Aramaean. ·Isaac prayed to Yahweh on behalf of his wife, for she was barren. 21
Yahweh heard his prayer, and his wife Rebekah conceived. ·But the children 22
inside her struggled so much that she said, 'If this is the way of it, why go on
living?' [d] So she went to consult Yahweh, [e] ·and Yahweh said to her: 23

There are two nations in your womb,
your issue will be two rival peoples.
One nation will have the mastery of the other,
4:5c and the elder will serve the younger. [f]
Ml 1:2–5
↗Rm 9:12

When the time came for her confinement, there were indeed twins in her womb. 24
Ho 12:4 The first to be born was red, altogether like a hairy cloak; so they named him 25
Esau. ·Then his brother was born, with his hand grasping Esau's heel; so they 26
named him Jacob. [g] Isaac was sixty years old at the time of their birth. ·When the 27
boys grew up Esau became a skilled hunter, a man of the open country. Jacob on
the other hand was a quiet man, staying at home among the tents. ·Isaac preferred 28
Esau, for he had a taste for wild game; but Rebekah preferred Jacob.

Esau gives up his birthright

Once, when Jacob was cooking a stew, Esau returned from the countryside 29
exhausted. ·Esau said to Jacob, 'Give me a mouthful of that red stuff there; I am 30
exhausted'—hence the name given to him, Edom. [h] ·Jacob said, 'First, give me 31
Dt 21:17 your birthright in exchange.' ·Esau said, 'Here I am, at death's door; what use is a 32
birthright to me?' ·Then Jacob said, 'First give me your oath'; he gave him his oath 33
and sold his birthright to Jacob. ·Then Jacob gave him some bread and lentil stew; 34
Heb 12:16 =12:10–20; =20 he ate, drank, got up and went away. That was all Esau cared about his birthright.

Isaac at Gerar [a]

26 There was a famine in the country—different from the previous famine 1
which took place in the time of Abraham—and Isaac went to Abimelech,
the Philistine king at Gerar. ·Yahweh had appeared to him and said, 'Do not go 2
12:1 down to Egypt; stay in the country which I shall point out to you. ·Remain for the 3
present in that country; I shall be with you and bless you, for I shall give all these
12:3b,7+ 22:17–18 countries to you and your descendants in fulfilment of the oath I swore to your
father Abraham. ·I shall make your descendants as numerous as the stars of 4
heaven, and I shall give them all these countries, and all nations on earth will bless

5 themselves by your descendants ·in return for Abraham's obedience; for he kept
6 my charge, my commandments, my statutes and my laws.' ·So Isaac stayed
at Gerar.
7 When the people of the place asked him about his wife he replied, 'She is my
sister,' for he was afraid to say, 'She is my wife,' thinking, 'The people of the place
8 will kill me because of Rebekah, since she is beautiful.' ·When he had been there
some time, Abimelech the Philistine king happened to look out of the window and
9 saw Isaac fondling[b] his wife Rebekah. ·Abimelech summoned Isaac and said to
him, 'Surely she must be your wife! How could you have said, "She is my sister"?'
10 Isaac replied, 'Because I thought I might be killed on her account.' ·Abimelech
said, 'What a thing to do to us! One of the people might easily have slept with your
11 wife. We should have incurred guilt, thanks to you.' ·Then Abimelech issued this
order to all the people: 'Whoever touches this man or his wife will be put to death.'
12 Isaac sowed his crops in that country, and that year he reaped a hundredfold.
13 Yahweh blessed him ·and the man became rich; he prospered more and more until
14 he was very rich indeed. ·He acquired flocks and herds and a large retinue. The
Philistines began to envy him.

The wells between Gerar and Beersheba =21:25–31

15 The Philistines had blocked up all the wells dug by his father's servants—in the
16 days of his father Abraham—filling them in with earth. ·Then Abimelech said to
Isaac, 'You must leave us, for you have become much more powerful than we are.'
17, 18 So Isaac left; he pitched camp in the Valley of Gerar and there he stayed. ·Isaac
reopened the wells dug by the servants[c] of his father Abraham and blocked up by
the Philistines after Abraham's death, and he gave them the same names as his
father had given them.
19 But when Isaac's servants, digging in the valley, found a well of spring-water
20 there,[d] ·the herdsmen of Gerar disputed it with Isaac's herdsmen, saying, 'That
water is ours!' So Isaac named the well Esek, because they had disputed with him.
21 They dug another well, and there was a dispute over that one too; so he named it
22 Sitnah. ·Then he left there, and dug another well, and since there was no dispute
over this one, he named it Rehoboth, saying, 'Now Yahweh has made room for us
to thrive in the country.'[e]
23, 24 From there he went up to Beersheba. ·Yahweh appeared to him the same night
and said:

I am the God of your father Abraham.[f]

b. Ishmael's descendants, 17:20, are the North Arabian tribes.

c. Yahwistic narrative, apart from the Priestly chronological framework, vv. 19–20, 26[b].

d. 'living' Syr.; Hebr. omits.

e. On the methods of 'consulting Yahweh' *see* Ex 33:7e and 1 S 14:41r. Here it can only mean a visit to a holy place where Yahweh manifests his presence.

f. *see* note 4:5c. The struggle of the children in their mother's womb is an omen of the enmity between the two related peoples: the Edomites, descendants of Esau, and the Israelites, descendants of Jacob. The Edomites, Nb 20:22f, were subjugated by David, 2 S 8:13–14, and did not achieve complete liberation until the reign of Jehoram of Judah in mid-ninth century, 2 K 8:20–22.

g. Popular etymologies: Esau is red, *'admoni*, his other name being Edom, v. 30; 36:1, 8; he is like a mantle of hair, *se'ar*, and is destined to dwell in the land of *se'ir*, Nb 24:18. According to this passage Jacob, *ya'aqob*, gets his name from gripping the heel (*'aqeb*) of his twin; but in 27:36 and Ho 12:4 the name means that the child has supplanted (*'aqab*) his brother. In fact, however, the probable meaning of the name (abbreviated from *ya'aqob-el*) is 'May Yahweh protect!'

h. Because he had eaten the stew which was of a red-brown colour (*'adom*)—another play on words.

26 a. Isaac scarcely appears except in his father's story, ch. 21: 22: 24: and in that of his sons, 25:19–28; 27; 28:1–9; 35:27–29. Only ch. 26, Yahwistic except for the Priestly vv. 34–35, treats of him directly, but the three episodes are all paralleled in the life of Abraham and are linked together by the figure of Abimelech king of Gerar, *see* 20:2, and the 'Philistines', *see* 21:22f. The first episode is parallel to 12:10–20 and ch. 20 (*see* notes). This last presentation is the most discreet.

b. Isaac (*yitzhaq*), fondles (*metzaheq*) Rebekah; another play on words as in 21:9, *see* 17:17; 18:12 seq.; 21:6.

c. 'dug by the servants' versions; 'which had been dug in the days' Hebr.

d. The Book of Genesis speaks of many wells dug by the patriarchs, who were pastoralists. It was near 'Jacob's well' at Shechem (which Gn does not mention) that Jesus spoke of the true living water to the Samaritan woman, Jn 4:1a.

e. *'esek* means 'quarrel', *sitnah* 'accusation', *rehobot* 'room, space'.

f. Patriarchal religion was essentially that of the 'God of the father(s)', 28:13; 31:5; 32:10, until the revelation of the name Yahweh, Ex 3:13–15. It was a nomadic religion: this God was not the master of a specific territory, but revealed himself to the ancestor of a group which he would henceforth protect and guide, *see* as early as 12:1 and up to 46:3–4, and to whom he promised posterity and a country of their own, ch. 15.

Do not be afraid, for I am with you.
I shall bless you and multiply your offspring
for my servant Abraham's sake.

4:26m There he built an altar and invoked the name of Yahweh. There he pitched his 25
tent, and there Isaac's servants sank a well.

The alliance with Abimelech

=21:22–33 Abimelech came from Gerar to see him, with Ahuzzath his adviser and Phicol the 26
commander of his army. ·Isaac said to them, 'Why do you come to me since you 27
hate me, and have made me leave you?' ·'It became clear to us that Yahweh was 28
with you,' they replied, 'and so we thought, "It is time to have a treaty sworn
between us, between us and you." So let us make a covenant with you: ·that you 29
will not do us any harm, since we never molested you but were unfailingly kind to
you and let you go away in peace. Henceforth, Yahweh's blessing on you!' ·He 30
then made them a feast and they ate and drank.

Early next morning, they exchanged oaths. Then Isaac bade them farewell and 31
they left him as friends. ·It happened, the same day, that Isaac's servants brought 32
him news about the well they had been digging. 'We have found water!' they said
to him. ·So he called the well Sheba,[g] and hence the town is named Beersheba to 33
this day.

The Hittite wives of Esau

36:1–5 When Esau was forty years old he married Judith daughter of Beeri the Hittite, 34
24:3seq.; 28:1seq. and Basemath daughter of Elon the Hittite. ·These were a bitter disappointment 35
to Isaac and Rebekah.

Jacob obtains Isaac's blessing by fraud[a]

27 When Isaac had grown old, and his eyes were so weak that he could no 1
longer see, he summoned his elder son Esau. 'Son!' he said, and Esau
replied, 'Here I am.' ·He then said, 'Look, I am old and do not know when I may 2
die. ·Now take your weapons, your quiver and bow; go out into the country and 3
hunt me some game. ·Make me the kind of appetising dish I like and bring it to me 4
Gn 49:1seq.,1a Dt 33:1seq.,1a to eat and I shall give you my special blessing before I die.'

Rebekah was listening while Isaac was talking to his son Esau. So when Esau 5
went into the country to hunt game for his father, ·Rebekah said to her son Jacob, 6
25:28 'I have just heard your father saying to your brother Esau, ·"Bring me some game 7
and make an appetising dish for me to eat and then I shall bless you in Yahweh's
presence before I die." ·Now, son, listen to me and do as I tell you. ·Go to the 8, 9
flock and bring me back two good kids, so that I can make the kind of special dish
your father likes. ·Then take it to your father for him to eat, so that he may bless 10
you before he dies.'

25:25 Jacob said to his mother Rebekah, 'Look, my brother Esau is hairy, while I am 11
smooth-skinned. ·If my father happens to touch me, he will see I am cheating him, 12
and I shall bring a curse down on myself instead of a blessing.' ·But his mother 13
replied, 'On me be the curse, my son! Just listen to me; go and fetch me the kids.'
So he went to fetch them and brought them to his mother, and she made the kind 14
of special dish his father liked. ·Rebekah took her elder son Esau's best clothes, 15
which she had at home, and dressed her younger son Jacob in them,
covering his arms and the smooth part of his neck with the skins of the kids. 16
She then handed the special dish and the bread she had made to her son Jacob. 17

He went to his father and said, 'Father!' 'Yes?' he replied. 'Which of my sons are 18
you?' ·Jacob said to his father, 'I am Esau your first-born; I have done as you told 19
me. Please sit up and eat some of the game I have brought and then give me your
soul's blessing.' ·Isaac said to his son, 'Son, how did you succeed so quickly?' He 20
replied, 'Because Yahweh your God made things go well for me.'[b] ·Isaac said to 21

Jacob, 'Come closer, son, so that I can feel you and be sure whether you really are
22 my son Esau or not.' ·Jacob went closer to his father Isaac, who felt him and said,
23 'The voice is Jacob's voice but the arms are the arms of Esau!' ·He did not recognise
24 him since his arms were hairy like his brother Esau's, and so he blessed him. ·He
25 said, 'Are you really my son Esau?' And he replied, 'I am.' ·Isaac said, 'Serve it to
me, so that I can eat my son's game and give you my special blessing.' He served it
26 to him and he ate; he offered him wine, and he drank. ·His father Isaac said to
27 him, 'Come closer, and kiss me, son.' ·He went closer and kissed his father, who
sniffed the smell of his clothes. Then he blessed him, saying: [c]

Ah, the smell of my son
is like the smell of a fertile field 22:17–18 ↗Heb 11:20
which Yahweh has blessed.
28 May God give you
dew from heaven,
and the richness of the earth,
abundance of grain and wine!
29 Let peoples serve you 25:23f
and nations bow low before you!
Be master of your brothers;
let your mother's other sons bow low before you!
Accursed be whoever curses you
and blessed be whoever blesses you!

30 As soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, and just as Jacob was leaving his
31 father Isaac, his brother Esau returned from hunting. ·He too made an appetising
dish and brought it to his father, 'Father, please eat some of your son's game and
32 then give me your special blessing.' ·His father Isaac asked, 'Who are you?' 'I am
33 your first-born son, Esau,' he replied. ·At this Isaac was seized with a violent
trembling and said, 'Who was it, then, that went hunting and brought me the
game? I finished eating it just before you came; I blessed him, and now blessed he
34 will remain!' [d] ·On hearing his father's words, Esau cried out loudly and bitterly
35 and said to his father, 'Father, bless me too!' ·But he replied, 'Your brother came
36 by fraud and took your blessing.' ·Esau said, 'His name should be Jacob right 25:26,29–34 Is 43:27 Jr 9:3 Ho 12:4
enough, for he has now supplanted me twice. First he took my birthright, and look,
now he has gone and taken my blessing! [e] But', he added, 'have you not kept a
37 blessing for me?' ·Isaac replied to Esau, 'I have already made him your master; I
have given him all his brothers as servants, I have given him grain and wine to
38 sustain him. So what can I do for you, son?' ·Esau said to his father, 'Can you bless
only once, father? Father, bless me too.' Isaac remained silent, [f] and Esau began to
39 weep aloud. ·Then his father Isaac spoke again and said:

'Far from the richness of the earth
and the dew of heaven above,
your home will be.
40 By your sword you will live,
and your brother will you serve. [g]

g. Read *sheba* (or *shebu'a*), 'oath', in accordance with Gk and context, instead of Hebr. *shibe'a*, 'seven'. *see* 21:22–30.

27 **a.** Yahwistic narrative in praise of Jacob's cunning but in its final form modified by a touch of blame for Rebekah's trick and of sympathy for Esau. The morality is immature but the lie reported here mysteriously serves God's purpose; the free divine choice preferred Jacob to Esau, 25:23; *see* Ml 1:2 seq.; Rm 9:12–13.

b. To bring God into the lie seems blasphemous to us but the oriental mentality saw no wrong in it, being used to ascribing every event to God, ignoring 'secondary causes'.

c. This blessing, promising to Jacob, the shepherd, rural prosperity, like that of Esau, vv. 39–40, affects not the patriarchs themselves but the peoples sprung from them.

d. Blessings and curses, once pronounced, were regarded as efficacious and irrevocable.

e. A play on the words *bekorah* (birthright) and *berakah* (blessing).

f. 'Isaac remained silent' Gk; Hebr. omits.

g. Esau (i.e. his descendants) is to dwell outside the fertile country of Palestine and to be subjected to Jacob (i.e. to his descendants, 2 S 8:13–14). His brother has all, v. 37, and the only blessing remaining to him is 'to live by his sword', a brigand's life of plunder.

But when you win your freedom, you will shake his yoke off your neck.' [h]

=27:46–28:5 Ob 10n

Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing his father had given him, and Esau said 41
to himself, 'The time to mourn for my father will soon be here. Then I shall kill my
brother Jacob.' ·When the words of Esau, her elder son, were repeated to Re- 42
bekah, she sent for her younger son Jacob and said to him, 'Look, your brother
↗Ws 10:10 Esau means to take revenge and kill you. ·Now, son, listen to me; go at once and 43
24:29 take refuge with my brother Laban in Haran. ·Stay with him a while, until your 44
brother's fury cools, ·until your brother's anger is diverted from you and he forgets 45
what you have done to him. Then I shall send someone to bring you back. I do not
want to lose you both on one day!' [i]

Isaac sends Jacob to Laban [j]

=27:41–45

Rebekah said to Isaac, 'The Hittite women sicken me to death. If Jacob were to 46
marry a Hittite woman like these, one of the local women, what would there be left
in life for me?'

28 So Isaac summoned Jacob and blessed him; and he gave him this order: 1
'You are not to marry any of the Canaanite women. ·Go off to Paddan- 2
Aram, the home of Bethuel your mother's father, and there choose a wife for
17:1b.4–5 yourself from the daughters of Laban your mother's brother. ·May El Shaddai 3
bless you; may he make you fruitful and make you multiply so that you become a
group of nations. ·May he grant you the blessing of Abraham, you and your 4
descendants after you, so that one day you may own the country where you are
now living as a stranger—which God gave to Abraham.' ·Then Isaac sent Jacob 5
away, and Jacob went to Paddan-Aram, to Laban son of Bethuel the Aramaean
and brother of Rebekah the mother of Jacob and Esau.

Another marriage of Esau [a]

When Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob and sent him to Paddan-Aram to 6
choose a wife there, and that in blessing him he had given him this order: 'You are
not to choose a wife from the Canaanite women,' ·and that, in obedience to his 7
father and mother, Jacob had gone to Paddan-Aram, ·Esau then realised how 8
much his father Isaac disapproved of the Canaanite women. ·So Esau went to 9
25:12–13 Ishmael and chose for wife, in addition to the wives he had, Mahalath daughter of
Abraham's son Ishmael and sister of Nebaioth.

↗Ws 10:10 Jacob's dream [b]

Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Haran. ·When he had reached a certain 10, 11
place, he stopped there for the night, since the sun had set. Taking one of the
stones of that place, he made it his pillow and lay down where he was. ·He had a 12
dream: there was a ladder, planted on the ground with its top reaching to heaven;
↗Jn 1:51 and God's angels were going up and down on it. ·And there was Yahweh, standing 13
beside him and saying, 'I, Yahweh, am the God of Abraham your father, and the
God of Isaac. The ground on which you are lying I shall give to you and your
12:2seq.;13:14seq.;15:5seq.;18:18;22:17seq.; 26:4 descendants. ·Your descendants will be as plentiful as the dust on the ground; you 14
·12:3b will spread out to west and east, to north and south, and all clans on earth will bless
themselves by you and your descendants. ·Be sure, I am with you; I shall keep you 15
safe wherever you go, and bring you back to this country, for I shall never desert
you until I have done what I have promised you.' ·Then Jacob awoke from his 16
Ex 19:12e sleep and said, 'Truly, Yahweh is in this place and I did not know!' ·He was afraid 17
and said, 'How awe-inspiring this place is! This is nothing less than the abode of
God, and this is the gate of heaven!' ·Early next morning, Jacob took the stone he 18
Ex 23:24k had used for his pillow, and set it up as a pillar, pouring oil over the top of it. [c]
35:6;48:3 Jg 1:23 He named the place Bethel, but before that the town had been called Luz. 19

Jacob then made this vow, 'If God remains with me and keeps me safe on this 20
journey I am making, if he gives me food to eat and clothes to wear, ·and if I come 21
home safe to my father's home, then Yahweh shall be my God. ·This stone I have 22

set up as a pillar is to be a house of God, and I shall faithfully pay you a tenth part of everything you give me.' Am 4:4

Jacob arrives at Laban's home [a]

1, 2 29 Continuing his journey, Jacob reached the Land of the Easterners. •And there, out in the open, he saw a well with three flocks of sheep lying beside it; this well was used for watering the flocks. Now the stone on the mouth of the 3 well was a large one, •and only when all the flocks had collected there, did they roll the stone off the mouth of the well and water the sheep; then they would replace 4 the stone over the mouth of the well. •Jacob said to the shepherds, 'Friends, where 5 are you from?' They replied, 'We are from Haran.' •He asked them, 'Do you know 6 Laban son of Nahor?' They replied, 'We do.' •Then he asked them, 'Is he well?' 7 'He is,' they replied, 'and here comes his daughter Rachel with the flock.' •Then he said, 'But it is still broad daylight, not the time to round up the animals. Why don't 8 you water the sheep and take them back to graze?' •To which, they replied, 'We can't, until all the shepherds have assembled to roll the stone off the mouth of the well; then we can water the sheep.' 24:11seq. Ex 2:16seq.

9 He was still talking to them, when Rachel arrived with her father's flock, for she 10 was a shepherdess. •As soon as Jacob saw Rachel, his uncle Laban's daughter, with his uncle Laban's flock, he went up and, rolling the stone off the mouth of the well, 11 watered his uncle Laban's sheep. •Jacob then kissed Rachel and burst into tears. 12 He told Rachel he was her father's kinsman and Rebekah's son, and she ran to tell 13 her father. •As soon as he heard her speak of his sister's son Jacob, Laban ran to greet him, embraced him, kissed him and took him to his house. Jacob told Laban 14 everything that had happened, [b] •and Laban said to him, 'You are indeed my bone and flesh!'

Jacob's two marriages [c]

15 After Jacob had been staying with him for a month, •Laban said to Jacob, 'Just because you are my kinsman, why should you work for me for nothing? Tell me 16 what wages you want.' •Now Laban had two daughters, the elder named Leah, 17 and the younger Rachel. •Leah had lovely eyes, but Rachel was shapely and 18 beautiful, •and Jacob had fallen in love with Rachel. So his answer was, 'I will work for you for seven years in exchange for your younger daughter Rachel.' 19 Laban replied, 'It is better for me to give her to you than to a stranger; stay with me.'

20 So Jacob worked for seven years for Rachel, and they seemed to him like a few 21 days because he loved her so much. •Then Jacob said to Laban, 'Give me my wife, 22 for my time is up and I should like to go to her.' •Laban gathered all the people of 23 the place together, and gave a banquet. •But when night came, he took his 24 daughter Leah and brought her to Jacob, and he slept with her. •(Laban gave his

h. This last sentence is in prose and may have been added after the Edomites had regained their independence, 2 K 8:20–22. The translation 'you win your freedom' is uncertain.

i. As one who had shed blood Esau would have been liable to blood-revenge, Nb 35:19c.

j. The equivalent of 27:41–45 in the Priestly tradition which, passing over the shocking story in ch. 27, gave a different reason for Jacob's departure for Mesopotamia. Note the identification of the 'Hittite women', v. 46, with the 'Canaanite women' of 28:1.

28 **a.** Continuation of the Priestly source.

b. This narrative is in part an Elohistic tradition: the dream of the ladder (more properly a staircase) leading to heaven, a Mesopotamian idea symbolised by stepped towers or ziggurats, vv. 12 and 17, Jacob's vow and the foundation of the shrine at Bethel, vv. 18, 20, 21[a], 22. With this is combined a Yahwistic tradition: an apparition of Yahweh who renews the promises made to Abraham and Isaac, and whom Jacob acknowledges as his God, vv. 13–16, 19, 21[b]. Both enhanced the prestige of the shrine at Bethel, 1 K 12:29–30e.

c. The stone marks the place of God's presence. It becomes a *beth'el*, an 'abode of God', and is anointed with oil as a formal act of worship. Practices of this kind were common in the Canaanite cult and in the semitic world in general but were subsequently condemned by the Law and the Prophets, *see* Ex 23:24. Even in this passage a more spiritual conception goes with the idea of a divine dwelling on earth; Bethel is the 'gate of heaven', God's true home, *see* 1 K 8:27.

29 **a.** Yahwistic narrative continuing ch. 28 and following on from 27:41–45.

b. i.e. what had happened between himself and Esau, ch. 27.

c. Yahwistic narrative and continuation of the preceding.

slave-girl Zilpah to his daughter Leah as her slave.) ·When morning came, it was 25
Leah![d] So Jacob said to Laban, 'What have you done to me? Did I not work for
you for Rachel? Why then have you tricked me?' ·Laban replied, 'It is not the 26
custom in our place to marry off the younger before the elder. ·Finish this marriage 27
week[e] and I shall give you the other one too in return for your working for me for
another seven years.'[f] ·Jacob agreed and, when he had finished the week, Laban 28
gave him his daughter Rachel as his wife. ·(Laban gave his slave-girl Bilhah to his 29
daughter Rachel as her slave.) ·So Jacob slept with Rachel too, and he loved 30
Rachel more than Leah. He worked for Laban for another seven years.

Jacob's children[g]

When Yahweh saw that Leah was unloved,[h] he opened her womb, while Rachel 31
remained barren. ·Leah conceived and gave birth to a son whom she named 32
Reuben, meaning 'Yahweh has seen my misery';[i] and she said, 'Now my husband
will love me.' ·Conceiving again, she gave birth to a son and said, 'Yahweh heard 33
that I was unloved, and so he has given me this one too'; and she named him
Simeon. ·Again she conceived and gave birth to a son, and said, 'This time my 34
husband will become attached to me, because I have borne him three sons.'
Accordingly, she named him Levi. ·Again she conceived and gave birth to a son, 35
and said, 'Now I shall praise Yahweh!' Accordingly, she named him Judah. Then
she had no more children.

30 Rachel, seeing that she herself gave Jacob no children, became jealous of 1
her sister. And she said to Jacob, 'Give me children, or I shall die!' ·This 2
made Jacob angry with Rachel, and he retorted, 'Am I in the position of God, who
16:2b has denied you motherhood?' ·So she said, 'Here is my slave-girl, Bilhah. Sleep 3
with her and let her give birth on my knees; through her, then, I too shall have
children!' ·So she gave him her slave-girl Bilhah as concubine. Jacob slept with 4
her, ·and Bilhah conceived and gave birth to a son by Jacob. ·Then Rachel said, 5, 6
'God has done me justice; yes, he has heard my prayer and given me a son.'
Accordingly she named him Dan. ·Again Rachel's slave-girl Bilhah conceived and 7
gave birth to a second son by Jacob. ·Then Rachel said, 'I have fought a fateful 8
battle with my sister, and I have won!' So she named him Naphtali.

Now Leah, seeing that she had ceased to bear children, took her slave-girl 9
Zilpah and gave her to Jacob as concubine. ·So Leah's slave-girl Zilpah gave birth 10
to a son by Jacob. ·Then Leah exclaimed, 'What good fortune!' So she named him 11
Gad. ·Leah's slave-girl Zilpah gave birth to a second son by Jacob. ·Then Leah 12, 13
Lk 1:48 said, 'What blessedness! Women will call me blessed!' So she named him Asher.

One day, at the time of the wheat harvest, Reuben found some mandrakes in the 14
field[a] and brought them to his mother Leah. Rachel said to Leah, 'Please give me
some of your son's mandrakes.' ·Leah replied, 'Is it not enough to have taken my 15
husband, without your taking my son's mandrakes as well?' So Rachel said, 'Very
well, he can sleep with you tonight in return for your son's mandrakes.' ·When 16
Jacob came back from the fields that night, Leah went out to meet him and said,
'You must come to me, for I have hired you at the price of my son's mandrakes.'
So he slept with her that night. ·God heard Leah, and she conceived and gave birth 17
to a fifth son by Jacob. ·Then Leah said, 'God has given me my reward for giving 18
my slave-girl to my husband.' So she named him Issachar. ·Again Leah conceived 19
and gave birth to a sixth son by Jacob, ·and said, 'God has given me a fine gift; now 20
my husband will bring me presents, for I have borne him six sons.' So she named
him Zebulun. ·Later she gave birth to a daughter and named her Dinah. 21

Then God remembered Rachel; he heard her and opened her womb. ·She 22, 23
Lk 1:25,25p conceived and gave birth to a son, and said, 'God has taken away my disgrace!'
She named him Joseph, saying, 'May Yahweh add another son for me!' 24

How Jacob became rich

When Rachel had given birth to Joseph, Jacob said to Laban, 'Release me and let 25

me go home to my own country. •Give me my wives for whom I have worked for
you, and my children, and let me go. You are well aware how long I have worked
for you.' •Laban replied, 'If I have done what pleases you . . .[b] I have learnt by
divination that Yahweh has blessed me because of you. •So name your wages,' he
added, 'and I will pay.' •He replied, 'You know how hard I have worked for you,
and how your stock has fared in my charge. •The little you had before I came has
increased enormously, and Yahweh has blessed you wherever I have been. When
am I to provide for my own household too?' •Laban said, 'How much am I to pay
you?' Jacob replied, 'You need not pay me anything. I will change my mind and go
on tending your flock, if you do this one thing for me.

'Go through your entire flock today[c] and remove every black animal[d] among
the sheep, and every speckled or spotted one among the goats. These will be my
wages, •and my uprightness will answer for me later: when you come to check my
wages, every goat I have that is not speckled or spotted, and every sheep that is not
black will count as stolen by me.' •Laban replied, 'Good, just as you say.' •That
same day he removed the striped and speckled he-goats and all the spotted and
speckled she-goats, every one that had white on it, and all the black sheep, and
entrusted these to his sons. •Then he put a three days' journey between himself
and Jacob, while Jacob grazed the rest of Laban's flock.

Jacob then got fresh shoots from poplar, almond and plane trees, and peeled
them in white strips, laying bare the white part of the shoots. •He set up the shoots
he had peeled in front of the animals, in the troughs, in the water-holes where the
animals came to drink. Since they mated when they came to drink, •the goats thus
mated in front of the shoots and so the goats produced striped, spotted and
speckled young. •The ewes, on the other hand, Jacob kept apart and made these
face whatever was striped or black in Laban's flock. Thus he built up droves of his
own which he did not put with Laban's flocks. •Furthermore, whenever the sturdier
animals were mating, Jacob put the shoots where the animals could see them, in
the troughs, so that they would mate in front of the shoots. •But when the animals
were feeble, he did not put them there; so Laban got the feeble, and Jacob the
sturdy. •Thus the man grew extremely rich, and came to own large flocks, men and
women slaves, camels and donkeys.

d. The success of Laban's stratagem is explained by the custom, which still exists, of keeping the bride veiled until the wedding night, *see* 24:65.

e. The wedding celebrations lasted for seven days, Jg 14; *see* Tb 8:20; 10:7.

f. Marriage with two sisters was not forbidden before the legislation of Lv 18:18.

g. This section (Yahwistic with Elohistic insertions) connects the tribes of Israel with the patriarchal line through Jacob's twelve children. This is the earliest form of the 'twelve-tribal system', which later went through various stages of development. Here, the figure of twelve is achieved by the inclusion of Dinah, who was later to be replaced by Benjamin, born in Canaan, 35:16 seq. Levi, which later became a priestly tribe, was replaced by dividing Joseph into Ephraim and Manasseh. The system, even in its most ancient form, cannot have been elaborated until after the settlement of Canaan. The 'twelve sons of Jacob', who for the most part have no role in the narratives of Gn and some of whom are not even mentioned again, are merely eponymous ancestors of tribes long in existence, *see* ch. 49.

h. The text reads 'hated', but here the word only means the less favoured wife in a polygamous household.

i. The rivalry between Leah and Rachel is used to explain the proper names: some of these popular etymologies are obscure. *Ra'ah be'onyi* 'he has seen my distress', Reuben; *shama'* 'he has heard', Simeon; *yillaweh* 'he will cling', Levi; *'odeh* 'I shall praise', Judah; *dananni* 'he has done justice to me', Dan; *niphtali* 'I have fought', Naphtali; *gad* 'good luck', Gad; *'osheri* 'my happiness' and *'ishsheruni* 'they will count me happy', Asher; *sakar* 'he has hired' and *sakar* 'wages', Issachar; *yizbeleni* 'he will respect me', Zabulon; *'asaph* 'he has taken away' and *yoseph* 'may he add', Joseph.

30 **a.** The Hebrew word for 'mandrake' or 'mandragora' is formed from the same root as 'love'; the ancients accounted it an aphrodisiac. Primitive tradition must have associated this fruit with Joseph's birth.

b. The phrase is broken off; 'hear me' or 'stay here' is to be understood.

c. The text of vv. 32–43 is difficult to interpret. The story is possibly composite of Yahwistic and Elohistic tradition and further obscured by glosses. The story, which can have taken shape only among a semi-nomadic people, is clearly ancient. In Eastern flocks the sheep are usually white, the goats black. For his wages Jacob asks the abnormal animals (black sheep and white-spotted goats); Laban agrees, shrewdly as he thinks. Jacob's plot is briefly this: **1** He sees to it that when the goats mate, vv. 37–39, they are in sight of white-striped rods; this affects the formation of the embryo. **2** At the same time he makes sure that the sheep are looking at the black goats in the flock, v. 40. **3** For this operation he selects the robust strains, leaving the weaker animals and their offspring to Laban. In this way Jacob takes his 'honourable' revenge.

d. Hebr. here adds 'speckled and spotted and every animal'; Gk omits.

Jacob's flight [a]

31 Jacob learned that Laban's sons were saying, 'Jacob has taken everything 1
that belonged to our father; it is at our father's expense that he has acquired
all this wealth,' ·and Jacob also saw that Laban's manner towards him was not as it 2
had been in the past. ·Yahweh said to Jacob, 'Go back to the land of your 3
26:3;28:15 ancestors, where you were born, and I shall be with you.' ·So Jacob had Rachel 4
and Leah called to the fields where his flocks were, ·and he said to them, 'I can see 5
that your father's manner towards me is not as it was in the past, but the God of my
father has been with me. ·You yourselves know that I have worked for your father 6
with all my might, ·and that your father has tricked me, changing my wages ten 7
times over, and yet God has not allowed him to harm me. ·Whenever he said, "The 8
spotted ones will be your wages," all the animals produced spotted young; when-
ever he said, "The striped ones will be your wages," all the animals produced
striped young. ·Thus God has reclaimed your father's livestock and given it to me. 9
Once, when the animals were on heat, I suddenly saw in a dream that the he- 10
goats covering the females were striped or spotted or piebald. ·In the dream the 11
16:7c angel of God called to me, "Jacob!" I said, "Here I am." ·He said, "Now take 12
note: all the he-goats covering the females are striped or spotted or piebald—for I
too have noted all the things that Laban has been doing to you, ·I am the God who 13
28:18–22 appeared to you at Bethel, [b] where you poured oil on a pillar and made a vow to
me. On your feet, then, leave this country and return to the land of your birth." '

In answer Rachel and Leah said to him, 'Are we still likely to inherit anything 14
from our father's estate? ·Does he not think of us as outsiders now? For not only 15
has he sold us, but he has completely swallowed up the money he got for us. [c] ·All 16
the wealth that God has reclaimed from our father belonged to us and our children
in any case. So do whatever God has told you.'

Forthwith, Jacob put his children and his wives on camels, ·and drove off all his 17, 18
livestock—with all the possessions he had acquired, the livestock belonging to him
which he had acquired in Paddan-Aram [d]—to go to his father Isaac in Canaan.
Laban was away, shearing his sheep; Rachel in the meanwhile had appropriated 19
Jg 17:5 the household idols [e] belonging to her father, ·and Jacob had outwitted Laban the 20
1 S 19:13
2 K 23:24 Aramaean so that he would not be forewarned of his flight. ·Thus he got away with 21
Ho 3:4 all he had. He was soon across the River [f] and heading for Mount Gilead.

Laban pursues Jacob [g]

Three days later Laban was told that Jacob had fled. ·Taking his brothers with 22, 23
him, he pursued him for seven days and overtook him at Mount Gilead. ·But God 24
appeared to Laban the Aramaean in a dream that night and said to him, 'On no
account say anything whatever [h] to Jacob.' ·Laban caught up with Jacob, who had 25
pitched his tent [i] in the hills; and Laban pitched camp on Mount Gilead.

Laban said to Jacob, 'What do you mean by outwitting me and then carrying off 26
my daughters like prisoners of war? ·Why did you flee in secret, stealing away 27
without letting me know, so that I could send you on your way rejoicing, with songs
and the music of tambourines and harps? ·You did not even let me kiss my sons 28
and daughters. You have behaved like a fool. ·It is in my power to harm you, but 29
the God of your [j] father said to me last night, "On no account say anything
whatever to Jacob." ·Now it may be you really went because you had such a 30
longing for your father's house, but why did you steal my gods?'

Jacob answered Laban, 'I was afraid, thinking you were going to snatch your 31
daughters from me. ·But whoever is found in possession of your gods shall not 32
remain alive. In the presence of our brothers, examine for yourself what I have,
and take what is yours.' Now Jacob did not know that Rachel had appropriated
them. ·Laban went into Jacob's tent, and then into Leah's tent and the tent of the 33
two slave-girls, but he found nothing. He came out of Leah's tent and went into
31:19 Rachel's. ·Now Rachel had taken the household idols and put them inside a camel 34
Lv 15:19–20 cushion, and was sitting on them. Laban went through everything in the tent but

35 found nothing. •Then Rachel said to her father, 'Do not look angry, my lord,
because I cannot rise in your presence, for I am as women are from time to time.'
Laban searched but did not find the idols.
36 Then Jacob lost his temper and took Laban to task. And Jacob said to Laban,
'What is my offence, what is my crime, for you to have hounded me like this?
37 You have gone through all my belongings; have you found anything belonging to
your household? Produce it here in the presence of my brothers and yours, and let
38 them decide between the two of us. •In all the twenty years I was under you, your
ewes and your she-goats never miscarried, and I never ate rams from your flock.
39 Those mauled I never brought back to you, but bore the loss myself. You Ex 22:12
demanded compensation from me, whether the animal was stolen in daylight or at
40 night.[k] •In the daytime the heat devoured me, and frost at night; I never had a
41 good night's sleep. •It was like this for the twenty years I spent in your household.
Fourteen years I slaved for you for your two daughters, and six years for your
42 flock, since you changed my wages ten times over. •If the God of my father, the
God of Abraham, the Kinsman of Isaac,[l] had not been with me, you would have
sent me away empty-handed. But God saw my plight and my labours, and last 31:24,29
night he delivered judgement.'

A treaty between Jacob and Laban[m]

43 Laban replied to Jacob, 'These daughters are my daughters and these children are
my children, this livestock is my livestock: everything you see belongs to me. But
what can I do today about my daughters here or about the children they have
44 borne? •So come, let us make a pact, you and me . . . ,[n] and let that serve as a
witness between us.'
45, 46 Jacob then took a stone and set it up as a memorial. •Jacob said to his kinsmen,
'Collect some stones,' and gathering some stones they made a cairn. They had a
47 meal there, on the cairn, and •Laban called it Jegar-Sahadutha while Jacob called
48 it Galeed.[o] •Laban said, 'May this cairn be a witness between us today.' That is Jos 24:27d
49 why he named it Galeed, •and also Mizpah, because he said, 'Let Yahweh act as
50 watchman between us when we are no longer in sight of each other. •If you ill-treat
my daughters or marry other women besides my daughters, even though no one be
51 with us, remember: God is witness between us.' •Then Laban said to Jacob, 'Here
52 is this cairn I have thrown up between us, and here the pillar. •This cairn is a
witness, and the pillar is a witness, that I am not to cross to your side of this cairn
53 and you are not to cross to my side of this cairn and pillar, with hostile intent. •May
the God of Abraham and the god of Nahor judge between us.'[p] Then Jacob swore

31 **a.** Elohistic narrative with some Yahwistic remnants (vv. 1, 3, 21). It emphasises the fact that Jacob is in the right and enjoys divine protection; this did not appear from the narrative of ch. 30 which is secular in character.

b. 'who appeared to you' supplied from Gk.

c. In Upper Mesopotamia, it was considered miserly if a father-in-law did not return to his daughter a part of the sum paid over by the husband at the time of marriage, but Laban exploited Jacob's services for himself alone.

d. This insertion is a Priestly addition.

e. In Hebrew *teraphim*, small domestic idols. In Hurrian law, possession of these could, especially in exceptional cases, constitute a legal title to an estate.

f. The Euphrates.

g. Like the preceding narrative Elohistic (with the possible exception of some Yahwistic fragments, vv. 27, 31, 38–40?).

h. lit. 'neither good nor evil', nothing at all.

i. 'his tent' *'ohalo* conj.; Hebr. *'ehaw*, 'with his brothers'.

j. 'you', 'your': singular, Gk and Sam.; plural, Hebr.

k. According to Ex 22:12 the shepherd was to be exonerated if he could produce the remains of the animal alleged to have been killed by wild beasts, *see* Am 3:12.

l. A name for God that appears only here and in v. 53; Arabic and Palmyrene Aramaic justify this translation. Alternatively: 'The Awesome One of Isaac'.

m. Two traditions (Yahwistic and Elohistic) appear to have been combined here: **1** A formal pact regulating the frontier between Laban and Jacob, i.e. between Aram and Israel, v. 52, together with an explanation of the name Gilead = Galeed, 'cairn of witness'. **2** A private agreement concerning Laban's daughters, wives of Jacob, v. 50, together with an explanation of the name Mizpah, 'watch-post', *see* v. 49, where a stele (*matzzebah*) is erected. On the other hand it is possible that we have here not two traditions but simply explanations of each part of the traditional composite name Mizpah of Gilead, 'watch-post of Gilead'; the place is known from Jg 11:29 and lies south of the Jabbok in Transjordan. The text has been further obscured by glosses.

n. It is probable that some words of the text have been lost.

o. Yegar sahaduta is the exact Aramaic equivalent of *gal'ed*, 'cairn of witness'.

p. Here the text adds 'the god of their fathers', a gloss absent from the Gk and from some Hebr. MSS. • In ancient times the gods of each contracting party were invoked as witnesses to a treaty.

by the Kinsman of his father Isaac. •He offered a sacrifice on the mountain and 54
invited his kinsmen to the meal. They ate the meal, and passed the night on the
mountain.

32 Early next morning, Laban kissed his grandchildren and daughters and 1 31:55
blessed them. Then Laban left to return home. •While Jacob was going on 2 32:1
his way, angels of God encountered him, •and on seeing them he said, 'This is 3 2
God's camp,' and he named the place Mahanaim. [a]

Jacob prepares for his meeting with Esau [b]

Jacob sent messengers ahead of him to his brother Esau in Seir, the open country 4 3
of Edom, •with these instructions, 'Say this to my lord Esau, "Here is the message 5 4
of your servant Jacob: I have been staying with Laban and have been delayed there
until now, •and I own oxen, beasts of burden and flocks, and men and women 6 5
slaves. I send news of this to my lord in the hope of winning your favour." ' •The 7 6
messengers returned to Jacob and told him, 'We went to your brother Esau, and
he is already on his way to meet you; there are four hundred men with him.'

Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed. He divided the people with him, and 8 7
the flocks and cattle, [c] into two camps, •thinking, 'If Esau comes to one of the 9 8
camps and attacks it, the remaining camp may be able to escape.' •Jacob said, 'God 10 9
31:3 of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, Yahweh who told me, "Go
back to your native land and I will be good to you," •I am unworthy of all the 11 10
faithful love and constancy you have shown your servant. I had only my staff when
I crossed this Jordan, and now I have grown into two camps. •I implore you, save 12 11
me from my brother Esau's clutches, for I am afraid that he may come and attack
22:16–17; 28:14 me, mothers and children alike. •Yet it was you who said, "I shall be very good to 13 12
you, and make your descendants like the sand of the sea, which is too numerous to
count." ' •Then Jacob passed that night there. 14 13

From what he had with him he chose a gift for his brother Esau: •two hundred 15 14
she-goats and twenty he-goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams, •thirty camels 16 15
in milk with their calves, forty cows and ten bulls, twenty female donkeys and ten
male. •He put them in the charge of his servants, in separate droves, and told his 17 16
servants, 'Go ahead of me, leaving a space between each drove and the next.' •He 18 17
gave the leading man this order: 'When my brother Esau meets you and asks,
"Whose man are you? Where are you going? Whose are those animals that you are
driving?" •you will answer, "Your servant Jacob's. They are a gift sent to my lord 19 18
Esau. And Jacob himself is just behind us." ' •He gave the same order to the 20 19
second and the third, and to all who were following the droves. 'That is what you
must say to Esau when you find him. •And you must add, "Your servant Jacob 21 20
himself is just behind us." ' For he thought, 'If I conciliate him by sending a gift in
advance, perhaps he will be well inclined towards me when I face him.' •The gift 22 21
went ahead of him, but he himself spent that night in the camp.

Jacob wrestles with God [d]

That same night he got up and, taking his two wives, his two slave-girls and his 23 22
eleven children, crossed the ford of the Jabbok. •After he had taken them across 24 23
Ex 4:24–26 Ws 10:12 Ho 12:4–6 the stream, he sent all his possessions over too. •And Jacob was left alone. 25 24
Then someone [e] wrestled with him until daybreak •who, seeing that he could not 26 25
master him, struck him on the hip socket, and Jacob's hip was dislocated as he
wrestled with him. •He said, 'Let me go, for day is breaking.' Jacob replied, 'I will 27 26
not let you go unless you bless me.' •The other said, 'What is your name?' 'Jacob,' 28 27
=35:10 he replied. •He said, 'No longer are you to be called Jacob, but Israel since you 29 28
have shown your strength [f] against God and men and have prevailed.' •Then Jacob 30 29
Jg 13:17seq. asked, 'Please tell me your name.' He replied, 'Why do you ask my name?' With
that, he blessed him there.

Ex 33:20i Jacob named the place Peniel, 'Because I have seen God face to face,' he said, 31 30
'and have survived.' [g] •The sun rose as he passed Peniel, limping from his hip. 32 31

32 33 That is why to this day the Israelites do not eat the thigh sinew which is at the hip socket: [h] because he had struck Jacob at the hip socket on the thigh sinew.

The meeting with Esau [a]

1 33 Looking up, Jacob saw Esau coming and with him four hundred men. He then divided the children between Leah, Rachel and the two slave-girls.
2 He put the slave-girls and their children in front, with Leah and her children
3 following, and Rachel and Joseph behind. ·He himself went ahead of them and
4 bowed to the ground seven times, until he reached his brother. ·But Esau ran to meet him, took him in his arms, threw himself on his neck and wept as he kissed
5 him. ·Then looking up he saw the women and children. 'Who are these with you?' he asked. Jacob answered, 'The children whom God has bestowed on your ser-
6 vant.' ·The slave-girls then came up with their children, and they all bowed low.
7 Then Leah too came up with her children, and they all bowed low. Finally Rachel and Joseph came up and bowed low.
8 Esau asked, 'What was the purpose of that whole camp I just met?' [b] 'To win my
9 lord's favour,' he replied. ·'Brother, I have plenty,' Esau answered, 'keep what is
10 yours.' ·Jacob protested, 'No, if I have won your favour, please accept the gift I offer, for in fact I have come into your presence as into the presence of God, [c] since
11 you have received me kindly. ·So accept the gift I have brought for you, since God has been generous to me and I have all I need.' And he urged him, and Esau accepted.

Jacob parts company with Esau [d]

12, 13 Esau said, 'Let us break camp and move off; I shall go beside you.' ·But Jacob replied, 'As my lord knows, the children are weak, and the sheep and cows which have calved make it hard for me. If they are driven too hard, even for one day, the
14 whole drove will die. ·May it please my lord to go on ahead of his servant. For my part, I shall move at a slower pace, to suit the flock I am driving and the children,
15 until I join my lord in Seir.' ·Esau then said, 'At least let me leave you some of the people who are with me.' 'What for?' Jacob asked. 'Please indulge me, my lord!'
16, 17 So that day Esau turned back towards Seir, ·but Jacob made his way to Succoth, where he built himself a house and made shelters for his livestock; that is why the place was given the name of Succoth. [e]

Jacob arrives at Shechem [f]

12:6
Jos 24:1b
Jn 4:6

18 Jacob arrived safely at the town of Shechem in Canaanite territory, on his return

32 **a.** *Mahaneh* 'camp' explains the name *mahanaim*. Here, in the dual form, it means 'two camps', to which allusion is made in vv. 8 and 11. • vv. 1–3 are Elohistic.

b. Jacob, having reached Esau's territory, takes the usual precautions of a caravan approaching hostile country. These precautions are described in two ways, one following the Yahwistic tradition, vv. 4–14[a], the other the Elohistic, vv. 14[b]–22. Both traditions agree on Jacob's meek demeanour before Esau, in accordance with 27:41–45 and with what has been said of the two brothers' characters in 25:27 and 27:40.

c. After 'cattle', Hebr. adds 'and the camels'; Gk omits.

d. This enigmatic story, probably Yahwistic, speaks of a physical struggle, a wrestling with God from which Jacob seems to emerge victor. Jacob recognises the supernatural character of his adversary and extorts a blessing from him. The text, however, avoids using the name of Yahweh and the unknown antagonist will not give his name. The author has made use of an old story as a means of explaining the name Peniel by *peni'el* ('face of God') and the origin of the name Israel. At the same time he gives the story a religious significance: the patriarch holds fast to God and forces from him a blessing; henceforth all who bear Israel's name will have a claim on God.

e. lit. 'a man'.

f. The meaning given by the versions to the verb *sarah* which is found only here and in Ho 12:5. The probable meaning of Israel is 'May God show his strength!', but it is here explained: 'He has shown his strength against God', a popular etymology. This change of name is also mentioned at 35:10, where it seems to be more primitive. It possibly indicates the fusion of two different tribal groups, that of 'Jacob' and that of 'Israel', *see* 33:20: 'El, God of Israel'.

g. To see God is death to a human being; to do so and survive is a sign of special favour, *see* Ex 33:20i.

h. There is no mention of this ancient food-law elsewhere in the Bible.

33 **a.** Narrative, for the most part Yahwistic, continuing that of 32:4–14[a].

b. Not the groups of 32:14[b]–22 (Elohistic tradition) but the first camp of 32:8; Jacob had despaired of it, 32:9, and is now only too glad to offer it as a gift.

c. Another allusion to the name 'Peniel', 'face of God', 32:31.

d. Jacob mistrusts Esau and, letting him go on ahead, takes another direction himself. Yahwistic tradition.

e. Probable location: Tell Akhsas in the Jordan Valley. The name means a shelter made of branches.

f. v. 18 is Priestly; vv. 19–20 are Elohistic.

from Paddan-Aram. He encamped opposite the town ·and for one hundred pieces 19
23 of silver he bought from the sons of Hamor father of Shechem the piece of land on
Jos 24:32 which he had pitched his tent. ·There he erected an altar which he called 'El, God 20
of Israel'.

The rape of Dinah [a]

34 Dinah, who was Jacob's daughter by Leah, went out to visit some of the 1
women of that region. ·Shechem son of Hamor the Hivite, [b] headman of the 2
region, saw her, seized her and forced her to sleep with him. ·He was captivated by 3
Dinah daughter of Jacob; he fell in love with the girl and tried to win her heart.
Accordingly Shechem said to his father Hamor, 'Get me this girl; I want to marry 4
her.' ·Meanwhile, Jacob had heard how his daughter Dinah had been dishonoured, 5
but since his sons were out in the countryside with his livestock, Jacob said nothing
until they came back.

A matrimonial alliance with the Shechemites

Hamor father of Shechem was visiting Jacob to discuss the matter with him, 6
when Jacob's sons returned from the countryside and heard the news; the men 7
were outraged and infuriated that Shechem had insulted Israel by sleeping with
Jacob's daughter—a thing totally unacceptable. ·Hamor reasoned with them as 8
follows, 'My son Shechem's heart is set on your daughter. Please allow her to
marry him. ·Intermarry with us; give us your daughters and take our daughters for 9
yourselves. ·We can live together, and the country will be open to you, for you to 10
live in, and move about in, and acquire holdings.' ·Then Shechem addressed the 11
girl's father and brothers, 'Grant me this favour, and I will give you whatever you
Ex 22:15–16, 15d ask. ·Demand as high a bride-price from me as you please, and I will pay as much 12
as you ask. Only let me marry the girl.'

Jacob's sons gave Shechem and his father Hamor a crafty answer, speaking as 13
they did because he had dishonoured their sister Dinah. ·'We cannot do this,' they 14
said to them. 'To give our sister to an uncircumcised man would be a disgrace for
17:10d us. ·We can agree only on one condition: that you become like us by circumcising 15
all your males. ·Then we will give you our daughters, taking yours for ourselves; 16
and we will stay with you to make one nation. ·But if you will not agree to our 17
terms about being circumcised, we shall take our daughter and go.' ·Hamor and 18
Shechem son of Hamor were pleased with what they heard. ·The young man did 19
not hesitate about doing this, for he was deeply in love with Jacob's daughter.
Moreover he was the most respected member of his entire family.

Hamor and his son Shechem went to the gate of their town and spoke to their 20
fellow-townsmen as follows, ·'These men are friendly; let them settle in the region 21
and move about freely in it; there is plenty of room here for them; we shall marry
their daughters and give our daughters to them. ·But these men will agree to settle 22
with us and become a single nation only on this condition: that all our males be
circumcised like them. ·Will not the livestock they own, all their animals, become 23
ours? Then let us give our assent to this, so that they can settle with us.'
All the citizens of the town agreed to the proposal made by Hamor and his son 24
Shechem, and all the males were circumcised. [c]

The treacherous revenge of Simeon and Levi

49:5–6, 5c Now on the third day, when the men were still in pain, Jacob's two sons Simeon 25
and Levi, Dinah's brothers, each took his sword and advanced unopposed against
the town and slaughtered all the males. ·They killed Hamor and his son Shechem 26
with the sword, removed Dinah from Shechem's house and came away. ·When 27
Jacob's other sons came on the slain, they pillaged the town in reprisal for the
dishonouring of their sister. ·They seized their flocks, cattle, donkeys, everything 28
else in the town and in the countryside, ·and all their possessions. They took all 29
their children and wives captive and looted everything to be found in the houses.

30 Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, 'You have done me an ill turn by bringing me
into bad odour with the people of the region, the Canaanites and the Perizzites. I 13:7
have few men, whereas they will unite against me to defeat me and destroy me and
31 my family.' •They retorted, 'Should our sister be treated like a whore?'

Jacob at Bethel [a]

1 35 God said to Jacob, 'Move on, go to Bethel and settle there. Make an altar
there for the God who appeared to you when you were fleeing from your 28:10–22
brother Esau.'
2 Jacob said to his family and to all who were with him, 'Get rid of the foreign gods
3 you have with you; [b] cleanse yourselves, and change your clothes. [c] •We must move
on and go to Bethel. There I shall make an altar for the God who heard me when I
4 was in distress, and gave me his help on the journey I made.' •They gave Jacob all
the foreign gods in their possession, and the earrings that they were wearing. Jacob
5 buried them under the oak tree near Shechem. •They broke camp; a divine terror 12:6
struck the towns round about, and no one pursued the sons of Jacob. 34:30
6 When Jacob arrived at Luz in Canaan—that is, Bethel—and all the people with 28:19
7 him, •he built an altar there and named the place El-Bethel, [d] since it was there that
8 God had appeared [e] to him when he was fleeing from his brother. •Deborah, who
had been Rebekah's nurse, died and was buried below Bethel, under the oak tree;
so they named it the Oak of Tears.
9 God again appeared to Jacob on his return from Paddan-Aram, and blessed
10 him. •God said to him, 'Your name is Jacob, but from now on you will be called 32:29
not Jacob but Israel.' Thus he came by the name Israel.
11 God said to him, 'I am El Shaddai. Be fruitful and multiply. A nation, indeed an 17:1b
assembly of nations, will descend from you, and kings will issue from your loins.
12 The country which I gave to Abraham and Isaac, I now give to you; and this 12:7+
13 country I shall give to your descendants after you.' •Then God went up from him. [f]
14 Jacob raised a monument at the spot where he had spoken to him, a standing-
15 stone, on which he made a libation and poured oil. •Jacob named the place Bethel
where God had spoken to him.

The birth of Benjamin and the death of Rachel

16 They left Bethel, and while they were still some distance from Ephrath, Rachel
17 went into labour, and her pains were severe. •When her labour was at its hardest,
18 the midwife said to her, 'Do not worry, this is going to be another boy.' •At the
moment when she breathed her last, for she was dying, she named him Ben-Oni.
19 His father, however, named him Benjamin. [g] •So Rachel died and was buried on
20 the road to Ephrath, now Bethlehem. •Jacob raised a monument on her grave, Mi 5:1a
that same monument of Rachel's Tomb which is there today.

34 **a.** This chapter combines a domestic and a clan anecdote. In the first, Shechem seduces Dinah and then asks her in marriage; he accepts the required circumcision but is treacherously slain by Simeon and Levi. In the second, Hamor, father of Shechem, proposes a general matrimonial alliance with the sons of Jacob; this is accepted on condition that the sons of Hamor are circumcised; the agreement is broken by the sons of Jacob who sack the town and slaughter its inhabitants. Attribution, whether to Yahwistic or Elohistic source, is arbitrary. The story preserves the memory of an ill-fated attempt by certain Hebrew tribal groups to gain a foothold in the Shechem area in patriarchal times, *see* 49:5–7.

b. One of the ancient races of Canaan, 10:17.

c. At the end of the v., Hebr. repeats 'all the citizens', lit. 'all who go out through the gate of his city'; Gk omits.

35 **a.** This chapter tells of Jacob's journey from Shechem to Hebron, using this as a framework for traditions drawn from various sources.

b. This means more than discarding the domestic idols Rachel had carried off, 31:19, 34; as in Jos 24 (also at Shechem), it is an act of faith in the one God of Israel.

c. Purification preparatory to the Bethel pilgrimage; *see* Ex 19:10.

d. 'El-Bethel': God Bethel or God of Bethel, *see* 28:18c. The versions read 'Bethel'.

e. In Hebr. this verb is in the plural, possibly referring to the celestial beings of 28:12.

f. The text adds 'at the spot where he had spoken to him', dittography of following v.

g. Ben-Oni: 'son of my sorrow'. The father changes this name of ill omen to Benjamin: 'son of the right hand = son of happy omen'.

Reuben's incest

Israel left and pitched his tent beyond Migdal-Eder. ·While Israel was living in 21, 22
49:3–4 that district, Reuben went and slept with Bilhah his father's concubine, and Israel found out.

The twelve sons of Jacob [h]

29:31–30:24 The sons of Jacob were now twelve. ·The sons of Leah: Jacob's eldest son Reuben, 23
then Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar and Zebulun. ·The sons of Rachel: Joseph and 24
Benjamin. ·The sons of Bilhah, Rachel's slave-girl: Dan and Naphtali. 25
The sons of Zilpah, Leah's slave-girl: Gad and Asher. These were the sons born 26
to Jacob in Paddan-Aram.

The death of Isaac [i]

Jacob came home to his father Isaac at Mamre, at Kiriath-Arba—now Hebron— 27
where Abraham and Isaac had stayed. ·Isaac was one hundred and eighty years 28
old ·when he breathed his last. He died and was gathered to his people, an old man 29
who had enjoyed his full span of life. His sons Esau and Jacob buried him.

Esau's wives and children in Canaan [a]

26:34;28:9 **36** These are the descendants of Esau, that is, Edom. ·Esau chose his wives 1, 2
from the women of Canaan: Adah daughter of Elon the Hittite, Oholibamah daughter of Anah, son of Zibeon the Horite, [b] ·Basemath daughter of Ishmael 3
and sister of Nebaioth. ·Adah bore Eliphaz to Esau, Basemath bore Reuel, 4
Oholibamah bore Jeush, Jalam and Korah. These were the sons of Esau born to 5
him in Canaan.

Esau's migration [c]

Esau took his wives, his sons and daughters, all the members of his household, his 6
livestock, all his cattle and all the goods he had acquired in Canaan and left for
32:4 Seir, [d] away from his brother Jacob. ·For they had acquired too much to live 7
13:5–9 together. The land in which they were at that time could not support them both
because of their livestock. ·That is why Edom settled in the mountainous region of 8
Seir. Esau is Edom.

Esau's descendants in Seir

These are the descendants of Esau, ancestor of Edom, in the mountainous region 9
of Seir.

=36:15–19 1 Ch 1:35seq. These are the names of Esau's sons: Eliphaz son of Esau's wife Adah, and Reuel 10
son of Esau's wife Basemath.

The sons of Eliphaz were: Teman, Omar, Zepho, Gatam and Kenaz. ·Eliphaz 11, 12
Ex 17:8d son of Esau had Timna for concubine and she bore him Amalek. These were the sons of Esau's wife Adah.

These were the sons of Reuel: Nahath, Zerah, Shammah and Mizzah. These 13
were the sons of Esau's wife Basemath.

And these were the sons of Esau's wife Oholibamah daughter of Anah, son of 14
Zibeon: she bore him Jeush, Jalam and Korah.

The chieftains of Edom

=36:9–14 These are the chieftains of Esau. 15

The descendants of Eliphaz, Esau's eldest son: the chieftains of Teman, Omar, Zepho, Kenaz, [e] ·Gatam and Amalek. These are the chieftains of Eliphaz in Edom 16
and are descended from Adah.

The descendants of Esau's son Reuel: the chieftains of Nahath, Zerah, Shammah 17

and Mizzah. These are the chieftains of Reuel in Edom and are descended from Esau's wife Basemath.

18 The descendants of Esau's wife Oholibamah: the chieftains of Jeush, Jalam and Korah. These are the chieftains of Esau's wife Oholibamah daughter of Anah.

19 These were the sons of Esau—that is, Edom—and these are their chieftains.

The descendants of Seir the Horite[f]

20 These are the sons of Seir the Horite, natives of the country: Lotan, Shobal,
21 Zibeon, Anah, ·Dishon, Ezer and Dishan; these were the Horite chieftains de-
22 scended from Seir, in Edom. ·The sons of Lotan were Hori and Hemam, and
23 Lotan's sister was Timna. ·These are the sons of Shobal: Alvan, Manahath, Ebal,
24 Shepho and Onam. ·These are the sons of Zibeon: Aiah, Anah—the Anah who found the hot springs in the desert while pasturing his father Zibeon's donkeys.
25 These are the children of Anah: Dishon, and Oholibamah daughter of Anah.
26, 27 These are the sons of Dishon: Hemdan, Eshban, Ithran and Cheran. ·These
28 are the sons of Ezer: Bilhan, Zaavan and Akan. ·These are the sons of Dishan: Uz and Aran.

29 These are the Horite chieftains: the chieftains of Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah,
30 Dishon, Ezer and Dishan. These are the chieftains of the Horites, by their clans,[g] in Seir.

The kings of Edom

‖1 Ch 1:43–50

31, 32 These are the kings who reigned in Edom before an Israelite king.[h] ·In Edom Nb 20:14
33 reigned Bela son of Beor; his city was called Dinhabah. ·Bela died and Jobab son
34 of Zerah, from Bozrah, succeeded. ·Jobab died and Husham from the land of the
35 Temanites succeeded. ·Husham died and Hadad son of Bedad succeeded; he
36 defeated the Midianites in Moab, and his city was called Avith. ·Hadad died and
37 Samlah of Masrekah succeeded. ·Samlah died and Shaul of Rehoboth-ha-Nahar
38, 39 succeeded. ·Shaul died and Baal-Hanan son of Achbor succeeded. ·Baal-Hanan died and Hadad[i] succeeded; his city was called Pau and his wife's name was Mehetabel daughter of Matred, from Mezahab.

More chieftains of Edom

‖1 Ch 1:51–54

40 These are the names of the chieftains of Esau—according to their clans and
41 localities: the chieftains of Timna, Alvah, Jetheth, ·Oholibamah, Elah, Pinon,
42, 43 Kenaz, Teman, Mibzar, ·Magdiel and Iram. These are the chieftains of Edom, as settled in the territory which they own. Esau was Edom's ancestor.

1 **37** But Jacob settled in the land where his father had stayed, the land of Canaan.

h. The list comes from the Priestly source.

i. This closes the story of Isaac in the Priestly tradition which defers his death till now (*see* 27:1–2), identifies Mamre with Hebron, and does not mention the dispute with Esau, *see* 36:6 seq. and 27:46–28:2.

36 a. This is the last we shall hear of Esau. Ch. 36 is a collection of traditions (or documents) of Israelitic or Edomite origin; they deal with Esau's descendants, but there is no attempt to force them into agreement either among themselves or with what has been already said (*see* marginal references).

b. 'son of Zibeon the Horite', following versions and v. 20; 'daughter of Zibeon the Hivite' Hebr. • Similarly, we emend 'daughter' to 'son' at v. 14.

c. The Priestly tradition, which does not speak of the quarrel between Jacob and Esau, 35:27–29i, here explains their separation in the same way as it explained that of Abraham and Lot and almost in the same terms.

d. 'the land of Seir' Syr.; 'the land' Hebr.

e. Hebr. adds 'the chieftains of Korah', which presumably comes from v. 18; Sam. omits.

f. The Horites, Dt 2:12d, were the ancient inhabitants of Seir; Seir is here personified as their ancestor. The Horites were dispossessed by the Edomites, Dt 2:12, 22.

g. 'clans' Gk; 'chieftains' Hebr.

h. i.e. 'before an Israelite king reigned over Edom' rather than 'before any king reigned in Israel' (as the Gk understood it).

i. 'Hadad' 1 Ch 1:50 and versions; 'Hadar' Hebr.

IV: THE STORY OF JOSEPH[a]

Joseph and his brothers

This is the story of Joseph.[b] 2

Joseph was seventeen years old. As he was young, he was shepherding the flock with his brothers, with the sons of his father's wives, Bilhah and Zilpah; and Joseph brought his father bad reports about them.

Jacob loved Joseph more than all his other sons, for he was the son of his old age, 3
37:23,31–33 and he had a decorated tunic made for him. 4 But his brothers, seeing how much more his father loved him than all his other sons,[c] came to hate him so much that they could not say a civil word to him.

Now Joseph had a dream,[d] and he repeated it to his brothers, who then hated 5
him more than ever. 6 'Listen', he said, 'to the dream I had. 7 We were binding 6, 7
sheaves in the field, when my sheaf suddenly rose and stood upright, and then your sheaves gathered round and bowed to my sheaf.' 8 'So you want to be king over us,' 8
his brothers retorted, 'you want to lord it over us?' And they hated him even more, on account of his dreams and of what he said. 9 He had another dream which he 9
recounted to his brothers. 'Look, I have had another dream,' he said. 'There were the sun, the moon and eleven stars, bowing down to me.' 10 He told his father and 10
brothers, and his father scolded him. 'A fine dream to have!' he said to him. 'Are all of us then, myself, your mother[e] and your brothers, to come and bow to the
Dn 7:28 Lk 2:19,51 ground before you?' 11 His brothers held it against him, but his father pondered the 11
matter.

Joseph sold by his brothers[f]

↗Ws 10:13 ↗Ac 7:9

His brothers went to pasture their father's flock at Shechem. 12 Then Israel said to 12, 13
Joseph, 'Your brothers are with the flock at Shechem, aren't they? Come, I am going to send you to them.' 'I am ready,' he replied. 13 He said to him, 'Go and see 14
how your brothers and the flock are doing, and bring me word.' He sent him from the valley of Hebron, and Joseph arrived at Shechem.

A man found him wandering in the countryside and asked him, 'What are you 15
looking for?' 16 'I am looking for my brothers,' he replied. 'Please tell me where they 16
are pasturing their flock.' 17 The man answered, 'They have moved on from here; 17
indeed I heard them say, "Let us go to Dothan." ' So Joseph went after his brothers and found them at Dothan.

They saw him in the distance, and before he reached them they made a plot to 18
kill him. 19 'Here comes that dreamer,' they said to one another. 20 'Come on, let 19, 20
us kill him now and throw him down one of the storage-wells; we can say that some wild animal has devoured him. Then we shall see what becomes of his dreams.'

But Reuben heard, and he saved him from their clutches. 'We must not take his 21
life,' he said. 22 'Shed no blood,' said Reuben to them, 'throw him down that well 22
out in the desert, but do not kill him yourselves'—intending to save him from them and to restore him to his father. 23 So, when Joseph reached his brothers, they pulled 23
off his tunic, the decorated tunic which he was wearing, 24 and catching hold of him, 24
threw him into the well. The well was empty, with no water in it. 25 They then sat 25
down to eat.

Looking up, they saw a group of Ishmaelites who were coming from Gilead, their camels laden with gum tragacanth, balsam and resin, which they were taking to Egypt. 26 Then Judah said to his brothers, 'What do we gain by killing our brother 26
and covering up his blood?[g] 27 Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, then we shall 27
4:10 Jb 16:18 Is 26:21 Ezk 24:7 not have laid hands on him ourselves. After all, he is our brother, and our own flesh.' His brothers agreed.

Now some Midianite merchants were passing, and they pulled Joseph out of the 28
well. They sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver, and these men took Joseph to Egypt. 29 When Reuben went back to the well, there was no 29

30 sign of Joseph. Tearing his clothes, ·he went back to his brothers. 'The boy has
gone,' he said. 'What am I going to do?'
31 They took Joseph's tunic and, slaughtering a goat, dipped the tunic in the blood.
32 Then they sent off the decorated tunic and had it taken to their father, with the
message, 'This is what we have found. Do you recognise it as your son's tunic or
33 not?' ·He recognised it and cried, 'My son's tunic! A wild animal has devoured
34 him! Joseph has been torn to pieces!' ·Tearing his clothes and putting sackcloth
35 round his waist, Jacob mourned his son for many days. ·All his sons and daughters
tried to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. 'No,' he said, 'I will go down Jr 31:15
to Sheol in mourning and join my son.' Thus his father wept for him.
36 Meanwhile the Midianites had sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, one of Pharaoh's
officials and commander of the guard.

The story of Judah and Tamar [a]

1 38 It happened at about that time that Judah left his brothers, to go down and
2 settle with a certain Adullamite called Hirah. ·There Judah saw the daugh-
3 ter of a Canaanite called Shua. He made her his wife and slept with her. ·She
4 conceived and gave birth to a son whom she named Er. ·She conceived again and
5 gave birth to a son whom she named Onan. ·Yet again she gave birth to a son
whom she named Shelah. She was at Chezib when she gave birth to him.
6, 7 Judah took a wife for his first-born Er, and her name was Tamar. ·But Er,
8 Judah's first-born, offended Yahweh, and Yahweh killed him. ·Then Judah said to
Onan, 'Take your brother's wife, and do your duty as her brother-in-law, [b] to Dt 25:5 Rt 1:11,13
9 maintain your brother's line.' ·But Onan, knowing that the line would not count as Mt 22:24
his, spilt his seed on the ground every time he slept with his brother's wife, to avoid
10 providing offspring for his brother. ·What he did was offensive to Yahweh, [c] who
11 killed him too. ·Then Judah said to his daughter-in-law Tamar, 'Go home [d] as a
widow to your father, until my son Shelah grows up,' for he was thinking, 'He must
not die like his brothers.' So Tamar went home to her father.
12 A long time passed, and then Shua's daughter, the wife of Judah, died. After
Judah had been comforted [e] he went up to Timnah for the shearing of his sheep, he
13 and his friend Hirah the Adullamite. ·When Tamar was told, 'Look, your father-
14 in-law is going up to Timnah for the shearing of his sheep,' ·she changed out of her
widow's clothes, wrapped a veil around her to disguise herself, and sat down at the

37 **a.** With the exception of ch. 38 and 49 the whole of this final section of Gn is a biography of Joseph. This narrative, unlike what has gone before, proceeds without any visible divine intervention or new revelation but is a sustained lesson nonetheless, explicitly stated in the concluding 50:20 (*see* earlier 45:5–8): Providence thwarts human plots and turns malice to advantage. Not only is Joseph rescued, but his brothers' crime becomes instrumental in God's plan: the arrival of Jacob's sons in Egypt is the first step in the making of a chosen people. This theme of salvation ('the survival of a numerous people', 50:20) runs through the whole of the Old Testament to be enriched in the New. Here, as later with the Exodus, we have a foreshadowing of the redemption. Not a few details in the narrative bear witness to familiarity with Egyptian affairs and customs as known to us from Egyptian sources; but the parallels to which a date can be assigned relate to the period when these traditions were edited and not to that of Jacob's migration to Egypt, which seems to have occurred in about the 17th century BC at the time of the Hyksos.

b. v. 2 belongs to a Priestly tradition parallel to the Yahwistic tradition of vv. 3–11.

c. 'his other sons' Gk, Sam.; 'his brothers' Hebr.

d. Dreams play a large part in Joseph's story, ch. 40–41; they are not divine apparitions as in 20:3; 28:12 seq.; 31:11, 24; 1 K 3:5; *see* Nb 12:6; Si 34:1a, but premonitions.

e. According to 35:19, Rachel was already dead. The narrative seems to be following another tradition which put Rachel's death and Benjamin's birth later, v. 3 and 43:29.

f. A combination of Elohistic and Yahwistic sources is discernible here. According to the former, the sons 'of Jacob' are for killing Joseph, but Reuben, hoping to rescue him later, persuades them to throw him into a storage-well instead; Midianite merchants who, unknown to the brothers are passing that way, extricate Joseph and take him to Egypt. According to the second, the sons 'of Israel' are for killing Joseph, but Judah suggests selling him to a party of Ishmaelites on their way to Egypt. On 'Jacob-Israel', *see* 32:29f.

g. Lest the victim's blood should cry to heaven. 4:10, the murderer covered it with earth, Jb 16:18f; Ezk 24:7.

38 **a.** Yahwistic tradition relating to the origin of the tribe of Judah. Judah dwells apart from his brothers and he associates with the Canaanites. From his union with his daughter-in-law Tamar come the clans of Perez and Zerah, Nb 26:20–21; 1 Ch 2:4 seq.; Perez is the ancestor of David, Rt 4:18 seq., and consequently of the Messiah, Mt 1:3; Lk 3:33. In this way we learn of the mixture of strains in Judah and of its singular destiny among the other tribes (Dt 33:7; Jg 1:3; and *see* all the history that follows).

b. According to 'levirate' law, *see* Dt 25:5a.

c. Yahweh condemns Onan for failing to put his duty to the family and nation before his own self-interest.

d. 'Go home', 'went home' conj.; 'stay', 'stayed' Hebr. with the same consonants.

e. i.e. 'when he had observed all mourning rites', *see* Jr 16:7.

entrance to Enaim, which is on the way to Timnah; for she saw that, although Shelah was grown up, she had not been given to him as his wife.[f]

Judah, seeing her, took her for a prostitute, since her face was veiled. ·Going up 15. 16
to her on the road, he said, 'Here, let me sleep with you.' He did not know that she was his daughter-in-law. 'What will you give me for sleeping with you?' she asked. 'I will send you a kid from the flock,' he said. 'Agreed, if you give me a pledge 17
until you send it,' she replied. ·'What pledge shall I give you?' he asked. 'Your seal 18
and cord and the staff you are holding,'[g] she replied. He gave them to her and slept with her, and she conceived by him. ·Then she got up and left him and, taking off 19
her veil, resumed her widow's weeds.

Judah sent the kid by his friend the Adullamite, to recover the pledge from the 20
woman. But he did not find her. ·He enquired from the men of the place, 'Where 21
is the prostitute[h] who was by the roadside at Enaim?' 'There has been no prostitute there,' they answered. ·So returning to Judah he said, 'I did not find her. What is 22
more, the men of the place told me there had been no prostitute there.' ·'Let her 23
keep the things,' Judah said, 'or we shall become a laughing-stock. At least I sent her this kid, even though you did not find her.'

About three months later, Judah was told, 'Your daughter-in-law has played the 24
harlot; furthermore, she is pregnant, as a result of her misconduct.' 'Bring her out,' Judah ordered, 'and let her be burnt alive!'[i] ·But as she was being led off, she sent 25
word to her father-in-law, 'It was the owner of these who made me pregnant. Please verify', she said, 'whose seal and cord and staff these are.' ·Judah recognised 26
them and said, 'She was right and I was wrong, since I did not give her to my son Shelah.' He had no further intercourse with her.

When the time for her confinement came, there were twins in her womb! 27
During the delivery, one of them put out a hand, and the midwife caught it and 28
tied a scarlet thread to it, indicating that this was the first to arrive. ·Whereupon, 29
he drew back his hand, and out came his brother. Then she said, 'What a breach
Rt 4:12 Mt 1:3 Lk 3:33 you have opened for yourself!' So he was named Perez. ·Then his brother came 30
out with the scarlet thread on his hand, so he was named Zerah.[j]

Joseph's early days in Egypt[a]

39 Now Joseph had been taken down into Egypt. Potiphar the Egyptian, one 1
of Pharaoh's officials and commander of the guard, bought him from the
↗Ac 7:9 Ishmaelites who had taken him down there. ·Yahweh was with Joseph, and 2
everything he undertook was successful. He lodged in the house of his Egyptian master, ·and when his master saw how Yahweh was with him and how Yahweh 3
made everything he undertook successful, ·he was pleased with Joseph and made 4
him his personal attendant; and his master put him in charge of his household, entrusting him with all his possessions. ·And from the time he put him in charge of 5
his household and all his possessions, Yahweh blessed the Egyptian's household out of consideration for Joseph; Yahweh's blessing extended to all his possessions, both household and estate. ·So he left Joseph to handle all his possessions, and 6
with him there, concerned himself with nothing beyond the food he ate.

The attempt to seduce Joseph

Now Joseph was well built and handsome, ·and it happened some time later that 7
his master's wife cast her eyes on Joseph and said, 'Sleep with me.' ·But he refused. 8
'Look,' he said to his master's wife, 'with me here, my master does not concern himself with what happens in the house, having entrusted all his possessions to me. He himself wields no more authority in this house than I do. He has exempted 9
nothing from me except yourself, because you are his wife. How could I do anything so wicked, and sin against God?' ·Although she spoke to Joseph day after 10
day, he would not agree to sleep with her or be with her.

But one day when Joseph came into the house to do his work, and none of the 11
men of the household happened to be indoors, ·she caught hold of him by his tunic 12

and said, 'Sleep with me.' But he left the tunic in her hand, took to his heels and
13 got out. ·When she saw that he had left the tunic in her hands as he ran out,
14 she called her servants and said to them, 'Look at this! My husband brought in a
15 Hebrew to make a fool of me! He burst in on me, but I screamed, ·and when he
heard me scream, he left his tunic beside me and ran out of the house.'
16, 17 She kept his tunic by her until his master came home. ·Then she told him the
same tale, 'The Hebrew slave you brought to us burst in on me to make a fool of
18, 19 me. ·But when I screamed, he left his tunic beside me and ran away.' ·When his
master heard his wife say, 'This was how your slave treated me,' he became furious.
20 Joseph's master had him arrested and committed to the gaol where the king's Ps 105:18seq.
prisoners were kept.

Joseph in gaol

21 And there in gaol he stayed. ·But Yahweh was with Joseph. He showed him
22 faithful love and made him popular with the chief gaoler. ·The chief gaoler put
Joseph in charge of all the prisoners in the gaol, making him responsible for
23 everything done there. ·The chief gaoler did not bother about anything put in his
charge, since Yahweh was with him, and Yahweh made everything he undertook
successful.

Joseph interprets the dreams of Pharaoh's officials[a]

1 **40** It happened some time later that the king of Egypt's cup-bearer and his
2 baker offended their master the king of Egypt. ·Pharaoh was angry with his
3 two officials, the chief cup-bearer and the chief baker, ·and put them in custody in
the house of the commander of the guard, in the gaol where Joseph was a prisoner.
4 The commander of the guard assigned Joseph to them to attend to their wants,
and they remained in custody for some time.
5 Now both of them had dreams on the same night, each with its own meaning for
the cup-bearer and the baker of the king of Egypt, who were prisoners in the gaol.
6 When Joseph came to them in the morning, he saw that they looked gloomy,
7 and he asked the two officials who were in custody with him in his master's house,
8 'Why these sad looks today?' ·They replied, 'We have each had a dream, but there
is no one to interpret it.'[b] 'Are not interpretations God's business?' Joseph asked 41:16
them. 'Tell me about them.'
9 So the chief cup-bearer described his dream to Joseph, telling him, 'In my dream
10 there was a vine in front of me. ·On the vine were three branches; no sooner had it
11 budded than it blossomed, and its clusters became ripe grapes. ·I had Pharaoh's
cup in my hand; I picked the grapes and squeezed them into Pharaoh's cup, and
12 put the cup into Pharaoh's hand.' ·'This is what it means,' Joseph told him. 'The
13 three branches are three days. ·In another three days Pharaoh will lift up your head
by restoring you to your position. Then you will hand Pharaoh his cup, as you did
14 before, when you were his cup-bearer. ·But be sure to remember me when things
go well with you, and keep faith with me by kindly reminding Pharaoh about me,
15 to get me out of this house. ·I was kidnapped from the land of the Hebrews in the
first place, and even here I have done nothing to warrant being put in the dungeon.'

f. Disguised as a harlot Tamar awaits Judah by the roadside. She is prompted not by wantonness but by the desire to bear a child of her dead husband's blood. Later, v. 26, Judah will approve her conduct and future generations will praise her, Rt 4:12.

g. The seal strung on a cord, and the staff, being intrinsically personal, serve to identify the owner.

h. Strictly, 'sacred prostitute', priestess of a pagan cult; it will be remembered that the background is Canaanite.

i. Tamar, widow of Er, is—by levirate law (*see* Dt 25:5a)—the betrothed of Shelah. Hence, though she lives with her father, she is under Judah's jurisdiction and it is Judah who pronounces sentence on her adultery, Lv 20:10; Dt 22:22; *see* Jn 8:5. At a later date, ordeal by fire was reserved for the daughters of priests, Lv 21:9.

j. *Peretz* means 'breach'. The name *zerah* probably alludes to the scarlet thread.

39 a. This narrative takes up the story from ch. 37 in the Yahwistic tradition. Elohistic ch. 40 tells the same tale somewhat differently. Both traditions have been unified by means of a few editorial adjustments, here the mention of Potiphar, commander of the guard, at v. 1; *see* 37:36; 40:3.

40 a. Elohistic narrative with a few modifications.

b. The Egyptians believed that dreams foreshadowed the future.

The chief baker, seeing that the interpretation had been favourable, said to 16
Joseph, 'I too had a dream; there were three wicker trays on my head. ·In the top 17
tray there were all kinds of pastries for Pharaoh, such as a baker might make, and
the birds were eating them off the tray on my head.' ·Joseph replied as follows, 18
'This is what it means: the three trays are three days. ·In another three days 19
Pharaoh will lift up your head[c] by hanging you on a gallows, and the birds will eat
the flesh off your bones.'

And so it happened; the third day was Pharaoh's birthday and he gave a banquet 20
for all his officials. Of his officials he lifted up the head of the chief cup-bearer and
the chief baker, ·the chief cup-bearer by restoring him to his cup-bearing, so that 21
he again handed Pharaoh his cup; ·and by hanging the chief baker, as Joseph had 22
explained to them. ·But the chief cup-bearer did not remember Joseph; he had 23
forgotten him.

Pharaoh's dreams[a]

41 Two years later it happened that Pharaoh had a dream: there he was, 1
standing by the Nile, ·and there, coming up from the Nile, were seven cows, 2
sleek and fat, and they began to feed among the rushes. ·And then seven other 3
cows, wretched and lean, came up from the Nile, behind them; and these went
over and stood beside the other cows on the bank of the Nile. ·The wretched and 4
lean cows ate the seven sleek and fat cows. Then Pharaoh woke up.

He fell asleep and dreamed a second time: there, growing on one stalk, 5
were seven ears of grain, full and ripe. ·And then sprouting up, behind them, 6
came seven ears of grain, meagre and scorched by the east wind. ·The scanty 7
ears of grain swallowed the seven full and ripe ears of grain. Then Pharaoh woke
up; it had been a dream.

Ex 7:11,22; 8:1–3 In the morning Pharaoh, feeling disturbed, had all the magicians and wise men 8
of Egypt summoned to him. Pharaoh told them his dream, but there was no one to
interpret it for Pharaoh.[b] ·Then the chief cup-bearer addressed Pharaoh, 'Today, 9
I recall having been at fault. ·When Pharaoh was angry with his servants, he put 10
myself and the chief baker in custody in the house of the commander of the guard.
We had a dream on the same night, he and I, and each man's dream had a 11
meaning for himself. ·There was a young Hebrew with us, one of the slaves 12
belonging to the commander of the guard. We told our dreams to him and he
interpreted them for us, telling each of us what his dream meant. ·It turned out 13
exactly according to his interpretation: I was restored to my position, but the other
man was hanged.'

Then Pharaoh had Joseph summoned, and they hurried him from the dungeon. 14
He shaved and changed his clothes, and presented himself before Pharaoh.
Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'I have had a dream, and there is no one to interpret it. 15
But I have heard it said of you that you can interpret a dream the instant you hear
40:8 it.' ·'Not I,' Joseph replied to Pharaoh, 'God will give Pharaoh a favourable 16
answer.'

So Pharaoh told Joseph, 'In my dream there I was, standing on the bank of the 17
Nile. ·And there were seven cows, fat and sleek, coming up out of the Nile, and 18
they began to feed among the rushes. ·And then seven other cows came up, behind 19
them, starved, very wretched and lean; I have never seen such poor cows in all
Egypt. ·The lean and wretched cows ate up the first seven fat cows. ·But when they 20, 21
had eaten them up, it was impossible to tell they had eaten them, for they looked
as wretched as ever. Then I woke up. ·And then again in my dream, there, growing 22
on one stalk, were seven ears of grain, beautifully ripe; ·but then sprouting up 23
behind them came seven ears of grain, withered, meagre and scorched by the east
wind. ·Then the shrivelled ears of grain swallowed the seven ripe ears of grain. I 24
have told the magicians, but no one has given me the answer.'

Joseph said to Pharaoh, 'Pharaoh's dreams are one and the same: God has 25
revealed to Pharaoh what he is going to do. ·The seven fine cows are seven years 26

27 and the seven ripe ears of grain are seven years; it is one and the same dream. ·The
seven gaunt and lean cows coming up behind them are seven years, as are
the seven shrivelled[c] ears of grain scorched by the east wind: there will be seven
28 years of famine. ·It is as I have told Pharaoh: God has revealed to Pharaoh what he
29 is going to do. ·Seven years are coming, bringing great plenty to the whole of
30 Egypt, ·but seven years of famine will follow them, when all the plenty in Egypt
31 will be forgotten, and famine will exhaust the land. ·The famine that is to follow
will be so very severe that no one will remember what plenty the country used to
32 enjoy. ·The reason why Pharaoh had the same dream twice is that the event is
already determined by God, and God will shortly bring it about.
33 'Pharaoh should now find someone intelligent and wise to govern Egypt.
34 Pharaoh should take action and appoint supervisors for the country, and impose
35 a tax of one-fifth on Egypt during the seven years of plenty. ·They will collect all
the food produced during these good years that are coming, and store the grain
36 under Pharaoh's authority, putting it in the towns and keeping it. ·This food will
form a reserve for the country against the seven years of famine which are coming
on Egypt, so that the country will not be destroyed by the famine.'

Joseph's promotion

37, 38 Pharaoh and all his ministers approved of what he had said. ·Then Pharaoh asked
his ministers, 'Can we find anyone else endowed with the spirit of God, like him?' Dn 13:45
39 So Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'Since God has given you knowledge of all this, there
40 can be no one as intelligent and wise as you. ·You shall be my chancellor, and all Ac 7:10
my people shall respect your orders; only this throne shall set me above you.' Ps 105:21seq.
41 Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'I hereby make you governor of the whole of Egypt.'
42 Pharaoh took the ring from his hand and put it on Joseph's. He dressed him in
43 robes of fine linen and put a gold chain round his neck. ·He made him ride in the
best chariot he had after his own, and they shouted '*Abrek*!'[d] ahead of him. Thus
he became governor of the whole of Egypt.
44 Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'Although I am Pharaoh, no one is to move hand or foot
45 without your permission throughout Egypt.' ·Pharaoh named Joseph Zaphenath-
Paneah, and gave him Asenath daughter of Potiphera, priest of On,[e] to be his wife.
And Joseph began to journey all over Egypt.
46 Joseph was thirty years old when he entered the service of Pharaoh king of
Egypt. After leaving Pharaoh's presence, Joseph travelled throughout the length
47 and breadth of Egypt. ·During the seven years of plenty, the soil yielded gener-
48 ously. ·He collected all the food of the seven years while there was an abundance[f]
in Egypt, and stored the food in the towns, placing in each the food from the
49 surrounding countryside. ·Joseph gathered in grain like the sand of the sea, in such
quantity that he gave up keeping count, since it was past accounting.

Joseph's sons

50 Before the year of famine came, two sons were born to Joseph: Asenath daughter

c. An expression that usually has a favourable sense, *see* v. 13; 2 K 25:27; Jr 52:31. Here, however, there is a grim play on words: the head of the cup-bearer is to be 'lifted up': he will be pardoned, v. 13. The head of the baker will also be 'lifted up': he is to be hanged. A gloss here adds 'from you'. *See also* v. 20.

41 a. This narrative follows on the preceding and is from the same (Elohistic) source with which, however, especially from v. 33 onwards, it combines remnants of a parallel tradition ascribed to the Yahwistic source.

b. Egypt was the land of magicians and sages, Ex 7:11, 22; 1 K 5:10; Is 19:11–13, but the wisdom God gives his servants eclipses theirs. This theme recurs in the story of Moses, Ex 7–8; *see*, in a different setting, Dn 2.

c. 'shrivelled' versions; 'empty' Hebr.

d. The author imagines this investiture as conforming to what he has heard of Egyptian court-life: Joseph is made viceroy of Egypt: he is second only to the Pharaoh; his house is the centre of administration and he is keeper of the king's seal. The runners before his chariot-of-state cry *Abrek*, which suggests the Egyptian *ib-r-q* 'thy heart to thee', 'beware', 'make way'.

e. Egyptian names: *zaphenat-paneah* 'God says: he is living'; *asenat* 'belonging to the goddess Neit'; *potiphera*, the same name as the Potiphar of 37:36 = 'Gift of Ra' (the sun-god). Joseph's father-in-law is priest of On = Heliopolis, centre of Ra-worship; its priesthood played an important part in the politics of the country. Joseph had married into Egypt's most exclusive nobility. But these name-types are unattested earlier than the XXth and XXIst Dynasties, and are products of the author's erudition.

f. 'while there was an abundance' Sam., Gk; 'which there was' Hebr.

of Potiphera priest of On, bore him these. ·Joseph named the first-born Manasseh, 51
'Because', he said, 'God has made me completely forget my hardships and my
father's House.' ·He named the second Ephraim, 'Because', he said, 'God has 52
made me fruitful in the country of my misfortune.'[g]

Ps 105:16 Then the seven years of plenty that there had been in Egypt came to an end, 53
↗Ac 7:11 and the seven years of famine set in, as Joseph had predicted. There was famine 54
in every country, but throughout Egypt there was food. ·But when all Egypt too 55
began to feel the famine and the people appealed to Pharaoh for food, Pharaoh
↗Jn 2:5 told all the Egyptians, 'Go to Joseph and do whatever he tells you.'·There was 56
famine all over the world. Then Joseph opened all the granaries and rationed out
grain to the Egyptians, as the famine grew even worse in Egypt. ·People came to 57
Egypt from all over the world to get supplies from Joseph, for the famine had
grown severe throughout the world.

The first meeting between Joseph and his brothers[a]

↗Ac 7:12 **42** Jacob, seeing that there were supplies to be had in Egypt, said to his sons, 1
'Why do you keep staring at one another? ·I hear', he said, 'that there are 2
supplies in Egypt. Go down and procure some for us there, so that we may survive
and not die.' ·So ten of Joseph's brothers went down to procure grain in Egypt. 3
But Jacob did not send Joseph's brother Benjamin with his brothers. 'Nothing 4
must happen to him,' he thought.

Thus the sons of Israel were among the other people who came to get supplies, 5
there being famine in Canaan. ·It was Joseph, as the man in authority over the 6
country, who allocated the rations to the entire population. So Joseph's brothers
went and bowed down before him, their faces touching the ground. ·As soon as 7
Joseph saw his brothers he recognised them. But he did not make himself known
to them, and he spoke harshly to them. 'Where have you come from?' he asked.
'From Canaan to get food,' they replied.

Now when Joseph recognised his brothers, but they did not recognise him, 8
37:5–11 Joseph remembered the dreams he had had about them, and said to them, 'You 9
are spies. You have come to discover the country's weak points.' ·'No, my lord,' 10
they said, 'your servants have come to get food. ·We are all sons of the same man. 11
We are honest men, your servants are not spies.' ·'Oh no,' he replied, 'you have 12
come to discover the country's weak points.' ·'Your servants were twelve brothers,' 13
they said, 'sons of the same man in Canaan, but the youngest is at present with our
father, and the other one is no more.' ·To which Joseph retorted, 'It is as I said, 14
you are spies. ·This is the test you are to undergo: as sure as Pharaoh lives you shall 15
not leave unless your youngest brother comes here. ·Send one of your number to 16
fetch your brother; you others will remain under arrest, so that your statements
can be tested to see whether or not you are honest. If not, then as sure as Pharaoh
lives you are spies.' ·Whereupon, he put them all into custody for three days. 17

On the third day Joseph said to them, 'Do this and you will live, for I am a man 18
who fears God. ·If you are honest men, let one of you brothers be detained where 19
you are imprisoned; the rest of you, go and take supplies home for your starving
families. ·But you must bring your youngest brother back to me; in this way, what 20
you have said will be verified, and you will not have to die!' And this is what they
37:18–27 did. ·And they said to one another, 'Clearly, we are being punished for what we 21
did to our brother. We saw his deep misery when he pleaded with us, but we would
not listen, and now this misery has come home to us.' ·Reuben retorted to them, 22
37:22 'Did I not tell you not to wrong the boy? But you would not listen. Now comes the
accounting.' ·They did not know that Joseph understood, because there was an 23
43:30 interpreter between them. ·He turned away from them and wept.[b] When he was 24
able to speak to them again, he chose Simeon out of their number and had him
bound while they looked on.

Jacob's sons return to Canaan

25 Joseph gave the order to fill their panniers with grain, to put back each man's
money in his sack, and to give them provisions for the journey. This was done for
26, 27 them. ·Then they loaded their supplies on their donkeys and went away. ·But
when they camped for the night, one of them opened his sack to give his donkey
28 some fodder and saw his money—there it was in the mouth of his sack. ·He said to
his brothers, 'My money has been put back; here it is, in my sack!' Their hearts
sank, and they looked at one another in panic, saying, 'What is this that God has
done to us?'[c]

29 Returning to their father Jacob in Canaan, they gave him a full report of what
30 had happened to them, ·'The man who is lord of the country spoke harshly to us,
31 accusing us of spying on the country. ·We told him, "We are honest men, we are
32 not spies. ·We were twelve brothers, sons of the same father. One of us is no more,
33 and the youngest is at present with our father in Canaan." ·But the man who is lord
of the country said to us, "This is how I shall know whether you are honest: leave
one of your brothers with me. Take supplies for your starving families and be gone,
34 but bring me back your youngest brother and then I shall know that you are not
spies but honest men. Then I shall give your brother back to you and you will be
free to move about the country." '

35 As they emptied their sacks, each discovered his bag of money in his sack. On
36 seeing their bags of money they were afraid, and so was their father. ·Then their
father Jacob said to them, 'You are robbing me of my children; Joseph is no more;
Simeon is no more; and now you want to take Benjamin. I bear the brunt of all
this!'

37 Then Reuben said to his father, 'You may put my two sons to death if I do not
38 bring him back to you. Put him in my care and I will bring him back to you.'[d] ·But
he replied, 'My son is not going down with you, for now his brother is dead he is
the only one left.[e] If any harm came to him on the journey you are undertaking, 42:4
you would send my white head down to Sheol with grief!' 37:35
Nb 16:33f

Jacob's sons leave again with Benjamin[a]

1, 2 **43** But the famine in the country grew worse, ·and when they had finished
eating the supplies which they had brought from Egypt their father said to
3 them, 'Go back and get us a little food.' ·'But', Judah replied, 'the man expressly
warned us, "You will not be admitted to my presence unless your brother is with
4 you." ·If you are ready to send our brother with us, we will go down and get food
5 for you. ·But if you are not ready to send him, we will not go down, in view of the
man's warning, "You will not be admitted to my presence unless your brother is
6 with you." ' ·Then Israel said, 'Why did you bring this misery on me by telling the
7 man you had another brother?' ·They replied, 'He kept questioning us about
ourselves and our family, asking, "Is your father still alive?" and, "Have you
another brother?" That is why we told him. How could we know he was going to
8 say, "Bring your brother down here"?' ·Judah then said to his father Israel, 'Send 42:37
the boy with me, and let us be off and go, if we are to survive and not die, we, you,

g. The name Manasseh, *menashsheh* in Hebr., is explained by *nashshani* 'he has made me forget', *ephraim* by *hiphrani* 'he has made me fruitful'.

42 a. This narrative is almost entirely Elohistic. But the Yahwistic tradition of ch. 43 also knew of a first meeting of Joseph and his brothers, and some small traces of it are to be found here (especially vv. 27–28 and 38).

b. An interest in human emotions is one of the characteristics of the closing chapters of Gn.

c. vv. 27–28 belong to the Yahwistic tradition which made the brothers discover their money at the first stopping-place and at the top of the sacks, *see* 43:21. According to the Elohistic tradition (*see* v. 35) they found it at the bottom of the sacks when they reached home. Both traditions agree that the discovery filled the brothers with awe, as at a mysterious and supernatural event.

d. In the Yahwistic tradition, see 43:8–9, Judah and not Reuben is surety for Benjamin's return. Similarly, it was Judah according to the Yahwistic tradition (37:26), and Reuben according to the Elohistic (37:22), who intervened on Joseph's behalf.

e. i.e. the only one of the two sons of the beloved Rachel.

43 a. Except for a few short glosses ch. 43 and 44 are entirely Yahwistic.

and our dependants. •I will go surety for him, and you can hold me responsible for 9
him. If I do not bring him back to you and produce him before you, let me bear the
blame all my life. •Indeed, if we had not wasted so much time we should have been 10
there and back twice by now!'

Then their father Israel said to them, 'If it must be so, then do this: take some of 11
the country's best products in your baggage and take them to the man as a gift:
37:25 some balsam, some honey, gum tragacanth, resin, pistachio nuts and almonds.
Take double the amount of money with you and return the money put back in 12
the mouths of your sacks; it may have been a mistake. •Take your brother, and go 13
17:1b back to the man. •May El Shaddai move the man to be kind to you, and allow you 14
to bring back your other brother and Benjamin. As for me, if I must be bereaved,
42:24 bereaved I must be.'

The meeting with Joseph

The men took this gift; they took double the amount of money with them, and 15
Benjamin. They set off, went down to Egypt and presented themselves before
Joseph. •When Joseph saw Benjamin with them he said to his chamberlain, 'Take 16
these men into the house. Slaughter a beast and prepare it, for these men are to eat
with me at midday.' •The man did as Joseph had ordered, and took the men to 17
Joseph's house.

The men were afraid at being taken to Joseph's house and said, 'We are being 18
taken there because of the money replaced in our sacks the first time. They will set
on us; they will fall on us and make slaves of us, and take our donkeys too.' •So 19
they went up to Joseph's chamberlain and spoke to him at the entrance to the
42:27–28 house. •'By your leave, sir,' they said, 'we came down once before to get supplies, 20
and when we reached camp and opened our sacks, there was each man's money 21
in the mouth of his sack, to the full. But we have brought it back with us, •and we 22
have brought more money with us for the supplies. We do not know who put our
money in our sacks.' •'Set your minds at ease,' he replied, 'do not be afraid. Your 23
God and the God of your father put treasure in your sacks for you. I received your
money.'[b] And he brought Simeon out to them.

The man then took the men into Joseph's house. He offered them water to wash 24
their feet, and gave their donkeys fodder. •They arranged their gift while they 25
waited for Joseph to come at midday, for they had heard they were to dine there.

When Joseph arrived at the house they offered him the gift they had with 26
them,[c] bowing low before him. •He greeted them pleasantly, asking, 'Is your 27
father well, the old man you told me of? Is he still alive?' •'Your servant our father 28
is well,' they replied, 'he is still alive,' and they bowed respectfully. •Looking 29
about, he saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son. 'Is this your youngest
brother', he asked, 'of whom you told me?' And he added, 'God be good to you,
42:24 my son.'[d] •Joseph hurried out; so strong was the affection he felt for his brother 30
that he wanted to cry. He went into his room and there he wept. •After washing his 31
face he returned and, controlling himself, gave the order: 'Serve the meal.' •He 32
was served separately; so were they, and so were the Egyptians who ate in his
household, for the Egyptians could not take food with Hebrews; Egyptians have a
horror of doing so. •They were placed facing him in order of seniority, from the 33
eldest to the youngest, and the men looked at one another in amazement. •He had 34
portions carried to them from his own dish, the portion for Benjamin being five
times larger than any of the others. And they feasted with him and drank freely.

Joseph's cup in Benjamin's sack

44 Then Joseph instructed his chamberlain as follows: 'Fill these men's sacks 1
with as much food as they can carry, and put each man's money in the
mouth of his sack. •And put my cup, the silver one, in the mouth of the youngest 2
one's sack as well as the money for his rations.' He did as Joseph had instructed.

At daybreak, the men were sent off with their donkeys. •They had gone only a 3, 4

little way from the city, when Joseph said to his chamberlain, 'Away now and follow those men. When you catch up with them, say to them, "Why have you
5 repaid good with evil? ·Is this not what my lord uses for drinking and also for reading omens? [a] What you have done is wrong." '
6, 7 So when he caught up with them he repeated these words. ·They asked him, 'What does my lord mean? Your servants would never think of doing such a thing.
8 Look, we brought you back the money we found in the mouths of our sacks, all the way from Canaan. Are we likely to have stolen silver or gold from your master's
9 house? ·Whichever of your servants is found to have it shall die, and the rest of us
10 shall be slaves of my lord.' ·'Very well, then, it shall be as you say,' he replied, 'the one on whom it is found shall become my slave, but the rest of you can go free.'
11 Each of them quickly lowered his sack to the ground, and each opened his own.
12 He searched, beginning with the eldest and ending with the youngest, and found
13 the cup in Benjamin's sack. ·Then they tore their clothes, and when each man had reloaded his donkey they returned to the city.
14 When Judah and his brothers arrived at Joseph's house he was still there, so they
15 fell on the ground in front of him. ·'What do you mean by doing this?' Joseph asked them. 'Did you not know that a man such as I am is a reader of omens?'
16 'What can we answer my lord?' Judah replied. 'What can we say? How can we clear ourselves? God himself has uncovered your servants' guilt. [b] Here we are then, my lord's slaves, we no less than the one in whose possession the cup was
17 found.' ·'I could not think of doing such a thing,' he replied. 'The man in whose possession the cup was found shall be my slave, but you can go back unhindered to your father.'

Judah intervenes

18 At this, Judah went up to him and said, 'May it please my lord, let your servant have a word privately with my lord. Do not be angry with your servant, for you are
19 like Pharaoh himself. ·My lord questioned his servants, "Have you father or
20 brother?" ·And we said to my lord, "We have an old father, and a younger brother born of his old age. His brother is dead, so he is the only one by that mother now
21 left, and his father loves him." ·Then you said to your servants, "Bring him down
22 to me, so that I can set eyes on him." [c] ·We replied to my lord, "The boy cannot
23 leave his father. If he leaves him, his father will die." ·But you said to your servants, "If your youngest brother does not come down with you, you will not be
24 admitted to my presence again." ·When we went back to your servant my father,
25 we repeated to him what my lord had said. ·So when our father said, "Go back and
26 get us a little food," ·we said, "We cannot go down. We shall go only if our youngest brother is with us for, unless our youngest brother is with us, we shall not
27 be admitted to the man's presence." ·So your servant our father said to us, "You
28 know that my wife bore me two children. ·When one of them left me, I supposed that he must have been torn to pieces, and I have never seen him since. 37:33
29 If you take this one from me too and any harm comes to him, you will send my
30 white head down to Sheol with grief." ·If I go to your servant my father now, and we do not have the boy with us, he will die as soon as he sees that the boy is not
31 with us, [d] for his heart is bound up with him; ·and your servants will have sent your
32 servant our father's white head down to Sheol with grief. ·Now your servant went

b. The chamberlain has been instructed by Joseph. 42:25, and knows what the latter intends to do.

c. After 'with them', Hebr. repeats 'at the house', dittography.

d. Joseph is evidently much older than Benjamin, *see* 30:22 seq. and 35:16. It is even possible that there was a tradition according to which Benjamin was born after Joseph had been kidnapped, *see* 37:10e.

44 a. The way in which water fell into a cup, or the sound it made, or the pattern of oil-drops poured into it, were interpreted as omens. This method of divination was common in the ancient East.

b. This does not mean that they confess a theft, which in fact they had not committed, nor even that they are referring to their original crime against Joseph, but that their present misfortune seems to be a manifestation of God's anger, hence by implication that they are in a state of sin.

c. A sign of benevolence, human or divine. Ps 33:18; 34:15; Jr 39:12; 40:4.

d. 'is not with us' Gk; 'is missing' Hebr.

43:9 surety to my father for the boy. I said: "If I do not bring him back to you, let me bear the blame before my father all my life." ·Let your servant stay, then, as my 33
lord's slave in place of the boy, I implore you, and let the boy go back with his brothers. ·How indeed could I go back to my father and not have the boy with me? 34
I could not bear to see the misery that would overwhelm my father.'

Joseph makes himself known [a]

45 Then Joseph could not control his feelings in front of all his retainers, and 1
he exclaimed, 'Let everyone leave me.' No one therefore was present with
him while Joseph made himself known to his brothers, ·but he wept so loudly that 2
all the Egyptians heard, and the news reached Pharaoh's palace. [b]

↗Ac 7:13 Joseph said to his brothers, 'I am Joseph. Is my father really still alive?' His 3
50:15 brothers could not answer him, they were so dumbfounded at seeing him. [c] ·Then 4
Joseph said to his brothers, 'Come closer to me.' When they had come closer to
him he said, 'I am your brother Joseph whom you sold into Egypt. ·But now, do 5
50:19 not grieve, do not reproach yourselves for having sold me here, since God sent me
Ps 105:17 before you to preserve your lives. [d] ·For this is the second year there has been 6
famine in the country, and there are still five years to come without ploughing or
harvest. ·God sent me before you to assure the survival of your race on earth and 7
to save your lives by a great deliverance. ·So it was not you who sent me here but 8
God, and he has set me up as a father [e] to Pharaoh, as lord of all his household and
governor of the whole of Egypt.

'Return quickly to your father and tell him, "Your son Joseph says this: 'God 9
has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me without delay. ·You will live in 10
46:28seq.; 47:1–6 the region of Goshen [f] where you will be near me, you, your children and your
Ex 8:18;9:26 grandchildren, your flocks, your cattle and all your possessions. ·There I shall 11
provide for you—for there are five years of famine still to come—so that you, your
household and all yours are not reduced to penury.' " ·You can see with your own 12
eyes, and my brother Benjamin can see too, that I am who I say I am. ·Give my 13
father a full report of all the honour I enjoy in Egypt, and of all you have seen; and
quickly bring my father down here.'

Then throwing his arms round the neck of his brother Benjamin he wept; and 14
Benjamin wept on his shoulder. ·He kissed all his brothers, weeping on each one. 15
Only then were his brothers able to talk to him.

Pharaoh's invitation

News reached Pharaoh's palace that Joseph's brothers had come, and Pharaoh 16
was pleased to hear it, as were his servants. ·Pharaoh told Joseph, 'Say to your 17
brothers, "Do this: load your beasts and hurry away to Canaan. ·Fetch your father 18
and your families, and come back to me. I will give you the best territory in Egypt,
where you will live off the fat of the land." ·And you, for your part, give them this 19
order: [g] "Do this: take waggons from Egypt, for your little ones and your wives.
Get your father and come. ·Never mind about your property, for the best of all 20
Egypt will be yours." '

The return to Canaan

Israel's sons did as they were told. Joseph gave them waggons as Pharaoh had 21
ordered, and he gave them provisions for the journey. ·To each and every one he 22
gave new clothes, and to Benjamin three hundred shekels of silver and five changes
43:11 of clothes. ·And to his father he sent ten donkeys laden with the best that Egypt 23
offered, and ten she-donkeys laden with grain, bread and food for his father's
journey. ·And so he sent his brothers on their way. His final words to them were, 24
'And let there be no upsets [h] on the way!'

And so they left Egypt. When they reached their father Jacob in Canaan, ·they 25, 26
gave him this report, 'Joseph is still alive. He is at this moment governor of all
Egypt!' But he was as one stunned, for he did not believe them. ·However, when 27

they told him all Joseph had said to them, and when he saw the waggons that
28 Joseph had sent to fetch him, the spirit of their father Jacob revived, •and Israel said, 'That is enough! My son Joseph is still alive. I must go and see him before I die.'

Jacob leaves for Egypt [a]

1 **46** So Israel set out with all his possessions. Arriving at Beersheba, he offered
2 sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. •God spoke to Israel in a vision [b] at 31:24
3 night, 'Jacob, Jacob,' he said. 'Here I am,' he replied. •'I am El, God of your 26:23–24
father,' he said. 'Do not be afraid of going down to Egypt, for I will make you into
4 a great nation there. •I shall go down to Egypt with you and I myself shall bring
5 you back again, and Joseph's hand will close your eyes.' •So Jacob left Beersheba. Israel's sons conveyed their father Jacob, their little children and their wives in the waggons Pharaoh had sent to fetch him.
6 Taking their livestock and all that they had acquired in Canaan, they arrived in
7 Egypt—Jacob and all his offspring. •With him to Egypt, he brought his sons and grandsons, his daughters and granddaughters—all his offspring.

Jacob's family [c] ‖Nb 26:5seq.

8 These were the names of the Israelites, Jacob and his descendants, who arrived in Egypt:
9 Reuben, Jacob's first-born, •and the sons of Reuben: Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron
10 and Carmi. •The sons of Simeon: Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jachin, Zohar, and Shaul
11 the son of the Canaanite woman. •The sons of Levi: Gershon, Kohath and Merari.
12 The sons of Judah: Er, Onan, Shelah, Perez, and Zerah (Er and Onan had died in 38:3–10
13 Canaan), and Hezron and Hamul sons of Perez. •The sons of Issachar: Tola,
14 Puvah, Jashub and Shimron. •The sons of Zebulun: Sered, Elon and Jahleel.
15 These were the sons that Leah had born to Jacob in Paddan-Aram, besides his daughter Dinah; in all, his sons and daughters numbered thirty-three.
16, 17 The sons of Gad: Ziphion, Haggi, Shuni, Ezbon, Eri, Arodi and Areli. •The sons of Asher: Jimnah, Jishvah, Jishvi, Beriah, with their sister Serah; the sons of
18 Beriah: Heber and Malchiel. •These were the sons of Zilpah whom Laban gave to his daughter Leah; she bore these to Jacob—sixteen persons.
19, 20 The sons of Rachel wife of Jacob: Joseph and Benjamin. •Born to Joseph in Egypt were: Manasseh and Ephraim sons of Asenath, daughter of Potiphera priest 41:45
21 of On. •The sons of Benjamin: Bela, Becher, Ashbel, Gera, Naaman, Ehi, Rosh,
22 Muppim, Huppim and Ard. •These were the sons that Rachel bore to Jacob—fourteen persons in all.
23, 24 The sons of Dan: Hushim. •The sons of Naphtali: Jahzeel, Guni, Jezer and
25 Shillem. •These were the sons of Bilhah whom Laban gave to his daughter Rachel; she bore these to Jacob—seven persons in all.
26 Altogether, the members of Jacob's family who arrived with him in Egypt—his own issue, not counting the wives of Jacob's sons—numbered sixty-six all told.
27 With Joseph's sons born to him in Egypt—two persons—the members of Jacob's family who went to Egypt totalled seventy. [d]

Ex 1:5
Dt 10:22
↗Ac 7:14

45 **a.** The Elohistic and Yahwistic traditions are blended here in the climax of the story.
b. Following Gk; Hebr. corrupt.
c. The brothers fear Joseph's vengeance, *see* 50:15 seq.
d. Taken together with 50:20, vv. 5–8 point the significance of the Joseph-narrative, *see* 37:2a.
e. 'Father' is a title of the vizier, *see* Est 3:13, subverse f (= Vulg. 13:6); 8:12, sub-verse *l* (= 16:11); Is 9:5; 22:21.
f. Eastern district of the Nile delta.
g. 'give them this order' Gk; 'you are ordered' Hebr.
h. The Hebrew verb means 'agitation', no cause specified: anxiety? recriminations? hastiness?

46 **a.** In this passage two traditions are reconciled: the Yahwistic tradition makes Israel set out from Hebron where it had left him, 37:14; the Elohistic makes Jacob set out from Beersheba.
b. The last of the patriarchal theophanies. God commands Jacob to go down to Egypt (the Exodus is already in view, v. 4) just as he had commanded Abraham to set out for Canaan, 12:1.
c. Here the Priestly editor inserts a list of Jacob's family; originally it had nothing to do with the descent into Egypt.
d. The Greek adds five descendants of Ephraim and Manasseh, making the total seventy-five as in Ac 7:14.

Joseph welcomes them

Israel sent Judah ahead to Joseph, so that Judah might present himself[e] to Joseph 28
in Goshen. When they arrived in Goshen, ·Joseph had his chariot made ready and 29
45:15 went up to Goshen to meet his father Israel. As soon as he appeared he threw his
arms round his neck and for a long time wept on his shoulder. ·Israel said to 30
Joseph, 'Now I can die, now that I have seen you in person and seen you still alive.'
45:16seq. Then Joseph said to his brothers and his father's family, 'I shall go back and 31
break the news to Pharaoh. I shall tell him, "My brothers and my father's family
who were in Canaan have come to me. ·The men are shepherds and look after 32
livestock, and they have brought their flocks and cattle and all their possessions."
Thus, when Pharaoh summons you and asks, "What is your occupation?", ·you 33, 34
are to say, "Ever since our boyhood your servants have looked after livestock, we
and our fathers before us," so that you can stay in the Goshen region—for the
Egyptians have a horror of all shepherds.'[f]

Pharaoh grants an audience

47 So Joseph went and told Pharaoh, 'My father and brothers have arrived 1
from Canaan with their flocks and cattle and all their possessions. Here they
are, in the region of Goshen.' ·He had taken five of his brothers, and he now 2
presented them to Pharaoh. ·Pharaoh asked his brothers, 'What is your occupa- 3
tion?' and they gave Pharaoh the answer, 'Your servants are shepherds, like our
fathers before us.' ·They went on to tell Pharaoh, 'We have come to stay in this 4
country for the time being, since there is no pasturage for your servants' flocks,
Canaan being stricken with famine. So now please allow your servants to settle in
the region of Goshen.' ·Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, ·'They may stay in the region 5a, 6b
of Goshen, and if you know of any capable men among them, put them in charge
of my own livestock.'

Another version[a]

Jacob and his sons went to Egypt where Joseph was. Pharaoh king of Egypt heard 5b
about this and said to Joseph, 'Your father and brothers have come to you.
The country of Egypt is open to you: settle your father and brothers in the best 6a
region.'[b] ·Joseph brought his father and presented him to Pharaoh. Jacob paid his 7
respects to Pharaoh. ·Pharaoh asked Jacob, 'How many years have you lived?' 8
25:7;35:28; 47:48 Jacob said to Pharaoh, 'The years of my stay on earth add up to one hundred and 9
thirty years. Few and unhappy my years have been, falling short of my ancestors'
years in their stay on earth.' ·Jacob then took leave of Pharaoh and withdrew from 10
his presence. ·Joseph then settled his father and brothers, giving them land hold- 11
Ex 1:11;12:37 ings in Egypt, in the best part of the country, the region of Rameses,[c] as Pharaoh
had ordered.

Joseph provided his father, brothers and all his father's family with food, down 12
to the least of them.

Joseph's agrarian policy[d]

And on all the earth around there was now no food anywhere, for the famine had 13
grown very severe, and Egypt and Canaan were both weak with hunger. ·Joseph 14
accumulated all the money to be found in Egypt and Canaan, in exchange for the
supplies being handed out, and put the money in Pharaoh's palace.

When all the money in Egypt and Canaan was exhausted, all the Egyptians came 15
to Joseph, pleading, 'Give us food, unless you want us to die before your eyes! For
our money has come to an end.' ·Joseph replied, 'Hand over your livestock and I 16
will issue you food[c] in exchange for your livestock, if your money has come to an
end.' ·So they brought their livestock to Joseph, and Joseph gave them food in 17
exchange for horses and livestock, whether sheep or cattle, and for donkeys. Thus
he saw them through that year with food in exchange for all their livestock.

When that year was over, they came to him the next year, and said to him, 'We 18

cannot hide it from my lord: the truth is, our money has run out and the livestock
is in my lord's possession. There is nothing left for my lord except our bodies and
19 our land. ·If we and our land are not to perish, take us and our land in exchange for
food, and we with our land will become Pharaoh's serfs; only give us seed, so that
we can survive and not die and the land not revert to desert!'
20 Thus Joseph acquired all the land in Egypt for Pharaoh, since one by one the
Egyptians sold their fields, so hard pressed were they by the famine; and the whole
21 country passed into Pharaoh's possession, ·while the people he reduced to serf-
22 dom[f] from one end of Egypt to the other. ·The only land he did not acquire
belonged to the priests, for the priests received an allowance from Pharaoh and
lived on the allowance that Pharaoh gave them. Hence they had no need to sell
their land.
23 Then Joseph said to the people, 'This is how we stand: I have bought you out,
24 with your land, on Pharaoh's behalf. Here is seed for you to sow the land. ·But of
the harvest you must give a fifth to Pharaoh. The other four-fifths you can have for
sowing your fields, to provide food for yourselves and your households, and food
25 for your children.' ·'You have saved our lives!' they replied. 'If it please my lord,
26 we will become serfs to Pharaoh.' ·So Joseph made a law, still in force today, as
regards the soil of Egypt, that one-fifth should go to Pharaoh. Only the land of the 41:34
priests did not go to Pharaoh.

Jacob's last wishes[g]

27 Thus Israel settled in Egypt, in the region of Goshen. They acquired property
28 there; they were fruitful and grew very numerous. ·Jacob lived seventeen years in
29 Egypt; thus Jacob's total age came to a hundred and forty-seven years. · When
Israel's time to die drew near he sent for his son Joseph and said to him, 'If you =49:29–32; 50:6
really love me, place your hand under my thigh as pledge that you will act with 24:2b
30 faithful love towards me: do not bury me in Egypt! ·When I lie down with my
ancestors, carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their tomb.' 'I shall do as you say,'
31 he replied. ·'Swear to me,' he insisted. So he swore to him, and Israel sank back on 1 K 1:47 ↗Heb 11:21
the pillow.[h]

Jacob adopts Joseph's two sons and blesses them[a]

1 **48** Some time later, Joseph was informed, 'Your father has been taken ill.' So
2 he took with him his two sons Manasseh and Ephraim. ·When Jacob was
told, 'Look, your son Joseph has come to you,' Israel, summoning his strength, sat
3 up in bed. ·'El Shaddai appeared to me at Luz in Canaan,' Jacob told Joseph, 'and 17:1b;35:6, 11–12;
4 he blessed me, ·saying to me, "I shall make you fruitful and numerous, and shall 28:13–14
make you into an assembly of peoples and give this country to your descendants
5 after you, to own in perpetuity." ·Now your two sons, born to you in Egypt before

e. lit. 'appear before' Sam., Syr.; Hebr. uncertain.

f. The sentence sounds odd after the previous advice and is probably an interpolation. Though sometimes explained as a reference to the Egyptians' hatred for the Hyksos, the 'Shepherd' Kings, this explanation of the word *hyksos* is not found earlier than the Hellenistic period.

47 a. Priestly tradition of the settlement in Egypt.

b. The order here followed (5^a, 6^b, 5^b, 6^a) is that of the Gk which adds 'Jacob and his sons . . . said to Joseph', missing from Hebr.

c. Used here, the name is an anachronism: it was at a later period that 'Rameses' (Tanis or Qantir) got its name from Rameses II.

d. This Yahwistic section follows on ch. 41. The Israelites, accustomed to the idea of private property, were surprised by the Egyptian system: almost all the land was crown property. It may be that in the days of Solomon, when the lands of the crown were being enlarged, when taxes in kind were imposed and forced labour instituted, wise men at court regarded the Egyptian system as the ideal to be achieved and ascribed the distinction of having devised it to Joseph.

e. 'food' versions; Hebr. omits.

f. 'he reduced to serfdom' Sam., Gk; 'he deported into the towns' Hebr.

g. Yahwistic tradition with a Priestly note, vv. 27^b–28.

h. lit. 'bowed at the head of the bed'. By confusing *mittah* 'bed' with *matteh* 'staff' the Gk version makes Jacob 'bow over his staff'.

48 a. This chapter is an amalgam of several traditions: Yahwistic-Elohistic, vv. 1–2, 8–22; Priestly, vv. 3–7. These traditions use Jacob's dying bequest to show why it was that Manasseh and Ephraim, sons of Joseph, became fathers of tribes with the same status as that of Jacob's sons, why also their two tribes prospered and why Ephraim's outstripped Manasseh's.

I came to you in Egypt, shall be mine; Ephraim and Manasseh shall be as much
mine as Reuben and Simeon. •But with regard to the children you have had since 6
them, they shall be yours, and they shall be known by their brothers' names for the
purpose of their inheritance.
35:16–20 'When I was on my way from Paddan, to my sorrow death took your mother[b] 7
Rachel from me in Canaan, on the journey while only a short distance from
Ephrath. I buried her there on the road to Ephrath—now Bethlehem.'
When Israel saw Joseph's two sons, he asked, 'Who are these?' •'They are my 8, 9
sons, whom God has given me here,' Joseph told his father. 'Then bring them to
me', he said, 'so that I may bless them.' •Now, Israel's eyes were dim with age, and 10
he could not see. So Joseph made them come closer to him and he kissed and
embraced them. •Then Israel said to Joseph, 'I did not think I should ever see you 11
again, and now God has let me see your children as well!' •Then Joseph took them 12
from his lap and bowed to the ground.[c]
Then Joseph took the two of them, Ephraim with his right hand so that he should 13
be on Israel's left, and Manasseh with his left hand, so that he should be on Israel's
right, and brought them close to him. •But Israel held out his right hand and laid it 14
on the head of Ephraim, the younger, and his left on the head of Manasseh,
crossing his hands—Manasseh was, in fact, the elder. •Then he blessed Joseph 15
saying:

May the God in whose presence my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked,
49:24seq. Ps 23:1;80: 2–3 •16:7c the God who has been my shepherd from my birth until this day,
the Angel who has saved me from all harm, bless these boys, 16
so that my name may live on in them, and the names of my ancestors
Abraham and Isaac,
and they grow into teeming multitudes on earth!

Joseph saw that his father was laying his right hand on the head of Ephraim, and 17
this he thought was wrong, so he took his father's hand and tried to shift it from the
head of Ephraim to the head of Manasseh. •Joseph protested to his father, 'Not 18
like that, father! This one is the elder; put your right hand on his head.'[d] •But his 19
father refused. 'I know, my son, I know,' he said. 'He too shall become a people;
Dt 33:17 he too will be great. But his younger brother will be greater, his offspring will be
sufficient to constitute nations.'[e]
So he blessed them that day, saying: 20

12:3b By you[f] shall Israel bless itself, saying,
'God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh!'

putting Ephraim before Manasseh.
Then Israel said to Joseph, 'Now I am about to die. But God will be with you 21
and take you back to the land of your ancestors. •As for me, I give you a Shechem[g] 22
more than your brothers, the one I took from the Amorites with my sword and
bow.'

Dt 33 Jg 5 **Jacob's testament**[a]

49 Jacob called his sons and said, 'Gather round, so that I can tell you what is 1
in store for you in the final days.

Gather round, sons of Jacob, and listen; 2
listen to Israel your father.

29:32 Reuben, you are my first-born, 3
my vigour, and the first-fruit of my manhood,
foremost in pride, foremost in strength,
uncontrolled as water: you will not be foremost, 4
35:22 for you climbed into your father's bed,
and so defiled my couch, to my sorrow.[b]

Simeon and Levi [c] are brothers
in carrying out their malicious plans. [d]
May my soul not enter their council
nor my heart join their company,
for in their rage they have killed men — 34:25–31
and hamstrung oxen at their whim.
Accursed be their rage for its ruthlessness,
their wrath for its ferocity.
I shall disperse them in Jacob,
I shall scatter them through Israel.

Judah, [e] your brothers will praise [f] you: — 27:29
you grip your enemies by the neck,
your father's sons will do you homage. — 37:7,9
Judah is a lion's whelp; — ↗Rv 5:5
You stand over your prey, my son.
Like a lion he crouches and lies down,
a mighty lion: who dare rouse him?
The sceptre shall not pass from Judah, — Nb 24:17
nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, — 2 S 7:1a
until tribute be brought him [g] — Is 9:5seq.; 11:1seq.
and the peoples render him obedience. [h] — ↗Ezk 21:32; Mi 5:1–3; Zc 9:9
He tethers his donkey to the vine, — Heb 7:14
to its stock the foal of his she-donkey.
He washes his clothes in wine, — Rv 7:14;19:13
his robes in the blood of the grape.
His eyes are darkened with wine
and his teeth are white with milk.

Zebulun will live by the seashore
and be a sailor [i] on board the ships,
with Sidon on his flank.

b. 'your mother' Sam., Gk; Hebr. omits.

c. The children were placed in Jacob's lap (lit. 'between the knees'), evidently part of an adoption-rite, *see* 30:3 and, on adoption, 16:2, 26, Joseph receives them back and prostrates himself to receive, with them, his father's blessing.

d. The gestures of blessing were considered as efficacious in themselves, the right hand conferring more than the left.

e. Ephraim did in fact become the most influential of the northern group of tribes and the nucleus of the future kingdom of Israel.

f. 'you' plural, Targ., Gk; singular, Hebr.

g. There is a play on the Hebrew word *shekem* which means 'shoulder' but is also the name of the town and district of Shechem which was to become the property of the sons of Joseph where Joseph himself was to be buried, Jos 24:32. Jacob apportions out the Holy Land just as a paterfamilias, or the presiding personage, assigns the portions in a sacrificial banquet, 1 S 1:4 seq., the shoulder being one of the choicest parts, 1 S 9:23–24. This is an isolated piece of tradition dealing with Jacob's apportionment of Canaan and an armed conquest of Shechem where, according to 33:19, Jacob had done no more than buy a field.

49 a. Traditionally known as the 'blessings of Jacob', these are more properly prophecies, *see* v. 1; in words which are themselves efficacious, the patriarch foretells the destiny of his sons, i.e., of the tribes bearing their names. Doubtless the prophecies allude to events of the patriarchal age (Reuben, Simeon, Levi) but they deal with a much later historical situation. The high honour assigned to Judah and the tribute paid to the House of Joseph (Ephraim and Manasseh) point to a period when those tribes together played a leading part in the life of the nation; in its final form the poem cannot be earlier than David's time, but many of its elements date from before the monarchy. The poem was inserted in Gn at a relatively late date; it is impossible to ascribe it to any of the three great 'sources' with any certainty. *See* the collective picture of the tribes in the (earlier) Song of Deborah, Jg 5, and in the (later) Blessings of Moses, Dt 33.

b. '*Ali* 'to my sorrow' conj.; 'Hebr. '*alah*, **he has climbed'. Reuben, the first-born,** forfeits the position of honour as a punishment for his incest. The tribe was still important in the days of the Song of Deborah, but in the Blessings of Moses its military strength is considered negligible, Dt 33:6.

c. The two are cursed for their treacherous attack on Shechem. Both tribes are to be scattered in Israel: Simeon very soon ceased to exist, being for the most part absorbed in Judah; Levi vanished as a secular tribe but Dt 33:8–11 makes much of its religious function of which nothing is said here.

d. 'in . . . plans' *Vet. Lat.*, Gk; Hebr. corrupt.

e. To the prediction of Judah's primacy and power, vv. 8–9, is added a messianic prophecy, vv. 10–12. • In Dt 33:7 Judah lives apart from the others: by then the kingdom had split.

f. In Hebrew *yodu*, a play on 'Judah', *see* 29:35.

g. Text and meaning much disputed: 'tribute be brought him' conj., emendation of vowel sounds in MT '(until) Shiloh come'. The reference is to David as founder of an empire, but also as type of the Messiah.

h. lit. 'to whom the obedience', with Hebr.; the versions read 'the hope', thus making the messianic sense of the passage explicit.

i. 'sailor' conj.; Hebr. repeats 'on board'. Zebulun was to settle on the coast, near Phoenicia (Sidon).

Issachar[j] is a strong donkey 14
lying down among sheepfolds.
When he saw how good the resting-place 15
and how pleasant the country,
he bowed his shoulder to the load
and became a slave to forced labour.

2 S 20:18 Dan[k] will govern his people 16
like any other of the tribes of Israel.
May Dan be a snake on the road, 17
a viper[l] on the path,
who bites the horse on the hock
so that its rider falls off backwards!

Is 25:9 I long for your deliverance, Yahweh![m] 18

Gad will be raided by raiders, 19
and he will raid at their heels.[n]

Dt 33:24 Rich the food produced by Asher: 20
he will furnish food fit for kings.

Naphtali is a swift hind 21
bearing lovely fawns.[o]

‖Dt 33:13–17 Joseph is a fruitful plant near a spring 22
whose tendrils reach over the wall.[p]
Archers in their hostility 23
drew their bows and attacked him.
But their bows were broken by a mighty One, 24
the sinews of their arms were snapped
by the power of the Mighty One of Jacob,
by the Name of the Stone of Israel,[q]
the God of your father who assists you, 25
17:1b El Shaddai[r] who blesses you:
blessings of heaven above,
blessings of the deep lying below,[s]
blessings of the breasts and womb,
blessings of the grain and flowers, 26
blessings of the eternal mountains,[t]
bounty of the everlasting hills—
may they descend on Joseph's head,
on the crown of the one dedicated[u] from among his brothers!

Benjamin[v] is a ravening wolf, 27
in the morning he devours the prey,
in the evening he is still sharing out the spoil.'

All these make up the tribes of Israel, twelve in number, and this is what their 28
father said to them as he bade them farewell, giving each[w] an appropriate blessing.

Jacob's last moments and death[x]

Then he gave them these instructions, 'I am about to be gathered to my people. 29
23 Bury me with my ancestors, in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite,
in the cave in the field at Machpelah, facing Mamre, in Canaan, which Abraham 30
bought[y] from Ephron the Hittite as a burial site of his own. ·There Abraham and 31
his wife Sarah were buried. There Isaac and his wife Rebekah were buried; and
there I buried Leah—·the field and the cave in it which were bought from the 32
Hittites.'

33 When Jacob had finished giving his instructions to his sons, he drew his feet up 48:2
into the bed, and breathing his last was gathered to his people.

Jacob's funeral [a]

1 50 At this Joseph threw himself on his father's face, covering it with tears and 46:4
2 kisses. ·Then Joseph ordered the doctors in his service to embalm his father.
3 The doctors embalmed Israel, ·and it took them forty days, for embalming takes
forty days to complete.
4 The Egyptians mourned him for seventy days. ·When the period of mourning
for him was over, Joseph said to Pharaoh's household, 'If you have any affection
5 for me, see that this message reaches Pharaoh's ears, ·"My father put me under
oath, saying: I am about to die. In the tomb which I dug for myself in Canaan, that
is where you are to bury me. So may I have leave to go up and bury my father, and
6 then come back?" ' ·Pharaoh replied, 'Go up and bury your father, as he made
you swear to do.'
7 Joseph went up to bury his father, and with him went all Pharaoh's officials, the
8 dignitaries of his palace and all the dignitaries of Egypt, ·as well as all Joseph's
family, his brothers and his father's family. The only people they left behind in
9 Goshen were those unfit to travel, [b] and their flocks and cattle. ·Chariots and
horsemen went up with him too; it was a very large retinue.
10 On arriving at Goren-ha-Atad, which is across the Jordan, they there held a long 1 S 31:13i
and solemn lamentation, and Joseph observed seven days' mourning for his father.
11 When the Canaanites, the local inhabitants, witnessed the mourning at Goren-
ha-Atad, they said, 'This is a solemn act of mourning by the Egyptians,' which is
why the place was given the name Abel-Mizraim [c]—it is across the Jordan.
12, 13 His sons did what he had ordered them to do for him. ·His sons carried him to ↗Ac 7:16
Canaan and buried him in the cave in the field at Machpelah, facing Mamre, which
Abraham had bought from Ephron the Hittite as a burial site of his own.
14 Then Joseph returned to Egypt with his brothers and all those who had come up
with him to bury his father. [d]

From the death of Jacob to the death of Joseph

15 Seeing that their father was dead, Joseph's brothers said, 'What if Joseph intends
16 to treat us as enemies and pay us back for all the wrong we did him?' ·So they sent
17 this message to Joseph: 'Before your father died, he gave us this order: ·"You are
to say to Joseph: Now please forgive the crime and faults of your brothers and all
the wrong they did you." So now please forgive the crime of the servants of your 37
father's God.' Joseph wept at the message they sent to him.

j. Issachar, ensconced in the fertile plain of Esdraelon, grew soft and accepted the yoke of the Canaanites.

k. 'Dan will govern' *dan yadin*, play on words as in 30:6.

l. The venomous horned viper.

m. An invocation in the manner of the Psalms; it marks approximately the middle of the poem.

n. v. 19 is alliterative: *gad gedud yegudennu . . . ya-gud*. Gad, settled in Transjordan, had to defend itself from raiding nomads.

o. 'fawns' *'immere* conj.; Hebr. *'imre*, 'words'. The text is uncertain.

p. Trans. conj.; Hebr. obscure.

q. The translation of v. 24^{a-b} is based on Gk; Hebr. unintelligible. The 'Stone of Israel', equivalent to the 'Rock', a frequent title of Yahweh in the Psalms.

r. 'El Shaddai' versions; 'with Shaddai' Hebr.

s. The subterranean flood whose waters irrigate the earth, Dt 8:7.

t. 'blessings of the grain and flowers' conj.; 'the blessings of your father exceeded' Hebr. • 'eternal mountains' Gk and Dt 33:15; Hebr. confused.

u. 'dedicated' Hebr. *nazir*, *see* Nb 6.

v. This picture of a bellicose Benjamin is vindicated by the tribe's subsequent history, *see* Jg 3:15 seq.; 5:14; 19–20 and the career of Saul, 1 S.

w. 'each' several MSS and Gk; 'the man who' Hebr.

x. The end of Jacob's life according to the Priestly tradition.

y. After 'bought', Hebr. repeats 'the field', as also in 50:13.

50 a. This chapter mingles the Yahwistic, vv. 1–11 and 14, and Elohistic, vv. 15–26, traditions; there is also a trace, vv. 12–13, of the Priestly tradition.

b. The usual translation is 'the small children', but the Hebrew word here and in certain other places (43:8; 47:12; 50:8, 21) has a wider meaning: dependants, the very young and the very old.

c. *Goren-ha-'atad* means 'Threshing-floor of the Bramble'; *'abel-mitzrayim* ('Meadow of Egypt') gives opportunity for a play on words (*'abel* 'meadow' and *'ebel* 'mourning'). Neither locality is known. There are traces here of a tradition other than that relating to the family grave at Machpelah, namely that Jacob was buried in Transjordan.

d. At the end of the v., Hebr. adds 'after he had buried his father', a gloss omitted by Gk.

Then his brothers went to him themselves and, throwing themselves at his feet, 18
45:5 said, 'Take us as your slaves!' ·But Joseph replied, 'Do not be afraid; is it for me to 19
Rm 12:19 put myself in God's place? ·The evil you planned to do me has by God's design 20
Rm 8:28 Ph 1:12 been turned to good, to bring about the present result: the survival of a numerous people. ·So there is no need to be afraid; I shall provide for you and your 21 dependants.' In this way he reassured them by speaking affectionately to them.

So Joseph stayed in Egypt with his father's family; and Joseph lived a hundred 22 and ten years. ·Joseph saw the third generation of Ephraim's line, as also the 23
48:12 children of Machir son of Manasseh, who were born on Joseph's lap. ·At length 24
Ex 12:41 Joseph said to his brothers, 'I am about to die; but God will be sure to remember you kindly and take you out of this country to the country which he promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.' ·And Joseph put Israel's sons on oath, saying, 25
Ex 13:19 Jos 24:32 Heb 11:22 'When God remembers you with kindness, be sure to take my bones away from here.'

Joseph died at the age of a hundred and ten; he was embalmed and laid in a 26 coffin in Egypt.

EXODUS

I: THE LIBERATION FROM EGYPT

A: ISRAEL IN EGYPT [a]

The prosperity of the Hebrews in Egypt

1 These are the names of the Israelites who went with Jacob to Egypt, each of Gn 46:1–27
2, 3 them went with his family: ·Reuben, Simeon, Levi and Judah, ·Issachar, ↗Ac 7:14–17
4, 5 Zebulun and Benjamin, ·Dan and Naphtali, Gad and Asher. ·In all, the descen-
6 dants of Jacob numbered seventy persons. Joseph was in Egypt already. [b] ·Then ‖Gn 46:27
7 Joseph died, and his brothers, and all that generation. ·But the Israelites were Dt 10:22 ·Gn 50:26
fruitful and prolific; they became so numerous and powerful that eventually the Ps 105:24 ↗Ac 13:17
whole land was full of them.

The Hebrews oppressed

8 Then there came to power in Egypt a new king who had never heard of Joseph. ↗Ac 7:18–19
9 'Look,' he said to his people, 'the Israelites are now more numerous and stronger
10 than we are. ·We must take precautions to stop them from increasing any further, Ps 105:25
or if war should break out, they might join the ranks of our enemies. They might
11 take arms against us and then escape from the country.' ·Accordingly they put
taskmasters over the Israelites to wear them down by forced labour. [c] In this way
12 they built the store-cities of Pithom and Rameses [d] for Pharaoh. [e] ·But the harder Gn 47:11
their lives were made, the more they increased and spread, until people came to
13 fear the Israelites. ·So the Egyptians gave them no mercy in the demands they
14 made, ·making their lives miserable with hard labour: with digging clay, making
bricks, doing various kinds of field-work—all sorts of labour that they imposed on Dt 11:10
them without mercy. [f]
15 The king of Egypt then spoke to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was called
16 Shiphrah, and the other Puah. ·'When you attend Hebrew women in childbirth,'
17 he said, 'look at the two stones. [g] If it is a boy, kill him; if a girl, let her live.' ·But

1 **a.** vv. 1–5 are from the Priestly source, the remainder of ch. 1 being ascribed to the Yahwistic (vv. 6–14) and Elohistic (vv. 15 seq.) traditions. The author does not describe the life of the Israelite communities in Egypt; he mentions only what is to his purpose. This purpose is to write a *religious* history: the increase in numbers of Jacob's descendants and the Egyptian persecution are recorded because they lead up to the account of the Exodus and the Sinaitic covenant. For the historical setting of these events, *see* Introduction to the Pentateuch §3.

b. The Gk reads 'seventy-five', *see* Gn 46:27d, and makes 'Joseph was in Egypt' the opening of the verse.

c. Egypt does not seem to have had a regular system of forced labour, though the manpower for major undertakings was provided in part by prisoners of war and by serfs attached to the royal domains, *see* for Israel, 2 S 12:31. The Israelites regarded being reduced to these inferior categories as an intolerable form of oppression. It is not surprising that they wanted to return to their free way of life in the desert; nor that the Egyptians took the suggestion as a form of slave-revolt.

d. Residence in the Delta of Pharaoh Rameses II; to be identified either with Tanis or with Qantir. The reference indicates Rameses II (1290–1224) as the oppressive Pharaoh and gives an approximate date for the Exodus.

e. The Egyptian is *per-aa*, 'the great House', conventional designation of the Palace or Court and, from the 18th dynasty onwards, of the king's own person. Here, 'Pharaoh' is used as a proper name.

f. The story of the oppression is continued at 5:6–23. In the following vv. (Elohistic), the measures taken for the destruction of the male children do not tally with the requirements of forced labour, but prepare the ground for the story of the birth of Moses.

g. The seat on which the woman was placed while in labour (or the sexual organs of the infant?); Syr. 'the two knees'; Gk interprets freely 'when they are about to give birth'.

the midwives were God-fearing women and did not obey the orders of the king of Egypt, but allowed the boys to live. ·So the king of Egypt summoned the midwives 18
and said to them, 'What do you mean by allowing the boys to live?' ·The midwives 19
said to Pharaoh, 'Hebrew women are not like Egyptian women, they are hardy
and give birth before the midwife can get to them.' ·For this, God was good to the 20
midwives, and the people went on increasing and growing more powerful; ·and 21
since the midwives feared God, he gave them families of their own.

Pharaoh then gave all his people this command: 'Throw every new-born boy into 22
the river,[h] but let all the girls live.'

B: EARLY LIFE OF MOSES

The birth of Moses[a]

6:20 2 There was a man descended from Levi who had taken a woman of Levi as his 1
↗Ac7:20seq. ↗Heb 11:23 wife. ·She conceived and gave birth to a son and, seeing what a fine child he 2
was, she kept him hidden for three months. ·When she could hide him no longer, 3
she got a papyrus basket for him; coating it with bitumen and pitch, she put the
child inside and laid it among the reeds at the River's edge. ·His sister took up 4
position some distance away to see what would happen to him.

Now Pharaoh's daughter went down to bathe in the river, while her maids 5
walked along the riverside. Among the reeds she noticed the basket, and she sent
her maid to fetch it. ·She opened it and saw the child: the baby was crying. Feeling 6
sorry for it, she said, 'This is one of the little Hebrews.' ·The child's sister then said 7
to Pharaoh's daughter, 'Shall I go and find you a nurse among the Hebrew women
to nurse the child for you?' ·'Yes,' said Pharaoh's daughter, and the girl went and 8
called the child's own mother. ·Pharaoh's daughter said to her, 'Take this child 9
away and nurse it for me. I shall pay you myself for doing so.' So the woman took
the child away and nursed it. ·When the child grew up, she brought him to 10
↗Ac 7:21 Pharaoh's daughter who treated him like a son; she named him Moses 'because',
she said, 'I drew him out of the water.'[b]

Moses escapes to Midian[c]

↗Heb11:24–27 Ac 7:23–29,29g It happened one day, when Moses was grown up,[d] that he went to see his kinsmen. 11
While he was watching their forced labour he also saw an Egyptian striking a
Hebrew, one of his kinsmen. ·Looking this way and that and seeing no one in sight, 12
he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. ·On the following day he came 13
back, and there were two Hebrews, fighting. He said to the man who was in the
wrong, 'What do you mean by hitting your kinsman?' ·'And who appointed you', 14
↗Ac 7:35 the man retorted, 'to be prince over us and judge? Do you intend to kill me as you
killed the Egyptian?' Moses was frightened. 'Clearly that business has come to
light,' he thought. ·When Pharaoh heard of the matter, he tried to put Moses to 15
↗Ac 7:29 death, but Moses fled from Pharaoh. He went[e] into Midianite territory and sat
down beside a well.

Now there was a priest of Midian[f] with seven daughters. They used to come to 16
Gn24:11seq.; 29:2seq. draw water and fill the troughs to water their father's flock. ·Some shepherds came 17
and drove them away, but Moses sprang to their help and watered their flock.
When they returned to their father Reuel,[g] he said to them, 'Why are you back so 18
early today?' ·'An Egyptian protected us from the shepherds,' they said, 'and he 19
even drew water for us and watered the flock.' ·'And where is he?' he asked his 20
daughters. 'Why did you leave the man there? Ask him to eat with us.' ·Moses 21
agreed to stay on there with the man, who gave him his daughter Zipporah in
marriage. ·She gave birth to a son, whom he named Gershom[h] 'because', he said, 22
18:3 'I am an alien in a foreign land.'

C: THE CALL OF MOSES

God remembers Israel [i]

23 During this long period the king of Egypt died. The Israelites, groaning in their
slavery, cried out for help and from the depths of their slavery their cry came up to
24 God. •God heard their groaning; God remembered his covenant with Abraham,
25 Isaac and Jacob. •God saw the Israelites and took note. . .

The burning bush [a]

6:2–13; 6:28–7:7
Ac 7:30–35; 13;17 •1K19:8b •19:1a
Gn 16:7c
Dt 33:16

1 3 Moses was looking after the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of
Midian; he led it to the far side of the desert and came to Horeb, [b] the mountain
2 of God. •The angel of Yahweh [c] appeared to him in a flame blazing from the middle
of a bush. Moses looked; there was the bush blazing, but the bush was not being
3 burnt up. •Moses said, 'I must go across and see this strange sight, and why the
4 bush is not being burnt up.' •When Yahweh saw him going across to look, God
called to him from the middle of the bush. 'Moses, Moses!' he said. 'Here I am,' he
5 answered. •'Come no nearer,' he said. 'Take off your sandals, for the place where
6 you are standing is holy ground. •I am the God of your ancestors,' he said, 'the
God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.' At this Moses covered
his face, for he was afraid to look at God. [d]

19:12e
Gn 28:16–17
Lv 17:1a
Jos 5:15
• ↗Mt22:32par.
33:20i

The mission of Moses

7 Yahweh then said, 'I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have
heard them crying for help on account of their taskmasters. Yes, I am well aware
8 of their sufferings. •And I have come down to rescue them from the clutches of the
Egyptians and bring them up out of that country, to a country rich and broad, to a
country flowing with milk and honey, [e] to the home of the Canaanites, the Hittites,
9 the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites. •Yes indeed, the

Dt 7:1a

h. The word indicates the Nile, the great river of Egypt, but is also used of its main branches.

2 **a.** Attributed to the Yahwistic-Elohistic tradition, or else to the Elohistic alone.

b. Popular etymology of the name Moses (Hebr. *mosheh*) from the verb *mashah* 'to draw out'. But Pharaoh's daughter did not speak Hebrew. In point of fact, the name is Egyptian, known under its shortened form, *moses*, or under a complete form, e.g. Tutmoses, 'the god Tut is born'. • The story of Moses drawn from the waters invites comparison with infancy-legends about other famous personalities, notably Sargon of Agade king of Mesopotamia in the third millennium, whose mother entrusted him to the river in a basket of reeds.

c. vv. 11–22 (or, as some think, only 15–22) belong to the Yahwistic tradition. • Midian is usually sited in Arabia, to the south of Edom and to the east of the Gulf of Aqaba, and Arabic folklore has preserved the memory of a stay by Moses in this region. This localisation is late, however, and a number of texts show us the Midianites as long-distance nomads frequenting the highways of Palestine, Gn 37:28, 36, and of the Sinai peninsula, Nb 10:29–32, and making incursions into Moab, Gn 36:35, *see also* Nb 22:4, 7; 25:6, 18; 31:1–9; Jos 13:21. It was in Central Palestine that they were defeated by Gideon, Jg 6–8; *see* Is 9:3; 10:26. More precise indication of where their territory lay is given in 1 K 11:18, where a prince of Edom, fleeing to Egypt, crosses Midian and then Paran (the southern part of the Negeb, between Kadesh and Egypt). Thus Midian where God revealed himself to Moses is to be situated in the Sinai peninsula, to the east of the desert of Paran, and not in Arabia.

d. The text says nothing about Moses' education. 11:3 merely stating that he had become 'a man of great importance' and Ac 7:22 that he was 'taught all the wisdom of the Egyptians'. Josephus and Philo add legendary details.

e. 'He went' Gk, Syr.; 'he settled' Hebr.

f. *see* 18:1a.

g. The texts disagree over the name and person of Moses' father-in-law. Here we have Reuel, priest of Midian; in 3:1; 4:18; 18:1, he is called Jethro; Nb 10:29 speaks of Hobab son of Reuel the Midianite, and Jg 1:16; 4:11 of Hobab the Kenite. The mention of Reuel here may be set aside as secondary, and Nb 10:29 be taken as an attempt to reconcile the two traditions, a Kenite marriage and a Midianite marriage. The two traditions are in fact independent of each other and it is a mistake to try to harmonise them. The first, Yahwistic, and originating in Southern Palestine, reflects the existence of friendly relations between Judah and the Kenites, while preserving the memory of Moses' marriage to a foreigner. The second, Elohistic, and closely linked to the Exodus from Egypt, should be retained as historical.

h. Popular etymology, accounting only for the first syllable: *ger*, a resident alien.

i. Priestly tradition.

j. End of v. missing.

3 **a.** This first account (ch. 3–4) of the call of Moses combines Yahwistic, vv. 1–5, 16–20 (theophany and commissioning of Moses) and Elohistic elements, vv. 6, 9–15 (revelation of the divine name). A second, Priestly, account of the revelation of the divine name and commissioning of Moses, this time in Egypt, occurs in 6:2–13 and 6:28–7:7.

b. Horeb is the name for the Sinai Range in the historical context of the Deuteronomist and in the Deuteronomic editing of the Book of Kings. Here, it is a gloss, as in 17:6.

c. God manifesting himself in the world. *see* Gn 16:7c.

d. God's majesty is such that no creature can gaze on it and live.

e. Description of the Promised Land frequent in the Pentateuch.

Israelites' cry for help has reached me, and I have also seen the cruel way in which the Egyptians are oppressing them. •So now I am sending you to Pharaoh, for you 10
to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt.'

Nb 12:3 Is 6:5 Jr 1:6 •1 S 14:10c ↗Ac 7:7

Moses said to God, 'Who am I to go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of 11
Egypt?' •'I shall be with you,' God said, 'and this is the sign by which you will know 12
that I was the one who sent you. *f* After you have led the people out of Egypt, you
will worship God on this mountain.'

The divine name revealed *g*

Jn 17:6,26 Is 42:8e ↗Jn 8:24g ↗Rv 1:4g

Moses then said to God, 'Look, if I go to the Israelites and say to them, "The God 13
of your ancestors has sent me to you," and they say to me, "What is his name?"
what am I to tell them?' •God said to Moses, 'I am he who is.' And he said, 'This is 14
what you are to say to the Israelites, "I am has sent me to you." ' •God further said 15
to Moses, 'You are to tell the Israelites, "Yahweh, the God of your ancestors, the
God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you."
This is my name for all time, and thus I am to be invoked for all generations to
come.

Moses instructed for his mission

Dt 7:1a

'Go, gather the elders of Israel together and tell them, "Yahweh, the God of your 16
ancestors, has appeared to me—the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob—and
has indeed visited *h* you and seen what is being done to you in Egypt, •and has said: 17
I shall bring you out of the misery of Egypt to the country of the Canaanites, the
Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, to a country
flowing with milk and honey." •They will listen to your words, and you and the 18
elders of Israel are to go to the king of Egypt and say to him, "Yahweh, the God of
the Hebrews, has encountered us. So now please allow us to make a three-days'
journey into the desert and sacrifice to Yahweh our God." •I am well aware that 19
the king of Egypt will not let you go unless he is compelled by a mighty hand; •he 20
will not let you go until I have stretched out my arm and struck Egypt with all the
wonders I intend to work there.

The Egyptians to be plundered

11:2–3; 12:35–36 ↗Ws 10:17

'I shall ensure that the Egyptians are so much impressed with this people that when 21
you go, you will not go empty-handed. •Every woman will ask her neighbour and 22
the woman staying in her house for silver and golden jewellery, and clothing. In
these you will dress your own sons and daughters, despoiling the Egyptians of
them.'

Moses granted miraculous powers

Mt 13:57 7:8–12

4 Moses replied as follows, 'But suppose they will not believe me or listen to 1
my words, and say to me, "Yahweh has not appeared to you"?' •Yahweh 2
then said, 'What is that in your hand?' 'A staff,' he said. •'Throw it on the ground,' 3
said Yahweh. Moses threw it on the ground; the staff turned into a snake and
Moses recoiled from it. •Yahweh then said to Moses, 'Reach out your hand and 4
catch it by the tail.' He reached out his hand, caught it, and in his hand it turned
back into a staff. *a* •'Thus they may believe that Yahweh, the God of their ancestors, 5
the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob, has appeared
to you.'

Lv 13:1a

Next, Yahweh said to him, 'Put your hand inside your tunic.' He put his hand 6
inside his tunic, then drew it out again: and his hand was diseased, white as snow.
Yahweh then said, 'Put your hand back inside your tunic.' He put his hand back 7
inside his tunic and when he drew it out, there it was restored, just like the rest of
his flesh. •'Even so: should they not believe you nor be convinced by the first sign, 8
the second sign will convince them; •but should they not be convinced by either of 9
these two signs and refuse to listen to what you say, you are to take some water

from the River and pour it on the ground, and the water you have taken from the River will turn to blood on the dry land.'

Aaron, the mouthpiece of Moses

10 Moses said to Yahweh, 'Please, my Lord, I have never been eloquent, even since Nb 12:3
11 you have spoken to your servant, for I am slow and hesitant of speech.' ·'Who Jr 1:6–10
gave a person a mouth?' Yahweh said to him. 'Who makes a person dumb or deaf,
12 gives sight or makes blind? Is it not I, Yahweh? ·Now go, I shall help you speak Dt 18:18
Mt 10:19–20 par.
and instruct you what to say.'
13, 14 'Please, my Lord,' Moses replied, 'send anyone you decide to send!' ·At this, Is 6:8
Yahweh's anger kindled against Moses, and he said to him, 'There is your brother
Aaron the Levite, is there not? I know that he is a good speaker. Here he comes to
15 meet you. When he sees you, his heart will be full of joy. ·You will speak to him 7:1–2
Dt 18:18e
and tell him what message to give. I shall help you speak, and him too, and instruct
16 you what to do. ·He will speak to the people in your place; he will be your
17 mouthpiece, and you will be as the god inspiring him. ·And take this staff in your
hand; [b] with this you will perform the signs.'

Moses leaves Midian and returns to Egypt

18 Moses went back to his father-in-law Jethro and said to him, 'Give me leave to 2:18g
return to my kinsmen in Egypt and see if they are still alive.' And Jethro said to
Moses, 'Go in peace.'
19 Yahweh said to Moses in Midian, 'Go, return to Egypt, for all those who wanted ↗Mt 2:20
20 to kill you are dead.' ·So Moses took his wife and his son [c] and, putting them on a
donkey, started back for Egypt; and Moses took the staff of God in his hand. 4:17
21 Yahweh said to Moses, 'Think of the wonders I have given you power to perform,
once you are back in Egypt! You are to perform them before Pharaoh, but I myself
22 shall make him obstinate, and he will not let the people go. ·You will then say to Rm 9:18
23 Pharaoh, "This is what Yahweh says: Israel is my first-born son. ·I told you: Let Dt 1:31;7:6b
my son go and worship me; but since you refuse to let him go, well then! I shall put
your first-born son to death." ' [d]

f. The 'sign' may be what is said in the second part of the v., or perhaps a sign of the type in 4:1–9 which has been omitted.

g. The Yahwistic tradition dates the worship of Yahweh from the origins of humanity, Gn 4:26, and uses this divine name throughout the history of the Patriarchs. According to the Elohistic tradition, to which this text belongs, the name of Yahweh was first revealed to Moses as the name of the God of the Ancestors. The Priestly tradition, 6:2–3, is in agreement with this, merely giving the added information that the name of the God of the Ancestors was El Shaddai; *see* Gn 17:1b. This narrative, one of the climactic moments of the OT, presents two difficulties: the first is philological—the etymology of the name Yahweh; the second is exegetical and theological—the meaning of the narrative as a whole and the significance of the revelation that it conveys. **1** The etymology: attempts have been made to explain the name *yahweh* by languages other than Hebrew or by various Hebrew roots. Clearly, however, it is part of the Hebr. verb 'to be' in an archaic form. Some see it as a causative form of the verb: 'he causes to be', 'he brings into existence'. But it is much more probably a form of the present indicative, meaning 'he is'. **2** The interpretation: the word is explained in v. 14, which is an ancient addition from the same tradition. The meaning of this explanation: *'ehyeh 'asher 'ehyeh*, is disputed. Speaking of himself, God can only use the first person: 'I am'. The Hebr. can be translated literally: 'I am what I am', which would mean that God does not wish to reveal his name; but in fact here God is giving his name which, according to the Semitic way of thinking, ought in some degree to define him. But the Hebr. can also be translated literally as 'I am who am', and by the rules of Hebr. syntax, this corresponds to 'I am he who is', 'I am the one who exists'; and this is how the translators of the Septuagint understood it: *ego eimi ho on*. God is the only truly existent being. This means that he is transcendent and remains a mystery for man, and also that he acts in the history of his people and in human history, which he guides towards an end. In essence this passage contains the developments to be given by subsequent revelation, Rv 1:8: 'who was, who is and who is to come, the Almighty'.

h. When used of God, 'visit' implies an absolute right of scrutiny, judgement and punishment. His interventions in the destiny of individuals or peoples can bring well-being, 4:31; Gn 21:1; 50:24–25; Ps 65:9; 80:14; Ws 3:7–13; Jr 29:10; *see* Lk 1:68gg; or punishment, 1 S 15:2; Ws 14:11; 19:15; Jr 6:15; 23:24; Am 3:2.

4 **a.** v. 5, interrupting the story, is an addition.

b. Moses receives his staff back from God (hence its name 'staff of God', *see* v. 20); it is to be the instrument of wonders, 7:20[b]; 9:22 seq.; 10:13 seq., cf. the staff of Elisha, 2 K 4:29.

c. 'his son' conj., *see* 2:22; 4:25; 'his sons' Hebr.

d. vv. 21–23 are secondary and anticipate the plagues of Egypt: v. 21, the first nine plagues and the hardening of Pharaoh's heart, *see* 7:8a; and vv. 22–23, the tenth plague, *see* 11:1a.

Gn 32:25–33 **The son of Moses circumcised** [e]

On the journey, when he had halted for the night, Yahweh encountered him and 24
Jos 5:2–3.2b tried to kill him. ·Then Zipporah, taking up a flint, cut off her son's foreskin and 25
with it touched his feet and said, 'You are my blood-bridegroom!' ·So he let him 26
Gn 17:10d go. She said, 'Blood-bridegroom' then, with reference to the circumcision.

Moses meets Aaron

Yahweh said to Aaron, 'Go into the desert to meet Moses.' So he went, and met 27
3:1 him at the mountain of God and kissed him. ·Moses then told Aaron all that 28
3:16 Yahweh had said when sending him and all the signs he had ordered him to
perform. ·Moses and Aaron then went and gathered all the elders of the Israelites 29
together, ·and Aaron repeated everything that Yahweh had said to Moses, and in 30
4:2–9 the sight of the people performed the signs. ·The people were convinced, and they 31
14:31
Jn 2:11 rejoiced[f] that Yahweh had visited the Israelites and seen their misery, and they
bowed to the ground in worship.

The first audience with Pharaoh [a]

5 After this, Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said to him, 'This is what 1
Yahweh, God of Israel, says, "Let my people go, so that they can hold a feast [b]
in my honour in the desert." ' ·'Who is Yahweh,' Pharaoh replied, 'for me to obey 2
what he says and let Israel go? I know nothing of Yahweh, and I will not let Israel
go.' ·'The God of the Hebrews has encountered us,' they replied. 'Give us leave to 3
make a three-days' journey into the desert and sacrifice to Yahweh our God, or he
will strike us with a plague or with the sword.' ·The king of Egypt said to them, 4
'Moses and Aaron, what do you mean by distracting the people from their work?
Get back to your forced labour.' ·And Pharaoh said, 'Now that the people have 5
grown to such numbers in the country, what do you mean by interrupting their
forced labour?'

Instructions to the taskmasters

That very day, Pharaoh gave the order to the people's taskmasters and their 6
scribes, ·'Do not go on providing the people with straw [c] for brickmaking as before; 7
let them go and gather straw for themselves. ·But you will exact the same quantity 8
of bricks from them as before, not reducing it at all, since they are lazy, and that is
why their cry is, "Let us go and sacrifice to our God." ·Give these people more 9
work to do, and see they do it instead of listening to lying speeches.'

The people's taskmasters and scribes went out to speak to the people and said, 10
'Pharaoh says this, "I shall not provide you with any more straw. ·Go and collect 11
straw for yourselves where you can find it. But your output is not to be any less." '
So the people scattered all over Egypt to gather stubble for their straw. ·The 12, 13
taskmasters harassed them. 'You must complete your daily quota,' they said, 'just
as when the straw was there.' ·And the Israelites' foremen whom Pharaoh's 14
taskmasters had put in charge of them, were flogged and asked, 'Why have you not
fulfilled your quota of bricks made today as before?'

The Hebrew scribes complain

The Israelites' foremen went and appealed to Pharaoh. 'Why do you treat your 15
servants like this?' they said. ·'No straw is provided for your servants, yet still the 16
cry is, "Make bricks!" And now your servants are being flogged!. . .' [d] ·'You are 17
lazy, lazy,' he retorted. 'That is why you say, "Let us go and sacrifice to Yahweh."
Get back to your work at once. You will not be provided with straw; all the same, 18
you will deliver the quota of bricks.'

Recriminations of the people. Prayer of Moses

The Israelites' foremen saw they were in a difficult position on being told, 'You 19

20 will not reduce your daily production of bricks.' 21 As they left Pharaoh's presence,
they met Moses and Aaron who were standing in their way. 21 'May Yahweh look
down at you and judge!' they said to them. 'You have brought us into bad odour
with Pharaoh and his officials; you have put a sword into their hand to kill us.'
22 Moses went back to Yahweh and said, 'Lord, why do you treat this people so
23 harshly? Why did you send me? 23 Ever since I came to Pharaoh and spoke to him in
your name, he has ill-treated this people, and you have done nothing at all about
rescuing your people.'

1 6 Yahweh then said to Moses, 'Now you will see what I am going to do to
Pharaoh. A mighty hand will force him to let them go, a mighty hand will force
him to expel them from his country.'

Another account of the call of Moses [a] =3:1–4:23

2, 3 God spoke to Moses and said to him, 'I am Yahweh. 3 To Abraham, Isaac and
Jacob I appeared as El Shaddai, but I did not make my name Yahweh known to Gn 17:1b
4 them. 4 I also made my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, the Gn 17:7–8
5 country in which they were living as aliens. 5 Furthermore, I have heard the
groaning of the Israelites, enslaved by the Egyptians, and have remembered my
6 covenant. 6 So say to the Israelites, "I am Yahweh. I shall free you from the forced
labour of the Egyptians; I shall rescue you from their slavery and I shall redeem
7 you with outstretched arm [b] and mighty acts of judgement. 7 I shall take you as my Dt 7:6b
people and I shall be your God. [c] And you will know that I am Yahweh your God,
8 who have freed you from the forced labour of the Egyptians. 8 Then I shall lead you
into the country which I swore I would give to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and Gn 15;24:7
9 shall give it to you as your heritage, I, Yahweh." ' 9 And Moses repeated this to the
Israelites, but they would not listen to Moses, so crushed was their spirit and so
cruel their slavery.

10, 11 Yahweh then said to Moses, 11 'Go to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and tell him to let
12 the Israelites leave his country.' 12 But Moses spoke out in Yahweh's presence and
said, 'The Israelites have not listened to me, so why should Pharaoh take any
13 notice of a poor speaker like me?' [d] 13 Yahweh spoke to Moses and Aaron and sent 4:10
them to Pharaoh king of Egypt, [e] to lead the Israelites out of Egypt.

The genealogy of Moses and Aaron Nb 26:5–14

14 These were their heads of families:
The sons of Reuben, Israel's first-born: Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron and Carmi: these
are the clans of Reuben.
15 The sons of Simeon: Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jachin, Zohar, and Shaul son of the
Canaanite woman: these are the clans of Simeon.
16 These were the names of the sons of Levi with their descendants: Gershon, Gn 46:11
Kohath and Merari. Levi lived for a hundred and thirty-seven years. Nb 3:17seq.

e. A narrative mysterious on account of its brevity and lack of context; Moses is not named, and it is not clear to whom the personal pronouns apply. It may be conjectured that Moses attracts God's anger for not being circumcised and that Zipporah appeases it by in fact circumcising her son but simulating a circumcision of Moses by touching the latter's genitals ('his feet', *see* Is 6:2; 7:20) with the child's foreskin. On circumcision, *see* Gn 17:10d.

f. 'rejoiced' Gk; 'understood' Hebr.

5 **a.** This ch. is for the most part Yahwistic.

b. The mention of worship in the desert, *see* already 3:18, comes as a refrain in the account of the first nine plagues, except for the third and sixth, *see* 7:16, 26; 8:4, 16, 23; 9:1, 13; 10:3, 24. This feast, it would seem, was in fact to be the Passover, *see* 12:1a.

c. Chopped straw was mixed with the clay to give cohesion to the unbaked brick.

d. End of v. obscure, perhaps: 'but your people are to blame'.

6 **a.** 6:2–7:7 is the Priestly narrative, parallel with ch. 3–4, of the call of Moses. The revelation of the divine name is situated in Egypt, and the name Yahweh replaces the name El Shaddai, used by the Patriarchs, *see* 3:13g. The people refuse to listen to Moses (v. 9, *see* 4:31). Aaron acts as interpreter to Pharaoh (7:1) and not, as in 4:10–16, to the people.

b. Expression equivalent to the 'mighty hand' of 6:1. The Deuteronomist later combines both expressions, *see* Dt 4:34; 5:15; 7:19; 26:8.

c. These co-ordinate terms expressing the new relationship between God and his people are the time-honoured expression for God's election and covenant, especially in Lv 26:12; Dt 26:17–19; 29:12, and often in Jr and Ezk.

d. lit. 'I (who am) of uncircumcised lips'.

e. Before 'to Pharaoh', Hebr. adds 'to the Israelites'; Gk omits.

The sons of Gershon: Libni and Shimei, with their clans. 17
The sons of Kohath: Amram, Izhar, Hebron and Uzziel. Kohath lived for a 18
hundred and thirty-three years.
The sons of Merari: Mahli and Mushi. These are the clans of Levi with their 19
descendants.
2:1–2 Amram married Jochebed, his aunt, who bore him Aaron and Moses. Amram 20
Nb 26:59 lived for a hundred and thirty-seven years.
The sons of Izhar were: Korah, Nepheg and Zichri. 21
And the sons of Uzziel: Mishael, Elzaphan and Sithri. 22
Aaron married Elisheba daughter of Amminadab and sister of Nahshon, and 23
she bore him Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar.
The sons of Korah: Assir, Elkanah and Abiasaph. These are the clans of the 24
Korahites.
Eleazar, son of Aaron, married one of Putiel's daughters who bore him 25
Nb 25:6–13 Phinehas.
These were the Levitical heads of families, according to clan.
It was to this Aaron and Moses that Yahweh said, 'Lead the Israelites out of 26
Egypt in their armies.' ·It was they who spoke to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, to lead 27
the Israelites out of Egypt—namely Moses and Aaron.

6:2–13 **The narrative of Moses' call, continued**

Now the day when Yahweh spoke to Moses in Egypt, ·Yahweh said to Moses, 28, 29
'Tell Pharaoh king of Egypt everything that I am going to say to you.' ·But Moses 30
said to Yahweh's face, 'I am a poor speaker, so why should Pharaoh take any
notice of me?'
7 Yahweh then said to Moses, 'Look, I have made you as a god for Pharaoh, and 1
4:16 your brother Aaron is to be your prophet. ·You must say whatever I command 2
you, and your brother Aaron will repeat to Pharaoh that he is to let the Israelites
4:21 leave his country. ·But I myself shall make Pharaoh stubborn and shall perform 3
Ps 135:9 many a sign and wonder in Egypt. ·Since Pharaoh will not listen to you, I shall lay 4
my hand on Egypt and with great acts of judgement lead my armies, my people,
the Israelites, out of Egypt. ·And the Egyptians will know that I am Yahweh when 5
I stretch out my hand against the Egyptians and lead the Israelites out of their
country.'
Moses and Aaron did exactly as Yahweh had ordered. ·Moses was eighty years 6, 7
old and Aaron eighty-three, when they spoke to Pharaoh.

D: THE PLAGUES OF EGYPT[a]

Ps 78;105 Ws 11:14–20; 16:18 **The staff turned into a snake**

Yahweh said to Moses and Aaron, ·'If Pharaoh says to you, "Display some 8, 9
4:2seq. marvel," you must say to Aaron, "Take your staff and throw it down in front of
Pharaoh, and let it turn into a serpent!" ' ·Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and 10
did as Yahweh had ordered. Aaron threw down his staff in front of Pharaoh and
his officials, and it turned into a serpent. ·Then Pharaoh in his turn called for the 11
2 Tm 3:8 sages and sorcerers, and by their spells the magicians of Egypt did the same.
Each threw his staff down and these turned into serpents. But Aaron's staff 12
swallowed up theirs. ·Pharaoh, however, remained obstinate and, as Yahweh had 13
foretold, refused to listen to Moses and Aaron.

↗Ws 11:6–8 **The first plague: the water turns to blood**

Yahweh then said to Moses, 'Pharaoh is adamant. He refuses to let the people go. 14
Go to Pharaoh tomorrow morning as he makes his way to the water, confront him 15
on the river bank and in your hand take the staff that turned into a snake.

16 Say to him, "Yahweh, God of the Hebrews, sent me to say: Let my people go and
17 worship in the desert. Up till now, you have refused to listen. •This is what Yahweh
says: You will know that I am Yahweh by this: with the staff that is in my hand ♭ I
18 shall strike the waters of the River and they will turn to blood. •The fish in the river Rv 11:6
will die, and the River will stink, and the Egyptians will not be able to drink the
river water." '
19 Yahweh said to Moses, 'Say to Aaron, "Take your staff and stretch out your
hand over the waters of Egypt—over their rivers and canals, their marshland, and
all their reservoirs—and they will turn to blood. There will be blood throughout
20 the whole of Egypt, even in sticks and stones." ' •Moses and Aaron did as Yahweh
ordered. He raised his staff and struck the waters of the River, with Pharaoh and Ps 78:44; 105:29
his officials looking on, and all the water in the River turned to blood. ↗Rv 16:4–7; 8:8,11
21 The fish in the River died, and the River stank; and the Egyptians could no longer
drink the River water. Throughout the whole of Egypt there was blood.
22 But by their spells the magicians of Egypt did the same; Pharaoh remained
obstinate and, as Yahweh had foretold, refused to listen to Moses and Aaron.
23 Pharaoh turned away and went back into his palace, taking no notice even of this.
24 And the Egyptians all dug holes along the river-bank in search of drinking water,
25 since they could not drink the River water. •After Yahweh struck the River, seven
days went by.

The second plague: the frogs

8:1 26 Then Yahweh said to Moses, 'Go to Pharaoh and say to him, "Yahweh says this:
2 27 Let my people go and worship me. •If you refuse to let them go, I shall strike your
3 28 whole territory with frogs. •The River will swarm with frogs; they will make their
way into your palace, into your bedroom, onto your bed, into the houses of your
4 29 officials and subjects, into your ovens, into your kneading bowls. •The frogs will
actually clamber onto you, onto your subjects and onto all your officials." '
5 1 8 Yahweh then said to Moses, 'Say to Aaron, "Stretch out your hand with your
staff, over the rivers, the canals and the marshland, and bring the frogs up over
6 2 the land of Egypt." ' •So Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt,
7 3 and the frogs came up and covered the land of Egypt. •But by their spells the Ps 78:45; 105:30
magicians did the same, bringing frogs over the land of Egypt. ↗Rv 16:13
8 4 Pharaoh then summoned Moses and Aaron and said, 'Entreat Yahweh to take
the frogs away from me and my subjects, and I promise to let the people go and
9 5 sacrifice to Yahweh.' •Moses said to Pharaoh, 'You are the one to gain by it: [a] when
would you like me to pray for you, your officials and your subjects, so as to rid you
10 6 and your houses of the frogs so that they will be left only in the River?' •'Tomor-
row,' he said. Moses said, 'It shall be as you say, so that you will know that there is
11 7 no one like Yahweh our God. •The frogs will leave you, your houses, your officials
12 8 and your subjects and will be left only in the River.' •Moses and Aaron left
Pharaoh's presence, and Moses pleaded with Yahweh about the frogs which he
13 9 had inflicted on Pharaoh. •Yahweh did as Moses asked, and in house and courtyard

7 **a.** A time-honoured expression, which the text in fact applies only to the tenth plague; the first nine plagues are 'signs' or 'wonders', like the 'signs' and 'wonders' of Ex 4 *passim*; 7:9. As these wonders were designed to accredit Moses as regards the Israelites and Pharaoh, so the 'plagues' are designed to accredit Yahweh, that is to say, have his power recognised by Pharaoh. The first nine plagues differ from the tenth by form and vocabulary. The account ends with Pharaoh's absolute refusal, and Moses never sees him again, 10:28–29; there is now nothing for it but to flee. The story then continues with the pursuit of the fugitives and the miracle of the sea, ch. 14. The Exodus-flight tradition was originally independent of the tradition of the tenth plague, according to which the Israelites are expelled from Egypt, 12:31–33, *see also* 4:21; 6:1; 11:1. There were other traditions about these 'signs', *see* Ps 78:43–51; 105:27–36, to be further developed in Ws 11:14–20; 16:1–18:25. Like these other presentations, the account in Ex 7:14–10:29 is itself a literary composition. The third and sixth plagues belong to the Priestly tradition; distribution of the others between the Yahwistic and Elohistic traditions is problematic. It would be a mistake to try to explain these wonders in terms of astronomy or natural science, but the account as it stands draws on natural phenomena known in Egypt but unknown in Palestine (the reddened Nile, the frogs, the dust-laden desert wind), or known in Egypt and in Palestine (the locusts), or even known in Palestine but uncommon in Egypt (the hail). The main point of the story is to manifest Yahweh's omnipotence to the Israelites and to Pharaoh himself.

b. The hand of Moses, God's appointed agent.

8 **a.** lit. 'Glorify yourself about me'. Alternative trans. following Gk 'Let me know clearly'.

and field the frogs died. •They piled them up in heaps and the country stank. •But 10 14. 11 15
once Pharaoh saw that there had been a respite, he became obstinate and, as
Yahweh had foretold, refused to listen to them.

The third plague: the mosquitoes

Yahweh then said to Moses, 'Say to Aaron, " Stretch out your staff and strike the 12 16
dust of the earth, and it will turn into mosquitoes throughout the whole of Egypt." '
[b]Aaron stretched out his hand, with his staff, and struck the dust of the earth, and 13 17
Ps 105:31 there were mosquitoes on man and beast; all the dust of the earth turned into
mosquitoes throughout the whole of Egypt. •By their spells the magicians tried to 14 18
produce mosquitoes in the same way but failed, and there were mosquitoes on man
Lk 11:20 and beast. •So the magicians said to Pharaoh, 'This is the finger of God.'[c] But 15 19
Pharaoh was obstinate and, as Yahweh had foretold, refused to listen to them.

The fourth plague: the horseflies

Yahweh then said to Moses, 'Get up early in the morning and confront Pharaoh as 16 20
he makes his way to the water. Say to him, "Yahweh says this: Let my people go
Ps 78:45 and worship me. •But if you will not let my people go, I shall send horseflies on 17 21
you, on your officials, your subjects and your houses. The Egyptians' houses will
swarm with horseflies, and so will the very ground they stand on. •But I shall 18 22
Gn 47:1seq. exempt the region of Goshen, where my people are living, that day; there will be
no horseflies there, so that you will know that I am Yahweh, here in this country.
I shall make a distinction[d] between my people and your people. This sign will take 19 23
place tomorrow." ' •Yahweh did this, and great swarms of horseflies found their 20 24
way into Pharaoh's palace, into his officials' houses and all over Egypt; the country
was ruined by the horseflies.

Pharaoh then summoned Moses and Aaron and said, 'Go and sacrifice to your 21 25
God, inside the country.' •'That would never do,' Moses said, 'since what we 22 26
sacrifice to Yahweh our God is outrageous to the Egyptians. If the Egyptians see
us offering sacrifices which outrage them, won't they stone us?[e] •We shall make a 23 27
three-days' journey into the desert to sacrifice to Yahweh our God, as he has
ordered us.' •Pharaoh said, 'I will let you go and sacrifice to Yahweh your God in 24 28
the desert, provided you do not go very far. Pray for me.' •'The moment I leave 25 29
you,' Moses said, 'I shall pray to Yahweh. Tomorrow morning the horseflies will
leave Pharaoh, his officials and his subjects. But Pharaoh must stop trifling with us
by not allowing the people to go and sacrifice to Yahweh.' •Moses then left 26 30
Pharaoh's presence and prayed to Yahweh, •and Yahweh did as Moses asked; the 27 31
horseflies left Pharaoh, his officials and his subjects; not one remained. •But 28 32
Pharaoh became obstinate this time too and did not let the people go.

The fifth plague: death of the Egyptians' livestock

9 Yahweh then said to Moses, 'Go to Pharaoh and say to him, "Yahweh, God of 1
the Hebrews, says this: Let my people go and worship me. •If you refuse to let 2
them go and detain them any longer, •look, the hand of Yahweh will strike your 3
Ps 78:48 livestock in the fields, horses, donkeys, camels, oxen and flocks with a deadly
plague. •Yahweh will discriminate between the livestock of Israel and the livestock 4
of Egypt: nothing of what belongs to the Israelites will die. •Yahweh has fixed the 5
time. Tomorrow, he has said, Yahweh will do this in the country." ' •Next day 6
Yahweh did this: all the Egyptians' livestock died, but nothing of the livestock
owned by the Israelites died. •Pharaoh had enquiries made, and found that of the 7
livestock owned by the Israelites not a single beast had died. But Pharaoh was
obstinate and did not let the people go.

The sixth plague: the boils

Yahweh then said to Moses and Aaron, 'Take handfuls of soot from the kiln, and 8
before Pharaoh's eyes let Moses throw it in the air. •It will turn into fine dust over 9

the whole of Egypt and produce boils breaking into sores on man and beast
10 throughout the whole of Egypt.' •So they took soot from the kiln and stood in front
of Pharaoh, and Moses threw it in the air, and on man and beast it brought out
11 boils breaking into sores. •And the magicians could not compete with Moses in the Rv 16:2
matter of the boils, for the magicians were covered with boils like all the other
12 Egyptians. •But Yahweh made Pharaoh stubborn and, as Yahweh had foretold to
Moses, he did not listen to them.

The seventh plague: the hail

13 Yahweh then said to Moses, 'Get up early in the morning and confront Pharaoh.
Say to him, "Yahweh, God of the Hebrews, says this: Let my people go and
14 worship me. •For this time I am going to inflict all my plagues on you, on your
officials and on your subjects,[a] so that you will know that there is no one like me in
15 the whole world. •Had I stretched out my hand to strike you and your subjects with
16 pestilence, you would have been swept from the earth. •But I have let you survive ↗Rm 9:17
for this reason: to display my power to you and to have my name talked of
17 throughout the world. •Since you take a high hand with my people, refusing to let
18 them go, •very well, at about this time tomorrow, I shall cause so severe a hail to
19 fall as was never known in Egypt from the day of its foundation until now. •So now
send word to have your livestock and everything else you own in the fields put
under cover. On man or beast, all that happen to be in the fields and are not
brought indoors, the hail will fall and they will die." '
20 Those of Pharaoh's officials who respected what Yahweh said, brought their
21 slaves and livestock indoors, •but those who did not take to heart what Yahweh
said left their slaves and livestock in the fields.
22 Yahweh then said to Moses, 'Stretch out your hand towards heaven so that it
hails throughout the whole of Egypt, on man and beast and on everything growing
23 anywhere in Egypt.' •Moses stretched out his staff towards heaven, and Yahweh
thundered[b] and rained down hail. Lightning struck the earth and Yahweh rained Ps 78:47seq.; 105:32
24 down hail on Egypt. •And so there was hail, and lightning accompanied the hail, Rv 8:7;
very severe, such as had never been known anywhere in Egypt since it first became ↗16:21
25 a nation. •All over Egypt the hail struck down everything in the fields, man and
beast, and the hail beat down everything growing in the fields and shattered all the
26 trees in the fields. •The only place where there was no hail was in the Goshen Gn 47:1seq.
region, where the Israelites lived.
27 Pharaoh then sent for Moses and Aaron and said, 'This time, I have sinned.
28 Yahweh is in the right; I and my subjects are in the wrong. •Pray to Yahweh, for
we cannot bear any more of this thunder and hail. I promise to let you go. You
29 need stay no longer.' •Moses said to him, 'The moment I leave the city I shall
stretch out my hands to Yahweh. The thunder will stop, and there will be no more
30 hail, so that you may know that the earth belongs to Yahweh. •But as for you and Dt 10:14 Ps 24:1
your officials, I know very well that you still have no respect for Yahweh God.'
31 The flax and the barley were ruined, since the barley was in the ear and the flax in
32 bud, •but the wheat and spelt were not destroyed, being late crops.

b. At beginning of v. we omit 'And they did the same', following Gk.

c. Or 'the finger of a god', a formula occurring in Egyptian magico-religious texts.

d. 'I shall make a distinction (a separation)' versions; 'I shall set redemption' Hebr.

e. The pastoral Israelites sacrificed animals from their flocks; Egyptian rites were very different: vegetable offerings, poultry, pieces of butcher's meat. Furthermore, the ram and he-goat were sacred animals for them.

9 **a.** lit. 'against your heart.'

b. lit. 'gave voices'. The 'voice of Yahweh' is thunder, *see* v. 29; 19:19; Jb 37:2; Ps 18:13; 29:3–9.

Moses left Pharaoh and went out of the city. He stretched out his hands to 33
Yahweh and the thunder and hail ceased and the rain stopped pouring down on
the earth. ·When Pharaoh saw that rain and hail and thunder had stopped, he 34
relapsed into sin, ·and he and his officials became obstinate again. Pharaoh was 35
stubborn and, as Yahweh had foretold through Moses, refused to let the
Israelites go.

Jl 2 **The eighth plague: the locusts**

10 Yahweh then said to Moses, 'Go to Pharaoh, for I have made him and his 1
officials stubborn, to display these signs of mine among them; ·so that you 2
12:26;13:8 Dt 4:9;6:7, 20–25 Jos 4:6seq., 21seq. ·8:6 can tell your sons and your grandsons how I made fools of the Egyptians and what
signs I performed among them, so that you would know that I am Yahweh.' ·Moses 3
and Aaron then went to Pharaoh and said to him, 'Yahweh, God of the Hebrews,
says this, "How much longer will you refuse to submit to me? Let my people go
and worship me. ·Or, if you refuse to let my people go, tomorrow I shall send 4
locusts into your country. ·They will cover the surface of the soil so that the soil 5
cannot be seen. They will devour the remainder of what has escaped, of what you
have been left after the hail; they will devour all your trees growing in the fields;
they will fill your houses, all your officials' houses and all the Egyptians' 6
houses—something your ancestors and your ancestors' ancestors have never seen
from the day they first appeared on earth until now." ' Then he turned on his heel
and left Pharaoh's presence. ·At which, Pharaoh's officials said to him, 'How much 7
longer are we to be tricked by this fellow? Let the people go and worship Yahweh
their God. Do you not finally realise that Egypt is on the brink of ruin?'

So Moses and Aaron were brought back to Pharaoh who said to them, 'Go and 8
worship Yahweh your God. But who are to go?' ·Moses replied, 'We shall take our 9
young men and our old men, we shall take our sons and daughters, our flocks and
our herds, since we are going to hold a feast in Yahweh's honour.' ·Pharaoh said, 10
'So I must let you go with your wives and children! May Yahweh preserve you!
Plainly, you are up to no good! ·Oh no! You men [a] may go and worship Yahweh, 11
since that was your original request.' With that, they were driven [b] from Pharaoh's
presence.

Ps 78:46; 105:34 Yahweh then said to Moses, 'Stretch out your hand over Egypt for the locusts. 12
Let them invade Egypt and devour whatever is growing in the country, whatever
the hail has left!' ·Moses stretched his staff over Egypt, and over the country 13
Yahweh sent an east wind which blew all that day and night. By morning, the east
wind had brought the locusts.

↗Rv 9:3seq. The locusts invaded the whole of Egypt and settled all over Egypt, in great 14
swarms; never had there been so many locusts before, nor would there be again.
They covered the surface of the ground till the land was devastated. [c] They 15
devoured whatever was growing in the fields and all the fruit on the trees that the
hail had left. No green was left on tree or plant in the fields anywhere in Egypt.

Pharaoh sent urgently for Moses and Aaron and said, 'I have sinned against 16
Yahweh your God and against you. ·Now forgive my sin, I implore you, just this 17
once, and entreat Yahweh your God to turn this deadly thing away from me.'
When Moses left Pharaoh's presence he prayed to Yahweh, ·and Yahweh 18, 19
changed the wind into a west wind, [d] very strong, which carried the locusts away
and swept them into the Sea of Reeds. There was not one locust left in the whole of
Egypt. ·But Yahweh made Pharaoh stubborn, and he did not let the Israelites go. 20

The ninth plague: the darkness

Yahweh then said to Moses, 'Stretch out your hand towards heaven, and let 21
↗Ws 17:1–18:4 Ps 105:28 darkness, darkness so thick that it can be felt, cover Egypt.' ·So Moses stretched 22
out his hand towards heaven, and for three days there was thick darkness over the

23 whole of Egypt. ·No one could see anyone else or move about for three days, but ↗Rv 16:10▶
all the Israelites did have light where they were living.
24 Pharaoh summoned Moses and said, 'Go and worship Yahweh, but your flocks
25 and herds are to stay here. Your wives and children can go with you too.' · Moses
said, 'But now you must give us sacrifices and burnt offerings to offer to Yahweh
26 our God. ·And our livestock will go with us too; not a hoof will be left behind; for
we may need animals from these to worship Yahweh our God; for until we get
there we ourselves cannot tell how we are to worship Yahweh.'
27, 28 But Yahweh made Pharaoh stubborn, and he refused to let them go. ·Pharaoh
said to Moses, 'Out of my sight! Be sure you never see my face again, for the next
29 time you see my face you die!' ·Moses then said, 'You yourself have said it. I shall
never see your face again.'

Announcement of the death of the first-born

13:11b

1 **11** Yahweh then said to Moses, 'I shall inflict one more plague on Pharaoh and
Egypt, after which he will let you go away. When he lets you go, he will
2 actually drive you out![a] ·Now instruct the people that every man is to ask his
3 neighbour, and every woman hers, for silver and golden jewellery.'[b] ·And
Yahweh made the Egyptians impressed with the people, while Moses himself was 3:21
a man of great importance in Egypt in the opinion of Pharaoh's officials and the Ac 7:22
people.
4 Moses then said, 'Yahweh says this, "At midnight I shall pass through Egypt,
5 and all the first-born in Egypt will die, from the first-born of Pharaoh, heir to his
throne, to the first-born of the slave-girl at the mill, and all the first-born of the
6 livestock.[c] ·And throughout Egypt there will be great wailing, such as never was
7 before, nor will be again. ·But against the Israelites, whether man or beast, never
a dog shall bark, so that you may know that Yahweh discriminates between Egypt
8 and Israel. ·Then all these officials of yours will come down to me and, bowing low
before me, say: Go away, you and all the people who follow you! After which, I
shall go." ' And, hot with anger, he left Pharaoh's presence.
9 Yahweh then said to Moses, 'Pharaoh will not listen to you, so that more of my
10 wonders may be displayed in Egypt.' ·Moses and Aaron worked all these wonders[d]
in Pharaoh's presence, but Yahweh made Pharaoh stubborn, and he did not let the
Israelites leave his country.

10 **a.** Pharaoh is suspicious, and reluctant to give general permission, v. 9; he wants to keep the women and children as hostages.

b. 'they were driven', lit. 'they drove them' Gk, Sam.; 'he drove them' Hebr.

c. 'devastated' Gk; 'black with them' Hebr.

d. lit. 'sea wind' from the point of view of someone living in Palestine, where the sea lies on the west.

11 **a.** The last vv. of ch. 10 conclude the story of the nine plagues, belonging to the Exodus-flight tradition, *see* 7:8a. The story of the tenth plague, which begins here, presents the Exodus as an expulsion, *see* 12:31–33 and earlier 4:21; 6:1. These two concepts are irreconcilable if concerned with the same group, but may be based on fact, if originally relating to two different groups. The Exodus-flight tradition concerns the group led by Moses, who were pursued by the Egyptians and were favoured with the miracle of the sea. The Exodus-expulsion tradition would then apply to a related group, presumably driven out of Egypt some time earlier. The histories of these two groups may be followed through the duplicate accounts of the itineraries taken on the way out of Egypt, *see* 13:17e,f. The tradition concerning the group led by Moses, being the dominant one, has assimilated features from the expulsion tradition.

b. The despoiling of the Egyptians is a secondary theme, appearing earlier in 3:21 and later in 12:35–36. Its mention here excludes the possibility that the Egyptians had experienced the first nine plagues.

c. The first-born of the beasts are added here, borrowing from 12:12, because, like the human first-born, they are first-fruits dedicated to the godhead.

d. The first nine plagues. • vv. 9–10 are an editorial addition.

34:18
Lv 23:5–8
Nb 28:16–25
Dt 16:1–8
Ezk 45:21–24

E: THE PASSOVER [a]

↗Mt 26:17seq., par.
↗Lk 22:15–16
↗1 Co 5:7

12 Yahweh said to Moses and Aaron in Egypt, 2 'This month [b] must be the first
of all the months for you, the first month of your year. 3 Speak to the whole
community of Israel and say, "On the tenth day of this month each man must take
an animal from the flock for his family: one animal for each household. 4 If the
household is too small for the animal, he must join with his neighbour nearest to
his house, depending on the number of persons. When you choose the animal, you
will take into account what each can eat. 5 It must be an animal without blemish, a
Lv 22:19seq. male one year old; you may choose it either from the sheep or from the goats.
↗1 P 1:19 You must keep it till the fourteenth day of the month when the whole assembly of 6
the community of Israel will slaughter it at twilight. [c] 7 Some of the blood must then
be taken and put on both door-posts and the lintel of the houses where it is eaten.
That night, the flesh must be eaten, roasted over the fire; it must be eaten with 8
unleavened bread and bitter herbs. 9 Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but
roasted over the fire, with the head, feet and entrails. 10 You must not leave any of it
over till the morning: whatever is left till morning you must burn. [d] 11 This is how you
must eat it: with a belt round your waist, your sandals on your feet and your staff in
your hand. [e] You must eat it hurriedly: it is a Passover in Yahweh's honour. [f] 12 That
Nb 33:4 night, I shall go through Egypt and strike down all the first-born in Egypt, man and
Lk 2:23 beast alike, and shall execute justice on all the gods of Egypt, I, Yahweh! 13 The
Lv 1:5e blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are. When I see the blood I
shall pass over you, and you will escape the destructive plague [g] when I strike
Egypt. 14 This day must be commemorated by you, and you must keep it as a feast in
Yahweh's honour. You must keep it as a feast-day for all generations; this is a
decree for all time.

13:3–10;23:15 **The feast of Unleavened Bread**

↗1 Co 5:7 15 "For seven days you must eat unleavened bread. On the first day you must clean
the leaven out of your houses, for anyone who eats leavened bread from the first to
the seventh day must be outlawed from Israel. 16 On the first day you must hold a
sacred assembly, and on the seventh day a sacred assembly. On those days no work
may be done; you will prepare only what each requires to eat. 17 You must keep the
feast of Unleavened Bread because it was on that same day that I brought your
armies out of Egypt. You will keep that day, generation after generation; this is a
decree for all time. 18 In the first month, from the evening of the fourteenth day until
the evening of the twenty-first day, you must eat unleavened bread. 19 For seven
days there may be no leaven in your houses, since anyone, either stranger or citizen
of the country, who eats leavened bread will be outlawed from the community of
Israel. 20 You will eat nothing with leaven in it; wherever you live, you will eat
unleavened bread." '

Injunctions relating to the Passover

21 Moses summoned all the elders of Israel and said to them, 'Go [h] and choose a lamb
22 or kid for your families, and kill the Passover victim. Then take a bunch of
hyssop, [i] dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and with the blood from the basin
touch the lintel and both door-posts; then let none of you venture out of the house
till morning. 23 Then, when Yahweh goes through Egypt to strike it, and sees the
Ezk 9:4–7 blood on the lintel and on both door-posts, he will pass over the door and not allow
↗Heb 11:28 the Destroyer [j] to enter your homes and strike. 24 You will observe this as a decree
binding you and your children for all time, 25 and when you have entered the country
which Yahweh will give you, as he has promised, you will observe this ritual. 26 And
10:2+ when your children ask you, "What does this ritual mean?" 27 you will tell them, "It
Dt 6:20–25 is the Passover sacrifice in honour of Yahweh who passed over the houses of the
Israelites in Egypt, and struck Egypt but spared our houses." ' And the people

28 bowed in worship. •The Israelites then went away and did as Yahweh had ordered
Moses and Aaron.

The tenth plague: death of the first-born

11:4–8;13:11b
↗Ws 18:6–19
Ps 78:51;105:36;
135:8;
136:10

29 And at midnight Yahweh struck down all the first-born in Egypt from the first-born
of Pharaoh, heir to his throne, to the first-born of the prisoner in the dungeon, and
30 the first-born of all the livestock. •Pharaoh and all his officials and all the Egyptians
got up in the night, and there was great wailing in Egypt, for there was not a house
31 without its dead. •It was still dark when Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and
said, 'Up, leave my subjects, you and the Israelites! Go and worship Yahweh as
32 you have asked! •And take your flocks and herds as you have asked, and go! And
33 bless me too!' •The Egyptians urged the people on and hurried them out of the
34 country because, they said, 'Otherwise we shall all be dead.' •So the people carried
off their dough still unleavened, their bowls wrapped in their cloaks, on their
shoulders.

The Egyptians plundered

3:21–22; 11:2

35 The Israelites did as Moses had told them and asked the Egyptians for silver and
36 golden jewellery, and clothing. •Yahweh made the Egyptians so much impressed
with the people that they gave them what they asked. So they despoiled the
Egyptians.

Ws 10:17

Israel's departure

37 The Israelites left Rameses for Succoth, about six hundred thousand[k] on the
38 march—men, that is, not counting their families. •A mixed crowd of people went
39 with them, and flocks and herds, quantities of livestock. •And with the dough
which they had brought from Egypt they baked unleavened cakes, because the
dough had not risen, since they had been driven out of Egypt without time to linger
40 or to prepare food for themselves.[l] •The time that the Israelites spent in Egypt was
41 four hundred and thirty years.[m] •And on the very day the four hundred and thirty

33:1–6
Nb 1:46e;
33:3–5
•Lv 24:10–14
Nb 11:4

Gn 15:13
↗Ac 7:6
↗Ga 3:17

12 a. The long section on the Passover, 12:1–13:16, consists of an ancient source in the Yahwistic tradition, 12:21–23, 27b, 29–39; additions in the Deuteronomic style, 12:24–27a; 13:3–16 and perhaps 13:1–2; and additions of the Priestly editors, i.e. the ritual laws and the meaning of the Passover, 12:1–20, 28, 40–51. With these additions, compare the rituals in Lv 23:5–8; Nb 28:16–25; Dt 16:1–8. In point of fact, the feasts of Passover and Unleavened Bread were originally two separate festivals, the feast of Unleavened Bread being an agricultural festival which began to be celebrated only in Canaan and was not joined to the Passover until after Josiah's reforms. The Passover, of pre-Israelite origin, was an annual festival of nomadic shepherds for the well-being of their flocks. The beginning of the ancient narrative, v. 21, mentioning it without explanation, presupposes that it was already known, and it was in all likelihood the 'feast of Yahweh' which Moses was asking Pharaoh's permission to celebrate, *see* 5:1b. Hence, the connection between the Passover, the tenth plague and the departure from Egypt is only accidental: the departure took place at the same time as the feast. But this coincidence in time accounts for why the Deuteronomic additions, 12:24–27; 13:3–10, explain the feast of Passover (and Unleavened Bread) as commemorating the Exodus from Egypt (as Dt itself, 16:1–3). The Priestly tradition attaches the entire Passover ritual to the tenth plague and the departure from Egypt, 12:11b–14, 42. The connection is more ancient, however, for the Yahwistic account, 12:34, 39*l*, also relates the ancient Passover ritual of the Unleavened Bread to the departure from Egypt. Put into historical relationship with this decisive event in the calling of Israel, these rites acquired an entirely new religious significance: they recalled how God had saved his people, as the explanatory formula accompanying the rite makes clear, 12:26–27; 13:8. The Jewish Passover hence becomes an anticipation of the Christian Easter: the lamb of God, Christ, is sacrificed (the cross) and eaten (the Last Supper) within the framework of the Jewish Passover (Holy Week).

b. The first month of spring, corresponding to our March-April, called Abib in the ancient calendar, Dt 16:1, and Nisan in the post-exilic calendar of Babylonian origin.

c. lit. 'between the two evenings', i.e. either between sunset and darkness (Samaritans) or between afternoon and sunset (Pharisees and Talmud).

d. To preclude profanation. The Gk adds, 'You are not to break any of its bones,' *see* v. 46.

e. Dressed as for a journey.

f. The etymology of the word translated 'Passover' (*pesah*) is unknown. 12:13, 23, 27 explain that Yahweh 'jumped over' or 'left out' or 'protected' the Israelites' houses, but this explanation is secondary.

g. Or, by emendation, 'and on you (will fall) no stroke of the Destroyer' (*see* v. 23).

h. 'Go' Gk; 'Draw' Hebr.

i. Aromatic plant used in various purificatory rites, Nb 19:6; Ps 51:7; Heb 9:19.

j. In the pre-Israelite Passover rite, the Destroyer was a demon threatening flock and family; the blood put on the doors of houses or, in more primitive times, of tents, was to give protection against his assaults.

k. This very exaggerated figure possibly represents a national census of Israel at the time the Yahwistic document was written.

l. These unleavened cakes were not the unleavened bread of the later ritual, but an element of the ancient Passover ritual as celebrated by nomads who habitually eat unleavened bread, *see also* Jos 5:11. The Yahwistic tradition interpreted this as a sign of the haste in which the Israelites left Egypt.

m. Sam. and Gk include the whole period of the Patriarchs' stay in Canaan in this figure.

years ended, all Yahweh's armies left Egypt. 42 The night when Yahweh kept vigil
to bring them out of Egypt must be kept as a vigil in honour of Yahweh by all
Israelites, for all generations.

Ordinances for the Passover

Yahweh said to Moses and Aaron, 'This is the ritual for the Passover: [a] no alien 43
Gn 17:10d may eat it, 44 but any slave bought for money may eat it, once you have circumcised
him. 45, 46 No stranger and no hired servant may eat it. It must be eaten in one house
Nb 9:12 ↗Jn 19:36 alone; you will not take any of the meat out of the house; nor may you break any of
its bones.

'The whole community of Israel must keep it. 47, 48 Should a stranger residing with
you [a] wish to keep the Passover in honour of Yahweh, all the males of his household
must be circumcised: he will then be allowed to keep it and will count as a citizen of
the country. But no uncircumcised person may eat it. 49 The same law will apply to
the citizen and the stranger resident among you.' 50 The Israelites all did as Yahweh
had ordered Moses and Aaron, 51 and that same day Yahweh brought the Israelites
out of Egypt in their armies.

The first-born [a]

13:11b 13 Yahweh spoke to Moses and said, 1, 2 'Consecrate all the first-born to me, the
first birth from every womb, among the Israelites. Whether man or beast, it
is mine.'

12:1a **The feast of Unleavened Bread**

Moses said to the people, 'Remember this day, on which you came out of Egypt, 3
from the place of slave-labour, for by the strength of his hand Yahweh brought you
out of it; no leavened bread may be eaten. 4 On this day, in the month of Abib, you
Dt 7:1a are leaving, 5 and when Yahweh has brought you into the country of the Canaanites,
the Hittites, the Amorites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, flowing with milk and
honey, which he swore to your ancestors that he would give you, then you must
34:18 observe this rite in the same month. 6 For seven days you will eat unleavened bread,
and on the seventh day there must be a feast in Yahweh's honour. 7 During these
seven days unleavened bread may be eaten; no leavened bread may be seen among
you, no leaven among you throughout your territory. 8 And on that day you will
12:26;10:2+ explain to your son, "This is because of what Yahweh did for me when I came out
of Egypt." 9 This will serve as a sign on your hand would serve, or a reminder on
your forehead, and in that way the law of Yahweh will be ever on your lips: for
with a mighty hand Yahweh brought you out of Egypt. 10 You shall observe this law
at its appointed time, year by year.

Gn 22:1a ↗Lk 2:22–24 **The first-born [b]**

'When Yahweh has brought you into the Canaanites' country, as he swore to you 11
and your ancestors that he would, and given it to you, 12 to Yahweh you must make
34:19 Lk 2:23 over whatever first issues from the womb, and every first-born cast by animals
belonging to you: these males belong to Yahweh. 13 But every first-born donkey you
Nb 18:15 will redeem with a lamb or kid; if you do not redeem it, you must break its neck. [c]
All the human first-born, however, those of your own race, you will redeem. 14 And
when your son asks you in days to come, "What does this mean?" you will tell him,
"By the strength of his hand Yahweh brought us out of Egypt, out of the place of
slave-labour. 15 When Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, Yahweh killed all
the first-born in Egypt, of man and beast alike. This is why I sacrifice every male
first issuing from the womb to Yahweh and redeem every first-born of my sons."
Dt 6:8;11:18 This will serve as a sign on your hand would serve, or a headband on your 16
forehead, for by the strength of his hand Yahweh brought us out of Egypt.'

F: THE DEPARTURE FROM EGYPT[d]

The departure of the Israelites[e]

17 When Pharaoh had let the people go, God did not let them take the road to the Philistines' territory, although that was the shortest,[f] 'in case', God thought, 'the prospect of fighting makes the people change their minds and turn back to
18 Egypt.' ·Instead, God led the people a roundabout way through the desert of the
19 Sea of Reeds.[g] The Israelites left Egypt fully armed. ·Moses took with him the bones of Joseph, since Joseph had put the Israelites on solemn oath with the words, 'It is sure that God will visit you,' he had said, 'and when that day comes you must take my bones away from here with you.'

14:10–12 Nb 14:1seq. Gn 50:25 Jos 24:32

20 They set out from Succoth and encamped at Etham, on the edge of the desert.
21 Yahweh preceded them, by day in a pillar of cloud to show them the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could march by day and by
22 night. ·The pillar of cloud never left its place ahead of the people during the day, nor the pillar of fire during the night.[h]

Nb 33:5–6 40:36+ Dt 1:33 Ne 9:19 Ps 78:14; 105:39 Ws 10:17–18; 18:3 Is 4:5 Jn 8:12;10:4

From Etham to the Sea of Reeds

1, 2 **14** Yahweh spoke to Moses and said, ·'Tell the Israelites to turn back and pitch camp in front of Pi-Hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, facing Baal-
3 Zephon. You must pitch your camp opposite this place, beside the sea, ·and then Pharaoh will think, "The Israelites are wandering to and fro in the countryside; the

n. The victim, not the feast. vv. 43–50 lay down the conditions for non-Israelites who wish to join in the paschal meal, and explain how it is to be conducted. These instructions complete the Priestly ritual of vv. 3–11. In them the Israelite is considered to be the 'citizen of the country', i.e. the true inhabitant of Canaan.

o. Like the Athenian *metoikos* and the Roman *incola*, the foreigner who settles in Israel (the *ger*) had his own charter. The patriarchs themselves had been resident aliens in Canaan, Gn 23:4, as had the Israelites in Egypt, Ex 2:22; Gn 15:13. After the conquest of the Holy Land the roles were reversed: the Israelites became citizens and played the host to resident foreigners, Dt 10:19. These last were subject to the laws, Lv 17:15; 24:16–22, and bound to observance of the Sabbath, Ex 20:10; Dt 5:14. They were allowed to make offerings to Yahweh, Nb 15:15–16; they were also permitted to celebrate the Passover, Nb 9:14, provided they accepted circumcision, Ex 12:48. This laid the foundations of the proselytes' charter of the Greek period, already foreshadowed in Is 14:1. These 'strangers' were the 'economically weak' protected by the law, Lv 23:22; 25:35; Dt 24 *passim*; 26:12. This last text and Dt 12:12 compare them to the Levites who similarly had no heritage in Israel; in Jg 17:7 the Bethlehem Levite is called 'a stranger resident' in Judah; *see* Jg 19:1. In the Gk version, *ger* is translated as 'proselyte', *see* Mt 23:15.

13 a. The law of the first-born in 13:1–2, 11–16 is a Deuteronomic addition to the ancient narrative; it is appended not to the Passover but to the death of the Egyptians' first-born and, in the Code of the Covenant, 22:28–29, has nothing to do with the Passover.

b. *see* v. 1a. In the most ancient legal codes of Israel, 22:28–29; 34:19–20, the first-born male, either human or animal, is pronounced God's property. The first-born of beasts are offered in sacrifice, Dt 15:19–20, and a portion goes to the priests, Nb 18:15–18; the donkey is an exception: it is either redeemed or has its neck broken, v. 13; 34:20; and this applies to all unclean animals, Lv 27:26–27; Nb 18:15. The human first-born are always redeemed, v. 13; 34:19–20; Nb 3:46–47; *see* Gn 22. The texts of v. 14 seq.; Nb 3:13; 8:17 associate this special dedication to God with the deliverance from Egypt and with the tenth plague. In place of the first-born of Israel, spared on that occasion, the Levites are consecrated to God, Nb 3:12, 40–51; 8:16–18.

c. The donkey, being an unclean animal, could not be offered in sacrifice.

d. This, properly speaking, is the beginning of the Exodus, the journey of God's people through the desert to the Promised Land; the prophets were to look back on this time as the first days of God's marriage with his people, Jr 2:2; Ezk 16:8; Ho 2:16p; 11:1 seq. Throughout the Bible Yahweh remains 'He who brought his people out of Egypt', Jos 24:17; Ps 81:10; Am 2:10; 3:1; Mi 6:4. • The second part of Isaiah sees the return from Babylon as a second Exodus, Is 40:3e. Christian tradition has later seen the journey through the desert as a figure of the pilgrimage of the Church (or individual soul) towards Heaven.

e. The route taken by the Exodus and the precise stages of the journey are extremely difficult to determine. v. 17 notwithstanding, a certain number of names tend to indicate a northern route, that is to say, through 'the Philistines' territory' (which term, however, is an anachronism). There would seem to be traces of two literary traditions here, preserving the memory of two historic facts, the duplicate itineraries corresponding to the exodus of two distinct groups, *see* 7:8a; 16:1a.

f. The normal highway running parallel with the coast and going by way of Sileh (the modern el-Kantara); there are wells and military posts at intervals along its course. The fugitive group certainly did not take it. The group driven out of Egypt may have done so. On it, the three geographical names mentioned in 14:2 may most convincingly be sited, but the flight-Exodus, being the more important, has assimilated memories from the other tradition.

g. The words 'the Sea of Reeds', in Hebr. *yam suph*, are additional. The original text gave only a general indication: the Israelites took the desert route, to the east or south-east. The meaning and location of what is termed 'the Sea of Suph' are uncertain: it is not mentioned in the ch. 4 narrative, which only speaks of 'the sea'. The sole ancient text to mention the 'Sea of Suph' or 'Sea of Reeds' (translating the Egyptian term—*see also* the phrase in Nb 21:4), is 15:4, which is poetic.

h. In the Pentateuch we find the divine presence manifested in various ways: the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire (Yahwistic tradition); the 'dark mist' and the cloud (Elohistic tradition); finally, coupled with the cloud, the 'glory' of Yahweh, 24:16f, a consuming fire which moves like Yahweh himself (Priestly tradition), *see* 19:16 seq., 16g. Mystical theology makes much of these ideas or images.

desert has closed in on them." ·I shall then make Pharaoh stubborn and he will set 4
out in pursuit of them; and I shall win glory for myself at the expense of Pharaoh
and his whole army, and then the Egyptians will know that I am Yahweh.' And the
Israelites did this.

The Egyptians pursue the Israelites

When Pharaoh king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, he and his officials 5
changed their attitude towards the people. 'What have we done,' they said,
'allowing Israel to leave our service?' ·So Pharaoh had his chariot harnessed and 6
set out with his troops, ·taking six hundred of the best chariots and all the other 7
chariots in Egypt, with officers in each. ·Yahweh made Pharaoh king of Egypt 8
stubborn, and he gave chase to the Israelites. The Israelites marched confidently
away, ·but the Egyptians, all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, his horsemen and his 9
army, gave chase and caught up with them where they lay encamped beside the sea
near Pi-Hahiroth, facing Baal-Zephon. ·As Pharaoh approached, the Israelites 10
looked up—and there were the Egyptians in pursuit of them! The Israelites were
5:21;6.9 terrified and cried out to Yahweh for help. ·To Moses they said, 'Was it for lack of 11
16:2seq.;17:3; graves in Egypt, that you had to lead us out to die in the desert? What was the
15:24 point of bringing us out of Egypt? ·Did we not tell you as much in Egypt? Leave us 12
Nb 11:1,4; alone, we said, we would rather work for the Egyptians! We prefer to work for the
21:4–5 Egyptians than to die in the desert!' ·Moses said to the people, 'Do not be afraid! 13
Ps 78:40 Stand firm, and you will see what Yahweh will do to rescue you today: the
5:21;6:9 Egyptians you see today you will never see again. ·Yahweh will do the fighting for 14
Is 30:15 you; all you need to do is to keep calm.'

Ps 78;105; **The miracle of the sea** [a]
106;114
↗Ws 10:18seq. Yahweh then said to Moses, 'Why cry out to me? Tell the Israelites to march 15
↗1 Co 10:1–2 on. ·Your part is to raise your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea and 16
divide it, so that the Israelites can walk through the sea on dry ground, ·while 17
I, for my part, shall make the Egyptians so stubborn that they will follow them,
and I shall win glory for myself at the expense of Pharaoh and all his army,
chariots and horsemen. ·And when I have won glory for myself at the expense 18
of Pharaoh and his chariots and horsemen, the Egyptians will know that I am
Yahweh.'

Gn 16:7c Then the angel of God, who preceded the army of Israel, changed station and 19
followed behind them. The pillar of cloud moved from their front and took position
behind them. ·It came between the army of the Egyptians and the army of Israel. 20
The cloud was dark, and the night passed [b] without the one drawing any closer to
the other the whole night long. ·Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, 21
and Yahweh drove the sea back with a strong easterly wind all night and made the
1 Co 10:1 sea into dry land. The waters were divided ·and the Israelites went on dry ground 22
Heb 11:29 right through the sea, with walls of water to right and left of them. ·The Egyptians 23
gave chase, and all Pharaoh's horses, chariots and horsemen went into the sea after
Ps 77:16–18 them. ·In the morning watch, [c] Yahweh looked down on the army of the Egyptians 24
from the pillar of fire and cloud and threw the Egyptian army into confusion. ·He 25
so clogged [d] their chariot wheels that they drove on only with difficulty, which made
the Egyptians say, 'Let us flee from Israel, for Yahweh is fighting on their side
against the Egyptians!' ·Then Yahweh said to Moses, 'Stretch out your hand over 26
the sea and let the waters flow back on the Egyptians and on their chariots and
their horsemen.' ·Moses stretched out his hand over the sea and, as day broke, the 27
sea returned to its bed. The fleeing Egyptians ran straight into it, and Yahweh
Dt 11:4 overthrew the Egyptians in the middle of the sea. ·The returning waters washed 28
right over the chariots and horsemen of Pharaoh's entire army, which had followed
the Israelites into the sea; not a single one of them was left. ·The Israelites, 29
however, had marched through the sea on dry ground, with walls of water to right
and left of them. ·That day, Yahweh rescued Israel from the clutches of the 30

31 Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians lying dead on the sea-shore. •When Israel
saw the mighty deed that Yahweh had performed against the Egyptians, the people
revered Yahweh and put their faith in Yahweh and in Moses, his servant. 4:31

Song of victory [a]

1 **15** It was then that Moses and the Israelites sang this song in Yahweh's honour:

I shall sing to Yahweh, for he has covered himself in glory,
horse and rider he has thrown into the sea.
2 Yah [b] is my strength and my song, [c] ‖Is 12:2
to him I owe my deliverance.
He is my God and I shall praise him,
my father's God and I shall extol him.
3 Yahweh is a warrior;
Yahweh is his name. 3:14

4 Pharaoh's chariots and army he has hurled into the sea;
the pick of his officers have been drowned in the Sea of Reeds.
5 The ocean has closed over them;
they have sunk to the bottom like a stone.
6 Your right hand, Yahweh, wins glory by its strength,
your right hand, Yahweh, shatters your foes,
7 and by your great majesty you fell your assailants;
you unleash your fury, it consumes them like chaff. Is 5:24
8 A blast from your nostrils and the waters piled high; Ob 18
the waves stood firm as a dyke; Na 1:10
the bed of the sea became firm ground. •Jr 51:63seq.
Rv 18:21

9 The enemy said, 'I shall give chase and overtake,
'I shall share out the spoil and glut myself on them,
'I shall draw my sword, my hand will destroy them.'
10 You blew with your breath, the sea closed over them;
they sank like lead in the terrible waters.
11 Yahweh, who is like you, majestic in sanctity,
who like you among the holy ones, Lv 19:1a
fearsome of deed, worker of wonders? Dt 3:24
Ps 86:8
12 You stretched your right hand out, the earth swallowed them!
13 In your faithful love you led out the people you had redeemed,
in your strength you have guided them to your holy dwelling.

14 Hearing of this, the peoples tremble;
pangs [d] seize on the people of Philistia;

14 a. The narrative presents the miracle in two ways: **1** Moses waves his staff over the sea, which divides, forming two walls of water between which the Israelites pass on dry ground. Then, when the Egyptians have followed them in, the waters flow back and engulf them. This account is attributable to the Priestly or Elohistic traditions. **2** Moses encourages the pursued Israelites by assuring them that there is nothing that they need do. Yahweh then raises a wind, which dries up 'the sea', the Egyptians advance into it and are engulfed when the waters flow back. In this account, attributed to the Yahwist, Yahweh alone intervenes; there is nothing about the Israelites' crossing the sea, but only the miraculous destruction of the Egyptians. This account represents the primitive tradition. Only the destruction of the Egyptians is mentioned in the very old song, 15:21, elaborated in the poem of 15:1–18. It is impossible to determine the place where and the way in which this event occurred, but it struck the eyes of the witnesses as a startling intervention on the part of 'Yahweh the Warrior', 15:3, and became a fundamental article of Yahwistic faith, Dt 11:4; Jos 24:7 and *see* Dt 1:30; 6:21–22; 26:7–8. The miracle of the sea later found a parallel in another water-miracle, the crossing of the Jordan, Jos 3–4, the exodus from Egypt came to be thought of in the light of the entry into Canaan, and both ideas are intertwined in ch. 14.

b. 'the night passed' Gk; 'there was a cloud and darkness; and it lit up the night' Hebr.; 'the cloud was dark on one side and bright on the other' Symm. In Jos 24:7 Yahweh sets a thick mist between Israelites and Egyptians. Our translation is conjectural.

c. The last watch of the night, 2–6 am.

d. 'clogged' versions; 'took off' Hebr.

15 a. The victory chant of v. 21 has been expanded into a thanksgiving psalm; its starting point is the destruction of Pharaoh's army but it goes on to develop the theme of God's power and his care for his people: the wonders of the exodus, the conquest of Canaan, even the building of the Temple in Jerusalem.

b. Another form of the name 'Yahweh'.

c. 'my song' MSS; 'the song' Hebr.; 'protects me' (my protection) Gk.

d. Like those of a woman in labour. A common biblical image.

Nb 20:21; 21:4–13 Dt 2:1–9.18
the chieftains of Edom are dismayed, 15
Moab's princes—panic has seized them,
all the inhabitants of Canaan have melted away.
On them fall terror and dread; 16
through the power of your arm they are still as stone
while your people are passing, Yahweh,
Ps 74:2 Is 11:11 Ep 1:14
while the people you have purchased are passing.
You will bring them in and plant them 17
1 K 8:13 Ps 74:2
on the mountain [e] which is your heritage,
the place which you, Yahweh, have made your dwelling,
the sanctuary, Yahweh, prepared by your own hands.
Yahweh will be king for ever and ever. 18

[f]For when Pharaoh's cavalry, with his chariots and horsemen, had gone into the 19
sea, Yahweh brought the waters of the sea back over them, though the Israelites
went on dry ground right through the sea.

Nb 26:59 Jg 11:34 1 S 18:6
The prophetess Miriam, Aaron's sister, took up a tambourine, and all the 20
women followed her with tambourines, dancing, ·while Miriam took up from them 21
the refrain:

Sing to Yahweh, for he has covered himself in glory,
horse and rider he has thrown into the sea.

II: THE JOURNEY THROUGH THE DESERT

↗1 Co 10:3–5
Marah [g]

Gn 16:7
Moses led Israel away from the Sea of Reeds, and they entered the desert of Shur. 22
They then travelled through the desert for three days without finding water. ·When 23
Nb 33:8 Rt 1:20
they reached Marah, they could not drink the Marah water because it was bitter;
this is why the place was named Marah. [h] ·The people complained to Moses saying, 24
14:11+
'What are we to drink?' [i] ·Moses appealed to Yahweh for help, and Yahweh 25
2 K 2:21 Si 38:5 Ezk 47:8 1 Co 1:18
showed him a piece of wood. When Moses threw it into the water, the water
became sweet.

Jos 24:25
There he [j] laid down a statute and law for them
and there he put them to the test. [k]

Then he said, ·'If you listen carefully to the voice of Yahweh your God and do 26
what he regards as right, if you pay attention to his commandments and keep all his
Dt 7:15 Ps 103:3
laws, I shall never inflict on you any of the diseases that I inflicted on the Egyptians,
for I am Yahweh your Healer.'

So they came to Elim where there were twelve springs and seventy palm trees; 27
and there they pitched camp beside the water.

‖Nb 11 Dt 8:3.16 Ps 78:18seq.; 105:40; 106:13–15 Ws 16:20–29 ↗Jn 6:26–58
The manna and the quails [a]

16 Setting out from Elim, the whole community of Israelites entered the desert 1
of Sin, lying between Elim and Sinai—on the fifteenth day of the second
month after they had left Egypt. ·And the whole community of Israelites began 2
14:11+
complaining about Moses and Aaron in the desert ·and said to them, 'Why did we 3
not die at Yahweh's hand in Egypt, where we used to sit round the flesh pots and
could eat to our heart's content! As it is, you have led us into this desert to starve
this entire assembly to death!'

Yahweh then said to Moses, 'Look, I shall rain down bread for you from the 4
heavens. Each day the people must go out and collect their ration for the day; I
Dt 8:2
propose to test them in this way to see whether they will follow my law or not. ·On 5

the sixth day, however, when they prepare what they have brought in, this must be twice as much as they collect on ordinary days.'

6 Moses and Aaron then said to the whole community [b] of Israelites, 'This evening
7 you will know that it was Yahweh who brought you out of Egypt, ·and tomorrow Ps 81:10
morning you will see the glory of Yahweh, for Yahweh has heard your complaints
8 about him. What are we, that your complaint should be against us?' ·Moses then
said, 'This evening Yahweh will give you meat to eat, and tomorrow morning
bread to your heart's content, for Yahweh has heard your complaints about him.
What do we count for? Your complaints are not against us, but against Yahweh.' Lk 10.16
9 Moses then said to Aaron, 'Say to the whole community of Israelites, "Approach
10 Yahweh's presence, for he has heard your complaints." ' ·As Aaron was speaking
to the whole community of Israelites, they turned towards the desert, and there
11 the glory of Yahweh appeared in the cloud. ·Yahweh then spoke to Moses and
12 said, ·'I have heard the Israelites' complaints. Speak to them as follows, "At
twilight you will eat meat, and in the morning you will have bread to your heart's
content, and then you will know that I am Yahweh your God." '
13 That evening, quails flew in and covered the camp, and next morning there was Nb 11:31
14 a layer of dew all round the camp. ·When the layer of dew lifted, there on the
surface of the desert was something fine and granular, [c] as fine as hoarfrost on the Nb 11:7-9
15 ground. ·As soon as the Israelites saw this, they said to one another, 'What is
that?' [d] not knowing what it was. 'That', Moses told them, 'is the food which 1 Co 10:3
16 Yahweh has given you to eat. ·These are Yahweh's orders: Each of you must
collect as much as he needs to eat—a *homer* per head for each person in his tent.'
17, 18 The Israelites did this. They collected it, some more, some less. ·When they
measured out what they had collected by the *homer*, no one who had collected ↗2 Co 8:15
more had too much, no one who had collected less had too little. Each had
collected as much as he needed to eat.
19, 20 Moses then said, 'No one may keep any of it for tomorrow.' ·But some of them
took no notice of Moses and kept part of it for the following day, and it bred
21 maggots and smelt foul; and Moses was angry with them. ·Morning by morning Jn 6:27
they collected it, each man as much as he needed to eat, and once the sun grew hot,
it melted away.
22 Now, on the sixth day they collected twice the amount of food: two *homer* per
23 person, and all the leaders of the community came and told Moses this. ·Moses
replied, 'This is what Yahweh said, "Tomorrow is a day of complete rest, a Sabbath
sacred to Yahweh. Bake what you want to bake, boil what you want to boil; put
24 aside what is left over, to be kept for tomorrow." ·So, as Moses ordered, they put
it aside for the following day, and its smell was not foul nor were there maggots in
25 it. ·'Eat it today,' Moses said, 'for today is a Sabbath for Yahweh; you will find
26 none in the fields today. ·For six days you will collect it, but on the seventh day, the
27 Sabbath, there will be none.' ·On the seventh day some of the people went out to

e. The hill of Jerusalem, site of the Temple.

f. Editorial addition.

g. Yahwistic tradition, or mixture of Yahwistic and Elohistic. v. 26 is Deuteronomic in style.

h. *Marah*: bitter, bitterness; *mar* in Hebr.

i. The journey through the desert is punctuated by Israel's complaints: about thirst, here and 17:3; Nb 20:2 seq.; hunger, Ex 16:2; Nb 11:4 seq.; the dangers of war, Nb 14:2 seq. Israel's wilfulness is already evident, to the point of spurning the favours of God, *see* Ps 78; 106.

j. Yahweh.

k. Same terms as Jos 24:25. A rhythmical fragment, alien to the context, which seems to refer to the incident at *massah* ('trial'); 17:7 explains this name differently.

16 a. This episode preserves a few Yahwistic elements in what is predominantly a Priestly narrative, *see* the strict regulations about collecting the manna, subordinated to the requirements of the Sabbath. • The manna and the quails, occurring in the same narrative, raise a problem. Manna is formed from the secretions of insects living on tamarisk trees, but only in Central Sinai; it is harvested in May–June. Quails, exhausted by their crossing of the Mediterranean when they migrate from Europe in about September, flying with the west wind, land in large numbers on the coast in the northern part of the peninsula, *see* Nb 11:31. The story may combine the memories of two separate groups leaving Egypt, *see* 7:8a; 11:1a, and following different routes, *see* 13:17f. These natural curiosities serve to illustrate God's special providence for his people..

b. 'community' Gk; Hebr. omits.

c. Or 'rounded' or 'coagulated'. •. Hoarfrost was believed to be frozen dew which fell from the sky, *see* Ps 147:16; Si 43:19.

d. Hebr. *man hu'*: popular etymology of the word 'manna', the exact meaning of which is not known.

collect it, but they found none. ·Yahweh then said to Moses, 'How much longer 28
will you refuse to obey my commandments and laws? ·Look, Yahweh has given 29
you the Sabbath; this is why he gives you two days' food on the sixth day; each of
you must stay in his place; on the seventh day no one may leave his home.' ·So on 30
the seventh day the people rested. [e]

Nb 11:7 The House of Israel named it 'manna'. It was like coriander seed; it was white 31
and its taste was like that of wafers made with honey.

Moses then said, 'These are Yahweh's orders: Fill a *homer*[f] with it and preserve 32
it for your descendants, so that they can see the bread on which I fed you in the
desert when I brought you out of Egypt.' ·Moses then said to Aaron, 'Take a jar 33
and in it put a full *homer* of manna and store it in Yahweh's presence, to be kept
for your descendants.' ·Accordingly, Aaron stored it in front of the Testimony,[g] to 34
be preserved, as Yahweh had ordered Moses.

Nb 21:5 Jos 5:10–12 The Israelites ate manna for forty years, up to the time they reached inhabited 35
country: they ate manna up to the time they reached the frontiers of Canaan. ·A 36
homer is one-tenth of an *ephah*.

‖Nb 20:1–13 **The water from the rock** [a]

Nb 33:12–14 17 The whole community of Israelites left the desert of Sin, travelling by stages 1
as Yahweh ordered. They pitched camp at Rephidim where there was no
water for the people to drink. ·The people took issue with Moses for this and said, 2
14:11+;15:24 'Give us water to drink.' Moses replied, 'Why take issue with me? Why do you put
Dt 6:16 Yahweh to the test?' ·But, tormented by thirst, the people complained to Moses. 3
'Why did you bring us out of Egypt,' they said, 'only to make us, our children and
our livestock, die of thirst?' ·Moses appealed to Yahweh for help. 'How am I to 4
Nb 14:10 deal with this people?' he said. 'Any moment now they will stone me!' ·Yahweh 5
then said to Moses, 'Go on ahead of the people, taking some of the elders of Israel
with you; in your hand take the staff with which you struck the River, and go. ·I 6
Nb 20:10+ Jn 7:38r 1 Co 10:4c shall be waiting for you there on the rock (at Horeb).[b] Strike the rock, and water
will come out for the people to drink.' This was what Moses did, with the elders of
Nb 20:24 Dt 6:16;9:22; 32:51;33:8 Ps 95:8;106:32 Israel looking on. ·He gave the place the names Massah and Meribah [c] because of 7
the Israelites' contentiousness and because they put Yahweh to the test by saying,
'Is Yahweh with us, or not?'

A battle against the Amalekites [d]

The Amalekites then came and attacked Israel at Rephidim. ·Moses said to 8, 9
Jos 1:1b Joshua, [e] 'Pick some men and tomorrow morning go out and engage Amalek. I, for
Jos 8:18–19,18f my part, shall take my stand on the hilltop with the staff of God in my hand.'
Joshua did as Moses had told him and went out [f] to engage Amalek, while Moses, 10
24:14 Aaron and Hur went up to the top of the hill. ·As long as Moses kept his arms 11
Ps 44:4–7 raised, Israel had the advantage; when he let his arms fall, the advantage went to
Amalek. ·But Moses' arms grew heavy, so they took a stone and put it under him 12
and on this he sat, with Aaron and Hur supporting his arms on each side.

Thus his arms remained unwavering till sunset, ·and Joshua defeated Amalek, 13
putting their people to the sword. ·Yahweh then said to Moses, 'Write this down in 14
Nb 24:20 Dt 25:17–19 1 S 15:3seq. a book to commemorate it, and repeat it over to Joshua, for I shall blot out all
memory of Amalek under heaven.' ·Moses then built an altar and named it 15
Yahweh-Nissi [g] ·meaning, 'Lay hold of Yahweh's banner! Yahweh will be at war 16
with Amalek generation after generation.'

The meeting of Jethro and Moses [a]

2:18g 18 Jethro, priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law, had heard all about what 1
God had done for Moses and for Israel his people: how Yahweh had
brought Israel out of Egypt. ·Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, then took back Zip- 2
porah, Moses' wife, whom Moses had sent home,[b] ·with her two sons; one of them 3
2:22h was called Gershom because, he had said, 'I am an alien in a foreign land,' ·and the 4

other called Eliezer[c] because 'My father's God is my help and has delivered me from Pharaoh's sword.'

Then Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, with Moses' sons and wife, came to Moses in the desert where he was encamped, at the mountain of God. ·'Here is your father-in-law Jethro approaching', Moses was told,[d] 'with your wife and her two sons.' ·So Moses went out to greet his father-in-law, bowed low to him and kissed him; and when each had asked how the other was they went into the tent. ·Moses then told his father-in-law all about what Yahweh had done to Pharaoh and the Egyptians for Israel's sake, and about all the hardships that they had encountered on the way, and how Yahweh had rescued them. ·And Jethro was delighted at all Yahweh's goodness to Israel in having rescued them from the clutches of the Egyptians. ·'Blessed be Yahweh', Jethro exclaimed, 'for having rescued you from the clutches of the Egyptians and the clutches of Pharaoh, for having rescued the people from the grasp of the Egyptians! ·Now I know that Yahweh is greater than all other gods, . .'[e]

19:1a

Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, then offered a burnt offering and other sacrifices to God; and Aaron and all the elders of Israel came and ate with Moses' father-in-law in the presence of God.[f]

Dt 12:7c

The appointment of judges[g]

‖Dt 1:9–18

On the following day, Moses took his seat to administer justice for the people, and the people were standing round him from morning till evening. ·Seeing all he did for the people, Moses' father-in-law said to him, 'Why do you do this for the people, why sit here alone with the people standing round you from morning till evening?' ·Moses replied to his father-in-law, 'Because the people come to me to consult God. ·When they have a problem they come to me, and I give a ruling between the one and the other and make God's statutes and laws known to them.' Moses' father-in-law then said to him, 'What you are doing is not right. ·You will only tire yourself out, and the people with you too, for the work is too heavy for you. You cannot do it all yourself. ·Now listen to the advice I am going to give you,

33:7e

Nb 11:14

e. Or 'kept the Sabbath'.

f. 'Fill a *homer*' Gk, Sam.; 'a *homer*-ful' Hebr.

g. i.e. the tables of the Law, *see* 31:18, kept inside the ark, frequently called 'ark of the Testimony', *see* 25:22g. Its mention here is an anachronism on the part of the Priestly editor.

17 a. The same miracle is reported in Nb 20:1–13 (*see* Nb 20:1b), which sites it in the Kadesh area. Here it is placed at Rephidim, the last stop before Sinai. This is another instance of the theme of discontent in the desert, *see* 15:24i.

b. 'at Horeb', evidently a reader's gloss. In the opinion of certain rabbis the rock followed the Israelites in their wanderings, *see* 1 Co 10:4. For 'Rock' as a divine title, *see* Ps 18:2c.

c. *Massah*: trial; *meribah*: contention.

d. This ancient, probably Yahwistic, story represents a tradition of the southern tribes and has been attached by the editors to Rephidim, where the previous episode occurred. In fact, the Amalekites lived further north, in the Negeb and in the mountain country of Seir, Gn 14:7; Nb 13:29; Jg 1:16; 1 Ch 4:42 seq., which is presumably where Hormah was, Nb 14:39–45, *see also* Dt 25:17–19; 1 S 15. Amalek was said to be the grandson of Esau, Gn 36:12, 16, and was in fact a nation of great antiquity, Nb 24:20. In the time of the Judges the Amalekites were in alliance with Midianite bandits; they were still formidable in David's day. There is no further mention of them until 1 Ch 4:43 and Ps 83:7.

e. First mention of Joshua in the Pentateuch.

f. 'went out' Gk; Hebr. omits.

g. The name means 'Yahweh is my banner'; 'banner' restored in v. 16, where Hebr. reads 'throne'.

18 a. Elohistic narrative connected with that of Moses' stay in Midian, 2:11–4:31. Attempts have been made to give Yahwism a Midianite origin: Moses received the revelation of the divine name in Midian, 3:1; Jethro was 'priest of Midian', 18:1; he invoked the name of Yahweh, v. 10, offered sacrifices to him and presided over the subsequent meal, v. 12. But acknowledging Yahweh's greatness and power does not mean that Yahweh was his God, nor even that he was converted to Yahweh (contrast, for instance, the professions of faith of Pharaoh, 9:27, and Rahab, Jos 2:9–10) although tradition may have construed it so, v. 12. The 'mountain of God', v. 5, was not a Midianite sanctuary served by Jethro: he came there to meet Moses, later returning to his own country, v. 27. A Midianite origin for the name Yahweh is purely hypothetical, *see* 3:13g, but in any case, whether borrowed or not, the name Yahweh comes to express an entirely new religious reality.

b. Unique mention of the repudiation of Zipporah; a tradition independent of 4:19–20, 24–26.

c. Gershom: *see* 2:22. Eliezer: *'eli*—my God—(is) *'ezer*—help.

d. 'Here . . . was told' Gk, Syr.; 'He (Jethro) said . . . I am' Hebr.

e. The end of the v. 'because in the matter in which they treated them arrogantly' is probably incomplete or corrupt.

f. 'offered' versions; 'took' Hebr. • This v., apparently interpreting Jethro's declaration as a conversion (he offered sacrifices) and omitting any mention of Moses, is probably an addition.

g. A measure presupposing a numerous and already settled population, *see* v. 23, and attributing to Moses a decentralisation of judicial powers, which certainly occurred much later. Nonetheless, the fact that a measure of this sort was attributed to Jethro's intervention may witness to a Midianite influence on the early organisation of the people.

and God be with you! Your task is to represent the people to God, to lay their cases before God, 20 and to teach them the statutes and laws, and show them the way they ought to follow and how they ought to behave. 21 At the same time, from
Nb 11:16–17 the people at large choose capable and God-fearing men, men who are trustworthy and incorruptible, and put them in charge of them as heads of thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens, 22 and make them the people's permanent judges. They will refer all important matters to you, but all minor matters they will decide themselves, so making things easier for you by sharing the burden with you. 23 If you do this—and may God so command you—you will be able to stand the strain, and all these people will go home satisfied.'

24, 25 Moses took his father-in-law's advice and did just as he said. Moses chose capable men from all Israel and put them in charge of the people as heads of thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. 26 These acted as the people's permanent judges. They referred hard cases to Moses but decided minor matters themselves.

Nb 10:30 27 Moses then set his father-in-law on his way, and he travelled back to his own country.

III: THE COVENANT AT SINAI [a]

Jr 31:31–34q

A: THE COVENANT AND THE DECALOGUE

The Israelites reach Sinai

Nb 33:15 1 Three months to the day after leaving Egypt, the Israelites reached the
2 desert of Sinai. Setting out from Rephidim, they reached the desert of Sinai and pitched camp in the desert; there, facing the mountain, [b] Israel pitched camp.

Yahweh promises the covenant [c]

3 Moses then went up to God, and Yahweh called to him from the mountain, saying,
Dt 4:34;29:2 4 'Say this to the House of Jacob! Tell the Israelites, "You have seen for yourselves
Dt 32:11 Is 46:4;63:9 what I did to the Egyptians and how I carried you away on eagle's wings and brought you to me. 5 So now, if you are really prepared to obey me and keep my
Dt 7:6b; 10:14–15 covenant, you, out of all peoples, shall be my personal possession, for the whole
1 P 2:9 Rv 5:10 world is mine. 6 For me you shall be a kingdom of priests, a holy nation." Those are the words you are to say to the Israelites.' 7 So Moses went and summoned the people's elders and acquainted them with everything that Yahweh had bidden him,
Dt 5:27 Jos 24:16–24 8 and the people all replied with one accord, 'Whatever Yahweh has said, we will do.' Moses then reported to Yahweh what the people had said.

Preparing for the covenant

13:22h;24:16f Si 45:5 •14:31 9 Yahweh then said to Moses, 'Look, I shall come to you in a dense cloud so that the people will hear when I speak to you and believe you ever after.' Moses then told Yahweh what the people had said. [d]

10 Yahweh then said to Moses, 'Go to the people and tell them to sanctify themGn 35:2 Lv 11:25, 28,40 11 selves today and tomorrow. They must wash their clothes and be ready for the day after tomorrow; for the day after tomorrow, in the sight of all the people, Yahweh will descend on Mount Sinai. 12 You will mark out the limits of the mountain [e] and
↗Heb 12:20 say, "Take care not to go up the mountain or to touch the edge of it. Anyone who touches the mountain will be put to death. 13 No one may lay a hand on him: he must be stoned or shot by arrow; whether man or beast, he shall not live." When the ram's horn sounds a long blast, they must go up the mountain.'

14 So Moses came down from the mountain to the people; he made the people sanctify themselves and they washed their clothes. 15 He then said to the people, 'Be ready for the day after tomorrow; do not touch a woman.' [f]

The theophany on Sinai [g]

||Dt 4:10–12,5:2–5,23–31 Is 6:4h Mt 17:5par.

16 Now at daybreak two days later, there were peals of thunder and flashes of lightning, dense cloud on the mountain and a very loud trumpet blast; and, in the
17 camp, all the people trembled. ·Then Moses led the people out of the camp to meet
18 God; and they took their stand at the bottom of the mountain. ·Mount Sinai was entirely wrapped in smoke, because Yahweh had descended on it in the form of fire. The smoke rose like smoke from a furnace and the whole mountain shook
19 violently. ·Louder and louder grew the trumpeting. Moses spoke, and God an-
20 swered him in the thunder. [h] ·Yahweh descended on Mount Sinai, on the top of the mountain, and Yahweh called Moses to the top of the mountain; and Moses went
21 up. ·Yahweh then said to Moses, [i] 'Go down and warn the people not to break 19:12; 33:20i
22 through to look at Yahweh, or many of them will perish. ·Even the priests, who do have access to Yahweh, must sanctify themselves, or Yahweh may burst out against
23 them.' ·Moses said to Yahweh, 'The people cannot come up Mount Sinai, since you yourself warned us to mark out the limits of the mountain and declare it
24 sacred.' ·Yahweh said, 'Away with you! Go down! Then come back bringing Aaron with you. But do not allow the priests and people to break through to come
25 up to Yahweh, or he may burst out against them.' ·So Moses went down to the people and spoke to them. . . [j]

19 a. This large section is mainly from the Priestly source: 19:1–2[a]; 24:15[b]–31:18[a]; 34:29 to the end of the book. Ch. 20:22–23:33 are to be excluded, since their content, the Book of the Covenant, was connected with Sinai at a later date. The remainder derives from ancient sources, where the distinction between Yahwistic and Elohistic is sometimes hard to make. In its final form, the Mosaic covenant seals God's choice of the nation and the promises made to it, 6:6–8, just as the covenant with Abraham, mentioned in 6:5, sealed the earlier promises, Gn 17. But the covenant with Abraham was made with a single individual (though also embracing his descendants) and imposed a single obligation, that of circumcision; by contrast the Sinaitic covenant was to bind the whole nation, which then received a Law: the Decalogue and the Book of the Covenant. This Law with its subsequent elaborations was to become the charter of Judaism, and Si 24:9–27 identifies it with divine wisdom. But the Law is also 'a witness against the nation', Dt 31:26, because breach of it nullifies the promises and invites God's condemnation. Paul will later interpret the role of the law as being at once instruction and deterrent, to prepare people for the coming of Christ who seals the new covenant, Rm 7; Ga 3.

b. The location of the mountain is problematic. Since the fourth century AD, Christian tradition has placed it in the southern part of the peninsula named after it, at Jebel Musa (2245 m). One theory now current argues from the volcanic characteristics in the description of the theophany, 19:16g, and the itinerary in Nb 33 (*see* Nb 33:1a) that Sinai should be located in Arabia, where volcanoes were still active in historic times. These arguments are not conclusive (*see* the notes indicated above), and other texts suggest a site nearer Egypt and south of Palestine. Consequently, another theory sites Sinai near Kadesh, on the strength of texts connecting Seir, Edom and Mount Paran with the theophany, Dt 33:2; Jg 5:4; Hab 3:3. Kadesh, however, is never associated with the desert of Sinai which certain texts explicitly place a long way from Kadesh, Nb 11–13; Dt 1:2, 19. The position in the southern part of the peninsula remains the most likely. Despite the lasting importance of the events and legislation connected with Sinai, 3:1–4:17; 18:19–40; Nb 1–10, the Israelites seem quickly to have forgotten exactly where it was. The episode of Elijah, 1 K 19, *see* Si 48:7, is an exception.

c. The covenant was to make Israel God's personal and sacred possession, Jr 2:3, a people consecrated, Dt 7:6; 26:19, or holy (the Hebr. word means both) as its God is holy, Lv 19:2, *see* Lv 11:44 seq.; 20:7, 26, and a nation of priests, *see* Is 61:6, because what is sacred is by that very fact related to ritual worship.

d. A repetition of the end of v. 8, added to make the transition to the following passage.

e. 'You will mark out the limits of the mountain' Sam.; 'set limits for the people' Hebr. • Transcendence and holiness are inseparable and holiness implies separation from the profane. Where God manifests his presence is forbidden ground, 3:5; 40:35; Gn 28:16–17; Lv 16:2; Nb 1:51; 18:22. For the same reason the ark must not be handled, 2 S 6:7. This idea of the sacred, though primitive, conveys a lesson of enduring worth: that the mystery of God's greatness is impenetrable and his majesty a thing of awe.

f. It is assumed that sexual relations make people unfit for sacred duties, *see* 1 S 21:5.

g. The Yahwistic, 19:18, Priestly, 24:15[b]–17 and Deuteronomic traditions, Dt 4:11[b]–12[a]; 5:23–24; 9:15, describe the theophany on Sinai in terms appropriate to a volcanic eruption. The Elohistic tradition describes it as a storm, 19:16, *see* v. 19. In both cases, the imagery is inspired by spectacular natural phenomena: a volcanic eruption such as the Israelites might have heard described by visitors from northern Arabia or might themselves have been able to observe at a distance in the days of Solomon (expedition to Ophir); a mountain storm such as they could see in Galilee or on Mount Hermon. It may well be that the first tradition is that of the Yahwist, a native of the south, and the second that of the Elohist, a native of the north. The imagery is used to express Yahweh's majesty and glory, *see* 24:16f, his transcendence and the religious awe that he inspires, *see* Jg 5:4 seq.; Ps 29; 68:8; 77:17–18; 97:3–5; Hab 3:3–15.

h. lit. 'in (or by) a voice'. The word always means thunder when used in the plural, *see* v. 16. In the singular, it can mean thunder too, but here it may mean the intelligible voice of God, who 'answered' Moses.

i. vv. 21–24 are additional, referring back to vv. 12–13. The mention of the priests is an anachronism; the priesthood had not yet been instituted.

j. The sentence is incomplete, the narrative being interrupted by the insertion of the Decalogue.

34:10–27
‖Dt 5:6–22
↗Mt 19:16–22,17e
↗Mt 5

The Decalogue [a]

20 Then God spoke all these words. He said, •'I am Yahweh your God who brought you out of Egypt, where you lived as slaves. 1, 2

Dt 6:4
Ho 13:4

'You shall have no other gods to rival me. [b] 3

Lv 19:4
Dt 4:15–20

'You shall not make yourself a carved image or any likeness of anything in heaven above or on earth beneath or in the waters under the earth. [c] 4

34:7+
Dt 4:24f

'You shall not bow down to them [d] or serve them. For I, Yahweh your God, am a jealous God and I punish a parent's fault in the children, the grandchildren, and the great-grandchildren among those who hate me; •but I act with faithful love towards thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments. 5, 6

Lv 19:12

'You shall not misuse [e] the name of Yahweh your God, for Yahweh will not leave unpunished anyone who misuses his name. 7

23:12;31:12–17;
34:21;35:1–3
Lv 19:3;23:3
Nb 15:32–36
Dt 5:12–15
2 Ch 36:21
↗Lk 13:14
•Gn 2:2–3

'Remember the Sabbath day [f] and keep it holy. •For six days you shall labour and do all your work, •but the seventh day is a Sabbath for Yahweh your God. You shall do no work that day, neither you nor your son nor your daughter nor your servants, men or women, nor your animals nor the alien living with you. •For in six days Yahweh made the heavens, earth and sea and all that these contain, but on the seventh day he rested; that is why Yahweh has blessed the Sabbath day and made it sacred. 8, 9, 10, 11

Lv 19:3
↗Ep 6:2–3
Mt 15:4par.

'Honour your father and your mother so that you may live long in the land that Yahweh your God is giving you. 12

Mt 5:21
↗Rm 13:9
↗Jm 2:11
•Mt 5:27
•Lv 19:11
•Dt 5:20

'You shall not kill. 13

'You shall not commit adultery. 14

'You shall not steal. 15

'You shall not give false evidence against your neighbour. 16

Mi 2:2

'You shall not set your heart on your neighbour's house. You shall not set your heart on your neighbour's spouse, or servant, man or woman, or ox, or donkey, or any of your neighbour's possessions.' 17

Dt 5:23–31

[g]Seeing the thunder pealing, the lightning flashing, the trumpet blasting and the mountain smoking, the people were all terrified [h] and kept their distance. •'Speak to us yourself,' they said to Moses, 'and we will obey; but do not let God speak to us, or we shall die.' •Moses said to the people, 'Do not be afraid; God has come to test you, so that your fear of him, being always in your mind, may keep you from sinning.' [i] •So the people kept their distance while Moses approached the dark cloud where God was. 18, 19, 20, 21

33:20i
Dt 8:2

B: THE BOOK OF THE COVENANT [j]

Law concerning the altar

Yahweh said to Moses, 'Tell the Israelites this, "You have seen for yourselves how I have spoken to you from heaven. •You must not make gods of silver to rival me, nor must you make yourselves gods of gold. 22, 23

Lv 1:1b; 3:1a
Dt 27:5–6

"You must make me an altar of earth on which to sacrifice your burnt offerings and communion sacrifices, your sheep and cattle. Wherever I choose to have my name remembered, [k] I shall come to you and bless you. •If you make me an altar of stone, do not build it of dressed stones; for if you use a chisel on it, you will profane it. •You must not go up to my altar by steps, in case you expose your nakedness on them." [l] 24, 25, 26

Lv 25:35–46,41h
Dt 15:12–18

Laws concerning slaves

21 'These are the laws you must give them: 1

Jr 34:8–16

'When you buy a Hebrew slave, his service will last for six years. In the seventh year he will leave a free man without paying compensation. •If he came single, he will depart single; if he came married, his wife will depart with him. •If 2, 3, 4

his master gives him a wife and she bears him sons or daughters, the wife and her
5 children will belong to her master, and he will depart alone. •But if the slave says,
6 "I love my master and my wife and children; I do not wish to be freed," •then his
master will bring him before God and then, leading him to the door or the door-
post, his master will pierce his ear with an awl, and the slave will be permanently
7, 8 his. •If a man sells his daughter as a slave,[a] she will not leave as male slaves do. •If
she does not please her master who intended her for himself,[b] he must let her be
bought back: he has not the right to sell her to foreigners, for this would be a
9 breach of faith with her. •If he intends her for his son, he must treat her as custom
10 requires daughters to be treated.[c] •If he takes another wife, he must not reduce the
11 food, clothing or conjugal rights of the first one. •Should he deprive her of these
three things she will leave a free woman, without paying compensation.

Homicide

Lv 24:17
Nb 35:16–34

12, 13 'Anyone who by violence causes a death must be put to death. •If, however, he has
not planned to do it but it comes from God by his hand,[d] he can take refuge in a
14 place which I shall appoint for you.[e] •But should any person dare to kill another
with deliberate planning, you will take that person even from my altar to be put to
death.

1 K 1:50;
2:28–34

15, 16 'Anyone who strikes father or mother will be put to death. •Anyone who abducts

Dt 24:7

20 a. In the book as it stands the Decalogue is not linked to the narrative framework, 19:24–25 and 20:18–21. The Decalogue (or 'Ten Words', *see* 34:28; Dt 4:13; 10:4) has come down to us in two forms: the Elohistic recension here, and the somewhat different Deuteronomic recension in Dt 5:6–21. In its original form, which may go back to the time of Moses, it probably consisted of a sequence of ten short (*see* commandments 5, 6, 7 and 8), rhythmical formulae which were easy to learn by heart. The Decalogue was then handed down orally by the groups that had had the experience at Sinai and knew that it contained the 'words' spoken by God there. It was later inserted, with further elaborations, in the account of the theophany. The Elohistic tradition continues at 24:3, after the Book of the Covenant. The Decalogue covers the entire field of religious and moral life. Two systems for dividing the commandments have been proposed: (a) vv. 2–3, 4–6, 7, 8–11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17; and (b) vv. 3–6, 7, 8–11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17[a], 17[b]. The first is that of the Greek Fathers and is preserved in the Orthodox and Reformed Churches. The Catholic and Lutheran Churches have adopted the second, drawn up by St Augustine following Deuteronomy. The Decalogue is the core of the Mosaic Law and is still valid under the New Law; Christ appeals to the commandments, to which he adds the evangelical counsels, Mk 10:17–21, as the seal of perfection. Paul's attack on the Law, Rm and Ga, is not directed against these essential duties to God and neighbour.

b. Yahweh demands exclusive worship from Israel; the covenant is conditional on this. Denial of the existence of other gods was only to come later, *see* Dt 4:35j.

c. Prohibition against making cult-images of Yahweh (*see* the explanation given in Dt 4:15). This prohibition set Israel apart from all the other peoples surrounding it.

d. i.e. the gods of v. 3, of which v. 5 is the continuation.

e. Besides perjury, Mt 5:33, and false evidence, Ex 20:16; Dt 5:20, this can also include the use of the divine name in magic; Gk translates 'futilely'.

f. The biblical texts expressly connect the term 'Sabbath' with a root meaning 'to desist, to stop work', 16:29–30; 23:12; 34:21. The Sabbath is a weekly day of rest dedicated to Yahweh who rested on the seventh day of creation, v. 11, *see* Gn 2:2–3. But while it does homage to God, it also benefits human beings, 23:12; Dt 5:14. The Sabbath is of very ancient origin but its observance gained particular importance at the time of the Exile and became a distinctive mark of Judaism, Ne 13:15–22; 1 M 2:32–41. A certain legalism made its observance burdensome, Mt 12:1 seq. and par.; Lk 13:10 seq.; 14:1 seq.

g. vv. 18–21 follow on from 19:19 as part of the Elohistic description of the theophany as a storm, *see* 19:16g.

h. 'were terrified' Sam. and Gk, vowel rearrangement of MT 'saw'.

i. A distinction is drawn here between the terror inspired by the physical manifestations of God's greatness, especially by those natural phenomena accompanying a theophany, and that awe characteristic of absolute submission to the will of God, *see* Gn 22:12; Dt 6:2a.

j. The 'Book of the Covenant', 20:22–23:33, has been so named in modern times on account of 24:7 (although the text in question refers to the Decalogue). This collection of laws and customs was not promulgated at Sinai: its prescriptions presuppose an already settled and agricultural society. It dates from the early days of the colonisation of Canaan, before the monarchy. Applying the spirit of the Ten Commandments, it came to be regarded as the charter of the Sinaitic Covenant and hence was inserted here, after the Decalogue. Points of contact with the Code of Hammurabi, with the Hittite Code and with the Decree of Horemheb are not evidence of direct borrowing but point rather to a common source, namely to ancient customary law diversified according to local and racial requirements. The clauses of the Book of the Covenant may be grouped under three heads according to subject-matter: civil and penal laws, 21:1–22:20; regulation of ritual, 20:22–26; 22:28–31; 23:10–19; social morality, 22:21–27; 23:1–9. In literary form, the prescriptions fall into two categories: 'casuistic' or conditional, in the style of the Mesopotamian code.; and 'apodictic' or imperative, in the style of the Decalogue and certain Egyptian wisdom-texts.

k. Unlike Dt 12:5, etc., the Book of the Covenant allows a plurality of cult-places. Worship is lawful in any place in which Yahweh has manifested his presence, and of which, by revealing himself there, he has thus taken possession.

l. Apparently only a loincloth was worn when offering sacrifice, as among the Egyptians; hence the risk of indecency when mounting the altar-steps.

21 a. i.e. slave and also concubine, *see* following vv.

b. 'who intended her' Gk; 'who did not intend her for himself' Hebr.

c. His own daughters.

d. Accidents were attributed to God.

e. In a society where the state had not yet supplanted the individual avenger, the unintentional killer had to be protected from blood-vengeance, *see* Nb 35:19c; in the earliest days, the place of sanctuary was the sanctuary itself, 1 K 1:50; 2:28–34 (but the right of sanctuary did not obtain for premeditated murder, v. 14). This arrangement lay at the origin of the institution of cities of refuge, *see* Jos 20:1a.

a person—whether that person has since been sold or is still held—will be put to
Lv 20:9 Dt 27:16 Si 3:16 ↗Mt 15:4 death. •Anyone who curses father or mother will be put to death. 17

Blows and wounds

'If people quarrel and one strikes the other a blow with stone or fist so that the 18
injured party, though not dead, is confined to bed, •but later recovers and can go 19
about, even with a stick, the one who struck the blow will have no liability, other
than to compensate the injured party for the enforced inactivity and to take care of
the injured party until the cure is complete.

'If someone beats his slave, male or female, and the slave dies at his hands, he 20
must pay the penalty. •But should the slave survive for one or two days, he will pay 21
no penalty because the slave is his by right of purchase.

'If people, when brawling, hurt a pregnant woman and she suffers a miscarriage 22
but no further harm is done, the person responsible will pay compensation as fixed
by the woman's master, paying as much as the judges decide. •If further harm is 23
Gn 4:23 Lv 24:19–20 Dt 19:21 ↗Mt 5:38–42 done, however, you will award life for life, •eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for 24
hand, foot for foot, •burn for burn, wound for wound, stroke for stroke.[f] 25

'If anyone strikes the eye of his slave, male or female, and destroys the use of it, 26
he will give the slave his freedom to compensate for the eye. •If he knocks out the 27
tooth of his slave, male or female, he will give the slave his freedom to compensate
for the tooth.

'If an ox gores a man or woman to death, the ox will be stoned and its meat will 28
not be eaten, but the owner of the ox will not be liable. •But if the ox has been in 29
the habit of goring before, and if its owner has been warned but has not kept it
under control, then should this ox kill a man or woman, it will be stoned and its
owner put to death. •If a ransom is imposed on the owner, he will pay whatever is 30
imposed, to redeem his life. •If the ox gores a boy or a girl, it will be treated in 31
accordance with this same rule. •If the ox gores a slave, male or female, its owner 32
will pay the price—thirty shekels—to their master, and the ox will be stoned.

'If anyone leaves a pit uncovered, or digs a pit and does not cover it, and an ox, 33
or donkey falls into it, •then the owner of the pit will make good the loss by 34
compensating its owner, and the dead animal will be his. •If anyone's ox injures 35
anyone else's ox causing its death, the owners will sell and share the money for it;
they will also share the dead animal. •But if it is common knowledge that the ox 36
has been in the habit of goring before, and its owner has not kept it under control,
the owner will repay ox for ox, and will keep the dead animal.

Theft of animals

2 S 12:6 Lk 19:8 'If anyone steals an ox or a sheep and slaughters or sells it, he will pay back five 37 22:1
beasts from the herd for the ox, and four animals from the flock for the sheep.'

22 'If a thief is caught breaking in and is struck a mortal blow, his blood may 1 2
not be avenged, •but if it happens after sunrise, his blood may be avenged. 2 3
He will make full restitution; if he has not the means, he will be sold to pay for
what he has stolen. •If the stolen animal is found alive in his possession, be it ox, 3 4
donkey or animal from the flock, he will pay back double.

Offences requiring compensation

'If anyone puts his animals out to graze in a field or vineyard and lets them graze in 4 5
someone else's field, he will make restitution for the part of the field that has been
grazed on the basis of its yield. But if he has let the whole field be grazed, he will
make restitution[g] in proportion to the best crop of the field or vineyard.

'If a fire breaks out, setting light to thorn bushes and burning stacks, standing 5 6
corn or the field as a result, the person who started the fire will make full restitution.

Lk 5:21–26 'If anyone entrusts money or goods to someone else's keeping and these are 6 7
stolen from that person's house, the thief, if he can be discovered, will repay
double. •Should the thief not be discovered, the owner of the house will come into 7 8

the presence of God, to declare that he has not laid hands on the other person's property.

9 8 'In every case of law-breaking involving an ox, donkey, animal from the flock, clothing or lost property of any sort, the ownership of which is disputed, both parties will lay their case before God. The party whom God pronounces guilty[b] will pay back double to the other.

10 9 'If anyone entrusts a donkey, ox, animal from the flock or any other animal to someone else's keeping, and it dies or breaks a limb or is carried off without anyone
11 10 seeing, •an oath by Yahweh will decide between the two parties whether the keeper has laid hands on the other's property or not. The owner will take what remains,[c]
12 11 the keeper will not have to make good the loss. •Only if the animal has been stolen
13 12 from him, will he make restitution to the owner. •If it has been savaged by a wild Gn 31:39 animal, he must bring the savaged remains of the animal as evidence, and will then not have to make restitution.

14 13 'If anyone borrows an animal from someone else, and it breaks a limb or dies in
15 14 the owner's absence, he will make full restitution. •But if the animal's owner has been present, he will not have to make good the loss. If the owner has hired it out, he will get the cost of its hire.

Violation of a virgin

Dt 22:28–29

16 15 'If a man seduces a virgin who is not engaged to be married, he will pay her bride-
17 16 price[d] and make her his wife. •If her father absolutely refuses to let him have her, he will pay a sum equivalent to the bride-price of a virgin.

Moral and religious laws

18 17 'You will not allow a sorceress to live. Lv 20:6.27 Dt 18:9–12

18 'Anyone who has intercourse with an animal will be put to death. Lv 18:23• Dt 27:21

19 'Anyone who sacrifices to other gods will be put under the curse of destruction.[e] Nb 25:1–5• 12:48*o*•

20 'You will not molest or oppress aliens, for you yourselves were once aliens in Lv 19:33seq.

21, 22 Egypt. •You will not ill-treat widows or orphans; •if you ill-treat them in any way Dt 10:18seq.; 24:17seq.;

24 23 and they make an appeal to me for help, I shall certainly hear their appeal, •my 27:19 anger will be roused and I shall put you to the sword; then your own wives will be Ps 146:9 widows and your own children orphans. Is 1:17

24 'If you lend money to any of my people, to anyone poor among you, you will not Lv 25:35–37 play the usurer with him: you will not demand interest from him. Dt 23:20–21

26 25 'If you take someone's cloak in pledge, you will return it to him at sunset.

27 26 It is all the covering he has; it is the cloak he wraps his body in; what else will he Dt 24:10–13,17 sleep in? If he appeals to me, I shall listen. At least with me he will find compassion!

27 'You will not revile God, nor curse your people's leader. Qo 10:20 ↗Ac 23:5

First-fruits and first-born

28 'Do not be slow about making offerings from your abundance and your surplus.[f]

29 You will give me the first-born of your children; •you will do the same with your 13:11b flocks and herds. For the first seven days the first-born will stay with its mother; on Dt 26:1a the eighth day you will give it to me. Dt 15:19

f. The *Lex Talionis*, *see* Lv 24:17–20; Dt 19:21, also to be found in the code of Hammurabi and the Assyrian laws, is social, not individual, in scope. By imposing a punishment equal to the damage caused, it aims at limiting excesses of vengeance, *see* Gn 4:23–24. The most obvious case is that of the execution of a murderer, Nb 35:31–34; *see* 21:12–17e; Lv 24:17. In fact, the application of the rule seems very early to have lost its primitive brutality. The obligations of the 'avenger of blood', *go'el*, Nb 35:19c, were progressively refined to the point where the essential functions were those of redemption, Rt 2:20i, and protection, Ps 19:14g; Is 41:14g, the principle still remaining in force, but under milder forms in practice, Ws 11:16*l*; Si 27:25–29; *see also* Ex 12:22. Forgiveness was enjoined within the Israelite nation, Lv 19:17–18; Si 10:6; 27:30–28:7, and Christ was to lay even stronger emphasis on the commandment to forgive, Mt 5:38–39p; 18:21–22k.

22 **a.** 'whole . . . restitution' Gk; Hebr. omits.

b. By judicial verdict, ordeal, prophetic pronouncement or oath.

c. Alternative translation 'The owner will accept (the oath).'

d. Hebr. *mohar*, the money handed over by a betrothed man to the family of his future wife.

e. 'to other gods' Gk, Sam.; 'to the gods, except to Yahweh alone' Hebr.

f. Referring to religious dues payable on the products of the soil. Gk specifies 'the first-fruits of your threshing-floor and press'.

19:3c,6 Lv 11:44 Lv 17:15–16 Dt 14:21

'You must be people consecrated to me. You will not eat the meat of anything in the countryside savaged by wild animals; you will throw it to the dogs.' 30

Justice. Duties towards enemies

Lv 5:22;19:16 Dt 16:18–20

23 'You will not spread false rumours. You will not lend support to the wicked by giving untrue evidence. 1 ·You will not be led into wrong-doing by the majority nor, when giving evidence in a lawsuit, side with the majority to pervert 2

Lv 19:15

the course of justice; ·nor will you show partiality to the poor in a lawsuit. 3

||Dt 22:1–4

'If you come on your enemy's ox or donkey straying, you will take it back to him. 4 If you see the donkey of someone who hates you fallen under its load, do not stand back; you must go and help him with it. 5

Dt 1:17;16:19

'You will not cheat the poor among you of their rights at law.[a] 6, 7 ·Keep clear of fraud. Do not cause the death of the innocent or upright, and do not acquit[b] the

Dt 16:19;27:25

guilty. 8 ·You will accept no bribes, for a bribe blinds the clear-sighted[c] and is the ruin of the cause of the upright.

22:20+

'You will not oppress the alien; you know how an alien feels, for you yourselves were once aliens in Egypt. 9

Lv 25:1a

The sabbatical year and the Sabbath

Lv 25:2–7 Dt 24:19; 26:12–13

'For six years you will sow your land and gather its produce, 10, 11 ·but in the seventh year you will let it lie fallow and forgo all produce from it, so that those of your people who are poor can take food from it and the wild animals eat what they have left. You will do the same with your vineyard and your olive grove.

20:8f

'For six days you will do your work, and on the seventh you will rest, so that your ox and your donkey may rest and the child of your slave-girl have a breathing space, and the alien too. 12

Jos 23:7

'Take notice of everything I have told you and do not mention the name of any other god: let none ever be heard from your lips. 13

34:18–23 Dt 16:1–16 Lv 23

The great feasts[d]

'Three times a year you will hold a festival in my honour. 14, 15 ·You will observe the feast of Unleavened Bread. For seven days you will eat unleavened bread, as I have commanded you, at the appointed time in the month of Abib, for in that month you came out of Egypt.[e] No one will appear before me empty-handed. You will also observe the feast of Harvest, of the first-fruits of your labours in 16 sowing the fields, and the feast of Ingathering, at the end of the year, once you have brought the fruits of your labours in from the fields. 17 ·Three times a year all your menfolk will appear before Lord Yahweh.

34:25 Lv 2:11c

'You will not offer the blood of my victim with leavened bread, nor will the fat of 18 my feast[f] be kept till the following day.

Dt 26:1a

'You will bring the best of the first-fruits of your soil to the house of Yahweh 19 your God.

34:26 Dt 14:21

'You will not boil a kid in its mother's milk.[g]

Dt 7:1–26

Promises and instructions for the entry into Canaan[h]

14:19;33:2 Is 63:9 Ml 3:1

'Look, I am sending an angel[i] to precede you, to guard you as you go and bring 20 you to the place that I have prepared. 21 ·Revere him and obey what he says. Do not defy him: he will not forgive any wrong-doing on your part, for my name[j] is in him. If, however, you obey what he says and do whatever I order, I shall be an enemy to 22 your enemies and a foe to your foes. 23 ·My angel will precede you and lead you to

Dt 7:1a

the home of the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hivites

20:5

and the Jebusites, whom I shall exterminate. 24 ·You will not bow down to their gods

Lv 18:3 •34:13 Nb 33:52 Dt 7:5;12:3

or worship them or observe their rites, but throw them down and smash their cultic stones.[k] 25 ·You will worship Yahweh your God, and then I shall bless your food and water, and keep you free of sickness. 26 ·In your country no woman will miscarry,

Lv 26:9 Dt 7:14;28;30:9

none be sterile, and I shall give you your full term of life.

27 'I shall send terror of myself ahead of you; I shall throw all the peoples you
28 encounter into confusion, and make all your enemies take to their heels. •I shall
29 send hornets ahead of you to drive Hivite, Canaanite and Hittite out before you. •I shall not drive them out ahead of you in a single year, or the land might become a
30 desert where wild animals would multiply to your cost. •I shall drive them out little by little before you, until your numbers grow sufficient for you to take possession
31 of the land.[l] •And your frontiers I shall fix from the Sea of Reeds to the Sea of the Philistines, and from the desert to the River,[m] for I shall put the inhabitants of the
33 32 territory at your mercy, and you will drive them out before you. •You will make no
33 pact with them or with their gods. •They may not stay in your country or they might make you sin against me, for you would serve their gods, and that would be a snare for you!'

Dt 7:20
Jos 24:12
Ws 12:8
Dt 7:22d
Jg 2:6f
Dt 11:24
Jg 20:1a

C: THE RATIFICATION OF THE COVENANT[a]

1 **24** He then said to Moses, 'Come up to Yahweh, you and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel and bow down at a distance.
2 Moses alone will approach Yahweh; the others will not approach, nor will the people come up with him.'
3 Moses went and told the people all Yahweh's words and all the laws,[b] and all the people answered with one voice, 'All the words Yahweh has spoken we will carry
4 out!' •Moses put all Yahweh's words into writing, and early next morning he built an altar at the foot of the mountain, with twelve standing-stones for the twelve
5 tribes of Israel. •Then he sent certain young Israelites to offer burnt offerings and
6 sacrifice bullocks to Yahweh as communion sacrifices. •Moses then took half the
7 blood and put it into basins, and the other half he sprinkled on the altar. •Then, taking the Book of the Covenant, he read it to the listening people, who then said,
8 'We shall do everything that Yahweh has said; we shall obey.' •Moses then took

19:20;28:1
Nb 11:16
Jos 24:16–24
34:27–28
Jos 4:3–9.20–24;24:26–27
1 K 18:31

23 **a.** i.e. the poor suitor who appeals to you for justice.
b. 'do not acquit' Gk; 'for I shall not acquit' Hebr.
c. Or 'eye-witnesses'.
d. The four Pentateuchal traditions have each a calendar of the great religious feasts: 23:14–17 Elohistic; 34:18–23 Yahwistic; Dt 16:1–16 Deuteronomic; and Priestly tradition of Lv 23 with which the liturgical regulations of Nb 28–29 correspond. In the various texts appear further details of ritual, but the three principal feasts remain those laid down by Ex 23: **1** In spring, the feast of the Unleavened Bread. **2** The feast of Harvest, called 'feast of Weeks' in 34:22, held seven weeks, Dt 16:9, or fifty days, Lv 23:16, after the Passover (hence its Greek name 'Pentecost', Tb 2:1), marking the end of the wheat harvest; at a later date it also commemorated the giving of the Law on Sinai. **3** The feast of Ingathering of grapes and olives in the autumn, called the feast of Shelters (or Tabernacles), Lv 23:34; Dt 16:13, because during the week's festivities the people lived in huts made of branches in the manner of grape-gatherers in the vineyards; these shelters recalled the memory of Israel's encampments in the desert, Lv 23:43. Of these three feasts the most popular seems to have been Ingathering or Shelters, which is called simply 'the feast' in 1 K 8:2, 65; Ezk 45:25. These three agricultural feasts were celebrated only after the entry into Canaan. No precise date is given in the calendar of Ex 23 or Ex 34, because they are earlier than the centralisation of worship and were celebrated in local sanctuaries at dates appropriate to the state of agricultural activity in the region. Later, other feasts were added: the religious New Year, Lv 23:24; the Day of Expiation, Lv 16 and 23:27–32; and after the Exile: Purim, Est 9:24; Dedication, 1 M 4:59; the Day of Nicanor, 1 M 7:49.
e. Established in early times, this connection between the feast of Unleavened Bread and the exodus from Egypt, in the spring, made it easy for this feast to become linked with the Passover, *see* 12:1a.
f. Ex 34:25 says explicitly that this refers to the Passover, but in both cases the prescription is given after the religious calendar, vv. 14–17; 34:18–23, neither of which deals with the Passover. This latter was celebrated as a family festival until the Deuteronomic reforms, *see* Dt 16:5–6.
g. Canaanite custom known from the Ras Shamra texts.
h. This composite paragraph shows clear signs of Deuteronomic editing. It serves as conclusion to the Book of the Covenant, thus presenting it as a collection of laws given at Sinai in preparation for the colonisation of Canaan.
i. This angel appears to be distinguished from God himself, *see* Gn 16:7g, though he performs Yahweh's function. It is a guardian angel, Gn 24:7; Nb 20:16, such as figures later in the Book of Tobit, *see* Tb 5:4b.
j. 'do not defy him' Gk; 'do not make him bitter' Hebr. • The name expresses and represents the person himself.
k. In the Canaanite cult, *stelae* or standing-stones, Hebr. *matztzebot*, were symbols of the male divinity. The Law forbade their worship, *see* this passage and 34:13; Lv 26:1; Dt 7:5; 12:3; 16:22, so also did the prophets, Ho 3:4; 10:1; Mi 5:12. The religion of the patriarchs accepted them, *see* Gn 28:18, 22.
l. The explanation given here for the slowness of the conquest is the same as in Dt 7:22; other explanations were also given, *see* Jg 2:6f.
m. i.e. the Gulf of Aqaba—the Mediterranean—Sinai—the Euphrates: the ideal limits of the empire of David and Solomon, 1 K 5:1. For other descriptions of the Promised Land, *see* Nb 34:1a; Jg 20:1a.

24 **a.** This narrative combines two accounts of the covenant: **1** vv. 1–2, 9–11, the Yahwistic (?) tradition, in which the covenant is sealed by a meal. **2** vv. 3–8, the Elohistic tradition in which the essential element is the sprinkling of the blood over altar and people. A third (Yahwistic) account appears in ch. 34.
b. The 'words', alone mentioned in what follows, refer to the Decalogue, *see* 20:1 seq., called the 'Book of the Covenant' in 24:7. The 'laws' are an addition after the Book of the Covenant had been inserted, *see* 21:1.

Ps 50:5 Mt 26:28par. 1 Co 11:25 Heb 9:18seq. 1 P 1:2 the blood[c] and sprinkled it over the people, saying, 'This is the blood of the covenant which Yahweh has made with you, entailing all these stipulations.'

•33:20i Ezk 1:26 Rv 4:2–3 Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu and seventy elders of Israel then went up, •and 9, 10 they saw the God of Israel beneath whose feet there was what looked like a sapphire pavement pure as the heavens themselves, •but he did no harm to the 11 Israelite notables; they actually gazed on God and then ate and drank.

Moses on the mountain[d]

31:18;32:15seq.; 34:1,4,28seq. Dt 4:13;5:22; 9:9,15;10:1–5 Yahweh said to Moses, 'Come up to me on the mountain. Stay there, and I will 12 give you the stone tablets—the law and the commandment—which I have written for their instruction.' •Moses made ready, with Joshua his assistant, and they went 13 up[e] the mountain of God. •He said to the elders, 'Wait here for us until we come 14 back to you. You have Aaron and Hur with you; if anyone has any matter to settle, let him go to them.' •Moses then went up the mountain. 15

19:3 Cloud covered the mountain. •The glory of Yahweh[f] rested on Mount Sinai and 16 the cloud covered it for six days. On the seventh day Yahweh called to Moses from inside the cloud. •To the watching Israelites, the glory of Yahweh looked like a 17 devouring fire on the mountain top. •Moses went right into the cloud and went on 18 up the mountain. Moses stayed on the mountain for forty days and forty nights.[g]

19:9 Dt 4:36 34:28 Dt 9:9 1 K 19:8b Mt 4:2

IV: INSTRUCTIONS ON THE BUILDING OF THE SANCTUARY AND ON ITS MINISTERS[a]

35:4–29 ### Contributions for the sanctuary

25 Yahweh spoke to Moses and said, •'Tell the Israelites to set aside a contri- 1, 2 bution for me; you will accept a contribution from everyone whose heart prompts him to give it. •And this is what you will accept from them: gold, silver 3 and bronze; •materials dyed violet-purple, red-purple and crimson, fine linen, 4 goats' hair; •rams' skins dyed red, fine leather,[h] acacia wood; •oil for the light, 5, 6 spices for the anointing oil and fragrant incense; •cornelian and other stones to be 7 set in the *ephod* and breastplate. •Make me[c] a sanctuary so that I can reside among 8 them.[d] •You will make it all according to the design for the Dwelling and the design 9 for its furnishings which I shall now show you.

25:40+;26:30; 27:8 Nb 8:4

37:1–9 ### The Dwelling and its furnishings. The ark[e]

'You must make me an ark of acacia wood, two and a half cubits long, one and a 10 half cubits wide and one and a half cubits high.[f] •You will overlay it, inside and 11 out, with pure gold and make a gold moulding all round it. •You will cast four gold 12 rings for it and fix them to its four supports: two rings on one side and two rings on the other. •You will also make shafts of acacia wood and overlay them with gold 13 and pass the shafts through the rings on the sides of the ark, by which to carry it. 14 The shafts will stay in the rings of the ark and not be withdrawn. •Inside the ark 15, 16 you will put the Testimony[g] which I am about to give you.

2 S 6:7f

24:12+ Dt 10:1–2 •Lv 16:12–15 Rm 3:25k 'You will also make a mercy-seat[h] of pure gold, two and a half cubits long and 17 one and a half cubits wide, •and you will model two great winged creatures[i] of 18 beaten gold, you will make them at the two ends of the mercy-seat. •Model one of 19 the winged creatures at one end and the other winged creature at the other end; you will model the winged creatures of a piece with the mercy-seat at either end. The winged creatures must have their wings spread upwards, protecting the 20 mercy-seat with their wings and facing each other, their faces being towards the mercy-seat. •You will put the mercy-seat on the top of the ark, and inside the ark 21 you will put the Testimony which I am about to give you. •There I shall come to 22 meet you; from above the mercy-seat, from between the two winged creatures

26:34 33:7–11,7c

which are on the ark of the Testimony, I shall give you all my orders for the Israelites.

The table for the loaves of permanent offering[j]

37:10–16

23 'You must also make a table of acacia wood, two cubits long, one cubit wide and
24 one and a half cubits high. ·You will overlay it with pure gold, and make a gold
25 moulding all round it. ·You will fit it with struts of a hand's breadth and make a
26 gold moulding round the struts. ·You will make four gold rings for it and fix the
27 four rings at the four corners where the four legs are. ·The rings must lie close to
28 the struts to hold the shafts for carrying the table. ·You must make the shafts of
29 acacia wood and overlay them with gold. The table must be carried by these. ·You
must make dishes, cups, jars and libation bowls for it; you must make these of pure
30 gold, ·and on the table, in my presence, you will always put the loaves of permanent
offering.

Nb 4:7
Lv 24:5–9
1 S 21:4–7

The lamp-stand

37:17–24
Lv 24:2–4

31 'You will also make a lamp-stand of pure gold; the lamp-stand must be of beaten
32 gold, base and stem. Its cups, calyxes and petals, must be of a piece with it. ·Six
branches must spring from its sides: three of the lamp-stand's branches from one
33 side, three of the lamp-stand's branches from the other. ·The first branch must
carry three cups shaped like almond blossoms, each with its calyx and petals; the

c. Moses, being the mediator between God and the people, symbolically unites them by sprinkling the blood of the same victims first on the altar, which represents Yahweh, and then on the people. The covenant is thus ratified in blood, *see* Lv 1:5e, as the new covenant was to be ratified by the blood of Christ, Mt 26:28i; Heb 9:12–26, 15i.

d. vv. 12–15[a] and 18[b] seem to be of Elohistic origin; vv. 15[b]–18[a] (a parallel account) from the Priestly tradition.

e. 'they went up' Gk; 'and Moses went up' Hebr.

f. In the Priestly tradition, *see* 13:22h, the 'glory of Yahweh' is the manifestation of God's presence. It is a fire clearly distinguished (here and in 40:34–35) from the cloud that accompanies and surrounds it. The fire and the cloud are images borrowed from the great theophanies which occur with a thunderstorm for their setting, 19:16g, but they have a more profound significance: the brilliant light (which needs no storm for its appearance, 33:22, and which later leaves its glow on the face of Moses, 34:29) stands for God's unapproachable majesty. It fills the newly erected Tent, 40:34–35, and later takes possession of Solomon's Temple, 1 K 8:10–11. On the eve of the destruction of Jerusalem Ezekiel sees the glory leaving the city, Ezk 9:3; 10:4, 18–19; 11:22–23; later he sees it returning to the new Temple, Ezk 43:1 seq.; for Ezekiel the 'glory' assumes a shining, human form, Ezk 1:26–28. In other texts, and particularly in the Psalms, the glory of Yahweh simply expresses God's majesty and the honour due to him, often with eschatological overtones; or else it indicates God's miraculous power, 15:7, cf. the 'glory' of Jesus, Jn 2:11; 11:40.

g. Compare the forty days' journey of Elijah to Sinai, 1 K 19:8, and Christ's forty days in the desert, Mt 4:2 par.

25 a. In ch. 25–31 ('Priestly' tradition) there are elements of great antiquity like the ark and the tabernacle which, with the system of worship itself, certainly go back to the time of Moses; but with these are mixed others which reflect the development of worship in the course of the history of Israel. When the text gathers all together under the formula, 'God said to Moses', it is asserting the divine authority behind the religious institutions of Israel.

b. lit. '*tahash*-skin', meaning uncertain.

c. 'Make me' Gk, Syr.; 'They will make me' Hebr. Following the versions, we also correct Hebr. singulars to plurals at vv. 9, 10 and 19.

d. God was worshipped in those places where he had specially manifested his presence by means of a theophany, Gn 12:7; 28:12–19; etc. Sinai, scene of the greatest theophany of all, is the 'mountain of God', 3:1; 1 K 19:8, his dwelling-place, Dt 33:2; Jg 5:4–5; Ps 68:8; Hab 3:3. The ark is the sign of his presence, 25:22; *see* 1 S 4:4; 2 S 6:2, and the Tent which houses the ark is Yahweh's Dwelling, Ex 25:9; 40:34; it accompanies the people on their journey, 2 S 7:6, until the Temple of Jerusalem becomes his House, 1 K 8:10.

e. The ark was a rectangular chest, carried on wooden poles. For its history, *see* especially Jos 3:3; 6:4 seq.; 1 S 4–6; 2 S 6; 1 K 8:1–9. It disappeared in the sack of Jerusalem (or perhaps during Manasseh's wicked reign) and was never remade, *see* Jr 3:16.

f. A cubit was approximately 1ft 6in. (46 cm). Further information about ancient weights and measures will be found in the Tables of measures and money.

g. 'Testimony': accepted translation of the word '*edut* which, properly speaking, following other Middle Eastern parallels, means the stipulations in a treaty, imposed by an overlord on his vassal. Here, the 'Testimony' is the Decalogue, written on stone tablets sometimes called 'tablets of the Testimony', 31:18; 32:15; 34:29. Consequently, the ark is called the 'ark of the Testimony', 25:22; 26:33; 40:21.

h. Accepted translation of the word *kapporet*, from the root *kaphar*, 'to cover', but also 'to perform the expiation', 'to obliterate'. The *kapporet* is presented here and at 35:12 as being distinct from the ark. It figures, without the ark, in the post-exilic ritual for the Day of Expiation, Lv 16:15; and 1 Ch 28:11 calls the Holy of Holies the 'hall of the mercy-seat'. It seems that the mercy-seat and the winged creatures attached to it in the post-exilic Temple, were substituted for the ark and winged creatures of Solomon's Temple. The Priestly description has put them both together, *see* v. 21. Yahweh appears on the mercy-seat, and this is where he speaks to Moses, v 22; Lv 16:2; Nb 7:89.

i. The word corresponds to the Babylonian *karibu*, half-human, half-animal spirits guarding the gates of temples and palaces. In Biblical descriptions and Middle Eastern iconography, the great winged creatures were winged sphinxes. Winged creatures played no part in the cult in the desert, and do not seem to occur in the cult of Yahweh earlier than the stay of the ark at Shiloh, where Yahweh was entitled 'He who is enthroned on the great winged creatures', 1 S 4:4; 2 S 6:2; *see* 2 K 19:15; Ps 80:1; 99:1, and is said to 'ride on the winged creatures', 2 S 22:11; *see* Ps 18:10. In Solomon's Temple, they formed a frame for the ark and disappeared when the ark disappeared. In the post-exilic Temple, two little figures of winged creatures were attached to the mercy-seat, *see* preceding note. In Ezk 1 and 10, God's chariot is drawn by winged creatures.

j. lit. 'loaves of the face', i.e. Yahweh's personal loaves, on which *see* Lv 24:5–9; 1 S 21:5.

second branch, too, must carry three cups shaped like almond blossoms, each with its calyx and bud, and similarly for all six branches springing from the lamp-stand. The lamp-stand itself must carry four cups shaped like almond blossoms, each 34
with its calyx and bud: ·one calyx under the first two branches springing from the 35
lamp-stand, one calyx under the next pair of branches and one calyx under the last pair of branches—thus for all six branches springing from the lamp-stand. ·The 36
calyxes and the branches will be of a piece with the lamp-stand, and the whole made from a single piece of pure gold, beaten out. ·You will also make seven lamps 37
for it and mount the lamps in such a way that they light up the space in front of it. The snuffers and trays must be of pure gold. ·You will use a talent of pure gold for 38, 39
25:9+ ↗Heb 8:5 the lamp-stand and all its accessories; ·and see that you work to the design which 40
was shown you on the mountain.'

33:7–11; 36:8–19 Heb 9:11.24 **The Dwelling. [a] Fabrics and hangings**

26 'The Dwelling itself you will make with ten sheets of finely woven linen 1
dyed violet-purple, red-purple and crimson. You will have them embroidered with great winged creatures. ·The length of a single sheet is to be 2
twenty-eight cubits, its width four cubits. all the sheets to be of the same size. ·Five 3
of the sheets are to be joined to one another, and the other five sheets are to be joined to one another. ·You will make violet loops along the edge of the first sheet, 4
at the end of the set, and do the same along the edge of the last sheet in the other set. ·You will make fifty loops on the first sheet and fifty loops along the outer edge 5
of the sheet of the second set, the loops corresponding to one another. ·You will 6
also make fifty gold clasps, and join the sheets together with the clasps. [b] In this way the Dwelling will be a unified whole.

'You will make sheets of goats' hair to form a tent over the Dwelling; you will 7
make eleven of these. ·The length of a single sheet must be thirty cubits and its 8
width four cubits, the eleven sheets to be all of the same size. ·You will join five 9
sheets together into one set, and six sheets into another; the sixth you will fold double over the front of the tent. ·You will make fifty loops along the edge of the 10
first sheet, at the end of the first set, and fifty loops along the edge of the sheet of the second set. ·You will make fifty bronze clasps and insert the clasps into the 11
loops, to draw the tent together and to make it a unified whole.

'Of the extra part of the sheets that overlap, half is to hang down the back of the 12
Dwelling. ·The extra cubit on either side along the length of the tent sheets must 13
hang down the sides of the Dwelling on either side to cover it.

'And for the tent you will make a cover of rams' skins dyed red and a cover of 14
fine leather over that.

36:20–34 **The framework**

'For the Dwelling you will make vertical frames of acacia wood. ·Each frame must 15, 16
be ten cubits long and one and a half cubits wide. ·Each frame must have twin 17
tenons; [c] that is how all the frames for the Dwelling must be made. ·You will make 18
frames for the Dwelling: twenty frames for the south side, to the south, ·and make 19
forty silver sockets under the twenty frames, two sockets under one frame for its two tenons, two sockets under the next frame for its two tenons; ·and for the other 20
side of the Dwelling, the north side, twenty frames ·and forty silver sockets, two 21
sockets under one frame, two sockets under the next frame. ·For the back of the 22
Dwelling, on the west, you will make six frames, ·and make two frames for the 23
corners at the back of the Dwelling; ·these must be coupled together at the bottom, 24
and right [d] up to the top, to the level of the first ring; this for the two frames that must form the two corners. ·Thus there will be eight frames with their silver 25
sockets: sixteen sockets; two sockets under one frame and two sockets under the next frame.

'You will make crossbars of acacia wood: five for the frames of the first side of 26
the Dwelling, ·five crossbars for the frames of the opposite side of the Dwelling, 27

and five crossbars for the frames which form the back of the Dwelling, to the west.
28 The middle bar must join the frames from one end to the other, halfway up.
29 You will overlay the frames with gold, make gold rings for them, through which to
30 place the crossbars, and overlay the crossbars with gold. ·This is how you must erect the Dwelling, following the design shown you on the mountain. 25:40+

The curtain

36:35–38
Lv 16
↗Heb 6:19; 9:1–10,24; 10:19seq.
Mt 27:51v

31 'You will make a curtain of finely woven linen, dyed violet-purple, red-purple and
32 crimson, and embroidered with great winged creatures, ·and put it on four poles of acacia wood overlaid with gold, with golden hooks for them, set in four
33 sockets of silver. ·You will put the curtain below the clasps, so that inside behind the curtain, you can place the ark of the Testimony, and the curtain will mark the
34 division for you between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies.[e] ·You will put
35 the mercy-seat on the ark of the Testimony in the Holy of Holies. ·You will place 25:21
the table outside the curtain, and the lamp-stand on the south side of the Dwelling,
36 opposite the table; you will put the table on the north side. ·For the entrance to the tent you will make a screen of finely woven linen embroidered with violet-purple,
37 red-purple and crimson, ·and for the screen you will make five poles of acacia wood and overlay them with gold, with golden hooks, and for them you will cast five sockets of bronze.'

The altar of burnt offerings

38:1–7
1 K 8:64s
Ezk 43:13–17

1 **27** 'You will make the altar[a] of acacia wood, five cubits long and five cubits
2 wide; the altar will be square and three cubits high. ·At its four corners you will make horns,[b] the horns must be of a piece with it, and you will overlay it with
3 bronze. ·And for it you will make pans for taking away the fatty ashes, and shovels, sprinkling basins, hooks and fire pans; you will make all the altar accessories of
4 bronze. ·You will also make a grating for it of bronze network, and on the four
5 corners of the grating you will make four bronze rings. ·You will put it below the
6 ledge of the altar, underneath, so that it comes halfway up the altar. ·You will make shafts for the altar, shafts of acacia wood and overlay them with bronze.
7 The shafts will be passed through the rings in such a way that the shafts are on
8 either side of the altar, for carrying it. ·You will make the altar hollow, out of boards; you will make it as you were shown on the mountain.

The court[c]

38:9–20
Ezk 40:17–49

9 'Then you will make the court of the Dwelling. On the south side, the curtaining of the court must be of finely woven linen, one hundred cubits long (for the first side),
10 its twenty poles and their twenty sockets being of bronze, and the poles'
11 hooks and rods of silver. ·So too for the north side, there must be a hundred cubits

26 a. 'Dwelling', *mishkan*, is the word proper to the Priestly tradition for the sanctuary in the desert: the word is normally used without further qualification, though 'Dwelling of the Testimony', *see* 25:16g, or 'Dwelling of the Tent of Meeting' is sometimes found. The Priestly tradition thus carries on the name given to this sanctuary in the ancient traditions, the 'Tent of Meeting', *ohel mo'ed*, and most frequently uses this. The description, though hard to grasp in detail, is of a collapsible sanctuary appropriate to tribal movements of the nomadic period. It is a retrojection of the plan of Solomon's Temple into the desert; but the hangings to cover the Dwelling preserve the memory of the Mosaic sanctuary, mentioned in the ancient traditions though never described, *see* 37:1–11; 38:8; Nb 11:16 seq., 12:4–10; Dt 13:14–15.

b. So two great hangings form a roof for the Dwelling; this covering has another of stronger material, vv. 7–13, and yet another, v. 14.

c. Each base must have had two mortises into which the tenons fitted at the foot of each frame.

d. lit. 'perfect' Hebr; 'staying so' Gk, Syr.

e. The curtain shut off the Holy of Holies, Yahweh's dwelling-place, from the worshippers. Only the high priest entered this sanctuary, and then only once a year on the Day of Expiation, Lv 16; *see* Heb 9:6–14. The same division between Holy Place and Holy of Holies existed in Solomon's Temple, 1 K 6:16 and the curtain was also to be found in Herod's Temple, Mt 27:51 par., seq.

27 a. The more important one, for the burnt offering, 1 K 8:64s, as opposed to the altar of incense, Ex 30:1–10.

b. The 'horns' jutted out from the four corners of the altar and were considered a particularly sacred part of it. Like the horns on the altar of incense, 30:10, they were smeared with the blood of sacrifice, 29:12. By laying hold of them, a criminal could put himself beyond the reach of punishment, 1 K 1:50; 2:28.

c. Consecrated space round the sanctuary. This text describes it as enclosed by wooden uprights and curtaining. It corresponds to the courts of the Temple of Jerusalem, 1 K 6:36; Ezk 40; Mt 21:12 par; Ac 21:27–30.

of curtaining, its twenty poles and their twenty sockets being of bronze, and the poles' hooks and rods of silver. ·Across the width of the court, on the west side, 12
there must be fifty cubits of curtaining, with its ten poles and their ten sockets. ·The 13
width of the court on the east side, facing the sunrise, must be fifty cubits, ·with 14
fifteen cubits of curtaining on one side of the entrance, with its three poles and their three sockets, ·and on the other side of the entrance, fifteen cubits of 15
curtaining, with its three poles and their three sockets; ·and for the gateway to the 16
court there must be a twenty-cubit screen of finely woven linen embroidered with violet-purple, red-purple and crimson, with its four poles and their four sockets. All the poles round the court must be connected by silver rods; their hooks must be 17
of silver and their sockets of bronze. ·The length of the court must be one hundred 18
cubits, its width fifty cubits [d] and its height five cubits. All the curtaining must be made of finely woven linen, and their sockets of bronze. ·All the accessories for 19
general use in the Dwelling, all its pegs and all the pegs of the court, must be of bronze.

The oil for the lamps

'You will order the Israelites to bring you pure pounded olive oil for the light, and 20
Lv 24:2–4 to keep a lamp burning all the time. ·Aaron and his sons will tend it in the Tent of 21
30:7–8 1 S 3:3 Meeting, outside the curtain hanging in front of the Testimony, from dusk to dawn, before Yahweh. This is a perpetual decree for all generations of Israelites.'

Lv 8–10 ### The priestly vestments

28 'From among the Israelites, summon your brother Aaron and his sons to be 1
priests in my service: Aaron and Aaron's sons Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar. ·For your brother Aaron you will make sacred vestments to give dignity 2
and magnificence. ·You will instruct all the skilled men, whom I have endowed 3
with skill, to make Aaron's vestments for his consecration to my priesthood. These are the vestments which they must make: a pectoral, an *ephod*, a robe, an 4
embroidered tunic, a turban and a belt. They must make sacred vestments for your brother Aaron and his sons, for them to be priests in my service. ·They will use 5
gold and violet material, red-purple and crimson, and finely woven linen.

39:2–7 ### The *ephod* [a]

'They will make the *ephod* of finely woven linen embroidered with gold, violet- 6
purple, red-purple and crimson. ·It will have two shoulder-straps joined to it; it 7
will be joined to them by its two edges. ·The waistband on the *ephod* to hold it in 8
position must be of the same workmanship and be of a piece with it: of gold, violet-purple, red-purple and crimson materials and finely woven linen. ·You will 9
then take two cornelians and engrave them with the names of the sons of Israel, six of their names on one stone, the remaining six names on the other, in the order 10
of their birth. ·By the stone-carver's art—seal engraving—you will engrave the two 11
stones with the names of the sons of Israel. You will have them mounted in gold settings ·and will put the two stones on the shoulder-straps of the *ephod*, to 12
30:16 Nb 31:54 commemorate the sons of Israel. In this way Aaron will bear their names on his two shoulders, before Yahweh, as a reminder. ·You will also make golden rosettes, 13
and two chains of pure gold twisted like cord, and will attach the cord-like chains 14
to the rosettes.

39:8–21 ### The breastplate of judgement

'You will make the breastplate of judgement of the same embroidered work as the 15
ephod; you will make it of gold, violet-purple, red-purple and crimson materials and finely woven linen. ·It must be square and doubled over, a span [b] in length and 16
39:10–13 Ezk 29:13 a span in width. ·In it you will set four rows of stones: [c] a sard, topaz and emerald 17
Rv 21:19seq. for the first row; ·for the second row, a garnet, sapphire and diamond; ·for the 18, 19
third row, a hyacinth, a ruby and an amethyst; ·and for the fourth row, a beryl, a 20

21 cornelian and a jasper. These must be mounted in gold settings. ·The stones will
correspond to the names of the sons of Israel, twelve like their names, engraved
22 like seals, each with the name of one of the twelve tribes. ·For the breastplate you
23 will make chains of pure gold twisted like cords, · [d]and on the breastplate you will
make two gold rings, putting the two rings on the two outside edges of the
24 breastplate ·and fastening the two gold cords to the two rings on the outside edges
25 of the breastplate. ·The other two ends of the cords you will fasten to the two
26 rosettes, putting these on the shoulder-straps of the *ephod*, on the front. ·You will
also make two gold rings and put them on the two edges of the breastplate, on the
27 inner side, against the *ephod*; ·and you will make two gold rings and put them low
down on the front of the two shoulder-pieces of the *ephod*, close to the join, above
28 the waistband of the *ephod*. ·The breastplate will be secured by a violet-purple
cord passed through its rings and those of the *ephod*, so that the breastplate will sit
29 above the waistband and not come apart from the *ephod*. ·Thus Aaron will bear
the names of the sons of Israel on the breastplate of judgement, on his heart, when
30 he enters the sanctuary, as a reminder, before Yahweh, always. ·To the breastplate
of judgement you will add the *urim* and the *thummim*, and these will be on Aaron's 1 S 14:41r
heart when he goes into Yahweh's presence, and Aaron will bear the Israelites'
judgement [e] on his heart, in Yahweh's presence, always.

The robe

39:22–26

31, 32 'You will make the robe of the *ephod* entirely of violet-purple. ·In the centre it will
have an opening for the head, the opening to have round it a border woven like the
33 neck of a coat of mail, so that it will not get torn. ·On its lower hem, you will make
pomegranates of violet-purple, red-purple and crimson, and finely woven linen [f] all
34 round the hem, with golden bells between them all round: ·a golden bell and then Si 45:9
35 a pomegranate, alternately, all round the lower hem of the robe. ·Aaron must
wear it when he officiates, and the tinkling will be heard when he goes into the
sanctuary into Yahweh's presence, or leaves it, and so he will not incur death. [g]

The symbol of consecration

39:27–31

36 'You will make a flower of pure gold and on it, as you would engrave a seal, you
37 will engrave, "Consecrated to Yahweh". ·You will put it on a violet-purple cord; Zc 14:20 Jn 17:19
it will go on the turban; the front of the turban is the place where it must go.
38 This will go on Aaron's brow, and Aaron will thus take on himself the short-
comings in the holy things consecrated by the Israelites, in all their holy offerings. [h]
39 It will be on his brow permanently, to make them acceptable to Yahweh. ·The
tunic you will weave of fine linen, and make a turban of fine linen, and an
embroidered waistband.

The vestments of the priests

40 'For the sons of Aaron you will make tunics and waistbands. You will also make
41 them head-dresses to give dignity and magnificence. · [i] You will dress your brother

d. 'fifty cubits' (25 yd, 22.5 m) Sam.; 'fifty by fifty', Hebr. • 'All the curtaining' is supplied, following 38:16.

28 a. The Old Testament uses the name *ephod* (meaning uncertain) for three different objects: **1** The *ephod* which is an instrument of divination, used for consulting Yahweh, *see* 1 S 2:28*l*. **2** The *ephod bad*, 'linen loincloth', worn by sacred ministers, *see* 1 S 2:18e. **3** The *ephod* of the high priest, a kind of breastplate held in position by a belt and shoulder-straps. To this is attached the 'breastplate of judgement', vv. 15 seq., in which were the sacred lots, the *urim* and *thummim*, v. 30; Lv 8:7–8, *see* 1 S 14:41r. In this way the text connects the high priest's *ephod* with the prophetic *ephod*; but the relationship is artificial because the description given here of the high priest's vestments applies only to the post-exilic period, whereas there is no evidence for the use, after David's time, of the prophetic *ephod* with its sacred lots—*see also* Jg 8:27i.

b. About 9 in. (23 cm).

c. Hebr. adds two words giving no obvious sense, lit. 'of stone, a row'.

d. vv. 23–28 of the Hebr. have been abridged in the Gk and placed after v. 29.

e. The means of judging the Israelites, that is to say, by prophecy, *see* 28:6a.

f. 'and finely woven linen' Gk, Sam.; Hebr. omits.

g. Remains of a widespread primitive notion that the sound of bells drove off demons.

h. The high priest, being consecrated to God, expiated involuntary ritual shortcomings in his own person.

i. The v. anticipates 29:1 and extends to ordinary priests the anointing reserved to the high priest, 29:7 and Lv 8:12. It is a later addition.

Aaron and his sons in these; you will then anoint them, invest them[j] and consecrate
them to serve me in the priesthood. ·You will also make them linen breeches[k] 42
20:26*l* reaching from waist to thigh, to cover their bare flesh. Aaron and his sons will wear 43
these when they go into the Tent of Meeting and when they approach the altar to
serve in the sanctuary, as a precaution against incurring mortal guilt. This is a
perpetual decree for Aaron and for his descendants after him.'

Lv 8
Heb 7:26–28
The consecration of Aaron and his sons. Preparations

29 'This is what you will do to them, to consecrate them to my priesthood. 1
Take one young bull and two rams without blemish; ·also unleavened 2
Lv 2:4 bread, unleavened cakes mixed with oil, and unleavened wafers spread with oil,
made from fine wheat flour, ·and put these into a basket and present them in the 3
basket, at the same time as the bull and the two rams.

Their purification, clothing and anointing

‖40:12–15
Lv 8:2–13
↗Heb 10:22 'You will bring Aaron and his sons to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting and 4
bathe them.[a] ·You will then take the vestments and dress Aaron in the tunic, the 5
robe of the *ephod*, the *ephod*, and the breastplate, and tie the waistband of the
28:36seq.;39:30 *ephod* round his waist. ·Then you will place the turban on his head, and on it put 6
30:22–23,22*d* the symbol of holy consecration. ·You will then take the anointing oil and pour it 7
on his head and so anoint him.

'Next, you will bring his sons and dress them in tunics, ·and fasten waistbands 8, 9
round their waists[b] and put the head-dresses on their heads. By perpetual decree
the priesthood will be theirs. Then you will invest Aaron and his sons.

The offerings

'You will bring the bull in front of the Tent of Meeting, and Aaron and his sons will 10
lay their hands on the bull's head.[c] ·You will then slaughter the bull before Yahweh 11
Lv 1:5e at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. ·You will then take some of the bull's blood 12
Lv 4:7 and with your finger put it on the horns of the altar. Next, pour out the
rest of the blood at the foot of the altar. ·And then take all the fat covering the 13
entrails, the fatty mass over the liver, the two kidneys with their covering fat, and
burn them on the altar. ·But the young bull's flesh, its skin and its offal, you will 14
Lv 4:1a
↗Heb 13:11 burn outside the camp, for this is a sin offering.

'Next, you will take one of the rams, and Aaron and his sons will lay their hands 15
24:6 on the ram's head. ·You will then slaughter the ram, take its blood and pour it 16
against the altar, all round. ·Next, cut the ram into quarters, wash the entrails and 17
legs and put them on the quarters and head. ·Then burn the whole ram on the altar. 18
Lv 1:1b
Lv 1:9g This will be a burnt offering for Yahweh, a pleasing smell,[d] a food offering burnt
for Yahweh.

'Next, you will take the other ram, and Aaron and his sons will lay their hands 19
on the ram's head. ·You will then slaughter the ram, take some of its blood and put 20
it on the lobe of Aaron's right ear,[e] on the lobes of his sons' right ears, the thumbs
of their right hands, and the big toes of their right feet, and pour the rest of the
blood against the altar, all round. ·[f]You will then take some of the blood on the 21
altar and some of the anointing oil, and sprinkle it on Aaron and his vestments and
on his sons and on his sons' vestments: so that he and his vestments will be
consecrated and his sons too, and his sons' vestments.

The investiture of the priests

'You will then take the fatty parts of the ram: the tail, the fat covering the entrails, 22
the fatty mass over the liver, the two kidneys with their covering fat and also the
29:2–3 right thigh—for this is a ram of investiture—·and a loaf of bread, a cake of bread 23
made with oil, and a wafer, from the basket of unleavened bread before Yahweh,
and put it all on the palms of Aaron and his sons, and make the gesture of offering[g] 24
before Yahweh. ·Then you will take them back and burn them on the altar, on top 25

of the burnt offering, as a smell pleasing before Yahweh, a food offering burnt for Yahweh.

26 'You will then take the forequarters of the ram of Aaron's investiture and with it
27 make the gesture of offering before Yahweh; this will be your portion. •You will Lv 7:30seq.
consecrate the forequarters that have been thus offered, as also the thigh that is set aside—what has been offered and what has been set aside from the ram of
28 investiture of Aaron and his sons. •This, by perpetual decree, will be the portion that Aaron and his sons will receive from the Israelites, since it is the portion set aside, the portion set aside for Yahweh by the Israelites from their communion sacrifices: a portion set aside for Yahweh.

29 'Aaron's sacred vestments must pass to his sons after him, and they will wear
30 them for their anointing and investiture. •Whichever of the sons of Aaron succeeds him in the priesthood and enters the Tent of Meeting to serve in the sanctuary, will wear them for seven days.

The sacred meal

31, 32 'You will take the ram of investiture and cook its meat in a holy place. •Aaron and Lv 8:31
his sons will eat the meat of the ram and the bread which is in the basket, at the
33 entrance to the Tent of Meeting. •They will eat what was used in making expiation for them at their investiture and consecration. No unauthorised person may eat
34 these; they are holy things. •If any of the meat from the investiture sacrifice, or the bread, should be left till morning, you will burn what is left. It may not be eaten; it
35 is a holy thing. •This is what you will do for Aaron and his sons, implementing all the orders I have given you. You will take seven days over their investiture. Lv 8:33seq.

The consecration of the altar of burnt offerings

36 'On each of the days you will also offer a young bull as a sacrifice for sin, in Ezk 43:18–27
expiation. You will offer a sin sacrifice for the altar when you make expiation for
37 it; then you will consecrate it by anointing it. •For seven days you will make expiation for the altar, then you will consecrate it; it will then be especially holy, Lv 16:18–20 Nb 4:15,20 2 S 6:6–7
and whatever touches the altar will become holy.

The daily burnt offering ‖Lv 6:2–6 ‖Nb 28:3–8+

38 'This is what you must offer on the altar: two yearling male lambs each day in
39 perpetuity. •The first lamb you will offer at dawn, and the second at twilight,
40 and with the first lamb, one-tenth of a measure[h] of fine flour mixed with one- Ezk 46:13–15
quarter of a *hin*[i] of pounded olive oil and, for a libation, one-quarter of a *hin* of
41 wine. •The second lamb you will offer at twilight, and do it with a similar cereal offering and libation as at dawn, as a pleasing smell, as an offering burnt for
42 Yahweh, •a perpetual burnt offering for all your generations to come, at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting before Yahweh, where I shall meet you[j] and speak 25:22
to you.

43, 44 'There I shall meet the Israelites in the place consecrated by my glory. •I shall 24:16f; 40:34
consecrate the Tent of Meeting and the altar; I shall also consecrate Aaron and his
45 sons, to be priests in my service. •And I shall live with the Israelites and be their 25:8

j. lit. 'you will fill their hands'. Portions of the victim that the new priest was about to offer were placed in his hands, 29:9; 32:29; Lv 8:27–28; Jg 17:5, 12; 1 K 13:33.

k. For modesty's sake. For the same reason the Book of the Covenant forbade altars with steps, 20:26, though there was to be one in the Temple.

29 **a.** A complete bath, as opposed to the ablutions of 30:19–21, to confer the ritual purity required.

b. Here Hebr. repeats 'Aaron and his sons'; Gk omits.

c. To make the sacrifice their own.

d. An anthropomorphism expressing the satisfaction which God finds in the offering made to him, *see* below *passim*; Gn 8:21; Lv 1:9; Nb 28:2.

e. 'right ear' versions; 'ear' Hebr.

f. Later addition. Gk puts it before 20^b; Sam. after 28; Lv after Lv 8:29 (which corresponds to Ex 29:26).

g. This ritual of offering consisted in holding the object forward and then withdrawing it, symbolising its presentation to God before its reversion to the priest.

h. About 0.125 bushel (4.50 litres)

i. One-quarter of a *hin*, 0.4 UK gallons, 0.5 USA (1.87 litres).

j. 'you' (singular) Sam., Gk; 'you' (plural) Hebr.

God, ·and they will know that I am Yahweh their God, who brought them out of 46
Egypt to live among them: I, Yahweh their God.'

37:25–28 Nb 4:11 1 K 6:20 ↗Rv 8:3–5
The altar of incense

30 'You will make an altar on which to burn incense; [a] you will make it of acacia 1
wood, ·one cubit long, and one cubit wide—it must be square—and two 2
cubits high; its horns must be of a piece with it. ·You will overlay its top, its sides 3
all round and its horns with pure gold and make a gold moulding to go all round.
You will make two gold rings for it below the moulding on its two opposite sides, 4
to take the shafts used for carrying it. ·You will make the shafts of acacia wood and 5
overlay them with gold.

40:5 'You will put it in front of the curtain by the ark of Testimony, in front of the 6
mercy-seat which is on the Testimony, where I shall meet you. ·On it Aaron will 7
Lk 1:9f burn fragrant incense each morning; when he trims the lamps, he will burn incense
on it; ·and when Aaron puts back the lamps at twilight, he will burn incense on it, 8
incense perpetually before Yahweh for all your generations to come. ·You will not 9
offer unauthorised incense, or burnt offering, or cereal offering on it, and you will
not pour any libation over it. ·Once a year, Aaron will perform the rite of expiation 10
Heb 9:7–8,9d on the horns of the altar; once a year, on the Day of Expiation, with the blood of
29:36–37 the sacrifice for sin, he will make expiation for himself, for all your generations to
come. It is especially holy for Yahweh.'

38:25–28
The poll tax

Nb 1 Yahweh then spoke to Moses and said, ·'When you count the Israelites by census, 11, 12
each one of them must pay Yahweh a ransom for his life, [b] to avoid any incidence
2 S 24 of plague among them while you are holding the census. ·Everyone subject to the 13
census will pay half a shekel, reckoning by the sanctuary shekel: twenty *gerah* to
↗Mt 17:24 the shekel. This half-shekel will be set aside for Yahweh. ·Everyone subject to the 14
census, that is to say of twenty years and over, will pay the sum set aside for
Yahweh. ·The rich man must not give more, nor the poor man less, than half a 15
1 P 1:18–19 shekel when he pays the sum set aside for Yahweh in ransom for your lives. [c] ·You 16
will take the ransom money of the Israelites and apply it to the service of the Tent
of Meeting, for it to be a reminder of the Israelites before Yahweh, as the ransom
for your lives.'

38:8 1 K 7 23–28
The bronze basin

Yahweh then spoke to Moses and said, ·'You will also make a bronze basin on its 17, 18
bronze stand, for washing. You will put it between the Tent of Meeting and the
altar and put water in it, ·in which Aaron and his sons will wash their hands and 19
feet. ·Whenever they are to enter the Tent of Meeting, they will wash, to avoid 20
incurring death; and whenever they approach the altar for their service, to burn an
offering for Yahweh, ·they will wash their hands and feet, to avoid incurring death. 21
This is a perpetual decree for him and his descendants for all their generations to
come.'

Lv 8:10seq.
The anointing oil [d]

Yahweh spoke further to Moses and said, ·'Take the finest spices: five hundred 22, 23
shekels of fresh myrrh, half as much (two hundred and fifty shekels) of fragrant
cinnamon, two hundred and fifty shekels of scented reed, ·five hundred shekels 24
(reckoning by the sanctuary shekel) of cassia, and one *hin* of olive oil. ·You will 25
37:29 make this into a holy anointing oil, such a blend as the perfumer might make; this
will be a holy anointing oil. ·With it you will anoint the Tent of Meeting and the 26
ark of the Testimony, ·the table and all its accessories, the lamp-stand and its 27
accessories, the altar of incense, ·the altar of burnt offerings and all its accessories, 28
29:37 and the basin with its stand, ·consecrating them, so that they will be especially holy 29
28:41;40:15 and whatever touches them will become holy. ·You will also anoint Aaron and his 30

31 sons and consecrate them to be priests in my service. •You will then speak to the
Israelites and say, "This anointing oil will be holy for you [c] for all your generations
32 to come. •It must not be used for anointing the human body, nor may you make
any of the same mixture. It is a holy thing; you will regard it as holy.
33 Anyone who makes up the same oil or uses it on an unauthorised person will be
outlawed from his people." '

The incense 37:29

34 Yahweh then said to Moses, 'Take sweet spices: storax, onycha, galbanum, sweet
35 spices and pure frankincense in equal parts, •and compound an incense, such a
36 blend as the perfumer might make, salted, pure, and holy. •You will grind some of
this up very fine and put it in front of the Testimony in the Tent of Meeting, where 25:22
37 I shall meet you. You will regard it as especially holy. •You may not make any
incense of similar composition for your own use. You will regard it as holy,
reserved for Yahweh. Anyone who makes up the same thing to use as perfume will
be outlawed from his people.'

The craftsmen for the sanctuary 35:30–35

1, 2 **31** Yahweh then spoke to Moses and said, •'Look, I have singled out Bezalel
3 son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, •and have filled him with the
4 spirit of God [a] in wisdom, knowledge and skill in every kind of craft: •in designing
5 and carrying out work in gold and silver and bronze, •in cutting stones to be set, in
6 wood carving and in executing every kind of work. •And to help him I have given
him Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan, and have endowed the hearts
7 of all the skilled men with the skill to make everything I have ordered you: •the
Tent of Meeting; the ark of the Testimony; the mercy-seat above it; and all the
8 furniture of the tent; •the table and all its accessories; the pure lamp-stand and all
9 its equipment; the altar of incense; •the altar of burnt offerings and all its accessor-
10 ies; the basin and its stand; •the liturgical vestments, the sacred vestments for
11 Aaron the priest, and the vestments for his sons, for their priestly functions; •the
anointing oil and the fragrant incense for the sanctuary. They will do everything as
I have ordered you.'

The Sabbath rest [b] 20:8–11,8f

12, 13 Yahweh then said to Moses, •'Speak to the Israelites and say, "You will keep my
Sabbaths properly, for this is a sign between myself and you for all your generations Ezk 20:12
14 to come, so that you will know that it is I, Yahweh, who sanctify you. •You will
keep the Sabbath, then; you will regard it as holy. Anyone who profanes it will be Nb 15:32–36
put to death; anyone who does any work on that day will be outlawed from his
15 people. •Work must be done for six days, but the seventh day will be a day of
complete rest, consecrated to Yahweh. Anyone who works on the Sabbath day
16 will be put to death. •The Israelites will keep the Sabbath, observing the Sabbath

30 **a.** In Solomon's Temple it stood in front of the Holy of Holies, 1 K 6:20–21. Altars of this kind were common in the ancient East.

b. Here Hebr. adds 'while you are holding the census'; Gk omits.

c. Rich and poor are equal before God. • The 'sanctuary shekel' appears only in late texts, here, 38:24–26; Lv 5:15; 27:25; Nb 3:47; 18:16. It was perhaps the old shekel, worth one-fiftieth of a *mina* and weighing approximately 0.04 oz (1.13 grams), whereas the shekel in use had fallen to one-sixtieth of a *mina*, *see* Ezk 45:12. (For further information on ancient weights and measures, *see* Tables of measures and money.)

d. The directives for the use of the oil, like those for incense (vv. 34–35), are of late origin: all priests were to be anointed but no layman. According to the ancient historical texts, only the king was anointed, 1 S 10:1 seq.; 16:1 seq.; 1 K 1:39; 2 K 9:6; 11:12. This anointing made the king a sacred person: he was the 'anointed of Yahweh', 1 S 24:7; 26:9, 11, 23; 2 S 1:14, 16; 19:22, which is in Hebr. 'the Messiah', in Gk 'the Christ'. In the Psalms the title is often used of David and his dynasty and becomes the main title of the future King, the Messiah, of whom David was the prototype; the NT applies the title to Jesus the Christ. It does not seem that members of the priesthood were anointed before the Persian period. The ancient Priestly texts reserve it to the high priest, 29:7, 29; Lv 4:3, 5, 16; 8:12. It was later extended to all priests, here at v. 30; 28:41; 40:15; Lv 7:36; 10:7; Nb 3:3.

e. 'for you' Gk; 'for me' Hebr.

31 **a.** The spirit of God was regarded as the source of outstanding gifts, in this case of technical skill, considered as a sharing to some degree in the divine wisdom.

b. This section has no connection with the preceding but may have been inserted here to emphasise the part played by the Sabbath in official worship.

Gn 9:9d for all their generations to come: this is an eternal covenant. •Between myself and 17
=20:11 Gn 2:2–3 the Israelites, this is a sign for ever, for in six days Yahweh made heaven and earth, but on the seventh day he rested and drew breath." '

The tablets of the Law committed to Moses [c]

When he had finished speaking to Moses on Mount Sinai, he gave him the two 18
24:12+;25:16g tablets of the Testimony, tablets of stone inscribed by the finger of God.

‖Dt 9:7;10:5

V: THE GOLDEN CALF AND THE RENEWAL OF THE COVENANT [a]

The golden calf [b]

24:18 Jr 31:32 ↗Ac 7:40–41 32 When the people saw that Moses was a long time before coming down the 1
mountain, they gathered round Aaron and said to him, 'Get to work, make us a god to go at our head; for that Moses, the man who brought us here from Egypt—we do not know what has become of him.' •Aaron replied, 'Strip off the 2
gold rings in the ears of your wives and your sons and daughters, and bring them to me.' •The people all stripped off the gold rings from their ears and brought them to 3
Aaron. •He received what they gave him, melted it down in a mould and with it 4
1 K 12:28 Ne 9:18 Ps 106:19seq. made the statue of a calf. 'Israel,' the people shouted, 'here is your God who brought you here from Egypt!' [c] •Observing this, Aaron built an altar before the 5
statue and made this proclamation, 'Tomorrow will be a feast in Yahweh's honour.'
↗1 Co 10:7 Early next morning they sacrificed burnt offerings and brought communion 6
sacrifices. The people then sat down to eat and drink, and afterwards got up to amuse themselves.

Moses forewarned by Yahweh

Yahweh then said to Moses, 'Go down at once, for your people whom you brought 7
Jr 31:32 here from Egypt have become corrupt. •They have quickly left the way which I 8
ordered them to follow. They have cast themselves a metal calf, worshipped it and offered sacrifice to it, shouting, "Israel, here is your God who brought you here from Egypt!" ' • [d] Yahweh then said to Moses, 'I know these people; I know how 9
33:3;34:9 Dt 9:13+ Gn 12:2 Nb 14:12 obstinate they are! •So leave me now, so that my anger can blaze at them and I can 10
put an end to them! I shall make a great nation out of you instead.'

Dt 9:26–29 Ps 106:23 **The prayer of Moses** [e]

Moses tried to pacify Yahweh his God. 'Yahweh,' he said, 'why should your anger 11
blaze at your people, whom you have brought out of Egypt by your great power
Nb 14:13–16 Dt 9:28;32:27 Ezk 20:9,44 and mighty hand? •Why should the Egyptians say, "He brought them out with evil 12
intention, to slaughter them in the mountains and wipe them off the face of the earth?" Give up your burning wrath; relent over this disaster intended for your
people. •Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to whom you swore 13
Gn 15:5; 22:16–17+; 35:11–12 by your very self and made this promise: "I shall make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven, and this whole country of which I have spoken, I shall give to your descendants, and it will be their heritage for ever." ' •Yahweh then relented 14
over the disaster which he had intended to inflict on his people.

24:12+ **Moses breaks the tablets of the Law**

Moses turned and came down the mountain with the two tablets of the Testimony 15
in his hands, tablets inscribed on both sides, inscribed on the front and on the back.
31:18 The tablets were the work of God, and the writing on them was God's writing, 16
engraved on the tablets.

When Joshua heard the noise of the people shouting, he said to Moses, 'There is 17
the sound of battle in the camp!' •But he replied: 18

No song of victory is this sound,
no lament for defeat this sound;
but answering choruses I hear!

19 And there, as he approached the camp, he saw the calf and the groups dancing.
Moses blazed with anger. He threw down the tablets he was holding, shattering
20 them at the foot of the mountain. •He seized the calf they had made and burned it, Dt 9:21
grinding it into powder which he scattered on the water, and made the Israelites
21 drink it.[f] •Moses then said to Aaron, 'What have these people done to you for you
22 to have brought so great a sin on them?' •Aaron replied, 'My lord should not be so
23 angry. You yourself know what a bad state these people are in! •They said to me,
"Make us a god to go at our head; for that Moses, the man who brought us here
24 from Egypt—we do not know what has become of him." •I then said to them,
"Anyone with gold, strip it off!" They gave it to me. I threw it into the fire and out
came this calf!'

The zeal of the Levites

25 When Moses saw that the people were out of hand—for Aaron had let them get
26 out of hand to the derision[g] of their enemies all round them—•Moses then stood at
the gate of the camp and shouted, 'Who is for Yahweh? To me!' And all the Levites Dt 33:9
27 rallied round him. •He said to them, 'Yahweh, God of Israel, says this, "Buckle on
your sword, each of you, and go up and down the camp from gate to gate, every
28 man of you slaughtering brother, friend and neighbour." ' •The Levites did as Mt 10:37 Lk 14:26
Moses said, and of the people about three thousand men perished that day.
29 'Today', Moses said, 'you have consecrated yourselves[h] to Yahweh, one at the
cost of his son, another of his brother; and so he bestows a blessing on you today.' Nb 25:7–13 Dt 33:8–11

Moses prays again

30 On the following day Moses said to the people, 'You have committed a great sin.
But now I shall go up to Yahweh: perhaps I can secure expiation for your sin.'
31 Moses then went back to Yahweh and said, 'Oh, this people has committed a
32 great sin by making themselves a god of gold. •And yet, if it pleased you to forgive
33 their sin. . .! If not, please blot me out of the book you have written!'[i] •Yahweh Dn 12:1a Rm 9:3 Rv 20:12
said to Moses, 'Those who have sinned against me are the ones I shall blot out of
34 my book. •So now go and lead the people to the place I promised to you. My angel 23:20i 3:16h

c. This v. follows on from 24:12–15 and continues the ancient narratives interrupted by the lengthy Priestly interpolation. The tablets were inscribed with the Decalogue, called the Testimony, *see* 25:16g, which contained the stipulations of the covenant. Ancient Eastern treaties were similarly inscribed on tablets or on steles and preserved in a shrine.

32 a. From the literary critical point of view, ch. 32–34 combine Yahwistic and Elohistic traditions which it is almost impossible to distinguish in detail. They represent the Yahwistic covenant of ch. 34 as a renewal of the Elohistic covenant of ch. 24, the latter having been broken by Israel's rebellion: the adoration of the golden calf. This arrangement is perhaps artificial and the episode of the golden calf has been placed here to separate the two conventional narratives and make it possible to preserve both.

b. The golden 'calf', derisively so called, was in fact the statue of a young bull, a symbol of divinity in the ancient East. A group in competition with Moses' group, or a dissident faction of his group, had or wished to have the figure of a bull to symbolise the presence of its God, instead of the ark of the covenant. The God was still Yahweh however, v. 5, who had brought Israel out of Egypt, vv. 4 and 8. It has been argued that this episode is a retrojection of Jeroboam's golden calves into the desert period, though it seems more likely that Jeroboam was trying to revive an ancient tradition, *see* 1 K 12:28d.

c. The bull was not an image of Yahweh; like other Eastern parallels, it was the footstool of the unseen deity, as was the ark which it was intended to replace as guide, *see* v. 1.

d. v. 9 is absent from the Greek.

e. Moses is represented as the great mediator: at the time of the plagues, 5:22–23; 8:4; 9:28; 10:17; on behalf of his sister Miriam, Nb 12:13, and especially on behalf of the people on their journey through the desert, 5:22–23; 32:11–14, 30–32; Nb 11:2; 14:13–19; 16:22; 21:7; Dt 9:25–29. This function of his is recalled by Ps 99:6; 106:23; Si 45:3; Jr 15:1; *see also* 2 M 15:14e.

f. The water thus became the 'water of cursing', *see* Nb 5:11–31, but in this case was not administered as an ordeal, unlike the latter text, since the entire people is considered guilty. The primitive tradition probably attributed to God the punishment here inflicted by the Levites, *see* vv. 25 seq. Dt 9:21 reports the same event in a different way.

g. Hebr. word of uncertain meaning.

h. 'you have consecrated yourselves', lit. 'you have filled your hands', *see* 28:41j, Gk; 'consecrate yourselves!' Hebr.

i. The book recording human deeds and describing human fate, *see* Ps 69:28; 139:16.

will indeed go at your head but, on the day of punishment, I shall punish them for their sin.' ·And Yahweh punished the people for having made the calf, the one Aaron had made. 35

Nb 10:11–13 **The Israelites ordered to depart** [a]

33 Yahweh then said to Moses, 'Leave, move on from here, you and the people whom you have brought here from Egypt, to the country that I swore to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that I would give to their descendants. ·I shall send an 2
23:20h Dt 7:1a angel in front of you and drive out the Canaanites, the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites. ·Move on towards a country flowing with 3 milk and honey, but I myself shall not be going with you or I might annihilate you on the way, for you are an obstinate people.' ·On hearing these stern words the 4 people went into mourning and no one wore his ornaments.

32:9+ Yahweh then said to Moses, 'Say to the Israelites, "You are an obstinate people. 5 If I were to go with you even for a moment, I should annihilate you. So now take off your ornaments, and then I shall decide how to deal with you!" ' ·So, from 6 Mount Horeb onwards, the Israelites stripped themselves of their ornaments. [b]

The Tent [c]

26:1a Moses used to take the Tent and pitch it [d] outside the camp, far away from the 7 camp. He called it the Tent of Meeting. Anyone who wanted to consult Yahweh [e] would go out to the Tent of Meeting, outside the camp. ·Whenever Moses went 8 out to the Tent, the people would all stand up and every man would stand at the door of his tent and watch Moses until he went into the Tent. ·And whenever 9 Moses went into the Tent, the pillar of cloud would come down and station itself at
34:34 the entrance to the Tent, while Yahweh spoke with Moses. ·The people could all 10 see the pillar of cloud stationed at the entrance to the Tent and the people would
33:20i Nb 12:8 Dt 34:10 Jn 15:15 Jos 1:1b all stand up and bow low, each at the door of his tent. ·Yahweh would talk to 11 Moses face to face, as a man talks to his friend, and afterwards he would come back to the camp, but the young man who was his servant, Joshua son of Nun, never left the inside of the Tent.

Moses prays

Moses said to Yahweh, 'Look, you say to me, "Make the people move on," but 12 you have not told me whom you are going to send with me, although you have said,
33:11+ "I know you by name and you enjoy my favour." ·If indeed I enjoy your favour, 13 please show me your ways, so that I understand you and continue to enjoy your favour; consider too that this nation is your people.' ·Yahweh then said, 'I myself 14
↗Heb 4:1 shall go with you and I shall give you rest.' [f] ·To which he said, 'If you do not come 15 yourself, do not make us move on from here, ·for how can it be known that I and 16
Dt 2:7 my people enjoy your favour, if not by your coming with us? By this we shall be marked out, I and your people, from all the peoples on the face of the earth.' Yahweh then said to Moses, 'Again I shall do what you have asked, because you 17 enjoy my favour and because I know you by name.'

33:11+ 1 K 19:9–18 **Moses on the mountain**

↗Jn 1:14–18,14n He then said, 'Please show me your glory.' [g] ·Yahweh said, 'I shall make all my 18, 19
34:6–7; 3:13g goodness pass before you, and before you I shall pronounce the name Yahweh; [h]
Rm 9:15 and I am gracious to those to whom I am gracious and I take pity on those on whom I take pity.' ·'But my face', he said, 'you cannot see, for no human being can see 20
19:21 Gn 32:31 me and survive.' [i] ·Then Yahweh said, 'Here is a place near me. You will stand on 21
Lv 16:2 Nb 4:20 the rock, ·and when my glory passes by, I shall put you in a cleft of the rock and 22
Dt 5:24 Jg 6:22–23 shield you with my hand until I have gone past. ·Then I shall take my hand away 23
Is 6:5 and you will see my back; but my face will not be seen.'

The covenant renewed. [a] **The tablets of the Law** 19;32:1a

34 Yahweh said to Moses, 'Cut two tablets of stone like the first ones and come
up to me on the mountain,[b] and I will write on the tablets the words that
were on the first tablets, which you broke. ·Be ready at dawn; at dawn come up
Mount Sinai and wait for me there at the top of the mountain. ·No one may come 19:12seq.
up with you, no one may be seen anywhere on the mountain; the flocks and herds
may not even graze in front of this mountain.' ·So he cut two tablets of stone like
the first and, with the two tablets of stone in his hands, Moses went up Mount Sinai
in the early morning as Yahweh had ordered. ·And Yahweh descended in a cloud
and stood with him there and pronounced the name Yahweh.

God appears 33:18–23

Then Yahweh passed before him and called out,[c] 'Yahweh, Yahweh, God of 3:13g
tenderness and compassion, slow to anger, rich in faithful love and constancy, 20:5–6 Nb 14:18
maintaining his faithful love to thousands, forgiving fault, crime and sin, yet Dt 5:9–10 Ps 86:15
letting nothing go unchecked, and punishing the parent's fault in the children and Jr 32:18 Jl 2:13
in the grandchildren to the third and fourth generation!' ·Moses immediately Jon 4:2 Na 1:3
bowed to the ground in worship, ·then he said, 'If indeed I do enjoy your favour, ↗Jn 1:14
please, my Lord, come with us, although they are an obstinate people; and forgive ·32:11–14
our faults and sins, and adopt us as your heritage.'

The covenant [d] 20:1a

He then said, 'Look, I am now making a covenant: I shall work such wonders at ↗Jn 1:17
the head of your whole people as have never been worked in any other country or
nation, and all the people round you will see what Yahweh can do, for what I shall Dt 2:7
do through you will be awe-inspiring. ·Mark, then, what I command you today. I 23:20h
am going to drive out the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, Dt 7:1a
the Hivites and the Jebusites before you. ·Take care you make no pact with the 23:32–33
inhabitants of the country which you are about to enter, or they will prove a snare
in your community. ·You will tear down their altars, smash their cultic stones and 23:24k Nb 33:52

33 **a.** Ch. 33 is a collection of elements having no further link between them than preoccupation over God's presence with his people.

b. vv. 1–6, in the Deuteronomic style, are not consistent: Yahweh orders the people to do what they have already done of their own accord.

c. This is one of the few ancient texts that mention the Tent: it is the place where Yahweh 'meets' Moses and the people, Nb 11:16 seq.; 12:4–10; *see* Ex 29:42–43; Lv 1:1.

d. lit. 'pitch it for him' or 'for it', the pronoun standing for either Moses or Yahweh or the ark (which is masculine in Hebrew and which may have been mentioned earlier in the narrative from which this passage was taken). It is probable that the Tent in the desert was the shrine of the ark and, according to v. 11, Joshua was attached to it.

e. i.e. to ask for divine response through the agency of Moses who conversed with God in the Tent, *see* above 18:15. In later times, Yahweh was 'consulted' through a man of God or through a prophet, 1 K 14:5; 22:5, 8; 2 K 3:11; 8:8; etc. or by using the sacred lots, *see* 1 S 2:28*l*; 14:41r.

f. A Deuteronomic theme, *see* Dt 12:10; 25:19; Jos 1:13; 22:4; 23:1; *see also* Ps 95:11, signifying the fulfilment of the promises.

g. *see* 24:16f.

h. God's uttering his own name to Moses is tantamount to a revelation of his true nature and identity, *see* 3:13–15,13g.

i. God's sanctity is so removed from human unworthiness, *see* Lv 17:1a, that anyone who looks on God, *see* Ex 19:21; Lv 16:2; Nb 4:20, *see* Nb 6:27b, or even hears his voice, Ex 20:19; Dt 5:24–26; 18:16 must perish. For this reason Moses, 3:6, Elijah, 1 K 19:13, and even the seraphim, Is 6:2, cover their faces in his presence. Anyone who remains alive after seeing God is overwhelmed with astonishment and gratitude, Gn 32:31; Dt 5:24, and with awe, Jg 6:22–23; 13:22; Is 6:5. It is a favour God rarely concedes, 24:10–11; he grants it to Moses his 'friend', 33:11; Nb 12:7–8; Dt 34:10, and to Elijah, 1 K 19:11 seq., both of whom were to be witnesses of the New Testament theophany, the transfiguration of Christ, Mt 17:3 par. In the New Testament the 'glory' of God, *see* 24:16f and 33:18, is manifested in Jesus, Jn 1:14i; 11:40; *see* 2 Co 4:4, 6, who alone has gazed on the Father, Jn 1:18; 6:46; 1 Jn 4:12. No human being can look on God's face except in heaven, Mt 5:8; 1 Co 13:12; 1 Jn 3:2.

34 **a.** Ch. 34 contains the Yahwistic account of the Sinaitic covenant. On its aspect of 'renewal of the covenant', *see* 32:1a.

b. 'come up to me on the mountain' Gk; Hebr. omits.

c. Yahweh fulfils his promise, 33:19–23 and reveals his divine attributes, most particularly his faithful love.

d. The covenant consists of both promises and command and involves no antithesis between 'grace' and 'law'. vv. 14–26 are sometimes called the 'Ritual Decalogue' (though whether ten commandments are to be distinguished is disputed), or the Yahwistic Book of the Covenant. They lay down the necessary conditions of the covenant: prohibition of idolatry, observance of the Sabbath, as in the Decalogue of ch. 20. Besides these there are ritual ordinances: feasts, first-fruits, sacrifice.

cut down their sacred poles,[e] •for you will worship no other god, since Yahweh's 14
Dt 4:24f name is the Jealous One; he is a jealous God. •Make no pact with the inhabitants 15
of the country or, when they prostitute themselves[f] to their own gods and sacrifice
to them, they will invite you and you will partake of their sacrifice, •and then you 16
will choose wives for your sons from among their daughters, and their daughters,
prostituting themselves to their own gods, will induce your sons to prostitute
themselves to their gods.

20:4c 'You will not cast metal gods for yourself. 17

12:1a;23:14d 'You will observe the feast of Unleavened Bread. For seven days you will eat 18
unleavened bread, as I have commanded you, at the appointed time in the month
of Abib, for in the month of Abib you came out of Egypt.

13:11b 'All that first issues from the womb belongs to me:[g] every male, every first-born 19
of flock or herd. •But the first-born donkey you will redeem with an animal from 20
the flock; if you do not redeem it, you must break its neck. All the first-born of
your sons you will redeem, and no one will appear before me empty-handed.

20:8f 'For six days you will labour, but on the seventh day you will rest; you will stop 21
work even during ploughing and harvesting.

'You will observe the feast of Weeks, of the first-fruits of the wheat harvest, and 22
the feast of Ingathering at the close of the year.

'Three times a year all your menfolk will appear before Lord Yahweh, God of 23
Israel, •for I shall dispossess the nations before you and extend your frontiers, and 24
no one will set his heart on your territory when you go away to appear before
Yahweh your God three times a year.

12:15–20 'You will not offer the blood of my sacrificial victim with leavened bread, nor is 25
12:10 the victim offered at the feast of Passover to be left until the following day.

Dt 26:1a 'You will bring the best of the first-fruits of your soil to the house of Yahweh 26
your God.

23:19 'You will not boil a kid in its mother's milk.'

Yahweh then said to Moses, 'Put these words in writing, for they are the terms 27
34:10 of the covenant which I have made with you and with Israel.'

24:18g He stayed there with Yahweh for forty days and forty nights, eating and drinking 28
Mt 4:2
20:1a nothing, and on the tablets he[h] wrote the words of the covenant—the Ten Words.

↗2 Co 3:7–4:6 **Moses comes down from the mountain**[i]

↗Mt 17:2 When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the Testimony 29
in his hands, as he was coming down the mountain, Moses did not know that the
skin of his face was radiant because he had been talking to him. •And when Aaron 30
and all the Israelites saw Moses, the skin on his face was so radiant that they were
afraid to go near him. •But Moses called to them, and Aaron and all the leaders of 31
the community rejoined him, and Moses talked to them, •after which all the 32
Israelites came closer, and he passed on to them all the orders that Yahweh had
Jn 1:17 given to him on Mount Sinai. •Once Moses had finished speaking to them, he put 33
a veil over his face. •Whenever Moses went into Yahweh's presence to speak with 34
him, he took the veil off until he came out. And when he came out, he would tell
the Israelites what orders he had been given, •and the Israelites would see Moses' 35
face radiant.[j] Then Moses would put the veil back over his face until he went in to
speak to him next time.

25–31 ## VI: THE FURNISHING AND BUILDING OF THE SANCTUARY[a]

20:8f **The Sabbath rest**

Nb 15:32seq. 35 Moses assembled the whole community of Israelites and said, 'These are 1
the things Yahweh has ordered to be done: •Work must be done for six 2

days, but the seventh must be a holy day for you, a day of complete rest, in honour
3 of Yahweh. Anyone who does any work on that day will be put to death. •You will
not light a fire on the Sabbath day in any of your homes.'

The materials are collected 25:1-7

4 Moses spoke to the whole community of Israelites. 'This', he said, 'is what Yahweh
5 has ordered: •Set aside a contribution for Yahweh out of your possessions. Every-
one whose heart prompts him to do so should bring a contribution for Yahweh:
6 gold, silver and bronze; •materials dyed violet-purple, red-purple and crimson,
7 finely woven linen, goats' hair, •rams' skins dyed red, fine leather, acacia wood,
8 oil for the light, spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense;
9, 10 cornelian and other stones to be set in the *ephod* and breastplate. •And all
those of you who have the skill must come and make everything that Yahweh has
11 ordered: •the Dwelling, its tent and its covering, its clasps and its frames, its
12 crossbars, its pillars and its sockets; •the ark, its shafts and all its accessories, the
13 mercy-seat and the screening curtain; •the table, its shafts and all its accessories,
14 and the loaves of permanent offering; •the lamp-stand for the light, its accessories,
15 its lamps, and the oil for the light; •the altar of incense and its shafts, the anointing
oil, the fragrant incense, and the screen for the entrance, for the entrance of the
16 tent; •the altar of burnt offerings and its bronze grating, its shafts, and all its
17 accessories; the basin and its stand; •the curtaining for the court, its poles, its
18 sockets, and the screen for the entrance to the court; •the pegs for the Dwelling
19 and the pegs for the court, and their cords; •the liturgical vestments for service in
the sanctuary—the sacred vestments for Aaron the priest, and the vestments for
his sons, for their priestly functions.'
20, 21 The whole community of Israelites then withdrew from Moses' presence. •And
all those whose heart stirred them and all those whose spirit prompted them
brought a contribution for Yahweh, for the work on the Tent of Meeting, for its
22 general service and for the sacred vestments. •Men and women, they came, all
those whose heart prompted them, bringing brooches, rings, bracelets, necklaces,
23 golden objects of every kind—all those who had vowed gold to Yahweh, •while all
those who happened to own violet-purple, red-purple or crimson materials, finely
woven linen, goats' hair, rams' skins dyed red, or fine leather, brought that.
24 All those offering a contribution of silver or bronze brought their contribution for
Yahweh and all who happened to own acacia wood, suitable for any of the work to
25 be done, brought that. •All the skilled women set their hands to spinning, and
brought what they had spun: violet-purple, red-purple or crimson materials, and
26 fine linen, •while all those women whose heart stirred them by virtue of their skill,
27 spun goats' hair. •The leaders brought cornelians and other stones to be set in the
28 *ephod* and breastplate, •and the spices and oil for the light, for the anointing oil
29 and for the fragrant incense. •All those Israelites, men and women, whose heart
prompted them to contribute to the entire work that Yahweh had ordered through
Moses to be done, brought a contribution to Yahweh.

The craftsmen for the sanctuary 31:2-6

30 Moses then said to the Israelites, 'Look, Yahweh has singled out Bezalel son of
31 Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, •and has filled him with the spirit of God in

e. For the cultic stones, *see* 23:24k; The sacred pole, *asherah*, was the emblem of Asherah (Greek: Astarte) goddess of love and of fertility, and from her takes its name.

f. The worship of Yahweh is compared to lawful wedlock, the worship of false gods to prostitution; *see* Ezk 16 and 23; Ho 1–3; Rv 17.

g. Following Gk, we omit 'all your flocks', Hebr. 'every male' Gk; 'who is born male' Hebr.

h. Moses, *see* v. 27, or Yahweh, *see* v. 1; Dt 10:4. • 'the Ten Words' is probably a gloss.

i. vv. 29–35 are of uncertain origin. They record a tradition about the radiance of Moses' face, expressed by the verb *qaran* derived from *qeren*, 'horn', hence the literal translation of Vulg. 'his face was horned'. vv. 29–33 make use of this tradition to describe Moses on his descent from the mountain; vv. 34–35 link it to the Tent of Meeting, in the tradition of 33:7–11.

j. Hebr. reads 'the skin of Moses' face'; Gk omits.

35 a. This section, ch. 35–39, is an almost word for word repetition of ch. 25–31; there the orders were given, here they are carried out.

wisdom, knowledge and skill in every kind of craft: ·in designing and carrying out 32
work in gold and silver and bronze, ·in cutting stones to be set, in wood carving 33
and in executing every kind of work. ·And on him and on Oholiab son of Ahisa- 34
mach, of the tribe of Dan, he has bestowed the gift of teaching, ·and filled them 35
with the skill to carry out every kind of work, that of the engraver, that of the
embroiderer, that of the needleworker in violet-purple, red-purple and crimson
materials and fine linen, that of the weaver, and indeed that of every kind of
craftsman and designer.'

36 'Bezalel, Oholiab and all the men whom Yahweh has endowed with the skill 1
and knowledge to know how to carry out all the work to be done on the
sanctuary, will do exactly as Yahweh has ordered.'

A halt is called to the collection

Moses then summoned Bezalel, Oholiab and all the skilled men whose hearts 2
Yahweh had endowed with skill, all whose heart stirred them to come forward and
do the work. ·From Moses they received everything that the Israelites had brought 3
as contributions for carrying out the work of building the sanctuary, and, as they
went on bringing their offerings every morning, ·the skilled men who were doing 4
all the work for the sanctuary, all left their particular work ·and said to Moses, 5
'The people are bringing more than is needed for the work Yahweh has ordered to
be done.' ·Moses then gave the order and proclamation was made throughout the 6
camp, 'No one, whether man or woman, must do anything more towards contribu-
ting for the sanctuary.' So the people were prevented from bringing any more, ·for 7
the material to hand was enough, and more than enough, to complete all the work.

26:1–11,14 **The Dwelling** [a]

All the most skilled of the men doing the work made the Dwelling. Moses [b] made it 8
with ten sheets of finely woven linen, dyed violet-purple, red-purple and crimson
and embroidered with great winged creatures. ·The length of a single sheet was 9
twenty-eight cubits, its width four cubits, all the sheets being of the same size. ·He 10
joined five of the sheets to one another, and the other five sheets to one another.
He made violet loops along the edge of the first sheet, at the end of the set, and 11
did the same along the edge of the last sheet in the other set. ·He made fifty loops 12
on the first sheet and fifty loops along the outer edge of the sheet of the second set,
the loops corresponding to one another. ·He made fifty gold clasps and joined the 13
sheets together with the clasps. In this way the Dwelling was a unified whole.

Next he made sheets of goats' hair for the tent over the Dwelling; he made 14
eleven of these. ·The length of a single sheet was thirty cubits and its width four 15
cubits; the eleven sheets were all of the same size. ·He joined five sheets together 16
into one set and six sheets into another. ·He made fifty loops along the edge of the 17
last sheet of the first set, and fifty loops along the edge of the sheet of the second
set. ·He made fifty bronze clasps, to draw the tent together and make it a unified 18
whole. ·And for the tent he made a cover of rams' skins dyed red, and a cover of 19
fine leather over that.

26:15–29 **The framework**

For the Dwelling he made vertical frames of acacia wood. ·Each frame was ten 20, 21
cubits long and one and a half cubits wide. ·Each frame had twin tenons; this was 22
how he made all the frames for the Dwelling. ·He made frames for the Dwelling: 23
twenty frames for the south side, to the south, ·and made forty silver sockets under 24
the twenty frames, two sockets under one frame for its two tenons, two sockets
under the next frame for its two tenons; ·and for the other side of the Dwelling, the 25
north side, twenty frames ·and forty silver sockets, two sockets under one frame, 26
two sockets under the next frame. ·For the back of the Dwelling, on the west, he 27
made six frames. ·He also made two frames for the corners at the back of the 28
Dwelling; ·these were coupled together at the bottom, staying so up to the top, to 29

the level of the first ring; this he did with the two frames forming the two corners.
30 Thus there were eight frames with their sixteen silver sockets; two sockets under
31 each frame. ·He made crossbars of acacia wood: five for the frames of the first side
32 of the Dwelling, ·five crossbars for the frames of the other side of the Dwelling and
five crossbars for the frames which formed the back of the Dwelling, to the west.
33 He made the middle bar, to join the frames from one end to the other, halfway
34 up. ·He overlaid the frames with gold, made gold rings for them, through which to
place the crossbars, and overlaid the crossbars with gold.

The curtain 26:31–32,36–37

35 He made a curtain of finely woven linen, dyed violet-purple, red-purple and
36 crimson and embroidered with great winged creatures, ·and for it he made four
poles of acacia wood, overlaying them with gold, with golden hooks for them, for
37 which he cast four sockets of silver. ·For the entrance to the tent he made a screen
38 of finely woven linen embroidered with violet-purple, red-purple and crimson, ·as
also the five columns for it and their hooks; he overlaid their capitals and rods with
gold, but their five sockets were of bronze.

The ark 25:10–20

1 **37** Bezalel made the ark of acacia wood, two and a half cubits long, one and a
2 half cubits wide and one and a half cubits high. ·He overlaid it, inside and
3 out, with pure gold, and made a gold moulding all round it. ·He cast four gold rings
for it at its four supports: two rings on one side and two rings on the other.
4, 5 He also made shafts of acacia wood and overlaid them with gold, ·and passed the
6 shafts through the rings on the sides of the ark, by which to carry it. ·He also made
a mercy-seat of pure gold, two and a half cubits long and one and a half cubits
7 wide, ·and modelled two great winged creatures of beaten gold, putting them at
8 the two ends of the mercy-seat, ·one winged creature at one end and the other
winged creature at the other end, making the winged creatures of a piece with the
9 mercy-seat at either end. ·The winged creatures had their wings spread upwards,
protecting the ark with their wings and facing each other, their faces being towards
the mercy-seat.

The table for the loaves of permanent offering 25:23–29

10 He made the table of acacia wood, two cubits long, one cubit wide and one and a
11, 12 half cubits high, ·and made a gold moulding all round it. ·He fitted it with struts a
13 hand's breadth wide and made a gold moulding round the struts. ·He cast four gold
14 rings for it and fixed the rings at the four corners where the four legs were. ·The
15 rings lay close to the struts to hold the shafts for carrying the table. ·He made the
shafts of acacia wood and overlaid them with gold; these were for carrying
16 the table. ·He made the accessories which were to go on the table: its dishes, cups,
jars and libation bowls, of pure gold.

The lamp-stand 25:31–40

17 He also made the lamp-stand of pure gold, making the lamp-stand, base and stem,
18 of beaten gold, its cups, calyxes and bud being of a piece with it. ·Six branches
sprang from its sides: three of the lamp-stand's branches from one side, three of
19 the lamp-stand's branches from the other. ·The first branch carried three cups
shaped like almond blossoms, each with its calyx and bud; the second branch, too,
carried three cups shaped like almond blossoms, each with its calyx and bud, and
20 similarly all six branches springing from the lamp-stand. ·The lamp-stand itself

36 **a.** In 36:8[b]–39:43 the Gk, which translates a text somewhat different from ours, also arranges it differently: 36:8; 39:1–3; 36:8–9, 35–38; 38:9–20, 21–23; 37:1–23; 36:34, 36, 38; 38:20; 38:1–7; 37:5; 38:8 and 40:30–32; 38:24–31; 39:32; 39:1; 39:33–43 (with internal inversions); 40:1–38. *Information about ancient weights and measures will be found in the Tables of measures and money.*

b. The singular here replaces the plural: the author has reproduced the orders given to Moses himself, with the necessary grammatical changes.

carried four cups shaped like almond blossoms, each with its calyx and bud: •one 21
calyx under the first two branches springing from the lamp-stand, one calyx under
the next pair of branches and one calyx under the last pair of branches—thus for all
six branches springing from the lamp-stand. •The calyxes and the branches were of 22
a piece with the lamp-stand, and the whole was made from a single piece of pure
gold, beaten out. •He also made its seven lamps, its snuffers and trays of pure gold. 23
He made the lamp-stand and all its accessories from a talent of pure gold. 24

30:1–5 **The altar of incense. The anointing oil and incense**

He made the altar of incense of acacia wood, one cubit long, and one cubit wide— 25
it was square—and two cubits high, its horns were of a piece with it. •He overlaid 26
its top, its sides all round and its horns with pure gold and made a moulding to go
all round. •He made two gold rings for it below the moulding on its two opposite 27
sides, to take the shafts used for carrying it. •He made the shafts of acacia wood 28
30:22–25,34–35 and overlaid them with gold. •He also made the holy anointing oil and the fragrant 29
incense, blending it as a perfumer would.

27:1–8 **The altar of burnt offerings**

38 He made the altar of burnt offerings of acacia wood, five cubits long and 1
five cubits wide; it was square and three cubits high. •At its four corners he 2
made horns, the horns being of a piece with it, and overlaid it with bronze. •He 3
made all the altar accessories: the ash pans, shovels, sprinkling basins, hooks and
fire pans; he made all the altar accessories of bronze. •He also made a grating for 4
the altar of bronze network, below its ledge, underneath, coming halfway up. •He 5
cast four rings for the four corners of the bronze grating to take the shafts. •He 6
made the shafts of acacia wood and overlaid them with bronze. •He passed the 7
shafts through the rings on the sides of the altar for carrying it. He made the altar
hollow, out of boards.

30:18 **The bronze basin**

He made the bronze basin and its bronze stand from the mirrors of the women who 8
1 S 2:22g served at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. [a]

27:9–19 **The court**

He made the court. On the south side, on the south, the curtaining of the court was 9
of finely woven linen a hundred cubits long. •Its twenty poles and their sockets 10
being of bronze, and their hooks and rods of silver; •and on the north side, a 11
hundred cubits of curtaining, its twenty poles and their twenty sockets
being of bronze, and their hooks and rods of silver. •On the west side there were 12
fifty cubits of curtaining, with its ten poles and their ten sockets, the poles'
hooks and rods being of silver; •and on the east side on the east, there were 13
fifty cubits. •On the one side there were fifteen cubits of curtaining, with its 14
three poles and their three sockets, •and on the other side—either side of the 15
gateway to the court—there were fifteen cubits of curtaining with its three poles
and their three sockets. •All the curtaining round the court was of finely woven 16
linen, •the sockets for the poles were of bronze, the poles' hooks and rods of silver, 17
their capitals were overlaid with silver and all the poles of the court had silver rods.
•The screen for the gateway to the court was of finely woven linen embroidered 18
with violet-purple, red-purple and crimson, twenty cubits long and five cubits high
(all the way along) like the curtaining of the court, •its four poles and their four 19
sockets being of bronze, their hooks of silver, their capitals overlaid with silver,
and their rods of silver. •All the pegs round the Dwelling and the court were of 20
bronze.

The amount of metal used [b]

These are the accounts for the Dwelling—the Dwelling of the Testimony—drawn 21

up by order of Moses, the work of Levites, produced by Ithamar son of Aaron, the priest.

22 Bezalel son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, made everything that 35:30–35
23 Yahweh ordered Moses to make, ·his assistant being Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan, an engraver, embroiderer and needleworker in violet-purple, red-purple and crimson materials and fine linen.

24 The amount of gold used for the work, for the entire work for the sanctuary (the gold consecrated for the purpose) was twenty-nine talents and seven hundred and
25 thirty shekels, reckoned by the sanctuary shekel. ·The silver from the census of the Nb 1
community was one hundred talents and one thousand seven hundred and
26 seventy-five shekels, reckoned by the sanctuary shekel, ·one *beqa* per head, half a shekel reckoned by the sanctuary shekel, for everyone of twenty years and over Nb 1:45–46
included in the census, for six hundred and three thousand five hundred and fifty
27 persons. ·A hundred talents of silver were used for casting the sockets for the sanctuary and the sockets for the curtain: a hundred sockets from a hundred
28 talents, one talent per socket. ·From the one thousand seven hundred and seventy-five shekels he made the hooks for the poles, overlaid their capitals and
29 made the rods for them. ·The bronze consecrated for the purpose amounted to
30 seventy talents and two thousand four hundred shekels, ·and from it he made the sockets for the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, the bronze altar, its bronze grating
31 and all the altar accessories, ·the sockets all round the court, the sockets for the gateway to the court, all the pegs for the Dwelling and all the pegs round the court.

The vestments of the high priest

1 **39** From the violet-purple, red-purple and crimson materials, they made the liturgical vestments for service in the sanctuary. They made the sacred vestments for Aaron, as Yahweh had ordered Moses.

The *ephod* 28:6–8

2 They made [a] the *ephod* of gold, of violet-purple, red-purple and crimson materials
3 and finely woven linen. ·They beat gold into thin plates and cut these into threads to work into the violet-purple, red-purple and crimson materials and the fine linen
4 by needlework. ·For the *ephod* they made shoulder-straps which were joined to it
5 at its two edges. ·The waistband on the *ephod* to hold it in position, was of a piece with it and of the same workmanship: of gold, violet-purple, red-purple and finely
6 woven linen, as Yahweh had ordered Moses. ·They worked the cornelians, mounted in gold setting, and engraved, like an engraved seal, with the names of 28:9–12
7 the sons of Israel, ·and put the stones on the shoulder-straps of the *ephod*, to commemorate the sons of Israel, as Yahweh had ordered Moses.

The breastplate of judgement 28:15–30

8 They made the breastplate of the same embroidered work as the *ephod*: of gold,
9 violet-purple, red-purple and crimson materials and finely woven linen. ·It was
10 square and doubled over, a span in length and a span in width. ·In it they set four
11 rows of stones: a sard, a topaz and an emerald, for the first row; ·for the second
12 row, a garnet, a sapphire and a diamond; ·for the third row, a hyacinth, a ruby and
13 an amethyst; ·and for the fourth row, a beryl, a cornelian and a jasper: mounted in
14 gold settings, ·the stones corresponding to the names of the sons of Israel, twelve like their names, engraved like seals, each with the name of one of the twelve
15, 16 tribes. ·For the breastplate they made chains of pure gold twisted like cords, and

38 **a.** The mirrors of antiquity were of polished bronze. What part these women played is not known. It may perhaps be a purified echo of 2 K 23:7. The v. served as a gloss on 1 S 2:22.
b. This passage is an editorial addition and assumes that the institution of the Levites, Nb 3, and the national census, Nb 1, have already taken place.

39 **a.** Here and in vv. 3, 7, 8 and 22, some of the verbs appearing in the singular in Hebr., have been changed to plural with Sam. and Syr.

they made two gold rosettes and two gold rings, putting the two rings on the two outside edges of the breastplate ·and fastening the two gold cords to the two rings 17
on the outside edges of the breastplate. ·The other two ends of the cords they 18
fastened to the two rosettes, putting these on the shoulder-straps of the *ephod*, on the front. ·They also made two gold rings and put them on the two outside edges of 19
the breastplate, on the inner side, against the *ephod*; ·and they made two more 20
gold rings and put them low down on the front of the two shoulder-straps of the *ephod*, close to the join, above the waistband of the *ephod*. ·They secured the 21
pectoral by a violet-purple cord passed through its rings and those of the *ephod*, so that the pectoral would sit above the waistband and not come apart from the *ephod*, as Yahweh had ordered Moses.

28:31–35 **The robe**

They made the robe of the *ephod* woven entirely of violet-purple. ·The opening 22, 23
in the centre of the robe was like the neck of a coat of mail; round the opening was a border, so that it would not get torn. ·On the lower hem of the robe, they made 24
pomegranates of violet-purple, red-purple and crimson and finely woven linen,[b] and made bells of pure gold, putting the bells between the pomegranates[c] all 25
round the lower hem of the robe: ·alternately, a bell and then a pomegranate, all 26
round the lower hem of the robe of office, as Yahweh had ordered Moses.

28:39–42 **The vestments of the priests**

They made the tunics of finely woven linen for Aaron and his sons, ·the turban of 27, 28
fine linen, the head-dresses of fine linen, the breeches of finely woven linen, ·the 29
waistbands of finely woven linen embroidered with violet-purple, red-purple and crimson, as Yahweh had ordered Moses.

28:36–37 They also made the flower—the symbol of holy consecration—of pure gold and 30
on it, like an engraved seal, they engraved, 'Consecrated to Yahweh'. ·They put it 31
on a violet-purple cord, to fasten it high up on the turban, as Yahweh had ordered Moses.

So all the work for the Dwelling, for the Tent of Meeting, was completed. They 32
had done everything exactly as Yahweh had ordered Moses.

The finished work presented to Moses

They then brought Moses the Dwelling, the Tent and all its accessories: its clasps, 33
frames, crossbars, poles and sockets; ·the cover of rams' skins dyed red, the cover 34
of fine leather and the screening curtain; ·the ark of the Testimony and its shafts, 35
and the mercy-seat; ·the table, all its accessories and the loaves of permanent 36
offering; ·the lamp-stand of pure gold, its lamps—the array of lamps—and all its 37
accessories, and the oil for the light; ·the golden altar, the anointing oil, the 38
fragrant incense and the screen for the entrance to the tent; ·the bronze altar and 39
its bronze grating, its shafts and all its accessories; the basin and its stand; ·the 40
curtaining for the court, its poles, its sockets, and the screen for the gateway to the court, its cords, its pegs and all the accessories for the service of the Dwelling, for the Tent of Meeting; ·the liturgical vestments for officiating in the sanctuary—the 41
sacred vestments for Aaron the priest, and the vestments for his sons—for the priestly functions. ·The Israelites had done all the work exactly as Yahweh had 42
ordered Moses.

Moses inspected all the work: they had indeed done it as Yahweh had ordered; 43
and Moses blessed them.

The sanctuary erected and consecrated

40 Yahweh then spoke to Moses and said, ·'On the first day of the first month, 1, 2
you will erect the Dwelling, the Tent of Meeting, ·and place the ark of the 3
Testimony in it and screen the ark with the curtain. ·You will then bring in the 4
table and arrange what has to be arranged on it. You will then bring in the lamp-

5 stand and set up its lamps. ·You will place the golden altar of incense in front of the
ark of the Testimony, and place the screen at the entrance to the Dwelling.
6 You will place the altar of burnt offerings in front of the entrance to the Dwelling,
7 the Tent of Meeting, ·and you will place the basin between the Tent of Meeting
8 and the altar, and fill it with water. ·You will then set up the surrounding court and
9 hang the screen at the gateway of the court. ·Then, taking the anointing oil, you Lv 8:10
will anoint the Dwelling and everything inside, consecrating it and all its accessor-
10 ies; it will then be holy. ·You will then anoint the altar of burnt offerings and all its
accessories, consecrating the altar; the altar will then be especially holy.
11, 12 You will then anoint the basin and its stand, and consecrate it. ·You will then
bring Aaron and his sons to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, bathe them 29:4–8
13 thoroughly ·and then dress Aaron in the sacred vestments, and anoint and conse-
14 crate him, to serve me in the priesthood. ·You will then bring his sons, dress them
15 in tunics ·and anoint them as you anointed their father, to serve me in the
priesthood. Their anointing will confer an everlasting priesthood on them for all
their generations to come.'

The divine commands are carried out

16, 17 Moses did this; he did exactly as Yahweh had ordered him. ·On the first day of the
18 first month in the second year the Dwelling was erected. ·Moses erected the
Dwelling. He fixed its sockets, set up its frames, put its crossbars in position and
19 set up its poles. ·He spread the tent over the Dwelling and the covering for the
20 tent over that, as Yahweh had ordered Moses. ·He took the Testimony and put it
in the ark, positioned the shafts on the ark and put the mercy-seat on top of the
21 ark. ·He brought the ark into the Dwelling and put the screening curtain in place,
22 screening the ark of the Testimony, as Yahweh had ordered Moses. ·He put the
table inside the Tent of Meeting, against the side of the Dwelling, on the north,
23 outside the curtain, ·and on it arranged the loaves before Yahweh, as Yahweh had
24 ordered Moses. ·He put the lamp-stand inside the Tent of Meeting, opposite the
25 table, on the south side of the Dwelling, ·and set up the lamps before Yahweh, as
26 Yahweh had ordered Moses. ·He put the golden altar inside the Tent of Meeting,
27 in front of the curtain, ·and on it burnt fragrant incense, as Yahweh had ordered
28, 29 Moses. ·He then put the screen at the entrance to the Dwelling. ·He put the altar
of burnt offerings at the entrance to the Dwelling, to the Tent of Meeting, and on
it offered the burnt offering and cereal offering, as Yahweh had ordered Moses.
30 He put the basin between the Tent of Meeting and the altar and put water in it for
31 the ablutions, ·where Moses, Aaron and his sons washed their hands and feet;
32 whenever they entered the Tent of Meeting or approached the altar they washed,
33 as Yahweh had ordered Moses. ·He then set up the court round the Dwelling and
the altar and set up the screen at the gateway to the court. Thus Moses completed
the work.

Yahweh takes possession of the sanctuary

34 The cloud then covered the Tent of Meeting and the glory of Yahweh filled the
35 Dwelling. ·Moses could not enter the Tent of Meeting, since the cloud stayed over 25:8d
it and the glory of Yahweh filled the Dwelling. 1 K 8:10–11
Ezk 43:1–5
24:16f
↗Rv 15:8

The cloud guides the Israelites

‖Nb 9:15–23
36 At every stage of their journey, whenever the cloud rose from the Dwelling, the 13:21+, 22h
37 Israelites would resume their march. ·If the cloud did not rise, they would not Ps 78:14; 105:39
38 resume their march until the day it did rise. ·For Yahweh's cloud stayed over the
Dwelling during the daytime and there was fire inside the cloud at night, for the
whole House of Israel to see, at every stage of their journey.

b. 'finely woven linen' Sam.; 'woven' Hebr.

c. Hebr. repeats 'between the pomegranates'.

LEVITICUS

I: THE RITUAL OF SACRIFICE[a]

The burnt offering[b]

Ex 25:22 1 Yahweh summoned Moses and, speaking to him from the Tent of Meeting, 1
said, •'Speak to the Israelites; say to them, "When any of you brings an offering 2
to Yahweh, he can offer an animal either from the herd or from the flock.

22:18–20 Ex 12:5 "If his offering is to be a burnt offering from the herd, he must offer an 3
unblemished male; he will offer it at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting, to make
it acceptable to Yahweh. •He must lay his hand on the victim's head, and it will be 4
accepted as effectual for his expiation.[c] •He will then slaughter[d] the bull before 5
19:26 Ac 15:20 Yahweh, and the priests descended from Aaron will offer the blood.[e] They will
pour it all around the altar which stands at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting.
He will then skin the victim and quarter it. •The priests descended from Aaron[f] 6, 7
will put a fire on the altar and arrange wood on the fire. •The priests descended 8
from Aaron will then arrange the quarters, the head and the fat on the wood on the
fire on the altar. •He will wash the entrails and shins in water, and the priest will 9
Ex 29:18d burn it all on the altar as a burnt offering, food burnt[g] as a smell pleasing to
Yahweh.

"If his offering is to be of an animal from the flock, of a lamb or a goat to be 10
offered as a burnt offering, he must offer an unblemished male. •He will slaughter 11
it on the north side of the altar, before Yahweh, and the priests descended from
Aaron will pour the blood all around the altar. •He will then quarter it, and the 12
priest will arrange the quarters, the head and the fat on the wood on the fire on the
altar. •He will wash the entrails and shins in water, and the priest will burn it all on 13
Ex 29:18d the altar as a burnt offering, food burnt as a smell pleasing to Yahweh.

Gn 15:10 "If his offering to Yahweh is to be a burnt offering of a bird, he must offer a 14
turtledove or a young pigeon. •The priest will offer it at the altar and wring off its 15
head, which he will burn on the altar; its blood must then be squeezed out on the
side of the altar. •He will then remove the crop and the feathers and throw them on 16
4:12 1 K 13:5 the eastern side of the altar, where the fatty ashes are put. •He will then split it in 17
half with a wing on each side, but without separating the two parts. The priest will
then burn it on the altar, on the wood which is on the fire, as a burnt offering, food
burnt as a smell pleasing to Yahweh." '

The cereal offering[a]

6:7–11; 7:9–10 Nb 15:1–16 2 ' "If anyone offers Yahweh a cereal offering, his offering must consist of 1
wheaten flour on which he must pour wine and put incense. •He will bring it to 2
the priests descended from Aaron; he will take a handful of the wheaten flour,
some of the oil and all the incense, and this the priest will burn on the altar as a
memorial, as food burnt as a smell pleasing to Yahweh. •The remainder of the 3
cereal offering will revert to Aaron and his sons, an especially holy[b] portion of the
food burnt for Yahweh.

"When you offer a cereal offering of dough baked in the oven, the wheaten flour 4

must be prepared either in the form of unleavened cakes mixed with oil, or in the form of unleavened wafers spread with oil.

5 "If your offering is a cereal offering cooked on the griddle, the wheaten flour
6 mixed with oil must contain no leaven. ·You will break it in pieces and pour oil over it. It is a cereal offering.

7 "If your offering is a cereal offering cooked in the pan, the wheaten flour must be prepared with oil.

8 "You will bring Yahweh the cereal offering thus prepared and present it to the
9 priest; he will take it to the altar. ·And from the cereal offering the priest will take the memorial and burn it on the altar, food burnt as a smell pleasing to Yahweh.
10 The remainder of the cereal offering will revert to Aaron and his descendants: it is especially holy since it is taken from the food burnt for Yahweh.

11 "None of the cereal offerings which you offer to Yahweh must be prepared with leaven, [e] for you must never include leaven or honey in food burnt for Yahweh. 6:9
12 You may offer them to Yahweh as an offering of first-fruits, but they will not make
13 a pleasing smell if they are burnt on the altar. ·You will put salt in every cereal Nb 18:19 Mk 9:49 offering that you offer, and you will not fail to put the salt of the covenant of your God [d] on your cereal offering; to every offering you will add an offering of salt to
14 your God. ·If you offer Yahweh a cereal offering of first-fruits, [e] you will offer it in Dt 26:1a
15 the form of roasted ears of wheat or of bread made from ground wheat. ·You will
16 add oil to it and put incense on it; it is a cereal offering; ·and from it the priest will burn the memorial with some bread and oil (and all the incense) as food burnt for Yahweh." '

1 **a.** The entire sacrificial ritual, Lv 1–7, is attached to the period in the desert and placed under the authority of Moses. In fact, however, apart from ancient regulations, it contains a number of later dispositions and attained its definitive form only after the return from the Exile. In its present form, Lv 1–7 represents the sacrificial code of the Second Temple. Very little is known about the sacrificial ritual of the Israelites during the nomadic period, the ancient texts giving information only about the Passover sacrifice, *see* Ex 12:1a, 23j, 39*l*.

b. Sacrifices in which the victim was entirely consumed. By laying his hands on the victim's head, v. 4, the offerer solemnly attested that the victim, then to be presented by the priest, was indeed his own sacrifice. The Pentateuchal narratives and ritual texts alike attribute this type of sacrifice to the period in the desert, Ex 18:12; Nb 7:12, and even to the Patriarchs, Gn 8:20; 22:9–10. In point of fact, the earliest historical evidence for these procedures dates from the time of the Judges, *see* Jg 6:26; 11:31; 13:15–20. This form of sacrifice seems to have been influenced by the ritual of the Canaanites (*see* 1 K 18, where the burnt offering made by the prophets of Baal is similar to that made by Elijah) and not to be earlier than the settlement of the tribes. In Lv 1, an expiatory value is attached to the burnt offering; in ancient times, it was more properly a thanksgiving sacrifice, *see* 1 S 6:14; 10:8; 2 S 6:17, or a sacrifice to obtain a favour from Yahweh, 1 S 7:9; 13:9; 1 K 3:4.

c. Expiation was the sacrifice by means of which someone who had offended Yahweh by breaking the covenant might be restored to favour. The animal offered in sacrifice (*kipper*) was regarded as a ransom (*kopher*), *see* Ex 30:12. In expiatory sacrifices, rituals with the blood played an essential part, 17:11, *see* 4:1a, 12c. Known to the Assyro-Babylonians and Canaanites, expiation was written into the very basis of the Israelite Law. In the NT, it appears no longer as a payment or substitution, but as the giving of God's life to give life to all people, Rm 3: 25–26.

d. Ezk 44:11 entrusts the slaughtering to the Levites. The priest's role began when the victim's blood came into contact with the altar. This was a general law in any kind of sacrifice: only the priest approached the altar, *see* Nb 18:7.

e. The blood was regarded as the seat of the life-principle, Gn 9:4; *see* Dt 12:16, 23; Ps 30:9; hence its expiatory value, *see* Lv 17:11, and its pre-eminent part in sacrificial and covenantal ritual, Ex 24:8. This was a feature peculiar to Israelite, as opposed to Canaanite, religion. According to ancient custom, therefore, the slaughter of any animal became a cultic act which had to be done on an altar, 1 S 14:32–35, and, according to Lv 17:3 seq., in the sanctuary, *see* Lv 17:4b.

f. Following the versions and *see* v. 8; 'The sons of Aaron the priest' Hebr.

g. Here the word is applied to burnt offerings, but it is also used for any portion burnt for Yahweh, whatever the nature of the sacrifice. The offering was not regarded as material food offered to God and shared with him, *see* Dt 18:1b, but was assimilated to the smoke of the burnt offering or of incense, ascending as 'a pleasing smell', *see* Ex 29:18d.

2 **a.** The cereal offering, with the first-fruits here assimilated to it, vv. 14–15, was an offering of agricultural produce, hence originating as the rite of a settled population, probably going back to the early days of the settlement of Canaan. The incense offering accompanying it and attested among neighbouring peoples, notably in Egypt, may have had a more ancient origin. The cereal offering is assimilated to a burnt offering by the burning of a handful of flour sprinkled with oil, as a 'smell pleasing' to Yahweh, *see* 1:9g; Ex 29:18. This kind of sacrifice was commonly offered to complement an animal sacrifice and was then accompanied by a libation of wine, *see* 23:13; Ex 29:40; Nb 15:3, 7.

b. A distinction was drawn between holy and especially holy offerings; the latter sanctified everything they touched, Ex 29:37.

c. The addition of leaven changed the natural character of the gift offered to God and to a certain degree profaned it. The prohibition may perhaps also be a reaction against Canaanite religious practices, *see* Am 4:5.

d. Salt was believed to have a purifying effect, 2 K 2:20; Ezk 16:4; *see* Mt 5:13. Among the Assyrians it was used in worship and among nomads at friendly or covenantal meals, hence the expression 'covenant of salt', Nb 18:19, to express the stability of the covenant between God and his people.

e. Under 'cereal offerings', vv. 12–16 classify the ancient practice of offering the first-fruits, *see* Dt 26:1a.

7:11–15;19:5–8; 22:21–25 1 Co 10:16

The communion sacrifice [a]

3 ' "If his sacrifice is a communion sacrifice, and if he offers an animal from the herd, be it male or female, whatever he offers before Yahweh must be unblemished. 1
·He will lay his hand on the victim's head and slaughter it at the entrance to 2
9:18–21 the Tent of Meeting. The priests descended from Aaron will then pour the blood all around the altar. ·He will offer part of the communion sacrifice as food burnt 3
for Yahweh: the fat covering the entrails, all the fat on the entrails, ·both kidneys, 4
the fat on them and on the loins, the mass of fat which he will remove from the liver and kidneys. ·The priests descended from Aaron will then burn this on the altar, in 5
addition to the burnt offering, on the wood of the fire, food burnt as a smell pleasing to Yahweh.

"If it is an animal from the flock which he offers as a communion sacrifice to 6
Yahweh, be the animal that he offers male or female, it must be unblemished.

"If he offers a sheep, he will offer it before Yahweh, ·he will lay his hand on the 7, 8
victim's head and slaughter it in front of the Tent of Meeting; the priests descended from Aaron will then pour its blood all around the altar. ·Of the communion 9
sacrifice he will offer the following as food burnt for Yahweh: the fat, all the tail taken off near the base of the spine, the fat covering the entrails, all the fat on the entrails, ·both kidneys, the fat on them and on the loins, the mass of fat which he 10
will remove from the liver and kidneys. ·The priest will then burn this on the altar 11
as food, [b] as food burnt for Yahweh.

"If his offering is a goat, he will offer it before Yahweh, ·he will lay his hand on 12, 13
the victim's head and slaughter it in front of the Tent of Meeting, and the descendants of Aaron will then pour its blood all around the altar. ·This is what he will 14
then offer of it as food burnt for Yahweh: the fat covering the entrails, all the fat on the entrails, ·both kidneys, the fat on them and on the loins, the mass of fat which 15
he will remove from the liver and kidneys. ·The priest will then burn these pieces 16
on the altar as food burnt as a smell pleasing to Yahweh.

"All the fat belongs to Yahweh. ·This is a perpetual law for all your descendants, 17
wherever you may live: that you will not eat either fat or blood." '

6:17–23

The sacrifice for sin: [a]

a: of the high priest

4 Yahweh spoke to Moses and said: 1
'Speak to the Israelites and say: 2

"If anyone sins inadvertently against any of Yahweh's commandments and does
Ex 30:22d anything prohibited by them, ·if the one who sins is the anointed priest, thus 3
making the people guilty, [b] then for the sin which he has committed he must offer Yahweh a young bull, an unblemished animal from the herd, as a sacrifice for sin.
He will bring the bull before Yahweh at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting, will 4
lay his hand on its head and slaughter it before Yahweh. ·The anointed priest 5
will then take some of the bull's blood and carry it into the Tent of Meeting.
He will then dip his finger in the blood and sprinkle it seven times in front of the 6
Ex 26:33e sanctuary curtain, before Yahweh. ·The priest will then put some of the blood on 7
Ex 27:2b; 30:1–10,1a the horns of the altar of incense smoking before Yahweh in the Tent of Meeting, and will pour all the rest of the bull's blood at the foot of the altar of burnt offerings at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting.

"Of the bull offered as a sacrifice for sin, he will set aside all the fat: the fat 8
covering the entrails, all the fat on the entrails, ·both kidneys, the fat on them and 9
on the loins, the mass of fat which he will remove from the liver and kidneys—
exactly as was done with the portion set aside in the communion sacrifice—and 10
the priest will burn these pieces on the altar of burnt offerings.

"The bull's skin and all its meat, its head, its shins, its entrails and its offal, ·the 11, 12
Heb 13:11 whole bull he will then have carried out of the camp to a clean place, the place

where the fatty ashes are thrown, and will burn it on a wood fire; it must be burnt where the ashes are thrown. [c]

b: of the community of Israel

13 "If the whole community of Israel has sinned inadvertently and, without being aware of it has incurred guilt by doing something forbidden by Yahweh's com-
14 mandments, •once the sin of which it is guilty has been discovered, the community must offer a young bull, an unblemished animal from the herd, as a sacrifice for
15 sin, and bring it in front of the Tent of Meeting. •The elders of the community will then lay their hands on the bull's head before Yahweh, and the bull will be slaughtered before Yahweh. [d]

16 "The anointed priest will then take some of the bull's blood into the Tent of
17 Meeting. •He will then dip his finger in the blood and sprinkle it seven times in
18 front of the curtain, before Yahweh. •He will then put some of the blood on the horns of the altar standing before Yahweh inside the Tent of Meeting, and then pour all the rest of the blood at the foot of the altar of burnt offerings at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting.

19, 20 "He will then set aside all the fat from the animal and burn it on the altar. •He will then deal with the bull as he did with the bull in the sacrifice for sin. It will be dealt with in the same way; and once the priest has performed the rite of expiation for the people, they will be forgiven.

21 "He will then have the bull carried out of the camp and will burn it as he burned the first one. This is the sacrifice for the sin of the community.

c: of a leader of the community

22 "When a leader has sinned and inadvertently incurred guilt by doing something
23 forbidden by the commandments of Yahweh his God •(or if the sin which he has committed is drawn to his attention), he must bring a he-goat as his offering, an
24 unblemished male. •He will then lay his hand on the goat's head and slaughter it on the spot where the burnt offerings are slaughtered before Yahweh. This is a 1:11
25 sacrifice for sin; •the priest will take some of the victim's blood on his finger and put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offerings. [e] He will then pour the rest of its
26 blood at the foot of the altar of burnt offerings •and burn all the fat on the altar, as with the fat in the communion sacrifice. This is how the priest must perform the rite of expiation for him to free him from his sin, and he will be forgiven.

3 **a.** The sacrifice known as the 'communion sacrifice', in which the victim was shared between God and the offerer, is attested in Canaan, but the Israelite sacrifice differed from it by the antique ritual of the blood, *see* 1:5e. It was a sacred banquet: the most vital parts of the victim were offered to God; a choice portion fell to the priests, *see* 7:28 seq., and the rest was eaten by the faithful. In early times, this type of sacrifice was the most common and formed the central rite at festivals, being the most perfect way of expressing the communal life, covenantal bond and fellowship existing between the worshipper and his God.

b. The word 'food' here and in v. 16 has been replaced in the Gk by 'pleasing smell', *see* 1:9g, the better to safeguard God's entirely spiritual nature, *see* Dt 14; Ps 50:13.

4 **a.** The greater part of the sacrificial ritual is devoted to sacrifices of expiation. Two types are distinguished: sacrifice for sin and sacrifice of reparation, but it is difficult to tell in what the difference consists. The sacrifice for sin seems to have had a wider scope than the sacrifice of reparation which applies principally to misdeeds defrauding God or his priests or one's fellow. In fact, the two sacrifices are envisaged here for very similar situations, ch. 5, and confusion is compounded when specific laws, 14:10–32; Nb 6:9–12; 15:22–31, are adduced in comparison.

b. The high priest was God's representative before the nation, and he was also the representative of the nation before God; hence any fault of his involved the whole nation in guilt.

c. Since the sacrifice was offered to restore the covenant, the person or persons on whose behalf it was offered (here the high priest, at v. 21 the whole community) could not participate in eating the victim since he was not at peace with God. What therefore was not offered on the altar was burnt in its entirety outside the sanctuary. The mention of 'the camp' is a retrojection into the desert of this post-Exilic ritual.

d. The same rite is used for the high priest because he is the representative of the community.

e. Neither ruler nor commoner has the sacred quality of the high priest and of the community, Ezk 44:3; 45:7–12, and the blood of their representative victim is not allowed inside the holy Tent.

d: of a private individual

"If one of the country people sins inadvertently and incurs guilt by doing something 27
forbidden by Yahweh's commandments ·(or if the sin which he has committed is 28
drawn to his attention), he must bring a she-goat as his offering for the sin which he
has committed, an unblemished female. ·He will then lay his hand on the victim's 29
head and slaughter it on the spot where the burnt offerings are slaughtered. ·The 30
priest will take some of its blood on his finger and put it on the horns of the altar of
burnt offerings. He will then pour all the rest of the blood at the foot of the altar.
He will then remove all the fat, as the fat was removed for the communion 31
sacrifice, and the priest will burn it on the altar as a smell pleasing to Yahweh. This
is how the priest must perform the rite of expiation for him, and he will be forgiven.

"If he wishes to bring a lamb as an offering for this kind of sacrifice, he must 32
bring an unblemished female. ·He will then lay his hand on the victim's head and 33
slaughter it as a sacrifice for sin on the spot where the burnt offerings are slaughtered. ·The priest will take some of the victim's blood on his finger and put it on the 34
horns of the altar of burnt offerings. He will then pour all the rest of the blood at
the foot of the altar. ·He will then remove all the fat, as was done for the sheep in 35
the communion sacrifice, and the priest will burn it as food burnt for Yahweh. This
is how the priest must perform for him the rite of expiation for the sin which he has
committed, and he will be forgiven." '

Some cases of sacrifice for sin

5 ' "If someone sins in any of these following cases: [a] 1
"He should have come forward to give evidence when he heard the formal
Dt 19:15–20 Pr 29:24 adjuration, [b] having seen the incident or known the facts; but he has not spoken
out, and so bears the consequences of his guilt;
11–16 "or someone touches something unclean, whatever it may be—the dead body of 2
an unclean animal, wild or tame, or of one of the unclean reptiles—and without
realising it becomes unclean, he becomes answerable for it; [c]
"or he touches some human uncleanness, whatever it may be, contact with which 3
makes him unclean; he does not notice it, then, realising it later, he becomes
answerable for it;
"or someone lets slip an oath to do something either evil or good, in any of those 4
matters on which someone may let slip an oath; he does not notice it, then, realising
it later, he becomes answerable for it;
"if he is answerable in any of those cases, he will have to confess [d] the sin 5
committed. ·As a sacrifice of reparation for the sin committed, he will bring 6
Yahweh a female from the flock (sheep or goat) as a sacrifice for sin; and the priest
will perform the rite of expiation for him to free him from his sin.

Sins of private individuals (continued)

"If he cannot afford an animal from the flock as a sacrifice of reparation for the sin 7
he has committed, he will bring Yahweh two turtledoves or two young pigeons—
one as a sacrifice for sin and the other as a burnt offering. ·He will bring them to 8
the priest who will first offer the one intended for the sacrifice for sin. The priest
will wring its neck but not remove the head. ·He will sprinkle the side of the altar 9
with the victim's blood, and then squeeze out the rest of the blood at the foot of the
altar. This is a sacrifice for sin. ·He will then offer the other bird as a burnt offering 10
according to the ritual. This is how the priest must perform the rite of expiation for
the person for the sin he has committed, and he will be forgiven.

"If he cannot afford two turtledoves or two young pigeons, he will bring a tenth 11
of an *ephah* of wheaten flour as an offering for the sin committed; he must not mix
oil with it or put incense on it, since this is a sacrifice for sin. ·He will bring it to the 12
priest, who will take a handful of it as a memorial, and burn this on the altar in
addition to the offerings of food burnt for Yahweh. This is a sacrifice for sin. ·This 13

is how the priest must perform the rite of expiation for the person for the sin he has committed in any of those cases,[e] and he will be forgiven. In this case, the priest has the same rights as for a cereal offering." '

The sacrifice of reparation[f] 7:1–6

14 Yahweh spoke to Moses and said:

15 'If someone is unfaithful and sins inadvertently by infringing Yahweh's sacred rights,[g] as a sacrifice of reparation he must bring Yahweh an unblemished ram Nb 5:5–8
from his flock, the value of which will be decided by you in silver shekels according
16 to the rate of the sanctuary-shekel.[h] ·He will make amends for what his sin
subtracted from the sacred rights, adding one-fifth to the value, and give it to the
priest. The priest will then perform the rite of expiation for him with the ram for 2 K 12:17
the sacrifice of reparation and he will be forgiven.

17 'If someone sins and without realising it does one of the things forbidden by
Yahweh's commandments, he will answer for it and bear the consequences of his
18 guilt. ·As a sacrifice of reparation he must bring the priest an unblemished ram
from his flock to the value which you decide, and the priest will perform the rite of
expiation for him for the oversight unwittingly committed, and he will be forgiven.
19 This is a sacrifice of reparation; the man was certainly answerable to Yahweh.'[i]

6:1 20 Yahweh spoke to Moses and said:

2 21 'If someone sins and is unfaithful against Yahweh by deceiving his fellow- Ex 22:6–14
countryman over a deposit or a security, or by withholding something due to him
or by exploiting him;

3 22 'or if he finds lost property and denies it;

'or if he perjures himself about anything that a human being may do criminally Ex 23:1–2
in such matters;

4 23 'if he sins and so becomes answerable, he must restore what he has taken or
demanded in excess: the deposit confided to him, the lost property that he has
5 24 found, ·or any object about which he has perjured himself. He will add one-fifth to 5:16
the principal and pay the whole to the person who held the property rights on the
6 25 day when he incurred the guilt. ·He will then bring Yahweh an unblemished ram
from his flock to the value which you decide, to the priest as a sacrifice of 2 K 12:17
7 26 reparation, ·and the priest will perform the rite of expiation for him before Yahweh
and he will be forgiven, whatever the act by which he incurred guilt.'

Priesthood and sacrifice[a]

a: The burnt offering

8 1 6 Yahweh spoke to Moses and said:

9 2 'Give these orders to Aaron and his sons:

"This is the ritual for the burnt offering (that is, the burnt offering that stays on the altar brazier all night until morning and is consumed by the altar fire).[b]

5 **a.** The words 'in any of these (following) cases' appear after v. 4 in the original text but are inserted here for clarity's sake.

b. After summoning the witness the judge pronounced a conditional curse on him should he lie or prove evasive.

c. In view of the following paragraphs many correct to 'and, after being ignorant of it, discovers it and becomes guilty'.

d. A solemn, public act.

e. All the cases provided for in 4:22, 27.

f. When the rights of God or fellow-citizen, *see* 4:1a, had sustained damage which could be assessed in terms of money, a fine was added to the sacrifice, *see* 5:16, 24. 'Reparation money' and 'sin money', mentioned in 2 K 12:17, seem to refer to payments accompanying these sacrifices, which implies that these were already being made before the Exile, *see also* perhaps Ho 4:8. Information concerning ancient weights and measures will be found in the Tables of measures and money.

g. lit. 'holy things', i.e. offerings either freely made or laid down by law.

h. A heavier shekel than the one in common use, *see* Ex 30:15c.

i. Alternative translation: 'sacrifice of reparation which he ought to offer to Yahweh as such'.

6 **a.** Ch. 1–5 deal with sacrificial materials, ch. 6–7 with the duties and privileges of the sacrificing priest.

b. According to Ezk 46:13–15 the perpetual burnt offering entails only one daily sacrifice, in the morning; this coincides with the practice of the monarchical period: 2 K 16:15 speaks of the morning burnt offering as distinct from the evening cereal offering (*see* 1 K 18:29). According to Ex 29:38–42 and Nb 28:3–8 burnt offering is obligatory both morning and evening. In our passage the morning burnt offering is prescribed in v. 5 and an evening one is implied in the parenthesis of v. 2, though this is awkwardly phrased and apparently a later addition. The fire always burning on the altar symbolises the continuity of the cult; *see* the ever-burning lamp of Lv 24:2–4.

"The priest will put on his linen tunic and put his linen drawers on to cover 3 10
himself. He will then remove the fatty ashes of the burnt offering consumed by the
altar fire and put them at the side of the altar. ·He will then take off his clothes, put 4 11
4:12c on others and carry the ashes to a clean place outside the camp.
2 M 1:18–36 "The fire on the altar that consumes the burnt offering must not be allowed to go 5 12
out. Every morning the priest will make it up with wood, arranging the burnt
offering on it and burning the fat from the communion sacrifices. ·The fire must 6 13
always be burning on the altar; it must never go out.

b: The cereal offering

"This is the ritual for the cereal offering: 7 14
"One of the descendants of Aaron will bring it into Yahweh's presence in front
of the altar, ·will take a handful of the wheaten flour (with the oil and all the 8 15
incense which have been added to it) and burn the memorial on the altar as a smell
pleasing to Yahweh; ·and Aaron and his sons will eat the remainder in the form of 9 16
2:11 unleavened loaves. They will eat it inside the holy place, in the court of the Tent of
Meeting. ·The portion I give them of the food burnt for me must not be baked with 10 17
leaven; it is especially holy, like the sacrifice for sin and the sacrifice of reparation.
All male descendants of Aaron are entitled to eat this portion of the food burnt 11 18
for Yahweh (this is a perpetual law for all your descendants) and anyone who
touches it will become holy." '
Yahweh spoke to Moses and said: [c] 12 19
8–9 'This is the offering that Aaron and his sons must make to Yahweh on the day 13 20
they are anointed: one-tenth of an *ephah* of wheaten flour as a perpetual cereal
offering, half in the morning and half in the evening. ·It will be prepared on the 14 21
griddle and mixed with oil; you will bring the paste as a cereal offering in several
pieces, offering them as a smell pleasing to Yahweh. ·When one of his sons is 15 22
anointed priest to succeed him, he will do the same. This is a perpetual law.
'The entire cereal offering will be burnt for Yahweh. ·Every cereal offering 16 23
made by a priest will be a total sacrifice; none of it will be eaten.' [d]

c: The sacrifice for sin

Yahweh spoke to Moses and said, ·'Speak to Aaron and his sons and say: 17 24. 18 2
"This is the ritual for the sacrifice for sin:
"The victim must be slaughtered before Yahweh on the spot where the burnt
offerings are slaughtered. It is especially holy. ·The priest who offers this sacrifice 19 26
will eat it. It will be eaten inside the holy place, in the court of the Tent of Meeting.
Everything touching the victim's meat will become holy, and if any of the blood 20 27
splashes on clothing, the stain will be washed off inside the holy place. ·The 21 28
earthenware vessel in which the meat is cooked must be broken; if a bronze vessel
has been used for the cooking, it must be scrubbed and thoroughly rinsed with
water. ·Any male who is a priest may eat the sacrifice. It is especially holy. [e] ·But no 22 29. 23 3
one may eat any of the victims offered for sin, the blood of which has been taken
4:5,16 into the Tent of Meeting to make expiation inside the sanctuary. These must be
burnt." '

d: The sacrifice of reparation

7 ' "This is the ritual for the sacrifice of reparation: 1 31
"It is especially holy. ·The victim must be slaughtered where the burnt offerings 2 32
are slaughtered, and the priest will pour the blood all around the altar. ·He will 3 33
then offer all the fat: the tail, the fat covering the entrails, ·both kidneys, the fat on 4 34
them and on the loins, the mass of fat which he will remove from the liver and

35 5 kidneys. ·The priest will burn these pieces on the altar as food burnt for Yahweh.
36 6 This is a sacrifice of reparation. ·Every male who is a priest may eat it. It will be eaten inside the holy place; it is especially holy.

The rights of the priests

37 7 "As with the sacrifice for sin, so with the sacrifice of reparation—the ritual is the same for both. The offering with which the priest performs the rite of expiation will
38 8 revert to the priest. ·The hide of the victim presented by someone to the priest to
39 9 be offered as a burnt offering will revert to the priest. ·Every cereal offering baked 1
in the oven, every cereal offering cooked in the pan or on the griddle will revert to 2:4–7
40 10 the priest who offers it. ·Every cereal offering, mixed with oil or dry, will revert to 5:11–13 Nb 5:15
all the descendants of Aaron without distinction. Ezk 44:29

e: The communion sacrifice

(i) Sacrifice with praise [a]

7:1 11 "This is the ritual for the communion sacrifice to be offered to Yahweh: 22:29–30
2 12 "If this is offered as a sacrifice with praise, to the latter must be added an offering of unleavened cakes mixed with oil, unleavened wafers spread with oil,
3 13 and wheaten flour in the form of cakes mixed with oil. ·This offering, then, must be added to the cakes of leavened bread and to the communion sacrifice with
4 14 praise. ·One of the cakes of this offering must be presented as an offering to Yahweh; it will revert to the priest who pours out the blood of the communion
5 15 sacrifice. ·The meat of the victim will be eaten on the day the offering is made; nothing may be left until next morning.

(ii) Votive or voluntary sacrifices

6 16 "If the victim is offered as a votive or a voluntary sacrifice, it must be eaten on the 22:18–23
7 17 day it is offered, and the remainder may be eaten on the following day; ·but on the third day whatever is left of the meat of the victim must be burnt.

General rules

8 18 "If any of the meat of a victim offered as a communion sacrifice is eaten on the third day, the person who has offered it will not be acceptable and will receive no 19:7
credit for it. It will count as rotten meat, and the person who eats it will bear the consequences of the guilt.
9 19 "Meat that has touched anything unclean cannot be eaten; it must be burnt.
10 20 "Anyone clean may eat the meat, ·but anyone unclean who eats the meat of a 11–16
communion sacrifice offered to Yahweh will be outlawed from his people. [b]
11 21 Furthermore, if anyone touches anything unclean, human or animal, or any foul thing, and then eats the meat of a communion sacrifice offered to Yahweh, that individual will be outlawed from his people." '
13 23 Yahweh spoke to Moses and said, ·"Speak to the Israelites and say:
14 24 "You may not eat the fat of ox, sheep or goat. ·The fat of an animal that has died a natural death or been savaged by beasts may be used for any other purpose, but

c. vv. 12–16, missing from the Gk MS A, deal with the ceremony of investiture, *see* 8:26; 9:4, and interrupt the more general ritual instructions.

d. The priest could not both make and receive the offering: the idea is rather that of a debt to God than of participation in the divine life as in communion sacrifices, 3:1 seq.; 7:10 seq.; *see also* 7:28–34.

e. A private individual's sacrifice for sin could not be eaten by the offerer, since his guilt had not yet been expiated, *see* 4:12c; the priests, however, could eat it. The rule is the same for the sacrifice of reparation, 7:6, 8–10.

7 **a.** The communion sacrifice might be offered 'in praise', vv. 12–15, or in fulfilment of a vow or as a voluntary offering, vv. 16–17. It is difficult to determine the exact relationship between the three kinds. *See* Dt 12:6, 17; Jr 17:26; 33:11; Am 4:5.

b. For a desert nomad to be outlawed from his people was tantamount to a death sentence; here it is a religious condemnation as well: the guilty person loses all title to the divine promises made to Abraham's race.

you are not to eat it. ·Anyone who eats the fat of an animal offered as food burnt 25 15
for Yahweh will be outlawed from his people.
1:5e "Wherever you live, you will never eat blood, whether it be of bird or of beast. 26 16
Anyone who eats any blood will be outlawed from his people." ' 27 17

Dt 18:3 **The priest's portion**

Yahweh spoke to Moses and said, ·'Speak to the Israelites and say: 28 18, 29 19
"Anyone who offers Yahweh a communion sacrifice must bring him part of his
sacrifice as an offering. ·He must bring the food to be burnt for Yahweh, that is to 30 20
say, the fat adhering to the forequarters, with his own hands. He will bring it, and
Ex 29:24g also the forequarters, with which he will make the gesture of offering before
Yahweh. ·The priest will then burn the fat on the altar, and the forequarters will 31 21
revert to Aaron and his descendants. ·You will set aside the right thigh from your 32 22
communion sacrifice and give it to the priest. ·The right thigh will be the portion of 33 23
the descendant of Aaron who offers the blood and fat of the communion sacrifice.
For I have deprived the Israelites of the forequarter offered and the thigh pre- 34 24
sented in their communion sacrifices, and given them to the priest Aaron and his
descendants; this is a perpetual law for the Israelites." '

Conclusion

Such was the portion [c] of Aaron and his descendants in the food burnt for Yahweh, 35 25
the day he presented them to Yahweh for them to become his priests. ·This was 36 26
Ex 30:22d what Yahweh ordered the Israelites to give them on the day they were anointed: a
perpetual law for all their descendants.
Such was the ritual for burnt offering, cereal offering, sacrifice for sin, sacrifice 37 27
of reparation, investiture sacrifice and communion sacrifice, ·which Yahweh laid 38 28
down for Moses on Mount Sinai, the day he ordered the Israelites to make their
offerings to Yahweh in the desert of Sinai.

II: THE INVESTITURE OF THE PRIESTS

‖Ex 28:1–29:35; ‖39:1–32; ‖40:12–15 **Consecration rites** [a]

Ex 30:22d, 23–25 8 Yahweh spoke to Moses and said: 1
'Take Aaron and with him his sons, the vestments, the anointing oil, the 2
bull for the sacrifice for sin, the two rams and the basket of unleavened bread.
Then call the whole community together at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting.' 3
Moses did as Yahweh ordered; the community gathered at the entrance to the 4
Tent of Meeting, ·and Moses said to them, 'This is what Yahweh has ordered to be 5
done.'
He made Aaron and his sons come forward and washed them with water. 6
He then dressed him in the tunic, passed the waistband round his waist, vested 7
Ex 28:6a him in the robe and put the *ephod* on him. He then put the waistband of the *ephod*
Dt 33:8 round his waist, fastening it to him. ·He put the breastplate on him, and placed the 8
1 S 14:41r *urim* and *thummim* in it. ·He put the turban on his head, and on the front of the 9
Ezk 21:31 turban, the golden flower; this was the symbol of holy consecration, which Yahweh
had prescribed to Moses.
Ex 30:22d Moses then took the anointing oil and anointed the Dwelling and everything 10
inside it, to consecrate them. ·He sprinkled the altar seven times and anointed the 11
altar and its accessories, the basin and its stand, to consecrate them. ·He then 12
poured some of the anointing oil on Aaron's head and anointed him to consecrate
him.
Moses then made Aaron's sons come forward; he dressed them in tunics, passed 13
the waistbands round their waists and put on their head-dresses, as Yahweh had
ordered him.

14 He then had the bull for the sacrifice for sin brought forward. Aaron and his sons
15 laid their hands on the victim's head ·and Moses slaughtered it. He then took the blood and with his finger put some of it on the horns on the corners of the altar to purify the altar. He then poured the rest of the blood at the foot of the altar, which
16 he consecrated by performing the rite of expiation over it. ·He then took all the fat covering the entrails, the mass of fat over the liver, both kidneys and their fat; and
17 he burnt this on the altar, ·but the bull's skin, its meat and its offal he burnt outside the camp, as Yahweh had ordered Moses.
18 He then had the ram for the burnt offering brought forward. Aaron and his sons
19 laid their hands on the ram's head ·and Moses slaughtered it. He poured its blood
20 all around the altar. ·He then quartered the ram and burned the head, the quarters
21 and the fat. ·He then washed the entrails and shins, and burnt the whole ram on the altar, as a burnt offering, offered to be a pleasing smell, as food burnt for Yahweh, as Yahweh had ordered Moses.
22 He then had the other ram brought forward, the ram for the investiture sacrifice.
23 Aaron and his sons laid their hands on its head ·and Moses slaughtered it. He took some of its blood and put it on the lobe of Aaron's right ear, on the thumb of his
24 right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot. ·He then made Aaron's sons come forward and he put some of the blood on the lobes of their right ears, on the thumbs of their right hands and on the big toes of their right feet. Next, Moses
25 poured the rest of the blood all around the altar. ·He then took the fat: the tail, all the fat covering the entrails, the mass of fat over the liver, both kidneys and their
26 fat, and the right thigh. ·From the basket of unleavened bread placed before Yahweh, he took an unleavened cake, a cake of bread made with oil, and a wafer;
27 he placed these on the fat and the right thigh, ·and put it all into Aaron's hands and Ex 28:41j
28 those of his sons, and made the gesture of offering before Yahweh. ·Moses then took them away from them and burned them on the altar, with the burnt offering. This was the investiture sacrifice,[b] offered to be a pleasing smell, as food burnt
29 for Yahweh. ·Moses then took the forequarter and made the gesture of offering before Yahweh. This was the portion of the ram of investiture that reverted to Moses, as Yahweh had ordered Moses.
30 Moses then took some of the anointing oil and some of the blood that was on the altar and sprinkled Aaron and his vestments, and his sons and their vestments, with it. In this way he consecrated Aaron and his vestments and his sons and their vestments.
31 Moses then said to Aaron and his sons, 'Cook the meat at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting, and eat it there, as also the bread of the investiture sacrifice still in the basket of the investiture offerings, as I ordered, when I said, "Aaron and his
32, 33 sons must eat it." ·What remains of the meat and bread you will burn. ·For seven days you will not leave the entrance to the Tent of Meeting, until the time of your
34 investiture is complete; for your investiture will require seven days. ·Yahweh has ordered us to do as we have done today to perform the rite of expiation for you;
35 hence, for seven days, day and night, you will remain at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting observing Yahweh's ritual; do this, and you will not incur death.[c] For this
36 was the order I received.' ·So Aaron and his sons did everything that Yahweh had ordered through Moses.

c. This allusion to the first investiture sacrifice introduces its full description in ch. 8–10.

8 **a.** The ritual for high-priestly investiture appears here as an account of the investiture of Aaron and his sons. It comprises the robing and anointing, vv. 7–13, followed by a sacrifice for sin, necessary for the consecration of the altar, vv. 14–17, then the burnt offering, vv. 18–21, and finally the investiture sacrifice, vv. 22–35. The priest assumes his office in ch. 9. The rite of anointing, originally a royal prerogative, was not transferred to the priesthood until the period of the Second Temple, *see* Ex 30:22d. In ancient times there had been no ordination properly speaking, the priest entering the realm of the sacred by virtue of his function.

b. 'investiture', lit. 'filling (of hands)', *see* v. 33; *see* Ex 28:41j.

c. Any infringement of the prescribed ritual was a grave fault, *see* 10:1 seq.

The priests assume their functions [a]

9 On the eighth day Moses summoned Aaron and his sons and the elders of 1
Israel; ·he said to Aaron, 'Take a calf to offer a sacrifice for sin, and a ram for 2
a burnt offering, both without blemish, and bring them before Yahweh. ·Then say 3
to the Israelites, "Take a goat to be offered as a sacrifice for sin, a calf and a lamb
one year old (both without blemish) for a burnt offering, ·a bull and a ram for 4
communion sacrifices to be slaughtered before Yahweh, and a cereal offering
mixed with oil. For Yahweh will appear to you today." '

They brought what Moses had ordered in front of the Tent of Meeting; then the 5
whole community approached and stood before Yahweh. ·Moses then said, 'This 6
Ex 24:16f is what Yahweh has ordered you to do, so that his glory may be visible to you.'
Heb 5:1-4;7:27 Moses then addressed Aaron, 'Go to the altar and offer your sacrifice for sin and 7
your burnt offering, and so perform the rite of expiation for yourself and your
family. [b] Then present the people's offering and perform the rite of expiation for
them, as Yahweh has ordered.'

Aaron went to the altar and slaughtered the calf as a sacrifice for his own sin. 8
Aaron's sons then presented the blood to him; he dipped his finger in it and put 9
some on the horns of the altar, and then poured the rest of the blood at the foot of
the altar. ·The fat of the sacrifice for sin and the kidneys and the mass of fat over 10
the liver he burned on the altar, as Yahweh had ordered Moses, ·and the meat 11
and the skin he burned outside the camp.

He [c] then slaughtered the burnt offering; Aaron's sons then handed him the 12
blood, which he poured all around the altar. ·They then handed him the quartered 13
victim and the head, and he burned these on the altar. ·He then washed the entrails 14
and shins and burned them with the burnt offering on the altar.

He then presented the people's offering. He took the goat for the people's 15
sacrifice for sin, slaughtered it, and made a sacrifice for sin with it in the same way
as with the first. ·He then had the burnt offering brought forward and proceeded 16
according to the ritual. ·He then had the cereal offering brought forward, took a 17
handful of it and burned it on the altar in addition to the morning burnt offering.

Then he slaughtered the bull and the ram as a communion sacrifice for the 18
people. Aaron's sons handed him the blood and he poured it all around the altar.
The fat of the bull and the ram, the tail, the covering fat, the kidneys, the mass of 19
fat over the liver, ·he placed [d] on the ribs and then burned on the altar. ·With the 20, 21
ribs and the right thigh Aaron made the gesture of offering as Yahweh had ordered
Moses.

Aaron then raised his hands towards the people and blessed them. Having thus 22
performed the sacrifice for sin, the burnt offering and the communion sacrifice, he
came down ·and entered the Tent of Meeting with Moses. Then they came out 23
together to bless the people and the glory of Yahweh appeared to the entire
1 K 18:20seq. people: ·a flame leapt out from Yahweh's presence and consumed the burnt 24
2 M 2:10 offering and fat on the altar. At this sight the entire people shouted for joy and fell
on their faces.

Complementary legislation [a]

Nb 16:1-17:5 ***a: A lesson in exact observance***

10 Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu each took his censer, put fire in it and 1
incense on the fire, and presented unauthorised fire before Yahweh, which
Nb 16:35 was not in accordance with his orders. [b] ·At this a flame leapt out from Yahweh's 2
2 K 1:10seq. presence and swallowed them up, and they perished before Yahweh. ·Moses then 3
said to Aaron, 'That is what Yahweh meant when he said:

> In those who are close to me I show my holiness,
> and before all the people I show my glory.' [c]

Aaron remained silent.

b: Removal of bodies

4 Moses summoned Mishael and Elzaphan, sons of Aaron's uncle Uzziel, and said to
them, 'Come here and take your brothers away from the sanctuary, out of the
5 camp.' ·They came and carried them away, still in their tunics, out of the camp, as
Moses had said.

c: Rules for priestly mourning

6 Moses said to Aaron and his sons Eleazar and Ithamar, 'Do not disorder your hair
or tear your clothes;[d] or you may incur death and his retribution may overtake the
whole community. No, it is for the entire House of Israel to lament your brothers
7 who have been the victims of Yahweh's fire. ·To avoid incurring death, do not
leave the entrance to the Tent of Meeting, for Yahweh's anointing oil is on you.'
And they did as Moses said.

d: Wine forbidden

8 Yahweh spoke to Aaron and said:
9 'When you come to the Tent of Meeting, you and your sons with you, you may
not drink wine or any other fermented liquor, to avoid incurring death. This is a Ezk 44:21
10 perpetual law for all your descendants. ·And so shall it be also when you separate
11 the sacred from the profane, the unclean from the clean, ·and when you teach the
Israelites any of the decrees that Yahweh has pronounced for them through
Moses.'

e: The priests' portion in offerings

12 Moses said to Aaron and his surviving sons, Eleazar and Ithamar, 'Take the cereal
offering left over from the food burnt for Yahweh. Eat the unleavened part of it
13 beside the altar, since it is especially holy. ·Eat it in the holy place, since it is the
portion of the food burnt for Yahweh that is prescribed for you and your sons; this 6:9–10
is the order I have received.
14 'You, your sons and daughters with you, will eat in a clean place the forequarter 7:34
offered and the thigh presented, for these have been given to you and your children
15 as your due from the Israelites' communion sacrifices. ·The thigh presented and
the forequarter offered, once the fat has been burnt, revert to you and your sons
with you, after they have been presented before Yahweh with the gesture of
offering, in virtue of a perpetual law as Yahweh has ordered.'

f: A special regulation concerning sacrifice for sin[e]

16 Moses then enquired carefully about the goat offered as a sacrifice for sin, and 9:15
found that they had burnt it. He was angry with Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron's
17 surviving sons, and said, ·'Why did you not eat this victim for sin in the holy place, 6:19
since it is especially holy and was given to you to take away the community's guilt,
18 by performing the rite of expiation for them before Yahweh? ·Since its blood was

9 **a.** The priests inaugurate their priesthood by offering sacrifices on the altar, this being their essential function, *see* 1:5d, with the whole community participating. Although the purpose of this ch. is partly the same as that of ch. 1–7 (sacrificial ritual), the vocabulary is different and less developed, and the victims are not precisely those prescribed in ch. 4. The ch. apparently belongs to the earliest layer of Priestly writings and may perhaps be the continuation of Ex 40. As the glory of Yahweh takes possession of the sanctuary, Ex 40:34, similarly it appears to mark acceptance of the first sacrifices, Lv 9:23.

b. 'your family' Gk; 'the people' Hebr.

c. Aaron.

d. 'he placed' conj.; 'they placed' Hebr.

10 **a.** The purpose of the following anecdotes is to introduce various ritual regulations.

b. Perhaps because Nadab and Abihu are not priests, or because the fire is presented at an unauthorised time.

c. This couplet is found nowhere else in the Bible. Those who are 'close to' Yahweh (the priests) have a share in his 'holiness', *see* 19:2; his 'glory', *see* Ex 24:16f, is shown (by means of a punitive fire) to all the people.

d. Mourning ritual: but the priests must remain apart from the secular world and hence are subject to special rules, *see also* ch. 21.

e. This anecdote takes no account of the rules laid down in 4:13 seq. and 6:17–23; the excuse offered by Aaron and the assent given by Moses are difficult to understand. This paragraph and the others in this ch. are independent fragments artificially grouped together.

not taken inside the sanctuary, you should have eaten its meat there, as I ordered
you.' ·Aaron said to Moses, 'Look, today they offered their sacrifice for sin and 19
their burnt offering before Yahweh, and these disasters have befallen me. If I had
eaten the sin offering today, would this have met with Yahweh's approval?' ·And 20
when Moses heard this, he was satisfied.

III: RULES CONCERNING THE CLEAN AND UNCLEAN[a]

20:25–26
Gn 7:2
‖Dt 14:3–21
↗Mt 15:10–20par.
↗Ac 10:9–16; 11:1–18

Clean and unclean animals[b]

a: On land

11 Yahweh spoke to Moses and Aaron and said to them, ·'Speak to the 1, 2
Israelites and say:

"Of all animals living on land these are the creatures you may eat:

"You may eat any animal that has a cloven hoof, divided into two parts, and that 3
is a ruminant. ·The following, which either chew the cud or have a cloven hoof, are 4
the ones that you may not eat: you will regard the camel as unclean, because
though it is ruminant, it does not have a cloven hoof; ·you will regard the coney 5
as unclean, because though it is ruminant, it does not have a cloven hoof;
you will regard the hare as unclean, because though it is ruminant, it does not have 6
a cloven hoof; ·you will regard the pig as unclean, because though it has a cloven 7
hoof, divided into two parts, it is not a ruminant. ·You will not eat the meat of 8
these or touch their dead bodies; you will regard them as unclean.

b: In water

"Of all that lives in water, these you may eat: 9

"Anything that has fins and scales, and lives in the water, whether in sea or river,
you may eat. ·But anything in sea or river that does not have fins and scales, of all 10
the small water-creatures and all the living things found there, you will regard as
detestable. ·You will regard them as detestable; you must not eat their meat and 11
you will regard their carcases as detestable. ·Anything that lives in water, but not 12
having fins and scales, you will regard as detestable.

c: Birds

"Of the birds these are the ones that you will regard as detestable; they may not be 13
eaten, they are detestable for eating:

"The tawny vulture, the griffon, the osprey, ·the kite, the various kinds of 14
buzzard, ·all kinds of raven, ·the ostrich, the screech owl, the seagull, the various 15, 16
kinds of hawk, ·horned owl, night owl, cormorant, barn owl, ·ibis, pelican, white 17, 18
vulture, ·stork, the various kinds of heron, the hoopoe and the bat. 19

d: Winged insects

"All winged insects moving on four feet[c] you will regard as detestable for eating. 20
Of all these winged insects you may eat only the following: those with the sort of 21
legs[d] above their feet which enable them to leap over the ground. ·These are the 22
ones you may eat: the various kinds of migratory locust, the various kinds of
solham locust, *hargol* locust and *hagab* locust. ·But all other winged insects on four 23
feet you will regard as detestable for eating.

Contact with unclean animals

"By the following you will be made unclean. Anyone who touches the carcase of 24
one will be unclean until evening. ·Anyone who picks up their carcases must wash 25
his clothing and will be unclean until evening. ·Animals that have hoofs, but not 26
cloven, and that are not ruminant, you will regard as unclean; anyone who touches
them will be unclean. ·Those four-footed animals which walk on the flat of their 27

paws[e] you will regard as unclean; anyone who touches their carcases will be
28 unclean until evening, ·and anyone who picks up their carcases must wash his clothing and will be unclean until evening. You will regard them as unclean.

e: Small ground animals

29 "Of the small creatures which crawl along the ground, these are the ones which
30 you will regard as unclean: the mole, the rat, the various kinds of lizard: ·gecko, *koah*, *letaah*, chameleon and *tinshamet*.

Further rules on contact with things unclean

31 "Of all the small creatures, these are the animals which you must regard as disgusting. Anyone who touches them when they are dead will be unclean until evening.

32 "Any object on which one of these creatures falls when it is dead becomes unclean: wooden utensil, clothing, skin, sacking, any utensil whatever. It must be
33 immersed in water and will remain unclean until evening: then it will be clean. ·If the creature falls into an earthenware vessel, the vessel must be broken; whatever
34 the vessel contains is unclean. ·Any edible food will be unclean if the water touches it; any drinkable liquid will be unclean, no matter what its container.
35 Anything on which the carcase of such a creature may fall will be unclean: be it oven or stove, it must be destroyed; for they are unclean and you will regard them
36 as unclean ·(although springs, wells and stretches of water will remain clean);[f]
37 anyone who touches one of their carcases will be unclean. ·If one of their carcases
38 falls on any kind of seed, the seed will remain clean; ·but if the seed has been moistened and one of their carcases falls on it, you will regard it as unclean.

39 "If one of the animals that you use as food dies, anyone who touches the carcase
40 will be unclean until evening; ·anyone who eats any of the carcase must wash his clothing and will remain unclean until evening; anyone who picks up the carcase must wash his clothing and will remain unclean until evening.

The religious aspect

41 "Any creature that swarms on the ground is detestable for eating; it must not be
42 eaten. ·Anything that moves on its belly, anything that moves on four legs or more—in short all the creatures that swarm on the ground—you will not eat, since
43 they are detestable. ·Do not make yourselves detestable with all these swarming
44 creatures; do not defile yourselves with them, do not be defiled by them. ·For it is I, Yahweh, who am your God. You have been sanctified and have become holy 17:1a
because I am holy: do not defile yourselves with all these creatures that swarm on
45 the ground. ·Yes, it is I, Yahweh, who brought you out of Egypt to be your God: you must therefore be holy because I am holy." ' 17:1a;19:2; 22:33+ ↗Mt 5:48 1 P 1:15–16 ↗1 J 3:3

11 a. The 'law of purity' ch. 11–16, complements the 'law of holiness' ch. 17–26, as the negative and positive aspects of the same divine demand. Behind these regulations lie religious taboos of great antiquity. That is 'clean' which is considered worthy to approach God, 'unclean' whatever makes a person unfit for ritual worship or whatever is in fact excluded from it. The clean animals are those that can be offered to God, Gn 7:2, the unclean animals those which neighbouring peoples regarded as sacred or which, since they were unpleasing to human beings, were thought displeasing to God, ch. 11. Other regulations deal with birth, ch. 12, sexual life, ch. 15, death, 21:1, 11; Nb 19:11–16; all these are the mysterious province of God, the master of life. A symptom of decay as in contagious skin-diseases, 13:1a, also induces impurity. The prophets, however, were to go further and insist on the cleansing of the heart, Is 1:16; Jr 33:8, *see* Ps 51:10, thus preparing the way for the teaching of Jesus, Mt 15:10–20 and par., who released his followers from ordinances of which only the formalities had been preserved, Mt 23:24–26 and par. The ancient legislation, however, established an ideal of moral purity, safeguarded by positive observances.

b. The classifications given here are empirical. They are based on practical characteristics rather than ultimate distinction, sheep or cattle being kept in mind as the prototype of what is a clean animal: the hare, for example, is classed with the ruminants because the movements of its jaw suggest rumination. The identification of some of the animals mentioned is uncertain.

c. Winged insects are called 'four-footed' to distinguish them from birds. The locust is not impure, v. 21.

d. 'with legs' versions; 'without legs' Hebr.

e. This means not only the animals that walk on the flat of the foot ('plantigrades') but all hoofless animals.

f. Water is in itself life-giving and purifying.

Conclusion

Such is the law concerning animals, birds, all living creatures that move in water 46
and all creatures that swarm on the ground. •Its purpose is to distinguish the clean 47
from the unclean, the creatures that may be eaten from those that may not be
eaten.

Purification of a woman after childbirth [a]

12 Yahweh spoke to Moses and said, •'Speak to the Israelites and say: 1, 2
"If a woman becomes pregnant and gives birth to a boy, she will be unclean
15:19 for seven days as when in a state of pollution due to menstruation. •On the eighth 3
Gn 17:10d
↗Lk 1:59;2:21 day the child's foreskin must be circumcised, •and she will wait another thirty-three 4
days for her blood to be purified. She will not touch anything consecrated nor go to
the sanctuary until the time of her purification is over.

"If she gives birth to a girl, she will be unclean for two weeks, as during her 5
monthly periods; and will wait another sixty-six days for her blood to be purified.

↗Lk 2:22–38 "When the period of her purification is over, for either boy or girl, she will bring 6
the priest at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting a lamb one year old for a burnt
offering, and a young pigeon or turtledove as a sacrifice for sin. •The priest must 7
offer this before Yahweh, perform the rite of expiation for her, and she will be
purified from her discharge of blood.

"Such is the law concerning a woman who gives birth to either a boy or a girl. •If 8
5:7–13 she cannot afford a lamb, she must take two turtledoves or two young pigeons, one
for the burnt offering and the other for the sacrifice for sin. The priest will perform
the rite of expiation for her and she will be purified." '

Nb 12:10–15
Dt 24:8–9 **Human skin-diseases** [a]

a: Swellings, scabs, discolorations

13 Yahweh said to Moses and Aaron, •'If a swelling or scab or spot appears on 1, 2
someone's skin, which could develop into a contagious skin-disease, that
person must then be taken to the priest, either Aaron or one of his sons. •The priest 3
will examine the disease on the skin. If the hair on the diseased part has turned
white, or if the disease bites into the skin, the skin-disease is contagious, and after
examination the priest will declare the person unclean. •But if there is a white spot 4
on the skin without any visible depression of the skin or whitening of the hair, the
priest will isolate the sick person for seven days. •On the seventh day he will 5
examine the person, and if he observes that the disease persists though without
spreading over the skin, he will isolate the person for a further seven days •and 6
examine him again on the seventh. If he finds that the disease has faded and has
not spread over the skin, the priest will declare the person clean. This was merely
a scab. Once he has washed his clothing he will be clean.

'But if the scab spreads over the skin after the sick person has been examined by 7
the priest and declared clean, then he will let himself be examined again by the
priest. •After examining him and certifying the spread of the scab over the skin, 8
the priest will declare him unclean: it is a contagious skin-disease.

b: Cases of dormant skin-disease [b]

'Someone who has a contagious skin-disease must be taken to the priest. •The 9, 10
priest will examine the sick person, and if he finds a whitish swelling with whitening
of the hair and an ulcer forming on the skin, •this is a dormant skin-disease, and 11
the priest will declare the person unclean. He will not isolate him; he is obviously
unclean. [c]

'But if the disease spreads all through the skin, if it covers the person entirely 12
from head to foot so far as the priest can see, •the priest will then examine the sick 13
person and, if he finds that the skin-disease covers his whole body, declare the sick
person [d] clean. Since it has all become white, he is clean. •But as soon as an ulcer 14

15 appears on him, he will be unclean. •After examining the ulcer, the priest will
16 declare him unclean: the ulcer is unclean, it is contagious. •But if the ulcer becomes
17 white again, the sick person will go to the priest; •the priest will examine him and if he finds that the disease has turned white, he will declare the sick person clean: he is clean.

c: Ulcers

18, 19 'When an ulcer[e] appears on someone's skin, and then gets better, •and if then a white swelling or a reddish-white spot forms on the same place, the sick person will
20 show himself to the priest. •The priest will examine him, and if he finds a visible depression in the skin and a whitening of the hair, he will declare the person
21 unclean: this is a case of contagious skin-disease breaking out in an ulcer. •But if on examination the priest finds neither white hair nor depression of the skin, but a
22 fading of the affected part, he will isolate the sick person for seven days. •If the disease has then spread over the skin, he will declare the person unclean: this is a
23 case of contagious skin-disease. •But if the spot has stayed where it was and has not spread, it is the scar of the ulcer and the priest will declare the person clean.

d: Burns

24 'If someone has a burn on the skin and an abscess, a reddish-white or white spot,
25 forms on the burn, •the priest will then examine it. If he finds a whitening of the hair or a visible depression of the mark on the skin, a contagious disease has broken out in the burn. The priest will declare the sick person unclean: this is a contagious
26 skin-disease. •If on the other hand the priest on examination does not find white hair on the mark or depression of the skin, but a fading of the mark, the priest will
27 isolate the person for seven days. •He will examine the person on the seventh day and, if the disease has spread over the skin, he will declare the sick person unclean:
28 this is a case of contagious skin-disease. •If the mark has stayed where it was and has not spread over the skin, but has faded instead, it was only a swelling due to the burn. The priest will declare the person clean: it is merely a burn scar.

e: Diseases of the scalp and chin

29, 30 'If a man or a woman has a sore on the head or chin, •the priest will examine the sore; and if he finds a depression visible in the skin, with the hair on it yellow and thin, he will declare the sick person unclean: this is tinea,[f] that is to say, a
31 contagious skin-disease of the head or chin. •If on examining this case of tinea the priest finds no visible depression in the skin and no yellow hair,[g] he will isolate
32 the person so affected for seven days. •He will examine the infected part on the seventh day, and if he finds that the tinea has not spread, that the hair on it is not
33 yellow, and that there is no visible depression in the skin, •the sick person will shave his hair off, all except the part affected with tinea, and the priest will again
34 isolate him for seven days. •He will examine the infected part on the seventh day, and if he finds that it has not spread over the skin, and that there is no visible

12 **a.** Childbirth, like menstruation or seminal discharge, ch. 15, is regarded as a loss of vitality; this loss must be made good by ritual means: union with God, the source of life, is thus re-established.

13 **a.** The word traditionally translated as 'leprosy' included various serious or trivial skin-diseases, vv. 1–44, and even signs of decay in clothing, vv. 47–59, or on walls, 14:33–53. Diagnostic and precautionary measures were codified and their application entrusted to the priests. These practical measures were derived from primitive ideas and practice but in Israel were used to identify ritual uncleanness and so took on a religious significance. Restoration to the community was accompanied by a ritual like that of 'sacrifice for sin', 14:1–31, 49–53, the 'sin' being, in this case, an affront to the life-giving power of the God of Israel.

b. Here it is a question of distinguishing not real from apparent disease but contagious skin-diseases from others. Lv seems to regard only the ulcerous form as contagious.

c. No second examination is necessary. The Gk has the opposite 'will isolate him'.

d. lit. 'the disease'. When the symptoms spread over the surface it is a sign of recovery: the white scabs will drop off.

e. Alternative translations: 'boil', 'abscess'.

f. Or possibly eczema.

g. Hebr. 'dark hair', but see v. 32.

depression of the skin, the priest will declare the sick person clean. After washing his clothes the person will be clean. 35 But if after this purification the tinea does spread over the skin, 36 the priest will examine the person; if he finds that the tinea has indeed spread over the skin, the sick person is unclean, and there is no need to verify whether the hair is yellow. 37 Whereas if, so far as he can see, the tinea is arrested and dark hair is beginning to grow on it, the sick person is cured. He is clean, and the priest will declare him clean.

f: Rash

38 If spots break out on the skin of a man or woman, and if these spots are white, 39 the priest will examine them. If he finds that the spots are of a dull white, this is a rash that has broken out on the skin: the sick person is clean.

g: Loss of hair

40 If someone loses the hair of the scalp, this is baldness of the scalp but the person is clean. 41 If he loses hair off the front of the head, this is baldness of the forehead but the person is clean. 42 If, however, a reddish-white sore appears on scalp or forehead, a contagious skin-disease has broken out on the scalp or forehead. 43 The priest will examine it, and if he finds a reddish-white swelling on scalp or forehead, looking like a contagious skin-disease, 44 the person has such a disease: he is unclean. The priest will declare him unclean; he has a contagious skin-disease of the head.

The law governing cases of contagious skin-diseases

45 Anyone with a contagious skin-disease will wear torn clothing and disordered hair; and will cover the upper lip and shout, "Unclean, unclean." 46 As long as the disease lasts, such a person will be unclean and, being unclean, will live alone and live outside the camp.

Infections of clothing

47 When a piece of clothing is infected with mould, be it woollen or linen clothing, linen or woollen fabric or covering, or leather or anything made of leather, 48, 49 if the spot on the clothing, leather, fabric, covering or object made of leather is a greenish or reddish colour, it is a disease to be shown to the priest. 50 The priest will examine the infection and isolate the object for seven days. 51 If on the seventh day he observes that the infection has spread on the clothing, fabric, covering, leather or object made of leather, whatever it may be, this is a contagious disease and the object is unclean. 52 He will burn this clothing, fabric, linen or woollen covering or leather object whatever it may be, on which the infection has appeared; for this is a contagious disease which must be destroyed by fire.

53 But if on examination the priest finds that the infection has not spread on the clothing, fabric, covering, or leather object whatever it may be, 54 he will order the infected object to be washed and will isolate it again for a period of seven days. After the washing, he will examine the infection and if he finds that there is no change in its appearance, 55 even though it has not spread, the article is unclean. You will burn it; it is infected through and through.

56 But if on examination the priest finds that the infection has diminished after washing, he will tear it out of the clothing, leather, fabric or covering. 57 But if the infection reappears on the same clothing, fabric, covering or leather object whatever it may be, this means that the infection is active; you will burn whatever is infected. 58 The clothing, fabric, covering or leather object whatever it may be, from which the infection disappears after being washed, will be clean after it has been washed a second time.

59 Such is the law governing disease in a linen or woollen garment, a fabric or covering or leather object whatever it may be, when it is a question of declaring them clean or unclean.'

Purification from contagious skin-diseases [a]

14 Yahweh spoke to Moses and said:
'This is the law to be applied on the day of the purification of someone who ↗Mt 8:4par. ↗Lk 17:14
has suffered from a contagious skin-disease. Such a person will be taken to the
priest, ·and the priest will go outside the camp. If he finds on examination that the
person has recovered from the disease, ·he will order the following to be brought
for his purification: two live birds that are clean, some cedar wood, scarlet material
and hyssop. ·He will then order one of the birds to be slaughtered in an earthen-
ware pot over running water. ·He will then take the live bird, the cedar wood, the Nb 19:6,18 Ps 51:7
scarlet material and the hyssop and dip all this (including the live bird) into the
blood of the bird slaughtered over running water. ·He will then sprinkle the person
to be purified of the skin-disease seven times, and having declared the person
clean, will set the live bird free to fly off into the countryside. ·The person who is
being purified will then wash all clothing, shave off all hair, and wash, and will then
be clean. After this he will return to the camp, although he will remain outside his
tent for seven days. ·On the seventh day he will shave off all his hair—head, beard
and eyebrows; he will shave off all his hair. After washing his clothing and his body Nb 6:9
he will be clean.
'On the eighth day he will take two unblemished lambs, an unblemished ewe
one year old, three-tenths [b] of wheaten flour mixed with oil for the cereal offering,
and one *log* of oil. ·The priest who is performing the purification will place the
person who is being purified, with all his offerings, at the entrance to the Tent of
Meeting, before Yahweh. ·He will then take one of the lambs and offer it as a
sacrifice of reparation, as also the *log* of oil. With these he will make the gesture of
offering before Yahweh. ·He will then slaughter the lamb on that spot inside the
holy place where the victims for the sacrifice for sin and for the burnt offering are
slaughtered. This reparatory offering, like the sacrifice for sin, will revert to the
priest: it is especially holy. ·The priest will then take some blood of this sacrifice
and put it on the lobe of the right ear, the thumb of the right hand, and the big toe 8:23
of the right foot of the person who is being purified. ·He will then take the *log* of oil
and pour a little into the hollow of his left hand. ·He will dip a finger of his right
hand into the oil in the hollow of his left hand, and sprinkle the oil with his finger
seven times before Yahweh. ·He will then take some of the oil left in the hollow of
his hand and put it on the lobe of the right ear, the thumb of the right hand, and the
big toe of the right foot of the person being purified, in addition to the blood of the
sacrifice of reparation. ·The rest of the oil in the hollow of his hand he will put on
the head of the person who is being purified. This is how the priest will perform the
rite of expiation for such a person before Yahweh.
'The priest will then offer the sacrifice for sin, and perform the rite of expiation
for uncleanness for the person who is being purified. After this, he will slaughter
the burnt offering ·and offer this and the cereal offering on the altar. So, when the
priest has performed the rite of expiation for him the person will be clean.
'If he is poor and cannot afford all this, he need take only one lamb, the one for 5:7–13;12:8
the sacrifice of reparation, and this will be presented with the gesture of offering to
perform the rite of expiation for him. And for the cereal offering he will take only
one-tenth of wheaten flour mixed with oil, and the *log* of oil, ·and two turtledoves
or two young pigeons, whichever he can afford, one for a sacrifice for sin and the
other for the burnt offering. ·He will bring these on the eighth day to the priest at
the entrance to the Tent of Meeting before Yahweh, for his purification. ·The
priest will take the lamb for the sacrifice of reparation and the *log* of oil, and
present them before Yahweh with the gesture of offering. ·He will then slaughter

14 **a.** Ch. 14 combines two purification rites: vv. 2–9, an archaic rite somewhat like that of the red heifer, Nb 19:1a, and presupposing that the illness is caused by a demon which can be driven away by these means (*see* the goat for Azazel, Lv 16:10); and 10–32, a rite more in keeping with the rest of Lv, except for the anointings with oil, vv. 15–18, which have no parallel.
b. Three-tenths, i.e. of an *ephah* or about 0.375 bushel (13.5 litres).

the lamb for the sacrifice of reparation, take some of its blood and put it on the lobe of the right ear, the thumb of the right hand and the big toe of the right foot of the person who is being purified. ·He will pour the oil into the hollow of his left 26
hand, ·and with his finger sprinkle the oil in the hollow of his left hand seven times 27
before Yahweh. ·He will then put some of the oil on the lobe of the right ear, the 28
thumb of the right hand and the big toe of the right foot of the person who is being purified, as he did with the blood of the sacrifice of reparation. ·The remainder of 29
the oil in the hollow of his hand he will put on the head of the person who is being purified, thus performing the rite of expiation for him before Yahweh. ·Of the two 30
turtledoves or two young pigeons—whatever he has been able to afford—he will offer ·a sacrifice for sin with one, and with the other a burnt offering with a cereal 31
offering—whatever he has been able to afford. This is how the priest will perform before Yahweh the rite of expiation for the person who is being purified.

'Such is the law concerning someone with a contagious skin-disease who cannot 32
afford the means of purification.'

Similar infections of houses

Yahweh spoke to Moses and Aaron and said: 33

'When you reach Canaan, which I am giving you as your possession, if I infect a 34
house with a disease in the country which you are to possess, ·the owner will come 35
and inform the priest and say, "I have seen something like a skin-disease in the house." ·The priest will order the house to be emptied before he goes to examine 36
the infection, or everything in the house will become unclean; after which, the priest will go inside and examine the house; ·and if on examination he finds the 37
walls of the house pitted with reddish or greenish depressions which appear to be eating away the wall,[c] ·the priest will then go out of the house, to the door, and 38
shut it up for seven days. ·On the seventh day, the priest will come back and if on 39
examination he finds that the infection has spread over the walls of the house, ·he 40
will order the infected stones to be removed and thrown into some unclean place outside the town. ·He will then have all the inside of the house scraped, and the 41
plaster that comes off will be emptied in an unclean place outside the town. ·The 42
stones will then be replaced with new ones and the house given a new coat of plaster.

'If the infection spreads again after the stones have been removed and the house 43
scraped and replastered, ·the priest will come and examine it. If he finds that the 44
infection has spread, this means that there is a contagious disease in the house: it is unclean. ·It must be pulled down and the stones, woodwork and all the plaster be 45
taken to an unclean place outside the town.

'Anyone who enters the house while it is closed will be unclean until evening. 46
Anyone who sleeps there will wash his clothes. Anyone who eats there will wash 47
his clothes. ·But if the priest finds, when he comes to examine the infection, that it 48
has not spread in the house since it was plastered, he will declare the house clean, for the infection is cured.

'As a sacrifice for the defilement[d] of the house, he will take two birds, some 49
cedar wood, scarlet material and hyssop. ·He will slaughter one of the birds in an 50
earthenware pot over running water. ·He will then take the cedar wood, the 51
hyssop, the scarlet material and the live bird, dip them into the blood of the slaughtered bird and into the running water and sprinkle the house seven times; and after offering the sacrifice for the defilement of the house with the blood of 52
the bird, the running water, the live bird, the cedar wood, the hyssop and the scarlet material, ·he will set the live bird free to fly out of the town into the 53
countryside. Once the rite of expiation has been performed for the house in this way it will be clean.

'Such is the law governing all kinds of skin-disease and tinea, ·diseases of 54, 55
clothing and houses, ·swellings, scabs and spots. It defines the occasions when 56
things are unclean and when clean. ·Such is the law on skin-diseases.' 57

Sexual impurities [a]

a: Of men

15 Yahweh spoke to Moses and Aaron and said:
'Speak to the Israelites and say to them:
"When a man has a discharge from his body, that discharge is unclean. ·While the discharge continues, the nature of his uncleanness is as follows:
"Whether his body allows the discharge to flow or whether it retains it, he is unclean.
"Any bed the man lies on and anything he sits on will be unclean.
"Anyone who touches his bed must wash clothing and body and will be unclean until evening.
"Anyone who sits where the man has sat must wash clothing and body and will be unclean until evening.
"Anyone who touches the body of the man with the discharge must wash clothing and body and will be unclean until evening.
"If the man with the discharge spits on someone who is clean, that person must wash clothing and body and will be unclean until evening.
"Any saddle the man has ridden on will be unclean.
"All those who touch any object that has been under him will be unclean until evening.
"Anyone who picks up such an object must wash clothing and body and will be unclean until evening.
"All those whom the man with the discharge touches without having washed his hands must wash clothing and body and will be unclean until evening.
"The earthenware vessel he touches must be broken and any wooden utensil must be rinsed.
"Once the man with the discharge is cured, he will allow seven days for his purification. He will wash his clothes and wash his body in running water and he will be clean. ·On the eighth day he will take two turtledoves or two young pigeons and come before Yahweh at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting and give them to the priest. ·The priest will offer one of them as a sacrifice for sin and the other as a burnt offering. And in this way the priest will perform the rite of expiation for him before Yahweh for his discharge.
"When a man has a seminal discharge, he must wash his whole body with water and will be unclean until evening. ·Any clothing or leather touched by the seminal discharge must be washed and will be unclean until evening. ·When a woman has had intercourse with a man, both of them must wash and will be unclean until evening.

b: Of women

"Whenever a woman has a discharge and the discharge from her body is of blood, she will remain in a state of menstrual pollution for seven days.
"Anyone who touches her will be unclean until evening.
"Anything she lies on in this polluted state will be unclean; anything she sits on will be unclean.
"Anyone who touches her bed must wash clothing and body and will be unclean until evening.
"Anyone who touches anything she has sat on must wash clothing and body and

c. Left by the mildew staining and rotting the walls.
d. Here 'defilement' has no moral connotation: the impurity of the house is assimilated to that of someone freeing himself from sin by offering a sin sacrifice. The rite is the same as the archaic one for people suffering from skin-diseases, vv. 4–7.

15 a. The kinds of impurity here dealt with include not only contagious venereal disease but also normal seminal discharge and menstruation. Everything connected with conception and birth is sacred and mysterious, *see* 12:1a.

will be unclean until evening. •If there is anything on the bed or where she is sitting, 23
anyone who touches it will be unclean until evening.

"If a man goes so far as to sleep with her, he will contract her menstrual pollution 24
and will be unclean for seven days. Any bed he lies on will be unclean.

Mt 9:20par. "If a woman has a prolonged discharge of blood outside the period, or if the 25
period is prolonged, during the time this discharge lasts she will be in the same
state of uncleanness as during her monthly periods. •Any bed she lies on during the 26
time this discharge lasts will be polluted in the same way as the bed she lies on
during her monthly periods. Anything she sits on will be unclean as during her
monthly periods. •Anyone who touches it will be unclean and must wash clothing 27
and body and will be unclean until evening.

"Once she is cured of her discharge, she will allow seven days to go by; after 28
that she will be clean. •On the eighth day she will take two turtledoves or two 29
young pigeons and bring them to the priest at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting.
The priest will offer one of them as a sacrifice for sin and the other as a burnt 30
offering. And in this way the priest will perform the rite of expiation for her before
Yahweh for the discharge which made her unclean.

Conclusion

"Hence you will warn[b] the Israelites against contracting a state of uncleanness, 31
rather than incurring death by defiling my Dwelling which is among them.

"Such is the law governing a man with a discharge or who is made unclean by a 32
seminal discharge, •a woman in a state of pollution due to menstruation, a man or 33
a woman with a discharge, or a man who sleeps with a woman when she is unclean." '

23:26–32 Nb 29:7–11 ↗Heb 9:6–14

The great Day of Expiation[a]

16 Yahweh spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron who died 1
10:1seq. when offering unauthorised fire. •Yahweh spoke to Moses and said: 2
Ex 19:12e 'Tell Aaron your brother that he may not enter the sanctuary inside the curtain
Ex 25:17h in front of the mercy-seat on the ark whenever he chooses, in case he incurs death,
for I appear in a cloud on the mercy-seat.

'This is how he must enter the sanctuary: with a young bull for a sacrifice for sin 3
and a ram for a burnt offering. •He will put on a tunic of consecrated linen, wear 4
linen drawers on his body, a linen waistband round his waist, and a linen turban on
his head. These are the sacred vestments he will put on after washing himself.

'From the community of Israelites he will receive two he-goats for a sacrifice for 5
sin and a ram for a burnt offering. •After offering the bull as a sacrifice for his own 6
sin and performing the rite of expiation for himself and his family, •he will take the 7
two he-goats and place them before Yahweh at the entrance to the Tent of
Meeting. •Aaron will then draw lots over the two goats, one lot to be for Yahweh 8
and the other lot for Azazel.[b] •Aaron will then take the goat on which the lot "For 9
Yahweh" has fallen, and offer it as a sacrifice for sin. •But the goat on which the lot 10
"For Azazel" has fallen, will be placed alive before Yahweh, for the rite of
16:22 expiation to be performed with it, and for it then to be sent to Azazel in the desert.

'Having offered the bull as a sacrifice for his own sin and performed the rite of 11
expiation for himself and for his family, and slaughtered the bull as a sacrifice for
sin, •Aaron will then fill a censer with live coals from the altar before Yahweh, 12
take two handfuls of finely ground aromatic incense and bring this inside the
curtain. •He will then put the incense on the fire before Yahweh, so that the cloud 13
Ex 25:17h of incense hides the mercy-seat which is on the Testimony and he does not incur
Ex 33:20c death. •He will then take some of the bull's blood and sprinkle it with his finger on 14
the eastern side of the mercy-seat. He will sprinkle some of the blood seven times
with his finger in front of the mercy-seat.

'He will then slaughter the goat for the sacrifice for the sin of the people, and 15
take its blood inside the curtain, and with this blood do as he did with the blood of

16 the bull, sprinkling it on the mercy-seat and in front of it. ·This is how he must perform the rite of expiation for the sanctuary for the uncleanness of the Israelites, for their acts of rebellion and all their sins.

Ezk 45:18–20
Rm 3:25k

'And this is what he must do for the Tent of Meeting which remains with them,
17 surrounded by their uncleanness. ·No one must be inside the Tent of Meeting, from the moment he enters to make expiation in the sanctuary until the time he comes out.

Dt 4:7b
Is 6:5

'When he has made expiation for himself, for his family, and for the whole
18 community of Israel, ·he must come outside, go to the altar before Yahweh and perform the rite of expiation for it. He will take some of the bull's blood and some of the goat's blood and put it on the horns at the corners of the altar all around it,
19 ·and sprinkle some of the blood on it seven times with his finger, thus purifying it and setting it apart [c] from the uncleanness of the Israelites.

20 'Once expiation for the sanctuary, the Tent of Meeting and the altar is complete,
21 he will bring the goat which is still alive. ·Aaron will then lay both his hands on its head and over it confess all the guilt of the Israelites, all their acts of rebellion and all their sins. Having thus laid them on the goat's head, he will send it out into the
22 desert under the charge of a man waiting ready, ·and the goat will bear all their guilt away into some desolate place. [d]

Tb 8:3
Is 13:21; 34:11; 53:6,11
Lk 11:24
1 P 2:24

23 'When he has sent the goat into the desert, ·Aaron will go back into the Tent of Meeting and take off the linen vestments which he wore to enter the sanctuary and
24 leave them there. ·He will then wash his body inside the holy place, put on his vestments and come outside to offer his own and the people's burnt offering. He
25 will perform the rite of expiation for himself and for the people, ·and burn the fat of the sacrifice for sin on the altar.

26 'The man who led the goat away to Azazel will wash his clothes and body before
27 entering the camp. ·The bull and the goat offered as a sacrifice for sin, the blood of which was taken into the sanctuary for the rite of expiation, must be taken outside
28 the camp, where their skin, meat and offal are to be burnt. ·The man who burns them will wash his clothes and body before entering the camp.

Heb 13:11–12,12e

29 'This will be a perpetual law for you.

23:26–32

'On the tenth day of the seventh month you will fast and refrain from work, both
30 citizen and resident alien; ·for this is the day on which the rite of expiation will be performed for you to purify you, to purify you before Yahweh from all your sins.
31 It will be a sabbatical rest for you and you will fast. This is a perpetual law.

32 'The rite of expiation will be performed by the priest who has been anointed and installed to officiate in succession to his father. He will put on the linen vestments,
33 the sacred vestments, ·and perform the rite of expiation for the holy sanctuary, the Tent of Meeting and the altar, and will then perform the rite of expiation for the
34 priests and all the people of the community. ·This will be a perpetual law for you; once a year the rite of expiation will be made for the Israelites for all their sins.'

And as Yahweh ordered Moses, so it was done.

b. 'you will warn' *hizhartem* conj.; Hebr. *hizzartem* 'you will separate'.

16 a. This ch. concludes the list of impurities with the yearly ritual expiating them all. The editors have combined two rites of differing spirit and antiquity: an expiation sacrifice, vv. 6, 11–19, *see* ch. 4, and the rite of sending the he-goat to Azazel, vv. 8–10, 20–22, 26 (*see* following notes). The latter is of archaic type but, as with the double rite in ch. 14, has been integrated into prescriptions properly levitical. Far from being a sign of antiquity, the integration dates from a time when growing concern over ritual purity increased the possible occasions for impurity and sanctioned every kind of purificatory rite. The great festival of the Day of Expiation does not, in fact, seem to pre-date the Exile, since no ancient text alludes to it.

b. Azazel, as the Syr. version seems rightly to have understood, was the name of a demon, whom the ancient Hebrews and Canaanites believed to live in the desert, the barren region where God did not exert his life-giving activity; *see* v. 22, 22d, and 17:7c.

c. lit. 'sanctifying it'. *see* 17:1a.

d. The scapegoat was not sacrificed to Azazel but carried away the people's guilt to the demon's desolate haunts. The handing over of the animal and the rite of expiation were performed 'before Yahweh', v. 10, by the priest, v. 21; in this way an ancient popular custom was taken over, and purged of demonolatry.

IV: THE LAW OF HOLINESS [a]

Ex 20:24 Dt 12:4–28 **Slaughtering and sacrifice**

17 Yahweh spoke to Moses and said: 1
'Speak to Aaron and his sons and all the Israelites and say: 2
"This is the order that Yahweh has given:
"Any man of the House of Israel who slaughters a bull, lamb or goat, whether 3
inside the camp or outside it, ·without bringing it to the entrance to the Tent of 4
Meeting to make an offering of it to Yahweh in front of his Dwelling, that man will
1:5e be answerable for bloodshed; [b] he has shed blood, and that man will be outlawed
from his people. ·The purpose of this is that the Israelites should instead bring 5
their sacrifices, which they would otherwise offer in the countryside, to Yahweh
at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting, to the priest, and offer them as communion
sacrifices to Yahweh; ·and the priest will sprinkle the blood on Yahweh's altar at 6
the entrance to the Tent of Meeting and will burn the fat as a smell pleasing to
16:8b Yahweh. ·No longer may they offer their sacrifices to the satyrs [c] in whose service 7
Is 13:9,21; 34:12–14 they used to prostitute themselves. [d] This is a perpetual law for them and for their
descendants."
'You will also say to them, "Any member of the House of Israel or any resident 8
alien who offers a burnt offering or sacrifice ·without bringing it to the entrance to 9
the Tent of Meeting to offer it to Yahweh, will be outlawed from his people.
1:5e "If any member of the House of Israel or any resident alien consumes blood of 10
any kind, I shall set my face against that individual who consumes blood and shall
outlaw him from his people. ·For the life of the creature is in the blood, and I have 11
↗Heb 9:7, 21seq. given it to you for performing the rite of expiation on the altar for your lives, [e] for
blood is what expiates for a life. ·That is why I told the Israelites: None of you will 12
consume blood, nor will any resident alien consume blood.
"Anyone, whether Israelite or resident alien, who hunts and catches game, 13
Dt 12:16 whether animal or bird, which it is lawful to eat, must pour out its blood and cover
it with earth. ·For the life of every creature is its blood, and I have told the 14
Israelites: You will not consume the blood of any creature, for the life of every
creature is its blood, and anyone who consumes it will be outlawed.
Ex 22:30 Dt 14:21 Ezk 4:14 "Anyone, citizen or alien, who eats an animal that has died a natural death or 15
been savaged, must wash clothing and body, and will be unclean until evening, but
will then be clean. ·But anyone who does not wash clothing and body will bear the 16
consequences of his guilt." '

20:8–21 **Sexual prohibitions** [a]

18 Yahweh spoke to Moses and said: 1
'Speak to the Israelites and say: 2
Ezk 20:7–8 "I am Yahweh your God: [b] ·You must not behave as they do in Egypt where you 3
Ex 23:23–24 used to live; you must not behave as they do in Canaan where I am taking you, nor
must you follow their laws. ·You must observe my customs and keep my laws, 4
following them.
Dt 4:1;5:29; 6:24;8:1 Ne 9:29 Ezk 20:11 ↗Rm 10:5 ↗Ga 3:12 "I, Yahweh, am your God: ·hence you will keep my laws and my customs. 5
Whoever complies with them will find life in them.
"I am Yahweh.
"None of you will approach a woman who is closely related to him, [c] to have 6
intercourse with her. I am Yahweh.
"You will not have intercourse with your father or your mother. She is your 7
mother—you will not have intercourse with her.
Dt 23:1;27:20 "You will not have intercourse with your father's wife; it is your father's sexual 8
prerogative.
Dt 27:22 "You will not have intercourse with your sister, whether she is your father's or 9

your mother's daughter. Whether she was born in the same house or elsewhere, you will not have intercourse with her.

10 "You will not have intercourse with your son's or your daughter's daughter; for their sexual privacy is your own.

11 "You will not have intercourse with [d] the daughter of your father's wife, born to your father. She is your sister; you will not have intercourse with her.

12 "You will not have intercourse with your father's sister; for she is your father's own flesh and blood.

13 "You will not have intercourse with your mother's sister; for she is your mother's own flesh and blood.

14 "You will not have intercourse with your father's brother; you will not approach his wife. She is your aunt.

15 "You will not have intercourse with your daughter-in-law. She is your son's wife; you will not have intercourse with her.

16 "You will not have intercourse with your brother's wife; it is your brother's sexual prerogative.

17 "You will not have intercourse with a woman and her daughter; nor will you take her son's or her daughter's daughter, to have intercourse with them. They are your own flesh and blood; [e] it would be incest. 20:14

18 "You will not take a woman and her sister into your harem at the same time, to have intercourse with the latter while the former is still alive. Gn 29:27f

19 "You will not approach and have intercourse with a woman who is in a state of menstrual pollution.

20 "Furthermore, you will not have intercourse with your fellow-citizen's wife; you would become unclean by doing so. [f] Ex 20:14

21 "You will not allow any of your children to be sacrificed to Molech, [g] thus profaning the name of your God. I am Yahweh. 20:2–5 Gn 22:1a Lv 19:12;22:32

22 "You will not have intercourse with a man as you would with a woman. This is a hateful thing. Gn 19:5b

17 **a.** Priestly in its present format, the basic elements of the 'law of holiness', ch. 17–26, seem to date from the end of the monarchical period and represent the usages of the Temple in Jerusalem. There are evident points of contact between it and the thought of Ezekiel, which also seems to be the product of a pre-exilic movement. Holiness is one of the essential attributes of the God of Israel, *see* 11:44–45; 19:2; 20:7, 26; 21:8; 22:32 seq. The original concept is one of separateness, of inaccessibility and of awe-inspiring transcendence, Ex 33:20i. This sanctity communicates itself to everything in God's vicinity and to anything consecrated to him: places, Ex 19:12e; seasons, Ex 16:23; Lv 23:4; the ark, 2 S 6:7f; people, Ex 19:3c, 6, the priests in particular, Lv 21:6; things, Ex 30:29; Nb 18:9, etc. Because holiness is thought of in relation to worship, it is connected with the idea of ritual purity: the 'law of holiness' is also a 'law of purity'. But the God of Israel makes moral demands and under this influence the primitive notion of holiness undergoes a transformation: avoidance of what was ritually impure becomes abstention from sin; ritual purity develops into purity of conscience, *see* Isaiah's inaugural vision, Is 6:3g. *See* notes to Lv 1:1 and 11:1.

b. *see* 1:5c. This passage retrojects the law of the unique sanctuary promulgated in Dt 12:1–12, into the desert period: sacrificial victims may be slaughtered only at the Tent of Meeting. It does not, however, envisage secular, as opposed to ritual, slaughtering, as does Dt 12:15–16. It preserves the memory of an ancient custom, 17:12; 19:26; 1 S 14:32 seq.; Ac 15:29.

c. The Hebr. word means 'goat'; here it indicates beings of animal form who were thought to haunt deserts and ruins, Is 13:21; 34:14. Azazel was thought to be one of them, 16:8b. Here and in 2 Ch. 11:15 the word is used contemptuously of false gods.

d. Classic image of religious faithlessness, *see* Ho 1–3, 1:2b.

e. Or 'by means of the life which is in it.' But *see* Dt 19:21.

18 **a.** After an introduction, vv. 1–5, the kernel of this ch., vv. 6–18, is a list forbidding sexual intercourse between closely related persons, thus defining the limits of the family. vv. 19–23 add various other prohibitions. vv. 24–30 form a concluding exhortation. The ch. is to some degree a literary unit. It is more akin to Dt than the rest of the 'Law of Holiness'.

b. This affirmation, whether in full or in its abridged form, 'I am Yahweh', recurs like a refrain throughout this and the following ch., giving a direction to the entire law of holiness: Yahweh is the God of Israel, whom he has brought out of Egypt, 19:36; 22:33; he is a holy God, 19:2; 20:26; 21:8, who makes his people holy, 20:8; 21:8, 15; 22:9, 32; *see* 20:7.

c. lit. 'of the flesh of his body'. To express relationship the Hebrews spoke of an identity of blood, flesh or even bone (Jg 9:2), an identity most perfectly achieved in the union of man and wife. For this reason the prohibitions that follow, whether concerned with blood-relationship or relationship by marriage (vv. 8, 14, 16), are all grouped under the prohibition against incest: flesh must not fertilise itself.

d. 'You will not expose' Gk; Hebr. omits.

e. lit. 'your flesh' Gk; 'his remainder' (?) Hebr.

f. Here adultery is condemned as an instance of ritual impurity.

g. lit. 'to be passed to Molech.' In Canaanite ritual, children were sacrificed by being 'made to pass' through fire, i.e. by burning; the practice was condemned by the Law, 20:2–5; Dt 12:31; 18:10. The rite found its way into Israel, notably at the burning-place in the valley of Ben-Hinnom ('Gehenna'), just outside Jerusalem, 2 K 16:3; 21:6; 23:10; Jr 7:31; 19:5 seq.; 32:35; Ezk 16:21. The origin of the word Molech is Phoenician and designated a certain type of sacrifice; Molech was divinised in Ugarit, where the name appears on a list of gods. In Israel, it was understood as a divine title and several texts mention sacrifices offered to the god Molech (i.e. *melek*, 'the king', vowels arranged as in *boshet*, 'shame').

"You will not have intercourse with any kind of animal; you would become unclean by doing so. Nor will a woman offer herself to an animal, to have intercourse with it. This would be a violation of nature. 23

"Do not make yourselves unclean by any of these practices, for it was by such things that the nations that I am driving out before you made themselves unclean. The country has become unclean; hence I am about to punish it for its guilt, and the country itself will vomit out its inhabitants. 24 25

"You, however, must keep my laws and customs and not do any of these hateful things: none of your citizens, none of your resident aliens. ·For all these hateful things were done by the people who lived in the country before you, and the country became unclean. ·If you make it unclean, will it not vomit you out as it vomited out the nations there before you? ·Yes, anyone who does any of these hateful things, whatever it may be, any person doing so, will be outlawed from his people; ·so keep my rules and do not observe any of the hateful laws which were in force before you came; then you will not be made unclean by them. I am Yahweh your God." ' 26 27 28 29 30

Moral and religious regulations [a]

19 Yahweh spoke to Moses and said: 1
'Speak to the whole community of Israelites and say: 2
11:44–45+; 17:1a "Be holy, for I, Yahweh your God, am holy.
Ex 20:12+ "Each of you will respect father and mother. 3
19:30;26:2 Ex 20:8f "And you will keep my Sabbaths; I am Yahweh your God.
Ex 20:4seq.,4c "Do not turn to idols [b] and do not cast metal gods for yourselves. I am Yahweh your God. 4

"If you offer a communion sacrifice to Yahweh, make it in such a way as to be acceptable. ·It must be eaten the same day or the day after; whatever is left on the 7:18 third day must be burnt. ·If eaten on the third day it would be rotten food and not be acceptable. ·Anyone who eats it must bear the consequences of this guilt, having profaned Yahweh's holiness; that person will be outlawed from his people. 5 6 7 8
Dt 24:19–22 "When you reap the harvest of your land, you will not reap to the very edges of the field, nor will you gather the gleanings of the harvest; ·nor will you strip your vineyard bare, nor pick up the fallen grapes. You will leave them for the poor and the stranger. I am Yahweh your God. 9 10

Ex 20:15 Dt 19:16–21; 24:7;25:13 Dt 24:14–15 [c] "You will not steal, nor deal deceitfully or fraudulently with your fellow-citizen. ·You will not swear by my name with intent to deceive and thus profane the name of your God. I am Yahweh. ·You will not exploit or rob your fellow. You will not keep back the labourer's wage until next morning. ·You will not curse the dumb [d] or put an obstacle in the way of the blind, but will fear your God. I am Yahweh. 11 12 13 14

"You will not be unjust in administering justice. You will neither be partial to the poor nor overawed by the great, but will administer justice to your fellow-citizen justly. [e] ·You will not go about slandering your own family, nor will you put 1 Jn 2:9,11;3:15 your neighbour's life in jeopardy. [f] I am Yahweh. ·You will not harbour hatred for Si 10:6 Ezk 33:1–9+ your brother. You will reprove your fellow-countryman firmly and thus avoid Mt 18:15par. Rm 12:19 burdening yourself with a sin. ·You will not exact vengeance on, or bear any sort ↗Mt 5:43; 22:39par. of grudge against, the members of your race, but will love your neighbour as ↗Rm 13:9 yourself. I am Yahweh. 15 16 17 18
↗Ga 5:14 ↗Jm 2:8 "You will keep my laws. 19
•Dt 22:9–11 "You will not mate your cattle with those of another kind; you will not sow two kinds of grain in your field; you will not wear a garment made from two kinds of fabric. [g]

"If someone has intercourse with a woman who is the concubine slave of a man from whom she has not been redeemed and she has not been given her freedom, he will be liable for a fine, but they will not incur death, since she was not a free woman. ·He will bring a sacrifice of reparation for Yahweh to the entrance of the 20 21

22 Tent of Meeting. This will be a ram of reparation, ·and with the ram of reparation
the priest will perform the rite of expiation for him before Yahweh for the sin
committed; and the sin he has committed will be forgiven.
23 "Once you have entered the country and planted any kind of fruit tree, you will
regard its fruit as uncircumcised. [h] For three years you will count it as uncircumcised Gn 17:10d
24 and it will not be eaten; ·in the fourth year, all its fruit will be consecrated to
25 Yahweh in a feast of praise; ·and in the fifth year you may eat its fruit, so that it
may yield you even more. I am Yahweh your God.
26 "You will eat nothing with blood in it. You will not practise divination or magic. 1:5e; 17:10–14;19:31
27 [i] "You will not round off your hair at the edges or trim the edges of your beard. Dt 18:10–12
28 You will not gash your bodies when someone dies, and you will not tattoo
yourselves. I am Yahweh.
29 "Do not profane your daughter by making her a prostitute, or the country itself
will become prostituted and filled with incest.
30 "You will keep my Sabbaths and revere my sanctuary. I am Yahweh. Ex 20:8f
31 "Do not have recourse to the spirits of the dead or to magicians; they will defile 19:26+;20:6,27 Dt 18:11 1 S 28:7
you. I, Yahweh, am your God. Is 8:19
32 "You will stand up in the presence of grey hair, you will honour the person of
the aged and fear your God. I am Yahweh.
33, 34 "If you have resident aliens in your country, you will not molest them. ·You will
treat resident aliens as though they were native-born and love them as yourself— Ex 22:20+
for you yourselves were once aliens in Egypt. I am Yahweh your God.
35 "You will not be unjust in administering justice as regards measures of length, Dt 25:13–16 Is 10:1seq.
36 weight or capacity. ·You will have just scales, just weights, a just *ephah* and a just Am 8:5
37 *hin*. I am Yahweh your God who brought you out of Egypt; ·hence you are to keep
all my laws and all my customs and put them into practice. I am Yahweh." '

Penalties [a]

a: Religious offences

1 20 Yahweh spoke to Moses and said:
2 'Say to the Israelites:
"Anyone, be he Israelite or alien resident in Israel, who gives any of his children
3 to Molech, will be put to death. The people of the country must stone him, ·and I 18:21h
shall set my face against that man and outlaw him from his people; for by giving a
4 child of his to Molech he has defiled my sanctuary and profaned my holy name. ·If
the people of the country choose to close their eyes to the man's action when he
5 gives a child of his to Molech, and do not put him to death, ·I myself shall turn my
face against that man and his clan. I shall outlaw them from their people, both him
and all those after him who prostitute themselves by following Molech. 1 K 11:7

19 **a.** This ch. is a collection, without apparent order, of regulations concerning daily life, the only unifying feature being the repeated reference to Yahweh and his holiness. The links with the Decalogue are obvious.

b. lit. 'nothings', *see* 26:1; Is 2:8.

c. vv. 11–18 regulate social behaviour and are summed up in the commandment to love one's neighbour. Similar injunctions are found in all the legislative passages of the Pentateuch.

d. He cannot curse back. The Hebr. word also means 'deaf'.

e. Like God's uprightness, Ps 7:9, from which it is derived, human uprightness far exceeds the demands of civic or social good conduct. It entails complete conformity to the will of God, Gn 6:9; 7:1; Jb 12:4; Is 1:26; 3:10; 56:1; Dn 4:24; Ho 14:10. After the Exile it was to be defined as faithfulness to the Law, Ps 1:6; 119:7; Pr 11:5; 15:9; Ws 1:1. Its demands of perfection in everyday life, in relationship to God and human beings, were to grow increasingly specific and inward, a tendency carried still further by Jesus, Mt 3:15; 5:17h, 20; *see also* Rm 1:17j.

f. By a baseless capital charge.

g. Prohibition against magic, with its incongruous compounds.

h. Circumcision originally celebrated man's achievement of maturity, Gn 17:10d, and an uncircumcised man was unclean. The fruit of a young tree was by analogy 'uncircumcised', and therefore unclean until consecrated to God.

i. vv. 27–28 forbid mourning customs thought to be tainted with paganism, *see also* 21:5; Dt 14:1. Their practice is widely attested, however, Jb 1:20; Is 3:24; Jr 16:6; 41:5; 47:5; 48:37; Am 8:10, and the mention of these same customs in Ezk 7:18 shows that this prohibition notwithstanding, they persisted in use, possibly because they were considered to have a penitential and hence religious significance, *see* Is 22:12.

20 **a.** A fresh section dealing with penalties and therefore involving repetition of ordinances already recorded.

19:26.31 "If anyone has recourse to the spirits of the dead or to magicians, to prostitute 6
himself by following them, I shall set my face against him and outlaw him from his
people.
11:44–45+; 17:1a "Sanctify yourselves and be holy, for I am Yahweh your God. 7

18 ***b: Offences against the family***

"You will keep my laws and put them into practice, for it is I, Yahweh, who make 8
you holy. ·Hence: 9
"Anyone who curses father or mother will be put to death. Having cursed father
or mother, the blood will be on that person's own head.
"The man who commits adultery with his neighbour's wife [b] will be put to death, 10
he and the woman.
"The man who has intercourse with his father's wife has infringed his father's 11
sexual prerogative. Both of them will be put to death; their blood will be on their
own heads.
"The man who has intercourse with his daughter-in-law: both of them will be 12
put to death; they have violated nature, their blood will be on their own heads.
"The man who has intercourse with a man in the same way as with a woman: 13
they have done a hateful thing together; they will be put to death; their blood will
be on their own heads.
18:17 "The man who marries a woman and her mother: this is incest. They will be 14
burnt alive, he and they; you will not tolerate incest.
"The man who has intercourse with an animal will be put to death; you will kill 15
the animal too.
"The woman who approaches any animal to have intercourse with it: you will 16
kill the woman and the animal. They will be put to death; their blood will be on
their own heads.
"The man who marries his father's or his mother's daughter: if they have 17
intercourse together, this is an outrage. They will be executed in public, [c] for the
man has had intercourse with his sister; he will bear [d] the consequences of his guilt.
"The man who has intercourse with a woman during her monthly periods and 18
exposes her nakedness: he has laid bare the source of her blood, and she has
exposed the source of her blood, and both of them will be outlawed from their
people.
"You will not have intercourse with your mother's sister or your father's sister. 19
Whoever does so, has had intercourse with a close relation; they will bear the
consequences of their guilt.
"The man who has intercourse with the wife of his paternal uncle has infringed 20
his uncle's sexual prerogative; they will bear the consequences of their guilt and
die childless.
↗Mt 14:4par. "The man who marries his brother's wife: this is pollution; he has infringed his 21
brother's sexual prerogative; they will die childless.

Concluding exhortation [e]

"You will keep all my laws, all my decisions, and put them into practice, so that the 22
country where I am taking you to live will not vomit you out. ·You will not follow 23
the laws of the nations whom I am driving out before you; they practised all these
things, which is why I detested them. ·As I have already told you, you will take 24
possession of their soil, I myself shall give you possession of it, a country flowing
with milk and honey.
"Since I, Yahweh your God, have set you apart from these peoples, ·you for 25
your part will make a distinction between clean animals and unclean ones and
11 between unclean birds and clean ones, and will not make yourselves detestable
with any animal or bird or reptile, which I have set apart from you as unclean.
11:44–45+; 17:1a "Be consecrated to me, for I, Yahweh, am holy, and I shall set you apart from 26
all these peoples, for you to be mine.

27 "Any man or woman of yours who is a necromancer or magician will be put to death; they will be stoned to death; their blood will be on their own heads." ' 19:26,31;20:6

The holiness of the priesthood

a: The priests

1 21 Yahweh said to Moses:
'Speak to the priests descended from Aaron and say:
"None of them must make himself unclean by touching the corpse [a] of one of his
2 people, ·unless it be of one of his closest relations—father, mother, son, daughter,
3 brother, ·or virgin sister, since she being unmarried is still his close relation: [b] he
4 can make himself unclean for her; ·but for a close female relation who is married Ezk 44:25–27
he will not make himself unclean; he would profane himself. [c]
5 "They will not make tonsures on their heads, shave the edges of their beards, or 19:27–28
6 gash their bodies. ·They will be consecrated to their God and will not profane the
name of their God. For their function is to offer the food burnt for Yahweh, the 1:9g
food of their God, and so they must be holy.
7 "They will not marry a woman profaned by prostitution, or one divorced by her Ezk 44:22
husband, for the priest is consecrated to his God. [d]
8 "You will treat him as holy, for he offers the food of your God. For you, he will
be a holy person, for I, Yahweh, who sanctify you am holy. 11:44–45+; 17:1a
9 "If a priest's daughter profanes herself by prostitution, she profanes her father
and will be burnt alive.

b: The high priest

10 "The priest who is pre-eminent over his brothers, on whose head the anointing oil 8:7–12
has been poured, and who, robed in the sacred vestments, has received investiture,
11 will not disorder his hair or tear his clothes; ·he will not go near any corpse or
12 make himself unclean even for his father or mother. ·He will not leave the holy
place in such a way as to profane the sanctuary of his God; for he bears the
consecration of the anointing oil of his God. I am Yahweh.
13, 14 "He will marry a woman who is still a virgin. ·He will not marry a woman who
has been widowed or divorced or profaned by prostitution, but will marry a virgin
15 from his own people: ·he must not make his own children profane, for I, Yahweh,
have sanctified him." ' [e]

c: Impediments to the priesthood

16 Yahweh spoke to Moses and said:
17 'Speak to Aaron and say:
"None of your descendants, for all time, may come forward to offer the food of
18 his God if he has any infirmity, [f] ·for none may come forward if he has an infirmity,
19, 20 be he blind or lame, disfigured or deformed, ·or with an injured foot or arm, ·a
hunchback, someone with rickets or ophthalmia or the scab or running sores, or a
21 eunuch. ·No descendant of the priest Aaron may come forward to offer the food
burnt for Yahweh if he has any infirmity; if he has an infirmity, he will not come
forward to offer the food of his God.

b. The first nine words are repeated in Hebr.: dittography.

c. The only case for which punishment is to be in public.

d. Gk and Sam. read the plural.

e. Similar phraseology as in the points mentioned in 18:24–30. v. 27 is a later addition.

21 a. Contact with the dead produces uncleanness, Nb 6:9; 19:11–13; 31:19, 24; *see* Hg 2:13. The same rule is given for priests in Ezk 44:25–27; it is more severe for the high priest, here at v. 11.

b. Marriage, by which woman becomes the 'flesh' of her husband, Gn 2:23, loosens ties of blood.

c. Meaning disputed. The text is probably corrupt. At the beginning, for *ba'al* 'husband', we read *libe'ulat ba'al* 'for a woman with a husband', contrasting with previous v.

d. Widows are not excluded, as they are in Ezk 44:22, which makes exception for the widow of a priest only, and is the same as for the high priest here, v. 14.

e. By becoming 'one flesh' with a woman who did not belong to the appropriate tribe, the high priest would profane the sanctuary and transmit profane blood to his descendants.

f. Because the priest was to approach God and share God's sanctity in a special way, a physical defect in him would be an affront to God who created the physical world without blemish.

"He may eat the food of his God, things especially holy and things holy, ·but he 22. 23
will not go near the curtain or approach the altar, since he has an infirmity and
must not profane my holy things; for I, Yahweh, have sanctified them." '
And Moses promulgated this to Aaron, to his sons, and to all the Israelites. 24

Holiness in consuming sacred food

a: The priests

22 Yahweh spoke to Moses and said: 1
'Speak to Aaron and his sons. They must be consecrated[a] by the holy 2
offerings of the Israelites and must not profane my holy name; for my sake they
must sanctify it; I am Yahweh. ·Say to them: 3
"Any one of your descendants, for all time, who in a state of uncleanness
approaches the holy offerings consecrated to Yahweh by the Israelites, will be
outlawed from my presence. I am Yahweh.
"Anyone of Aaron's line who is afflicted with a contagious skin-disease or a 4
discharge will not eat holy things until he is clean. Anyone who touches anything
13;15 made unclean by a dead body, or who has a seminal discharge, ·or who is made 5
unclean by touching any kind of reptile or any one who has contaminated him with
his own uncleanness, be it what it may, ·in short, anyone who has had any such 6
contact will be unclean until evening, and must not eat holy things until he has
washed his body. ·At sunset he will be clean and may then eat holy things, for these 7
are his food.
"He must not eat an animal that has died a natural death or been savaged; he 8
17:15 Ezk 4:14 would contract uncleanness from it. I am Yahweh.
"They must keep my rules and not burden themselves with sin. If they profane 9
them, they will incur death; I, Yahweh, have sanctified them.

b: Lay people[b]

"No lay person may eat anything holy; no guest or employee of a priest may eat 10
anything holy. ·But if the priest has acquired a slave by purchase, the slave may eat 11
it like anyone born in his household; they will share his food.
"If a priest's daughter marries a layman, she will have no share in the holy things 12
set aside, ·but if she is widowed or divorced and, being childless, has had to return 13
to her father's house as when she was young, she may share her father's food. No
lay person may share it; · anyone who does eat a holy thing by inadvertence, will 14
restore it to the priest with one-fifth added.
5:14–16 "They may not profane the holy offerings which the Israelites have set aside for 15
Yahweh. ·By eating these, they would burden them with guilt requiring a sacrifice 16
of reparation; for I, Yahweh, have sanctified these offerings." '

c: Sacrificial animals

Yahweh spoke to Moses and said: 17
'Speak to Aaron, to his sons, and to all the Israelites and say: 18
"Any member of the House of Israel or any alien resident in Israel who brings
an offering either in payment of a vow or as a voluntary gift, and offers it as a burnt
1:1b offering to Yahweh,[c] ·must, if he is to be acceptable, offer an unblemished male, 19
be it bull or sheep or goat. ·You will not offer anything with a blemish, for it would 20
not make you acceptable.
3:1a;7:11a "If anyone offers Yahweh a communion sacrifice, either to fulfil a vow or as a 21
1:3;3:1 voluntary offering, the animal, be it from the herd or flock, must be perfect, if he is
to be acceptable; it must be unblemished. ·You will not offer Yahweh any animal 22
21:18–21 Ml 1:8 which is blind, lame, mutilated, ulcerous, scabby or covered in sores. No part of
such an animal will be offered on the altar as food burnt for Yahweh. ·As a 23
voluntary offering, you may offer a bull or a lamb that is underdeveloped or
deformed; but such will not be acceptable in payment of a vow. ·You will not offer 24

Yahweh an animal if its testicles have been bruised, crushed, torn or cut off. You
25 may not do that in your country, ·and you may not accept any such from the hands
of a stranger, to be offered as food for your God. Their deformity is a blemish, and
they would not make you acceptable." '
26 Yahweh spoke to Moses and said:
27 'A calf, lamb, or kid will stay with its dam for seven days after being born. From
28 the eighth day onwards, it will be acceptable as food burnt for Yahweh. ·But no
animal, whether cow or ewe, will be slaughtered on the same day as its young. Ex 23:19
29, 30 'If you offer Yahweh a sacrifice with praise, do it in the acceptable manner; ·it 7:11a
must be eaten the same day; you will leave nothing over till next morning. I am
Yahweh.

d: Concluding exhortation 18:3–5

31, 32 'You will keep my commands and put them into practice. I am Yahweh. ·You will
not profane my holy name—so that I may be honoured as holy among the Israelites, 11:44–45+; 17:1a
33 I, Yahweh, who make you holy, ·I who brought you out of Egypt, to be your God, 11:45;25:38,55; 26:13,45
I, Yahweh.'

The ritual for the annual feasts [a] Ex 23:14d

1 **23** Yahweh spoke to Moses and said:
2 'Speak to the Israelites and say:
(The solemn festivals of Yahweh to which you will summon them are my sacred
assemblies.)
"These are my solemn festivals:

a: The Sabbath Ex 20:8d

3 "You will work for six days, but the seventh will be a day of complete rest, a day
for the sacred assembly on which you do no work at all. Wherever you live, this is
a Sabbath for Yahweh.
4 "These are Yahweh's solemn festivals, the sacred assemblies to which you will
summon the Israelites on the appointed day:

b: The Passover and the feast of Unleavened Bread [b] Ex 12:1a; 23:14d

5 "The fourteenth day of the first month, at twilight, is the Passover of Yahweh;
6 and the fifteenth day of the same month is the feast of Unleavened Bread for
7 Yahweh. For seven days you will eat unleavened bread. ·On the first day you will
8 hold a sacred assembly; you will do no heavy work. ·For seven days you will offer
food burnt for Yahweh. On the seventh day there will be a sacred assembly; you
will do no heavy work." '

c: The first sheaf [c] Dt 26:1a

9 Yahweh spoke to Moses and said:
10 'Speak to the Israelites and say:
"When you enter the country which I am giving you and reap the harvest there,
11 you will bring the priest the first sheaf of your harvest, ·and he will present it to

22 **a.** God's acceptance sanctifies the offerings which, in turn, sanctify those who eat them, who must be in a state of ritual purity.

b. The laity, that is, as distinguished from members of the priest's family which, according to ancient notions, also included his slaves.

c. According to the Law of Holiness, burnt offerings as well as communion sacrifices might be offered either in fulfilment of a vow or as voluntary offerings, *see* 7:11a.

23 **a.** The moral (ch. 18–20) and ritual (ch. 21–22) prerequisites for sacrifice are now (ch. 23) followed by a description of the liturgical cycle. On the various feasts *see* Ex 12:1a and Ex 23:14d.

b. The two festivals are linked together, occurring on consecutive dates, specified as in Nb 28:16–25. At first sight, they seem to be more closely linked in Dt 16:1–8, but the text is composite.

c. Between the feast of Unleavened Bread and the feast of Weeks, the Law of Holiness introduces an offering of the first sheaf (of the barley harvest) at the appropriate place in the agricultural cycle; this is a new formulation of the ancient offering of the first-fruits, Ex 23:19; 34:26.

Ex 29:24g Yahweh with the gesture of offering, for you to be acceptable. The priest will make this offering on the day after the Sabbath, 12 and on the same day as you make this offering, you will offer Yahweh an unblemished lamb one year old as a burnt
Nb 15:4 offering. 13 The cereal offering for that day will be two-tenths of wheaten flour mixed with oil, as food burnt as a smell pleasing to Yahweh. The libation will be a quarter
2:14 of a *hin* of wine. 14 You will eat no bread, roasted ears of wheat or fresh produce before this day, before making the offering to your God. This is a perpetual law for all your descendants, wherever you live.

Ex 23:14d ***d: The feast of Weeks***

15 "From the day after the Sabbath, the day on which you bring the sheaf of offering, you will count seven full weeks. 16 You will count fifty days, to the day after the seventh Sabbath, and then you will offer Yahweh a new cereal offering. 17 You will bring bread from your homes to present with the gesture of offering—two loaves, made of two-tenths of wheaten flour baked with leaven; these are first-fruits for Yahweh. 18 In addition to the bread, you will offer seven unblemished lambs a year old, a young bull and two rams, as a burnt offering to Yahweh with a cereal offering and a libation, as food burnt as a smell pleasing to Yahweh. 19 You will also offer a goat as a sacrifice for sin, and two lambs a year old as communion sacrifice. 20 The priest will present them before Yahweh with the gesture of offering, in addition to the bread of the first-fruits. These, and the two lambs, are holy things for Yahweh, and will revert to the priest.

21 "On the same day, you will hold an assembly; for you this will be a sacred assembly; you will do no heavy work. This is a perpetual law for your descendants, wherever you live.

19:9–10 22 "When you reap the harvest in your country, you will not reap to the very edges of your field, nor will you gather the gleanings of the harvest. You will leave them
Ex 12:48*o* Rt 2:2,2a for the poor and the stranger. I am Yahweh your God." '

Nb 29:1–6 ***e: The first day of the seventh month***

23 Yahweh spoke to Moses and said:

24 'Speak to the Israelites and say:

Nb 10:10 "The first day of the seventh month[d] will be a day of rest for you, of remembrance and acclamation, a sacred assembly. 25 You will do no heavy work and you will offer food burnt for Yahweh." '

16;16:1a Nb 29:7–11 ***f: The Day of Expiation***

26 Yahweh spoke to Moses and said:

27 'But the tenth day of this seventh month will be the Day of Expiation. You will hold a sacred assembly. You will fast and offer food burnt for Yahweh. 28 You will do no work that day, for it is the Day of Expiation, on which the rite of expiation will be performed for you before Yahweh your God. 29 Anyone who fails to fast that day will be outlawed from his people; 30 anyone who works that day I shall eliminate from his people. 31 No work will be done—this is a perpetual law for your descendants wherever you live. 32 It must be a day of complete rest for you. You will fast; on the evening of the ninth day of the month, from this evening till the following evening, you will rest completely.'

Ex 23:14d ***g: The feast of Shelters***

33 Yahweh spoke to Moses and said:

34 'Speak to the Israelites and say:

"On the fifteenth day of this seventh month there will be the feast of Shelters for Yahweh, lasting for seven days. 35 The first day will be a day of sacred assembly; you will do no heavy work. 36 For seven days you will offer food burnt for Yahweh. On the eighth day you will hold a sacred assembly and you will offer food burnt for Yahweh. It is a day of solemn meeting; you will do no heavy work.

Conclusion

37 "These are Yahweh's solemn festivals to which you will summon the Israelites, the sacred assemblies for the purpose of offering food burnt for Yahweh, consisting of burnt offerings, cereal offerings, sacrifices and libations, each on its appropriate
38 day, ·besides Yahweh's Sabbaths, and your presents and all your votive and voluntary gifts that you make to Yahweh.

Recapitulation on the feast of Shelters [c]

39 "But on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the produce of the land, you will celebrate the feast of Yahweh for seven days. The
40 first and eighth days will be days of rest. ·On the first day you will take choice fruit, palm branches, boughs of leafy trees and flowering shrubs from the river bank, and
41 for seven days enjoy yourselves before Yahweh your God. ·You will celebrate a feast for Yahweh in this way for seven days every year. This is a perpetual law for your descendants.
42 "You will keep this feast in the seventh month. ·For seven days you will live in
43 shelters: all the citizens of Israel will live in shelters, ·so that your descendants may know that I made the Israelites live in shelters when I brought them out of Egypt, I, Yahweh your God." '
44 Moses then promulgated Yahweh's solemn festivals to the Israelites.

Complementary ritual prescriptions [a]

a: The perpetual flame

1 **24** Yahweh spoke to Moses and said:
2 'Order the Israelites to bring you crushed-olive oil for the lamp-stand, and 6:5–6
3 keep a flame burning there continually. ·Aaron will keep it permanently in trim Ex 25:31–40; 27:20seq.
from evening to morning, outside the curtain of the Testimony in the Tent of
4 Meeting, before Yahweh. This is a perpetual decree for your descendants: ·Aaron will keep the lamps permanently trimmed on the pure [b] lamp-stand before Yahweh.

b: The loaves of permanent offering on the golden table Ex 25:23j

5 'You will take wheaten flour and with it bake twelve loaves, each of two-tenths of
6 an *ephah*. ·You will then place them in two rows of six on the pure table before
7 Yahweh ·and put pure incense on each row, to make it food offered as a memorial,
8 food burnt for Yahweh. ·Every Sabbath they will be arranged before Yahweh. The
9 Israelites will provide them as a permanent covenant. ·They will belong to Aaron and his sons, who will eat them inside the holy place since, for him, they are an especially holy part of the food burnt for Yahweh. This is a permanent law.'

A case of blasphemy. The law of retaliation

10 There was a man whose mother was an Israelite woman and whose father was an Egyptian. He came out of his house and, in the camp, surrounded by the Israelites,
11 he began to quarrel with a man who was an Israelite. ·Now the son of the Israelite woman blasphemed the Name and cursed it. He was then taken to Moses (his Ex 22:27

d. The first day of each (lunar) month was long kept as a feast by both Israelites and Canaanites (the New Moon, or Neomenia), 1 S 20:5, 24; Is 1:13; Am 8:5, and was still observed into NT times, *see* Nb 28:11–15; Ne 10:34; Ezk 46:6–7; Col 2:16. The rituals of Lv 23 and Nb 29:1–6 retain only the New Moon of the seventh month (i.e. of the year beginning in spring) which for a long time was the first month (of a year that began in autumn).

e. This passage is a post-exilic addition emphasising the joyful character of the feast, in the manner of Dt 16:13–16, linking it to memories of the journey through the desert, v. 43.

24 a. Apart from vv. 15–22, which belong to the Law of Holiness, ch. 24 is the product of later Priestly editing, laying down daily (vv. 2–4) or weekly (vv. 5–9) usages for the Temple in Jerusalem by reference to texts from the same editing in Ex 25. A story, vv. 10–14 and 25, in the style of 10:1–5; 16:20; Nb 15:22-36, forms a frame for what the Law of Holiness taught on the subjects of blasphemy and retaliation.

b. 'pure', i.e. ritually; or perhaps 'of pure gold'; same alternative for the 'table' of v. 6.

mother's name was Shelomith daughter of Dibri, of the tribe of Dan). ·He was 12
then put under guard until Yahweh's will should be made clear to them.
Yahweh spoke to Moses and said: 13
'Take the man who pronounced the curse outside the camp. All those who heard 14
him must then lay their hands on his head, and the whole community must then
stone him. [c] ·Then say to the Israelites: 15
"Anyone who curses his God will bear the consequences of his sin, ·and anyone 16
who blasphemes the name of Yahweh will be put to death; the whole community
will stone him; be he alien or native-born, if he blasphemes the Name, [d] he will be
put to death.
Ex 21:12-20 "Anyone who strikes down any other human being, [e] will be put to death. 17
"Anyone who strikes down an animal will make restitution for it: a life for a life. 18
"Anyone who injures a neighbour shall receive the same in return, ·broken limb 19, 20
Ex 21:24seq., 24f for broken limb, eye for eye, tooth for tooth. As the injury inflicted, so will be the
injury suffered. ·Whoever strikes down an animal will make restitution for it, and 21
whoever strikes down a human being will be put to death. ·The sentence you pass 22
will be the same, whether on native-born or on alien; for I am Yahweh your
God." '
Moses having told the Israelites this, they took the man who had pronounced 23
the curse out of the camp and stoned him. And so the Israelites carried out
Yahweh's order to Moses.

The holy years [a]

Ex 23:10-11 Dt 15:1-11 ***a: The sabbatical year***

25 Yahweh spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai and said: 1
'Speak to the Israelites and say to them: 2
"When you enter the country which I am giving you, the land must keep a
Sabbath's rest for Yahweh. ·For six years you will sow your field, for six years you 3
will prune your vineyard and gather its produce. ·But in the seventh year the land 4
will have a sabbatical rest, a Sabbath for Yahweh. You will neither sow your field,
nor prune your vineyard, ·nor reap any grain which has grown of its own accord, 5
nor gather the grapes from your untrimmed vine. It will be a year of rest for the
land. ·But what the land produces in its Sabbath will serve to feed you, your slave, 6
male or female, your employee and your guest residing with you; ·for your cattle 7
too, and the wild animals of your country, whatever it produces will serve as food.

b: The year of jubilee

"You will count seven weeks of years—seven times seven years, that is to say a 8
period of seven weeks of years, forty-nine years. ·And on the tenth day of the 9
seventh month you will sound the trumpet-call; on the Day of Expiation you will
sound the trumpet throughout the land. ·You will declare this fiftieth year to be 10
Ex 21:2-11 Dt 15:12-18 Is 61:1-3 Jr 34:8-22 sacred and proclaim the liberation of all the country's inhabitants. You will keep
this as a jubilee: each of you will return to his ancestral property, each to his own
clan. ·This fiftieth year will be a jubilee year for you; in it you will not sow, you will 11
not harvest the grain that has come up on its own or in it gather grapes from your
untrimmed vine. ·The jubilee will be a holy thing for you; during it you will eat 12
whatever the fields produce.
"In this year of jubilee, each of you will return to his ancestral property. ·If you 13, 14
buy land from, or sell land to, your fellow-countryman, neither of you may exploit
the other. [b] ·In buying from your fellow-countryman, you will take account of the 15
number of years since the jubilee; the sale-price he fixes for you will depend on
the number of productive years still to run. ·The greater the number of years, the 16
higher the price you will ask for it; the fewer the number of years, the greater the
reduction; for what he is selling you is a certain number of harvests. ·So you will 17
not exploit one another, but fear your God, for I am Yahweh your God.

Divine guarantee for the sabbatical year

18 "Hence, you will put my laws and customs into practice; you will keep them and
19 put them into practice, and you will live securely in the country. ·The land will give
its fruit, and you will eat your fill and live in security.
20 "In case you should ask: What shall we eat in this seventh year if we do not sow
21 or harvest our produce? ·I shall order my blessing to be on you in the sixth year,
22 which will yield you enough produce for three years.[c] ·You will have the old
produce to eat while you are sowing in the eighth year, and even in the ninth year,
you will be eating the old produce, while waiting for the harvest of that year.

Redemption of land[d]

23 "Land will not be sold absolutely, for the land belongs to me, and you are only
24 strangers and guests of mine. ·You will allow a right of redemption over all
25 ancestral property. ·If your brother becomes impoverished and sells off part of his
ancestral property, his nearest male relative will come and exercise his family rights
26 over what his brother has sold. ·The man who has no one to exercise this right
27 may, once he has found the means to effect the redemption, ·calculate the number
of years that the alienation would have lasted, repay to the purchaser the sum due
28 for the time still to run, and so recover his ancestral property. ·If he cannot find the
sum in compensation, the property sold will remain in the possession of the
purchaser until the jubilee year. In the jubilee year, the latter will vacate it and
return to his own ancestral property.

1 Ch 29:15
Ps 24:1;39:12; 119:19
Jr 35:7
Rt 4:1–12
Jr 32:6–9

29 "If anyone sells a dwelling house inside a walled town, he will have the right of
redemption until the expiry of the year following the sale. His right of redemption
30 is limited to the year; ·and if the redemption has not been effected by the end of
the year, the house in the walled town will become the property of the purchaser
31 and his descendants in perpetuity; he need not vacate it at the jubilee.[e] ·But houses
in villages not enclosed by walls will be considered as situated in the open country;
they carry the right of redemption, and the purchaser will vacate them at the
jubilee.
32 "As regards the towns of the Levites, town houses forming part of their ancestral
33 property will carry a perpetual right of redemption in their favour.[f] ·If a Levite is
the one to be affected by the right of redemption, at the jubilee he will vacate the
purchased property and return to his own home, to the town in which he has a title
to property.[g] The houses in the Levites' towns represent their ancestral property
34 in Israel, ·and the arable land depending on these towns cannot be sold, being their
ancestral property for ever.

Nb 35:1–8
Jos 21
Ezk 48:13–14

c. The community, defiled by the curse, will be cleansed by the stoning of the guilty man; hands are imposed on him as on the sacrificial animal which is the community's substitute, 16:21.

d. 'the Name' Sam.; 'a name' Hebr.; 'the name of Yahweh' Gk.

e. Fatally, *see* Ex 21:12. These vv. reproduce the earlier injunctions of the Book of the Covenant but explicitly associate resident aliens with Israelites, vv. 16[b], 20[b]–22.

25 a. These laws assert God's absolute ownership of the Holy Land: even the soil will observe the Sabbath, *see* Ex 20:8f. The sabbatical year has already been mentioned in the Book of the Covenant, Ex 23:10–11; here the legislation is further defined, vv. 1–7. Its observance is attested after the Exile in Ne 10:32 and 1 M 6:49–53. To this legislation Dt 15:1–11 adds the cancellation of debts. There was also a liberation of Hebrew slaves in the seventh year of their service but not necessarily in a sabbatical year, Ex 21:2; Dt 15:12–18; in fact, however, it rarely took place, *see* Jr 34:8–16. To make it less burdensome, this liberation was enforced in jubilee years (vv. 8–17) which occurred every fifty years and were so called because announced by a trumpet, *yobel* (*see also* the allusion to the year of Liberation in Is 61:1–2). During this year the fields lay fallow and there was also a general enfranchisement of people and goods: everyone rejoined his own clan and everyone recovered his ancestral property, v. 10. These arrangements made for stability in a society based on the family and on family property. But in fact this was only a late attempt to make the sabbatical law more effective, and it does not seem that this particular law was ever observed.

b. This law ensures fair dealing in business; it also attacks the land monopolies denounced in Is 5:8 and Mi 2:2.

c. Three years, i.e. the sabbatical year, the jubilee year and also (since there was no autumn sowing in jubilee year) the following year.

d. This passage is an attempt to combine the jubilee law with the ancient institution of the *go'el*, the 'nearest male relative' of v. 25, *see* Nb 35:19c.

e. The jubilee law applied to town property only to a limited degree.

f. The sacred character of the Levitical towns was thus assured: only Levites could acquire permanent rights in them.

g. Text emended, Hebr. unintelligible. The case in question seems to be that of a Levite purchasing from another Levite, in which case the sale is regarded as valid. Alternatively, it may be a question of what happens when a Levite does not exercise the right of redemption.

Redemption of persons

"If your brother becomes impoverished and cannot support himself in the com- 35
Ex 12:48*o* munity, you will assist him as you would a stranger or guest, so that he can go on
living with you. ·Do not charge him interest on a loan, but fear your God, and let 36
your brother live with you. ·You will not lend him money on interest or give him 37
22:33+ food to make a profit out of it. ·I am Yahweh your God who brought you out of 38
Egypt to give you the land of Canaan and be your God.

Ex 21:2–11 "If your brother becomes impoverished while with you and sells himself to you, 39
Dt 15:12–18
Jr 34:8–22 you will not make him do the work of a slave; ·you will treat him like an employee 40
or guest, and he will work for you until the jubilee year. ·He will then leave you, 41
both he and his children, and return to his clan and regain possession of his
ancestral property. [h] ·For they are my servants whom I have brought out of Egypt, 42
and they may not be bought and sold as slaves. ·You will not oppress your 43
brother-Israelites harshly but will fear your God.

"The male and female slaves you have will come from the nations round you; 44
from these you may purchase male and female slaves. ·As slaves, you may also 45
purchase the children of aliens resident among you, and also members of their
families living with you who have been born on your soil; and they will become
your property, ·and you may leave them as a legacy to your sons after you as their 46
perpetual possession. These you may have for slaves; but you will not oppress your
brother-Israelites. [i]

"If a stranger or guest living with you gets rich and your brother, in the course of 47
dealings with him, becomes impoverished and sells himself to this stranger or
Ne 5:8 guest, or to the descendant of a stranger's family, ·he will enjoy the right of 48
redemption after being sold, and one of his brothers may redeem him. ·His 49
paternal uncle, his uncle's son, or a member of his own family may redeem him; if
he has the means, he may redeem himself. ·By agreement with his purchaser, he 50
will count the number of years between the year of sale and the jubilee year; his
sale-price will be proportionate to the number of years, his time being valued as
that of an employee. ·If there are still many years to run, in proportion to their 51
number he will refund part of his sale-price as payment for his redemption. ·And if 52
there are only a few years still to run before the jubilee year, he will calculate with
him what should be refunded for his redemption, in proportion to their number,
as though he were hired by the year. You will see to it that he is not harshly 53
oppressed.

"If he has not been redeemed in any of these ways, he will go free in the jubilee 54
year, both he and his children; ·for the Israelites are my servants; they are my 55
22:33+ servants whom I brought out of Egypt. I am Yahweh your God." '

Summary: conclusion

Ezk 8:12 **26** '"You will not make idols for yourselves; you will not erect statues or cultic 1
stones, or erect carved stones in your country, for you to worship: for I,
17:1a;=19:30 Yahweh, am your God. ·You will keep my Sabbaths and revere my sanctuary. I 2
Jr 17:19–27
Ezk 20:12–13 am Yahweh.

Dt 28:1–14 ### Blessings [a]

Dt 11:13–14 "If you live according to my laws, if you keep my commandments and put them 3
Is 1:19
Ezk 34:26–27 into practice, ·I shall give you the rain you need at the right time; the soil will yield 4
Am 9:13 its produce and the trees of the countryside their fruit; ·you will thresh until vintage 5
time and gather grapes until sowing time. You will eat your fill of bread and live
secure in your land.

"I shall give peace in the land, and you will go to sleep with no one to frighten 6
you. I shall rid the land of beasts of prey. The sword will not pass through your
Dt 28:7 land. ·You will pursue your enemies and they will fall before your sword; ·five of 7, 8
you pursuing a hundred of them, one hundred pursuing ten thousand; and your
enemies will fall before your sword.

9 "I shall turn towards you, I shall make you fertile and make your numbers grow,
and I shall uphold my covenant with you.
10 "Having eaten all you need of last year's harvest, you will throw out the old to 25:21–22
make room for the new.
11, 12 "I shall fix my home among you and never reject you. •I shall live among you; I Dt 4:7b
13 shall be your God and you will be my people, •I, Yahweh your God, who brought Ezk 48:35
you out of Egypt so that you should be their slaves no longer, and who broke the Jn 1:14m
bonds of your yoke and made you walk with head held high. Ezk ↗2 Co 6:16 ↗Rv 21:3 •22:33+ Ex 6:7

Curses

Dt 28:15–68 Am 4:6–12

14 "But if you will not listen to me and do not put all these commandments into
15 practice, •if you reject my laws and detest my customs, and you break my covenant
16 by not putting all my commandments into practice, •this is how I shall treat you:
"I shall subject you to terror, consumption and fever, making you dim of sight
17 and short of breath. You will sow your seed in vain, for your enemies will eat it. •I
shall turn against you and you will be defeated by your enemies. Your foes will
have the mastery over you, and you will flee when no one is pursuing you.
18 "And if, in spite of this, you will not listen to me, I shall punish you seven times
19 over for your sins. •I shall break your proud strength. I shall make the sky like iron Jr 5:24seq.; 14:1–9;23
20 for you, and your soil like bronze. •You will wear out your strength in vain, your
land will not yield its produce, nor the trees of the country their fruit. Dt 11:17
21 "And if you go against me and will not listen to me, I shall heap seven times
22 more plagues on you for your sins. •I shall send wild animals to attack you and rob Ezk 14:15
you of your children, destroy your cattle and reduce your numbers until your roads Lm 1:4
are deserted.
23, 24 "And if that does not reform you, and you still go against me, •then I shall go
25 against you and punish you another seven times over for your sins. •I shall bring
the sword on you, which will avenge the covenant, and when you huddle inside Ezk 21
your towns, I shall send pestilence among you, and you will fall into the enemy's
26 clutches. •When I take away the bread which supports you[b], ten women will be Ps 105:16 Ezk 4:16
able to bake your bread in one oven and will then dole your bread out by weight;
you will eat but not be satisfied.
27, 28 "And if, in spite of this, you will not listen to me but go against me, •I shall go
29 against you in fury and punish you seven times over for your sins. •You will eat the
30 flesh of your own sons, you will eat the flesh of your own daughters. •I shall destroy Lm 2:20;4:10 Ezk 5:10
your high places and smash your incense-altars; I shall pile your corpses on the Ezk 6:1–7
31 corpses of your foul idols and shall reject you. •I shall reduce your cities to ruins; Jr 22:5 Lm 2:5
I shall lay waste your sanctuary[c] and refuse to inhale from you smells intended to Am 5:21–23,21r
32 please. •I shall make such a desolation of the country that your enemies who come
33 to live there will be appalled by it. •And I shall scatter you among the nations. I
shall unsheathe the sword against you, reducing your country to desert and your
34 towns to ruins. •Then the country will indeed observe its Sabbaths, all the while it 2 Ch 36:21
lies deserted, while you are in the country of your enemies. Then indeed the
35 country will rest and observe its Sabbaths. •And as it lies deserted it will rest, as it
36 never did on your Sabbaths when you were living there. •I shall strike such fear Ezk 21:12
into the hearts of those of you who survive in the countries of their enemies that

h. This is an attempt to harmonise the jubilee law with the ancient law in the Book of the Covenant on the emancipation of slaves after six years' service, Ex 21:2–6. The new law is utopian: a slave bought at the beginning of a jubilee period was more than likely to die before being emancipated and in any case was too old to work as a free man; he was, however, to be given a less exacting status than that of slave, *see* vv. 45–46.

i. Between Israelite and foreigner the common slave law of antiquity was to hold; between Israelite and Israelite, beneficiaries of the divine covenant, another law was to obtain. The NT brings all nations into the covenant.

26 a. Like the Deuteronomic code, Dt 28, the Law of Holiness ends with blessings and curses. But the differences in vocabulary and content show that there is no literary relationship between the two texts. Ancient Middle Eastern treaties of alliance ('covenants') also ended with conditional blessings and imprecations.

b. lit. 'I shall break your staff of bread'. On this figure of speech for famine, *see* Ps 105:16.

c. Text has 'sanctuaries', a Phoenician plural for premises of importance; numerous MSS have singular.

Jb 32:25 the sound of a falling leaf will set them fleeing; they will flee as though fleeing from
the sword, and fall when no one is pursuing. 37 They will stumble over one another
as though fleeing before the sword, when no one is pursuing. You will be powerless
to stand up to your enemies; 38 you will perish among the nations, and the land of
Ezk 4:17 your enemies will swallow you up. 39 Those of you who survive will pine away in
their guilt in the countries of their enemies and, bearing the guilt of their ancestors
too, will pine away like them.

"Then they shall admit their guilt and that of their ancestors and their infidelities 40
against me, and further, their setting themselves against me.

Jr 4:4a "I in my turn will go against them and bring them into the land of their enemies. 41
Ezk 16:60seq.; 20:9,13,16, 23–24 Then their uncircumcised hearts will grow humble and then they will accept the
Gn 17:7–8; 26:3–4; 28:13–14 punishment for their guilt. 42 I shall remember my covenant with Jacob, I shall
remember my covenant with Isaac and my covenant with Abraham; and I shall
remember the country too.

"Abandoned, the country will keep its Sabbaths, as it lies deserted in their 43
absence,[d] and they will have to accept the punishment for their guilt, since they
detested my customs and rejected my laws.

"Yet, in spite of all this, when they are in the land of their enemies, I shall not so 44
Dt 4:29–31 utterly reject or detest them as to destroy them completely and break my covenant
Rm 11:1seq.,1a •Lm 3:21seq., 31seq.;5:21seq. with them; for I am Yahweh their God. 45 For their sake I shall remember the
covenant I made with those first generations that I brought out of Egypt while
other nations watched, so that I should be their God, I, Yahweh." '

22:33 Such were the decrees, customs and laws which Yahweh established between 46
himself and the Israelites on Mount Sinai through Moses.

APPENDIX

Tariffs and Valuations[a]

a: Persons

27 Yahweh spoke to Moses and said: 1
'Speak to the Israelites and say: 2

"If anyone vows the value of a person[b] to Yahweh and wishes to discharge the vow:

"a man between twenty and sixty years of age will be valued at fifty silver 3
shekels—the sanctuary shekel; 4 a woman will be valued at thirty shekels;

"between five and twenty years, a boy will be valued at twenty shekels, a girl at 5
ten shekels;

"between one month and five years, a boy will be valued at five silver shekels, a 6
girl at three silver shekels;

"at sixty years and over, a man will be valued at fifteen shekels and a woman at 7
ten shekels.

5:7,11 "If the person who made the vow cannot meet this valuation, he will present the 8
person concerned to the priest, and the priest will set a value proportionate to the
resources of the person who made the vow.

b: Animals

"In the case of an animal suitable for offering to Yahweh, any such animal given to 9
Yahweh will be holy. 10 It cannot be exchanged or replaced, a good one instead of a
bad one, or a bad one instead of a good one. If one animal is substituted for
another, both of them will become holy. 11 In the case of an unclean animal unsuit-
able for offering to Yahweh, whatever it may be, it will be presented to the priest
and he will set a value on it, in relation to its worth. His valuation will be decisive; 12
but if the person wishes to redeem it, he will add one-fifth to the valuation. 13

c: Houses

14 "If a man consecrates his house to Yahweh, the priest will set a value on it, in
15 relation to its worth. His valuation will be decisive. ·If the man who has vowed his house wishes to redeem it, he will add one-fifth to the valuation, and it will revert to him.

d: Fields

16 "If a man consecrates one of the fields of his ancestral property to Yahweh, its value will be calculated in terms of its yield,[c] at the rate of fifty silver shekels to one *homer* of barley.
17 "If he consecrates the field during the jubilee year, he will abide by this valua-
18 tion. ·But if he consecrates it after the jubilee, the priest will calculate the price in terms of the number of years still to run until the next jubilee and the valuation will be reduced accordingly.
19 "If he wishes to redeem the field, he will add one-fifth to the valuation, and the
20 field will revert to him. ·If he does not redeem it but sells it to someone else, the
21 right of redemption ceases; ·when the purchaser has to vacate it at the jubilee year,[d] it becomes consecrated to Yahweh, like a field vowed unconditionally; 27:28e
ownership of it passes to the priest.
22 "If he consecrates to Yahweh a field which he has bought, but which is not
23 part of his ancestral property, ·the priest will calculate the valuation in terms of the number of years still to run before the jubilee year; and the man will pay this
24 sum the same day since it is consecrated to Yahweh. ·In the jubilee year the field will revert to the vendor, the man to whose ancestral property the land belongs.
25 All your valuations will be made in sanctuary shekels, at the rate of twenty *gerah* to the shekel. Ex 30:15c

Particular rules for the redemption

a: of the first-born

26 "The first-born of livestock is born to Yahweh; no one may consecrate it, whether Ex 13:11b
27 it be cattle or sheep, for it belongs to Yahweh anyway. ·But if it is an unclean animal, it may be redeemed at the valuation price with one-fifth added; if the animal is not redeemed, it will be sold at the valuation price.

b: of things vowed unconditionally[e]

28 "Nothing, however, that someone vows unconditionally to Yahweh may be redeemed, nothing he possesses, be it a human being or animal or field of his ancestral property. What is vowed unconditionally is especially holy and belongs
29 to Yahweh. ·A human being vowed unconditionally cannot be redeemed but will be put to death.

c: of tithes Dt 14:22d

30 "All tithes on land, levied on the produce of the soil or on the fruit of trees, belong
31 to Yahweh; they are consecrated to Yahweh. ·If anyone wishes to redeem part of his tithe, he will add one-fifth to its value.
32 "In all tithes on herds or flocks, the tenth animal of all that pass under the

d. Or 'because of them'.

27 a. This ch. is an addition. It lists rules for the discharge of vows, 7:16; 22:21; Nb 30:3–16; Dt 12:6–12; 23:19, 22–24. These regulations belonged to the post-exilic Temple and probably existed separately until attached to the legislation given on Sinai, vv. 1–2[a] and 34. Originally, a vow imposed a serious obligation, but this later became relaxed and it was ultimately conceded that it might be commuted by a money-payment, except in the case of things vowed unconditionally, vv. 28–29.

b. Persons might be vowed, *see* Jg 11:30–40; 13:3 seq.; 1 S 1:11.

c. Alternative translation 'in proportion to the seed (used) for it'.

d. The matter here and at v. 23 is dependent on ch. 25.

e. The Hebr. technical term, *herem*, see also v. 21 above, is borrowed from the vocabulary of the Holy War (Jos 6:17c) and here transferred to whatever is unconditionally vowed to God. According to v. 21; Nb 18:14; Ezk 44:29, the usufruct reverted to the priest. The word *herem* is also used of things forbidden by God, Dt 7:26.

herdsman's staff will be consecrated to Yahweh; ·there will be no examining 33
Ml 1:8 whether it is good or bad, and no substitution. If substitution takes place, the animal and its substitute will both become holy without possibility of redemption." '

26:46 Such were the orders which Yahweh gave Moses on Mount Sinai for the 34 Israelites.

NUMBERS

I: THE CENSUS [a]

26
2 S 24

1 Yahweh spoke to Moses, in the desert of Sinai, in the Tent of Meeting, on the first day of the second month, [b] in the second year after the exodus from Egypt, and said:

2 'Take a census of the whole community of Israelites by clans and families, taking
3 a count of the names of all the males, head by head. ·You and Aaron will register all those in Israel, twenty years of age and over, fit to bear arms, company by
4 company; ·you will have one man from each tribe, the head of his family, to help you.

The census officials

10:13–28

5 'These are the names of those who must help you:
For Reuben, Elizur son of Shedeur. 2:10;7:30; 10:18
6 For Simeon, Shelumiel son of Zurishaddai.
7 For Judah, Nahshon son of Amminadab. 2:3 Rt 4:20 Mt 1:4 Lk 3:32–33
8 For Issachar, Nethanel son of Zuar.
9 For Zebulun, Eliab son of Helon.
10 Of the sons of Joseph: for Ephraim, Elishama son of Ammihud; for Manasseh, Gamaliel son of Pedahzur.
11 For Benjamin, Abidan son of Gideoni.
12 For Dan, Ahiezer son of Ammishaddai.
13 For Asher, Pagiel son of Ochran.
14 For Gad, Eliasaph son of Reuel. 2:14;7:42
15 For Naphtali, Ahira son of Enan.'
16 These were men of repute in the community; they were the leaders of their ancestral tribes, the heads of Israel's thousands. [c] Ex 18:21,25
17, 18 Moses and Aaron took these men who had been named ·and on the first day of the second month they mustered the whole community. The Israelites established their pedigrees [d] by clans and families, and one by one the names of all men of
19 twenty years and over were recorded. ·As Yahweh had ordered, Moses registered them in the desert of Sinai.

The census

Rv 7:4–8

20 Once the pedigrees of the descendants of Reuben, Israel's first-born, had been established by clans and families, the names of all the males of twenty years and
21 over, fit to bear arms, were recorded one by one. ·The total of these for the tribe of Reuben was forty-six thousand five hundred.

1 **a.** This section (ch. 1–4), attributed to the Priestly tradition, presents Israel as a sacred community already fully formed and organised. The Levites are at the very heart of it: this appears from the place assigned to them in the camp, the nature of their functions and even from their numbers (interpreted in terms of the redemption of the first-born). The taking of a census was itself regarded as an act of religious significance, *see* 2 S 24. The MSS and versions do not always agree on the figures.

b. Hence one month after the erection of the Dwelling, Ex 40:17.

c. 'Thousand' is an ancient term equivalent to 'clan', 1 S 10:19, 21, seen from the military point of view.

d. A necessity under the old covenant because membership depended on physical descent from Abraham; hence the genealogies of 1 Ch 1–9; *see also* Ne 7:5, 61.

Once the pedigrees of Simeon's descendants had been established by clans and families, the names of all the males of twenty years and over, fit to bear arms, were recorded one by one. ·The total of these for the tribe of Simeon was fifty-nine thousand three hundred. 22 23

Once the pedigrees of Gad's descendants had been established by clans and families, the names of all the males of twenty years and over, fit to bear arms, were recorded one by one. ·The total of these for the tribe of Gad was forty-five thousand six hundred and fifty. 24 25

Once the pedigrees of Judah's descendants had been established by clans and families, the names of all the males of twenty years and over, fit to bear arms, were recorded one by one. ·The total of these for the tribe of Judah was seventy-four thousand six hundred. 26 27

Once the pedigrees of Issachar's descendants had been established by clans and families, the names of all the males of twenty years and over, fit to bear arms, were recorded one by one. ·The total of these for the tribe of Issachar was fifty-four thousand four hundred. 28 29

Once the pedigrees of Zebulun's descendants had been established by clans and families, the names of all the males of twenty years and over, fit to bear arms, were recorded one by one. ·The total of these for the tribe of Zebulun was fifty-seven thousand four hundred. 30 31

As regards the descendants of Joseph: once the pedigrees of Ephraim's descendants had been established by clans and families, the names of all the males of twenty years and over, fit to bear arms, were recorded one by one. ·The total of these for the tribe of Ephraim was forty thousand five hundred. 32 33

Once the pedigrees of Manasseh's descendants had been established by clans and families, the names of all the males of twenty years and over, fit to bear arms, were recorded one by one. ·The total of these for the tribe of Manasseh was thirty-two thousand two hundred. 34 35

Once the pedigrees of Benjamin's descendants had been established by clans and families, the names of all the males of twenty years and over, fit to bear arms, were recorded one by one. ·The total of these for the tribe of Benjamin was thirty-five thousand four hundred. 36 37

Once the pedigrees of Dan's descendants had been established by clans and families, the names of all the males of twenty years and over, fit to bear arms, were recorded one by one. ·The total of these for the tribe of Dan was sixty-two thousand seven hundred. 38 39

Once the pedigrees of Asher's descendants had been established by clans and families, the names of all the males of twenty years and over, fit to bear arms, were recorded one by one. ·The total of these for the tribe of Asher was forty-one thousand five hundred. 40 41

Once the pedigrees of Naphtali's descendants had been established by clans and families, the names of all the males of twenty years and over, fit to bear arms, were recorded one by one. ·The total of these for the tribe of Naphtali was fifty-three thousand four hundred. 42 43

Such were the men registered by Moses, Aaron and the leaders of Israel, of whom there were twelve, each representing his family. ·All the Israelites of twenty years and over, fit to bear arms, were counted by families. ·Altogether, the total came to six hundred and three thousand five hundred and fifty.[e] 44 45 46

2:32;11:21; 26:51 Ex 12:37;38:26

But the Levites and their tribes were not included in the count. 47

Statute for the Levites

2:33;3:11d,21–23;4:1–33;8:19;18:3–4,7,23 1 Ch 15:1a

Yahweh spoke to Moses and said: 48

'Do not, however, take a census of the Levites, or register them with the other Israelites, ·but enrol the Levites to take charge of the Dwelling where the Testimony[f] is and of all its furnishings and belongings. They must carry the Dwelling and all its furnishings; they must look after the Dwelling and pitch their camp 49 50

Ex 25–28 ·3:6–8 Ezk 48:8–14

51 round it. •Whenever the Dwelling is moved, the Levites will dismantle it; whenever 9:15–23
the Dwelling stops for the night, the Levites will erect it. Any unauthorised person Ex 40:36–38
52 coming near it will be put to death. •The Israelites will pitch their tents, each in •3:10,38
53 their own encampment and by their own standard, company by company, •but the Ex 19:12e
Levites will pitch their tents round the Dwelling where the Testimony is. In this
way Retribution[g] will be kept from falling on the whole community of Israelites,
and the Levites will keep charge of the Dwelling of the Testimony.'
54 The Israelites did exactly as Yahweh had ordered Moses. They did as he said.

Order of the tribes 10:11–28

1 2 Yahweh spoke to Moses and to Aaron and said:
2 'The Israelites must pitch their tents, each man by his own standard, under
their family emblems. They must pitch their tents round the Dwelling where the
Testimony is, some distance away.
3 'Encamped on the east side:
'Furthest towards the east, the standard of the camp of Judah, unit by unit.
4 Leader of the Judahites: Nahshon son of Amminadab. •His company: seventy-four
thousand six hundred men.
5 'Next to him:
6 'The tribe of Issachar. Leader of the Issacharites: Nethanel son of Zuar. •His
company: fifty-four thousand four hundred men.
7, 8 'The tribe of Zebulun. Leader of the Zebulunites: Eliab son of Helon. •His
company: fifty-seven thousand four hundred men.
9 'The tribal forces in the camp of Judah number in all a hundred and eighty-six
thousand four hundred. These will be the first to break camp.
10 'On the south side, the standard of the camp of Reuben, unit by unit. Leader of
11 the Reubenites: Elizur son of Shedeur. •His company: forty-six thousand five
hundred men.
12 'Next to him:
'The tribe of Simeon. Leader of the Simeonites: Shelumiel son of Zurishaddai.
13 His company: fifty-nine thousand three hundred men.
14, 15 'The tribe of Gad. Leader of the Gadites: Eliasaph son of Reuel. •His company:
forty-five thousand six hundred and fifty men.
16 'The tribal forces in the camp of Reuben number in all a hundred and fifty-one
thousand four hundred and fifty. They will be second to break camp.
17 'Next, the Tent of Meeting will move, since the camp of the Levites is situated in
the middle of the other camps. The order of movement will be the order of
encampment, each man under his own standard.
18 'On the west side, the standard of the camp of Ephraim, unit by unit. Leader of
19 the Ephraimites: Elishama son of Ammihud. •His company: forty thousand five
hundred men.
20 'Next to him:
'The tribe of Manasseh. Leader of the Manassehites: Gamaliel son of Pedahzur.
21 His company: thirty-two thousand two hundred men.
22 'The tribe of Benjamin. Leader of the Benjaminites: Abidan son of Gideoni.
23 His company: thirty-five thousand four hundred men.
24 'The tribal forces in the camp of Ephraim number in all a hundred and eight
thousand one hundred. They will be third to break camp.
25 'On the north side, the standard of the camp of Dan, unit by unit. Leader of the
26 Danites: Ahiezer son of Ammishaddai. •His company: sixty-two thousand seven
hundred men.
27 'Next to him:

e. There were six hundred thousand of them when they left Egypt. Both figures should be interpreted along the lines of Ex 12:37k.

f. *see* Ex 16:34g.

g. i.e. divine retribution, *see* Lv 10:1–3; Dt 29:23–27, associated with the presence of God, residing in the Tent, whom the people's irreverence would offend.

'The tribe of Asher. Leader of the Asherites: Pagiel son of Ochran. ·His 28
company: forty-one thousand five hundred men.
'The tribe of Naphtali. Leader of the Naphtalites: Ahira son of Enan. ·His 29, 30
company: fifty-three thousand four hundred men.
'The tribal forces in the camp of Dan number in all a hundred and fifty-seven 31
thousand six hundred. They will be the last to break camp.
'All under their appropriate standards.'
Such was the tally of the Israelites when the census was taken by families. The 32
1:46e full count of the entire camp, unit by unit, came to six hundred and three thousand
five hundred and fifty. ·But, as Yahweh had ordered Moses, the Levites were not 33
included in the census of the Israelites.
The Israelites did exactly as Yahweh had ordered Moses. This was how they 34
pitched camp, grouped by standards. This was how they broke camp, each man in
his own clan, each man with his own family.

The tribe of Levi

a: The priests

26:59–61 3 These were the descendants of Aaron and Moses, at the time when Yahweh 1
spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai.
Ex 6:23 These were the names of Aaron's sons: Nadab the eldest, then Abihu, Eleazar 2
and Ithamar. [a]
Ex 29;30:22d Lv 8–9 Such were the names of Aaron's sons, priests anointed and invested with the 3
powers of the priesthood. ·Nadab and Abihu died in Yahweh's presence, in the 4
Lv 10:1–7 desert of Sinai, when they offered unauthorised fire before Yahweh. They left no
children and so it fell to Eleazar and Ithamar to exercise the priesthood under their
father Aaron.

b: The Levites: their duties

Yahweh spoke to Moses and said: 5
'Muster the tribe of Levi and put it at the disposal of the priest Aaron: they must 6
be at his service. ·They will undertake the duties incumbent on him and the whole 7
community before the Tent of Meeting, in serving the Dwelling, ·and they will be 8
in charge of all the furnishings of the Tent of Meeting and undertake the duties
incumbent on the Israelites in serving the Dwelling. ·You will present the Levites 9
8:14–19 Ezr 2:43d to Aaron and his sons as men dedicated; [b] they will be given to him by the
Israelites. [c]
'You will register Aaron and his sons, who will carry out their priestly duty. But 10
1:51 any unauthorised person who comes near must be put to death.'

c: Their privileged status [d]

Yahweh spoke to Moses and said: 11
'Look, I myself have chosen the Levites from the Israelites instead of all the 12
Ex 13:11b first-born, those who emerge first from the womb in Israel; the Levites therefore
belong to me. ·For every first-born belongs to me. On the day when I struck down 13
all the first-born in Egypt, I consecrated all the first-born in Israel, of both man and
beast, to be my own. They are mine, Yahweh's.'

26:57–62 ***d: Census of the Levites***

Yahweh spoke to Moses in the desert of Sinai and said: 14
'You must take a census of Levi's descendants by families and clans; all the 15
males of the age of one month and over will be counted.'
At Yahweh's word Moses took a census of them, as Yahweh had ordered. 16
Gn 46:11 Ex 6:16–19 These were the names of Levi's sons: Gershon, Kohath and Merari. 17
These were the names of Gershon's sons by their clans: Libni and Shimei; 18
Kohath's sons by their clans: Amram, Izhar, Hebron and Uzziel; ·Merari's sons by 19, 20
their clans: Mahli and Mushi. These were the clans of Levi, grouped by families.

21 From Gershon were descended the Libnite and Shimeite clans; these were the
22 Gershonite clans. ·Their full number, counting the males of one month and over,
23 came to seven thousand five hundred. ·The Gershonite clans pitched their camp
24 behind the Dwelling, on the west side. ·The leader of the House of Gershon was
25 Eliasaph son of Lael. ·As regards the Tent of Meeting, the Gershonites had charge
of the Dwelling, the Tent and its covering, the screen for the entrance to the Tent Ex 26–27
26 of Meeting, ·the curtaining of the court, the screen for the entrance to the court
surrounding the Dwelling and the altar, and the cords required in dealing with all
this.
27 From Kohath were descended the Amramite, Izharite, Hebronite and Uzzielite
28 clans; these were the Kohathite clans. ·Their full number, counting the males of
one month and over, came to eight thousand three hundred. They were in charge
29 of the sanctuary. ·The Kohathite clans pitched their camp on the south side of the
30 Dwelling. ·The leader of the house of the Kohathite clans was Elizaphan son of
31 Uzziel. ·They were in charge of the ark, the table, the lamp-stand, the altars, the Ex 25:10–40; 27:1–8; 30:1–10
sacred vessels used in the liturgy, and the curtain with all its fittings.
32 The chief of the Levite leaders was Eleazar, son of Aaron the priest. He
supervised the people responsible for the sanctuary.
33 From Merari were descended the Mahlite and Mushite clans; these were the
34 Merarite clans. ·Their full number, counting the males of one month and over,
35 came to six thousand two hundred. ·The leader of the House of the Merarite clans
was Zuriel, son of Abihail. They pitched their camp on the north side of the
36 Dwelling. ·The Merarites were in charge of the framework of the Dwelling, with Ex 26:15–30; 27:9–19
37 its crossbars, poles, sockets and all its accessories and fittings, ·and also the poles
round the court, with their sockets, pegs and cords.
38 Finally, on the east side, in front of the Dwelling, in front of the Tent of Meeting,
towards the east, was the camp of Moses and Aaron and his sons, who had charge
of the sanctuary on behalf of the Israelites. Any unauthorised person coming near 1:51
was to be put to death.
39 The total number of male Levites of the age of one month and over, whom
Moses counted by clans as Yahweh had ordered, came to twenty-two thousand.

e: The Levites and the ransoming of the first-born

40 Yahweh said to Moses:
'Take a census of all the first-born of the Israelites, all the males from the age of
41 one month and over; take a census of them by name. ·You will then present the
Levites to me, Yahweh, instead of Israel, and similarly the Levites' cattle instead
of the first-born cattle of the Israelites.' 3:12–13 Ex 13:11b
42 As Yahweh ordered, Moses took a census of all the first-born of the Israelites.
43 The total count, by name, of the first-born from the age of one month and over
came to twenty-two thousand two hundred and seventy-three. [c]
44 Yahweh then spoke to Moses and said:
45 'Take the Levites instead of all the first-born of the Israelites, and the Levites' Ex 13:11b
46 cattle instead of their cattle; the Levites will be mine, Yahweh's. ·For the ransom
of the two hundred and seventy-three first-born of the Israelites in excess of the
47 number of Levites, ·you will take five shekels for each, by the sanctuary shekel, at
48 twenty *gerah* to the shekel; ·you will then give this money to Aaron and his sons as Lv 5:15h
the ransom for the extra number.'

3 **a.** Zadok and the priests of the Temple of Jerusalem were traced back to Eleazar, 1 Ch 5:30 seq.; 18:16; *see* 2 S 8:17. Abiathar, the other priest of David's time, was descended, through Ahimelech, from Ithamar, 1 Ch 24:3 seq., *see* 2 S 20:25.

b. The dedicated men are described as lesser ministers of the post-exilic Temple in Ezr 2:43d.

c. Gk, Sam. and 12 Hebr. MSS read 'they will be given to me.'

d. The Levites belong to Yahweh, like the first-born, whose place they take, Ex 13:11b. As in Ex 13:14, the institution is linked to the tenth plague of Egypt (Ex 11:4 seq.; 12:29 seq.) and the choice of the Levites is understood as a substitution for the first-born of Israel who were spared, *see* Nb 8:12.

e. The figure represented the number of Levites, v. 39, plus a remainder who were to be redeemed by a cash payment, *see* Lv 27:3–7, which practice later became the general rule.

Moses took the ransom money for the extra ones unransomed by the Levites; 49
he took the money for the first-born of the Israelites: one thousand three hundred 50
and sixty-five shekels, by the sanctuary shekel; ·and Moses then handed over their 51
ransom money to Aaron and his sons, at Yahweh's bidding, as Yahweh had
ordered Moses.

The Levite clans

a: The Kohathites

4 Yahweh spoke to Moses and said: 1
'Take a census by clans and families of the Levites descended from Kohath: 2
all the men between thirty and fifty years of age and eligible for military service, 3
who will have their duties in the Tent of Meeting.
'These are the duties of the Kohathites: looking after those things that are 4
especially holy.
'When camp is broken, Aaron and his sons must come and take down the 5
Ex 26:31–37; 35:12;39:34 screening curtain, and cover the ark of the Testimony with it. ·Over this, they will 6
2 S 6:7f put a covering of fine leather, over which they will spread a cloth entirely of
violet-purple. They will then fix the poles to the ark.
Ex 25:23j 'Over the offertory table they will spread a violet cloth, and on it put the dishes, 7
cups, bowls and libation jars; the bread of permanent offering will also be on it.
Over these they will spread a scarlet cloth and cover the whole with a covering of 8
fine leather. They will then fix the poles to the table.
'They will then take a violet cloth and cover the lamp-stand, its lamps, snuffers, 9
trays and all the oil jars used for it, ·and will lay it and all its accessories in a 10
covering of fine leather and put it on the litter.
Ex 30:1–6 'Over the golden altar[a] they will spread a violet cloth, and cover that with a 11
covering of fine leather. They will then fix the poles to it.
'They will then take all the other objects used in the service of the sanctuary, put 12
them in a violet cloth, with a covering of fine leather, and put it all on the litter.
'When they have removed the ashes from the altar,[b] they will spread a scarlet 13
cloth over it, ·and on this place all the objects used in the liturgy, the fire pans, 14
hooks, scoops, sprinkling basins and all the altar accessories. Over this they will
spread a covering of fine leather. They will then fix the poles to it.
'Once Aaron and his sons have finished covering the holy things and all their 15
accessories at the breaking of camp, the Kohathites will come and carry them, but
Lv 17:1a 2 S 6:7f without touching any of the holy things on pain of death. Such is the load for the
Kohathites in the Tent of Meeting. ·But Eleazar, son of Aaron the priest, is 16
Ex 27:20; 30:34–38 responsible for looking after the oil for the light, the fragrant incense, the daily
Ex 30:22–23 cereal offering and the anointing oil, and for supervising the entire Dwelling and
everything in it, the holy things and their accessories.'
Yahweh spoke to Moses and said: 17
'You must not let the group of Kohathite clans be lost to the rest of the Levites. 18
But deal with them in this way, so that they may survive and not incur death by 19
approaching those things that are especially holy. Aaron and his sons will go in and
assign to each of them his task and load, ·in such a way that they have no need to 20
incur the death penalty by going in and setting eyes on the holy things, even for an
instant.'

b: The Gershonites

Yahweh spoke to Moses and said: 21
'Take a census of the Gershonites by families and clans, too: ·all the men 22, 23
between thirty and fifty years of age, eligible for military service, who will have
their duties in the Tent of Meeting.
'These are the duties of the Gershonite clans, their functions and their loads. 24
They will carry the curtaining of the Dwelling, the Tent of Meeting with its 25

covering and the covering of fine leather that goes over it, the screen for the
26 entrance to the Tent of Meeting, ·the curtaining of the court, the screen for
the entrance to the court surrounding the Dwelling and the altar, the cords, all the
accessories for worship, and all the necessary equipment.
27 'They will be responsible for these things. ·All the duties of the Gershonites,
their functions and their loads, will be carried out under the direction of Aaron and
28 his sons: you will see that they fulfil their charge. ·Such are the duties of the
Gershonite clans in the Tent of Meeting. Their work will be supervised by Ithamar,
son of Aaron the priest.

c: The Merarites

29, 30 'You will take a census of the Merarites by clans and families. ·You will take a
census of all the men between thirty and fifty years of age, eligible for military
service, who will have their duties in the Tent of Meeting.
31 'The load they carry and the duties incumbent on them in the Tent of Meeting
will be as follows: the framework of the Dwelling, its cross-bars, poles and sockets,
32 ·the poles round the court with their sockets, pegs, cords and all their tackle. You
will draw up a list of their names with the loads for which each is responsible.
33 'Such are the duties of the Merarite clans. All their duties in the Tent of Meeting
will be supervised by Ithamar, son of Aaron the priest.'

Census of the Levites

34 Moses, Aaron and the leaders of the community took a census of the Kohathites
35 by clans and families: ·all the men between thirty and fifty years of age, eligible for
36 military service, for duties in the Tent of Meeting. ·The number of men counted in
37 their clans came to two thousand seven hundred and fifty. ·Such was the total
number of men in the Kohathite clans who were eligible for duties in the Tent of
Meeting and whom Moses and Aaron counted at Yahweh's bidding through
Moses.
38, 39 A census was taken of the Gershonites by clans and families: ·all the men
between thirty and fifty years of age, eligible for military service, for duties in the
40 Tent of Meeting. ·The number of men counted in their clans and families came to
41 two thousand six hundred and thirty. ·Such was the total number of men in the
Gershonite clans who were eligible for duties in the Tent of Meeting, and whom
Moses and Aaron counted at Yahweh's bidding.
42, 43 A census was taken of the Merarite clans by clans and families: ·all the men
between thirty and fifty years of age, eligible for military service, for duties in the
44 Tent of Meeting. ·The number of men counted in their clans came to three
45 thousand two hundred. ·Such was the total number of men in the Merarite clans,
whom Moses and Aaron counted at Yahweh's bidding through Moses.
46 The total number of Levites whom Moses, Aaron and the leaders of Israel
47 counted in their clans and families, ·all the men between thirty and fifty years of
age, eligible for religious duties and for those of transporting the Tent of Meeting
48, 49 came to eight thousand five hundred and eighty. ·At Yahweh's bidding through
Moses, a census was taken of them and each man was assigned his duty and load.
And so the census was conducted by Moses as Yahweh had ordered him.

4 **a.** The altar of incense.
b. The altar of burnt offerings.

II: VARIOUS LAWS[a]

Dt 23:10–15 **Expulsion of the unclear**

5 Yahweh spoke to Moses and said: 1
Lv 13:45–46; 15 'Order the Israelites to expel from the camp all those suffering from a contagious skin-disease or from a discharge, or who have become unclear by touching a 2
19:11–16 corpse. ·Whether man or woman, you will expel them; you will expel them from 3
1 Co 5:7–13 the camp, so that they do not pollute their encampments, in the heart of which I
2 Co 6:16–18 Rv 21:27;22:15 dwell.'[b]

The Israelites did so: they expelled them from the camp. The Israelites did as 4
Yahweh had told Moses.

Restitution

Yahweh spoke to Moses and said, ·'Speak to the Israelites: 5, 6
Lv 5:15–26 "If a man or woman commits any of the sins by which people break faith with Yahweh, that person incurs guilt.

"The person must confess the sin committed and restore in full the amount 7
owed, with one-fifth added. Payment is to be made to the person wronged.

"If, however, the latter has no relation to whom restitution can be made, the 8
restitution due to Yahweh reverts to the priest, apart from the ram of expiation with which the priest makes expiation for the guilty party. ·For of everything the 9
Israelites consecrate and bring to the priest he has a right to the portion set aside. Whatever anyone consecrates is that person's own; whatever is given to the priest 10
belongs to the priest." '

Cereal offering in cases of suspicion[c]

Yahweh spoke to Moses and said, ·'Speak to the Israelites and say: 11, 12

"If anyone has a wife who goes astray and is unfaithful to him, ·if some other 13
man sleeps with the woman without the husband's knowledge, and she secretly makes herself unclean, without any witness against her, and without anyone catching her in the act; ·if, then, a spirit of suspicion comes over the husband and 14
makes him suspicious of the wife who has disgraced herself, or again if this spirit of suspicion comes over him and makes him suspicious of his wife even when she is innocent, ·the man will bring his wife before the priest, and on her behalf make an 15
Lv 5:11 offering of one-tenth of an *ephah* of barley meal. He will not pour oil over it or put
Lv 2:2 incense on it, because this is a cereal offering for a case of suspicion, a memorial offering to recall guilt to mind.

"The priest will then bring the woman forward and place her before Yahweh. 16
The priest will then take fresh water in an earthen jar, and on the water throw 17
dust that he has taken from the floor of the Dwelling. ·After he has placed the 18
woman before Yahweh, he will unbind her hair and put the commemorative cereal offering (that is, the cereal offering for a case of suspicion) into her hands. In his own hands the priest will hold the water of bitterness and cursing.

"The priest will then put the woman on oath. He will say to her: If it is not true 19
that a man has slept with you, that you have gone astray and made yourself unclean while under your husband's authority, may this water of bitterness and cursing do you no harm. ·But if it is true that you have gone astray while under your husband's 20
authority, that you have made yourself unclean and that a man other than your
Rt 1:17f husband has slept with you . . . ·Here the priest will impose an imprecatory oath 21
on the woman. He will say to her: . . . May Yahweh make you the object of your people's execration and curses, by making your sexual organs shrivel and your belly swell! ·May this water of cursing entering your bowels, make your belly swell 22
and your sexual organs shrivel! To which the woman will reply: Amen! Amen!

"Having written these curses on a scroll and washed them off in the water of 23

24 bitterness, ·the priest will make the woman drink the water of bitterness and Ex 32:20f
cursing; when the water of cursing enters into her, it will become bitter.
25 "The priest will then take the cereal offering for a case of suspicion from the
woman's hands, and hold it up before Yahweh with a gesture of offering, and so
26 carry it up to the altar. ·He will take a handful of it as a memorial and burn it on the Lv 5:12
altar.
27 "After this, he will make the woman drink the water. ·After he has made her
drink it, if it is true that she has made herself unclean and been unfaithful to her
husband, the water of cursing then entering into her will indeed be bitter: her belly
will swell and her sexual organs shrivel, and she will be an object of execration to
28 her people. ·But if she has not made herself unclean, but is clean, then she will go
unscathed and will bear children.
29 "Such is the ritual in cases of suspicion, when a woman has gone astray and made
30 herself unclean while under her husband's authority, ·or when a spirit of suspicion
has come over a man and made him suspicious of his wife. When a husband brings
31 such a woman before Yahweh, the priest will apply this ritual to her in full. ·The
husband will be guiltless, but the woman will bear the consequences of her guilt." '

The nazirite [a] 1 S 1:11h Ac 18:18n

1, 2 6 Yahweh spoke to Moses and said, ·'Speak to the Israelites and say:
"If a man or a woman wishes to make a vow, the nazirite vow, to vow himself ↗Lk 1:15
3 to Yahweh, ·he will abstain from wine and fermented liquor, he will not drink Jg 13:5;16:17
vinegar derived from one or the other, he will not drink grape-juice or eat grapes,
4 be they fresh or dried. ·For the duration of his vow he will eat nothing that comes
5 from the vine, not even juice of unripe grapes or skins of grapes. ·As long as he is Jr 35:2–6 Am 2:12
bound by his vow, no razor will touch his head; until the time for which he has
vowed himself to Yahweh is completed, he remains consecrated and will let his
6 hair grow freely. ·For the entire period of his vow to Yahweh, he will not go near a
7 corpse, ·he will not make himself unclean for his father or his mother, or his
brother or his sister, should they die, since on his head he carries his vow to his
8 God. ·Throughout the whole of his vow he is a person consecrated to Yahweh. Lv 21:12 Ac 21:23–26
9 "If anyone suddenly dies near him, making his vowed hair unclean, he will shave
10 his head on the day he is purified, he will shave his head on the seventh day. ·On
the eighth day, he will bring two turtledoves or two young pigeons to the priest, at
11 the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. ·The priest will offer one as a sacrifice for sin,
and the other as a burnt offering and will then perform for the person the rite of
expiation for the pollution which he has contracted from the corpse. He will
12 consecrate his head that same day; ·he will vow himself to Yahweh for the period
of his nazirate, and will bring a male yearling lamb as a sacrifice of reparation. The Lv 14:21–31
time already spent will not count, since his hair had become unclean.
13 "This is the ritual for the nazirite on the day when his period of vow is completed.
14 He will be led to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, ·bringing his offering to
Yahweh: an unblemished male yearling lamb as a burnt offering, an unblemished
yearling ewe lamb as a sacrifice for sin, an unblemished ram as a peace offering,

5 **a.** These laws from the Priestly tradition are additional material in the spirit of the Rules concerning the Clean and Unclean in Lv 11–16. They resemble the supplementary laws inserted in the Law of Holiness, as in Lv 20:22–25.

b. The Priestly editor imagines the Tent to be in the middle of the camp, 2:17, whereas ancient traditions sited it outside, *see* Ex 33:7.

c. The judgement of God, or trial by ordeal, was universally practised from ancient times up to the Middle Ages, to obtain a fair decision when evidence was lacking. Ordeal by water, in which the accused was thrown into the river, was known throughout the ancient Middle East, but ordeal by the 'waters of bitterness' has no known parallel. It must have been an ancient custom on which an Israelite ritual was superimposed: intervention of the priest, cereal offering, oath, etc.

6 **a.** For the period of his vow the nazirite, i.e. 'vowed' to God, undertook to leave his hair uncut, to take no strong drink, and to avoid contact with corpses. The hair was a sign of strength, and the first abstention signified that the nazirite allowed the divine power to act in him, thus symbolising his dedication to God. (In Gn 49:26 and Dt 33:16 Joseph is called a nazirite.) The second abstention showed that the nazirite refused a life of ease (*see* the Rechabites, Jr 35:5–8). The third showed that he belonged to God in a special way (*see* the priests in Lv 21:1–2, 10–11). *See* Am 2:11–12 and the examples of this temporary vow in Ac 18:18; 21:23–26. A child could be thus dedicated by his mother (without time-limit?): Samson, Jg 13:5–7, 14; 16:17; Samuel, 1 S 1:11 (no 'strong drink' clause); John the Baptist, Lk 1:15 ('hair' clause omitted).

and a basket of unleavened loaves made of fine flour mixed with oil, and of 15
unleavened wafers spread with oil, with the cereal offerings and libations appropriate to them. ·The priest, having brought all this before Yahweh, will offer the 16
nazirite's sin sacrifice and burnt offering. ·The latter will then offer the ram as a 17
communion sacrifice with the basket of unleavened bread, and the priest will offer the accompanying cereal offering and libation. ·The nazirite will then shave off his 18
vowed hair at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting and, taking the locks of his vowed head, he will put them in the fire of the communion sacrifice. ·The priest 19
will take the shoulder of the ram, as soon as it is cooked, with an unleavened cake from the basket, and an unleavened wafer, and put them into the hands of the nazirite once he has shaved off his hair. ·With these he will make the gesture of 20
offering before Yahweh; as it is a holy thing, it reverts to the priest, in addition to
Lv 7:34;10:14 the forequarter that has been presented and the thigh that has been set aside. After this, the nazirite may drink wine.

"Such is the ritual for the nazirite. If, besides his hair, he has also vowed a 21
personal offering to Yahweh, he will (apart from anything else that his means allow) fulfil the vow that he has made, in addition to what the ritual prescribes for his hair." '

The form of blessing

Yahweh spoke to Moses and said, ·'Speak to Aaron and his sons and say: 22, 23
"This is how you must bless the Israelites. You will say:

Ex 23:20 Ps 121:7–8 May Yahweh bless you and keep you. 24
Jn 17:11–12 May Yahweh let his face shine on you and be gracious to you. 25
Ps 4:6;31:16 May Yahweh show you his face and bring you peace." 26
Ps 122:6seq. Jn 14:27
Dt 28:10 Si 50:20–21 This is how they must call down my name on the Israelites, and then I shall bless them.' [b] 27

III: OFFERINGS OF THE LEADERS AND CONSECRATION OF THE LEVITES [a]

Offering of wagons

Ex 40:17–33 7 On the day Moses finished erecting the Dwelling, he anointed and consecrated 1
it and all its furniture, as well as the altar and all its equipment. When he had
Ex 40:9–15 anointed and consecrated it all, ·the leaders of Israel made an offering; they were 2
1:4 the heads of their families, the tribal leaders who had presided over the census. They brought their offering before Yahweh: six covered wagons and twelve oxen, 3
one wagon for every two leaders and one ox each. They brought them in front of the Dwelling. ·Yahweh spoke to Moses and said, ·'Accept these from them, and 4, 5
let them be set apart for the service of the Tent of Meeting. You will give them to the Levites, to each as his duties require.' ·Moses took the wagons and oxen, and 6
4:24–28 gave them to the Levites. ·To the Gershonites he gave two wagons and four oxen 7
4:29–33 for the duties they had to perform. ·To the Merarites he gave four wagons and 8
eight oxen for the duties they had to perform under the direction of Ithamar, son
4:2–15 of Aaron the priest. ·But to the Kohathites he gave none at all, because the sacred 9
charge entrusted to them had to be carried on their shoulders.

Dedication offering

Ezk 43:18–26 The leaders then made an offering for the dedication of the altar, on the day it was 10
anointed. They brought their offering before the altar, ·and Yahweh said to Moses, 11
'Each day one of the leaders must bring his offering for the dedication of the altar.'
2:3 On the first day an offering was brought by Nahshon son of Amminadab, of the 12
tribe of Judah. ·His offering consisted of: one silver bowl weighing a hundred and 13
thirty shekels, one silver sprinkling bowl weighing seventy shekels (sanctuary

shekels), both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil as a cereal offering, ·one
golden bowl weighing ten shekels, full of incense, ·one young bull, one ram and
one male yearling lamb as a burnt offering, ·one he-goat as a sacrifice for sin,
and two bulls, five rams, five he-goats and five male yearling lambs as a com-
munion sacrifice. Such was the offering of Nahshon son of Amminadab.

On the second day an offering was brought by Nethanel son of Zuar, leader of 2:5
Issachar. ·His offering consisted of: one silver bowl weighing a hundred and thirty
shekels, one silver sprinkling bowl weighing seventy shekels (sanctuary shekels),
both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil as a cereal offering, ·one golden bowl
weighing ten shekels, full of incense, ·one young bull, one ram and one male
22, 23 yearling lamb as a burnt offering, ·one he-goat as a sacrifice for sin, ·and two
bulls, five rams, five he-goats and five male yearling lambs as a communion
sacrifice. Such was the offering of Nethanel son of Zuar.

On the third day an offering was brought by Eliab son of Helon, leader of the 2:7
Zebulunites. ·His offering consisted of: one silver bowl weighing a hundred and
thirty shekels, one silver sprinkling bowl weighing seventy shekels (sanctuary
shekels), both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil as a cereal offering, ·one
golden bowl weighing ten shekels, full of incense, ·one young bull, one ram and
one male yearling lamb as a burnt offering, ·one he-goat as a sacrifice for sin,
and two bulls, five rams, five he-goats and five male yearling lambs as a communion
sacrifice. Such was the offering of Eliab son of Helon.

On the fourth day an offering was brought by Elizur son of Shedeur, leader of 2:10
the Reubenites. ·His offering consisted of: one silver bowl weighing a hundred and
thirty shekels, one silver sprinkling bowl weighing seventy shekels (sanctuary
shekels), both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil as a cereal offering, ·one
golden bowl weighing ten shekels, full of incense, ·one young bull, one ram and
one male yearling lamb as a burnt offering, , ·one he-goat as a sacrifice for sin,
and two bulls, five rams, five he-goats and five male yearling lambs as a com-
munion sacrifice. Such was the offering of Elizur son of Shedeur.

On the fifth day an offering was brought by Shelumiel son of Zurishaddai, leader 2:12
of the Simeonites. ·His offering consisted of: one silver bowl weighing a hundred
and thirty shekels, one silver sprinkling bowl weighing seventy shekels (sanctuary
shekels), both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil as a cereal offering, ·one
golden bowl weighing ten shekels, full of incense, ·one young bull, one ram and
one male yearling lamb as a burnt offering, ·one he-goat as a sacrifice for sin,
and two bulls, five rams, five he-goats and five male yearling lambs as a com-
munion sacrifice. Such was the offering of Shelumiel son of Zurishaddai.

On the sixth day an offering was brought by Eliasaph son of Reuel, leader of the 2:14
Gadites. ·His offering consisted of: one silver bowl weighing a hundred and thirty
shekels, one silver sprinkling bowl weighing seventy shekels (sanctuary shekels),
both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil as a cereal offering, ·one golden bowl
weighing ten shekels, full of incense, ·one young bull, one ram and one male
46, 47 yearling lamb as a burnt offering, ·one he-goat as a sacrifice for sin, ·and two
bulls, five rams, five he-goats and five male yearling lambs as a communion
sacrifice. Such was the offering of Eliasaph son of Reuel.

On the seventh day an offering was brought by Elishama son of Ammihud, 2:18
leader of the Ephraimites. ·His offering consisted of: one silver bowl weighing a
hundred and thirty shekels, one silver sprinkling bowl weighing seventy shekels
(sanctuary shekels), both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil as a cereal
50, 51 offering, ·one golden bowl weighing ten shekels, full of incense, ·one young bull,
one ram and one male yearling lamb as a burnt offering, ·one he-goat as a sacrifice
for sin, ·and two bulls, five rams, five he-goats and five male yearling lambs as a
communion sacrifice. Such was the offering of Elishama son of Ammihud.

b. Semitic way of expressing divine favour. The thrice-invoked divine name assures Israel of God's protective presence.

7 **a.** After the supplementary legislation of ch. 5–6 the Priestly narrative is resumed and continues until 10:28.

2:20 On the eighth day an offering was brought by Gamaliel son of Pedahzur, leader 54
of the Manassehites. ·His offering consisted of: one silver bowl weighing a hundred 55
and thirty shekels, one silver sprinkling bowl weighing seventy shekels (sanctuary
shekels), both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil as a cereal offering, ·one 56
golden bowl weighing ten shekels, full of incense, ·one young bull, one ram and 57
one male yearling lamb as a burnt offering, ·one he-goat as a sacrifice for sin, ·and 58, 59
two bulls, five rams, five he-goats and five male yearling lambs as a communion
sacrifice. Such was the offering of Gamaliel son of Pedahzur.

2:22 On the ninth day an offering was brought by Abidan son of Gideoni, leader of 60
the Benjaminites. ·His offering consisted of: one silver bowl weighing a hundred 61
and thirty shekels, one sprinkling bowl weighing seventy shekels (sanctuary shek-
els), both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil as a cereal offering, ·one golden 62
bowl weighing ten shekels, full of incense, ·one young bull, one ram and one male 63
yearling lamb as a burnt offering, ·one he-goat as a sacrifice for sin, ·and two 64, 65
bulls, five rams, five he-goats and five male yearling lambs as a communion
sacrifice. Such was the offering of Abidan son of Gideoni.

2:25 On the tenth day an offering was brought by Ahiezer son of Ammishaddai, 66
leader of the Danites. ·His offering consisted of: one silver bowl weighing a 67
hundred and thirty shekels, one silver sprinkling bowl weighing seventy shekels
(sanctuary shekels), ·both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil as a cereal
offering, ·one golden bowl weighing ten shekels, full of incense, ·one young bull, 68, 69
one ram and one male yearling lamb as a burnt offering, ·one he-goat as a sacrifice 70
for sin, ·and two bulls, five rams, five he-goats and five male yearling lambs as a 71
communion sacrifice. Such was the offering of Ahiezer son of Ammishaddai.

2:27 On the eleventh day an offering was brought by Pagiel son of Ochran, leader of 72
the Asherites. ·His offering consisted of: one silver bowl weighing a hundred and 73
thirty shekels, one silver sprinkling bowl weighing seventy shekels (sanctuary
shekels), both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil as a cereal offering, ·one 74
golden bowl weighing ten shekels, full of incense, ·one young bull, one ram and 75
one male yearling lamb as a burnt offering, ·one he-goat as a sacrifice for sin, ·and 76, 77
two bulls, five rams, five he-goats and five male yearling lambs as a communion
sacrifice. Such was the offering of Pagiel son of Ochran.

2:29 On the twelfth day an offering was brought by Ahira son of Enan, leader of the 78
Naphtalites. ·His offering consisted of: one silver bowl weighing a hundred and 79
thirty shekels, one silver sprinkling bowl weighing seventy shekels (sanctuary
shekels), both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil as a cereal offering, ·one 80
golden bowl weighing ten shekels, full of incense, ·one young bull, one ram and 81
one male yearling lamb as a burnt offering, ·one he-goat as a sacrifice for sin, ·and 82, 83
two bulls, five rams, five he-goats and five male yearling lambs as a communion
sacrifice. Such was the offering of Ahira son of Enan.

Such were the offerings made by the leaders of Israel for the dedication of the 84
altar on the day it was anointed: twelve silver bowls, twelve silver sprinkling bowls,
and twelve golden bowls. ·Each silver bowl weighed a hundred and thirty shekels, 85
and each sprinkling bowl seventy, the silver of these objects weighing in all two
thousand four hundred sanctuary shekels. ·The twelve golden bowls full of incense 86
each weighed ten shekels (sanctuary shekels), the gold of these bowls weighing in
all a hundred and twenty shekels.

The sum total of animals for the burnt offering: twelve bulls, twelve rams, twelve 87
male yearling lambs, with their cereal offerings. For the sacrifice for sin, twelve
he-goats. ·The sum total of animals for the communion sacrifice: twenty-four bulls, 88
sixty rams, sixty he-goats and sixty male yearling lambs.

Such were the offerings for the dedication of the altar, after it had been anointed.

Ex 33:9–11 When Moses went into the Tent of Meeting to speak with him, he heard the 89
Ex 25:17h voice speaking to him[b] from above the mercy-seat on the ark of the Testimony,
from between the two great winged creatures. He then spoke to him.[c]

The lamps for the lamp-stand

8 Yahweh spoke to Moses and said:
'Speak to Aaron and say, "When you set up the lamps, the seven lamps must throw their light towards the front of the lamp-stand." ' Ex 25:31–40 Lv 24:2–4
Aaron did this. He set up the lamps to the front of the lamp-stand, as Yahweh had ordered Moses. ·This lamp-stand was worked in beaten gold, including its stem and its petals, which were also of beaten gold. This lamp-stand had been made according to the pattern Yahweh had shown to Moses.

The Levites are offered to Yahweh Lv 8

Yahweh spoke to Moses and said, ·"Separate the Levites from the Israelites and purify them. ·This is how you must purify them: you will sprinkle them with purifying water,[a] and they will shave their bodies all over and wash their clothes. 19:1–10 Lv 14:8–9
They will then be clean. ·They will then take a young bull, with the accompanying cereal offering of fine flour mixed with oil, and you will take a second young bull for a sacrifice for sin. ·You will then bring the Levites in front of the Tent of Meeting, and assemble the whole community of Israelites. ·Once you have brought the Levites before Yahweh, the Israelites will lay their hands on them. ·Aaron will then offer the Levites, making the gesture of offering before Yahweh on behalf of the Israelites, admitting them to Yahweh's service. Ezk 36:25 3:6–8
'The Levites will then lay their hands on the heads of the bulls, one of which you will offer as a sacrifice for sin, and the other as a burnt offering to Yahweh, to perform the rite of expiation for the Levites.[b] ·Having brought the Levites before Aaron and his sons, you will present them to Yahweh with the gesture of offering. Lv 1:4 Ex 29:24g
That is how you will set the Levites apart from the Israelites, for them to be mine.
The Levites will then begin their ministry in the Tent of Meeting.
'You will purify them and offer them with the gesture of offering ·because, of the Israelites, they have been dedicated to me in place of all those who first emerge from the womb, instead of the first-born; of all the Israelites, I have taken them for my own. ·For all the first-born of the Israelites, whether human or animal, do indeed belong to me: the day I struck down all the first-born in Egypt, I consecrated them to myself, ·and now, in place of all the first-born of the Israelites, I have taken the Levites. ·Of the Israelites, I give the Levites to Aaron and his sons, as dedicated men, to minister in the Tent of Meeting on behalf of the Israelites and perform the rite of expiation for them, so that no disaster befalls the Israelites when the Israelites come close to the sanctuary.' 3:12–13 Ex 13:11b
Moses, Aaron and the whole community of Israelites dealt with the Levites exactly as Yahweh had ordered Moses concerning them; this is what the Israelites did with them. ·The Levites purified themselves and washed their clothes, and Aaron presented them with the gesture of offering before Yahweh. He then performed the rite of expiation for them to purify them. ·The Levites were then allowed to perform their ministry in the Tent of Meeting in the presence of Aaron and his sons. As Yahweh had ordered Moses concerning the Levites, so it was done with them.

The duration of their ministry

Yahweh spoke to Moses and said:
'This concerns the Levites. From the age of twenty-five onwards, the Levite will exercise his ministry and do duty in the Tent of Meeting. ·After the age of fifty, he 4:3

b. 'speaking to him' *medabber* conj.; Hebr. *middaber* corrupt.
c. There is no connection between v. 89 and what precedes or what follows, and its meaning is not clear. The end can be translated 'and it (the voice) spoke to him', or indeed, 'and it said to him:', the subsequent instructions having been lost.

8 **a.** lit. 'sin-water', *see* 19:1a.
b. Regarded in terms of a sacrificial offering, v. 10, *see* Lv 1:4, the Levites had to be cleansed of all worldly contamination. They were substitutes for the first-born of Israel, 3:12–13, and now the sacrificial animals are substitutes for the Levites.

is no longer bound to the ministry; he will have no further duties; ·but he will still 26
help his brothers to assure the services in the Tent of Meeting, though he himself
will no longer have any ministry. That is how you will act as regards the ministry of
the Levites.'

IV: THE PASSOVER AND THE DEPARTURE

Ex 12:1a **Date of the Passover** [a]

9 Yahweh spoke to Moses, in the desert of Sinai, in the second year after the 1
exodus from Egypt, in the first month, and said:

Ex 12:6 'The Israelites must keep the Passover at its appointed time. ·The fourteenth 2, 3
day of this month, at twilight, is the time appointed for you to keep it. You will
keep it with all the laws and customs proper to it.'

Moses told the Israelites to keep the Passover. ·They kept it, in the desert of 4, 5
Sinai, in the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, at twilight. The
Israelites did everything as Yahweh had ordered Moses.

Individual cases

5:2;19:11 It happened that some men had become unclean by touching a dead body; they 6
could not keep the Passover that day. They came the same day to Moses and
Aaron, ·and said, 'We have become unclean by touching a dead body. Why should 7
we be excluded from bringing an offering to Yahweh at the proper time with the
rest of the Israelites?' ·Moses replied, 'Wait here until I hear what order Yahweh 8
gives about you.'

Yahweh spoke to Moses and said, ·'Speak to the Israelites and say: 9, 10

"Any of you or your descendants who becomes unclean by touching a dead
body, or is away on a long journey, can still keep a Passover for Yahweh. ·Such 11
2 Ch 30:2–3 persons will keep it in the second month, on the fourteenth day, at twilight. They
will eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs; ·nothing of it must be left over 12
Ex 12:46+ until morning, nor will they break any of its bones. They will keep it, following the
entire Passover ritual. ·But anyone who is clean, or who is not on a journey, but 13
fails to keep the Passover, such a person will be outlawed from his people. For not
having brought the offering to Yahweh at its appointed time, the person will bear
the consequences of the sin.

Ex 12:48*o* "A resident alien who keeps a Passover for Yahweh, will keep it in accordance 14
with the ritual and customs of the Passover. You will have one law for alien and
citizen alike." '

Ex 13:22h; 40:34–38 **The cloud**

On the day the Dwelling was erected, the cloud covered the Dwelling, the Tent of 15
the Testimony. From nightfall until morning it remained over the Dwelling
looking like fire. ·So the cloud covered it all the time, and at night it looked like 16
fire.

Whenever the cloud rose from the Tent, the Israelites broke camp, and wherever 17
the cloud halted, there the Israelites pitched camp. ·At Yahweh's order, the 18
Israelites set out and, at Yahweh's order, the Israelites pitched camp. They
remained in camp for as long as the cloud rested on the Dwelling. ·If the cloud 19
stayed for many days on the Dwelling, the Israelites performed their duty to
Yahweh [b] and did not set out. ·But if the cloud happened to stay for only a few days 20
on the Dwelling, just as they had pitched camp at Yahweh's order, at Yahweh's
order they set out. ·If the cloud happened to remain only from evening to morning, 21
they set out when it lifted the next morning. Or, if it stayed for a whole day and
night, they set out only when it lifted. ·Sometimes it stayed there for two days, a 22
month, or a longer time; however long the cloud rested on the Dwelling, the

23 Israelites remained in camp, and when it lifted they set out. •At Yahweh's order
they pitched camp, and at Yahweh's order they set out. They performed their duty
to Yahweh, as Yahweh had ordered through Moses.

The trumpets

Jl 2:1,15seq.
1 Co 15:52
1 Th 4:16seq.

1 10 Yahweh spoke to Moses and said:
2 'Make yourself two trumpets; make them of beaten silver, so that you can
use them for summoning the community, and for sounding the order to break 2:1–34
3 camp. •Whenever they are sounded, the whole community must gather round you,
4 at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. •But if only one trumpet is sounded, then
only the leaders, the heads of Israel's thousands, must gather round you. 1:6
5 'When the trumpet blast is accompanied by a battle cry,[a] the encampments
6 pitched to the east will set out. •At the second blast accompanied by a battle cry,
the encampments pitched to the south will set out.[b] For breaking camp, the
7 trumpet blast will be accompanied by a battle cry, •but for assembling the com-
8 munity the trumpets will be sounded without battle cry. •The Aaronite priests will
sound the trumpets; this is a perpetual decree for you and your descendants.
9 'When in your country you go to war against an enemy who is oppressing you,
you will sound trumpets with a battle cry, and Yahweh your God will remember
10 you, and you will be delivered from your enemies. •At your festivals, solemnities
and new-moon feasts, you will sound the trumpets over your burnt offerings and
communion sacrifices, so that they recall you to the remembrance of your God. I
am Yahweh your God.' Lv 17:1a

The order of march

11 [c]In the second year, in the second month, on the twentieth day of the month, the
12 cloud rose from where the Dwelling of the Testimony was, •and the Israelites set
out, in marching order, from the desert of Sinai. The cloud came to rest in the 2:1–34
Ex 19:1a
desert of Paran.
13 These were the men who set out in the vanguard, at Yahweh's order through
14 Moses: •first went the standard of the camp of the Judahites and their units, with
15 Nahshon son of Amminadab commanding that company; •Nethanel son of Zuar
16 commanding the tribal company of the Issacharites; •and Eliab son of Helon
commanding the tribal company of the Zebulunites.
17 The Dwelling was then dismantled and the Gershonites and Merarites set out,
carrying the Dwelling.
18 Then came the standard of the camp of the Reubenites and their units, with
19 Elizur son of Shedeur commanding that company; •Shelumiel son of Zurishaddai
20 commanding the tribal company of the Simeonites; •and Eliasaph son of Reuel
commanding the tribal company of the Gadites.
21 Then came the Kohathites carrying the sanctuary (the Dwelling was erected
before they arrived).
22 Then came the standard of the camp of the Ephraimites and their units, with

9 **a.** The section 9:1–14 (still the Priestly tradition) does not fit into the chronological scheme of ch. 1 (whose starting-point is the second month, 1:1). It supplements the great Priestly rulings on the Passover, Ex 12, with a clause of considerable interest to the Jews of the Dispersion, who were obliged to come to Jerusalem to keep the Passover, Dt 16:2, but were rendered ritually unclean by the exigencies of the journey and consequently risked missing the Passover owing to the time required for purification.

b. Alternative translation 'obeyed Yahweh's instructions'.

10 **a.** The Hebr. word primarily means a sacred war cry, v. 9; 31:6, and *see* Jos 6:5, 20; Am 1:14; 2:2; Zp 1:16; etc., part of the ark ceremonial, 1 S 4:5, *see* 2 S 6:15, each stage of the journey being regarded as a march to battle. Acclamations were also in use on royal occasions, 23:21, *see* 1 K 1:34, 40, and at religious festivals, Nb 29:1; Lv 25:9; Ps 33:3a.

b. Gk and *Vet. Lat.* here add 'At the third blast of the trumpet accompanied by a battle cry, the camps on the west side will set out. At the fourth blast of the trumpet accompanied by a battle cry, the camps on the north side will set out.'

c. In Syr. Hex. and Sam. this v. is preceded by: 'Yahweh said to Moses, "You have stayed long enough at this mountain. Go, leave here and go to the hill country of the Amorites, to all those who dwell in the Plain, the uplands, the lowlands, the Negeb and the sea coast, of Canaan and the Lebanon as far as the great River, the River Euphrates. Look, I have put the country in front of you; go and take possession of the country which I swore to your fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that I would give to their descendants after them."'

Elishama son of Ammihud commanding that company; ·Gamaliel son of Pedahzur 23
commanding the tribal company of the Manassehites; ·and Abidan son of Gideoni 24
commanding the tribal company of the Benjaminites.
Last of all, the rearguard of all the camps, came the standard of the camp of the 25
Danites and their units, with Ahiezer son of Ammishaddai commanding that
company; ·Pagiel son of Ochran commanding the tribal company of the Asherites; 26
and Ahira son of Enan commanding the tribal company of the Naphtalites. 27
Such was the order of march for the Israelites, unit by unit. So they set out. 28

Moses' proposal to Hobab [d]

Ex 2:15–22 Moses said to Hobab son of Reuel the Midianite, his father-in-law, 'We are setting 29
Gn 12:2 out for the country of which Yahweh has said: I shall give it to you. Come with us,
and we will treat you well, for Yahweh has promised good things for Israel.' ·'I will 30
not come with you,' he replied, 'but shall go to my own country and kin.' ·'Do not 31
leave us,' Moses said, 'for you know where we can camp in the desert, and so you
will be our eyes. [e] ·If you come with us, we shall share with you whatever blessings 32
Yahweh gives us.'

The departure

They set out from Yahweh's mountain and travelled for three days, while the ark 33
Dt 1:33 of the covenant of Yahweh preceded them on the three-day journey, searching out
a place for them to halt.
9:15–23 /In the daytime, Yahweh's cloud was over them, once they had broken camp. 34
Ex 40:34–38 Whenever the ark set out, Moses would say: 35

‖Ps 68:1
Is 33:3;42:13+ Rise, Yahweh, may your enemies be scattered
and those who hate you flee at your approach!

And when it halted, he would say: 36

Come back, Yahweh,
to the countless thousands of Israel! [g]

V: THE HALTS IN THE DESERT

Taberah

Ex 14:11+ 11 Now the people began to complain, which was offensive to Yahweh's ears. 1
Dt 9:22 When Yahweh heard, his anger was aroused and the fire of Yahweh broke
out among them; [a] it devoured one end of the camp. ·The people appealed to 2
Ex 32:11e Moses who interceded with Yahweh and the fire died down. ·So the place was 3
called Taberah, because the fire of Yahweh had broken out among them. [b]

‖Ex 16 **Kibroth-ha-Taavah.** [c] **The people complain**

The rabble who had joined the people were feeling the pangs of hunger, and the 4
Israelites began to weep again. 'Who will give us meat to eat?' they said. ·'Think of 5
the fish we used to eat free in Egypt, the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and
garlic! ·But now we are withering away; there is nothing wherever we look except 6
this manna!'
Ex 16:14 The manna was like coriander seed and had the appearance of bdellium. ·The 7, 8
people went round gathering it, and ground it in a mill or crushed it with a pestle;
it was then cooked in a pot and made into pancakes. It tasted like cake made with
oil. ·When the dew fell on the camp at night-time, the manna fell with it. 9

Ex 32:11e **The prayer of Moses**

Moses heard the people weeping, each family at the door of its tent. Yahweh's 10
anger was greatly aroused; Moses too found it disgraceful, ·and he said to Yahweh: 11

'Why do you treat your servant so badly? In what respect have I failed to win Ex 3:11;4:1; 5:22
12 your favour, for you to lay the burden of all these people on me? ·Was it I who conceived all these people, was I their father, for you to say to me, "Carry them in your arms, like a foster-father carrying an unweaned child, to the country which I
13 swore to give their fathers"? ·Where am I to find meat to give all these people, Mk 8:4par.
14 pestering me with their tears and saying, "Give us meat to eat"? ·I cannot carry all Ex 18:18 Dt 19:11
15 these people on my own; the weight is too much for me. ·If this is how you mean to 1 K 3:9; 19:4
treat me, please kill me outright! If only I could win your favour and be spared the sight of my misery!'

Yahweh replies

16 Yahweh said to Moses, 'Collect me seventy of the elders of Israel, men you know Ex 18:21–26
to be the people's elders and scribes. Bring them to the Tent of Meeting, and let Jos 1:10
17 them stand beside you there. ·I shall come down and talk to you there and shall 2 K 2:9
take some of the spirit which is on you and put it on them. Then they will bear the burden of the people with you, and you will no longer have to bear it on your own.
18 'And say to the people, "Purify yourselves for tomorrow and you will have meat Ex 19:10
to eat, since you have wept in Yahweh's hearing, saying: Who will give us meat to eat? How happy we were in Egypt! Very well, Yahweh will give you meat to eat.
19, 20 You will eat it not for one day, or two, or five, or ten or twenty, ·but for a whole month, until it comes out of your nostrils and sickens you, since you have rejected Yahweh who is among you, and have wept before him saying: Why did we ever leave Egypt?" '
21 Moses said, 'The people round me number six hundred thousand foot soldiers, 1:46e
22 and you say, "I shall give them meat to eat for a whole month"! ·If all the flocks Jn 6:7,9
and herds were slaughtered, would that be enough for them? If all the fish in the
23 seas were collected, would that be enough for them?' ·Yahweh said to Moses, 'Is the arm of Yahweh so short? You shall see whether the promise I have made to Is 50:2;59:1 Jr 32:17 Ezk 12:25;24:14
you comes true or not.'

The spirit given to the elders

24 Moses went out and told the people what Yahweh had said. Then he collected
25 seventy of the people's elders and stationed them round the Tent. ·Yahweh descended in the cloud. He spoke to him and took some of the spirit that was on 12:7+ 1 S 10:9–13; 19:20–24 2 K 2:9
him and put it on the seventy elders. When the spirit came on them they prophesied—but only once. [d]
26 Two men had stayed back in the camp; one was called Eldad and the other Medad. The spirit came down on them; though they had not gone to the Tent, their names were enrolled among the rest. These began to prophesy in the camp.
27 A young man ran to tell Moses this. 'Look,' he said, 'Eldad and Medad are
28 prophesying in the camp.' ·Joshua son of Nun, who had served Moses since he was Jos 1:1b
29 a boy, spoke up and said, 'My lord Moses, stop them!' ·Moses replied, 'Are you Mk 9:38seq.

d. The first of a number of narratives taken not from the Priestly source but from the Yahwistic (with Elohistic insertions). • Hobab, *see* Ex 2:18g, was a Kenite, Nb 24:21k, of a tribe we subsequently find in league with Judah and dominating the region of Hebron, Jos 14:14; Jg 1:16f.

e. The Bedouin still call a guide 'the eye of the caravan'.

f. In Gk, this v. comes after v. 36.

g. These warlike acclamations formed part of the ritual of the ark, *see also* 10:5a, which had a special role in battle, 1 S 4:3 seq.; 2 S 11:11. Elsewhere the exodus from Egypt and the journey through the desert are represented as military campaigns, which indeed to some extent they were.

11 a. God's anger, usually taking the form of a punishment, is one aspect of his absolute holiness, Lv 17:1a, of his 'jealousy', Dt 4:24f, which tolerates no resistance to his plan, and particularly no infidelity to the covenant, Nb 11:33; 12:9; Dt 1:34; 6:15; 9:8; 2 Ch 19:2; Is 5:25; Na 1:2; etc. Hence it also implies mercy, Ex 34:6c. Its total and definitive manifestation is reserved for 'the Day', Am 5:18m; Zp 1:15; *see* Dn 8:19; Mt 3:7; Rv 19:15m.

b. The name probably means 'pasture land' but the author derives it from a similar root meaning 'to burn'.

c. The narrative of 11:4–34 combines two traditions, one about the manna and quails, vv. 4–13, 18–24[a]; 31–34, and the other about the gift of the Spirit to the elders, vv. 14–17; 24[b]–30. Ex sites the incident of the manna and quails between the departure from Egypt and the arrival at Sinai, *see* Ex 16:1a. Here, it is put on the road to Kadesh, *see* 13:26. In both cases, elements from various traditions have been grouped together in an artificial geographical framework.

d. The prophetic gift was only temporary. Alternative translation 'and could not stop'.

Jl 3:1–2
Ac 2
1 Co 14:4–5
jealous on my account? If only all Yahweh's people were prophets, and Yahweh had given them his spirit!' ·Moses then went back to the camp with the elders of Israel. 30

The quails

Ex 16:12–13
A wind, sent by Yahweh, started blowing from the sea bringing quails which it deposited on the camp. They lay for a distance of a day's march either side of the camp, two cubits thick on the ground. ·The people were up all that day and night and all the next day collecting quails: the least gathered by anyone was ten *homer*; then they spread them out round the camp. ·The meat was still between their teeth, not even chewed, when Yahweh's anger was aroused by the people. Yahweh struck them with a very great plague. 31 32 33

Dt 9:22
The name given to this place was Kibroth-ha-Taavah, [c] because it was there that they buried the people who had indulged their greed. 34

From Kibroth-ha-Taavah the people set out for Hazeroth, and at Hazeroth they pitched camp. 35

20:1
Ex 15:20
Miriam and Aaron criticise Moses [a]

12 Miriam, and Aaron too, criticised Moses over the Cushite woman [b] he had married. He had indeed married a Cushite woman. ·They said, 'Is Moses 1 2
Ex 4:15–16
the only one through whom Yahweh has spoken? Has he not spoken through us
Ex 3:11;4:10
Si 45:4
too?' Yahweh heard this. ·Now Moses was extremely humble, the humblest man on earth. 3

God's answer

Suddenly Yahweh said to Moses, Aaron and Miriam, 'Come out, all three of you, to the Tent of Meeting.' They went, all three of them, ·and Yahweh descended in 4 5
Ex 13:22h
a pillar of cloud and stood at the entrance of the Tent. He called Aaron and Miriam and they both came forward. ·Yahweh said: 6

Listen to my words!
if there is a prophet among you, [c]
I reveal myself to him in a vision,
I speak to him in a dream.
Not so with my servant Moses; [d] 7
↗Heb 3:2–5
to him my whole household is entrusted;
Ex 33:11+
to him I speak face to face, 8
Ex 33:20i
Jn 16:29
1 Co 13:12
plainly and not in riddles,
and he sees Yahweh's form. [e]
How, then, could you dare
to criticise my servant Moses?

Yahweh's anger was aroused by them. He went away, ·and as soon as the cloud 9, 10
Dt 24:9
2 Ch 26:20
left the Tent, there was Miriam covered with a virulent skin-disease, white as snow! Aaron turned to look at her and saw that she had contracted a virulent skin-disease. [f]

Ex 32:11e
The prayer of Aaron and Moses

Aaron said to Moses: 11

'Oh, my Lord, please do not punish us for the sin we have been foolish enough to commit. ·Do not let her be like some monster with its flesh half eaten away when 12
it leaves its mother's womb!'

Moses pleaded with Yahweh. 'O God,' he said, 'I beg you, please heal her!' 13

Yahweh then said to Moses, 'If her father had done no more than spit in her 14
face, would she not be unclean for seven days? Have her shut out of the camp
Lv 13:4–6
for seven days, and then have her brought in again.' [g]

Miriam was shut out of the camp for seven days. The people did not set out until 15

she returned. ·Then the people moved on from Hazeroth and pitched camp in the desert of Paran.

The reconnaissance in Canaan [a] ‖Dt 1:20–29

13 Yahweh spoke to Moses and said, ·'Send out men, one from each tribe, to reconnoitre the land of Canaan which I am giving the Israelites. Each of them is to be a leading man of the tribe.'

At Yahweh's order, Moses sent them from the desert of Paran. All of them were leading men of Israel. ·These were their names: [b]

For the tribe of Reuben, Shammua son of Zaccur:
for the tribe of Simeon, Shaphat son of Hori;
for the tribe of Judah, Caleb son of Jephunneh; Jos 14:6–14,6b
for the tribe of of Issachar, Igal son of Joseph;
for the tribe of Ephraim, Hoshea son of Nun;
for the tribe of Benjamin, Palti son of Raphu;
for the tribe of Zebulun, Gaddiel son of Sodi;
for the tribe of Joseph, for the tribe of Manasseh, Gaddi son of Susi;
for the tribe of Dan, Ammiel son of Gemalli;
for the tribe of Asher, Sethur son of Michael;
for the tribe of Naphtali, Nahbi son of Vophsi;
for the tribe of Gad, Geuel son of Machi.

Such were the names of the men whom Moses sent to reconnoitre the country. Moses then gave Hoshea son of Nun the name Joshua. [c] Jos 1:1b

Moses sent them to reconnoitre the land of Canaan, [d] 'Go up into the Negeb,' he said, 'then go up into the highlands. ·See what sort of country it is, and what sort of people the inhabitants are, whether they are strong or weak, few or many, ·what sort of land they live on, whether it is good or poor; what sort of towns they live in, whether they are open or fortified; ·what sort of land it is, fertile or barren, wooded or open. Be bold, and bring back some of the country's produce.'

It was the season for early grapes. ·They went up and reconnoitred the country from the desert of Zin to Rehob, the Pass of Hamath. [e] ·They went up by way of the Negeb as far as Hebron, where Ahiman, Sheshai and Talmai, the Anakim, Jos 15:13–14,13d lived. (Hebron was founded seven years before Tanis in Egypt.) ·Reaching the Vale of Eshcol, there they lopped off a vine branch with a cluster of grapes, which Dt 1:25 two of them carried away on a pole, as well as pomegranates and figs. ·This place was called the Vale of Eshcol after the cluster which the Israelites cut there. [f]

e. This may have been a real place-name, meaning 'the graves of the Taavah' (name of a tribe?), though it has not been identified. What is clear is that tradition took it to mean 'the graves of greed', as the content of the story would have it.

12 a. Apparently an Elohistic narrative but somewhat affected by the Priestly editing.

b. In the normal sense of Cush, she would have been an Ethiopian; but in Hab 3:7, Kushan is mentioned with Midian. Moses' Cushite marriage may be a variant of the tradition of his Midianite marriage, *see* Ex 2:18g, in which case the wife in question would be Zipporah.

c. 'Yahweh said. . . if there is a prophet among you' conj.; 'He said. . .if your prophet, Yahweh' Hebr.

d. Answer to the complaint of v. 2. With the prophetic gift, v. 6 (Miriam herself was a prophetess, Ex 15:20), God contrasts his familiarity with Moses, *see* Ex 33:11 and Ex 33:20i. By way of exception certain others were given a share in the divine spirit, 11:25. God certainly raised up prophets after Moses' death, Dt 18:15, 18e, but Moses was to remain the greatest of them all, Dt 34:10, until John the Baptist, the forerunner of the new covenant, Mt 11:9–11 par.

e. For 'form' Gk and Syr. read 'glory'.

f. Miriam was the only one to be punished, although Aaron admitted himself to be as guilty as she was, v. 11. Possibly Aaron as well was punished in the original form of the story, later modified by the Priestly tradition.

g. For 'brought in again', Gk reads 'purified'.

13 a. Ch. 13–14 are composite. The Priestly tradition is easy to distinguish: it consists of the list of the scouting party, vv. 1–6; the reconnaissance of the whole country, v. 21 (in contradistinction to vv. 18 and 22); vv. 25–26, 32–33; 14:1–3, 5–10 (addition of Joshua to Caleb, *see* v. 30) and 26–38. The remainder belongs to the ancient Yahwistic and Elohistic tradition. • Other passages dealing with the reconnaissance of Canaan by Caleb, 32:6–15; Dt 1:19–46; Jos 14:6–14 (*see* Jos 6:1a), are dependent on this one, which preserves the historical memory of the Calebite group's penetration of Palestine from the south without making the detour through Transjordan. On 14:39–45 *see* 14:39d.

b. This list should be compared with that of ch. 1, which also begins with Reuben, but the names are different—several of them being found among the contemporaries of David.

c. Meaning, 'Yahweh saves'.

d. Compare the exploratory expeditions sent out by Joshua, Jos 2:1, and by the Danites, Jg 18. *See also* 21:32; Jos 7:2; Jg 1:23.

e. The extreme north of the Promised Land, *see* note on ch. 34 and Jg 20:1. In fact the expedition got no further than the Hebron district, v. 22.

f. *Eshcol* ('cluster') is a valley near Hebron.

Dt 1:25seq. **The expedition's report**

After forty days they returned from reconnoitring the country. ·Making their way 25, 26
to Moses, Aaron and the whole community of Israel, in the desert of Paran, at
Kadesh, [g] they made their report to them and the whole community, and displayed
the country's produce.

This was the report they gave: 'We made our way into the country where you 27
Ex 3:8 sent us. It does indeed flow with milk and honey; here is what it produces. ·At the 28
same time, its inhabitants are a powerful people; the towns are fortified and very
big; yes, and we saw the Anakim there. ·The Amalekites occupy the Negeb area, 29
the Hittites, Jebusites and Amorites the highlands, and the Canaanites the sea
coast and the banks of the Jordan.'

Caleb called the people round Moses to silence and then said, 'We must march 30
in immediately and take it; we are certainly able to conquer it.' ·But the men who 31
had been with him said, 'We cannot attack these people; they are stronger than we
are.' ·And they began disparaging the country they had reconnoitred to the 32
Israelites, saying, 'The country we have been to reconnoitre is a country that
devours its inhabitants. All the people we saw there were of enormous size. ·We 33
Dt 1:28g saw giants there too (the Anakim, descended from the Giants). We felt like
grasshoppers, and so we seemed to them.'

‖Dt 1:26–32 **The rebellion of Israel**

Ex 14:11+ 14 The whole community then cried out in dismay, and the people wept all that 1
night. ·All the Israelites muttered at Moses and Aaron, and the whole 2
community said to them, 'Would to God we had died in Egypt, or even that we had
died in this desert! ·Why has Yahweh brought us to this country, for us to perish by 3
the sword and our wives and children to be seized as booty? Should we not do
better to go back to Egypt?' ·And they said to one another, 'Let us appoint a leader 4
and go back to Egypt.'

At this, Moses and Aaron threw themselves on their faces in front of the whole 5
assembled community of Israelites, ·while Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of 6
Jephunneh, two of the men who had reconnoitred the country, tore their clothes
and addressed the whole community of Israelites as follows, 'The country we went 7
to reconnoitre is a good country, an excellent country. ·If Yahweh is pleased with 8
us, he will lead us into this country and give it to us. It is a country flowing with
milk and honey. ·But do not rebel against Yahweh or be afraid of the people of the 9
country, for we shall gobble them up. Their protecting shade [e] has deserted them,
while we have Yahweh on our side. Do not be afraid of them.'

Ex 32:7–14 **Yahweh's anger. Moses intercedes**

The whole community was talking of stoning them, when the glory of Yahweh 10
appeared to all the Israelites, inside the Tent of Meeting, ·and Yahweh said to 11
Moses:

'How much longer will these people treat me with contempt? How much longer
Jn 12:37 will they refuse to trust me, in spite of all the signs I have displayed among them?
Ex 32:10 I shall strike them with pestilence and disown them. And of you I shall make a 12
Gn 12:2 new nation, greater and mightier than they are.'

Moses said to Yahweh: 13

'Suppose the Egyptians hear about this—for by your power you brought these
people out of their country—·and tell the people living in this country. They have 14
Ex 33:14seq.; 34:9–10 9:15–23 Ex 13:21–22 heard that you, Yahweh, are with this people, and that you, Yahweh, show
yourself to them face to face; that your cloud stands over them and that you go
before them in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. ·If you kill this 15
people now as though it were one man, then the nations who have heard about you
will say, ·"Yahweh was not able to bring this people into the country which he had 16
sworn to give them, and so he has slaughtered them in the desert." ·No, my Lord! 17

Now is the time to assert your power as you promised when you said, earlier, ‖Ex 34:6–7,6+
18 "Yahweh, slow to anger and rich in faithful love, forgiving faults and transgression, and yet letting nothing go unchecked, punishing the parents' guilt in the
19 children to the third and fourth generation." ·In your most faithful love, please forgive this people's guilt, as you have done from Egypt until now.'

Pardon and punishment ‖Dt 1:34–40

20, 21 Yahweh said, 'I forgive them as you ask. ·But—as I live, and as the glory of Ex 24:16f
22 Yahweh fills the whole world—·of all these people who have seen my glory and the Ps 57:5; 72:19 Is 6:3;11:9 Hab 3:3 ·↗Heb 3:16–19
signs that I worked in Egypt and in the desert, who have put me to the test ten
23 times already and not obeyed my voice, ·not one shall see the country which I promised to give their ancestors. Not one of those who have treated me contemp-
24 tuously will see it. ·However, since my servant Caleb is of another spirit and since he has obeyed me completely, I shall bring him into the country where he has been,
25 and his descendants will own it ·(the Amalekites and Canaanites occupy the plain). Tomorrow you will turn about and go back into the desert, in the direction of the Sea of Suph.'

26 Yahweh then spoke to Moses and Aaron [b] and said:

27 'How much longer am I to endure this perverse community muttering against
28 me? I have heard what the Israelites mutter against me. ·Say to them, "As I live,
29 Yahweh declares, I shall do to you what I have heard you saying. ·In this desert your dead bodies will fall, all you who were counted in the census, from the age of 1:18seq.
30 twenty years and over who have muttered against me. ·I swear none of you will enter the country where I swore most solemnly to settle you, except Caleb son of
31 Jephunneh, and Joshua son of Nun. ·Your children, who you said would be seized as booty, will be the ones whom I shall bring in so that they get to know the country
32, 33 you disdained, ·but, as for you, your dead bodies will fall in this desert ·and your children will be nomads in the desert for forty years, bearing the consequences of
34 your faithlessness, until the last one of you lies dead in the desert. ·For forty days you reconnoitred the country. Each day will count as a year: for forty years you will bear the consequences of your guilt and learn what it means to reject me." [c]
35 I, Yahweh, have spoken: this is how I swear to treat this entire perverse community united against me. In this desert, to the last man, they shall die.'

36 The men whom Moses had sent to reconnoitre the country and who on their return had incited the whole community of Israel to mutter about him by disparaging it,
37 ·these men who had disparaged the country were all struck dead before
38 Yahweh. ·Of the men who had gone to reconnoitre the country, only Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh were left alive.

An abortive attempt by the Israelites [d] 20:12c Dt 1:41–45

39 When Moses told all the Israelites what had been said, the people set up a great
40 outcry. ·Early next morning they set out for the heights of the hill country saying, 'Look, we will set out for the place about which Yahweh said that we have certainly

g. Not a town or precise point, but a region: the principal oasis to the north of Sinai, 56 miles (90 km) southwest of Beersheba. The name is preserved by the spring of Ain Qadeis. Time out of mind, this oasis had been a staging-post for caravans.

14 a. Designation for the Canaanite gods, seen as combating the formidable heat of the sun. For 'protecting shade', Gk has '(favourable) season'.

b. vv. 26–38 are parallel with vv. 11–25 but the outlook of the Priestly tradition (compare its interest in the census) has influenced their editing.

c. Or possibly 'know my displeasure'.

d. A theological conclusion to this lengthy narrative: on the threshold of the Promised Land, Israel lacks faith and wants to return to Egypt; then, contrary to God's wishes, attacks, unaccompanied by the ark of Yahweh. This is an inversion of the themes of exodus and holy war: Israel was defeated and rejected in the desert; which explains why the long detour through Transjordan became necessary. The narrative is an attempt to reconcile a particular tradition relating to Caleb (penetration of Canaan from the south) with the tradition which had become common to all Israel (penetration from the east). It makes use of a different tradition relating to Hormah, *see* v. 45e.

e. Probably Tell el-Meshash, east of Beersheba, 47 miles (75 km) north of Kadesh, on the edge of the mountainous country. As the Israelites had reached 'the heights of the hill country', v. 44, they had gone beyond Hormah, on which they were now thrown back. They had, therefore, already conquered this town, *see* 21:1a.

sinned.' ·To which, Moses said, 'Why disobey Yahweh's order? No success will 41
come of doing so. ·Do not go, for Yahweh is not among you, and you will be 42
defeated by your enemies. ·For the Amalekites and the Canaanites are ahead of 43
you, and you will be put to the sword, since you have turned away from Yahweh,
and Yahweh is not with you.' ·All the same, they presumptuously set off for the 44
10:35 heights of the hill country. Neither the ark of the covenant of Yahweh nor Moses
Ex 17:8d left the camp. ·The Amalekites and Canaanites living in those highlands then came 45
Jg 1:17 down, defeated them and harried them all the way to Hormah. [e]

VI: LAWS GOVERNING SACRIFICES. POWERS OF PRIESTS AND LEVITES [a]

Ex 29:40seq. Lv 2:1–10; 23:18

Cereal offerings to accompany sacrifices

15 Yahweh spoke to Moses and said, ·'Speak to the Israelites and say: 1, 2
"When you have arrived in the country where you are to live and which I
am giving to you, ·and you burn food as an offering to Yahweh either as a burnt 3
offering or as a sacrifice, whether in payment of a vow, or as a voluntary gift, or on
the occasion of one of your solemn feasts, from your herds and flocks as a smell
pleasing to Yahweh: ·the offerer will, as his personal gift to Yahweh, bring a cereal 4
offering of one-tenth of an *ephah* of fine flour mixed with one-quarter of a *hin* of
oil. ·You will also make a libation of wine, one-quarter of a *hin* to each lamb, in 5
addition to the burnt offering or sacrifice. ·For a ram, you will make a cereal 6
offering of two-tenths of an *ephah* of fine flour mixed with one-third of a *hin* of oil,
and a libation of one-third of a *hin* of wine as a smell pleasing to Yahweh. ·If you 7, 8
offer a bull as a burnt offering or sacrifice, in payment of a vow or as a communion
sacrifice for Yahweh, ·in addition to the animal you will offer a cereal offering of 9
three-tenths of an *ephah* of fine flour mixed with half a *hin* of oil, ·and you will 10
offer a libation of half a *hin* of wine, as food burnt as a smell pleasing to Yahweh.
This will be done for every bull, every ram, every lamb or kid. ·Whatever the 11, 12
number of victims you intend to offer, you will do the same for each of them,
however many there are.

"Every citizen of the country will act in this way whenever he offers food burnt 13
Ex 12:48o as a smell pleasing to Yahweh; ·and if an alien residing with you or with your 14
descendants intends to offer food burnt as a smell pleasing to Yahweh, he will do
as you do. ·There will be one law for you, members of the community, and the 15
9:14;15:29seq. Lv 17:13;24:22 resident alien alike, a law binding your descendants for ever: before Yahweh you
and the alien are no different.' ·One law, one statute, will apply for you and the 16
alien." '

Dt 26:1a,2

The first-fruits of bread

Yahweh spoke to Moses and said, ·'Speak to the Israelites and say: 17, 18
"When you have entered the country to which I am bringing you, ·you will set a 19
portion aside for Yahweh when you eat that country's bread. ·You will set one 20
cake aside as the first-fruits of your dough; you will set this offering aside like the
one set aside from your threshing. ·For all future generations you will set a portion 21
of your dough aside for Yahweh.

Lv 4

Expiation for faults of inadvertence

"If through inadvertence you fail in any of these orders which Yahweh has given to 22
Moses ·(whatever orders Yahweh has given you or your descendants through 23
Moses, from the day when Yahweh gave his orders), ·this is what must be done: 24
"If it is an inadvertence on the part of the community, the community as a whole
will offer a young bull as a burnt offering, as a smell pleasing to Yahweh, with the
prescribed accompanying cereal offering and libation, and a he-goat as a sacrifice

25 for sin. •The priest will perform the rite of expiation for the entire community of
Israelites, and they will be forgiven, since it was an inadvertence. Once they have
brought their offering as food burnt for Yahweh, and have presented their sacrifice
26 for sin before Yahweh to make amends for their inadvertence, •the whole com-
munity of Israelites will be forgiven, as also the alien residing with them, since the
entire people acted by inadvertence.
27 "If it is an individual who has sinned by inadvertence, he will offer a yearling kid
28 as a sacrifice for sin. •The priest will perform the rite of expiation before Yahweh
for the person who has gone astray owing to this sin of inadvertence and, expiation
29 having been made for him, he will be forgiven; •whether he is an Israelite citizen or
a resident alien, you will have one law for anyone who sins by inadvertence.
30 "But the individual who acts deliberately, be he citizen or alien, commits an
31 outrage against Yahweh, and such a man will be outlawed from his people. •Since
he has treated Yahweh's word with contempt and has disobeyed his order, such a
man will be outlawed absolutely and will bear the consequences of his guilt." '[b]

Sabbath-breaking

Ex 20:8f; 31:12–17; 35:1–3

32 While the Israelites were in the desert, a man was caught gathering wood on the
33 Sabbath day. •Those who caught him gathering wood brought him before Moses,
34 Aaron and the whole community. •He was kept in custody, because the penalty he Lv 24:12
35 should undergo had not yet been fixed. •Yahweh said to Moses, 'This man must be
36 put to death. The whole community will stone him outside the camp.' •The whole
community took him outside the camp and stoned him till he was dead, as Yahweh
had ordered Moses.

Tassels on clothes

Dt 22:12

37, 38 Yahweh spoke to Moses and said, •'Speak to the Israelites and tell them, for all
generations to come, to put tassels on the hems of their clothes and work a violet Mt 9:20;23:5
39 thread into the tassel at the hem.[c] •You will thus have a tassel, and the sight of it
will remind you of all Yahweh's orders and how you are to put them into practice,
and not follow the dictates of your own heart and eyes, which have led you to be
unfaithful.
40 'This will remind you of all my orders; put them into practice, and you will be
41 consecrated to your God. •I, Yahweh your God, have brought you out of Egypt, to
be your God, I, Yahweh your God.'

The rebellion of Korah, Dathan and Abiram[a]

Lv 10:1–3
Ps 106:16–18
Si 45:18–20
Jude 11

1 **16** Now Korah son of Izhar, son of Kohath the Levite, and the Reubenites
2 Dathan and Abiram sons of Eliab, and On son of Peleth were proud[b] •and
rebelled against Moses with two hundred and fifty Israelites who were leaders of
3 the community, prominent at the solemn feasts, men of repute. •These banded
together against Moses and Aaron and said to them, 'You take too much on
yourselves! The whole community, all its members, are consecrated, and Yahweh Ex 19:3c, 6+
lives among them. Why set yourselves higher than Yahweh's community?' Is 61:6
4, 5 On hearing this, Moses threw himself on his face. •Then he said to Korah and all

15 **a.** Priestly tradition resumed. The essential part of this section describes the revolt(s) of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, emphasising the divine origin of authority in the community and the primacy of Aaron. To this some other laws and related episodes have been added.

b. An enactment of great importance which appears to make forgiveness impossible when the fault is deliberate (lit. 'with a high hand'). At this period, however, we must not look for an exact definition of 'deliberation'.

c. The tassel with a violet thread, playing an important part in religious costume, was to be a reminder of the sacred character of the community. Ancient reproductions of Palestinian costume show tassels hanging all round the hem (so *also* Dt 22:12), but in the Jewish period the tassels were almost always confined to its four corners. vv. 37–41 form the last part of the prayer known as the *shema*, Dt 6:4b.

16 **a.** Most critics agree that two parallel narratives are fused together in these chapters. The Yahwistic or Elohistic (vv. 1^b–2^a, 12–15, 25–34) is concerned with the political revolt of the Reubenites, Dathan and Abiram; the Priestly (vv. 1^a, 2^b–11, 16–24, 35) with the religious pretensions of the Kohathites at the Aaronites' expense.

b. Emended in accordance with Hex. and the meaning of the root *yaqah* in Arabic; 'took' Hebr.

in his party, 'Tomorrow morning Yahweh will reveal who is his, who the consecrated man whom he will allow to approach him. The one he allows to approach is the one whom he has chosen. ·This is what you must do: take the censers of Korah 6
and all in his party, ·put fire in them and put incense in them before Yahweh 7
tomorrow, and the one whom Yahweh chooses will be the consecrated man. Levites, you take too much on yourselves!'

Moses then said to Korah, 'Now listen, you Levites! ·Is it not enough for you 8, 9
3:45;8:14–19 that the God of Israel has singled you out of the community of Israel, and called you to be near him, to serve in Yahweh's Dwelling and to represent the community by officiating on its behalf? ·He has called you to be near him, you and all your 10
brother Levites with you, and now you want to be priests as well! ·For which 11
reason, you and all in your party have banded together against Yahweh himself: for what is Aaron, that you should mutter against him?'

Moses then summoned Dathan and Abiram sons of Eliab. They replied, 'We 12
will not come. ·Is it not enough for you to have brought us away from a country 13
Ex 3:8e flowing with milk and honey [e] to kill us in the desert, without your making yourself our absolute ruler? ·What is more, you have not brought us to a country flowing 14
with milk and honey and you have not given us fields and vineyards for our heritage. Do you think you can hoodwink these people? We will not come.' ·Moses 15
1 S 12:3–5 flew into a rage and said to Yahweh, 'Disregard their cereal offering! I have not taken so much as a donkey from them, nor have I wronged any of them.'

The punishment

Moses said to Korah, 'You and all your party, come before Yahweh tomorrow, 16
you and they, and Aaron too. ·Each will take his censer, put incense in it, and 17
bring his censer before Yahweh—two hundred and fifty censers. You and Aaron too will each bring his censer.' ·Each of them took his censer, put fire in it and 18
placed incense on it, and stood at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting with Moses and Aaron. ·Then, Korah having assembled the whole community to confront 19
them at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting, the glory of Yahweh appeared to the whole community.

Yahweh then spoke to Moses and Aaron. He said, ·'Get away from this com- 20, 21
munity; I am going to destroy them here and now.' ·They threw themselves on 22
27:16 their faces and cried out, 'O God, God of the spirits that gave life to every living
Jb 12:10 thing, will you be angry with the whole community because one man has sinned?'
Rv 22:6 Yahweh then said to Moses, ·'Speak to the community and say, "Stand well clear 23, 24
Gn 18:16–33 of Korah's tent." ' [d].

Moses stood up and went to Dathan and Abiram; the elders of Israel followed 25
him. ·He spoke to the community and said, 'Stand away, I tell you, from the tents 26
of these sinners, and touch nothing that belongs to them, for fear that with all their sins you too will be swept away.' ·So they moved away from Korah's tent. 27

Dathan and Abiram had come out and were standing at their tent doors, with their wives, their sons and their little ones. ·Moses said, 'This is how you will know 28
Ex 3:12; that Yahweh himself has sent me to perform all these tasks and that I am not doing
4:30–31 them of my own accord. ·If these people die a natural death such as men commonly 29
Jn 2:11f die, then Yahweh has not sent me. ·But if Yahweh does something utterly new, if 30
the earth should open its mouth and swallow them and all their belongings, so that they go down alive to Sheol, then you will know that these men held Yahweh in contempt.'

The moment he finished saying all this, the ground split apart under their feet, 31
the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them, their families, all Korah's people 32
and all their property. [e]

Ps 55:15 They went down alive to Sheol [f] with all their belongings. The earth closed over 33
them and they disappeared in the middle of the community. ·At their cries, all the 34
Israelites round them took to their heels, saying, 'We do not want the earth to swallow us too!'

35 Fire then shot out from Yahweh and consumed the two hundred and fifty men offering incense. Lv 10:1-3

The censers

1, 2 16:36, 37 **17** Yahweh then spoke to Moses and said, •'Tell Eleazar son of Aaron the priest to pick the censers out of the smouldering remains and scatter the fire
38 3 from them away from here, •for these sinful censers have become sanctified at the price of human lives.[a] Since they were brought before Yahweh and thus became consecrated, they must be hammered into sheets to cover the altar. They will be an object-lesson to the Israelites.' Lv 10:1-3
39 4 The priest Eleazar took the bronze censers which had been carried by the men
40 5 destroyed by the fire. They were hammered into sheets to cover the altar. •They are a reminder to the Israelites that no unauthorised person, no one not of Aaron's line, may approach and offer incense before Yahweh, on pain of suffering the fate of Korah and his party, as Yahweh had said through Moses. 1:51+

Aaron intercedes[b]

41 6 On the following day, the whole community of Israelites were muttering against Moses and Aaron and saying, 'You are responsible for killing Yahweh's people!'
42 7 Now, as the community was banding together against Moses and Aaron, they turned towards the Tent of Meeting, and there was the cloud covering it, and the
43 8 glory of Yahweh appeared. •Moses and Aaron then went to the front of the Tent of Meeting.
9, 10 44 45 Yahweh spoke to Moses and said, •'Get away from this community; I am going to destroy them here and now.' They threw themselves on their faces. 16:21 Ws 18:20-25
46 11 Moses then said to Aaron, 'Take a censer, put fire in it from the altar, place incense on it and hurry to the community to perform the rite of expiation for them:
47 12 for retribution has come from Yahweh, plague has broken out.' •Aaron took it as Moses said and ran into the middle of the community, but plague had already broken out among the people. He put in the incense and performed the rite of
48 13 expiation for the people. •Then he stood between the living and the dead, and the
49 14 plague stopped. •There were fourteen thousand seven hundred victims of the
50 15 plague, apart from those who died because of Korah. •Aaron then went back to Moses at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting; the plague had been halted.

Aaron's branch

16.17 17:1,2 Yahweh spoke to Moses and said, •'Tell the Israelites to give you a branch[c] for each of their families, one for each leader of each family: twelve branches. Write
3 18 the name of each on his branch; •and on the branch of Levi write Aaron's name,
4 19 since the head of the Levite families must have a branch too. •You will then put them inside the Tent of Meeting in front of the Testimony, where I make myself Ex 25:21-22
5 20 known to you. •The man whose branch sprouts will be the one I have chosen; this is how I shall put an end to the mutterings of the Israelites about you.'
6 21 Moses spoke to the Israelites, and all their leaders gave him one branch each,

c. Here the expression normally used of the Promised Land is uniquely applied to Egypt.

d. Hebr. adds 'Dathan and Abiram'; Gk omits.

e. The story of the revolt of Dathan and Abiram, earlier than the other (*see* 16:1a), takes no account of individual responsibility. The end of the v. was added when the two narratives were fused together.

f. A word of unknown origin, meaning the underworld. Dt 32:22; Is 14:9; etc., to which the dead 'go down'. Gn 37:35; 1 S 2:6; etc., and where the virtuous and wicked alike, 1 S 28:19g; Ps 89:48; Ezk 32:17–32, lead a colourless existence, Qo 9:10. God is not praised there, Ps 6:5; 88:4–5, 11–12; 115:17; Is 38:18, but the power of the living God, *see* Dt 5:26d, extends even into this desolate abode, 1 S 2:6; Ws 16:13; Am 9:2. The doctrine of rewards and punishments beyond the grave and of bodily resurrection, anticipated by the psalmists, Ps 16:10–11; 49:15, did not make a definite appearance until the OT period was drawing to its close, 2 M 12:38d; Ws 3–5 (where it is linked with a belief in immortality, *see* Ws 3:4c).

17 **a.** vv. 2–3 are emended in line with some of the versions; Hebr. divides differently. • The consecrated fire is scattered to avoid its being put to profane use, and the censers which it has touched have become consecrated by contact with it.

b. A supplementary passage illustrating the efficacy of Aaron's ritual expiation, *see* Lv 16. • At v. 9, Gk and Syr. have 'to Moses and Aaron'.

c. The Hebr. word *matteh* means both 'rod' and 'tribe'. The word 'branch' expresses the same symbolism: the branch of a family; *see* the 'shoot' of Is 11:1.

twelve branches in all for their families; Aaron's branch was among them. •Moses 22 7
placed them before Yahweh in the Tent of the Testimony. •On the following day 23 8
Moses went to the Tent of the Testimony and there, already sprouting, was Aaron's
branch, representing the House of Levi; buds had formed, flowers had bloomed
and almonds had already ripened. •Moses then brought out all the branches from 24 9
before Yahweh to all the Israelites; they examined them and each one took back
his own branch.

Yahweh then said to Moses, 'Put Aaron's branch back in front of the Testimony, 25 10
where it will have its ritual place as a warning to the rebellious; thus you will rid me
of their muttering for good, without their incurring death.' •Moses did as Yahweh 26 11
had ordered. That is what he did.

Expiation: the function of the priesthood

The Israelites then said to Moses, 'We are lost! We are dead men! We are all dead 27 12
men! •Anyone who approaches Yahweh's Dwelling with an offering will die. Are 28 13
we to be doomed to the last man?'[d]

18 Yahweh then said to Aaron: 1
↗Heb 7:25–28 'You, your sons and your ancestor's[a] line with you will be answerable for
offences against the sanctuary. You and your sons with you will be answerable
for the offences of your priesthood. •You will admit your brothers of the branch of 2
Levi, your ancestor's tribe, to join you and serve you, yourself and your sons,
before the Tent of the Testimony. •They must be at your service and the service of 3
the whole Tent. Provided they do not come near the sacred vessels or the altar,
they will be in no more danger of death than you. •They must join you, they must 4
take charge of the Tent of Meeting for the entire ministry of the Tent, and no
3:10 unauthorised person will come near you. •You will take charge of the sanctuary 5
and charge of the altar, and retribution will never again befall the Israelites. •Of 6
the Israelites, I myself have chosen your brothers the Levites as a gift to you. As
Ezr 2:43d men dedicated, they will belong to Yahweh, to serve at the Tent of Meeting. •You 7
and your sons will undertake the priestly duties in all that concerns the altar and all
Ex 26:33 that lies behind the curtain.[b] You will perform the liturgy, the duties of which I
1:51+ entrust to your priesthood. But an unauthorised person approaching will incur
death.'

Lv 6–7 Ezk 44:29–30 **The priests' portion**

Yahweh said to Aaron: 8

'I myself have put you in charge of everything set aside for me. Everything
consecrated by the Israelites I give to you and your sons as your portion by
perpetual decree. •Of the things especially holy, of the food offered, this is what 9
will revert to you: every offering that the Israelites give back to me,[c] whether it be
a cereal offering, a sacrifice for sin or a sacrifice of reparation, is a thing especially
holy and will revert to you and your sons. •You will eat the things especially holy. 10
Every male may eat them. You will regard them as sacred.

'To you will revert also whatever is set aside from the offerings of the Israelites, 11
Ex 29:24g whatever is held out with the gesture of offering; this I give to you and your sons
and daughters, by perpetual decree. All members of your household may eat it
unless they are unclean. •All the best of the oil, all the best of the new wine and 12
Dt 26:1a wheat, these first-fruits offered by them to Yahweh I give to you. •All the first 13
produce of the country brought by them to Yahweh will revert to you. All members
of your household may eat it unless they are unclean. •Everything in Israel put 14
Lv 27:28 Ex 13:11b under the curse of destruction will revert to you. •Every first-born of all creatures 15
brought to Yahweh, be it man or beast, will revert to you, but you will have to
redeem the first-born of man; you will also redeem the first-born of an unclean
animal. •You will redeem it in the month in which it is born, valuing it at five 16
shekels, at the sanctuary shekel, which is twenty *gerah*. •But you will not redeem 17
the first-born of cow, sheep and goat. They are holy: you will sprinkle their blood

18 on the altar and burn the fat as food burnt to be a smell pleasing to Yahweh; ·the
meat will revert to you, as will the forequarter that has been presented with the
19 gesture of offering, and the right thigh. ·Everything the Israelites set aside for
Yahweh from the holy things, I give to you and your sons and daughters, by
perpetual decree. This is a covenant of salt for ever before Yahweh, for you and Lv 2:13d
your descendants too.'

The Levites' portion [d]

20 Yahweh said to Aaron:
'You will have no heritage in their country, you will not have a portion like them;
I shall be your portion and your heritage among the Israelites.
21 'Look, as heritage I give the Levites all the tithes collected in Israel, in return Dt 14:22d
22 for their services, for the ministry they render in the Tent of Meeting. ·The
Israelites will no longer approach the Tent of Meeting, on pain of committing a Ex 19:12e
23 deadly sin. ·Levi will discharge the duties of the Tent of Meeting, and the Levites
will bear the consequences of their own guilt. This is a perpetual decree binding all
24 your descendants: the Levites will have no heritage among the Israelites, ·for the
tithe which the Israelites set aside for Yahweh is the heritage I have given
the Levites. This is why I have told them that they will have no heritage among the
Israelites.'

Tithes [e] Dt 14:22d

25, 26 Yahweh spoke to Moses and said, ·'Speak to the Levites and say:
"When from the Israelites you receive the tithe which I have given you from
them as your heritage, you will set a portion of this aside for Yahweh: a tithe of the
27 tithe. ·It will take the place of the portion set aside that is due from you, like the
28 wheat from the threshing-floor and new wine from the press. ·Thus you too will set
a portion aside for Yahweh out of all the tithes you receive from the Israelites. You
29 will give what you have set aside for Yahweh to the priest Aaron. ·Out of all the
gifts you receive, you will set a portion aside for Yahweh. Out of all these things,
you will set aside the best, the sacred portion."
30 'You will say to them,[f] "After you have set the best aside, the remainder will
take the place, in the Levites' case, of the produce of the threshing-floor and
31 wine-press. ·You may consume this anywhere, you and the members of your
32 households; this is your recompense for serving in the Tent of Meeting, ·and you
will not incur sin by doing so, once you have set aside the best; you will not be
profaning the things consecrated by the Israelites and will not incur death." '

The ashes of the red heifer [a] 31:23 ↗Heb 9:13

1 **19** Yahweh spoke to Moses and Aaron and said:
2 'This is a decree of the Law which Yahweh has prescribed. Tell the Israe-
lites, they are to bring you a red heifer without fault or blemish that has never

d. Sequel to 16:34 and linking it to what comes next. The distinction being made here is not between Aaronites and Levites but between Levites and laymen.

18 a. i.e. Levi. Here, the Levites (*see* 3:5–10) are associated with the Aaronites in their ministry of expiation for the people (*see* Lv 16:16), but only as servants.

b. The altar where the sacrifices were offered, and the Holy of Holies which only the high priest entered. The priests of the OT were primarily ministers of the altar.

c. The offerings were taken from what God had given in the first place, *see* 1 Ch 29:14, or were intended to make reparation for a wrong done to him, Lv 5:15 seq.

d. This Priestly legislation marks an intermediate stage between Dt 14:28–29; 26:12 (where the Levites share the tithe only once in three years) and Nb 35:1–8 (where they are endowed with land).

e. As the laity lived on the produce of the soil, so the Levites lived on the tithe, once 'the portion set aside for Yahweh' had been handed over to the priests.

f. i.e. to the Levites who, in v. 31, are addressed directly.

19 a. Ch. 19 forms a unit: the water for purification, vv. 17–22 prepared with the ashes of a red heifer slaughtered and burnt outside the camp (vv. 1–10), was used to remove the defilement incurred through contact with the dead, vv. 11–16. The rite is alluded to only once elsewhere, 31:23 (and *see* Heb. 9:13); it gave a legal status to an ancient, half-magical, custom by giving it the character of a sacrifice of expiation for sin, v. 17, and *see* vv. 4–5 with Lv 16:27; v. 8 with Lv 16:28. Certain other practices of this kind were taken over by the Mosaic Law, 5:17–28; Lv 14:2–7; 16:5–10; Dt 21:1–9. The heifer had to be red because everything red in the ancient Middle East had a prophylactic value: the colour evokes blood, the life-principle, and protects against death.

Dt 21:3 Lv 4:12c ↗Heb 13:11seq. Lv 4:5–6 Ex 12:22i Lv 14:4–6 Lv 11:25,40 Lv 4:11–12 ↗Heb 9:13

borne the yoke. 3 •You will give it to the priest Eleazar. It will then be taken outside
the camp and slaughtered in his presence. 4 •The priest Eleazar will then take some
of the victim's blood on his finger, and sprinkle this blood seven times towards the
entrance to the Tent of Meeting. 5 •The heifer will then be burnt while he looks on;
its hide, flesh, blood and offal will be burnt. 6 •The priest will then take some cedar
wood, hyssop and scarlet material and throw them on the fire where the heifer is
burning. 7 •He will then wash his clothes and bathe himself; after which he will go
back to the camp, though he will remain unclean until evening. 8 •The man who has
burnt the heifer will wash his clothes and bathe himself and will remain unclean
until evening. 9 •The man who gathers up the ashes of the heifer must be ritually
clean; he will deposit them outside the camp, in a clean place. They will be kept for
the ritual use of the Israelite community for making water for purification; it is a
sacrifice for sin. 10 •The man who has gathered up the ashes of the heifer will wash his
clothes and remain unclean until evening. For the Israelites as for the resident
alien, this will be a perpetual decree.

Lv 21:1 Hg 2:13

Cases of uncleanness [b]

11 'Anyone who touches the corpse of anyone whatever will be unclean for seven
days. 12 •Such a person must be purified with these waters on the third and seventh
day and will then be clean; otherwise he will not be clean. 13 •Anyone who touches
the corpse of anyone who has died and is not purified, defiles Yahweh's Dwelling;
such a person will be outlawed from Israel, since the water for purification has not
been sprinkled over him; he is unclean, and his uncleanness remains in him.

14 'This is the law when someone dies in a tent. Anyone who goes into the tent, or
anyone who is already in it, will be unclean for seven days, 15 •and every open vessel
with no cover tied over it will also be unclean.

16 'Anyone in the open country who touches a murder victim, a corpse, human
bones or a grave will be unclean for seven days.

The ritual of water for purification

17 'For someone thus unclean, some of the ashes of the victim burnt as a sacrifice for
sin will be taken and spring water must be poured over them, in a vessel. 18 •Someone
who is ritually clean will then take some hyssop and dip it in the water. He will then
sprinkle the tent, all the vessels and people who were there, and similarly anyone
who has touched human bones, a murder victim, a corpse or a grave. 19 •The clean
one will sprinkle the unclean one on the third and the seventh day, and on the
seventh day he will have purified him. The latter will then wash his clothes and
bathe himself in water, and in the evening he will be clean. 20 •If anyone unclean fails
to purify himself in this way, he will be outlawed from the community, for he would
defile Yahweh's sanctuary. The water for purification has not been sprinkled over
him; he is unclean.

21 'This will be a perpetual decree for them. The person who sprinkles the water
for purification will wash his clothes, and anyone who touches the water for
purification will be unclean until evening. 22 •Anything that an unclean person
touches will be unclean, and anyone who touches it will be unclean until evening.'

Lv 14:4–5 Dt 21:1–9

VII: FROM KADESH TO MOAB [a]

‖Ex 17:1–7

The Waters of Meribah [b]

20 The Israelites, the whole community, arrived in the first month at the desert
of Zin. The people settled at Kadesh. There Miriam died and was buried.

Ex 14:11+ 16:34;17:28

2 There was no water for the community, so they banded together against Moses
and Aaron. 3 •The people laid the blame on Moses. 'We would rather have died',
they said, 4 'as our brothers died before Yahweh! •Why have you brought Yahweh's

5 community into this desert, for us and our livestock to die here? •Why did you lead
us out of Egypt, only to bring us to this wretched place? It is a place unfit for
sowing, it has no figs, no vines, no pomegranates, and there is not even water to
drink!'
6 Leaving the assembly, Moses and Aaron went to the entrance to the Tent of
Meeting. They threw themselves on their faces, and the glory of Yahweh appeared
7, 8 to them. •Yahweh then spoke to Moses and said, •'Take the branch and call the 17:25
community together, you and your brother Aaron. Then, in full view of them,
order this rock to release its water. You will release water from the rock for them
and provide drink for the community and their livestock.'
9, 10 Moses took up the branch from before Yahweh, as he had directed him. •Moses
and Aaron then called the assembly together in front of the rock. He then said to
them, 'Listen now, you rebels. Shall we make water gush from this rock for you?' Dt 8:15
Ne 9:15
11 Moses then raised his hand and struck the rock twice with the branch; water Ps 78:15;
gushed out in abundance, and the community and their livestock drank. Ws 43:20
Jn 7:38;19:34
1 Co 10:14

The punishment of Moses and Aaron [c] •Dt 1:37;3:26;
32:51;33:8
12 Yahweh then said to Moses and Aaron, 'Because you did not believe that I could Ps 106:32seq.
assert my holiness before the Israelites' eyes, you will not lead this assembly into 27:14
the country which I am giving them.'
13 These were the Waters of Meribah, where the Israelites laid the blame on Ex 17:7
Yahweh and where, by their means, he asserted his holiness.

Edom refuses right of way [d] Dt 2:4–7
Jg 11:17
14 •Moses sent messengers from Kadesh: 'To the king of Edom. Your brother Israel Is 34;63:1–6
15 says this: You are aware of the great hardships we have encountered. •Our Am 1:11
ancestors went down to Egypt and there we stayed for a long time. But the •Dt 23:8,9e
16 Egyptians treated us badly, as they had our ancestors. •When we appealed to
Yahweh, he heard our cry and, sending an angel, brought us out of Egypt, and Ex 23:20i
17 here we are, now, at Kadesh, a town on the borders of your territory. •We ask
permission to pass through your country. We shall not go through the fields or 21:22
vineyards; we shall not drink the water from the wells; we shall keep to the king's
highway without turning to right or left until we have passed through your terri-
18 tory.' •To which, Edom replied, 'You will not pass through my country; if you do,
19 I shall oppose you by force of arms.' •To which the Israelites replied, 'We shall
keep to the high road; if I and my flocks drink any of your water, I am willing to
20 pay for it. All I am asking is to pass through on foot.' •Edom replied: 'You shall
21 not pass,' and Edom opposed them in great numbers and great force. •At Edom's
refusal to grant Israel passage through his territory, Israel turned away.

b. The purity regulations of Lv 11–16 did not mention contact with the dead.

20 a. The narratives of which this section largely consists, derive basically from the great Yahwistic and Elohistic collections; they draw upon several traditions of varying outlook which they either place side by side or, in many cases, fuse together; it is difficult to distinguish these traditions precisely. The main theme is the steady advance of God's chosen people despite all opposition.

b. This section, from the Priestly source, is a doublet of the one in Ex 17:1–17 (*see* note), with a supplementary theme, the punishment of Moses and Aaron, Nb 20:12–13. Its siting at Kadesh is secondary, which place, *see* 13:26, cannot be the same as that described in v. 5; even so, the incident related here caused Kadesh to be called Meribah-Kadesh, *see* 27:14; etc.

c. What Moses and Aaron had done wrong remains a mystery. Possibly Moses showed a lack of faith in striking the rock twice, a detail not occurring in parallel Ex 17. Or possibly the Priestly editor was trying to explain why Moses and Aaron never entered the Promised Land: if so, it would account for his having placed this modified form of the story, v. 11, before the death of Aaron, vv. 22 seq.; he was later to refer to it before the death of Moses, Dt 32:51. According to Dt 1:37; 3:26; 4:21, Moses was punished on account of the people's refusal to invade Canaan from Kadesh, *see* Nb. 14.

d. The ancient sources are resumed at this point, following on from the departure from Kadesh, 14:25 and 14:39d. In this period, however, Kadesh was a long way from the Edomite frontier (v. 16 notwithstanding). The request was presumably presented while the Israelites were on the march, but the most ancient tradition gives no details about the itinerary taken.

e. Just before this verse Sam. and Syr. Hex. insert certain phrases taken from Dt 2:2–6 and 3:24–28.

33:38–39 Dt 10:6

The death of Aaron [f]

They set out from Kadesh, and the Israelites, the whole community, came to 22
Mount Hor. ·Yahweh spoke to Moses and Aaron at Mount Hor, on the frontier of 23
Edom, and said, ·'Aaron is to be gathered to his people; he will not enter the 24
country which I have given to the Israelites, since you both disobeyed my order at
the Waters of Meribah. ·Take Aaron and his son Eleazar and bring them up Mount 25
Hor. ·Then take Aaron's robes off him and dress his son Eleazar in them. Aaron 26
will then be gathered to his people; that is where he will die.'

Moses did as Yahweh ordered. With the whole community watching, they went 27
up Mount Hor. ·Moses took Aaron's robes off him and dressed his son Eleazar in 28
them, and there Aaron died, on the mountain-top. Moses and Eleazar then came
back down the mountain. ·The whole community saw that Aaron had died, and 29
Dt 34:8 for thirty days the whole House of Israel mourned for Aaron.

The capture of Hormah [a]

Jg 1:16 21 The king of Arad, [b] the Canaanite living in the Negeb, learned that Israel 1
was coming by way of Atharim. He attacked Israel and took some prisoners.
Israel then made this vow to Yahweh, 'If you deliver this people into my power, I 2
Jg 6:17c shall curse their towns with destruction.' ·Yahweh heard Israel's words and deliv- 3
ered the Canaanites into their power, and they destroyed them in accordance with
their curse. Hence the place was given the name Hormah. [c]

The bronze serpent [d]

They left Mount Hor by the road to the Sea of Suph, [e] to skirt round Edom. On the 4
Ex 14:11+;22:27 way the people lost patience. ·They spoke against God and against Moses, 'Why 5
did you bring us out of Egypt to die in the desert? For there is neither food nor
water here; we are sick of this meagre diet.'

Dt 8:15 ↗1 Co 10:9 At this, God sent fiery serpents [f] among the people; their bite brought death to 6
many in Israel. ·The people came and said to Moses, 'We have sinned by speaking 7
against Yahweh and against you. Intercede for us with Yahweh to save us from
Ex 32:11e these serpents.' Moses interceded for the people, ·and Yahweh replied, 'Make a 8
fiery serpent and raise it as a standard. Anyone who is bitten and looks at it will
2 K 18:4d Ws 16:5seq. ↗Jn 3:14seq.; 19:37 survive.' ·Moses then made a serpent out of bronze and raised it as a standard, and 9
anyone who was bitten by a serpent and looked at the bronze serpent survived.

By stages to Transjordan [g]

The Israelites set out and camped at Oboth. ·Then they left Oboth and camped at 10. 11
Iye-Abarim, in the desert on the eastern border of Moab. ·They set out from there 12
and camped in the gorge of the Zered. ·They set out from there and camped on 13
the other side of the Arnon.

21:21m This gorge in the desert begins in the territory of the Amorites. For the Arnon is
the frontier of Moab, between the Moabites and the Amorites. ·That is why it says 14
in the Book of the Wars of Yahweh: [h]

'. . .Waheb near Suphah and the gorges of the Arnon ·and the slope of the 15
ravine running down to the site of Ar and over against the frontier of Moab.'

And from there they went to Beer, [i] that being the well in connection with which 16
Jn 4:1a Yahweh had said to Moses, 'Call the people together and I will give them water.'
Then it was that Israel sang this song: 17

Spring up, well!
Sing out for the well,
sunk by the princes, 18
dug by the people's leaders
with the sceptre, with their staves!

—and from the desert to Mattanah, [j] ·and from Mattanah to Nahaliel, and from 19

20 Nahaliel to Bamoth, ·and from Bamoth to the valley that opens into the country of
Moab, towards the heights of Pisgah overlooking the desert. [k]

The conquest of Transjordan [l] ||Dt 2:26–36

21. 22 Israel sent messengers to say to Sihon king of the Amorites, [m] ·'I wish to pass Jg 11:19–20
through your country. We shall not stray into the fields or vineyards; we shall not 20:14–21
drink the water from the wells; we shall keep to the king's highway until we have
passed through your territory.'
23 But Sihon would not give Israel leave to pass through his country. He assembled
all his people, marched into the desert to meet Israel, and reached Jahaz, where he
24 gave battle to Israel. ·Israel defeated him by force of arms and conquered his
country from the Arnon to the Jabbok, as far as the Ammonites, for Jazer [n] marked
the Ammonite frontier.
25 Israel took all these towns. Israel occupied all the Amorite towns, Heshbon and
26 all its dependencies, ·Heshbon being the capital of Sihon king of the Amorites,
who had made war on the first king [o] of Moab and captured all his territory as far as
27 the Arnon. ·Hence the poets say: [p]

Come to Heshbon!
Let the city of Sihon
be rebuilt on firm foundations!

28 For fire has burst from Heshbon, ||Jr 48:45–46
a flame from the city of Sihon,
devouring Ar of Moab,
engulfing [q] the heights of the Arnon.
29 Oh, unhappy Moab!
People of Chemosh, you are lost!
He [r] has resigned his sons as fugitives,
and his daughters as prisoners
to Sihon king of the Amorites.

f. Priestly narrative. Mount Hor has not been identified. The detail 'on the frontier of Edom' reflects the exilic period when the Edomites, originally settled to the east of the Arabah, had extended westwards at the expense of Judah. *see* Dt 2:1b.

21 a. An ancient tradition but out of context here. Hormah, *see* 14:45e, was captured by the Simeonites entering Palestine from the south, Jg 1:16–17.16f. The defeat at Hormah, Nb 14:39d, occurred later.

b. The incident appears to be a gloss justified by the proximity of Arad to Hormah.

c. The author connects the name with a root meaning 'to curse with unconditional destruction for religious motives', thus hinting at the religious character of the conquest.

d. This story should be associated with the copper mines of the Arabah, where the metal was already being exploited in the 13th century BC. At Meneiyeh (now Timnah) a number of small copper snakes have been discovered, presumably used, like those of Moses, for warding off poisonous snakes. This mining area in the Arabah lies on the route from Kadesh to Aqaba, *see* v. 4e.

e. Towards the Gulf of Aqaba, *see* Dt 2:1; 1 K 9:26, not to be confused with the Suph of the Exodus (*see* Ex 13:18g). Settled occupation of Edom had not yet extended as far as the Gulf of Aqaba and the Israelites took the normal route allowing them to skirt round Edomite territory. This note is the only ancient information on the route taken by them.

f. 'fiery' translates *saraph* which is used in Is 30:6 for a winged serpent or dragon. The 'seraphs' of Is 6:2–6 comes from the same root.

g. This late passage is an attempt to fill the gaps in the ancient source material by using information in Nb 33 (*see* 33:1a) and Dt 2 to describe the itinerary. In it have been inserted two fragments of ancient Hebrew poetry, vv. 14–15 and 17–18.

h. A lost collection of ancient war songs, quoted only here.

i. This unique occurrence of Beer as a place-name is suspect, being perhaps taken from the song, v. 17. *be'er* means 'a well'.

j. The editor has misconstrued the closing words of the poem: 'and of the desert it (the well) is a gift (*mattanah*)', transforming the common noun into a place-name.

k. v.20 is overburdened and confused. In Hebr. 'the heights of Pisgah' are in apposition to 'the Plains of Moab'.

l. Continuation of the ancient source, interrupted after 20:22[a].

m. A small Canaanite kingdom established to the north of the Arnon, with Heshbon as its capital. Sihon had been victorious over the invading Moabites, vv. 28–29, *see* vv. 27 seq., 27p, but was in turn to be beaten by the Israelites.

n. 'Jazer' Gk; 'Az' Hebr.

o. Alternative trans. 'the previous king'.

p. The poem, of which v. 30 is crucial and also corrupt, can be understood in two ways. **1** It is an Amorite victory-song celebrating Sihon's defeat of Moab, inserted as a commentary on v. 26[b]; though this requires more radical emendation of v. 30, which would then mean that Heshbon had destroyed Moab. **2** It is an Israelite song, introduced by vv. 25–26, celebrating Israel's victory over Sihon, vv. 27[b] and 30 (emended), but mentioning Sihon's victory over Moab to enhance the triumph, vv. 28–29: Heshbon devoured the towns of Moab, but we, the Israelites, have destroyed Heshbon, v. 27 would then be an ironic invitation to come and rebuild it.

q. 'engulfing' *bale'ah* following Gk; Hebr. *ba'ale* 'the masters of'.

r. i.e. Chemosh.

Their posterity has been destroyed 30
from Heshbon all the way to Dibon,
and we have lit a fire
all the way from Nophah to Medeba. [e]

Thus Israel occupied the Amorites' territory. ·Moses then sent men to recon- 31, 32
noitre Jazer, and Israel took it and its dependencies, evicting the Amorites who
lived there.

‖Dt 3:1–7 They then turned and marched on Bashan. Og king of Bashan and all his people 33
marched to meet them and give battle at Edrei. [f] ·Yahweh said to Moses, 'Do not 34
be afraid of him, for I have put him, all his people and his country at your mercy.
Treat him as you treated Sihon king of the Amorites, who lived in Heshbon.' ·So 35
they pressed their attack against him, his sons and all his people until there was no
one left alive. And they took possession of his country.

22 The Israelites then set out and pitched their camp in the Plains of Moab, 1
beyond the Jordan opposite Jericho. [a]

31:8,16 Dt 23:5–6 Jos 24:9–10 Ne 13:2 Mi 6:5 2 P 2:15seq. Jude 11 Rv 2:14 Ex 2:15e

The king of Moab appeals to Balaam [b]

Balak son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites, ·and Moab was 2, 3
terrified of the people, because there were so many of them.

Moab was afraid of the Israelites; ·he said to the elders of Midian, 'This horde 4
will soon have cropped everything round us as closely as an ox crops grass in the
countryside.'

Now Balak son of Zippor was king of Moab at the time. ·He sent messengers to 5
summon Balaam son of Beor, at Pethor on the River, in the territory of the
Amawites, [c] saying, 'Look, a people coming from Egypt has overrun the whole
countryside; they have halted at my very door. ·I beg you come and curse this 6
people for me, for they are stronger than I am. We may then be able to defeat
them and drive them out of the country. For this I know: anyone you bless is
blessed, anyone you curse is accursed.'

1 S 9:7d The elders of Moab and the elders of Midian set out, taking the fee for the 7
divination with them. They found Balaam and gave him Balak's message. ·He said 8
to them, 'Stay the night here, and I will answer as Yahweh directs me.' So the
chiefs of Moab stayed with Balaam. ·God came to Balaam and said, 'Who are 9
these men staying with you?' ·Balaam said to God, 'Balak son of Zippor, king of 10
Moab, has sent me this message, ·"Look, a people coming from Egypt has overrun 11
the whole countryside. Come now and curse them for me; I may then be able to
defeat them and drive them out." ' ·God said to Balaam, 'You are not to go with 12
them. You are not to curse the people, for they are blessed.' ·In the morning 13
Balaam got up and said to the chiefs sent by Balak, 'Go back to your country, for
Yahweh will not let me go with you.' ·So the chiefs of Moab got up, went back to 14
Balak and said, 'Balaam refuses to come with us.'

And again Balak sent chiefs, more numerous and more renowned than the first. 15
They came to Balaam and said, 'A message from Balak son of Zippor, "Now do 16
not refuse to come to me. ·I will load you with honours and do whatever you say. I 17
beg you come and curse this people for me." ' ·In reply, Balaam said to Balak's 18
envoys, 'Even if Balak gave me his house full of silver and gold, I could not go
against the order of Yahweh my God in anything, great or small. ·Now please stay 19
the night here yourselves, and I will learn what else Yahweh has to tell me.' ·God 20
came to Balaam during the night and said to him, 'Have not these men come to
summon you? Get up, go with them, but do only what I tell you to do.' ·Balaam 21
got up and saddled his donkey [d] and set out with the chiefs of Moab.

Balaam's donkey

His going kindled Yahweh's anger, and the angel of Yahweh took his stand on the 22
road to bar his way. [e] He was riding his donkey and his two servants were with him.

23 Now the donkey saw the angel of Yahweh standing in the road with a drawn sword Jos 5:13
in his hand, and she turned off the road into the open country. Balaam then struck
the donkey to turn her back onto the road.
24 The angel of Yahweh then went and stood on a narrow path among the vine-
25 yards, with a wall to the right and a wall to the left. ·The donkey saw the angel of
Yahweh and scraped against the wall, scraping Balaam's foot against it, so he
struck her again.
26 The angel of Yahweh then moved and stood in a place so narrow that there was
27 no room to pass either to right or left. ·When the donkey saw the angel of Yahweh,
she lay down under Balaam. Balaam flew into a rage and struck the donkey with
his stick.
28 Yahweh then gave the donkey the power to talk, and she said to Balaam, 'What ↗2 P 2:16
29 harm have I done you, for you to strike me three times like this?' ·Balaam answered
the donkey, 'Because you have been making a fool of me! If I had been carrying a
30 sword, I should have killed you by now.' ·The donkey said to Balaam, 'Am I not
your donkey, and have I not been your mount all your life? Have I ever behaved
like this with you before?' 'No,' he replied.
31 Yahweh then opened Balaam's eyes and he saw the angel of Yahweh standing in
the road with a drawn sword in his hand; and he bowed his head and threw himself
32 on his face. ·And the angel of Yahweh said to him, 'Why did you strike your
donkey three times like that? I myself had come to bar your way; while I am here
33 your road is blocked.[f] ·The donkey saw me and turned aside because of me three
times. You are lucky she did turn aside, or I should have killed you by now, though
34 I would have spared her.' ·Balaam said to the angel of Yahweh, 'I have sinned.[g] I
did not know you were standing in the road to stop me. But if what I am doing
35 displeases you, I will go home again.' ·The angel of Yahweh said to Balaam, 'Go
with these men, but say only what I tell you to say.' So Balaam went on with the
chiefs sent by Balak.

Balaam and Balak

36 Balak learned that Balaam was coming and went out to meet him, in the direction
37 of Ar in Moab,[h] at the Arnon frontier on the country's furthest boundary. ·Balak
said to Balaam, 'Did I not send messengers to summon you? Why did you not come
38 to me? Did you think, perhaps, I could confer no honours on you?' ·Balaam said
to Balak, 'I have come to you after all. I suppose you know I cannot say anything
on my own? The words God puts into my mouth are what I shall say.' Jr 1:9
39, 40 Balaam set out with Balak. They came to Kiriath-Huzoth. ·Balak sacrificed oxen

s. 'their posterity' Gk; 'their lamp' Hebr. • 'and we . . . Medeba' conj.; Hebr. not clear.

t. The account of the war against Og serves both to round off the conquest and to justify the half-tribe of Manasseh's claim to Bashan, which the Israelites never owned in fact. Og was a figure of legend, *see* Dt 3:11.

22 a. lit. 'beyond the Jordan of Jericho', i.e. on a level with Jericho but on the other side of the Jordan from the point of view of someone living in Palestine.

b. The narratives forming a setting for Balaam's prophecies combine the Yahwistic and Elohistic traditions, the Elohistic being predominant; the prophecies themselves seem to be older. This long episode offers an unusual case of the prophetic function. Balaam is a soothsayer from the banks of the Euphrates who acknowledges Yahweh as his God, 22:18, etc., and blesses Israel, 23:11–12, 25–26; 24:10, *see* Mi 6:5. But later traditions regard Balaam as hostile, constrained by Almighty God to bless Israel against his will, Dt 23:5–6; Jos 24:9–10, *see* Ne 13:2, and leading Israel into idolatry at Peor, 23:28; 31:16. This later tradition is also found in the NT.

c. Pethor (on 'the River', i.e. Euphrates) and the land of Amaw (with Hebr., against 'Ammon' of Sam., Syr., Vulg.) are known from cuneiform texts.

d. Considered a princely mount in the second millennium BC, *see* Jg 5:10; 10:4; 12:14.

e. 'Yahweh' with Sam., and some Gk MSS; 'God' Hebr. The contradiction with v. 20 seems to point to a different tradition, *see* 22:2b; this narrative, being more vivid and popular in character than the foregoing, is attributed to the Yahwist; he endows animals with powers of speech, *see* Gn 3:1 seq.

f. lit. 'the road is overturned'. Others translate 'for this journey did not please me'.

g. Here in the sense of any action, deliberate or not, that goes against God's will.

h. The text reads *'ir mo'ab*, 'a town of Moab', but it refers to Ar, a fortified town dominating the gorge of the Arnon, *see* 21:15. Balaam was, however, to utter his prophecies further north, near Mount Nebo, as he skirted the edge of the plateau overlooking the plain occupied by the Israelites. This was a long way north of the Arnon, marking the Moabite frontier, and in the former territory of Sihon, whom the Israelites had conquered. These narratives reflect a situation later than the conquest but earlier than the times of David, whem Moab had extended its frontiers northwards. At one point they even included Jericho, *see* Jg 3:12e, 13.

and sheep, and offered portions to Balaam and the chiefs who were with him.[i]
Next morning Balak took Balaam and brought him up to Bamoth-Baal, from 41
where he could see the edge of the camp.[j]

23 Balaam said to Balak, 'Build me seven altars here and prepare me seven 1
bulls and seven rams.' ·Balak did as Balaam said and offered a burnt 2
offering[a] of one bull and one ram on each altar. ·Balaam then said to Balak, 'Stand 3
beside your burnt offerings while I go away. Perhaps Yahweh will come and meet
me. If he does, I shall tell you whatever he reveals to me.' And he withdrew to a
bare hill.

Balaam's prophecies

God came to meet Balaam, who said to him, 'I have prepared the seven altars and 4
offered a burnt offering of one bull and one ram on each altar.' ·Yahweh then put 5
a prophecy into his mouth and said to him, 'Go back to Balak, and that is what you
must say to him.' ·So Balaam went back to him, and found him still standing beside 6
his burnt offering, with all the chiefs of Moab. ·He then declaimed his poem as 7
follows:[b]

Balak has brought me from Aram,
the king of Moab from the hills of Kedem:
'Come and curse Jacob for me,
come and denounce Israel!'
How shall I curse someone whom God has not cursed, 8
how denounce someone God has not denounced?
Yes, from the top of the crags I see him, 9
from the hills I descry him:
Dt 33:28 a people that dwells on its own,
not to be reckoned among other nations![c]
Gn 13:16;15:5+ Who can count the dust of Jacob? 10
Who can number the cloud of Israel?
May I die the death of the just,
and may my future be like theirs![d]

Balak said to Balaam, 'What have you done to me? I brought you to curse my 11
enemies, and you have heaped blessings on them!' ·Balaam replied, 'Am I to 12
depart from what Yahweh puts into my mouth?' ·Balak then said, 'Please come 13
somewhere else. From here you can see only the fringe of them, you cannot see
them all. Curse them for me over there.' ·He led him to the Lookouts' Field on the 14
top of Pisgah. There he built seven altars and offered a burnt offering of one bull
and one ram on each altar. ·Balaam said to Balak, 'Stand here beside your burnt 15
offerings while I wait[e] over there.' ·God came to meet Balaam; he put a prophecy 16
into his mouth and said to him, 'Go back to Balak, and that is what you must say to
him.' ·So Balaam went to him and found him still standing beside his burnt offering 17
and all the chiefs of Moab with him. 'What did Yahweh say?' Balak said to him.
Balaam then declaimed his poem, as follows: 18

Stand up, Balak, and listen,
give ear to me, son of Zippor.
1 S 15:29 Jb 9:32 Ml 3:6 Rm 11:29 Tt 1:2 Heb 6:18 Jm 1:17 God is no human being that he should lie, 19
no child of Adam to change his mind.
Is it his to say and not to do,
is it his to speak and not fulfil?
The charge laid on me is to bless,[f] 20
I shall bless, and I cannot reverse it.
I[g] have perceived no guilt in Jacob, 21
have seen no perversity in Israel.
Yahweh his God is with him,

and a royal acclamation to greet him.
22 God [h] has brought him out of Egypt, =24:8–9
is like the wild ox's horns to him. [i] ↗Mt 2:15
23 There is no omen whatever against Jacob,
no augury at all against Israel. [j]
Well may people say of Jacob,
of Israel, 'What has God achieved?' 14:14–18
24 for here is a people like a lioness rising,
poised like a lion to spring; Gn 49:9
nor will he lie down till he has devoured his prey
and drunk the blood of his slain.

25 Balak said to Balaam, 'Very well! Do not curse them. But at least do not bless
26 them!' ·Balaam retorted to Balak, 'Did I not tell you? Whatever Yahweh says, I
must do.'
27 Balak then said to Balaam, 'Come with me now and I shall take you somewhere
28 else. From there perhaps it will please God to curse them for me.' ·So Balak led
29 Balaam to the summit of Peor, overlooking the wastelands. ·Balaam then said to
Balak, 'Build me seven altars here and prepare me seven bulls and seven rams.'
30 Balak did as Balaam said and offered a burnt offering of one bull and one ram on
each altar.
1 **24** Balaam then saw that it pleased Yahweh to bless Israel. He did not go as
2 before to seek omens but turned towards the desert. ·Raising his eyes
3 Balaam saw Israel settled tribe by tribe; the spirit of God came on him ·and he
declaimed his poem, as follows: [a]

The prophecy of Balaam son of Beor,
the prophecy of the man with far-seeing eyes, [b]
4 the prophecy of one who hears the words of God.
He sees what Shaddai makes him see, Gn 17:1b
receives the divine answer, and his eyes are opened. [c]
5 How fair your tents are, Jacob, Ps 84:1
how fair your dwellings, Israel, Is 54:2–3
6 like valleys that stretch afar,
like gardens by the banks of a river,
like aloes planted by Yahweh,
like cedars beside the waters!
7 A hero arises from their stock, 24:17
he reigns over countless peoples. [d] Gn 49:10
His king is greater than Agag, Is 9:5par.;11:
and his kingdom held in honour. 1seq.

i. A communion sacrifice, Lv 3:1a, to be followed, Nb 23:2, by a burnt offering, as prelude to a divine manifestation, *see* Jg 6:25 seq.

j. lit. 'the extremity (i.e. the nearest part) of the people'.

23 **a.** 'he offered', reading singular with Gk.

b. The following poems may originally have belonged to one anti-Moabite collection. The first two come down through the Elohistic tradition.

c. Israel is a chosen race, Dt 7:6b, as its very numbers show.

d. 'theirs' Gk; Hebr. has the singular.

e. lit. 'I am met'.

f. lit. 'Look, he has blessed, I have taken (i.e. it—the opportunity)'; but the versions read the passive 'I have been taken' (i.e. as God's tool).

g. 'I' Sam. and Syr.; 'He' Hebr. and Gk.

h. Instead of *elohim*, Hebr. has *el*, which means God but is also the proper name of the principal god of the Canaanite pantheon. The latter had already been identified with the God of the Patriarchs and with Yahweh. Similarly in 24:4, 8 and 16.

i. A difficult text. Alternative translations: 'he (Jacob) has the strength of the wild ox,' or 'he (El) is like the horns of the wild ox.'

j. Others translate 'in Jacob' and 'in Israel'.

24 **a.** Here begins a new series of prophecies from the Yahwistic tradition.

b. lit. 'whose eye is perfect' *shettam*, following Gk; Hebr. *shetum* 'whose eye is closed'.

c. Alternative translation, 'He falls and his eyes are opened.'

d. Following Gk. The prophecy seems to be one of royal messianism; its immediate reference would seem to be either Saul who defeated the Amalekite king Agag, 1 S 15:8, or David who also fought against the Amalekites, 1 S 30. Hebr. is entirely different and may be translated: 'water will pour from his buckets, and his seed is in abundant waters.'

23:22–24 God has brought him out of Egypt, 8
Dt 33:17 is like the wild ox's horns to him.
He [e] devours the corpses of his enemies,
breaking their bones,
piercing them with his arrows.
Gn 49:9 He has crouched, he has lain down, 9
like a lion, like a lioness;
who dare rouse him?
Gn 12:3;27:29 Blessed be those who bless you,
and accursed be those who curse you!

Balak flew into a rage with Balaam. He struck his hands together and said to 10
Balaam, 'I brought you to curse my enemies, and you have insisted on blessing
them three times over! ·So now go home as fast as your legs can carry you. I pro- 11
mised to load you with honours. Yahweh himself has deprived you of them.'
Balaam retorted to Balak, 'Did I not tell the messengers you sent me, ·"Even if 12, 13
Balak gave me his house full of gold and silver I could not go against Yahweh's
order and do anything of my own accord, whether for good or ill; whatever Yahweh
says is what I shall say"? ·Now that I am going back to my own folk, let me warn 14
you what this people will do to your people, in days to come.' ·He then declaimed 15
his poem, as follows:

The prophecy of Balaam son of Beor,
the prophecy of the man with far-seeing eyes,
the prophecy of one who hears the words of God, 16
of one who knows the knowledge of the Most High.
He sees what Shaddai makes him see,
receives the divine answer, and his eyes are opened.
I see him—but not in the present. 17
I perceive him—but not close at hand:
Gn 49:10g Mt 2:2 Rv 2:28;22:16 a star [f] is emerging from Jacob,
a sceptre [g] is rising from Israel,
to strike the brow of Moab,
the skulls of all the children of Seth. [h]
Gn 25:23; 27:39–40,40h Dt 2:1b Edom too will be a conquered land, 18
Seir too will be a conquered land,
when Israel exerts his strength,
when Jacob tramples on his enemies 19
and destroys the last survivors of Ar. [i]

Balaam then looked at Amalek and declaimed his poem, as follows: 20

Ex 17:8d Amalek, the earliest of nations!
Ex 17:14 1 S 15:3 But his posterity will perish forever. [j]

He then looked at the Kenites and declaimed his poem, as follows: 21

1 S 15:6 Your dwelling was firm, Kain,
your nest [k] perched high in the rock.
But the nest belongs to Beor; 22
how long will you be Asshur's captive? [l]

He then declaimed his poem, as follows: 23

The Sea-people [m] are gathering in the north,
Dn 11:30 the vessels from the coasts of Kittim. 24
They will bear down on Asshur, bear down on Eber; [n]
he too will perish forever.

31:8 Balaam then got up, left and went home, and Balak too went his way. 25

Israel at Peor [a]

31:16
Dt 3:29;4:3
Ps 106:28–31
↗Rv 2:14

1 **25** Israel settled at Shittim. [b] The people gave themselves over to prostitution
2 with Moabite women. ·These invited them to the sacrifices of their gods,
3 and the people ate [c] and bowed down before their gods. ·With Israel thus committed to the Baal of Peor, Yahweh's anger was aroused against them.

4 Yahweh said to Moses, 'Take all the leaders of the people. Impale them facing
5 the sun, for Yahweh, to deflect his burning anger from Israel.' ·Moses said to the judges of Israel, 'Each of you will put to death those of his people who have committed themselves to the Baal of Peor.'

2 S 21:6seq.
Ex 18:25par.

6 One of the Israelites came along, bringing the Midianite [d] woman into his family, under the very eyes of Moses and the whole community of Israelites as they were
7 weeping at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. ·The priest Phinehas son of Eleazar, son of Aaron, on seeing this, stood up, left the assembly, seized a lance,
8 followed the Israelite into the alcove, [e] and there ran them both through, the Israelite and the woman, through the stomach. Thus the plague which had struck
9 the Israelites was arrested. ·In the plague twenty-four thousand of them had died.

Ex 2:15e
Ex 6:25
1 M 2:54
↗1 Co 10:8

10, 11 Yahweh then spoke and said, ·'The priest Phinehas son of Eleazar, son of Aaron has deflected my wrath from the Israelites, he being the only one of them to have the same zeal as I have; for which reason, I did not make an end of the Israelites in
12, 13 my zeal. ·For this reason I say: To him I grant my covenant of peace. ·To him and his descendants after him, this covenant will assure the priesthood for ever. In reward for his zeal for his God, he will have the right to perform the ritual of expiation for the Israelites.' [f]

Dt 4:24f
Ex 32:25–29
Lv 1:7
Dt 33:8–11
Ps 106:30–31
Si 45:23–26
Ezk 44:15

14 The Israelite who had been killed (the one who was killed with the Midianite woman) was called Zimri son of Salu, leader of one of the Simeonite families.
15 The woman, the Midianite who was killed, was called Cozbi, daughter of Zur, chief of a clan, of a family, in Midian.

16, 17 Yahweh then spoke to Moses and said, ·'Harass the Midianites, strike them
18 down, ·for harassing you with their guile in the Peor affair and in the affair of their sister Cozbi, the daughter of a prince of Midian, the woman who was killed the day the plague came on account of the business of Peor.'

31:3–12

e. Israel. The remainder of the v. is uncertain and the text corrupt. For 'corpses', MT reads 'nations'.

f. In the ancient Middle East a star signified a god and, consequently, a deified king. *See also* Is 14:12. Here the word seems to refer to the Davidic dynasty from which the Messiah was to come.

g. For 'sceptre', Gk reads 'a man'; for 'brows' it has 'chiefs'. The same Hebr. word means 'sides' (of the head) and 'frontiers'.

h. Here referring to Bedouin tribes. The poem goes on to enumerate those of Israel's enemies who lived on the borders of Canaan.

i. 'enemies': transposed from v. 18 where Hebr. has it after 'Seir'. • 'Ar', *see* 22:36, in place of Hebr. 'town'.

j. 'will perish forever' Sam.; 'will be until ruin (?)' Hebr., as also in v. 24.

k. Play on words: *qen*, 'nest' and *qyn*, 'Kain' (the latter is here a textual restoration demanded by the rhythm). The Kenites were nomads (*see* 1 Ch 2:55 where they appear as closely related to the Rechabites) intimately associated with Midian (*see* Nb 10:29 and Jg 1:16). They were driven back by the Edomites (the Beor of v. 22 appears to be the Edomite king of Gn 36:32) but penetrated as far as Amalekite territory, Jg 1:16; 1 S 15:4–6, *see* 1 S 27:10; 30:29, and even as far as the Plain of Esdraelon, Jg 4:11, 17; 5:24. There is evidently a connection between Kain and Kenaz; Kenaz was father of Othniel who was brother (or nephew?) of 'Caleb the Kenizzite' (who, according to other passages was of the tribe of Judah), 32:12; Jos 14:6, 14; 15:17 Jg 1:13; 3:9–11; 1 Ch 4:13. In Gn 15:19 the Kenizzites are listed between Kenites and Kadmonites (the 'sons of the East' of Gn 29:1; Jg 6:3; etc.); in Gn 36:11–12 Kenaz is described as grandson of Esau and half-brother of Amalek—which suggests that they were neighbours rather than blood-relations.

l. Text very uncertain, emended from Gk. The mention of Asshur is surprising here and at v. 24; it cannot refer to Assyria, for then the prophecy would have to be very late (8th century BC); it may mean the tribe of Asshur mentioned in Gn 25:3; 2 S 2:9.

m. lit. (with slight emendation) 'people of the isles'. These 'peoples of the sea' (the term includes the Philistines) descended on Egypt and Palestine at the end of the 13th century BC.

n. Cyprus, and also the eastern Mediterranean seaboard. Eber: *see* Gn 10:21; 11:14, a people from whom Abraham was descended, Gn 11:26; the name 'Hebrew' being in some way connected with it (*see* 'Abram the Hebrew', Gn 14:13), whatever the real origin of the word may be.

25 **a.** The original story, vv. 1–5, assumes the same historical situation as the stories about Balaam, *see* 22:36h. The sanctuary of Baal-Peor, *see* 23:28, on the frontier between Israel and Moab, was frequented by both peoples, and the Moabite women seduced the Israelites into serving their gods (or god), *see* 31:16. vv. 6–18, linked to the same sanctuary by v. 18, are from the Priestly editor but make use of an ancient tradition about a Midianite woman. Possibly, nomadic Midianites who roved this whole area, *see* 22:4, 7, far away from their own territory, *see* Ex 2:11c, frequented this sanctuary too. The story gave rise to the account of the war against Midian, 31:1a. The Midianites who figured favourably in traditions concerning Moses, *see* Ex 2:18g, later became Israel's enemies, *see* Jg 7–9.

b. On Shittim or Abel-ha-Shittim see Jos 2:1b.

c. The sacred banquet accompanying communion sacrifices.

d. Referring forward to vv. 6–15.

e. lit. 'vaulted niche', possibly intended for ritual prostitution.

f. Alternative translation 'It is the reward for his jealous zeal for his God and for having made expiation.'

VIII: FURTHER LEGISLATION[a]

The census

26 After this plague, Yahweh spoke to Moses and to the priest Eleazar son of Aaron and said: 1

'Take a census of the whole community of Israelites, by families: all those of twenty years and over, fit to bear arms in Israel.' 2

So Moses and the priest Eleazar took a census of them on the Plains of Moab, near the Jordan by Jericho.[b] They counted ·(as Yahweh had ordered Moses and the Israelites after leaving Egypt) men of twenty years and over: 3 4

Gn 46:8–9 Reuben, the first-born of Israel. The sons of Reuben: for Hanoch, the Hanochite clan; for Pallu, the Palluite clan; ·for Hezron, the Hezronite clan; for Carmi, the Carmite clan. ·These were the Reubenite clans. They numbered forty-three thousand seven hundred and thirty men. 5 6 7

16:1–17:15 The sons of Pallu: Eliab. ·The sons of Eliab: Nemuel, Dathan and Abiram. These two, Dathan and Abiram, men of repute in the community, were the ones who revolted against Moses and Aaron; they belonged to Korah's group when it revolted against Yahweh. ·The earth opened its mouth and swallowed them (with Korah when that group perished), when fire consumed the two hundred and fifty men. They were a sign. ·Korah's sons, however, did not perish. 8. 9 10 11

Gn 46:10 The sons of Simeon by clans: for Nemuel, the Nemuelite clan; for Jamin, the Jaminite clan; for Jachin, the Jachinite clan; ·for Zerah, the Zerahite clan; for Shaul, the Shaulite clan. ·These were the Simeonite clans. They numbered twenty-two thousand two hundred men. 12 13 14

Gn 46:16 ·The sons of Gad by clans: for Zephon, the Zephonite clan; for Haggi, the Haggite clan; for Shuni, the Shunite clan; ·for Ozni, the Oznite clan; for Eri, the Erite clan; ·for Arod, the Arodite clan; for Areli, the Arelite clan. ·These were the clans of the sons of Gad. They numbered forty thousand five hundred men. 15 16 17. 18

Gn 46:12 The sons of Judah: Er and Onan. Er and Onan died in the land of Canaan. ·The other sons of Judah became clans: for Shelah, the Shelahite clan; for Perez, the Perezzite clan; for Zerah, the Zerahite clan. ·The sons of Perez were: for Hezron, the Hezronite clan; for Hamul, the Hamulite clan. ·These were the clans of Judah. They numbered seventy-six thousand five hundred men. 19. 20 21 22

Gn 46:13 Jg 10:1–2 The sons of Issachar by clans: for Tola, the Tolaite clan; for Puvah, the Puvahite clan; ·for Jashub, the Jashubite clan; for Shimron, the Shimronite clan.· These were the clans of Issachar. They numbered sixty-four thousand three hundred men. 23 24. 25

Gn 46:14 Jg 12:11–12 The sons of Zebulun by clans: for Sered, the Seredite clan; for Elon, the Elonite clan; for Jahleel, the Jahleelite clan. ·These were the clans of Zebulun. They numbered sixty thousand five hundred men. 26 27

Gn 46:20 The sons of Joseph by clans: Manasseh and Ephraim. 28

Jos 17:1 Jg 5:14 1 Ch 7:14–19 The sons of Manasseh: for Machir, the Machirite clan; Machir fathered Gilead: for Gilead, the Gileadite clan. ·These were the sons of Gilead: for Iezer, the Iezerite clan; for Helek, the Helekite clan; ·Asriel, the Asrielite clan; Shechem, the Shechemite clan; ·Shemida, the Shemidaite clan; Hepher, the Hepherite clan. Zelophehad son of Hepher had no sons, only daughters; the names of Zelophehad's daughters were Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah and Tirzah. ·These were the clans of Manasseh. They numbered fifty-two thousand seven hundred men. 29 30 31 32 33 34

These were the sons of Ephraim by clans: for Shuthelah, the Shuthelahite clan; for Becher, the Becherite clan; for Tahan, the Tahanite clan. ·These were the sons of Shuthelah: for Eran, the Eranite clan. ·These were the clans of Ephraim. They numbered thirty-two thousand five hundred men. 35 36 37

These were the sons of Joseph by clans.

Gn 46:21 The sons of Benjamin by clans: for Bela, the Belaite clan; for Ashbel, the Ashbelite clan; for Ahiram, the Ahiramite clan; ·for Shephupham, the Shephuphamite clan; for Hupham, the Huphamite clan. ·Bela's sons were Ard and 38 39 40

41 Naaman; for Ard, the Ardite clan; for Naaman, the Naamanite clan. ·These were
the sons of Benjamin by clans. They numbered forty-five thousand six hundred
men.
42 These were the sons of Dan by clans: for Shuham, the Shuhamite clan. These Gn 46:23
43 were the sons of Dan by clans. ·All the Shuhamite clans numbered sixty-four
thousand four hundred men.
44 The sons of Asher by clans: for Imnah, the Imnahite clan; for Ishvi, the Ishvihite Gn 46:17
45 clan; for Beriah, the Beriahite clan. ·For the sons of Beriah: for Heber, the
46 Heberite clan; for Malchiel, the Malchielite clan. ·The daughter of Asher was
47 called Serah. ·These were the clans of Asher. They numbered fifty-three thousand
four hundred men.
48 The sons of Naphtali by clans: for Jahzeel, the Jahzeelite clan; for Guni, the Gn 46:24
49, 50 Gunite clan; ·for Jezer, the Jezerite clan; for Shillem, the Shillemite clan. ·These
were the clans of Naphtali as divided into clans. The sons of Naphtali numbered
forty-five thousand four hundred men.
51 Of the Israelites thus numbered, there were six hundred and one thousand seven 1:46e;2:32; 11:21
hundred and thirty men.
52, 53 Yahweh then spoke to Moses and said, ·'The country must be shared out among Jos 13seq.
54 these as a heritage, proportionately to the number of those inscribed. ·To the large
in number you will give a large area of land, to the small in number a small area; to =33:54
55 each the heritage will be in proportion to the number registered. ·The sharing out
of the country must, however, be done by lot. Each will receive a heritage
56 proportionate to the number of names in their patriarchal tribes; ·the heritage of
each tribe will be shared out by lot, depending on its larger or smaller numbers.'

Census of the Levites

57 These, by clans, are the Levites that were registered: for Gershon, the Gershonite Gn 46:11 Ex 6:16–23
clan; for Kohath, the Kohathite clan; for Merari, the Merarite clan. 1 Ch 6:1–15
58 These are the Levite clans: the Libnite clan, the Hebronite clan, the Mahlite
clan, the Mushite clan, the Korahite clan. [d]
59 Kohath fathered Amram. ·Amram's wife was called Jokebed daughter of Levi, Ex 6:20
born to him in Egypt. To Amram she bore Aaron, Moses and Miriam their sister.
60, 61 Aaron fathered Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar. ·Nadab and Abihu died 3:4 Lv 10:1–3
when they brought unauthorised fire before Yahweh.
62 Altogether twenty-three thousand males of one month and over were regis- 3:15,39
tered. They were not registered with the Israelites, since they were given no
heritage with the Israelites. 18:20–24
63 Such were the men registered by Moses and the priest Eleazar who took a census
64 of the Israelites on the Plains of Moab near the Jordan by Jericho. ·Not one of
them was among those whom Moses and the priest Aaron had registered when
65 they counted the Israelites in the desert of Sinai; ·for Yahweh had told them that 14:20–38
these were to die in the desert and that none of them would be left except Caleb
son of Jephunneh and Joshua son of Nun.

The inheritance of daughters

1 **27** There then came forward the daughters of Zelophehad son of Hepher, son 26:33 Jos 17:3–4
of Gilead, son of Machir, son of Manasseh; he belonged to the clans of
Manasseh son of Joseph. His daughters' names were Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah,

26 **a.** These new and varied enactments are all of the Priestly tradition.

b. 'took a census of them' Targ., Syr.; 'spoke to them and said' Hebr. The census on the Plains of Moab corresponds to the one taken on leaving Sinai, ch. 1; it is more detailed and was used for drawing up the genealogy of Jacob in Gn 46 (Priestly). The order of the tribes is different in Gk, and agrees with that in Gn 46.

c. At this point, Gk inverts the order of the tribes, hence a discrepancy in the verse numbers.

d. vv. 57 and 58 give two different clan divisions of the Levites; the second is probably the earlier, preserving the memory of the original concentration of the Levites in the south (Hebron, Libnah). 1 Ch 6:1–15 attempts a reconciliation.

Milcah and Tirzah. •They appeared before Moses, the priest Eleazar, the leaders 2
and the whole community, at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting, and said, •'Our 3
father died in the desert. He was not a member of the party who banded together
against Yahweh, Korah's party; it was for his own sin that he died without sons. [a]
Why should our father's name be lost to his clan? Since he had no son, give us 4
some property like our father's kinsmen.'

Moses took their case before Yahweh, •and Yahweh spoke to Moses and said, 5, 6
'Zelophehad's daughters are right in what they say. You will indeed give them a 7
property to be their heritage among their father's kinsmen; see that their father's
heritage is passed on to them. •Then speak to the Israelites and say, "If a man dies 8
without sons, his heritage will pass to his daughter. •If he has no daughter, the 9
heritage will go to his brothers. •If he has no brothers, his heritage will go to his 10
father's brothers. •If his father has no brothers, his heritage will go to the member 11
of his clan who is most nearly related; it will become his property. This will be a
legal rule for the Israelites, as Yahweh has ordered Moses." '

‖Dt 31:1–8, 23;34:9

Joshua the head of the community

Yahweh said to Moses, 'Climb this mountain of the Abarim range, and look at the 12
country which I have given to the Israelites. •After you have seen it, you will be 13
20:12c gathered to your people, as Aaron your brother was. •For you both rebelled in the 14
desert of Zin when the community disputed with me and when I ordered you to
assert my holiness before their eyes by means of the water.' (These were the
Waters of Meribah of Kadesh, in the desert of Zin.)

16:22+ Moses then said to Yahweh, •'May it please Yahweh, God of the spirits that give 15, 16
life to all living creatures, to appoint a leader for this community, •to be at their 17
head in all their undertakings, a man who will lead them out and bring them in, [b] so
Dt 34:9 Jos 1:1b Jg 3:10 1 K 22:17 Ezk 34:5 Mt 9:36 2 K 2:9,15 Jos 1:16–17 that Yahweh's community will not be like sheep without a shepherd.' •Yahweh 18
then said to Moses, 'Take Joshua son of Nun, a man in whom the spirit dwells, and
lay your hand on him. •Bring him before the priest Eleazar and the whole com- 19
munity and give him your orders in their presence, •conferring some of your own 20
authority on him, so that the whole community of Israelites will obey him. •He will 21
present himself to the priest Eleazar who will consult Yahweh on his behalf by
Dt 33:8 1 S 14:41r means of the rite of the *urim*; at his command, they will go out and, at his
command, they will come in, he and all the Israelites with him, the whole
community.'

Moses did as Yahweh had ordered. He took Joshua, brought him before the 22
Dt 34:9 priest Eleazar and the whole community, •laid his hands on him and gave him his 23
orders, as Yahweh had directed through Moses.

Ex 23:14d Lv 23

Regulations for sacrifices [a]

28 Yahweh spoke to Moses and said, •"Give the Israelites this order: 1, 2
"Take care to bring me my offering, my sustenance in the form of food
burnt as a smell pleasing to me, at the proper time."

Ex 29:18d 'You will then say to them: "This is the food which you will burn in offering to 3
Yahweh:

Ex 29:38–46 Lv 6:2b Ezk 46:13–15

a: Daily sacrifices

"Every day, two unblemished yearling lambs as a perpetual burnt offering. •You 4
will offer the first lamb in the morning and the second lamb at twilight, •with a 5
cereal offering of one-tenth of an *ephah* of fine flour mixed with one-quarter of a
hin of crushed-olive oil. •Such was the perpetual burnt offering made on Mount 6
Sinai as a pleasing smell, as food burnt for Yahweh. •The accompanying libation 7
will be of one-quarter of a *hin* for each lamb; the libation of fermented liquor for
Yahweh will be poured inside the sanctuary. •The second lamb you will offer at 8
twilight, offering it with the same cereal offering and the same libation as in the
morning, as food burnt as a smell pleasing to Yahweh.

b: The Sabbath

Ex 23:12
Ezk 46:4–5
↗Mt 12:5b

9 "On the Sabbath day, you will offer two unblemished yearling lambs and two-
tenths of an *ephah* of fine flour as a cereal offering, mixed with oil, as well as the
10 accompanying libation. ·The Sabbath burnt offering will be offered every Sabbath
in addition to the perpetual burnt offering, and the accompanying libation
similarly.

c: The feast of New Moon

Is 1:13
Ezk 46:6–7
Am 8:5

11 "At the beginning of each of your months you will offer a burnt offering to
12 Yahweh: two young bulls, one ram and seven yearling lambs, without blemish; ·for
each bull a cereal offering of three-tenths of an *ephah* of fine flour mixed with oil;
13 for each ram, a cereal offering of two-tenths of fine flour mixed with oil; ·for each
lamb, a cereal offering of one-tenth of fine flour mixed with oil: as a burnt offering,
14 as a pleasing smell, as food burnt for Yahweh. ·The accompanying libations will be
of half a *hin* of wine for a bull, one-third of a *hin* for a ram and one-quarter of a *hin*
for a lamb. This will be the monthly burnt offering, month after month, every
15 month of the year. ·In addition to the perpetual burnt offering, a goat will be
offered to Yahweh, as a sacrifice for sin, with its accompanying libation.

d: The feast of Unleavened Bread

Ex 12;12:1a
Lv 23:5–8
Dt 16:1–8
Ezk 45:21–24

16, 17 "The fourteenth day of the first month is the Passover of Yahweh, ·and the
fifteenth day of this month is a feast day. For seven days unleavened bread will be
18 eaten. ·On the first day there will be a sacred assembly; you will do no heavy work.
19 As food burnt as a burnt offering you will offer Yahweh two young bulls, a ram and
20 seven yearling lambs, without blemish. ·The accompanying cereal offering of fine
flour mixed with oil will be three-tenths of an *ephah* for a bull, two-tenths for a
21, 22 ram, ·and one-tenth for each of the seven lambs. ·There will also be a goat as a
23 sacrifice for sin, for performing the rite of expiation for you. ·You will offer these
24 in addition to the morning burnt offering, which is a perpetual burnt offering. ·You
will do this every day for seven days. It is sustenance, food burnt as a smell pleasing
to Yahweh, to be offered in addition to the perpetual burnt offering and its
25 accompanying libation. ·On the seventh day you will hold a sacred assembly; you
will do no heavy work.

e: The feast of Weeks

Ex 23:14d
Lv 23:15–21
Dt 16:9–12

26 "On the day of the first-fruits, when you make your offering of new fruits to
Yahweh at your feast of Weeks, you will hold a sacred assembly; you will do no
27 heavy work. ·As a burnt offering as a smell pleasing to Yahweh, you will offer two
28 young bulls, one ram and seven yearling lambs. ·The accompanying cereal offering
of fine flour mixed with oil will be three-tenths of an *ephah* for each bull, two-tenths
29, 30 for the ram, ·and one-tenth for each of the seven lambs. ·There will also be a goat
31 as a sacrifice for sin, [b] for performing the rite of expiation for you. ·You will offer
these in addition to the perpetual burnt offering and its accompanying cereal
offering [c] and libations." '

f: The feast of Acclamations [a]

10:5a
Lv 23:24

1 **29** ' "In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you will hold a
sacred assembly; you will do no heavy work. For you this will be a day of

27 **a.** The punishment for unbelief, ch. 14, left the next generation's rights intact; the punishment for Korah's sin, ch. 16–17, affected the rebels' descendants.

b. Phrases comprehensively covering the functions of the leader, Dt 28:6; 1 S 29:6; 2 K 19:27, whose actions were to be guided by the divine prophecies communicated to him by the priest, Nb 27:21, *see* 1 S 14:18; 14:36 seq.; 23:2 seq.

28 **a.** Ch. 28–29 deal with the liturgical cycle of Lv 23 but in their own distinctive fashion: with a view to the organisation of Temple worship they systematise the arrangements of Lv 23:13, 17–18; *see* Ezk 45:21–25; 46:11, 13–15.

b. 'as a sacrifice for sin' Gk; Hebr. omits.

c. Here the text adds 'They will be without blemish for you', which perhaps belongs to v. 27.

29 **a.** Possibly the vestiges of an ancient warrior-feast in honour of Yahweh Sabaoth, at the beginning of the year.

Acclamations. ·As a burnt offering as a smell pleasing to Yahweh, you will offer 2
one young bull, one ram and seven yearling lambs, without blemish. ·The accom- 3
panying cereal offering of fine flour mixed with oil will be three-tenths of an *ephah*
for the bull, two-tenths for the ram, ·and one-tenth for each of the seven lambs. 4
There will also be a goat as a sacrifice for sin, for performing the rite of expiation 5
for you. ·This is in addition to the monthly burnt offering and its cereal offering, 6
the perpetual burnt offering and its cereal offering, and the accompanying libations
enjoined by law, as a pleasing smell, as food burnt for Yahweh.

Lv 16:1a
Ezk 45:18–20 ***g: The Day of Expiation***

"On the tenth day of this seventh month, you will hold a sacred assembly; you will 7
fast and do no work. ·As a burnt offering for Yahweh, as a pleasing smell, you will 8
offer one young bull, one ram and seven yearling lambs, which you will choose as
being without blemish. ·The accompanying cereal offering of fine flour mixed with 9
oil will be three-tenths of an *ephah* for the bull, two-tenths for the ram, ·and one- 10
tenth for each of the seven lambs. ·And a goat will be offered as a sacrifice for sin. 11
This is in addition to the victim for sin at the feast of Expiation, to the perpetual
burnt offering and its cereal offering, and their accompanying libations.

Ex 23:14d
Lv 23:33–43
Dt 16:13–15
Ezk 45:25
Jn 7:2 ***h: The feast of Shelters***

"On the fifteenth day of the seventh month you will hold a sacred assembly; you 12
will do no heavy work, and for seven days you will celebrate a feast for Yahweh.
As a burnt offering, as food burnt as a smell pleasing to Yahweh, you will offer 13
thirteen young bulls, two rams and fourteen yearling lambs, without blemish.
The accompanying cereal offering of fine flour mixed with oil will be three-tenths 14
of an *ephah* for each of the thirteen bulls, two-tenths for each of the two rams,
and one-tenth for each of the fourteen lambs; ·also one goat as a sacrifice for sin. 15, 16
This is in addition to the perpetual burnt offering and its cereal offering and
libation.

"On the second day: twelve young bulls, two rams and fourteen yearling lambs, 17
without blemish; ·the accompanying cereal offering and libations, as prescribed, in 18
proportion to the number of bulls, rams and lambs; ·also one goat as a sacrifice for 19
sin. This is in addition to the perpetual burnt offering and its cereal offering and
libations.

"On the third day: eleven bulls, two rams and fourteen yearling lambs, without 20
blemish; ·the accompanying cereal offering and libations, as prescribed, in propor- 21
tion to the number of bulls, rams and lambs; ·also one goat as a sacrifice for sin. 22
This is in addition to the perpetual burnt offering and its cereal offering and
libations.

"On the fourth day: ten bulls, two rams and fourteen yearling lambs, without 23
blemish; ·the accompanying cereal offering and libations, as prescribed, in propor- 24
tion to the number of bulls, rams and lambs; ·also one goat as a sacrifice for sin. 25
This is in addition to the perpetual burnt offering and its cereal offering and
libation.

"On the fifth day: nine bulls, two rams and fourteen yearling lambs, without 26
blemish; ·the accompanying cereal offering and libations, as prescribed, in propor- 27
tion to the number of bulls, rams and lambs; ·also one goat as a sacrifice for sin. 28
This is in addition to the perpetual burnt offering and its cereal offering and
libation.

"On the sixth day: eight bulls, two rams and fourteen yearling lambs, without 29
blemish; ·the accompanying cereal offering and libations, as prescribed, in propor- 30
tion to the number of bulls, rams and lambs; ·also one goat as a sacrifice for sin. 31
This is in addition to the perpetual burnt offering and its cereal offering and
libations.

"On the seventh day: seven bulls, two rams and fourteen yearling lambs, without 32
blemish; ·the accompanying cereal offering and libations, as prescribed, in propor- 33

34 tion to the number of bulls, rams and lambs; ·also one goat as a sacrifice for sin.
This is in addition to the perpetual burnt offering and its cereal offering and
libation.
35. 36 "On the eighth day you will hold an assembly; you will do no heavy work. ·As a Jn 7:37
burnt offering, as food burnt as a smell pleasing to Yahweh, you will offer one bull,
37 one ram and seven yearling lambs, without blemish; ·the accompanying cereal
offering and libations, as prescribed, in proportion to the number of bulls, rams
38 and lambs; ·also one goat as a sacrifice for sin. This is in addition to the perpetual
burnt offering and its cereal offering and libation.
39 "This is what you are to do for Yahweh at your solemn feasts, over and above
your votive offerings and your voluntary offerings, your burnt offerings, cereal
offerings and libations, and your peace offerings." '
1 30 Moses told the Israelites exactly what Yahweh had ordered him.

Laws concerning vows

Lv 27:1a
Dt 23:22–24
Jg 11:30–40
Ps 50:14;56:12;
76:11
Qo 5:3–4

2 Moses spoke to the tribal leaders of the Israelites and said, 'This is what Yahweh
has ordered:
3 "If a man makes a vow to Yahweh or a formal pledge under oath, he must not
break his word: whatever he promises by word of mouth he must do.
4 "If a woman makes a vow to Yahweh or a formal pledge during her youth, while
5 she is still in her father's house, ·and if her father hears about this vow or pledge
made by her and says nothing to her, her vow, whatever it may be, will be binding,
6 and the pledge she has taken, whatever it may be, will be binding. ·But if her father
on the day he learns of it expresses his disapproval of it, then none of the vows or
pledges she has taken will be binding. Yahweh will not hold her to it, since her
father has expressed his disapproval.
7 "If, being bound by vows or by a pledge voiced without due reflection, she then Lv 5:4
8 marries, ·and if her husband hears of it but says nothing on the day he learns of it,
9 her vows will be binding and the pledges she has taken will be binding. ·But if on
the day he learns of it he expresses his disapproval to her, this will annul the vow
that she has made or the pledge that binds her, voiced without due reflection.
Yahweh will not hold her to it.
10 "The vow of a widow or a divorced woman and all pledges taken by her are
binding on her.
11 "If she has made a vow or taken a pledge under oath while in her husband's
12 house, ·and if when the husband learns of it he says nothing to her and does not
express disapproval to her, then the vow, whatever it is, will be binding, and the
13 pledge, whatever it is, will be binding. ·But if the husband when he hears of it
annuls it on the day he learns of it, no undertaking of hers, be it vow or pledge, will
be binding. Since the husband has annulled it, Yahweh will not hold her to it.
14 "Every vow or oath that is binding on the wife [a] may be endorsed or annulled by
the husband.
15 "If by the following day the husband has said nothing to her, it means that he
endorses her vow, whatever it may be, or her pledge, whatever it may be. He
16 endorses them if he says nothing on the day he learns of them. ·But if, having learnt
of them, he annuls them later, he will bear the consequences for his wife's guilt." '
17 Such were the laws which Yahweh prescribed to Moses, concerning the relation-
ship between a man and his wife, and between a father and his daughter while still
young and living in her father's home.

30 **a.** lit. 'that binds her to afflict her soul'. The expression commonly means 'to fast' but commentators are agreed that it has a wider sense here.

IX: BOOTY AND ITS ALLOCATION

Dt 20:1–20; 21:10–14
Jos 6:17c
1 S 15:1–33
Ex 2:15e

The holy war against Midian [a]

31 Yahweh spoke to Moses and said, 2 'Exact the full vengeance for the Israe- 1. 2
lites on the Midianites. Afterwards you will be gathered to your people.'
Moses said to the people, 'Some of you are to take up arms for Yahweh's 3
25:17–18 campaign against Midian, to carry out the vengeance of Yahweh on Midian. 4 You 4
will put a thousand men in the field from each of the tribes of Israel.'
1:16c In this way Israel's thousands provided twelve thousand men equipped for war, 5
one thousand from each tribe: 6 Moses put them in the field, one thousand from 6
25:6–13 each tribe, with Phinehas, son of the priest Eleazar, to go with them carrying the
10:9 sacred objects and the trumpets for the battle cry.
They made war on Midian, as Yahweh had ordered Moses, and put every male 7
Jos 13:21–22 to death. 8 What is more, they killed the kings of Midian, Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur 8
and Reba, the five Midianite kings; they also put Balaam son of Beor to the sword.
The Israelites took the Midianite women and their little ones captive and carried 9
off all their cattle, all their flocks and all their goods as booty. 10 They set fire to the 10
towns where they lived and to all their encampments. 11 Then, taking all their booty, 11
everything they had captured, man and beast, 12 they brought the captives, spoil and 12
booty to Moses, the priest Eleazar and the whole community of Israelites at the
camp on the Plains of Moab, near the Jordan by Jericho.

The slaughter of the women and purification of the booty

Moses, the priest Eleazar and all the leaders of the community went out of the 13
camp to meet them. 14 Moses was enraged with the officers of the army, the 14
commanders of the thousands and commanders of the hundreds, who had come
back from this military expedition. 15 He said, 'Why have you spared the life of all 15
the women? 16 They were the very ones who, on Balaam's advice, caused the 16
25 Israelites to be unfaithful to Yahweh in the affair at Peor: hence the plague which
↗Rv 2:14j struck Yahweh's community. 17 So kill all the male children and kill all the women 17
who have ever slept with a man; 18 but spare the lives of the young girls who have 18
never slept with a man, and keep them for yourselves. 19 As for you, bivouac outside 19
the camp for seven days, everyone who has killed anyone or touched a corpse.
19:11–22 Purify yourselves and your prisoners on the third and seventh days, 20 and purify all 20
clothing, everything made of skin, everything woven of goats' hair and everything
made of wood.'
The priest Eleazar said to the soldiers who had come back from the campaign, 21
'This is an article of the Law which Yahweh prescribed to Moses: 22 although gold, 22
silver, bronze, iron, tin and lead, 23 everything that can withstand fire can be cleaned 23
19:1–10 by being passed through fire, it must still be purified with water for purification.
Whatever cannot resist fire you must pass through water. [b]
'Wash your clothes on the seventh day and you will then be clean. You may then 24
re-enter the camp.'

The allocation of the booty

Yahweh spoke to Moses and said: 25
1 S 30:24 'With the priest Eleazar and the heads of families in the community, take a count 26
of the spoils and captives, man and beast. 27 You will then share out the spoil, half 27
and half, between those who fought the campaign and the rest of the community.
From the share of the combatants who took part in the campaign, you will set 28
aside one out of every five hundred persons, oxen, donkeys and sheep as Yahweh's
portion. 29 You will take this from the half share coming to them and give it to the 29
priest Eleazar as the portion set aside for Yahweh. 30 From the half coming to the 30
Israelites, you will take one out of every fifty persons, oxen, donkeys, sheep, and

all other animals, and give them to the Levites who are responsible for Yahweh's Dwelling.'

31, 32 Moses and the priest Eleazar did as Yahweh had ordered Moses. ·The spoils,
the remainder of the booty captured by the soldiers, came to six hundred and
33 seventy-five thousand sheep and goats, ·seventy-two thousand head of cattle,
34, 35 sixty-one thousand donkeys, ·and in persons, women who had never slept with a
36 man, thirty-two thousand in all. ·Half was assigned to those who had taken part in
the war, namely three hundred and thirty-seven thousand five hundred sheep and
37, 38 goats, ·of which Yahweh's portion was six hundred and seventy-five, thirty-six
39 thousand head of cattle, of which Yahweh's portion was seventy-two, ·thirty
40 thousand five hundred donkeys, of which Yahweh's portion was sixty-one, ·and
41 sixteen thousand persons, of which Yahweh's portion was thirty-two. ·Moses gave
the priest Eleazar the portion set aside for Yahweh, as Yahweh had ordered
Moses.

42 As for the half coming to the Israelites which Moses had separated from that of
43 the combatants, ·this half, the community's share, came to three hundred and
44 thirty-seven thousand five hundred sheep and goats, ·thirty-six thousand head of
45, 46 cattle, ·thirty thousand five hundred donkeys ·and sixteen thousand persons.
47 From this half, the Israelites' share, Moses took one out of every fifty, man and
beast, and gave them to the Levites who were responsible for Yahweh's Dwelling, 18:26–32
as Yahweh had ordered Moses.

The offerings [c]

Jg 8:24–27

48 The officers of the thousands who had fought the campaign, the commanders of
49 the thousands and commanders of the hundreds, came to Moses ·and said, 'Your
servants have numbered the soldiers under their command: none of our men is
50 missing. ·So, as an offering for Yahweh, we have brought what each of us has
found in the way of gold ornaments, armlets and bracelets, rings, earrings and
51 breastplates, to make expiation for ourselves before Yahweh.' ·Moses and the
52 priest Eleazar accepted this gold from them, all this jewellery. ·This portion of gold Ex 30:11–16
given to Yahweh by the commanders of the thousands and commanders of the
hundreds amounted to sixteen thousand seven hundred and fifty shekels.

53, 54 Each of the soldiers took his own booty. ·But Moses and the priest Eleazar,
having accepted the gold from the commanders of the thousands and commanders
of the hundreds, brought it into the Tent of Meeting, to be a reminder of the
Israelites before Yahweh.

The allocation of Transjordan [a]

21:24seq., 31seq. ‖Dt 3:12–20; 33:6,20seq. Jos 1:12–18; 13:8–32

1 **32** Now, the Reubenites and Gadites owned very large herds of cattle. Having
seen that the territories of Jazer and Gilead formed an ideal region for
2 raising stock, ·the Gadites and Reubenites went to Moses, the priest Eleazar and
3 the leaders of the community, and said to them, ·'The territory of Ataroth, Dibon,
4 Jazer, Nimrah, Heshbon, Elealeh, Sebam, Nebo and Beon, ·which Yahweh has
conquered before the advancing community of Israel, is ideal land for raising

31 **a.** Text of late composition (Priestly), logically following on from the incident at Peor and introducing regulations for the conduct of holy war, for the division of the booty and for the sharing out of the Holy Land.

b. Purification by fire was an ancient ritual to some degree tainted with paganism. On it, the text superimposes the ritual of water for purification, *see* 19:1a.

c. Like vv. 21–25 this passage appears to be an addition. Its theology is more developed: the war, holy as it is, involves contact with the profane, and expiation is required of the soldiers. This is the significance of the offering in v. 50. vv. 53–54 may be from another hand.

32 **a.** Deuteronomic in style and with signs of Priestly editing, this ch. draws on an ancient source, vv. 1–4, 16–19. The territory of Jazer, v. 1, lay to the north of the kingdom of Sihon. Ancient Gilead, mentioned here, lay between the territory of Jazer and the Jabbok; but as the Israelites penetrated further north, so the name Gilead came to extend as far as the River Jarmuk, Jos 13:10–12, and two halves of Gilead came to be spoken of, Dt 3:12–13; Jos 12:2, 5; 13:31. The northern half became the territory of the half-tribe of Manasseh, vv. 39–40. These vv., speaking of a conquest, are additional and relate to events later than the original colonisation: Manassehite groups emigrated from the west and carved out a new territory for themselves in the northern part of Transjordan, Jos 13:8 seq.; they formed the half-tribe of Manasseh mentioned in the addition to Nb 32:33. In contrast to this, the colonising activities of Reuben and Gad occurred peacefully.

stock, and your servants are cattle breeders. ·So', they said, 'if you approve, give 5
your servants this land for us to own; do not make us cross the Jordan.'

Moses said to the Gadites and Reubenites, 'Do you intend your brothers to go 6
into battle while you stay here? ·Why are you discouraging the Israelites from 7
crossing to the country which Yahweh has given them? ·Your fathers behaved in 8
the same way when I sent them to see the country from Kadesh-Barnea, ·for, 9
having gone as far as the Valley of Eshcol and seen the country, they discouraged
the Israelites from entering the country which Yahweh had given them. ·Hence 10
Yahweh's anger was aroused that day and he swore this oath, ·"No man of twenty 11
years and over, who left Egypt, shall set eyes on the country which I promised on
oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob . . . , for they have not followed me absolutely,
except for Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite, and Joshua son of Nun: these 12
indeed have followed Yahweh absolutely." ·Yahweh's anger being aroused by 13
Israel, he made them wander in the desert for forty years, until the generation that
offended Yahweh had all disappeared. ·And now you rise up in your father's place, 14
offshoot of sinful stock, to increase Yahweh's burning anger with Israel even more!
If you turn away from him, he will prolong the time spent in the desert, and you 15
will bring about this entire people's ruin.'

They came to Moses and said, 'We should like to build sheepfolds here for our 16
flocks and towns for our little ones. ·We ourselves will take up arms [b] and lead the 17
Israelites until we have brought them to the place appointed for them, while our
little ones stay in the fortified towns to be safe from the local inhabitants. ·We will 18
not return to our homes until every one of the Israelites has taken possession of his
heritage. ·For we shall have no heritage with them on the other bank of the Jordan 19
or beyond, since our heritage has fallen to us here, east of the Jordan.'

Moses said to them, 'If you do as you have said, if you are prepared to fight 20
before Yahweh, ·and if all those of you who bear arms cross the Jordan before 21
Yahweh, until he has driven all his enemies out before him, ·then, once the country 22
has become subject to Yahweh, you may go back, and will have discharged your
obligation to Yahweh and Israel, and Yahweh will consider this territory yours.
Dt 28:45 But if you do not, you will sin against Yahweh, and be sure your sin will find you 23
out. ·Build towns, then, for your little ones and folds for your flocks; but do what 24
you have promised.'

The Gadites and Reubenites said to Moses, 'Your servants will do as my lord 25
directs. ·Our little ones, our wives, our flocks and all our livestock will stay in the 26
towns of Gilead, ·but your servants, each armed for war, will cross in Yahweh's 27
name and fight, as my lord says.'

So Moses gave orders about them to the priest Eleazar, Joshua son of Nun, and 28
the heads of families in the Israelite tribes. ·Moses said to them, 'If the Gadites 29
and Reubenites, all those under arms, cross the Jordan with you to fight in
Yahweh's name, then, once the country has become subject to you, you will give
them the territory of Gilead as theirs. ·But if they will not cross with you under 30
arms, they will receive their domains in Canaan with the rest of you.'

To this, the Gadites and Reubenites replied, 'What Yahweh has said to your 31
servants, we shall do. ·Under arms, we shall cross in Yahweh's name into Canaan, 32
so that ownership of our heritage on this side of the Jordan will be ours.' ·Moses 33
then gave them—the Gadites, the Reubenites and the half-tribe of Manasseh son
of Joseph—the kingdom of Sihon king of the Amorites and the kingdom of Og
king of Bashan, the country and the towns within its territory, and the country's
frontier-towns.

The Gadites rebuilt Dibon, Ataroth, Aroer, ·Atroth-Shophan, Jazer, Jogbehah, 34, 35
Beth-Nimrah and Beth-Haran as fortified towns with folds for the flocks. 36

The Reubenites rebuilt Heshbon, Elealeh, Kiriathaim, ·Nebo and Baal-Meon 37, 38
(the names of which were altered), and Sibmah, giving new names to the towns
which they rebuilt. [c]

The descendants of Machir son of Manasseh went to Gilead. They conquered it 39

40 and drove out the Amorites who were there. ·Moses gave Gilead to Machir son of
41 Manasseh, and he settled there. ·Jair son of Manasseh went and seized their Dt 3:14–15
42 encampments, renaming them the Encampments of Jair. ·Nobah went and seized Jg 10:4
Kenat with its dependent townships, and called it Nobah after himself.

The stages of the Exodus [a]

1 33 These were the stages of the journey made by the Israelites when they left
2 Egypt in their companies under the leadership of Moses and Aaron.
Moses recorded their starting-points in writing whenever they moved on at
Yahweh's order. The stages, from one starting-point to another, were as follows:
3 They left Rameses in the first month. It was the fifteenth day of the first month,
the day following the Passover, when the Israelites confidently set out, under the Ex 14:8
4 eyes of all Egypt. ·The Egyptians were burying those of their own people whom
Yahweh had struck down, all the first-born; Yahweh had carried out his judgement
on their gods.
5, 6 The Israelites left Rameses and camped at Succoth. ·Then they left Succoth and Ex 12:37
7 encamped at Etham which is on the edge of the desert. ·They left Etham, turned Ex 13:20;14:1–4
8 back to Pi-Hahiroth, opposite Baal-Zephon, and encamped before Migdol. ·They
left Pi-Hahiroth, crossed the sea into the desert, and after marching for three days
9 in the desert of Etham they encamped at Marah. ·They left Marah and reached Ex 15:23
Elim. At Elim there were twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees; they Ex 15:27
10, 11 encamped there. ·They left Elim and encamped by the Sea of Reeds. ·They left
12 the Sea of Reeds and encamped in the desert of Sin. ·They left the desert of Sin Ex 16:1
13, 14 and encamped at Dophkah. ·They left Dophkah and encamped at Alush. ·They
left Alush and encamped at Rephidim; the people found no drinking water there. Ex 17:1–7
15, 16 They left Rephidim and encamped in the desert of Sinai. ·They left the desert of Ex 19:1
17 Sinai and encamped at Kibroth-ha-Taavah. ·They left Kibroth-ha-Taavah and 11:34–35
18, 19 encamped at Hazeroth. ·They left Hazeroth and encamped at Rithmah. ·They left 12:16
20 Rithmah and encamped at Rimmon-Perez. ·They left Rimmon-Perez and en-
21, 22 camped at Libnah. ·They left Libnah and encamped at Rissah. ·They left Rissah
23 and encamped at Kehelathah. ·They left Kehelathah and encamped at Mount
24, 25 Shepher. ·They left Mount Shepher and encamped at Haradah. ·They left Haradah
26 and encamped at Makheloth. ·They left Makheloth and encamped at Tahath.
27, 28 They left Tahath and encamped at Terah. ·They left Terah and encamped at
29, 30 Mithkah. ·They left Mithkah and encamped at Hashmonah. ·They left Hashmonah
31 and encamped at Moseroth. ·They left Moseroth and encamped at Bene-Jaakan.
32, 33 They left Bene-Jaakan and encamped at Hor-Gidgad. ·They left Hor-Gidgad and Dt 10:6–7
34, 35 encamped at Jotbathah. ·They left Jotbathah and encamped at Abronah. ·They
36 left Abronah and encamped at Ezion-Geber. ·They left Ezion-Geber and en- Dt 2:1–8
37 camped in the desert of Zin, that is, at Kadesh. ·They left Kadesh and encamped 1 K 9:26
38 at Mount Hor, on the borders of the land of Edom. ·The priest Aaron went up 20:22–29
Mount Hor on Yahweh's orders and died there in the fortieth year of the exodus of Dt 10:6;32:50
39 the Israelites from Egypt, in the fifth month, on the first day of the month. ·Aaron
40 was a hundred and twenty-three years old when he died on Mount Hor. ·The king 21:1
of Arad, the Canaanite who lived in the Negeb of Canaan, heard of the Israelites'
41, 42 arrival. ·They left Mount Hor and encamped at Zalmonah. ·They left Zalmonah 21:4,10–20
43, 44 and encamped at Punon. ·They left Punon and encamped at Oboth. ·They left 21:10–11

b. 'take up arms' Gk; 'we shall arm in haste' Hebr.

c. The towns attributed to Gad and Reuben extended beyond the territories of Jazer and ancient Gilead, *see* v. 1, as far as the Arnon, which was the frontier of Moab; that is to say, they covered the former kingdom of Sihon. Their geographical distribution does not indicate two territories, and the lists reflect an age when Gad and Reuben had come to be regarded as a single entity, *see* Jos 13:8.

33 a. This ch. belongs to a secondary layer of the Priestly editing. It makes use of geographical material in Ex, Nb and Dt, but more than half the names are new and come from other documents. The section of journey across Sinai to Ezion-Geber, vv. 16–35, uses a list of staging-posts in north-western Arabia, which has given grounds for locating Sinai in that region, *see* Ex 19:2b. vv. 41–49 use another 'itinerary' giving the most direct route from Kadesh to north of the Arnon. But this route cannot be reconciled with the information in ancient texts (detour through Ezion-Geber, and round Moab and Edom, etc.), *see* 14:25; 20:14–22; Dt 2:1–25.

Oboth and encamped in Moabite territory at Iye-Abarim. ·They left Iyim and 45
encamped at Dibon-Gad. ·They left Dibon-Gad and encamped at Almon-Dibla- 46
thaim. ·They left Almon-Diblathaim and encamped in the Abarim mountains 47
22:1 facing Nebo. ·They left the Abarim mountains and encamped on the Plains of 48
Moab, near the Jordan opposite Jericho. ·They encamped near the Jordan between 49
25:1 Beth-ha-Jeshimoth and Abel-ha-Shittim, on the Plains of Moab.
Jos 2:1

Dt 7:1–6.16; 12:2–3 **The allocation of Canaan. God's order**

Yahweh spoke to Moses on the Plains of Moab, near the Jordan by Jericho, and 50
said:
'Speak to the Israelites and say: 51
"When you have crossed the Jordan into Canaan, ·you will drive out all the local 52
Lv 26:1 inhabitants before you. You will destroy all their painted images, you will destroy
1 S 9:12f all their metal statues and you will demolish all their high places. ·You will take 53
possession of the country and settle in it, for I have given you the country as your
26:54–56 property. ·You will share it out by lot among your clans. To a large clan you will 54
give a larger heritage, and to a smaller clan you will give a smaller heritage. Where
the lot falls for each, that will be his. Your heritage will depend on the size of your
tribe. ·If, however, you do not drive out the local inhabitants before you, the ones 55
you allow to remain will be thorns in your eyes and thistles in your sides and will
harass you in the country where you are living, ·and I shall treat you as I intended 56
to treat them." '

Jos 14:19 Jg 20:1a Ezk 47:13–21 **The boundaries of Canaan** [a]

34 Yahweh spoke to Moses and said, ·'Give the Israelites this order. Say: 1, 2
"When you enter the country (Canaan), this will be the country which forms
your heritage. This is Canaan as defined by its boundaries:
Jos 15:1–5 Ezk 47:15–20 "The southern part of your country will start from the desert of Zin, on the 3
borders of Edom. Your southern boundary will start on the east at the end of the
Salt Sea. ·It will then turn south towards the Ascent of the Scorpions and go by Zin 4
to end in the south at Kadesh-Barnea. It will then run towards Hazar-Addar and
pass through Azmon. ·From Azmon the boundary will turn towards the Torrent of 5
Egypt and end at the Sea.
"Your seaboard will be on the Great Sea; this will be your western boundary. 6
"Your northern boundary will be as follows: you will draw a line from the Great 7
Sea to Mount Hor, [b] ·then from Mount Hor you will draw a line to the Pass of 8
Hamath, and the boundary will end at Zedad. ·From there it will run on to Ziphron 9
and end at Hazar-Enan. This will be your northern boundary.
"You will then draw your eastern boundary from Hazar-Enan to Shepham. 10
The boundary will run down from Shepham towards Riblah on the east side of 11
Ain. Further down it will keep to the eastern shore of the Sea of Chinnereth. [c] ·The 12
frontier will then follow the Jordan and end at the Salt Sea.
"Such will be your country with the boundaries surrounding it." '
Moses then gave the Israelites this order: 13
'This is the country, where your heritages will be assigned by lot, and which
Yahweh has ordered to be given to the nine tribes and the half-tribe, ·for the tribe 14
of the Reubenites with their families and the tribe of the Gadites with their families
have already received their heritage; the half-tribe of Manasseh has also received
its heritage. ·These two tribes and the half-tribe have received their heritage on 15
the other side of the Jordan by Jericho, to the east, towards the sunrise.'

The leaders in charge of the allocation

Yahweh spoke to Moses and said: 16
'Here are the names of the men who will divide the country up for you: the priest 17
Eleazar and Joshua son of Nun, ·and you will take one leader from each tribe to 18
divide the country up into heritages. ·Here are the names of these men: [d] 19

'For the tribe of Judah, Caleb son of Jephunneh;
20 'for the tribe of the Simeonites, Shemuel son of Ammihud;
21 'for the tribe of Benjamin, Elidad son of Chislon;
22 'for the tribe of the Danites, the leader Bukki son of Jogli;
23 'for the sons of Joseph: for the tribe of Manasseh, the leader Hanniel son of Ephod;
24 'for the tribe of the Ephraimites, the leader Kemuel son of Shiphtan;
25 'for the tribe of the Zebulunites, the leader Elizaphan son of Parnach;
26 'for the tribe of the Issacharites, the leader Paltiel son of Azzan;
27 'for the tribe of the Asherites, the leader Ahihud son of Shelomi;
28 'for the tribe of the Naphtalites, the leader Pedahel son of Ammihud.'
29 These were the men whom Yahweh ordered to divide Canaan into heritages for the Israelites.

The portion of the Levites[a]

18:20–24
Jos 20–21
Ezk 48:13

1 35 Yahweh spoke to Moses on the Plains of Moab, near the Jordan by Jericho,
and said:
2 'Order the Israelites, from the heritage they possess, to give the Levites towns in
which to live and pasture land round the towns. You will give these to the Levites.
3 The towns must be their homes and the surrounding pasture land must be for their
4 cattle, their possessions and all their animals. ·The pasture land surrounding the
towns which you give to the Levites will extend, from the walls of the towns, for a
thousand cubits all round.
5 'Outside the town, measure two thousand cubits to the east, two thousand cubits
to the south, two thousand cubits to the west and two thousand cubits to the north,
6 the town lying in the centre; such will be the pasture lands of these towns. ·The
towns you give to the Levites will be six cities of refuge, ceded by you as sanctuary Dt 4:41–43
for those who commit manslaughter; and you will give forty-two towns in addition.
7 Altogether you will give the Levites forty-eight towns, with their pasture lands. 26:54
8 Of the towns which you give from the Israelites' possessions, you will give more
from those who have more, and less from those who have less. Each will give some
of his towns to the Levites, in proportion to the heritage he himself has received.'

Cities of refuge

Ex 21:13e
Dt 19:1–13
Jos 20:1a

9 Yahweh spoke to Moses and said:
10 'Speak to the Israelites and say:
11 "Once you have crossed the Jordan into Canaan, ·you will find towns, some of
which you will make into cities of refuge where those who have accidentally
12 committed manslaughter can take sanctuary.[b] ·These towns will afford you refuge
from the avenger of blood, so that the killer will not be put to death before standing
13 trial before the community. ·Of the towns you give, six will serve you as cities of Dt 4:41–43
14 refuge: ·as cities of refuge, you will give three towns on the other side of the Jordan
15 and will give three towns in Canaan. ·These six towns will serve as refuge for the

34 a. With Ezk 47:13–21, this is the most detailed description of the frontiers of Canaan. They coincide with those of the Egyptian province of Canaan at the end of the 13th century BC, and it was from this administrative usage that the Israelites took both the name and concept. Canaan did not extend to the eastern side of the Jordan, vv. 13–15. Here the territory described is the Promised Land, *see* v. 2, which is defined elsewhere in different terms, *see* Ex 23:31m; Dt 1:7; Jg 20:1a; etc. After the Aramaean kingdoms had been set up, Canaan ceased to extend to the east of Phoenicia (Sidon), though it still stretched southwards as far as Gaza, Gn 10:19. Later, the name became confined to Phoenicia alone: Tyre and Sidon were the 'fortresses of Canaan', Is 23:1–14. 'Sidonian' became synonymous with 'Canaanite', Dt 3:9; Jg 18:7; etc. and *see* Mt 15:22 as against Mk 7:26.

b. Location unidentified. Here Mount Hor would appear to be the mountains in the northern part of the Lebanon; it is not the same as the site of Aaron's death, 33:38.

c. The Lake of Gennesareth. The 'Salt Sea' is the Dead Sea.

d. The names, with the exception of Joshua and Caleb, are new: the generation previously listed was destined to die without entering Canaan, *see* 14:23; 26:64–65. The partitioning of the country took place only after the conquest, Jos 14–19, but the editor invokes Mosaic authority for it.

35 a. Despite the regulation to the contrary in 18:20 seq., the Levites were to be given towns, among which were the six cities of refuge, *see* Jos 21:1a.

b. Apparently the Israelites did no more than consecrate already existing Canaanite towns to Yahwism. The right of sanctuary in shrines is a very widespread custom.

Israelites, for the foreigner and for the resident alien, where anyone who has accidentally killed someone can take sanctuary.

"But if he has struck the person with an iron object so as to cause death, he is a murderer. The murderer will be put to death. 16 ·If he has struck him with a stone meant for killing, and has killed him, he is a murderer. The murderer will be put to death. 17 ·Or if he has struck him with a wooden instrument meant for killing, and has killed him, he is a murderer. The murderer will be put to death. 18 ·The avenger of blood will put the murderer to death. Whenever he finds him, he will put him to death. 19 [c]

"If the killer has maliciously manhandled his victim, or thrown some lethal missile to strike him down, 20 ·or out of enmity dealt him the death-blow with his fist, 21 then he who struck the blow will be put to death; he is a murderer; the avenger of blood will put him to death whenever he finds him. 22 ·If, however, he has manhandled his victim by chance, without malice, or thrown some missile at him not meaning to hit him 23 ·or, without seeing him, dropped on him a stone meant for killing and so killed him, so long as he bore him no malice and wished him no harm, then the community will decide in accordance with these rules between the one who struck the blow and the avenger of blood, 24 ·and will save the killer from the clutches of the avenger of blood. They will send him back to the city of refuge where he had taken sanctuary, and there he will stay until the death of the high priest who has been anointed with the holy oil. 25 ·Should the killer leave the bounds of the city of refuge in which he has taken sanctuary 26 ·and the avenger of blood encounter him outside the bounds of his city of refuge, the avenger of blood may kill him without fear of reprisal; 27 ·since the killer should stay in his city of refuge until the death of the high priest; only after the death of the high priest is he free to go back to his own piece of property. 28 ·Such will be the legal rule for you and your descendants, wherever you may live. 29

"In any case of homicide, the evidence of witnesses will determine whether the killer must be put to death; but a single witness is not enough to sustain a capital charge. 30 ·You will not accept a ransom for the life of a murderer condemned to death; he must die. 31 ·Nor will you accept a ransom for anyone who, having taken sanctuary in his city or refuge, wishes to come back and live at home before the
Gn 9:5–6 death of the high priest. 32 ·Do not profane the country you live in. Blood profanes the country and, for the country, the only expiation for the blood shed in it is the blood of the man who shed it. 33 ·So do not defile the country which you live in and
Ex 25:8d where I live; for I, Yahweh, live among the Israelites." 34 '

A wife's inheritance [a]

36 Then the heads of families of the clan descended from Gilead, son of Machir, son of Manasseh, one of the clans descended from Joseph, came forward and, addressing Moses and the leaders, the Israelite heads of families, they said: 1 2

'Yahweh has ordered my lord to apportion the Israelites' heritages in the country by lot and my lord has been ordered by Yahweh to give the heritage of our brother
27:1–11 Zelophehad to his daughters. 3 ·Now, if they marry someone from another Israelite tribe, their heritage will be alienated from our ancestral heritage. The heritage of the tribe to which they will then belong will be increased, and the heritage allotted
Lv 25:1a to us will be diminished. 4 ·And when the jubilee for the Israelites comes round, these women's heritage will become part of the heritage of the tribe to which they then belong, and be alienated from the heritage of our ancestral tribe.'

At Yahweh's bidding, Moses gave the Israelites this order. He said: 5

'What the Josephite tribe says is true. 6 ·This is Yahweh's ruling for Zelophehad's daughters: "They may marry whom they please, providing they marry into a clan of their father's tribe. 7 ·But the heritages of Israelites are not to be transferred from tribe to tribe; each Israelite will stick to the heritage of his own tribe. 8 ·Any daughter who owns a heritage in an Israelite tribe will marry into a clan of her own

paternal tribe, so that the Israelites may each preserve the heritage of his father.
9 No heritage may be transferred from one tribe to another; each Israelite tribe will
stick to its own heritage." '
10, 11 Zelophehad's daughters did as Yahweh had ordered Moses. •Mahlah, Tirzah,
Hoglah, Milcah and Noah, daughters of Zelophehad, married the sons of their
12 father's brothers. •Since they married into clans descended from Manasseh son of
Joseph, their heritage reverted to the tribe of their father's clan.

Conclusion

13 Such were the commandments and laws that Yahweh prescribed for the Israelites
through Moses on the Plains of Moab near the Jordan by Jericho.

c. The system of private vengeance, surviving among some Arabs to today. The 'avenger of blood', or *go'el*, was the victim's nearest relative, Gn 4:15; 9:6; Dt 19:12; *see* 2 S 14:11. The *go'el* was also the official protector of his relations: he was especially bound to prevent the alienation of their landed property, Lv 25:23–25; Rt 4:3 seq. By extension, God was called the *go'el* of Israel, Ps 19:14; Is 41:14; Jr 50:34. The basic idea is that of protection.

36 a. An addition to the law of 27:1–11 and using the same specific case. But the rights of inheritance for daughters were limited by the obligation to marry within the tribe, to prevent any diminution of the tribal territory. • v. 4 is additional: it refers to the law of jubilee, concerned with land that was sold, not inherited.

DEUTERONOMY

I: INTRODUCTORY DISCOURSES

A: THE FIRST DISCOURSE OF MOSES

Time and place [a]

1 These are the words which Moses addressed to all Israel beyond the Jordan, in 1
the desert, in the Arabah facing Suph, between Paran and Tophel, Laban,
Hazeroth and Dizahab. ·It is eleven days' journey from Horeb by way of Mount 2
Seir to Kadesh-Barnea. ·It was in the fortieth year, on the first day of the eleventh 3
month, that Moses told the Israelites everything that Yahweh had ordered him to
tell them.

Nb 21:21–35 He had defeated Sihon king of the Amorites, who lived at Heshbon, and Og 4
king of Bashan, who lived at Ashtaroth and Edrei. ·There, in Moab beyond the 5
Jordan, Moses resolved to expound this Law. He said: [b]

The final instructions at Horeb

Ex 3:1b 'Yahweh our God said to us at Horeb, "You have stayed long enough at this 6
Nb 34:1a mountain. ·Move on, continue your journey, go to the highlands of the Amorites, 7
to all those who live in the Arabah, in the highlands, in the lowlands, in the Negeb
and in the coastland; go into Canaan and to Lebanon as far as the great River
Gn 12:7+;15; 26:2–5;28: 13–15+ Euphrates. ·Look, that is the country I have given you; go and take possession of 8
the country that Yahweh promised on oath to give to your ancestors, Abraham,
‖Ex 18:13–26 Nb 11:14 Isaac and Jacob, and to their descendants after them."

'At the same time, I told you, "I cannot be responsible for you by myself. 9
Gn 15:5;22:17 Yahweh your God has increased your numbers, until you are now as numerous as 10
the stars of heaven. ·And Yahweh your God is going to increase you a thousand 11
times more, and bless you as he has promised [c] you. ·So how can I cope by myself 12
with the bitter burden that you are, and with your bickering? ·From each of your 13
Nb 11:11–16 tribes pick wise, shrewd and experienced men for me to make your leaders." ·You 14
replied, "Your plan is good." ·So I took your tribal leaders, wise, experienced 15
men, and appointed them to lead you, as captains of thousands, hundreds, fifties,
tens, and as scribes for your tribes. ·At that same time I told your judges, "You 16
17:8–13 must give your brothers a fair hearing and see justice done between one person
Lv 19:15 and his brother or the foreigner living with him. ·You must be impartial in 17
judgement and give an equal hearing to small and great alike. [d] Do not be afraid of
any human person, for the verdict is God's. Should a case be too difficult, bring it
for me to hear. ·And on that occasion I gave you instructions about everything you 18
were to do."

‖Nb 13:1–14:9 **Kadesh: the Israelites lose faith**

'So, as Yahweh our God had ordered, we left Horeb and made our way through 19
that vast and terrible desert, which you saw on the way to the Amorite highlands,
and arrived at Kadesh-Barnea. ·I then said, "You have now reached the Amorite 20
highlands, which Yahweh our God has given us. ·Look, Yahweh your God has 21

given you this country. March in, take possession of it as Yahweh, the God of your
22 ancestors, has said; do not be afraid or discouraged."[e] ·Then you all came to me Jos 1:6,9
and said, "Let us send men ahead of us to explore the country; they shall report to
23 us which way we ought to take and what towns we shall come to."[f] ·This seemed
good advice to me and I selected twelve men from among you, one from each tribe.
24 These men made towards the highlands and went up into them; they reached the
25 Valley of Eshcol and reconnoitred it. ·They collected some of the produce of the
country and brought it down to us; and they made us this report, "Yahweh our
26 God has given us a fine country." ·You, however, refused to go up there and
27 rebelled against the voice of Yahweh your God. ·You muttered in your tents,
saying, "Yahweh hates us, and that is why he has brought us out of Egypt, to put us
28 into the Amorites' power and so destroy us. ·What kind of place are we making
for? Our brothers have discouraged us by saying that the people are stronger and
taller than we are, the cities immense, with walls reaching to the sky. And we have
seen Anakim there too."[g]

29, 30 'And I said to you, "Do not take fright, do not be afraid of them. ·Yahweh your
God goes ahead of you and will be fighting on your side, just as you saw him act in
31 Egypt. ·You have seen him in the desert too: Yahweh your God continued to ↗ Ac 13:18
support you, as a man supports his son, all along the road you followed until you 7:6b;14:1; 32:6
32, 33 arrived here." ·But for all this, you put no faith in Yahweh your God, ·going ahead Ex 4:22 Ws 18:13 Is 63:16 Jr 31:9 Ho 11:1 Ml 2:10–11
of you on the journey to find you a camping ground, by night in the fire to light
your path, and in the cloud by day.

Yahweh's instructions at Kadesh

·Nb 10:33 ·Ex 13:21seq. ·‖Nb 14:21–35

34, 35 'Yahweh heard what you were saying and in his anger swore this oath, ·"Not one
of these people, this perverse generation, will see the fine country I swore to give
36 your ancestors, ·except Caleb son of Jephunneh. He will see it. To him and to his Nb 13:30; 14:6–9
children I shall give the land he has set foot on, for he has been perfectly obedient
37 to Yahweh." ·Yahweh was angry with me too, because of you. "You will not go in Nb 20:12c Dt 3:26;4:21; 34:4
38 either," he said. ·"Your assistant, Joshua son of Nun, will be the one to enter.
39 Encourage him, since he is to bring Israel into possession of the country. ·And
your little ones too, who, you said, would be seized as booty, these children of
yours who do not yet know good from evil, they will go in; I shall give it to them
40 and they will own it. ·But, as regards yourselves, turn round, go back into the Nb 14:25
desert, towards the Sea of Suph."

1 **a.** Following the title, v. 1[a], this paragraph gives additional indications of place and time, inserted by various hands with a view to linking Dt to the Book of Numbers.

b. The first discourse of Moses, 1:6–4:40, is a summary of Israelite history from the stay in Sinai to the arrival at Pisgah in sight of the River Jordan, followed by a re-statement of the covenant and the obligations that it imposes: the Exile is predicted as the punishment for infidelity, but conversion and subsequent return from exile are offered as a consoling possibility. This material belongs to the second edition of the book, made during the Babylonian Captivity. The discourse makes a partial use of the Yahwistic, and above all Elohistic, narratives of Ex and Nb, though selectively, and adapting them with a different aim in view: particular emphasis is placed on divine providence in having especially chosen Israel, the central theme being the gift of the Promised Land by Yahweh to his people. Ch. 1–3, which form a kind of prologue, containing historical elements (particularly 1:19 seq.) and giving particular emphasis to this theme, may be regarded as an introduction to the entire deuteronomic history, running through subsequent books until it ends, in the Books of Kings, with the account of how the Promised Land was eventually lost to Israel.

c. Theological correction to Nb 11:11–15 where Moses complains that the Israelites have grown too numerous. Here, the growth in numbers is interpreted as a sign of God's blessing.

d. 'must be impartial', lit. 'not raise your face', i.e. not show benevolence or, more particularly, favouritism in judgement, 16:19; Lv 19:15. Judges are to imitate the sovereign impartiality of God, 10:17f; Pr 24:23. This is also a recurrent theme with the prophets, Is 10:2; Jr 5:28; Ezk 22:12; Am 2:6; 5:7, 10; Mi 3:9, 11.

e. This assurance of victory is characteristic of the holy war and recurs frequently in Dt, *see* v. 29; 7:21; 20:1; 30:8.

f. In contrast to Nb 13:2, where Yahweh orders the despatching of the explorers, here the people suggest it. Their action is represented as a lack of faith, and conditions the rest of the story: the refusal to enter Canaan and the ensuing punishment. Dt makes this faithless incident the reason for Moses' later exclusion from the Promised Land, whereas Nb 20:12–13 attributes this to the incident at Meribah: so here too the theme of the Promised Land is emphasised.

g. The Anakim, as also Emim, Rephaim and Zamzummim (or Zuzim), 2:10–11, 20–21; *see* Gn 14:5, are legendary names for the aboriginal inhabitants of Palestine and Transjordan. These were identified with the fabulous Nephilim of Gn 6:4 or Giants of Nb 13:33, the raisers of megalithic monuments, *see* Dt 3:11. In the days of Joshua, the Anakim still constituted an aristocracy in the highlands of Hebron and in the coastal region, Jos 11:21 seq.; 14:12–15; 15:13–15; 21:11. The Rephaim persisted in the country known as Bashan, 3:13; Jos 12:4 seq.; 13:12, while in Judaea their memory was preserved in the Valley of the Rephaim, south-west of Jerusalem, Jos 15:8; 18:16; 2 S 5:18. David's soldiers finished off the last descendants of Rapha, their eponymous ancestor, 2 S 21:16–22; *see* 1 Ch 20:4–8. The word *repha'im* later became a synonym for the ghosts in Sheol, *see* Jb 25:5 seq.; Ps 88:10; Is 14:9; 26:14, 19.

‖Nb 14:39–45 'In reply, you then said to me, "We have sinned against Yahweh our God. We 41
shall go up and fight just as Yahweh our God has ordered us." And each one of
you buckled on his arms and equipped himself to march up into the highlands. ·But 42
Yahweh said to me, "Tell them this: Do not go up and fight. I am not with you. Do
not let yourselves be defeated by your enemies." ·So I told you, but you would not 43
listen, and you rebelled against the voice of Yahweh; presumptuously you marched
into the highlands. ·The Amorites, who live in that country of hills, came swarming 44
Ps 118:12 out against you like bees, pursued you and beat you from Seir to Hormah. ·On 45
your return, you wept in Yahweh's presence, but he would not listen to your cries
or pay attention. ·That was why you had to stay at Kadesh as long as you did.' 46

From Kadesh to the Arnon [a]

2 'We then turned round and made for the desert, in the direction of the Sea of 1
Suph, as Yahweh had ordered me. For many days we skirted Mount Seir. [b]
·Yahweh then said to me, ·"You have gone far enough round this mountain; now 2, 3
Nb 20:14–21 turn north. ·And give the people this order: You are about to pass through the 4
territory of your kinsmen, the sons of Esau who live in Seir. They are afraid of you,
and you will be well protected. ·Do not provoke them, for I shall give you none of 5
their land, no, not so much as a foot's length of it. I have given the highlands of Seir
Gn 36:8 to Esau as his domain. [c] ·Pay them in money for what food you eat; and pay them 6
Ex 33:14,16; 34:9–10 in money for the water you drink. ·Yahweh your God has blessed you in all you 7
Dt 8:2seq.,29:5 Ne 9:20–21 do; he has watched over your journeying through this vast desert. Yahweh your
God has been with you these forty years and you have never been in want."

'So we passed beyond those relatives of ours, the children of Esau who live in 8
Seir, by the road through the Arabah, Elath and Ezion-Geber; then, changing
Nb 21:10–20 direction, we took the road towards the Plains of Moab. ·Yahweh then said to 9
me, "Do not attack Moab, do not provoke him to fight, for I shall give you none
of his land, since I have given Ar to the children of Lot as their domain." ·(At one 10
1:28g time the Emim lived there, a great and numerous people, tall as the Anakim;
and, like the Anakim, they were considered to be Rephaim, though the Moabites 11
call them, Emim. ·The Horites, [d] too, lived in Seir at one time; these, however, 12
were dispossessed and exterminated by the children of Esau who settled there in
place of them, just as Israel has done in the country given to it by Yahweh as a
heritage.) ·"On your way, then! Cross the Wadi Zered!" 13

'And so we crossed the Wadi Zered. ·From Kadesh-Barnea to the crossing of 14
the Wadi Zered our wanderings had taken thirty-eight years; as a result of which,
1:35 the entire generation of those of age to bear arms had been eliminated, as Yahweh
Nb 14:34 had sworn to them. ·Yahweh's hand had been against them, to eliminate them 15
completely from the camp.

'When death had carried off from the people those of age to bear arms, to the 16
last man, ·Yahweh said this to me, ·"You are now crossing Ar, the country of 17, 18
Gn 19:30–38 Moab, ·and soon you will encounter the children of Ammon. [e] Do not attack them, 19
do not provoke them, for I shall give you none of the land belonging to the children
of Ammon as your domain. I have given it to the children of Lot as theirs." ·(This 20
used also to be considered as Rephaim territory; at one time the Rephaim lived
there, though the Ammonites call them Zamzummim, ·a great and numerous 21
people, and tall like the Anakim. Yahweh exterminated them for the Ammonites
who dispossessed them and settled there in place of them, ·just as he had done for 22
the children of Esau who live in Seir, so that they dispossessed the Horites and
settled there instead of them and are still there now. ·It was the same with the 23
Jos 13:2b Avvites who occupied encampments as far as Gaza: the Caphtorim, coming from
Caphtor, [f] exterminated them and settled there instead.) ·"On your way! Break 24
camp and cross the Wadi Arnon. See, I am putting Sihon the Amorite, king of
Heshbon, at your mercy, and his country too. Set about the conquest; engage him
in battle. ·Today and henceforth, I shall fill the peoples under all heaven with fear 25

and terror of you; whoever hears word of your approach will tremble and writhe in anguish because of you."

Conquest of the kingdom of Sihon [g]

‖Nb 21:21–25
Jg 11:19–22

26 'So, from the desert of Kedemoth [h] I sent envoys to Sihon king of Heshbon with
27 this peaceful message, •"I intend to cross your country. I shall go my way, straying
28 neither to right nor to left. •I shall eat and pay for the food you choose to sell me, 2:6
and I shall drink and pay for the water you let me have. I only want to march
29 through, •just as the children of Esau who live in Seir permitted, as well as the Nb 20:18,21
Moabites who live in Ar, until I cross the Jordan into the country that Yahweh our God is giving us."

30 'But Sihon king of Heshbon would not give us leave to pass through his territory;
Yahweh our God had made his spirit obstinate and his heart stubborn, to put him Ex 4:21
31 at your mercy, as he still is. •Yahweh said to me, "You see, I am starting to give
32 you Sihon and his country. Begin the conquest by seizing his country." •Sihon
33 marched out against us, he and all his people, to give battle at Jahaz. •And Yahweh
our God handed him over to us: we defeated him and his sons and all his people.
34 We captured all his towns and laid all these towns under the curse of destruction: Jos 6:17b
35 men, women and children, we left no survivors •except the livestock which we took
36 as our booty, and the spoils of the captured towns. •From Aroer on the edge of the 2 S 24:5,5d
Arnon valley and from the town down in the valley, as far as Gilead, not one town
37 was beyond our reach; Yahweh our God delivered them all to us. •You did not,
however, go near the country of the Ammonites, or the region of the River Jabbok,
or the towns in the highlands, or anywhere forbidden us by Yahweh our God.'

Conquest of the kingdom of Og

‖Nb 21:33–35

1 3 'We then turned on Bashan and invaded that. And Og king of Bashan marched
2 out against us, he and all his people, to give battle at Edrei. •Yahweh said to
me, "Do not be afraid of him, for I have put him at your mercy, him, all his people
and his country. You will treat him as you treated Sihon king of the Amorites who
3 lived in Heshbon." •So, Yahweh our God put Og king of Bashan at our mercy too,
4 with all his people. We beat him so thoroughly that nobody was left. •That was
when we captured all his towns; there was not a town of theirs we did not take:
5 sixty towns, the whole confederation of Argob, Og's kingdom in Bashan, •all of

2 a. As in the ancient source, Nb 14:25, the Sea of Suph is given as the primary direction, but Dt elaborates by indicating a route through the desert towards Moab and Ammon. At the time of writing, the Edomites were already installed on the west side of the Arabah and on the Gulf of Aqaba (the Sea of Suph); hence, an Edomite refusal of passage, Nb 20:14–21, was no longer applicable: Israel is to pass through the Edomite territory but take nothing on the way. Similarly, Israel will receive no territory belonging to Moab or Ammon, neither of which is mentioned in the primitive source. The Israelites did indeed make their way round Moab by way of the desert, but did not reach the territory of the Ammonites, *see* 2:19e. The theological theme of the gift of the Promised Land, 1:6–8; *see* 1:5b, is merged here with an ampler theme: that God himself endows the various nations with their homelands. Edom, Moab and Ammon, which are related to Israel, will keep their own patrimonies, *see* 2:5c, whereas Sihon is an Amorite and God will give his country to Israel, v. 24.

b. The name of Seir, very often occurring in parallel with that of Edom, *see* Gn 32:4; Nb 24:18; Jg 5:4, designates the territory of Esau/Edom, Gn 33:14; 36:8, which originally lay to the east of the Arabah. But here, as in Jos 11:17; 12:7, 'Mount Seir' is located near Kadesh, not very far from Hormah, *see* 1:44. This portrays the situation as it existed when this text was written: the Edomites had already crossed the Arabah, *see* Nb 20:22f. At the collapse of the Kingdom of Judah, they were to advance as far as Hebron and this whole region became known as Idumaea, *see* 1 M 5:3b; Mk 3:8.

c. The Edomites, descended from Abraham, Gn 36, and the Moabites and Ammonites, vv. 9 and 19, descended from Lot, Gn 19:30 seq., have (like the Israelites) been settled by God in territories formerly belonging to other races, the names of which are recorded in the additional vv., Dt 2:10–12, 20 seq.

d. The Horites here can hardly be identified with the Hurrians mentioned in cuneiform texts. The latter entered Palestine only *c.* 1500 BC, and then in very small numbers, being quickly assimilated. Proper names attest their presence in a few towns west of the Jordan, but never in Transjordan.The term Horite seems no more than a pseudo-ethnic name applied to the inhabitants of Edom-Seir, *see* Gn 36:20, and cognate with the word *huru*, one of the Egyptian names for Palestine during the period of Israelite colonisation.

e. The territory of the Ammonites lay to the north of that of Sihon, on the upper waters of the River Jabbok *see* 3:16; Nb 21:24. Despite the relationship between Israel and Ammon, on which this text insists, *see* v. 37, the two peoples were to be at war during the period of the Judges, Jg 10:7 seq., and particularly in the days of David, 2 S 10:6 seq.; 11. Later, the Ammonites were to expand at the expense of Gad, *see* Jr 49:1, and the primitive tradition enshrined in Dt is hostile to them, *see* Dt 23:4.

f. The Philistines, coming from Crete or from Asia Minor, *see* Jos 13:2b.

g. Here, Dt follows the primitive narrative for the historic conquest of the kingdom of Sihon, as also for the legendary story of Og.

h. Or 'from the eastern desert'.

them fortresses defended by high walls and fortified with gates and bars, not to mention the Perizzite [a] towns, which were very numerous. ·We laid them under the 6
curse of destruction as we had done with Sihon king of Heshbon, laying all these towns under the curse of destruction: men, women and children—·but we seized 7
the livestock and spoils of the towns as booty for ourselves.

'Thus, by then we had taken the country of the two Amorite kings beyond the 8
Jordan, stretching from the Wadi Arnon to Mount Hermon ·(the Sidonians call 9
Hermon 'Sirion' and the Amorites call it 'Senir'): ·all the towns of the tableland, 10
all Gilead, and all Bashan as far as Salecah and Edrei, the capital cities of Og in
1:28g Bashan. ·(Og king of Bashan was the last survivor of the Rephaim; his bed was the 11
iron bed that can be seen at Rabbah-of-the-Ammonites, nine cubits long and four wide, according to the human cubit.) [b]

‖Nb 32 **The partitioning of Transjordan**

'Then we took possession of this country, from Aroer on the Wadi Arnon. To the 12
Reubenites and Gadites I gave half the highlands of Gilead with its towns. ·To the 13
half-tribe of Manasseh I gave the rest of Gilead and the whole of Bashan, Og's kingdom. (The whole confederation of Argob and the whole of Bashan is called
Nb 32:41 the country of the Rephaim. ·Since Jair son of Manasseh occupied the whole 14
Jg 10:3–5 confederation of Argob as far as the frontiers of the Geshurites and Maacathites, after him Bashan is called the Encampments of Jair even today.) ·To Machir I gave 15
Gilead. ·To the Reubenites and the Gadites I gave the region from Gilead to the 16
Wadi Arnon, the middle of the ravine marking the boundary, and up as far as the Jabbok, the ravine marking the frontier of the Ammonites. ·The Arabah 17
Nb 34:11–12 and the Jordan serve as frontiers from Chinnereth down to the Sea of the Arabah (the Salt Sea), at the foot of the slopes of Pisgah on the east.

Further instructions from Moses

'I then gave you this order: "Yahweh your God has given you this country to be 18
yours. Armed, every one of you fit to fight must go ahead of your brothers the Israelites. ·Only your wives, your children and your flocks (you have many flocks, 19
I know) must stay behind in the towns which I have given you, ·until Yahweh has 20
Ex 33:14f brought your brothers to rest as he has already brought you, and they too possess the territory which Yahweh your God is giving them on the other side of the Jordan; after that, you can go home, each to the domain I have given you." ·I then 21
Jos 1:1b gave Joshua this order, "You can see for yourself everything that Yahweh our God has done to these two kings; Yahweh will do the same to all the kingdoms through which you pass. ·Do not be afraid of them: Yahweh your God himself is fighting 22
for you."

'I then pleaded with Yahweh. ·"My Lord Yahweh," I said, "now that you have 23, 24
5:24;11:2–3 begun to reveal your greatness and your power to your servant with works and
Ex 15:6–7 Ps 86:8 mighty deeds no God in heaven or on earth can rival, ·may I not go across and see 25
this fine country on the other side of the Jordan, that fine upland country and the
Nb 20:12c Lebanon?" ·But, because of you, Yahweh was angry with me and would not listen. 26
32:48–52 "Enough!" he said, "Do not mention this subject again! ·Climb to the top of 27
Pisgah; turn your eyes to the west, the north, the south, the east. Look well, for across this Jordan you shall not go. ·Give Joshua your instructions; encourage him, 28
strengthen him; for he will be the one to cross at the head of this people; he will be the one to bring them into possession of the country which you will see."
Nb 25:1–18 'We then stayed in the valley, close to Beth-Peor.' 29

The apostasy at Beth-Peor contrasted with true wisdom

5:1;6:1; 8:1;11:8–9 Lv 18:5 4 'And now, Israel, listen to the laws and customs which I am teaching you today, 1
so that, by observing them, you may survive to enter and take possession of the
Rv 22:18–19 country which Yahweh, God of your ancestors, is giving you. ·You must add 2
nothing to what I command you, and take nothing from it, but keep the command-

ments of Yahweh your God just as I lay them down for you. ·You can see for yourselves what Yahweh has done about the Baal of Peor; Yahweh your God has destroyed all those of you who followed the Baal of Peor; ·but those of you who stayed faithful to Yahweh your God are all alive today. ·Look: as Yahweh my God commanded me, I have taught you laws and customs, for you to observe in the country of which you are going to take possession.[a] ·Keep them, put them into practice, and other peoples will admire your wisdom and prudence. Once they know what all these laws are, they will exclaim, "No other people is as wise and prudent as this great nation!" ·And indeed, what great nation has its gods as near as Yahweh our God is to us whenever we call to him?[b] ·And what great nation has laws and customs as upright as the entirety of this Law which I am laying down for you today?

Nb 25:1–18

Jb 28:28
Ps 19:7
Pr 1:7;9:10
Si 1:14–16

4:32–34
Lv 26:11–12+
Ps 145:18;147:19seq.;148:14
Jr 29:13–14

The revelation at Horeb; its demands

'But take care, as you value your lives! Do not forget the things which you yourselves have seen, or let them slip from your heart as long as you live; teach them, rather, to your children and to your children's children. ·The day you stood at Horeb in the presence of Yahweh your God, Yahweh said to me, "Summon the people to me; I want them to hear me speaking, so that they will learn to fear me all the days they live on earth, and teach this to their children." ·So you came and stood at the foot of the mountain, and the mountain flamed to the very sky, a sky darkened by cloud, murky and thunderous.[c] ·Yahweh then spoke to you from the heart of the fire; you heard the sound of words but saw no shape; there was only a voice. ·He revealed his covenant to you and commanded you to observe it, the Ten Words which he inscribed on two tablets of stone. ·Yahweh then ordered me to teach you the laws and customs[d] that you were to observe in the country into which you are about to cross, to take possession of it.

32:7
Ps 44:1;78:3–4
Jl 1:3

Ex 19:16–20

Ex 19:18

Ex 20:1a

'Hence, be very careful what you do. Since you saw no shape that day at Horeb when Yahweh spoke to you from the heart of the fire,[e] ·see that you do not corrupt yourselves by making an image in the shape of anything whatever: be it statue of man or of woman, ·or of any animal on the earth, or of any bird that flies in the heavens, ·or of any reptile that crawls on the ground, or of any fish in the waters under the earth. ·When you raise your eyes to heaven, when you see the sun, the moon, the stars—the entire array of heaven—do not be tempted to worship them and serve them. Yahweh your God has allotted these to all the other peoples under heaven, ·but Yahweh has chosen you, bringing you out of the iron-foundry, Egypt, to be his own people, his own people as you still are today.

5:8
Ex 20:4–5

Rm 1:23

17:3
Ws 13:2

1 K 8:51
Jr 11:4
7:6b

Of punishment to come, and of conversion

'Yahweh is angry with me because of you; he has sworn that I shall not cross the Jordan or enter the fine country which Yahweh your God is giving you as your

Nb 20:12c

3 **a.** The Perizzites were country folk whose towns were unfortified.

b. The 'iron (ferrous basalt) bed' was possibly one of the cromlechs to be seen in the neighbourhood of Amman. • Nine cubits are approximately 13ft (4 m). For the modern equivalents of ancient weights, measures etc., *see* Tables of measures and money.

4 **a.** The slow elaboration of 'the laws and customs', v. 5, culminates in an all-embracing view of the Law, which eventually comes to dominate all Israelite religion. The primary sense of the word *torah* is 'instruction', 'direction given': in this is to be included all religious worship and all human conduct, inspired by a growing awareness of the covenant and of the God who has proposed and ratified it, Gn 15:1a. Gradually, divine revelation and the teaching handed down in ancient texts, as also those afforded by the prophets, come to animate the entire 'life' of the people, v. 1; 8:3b; 30:14c; Ps 19:7-14; 94:12; 119:1a; Si 1:26; 24:23; *see also* Ac 7:38*l*. Later still, Jesus will declare that he has come to 'fulfil' the Law and the prophets, Mt 5:17h; *see* Mt 22:34–40 seq.; and Paul will explain how 'the Law' has been replaced by faith in Christ, Rm 3:27p; 10:4.

b. Whereas the other Pentateuchal traditions emphasise the distance between God and the human race, *see* Ex 33:20i, Dt calls attention to God's loving intimacy with his people in whose midst he dwells, 12:5. This same outlook is found in the narrative of the dedication of the Temple, 1 K 8:10–29, and the idea recurs in Ezk 48:35. The NT gives it supreme expression, *see* Jn 1:14 m.

c. 'thunderous' Gk; omitted by Hebr.

d. The author makes a distinction between the 'Ten Words' written by God himself on the stone tablets, 5:4–22; Ex 34:28, and the 'laws and customs', i.e. the Deuteronomic Code, *see* 12:1; 26:16.

e. This homiletic passage justifies the prohibition of images on the grounds that during the theophany at Horeb, Yahweh allowed himself to be heard, but not to be seen. Yahweh did, however, allow certain privileged persons to see him, Moses, Ex 33:18–23, and the Elders, Ex 24:10–11.

heritage. •Yes, I am to die in this country; I shall not cross this Jordan; you will go 22
over and take possession of that rich land. •Be careful not to forget the covenant 23
which Yahweh your God has made with you, by sculpting an image or making a
statue of anything, since Yahweh your God has forbidden this; •for Yahweh your 24
Ex 13.22h; 20:5+ Is 33:14 Zp 1:18 ↗Heb 12:29 God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.[f]

'When you have fathered children and grandchildren and have grown old in the 25
country, when you have grown corrupt and made some image, doing what Yahweh
regards as wrong and so provoking his anger—•today I call heaven and earth to 26
Is 1:2 •Lv 26:14–19 Jos 23:16 witness against you—you will quickly vanish from the country which you are
crossing the Jordan to possess. Your days will not be prolonged there, for you will
2 K 17:6; 25:8seq. Ps 105:12–13 Is 4:3c be utterly destroyed. •Yahweh will scatter you among the peoples, and only a small 27
number of you will remain[g] among the nations where Yahweh will have driven
you. •There you will serve gods made by human hand, of wood and of stone, that 28
cannot see or hear, eat or smell.

30:1–5 2 Ch 15:2,4, 7seq., 15 Ps 27:8; 105:3seq. Is 55:6 Jr 29:13 Ho 5:15 Mt 7:7–8 •Ex 34:6–7 'If, however, from there you start searching once more for Yahweh your God, 29
and if you search for him honestly and sincerely, you will find him. •You will suffer; 30
everything I have said will befall you, but in the final days[h] you will return to
Yahweh your God and listen to his voice. •For Yahweh your God is a merciful 31
God and will not desert or destroy you or forget the covenant which he made on
oath with your ancestors.

The glory of having been chosen by God

'Put this question, then, to the ages that are past, that have gone before you, from 32
when God created the human race on earth: Was there ever a word so majestic,
from one end of heaven to the other? Was anything like it ever heard? •Did ever a 33
4:7b Ex 33:20i people hear the voice of the living God[i] speaking from the heart of the fire, as you
have heard it, and remain alive? •Has it ever been known before that any god took 34
7:6b Ps 40:5 Jr 32:21 action himself to bring one nation out of another one, by ordeals, signs, wonders,
war with mighty hand and outstretched arm, by fearsome terrors—all of which
things Yahweh your God has done for you before your eyes in Egypt?

'This he showed you, so that you might know that Yahweh is the true God and 35
Ex 20:3 Dt 32:39 Is 43:10–13 ↗Mk 12:32 that there is no other.[j] •To instruct you, he made you hear his voice from heaven, 36
and on earth he let you see his great fire, and from the heart of the fire you heard
his words. •Because he loved your ancestors and, after them, chose their descen- 37
dants, he has brought you out of Egypt, displaying his presence and mighty power,
7:1;9:1; 11:23 Jos 2:11 dispossessing for you nations who were larger and stronger than you, to make way 38
for you and to give you their country as your heritage, as it still is today.

'Hence, grasp this today and meditate on it carefully: Yahweh is the true God, in 39
6:4 1 K 8:23 2 Ch 20:6 Ps 83:18 Is 65:20 Zc 8:4 heaven above as on earth beneath, he and no other. •Keep his laws and command- 40
ments as I give them to you today, so that you and your children after you may
prosper and live long in the country that Yahweh your God is giving you for ever.'

Ex 21:13e Jos 20:1a **The cities of refuge**[k]

Moses then set aside three towns in the east, beyond the Jordan, •to which any 41, 42
killer might flee who had accidentally, without any previous feud, killed his fellow;
by taking refuge in one of these towns he could save his life. •These were, for the 43
Jos 20:8 Reubenites, Bezer in the desert on the tableland; for the Gadites, Ramoth in
Gilead; for the Manassehites, Golan in Bashan.

B: THE SECOND DISCOURSE OF MOSES[l]

Time and place

This is the Law which Moses presented to the Israelites. •These are the stipulations, 44, 45
the laws and the customs which Moses gave the Israelites after they had left Egypt,

46 beyond the Jordan in the valley near Beth-Peor, in the country of Sihon the 2:26–3:17
Amorite king who had lived at Heshbon. Moses and the Israelites had defeated
47 him when they left Egypt, ·and had taken possession of his country, as well as that
48 of Og king of Bashan—two Amorite kings to the east beyond the Jordan, ·from
Aroer on the edge of the Arnon Valley, all the way to Mount Sion (that is,
49 Hermon) —·and of the whole Arabah east of the Jordan as far as the Sea of the
Arabah, at the foot of the slopes of Pisgah.

The Ten Commandments

1 **5** Moses called all Israel together and said to them, 'Listen, Israel, to the laws 4:1,5,8; 12:1
and customs[a] that I proclaim to you today. Learn them and take care to
observe them.
2, 3 'Yahweh our God made a covenant with us at Horeb. ·Yahweh made this 4:10–13,11c
4 covenant not with our ancestors, but with us, with all of us alive here today. ·On
5 the mountain, from the heart of the fire, Yahweh spoke to you face to face, ·while
I stood between you and Yahweh to let you know what Yahweh was saying, since
you were afraid of the fire and had not gone up the mountain. He said:
6 ' "I am Yahweh your God who brought you out of Egypt, out of the place of ‖Ex 20:1a,2–17
slave-labour.
7 ' "You will have no gods other than me.
8 ' "You must not make yourselves any image or any likeness of anything in 4:15–20
9 heaven above or on earth beneath or in the waters under the earth; ·you must not
bow down to these gods[b] or serve them. For I, Yahweh your God, am a jealous 4:24f; 7:9–10
God and I punish the parents' fault in the children, the grandchildren and the
10 great-grandchildren, among those who hate me; ·but I show faithful love to
thousands, to those who love me and keep my commandments.
11 ' "You must not misuse the name of Yahweh your God, for Yahweh will not
leave unpunished anyone who uses his name for what is false.
12 ' "Observe the Sabbath day and keep it holy, as Yahweh your God has com-
13, 14 manded you. ·Labour for six days, doing all your work, ·but the seventh day is a
Sabbath for Yahweh your God. You must not do any work that day, neither you,
nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your servants—male or female—nor your ox,
nor your donkey, nor any of your animals, nor the foreigner who has made his Ex 12:48o
15 home with you; ·so that your servants, male and female, may rest, as you do.
Remember that you were once a slave in Egypt, and that Yahweh your God
brought you out of there with mighty hand and outstretched arm; this is why
Yahweh your God has commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.[c]
16 ' "Honour your father and your mother, as Yahweh your God has commanded Si 3:1–16
you, so that you may have long life and may prosper in the country which Yahweh
your God is giving you.
17 ' "You must not kill.

f. God's 'jealousy' is the extravagance of his love; *see* 5:9; 6:15; 32:16, 21; etc.; Ex 20:5; 34:14; Nb 25:11; Ezk 8:3–5; 39:25; Zc 1:14; 2 Co 11:2. For the 'fire' *see* Ex 13:22; 24:17.

g. The 'remnant' of which Isaiah and the prophets speak, i.e. the sole survivors of the nation's trial.

h. In the prophetic books the phrase refers to the decisive establishment of God's kingdom, the age of the new covenant.

i. 'living' Gk. *see* 5:26; omitted by Hebr.

j. Explicit assertion of the non-existence of other gods, *see* Is 43:10–11; 44:6; 45:5. The Decalogue simply forbade the worship of foreign gods. These had long been regarded as inferior to Yahweh, impotent and contemptible. But now a new step has been reached: these gods do not exist.

k. This note on the cities of refuge, *see* Jos 20:1a, is an addition, and separates the two discourses of Moses.

l. After a brief indication of time and place, 4:44–49; *see* 1:4–5, begins the second discourse of Moses, 5:1–11:32, serving as introduction to the great Deuteronomic Code, 12:1–26:15, and then continuing from 26:16 to 28:68. Like the first discourse, it begins by summarising the past history of Israel, going back this time to the theophany at Horeb and to the Decalogue. It seems to have existed as a separate entity, in various forms, combined here, and to have been used for catechetic and cultic purposes before becoming the introduction to the Deuteronomic Code.

5 **a.** This, then, is a general announcement of the Deuteronomic Law, not merely of the 'Word', v. 5, of the Decalogue; *see also* 6:1.

b. *see* Ex 20:5d.

c. The explanatory reason for the Sabbath is not the same as that in Ex 20:11. Here it is linked to the liberation from slavery in Egypt, by which it acquires a dual aspect: it is a day of joy (compare similarly the feast of Weeks, 16:10–12) and it is a day when servants and foreign slaves are temporarily released from their drudgery (compare the same reason in legislation to protect the poor, 24:18, 22). These developments were added at a period when the sabbatical precept had acquired more importance.

' "You must not commit adultery. 18
' "You must not steal. 19
' "You must not give false evidence against your fellow. 20
' "You must not set your heart on your neighbour's spouse, you must not set 21 18
your heart on your neighbour's house, or field, or servant—man or woman—or ox,
or donkey or any of your neighbour's possessions."

4:12–13 Ex 24:16f 'These were the words Yahweh spoke to you when you were all assembled on 22 19
the mountain. Thunderously, he spoke to you from the heart of the fire, in cloud
and thick darkness. He added nothing, but wrote them on two tablets of stone
which he gave to me.

Ex 20:18–21 **Moses the mediator**

'Now, having heard this voice coming out of the darkness, while the mountain was 23 20
all on fire, you came to me, all of you, heads of tribes and elders, ·and said, 24 21
"Yahweh our God has shown us his glory and his greatness, and we have heard his
Ex 19:16g voice from the heart of the fire. Today we have seen that God can speak with a
human being and that person still live. ·So why should we expose ourselves to 25 22
Ex 33:20i death again? For this great fire might devour us if we go on listening to the voice of
Yahweh our God, and then we should die. ·For what creature of flesh could 26 23
possibly live after hearing, as we have heard, the voice of the living God [d] speaking
from the heart of the fire? ·Go nearer yourself and listen to everything that Yahweh 27 24
our God may say, and then tell us everything that Yahweh our God has told you;
Ex 19:8;24:3 we shall listen and put it into practice!"

'Yahweh heard what you were saying to me, and he then said to me, "I have 28 25
heard what these people are saying. Everything they have said is well said. ·If only 29 26
their heart were always so, set on fearing me and on keeping my commandments,
so that they and their children might prosper for ever! ·Go and tell them to go back 30 27
to their tents. ·But you yourself stay here with me, and I shall tell you all the 31 28
commandments, the laws and the customs which you are to teach them and which
they are to observe in the country which I am giving them as their possession."

To love Yahweh is the essence of the Law [e]

17:11,20 Jos 1:7 'Keep them and put them into practice: such is Yahweh's command to you. Stray 32 29
neither to right nor to left. ·Follow the whole way that Yahweh has marked for 33
you, and you will survive to prosper and live long in the country which you are
going to possess.'

Ex 15:26 6 'Such, then, are the commandments, the laws and the customs which Yahweh 1
your God has instructed me to teach you, for you to observe in the country
which you are on your way to possess. ·And hence, if, throughout your lives, you 2
↗Lk 11:28 fear Yahweh your God [a] and keep all his laws and commandments, which I am
laying down for you today, you will live long, you and your child and your grand-
child. ·Listen then, Israel, keep and observe what will make you prosperous and 3
numerous, as Yahweh, God of your ancestors, has promised you, in giving you a
country flowing with milk and honey.

4:25+;10:12 ↗Mt 22:37par. 'Listen, Israel: Yahweh our God is the one, the only Yahweh. [b] ·You must love 4, 5
Yahweh your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength. [c]
11:18–21 Jr 31:33 Let the words I enjoin on you today stay in your heart. ·You shall tell them to your 6, 7
children, and keep on telling them, when you are sitting at home, when you are out
and about, when you are lying down and when you are standing up; ·you must 8
Ex 13:9,16 fasten them on your hand as a sign and on your forehead as a headband; ·you must 9
write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

'When Yahweh has brought you into the country which he swore to your 10
ancestors Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that he would give you, with great and
Jos 24:13 prosperous cities you have not built, ·with houses full of good things you have not 11
provided, with wells you have not dug, with vineyards and olive trees you have not

12 planted, and then, when you have eaten as much as you want, •be careful you do
not forget Yahweh who has brought you out of Egypt, out of the place of slave-
13 labour. •Yahweh your God is the one you must fear, him alone you must serve, his
is the name by which you must swear.

8:10–18;32:13–18 Ho 2:7–11 •↗Mt 4:10par.

An appeal for loyalty

14, 15 'Do not follow other gods, gods of the peoples round you, •for Yahweh your God
among you is a jealous God; the wrath of Yahweh your God would blaze out
16 against you, and he would wipe you off the face of the earth. •Do not put Yahweh
17 your God to the test as you tested him at Massah. •Keep the commandments of
Yahweh your God, and his instructions and laws which he has laid down for you,
18 and do what Yahweh regards as right and good, so that you may prosper and take
possession of the fine country which Yahweh swore to give your ancestors,
19 driving out your enemies before you; such was Yahweh's promise.

Ex 23:32–33 4:24f Ex 17:1–7 Nb 20:2–13 ↗Mt 4:7par.

20 'In times to come, when your child asks you, "What is the meaning of these
instructions, laws and customs which Yahweh our God has laid down for you?"
21 you are to tell your child, "Once we were Pharaoh's slaves in Egypt, and Yahweh
22 brought us out of Egypt by his mighty hand. •Before our eyes, Yahweh worked
great and terrible signs and wonders against Egypt, against Pharaoh and his entire
23 household. •And he brought us out of there, to lead us into the country which he
24 had sworn to our ancestors that he would give us. •And Yahweh has commanded
us to observe all these laws and to fear Yahweh our God, so as to be happy for ever
25 and to survive, as we do to this day. •For us, right living will mean this: to keep and
observe all these commandments in obedience to Yahweh our God, as he has
commanded us." '

Ex 12:26seq.; 13:8

Israel a people apart

Ex 34:11–17 Ps 106:34–39

1 7 'When Yahweh your God has brought you into the country which you are
going to make your own, many nations will fall before you: Hittites, Girgash-
ites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites,[a] seven nations
2 greater and stronger than yourselves. •Yahweh your God will put them at your
mercy and you will conquer them. You must put them under the curse of destruc-
3 tion. You must not make any treaty with them or show them any pity. •You must
not intermarry with them; you must not give a daughter of yours to a son of theirs,
4 or take a daughter of theirs for a son of yours, •for your son would be seduced from

Ac 13:19 4:38+ Ex 23:32–33; 34:12–16 Ex 9:1–2 Jg 3:5–6 1 K 11:1–2

d. To assert that God is 'living' is one of the primary formulae of faith in the true God, 6:4b, since it implies rejection of all the false gods, who are as lifeless as their own images, Jos 3:10; 1 S 17:26, 36; Ps 84:2; Is 37:4; Jr 10:8–10; Ho 2:1; *see* Mt 16:16; 26:23; Rm 9:26; 1 Th 1:9; 1 Tm 3:15.

e. After the historical survey comes the catechetic part: a succession of small homiletic developments, summing up the spirit of deuteronomic religion.

6 **a.** 'To fear Yahweh' is an expression typifying faithfulness to the covenant. Henceforth, the fear of Ex 20:20i at once combines love in response to God's love, 4:37, and absolute obedience to whatever God commands, 6:2–5; 10:12–15; *see* Gn 22:12. The religious and moral content of this fear grows more and more refined as the centuries pass, Jos 24:14; 1 K 18:3, 12; 2 K 4:1; Pr 1:7a; Is 11:2; Jr 32:39.

b. Another translation is sometimes suggested, 'It is Yahweh our God, Yahweh alone.' But the phrase is certainly a declaration of monotheism. It was later to be used as the opening words of the *shema* ('Hear'), a prayer central to Jewish piety.

Throughout Israelite history, this faith in a unique God grows more and more precise, under the impact of faith in the covenant and in God's particular choice of Israel, Gn 6:18; 12:1a; 15:1a; 21:1a. The existence of other gods was never explicitly affirmed in ancient times but more and more the affirmation of the living God, 5:26d, unique master of the world as of his people, Ex 3:16, 16h; 1 K 8:56–60; 18:21; 2 K 19:15–19; Si 1:8–9; Is 42:8e; Am 4:13; 5:8; Mi 1:11; Zc 14:9, is accompanied by a systematic denial of the existence of other (false) gods, Ws 13:10e; 14:12–14; Is 40:20m; 41:21i.

c. Loving God is not a matter of choice, it is a command. This love, echo of God's love for his people, 4:37; 7:8; 10:15, embraces the fear of God, the duty of service and the observance of precepts, here v. 13, 10:12–13; 11:1; *see* 30:2. Outside Dt there is no explicit command to love God but its equivalent is found in 2 K 23:25 and Ho 6:6. Though the command does not appear, the Psalms and the prophetic books, especially Hosea and Jeremiah, are full of the love of God. Jesus, quoting Dt 6:5, lays it down as the greatest commandment of all, Mt 22:37 par.; with it goes fear, the fear proper to an heir, not to a slave, 1 Jn 4:18.

7 **a.** Such a conventional list of six or seven pre-Israelite Palestinian peoples recurs, with slight variations, in 20:17 and in Gn 15:20; Ex 3:8, 17; 13:5; 23:23; 33:2; 34:11; Jos 3:10; 9:1; 11:3; 12:8; 24:11; Jg 3:5; 1 K 9:20; 2 Ch 8:7; Ezr 9:1; Ne 9:8. The Canaanites represent the original semitic population of Palestine. The Amorites are later semitic arrivals (end of 3rd millennium). The 'Yahwistic' tradition prefers the former name, the 'Elohistic' normally uses the latter; Jos 11:3 makes a geographical distinction between them, *see* Jos 9:10. The Hittites are a people of Asia Minor; the term is here used in a vague sense; it indicates a non-semitic people resident in Palestine, Gn 23. The Girgashites, Perizzites and Hivites are of least importance. The Jebusites are the ancient inhabitants of Jerusalem, 2 S 5:9f.

following me into serving other gods; the wrath of Yahweh would blaze out against
12:3 Ex 23:24,24k you and he would instantly destroy you. ·Instead, treat them like this: tear down 5
their altars, smash their standing-stones, cut down their sacred poles and burn their
14:2 Ex 19:6+ Is 62:12 Jr 2:3 Am 3:2 idols. ·For you are a people consecrated to Yahweh your God; of all the peoples 6
on earth, you have been chosen by Yahweh your God to be his own people. [b]

God's election and his favour

Jn 15:16 'Yahweh set his heart on you and chose you not because you were the most 7
1 Co 1:26–29 numerous of all peoples—for indeed you were the smallest of all—·but because he 8
1 Jn 4:10.19 loved you and meant to keep the oath which he swore to your ancestors: that was
Mi 6:4 why Yahweh brought you out with his mighty hand and redeemed you from the
place of slave-labour, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt. ·From this you 9
4:35j;5:9seq. Ex 34:6–7 1 Co 1:9f can see that Yahweh your God is the true God, the faithful God who, though he is
true to his covenant and his faithful love for a thousand generations as regards
24:16b ↗2 K 14:6 Jr 31:29–30 Ezk 14:12d those who love him and keep his commandments, ·punishes in their own persons 10
those that hate him. He destroys anyone who hates him, without delay; [c] and it is in
their own persons that he punishes them. ·Hence, you must keep and observe the 11
commandments, laws and customs which I am laying down for you today.

Ex 23:22–23 'Listen to these ordinances, be true to them and observe them, and in return 12
Yahweh your God will be true to the covenant and love which he promised on oath
Lk 1:72 Jn 14:21,23 to your ancestors. ·He will love you and bless you and increase your numbers; he 13
will bless the fruit of your body and the produce of your soil, your corn, your new
wine, your oil, the issue of your cattle, the young of your flock, in the country
which he swore to your ancestors that he would give you. ·You will be the most 14
blessed of all peoples. None of you, man or woman, will be sterile, no male or
female of your beasts infertile. ·Yahweh will deflect all illness from you; he will not 15
28:60 Ex 15:26 afflict you with those evil plagues of Egypt which you have known, but will inflict
them on all who hate you.

Ex 23:24–33 'So, devour all the peoples whom Yahweh your God puts at your mercy, show 16
them no pity, do not serve their gods: or you will be ensnared.

9:1–6 **The power of Yahweh**

'You may say in your heart, "These nations outnumber me; how shall I be able to 17
dispossess them?" ·Do not be afraid of them: remember how Yahweh your God 18
treated Pharaoh and all Egypt, ·the great ordeals that you yourselves have seen, 19
the signs and wonders, the mighty hand and outstretched arm with which Yahweh
your God brought you out. This is how Yahweh your God will treat all the peoples
Ex 23:28 Jos 24:12 Ws 12:8 whom you fear to face. ·And what is more, Yahweh your God will send hornets to 20
destroy those who are left and who hide from you.

'Do not be afraid of them, for Yahweh your God is among you, a great and 21
Ex 23:29 Jg 2:6f terrible God. ·Little by little, Yahweh your God will clear away these nations 22
before you; you cannot destroy them all at once, or wild animals will breed and be
disastrous for you. [d] ·But Yahweh your God will put them at your mercy, and 23
disaster after disaster will overtake them until they are finally destroyed. ·He will 24
put their kings at your mercy and you will blot out their names under heaven; no
one will be able to resist you—until you have destroyed them all.

'You must burn the statues of their gods, not coveting the gold and silver that 25
covers them; take it and you will be caught in a snare: it is detestable to Yahweh
your God. ·You must not bring any detestable thing into your house: or you, like 26
Lv 27:28e it, will come under the curse of destruction. You must regard them as unclean and
loathsome, for they are under the curse of destruction.'

The ordeal in the desert [a]

8 'You must keep and put into practice all the commandments which I enjoin on 1
you today, so that you may survive and increase in numbers and enter the
country which Yahweh promised on oath to your ancestors, and make it your own.

Remember the long road by which Yahweh your God led you for forty years in the desert, to humble you, to test you and know your inmost heart—whether you would keep his commandments or not. ·He humbled you, he made you feel hunger, he fed you with manna which neither you nor your ancestors had ever known, to make you understand that human beings live not on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of Yahweh. [b] ·The clothes on your back did not wear out and your feet were not swollen, all those forty years. 29:4–5 Ex 16 Am 8:11 ↗Mt 4:4par. Jn 4:34

'Learn from this that Yahweh your God was training you as a man trains his child, ·and keep the commandments of Yahweh your God, and so follow his ways and fear him. 2 S 7:14 Pr 3:11–12 Ws 11:9–10 1 Co 11:31–32

The Promised Land and its temptations

'But Yahweh your God is bringing you into a fine country, a land of streams and springs, of waters that well up from the deep in valleys and hills, ·a land of wheat and barley, of vines, of figs, of pomegranates, a land of olives, of oil, of honey, ·a land where you will eat bread without stint, where you will want nothing, a land where the stones are iron and where the hills may be quarried for copper. ·You will eat and have all you want and you will bless Yahweh your God in the fine country which he has given you. 11:10–12 2 K 18:32 Jr 2:7

'Be careful not to forget Yahweh your God, by neglecting his commandments, customs and laws which I am laying down for you today. ·When you have eaten all you want, when you have built fine houses to live in, ·when you have seen your flocks and herds increase, your silver and gold abound and all your possessions grow great, ·do not become proud of heart. Do not then forget Yahweh your God who brought you out of Egypt, out of the place of slave-labour, ·who guided you through this vast and dreadful desert, a land of fiery snakes, scorpions, thirst; ·who in this waterless place brought you water out of the flinty rock; who in this desert fed you with manna unknown to your ancestors, to humble you and test you and so make your future the happier. Si 10:12 Jr 2:6 Nb 21:6f Ex 17:1–7 Nb 20:1–13,1a ·Ex 16 Nb 11:7–9

'Beware of thinking to yourself, "My own strength and the might of my own hand have given me the power to act like this." ·Remember Yahweh your God; he was the one who gave you the strength to act effectively like this, thus keeping then, as today, the covenant which he swore to your ancestors. ·Be sure: if you forget Yahweh your God, if you follow other gods, if you serve them and bow down to them—I testify to you today—you will perish. ·Like the nations Yahweh is to destroy before you, so you yourselves will perish, for not having listened to the voice of Yahweh your God.' 9:4;32:27 Jg 7:2 Is 10:13–15 Am 6:13 Jn 15:5 1 Co 1:26–31 Ep 2:8–9 4:26+

Yahweh, not Israel, wins the victory

9 'Listen, Israel; today you are about to cross the Jordan, to go and dispossess nations greater and stronger than yourself, and cities immense, with walls reaching to the sky. ·A people great and tall, these Anakim, as you know; you have heard the saying: Who can stand up to the sons of Anak? ·Know then today 4:38+ 1:28g Nb 13:33

b. Declaring Israel's election, as in 14:2. To 'find himself a nation' God made use of wonders, 4:34; *see* 4:20; 26:7–8. vv. 7–8 of this chapter explain the reason for God's choice, namely, loyalty to the promises which, of his own loving will, he had made to the Fathers, *see* 4:37; 8:18; 9:5; 10:15. This choice, ratified by the covenant (v. 9; 5:2–3), makes Israel a dedicated people (v. 6; 26:19). The idea of election, strongly emphasised in Dt, pervades the OT. Israel is a nation set apart, Nb 23:9, God's people, Jg 5:13, consecrated, Ex 19:3c, 19:6, a covenanted race, Ex 19:1a, God's son, Dt 1:31, the nation of Immanuel, ('God-with-us'), Is 8:8,10. The election marks Israel off from the world but the prophets foretell the recognition of Israel's God by all nations and the universality of salvation, Is 45:14h; 49:6; Zc 14:16.

c. Or 'without looking for anyone else'. This v. emphasises individual responsibility, *see* 24:16, an advance on Ex 34:7, but Ezekiel will be more explicit still, Ezk 14:12d; 18.

d. This v. is parallel to Ex 23:29, just as v. 20 was parallel to Ex 23:28. Here we have the deuteronomic explanation for the slowness of the conquest, *see* 2:11–15; Ex 23:30*l*; Dt 9:3, however, emphasises the terrifying intervention of Yahweh as War-God.

8 **a.** Unlike the prophets, who regarded the years spent in the desert as a sort of golden age, *see* Ho 2:16p, Dt presents the forty years as an ordeal, *see* 4:34 above. The Priestly editor of Nb 14:26–35 goes further and represents it as a punishment.

b. Yahweh who can create anything by his word, gives life to Israel by means of the commandments (*mitzwah*) that issue (*motza'*) from his mouth. On this text, cited in Mt 4:4 par., *see* Ne 9:29; Pr 9:1–5; Ws 16:26; Si 24:19–21; Am 8:11; Jn 6:30–36, 63, 63t.

Jos 3:3–4;6:8 7:22d 8:17+ Jg 7:2 that Yahweh your God himself will go ahead of you, destroying them like a devouring fire, and that he himself will subdue them before you so that you can dispossess and quickly make an end of them, as Yahweh has already said. 4 ·Do not think to yourself, once Yahweh your God has driven them before you, "Yahweh has brought me into possession of this country because I am upright," when 18:12 Yahweh is dispossessing these nations for you, because they do wrong. 5 ·You are not going into their country to take possession because of any right behaviour or uprightness on your part; rather, it is because of their wickedness that Yahweh is dispossessing these nations for you, and also to keep the pact which he swore to 8:17+ your ancestors, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. 6 ·Be clear about this: Yahweh is not Ep 2:7–9 Tt 3:5 giving you possession of this fine country because of any right conduct on your part: for you are an obstinate people.

‖Ex 32 **Israel's conduct at Horeb; Moses intercedes** [a]

'Remember; never forget how you provoked Yahweh your God in the desert. 7 From the very day that you left Egypt until you arrived here, you have been rebels against Yahweh. 8 ·At Horeb, you provoked Yahweh, and Yahweh was so angry with you that he was ready to destroy you. 9 ·I had gone up the mountain to receive the stone tablets, the tablets of the covenant that Yahweh was making with you. I stayed forty days and forty nights on the mountain, with nothing to eat or drink. Yahweh gave me the two stone tablets inscribed by the finger of God, exactly 10 5:2–22 corresponding to what Yahweh had said to you on the mountain, from the heart of the fire, on the day of the Assembly. [b] 11 ·After forty days and forty nights, having given me the two stone tablets, the tablets of the covenant, 12 ·Yahweh said to me, "Get up, go down quickly, for your people, whom you have brought out of Egypt, are corrupting one another. They have been quick to leave the way I marked out for them; they have cast themselves a metal idol." 13 ·Yahweh then said to me, "I 9:6;31:27 Ex 32:9d have seen this people, and what an obstinate people they are! 14 ·Leave me, I am 2 K 17:14 Jr 7:26;17:23; 19:15 going to destroy them and wipe out their name under heaven; and I shall make you into a mightier and more numerous nation than they are!"

Ba 2:30 'I went back down the mountain, which was blazing with fire, and in my hands 15 were the two tablets of the covenant. 16 ·When I looked, I saw that you had been sinning against Yahweh your God. You had cast yourselves a metal calf; you had been quick to leave the way marked out for you by Yahweh. 17 ·I seized the two tablets and with my two hands threw them down and broke them before your eyes. Then I fell prostrate before Yahweh; as before, I spent forty days and forty nights 18 with nothing to eat or drink, on account of all the sins which you had committed, by doing what was displeasing to Yahweh and thus arousing his anger. 19 ·For I was ↗Heb 12:21 afraid of this anger, of the fury which so roused Yahweh against you that he was ready to destroy you. And, once again, Yahweh heard my prayer. 20 ·Yahweh was enraged with Aaron and was ready to destroy him too; I also pleaded for Aaron on Ex 32:20 that occasion. 21 ·That work of sin, the calf you had made, I took and burned and broke to pieces; having ground it to the finest dust, I threw its dust into the stream that comes down from the mountain.

1:25–40 Ex 17:1–7 Nb 11:1–34; 13:25–14:38; 20:1–13 **Israel sins again. A prayer of Moses**

'At Taberah too and at Massah and Kibroth-ha-Taavah, you provoked Yahweh. 22 And when Yahweh, meaning you to leave Kadesh-Barnea, said, "Go up and take 23 possession of the country which I have given you," you rebelled against the command of Yahweh your God and would not believe him or listen to his voice. You have been rebels against Yahweh from the day he first knew you. [c] 24

‖Ex 32:11–14e, 'So I fell prostrate before Yahweh and lay there those forty days and forty nights, 25 Yahweh having said that he was going to destroy you. 26 ·And I pleaded with Yahweh. "My Lord Yahweh," I said, "do not destroy your people, your heritage whom in your greatness you have redeemed, whom you have brought out of Egypt with your mighty hand. 27 ·Remember your servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob;

28 take no notice of this people's stubbornness, their wickedness, and their sin, •so
that, in the country from which you have brought us, it may not be said, 'Yahweh
was not able to bring them to the country which he had promised them. He hated
29 them; that was why he brought them out—to slaughter them in the desert.' •But
these are your people, your heritage, whom you yourself have brought out by your
great power and your outstretched arm." '

The ark of the covenant; the choice of Levi Ex 34:1seq.,27

1 10 'Yahweh then said to me, "Cut two stone tablets like the first ones, and
2 come up to me on the mountain. Make an ark of wood; •on the tablets I 31:26
shall inscribe the words that were on the first tablets, which you broke; put them in
3 the ark." •So I made an ark of acacia wood, cut two stone tablets like the first and Ex 25:10e
4 went up the mountain with the two tablets in my hand. •And he inscribed the
tablets, as he had inscribed them before, with the Ten Words which Yahweh had
said to you on the mountain, from the heart of the fire, on the day of the Assembly.
5 Yahweh then gave them to me. •I turned and came down from the mountain and
put the tablets in the ark I had made, and there they stayed, as Yahweh had
commanded me.
6 'The Israelites left the wells of the Bene-Jaakan for Moserah,[a] where Aaron Nb 33:31–38
died; he was buried there, and his son Eleazar succeeded him in the priesthood.
7 From there, they set out for Gudgodah, and from Gudgodah for Jotbathah, an
8 area rich in streams. •Yahweh then set apart the tribe of Levi[b] to carry the ark of
Yahweh's covenant, to stand in the presence of Yahweh, to serve him and to bless
9 in his name, as they still do today. •This is why Levi has no share or heritage with Nb 18:20d
his brothers: Yahweh is his heritage, as Yahweh your God then told him.
10 'And, as before, I stayed on the mountain for forty days and forty nights. And
11 again Yahweh heard my prayer and agreed not to destroy you. •And Yahweh said
to me, "Be on your way at the head of this people, so that they can go and take
possession of the country which I swore to their ancestors that I would give them."

Circumcision of the heart[c]

12 'And now, Israel, what does Yahweh your God ask of you? Only this: to fear
Yahweh your God, to follow all his ways, to love him, to serve Yahweh your God 6:5b
13 with all your heart and all your soul, •to keep the commandments and laws of
Yahweh, which I am laying down for you today for your own good.
14 'Look, to Yahweh your God belong heaven and the heaven of heavens,[d] the Ex 19:5
15 earth and everything on it; •yet it was on your ancestors, for love of them, that Ps 24:1–2
Is 66:1–2
Yahweh set his heart to love them, and he chose their descendants after them, you 7:6b
16 yourselves, out of all nations, up to the present day. •Circumcise your heart[e] then 9:13+;30:6
Jr 4:4a
17 and be obstinate no longer; •for Yahweh your God is God of gods and Lord of 1 Tm 6:15
Rv 17:14;19:16
lords, the great God, triumphant and terrible, free of favouritism, never to be 2 Ch 19:7
Jb 34:19
Ws 6:7
Si 35:11–16
↗Ac 10:34
↗Rm 2:11

9 **a.** This is the beginning of a new unit, ending at 10:11. Moses, speaking in the first person, retells the story of the golden calf, of the breaking and remaking of the tablets of the covenant and of his intercession. Stylistically, the section is reminiscent of ch. 1–3. The narrative runs parallel to Ex 32, with some variation. It is not by a single hand, being burdened with a succession of additions, e.g. 9:20, 22–24; 10:8–9; there are frequent repetitions.

b. On several occasions in Dt, the word *qahal* denotes the religious assembly of the people of God, especially on the day of the promulgation of the Law, 18:16; *see* 4:10; 23:2–9, a notion that develops gradually, 2 Ch 31:18f, until it becomes 'the Church' of the NT, Mt 16:18g; Ac 7:38.

c. 'he knew you' Gk, Sam.; 'I knew you' Hebr.

10 **a.** NB 33:38 gives Mount Hor as the place were Aaron died; perhaps Moserah is the same place—it is otherwise unidentified.

b. The addition of vv. 8–9 was made independently of the addition of vv. 6–7 and the choice of the tribe of Levi has no connection with the death of Aaron. According to Ex 32:25–29, the Levites were given a special position in compensation for the slaughter of their brothers after sacrificing to the golden calf, and this association of ideas accounts for their intrusion into the narrative here. According to Nb 1:50; 3:6–8, however, the Levites were set apart by God himself, being devoted to him as substitutes for the first-born of Israel, Nb 3:12; 8:16.

c. The final section of the discourse explains the demands made by the covenant with God, borrowing the phraseology of human treaties of alliance: hence, the opening declaration, 10:12 seq., the historical exposition, 11:2–7, the description of the country, 11:10–12, 24, and the blessings and curses, 11:16–17, 22–23, 26–29.

d. Hebr. idiom to express the superlative. The 'heaven of heavens' is the highest of heavens.

e. Circumcision signified membership of God's people, Gn 17:10d. But this membership brought spiritual obligations with it: 'circumcision of the heart', Gn 8:21c; Jr 4:4a.

bribed.[f] •He it is who sees justice done for the orphan and the widow, who loves 18
Ex 22:20–21+ the stranger and gives him food and clothing. •(Love the stranger then, for you 19
were once strangers in Egypt.) •Yahweh your God is the one whom you must fear 20
and serve; to him you must hold firm; in his name take your oaths. •Him you must 21
praise, he is your God: for you he has done these great and terrible things which
you have seen for yourselves; •and, although your ancestors numbered only 22
Gn 46:27+ seventy persons when they went down to Egypt, Yahweh your God has now made
you as many as the stars of heaven.'

Israel's past experiences[a]

11 'You must love Yahweh your God and always keep his observances, his 1
laws, his customs, his commandments. •You are the ones who have had the 2
experience, not your children. They have not had the experience, they have not
witnessed the lessons of Yahweh your God, his greatness, his mighty hand and his
Ex 7:15 outstretched arm, •the signs and the deeds which he performed in the heart of 3
Egypt, against Pharaoh king of Egypt and his entire country, •what he did to the 4
armies of Egypt, to their horses and their chariots, by overwhelming them with the
waters of the Sea of Reeds when they were pursuing you, and leaving no trace of
them to this day; •what he did for you in the desert, until you arrived here; •what 5, 6
Nb 16 he did to Dathan and Abiram the sons of Eliab the Reubenite, when, with all Israel
standing round, the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them, with their
families, their tents and all their supporters. •All these great deeds of Yahweh you 7
have seen with your own eyes.

Promises and warnings

'You must keep all the commandments which I enjoin on you today, so that you 8
may have the strength to conquer the country into which you are about to cross, to
take possession of it, •and so that you may live long in the country which Yahweh 9
promised on oath to bestow on your ancestors and their descendants, a country
flowing with milk and honey.

28:3–5 'For the country which you are about to enter and make your own is not like the 10
country of Egypt from which you have come, where, having done your sowing,
you had to water the seed by foot,[b] as though in a vegetable garden. •No, the 11
8:7–10 Ne 9:25 country which you are about to enter and make your own is a country of hills and
valleys watered by the rain of heaven. •Yahweh your God looks after this country, 12
the eyes of Yahweh your God are always on it, from the beginning of the year to
Lv 26:3–11 the end. •Depend on it: if you faithfully obey the commandments I enjoin on you 13
today, loving Yahweh your God and serving him with all your heart and all your
Jr 5:24 soul, •I shall[c] give your country rain at the right time, rain in autumn, rain in 14
Jl 2:19,23seq. spring, so that you can harvest your wheat, your new wine and your oil. •I shall 15
provide grass in the fields for your cattle, and you will eat to your heart's content.
Beware of letting your heart be seduced: if you go astray, serve other gods and 16
bow down to them, •Yahweh's anger will be kindled against you, he will shut the 17
heavens, there will be no more rain, the soil will not yield its produce and, in the
fine country given you by Yahweh, you will quickly perish.

6:6–9 ### Conclusion

'Let these words of mine remain in your heart and in your soul; fasten them on 18
↗Mt 23:5par. your hand as a sign and on your forehead as a headband. •Teach them to your 19
children, and keep on telling them, when you are sitting at home, when you are out
and about, when you are lying down and when you are standing up. •Write them 20
on the doorposts of your house and on your gates, •so that you and your children 21
may live long in the country which Yahweh swore to your ancestors that he would
Ne 9:29 Pr 3:2 give them for as long as there is a sky above the earth.
Jr 33:25 'For if you faithfully keep and observe all these commandments that I enjoin on 22
you today, loving Yahweh your God, following all his ways and holding fast to him,

23 Yahweh will dispossess all these nations before you, and you will dispossess nations 4:38+ Nb 31:1+
24 greater and more powerful than yourselves. ·Wherever the sole of your Jos 1:3–5
foot treads will be yours; your territory will run from the desert all the way to the
Lebanon; and from the River, from the River Euphrates, as far as the Western
25 Sea, will be your territory. ·No one will be able to resist you; Yahweh your God
will make you feared and dreaded throughout the territory you tread, as he has
promised you.
26, 27 'Today, look, I am offering you a blessing and a curse: ·a blessing, if you obey 27–28; 30:15–20
28 the commandments of Yahweh your God which I enjoin on you today; ·a curse,
if you disobey the commandments of Yahweh your God and leave the way which
today I have marked out for you, by following other gods hitherto unknown to
29 you. ·And when Yahweh your God has brought you into the country which you
are about to enter and make your own, you must set the blessing on Mount Gerizim Jos 8:33i
30 and the curse on Mount Ebal. ·(These mountains, as everyone knows, are on the
other side of the Jordan on the westward road, in the territory of the Canaanites
31 who live in the Arabah, opposite Gilgal, near the Oak of Moreh.)[d] ·For you are Jos 4:19b
about to cross the Jordan, to enter and take possession of the country given you by
32 Yahweh your God. You will possess it, you will live in it, ·and you must keep and
observe all the laws and customs promulgated by me to you today.'

II: THE DEUTERONOMIC CODE[a]

1 12 'Now, these are the laws and customs which you must keep in the country
which Yahweh, God of your ancestors, is giving you as yours, and which
you must observe every day that you live in that country.

The place of worship[b]

2 'You must completely destroy all the places where the nations you dispossess have 1 K 14:23 2 K 16:4; 17:10
3 served their gods, on high mountains, on hills, under any spreading tree; ·you must Is 57:5
tear down their altars, smash their sacred stones, burn their sacred poles, hack to Jr 2:20; 3:6,13;17:2
bits the statues of their gods and obliterate their name from that place. Ezk 6:13
4, 5 'Not so must you behave towards Yahweh your God. ·You must seek Yahweh Ex 23:24k; 34:13e
your God in the place which he will choose from all your tribes, there to set his Ex 20:24k
6 name and give it a home: that is where you must go. ·That is where you must bring 1 K 8:29
your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes and offerings held high, your 14:22d
votive offerings and your voluntary offerings, and the first-born of your herd and Lv 1:1b,3
7 flock; ·and that is where you must eat in the presence of Yahweh your God,

f. God bestows his favour with absolute freedom and impartiality. 1:17; *see also* 2 Ch 19:7; Jb 34:19; Ws 6:7–8. The NT later adopts the same expression. Ac 10:34; Rm 2:11; Ga 2:6; Ep 6:9; Col 3:25; Jm 2:1; 1 P 1:17.

11 **a.** Apparently, the discourse of Moses originally ended with 11:1–17, to which a new conclusion, vv. 18–25, was later added. vv. 26–32 link the discourse to the Deuteronomic Code, *see* 4:44*l*.

b. Probably an allusion to a waterwheel operated by the foot.

c. At vv. 14–15, the speaker changes abruptly from Moses to God himself, *see* 7:4; 17:3; 28:20.

d. v. 30 is a gloss, in which the words 'in the territory of the Canaanites who live in the Arabah, opposite Gilgal' locate activities at Gilgal near Jericho, Jos 4:19b, which in fact occur near Shechem, where the Oak of Moreh used to be, Gn 12:6.

12 **a.** This Code, ch. 12–26, assembles, in no apparent order, several collections of laws of diverse origin, some of which probably belonged to the Northern Kingdom, whence they seem to have been introduced into Judah after the destruction of Samaria. The body of law reflects the social and religious development of the people and was intended to replace the old Code of the Covenant. It represents, basically at least, the Law discovered in the Temple under Josiah, 2 K 22:8 seq.

b. This law, later to become fundamental for the religion of Israel, and motivated by the same preoccupations as those of the Prophets, aims at preserving the cult of Yahweh from contamination by Canaanite cults: hence the destruction of the high places of these cults and the choice of a unique sanctuary for the worship of Yahweh. The expression 'place which he will choose . . . there to set his name', vv. 5, 21, or 'as a home for his name', v. 11; *see* 14:23; 16:11, or 'there to have his name remembered', Ex 20:24, might as it stands mean any place where God had manifested himself and where, hence, worship had been approved by God himself, *see* Jr 7:12 for Shiloh, and this is how, for many centuries, the expression was understood, the cult of Yahweh being practised in a number of different sanctuaries *see* Jg 6:24, 28; 13:16; 1 K 3:4. In Dt the formula applies exclusively to Jerusalem. This law on the unique sanctuary was to be one of the principal points of Josiah's reform, 2 K 23.

rejoicing over your labours, you and your households, because Yahweh your God has blessed you. [c]

Jg 17:6+ 'You must not behave as we are behaving here today, each of you doing what he 8
himself sees fit, 9 since you have not yet come to the resting place and the heritage
that Yahweh your God is going to give you. 10 You are about to cross the Jordan
and live in the country given you by Yahweh your God as your heritage; he will
grant you peace from all the enemies surrounding you, and you will live in safety.
To the place chosen by Yahweh your God as a home for his name, to that place 11
you must bring all the things that I am laying down for you: your burnt offerings
and your sacrifices, your tithes and offerings held high, and all the best of your
possessions dedicated by you to Yahweh. 12 That is where you will rejoice in the
presence of Yahweh your God, you and your sons and daughters, your serving
Nb 18:20–24 men and women, and the Levite living in your community since he has no share or
heritage of his own among you.

Sacrificial regulations [d]

'Take care you do not offer your burnt offerings in all the sacred places you see; 13
only in the place that Yahweh chooses in one of your tribes may you offer your 14
burnt offerings and do all the things which I have commanded you.

'This notwithstanding, and whenever you wish, you may slaughter and eat meat 15
wherever you live—as much as the blessing of Yahweh affords you. Clean or
unclean may eat it, as though it were gazelle or deer. [e] 16 You will not, however, eat
the blood, but will pour that like water on the ground.

12:23 'You must not eat the tithe of your wheat, of your new wine or of your oil, or the 17
Lv 1:5e first-born of your herd or flock, or any of your votive offerings or voluntary
14:22d offerings, or your offerings held high to Yahweh, at home. 18 You must eat these in
the presence of Yahweh your God in the place Yahweh your God chooses and
there alone, you, your son and your daughter, your serving man and serving
woman, and the Levite living in your community, expressing your joy in all your
labours in the presence of Yahweh your God. 19 As long as you live on your soil, be
careful not to neglect the Levite.

'When Yahweh your God enlarges your territory as he has promised you, and 20
you say, "I should like to eat meat," if you want to eat meat you may eat as much
as you like. 21 If the place in which Yahweh your God chooses to set his name is too
far away, you may slaughter any of your herd or flock that Yahweh has given you,
as I have prescribed for you; you may eat as much of it as you please at home. 22 But
you must eat it as you would gazelle or deer; clean and unclean may eat it together.

Lv 1:5e Take care, however, not to eat the blood, since blood is life, and you must not eat 23
the life with the meat. 24 You must not eat it, but must pour it like water on the
ground. 25 You must not eat it—so that you, and your children after you, may
prosper, doing what is right in Yahweh's eyes. 26 But the holy things of yours and
the things which you have dedicated, you must go and take to the place chosen by
Yahweh. 27 The burnt offerings of meat and blood must be presented on the altar of
Yahweh your God; whereas, in your sacrifices, the blood must be poured on the
altar of Yahweh your God; the meat you yourselves may eat. 28 Faithfully keep and
obey all these orders which I am giving you, so that you and your children after you
may prosper for ever, doing what is good and right in the eyes of Yahweh your
God.

Against Canaanite cults

'When Yahweh your God has annihilated the nations confronting you, whom you 29
7:1–6 are going to dispossess, and when you have dispossessed them and made your
home in their country, 30 beware of being entrapped into copying them, after they
have been destroyed to make way for you, and do not enquire about their gods,
saying, "How did these nations worship their gods? I am going to do the same
too." 31 This is not the way to treat Yahweh your God. For in honour of their gods

they have done everything detestable that Yahweh hates; yes, in honour of their gods, they even burn their own sons and daughters as sacrifices!' Lv 18:21h

32 1 **13** 'Whatever I am now commanding you, you must keep and observe, adding nothing to it, taking nothing away.

Against the enticements of idolatry 17:2–7;18:21f

1 2 'If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you, offering you some sign or Jr 23:11–14
2 3 wonder, ·and the sign or wonder comes about; and if he then says to you, "Let us
3 4 follow other gods (hitherto unknown to you) and serve them," ·you must not listen
to that prophet's words or to that dreamer's dreams. Yahweh your God is testing
you to know if you love Yahweh your God with all your heart and all your soul. 6:5
4 5 Yahweh your God is the one whom you must follow, him you must fear, his 6:13
commandments you must keep, his voice you must obey, him you must serve, to
5 6 him you must hold fast. ·That prophet or that dreamer of dreams must be put to 18:21f
death, since he has preached apostasy from Yahweh your God who brought you
out of Egypt and redeemed you from the place of slave-labour; and he would have
diverted you from the way in which Yahweh your God has commanded you to
walk. You must banish this evil from among you. ↗1 Co 5:13

6 7 'If your brother, the son of your father[a] or of your mother, or your son or
daughter, or the spouse whom you embrace, or your most intimate friend, tries
secretly to seduce you, saying, "Let us go and serve other gods," unknown to you
7 8 or your ancestors before you, ·gods of the peoples surrounding you, whether near
8 9 you or far away, anywhere throughout the world, ·you must not consent, you must
not listen to him; you must show him no pity, you must not spare him or conceal his
9 10 guilt. ·No, you must kill him, your hand must strike the first blow in putting him to
10 11 death and the hands of the rest of the people following. ·You must stone him to
death, since he has tried to divert you from Yahweh your God who brought you
11 12 out of Egypt, from the place of slave-labour. ·All Israel, hearing of this, will be
afraid, and none of you will do such a wicked thing again.

12 13 'If you hear that in one of the towns which Yahweh your God has given you for
13 14 a home, ·there are men, scoundrels[b] from your own stock, who have led their
fellow-citizens astray, saying, "Let us go and serve other gods," hitherto unknown
14 15 to you, ·it is your duty to look into the matter, examine it, and enquire most
carefully. If it is proved and confirmed that such a hateful thing has taken place
15 16 among you, ·you must put the inhabitants of that town to the sword; you must lay
16 17 it under the curse of destruction—the town and everything in it.[c] ·You must pile Jos 6:17c
up all its loot in the public square and burn the town and all its loot, offering it all to
17 18 Yahweh your God. It is to be a ruin for all time, and never rebuilt. ·From what is
thus put under the curse of destruction you must keep nothing back, so that
Yahweh may turn from the ferocity of his anger and show you mercy, and have
pity on you and increase your numbers, as he swore he would to your ancestors,
18 19 on condition that you listen to the voice of Yahweh your God by keeping all his
commandments which I am enjoining on you today, and by doing what is right in
the eyes of Yahweh your God.'

c. The Deuteronomic Code frequently emphasises the joy of the ritual meal and of the liturgical feasts, *see* vv. 12, 18; 16:11, 14.

d. As a consequence of the legislation for a single sanctuary, a distinction is drawn between the slaughter and the sacrificial killing of animals; the first may be performed anywhere, the second only in the chosen sanctuary. Lv 17:3 seq. makes no such distinction, *see* Lv 17:4b; *see also* 1 S 14:32 seq.

e. Game incurred no interdict.

13 **a.** 'son of your father' Gk, Sam.; omitted by Hebr.

b. lit. 'sons of Belial'. Its probable meaning is 'useless', whence 'worthless', 'wicked'. Gradually 'Belial' came to be considered a proper name, related to the power of evil, *see* Ps 18:4 ('Beliar' in NT, 2 Co 6:15 and the apocryphal writings).

c. Following the shorter Gk text; Hebr. adds 'and its cattle, to the edge of the sword'.

Against an idolatrous practice

‖Lv 19:27–28 7:6b Ex 19:6+ 14 'You are children of Yahweh your God. You must not gash yourselves or 1
shave your foreheads for the dead.[a] ·For you are a people consecrated to 2
Yahweh your God, and Yahweh has chosen you to be his own people from all the peoples on the earth.

Lv 11:1b **Clean and unclean animals**

'You must not eat anything disgusting. ·These are the animals you may eat: ox, 3, 4
sheep, goat, ·deer, gazelle, roebuck, ibex, antelope, oryx, mountain sheep. ·You 5, 6
may eat any animal that has a divided and cloven hoof and that is a ruminant. ·Of 7
those, however, that are ruminants and of those that have a divided and cloven hoof you may not eat the following: the camel, the hare and the coney, which are ruminants but have no cloven hoof; you must class them as unclean. ·So also the 8
pig, which though it has a cloven hoof is not a ruminant; you must class it as unclean. You must neither eat the meat of such animals nor touch their dead bodies.

'Of whatever lives in water you may eat the following: you may eat anything that 9
has fins and scales. ·But you must not eat anything without fins and scales: you 10
must class it as unclean.

'You may eat all clean birds, ·but the following birds you must not eat: the tawny 11, 12
vulture, the griffon, the osprey, ·the kite and the several kinds of buzzard,[b] 13
all kinds of raven, ·the ostrich, the screech owl, the seagull, the several kinds of 14, 15
hawk, ·owl, barn owl, ibis, ·pelican. white vulture, cormorant, ·stork, the several 16–18
kinds of heron, hoopoe and bat. ·You are to class all winged insects as unclean and 19
must not eat them. ·You may eat any clean fowl. 20

Ex 22:30 Lv 17:15 'You must not eat any animal that has died a natural death. You may give it to a 21
resident foreigner to eat, or sell it to a foreigner. For you are a people consecrated to Yahweh your God.[c]

‖Ex 23:19g 'You must not boil a kid in its mother's milk.

The annual tithe[d]

'Every year, you must take a tithe of what your fields produce from what you have 22
sown ·and, in the presence of Yahweh your God, in the place where he chooses to 23
give his name a home, you must eat the tithe of your wheat, of your new wine and of your oil, and the first-born of your herd and flock; and by so doing, you will learn always to fear·Yahweh your God.

'If the road is too long for you, if you cannot bring your tithe because the place in 24
which Yahweh chooses to make a home for his name is too far away, when Yahweh your God has blessed you, ·you must convert it into money and, with the money 25
clasped in your hand, you must go to the place chosen by Yahweh your God; there you may spend the money on whatever you like, oxen, sheep, wine, fer- 26
mented liquor, anything you please. There you must eat in the presence of Yahweh your God and rejoice, you and your household. ·Do not neglect the Levite living 27
in your community, since he has no share or heritage of his own among you.

26:12 **The third-year tithe**

'At the end of every three years, you must take all the tithes of your harvests for 28
Nb 18:20d that year and collect them in your community. ·Then the Levite—since he has no 29
share or heritage of his own among you—the foreigner, the orphan and the widow living in your community, will come and eat all they want. And so Yahweh your God will bless you in all the labours that you undertake.'

Lv 25:1–7.1a **The sabbatical year**

15 'At the end of every seven years, you must grant remission. ·The nature of 1, 2
the remission is as follows: any creditor holding a personal pledge obtained

from his fellow must release him from it; he must not exploit his fellow or his
3 brother[a] once the latter has appealed to Yahweh for remission. ·A foreigner you
4 may exploit, but you must remit whatever claim you have on your brother. ·There
must, then, be no poor among you. For Yahweh will grant you his blessing in the
5 country which Yahweh your God is giving you to possess as your heritage, ·only if
you pay careful attention to the voice of Yahweh your God, by keeping and
6 practising all these commandments which I am enjoining on you today. ·If Yahweh
your God blesses you as he has promised, you will be creditors to many nations but 23:20–21
debtors to none; you will rule over many nations, and be ruled by none.
7 'Is there anyone poor among you, one of your brothers, in any town of yours in
the country which Yahweh your God is giving you? Do not harden your heart or
8 close your hand against that poor brother of yours, ·but be open handed with him 1 Jn 3:17
9 and lend him enough for his needs. ·Do not allow this mean thought in your heart,
"The seventh year, the year of remission, is near," and scowl at your poor brother
and give him nothing; he could appeal against you to Yahweh, and you would incur
10 guilt! ·When you give to him, you must give with an open heart; for this, Yahweh
11 your God will bless you in all your actions and in all your undertakings. ·Of course,
there will never cease to be poor people in the country, and that is why I am giving Mt 26:11par.
you this command: Always be open handed with your brother, and with anyone in
your country who is in need and poor.

Slaves

12 'If your fellow Hebrew, man or woman, sells himself to you, he can serve you for
13 six years. In the seventh year you must set him free, ·and in setting him free you Ex 21:2–4 Lv 25:13–17
14 must not let him go empty handed. ·By way of present, you will load his shoulders Jr 34:14
with things from your flock, from your threshing-floor and from your winepress; as
15 Yahweh your God has blessed you, so you must give to him. ·Remember that you 24:18
were once a slave in Egypt and that Yahweh your God redeemed you; that is why
I am giving you this order today.
16 'But if he says to you, "I do not want to leave you," because he loves you and Ex 21:5–6
17 your household and is happy with you, ·you must take an awl and drive it through
his ear into the door and he will be your servant for ever. You must do the same to
a female slave.
18 'Do not think it hard on you to have to give him his freedom; he is worth twice
what a paid servant would cost you, and has served you for six years. And Yahweh
your God will bless you in everything you do.

The first-born

Ex 13:2.11b

19 'You must consecrate every first-born male from your herd and flock to Yahweh
your God. You must not put the first-born of your herd to work, or shear the first-
20 born of your flock. ·You must eat it, you and your household, each year, in the
21 presence of Yahweh your God, in the place which Yahweh chooses. ·If it has any
defect, if it is lame or blind—any serious defect—you must not sacrifice it to
22 Yahweh your God. ·You will eat it at home, unclean and clean together,[b] as you Ex 12:15

14 **a.** Commonly interpreted as a prohibition of the cult of the dead, *see* Lv 19:27i. Possibly, however, the 'one who is dead' is the god Baal whose death was commemorated at the beginning of summer, *see* 26:14; 1 K 18:28, when the vegetation withered; *see* also Ezk 8:14.

b. Hebr. corrupt; identifications uncertain.

c. The moral, legal and cultic regulations of Lv 17:15; 18:26; 19:33–34; 24:22, *see also* Dt 5:14; Ex 12:49; 20:10 (on the Sabbath) all insist that the stranger or foreigner should be treated in the same way as the 'citizen'. Dt makes a distinction, based on Israel's privileged and holy role, *see also* 15:3; 23:21. Where Dt does not make this distinction, 24:14, 17 seq., it is reproducing older legislation. Dt nonetheless does assert God's love for the stranger and foreigner, 10:18.

d. Tithe is paid to the owner of the land: it is therefore due to Yahweh who owns the land of Israel. According to Dt the produce of the soil is tithed and the tithe taken to the Temple (12:6–7, 17–19; 14:22–27). Every third year, vv. 28–29, it becomes the property of the poor. According to Nb 18:21–32 the tithe is paid, as God's due, to the Levites; these make a tenth of it over to the priests. According to Lv 27:32–33 cattle are also tithed. 14:25 and Lv 27:31 envisage payment in money.

15 **a.** The debtor sometimes made a contractual agreement to hand over one of his children as a slave, or himself to work for his creditor, in case of non-repayment.

b. To make it clear that the meal is not a ritual one.

would gazelle or deer; ·only, you will not eat its blood, but pour that like water on 23
the ground.'

Ex 12:1a; 23:14d Lv 23:5–8 Nb 28 16–25

The feasts: Passover and Unleavened Bread [a]

16 'Observe the month of Abib and celebrate the Passover for Yahweh your 1
God, because it was in the month of Abib that Yahweh your God brought
you out of Egypt by night. ·You must sacrifice a Passover from your flock or herd 2
for Yahweh your God in the place where Yahweh chooses to give his name a home.
You must not eat leavened bread with this; for seven days you must eat it with 3
unleavened bread—the bread of affliction—since you left Egypt in great haste; this
is so that, as long as you live, you will remember the day you came out of Egypt.
For seven days no leaven must be found in any house throughout your territory, 4
nor must any of the meat that you sacrifice in the evening of the first day be kept
overnight until the next day. ·You must sacrifice the Passover not in any of the 5
12:11 towns given you by Yahweh your God, ·but in the place where Yahweh your God 6
chooses to give his name a home; there you must sacrifice the Passover, in the
evening at sunset, at the hour when you came out of Egypt. ·You will cook it and 7
eat it in the place chosen by Yahweh your God, and in the morning you must return
and go to your tents. ·For six days you will eat unleavened bread; on the seventh 8
day there will be an assembly for Yahweh your God; and you must do no work.

Ex 23:14d Lv 23:15–21 Nb 28:26–31

Other feasts

'You must count seven weeks, counting these seven weeks from the time you begin 9
to put your sickle into the standing corn. ·You will then celebrate the feast of 10
Weeks for Yahweh your God with the gift of a voluntary offering proportionate to
the degree in which Yahweh your God has blessed you. ·You must rejoice in the 11
presence of Yahweh your God, in the place where Yahweh your God chooses to
give his name a home, you, your son and your daughter, your serving men and
women, the Levite living in your community, the foreigner, the orphan and the
widow living among you. ·Remember that you were once a slave in Egypt, and 12
carefully observe these laws.

Lv 23:33–43 Nb 29:12–29

'You must celebrate the feast of Shelters for seven days, at the time when you 13
gather in the produce of your threshing-floor and winepress. ·You must rejoice at 14
your feast, you, your son and your daughter, your serving men and women, the
Levite, the foreigner, the orphan and the widow living in your community. ·For 15
seven days, you must celebrate the feast for Yahweh your God in the place chosen
by Yahweh; for Yahweh your God will bless you in all your produce and in all your
undertakings, so that you will have good reason to rejoice.

Tb 1:6 Lk 2:42

'Three times a year all your menfolk must appear before Yahweh your God in 16
the place chosen by him: at the feast of Unleavened Bread, at the feast of Weeks,
at the feast of Shelters. No one must appear empty-handed before Yahweh, ·but 17
each must give what he can, in proportion to the blessing which Yahweh your God
has bestowed on you.

Ex 23:1–3;6–8 2 Ch 19:5

Judges [b]

'You must appoint judges and scribes in each of the towns that Yahweh your God 18
is giving you, for all your tribes; these are to mete out proper justice to the people.
1:16–17 You must not pervert the law; you must be impartial; you will take no bribes, for a 19
bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and ruins the cause of the upright. ·Strict justice 20
must be your ideal, so that you may live long in possession of the country given you
by Yahweh your God.

Abuses in worship

Ex 34:13e Ex 23:24k

'You must not plant a sacred pole of any wood whatsoever beside the altar which 21
you erect for Yahweh your God; ·nor will you set up a standing-stone, a thing 22
Yahweh your God would abhor.'

17 'To Yahweh your God you must sacrifice nothing from herd or flock that has any blemish or defect whatsoever, for Yahweh your God holds this detestable. Lv 22:20–25

'If there is anyone, man or woman, among you in any of the towns given you by Yahweh your God, who does what is wrong in the eyes of Yahweh your God by violating his covenant, ·who goes and serves other gods and worships them, or the sun or the moon or any of heaven's array—a thing I have forbidden—·and this person is denounced to you: if after careful enquiry it is found true and confirmed that this hateful thing has been done in Israel, ·you must take the man or woman guilty of this evil deed outside your city gates, and there you must stone that man or woman to death. ·A death sentence may be passed only on the word of two witnesses or three; and no one must be put to death on the word of one witness alone. ·The witnesses' hands must strike the first blow in putting the condemned to death, the rest of the people following. You must banish this evil from among you. 13;19:15–21 4:19 19:15+ Ac 7:58t ↗1 Co 5:13

Levitical judges 21:5

'If a case comes before you which is too difficult for you, a case of murder, conflicting claims, damage to property—any kind of dispute—in your towns, you must make your way to the place chosen by Yahweh your God, ·and approach the levitical priests and the judge then in office. They will hold an enquiry [a] and let you know their sentence. ·You must abide by the verdict which they give you in this place chosen by Yahweh, and you will take care to carry out all their instructions. You will abide by the decision which they give you and by the sentence which they pronounce, not deviating to right or to left from the verdict which they have given you. ·If anyone presumes to disobey either the priest who is there in the service of Yahweh your God, or the judge, that person must die. You must banish this evil from Israel. ·And when the people hear of this they will all be afraid and not act presumptuously any more.

Kings [b] 1 S 8:11–18

'If, having reached the country given by Yahweh your God and having taken possession of it and, while living there, you think, "I should like to appoint a king to rule me—like all the surrounding nations," ·the king whom you appoint to rule you must be chosen by Yahweh your God; the appointment of a king must be made from your own brothers; on no account must you appoint as king some foreigner who is not a brother of yours.

'He must not, however, acquire more and more horses, or send the people back to Egypt with a view to increasing his cavalry, since Yahweh has told you, "You must never go back that way again." [c] ·Nor must he keep on acquiring more and more wives, for that could lead his heart astray. Nor must he acquire vast quantities of silver and gold. [d] ·Once seated on his royal throne, and for his own use, he must write a copy of this Law on a scroll, at the dictation of the levitical priests. [e] ·It must never leave him, and he must read it every day of his life and learn to fear Yahweh his God by keeping all the words of this Law and observing these rules, 1 K 5:6;10:26–28 Jr 42:15–19 1 K 11:1

16 **a.** Composite text. vv. 1, 2, 4[b]–7, are about the Passover (in contrast to the ancient ritual, the victim may be selected from the cattle, v. 2, and may be 'cooked'—that is to say, boiled instead of roasted, v. 7); vv. 3, 4[a] and 8 are about the feast of Unleavened Bread (the description of the unleavened bread as 'the bread of affliction' is unparalleled elsewhere). The juxtaposition of these two feasts here is a literary device. The two feasts, celebrated at much the same time of year, together merged only after the times of Josiah. Dt's innovation was to make Passover, hitherto a family feast, into a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. The ritual according to which Josiah celebrated the Passover, followed the Dt rite. 2 K 23:21–23; *see* 2 Ch 35:7 seq. which mentions bullocks among the sacrificial victims.

b. Courts are to be set up in each town, vv. 18–20; cases beyond their competence are to be transferred to a supreme court, that of Jerusalem, from the sentences of which there is no appeal, 17:8–13. This reflects the judicial reforms of Jehoshaphat, 2 Ch 19:5–11.

17 **a.** 'They will hold an enquiry' Gk, Sam.; 'you will hold an enquiry' Hebr.

b. The king is not mentioned elsewhere in the Dt Code. This 'law for the king' is parallel to the one in 1 S 8:11–18 and shows little sympathy with monarchy. Both texts belong to the same current of anti-monarchical opinion, which can also be traced in Ho 7:3–7; 13:9–11 and in Ezk 34:1–10.

c. Not a verbatim quotation, but the thought is expressed in Nb 14:3 seq., *see* Ex 13:17 and 14:11 seq.

d. Apparently these vv. allude to Solomon, *see* 1 K 10:26 seq. and ch. 11.

e. Some render 'he will get the priests to write . . .'.

so that he will not think himself superior to his brothers, and not deviate from these commandments either to right or to left. So doing, long will he occupy his throne, he and his sons, in Israel.' 20

The levitical priesthood [a]

Nb 18 18 'The levitical priests, the whole tribe of Levi will be without share or heritage of their own in Israel; they will live on the foods offered [b] to 1
Ezk 44:28–29 Yahweh and on his heritage. ·Levi will have no heritage of his own among his brothers; Yahweh will be his heritage, as he has promised him. 2
Lv 6:7 Nb 18:8–24 'This is what is due to the priests from the people, from those who offer an ox or a sheep in sacrifice: the priest must be given the shoulder, the cheeks and the stomach. [c] ·You must give him the first-fruits of your wheat, of your new wine and 3 4
of your oil, as well as the first-fruits of your sheep-shearing. ·For Yahweh your God has chosen him from all your tribes to stand before Yahweh your God, to do 5
the duties of the sacred ministry, and to bless in Yahweh's name—him and his sons for all time.
2 K 23:9i 'If a Levite living in one of your towns anywhere in Israel decides to move to the place chosen by Yahweh, ·he shall minister there in the name of Yahweh his God 6 7
like all his fellow Levites who stand ministering there in the presence of Yahweh, eating equal shares with them—what he has from the sale of his patrimony notwithstanding. [d] 8

Prophets

'When you have entered the country given you by Yahweh your God, you must 9
not learn to imitate the detestable practices of the nations there already.
Lv 18:21+ There must never be anyone among you who makes his son or daughter pass 10
through the fire of sacrifice, who practises divination, who is soothsayer, augur or
Lv 19:31+ sorcerer, ·weaver of spells, consulter of ghosts or mediums, or necromancer. 11
For anyone who does these things is detestable to Yahweh your God; it is because 12
of these detestable practices that Yahweh your God is driving out these nations before you.

'You must be faultless in your relationship with Yahweh your God. ·For these 13, 14
Is 2:6.6e nations whom you are going to dispossess have listened to soothsayers and mediums, but Yahweh your God does not permit you to do this. From among
Nb 12:6c yourselves, from among your own brothers, ·Yahweh your God will raise up a 15
Mt 17:5 prophet like me; you will listen to him. ·This is exactly what you asked Yahweh 16
your God to do—at Horeb, on the day of the Assembly, when you said, "Never let me hear the voice of Yahweh my God or see this great fire again, or I shall die."
Then Yahweh said to me, ·"What they have said is well said. From their own 17, 18
Ex 4:12 ↗Jn 1:21t; 12:49–50 ↗Ac 3:22–23; 7:37 brothers I shall raise up a prophet like yourself; [e] ·I shall put my words into his 19
mouth and he will tell them everything I command him. Anyone who refuses to
listen to my words, spoken by him in my name, will have to render an account to
Ezk 3:19;33:9 13:1–6 Jr 14:14–16 me. ·But the prophet who presumes to say something in my name which I have not 20
commanded him to say, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet must die."

'You may be privately wondering, "How are we to tell that a prophecy does not 21
come from Yahweh?" [f] ·When a prophet speaks in the name of Yahweh and the 22
1 K 22:28 Jr 28:9 Ezk 2:5;33:33 thing does not happen and the word is not fulfilled, then it has not been said by Yahweh. The prophet has spoken presumptuously. You have nothing to fear from him.'

Ex 21:13–14,e Nb 35:9–34,19c

Homicide and cities of refuge

19 'When Yahweh your God has annihilated the nations whose country Yahweh your God is going to give you, and you have dispossessed them and 1
are living in their towns and in their houses, ·you must set aside three towns, 2
centrally placed in the country which Yahweh your God is giving you for your own.

3 You will keep the approaches to them in good order, dividing the area of the country which Yahweh your God is giving you as your heritage, into three parts, so
4 that any killer can flee to these towns. ·Here is an example of how someone may save his life by fleeing to them.

'If anyone has struck his fellow accidentally, without any previous feud with him
5 (for example, he goes with his fellow into the forest to cut wood; his arm swings the axe to fell a tree; the head slips off the handle and strikes his companion dead),
6 that man may take refuge in one of these towns and save his life. ·It must not be allowed that the avenger of blood, in the heat of his anger, should pursue the killer Nb 35:19c
and that the length of the road should help him to overtake and wound him fatally; for the man has not deserved to die, having had no previous feud with his victim.
7, 8 'Hence I am giving you this order: You must set aside three towns, ·and if 4:41–43
Yahweh your God enlarges your territory, as he swore to your ancestors that he would, and gives you the whole country which he promised to give to your
9 ancestors—·provided that you keep and observe all the commandments which I am enjoining on you today, loving Yahweh your God and always following his
10 ways—then, to those three towns you will add three more. ·In this way, innocent blood will not be shed in the country which Yahweh your God is going to give you as your heritage; otherwise you would incur blood-guilt.
11 'But if it happens that a man has a feud with his fellow and lies in wait for him and attacks him and fatally wounds him and he dies, and the man takes refuge in
12 one of these towns, ·the elders of his own town must send there and have him taken
13 and handed over to the avenger of blood, to be put to death.[a] ·You must show him 19:21
no pity. You must banish the shedding of innocent blood from Israel, and then you will prosper.

Boundaries 27:17

14 'You must not displace your neighbour's boundary mark, positioned by men of old in the heritage soon to be yours, in the country which Yahweh your God is about to give you.

Witnesses 17:2–7

15 'A single witness will not suffice to convict anyone of a crime or offence of any kind; whatever the misdemeanour, the evidence of two witnesses or three is ↗Mt 18:16 ↗Jn 8:16–17 ↗2 Co 13:1 ↗1 Tm 5:19 ↗Heb 10:28
required to sustain the charge.
16 'If someone gives false evidence against anyone, laying a charge of apostasy,
17 both parties to this dispute before Yahweh must appear before the priests and
18 judges then in office. ·The judges will make a careful enquiry, and if it turns out
19 that the witness is a liar and has made a false accusation against his brother, ·you must treat the witness as he would have treated his brother. You must banish this
20 evil from among you. ·The rest, hearing of this, will be afraid and never again do
21 such an evil thing among you. ·You must show no pity. 19:13

18 **a.** According to Dt, all the members of the tribe of Levi belong to the priesthood—hence the expression 'levitical priests', *see* 21:5; 24:8; 31:9; *see also* 17:9, 18—but they may exercise their priestly functions only in Jerusalem, vv. 6–7, where they draw their living from the altar, vv. 1–5. There being too many of them in point of fact for all of them to be employed in the Temple, many lived in the provinces where, like the stranger, the widow and the orphan, they were recommended to the charity of the Israelites, 12:18–19. a distinction between the priests and their servants the Levites does not, therefore, at this point yet exist, although anticipated by the actual distinction between those who serve the sanctuary and those other members of the tribe who are scattered about the country.

b. 'foods offered': in Hebr. *'ishshe*; here and in 1 S 2:28, the word simply means foods offered to the deity (of which the priests receive part). In Lv and the 'Priestly' tradition, it is given a less material sense, by a fancied connection with the word *'esh*, fire; hence 'sacrifice by fire', 'burnt offering', *see* Lv 1:9g.

c. Specifications to rule out abuses, as for instance those committed by the sons of Eli at Shiloh, 1 S 2:13.

d. Verse-ending obscure. Possibly a measure against a means-test: a Levite's portion from the Temple to be fair shares, regardless of what personal property he might own. In point of fact, the regulation granting equal rights to all Levites was never applied, *see* 2 K 23:9i.

e. Institution of the prophetic (as 17:14–20 is of the royal) office; it is ascribed by Moses to Yahweh at the time of the manifestation at Horeb, *see* Ex 20:19–21 and Dt 5:23–28. The Jewish expectation of a Messiah-Prophet, a second Moses, is based on this passage.

f. How to distinguish between true and false prophet was an urgent problem (1 K 22; Jr 28). Two criteria are offered: loyalty to the religion of Israel, *see* ch. 13, and fulfilment of the prediction, 18:22.

19 **a.** Yahwism admits consideration of intention in the penal code, *see also* Nb 35:20–23.

Ex 21:25f **Limits of retaliation**

'Life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.' [b]

War and combatants

1:28–29 20 'When you go to war against your enemies and see horses and chariots and 1
an army greater than your own, you must not be afraid of them; Yahweh
your God is with you, he who brought you out of Egypt. ·When you are about to 2
join battle, the priest must come forward and address the people. ·He must say to 3
1:21 them, "Listen, Israel: today you are about to join battle with your enemies. Do not
be faint hearted. Let there be no fear or trembling or alarm as you face them.
Ex 33:14; 34:9–10 Yahweh your God is marching with you, to fight your enemies for you and make 4
you victorious."

'The scribes will then address the people, as follows: 5

↗1 M 3:56 "Has anyone built a new house and not yet dedicated it? Let him go home, in case he dies in battle and someone else performs the dedication.

"Has anyone planted a vineyard and not yet enjoyed its fruit? Let him go home, 6
in case he dies in battle and someone else enjoys its fruit.

24:5 "Has anyone contracted to marry a girl and not yet married her? Let him go 7
home, in case he dies in battle and someone else marries her."

'Finally, the scribes will say to the people: 8

Jg 7:3 "Is anyone frightened or faint hearted? Let him go home, in case he makes his brothers faint hearted too!"

'Then, when the scribes have finished speaking to the people, commanders will 9
be appointed to lead them.

7:1–5 **Captured towns** [a]

'When you advance on a town to attack it, first offer it peace-terms. ·If it accepts 10, 11
these and opens its gates to you, all the people inside will owe you forced labour
and work for you. ·But if it refuses peace and gives battle, you must besiege it. 12
Yahweh your God having handed it over to you, you will put the whole male 13
population to the sword. ·But the women, children, livestock and whatever the 14
town contains by way of spoil, you may take for yourselves as booty. You will feed
on the spoils of the enemies whom Yahweh your God has handed over to you.

'That is how you will treat towns far away and not belonging to the nations near 15
you. ·But as regards the towns of those peoples whom Yahweh your God is giving 16
you as your heritage, you must not spare the life of any living thing. ·Instead, you 17
must lay them under the curse of destruction: Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites,
Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites, as Yahweh your God has commanded, ·so that 18
they may not teach you to do all the detestable things which they do to honour
their gods: in doing these, you would sin against Yahweh your God.

'If, when attacking a town, you have to besiege it for a long time before you 19
capture it, you must not destroy its trees by taking the axe to them: eat their fruit
but do not cut them down. Is the tree in the fields human, that you should besiege
it too? ·Any trees, however, which you know are not fruit trees, you may destroy 20
and cut down and use to build siege-works against the hostile town until it falls.'

The unidentified murderer

21 'If, in the country which Yahweh your God gives you as your possession, a 1
victim of murder is found lying in the open country and it is not known who
has killed that person, ·your elders and scribes [a] must measure the distance between 2
the victim and the surrounding towns, ·and establish which town is the nearest to 3
the victim. The elders of that town must then take a heifer that has not yet been put
Nb 19:2 to work or used as a draught animal under the yoke. ·The elders of that town must 4
bring the heifer down to a permanently flowing river, to a spot that has been
neither ploughed nor sown, and there by the river they must break the heifer's

neck. •The priests, the sons of Levi, will then step forward, these being the men whom Yahweh your God has chosen to serve him and to bless in Yahweh's name, and it being their business to settle all cases of dispute or of violence. •All the elders of the town nearest to the victim of murder must then wash their hands in the stream, over the slaughtered heifer.[b] •They must pronounce these words, "Our hands have not shed this blood and our eyes have seen nothing. •O Yahweh, forgive[c] your people Israel whom you have redeemed, and let no innocent blood be shed among your people Israel. May this bloodshed be forgiven them!" •You must banish all shedding of innocent blood from among you, if you mean to do what is right in the eyes of Yahweh.

17:8–12 Ps 26:6;73:13 Mt 27:24 19:13

Women taken in war

'When you go to war against your enemies and Yahweh your God delivers them into your power and you take prisoners, •and among the prisoners you see a beautiful woman, and you fall in love with her, and you take her to be your wife and bring her home; she must shave her head and cut her nails, •and take off her prisoner's garb; she must stay inside your house and mourn her father and mother for a full month. You may then go to her and be a husband to her, and she will be your wife. •Should she cease to please you, you will let her go where she wishes, not selling her for money: you must not make any profit out of her, since you have exploited her.

Birthright

'If a man has two wives, one loved and the other unloved, and the loved one and the unloved both bear him children, and if the first-born son is of the unloved wife, when the man comes to bequeath his goods to his sons, he may not treat the son of the wife whom he loves as the first-born, at the expense of the son of the wife whom he does not love, the true first-born. •As his first-born he must acknowledge the son of the wife whom he does not love, giving him a double share[d] of his estate; this son being the first-fruit of his vigour, the right of the first-born is his.

Gn 29:30–31 1 S 1:2,8

The rebellious son

'If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not listen to the voice either of his father or of his mother and, even when they punish him, still will not pay attention to them, •his father and mother must take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his town at the gate of that place. •To the elders of his town, they will say, "This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious and will not listen to us; he is a wastrel and a drunkard." •All his fellow-citizens must then stone him to death. You must banish this evil from among you. All Israel, hearing of this, will be afraid.

Pr 23:22;30:17

Various rulings

'If a man guilty of a capital offence is to be put to death, and you hang him from a tree, •his body must not remain on the tree overnight; you must bury him the same day, since anyone hanged is a curse of God, and you must not bring pollution on the soil which Yahweh your God is giving you as your heritage.'

Jn 19:31 Jos 8:29; 10:26–27 ↗Ga 3:13

b. The restatement of the law of retaliation is prompted by v. 19.

20 a. When Dt was promulgated under Josiah, the occasion no longer existed for applying these regulations: there were no Canaanites left to be put under the curse of destruction, *see* Jos 6:17c, and the Israelites were no longer laying siege to foreign towns. This revival of interest in the 'holy war' should perhaps be related to the national and military renaissance in the reign of Josiah.

21 a. 'scribes' Sam.; 'judges' Hebr.

b. The animal is bludgeoned to death in some deserted spot; there is no mention of the blood: not a sacrifice, therefore, but an old magical rite, comparable to those of Lv 14:2–9; 16:5–10, 21–22; Nb 19:2–10, which has been assimilated by Yahwism, *see* v. 8.

c. 'forgive', lit. 'cover'. Originally, 'to cover one's face' meant 'to be favourable to', *see* Gn 32:21. The word later acquired a technical sense designating both expiation and the expiatory rite, Ex 25:17h; Lv 1:4c; 16.

d. This arrangement in favour of the eldest son is paralleled in other oriental law-codes; *see* 2 K 2:9, where the expression is used metaphorically.

Ex 23:4–5
Mt 7:12
22 'If you see your brother's ox or one of his sheep straying, you must not 1
disregard it: you must take it back to your brother. •And if he is not close at 2
hand or you do not know who he is, you must take it home with you and keep it by
you until your brother comes to look for it; you will then return it to him.
'You must do the same with his donkey, the same with his cloak, the same with 3
anything that your brother loses and that you find; you must not disregard it.
'If you see your brother's donkey or ox fall over on the road, you must not 4
disregard it, but must help your brother get it on its feet again. [a]
'A woman must not dress like a man, nor a man like a woman; [b] anyone who 5
does this is detestable to Yahweh your God.
'If, when out walking, you come across a bird's nest, in a tree or on the ground, 6
with chicks or eggs and the mother bird sitting on the chicks or the eggs, you must
not take the mother as well as the chicks. •Let the mother go; the young you may 7
take for yourself. Thus will you have prosperity and long life.
'When you build a new house, you must give your roof a parapet; then your 8
house will not incur blood-vengeance, should anyone fall off the top.
Lv 19:19
'You must not sow any other crop in your vineyard, or the whole yield may 9
become forfeit, both the crop you have sown and the yield of your vines.
'You must not plough with ox and donkey together. 10
'You must not wear clothing woven part of wool, part of linen. [c] 11
Nb 15:38c
'You must make tassels for the four corners of the cloak in which you wrap 12
yourself.

A young wife's reputation

'If a man marries a woman, has sexual intercourse with her and then, turning 13
against her, •taxes her with misconduct and publicly defames her by saying, "I 14
married this woman and when I had sexual intercourse with her I did not find
evidence of her virginity," •the girl's father and mother must take the evidence of 15
her virginity and produce it before the elders of the town, at the gate. •To the 16
elders, the girl's father will say, "I gave this man my daughter for a wife and he has
turned against her, •and now he taxes her with misconduct, saying, I have found no 17
evidence of virginity in your daughter. Here is the evidence of my daughter's
virginity!" •They must then display the cloth to the elders of the town. •The elders 18, 19
of the town in question will have the man arrested and flogged, and fine him a
hundred silver shekels for publicly defaming a virgin of Israel, and give this money
to the girl's father. She will remain his wife; as long as he lives, he may not divorce
her.
'But if the accusation that the girl cannot show evidence of virginity is substan- 20
tiated, •she must be taken out, and at the door of her father's house her fellow- 21
citizens must stone her to death for having committed an infamy in Israel
by bringing disgrace on her father's family. You must banish this evil from
among you.

Adultery and fornication

Lv 20:10
'If a man is caught having sexual intercourse with another man's wife, both must be 22
put to death: the man who has slept with her and the woman herself. You must
banish this evil from Israel.
'If a virgin is engaged to a man, and another man encounters her in the town and 23
has sexual intercourse with her, •you will take them both to the gate of the town in 24
question and stone them to death: the girl, for not having called for help in the
town; the man, for having exploited his fellow-citizen's wife. You must banish this
evil from among you. •But if the man ran into the betrothed girl in the open country 25
and slept with her, having taken her by force, her ravisher alone must die; •you 26
must do nothing to the girl, she has not committed a capital offence. The case is
like that of a man who attacks and kills his fellow: •since he came across her in the 27

open country, the betrothed girl may have called out, without anyone's coming to her rescue.

28 'If a man meets a young virgin who is not betrothed and seizes her, sleeps with Ex 22:15–16
29 her and is caught in the act, ·her ravisher must give the girl's father fifty silver shekels; since he has exploited her, she must be his wife and, as long as he lives, he may not divorce her.'

30 1 **23** 'A man must not take his father's wife; he must not withdraw the skirt of his 27:20 Lv 18:8 father's cloak from her. [a]

Participation in public worship [b]

23.1 2 'A man whose testicles have been crushed or whose male member has been cut off Lv 21:17–23 Is 56:3–5
2 3 must not be admitted to the assembly of Yahweh. ·No half-breed [c] may be admitted to the assembly of Yahweh; not even his descendants to the tenth generation may
3 4 be admitted to the assembly of Yahweh. [d] ·No Ammonite or Moabite may be Rt 1:16e ↗Ne 13:1–3 admitted to the assembly of Yahweh; not even his descendants to the tenth Jdt 14:10 generation may be admitted to the assembly of Yahweh, and this is for all time;
4 5 since they did not come to meet you with food and drink when you were on your way out of Egypt, and even hired Balaam son of Beor to oppose you by cursing Nb 22:2b
5 6 you, from Pethor in Aram Naharaim. ·But Yahweh your God refused to listen to Balaam, and Yahweh your God turned the curse on you into a blessing, because
6 7 Yahweh your God loved you. ·Never, as long as you live, must you seek their welfare or their prosperity.
7 8 'You must not regard the Edomite as detestable, for he is your brother; you must 2:5 not regard the Egyptian as detestable, since you were once a foreigner in his Ex 2:22;12:48*o*
8 9 country. ·The third generation of children born to these may be admitted to the assembly of Yahweh. [e]

Hygiene in camp

Nb 5:1–4

9 10 'When you are in camp, at war with your enemies, you must avoid anything bad.
10 11 If any one of you is unclean by reason of a nocturnal emission, he must leave and Lv 15:16–17
11 12 not come back into camp, ·but towards evening wash himself, and return to camp at sunset.
13, 14 12, 13 'You must have a latrine outside the camp, and go out to this; ·you must have a trowel in your equipment and, when you squat outside, you must scrape a hole
14 15 with it, then turn round and cover up your excrement. ·For Yahweh your God goes about the inside of your camp to guard you and put your enemies at your mercy. Your camp must therefore be a holy place; Yahweh must not see anything indecent there or he will desert you.

Miscellaneous

15 16 'You must not allow a master to imprison a slave who has escaped from him and
16 17 come to you. ·Let him make his home with you and yours, wherever he pleases in whichever of your towns he prefers; you must not molest him.

22 **a.** What Ex 23:4–5 prescribed for 'enemies' (in context, opponents in a law-suit), Dt extends to all Israelites (the 'brothers').

b. Probably an allusion to immoral practices in Canaanite religions.

c. The prohibitions of vv. 10–11 are survivals of primitive taboos.

23 **a.** 'To spread the fold (of the cloak)' over a woman signifies marriage, Rt 3:9; Ezk 16:8. 'To withdraw the fold' signifies the opposite, namely, violation of a husband's rights.

b. Dt preserves and comments on certain old rules for deciding doubtful cases as regards participation in the assemblies of the Israelite community.

c. The only other occurrence of the word *mamzer* is in Zc 9:6 and its exact meaning is unknown. Jewish exegesis usually takes it to mean the descendants of marriages between Israelites and foreigners, and refers to Ne 13:23 (where, however, the word does not appear).

d. In contrast to 2:9, 19 which is exceptional, the traditional hostility towards Moab and Ammon reappears here. The explanatory reasons for v. 5 are both concerned with Moab, *see* 2:1a; Nb 22:2b, and are later in date.

e. This friendly attitude towards Edomites and Egyptians is surprising; it may perhaps be explained by the political relationships of the Northern Kingdom in the 8th century BC. The mention of Edomites as 'brothers' links the passage to others in which Edom and Israel are so called, Nb 20:14; Am 1:11; Ob vv. 10 and 12, even though Edom is blamed for having behaved badly.

'There must be no sacred prostitute among the women of Israel, and no sacred 18 17
prostitute among the men of Israel. ·You must not bring the wages of a prostitute 19 18
or the earnings of a 'dog'[f] to the house of Yahweh your God, whatever vow you
may have made: both are detestable to Yahweh your God.

15:6 'You must not lend on interest to your brother, whether the loan be of money, 20 19
Ex 22:24
Lv 25:35–38 of food, or of anything else that may earn interest. ·You may demand interest on a 21 20
loan to a foreigner, but you must not demand interest from your brother; so that
Yahweh your God may bless you in all your labours, in the country which you are
about to enter and make your own.

Nb 30:2–3+ 'If you make a vow to Yahweh your God, you must not be slack about fulfilling 22 21
Qo 5:3–5
it: Yahweh your God will certainly hold you answerable for it and you will incur
guilt. ·If, however, you make no vow, you do not incur guilt. ·Whatever passes 23.24
22. 23
your lips you must keep to, and the vow that you have made to Yahweh, your
generous God, you must fulfil.

'If you go into your neighbour's vineyard, you may eat as many grapes as you 25 24
please, but you must not put any in your basket. ·If you go into your neighbour's 26 25
↗Mt 12:1par. standing corn, you may pick ears by hand, but you must not put a sickle into your
neighbour's corn.'

Divorce

24 'Suppose a man has taken a wife and consummated the marriage; but she 1
has not pleased him and he has found some impropriety of which to accuse
↗Mt 5:31;19:7 her; he has therefore made out a writ of divorce for her and handed it to her and
then dismissed her from his house; ·she leaves his home and goes away to become 2
the wife of another man. ·Then suppose this second man who has married her 3
takes a dislike to her and makes out a writ of divorce for her and hands it to her and
dismisses her from his house or if this other man who took her as his wife dies, ·her 4
first husband, who has repudiated her, may not take her back as his wife now that
she has been made unclean in this way. For that is detestable in Yahweh's eyes and
you must not bring guilt on the country which Yahweh your God is giving you as
your heritage.

Protection of the individual

20:7 'If a man is newly married, he must not join the army, nor must he be pestered at 5
home; he must be left at home, free of all obligations for one year, to make his new
wife happy.

'No one must take a mill or a millstone in pledge; that would be to take life itself 6
in pledge.

Ex 21:16 'If anyone is caught, having kidnapped one of his brother-Israelites, whether he 7
makes him his slave or sells him, that thief must die. You must banish this evil from
among you.

Lv 13–14 'In a case of a virulent skin-disease, take care you faithfully observe and exactly 8
carry out everything that the levitical priests direct you to do. You must keep and
Nb 12:10–15 observe everything that I have commanded them. ·Remember what Yahweh your 9
God did to Miriam when you were on your way out of Egypt.

'If you are making your brother a loan on pledge, you must not go into his house 10
and seize the pledge, whatever it may be. ·You must stay outside, and the man to 11
whom you are making the loan must bring the pledge out to you. ·And if the man 12
‖Ex 22:25–26 is poor, you must not go to bed with his pledge in your possession;[a] ·you must 13
Jb 22:6
Am 2:8 return it to him at sunset so that he can sleep in his cloak and bless you; and it will
be an upright action on your part in God's view.

Lv 19:13 'You must not exploit a poor and needy wage-earner, be he one of your brothers 14
Jr 22:13
Ml 3:5 or a foreigner resident in your community. ·You must pay him his wages each day, 15
Jm 5:4
not allowing the sun to set before you do, since he, being poor, needs them badly;
otherwise he may appeal to Yahweh against you, and you would incur guilt.

16 'Parents may not be put to death for their children, nor children for parents, but each must be put to death for his own crime.' [b] 7:10 Gn 18:24f ↗2 K 14:6 Jr 31:29seq. Ezk 14:12d

17 'You must not infringe the rights of the foreigner or the orphan; [c] you must not
18 take a widow's clothes in pledge. •Remember that you were once a slave in Egypt and that Yahweh your God redeemed you from that. That is why I am giving you this order. 27:19 Ex 22:20seq; 15:15

19 'If, when reaping the harvest in your field, you overlook a sheaf in that field, do not go back for it. The foreigner, the orphan and the widow shall have it, so that Yahweh your God may bless you in all your undertakings. 26:12–13 Ex 23:11 Lv 19:9seq.; 23:22 Rt 2:2

20 'When you beat your olive tree, you must not go over the branches twice. The foreigner, the orphan and the widow shall have the rest.

21 'When you harvest your vineyard, you must not pick it over a second time. The foreigner, the orphan and the widow shall have the rest.

22 'Remember that you were once a slave in Egypt. That is why I am giving you this order.'

1 **25** 'If people fall out, they must go to court for judgement; the judges must declare the one who is right to be in the right, the one who is wrong to be in
2 the wrong. •If the one who is in the wrong deserves a flogging, the judge must have him laid on the ground and flogged in his presence, the number of strokes proportionate to his offence. •He may impose forty strokes but no more; otherwise, by
3 the infliction of more, serious injury may be caused and your brother be humiliated before you. ↗2 Co 11:24

4 'You must not muzzle an ox when it is treading out the corn. ↗1 Co 9:9 ↗1 Tm 5:18

The levirate [a] law

Gn 38 Rt 4 ↗Mt 22:24par.

5 'If brothers live together and one of them dies childless, the dead man's wife must not marry a stranger outside the family. Her husband's brother must come to her
6 and, exercising his duty as brother, make her his wife, •and the first son she bears must assume the dead brother's name; by this means his name will not be obliter-
7 ated from Israel. •But if the man declines to take his brother's wife, she must go to the elders at the gate and say, "I have no brother-in-law willing to perpetuate his brother's name in Israel; he declines to exercise his duty as brother in my favour."
8 The elders of the town must summon the man and talk to him. If, on appearing
9 before them, he says, "I refuse to take her," •then the woman to whom he owes duty as brother must go up to him in the presence of the elders, take the sandal off his foot, spit in his face, and pronounce the following words, "This is what is done
10 to the man who refuses to restore his brother's house," •and his family must henceforth be known in Israel as House of the Unshod. [b]

Modesty in brawls

11 'If, when two men are fighting, the wife of one intervenes to protect her husband from the other's blows by reaching out and seizing the other by his private parts,
12 you must cut off her hand and show no pity.

f. Sacred prostitution was a feature of Canaanite religion, compare Baal of Peor, Nb 25, and had affected Israel, 1 K 14:24; 22:47; 2 K 23:7; Ho 4:14. 'Dog' is an opprobrious term for a male prostitute.

24 a. lit. 'you are not to go to bed *in* his pledge', since originally the pledge was the borrower's cloak. Ex 22:25 seq.

b. A text of great importance for the doctrine of individual responsibility. The principle is an innovation, *see* 5:9; Ex 34:7; Jos 7:24. It is applied in 2 K 14:6, affirmed in Jr 31:29–30 and developed in Ezk 14:12–20; 18:10–20.

c. 'foreigner and orphan' versions, Targ.; 'foreign orphan' Hebr.

25 a. From the Latin *levir*, brother-in-law, translating the Hebrew *yabam*. A widow who has no son is taken to wife by her brother-in-law; the eldest son of this marriage is reckoned the dead husband's, whose heir he becomes. This law (found also in Assyrian and Hittite legislation) had for its purpose the perpetuation of the family name and the stability of the family property. The story of Tamar, Gn 38, emphasises the first, the story of Ruth the second; in Rt 4 the privileges and duties of the *levir* are extended to the 'avenger', *see* Nb 35:19c. According to Dt the obligation applies only to brothers living together and is optional. The custom still obtained in later Judaism despite opposition from certain groups. The Sadducees used this law as an argument against the doctrine of the resurrection, *see* Mt 22:23 seq.

b. The gesture of renunciation, the removal of the sandal, is accompanied by a contemptuous action and an insulting nickname. It is not very clear what the legal consequences of renunciation were: probably the widow retained possession of her husband's property. The ritual does not have quite the same sense in Rt 4:8.

Appendices

Lv 19:35–36 Pr 11:1+ Ho 12:8 Am 8:5 Mi 6:10–11
'You must not keep two different weights in your bag, one heavy, one light. ·You must not keep two different measures in your house, one large, one small. ·You must keep one weight, full and accurate, so that you may have long life in the country given you by Yahweh your God. ·For anyone who does things of this kind and acts dishonestly is detestable to Yahweh your God.
13. 14 15 16

Ex 17:8–16.8d
'Remember how Amalek treated you when you were on your way out of Egypt. He met you on your way and, after you had gone by, he fell on you from the rear and cut off the stragglers; when you were faint and weary, he had no fear of God. When Yahweh your God has granted you peace from all the enemies surrounding you, in the country given you by Yahweh your God to own as your heritage, you must blot out the memory of Amalek under heaven. Do not forget.'
17 18 19

First-fruits[a]

26 'When you have entered the country which Yahweh your God is giving you as heritage, when you have taken possession of it and are living in it, ·you must set aside the first-fruits of all the produce of the soil raised by you in your country, given you by Yahweh your God. You must put these in a basket and go to the place where Yahweh your God chooses to give his name a home. ·You will go to the priest then in office and say to him, "Today I declare to Yahweh my God that I have reached the country which Yahweh swore to our ancestors that he would give us."
1 2 3

'The priest will then take the basket from your hand and lay it before the altar of Yahweh your God. ·In the presence of Yahweh your God, you will then pronounce these words:[b]
4 5

10:22 Ps 105:12
"My father was a wandering Aramaean, who went down to Egypt with a small group of men, and stayed there, until he there became a great, powerful and numerous nation. ·The Egyptians ill-treated us, they oppressed us and inflicted harsh slavery on us. ·But we called on Yahweh, God of our ancestors. Yahweh heard our voice and saw our misery, our toil and our oppression; ·and Yahweh
6 7 8

4:34
brought us out of Egypt with mighty hand and outstretched arm, with great terror, and with signs and wonders. ·He brought us here and has given us this country, a country flowing with milk and honey. ·Hence, I now bring the first-fruits of the soil that you, Yahweh, have given me."
9 10

'You will then lay them before Yahweh your God, and prostrate yourself in the presence of Yahweh your God. ·You must then rejoice in all the good things that Yahweh your God has bestowed on you and your family—you, the Levite and the foreigner living with you.
11

14:22d
The third-year tithe

Ex 12:48c
'In the third year, the tithing year, when you have finished taking the tithe of your whole income and have given it to the Levite, the foreigner, the orphan and the widow so that, in your towns, they may eat to their heart's content, ·in the presence of Yahweh your God, you must say:
12 13

24:19
"I have cleared my house of what was consecrated. Yes, I have given it to the Levite, the foreigner, the orphan and the widow, in accordance with all the commandments you have imposed on me, neither going beyond your commandments nor neglecting them. ·When in mourning, I have not eaten any of it; when unclean, I have taken none of it away; I have given none of it for the dead.[c] I have
14

1 K 8:43 Ps 11:4 Ba 2:16
obeyed the voice of Yahweh my God and I have behaved in every way as you have commanded me. ·Look down from your holy dwelling, from heaven, and bless your people Israel and the country which you have given us, as you swore to our ancestors, a country flowing with milk and honey." '
15

III: CONCLUDING DISCOURSE

A: END OF THE SECOND DISCOURSE [d]

Israel, the people of Yahweh [e]

16 'Yahweh your God commands you today to observe these laws and customs; you must keep and observe them with all your heart and with all your soul.
17 'Today you have obtained this declaration from Yahweh: that he will be your God, but only if you follow his ways, keep his statutes, his commandments, his
18 customs, and listen to his voice. ·And today Yahweh has obtained this declaration from you: that you will be his own people—as he has said—but only if you keep all
19 his commandments; ·then for praise and renown and honour, he will raise you higher than every other nation he has made, and you will be a people consecrated to Yahweh, as he has promised.'

The writing of the Law and religious ceremonies [a]

1 **27** Moses and the elders of Israel gave the people this command: 'Keep all the
2 commandments which I am laying down for you today. ·After you have crossed the Jordan into the country which Yahweh your God is giving you, you
3 must set up tall stones, coat them with lime ·and on them write all the words of this Law, when you have crossed and entered the country which Yahweh your God is giving you, a country flowing with milk and honey, as Yahweh, God of your ancestors, has promised you. Jos 8:32
4 'When you have crossed the Jordan, you must erect these stones on Mount Jos 8:30–31
5 Ebal, [b] as I command you today, and coat them with lime. ·There, for Yahweh
6 your God, you must build an altar of stones, on which no iron has been used. ·You must build the altar of Yahweh your God of rough stones, and on this altar you 12:11
7 will present burnt offerings to Yahweh your God, ·and immolate communion Ex 20:25
8 sacrifices and eat them there, rejoicing in the presence of Yahweh your God. ·On these stones you must write all the words of this Law; cut them carefully.'
9 Moses and the levitical priests then said to all Israel: 'Be silent, Israel, and listen.
10 Today you have become a people for Yahweh your God. ·You must listen to the voice of Yahweh your God and observe the commandments and laws which I am laying down for you today.'

26 a. The first-born of man and beast belong to God, Ex 13:11b; similarly the first-fruits of the soil are consecrated to him, Ex 22:28; 23:19; 34:26; Lv 2:12, 14; 23:10–17; Dt 18:4. According to Nb 18:12 they revert to the priests, *see* Ezk 44:30. This offering of the fruits of the soil, which in the old religious calendar, *see* Ex 23:16, 19, was associated with the festivals of the grain- and grape-harvests, both of Canaanite origin, is linked here to an event in salvation-history: the entry into the Promised Land, vv. 1, 3, 9–10, thus also contributing to the central theme of Dt, the gift of the Land, *see* 1:5b.

b. The confession of faith in vv. 5–9 gives an outline of salvation-history centred on the deliverance from Egypt. The same elements are found in the 'confessions' of 6:20–23 and, with further developments, of Jos 24:1–13 and Ne 9:7–25. The insistence on the country flowing with milk and honey is appropriate to this confession, linked as it is to the offering of the first-fruits. Omission of any reference to the events at Sinai does not mean that this confession is the product of a tradition in which they did not figure. The text is not very old and references to the promulgation of the Law were not appropriate to its purpose.

c. The yield of the tithe, being consecrated to Yahweh, had to be kept free of all profanation: mourning rites, *see* Ho 9:4, or impurity, *see also* Hg 2:13. Offering to the dead may also refer to mourning rites, or to the idolatrous cult of a dying and reviving god (Baal-Adonis), *see* 14:1a.

d. The second discourse of Moses, *see* 4:44*l*, is resumed at this point and goes on until 28:68. It is interrupted by ch. 27, which is a later insertion. Ch. 28 is composite.

e. The foregoing Deuteronomic Code is the document of the covenant, set out as a contract: Yahweh will be the God of Israel, and Israel will be his people, on condition that the latter keeps the commandments. Blessings and curses, ch. 28, are the sanctions for observance of the contract.

27 a. This chapter consists of three dissimilar elements: vv. 1–8; 9–10; 11–26. vv. 9–10 are the continuation of 26:19. The other two sections are insertions. They do not lay down general laws, but prescribe cultic actions connected with the sanctuary at Shechem: they are ancient Shechemite traditions, suitably retouched. The author of Dt would never have ordered the construction of an altar on Mount Ebal (or Mount Gerizim), v. 4 seq., and the Law written on the stones, v. 8, must have been shorter than Dt, which was later written in a book, 31:24–26. The ceremonies of vv. 11–26 are foreign to the legislation about the unique sanctuary of Jerusalem, *see* note to v. 11.

b. 'Mount Gerizim' Sam., which is perhaps the original reading, altered later during the polemics against the Samaritans, whose place of worship was on Gerizim and may have conserved the old tradition. vv. 12–13, moreover, as also 11:29, place the blessings and cursings on Mount Gerizim.

That day Moses gave the people this order: [c] 11, 12
Jos 8:33–35 Lk 6:20–26 •"When you have crossed the Jordan, the following will stand on Mount Gerizim to bless the people: Simeon and Levi, Judah and Issachar, Joseph and Benjamin. 13 •And the following will stand on Mount Ebal for the curse: Reuben, Gad and Asher, Zebulun, Dan and Naphtali. 14 •The Levites will then speak, proclaiming loudly to all the Israelites:

Ex 20:4c "Accursed be anyone who makes a carved or cast idol, a thing detestable to Yahweh, a workman's artefact, and sets it up in secret." And the people are all to respond by saying, Amen. 15

Ex 21:17+ "Accursed be anyone who treats father or mother dishonourably." And the people must all say, Amen. 16

19:14 "Accursed be anyone who displaces a neighbour's boundary mark." And the people must all say, Amen. 17

Lv 19:14 "Accursed be anyone who leads the blind astray on the road." And the people must all say, Amen. 18

"Accursed be anyone who violates the rights of the foreigner, the orphan and the widow." And the people must all say, Amen. 19

23:1 "Accursed be anyone who has sexual intercourse with his father's wife and withdraws the skirt of his father's cloak from her." And the people must all say, Amen. 20

Ex 22:18+ Lv 18:23 "Accursed be anyone who has sexual intercourse with any kind of animal." And the people must all say, Amen. 21

Lv 18:9 "Accursed be anyone who has sexual intercourse with his sister, the daughter of his father or of his mother." And the people must all say, Amen. 22

Lv 18:8 "Accursed be anyone who has sexual intercourse with his mother-in-law." And the people must all say, Amen. 23

Ex 20:13+ "Accursed be anyone who secretly strikes down his neighbour." And the people must all say, Amen. 24

Ex 23:8c "Accursed be anyone who accepts a bribe to take an innocent life." And the people must all say, Amen. 25

↗Ga 3:10 "Accursed be anyone who does not make the words of this Law effective by putting them into practice." And the people must all say, Amen.' 26

Promised blessings [a]

28 'But if you faithfully obey the voice of Yahweh your God, by keeping and observing all his commandments, which I am laying down for you today, Yahweh your God will raise you higher than every other nation in the world, 2 •and all these blessings will befall and overtake you, for having obeyed the voice of Yahweh your God.
4:30 Gn 49:25–26

11:10–15 'You will be blessed in the town and blessed in the countryside; 3, 4 •blessed, the offspring of your body, the yield of your soil, the yield of your livestock, the young of your cattle and the increase of your flocks; 5 •blessed, your basket and your kneading trough. 6 •You will be blessed in coming home, and blessed in going out. 7 The enemies who attack you, Yahweh will defeat before your eyes; they will advance on you from one direction and flee from you in seven. 8 •Yahweh will command blessedness to be with you, on your barns and on all your undertakings, and he will bless you in the country given you by Yahweh your God.

'From you Yahweh will make a people consecrated to himself, as he has sworn to you, if you keep the commandments of Yahweh your God and follow his ways. 9
Jr 14:9 Jn 13:34–35 The peoples of the world, seeing that you bear Yahweh's name, [b] will all be afraid of you. 10 •Yahweh will make you abound in possessions: in the offspring of your body, in the yield of your cattle and in the yield of your soil, in the country which he swore to your ancestors that he would give you. 11 •For you Yahweh will open his treasury of rain, the heavens, to give your country its rain at the right time, and to bless all your labours. You will make many nations your subjects, yet you will be subject to none. 12
11:14 •Yahweh will put you at the head, not at the tail; you will always be on top and never underneath, if you listen to the commandments of Yahweh 13

your God, which I am laying down for you today, and then keep them and put
14 them into practice, ·not deviating to right or to left from any of the words which I
am laying down for you today, by following other gods and serving them.

Curses

15 'But if you do not obey the voice of Yahweh your God, and do not keep and Lv 26:14–39 Jr 26:4–6
observe all his commandments and laws which I am laying down for you today then
all these curses will befall and overtake you.
16, 17 'You will be accursed in the town and accursed in the countryside; ·accursed,
18 your basket and your kneading trough; ·accursed, the offspring of your body, the
19 yield of your soil, the young of your cattle and the increase of your flock. ·You will
be accursed in coming home, and accursed in going out.
20 'Yahweh will send a curse on you, a spell, an imprecation on all your labours
until you have been destroyed and quickly perish, because of your perverse
21 behaviour, for having deserted me. ·Yahweh will fasten the plague on you, until it
has exterminated you from the country which you are about to enter and make
22 your own. ·Yahweh will strike you down with consumption, fever, inflammation,
burning fever, drought, wind-blast, mildew, and these will pursue you to your ruin.
23, 24 The heavens above you will be brass, the earth beneath you iron. ·Your country's
rain Yahweh will turn into dust and sand; it will fall on you from the heavens until
25 you perish. ·Yahweh will have you defeated by your enemies; you will advance on
them from one direction and flee from them in seven; and you will be a terrifying
26 object-lesson to all the kingdoms of the world. ·Your carcase will be carrion for all Jr 24:9
wild birds and all wild animals, with no one to scare them away.
27 'Yahweh will strike you down with Egyptian ulcers, with swellings in the groin, 7:15;28:60
28 with scurvy and the itch, for which you will find no cure. ·Yahweh will strike you
29 down with madness, blindness, distraction of mind, ·until you grope your way at
noon like a blind man groping in the dark, and your steps will lead you nowhere. Is 59:10
'You will never be anything but exploited and plundered, with no one to save 20:5–7
30 you. ·Get engaged to a woman, another man will have her; build a house, you will Is 62:8–9 Am 5:11
31 not live in it; plant a vineyard, you will not gather its first-fruits. ·Your ox will be Mi 6:15
slaughtered before your eyes and you will eat none of it; your donkey will be
carried off in front of you and not be returned to you; your sheep will be given to
32 your enemies, and no one will come to your help. ·Your sons and daughters will be
handed over to another people, and every day you will wear your eyes out watching
33 for them, while your hands are powerless. ·A nation hitherto unknown to you will
eat the yield of your soil and of all your hard work. You will never be anything but
34 exploited and crushed. ·You will be driven mad by the sights you will see.
35 Yahweh will strike you down with foul ulcers on knee and leg, for which you will
find no cure—from the sole of your foot to the top of your head.
36 'Yahweh will send away both you and the king whom you have appointed to rule
you to a nation unknown either to you or to your ancestors, and there you will 2 K 17:4–6; 25:7,11
37 serve other gods, made of wood and stone. ·And you will be the astonishment, the Ho 9:3;11:5
byword, the laughing-stock of all the peoples where Yahweh is taking you. Jr 24:9+
38 'You will cast seed in plenty on the fields but harvest little, since the locust will
39 devour it. ·You will plant and till your vineyards but not drink the wine or gather
40 the grapes, since the grub will eat them up. ·You will grow olive trees throughout
your territory but not anoint yourself with the oil, since your olive trees will be cut

c. The section vv. 11–26 combines two ceremonies. 1 vv. 12–13: the tribes, divided into two groups, exchange blessings and curses. The original text has been cut short to make way for a different ceremony. 2 vv. 14–26: the Levites proclaim twelve curses, to which the entire people reply Amen. The first and last of these are manifestly deuteronomic; the other ten embody ancient prohibitions which have their parallels in the Code of the Covenant and in the ancient material of Lv 18.

28 **a.** This chapter is the continuation of 26:16–19; 27:9–10, in which the Deuteronomic Code has been set out like a formal treaty between Yahweh and Israel. This is supported by blessings and imprecations, in the manner of oriental treaties and offers striking parallels with Assyrian treaties of vassalage of the seventh century BC; but here, the style is deuteronomic again and exploits several themes found in the teachings of the Prophets.

b. lit. 'that Yahweh's name is pronounced over you': legal expression, signifying ownership, *see* 2 S 12:28; Is 4:1.

down. ·You will father sons and daughters but they will not belong to you, since 41
they will go into captivity. ·All your trees and the whole yield of your soil will be 42
the prey of insects.

'The foreigners living with you will rise higher and higher at your expense, while 43
you yourself sink lower and lower. ·You will be subject to them, not they to you; 44
they will be the ones at the head, and you the one at the tail.

'All these curses will befall you, pursue you and overtake you until you have 45
been destroyed, for not having obeyed the voice of Yahweh your God by keeping
his commandments and laws which he has laid down for you. ·They will be a sign 46
and a wonder over you and your descendants for ever.

Of war and exile to come

Jr 5:19 'For not having joyfully and with happy heart served Yahweh your God, despite 47
the abundance of everything, ·you will have to serve the enemy whom Yahweh 48
will send against you, in hunger, thirst, lack of clothing and total privation. He will
put an iron yoke on your neck, until he has destroyed you.

Is 5:26; 33:19 'Against you Yahweh will raise a distant nation from the ends of the earth like 49
Jr 5:15
Ba 4:15 an eagle taking wing: a nation whose language you do not understand, ·a nation 50
grim of face, with neither respect for the old, nor pity for the young. ·He will eat 51
the yield of your cattle and the yield of your soil until you have been destroyed; he
will leave you neither wheat, nor wine, nor oil, nor the young of your cattle, nor
Mt 24 increase of your flock, until he has made an end of you. ·He will besiege you inside 52
all your towns until your loftiest and most strongly fortified walls collapse, on
which, throughout your country, you have relied. He will besiege you inside all the
towns throughout your country, given you by Yahweh your God. ·During the siege 53
Lv 26:29 and in the distress to which your enemy will reduce you, you will eat the offspring
Jr 19:9
Lm 2:20;4:10 of your own body, the flesh of the sons and daughters given you by Yahweh your
Ezk 5:10 God. ·The gentlest and tenderest of your men will scowl at his brother, and at the 54
wife whom he embraces, and at his remaining children, ·not willing to give any of 55
them any of his own children's flesh, which he is eating; because of the siege and
the distress to which your enemy will reduce you in all your towns, he will have
nothing left. ·The most refined and fastidious of your women, so refined, so 56
fastidious that she has never ventured to set the sole of her foot to the ground, will
scowl at the husband whom she embraces, and at her son and daughter, and at the
after-birth when it leaves her womb, and at the child to which she has given birth—
she will hide away and eat them, so complete will be the starvation resulting from 57
the siege and the distress to which your enemy will reduce you in all your towns.

'If you do not keep and observe all the words of this Law, which are written in 58
this book, in the fear of this glorious and awe-inspiring name: Yahweh your God,
Yahweh will strike you down with monstrous plagues, you and your descendants: 59
28:27 with plagues grievous and lasting, diseases pernicious and enduring. ·He will afflict 60
you with all the maladies of Egypt which you used to dread, and they will fasten on
you. ·What is more, Yahweh will afflict you with all the plagues and all the diseases 61
not mentioned in the book of this Law, until you have been destroyed. ·There will 62
only be a small group of you left, you who were once as numerous as the stars of
heaven.

'For not having obeyed the voice of Yahweh your God, ·just as Yahweh used to 63
delight in making you happy and in making your numbers grow, so will he take
delight in ruining you and destroying you. You will be torn from the country which
you are about to enter and make your own. ·Yahweh will scatter you throughout 64
every people, from one end of the earth to the other; there you will serve other
gods made of wood and stone, hitherto unknown either to you or to your ancestors.
Among these nations there will be no repose for you, no rest for the sole of your 65
foot; there Yahweh will give you a quaking heart, weary eyes, halting breath.
Your life ahead of you will hang in doubt; you will be afraid day and night, 66
Jb 7:4 uncertain of your life. ·In the morning you will say, "How I wish it were evening!", 67

and in the evening you will say, "How I wish it were morning!", such terror will
68 grip your heart and such sights you will see! ·Yahweh will send you back to Egypt, Ho 8:13
either by ship or by a road which I promised you would never see again. And there
you will want to offer yourselves for sale to your enemies as serving men and
women, but no one will buy you.'[c]

B: THE THIRD DISCOURSE

29.1 69 These are the words of the covenant which Yahweh ordered Moses to make with
the Israelites in Moab, in addition to the covenant which he had made with them at
Horeb.[d]

Historical introduction[a]

2 1 29 Moses called all Israel together and said to them:
'You have seen everything that Yahweh did before your eyes in Egypt, to
3 2 Pharaoh, to his servants and to his whole country—·the great ordeals which you
4 3 yourselves witnessed, those signs and the great wonders. ·But until today Yahweh
has not given you a heart to understand, eyes to see, or ears to hear. 4:29;30:14 Is 29:10 Jr 5:21 Jn 12:37seq. ↗Rm 11:8 ·8:4
5 4 'I have been leading you for forty years in the desert, yet the clothes which you
6 5 have been wearing have not worn out, nor have the sandals on your feet. ·You
have had no bread to eat, you have had no wine or fermented liquor to drink, so
that you would learn that I, Yahweh, am your God.
7 6 'When you reached this place, Sihon king of Heshbon and Og king of Bashan 2:30–35; 3:1–13
8 7 came out to do battle against us; we defeated them. ·We conquered their country
and gave it as heritage to Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh.
9 8 'Keep the words of this covenant, put them into practice, and you will thrive in
everything you do.

The covenant in Moab

10 9 'All of you are standing here today in the presence of Yahweh your God: your
11 10 tribal leaders, your elders, your scribes, all the men of Israel, ·with your children
and your wives (and the foreigner too who is in your camp, be he your wood-cutter Jos 9:21,27
12 11 or your water-carrier[b]), ·and you are about to pass into the covenant of Yahweh
13 12 your God, sworn with imprecation, which he has made with you today, ·and by
which, today, he makes you a nation for himself and he himself becomes a God to
you, as he has promised you, and as he swore to your ancestors Abraham, Isaac
14 13 and Jacob. ·Not only on your behalf am I today making this covenant and pro-
15 14 nouncing this solemn curse, ·not only on behalf of those standing here with us in
the presence of Yahweh our God today, but also on behalf of those not here with
us today.[c]
16 15 'Yes, you know the people with whom we used to live in Egypt, and those
through whose countries we have travelled—the nations through whom we have
17 16 passed. ·You have seen their abominations and their idols made of wood and
stone, silver and gold, which were there.

c. The threat of disasters and of a second slavery recalls the favours commemorated in the introductory discourse: this balance suggests that the very power that saved may yet destroy.

d. This v. serves as title to a third discourse of Moses, ending at the end of ch. 30 rather than at 32:47 (as some scholars assert). Dt alone speaks of a covenant in Moab, complementary to that of Horeb where the Decalogue was given, 5:2–22. This historical fiction gives the new Code of 12:1–26:15 the authority of a treaty concluded with God and promulgated by Moses.

29 a. In ch. 29–30, we again find the elements of a treaty formula, *see* 10:12c; 28:1a. The discourse opens with a review of the events of the Exodus, vv. 1–7, *see* 1:4; 4:46–47; 8:2–4. Next follows the ratification of the treaty on behalf of the people, vv. 9–14, and after that a sermon, vv. 15–20, which seems to be resumed at 30:11–14. The blessings and imprecations normally associated with such treaties occur at 30:15–20. The section 29:21–30:10, consisting of miscellaneous elements, seems to be an insertion of the Dt school.

b. The lower orders, often of non-Israelite extraction, Jos 9:27.

c. Here more than anywhere else, Moses appears as mediator of the covenant, the central formula of which is given in v. 12, *see* 26:16e. vv. 13–14 extend the agreements to those absent, thus giving the covenant a permanent validity.

'Let there be no man or woman of you, no clan or tribe, whose heart turns away 17 18
from Yahweh your God today, to go and serve the gods of these nations. Among
you let there be no root which bears poison or wormwood. ·If, after hearing this 18 19
imprecation, anyone, blessing himself, should say in his heart, "I shall do well
enough if I follow the dictates of my heart; much water drives away thirst,"[d]
Yahweh will not pardon him. The wrath and jealousy of Yahweh will blaze against 19 20
such a person; every curse written in this book will fall on him, and Yahweh will
blot his name out under heaven. ·Yahweh will single him out of all the tribes of 20 21
Israel for misfortune, in accordance with all the curses of the covenant written in
the book of this Law.

A threat of exile

'The future generation, that of your children coming after you, and the foreigner 21 22
arriving from some far-away land, on seeing the plagues and diseases inflicted on
this country by Yahweh, will exclaim, ·"Sulphur! Salt!—The whole country is 22 23
burning! No one will sow, nothing grow, no vegetation spring ever again! Devas-
Gn 19:25g Ho 11:8 tation like that of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim, devastated by
1 K 9:7seq. Yahweh in his furious wrath!" ·And all the nations will exclaim, "Why has Yahweh 23 24
Jr 22:8seq. treated this country like this? Why this great blaze of anger?"

'And people will say, "Because they deserted the covenant of Yahweh, God of 24 25
their ancestors, the covenant which he made with them when he brought them out
of Egypt; ·because they went and served other gods and worshipped them, gods 25 26
hitherto unknown to them, gods that were no part of their heritage from him: ·this 26 27
is why Yahweh's anger has blazed against this country, afflicting it with all the
curses written in this book. ·In anger, in fury, in fierce wrath, Yahweh has torn 27 28
them from their own country and flung them into another country, where they are
today." ·Things hidden belong to Yahweh our God, but things revealed are ours 28 29
and our children's for ever, so that we can put all the words of this Law into
practice.'

Lv 26:40–45 **Return from exile and conversion**

4:29–31;29:3 30 'And when all these words have come true for you—the blessing and the 1
curse, which I have offered you—if you meditate on them in your heart
wherever among the nations Yahweh your God has driven you, ·if you return to 2
Yahweh your God, if with all your heart and with all your soul you obey his voice,
you and your children, in everything that I am laying down for you today, ·then 3
Is 27:13;43:5–7 Jr 29:14;31:10 Ezk 34:13;36:24 Mi 2:12 Zc 8:7–8 Jn 11:52 ·↗Ne 1:9 Yahweh your God will bring back your captives, he will have pity on you and
gather you back from all the peoples among whom Yahweh your God has scattered
you. ·Should you have been banished to the very sky's end, Yahweh your God will 4
gather you again even from there, will come there to reclaim you ·and bring you 5
back to the country which belonged to your ancestors, so that you may possess it in
your turn, and be made prosperous there and more numerous than your
ancestors.

10:16 Jr 4:4a 'Yahweh your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, 6
so that you will love Yahweh your God with all your heart and soul, and so will
live. ·Yahweh your God will make all these curses recoil on your foes and on your 7
enemies who have persecuted you. ·And once again you will obey the voice of 8
Yahweh your God and you will put all his commandments into practice, which I
am laying down for you today. ·Yahweh your God will make you prosper in all 9
your labours, in the offspring of your body, in the yield of your cattle and in the
yield of your soil. For once again Yahweh will delight in your prosperity as he used
to take delight in the prosperity of your ancestors, ·if you obey the voice of Yahweh 10
your God, by keeping his commandments and decrees written in the book of this
Law, and if you return to Yahweh your God with all your heart and soul.

'For this Law which I am laying down for you today is neither obscure for you 11
nor beyond your reach.[e] ·It is not in heaven, so that you need to wonder, "Who 12

will go up to heaven for us and bring it down to us, so that we can hear and practise ↗Rm 10:6–8
13 it?" ·Nor is it beyond the seas, so that you need to wonder, "Who will cross the
14 seas for us and bring it back to us, so that we can hear and practise it?" ·No, the
word is very near to you, it is in your mouth and in your heart for you to put into 6:6
practice. Si 51:26
Mt 13:18–23 par.
Lk 8:21;11:28
Jn 1:14m
1 P 1:22–23
11:26–28
Ps 1
Jr 21:8
Si 15:16–17
Rm 6:21–23
Ga 6:8
·Ne 9:29
Pr 8:34–35;
9:11

The two ways

15, 16 'Look, today I am offering you life and prosperity, death and disaster. ·If you obey
the commandments of Yahweh your God, [b] which I am laying down for you today,
if you love Yahweh your God and follow his ways, if you keep his commandments,
his laws and his customs, you will live and grow numerous, and Yahweh your God
17 will bless you in the country which you are about to enter and make your own. ·But
if your heart turns away, if you refuse to listen, if you let yourself be drawn into
18 worshipping other gods and serving them, ·I tell you today, you will most certainly
perish; you will not live for long in the country which you are crossing the Jordan to
19 enter and possess. ·Today, I call heaven and earth to witness against you: I am 4:26;31:28
offering you life or death, blessing or curse. Choose life, then, so that you and your
20 descendants may live, ·in the love of Yahweh your God, obeying his voice, holding
fast to him; for in this your life consists, and on this depends the length of time that
you stay in the country which Yahweh swore to your ancestors Abraham, Isaac
and Jacob that he would give them.'

IV: LAST ACTIONS AND DEATH OF MOSES [a]

The commissioning of Joshua

1, 2 **31** [b]Moses went and spoke to all Israel as follows, ·"Today, I am one hundred
and twenty years old, and can no longer act as leader. [c] Yahweh has told
3 me, "You shall not cross this Jordan." ·Yahweh your God himself will lead you
across, he himself will destroy and dispossess these nations confronting you; Joshua 3:21–28
4 too will lead you across, as Yahweh has said. ·Yahweh will treat them as he has
treated Sihon and Og the Amorite kings and their country—he destroyed them. Nb 21:24–35
5 Yahweh will put them at your mercy, and you will deal with them exactly as
6 prescribed by the commandments which I have laid down for you. ·Be strong, 1:29–30
stand firm, have no fear, do not be afraid of them, for Yahweh your God is going Jos 1:6,9
with you; he will not fail you or desert you.' Heb 13:5
7 Moses then summoned Joshua and, in the presence of all Israel, said to him, 'Be
strong, stand firm; you will be the one to go with this people into the country which
Yahweh has sworn to their ancestors that he would give them; you are to be the
8 one who puts them into possession of it. ·Yahweh himself will lead you; he will be
with you; he will not fail you or desert you. Have no fear, do not be alarmed.'

d. Alternative translation: 'in such a way as to remove the irrigated soil with the dry'; presumably a proverb indicating total ruin. Gk translates 'so that the sinner be not destroyed with him who is without sin'.

30 a. A recurrent theme in wisdom literature is that wisdom, source of all happiness, is inaccessible, Jb 28; Qo 7:24; Si 1:6; Ba 3:15 (but contrast Pr 8:1 seq.). Nevertheless, God reveals it through the Law, Ps 119; Si 24:23–34.

b. 'If you obey the commandments of Yahweh your God' Gk; omitted by Hebr.

31 a. Ch. 31–34 form a general conclusion to the Pentateuch; they represent elements of differing age and origins, attached to the body of Dt at its final editing.

b. A composite chapter. vv. 1–8, typically deuteronomic in style, refer back to 3:23–29. vv. 9–13, 24–27 (doublet?) belong to the first edition of Dt. Here, the Law (the Dt Code) will stand as witness against Israel, v. 26, if the latter rebels against Yahweh. This paragraph is continued at 32:45–47. vv. 14–15, 23, investiture of Joshua by Yahweh (*see* v. 7), are of different and presumably Elohistic origin. vv. 16–22, deuteronomic, continued at 28–30, introduce the canticle of ch. 32 and represent it as the witness against Israel, vv. 19, 21. The insistence on the 'witnesses' to the covenant, i.e. the Law, the canticle, heaven and earth, v. 28, parallels the witnesses invoked in ancient treaties of alliance.

c. lit. 'go out and come back', *see* Nb 27:17b.

Jos 8:34–35
2 K 23:1seq.
Ne 8

The ritual reading of the Law [d]

Moses committed this Law to writing and gave it to the priests, the sons of Levi, 9
who carried the ark of Yahweh's covenant, and to all the elders of Israel. ·And 10
Moses gave them this command, 'At the end of every seven years, at the time fixed
for the year of remission, at the feast of Shelters, ·when all Israel assembles in the 11
presence of Yahweh your God in the place chosen by him, you must proclaim this
Law in the hearing of all Israel. ·Call the people together, men, women, children, 12
and the foreigner residing with you, so that, hearing it, they may learn to fear
Yahweh your God and keep and observe all the words of this Law. ·Their children, 13
who as yet do not know it, will hear it and learn to fear Yahweh your God, all the
time you live in the country which you are crossing the Jordan to possess.'

Yahweh's instructions

Yahweh said to Moses, 'And now the time is near when you must die. Summon 14
Joshua and take your places at the Tent of Meeting, [e] so that I can give him his
Ex 25:22 orders.' Moses and Joshua went and took their places at the Tent of Meeting,
and Yahweh showed himself at the Tent in a pillar of cloud; the pillar of cloud 15
stood at the door of the Tent.

4:25–28
Ex 34:15–16,15f

Yahweh said to Moses, 'You will soon be sleeping with your ancestors, and this 16
people is about to play the harlot by following the gods of the foreigners of the
country, among whom they are going to live. They will desert me and break my
covenant, which I have made with them. ·That very day, my anger will blaze 17
against them; I shall desert them and hide my face from them. A host of disasters
and misfortunes will overtake them to devour them, and when that day comes they
will say, "If such disasters overtake me, surely Yahweh my God cannot be with
me?" ·Yes indeed, I shall hide my face that day, on account of all the evil which 18
they will have done by turning to other gods.

The song of witness

'Now write down this song for you to use; teach it to the Israelites, put it into their 19
mouths, for it to be a witness on my behalf against the Israelites: ·against Israel, 20
whom I am bringing into the country which I swore to his ancestors that I would
32:15 give him, a country flowing with milk and honey: against Israel, who will eat to his
heart's content and grow fat, and will then turn to other gods and serve them,
despising me and breaking my covenant. ·When a host of disasters and misfortunes 21
overtakes him, this song, like a witness, will give evidence against him, since his
descendants will not have forgotten it. Yes, even today, before I have brought him
to the country which I have promised him on oath, I know what plans he has in
mind.' ·So, that day, Moses wrote out this song and taught it to the Israelites. 22

To Joshua son of Nun, Yahweh gave this order, 'Be strong and stand firm, for 23
you are to be the one to bring the Israelites into the country which I have promised
them on oath, and I myself shall be with you.'

The Law placed beside the ark [f]

27:1a When Moses had completely finished writing the words of this Law in a book, ·he 24, 25
gave this command to the Levites who carried the ark of Yahweh's covenant:
'Take the book of this Law and put it beside the ark of the covenant of Yahweh 26
Jn 12:47–48 your God. Let it lie there as evidence against you. ·For I know how rebellious and 27
stiff-necked you are. If today, while I am still alive and with you, you rebel against
Yahweh, how much more will you rebel against him after my death!

Israel assembles to hear the song

'Gather all your tribal elders and scribes round me, so that I may be sure that they 28
4:26 hear these words, as I call heaven and earth to witness against them. ·For I know 29
that after my death you are certain to grow corrupt; you will leave the way which I

have marked out for you; in the final days disaster will befall you for having done
what is evil in Yahweh's eyes, for having provoked his anger by your behaviour.'
30 In the hearing of the whole assembly of Israel, Moses then recited the words of
this song to the end:

THE SONG OF MOSES [a]

1 **32** Listen, heavens, while I speak; 4:26;30:19 Is 1:2;34:1; 51:4
hear, earth, the words that I shall say!
2 May my teaching fall like the rain, Jb 29:22–23 Is 55:10
may my word drop down like the dew,
like showers on the grass, Ps 72:6 Ho 6:3
like light rain on the turf!
3 For I shall proclaim the name of Yahweh.
Oh, tell the greatness of our God! [b]

4 He is the Rock, his work is perfect, Is 17:10; 44:8
for all his ways are equitable.
A trustworthy God who does no wrong,
he is the Honest, the Upright One!
5 They have acted perversely, those he fathered without blemish, [c] Mt 17:17par. •Is 1:2
a deceitful and underhand brood. Ho 11:1–4
6 Is this the return you make to Yahweh? Ph 2:15
O people brainless and unwise!
Is this not your father, who gave you being, [d] 1:31+ Is 63:16; 64:7
who made you, by whom you subsist?
7 Think back on the days of old,
think over the years, down the ages.
Question your father, let him explain to you, 4:32
your elders, and let them tell you!
8 When the Most High gave the nations each their heritage, Gn 10 Ac 17:26r
when he partitioned out the human race,
he assigned the boundaries of nations
according to the number of the children of God, [e]
9 but Yahweh's portion was his people, 7:6b
Jacob was to be the measure of his inheritance.

10 In the desert he finds him, Ws 11:2 Jr 2:6 Ho 9:10; 13:5
in the howling expanses of the wastelands.
He protects him, rears him, guards him
as the pupil of his eye.

d. Treaties of alliance in the ancient Middle East make provision for their being read publicly. Dt fixes this reading to be held on the feast of Shelters, every sabbatical year. Later tradition, however, implicit in 2 Ch 15:10 and explicit in the *Book of Jubilees* and in the Qumran documents, links the memorial of the covenant to the feast of Weeks.

e. These two vv. mentioning the Tent and the theophany (each for the only time in Dt) are, with v. 23, fragments of some ancient tradition.

f. The Law mediated by Moses, 4:14d, is put beside the ark containing the Decalogue uttered by God himself.

32 a. The great canticle of Moses celebrates the unique power of the God of Israel, the one true God. After an introduction in the wisdom style, vv. 1–2, it proclaims the perfection of the works of God, vv. 3–7, his providence for Israel, vv. 8–14, to which it contrasts the people's rebelliousness, vv. 15–19, and the consequent judgement, vv. 19–25; God will not, however, abandon Israel to his enemies, vv. 26–35, and will intervene on behalf of his people, vv. 36–42; v. 43 is a doxology. The canticle existed independently, before being incorporated in Dt. It is difficult to date: certain archaic characteristics have suggested an early date to scholars, in which case the oppressors of Israel mentioned in it would be the Philistines (11th century). But similarities with the Psalms and Prophets, especially Deutero-Isaiah and Jeremiah, make a later date seem preferable, when the oppressors would therefore be the Babylonians (6th century BC).

b. Exordium addressed to the whole created world.

c. Following Gk and Sam.; Hebr. corrupt—lit. 'not sons of blemish'. Israel is of noble birth, being born of Yahweh; his degeneration is his own doing.

d. A summary of sacred history now begins. *See* the introductions to the discourses of Moses, also Ps 78, 105.

e. lit. 'the sons of God' (or 'of the gods') Gk; 'sons of Israel' Hebr.: The 'sons of God' (or 'of gods') are the angels, Jb 1:6f, members of the heavenly court, v. 43 and Ps 29:1; 82:1; 89:6, *see* Tb 5:4b; here the guardian angels of the nations, *see* Dn 10:13b. Yahweh, however, has reserved Israel, his chosen people, for himself, *see* Dt 7:6d. Here the Gk is followed; Hebr has 'the sons of Israel'.

Like an eagle watching its nest, 11
hovering over its young,
Ex 19:4+ Ps 17:8 he spreads out his wings to hold him,
he supports him on his pinions.

Is 43:11 Ho 13:4 Yahweh alone is his guide; 12
no alien god for him!
He gives him the heights of the land to ride, 13
8:7–10; 11:10–17 Ps 81:16 Is 58:14 he feeds him on the yield of the mountains,
he gives him honey from the rock to taste,
and oil from the flinty crag;
curds from the cattle, milk from the flock, 14
and the richness of the pasture,
rams of Bashan's breed, and goats,
the richness of the wheat kernel;
the fermented blood of the grape for drink.

31:20 Ps 95:1a Is 44:2a;63:10 Jr 5:7 Ho 13:6 Jacob has eaten to his heart's content,[f] 15
Jeshurun, grown fat, has now lashed out.[g]
(You have grown fat, gross, bloated.)
He has disowned the God who made him,
and dishonoured the Rock, his salvation,
4:24+ whose jealousy they aroused with foreigners— 16
with things detestable they angered him.
They sacrificed to demons who are not God, 17
13:3,7seq.,14 to gods hitherto unknown to them,
to newcomers of yesterday
whom their ancestors had never respected.
Is 1:2;17:10 Jr 2:27,32 (You forget the Rock who fathered you, 18
the God who made you, you no longer remember.)
Yahweh saw it and, in anger, 19
he spurned his sons and daughters.
31:17 'I shall hide my face from them,' he said, 20
'and see what will become of them.
For they are a deceitful brood,
children with no loyalty in them.
Is 45:6 Jr 2:11 They have roused me to jealousy with a non-god, 21
they have exasperated me with their idols.
↗Rm 10:19 In my turn I shall rouse them to jealousy with a non-people,
I shall exasperate them with a stupid nation.[h]
28:15–68 Jr 15:14;17:4 Yes, a fire has blazed from my anger, 22
it will burn right down to the depths of Sheol;
it will devour the earth and all its produce,
it will set fire to the footings of the mountains.
Lv 26:21–26 Ezk 5:16–17 I shall hurl disasters on them, 23
on them I shall use up all my arrows.
They will be weakened by hunger, 24
eaten away by plague and the bitter scourge.
Against them I shall send the fang of wild animals
Jr 8:17 Lm 1:20 Ezk 7:15 and the poison of snakes that glide in the dust.
Outside, the sword bereaves, 25
while inside terror will reign.
Lm 2:21 Young man and girl alike will perish,
suckling and greybeard both together.
Ex 32:10–12 Nb 14:13–16 I should crush them to dust, I said, 26
I should wipe out all memory of them,
9:28 did I not fear the boasting of the enemy.' 27

But do not let their foes be mistaken!
Do not let them say, 'We have got the upper hand
and Yahweh plays no part in this.'
28 What a short-sighted nation this is,
how thoroughly imperceptive!
29 Were they wise, they would succeed,
they would be able to read their destiny.[f]
30 How else could one man rout a thousand,
how could two put ten thousand to flight,
were it not that their Rock has sold them,
that Yahweh has delivered them up?

31 But their rock is not like our Rock;
our enemies cannot pray for us!
32 For their vine springs from the stock of Sodom
and from the groves of Gomorrah:
their grapes are poisonous grapes,
their clusters are bitter;
33 their wine is snakes' poison,
the vipers' cruel venom.
34 But he,[j] is he not safe with me,
sealed inside my treasury?
35 Vengeance is mine, I will pay them back,[k]
for the time when they make a false step.
For the day of their ruin is close,
doom[l] is rushing towards them,
for he will see to it that their power fails.
that neither serf nor free man remains.'
36 (For Yahweh will see his people righted,
he will take pity on his servants.)
37 'Where are their gods then?' he will ask,
'the rock where they sought refuge,
38 who ate the fat of their sacrifices
and drank the wine of their libations?'
Let these arise and help you,
let these be the shelter above you!
39 See now that I, I am he,
and beside me there is no other god.
It is I who deal death and life;
when I have struck, it is I who heal
(no one can rescue anyone from me).

40 Yes, I raise my hand to heaven,
and I say, 'As surely as I live for ever,
41 When I have whetted my flashing sword,
I shall enforce justice,
I shall return vengeance to my foes,
I shall take vengeance on my foes.

►Is 10:12–15; 42:8;48:11 •8:17+
4:6;29:8 Jr 4:22
Is 30:17
Jg 2:14
Ps 58:4
Is 49:2 Ho 13:12
↗Rm 12:19 ↗Heb 10:30
‖Ps 135:14
Jr 2:28
Is 34:10,13; 41:4;44:6–8 Is 42:8e •1 S 2:6+ •Is 19:22
Is 49:2 Ezk 21:14–22

f. Gk and Sam.; line omitted by Hebr.

g. Like a bull, *shor*; the name *yeshurun*, used for Israel here and at 33:5, 26, alludes to this, but is of uncertain derivation.

h. Yahweh has not chosen a new people but, to punish Israel, makes use of a nation on which he has not bestowed the privilege of wisdom. An allusion here, either to the Philistines or to the Babylonians.

i. Gk reads 'they will receive that in the future'.

j. 'he', i.e. Israel whom God still reserves for himself. The canticle now tells of Israel's deliverance and of the punishment of his enemies; *see* Is 14; 47; 51 and the prophecies of Jr and Ezk against the nations.

k. In these vv. words with which the prophets admonished Israel are turned against Israel's foes: *see* Is 10:3; Jr 18:17.

l. lit. 'what is prepared for them'.

Ps 68:21,23
Jr 46:10
I shall make my arrows drunk with blood, 42
and my sword will feed on flesh:
the blood of the wounded and the prisoners,
the dishevelled heads of the enemy!'

m Heavens, rejoice with him, 43
↗Heb 1:6 let all the children of God pay him homage!
↗Rm 15:10 Nations, rejoice with his people,
let God's envoys tell of his power!
For he will avenge the blood of his servants,
he will return vengeance to my foes,
he will repay those who hate him
and purify his people's country. n

o Moses came with Joshua son of Nun and recited all the words of this song in the 44
people's hearing.

The Law, the source of life p

When Moses had finished reciting these words to all Israel, •he said to them, 'Take 45, 46
all these words to heart; I intend them today to be evidence against you. You must
8:3 order your children to keep and observe all the words of this Law. •You must not 47
Ne 9:29 think of this as empty words, for the Law is your life, and by its means you will live
long in the country which you are crossing the Jordan to possess.'

Moses' death foretold q

3:23–28 Yahweh spoke to Moses that same day and said to him, •'Climb this mountain of 48, 49
Nb 27:12 the Abarim, Mount Nebo, in the country of Moab, opposite Jericho, and view the
Canaan which I am giving to the Israelites as their domain. •Die on the mountain 50
you have climbed, and be gathered to your people, as your brother Aaron died on
Nb 20:12c Mount Hor and was gathered to his people. •Because, with the other Israelites, 51
you broke faith with me at the Waters of Meribah-Kadesh in the desert of Zin,
Ezk 20:41 because you did not make my holiness clear to the Israelites; •you may only see the 52
country from outside; you cannot enter it—the country which I am giving to the
Israelites.'

Gn 49 **Moses blesses the tribes** a

33 This is the blessing that Moses, man of God, pronounced over the Israelites 1
before he died. •He said: 2

Ex 19:1–2b Yahweh came from Sinai, b
Jg 5:4 from Seir he dawned on us,
Hab 3:3 from Mount Paran blazed forth,
For them he came, after the mustering c at Kadesh,
from his zenith as far as the foothills.

4:37 You who love the ancestors! 3
Jn 10:29 Your holy ones d are all at your command.
At your feet they fell,
under your guidance went swiftly on.

Jn 1:17 (Moses enjoined a law on us.) e 4
The assembly of Jacob comes into its inheritance;
32:15g there was a king in Jeshurun 5
when the heads of the people foregathered
and the tribes of Israel were all assembled!

May Reuben survive and not die out, 6
survive though his men be few! f

7 Of Judah he said this:

Listen, Yahweh, to the voice of Judah,
and bring him back to his people.
That his hands may defend his rights,
come to his help against his foes!

8 Of Levi he said:

To Levi, give[g] your *urim*, 1 S 14:41r
to your faithful one, your *thummim*,
having tested him at Massah,
having striven with him at the Waters of Meribah. Nb 20:1–13,1b
9 Of his father and mother, he says, Ex 32:25–29
'I have not seen them.' Nb 25:7seq., 10seq.
He does not acknowledge his brothers, Mt 12:46–50
nor does he know his own children.
Yes, they have kept your word,
they hold firmly to your covenant.
10 They will teach your customs to Jacob,
and your Law to Israel.
They will put incense before you
and burnt offerings on your altar.
11 Yahweh, bless his worthiness,
and accept the actions he performs.
Crush the loins of those who rise against him
and of his foes, so that they rise no more!

12 Of Benjamin he said:

Beloved of Yahweh, he rests trustfully near him.
The Most High[h] protects him day after day
and dwells between his hillsides.

13 Of Joseph he said:

His land is blessed by Yahweh. Gn 49:22–26

m. Following Gk; Hebr. 'Nations, acclaim his people, since he avenges the blood of his servants; he makes vengeance recoil on his enemies, and his people will purify his country.' • On 'the sons of God', *see* v. 8e.

n. lit. 'perform the rite of expiation over', a phrase common in ritual texts, Ex 25:17h.

o. Here Gk inserts 31:22 and for 'song' reads 'Law'.

p. The continuation of 31:27. The 'words' are the words of the Law (v. 46 at end), not of the canticle. v. 48 follows on v. 44.

q. This paragraph, the inserted Blessings of Moses notwithstanding, is continued in 34:1, and is the work of the Priestly editor who gave the Pentateuch its final form by adding Dt to it. He repeats here what the same Priestly source had said in Nb 27:12–14.

33 **a.** This poem, attributed to Moses, is an addition to Dt, separating the prediction of the death of Moses from the account of his death. It is his testament, *see* the 'blessings' of Jacob, Gn 49. Set in the framework of a hymn, vv. 2–5; 26–29, it is a collection of sayings on individual tribes, which sayings presumably had a prior and independent existence. The poem reflects historical conditions difficult to date and perhaps not all applying at the same period. The sayings give the impression that the tribes are living in their allocated territories and that some of them already have a fairly long history (Reuben and Dan); Simeon is left out, perhaps because it has already been absorbed by Judah. The collection as it stands seems to be more recent than that of Gn 49. On the other hand, v. 7 might indicate a date earlier than the reign of David, unless it is a reference to the schism. In any case, the contrast between the short saying on Judah and the long blessing for Joseph shows that the author belonged to one of the central tribes (to the Kingdom of Israel, if it is a late compilation). More emphasis is placed on the aspect of 'blessing' than in Gn 49, and Moses is represented as a prophet, *see* 34:10.

b. A difficult verse, with an archaic vocabulary. The God of Sinai rose up like a star and accompanied his people.

c. lit. 'myriads', that is the clans mustered.

d. The 'ancestors' are the Patriarchs (the same archaic term is here used as in the expression 'gathered to one's people' in vv. like Gn 25:8. The 'holy ones' are Israel. The text of the v. is uncertain.

e. Evidently a gloss.

f. The heading of Reuben's blessing has dropped from the text. This tribe soon lost its importance. 'survive' is a correction; Hebr. could be rendered 'despite the small number of his warriors'.

g. 'To Levi, give' Gk omitted by Hebr. In contrast to the 'blessings' of Jacob, Gn 49:5–7, which are concerned with the fate of the secular tribe of Levi, dispersed at the same time as Simeon, the blessings of Moses are concerned with the priestly tribe of Levi, its origins as a separate group and its threefold function with regard to the divine prophecy, to teaching, and to serving the altar.

h. 'The Most High' conj.; Hebr. repeats 'near him' • 'hillsides', lit. 'shoulders', i.e. 'shoulder of a mountain'; the description of the territory of Benjamin in Jos 18 uses the expression five times in this sense.

For him the best of heaven's dew
and of the deep that lies below,
the best of what the sun makes grow, 14
of what springs with every month,
Gn 49:26 Hab 3:6 the first-fruits of the ancient mountains, 15
the best from the hills of old
the best of the land and all it holds, 16
Ex 3:1–3 the favour of him who dwells in the Bush.
May the hair grow thick on the head of Joseph,
on the brow of the consecrated one among his brothers! [i]
1 Ch 5:2 First-born of the Bull, [j] his the glory. 17
His horns are the wild ox's horns.
with which he gores the peoples
to the very ends of the earth.
Such are the myriads of Ephraim,
such are the thousands of Manasseh.

Of Zebulun [k] he said: 18

Prosper, Zebulun, in your expeditions,
and you, Issachar, in your tents!
On the mountain where the people come to pray 19
they offer upright sacrifices,
for they taste the riches of the seas
and the treasures hidden in the sands.

Of Gad [l] he said: 20

Blessed be he who gives Gad space enough!
He lies there like a lioness;
he has savaged arm and face and head.
Then he took the first portion for himself, 21
saw that there was stored up for him a leader's share.
He has come at the head of the people,
has carried out the saving justice of Yahweh
and his judgements on Israel.

Jos 19:40–48,40k Of Dan he said: 22

Dan is a lion cub
leaping from Bashan. [m]

Of Naphtali he said: 23

Naphtali, sated with favours,
filled with the blessings of Yahweh:
the west and south are to be his domain. [n]

Of Asher he said: 24

Most blessed of the sons let Asher be!
Let him be the most privileged of his brothers
and let him bathe his feet in oil!
Be your bolts of iron and of bronze 25
and your security as lasting as your days! [o]

32:15g Ex 15:11 Ps 18:10; 68:4b Hab 3:8 No one is like the God of Jeshurun: 26
he rides the heavens to your rescue,
rides the clouds in his majesty!
Ps 90:1–2 The God of old is your refuge, 27

his the eternal arm which here below
drives the enemy before you;
he it is who says, 'Destroy!'
28 Israel rests trustfully. Jr 23:6
The well-spring of Jacob is chosen out Nb 23:9
for a land of corn and wine;
there heaven itself rains down dew.
29 Blessed are you, O Israel! Ps 33:12; 144:15
Who is like you, O victorious people?
Yahweh is the shield that protects you Ps 115:9–11
and the sword that leads you to triumph. [p]
Your enemies will try to corrupt you,
but you yourself will trample on their backs.

The death of Moses [a]

1 34 Then, leaving the Plains of Moab, [b] Moses went up Mount Nebo, the peak 3:27;32:48seq. Nb 22:1;27:12
of Pisgah opposite Jericho, and Yahweh showed him the whole country:
2 Gilead as far as Dan, •the whole of Naphtali, the country of Ephraim and Manas-
3 seh, the whole country of Judah as far as the Western Sea, [c] •the Negeb, and the
4 region of the Valley of Jericho, city of palm trees, as far as Zoar. [d] •Yahweh said to
him, 'This is the country which I promised on oath to give to Abraham, Isaac and
Jacob, saying: I shall give it to your descendants. I have allowed you to see it for 32:49seq. Gn 12:7c
yourself, but you will not cross into it.'
5 There in the country of Moab, Moses, servant of Yahweh, died as Yahweh
6 decreed; •he [e] buried him in the valley, in the country of Moab, opposite Beth- Nb 27:12–14
7 Peor; but to this day no one has ever found his grave, •Moses was a hundred and 2 K 2:17
8 twenty years old when he died, his eye undimmed, his vigour unimpaired. •The Jude 9 [e]
Israelites wept for Moses on the Plains of Moab for thirty days. The days of
9 weeping for the mourning rites of Moses came to an end. •Joshua son of Nun was Nb 20:29
filled with the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him, and him the Nb 27:18–23 Is 11:2c
Israelites obeyed, carrying out the order which Yahweh had given to Moses.
10 Since then, there has never been such a prophet in Israel as Moses, the man Si 45:1–5 Jr 15:1
11 whom Yahweh knew face to face. •What signs and wonders Yahweh caused him to Jn 1:17
12 perform in Egypt against Pharaoh, all his servants and his whole country! •How Ex 33:11+;20i Nb 12:6–8
mighty the hand and great the fear that Moses wielded in the eyes of all Israel!

i. *see* Gn 49:26; 'dedicated' there and 'consecrated' here translate *nazir*, *see* Nb 6:1a.

j. Other texts also seem to give Joseph the rank of first-born, 1 Ch 5:1–2; *see* Gn 46:4; 47:29–31. The priority conferred on Joseph by this blessing is in Gn 49 attributed to Judah. The mention of Ephraim and Manasseh is perhaps an addition.

k. A single saying covers the two tribes of Zebulun and Issachar, which were neighbours and had a common origin. They attended the same sanctuary (Tabor) and were both engaged in commerce.

l. Gad, originally settling with Reuben in Transjordan, *see* Nb 32, expanded at the expense of the latter, *see* the saying on Reuben, v. 6 above.

m. Dan, having emigrated from its territory situated to the west of Benjamin, *see* Jos 19:40k, settled in the northern part of Israel at Laish (which means 'lion'), at the foot of Mount Hermon on the frontiers of Bashan, *see* 34:1.

n. The v. apparently alludes to an extension of Naphtali's territory, although this is not confirmed by history.

o. Asher's territory lay near the sea; its soil and climate suited the olive. Translation uncertain.

p. lit. 'the sword of your greatness' Gk; 'whose sword (?) is your greatness' Hebr. A term often used of gods in the ancient East.

34 **a.** The narrative is a continuation of 32:48–52. It combines Priestly elements, notably vv. 7–9, with a deuteronomic text. The vision of Moses embraces the entire Promised Land, into which he will not go, *see* 4:21, but of which he thus takes possession on behalf of the people, *see* Gn 13:14–15.

b. The expression, characteristic of Priestly writings, denotes the plain lying between the mountains of Moab and the River Jordan.

c. The Mediterranean.

d. Zoar lies to the south of the Dead Sea, *see* Gn 19:20 seq., and Jericho to the north.

e. i.e. Yahweh, but Sam. and some Gk texts read 'they buried him'.

THE HISTORICAL BOOKS

INTRODUCTION
TO THE BOOKS OF
JOSHUA, JUDGES, RUTH
SAMUEL AND KINGS

§1 In the Hebrew Bible the Books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings are called the 'Early Prophets', the 'Later Prophets' being Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the twelve Minor Prophets. A tradition ascribing these books to 'prophets' was responsible for the use of this title: Joshua was credited with the book of that name, Samuel with the Books of Judges and Samuel, Jeremiah with the Books of Kings. Though we are accustomed to refer to these as 'historical' books, they are written from a religious standpoint and are concerned chiefly with the relationship between Israel and God, and Israel's obedience—above all its disobedience—to the word ministered through the prophets.

These books are related to those that follow, but they are also related to those that precede them. They take up the story where the Pentateuch leaves off: at the end of Deuteronomy, Moses names Joshua as his successor and dies; this is the starting-point of the Book of Joshua. A literary unity has even been claimed as existing between the two groups, and efforts have been made to establish the persistence of the pentateuchal 'documents' or 'sources' to the end of Joshua (thus constituting a 'Hexateuch') and even to the end of the Books of Kings. Efforts, however, to identify pentateuchal documents in Judges, Samuel and Kings, have not produced convincing results. They are more convincing as regards Joshua, where currents more or less closely related to, if not actually continuations of, Yahwistic and Elohistic sources can be detected. Even so, the influence of Deuteronomy and of deuteronomic teaching is much more in evidence, and supporters of the Hexateuch theory cannot but admit that Joshua has been subjected to deuteronomic editing. The influence of Deuteronomy is also clear in subsequent books, though in differing degrees: extensive in Judges, very limited in Samuel, dominant in Kings. On these grounds, the theory has been advanced that Deuteronomy once formed the opening section of a religious history on the grand scale, reaching to the end of Kings.

Deuteronomy having provided the historical basis for the doctrine of the election of Israel, and having outlined the theocratic constitution resulting from it, the Book of Joshua then proceeds to show how this chosen people

established itself in its Promised Land; the Book of Judges recounts Israel's repeated defections and returns to grace; the two Books of Samuel deal first with the crisis that led to a monarchical régime and imperilled the theocratic ideal and then go on to show how this ideal achieved reality under David; the Books of Kings tell of the decline that set in during the reign of Solomon and how, notwithstanding the devotion of a few kings, Israel's obstinate infidelity brought down God's judgement on his people. The separation of Deuteronomy from this literary unit may have occurred when it was decided to assemble all the material relating to the person and work of Moses (*see* pp. 10–11).

This outline is acceptable but needs to be supplemented by two important considerations. First, the deuteronomic editor was using oral traditions and written documents. These varied in age and character; many were already grouped together and were only lightly retouched by the editor. This explains how it is that the books, or large sections of the books, preserve their individual character. Secondly, this deuteronomic editing was not a single process: each book shows traces of having passed through more than one process of editing. The Books of Kings, to take the clearest example, went through at least two editions: one just after the reform under Josiah, the other during the Exile. (For further details, *see* the notes on the individual books.)

In their final form, therefore, these books are the product of a school, of a number of devout men profoundly influenced by the outlook of Deuteronomy, men who meditated on the history of their nation and extracted a religious lesson from it. At the same time they hand on an account of the outstanding events in the history of Israel and traditions or texts that date back to the heroic age of the Conquest. From these books the believer will not only learn to see the hand of God in all world events, but in God's exacting love for his chosen people will recognise the slow preparation for the New Israel, the community of the faithful.

§2 The Book of Joshua

The Book of Joshua falls into three parts: **1** The conquest of the Promised Land, ch. 1–12. **2** The partition of the territory between the tribes, ch. 13–21. **3** The last days of Joshua, especially his last discourse and the assembly at Shechem, ch. 22–24. It is rightly conceded by Jewish tradition that the book was not written by Joshua. Various sources have been used. Part One consists of (ch. 2–9) a group of traditions, running parallel at times, connected with the Benjaminite shrine at Gilgal, and (ch. 10–11) two records of battles, Gibeon and Merom, associated respectively with the conquest of the south and north. The story of the Gibeonites, ch. 9, is dovetailed into 10:1–6, and so links up the two sections which, in all probability, were brought together at the beginning of the monarchical period.

The fact that the narratives of ch. 2–9 originate from Gilgal, a Benjaminite sanctuary, does not mean that the figure of Joshua, an Ephraimite, is a secondary addition, since the constituent elements of Ephraim and Benjamin entered Canaan together before establishing themselves in their respective

territories. The etiological aspect of these narratives, that is to say, their aiming to provide, by reference to events in the past, explanation for facts and situations still observable at the time of the author, is obvious. This does indeed affect details of the narrative, but the historical basis of the events themselves, with the exception of the capture of Ai and possibly of Jericho, is largely confirmed by archaeology.

Part Two, totally different in nature, is a geographical treatise. Ch. 13 locates the tribes of Reuben and Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh, already installed in Transjordan by Moses, according to Nb 32, *see also* Dt 3:12–17. Ch. 14–19 deal with the tribes to the west of the River Jordan and combine two types of document: a description, variably accurate, of tribal boundaries, basically dating from the pre-monarchical period, and lists, added later, of towns. The most detailed of these town-lists is the one for Judah, ch. 15, which, supplemented by some towns of Benjamin, ch. 18:25–28, divides the towns into twelve districts, reflecting the administrative divisions of the Kingdom of Judah probably under Jehoshaphat. Complementary to these, ch. 20 enumerates the 'cities of refuge', a list not earlier than the reign of Solomon; and ch. 21, describing the 'levitical cities', is a post-exilic addition embodying memories retained from the monarchy.

In Part Three, ch. 22, dealing with the return of the Transjordanian tribes and their building of an altar by the Jordan, bears signs of both deuteronomic and Priestly editing; it is based on an independent tradition of uncertain import and age. Ch. 24 preserves the ancient and authentic memory of an assembly held at Shechem and of the religious pact concluded there.

Minor changes apart, the following passages may be ascribed to the deuteronomic editor: 1 (almost entire); 8:30–35; 10:16–43; 11:10–20; 12; 22:1–8; 23; and the revision of 24. The fact that ch. 24, revised in the spirit of Deuteronomy, has been retained side by side with ch. 23, also inspired by Deuteronomy but the work of another hand, indicates that the book has in fact been edited twice.

In the Book of Joshua, the conquest of the entire Promised Land is represented as the result of collective tribal action under the leadership of Joshua. The narrative in Judges ch. 1 offers a different picture: there we see each tribe struggling for its own territory and often suffering reverses. This is a tradition originating in Judah, elements of which are reproduced in the geographical section of Joshua: Jos 13:1–6; 14:6–15; 15:13–19; 17:12–18. This picture of a piecemeal, incomplete conquest is much closer to historical reality, difficult as this is to reconstruct. The settlement of southern Palestine had its starting-point from Kadesh and the Negeb, principally by groups which became integrated into Judah only later and gradually: the Calebites, Kenizzites, etc. and the Simeonites. The settlement of central Palestine was the work of groups crossing the Jordan under the leadership of Joshua and consisting of elements of the tribes of Ephraim-Manasseh and Benjamin. The settlement of the north had a separate history: the tribes of Zebulun, Issachar, Asher and Naphtali established themselves there at some remote time and never went down to Egypt. At Shechem, these rallied to the Yahwistic faith which Joshua's contingent had brought with them; and they acquired their definitive territories by fighting the Canaanites who had enslaved them or were threatening to do so. In these various regions, settlement

was achieved partly by force of arms, partly by peaceful infiltration and by alliances with the indigenous population of the country.

The part played by Joshua in the settlement in central Palestine, from the crossing of the Jordan to the assembly at Shechem, should be retained as historical. In view of the date suggested for the Exodus (p. 12), the following chronology may be put forward: *c.* 1250, entry of southern groups; from 1225, occupation of central Palestine by groups coming from across the Jordan; *c.* 1200, expansion of northern groups.

The Book of Joshua presents an idealised and simplified picture of a complex history, the details of which must remain hypothetical. It is idealised: the epic of the deliverance from Egypt has its continuation in the conquest during which God intervenes miraculously to help his people. It is simplified: all is centred round the heroic figure of Joshua: it is he who leads the House of Joseph to war, ch. 1–12, and to him is ascribed the assignment of tribal territories (though this was done neither by him, nor at any given moment), ch. 13–21. Joshua holds the centre of the stage throughout, and the book ends with his farewell and death, ch. 23; 24:29–31. The land of Canaan is the dominant theme of the whole book: the people that had found God in the desert now receives its own country at God's hand. Yahweh himself having fought for the Israelites, 23:3,10; 24:11–12, now gives them the country which he had promised to the Fathers, 23:5,14, as their heritage.

§3 Book of Judges

The Book of Judges is made up of three unequal parts: **1** Introduction, 1:1–2:5. **2** Body, 2:6–16:31. **3** Two appendices, the first dealing with the migration of the Danites and the founding of the sanctuary at Dan, ch. 17–18, the second with the war waged on the Benjaminites for their crime at Gibeah, ch. 19–21.

The present introduction to the book, 1:1–2:5, does not properly belong to it; as has already been said in the notice on the Book of Joshua, this is an alternative picture of the conquest and its results, as seen from a Judaean point of view. Its insertion has given rise to the repetition of information about the death and burial of Joshua, 2:6–10, already given in Jos 24:29–31.

The history of the judges occupies the central portion of the book, 2:6–16:31. Scholars commonly distinguish six 'major' judges: Othniel, Ehud, Barak (and Deborah), Gideon, Jephthah and Samson, whose deeds are told in considerable detail; and six 'minor' judges: Shamgar, 3:31, Tola and Jair, 10:1–15, Ibzan, Elon and Abdon, 12:8–15, who receive only brief mention. The text, however, makes no distinction on these grounds, and there is in fact a much more radical distinction to be drawn between the two groups, the indiscriminate use of the title 'Judge' being a result of the combination of disparate elements in the composition of the book. The 'major judges' are hero-liberators: their origins, personalities and deeds vary in many respects, but all have one common characteristic: they have received a special grace, a charism: they have been individually chosen by God for a mission of rescue. Initially, their histories were handed down by word of mouth, in variant forms, with varying accretions. They were eventually collected into

a 'book of liberators', composed in the northern Kingdom in the earlier part of the monarchical period. This contained the story of Ehud; the story of Barak and Deborah, already perhaps contaminated by the narrative in Jos 11 about Jabin of Hazor; the story of Gideon/Jerubbaal, to which was attached the tale of the reign of Abimelech; the story of Jephthah and the story of Jephthah's daughter; and also incorporated two ancient poems, the Song of Deborah, Jg 5, which is parallel to the prose narrative, Jg 4, and Jotham's apologia, 9:7–15, against Abimelech's aspirations to sovereignty. In this book, the heroes of individual tribes were transformed into national figures leading the wars of Yahweh on behalf of all Israel. The 'minor judges', Tola, Jair, Ibzan, Elon, Abdon, come from a different tradition. To them no saving act is attributed; the only information given about them consists in their origin, family and place of burial, and that they are said to have 'judged' Israel for a precise, but variable, number of years. Consistently with the usage of the verb *shaphat*, 'to judge', in Western Semitic languages related to Hebrew, in Mari during the eighteenth century BC, and in Ugarit during the thirteenth century, through to the Phoenician and Punic texts of the Graeco-Roman period (the 'suffetes' of Carthage), these 'judges' not only meted out justice but also ruled. Their writ did not run beyond their own town or district. They represented a political institution midway between tribal and monarchical government.

The earliest deuteronomic editors were in possession of authentic information about these judges, but extended their power to cover all Israel and arranged them in chronological succession. They also assimilated to them the heroes of the 'book of liberators', who thus became 'judges of Israel'. Jephthah served as the link uniting the two groups: he had been a liberator, but he had also been a judge; the editors knew and gave, where he was concerned, the same sort of information, 11:1–2; 12:7, as for the 'minor judges', among whom his story is inserted. To these they also assimilated someone who originally had no connection with either of these groups: the extraordinary Danite hero, Samson, who had been neither liberator nor judge, but whose deeds of prowess against the Philistines had become a folk-tale in Judah, 13–16. To the growing list they added Othniel, 3:7–11, who rightly belongs to the period of the conquest, *see* Jos 15:16–19; Jg 1:12–15; and later Shamgar, Jg 3:31, who was not an Israelite at all, *see* Jg 5:6; and thus they obtained the figure of twelve, symbolic of all Israel.

These same deuteronomic editors gave the book its chronological framework. Retaining the authentic information on the 'minor judges', they punctuated the other stories with conventional figures, in which recur the numbers 40, the length of a generation, or its multiple 80, or its half 20. This was an attempt to arrive at a total which, combined with other information in the Bible, would add up to the 480 years which, according to deuteronomic historiography, had elapsed between the Exodus from Egypt and the building of the Temple, 1 K 6:1. Within this artificial chronological framework, the stories of the judges neatly fill the gap between the death of Joshua and the beginning of the ministry of Samuel. The deuteronomic editors' chief contribution, however, was to give the book its religious dimension. This is expressed in the general introduction, Jg 2:6–3:6, and in the special introduction to the story of Jephthah, 10:6–16, as also in the editorial phrases of

which the story of Othniel almost entirely consists: a deuteronomic composition introducing the longer stories to come. In brief: the Israelites have been unfaithful to Yahweh, who hands them over to oppressors; the Israelites call on Yahweh, who then sends them a saviour, the judge. But the infidelities recur and the whole cycle starts again.

The deuteronomic Book of Judges evidently passed through at least two editions. The most obvious indications of this are: the two elements added in the introduction, 2:11–19 and 2:6–10 plus 2:20–3:6, and the two conclusions to the story of Samson, 15:20 and 16:30, which show that ch. 16 is an addition. At this stage the book had not yet acquired its appendices, 17–21, which do not relate the story of a judge but record events which took place before the inauguration of the monarchy; they were hence added to the end of the book after the return from exile. They reproduce ancient traditions and had a long literary and pre-literary history before being inserted here. Ch. 17–18 are based on a Danite tradition about the migration of the tribe and the founding of the sanctuary of Dan; but a hostile interpretation has been given to the story. Ch. 19–21 combine two traditions about the sanctuaries at Mizpah and Bethel, which again have been extended to all Israel; possibly of Benjaminite origin, these traditions were revised in Judah in a sense hostile to the sovereignty of Saul at Gibeah.

The book is virtually our only source of knowledge about the period of the judges, and it does not provide the material for constructing a continuous history of the period. As has already been said, the chronology which it gives is artificial, events are represented as consecutive when in fact they must often have been simultaneous, the oppressions, as also the liberations, never having affected more than a part of the territory at any one time. The period of the judges in fact lasted for only one and a half centuries.

The chief events, the memory of which has been preserved, can be assigned only approximate dates within this period. The victory of Taanach under Deborah and Barak, Jg 4–5, may have been won sometime during the middle years of the twelfth century; it preceded the Midianite invasion (Gideon) and the expansion of the Philistines beyond their original frontiers (Samson). The principal fact to emerge is that the antagonists of Israel during this troubled age were not only the Canaanites, the original owners of the country, for instance those living in the Plain of Jezreel defeated by Deborah and Barak, but also the neighbouring peoples, the Moabites (Ehud), the Ammonites (Jephthah), the Midianites (Gideon) and the Philistine newcomers (Samson). Against these threats each part of the nation defended its own territory. At times, however, neighbouring groups would make common cause, Jg 7:23; on the other hand, protests might be registered by some powerful tribe against its exclusion from a share in the plunder, Jg 8:1–3; 12:1–6. The Song of Deborah, ch. 5, indicts the tribes that refused to fight; strangely enough, Judah and Simeon are not even mentioned.

The territory of these two tribes lay to the south, cut off from the rest of Israel by Canaanite Gezer, by the Gibeonite towns and by Jerusalem, and their isolation favoured the stirrings of the future schism. Contrastingly, in the north the battle of Taanach had left the Israelites masters of the plain of Jezreel and thus brought about the alliance of the House of Joseph with the northern tribes. A common faith, however, held the various sections firmly

together: all the judges were sincere worshippers of Yahweh and the shrine of the ark at Shiloh was a rallying point for the whole people.

For the Israelites, the lesson of this book was that oppression was the punishment for impiety and that victory was one of the consequences of returning to God. The author of Ecclesiasticus praises the judges for their constancy, Si 46:11–12, and the Letter to the Hebrews sees in their success the reward of faith; they belong to the 'cloud of witnesses' who encourage the Christian to renounce sin and to undergo his trials with fortitude, Heb 11:32–34; 12:1.

§4 Book of Ruth

The short Book of Ruth is placed after Judges in the Septuagint, Vulgate, and modern versions. In the Hebrew Bible it figures among the 'Writings' as one of the five *megillot*, or 'scrolls', read on the principal feasts, Ruth being used at Pentecost. Though linked by subject matter to the period of the judges, *see* Rt 1:1, the book escaped the deuteronomic revision running from Joshua to the end of Kings.

It tells the story of Ruth the Moabitess who, after the death of her husband, a man from Bethlehem who had emigrated to Moab, returns to Judah with her mother-in-law Naomi and marries Boaz, a relative of her husband, by application of the law of the levirate; of this marriage is born Obed, grandfather of David.

An addition, Rt 4:18–22, gives a genealogy of David, parallel to the one in 1 Ch 2:5–15.

The date of composition is much disputed and has been attributed to every period from David and Solomon to Nehemiah. Arguments for a late date, based on the book's position in the Hebrew canon, language, family customs, teaching, are not decisive and the book, concluding verses apart, could have been written during the monarchical period. It is an edifying tale, the principal aim of which is to show the reward to be reaped from putting one's trust in God, whose compassion extends even to a foreign woman, Rt 2:12. Faith in Providence and this sense of universalism are the abiding teaching of the story. The fact that Ruth was acknowledged as great-grandmother of David set particular value on the book, and Matthew includes her in the genealogy of Christ, Mt 1:5.

§5 Books of Samuel

In the Hebrew Bible, the Books of Samuel constitute one single work. The division into two books originates in the Greek translation which, moreover, grouped Samuel and Kings under the one title 'The Four Books of Kingdoms' (called in the Vulgate 'The Four Books of Kings'). The Hebrew Samuel is equivalent to the first two of these. It owes its name to its traditional attribution to the prophet Samuel.

The text is one of the worst preserved of the Old Testament. The Greek translation of the Septuagint gives a text which is frequently different, derived from a prototype, significant fragments of which have been recovered from

the caves of Qumran. There evidently existed several Hebrew versions of the Books of Samuel.

There are five sections: **1** Samuel, 1 S 1–7. **2** Samuel and Saul, 1 S 8–15. **3** Saul and David, 1 S 16–2 S 1. **4** David, 2 S 2–20. **5** Appendices, 2 S 21–24.

The work combines or juxtaposes various sources and traditions relating to the beginnings of the monarchical period. There is the story of the ark and of its capture and retention by the Philistines, 1 S 4–6, in which Samuel does not appear and which is continued at 2 S 6. For setting, this has an account of Samuel's childhood, 1 S 1–3, and a narrative representing Samuel as the last of the judges and preparing the way for final liberation from the Philistine yoke, ch. 7. Samuel plays an essential part in the story of the institution of the monarchy, 1 S 8–12, in which two groups of traditions have long been distinguished: ch. 9; 10:1–16; 11 on the one hand and ch. 8; 10:17–24; 12 on the other. The first group has been called a 'monarchist' version of the events and the second an 'anti-monarchist' version, the second being later. In fact, both traditions are ancient, merely representing different attitudes; furthermore, the second group is not as 'anti-monarchist' as is claimed, since it is opposed only to a monarchy disrespectful of the rights of God. Saul's wars against the Philistines are recounted in ch. 13–14, with a first version of the rejection of Saul, ch. $13:7^{b}$–15^{a}; a second version of his rejection is given in ch. 15, in the context of a war against the Amalekites. This latter version prepares the way for the anointing of David by Samuel, ch. 16:1–13. On David's early days and his vexed relationship with Saul, parallel and apparently equally ancient traditions have been collected into 1 S 16:14–2 S 1, where doublets are frequent. The end of this story comes in 2 S 2–5: David's reign in Hebron, the Philistine war and the capture of Jerusalem assure the recognition of David as king of all Israel, 2 S 5:12. The story of the ark is continued in 2 S 6; the prophecy of Nathan, ch. 7, is ancient but has been reworked; ch. 8 is an editorial summary. 2 S 9 is the first chapter of a long story which ends only in 1 K 1–2: it is a history of David's family and the disputed succession, written by an eyewitness in the first half of the reign of Solomon. The account is interrupted by 2 S 21–24, a collection of short passages of varying origin dealing with the reign of David.

It is possible that other literary units, besides the lengthy history of 2 S 9–20, were formed some time in the first two centuries of the monarchy, namely, the earliest Samuel cycle and the two histories of Saul and David (1 S 17–2 S 1). It is further possible that these units had already been combined by about 700 BC, though the books did not reach definitive form until they were gathered into the great deuteronomic historical work a little before, or during, the Exile. Even so, the influence of Deuteronomy is less obvious here than in Judges and Kings. It is most noticeable in the earlier chapters (especially 1 S 7 and 12) and may possibly be traced in a re-handling of Nathan's prophecy, 2 S 7; but the narrative of 2 S 9–20 has remained almost untouched.

The Books of Samuel cover a period from the rise of the monarchy to the end of the reign of David. Philistine expansion (the battle of Aphek was fought about 1050) threatened the very existence of Israel and made monarchical government a necessity. Saul (*c.* 1030) first appears as one of the

line of judges, but his recognition by all the tribes invests him with a wider and a lasting authority: monarchy has begun. The war of liberation begins and the Philistines are driven back to their own frontiers, 1 S 14; henceforth the engagements take place on the borders of Israelite territory, 1 S 17 (Valley of the Terebinth), 28 and 31 (Gilboa). The battle of Gilboa ends in disaster, and Saul dies on the field, *c.* 1010. National unity is once more in jeopardy: at Hebron the men of Judah proclaim David king; the northern tribes set up a rival, Ishbaal, son of Saul, who had taken refuge in Transjordan. The assassination of Ishbaal, however, clears the way for unity and the northern tribes acknowledge David's sovereignty.

The Second Book of Samuel mentions only briefly the political consequences of the reign of David which were nevertheless far reaching. The Philistines had been repelled for good, unification of the national territory was completed by the absorption of the Canaanite enclaves, in particular Jerusalem, which became the political and religious capital of the kingdom. The whole of Transjordan was reduced to submission, and David extended his authority to include the Aramaeans of southern Syria. This notwithstanding, when David died, *c.* 970, national unity had not in fact been achieved: Israel and Judah, the two sections of his kingdom, were frequently at loggerheads: the revolt of Absalom was backed by the men of the north and the slogan of Sheba the Benjaminite, 'To your tents, Israel!' was a signal for rebellion. The signs already pointed to the disruption of the kingdom.

The Books of Samuel have a religious lesson to teach: they reveal the conditions in which a kingdom of God on earth might be expected to function and what difficulties it would experience. The ideal was achieved only in the time of David: before him Saul's failure, after him the sins of his successors, thwarted it, calling down the judgement of God and procuring the ruin of the nation. The promises made to the House of David, from the prophecy of Nathan onwards, sustained and nourished the messianic hope. The New Testament refers three times to Nathan's prophecy, Ac 2:30; 2 Co 6:18; Heb 1:5. Jesus is presented as a descendant of David, and when the people salute him as 'Son of David' they are acknowledging him as Messiah. Between David and Christ the chosen Saviour, king of God's holy nation, persecuted by his own people, the Fathers see a significant likeness.

§6 Books of Kings

1 and 2 Kings, like 1 and 2 Samuel, were originally one book in the Hebrew Bible. They correspond to the last two books of Kingdoms in the Greek translation, and of Kings in the Vulgate.

They are a continuation of the Books of Samuel, and 1 K 1–2 are the concluding chapters of the lengthy document of 2 S 9–20. The long section on the reign of Solomon, 1 K 3–11, gives a detailed account of his excelling wisdom, his riches and the magnificence of his building, particularly of the Temple of Jerusalem. It was an age of splendour but not of conquest—the conquering spirit of the reign of David had disappeared, an age of conservatism, organisation and (most significantly) of exploitation. This last aggravated the existing hostility between north and south, and when Solomon died, in 931, the kingdom split in two: to the political secession of the

northern tribes was added religious schism, 1 K 12–13. From 1 K 14 to 2 K 17 the history of the twin kingdoms of Israel and Judah is described in parallel; it is a history of fraternal strife but also of attacks from outside: Egypt attacks Judah, the Aramaeans attack the northern tribes. But the danger becomes more acute with the intervention of Assyrian armies in this part of the world—in the ninth century first and then, more decisively, in the eighth when Samaria falls to their onslaught in 721, Judah having already accepted vassalage. The story of Judah, the remainder of the kingdom, is continued in 2 K 18–25:21 until the destruction of Jerusalem in 587. The narrative is concerned mainly with two reigns, each marked by a national revival and a religious reform: the reign of Hezekiah, 2 K 18–20, and that of Josiah, 2 K 22–23. The major political events of this period are Sennacherib's invasion in 701 when Hezekiah was king and, under Josiah, the collapse of Assyria and the rise of the Chaldaean empire. Judah was forced to submit to the new master of the east but shortly afterwards rebelled. Punishment was swift: in 597 Nebuchadnezzar's armies captured Jerusalem and deported part of its population; ten years later, incipient revolt provoked Nebuchadnezzar to further action which ended in the destruction of Jerusalem and a second deportation, 587. Two brief appendices, 2 K 25:22–30, bring the Books of Kings to a close.

The books themselves explicitly mention three of their sources: a History of Solomon, the Annals of the Kings of Israel, the Annals of the Kings of Judah. But there were others: the concluding chapters of the great Davidic document, 1 K 1–2; a description of the Temple, 'Priestly' in origin, 1 K 6–7; and notably an account of Elijah written towards the end of the ninth century and an account of Elisha of a slightly later date both of which underlie the Elijah and Elisha cycles (respectively, 1 K 17–2 K 1 and 2 K 2–13). The narratives of the reign of Hezekiah in which Isaiah figures, 2 K 18:17–20:19, are derived from the prophet's disciples.

Where the use of sources has not interfered, events are narrated according to a uniform plan: each reign is treated separately and completely and each is introduced and concluded by a scarcely varying formula which always includes a verdict on the king's religious conduct. By reason of the 'original sin' of the northern Kingdom (the erection of the shrine at Bethel) all the kings of Israel are judged guilty; of the kings of Judah only eight are praised for their fidelity to Yahweh's commands and on six occasions this praise is qualified by the reservation 'the high places were not destroyed'. Only Hezekiah and Josiah win unstinted approval.

The criterion of these verdicts is clearly the law of Deuteronomy on the one, central sanctuary. Further, the discovery of Deuteronomy in the reign of Josiah, and the religious reform that this discovery inspired, mark the climax of this entire history, and the whole work is a demonstration of the fundamental teaching of Deuteronomy, repeated in 1 K 8 and 2 K 17, namely, that the nation will be blessed if it respects God's covenant, punished if it does not. The influence of Deuteronomy is also traceable in the literary style of the editor's enlargements of, or comments on, his sources.

It is not improbable that a first deuteronomic edition was made before the Exile and before the death of Josiah at Megiddo in 609, with the eulogy of Josiah in 2 K 23:25 (minus the concluding words) marking the end of the

original work. A second edition, also deuteronomic, was compiled during the Exile—after 562 if we assign to it the present conclusion of the book (2 K 25:22–30), and a little earlier if we suppose that this second edition ended with the story of the second deportation (2 K 25:21 reads like a conclusion). Finally, certain additions were made to the work during or after the Exile.

The Books of Kings must be read as they were written: as a story of salvation. The ingratitude of the chosen people and the successive ruin of the two sections of the nation seem to thwart God's design. But a small body of faithful people remain who have not 'bowed the knee to Baal'; this remnant of Zion loyal to the covenant guarantees the future. That God's design cannot be frustrated is shown by the astonishing persistence of the Davidic dynasty to which the messianic promise had been made. The whole work ends, in its final form, with the favour shown to Jehoiachin, as though this were a dawning of redemption.

THE BOOK OF
JOSHUA

I: THE CONQUEST OF THE PROMISED LAND

A: THE PREPARATIONS

The summons to enter the Promised Land

Dt 34 1 When Moses, servant of Yahweh, was dead, [a] Yahweh spoke to Joshua son of 1
Nun, Moses' adjutant. [b] He said, 2 'Moses my servant is dead; go now and cross
this Jordan, you and this whole people, into the country which I am giving to them
Dt 11:24–25 (the Israelites). 3 Every place you tread with the soles of your feet I shall give you,
Gn 15:18 Dt 1:7 as I declared to Moses that I would. 4 From the desert and the Lebanon, to the
Great River, the Euphrates (the entire country of the Hittites), and as far as the
Great Sea to westward, is to be your territory. [c] 5 As long as you live, no one will be
Ex 3:12 Dt 7:24 1:9,17;3:7; 6:27 able to resist you; I shall be with you as I was with Moses; I shall not fail you or
desert you.

God's help conditional on faithfulness to the Law

Dt 3:28; 31:7–8,23 6 'Be strong and stand firm, for you are the man to give this people possession of the
land which I swore to their ancestors that I would give them. 7 Only be strong and
stand very firm and be careful to keep the whole Law which my servant Moses laid
Dt 5:32;29:8 down for you. Do not swerve from this either to right or to left, and then you will
Dt 6:6seq.; 17:18seq. succeed wherever you go. 8 Have the book of this Law always on your lips; meditate
on it day and night, so that you may carefully keep everything that is written in it.
Dt 31:7,23 Then your undertakings will prosper, then you will have success. 9 Have
Dt 1:21e,29seq.; 7:21;20:3;31:6 I not told you: Be strong and stand firm? Be fearless and undaunted, for go where
you may, Yahweh your God is with you.'

Support from the Transjordanian tribes

Dt 16:18 10, 11 Joshua then gave the people's officials [d] this instruction: 'Go through the camp
and give the people this order, "Make provisions ready, for in three days' time you
will cross this Jordan and go on to take possession of the land which Yahweh your
Nb 32 Dt 3:18–20 God is giving you as your own." ' 12 Joshua then said to the Reubenites and Gadites
and the half-tribe of Manasseh, 13 'Remember the order given you by Moses, servant
of Yahweh: Yahweh your God, in bringing you to rest, has given you the land
where we are. 14 Your wives, your little ones and your cattle must stay in the country
given you by Moses beyond the Jordan. But all you fighting men must cross in
battle formation at the head of your brothers and help them, [e] 15 until Yahweh grants
rest to your brothers and you alike, when they too have taken possession of the
22 land which Yahweh your God is giving to them. Then you may go back and take
possession of the land which belongs to you and which Moses, servant of Yahweh,
has given you on the eastern side of the Jordan.' 16 They answered Joshua, 'We will
Dt 34:9 do whatever you order us, and wherever you send us we will go. 17 We obeyed
Moses in everything, and now we will obey you. Only may Yahweh your God be

18 with you as he was with Moses! ·If anyone rebels against your orders or will not listen to your commands, let him be put to death. Only be strong and stand firm.' 1.5 Dt 17:12

Joshua's spies at Jericho [a]

1 2 From Shittim,[b] Joshua son of Nun secretly sent two men to reconnoitre. He said, 'Go and explore the country and Jericho.' They left; they went into the 7:2 Nb 13 Jg 18:2
2 house of a prostitute called Rahab, to spend the night there. ·The king of Jericho was told, 'Some men have come here tonight from the Israelites, to reconnoitre Mt 1:5
3 the country.' ·The king of Jericho then sent a message to Rahab, 'Send out the men who came to you and are lodging in your house, for they have come to
4 reconnoitre the whole country.' ·But the woman took the two men and hid them. Nb 13
'It is true,' she said, 'the men did come to me, but I did not know where they came
5 from. ·When the city gate was about to be closed at nightfall, the men went out and I cannot say where they have gone. Follow them quickly and you will overtake them.'
6 She had taken them up to the roof and hidden them under some stalks of flax
7 which she had laid out there. ·The men hurried in pursuit of them towards the Jordan, as far as the fords, and the gate was shut once the pursuers had gone through.

The pact between Rahab and the spies ↗He 11:31 ↗Jm 2:25

8 The two men had not yet settled down for the night when Rahab came up to them
9 on the roof. ·She said to them, 'I know that Yahweh has given you this country, that we are afraid of you and that everyone living in this country has been seized
10 with terror at your approach; ·for we have heard how Yahweh dried up the Sea of 9:9–10 Ex 14
Reeds before you when you came out of Egypt and what you did to the two Amorite kings across the Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom you put under the curse of Dt 2:26seq. Nb 21:23seq., 33seq.
11 destruction. ·When we heard this, our hearts failed us, and now no one has any •5:1
courage left to resist you, since Yahweh your God is God both in heaven above
12 and on earth beneath.[c] ·So, swear to me now by Yahweh, since I have been kind to Dt 4:39+
13 you, ·that you in your turn will be kind to my father's family; and give me a sure sign of this: that you will spare the lives of my father and mother, my brothers and sisters and all who belong to them, and will preserve us from death.'
14 The men replied, 'We pledge you our lives, provided that you say nothing about our mission. When Yahweh has given us the country, we shall treat you kindly and 6:22–25
15 faithfully.' ·She then let them down from the window on a rope, as her house was 1 S 19:12 Ac 9:25
16 against the city wall and she actually lived in the wall. ·'Make for the hills,' she 2 Co 11:33
said, 'or you may run into your pursuers. Hide there for three days, until your
17 pursuers have come back, and then go on your way.' ·The men said, 'This is how

1 **a.** The book is thus represented as the continuation of Dt and, adopting the style and outlook of Dt, draws on ancient traditions to describe the entry and settlement of the Promised Land, especially those concerning the tribes of Central Palestine.

b. 'adjutant', *mesharet*, is the title habitually given to Joshua, *see* Ex 24:13; 33:11; Nb 11:28. More honourable than *'ebed*, servant (except in the expression 'servant of Yahweh'), this term is also used for royal officials, 1 Ch 27:1, or for liturgical functions. On Joshua's name, his part in the reconnaissance of the Promised Land, his loyalty, and his appointment as Moses' successor, *see* Ex 17:9; 24:13; 33:11; Nb 11:28; 13:8, 16; 14:5 seq., 30, 38; 27:15–23; Dt 3:21, 28; 31:7–8, 14, 23; 34:9. In Gk and Vulg., he is called 'son of Naue', the result of a mistake in the earliest Septuagint MSS which read NAYH (Naue) instead of NAYN (Naun).

c. The boundaries assigned to the country destined for conquest (*see* Gn 15:18; Dt 1:7; 11:24, *see* Jg 20:1a) are the ideal frontiers of the Promised Land; they go far beyond those of the country partitioned in ch. 13–19. 'The entire country of the Hittites', omitted by Gk, is probably a Priestly gloss.

d. The recruiting sergeants or administrative officers, *see* Dt 20:5, 8. The term is also used for legal officials, recorders or judges' assistants, *see* Dt 16:18; 1 Ch 23:4.

e. According to Jos, and unlike Jg, the conquest is represented as the achievement of the whole nation, and not as the result of individual tribal efforts on isolated fronts.

2 **a.** Ch. 2–9 are a collection of traditions emanating from the Benjaminite shrine of Gilgal, 4:19b. • The story of the conquest of Jericho combines two traditions: **1** The sending of the spies and the story of Rahab, ch. 2, with its conclusion, 6:22–25. **2** The composite story of the crossing of the Jordan and the capture of Jericho, ch. 3–4 and 6. This miraculous story seems to have been substituted for a military action originally completing the story of Rahab and referred to in 24:11.

b. Shittim ('the Acacias') indicates that part of the plain just to the north east of the Dead Sea, Nb 25:1; 33:49.

c. The text credits Rahab with a profession of faith in the manner of Dt, *see* Dt 4:39. Rahab was saved by her faith, Heb 11:31, and justified by her works, Jm 2:25. In Hebr. her name is not the same as that of Rahab the mythical monster, Jb 7:12f;9:13; symbolising Egypt in Ps 87:4.

we shall fulfil the oath which you have made us swear: ·when we invade the 18
country, you must tie this scarlet cord to the window from which you let us down,
and collect your father, mother, brothers and entire family inside your house. ·If 19
2 S 1:16b anyone goes out of the doors of your house into the street, his blood will be on his
own head and we shall not be to blame; but the blood of all staying inside the house
with you will be on our heads if a hand is laid on any of them. ·But if you divulge 20
our mission in the meanwhile, we shall be free of the oath which you have made us
swear.' ·She replied, 'Let it be as you say.' She let them go, and they left. She then 21
tied the scarlet cord to the window. [d]

The spies return

They left and made for the hills. They stayed there for three days, until their 22
pursuers had gone home, having scoured the countryside without finding them.
The two men then came down again from the hills, crossed over and, going to 23
Joshua son of Nun, told him everything that had happened to them. ·To Joshua 24
6:2;8:7; 10:8 they said, 'Yahweh has put the whole country at our mercy, and its inhabitants are
5:1 all panic-stricken at our approach.'

B: THE CROSSING OF THE JORDAN [a]

Before the crossing

3 Early in the morning, Joshua struck camp and set out from Shittim with all the 1
Israelites. They went as far as the Jordan and there they camped before they
1:10d crossed. ·Three days later, the officials went through the camp ·and gave the 2, 3
people these instructions, 'When you see the ark of the covenant of Yahweh your
8:33 God being carried by the levitical priests, you will leave your position and follow it,
so that you may know which way to take, since you have never gone this way before. 4b
Between you and the ark, however, keep a distance of about two thousand cubits: [b] 4a
Ex 19:10,15 do not go near it.' ·Joshua said to the people, 'Sanctify yourselves, since tomorrow 5
Yahweh will work wonders among you.' ·Joshua then said to the priests, 'Take up 6
the ark of the covenant and cross at the head of the people.' They took up the ark
of the covenant and moved to the head of the people.

Final instructions

Yahweh said to Joshua, 'This very day, I shall begin to make you great in the eyes 7
1:5;17 of all Israel so that they will know that, as I was with Moses, so I shall be with you.
Now, give this order to the priests carrying the ark of the covenant, "When you 8
have reached the brink of the waters of the Jordan, you must halt in the Jordan
itself." ' ·To the Israelites, Joshua then said, 'Come closer and hear the words of 9
Ex 34:9–10 Yahweh your God.' ·Joshua said, 'By this, you are to know that the living God is 10
Dt 7:1a with you and without a doubt will expel the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Hivites,
Perizzites, Girgashites, Amorites and Jebusites before you. ·Look, the ark of the 11
covenant of the Lord of the whole earth is about to move into the Jordan at your
4:2 head. ·Now choose twelve men from the tribes of Israel, one man from each tribe. 12
As soon as the priests carrying the ark of Yahweh, Lord of the whole earth, have 13
set the soles of their feet in the waters of the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan will
Ps 114:3 be cut off, the upper waters flowing down will stop as a single mass.'

Crossing the Jordan

Accordingly, when the people left their tents to cross the Jordan, the priests carried 14
the ark of the covenant ahead of the people. ·As soon as the bearers of the ark 15
reached the Jordan and the feet of the priests carrying the ark touched the waters—
Ex 14:21 the Jordan is in spate throughout the harvest season [c]—·the upper waters stood still 16
and formed a single mass over a great distance, at Adam, the town near Zarethan,

while those flowing down to the Sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, were completely
17 separated. [d] The people crossed opposite Jericho. ·The priests carrying the ark of
the covenant of Yahweh stood firm on dry ground in mid-Jordan, while all Israel Ex 14:22 2 K 2:8
crossed on dry ground, until the whole nation had completed its crossing of the
Jordan.

The twelve memorial stones

1 **4** When the whole nation had finished crossing the Jordan, Yahweh spoke to
2 Joshua and said, ·'Choose twelve men from the people, one man from each
3 tribe, and give them this order, ·"Here, from mid-Jordan, from the place where
the priests' feet were standing, take twelve stones; carry them with you and set
4 them down in the camp where you pass the night." ' ·Joshua called the twelve men
5 whom he had selected from the Israelites, one man from each tribe, ·and Joshua
said to them, 'Go on ahead of the ark of Yahweh your God into mid-Jordan, and
each of you take one stone on his shoulder, corresponding to the number of the
6 tribes of Israel, ·to make this a sign among you; and when, in the future, your =4:21-24
7 children ask you, "What do these stones mean for you?" ·you will then tell them, Ex 12:26 Dt 6:20
"The waters of the Jordan separated before the ark of the covenant of Yahweh;
when it crossed the Jordan, the waters of the river separated. These stones are an
8 everlasting reminder of this to the Israelites." ' ·The Israelites did as Joshua
ordered; they took twelve stones from mid-Jordan corresponding to the number of
the tribes of Israel, as Yahweh had told Joshua; they carried them over to the camp
9 and set them down there. ·Joshua then erected twelve stones in mid-Jordan, on
the spot where the feet of the priests carrying the ark of the covenant had stood;
and they are still there today. [a]

The crossing ends

10 The priests carrying the ark stood still in mid-Jordan, until everything had been
done that Yahweh had ordered Joshua to tell the people (in accordance with
everything that Moses had ordered Joshua); and the people hurried across.
11 When the people had finished crossing, the ark of Yahweh then crossed, with the
12 priests, to the head of the people. ·The sons of Reuben, the sons of Gad and the
half-tribe of Manasseh crossed in battle formation at the head of the Israelites, as
13 Moses had told them. ·Some forty thousand warriors in arms, they crossed in
14 Yahweh's presence, ready for battle, towards the plain of Jericho. ·That day,
Yahweh made Joshua great in the eyes of all Israel, who respected him as they had
15, 16 respected Moses, as long as he lived. ·Yahweh said to Joshua, ·'Order the priests
17 carrying the ark of the Testimony to come up out of the Jordan.' ·And Joshua gave
18 the order to the priests, 'Come up, out of the Jordan!' ·Now, when the priests
carrying the ark of the covenant of Yahweh came up out of mid-Jordan, no sooner

d. vv. 17–21, would be more in place before v. 15; and there is no further mention of the scarlet cord.

3 a. There is a deliberate parallelism between the narrative of the crossing of the Jordan and entry into Canaan, 3:1–5:12, and the narrative of the Exodus from Egypt; the editor himself calls attention to it, 3:7; 4:14,23: Yahweh halts the Jordan just as he dried up the Sea of Reeds (3:7–4:18; Ex 14:5–31); the ark of Yahweh leads the Israelites as did the pillar of cloud or of fire (3:6–17; 4:10–11; Ex 13:21–22; 14:19–20); Joshua plays the part that Moses played in the Exodus (Jos 3:7; 4:14); and just as the adults of the Exodus period were circumcised, so in their turn are their desert-born children (Jos 5:2–9); the manna that had served Israel in the desert, Ex 16, ceases as soon as the Israelites enter Canaan, Jos 5:12, and the Passover is celebrated in Gilgal after the second 'crossing', Jos 5:10, as it had been celebrated in Egypt before the first, Ex 12:1–28; 13:3–10. This parallelism between the events at the beginning and end of the Exodus produces at the departure from Egypt a water miracle analogous to the water miracle at the crossing of the Jordan, *see* Ex 14:15a. As the Passion and Resurrection of Christ spiritually renew the events of the Exodus, *see* 1 Co 10:1, so Joshua, who gave the events of the Exodus their physical fulfilment, was regarded by some Fathers as an ante-type of Jesus, who has the same name.

b. A Sabbath day's journey, about ½m (about 1 km). v. 4[a] is an addition modifying vv. 3–4[b] and reflecting a scruple inspired by Yahweh's awesome presence resting on the ark, 2 S 6:7f.

c. This spate occurs in March and April when the snows of Hermon melt; this is harvest time in the lower Jordan valley.

d. According to an Arab historian, something similar happened in AD 1267: landslides blocked the valley in this very area, Adama-Damieh, and the Jordan ceased to flow for ten hours.

4 a. The narrative combines two distinct elements: 1 An explanation of the stone circle which used to stand at Gilgal, 4:19c, brought into relationship with the crossing of the twelve tribes. 2 An explanation of the stones visible in the bed of the Jordan, brought into relationship with the crossing of the ark, 4:9.

had the soles of the priests' feet touched solid ground, than the waters of the Jordan returned to their bed and ran on, in spate as before.

Arrival at Gilgal [b]

It was the tenth day of the first month when the people came up from the Jordan 19
and made their camp at Gilgal, on the eastern border of Jericho. ·As regards those 20
twelve stones, which they had taken from the Jordan, Joshua set them up at Gilgal.
=4:6–7 He then said to the Israelites, 'When, in the future, your children ask their fathers, 21
"What are these stones?" ·you will explain to your children, "Israel crossed this 22
Jordan dry-shod. ·For Yahweh your God dried up the waters of the Jordan in front 23
of you until you had crossed, just as Yahweh your God did to the Sea of Reeds,
Ex 14:21 which he dried up before us until we had crossed it; ·so that all the peoples of the 24
Ex 14:31 earth may know how mighty the hand of Yahweh is, and always stand in awe of
Yahweh your God." '

Terror of the peoples west of the Jordan

5 When all the kings of the Amorites living to westward across the Jordan, and 1
all the kings of the Canaanites living on the seaboard, heard that Yahweh had
dried up the waters of the Jordan before the Israelites until they had crossed, [a] their
2:11 hearts failed and they lost all courage to resist the Israelites.

Circumcision of the Hebrews at Gilgal

Gn 17:10d At this time Yahweh said to Joshua, 'Make flint knives and circumcise the Israelites 2
again (a second time). [b] ·Joshua made flint knives and circumcised the Israelites on 3
the Hill of Foreskins.

The reason why Joshua circumcised them was this. All the males of the people 4
who had come out of Egypt of age to bear arms had died in the desert on their
journey after leaving Egypt. ·Now, all the people who came out had been circum- 5
cised; but none of those born in the desert, during the journey, after leaving Egypt,
Nb 14:20–38 had been circumcised; ·for the Israelites walked the desert for forty years, until the 6
whole nation had died out, that is, the men who had come out of Egypt of age to
bear arms; they had not obeyed the voice of Yahweh, and Yahweh had sworn to
them never to let them see the land which he had sworn to their ancestors that he
Ex 3:8 would give us, a land flowing with milk and honey. ·But in place of these he set 7
their sons, and these were the ones whom Joshua circumcised: they were uncircum-
cised because they had not been circumcised during the journey. ·When the 8
circumcising of the whole nation was finished, they stayed resting in the camp till
they were well again. ·Yahweh then said to Joshua, 'Today I have taken the shame 9
of Egypt away from you.' Hence, the place has been called Gilgal ever since. [c]

Celebration of the Passover

The Israelites pitched their camp at Gilgal and kept the Passover there on the 10
fourteenth day of the month, at evening, in the plain of Jericho. ·On the very next 11
day after the Passover, they ate what the land produced, unleavened bread and
Ex 16:1a roasted ears of corn. ·The manna stopped the day after they had eaten the produce 12
of the land. The Israelites from that year onwards ate the produce of Canaan and
had no more manna. [d]

C: THE CONQUEST OF JERICHO

Prelude: a theophany [e]

Now when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front 13
Nb 22:23 of him, grasping a naked sword. Joshua walked towards him and said to him, 'Are
1 Ch 21:16 you on our side or on that of our enemies?' ·He replied, 'On neither side. I have 14

come now as the captain of the army of Yahweh.' Joshua fell on his face to the ground, worshipping him, and said, 'What has my Lord to say to his servant?'
15 The captain of the army of Yahweh answered Joshua, 'Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy.' And Joshua did so.

Ex 23:20
Dn 12:1
Rv 19:11–16
Ex 3:5; 19:12e

Capture of Jericho [a]

1 6 Now, Jericho had shut and barricaded its gates (against the Israelites): no one
2 came out and no one went in. •Yahweh then said to Joshua, 'Look, I am
3 putting Jericho, its picked troops and its king, at your mercy. •All you warriors must march round the city (go right round the city once, doing the same on six
4 successive days. •Seven priests must carry seven ram's-horn trumpets in front of the ark. On the seventh day, you will go seven times round the city and the priests
5 will blow their trumpets). •When the ram's horn sounds (when you hear the sound of the trumpet), the entire people must utter a mighty war cry [b] and the city wall will collapse then and there; the people will then go into the assault, each man straight ahead.'
6 Joshua son of Nun summoned the priests and said to them, 'Take up the ark of the covenant, and let seven priests carry seven ram's-horn trumpets ahead of the
7 ark of Yahweh.' •To the people he then said, 'Forward! March round the city, and
8 let the vanguard march ahead of the ark of Yahweh!' •(Everything was done as Joshua had given orders to the people.) Seven priests, carrying seven ram's-horn trumpets ahead of Yahweh, moved forward blowing their trumpets; the ark of the
9 covenant of Yahweh came behind them, •the vanguard marched ahead of the priests, who blew their trumpets, the rearguard followed behind the ark; the men marched, the trumpets sounded.
10 Joshua had given the people the following orders, 'Do not raise a war cry, do not let your voice be heard (not a word must pass your lips), until the day when I say, "Raise the war cry." That is when you must raise the war cry.'
11 He made the ark go round the city (going round it once), then they went back to
12 camp, where they spent the night. •Joshua got up early, and the priests took up the
13 ark of Yahweh. •Carrying the seven ram's-horn trumpets, the seven priests walked ahead of the ark of Yahweh, blowing their trumpets as they went, while the vanguard marched ahead of them and the rearguard behind the ark of Yahweh, and the march went on to the sound of the trumpet.
14 They marched once round the city (on the second day) and went back to camp;
15 and so on for six days. •On the seventh day, they got up at dawn and marched (in

b. The word *gilgal* means 'ring' (of stones); it was used as a proper name for several places *see* Dt 11:30; 2 K 2:1. Joshua's Gilgal lies between the Jordan and Jericho, 'on the eastern border (of the territory) of Jericho', but its precise position is unknown. This ancient centre of worship became the principal sanctuary of Benjamin; to it was attached the memory of the circumcision and first Passover in Canaan, 5:9–10, and the solemn promise made to the Gibeonites, 9:15. This first camp west of Jordan remained the headquarters of the campaign, 10:6; 14:6. Gilgal was still an important centre of political and religious life in the days of Saul, *see* 1 S 11:15. The prophets preached against the cult practised there, Ho 4:15; 9:15; 12:12; Am 4:4; 5:5.

5 **a.** 'they had' *qere*, MSS, versions; 'we had' *ketib*.

b. 'a second time', gloss on 'again'.

c. Play on words between *gilgal* and *galloti*, 'I have taken away'. • The 'shame' consists in being uncircumcised, as the author supposes the Egyptians to have been.

d. The eating of unleavened bread and roasted corn (marking the arrival of Israel in an agricultural country) took on a religious character because of the Passover and hence required circumcision. The ceasing of the manna indicated that the desert period was over.

e. vv. 13–15 are the remains of a lost tradition: this theophany consisted of a revelation and instructions to Joshua, v. 14; these doubtless concerned the conquest, conceived of as Yahweh's personal undertaking. There is perhaps a relationship between this and the similarly isolated passage of Jg 2:1–5. There is certainly a further parallel with the Exodus; the scene recalls the Burning Bush and the commissioning of Moses.

6 **a.** The basis of this narrative is a tradition attaching to the sanctuary at Gilgal, by which the ruined walls of Jericho were explained as resulting from the first act of Yahweh's war in Canaan, vv. 2–10, 15–16, 20–21; the ark is the sign of Yahweh's presence and he alone is responsible for what happens. The narrative, originally belonging to the type of the holy war of conquest, has been transformed into a religious narrative by a series of additions emphasising the part played by the priests. The Hebr. text is markedly longer than that of LXX, the latter omitting the repetitions (in brackets in our text). The narrative, even in its primitive form, is not historical in the accepted modern sense, although this does not preclude the possibility of Jericho's really having been captured by the Israelites (*see* 2:1a and 24:11). Archaeology admittedly offers no evidence for the destruction of Jericho at the end of the thirteenth century BC, but this is in no way conclusive, since the strata of this period have perhaps been lost owing to erosion of the site.

b. On this sacred war cry, *see* Nb 10:5a.

the same manner) round the city seven times. (This was the only day when they marched round the city seven times.) ·At the seventh time, the priests blew their 16
trumpets and Joshua said to the people, 'Raise the war cry, for Yahweh has given you the city!

Jericho placed under the curse of destruction [c]

Lv 27:28–29 'The city and everyone in it must be devoted to Yahweh under the curse of 17
destruction; the life of Rahab the prostitute alone must be spared, with all those
2:1–21 with her in her house, since she hid the messengers we sent. ·But beware of the 18
curse of destruction, yourselves, for fear that, moved by greed, you take something lying under the curse; that would put the camp of Israel under the same curse and
7:1–26 bring disaster on it. [d] ·All the silver and all the gold, everything made of bronze or 19
iron, will be consecrated to Yahweh and put in his treasury.'

The people raised the war cry, the trumpets sounded. When the people heard 20
↗Heb 11:30 the sound of the trumpet, they raised a mighty war cry and the wall collapsed then and there. At once the people stormed the city, each man going straight forward; and they captured the city. ·They enforced the curse of destruction on everyone in 21
the city: men and women, young and old, including the oxen, the sheep and the donkeys, slaughtering them all.

2:1–21 **Rahab's house preserved** [e]

Joshua said to the two men who had reconnoitred the country, 'Go into the 22
prostitute's house, and bring the woman out with all who belong to her, as you swore to her that you would.' ·The young men who had been spies went and 23
brought Rahab out, with her father and mother and brothers and all who belonged to her. They brought out all her clansmen too, and put them in a place of safety outside the camp of Israel.

Nb 31:22 They burned the city and everything inside it, except the silver, the gold and the 24
things of bronze and iron; these they put into the treasury of Yahweh's house. ·But 25
Rahab the prostitute, her father's family and all who belonged to her, these Joshua spared. She is still living in Israel even today, for having hidden the messengers whom Joshua sent to reconnoitre Jericho.

A curse on anyone who rebuilds Jericho

At that time Joshua made them take this oath before Yahweh: 26

> Accursed before Yahweh be the man who rises up
> and rebuilds this city (Jericho)!
> ↗1 K 16:34 On his first-born will he lay its foundations,
> on his youngest son set up its gates!

1:5+ So Yahweh was with Joshua, whose fame spread throughout the country. 27

Violation of the curse of destruction [a]

7 But the Israelites were unfaithful to the curse of destruction. Achan son of 1
Carmi, son of Zabdi, son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took something that fell under the curse of destruction, and the anger of Yahweh was aroused against the Israelites.

The sacrilege punished by a repulse at Ai

2:1 Now Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai [b] (which is near Beth-Aven), to the east 2
of Bethel, having said to them, 'Go up and reconnoitre the country.' They went up and reconnoitred Ai. ·Coming back to Joshua, they said, 'There is no need for the 3
whole people to go up; let some two or three thousand go and attack Ai. Spare the whole people such an effort; there are only a few of them!'

Jg 20:20–21 Of the people, some three thousand marched up, but these broke before the 4

people of Ai, •who killed some thirty-six of them and pursued them from the town gate as far as Shebarim, and on the slope cut them to pieces. The hearts of the people melted away and turned to water. Jg 20:26

Joshua's prayer [c]

Joshua then tore his clothes and prostrated himself before the ark of Yahweh till nightfall; the elders of Israel did the same, and all poured dust on their heads.
And Joshua said, 'Alas, Lord Yahweh, why did you bother to bring this nation across the Jordan, if only to put us at the mercy of the Amorites and destroy us? If only we could have settled down on the other side of the Jordan! •Forgive me, Lord, but what can I say, now that Israel has turned tail on the enemy? •The Canaanites, all the inhabitants of the land, will hear of it; they will unite against us to wipe our name from the earth. And what will you do about your great Name then?' Ex 32: 11–14

Yahweh's answer

Yahweh said to Joshua, 'Stand up! Why are you lying prostrate like this? •Israel has sinned; they have violated the covenant which I imposed on them. They have gone so far as to take what was under the curse of destruction, they have even stolen it; they have actually hidden it; they have put it in their baggage. •That is why the Israelites cannot stand up to their foes, why they have turned tail on their enemies: because they have come under the curse of destruction themselves. Unless you get rid of the object among you which has been put under the curse of destruction, I shall be with you no longer.' [d]

'Get up, sanctify the people and say, "Sanctify yourselves for tomorrow, since Yahweh, the God of Israel, declares: The curse of destruction has now fallen on you, Israel; you will not be able to stand up to your enemies, until you have rid yourselves of that object which has been put under the curse of destruction. Tomorrow morning, therefore, you will come forward tribe by tribe, and then the tribe which Yahweh selects by lot will come forward clan by clan, and the clan which Yahweh selects by lot will come forward family by family, and the family which Yahweh selects by lot will come forward man by man. [e] •And the man indicated by lot as regards the object which has been put under the curse of destruction will be delivered to the flames, he and all his possessions, for having violated the covenant with Yahweh and for having committed an infamy in Israel." ' 1 S 14:40–42

c. The 'curse of destruction', *herem* in Hebr., makes over all that is captured to God; hence men and animals are killed and booty given to the sanctuary. The curse of destruction is a religious act, a rule for holy war, and may depend either on a divine command. Dt 7:1–2; 20:13seq.; 1 S 15:3, or on a vow made to assure victory. Nb 21:2. Failure to observe it is sacrilege and its punishment is severe, Jos. 7. *see* 1 S 15:16–23, though the regulation is sometimes qualified, 8:26–27; Nb 31:15–23; Dt 2:34–35; 3:6–7; 20:13–14. The conception of God as a merciful father will later correct this primitive interpretation of his absolute dominion, *see* Ws 1:13 and especially the NT Mt 5:44–45.

d. 'moved by greed' Gk, *see* 7:21 and Dt 7:25; 'you be put under the curse of destruction yourselves' Hebr.

e. End of the story of Rahab and the spies, ch. 2, a folk-memory preserved by the survival of a clan of Rahab, v. 25.

7 a. The episode of Achan was originally independent of the capture of Jericho and the capture of Ai; Achan is a Judaean, and the plain of Achor is in Judah, far away from Ai and Jericho. This is an independent tradition, probably originating in Benjamin, since it is hostile to Judah.

b. Ai (name meaning 'the ruin') is the modern et-Tell (same meaning in Arabic). The site was in ruins long before the time of Joshua and the narrative has little historical basis. It is analogous to the narrative of the capture of Gibeah, Jg 20, and used perhaps to be told at Bethel, thus counterbalancing the memory of the Benjaminite defeat at Gibeah with the story of a heroic achievement attributed to the time of the conquest • 'which is near Beth-Aven', gloss introducing the nickname 'house of vanity' later applied to Bethel, Ho 4:15, *see* Am 5:5.

c. The prayer is reminiscent of the prayer of Moses in similar circumstances, Ex 32:11; Nb 14:13–16; Dt 9:26, though with significant differences: notably the fact that Yahweh had offered to give Moses another nation (Dt 9:13–14), and that Moses was refusing the offer and interceding for Israel, whereas here Joshua gives way in discouragement and Yahweh comforts and encourages him; *see* 1 K 19:4–8; Jr 15:10, 19–21.

d. The violation of the curse of destruction is a sacrilege, 6:17c, and the whole community is contaminated by the presence of the booty that has been pilfered. The community can be released from the effects of the curse of destruction only when these have been executed on the guilty individual.

e. *see* Saul designated king by lot, 1 S 10:20–21, and Jonathan found guilty, 1 S 14:40–42. Explicitly in the latter case and probably in others, identification was effected by the sacred lots, used for consulting God, *see* 1 S 2:28*l*; 14:41r; *see also* Jon 1:7.

The culprit discovered and punished

Joshua got up early; he made Israel come forward tribe by tribe, and the lot 16
indicated the tribe of Judah. ·He summoned the clans of Judah, and the lot 17
indicated the clan of Zerah. He summoned the clan[f] of Zerah, family by family,
and the lot indicated Zabdi. ·Joshua then summoned the family of Zabdi, man by 18
man, and the lot indicated Achan son of Carmi, son of Zabdi, son of Zerah, of the
tribe of Judah.

Joshua then said to Achan, 'My son, give glory to Yahweh, God of Israel, and 19
confess; tell me what you have done and hide nothing from me.' ·Achan replied to 20
Joshua, 'Yes, I am the man who has sinned against Yahweh, God of Israel, and
this is what I have done. ·In the loot, I saw a fine robe from Shinar[g] and two 21
hundred shekels of silver and an ingot of gold weighing fifty shekels, I set my heart
on them and I took them. They are hidden in the ground inside my tent, with the
silver underneath.'

Joshua sent messengers; they ran to the tent, and the robe was indeed hidden in 22
the tent, with the silver underneath. ·They took the things out of the tent and, 23
bringing them to Joshua and all the Israelites, laid them out before Yahweh.

Joshua then took Achan son of Zerah and led him up to the Vale of Achor, with 24
the silver and the robe and the ingot of gold, his sons, his daughters, his oxen, his
donkeys, his sheep, his goats, his tent and all his belongings. All Israel went with
him.

Joshua said, 'Why have you brought misfortune on us? Today may Yahweh 25
bring misfortune on you!' And all Israel stoned him to death (and they burned
them and threw stones at them).[h]

Over him, they raised a great mound of stones,[i] which is still there today. 26
Yahweh then relented from his fierce anger. That was why the place was called the
Vale of Achor,[j] as it still is today.

D: THE CAPTURE OF AI

The command given to Joshua

8 Yahweh then said to Joshua, 'Be fearless and undaunted. Take all your fighting 1
Jg 20:28 men with you. Up! March against Ai. Look, I have put the king of Ai, his
people, his town and his territory at your mercy. ·You must treat Ai and its king as 2
you treated Jericho and its king. The only booty you will take are the spoils and the
cattle. Take up a concealed position by the town, to the rear of it.'

Jg 20:29–48 **Joshua's stratagem**

Joshua set out to march against Ai with all the fighting men. Joshua chose thirty 3
thousand of the bravest and sent them out under cover of dark, ·having given them 4
these orders, 'Pay attention! You must take up a concealed position by the town,
at the rear, not very far from the town, and be sure you all keep alert! ·I, and the 5
whole people with me, shall advance on the town, and when the people of Ai[a]
come out to engage us as they did the first time, we shall run away from them.
They will then give chase, and we shall draw them away from the town, since they 6
will think, "They are running away from us as they did the first time."[b] ·You will 7
then burst out of your concealed position and seize the town; Yahweh your God
will put it at your mercy. ·When you have captured the town, set fire to it, in 8
obedience to Yahweh's command. Well then, these are my orders.'

Joshua sent them off, and they made their way to the place of ambush and took 9
up position between Bethel and Ai, to the west of Ai. Joshua spent the night with
the people, ·then, getting up early next morning, reviewed the people and, 10
with the elders of Israel, marched on Ai at their head. ·All the warriors marching 11
with him advanced on the front of the town and pitched camp north of Ai, with the

12 valley between them and the town. ·Joshua took about five thousand men[c] and
13 concealed these between Bethel and Ai, to the west of the town. ·The people
pitched the main camp to the north of the town and set up its ambush to the west of
the town. Joshua went that night into the middle of the plain.

The capture of Ai

14 The king of Ai had seen this; the people of the town got up early and hurried out,
so that he and all his people could engage Israel in battle on the slope[d] facing the
Arabah; but he did not know that an ambush had been laid for him to the rear of
15 the town. ·Joshua and all Israel pretended to be beaten by them and took to their
16 heels along the road to the desert. ·All the people in the town joined in the pursuit
17 and, in pursuing Joshua, were drawn away from the town. ·Not a man was left in
Ai (nor in Bethel),[e] who had not gone in pursuit of Israel; and in pursuing Israel
they left the town undefended.

18 Yahweh then said to Joshua, 'Point the sabre in your hand at Ai; for I am about 8:26
to put the town at your mercy.' Joshua pointed the sabre in his hand[f] towards the Ex 17:8–15
19 town. ·No sooner had he stretched out his hand than the men in ambush burst from 2 K 13:14–19
their position, ran forward, entered the town, captured it and quickly set it on fire.

20 When the men of Ai looked back, they saw smoke rising from the town into the
sky. None of them had the courage to run in any direction, for the people fleeing
21 towards the desert turned back on their pursuers. ·For, once Joshua and all Israel
saw that the town had been seized by the men in ambush, and that smoke was rising
22 from the town, they turned about and attacked the men of Ai. ·The others came
out from the town to engage them too, and the men of Ai were thus surrounded by
Israelites, some on this side and some on that. The Israelites struck them down
23 until not one was left alive and none to flee; ·but the king of Ai was taken alive,
24 and brought to Joshua. ·When Israel had finished killing all the inhabitants of Ai in
the open ground, and in the desert where they had pursued them, and when every
single one had fallen to the sword, all Israel returned to Ai and slaughtered its
25 remaining population. ·The number of those who fell that day, men and women
together, was twelve thousand, all people of Ai.

The curse of destruction; the destruction of the town

26 Joshua did not draw back the hand with which he had pointed the sabre until he
27 had subjected all the inhabitants of Ai to the curse of destruction. ·For booty,
Israel took only the cattle and the spoils of this town, in accordance with the order
28 that Yahweh had given to Joshua. ·Joshua then burned Ai, making it a ruin for
29 evermore, a desolate place even today. ·He hanged the king of Ai from a tree[g] till
evening; but at sunset Joshua ordered his body to be taken down from the tree. It
was then thrown down at the entrance to the town gate and on top of it was raised 10:27
a great mound of stones, which is still there today. Dt 21:22–23
7:26j

f. 'the clans' Gk; 'the clan' Hebr. 'family by family' Hebr. MSS, Syr.; 'man by man' Hebr.

g. Region in Upper Mesopotamia (modern Jebel es-Sinjar); but in the Bible the name normally used for Babylonia, Gn 10:10; 11:2; Dn 1:2, which is the meaning here, Babylonia being renowned for its luxury.

h. Gloss to cover Achan's family and possessions.

i. A felon's burial, *see* the king of Ai, 8:29, Absalom, 2 S 18:17, and the similar treatment of the five Canaanite kings, Jos 10:27.

j. *see* Is 65:10; Ho 2:17; the name is explained here by the verb *'akar*, 'to bring bad luck', v. 25. The Vale of Achor is the plain lying above the cliffs of Qumran; it belonged to Judah but was on the frontiers of Benjamin, *see* v. 1a. The geographical name has modified the spelling of the name Achan: Achar in Gk of this ch., and in Hebr. of 1 Ch 2:7.

8 **a.** 'the people of Ai' Gk; 'they' Hebr.

b. At the end of the v., Hebr. adds 'and we shall run away from them' dittography of v. 5.

c. A figure more credible than the 30 000 of v. 3.

d. 'slope' *morad* conj.; *see* 7:5; Hebr. *mo'ed* 'meeting-place'.

e. 'nor in Bethel' gloss omitted in Gk.

f. Not a mere signal but a gesture effective in itself like that of Moses in Ex 17:9, 11.

g. This ignominious treatment sometimes following the execution of an enemy, *see* 10:26–27, was also practised by other peoples, *see* 1 S 31:10. According to the law of Dt 21:22–23, however, the corpses of those executed had to be taken down before nightfall, hence Jn 19:31.

E: SACRIFICE AND READING OF THE LAW ON MOUNT EBAL [h]

The altar of undressed stones

Joshua then built an altar to Yahweh, God of Israel, on Mount Ebal, •as Moses, 30, 31
servant of Yahweh, had ordered the Israelites, as is written in the law of Moses: an
Ex 20:25 Dt 27:5–7 altar of undressed stones, on which no iron has been used. On this they presented
burnt offerings to Yahweh and communion sacrifices as well.

The reading of the Law

Dt 27:2–4,8 There, Joshua wrote on the stones a copy of the Law of Moses, which Moses had 32
Dt 27:9–26 written in the presence of the Israelites. •All Israel, with their elders, their officials 33
Dt 3:3 and their judges, stood on either side of the ark, facing the levitical priests who
were carrying the ark of the covenant of Yahweh, foreigners with the native-born,
Dt 11:29 half of them on the upper slopes of Mount Gerizim, and half of them on the upper
slopes of Mount Ebal, [i] as Moses, servant of Yahweh, had originally ordered for
Dt 31:10–12 the blessing of the people of Israel. •After this, Joshua read all the words of the 34
Law—the blessing and the cursing—exactly as it stands written in the Book
of the Law. •Of every word laid down by Moses, not one was left unread by Joshua 35
in the presence of the whole assembly of Israel, including the women and children,
and the foreigners living with them.

F: THE TREATY BETWEEN ISRAEL AND THE GIBEONITES

A coalition against Israel

9 Hearing these things, all the kings on this side of the Jordan, in the highlands 1
Jg 1–9 and in the lowlands, all along the coast of the Great Sea towards the Lebanon,
Dt 7:1a Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites, with one consent
formed a fighting alliance against Joshua and Israel. 2

The ruse of the Gibeonites [a]

When the inhabitants of Gibeon learned how Joshua had treated Jericho and Ai, 3
for their part, •they had recourse to a ruse. They provided themselves with 4
supplies, [b] and loaded their donkeys with old sacks and with old wineskins which
had burst and been sewn up again. •They put on patched old sandals and worn-out 5
clothes. The only bread they took with them to eat was dried up and crumbling.

They came to Joshua in the camp at Gilgal, and to him and the men of Israel 6
they said, 'We come from a distant country, so make a treaty with us.' •The 7
Israelites answered these Hivites, 'For all we know, you may live right among us.
How then could we make a treaty with you?' •They said to Joshua, 'We are your 8
servants.' 'But who are you?' Joshua asked them, 'and where do you come from?'
They said, 'Your servants have come from a country very far away, because of the 9
2:10 fame of Yahweh your God; for we have heard of him and of all that he did in
Egypt, •and of all that he did to the two Amorite kings who used to live on the 10
other side of the Jordan: Sihon king of Heshbon, and Og king of Bashan, who used
to live at Ashtaroth. •Because of which, our elders and all the people of our country 11
said to us, "Take provisions with you for the journey; go and meet them and say to
them: We are your servants; so make a treaty with us." •Here is our bread; it was 12
warm when we took it from home to provide for our journey the day we set out to
come to you, and now, you can see, it is dried up and crumbling. •These 13
wineskins were new when we filled them; you can see, they have burst; and these
clothes and sandals of ours are worn out from travelling such a long way.'

The leaders [c] sampled some of the food they offered, but they did not ask 14
Yahweh's orders. •Joshua made peace with them, and struck a treaty with them 15
guaranteeing their lives, and the leaders of the community [d] ratified it by oath.

Now it so happened that three days after the treaty had been made, it became 16

17 known that they were a neighbouring people, living in Israel's region. ·The Israe-
lites set out from camp, arriving in their towns three days later. Their towns were
18 Gibeon, Chephirah, Beeroth and Kiriath-Jearim. ·The Israelites did not attack
them, since the leaders of the community had sworn to them by Yahweh, God of
Israel, but the whole community muttered against the leaders.

The Gibeonites' place in the community

19 The leaders, however, all said to the whole community, 'Since we have sworn an
20 oath to them by Yahweh, God of Israel, we cannot touch them now. ·This is what
we shall do with them: let them live,[e] rather than bring retribution down on
21 ourselves on account of the oath which we have sworn to them.' ·And the leaders
went on, 'Let them live, but let them be wood-cutters and water-carriers for the Dt 29:10
22 whole community.' Thus spoke the leaders. ·Joshua sent for the Gibeonites and
asked them, 'Why did you deceive us by saying, "We live very far away," when in
23 fact you live right among us? ·From now on, you are accursed and will for ever be
24 serfs, as wood-cutters and water-carriers in the house of my God.'[f] ·Their answer
to Joshua was, 'We did it because your servants had been rightly told that Yahweh
your God had ordered his servant Moses to give you the whole of this country and
destroy all its inhabitants before you; also because, as you advanced on us, we
25 feared very greatly for our lives. That was why we did this. ·Now, as you see, we
26 are at your mercy; do to us whatever you think good and right.' ·What he did with
them was this: he saved them from the hand of the Israelites, who did not kill
27 them.[g] ·But that very day Joshua made them wood-cutters and water-carriers for
the community and for the altar of Yahweh, at the place which he would eventually
choose; and so they are today.

G: COALITION OF FIVE AMORITE KINGS CONQUEST OF SOUTHERN PALESTINE[a] Jg 1:1–8

Five kings make war on Gibeon

1 10 Now, it happened that Adoni-Zedek king of Jerusalem, learned that Joshua had conquered Ai and put the town under the curse of destruction, treating

h. vv. 30-35, interrupting the narrative of the conquest (in 9:6 Joshua is still at the camp at Gilgal), come from an editor inspired by Dt 11, 27 and 31. They possibly replace a mention of the sanctuary at Bethel, which might be expected here, since it is so close to Ai; but anything apparently legitimising a sanctuary which was later condemned has been expunged.

i. The incident takes place west of Shechem, which is overlooked on the north by Ebal, on the south by Gerizim. Later, possibly in the time of Nehemiah, the schismatic Samaritan temple was built on Gerizim; it was desecrated by Antiochus Epiphanes, 2 M 6:2; *see* 5:23.

9 a. The whole of this narrative bears clear marks of Deuteronomic editing though based on ancient traditions. Although these cannot be isolated, they are evidently Benjaminite in origin. • The 'Gibeonites' live not only in Gibeon (el-Jib, north west of Jerusalem) but also in the three neighbouring towns named in v. 17. They constitute a non-Canaanite enclave, *see* v. 7; 11:19, hence their isolation and their wish for an alliance with the Israelites. The existence of an ancient treaty of alliance between Gibeon and Israel is attested by the reparation made by David to the Gibeonites, 2 S 21. But the way the fact is presented here betrays a theological preoccupation, such a treaty being apparently a contravention of the rules governing the holy war, *see* 6:17c. These rules, however, did not apply to populations living outside Canaan, hence the amusing tale of the Gibeonites' ruse; the oath of friendship with them, once having been sworn, could not be revoked.

b. 'provided themselves with supplies' *wayyitztayadu* conj.; *see* vv. 11–12; Hebr. *wayyitztayaru* unintelligible.

c. 'leaders' Gk; 'men' Hebr. By agreeing to share the Gibeonites' provisions, the Israelite leaders automatically struck an alliance with them, Gn 31:46 seq.

d. The 'community' is a technical term meaning the Israelites when assembled for public worship or for transacting business of public importance, *see* ch. 22 (esp. v. 12); Jg 20:1; 1 K 12:20.

e. 'let them live', verb in the singular. Presumably the discourse to the 'whole assembly' is interrupted by a sentence addressed to Joshua in particular.

f. The Gibeonites attached to a sanctuary, possibly the high place at Gibeon, 1 K 3:4, are not the same people as the Temple slaves, Ezr 2:43,55, whose institution Ezra ascribes to David. They were reduced to an inferior place in society, *see* Dt 29:10, at their own request, v. 11, and not in the first instance as a punishment.

g. The violation of this treaty by Saul was expiated in the reign of David, 2 S 21:1–14.

10 a. Ch. 10 and 11 are different in literary form from the preceding ch.: the conquest of the whole south, and after this of the whole north, of the Promised Land, effected by all the united tribes under Joshua's leadership, is described as the result of two expeditions against the allied Canaanite kings. This is at variance with other passages of this book, 13:1–6; 14:6–13; 15:13–19; 17:12,16, and also with the outline at the beginning of Judges, Jg 1, in which the conquest is seen to be slow and incomplete, with each tribe acting for itself. This latter presentation is closer to the historical fact, but the Book of Joshua, to give an overall picture of the conquest, associates with Joshua events with which he had nothing to do, or which took place after his time.

Ai and its king as he had already treated Jericho and its king; and also that the inhabitants of Gibeon had made peace with Israel and were living with them.
There was consternation at this, since Gibeon was as important a town as any of 2
the royal towns themselves (it was larger than Ai), while all its citizens were
Jg 1:5 fighting men. ·Consequently, Adoni-Zedek king of Jerusalem sent word to Hoham 3
king of Hebron, Piram king of Jarmuth, Japhia king of Lachish, and Debir king of
Eglon, ·'Join me up here and help me to conquer Gibeon, since it has made peace 4
with Joshua and the Israelites.' ·The five Amorite kings joined forces and went up 5
there, that is, the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the
king of Lachish and the king of Eglon, they and all their armies; laying siege to
Gibeon, they attacked it.

9:3–14 **Joshua comes to the rescue of Gibeon**

The men of Gibeon sent word to Joshua in the camp at Gilgal, 'Do not desert your 6
servants; come up here quickly to save us and help us, since all the Amorite kings
living in the highlands have allied themselves against us.' ·Joshua came up from 7
Gilgal, he, all the fighting men and all the bravest of his army. ·Yahweh said to 8
Joshua, 'Do not be afraid of these people; I have put them at your mercy; not one
of them will put up any resistance.' ·Having marched from Gilgal throughout the 9
night, Joshua caught them unawares.

Si 46:4–6 **Aid from on high**

Yahweh threw them into disorder at the sight of Israel, defeating them completely 10
Is 28:21 at Gibeon; furthermore, he pursued them by way of the Descent of Beth-Horon
and harassed them as far as Azekah (and as far as Makkedah). ·And as they fled 11
Ex 9:18–26 from Israel down the Descent of Beth-Horon, [b] Yahweh hurled huge hailstones
Jb 38:22–23
Is 28:17; 30:30 from heaven on them all the way to Azekah, and they died. More of them died
under the hailstones than under the swords of the Israelites. ·Joshua then spoke to 12
Yahweh, the day Yahweh delivered the Amorites to the Israelites. In the presence
of Israel, Joshua said:

> Sun, stand still over Gibeon,
> and, moon, you too, over the Vale of Aijalon!

Hab 3:11–12 And the sun stood still, and the moon halted, until the people had taken 13
vengeance on their enemies.
Is this not written in the Book of the Just? [c] The sun stood still in the middle of
2 K 20:10–11 the sky and delayed its setting for almost a whole day. ·There was never a day like 14
that before or since, when Yahweh obeyed the voice of a man—for Yahweh was
Ex 14:14
Dt 1:30;3:22 fighting for Israel. ·Joshua, and all Israel with him, then went back to the camp at 15
Gilgal.

The five kings in the cave at Makkedah [d]

As regards the five kings, these had fled and hidden in the cave of Makkedah, 16
and news of this was brought to Joshua. 'The five kings have been found hiding 17
in the cave at Makkedah.' ·Joshua said, 'Roll great stones over the mouth of the 18
cave and post men there to keep guard. ·You yourselves, do not stay there doing 19
nothing; pursue the enemy, cut off their line of retreat and do not let them enter
their towns, for Yahweh your God has put them at your mercy.'
When Joshua and the Israelites had finished inflicting a very great defeat on 20
them, to the point of destroying them, those who had escaped alive took refuge in
their fortresses. ·The people came back to Joshua's camp at Makkedah; they were 21
all safe and sound, and no one dared to attempt anything [e] against the Israelites.
Joshua then said, 'Clear the mouth of the cave and bring the five kings out to 22
me.' ·They did so, and brought the five kings out of the cave to take them to him: 23
the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish
and the king of Eglon. ·When these kings had been brought out, Joshua assembled 24

all the men of Israel and said to the chiefs of the warriors who had fought with him, 'Come forward and put your feet on the necks of these kings!' They came forward Ps 110:1
25 and put their feet on their necks. ·'Be fearless and undaunted,' Joshua went on, 'be strong and stand firm, for this is how Yahweh will deal with all the enemies you
26 fight.' ·With this, Joshua struck and killed them and had them hanged on five trees; they hung there till evening.
27 At the hour of sunset, on Joshua's orders, they were taken down from the trees 8:29g
and thrown into the cave where they had been hiding. Great stones were laid over the mouth of the cave, and these are still there to this very day.

The conquest of the southern towns of Canaan[f]

28 The same day Joshua captured Makkedah, putting it and its king to the sword; he delivered them over to the curse of destruction, with every living creature there, and let no one escape, and he treated the king of Makkedah as he had treated the king of Jericho.
29 Joshua, and all Israel with him, went on from Makkedah to Libnah and attacked
30 it ·and Yahweh put this, too, and its king at Israel's mercy; and Israel put every living creature there to the sword, and left none alive, and treated its king like the king of Jericho.
31 Joshua, and all Israel with him, went on from Libnah to Lachish and besieged it
32 and attacked it. ·Yahweh put Lachish at Israel's mercy, and Israel took it on the second day and put it and every living creature in it to the sword, as they had
33 treated Libnah. ·Horam king of Gezer then marched up to help Lachish, but Jg 1:29f
Joshua beat him and his people until not one was left alive.
34 Joshua, and all Israel with him, went on from Lachish to Eglon. They besieged Jg 1:10–15
35 it and attacked it. ·The same day they took it and put it to the sword. That day he 14:12seq.; 15:13–14
delivered over to the curse of destruction every living creature there, treating it as he had treated Lachish.
36 Joshua, and all Israel with him, went on up from Eglon to Hebron. They
37 attacked it, ·took it and put it to the sword, with its king, its dependencies and every living creature in it. As he had treated Eglon, so here, he left no one alive. He delivered it over to the curse of destruction, with every living creature in it.
38, 39 Joshua, and all Israel with him, then turned back on Debir and attacked it. ·He 15:15seq.
took it and its king and all the places belonging to it; they put them to the sword, and every living creature there they delivered over to the curse of destruction. He left no one alive. As he had treated Hebron, as he had treated Libnah and its king, so he treated Debir and its king.

The southern conquests recapitulated

40 Thus Joshua subjugated the whole country: the highlands, the Negeb, the lowlands Jg 1:9
and watered foothills, and all their kings. He left not one survivor and put every living thing under the curse of destruction, as Yahweh, God of Israel, had com- 6:17c
41 manded. ·Joshua conquered them from Kadesh-Barnea to Gaza, and the whole Dt 7:1–2
42 region of Goshen as far as Gibeon. ·All these kings and their territory Joshua captured in a single campaign, because Yahweh, God of Israel, fought for Israel.
43 And then Joshua, and all Israel with him, went back to the camp at Gilgal.

b. On the normal invasion route, *see* Saul's pursuit of the Philistines, 1 S 14:23 (Gk), 31; *see also* the Syrian invasion, 1 M 3:16,24.

c. An ancient collection of poems now lost; it is quoted again in 2 S 1:18; 1 K 8:12. The rhythmical couplet, inexplicable either in terms of astronomy or of astral cults, is a poetic image, comparable to Ex 14 (song of Moses) and Jg 5 (song of Deborah, *see* especially v. 20); for the supernatural help given to Israel by Yahweh, *see* v. 11. It is, however, taken literally by the editor, who uses it to emphasise the greatness of Joshua, *see* v. 14.

d. This story belongs to an independent tradition, distinct from that of the battle of Gibeon, where the mention of Makkedah in v. 10 is an editorial addition. The site is unknown. According to 15:41, Makkedah was in the area of Eglon and Lachish, and far away from Gibeon.

e. lit. 'not a man (*'ish* instead of *le'ish* Hebr.) dared sharpen his tongue'.

f. Note the formal presentation of this material, *see* 10:1a. The conquest of Hebron and Debir cannot be credited to Joshua, *see* 15:13–17; Jg 1:10–15; while Libnah, Lachish and Eglon did not become Israelite until much later.

H: THE CONQUEST OF THE NORTH [a]

11 When Jabin king of Hazor [b] heard about this, he sent word to Jobab king of 1
Merom, [c] to the king of Shimron, to the king of Achshaph ·and to the kings 2
in the northern highlands, in the plain south of Chinneroth, and those in the
lowlands and on the slopes of Dor to the west. ·To eastward and to westward lived 3
Dt 7:1a the Canaanites: in the highlands, the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites and Jebusites;
the Hivites, at the foot of Hermon in the area of Mizpah. ·They set out with all 4
their troops, a people as numerous as the sands of the sea, with a huge number of
horses and chariots.

The victory at Merom

These kings, having all agreed on a meeting place, came and set up camp together 5
at the Waters of Merom, [d] to fight Israel. ·Yahweh then said to Joshua, 'Do not be 6
afraid of them, for by this time tomorrow I shall hand them all over, cut to pieces,
to Israel; you will hamstring their horses and burn their chariots.' ·With all his 7
17:16 warriors Joshua caught them unawares near the Waters of Merom and fell on
them. ·Yahweh put them at Israel's mercy and they defeated them and pursued 8
them as far as Sidon the Great, and as far as Misrephoth to the west, [e] and as far as
the Vale of Mizpah to the east; they harried them until not one of them was left
alive. ·Joshua treated them as Yahweh had told him; he hamstrung their horses 9
and burned their chariots.

The capture of Hazor and of the other northern towns [f]

Joshua then turned back and captured Hazor, putting its king to the sword. Hazor 10
in olden days was the capital of all these kingdoms. ·In compliance with the curse 11
of destruction, they put every living creature there to the sword. Not a living soul
was left, and Hazor was burnt to the ground.

All these royal cities and all their kings Joshua put to the sword in compliance 12
with the curse of destruction, as Moses, servant of Yahweh, had ordered.

Yet of all these towns standing on their mounds, Israel burned none, apart from 13
Hazor, burnt by Joshua. ·All the spoils of these towns, including the livestock, the 14
Israelites took as booty for themselves. But they put all the human beings to the
sword till they had destroyed them completely; they did not leave a living soul.

The orders of Moses carried out by Joshua

What Yahweh had ordered his servant Moses, Moses in turn had ordered Joshua, 15
and Joshua carried it out, leaving nothing undone of what Yahweh had ordered
Moses. ·In consequence, Joshua captured this entire country: the highlands, the 16
whole Negeb and the whole of Goshen, the lowlands, the Arabah, the highlands
and lowlands of Israel.

From Mount Halak, which rises towards Seir, to Baal-Gad in the Vale of 17
Lebanon at the foot of Mount Hermon, he captured all their kings, struck them
down and put them to death. ·For many a day Joshua made war on all these kings; 18
9:3a no city had made peace with the Israelites except the Hivites who lived at Gibeon; 19
Ex 4:21 all the rest had been captured in battle. ·For Yahweh had decided to harden the 20
hearts of these men, so that they would engage Israel in battle and thus come under
the curse of destruction and so receive no quarter but be exterminated, as Yahweh
had ordered Moses. [g]

15:13–14 Dt 1:28g Jg 1:10–15+ **Extermination of the Anakim** [h]

Joshua then went and wiped out the Anakim of the highlands, of Hebron, of 21
Debir, of Anab, of all the highlands of Judah and of all the highlands of Israel; he
delivered them and their towns over to the curse of destruction. ·No Anakim were 22
left in the territory of the Israelites, except at Gaza, Gath and Ashdod.

23 Joshua captured the entire country, just as Yahweh had told Moses, and he gave it as heritage to Israel, to be shared out between their tribes.
And the country had rest from warfare. Jg 3:11+

I: RECAPITULATION[a]

The kings conquered east of the Jordan

1 **12** The kings of the country, whom the Israelites conquered and whose territory they took, on the further, eastern side of the Jordan, from the Wadi Dt 2:26–3:17
Arnon to Mount Hermon, with the entire Arabah to the east, were as follows:
2 Sihon king of the Amorites, who lived at Heshbon, ruled from Aroer which is on Dt 2:36
the edge of the Arnon Valley, including the bottom of the valley, half Gilead and
3 as far as the Jabbok, the river forming the frontier with the Ammonites; ·the
eastern Arabah up to the Sea of Chinneroth, and as far as the Sea of the Arabah,
or Salt Sea, on the eastern side, in the direction of Beth-Jeshimoth, and, in the
south, the watered foothills of Mount Pisgah.
4 Og[b] king of Bashan, one of the last of the Rephaim, who lived at Ashtaroth and Dt 1:28g
5 Edrei, ·ruled over Mount Hermon and Salecah, the whole of Bashan to the frontier
of the Geshurites and Maacathites, and half Gilead to the frontier of Sihon king of Nb 21:21–35
Heshbon.
6 Moses, servant of Yahweh, and the Israelites conquered these, and Moses,
servant of Yahweh, conferred their territory on the Reubenites, the Gadites and Nb 32
the half-tribe of Manasseh.

The kings conquered west of the Jordan[c]

7 The kings of the country whom Joshua and the Israelites conquered on the nearer,
western side of the Jordan, from Baal-Gad in the Vale of Lebanon to Mount Halak
rising towards Seir, and whose heritage Joshua distributed to the tribes of Israel,
dividing it up between them, were as follows:
8 In the highlands and the lowlands, in the Arabah and in the watered foothills, in
the desert and in the Negeb, belonging to the Hittites, the Amorites, the Canaan- Dt 7:1a
ites, the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites:

9	the king of Jericho,	one;
	the king of Ai near Bethel,	one;
10	the king of Jerusalem,	one;
	the king of Hebron,	one;
11	the king of Jarmuth,	one;
	the king of Lachish,	one;
12	the king of Eglon,	one;

11 **a.** Ch. 11, relating the conquest of the north, is constructed in an exactly similar way to ch. 10, round a historical nucleus, which in this case is the victory at the Waters of Merom.

b. To the south west of Lake Huleh, *see* 1 K 9:15; 2 K 15:29; Jr 49:28seq. Excavations of the mound of Hazor, the largest in all Palestine, *see* v. 10, confirm that this very large town was completely destroyed by fire at the end of the Late Bronze Age, to which the Israelite invasion is generally dated. This Jabin of Hazor has been inopportunely introduced into the narrative of Jg 4.

c. 'Merom' Gk; 'Madon' Hebr.

d. i.e., the source of Merom's water-supply, probably to be located at Tell el-Khureibah, 9 miles (15 km) to the west of Hazor on a plateau where chariots could manoeuvre. • The explanation of the Israelite victory, despite the Canaanites' military superiority (*see* 17:16—the Israelites had no chariotry before the reign of Solomon, 1 K 9:19; 10:26seq.), is perhaps to be sought in vv. 6–7,9, where what is represented as the result of the victory should probably be regarded as its cause.

e. 'to the west' *miyyam* conj.; Hebr. *mayim* waters.

f. This is an incident in the settlement of the northern tribes, who had a history different from that of the House of Joseph.

g. *see* Dt 7:2seq. and 20:16–18 where reasons for this massacre are given: the conquest is a holy war, the land of Yahweh must be purified of its gentile inhabitants, Israel is holy and therefore a people apart, Dt 7:6b, it must use no half-measures or its faith will be compromised. This did not in fact happen; *see* notes on Jos 10 and Jg 1. The reason for failure (the sins of Israel) and why God allowed it (to test his people) are explained in Jg 2:11–3:4 (*see* Jg 2:11h).

h. On the Anakim, *see* Dt 1:28g. This editorial note does not square with the conquest of Hebron by Caleb, 15:13–14; *see* 10:28seq.

12 **a.** The whole of ch. 12 is the work of the deuteronomic editor. In vv. 1–6, he uses material given in Dt 2–3; in vv. 7–24, he compiles a list of conquered kings, based on the conquest narratives of Jos 1–10, adding a few other names of towns taken from an administrative list, possibly from the time of Solomon.

b. 'Og' Gk; 'The territory of Og' Hebr.

c. The divergences in the Gk of vv. 18,19,20 and 23 are probably only the result of a misunderstanding of the Hebr. text, followed here with minor corrections.

Jg 1:29	the king of Gezer,	one;	
	the king of Debir,	one;	13
	the king of Geder,	one;	
	the king of Hormah,	one;	14
	the king of Arad,	one;	
	the king of Libnah,	one;	15
	the king of Adullam,	one;	
	the king of Makkedah,	one;	16
Jg 1:22–26	the king of Bethel,	one;	
	the king of Tappuah,	one;	17
	the king of Hepher,	one;	
	the king of Aphek,	one;	18
	the king of Sharon,	one;	
	the king of Merom,[d]	one;	19
	the king of Hazor,	one;	
	the king of Shimron Meron,	one;	20
	the king of Achshaph,	one;	
Jg 1:27–28	the king of Taanach,	one;	21
	the king of Megiddo,	one;	
	the king of Kedesh,	one;	22
	the king of Jokneam in Carmel,	one;	
	the king of Dor, on the Slopes of Dor,	one;	23
	the king of the nations in Galilee,[e]	one;	
	the king of Tirzah,	one;	24
	Total number of all these kings:	thirty-one.	

II: DISTRIBUTION OF THE COUNTRY AMONG THE TRIBES

Lands remaining unconquered[a]

13 Now Joshua had grown old and advanced in years. Yahweh said to him, 1
'You are now old and advanced in years, yet there is still a great deal of
territory left to be taken possession of. ·This is all the territory left: 2
'All the districts of the Philistines[b] and the whole country of the Geshurites;
from the Shihor, facing Egypt, to the frontier of Ekron in the north, is reckoned as 3
Jg 3:3 Canaanite territory. The five rulers of the Philistines have their seats at Gaza,
Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gath and Ekron, respectively; the Avvites are in ·the south. 4
The entire territory of the Canaanites, and Mearah[c] which belongs to the Sidoni-
ans, as far as Aphekah and as far as the frontier of the Amorites; ·and then the 5
country of the Gebalites with the entire Lebanon eastwards from Baal-Gad at the
foot of Mount Hermon to the Pass of Hamath.
'All who live in the highlands from the Lebanon to Misrephoth in the west—all 6
23:5 the Sidonians—I myself shall dispossess before the Israelites. All you have to do is
to distribute the territory as a heritage for the Israelites as I have ordered you.
The time has come to divide this territory as a heritage between the nine tribes and 7
the half-tribe of Manasseh: from the Jordan as far as the Great Sea in the west, you
must give it them; the Great Sea will be their limit.'[d]

Nb 32
Dt 3:12–17

A: DESCRIPTION OF THE TRANSJORDANIAN TRIBES[e]

A general survey

As regards the other half-tribe of Manasseh,[f] this and the Reubenites and Gadites 8
had already received their heritage, given them by Moses on the further, eastern

side of the Jordan, the one which Moses, servant of Yahweh, had already given
9 them: ·The country onwards from Aroer on the edge of the Arnon Valley, with
the town in the bottom of the valley and the entire tableland from Medeba to
10 Dibon; ·all the towns of Sihon king of the Amorites, who had reigned in Heshbon,
11 to the frontier of the Ammonites; ·then Gilead and the territory of the Geshurites
and Maacathites with the whole Hermon range and the whole of Bashan as far as
12 Salecah; ·and in Bashan, the whole kingdom of Og, who had reigned in Ashtaroth 12:4
and Edrei, and was the last of the survivors of the Rephaim. Moses had conquered
13 and dispossessed these two kings. ·The Israelites did not, however, dispossess
either the Geshurites or the Maacathites, hence Geshur and Maacah survive inside
Israel even today.

14 To the tribe of Levi alone no heritage was given; Yahweh, God of Israel, was his 13:33
heritage,[g] as he had told him. Nb 18:20
Dt 18:2

The tribe of Reuben

Gn 49:3–4
Dt 33:6

15, 16 Moses had given the tribe of the sons of Reuben a share by clans. ·Thus, their
territory was the entire tableland from Aroer on the edge of the Arnon Valley,
17 with the town in the bottom of the valley, as far as Medeba, ·Heshbon with all the
18 towns on the tableland: Dibon, Bamoth-Baal, Beth-Baal-Meon, ·Jahaz, Kede-
19 moth, Mephaath, ·Kiriathaim, Sibmah and, in the highlands of the Arabah,
20 Zereth-Shahar; ·Beth-Peor, the watered foothills of Mount Pisgah, Beth-ha-Jeshi-
21 moth, ·all the towns on the tableland and the entire kingdom of Sihon king of the
Amorites, who had reigned in Heshbon; he had been defeated by Moses, and with
him the princes of Midian, Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur and Reba, vassals of Sihon, Ex 2:11c
formerly living in the country. Nb 22:2b;31:8

22 As regards Balaam son of Beor, the soothsayer, the Israelites had put him to the
sword with those whom they had killed.

23 The boundary of the Reubenites was the Jordan and its territory.

Such was the heritage of the sons of Reuben, by clans, with the towns and
villages belonging to them.

The tribe of Gad

Gn 49:19
Dt 33:20–21

24, 25 Moses had given the tribe of Gad, the sons of Gad, a share by clans. ·Their territory
was Jazer, all the towns of Gilead, half the country of the Ammonites as far as
26 Aroer facing Rabbah, ·and from Heshbon to Ramath-Mizpeh and Betonim; from
27 Mahanaim as far as the territory of Lo-Debar, ·and in the valley: Beth-Haram,

d. 'Merom' conj., *see* 11:1; 'Madon' Hebr.; missing in Gk.

e. 'Galilee' Gk; 'Gilgal' Hebr.

13 a. These places never became part of Israel although included in the ideal plan of the Holy Land (1:4) and in the outline of Nb 34:1–12; to the south, the territory of the Philistines and Geshurites, *see* 1 S 27:8, and also the Avvites, *see* Dt 2:23; to the north, the territory of the Sidonians, i.e. Phoenicia. The section 13:1–7 is editorial and introduces the geographical document.

b. According to Dt 2:23; Jr 47:4seq.; Am 9:7, the Philistines came originally from Caphtor, which is more probably Crete than Asia Minor. But, in any case, this had been only a stage in their migration, and their origins remain obscure. They formed part of the great movement of the 'Peoples of the Sea', which was turned back at the very gates of Egypt by Rameses III, at the beginning of the twelfth century BC.

After their defeat, the Philistines settled in the coastal plain of Palestine (which perpetuates their name). Their mention in Gn 21:32–34; 26:1–8 and Ex 13:17 is an anachronism by anticipation. v. 4 lists their five districts, *see* Jg 3:3; Jl 4:4. They were not Semites and did not practise circumcision. Bitter enemies of the Israelites in the days of the Judges and of Saul, they were driven back by David but remained entrenched along the coast.

c. Text corrupt. One would expect: 'from (such-and-such a place)'. All the proposed emendations are equally tentative.

d. 'from the Jordan . . . limit' Gk; missing in Hebr.

e. The constituent elements of this section come from Nb 32 and Dt 3:12–17, place-names are added but no description is given of the tribal territories, as it later is for the tribes in Canaan. The Israelites themselves were not sure of the topography of these tribes, and Reuben and Gad are generally treated as a unity, 1:12; Nb 32:1seq.; Dt 3:12. It was not long before the two tribes shrank under pressure from Ammonite and Moabite expansion, *see* for Reuben Gn 49:3–4; Dt 33:6, and for Gad Gn 49:19. The origins of the half-tribe of Manasseh are obscure; it seems that its settlement in northern Gilead did not date from this first period, *see* Nb 32:1a.

f. 'As regards the other half-tribe of Manasseh', restored from Gk.

g. 'Yahweh was' Gk; 'the burnt offerings for Yahweh were' Hebr.

Beth-Nimrah, Succoth, and Zaphon—the rest of the kingdom of Sihon king of Heshbon—the Jordan and the territory running to the tip of the Sea of Chinneroth, on the further, eastern side of the Jordan.

Such was the heritage of the sons of Gad, by clans, with their towns and villages belonging to them. 28

The half-tribe of Manasseh

Moses had given the half-tribe of Manasseh[h] a share by clans. ·Their territory, 29, 30
starting from Mahanaim, was the whole of Bashan, the entire kingdom of Og king of Bashan, all the Encampments of Jair in Bashan: sixty towns. ·Half of Gilead, 31
with Ashtaroth, and Edrei, the royal cities of Og in Bashan, were allotted to the sons of Machir son of Manasseh, to half of the sons of Machir, by clans.

This was what Moses had conferred in heritage on the Plains of Moab on the 32
further, eastern side of the Jordan opposite Jericho. ·To the tribe of Levi, however, 33
13:14 Moses gave no heritage; Yahweh, God of Israel, was his heritage, as he told him.

B: DESCRIPTION OF THE THREE LARGE TRIBES TO THE WEST OF THE JORDAN[a]

Introduction

14 This was what the Israelites received as their heritage in Canaan, which was 1
given them as their heritage by the priest, Eleazar, and by Joshua son of Nun, with the heads of families of the tribes of Israel. ·They received their heritage 2
by lot, as Yahweh had ordered through Moses, as regards the nine tribes and the half-tribe. ·For Moses himself had given the two-and-a-half tribes their heritage on 3
the further side of the Jordan, although to the Levites he had given no heritage with them. ·Since the sons of Joseph formed two tribes, Manasseh and Ephraim, 4
21 no share in the country was given to the Levites, apart from some towns to live in,
Nb 35:1–8 with their pasture lands for their livestock and their possessions. ·The Israelites did 5
Nb 34 as Yahweh had ordered Moses, and shared out the country.

Caleb's share[b]

Some sons of Judah came to Joshua at Gilgal, and Caleb son of Jephunneh the 6
Nb 13–14 Kenizzite said to him, 'You know what Yahweh said to Moses, man of God, at Kadesh-Barnea concerning you and me. ·I was forty years old when Moses, servant 7
of Yahweh, sent me from Kadesh-Barnea to reconnoitre this country, and I made him a completely honest report. ·The brothers, however, who had gone up with 8
me discouraged the people, whereas I myself scrupulously obeyed Yahweh my God. ·That day Moses swore this oath, "Be sure of this, that the country your 9
foot has trodden will be a heritage for you and your children for ever, since you have scrupulously obeyed Yahweh my God." ·From then till now, Yahweh has 10
Nb 14:38 kept me alive in observance of his promise. It is forty-five years since Yahweh said this to Moses—Israel was then going through the desert—and now I am eighty-five
Si 46:9–10 years old. ·Today I am still as strong as the day when Moses sent me out on that 11
Nb 14:24 errand; for fighting, for going and coming, I am as strong now as then. ·It is time 12
you gave me the highlands, of which Yahweh spoke to me that day. You heard that
Dt 1:28g day that there were Anakim and large, fortified towns there; but if Yahweh is with me, I shall drive them out, as Yahweh has said.'

15:13–19 Joshua blessed Caleb son of Jephunneh and gave him Hebron as heritage. 13
Jg 1:10–15 And hence Hebron down to the present day has remained the heritage of Caleb 14
son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite, since he had scrupulously obeyed Yahweh, God of Israel. ·Hebron in olden days was called Kiriath-Arba.[c] Arba had been the 15
15:14 greatest of the Anakim.
11:24 And the country had rest from warfare.

The tribe of Judah [a]

Gn 49:8–12
Dt 33:7

15 The portion falling to the tribe of the sons of Judah, by clans, was near the
frontier of Edom, from the desert of Zin southwards to Kadesh in the Nb 34:3–5
south. [b] ·Their southern frontier began at the tip of the Salt Sea, at the southerly
bay; ·it proceeded south of the Ascent of Scorpions, crossed Zin and came up to Jg 1:36+
Kadesh-Barnea from the south; past Hezron, it went on to Addar and turned
towards Karka; ·the frontier then went on to Azmon, came out at the Torrent of
Egypt and reached as far as the sea. This is to be your southern frontier.

The eastern frontier was the Salt Sea as far as the mouth of the Jordan.

The northern boundary began at the bay at the mouth of the Jordan. The
boundary went up to Beth-Hoglah, passed north of Beth-ha-Arabah and went on
to the Stone of Bohan son of Reuben. ·The boundary then went on to Debir from
the Vale of Achor and turned north towards the stone circle opposite the Ascent of
Adummim, which is south of the Torrent; the boundary went on to the Waters
of En-Shemesh and came out at En-Rogel. ·It then went back up the Valley of
Hinnom, coming from the south to the flank of the Jebusite [c]—that is, Jerusalem—
and climbed to the crest of the mountain barring the Valley of Hinnom to the west,
at the northern end of the Valley of the Rephaim. ·From the mountain top, the
boundary curved round to the spring of the Waters of Nephtoah, went on to the
towns of Mount Ephron and then turned towards Baalah—that is, Kiriath-Jearim.
From Baalah, the boundary curved westwards to the highlands of Seir, skirted the
northern slope of Mount Jearim—that is, Chesalon—went down to Beth-Shemesh
and through Timnah, ·came out on the northern flank of Ekron, turned towards
Shikkeron and, passing through the highlands of Baalah, came out at Jabneel, and
reached as far as the sea.

The western boundary was the Great Sea itself. Such was the frontier surrounding the sons of Judah, by clans.

The Calebites occupy the territory of Hebron [d]

14:6b
‖Jg 1:10–15

Caleb son of Jephunneh was given a share within that of the sons of Judah, in
accordance with Yahweh's order to Joshua: Kiriath-Arba, the town of the father
of Anak—that is, Hebron. ·Caleb drove out the three sons of Anak: Sheshai,
Ahiman and Talmai, descended from Anak. ·From there he marched on the
inhabitants of Debir; Debir in olden days was called Kiriath-Sepher. ·Caleb then
said, 'To the man who attacks and takes Kiriath-Sepher, I shall give my daughter
Achsah as wife.' ·The man who captured it was Othniel son of Kenaz, brother of
Caleb, who gave him his daughter Achsah as wife. ·When she arrived, he urged
her [e] to ask her father for arable land, but when she alighted from the donkey and

h. After 'Manasseh', a gloss adds: 'and this was for the half-tribe of the sons of Manasseh'; missing in Gk.

14 a. The long section 14:1–19:49 combines several documents: a pre-monarchical description of tribal boundaries and also lists of towns, especially detailed in the cases of Judah (Simeon) and Benjamin, which reflect the situation in the days of the monarchy. These documents, combined and glossed (see particularly 15:13–19; 16:10; 17:11–13, which are texts parallel to Jg 1) have been used to give a picture of the occupation under Joshua. In point of fact, the different groups established themselves in their respective territories either by peaceful infiltration or by conquest, only gradually gaining absolute possession.

b. Caleb was a Kenizzite, vv. 6 and 14, therefore not an Israelite, *see* Nb 24:21k. His clan, originally coming from southern Palestine, was related to the Edomites, *see* Gn 36:11; it became associated with Israel and in particular with Judah when the Israelites halted temporarily at Kadesh, Nb 13–14. It occupied the Hebron district, here and 15:13–19; Jg 1:10–16, near which lies the 'Negeb of Caleb', 1 S 30:14. The Calebites were eventually assimilated to Judah, *see* the genealogies in 15:13d and in 1 Ch 2:18seq., 42seq.; 4:11seq.

c. Kiriath-Arba, *see* Gn 23:2; 35:27; Jg 1:10, means 'town of the four': either referring to the four quarters of the town, or to the four clans living in it, Anak, eponymous ancestor of the Anakim, and his three sons, *see* 15:14; Dt 2:10. Here, Arba has become a personal name.

15 a. The southern and eastern limits of Judah are in fact those of Canaan itself; the northern frontier, plotted in most detail, was the frontier of Judah in the time of David. It takes into account the peculiar situation of Jerusalem and the permanent enclaves of Canaanites. Its prolongation to the sea is theoretical.

b. 'from the desert' Gk; 'the desert' Hebr. • 'to Kadesh in the south' Gk; 'to the southern tip' Hebr.

c. The 'flank' or 'shoulder' of the Jebusite, *see* 18:16, is the slope of the hill on which ancient Jerusalem stood, *see* 2 S 5:9seq.

d. vv. 13–19 recur almost identically in Jg 1:10–15 where, however, the capture of Hebron is attributed to Judah. Othniel, v. 17, will reappear as one of the 'Judges' of Israel, Jg 3:7–11.

e. 'he urged her' conj., *see* Jg 1:14; 'she urged him' Hebr.

Caleb asked her, 'What is the matter?' ·she said to him, 'Grant me a blessing! As 19
the land you have given me is the Negeb, give me springs of water too!' So Caleb
gave her what she wanted, the upper springs and the lower springs.
Such was the heritage of the tribe of the sons of Judah, by clans. 20

Names of places owned by Judah [f]

Towns at the extremity of the tribe of the sons of Judah, near the frontier of Edom 21
in the Negeb:
Kabzeel, Arad, Jagur, ·Kinah, Dimon, Aroer, ·Kedesh, Hazor-Ithnan, ·Ziph, 22, 23, 24
Telem, Bealoth, ·Hazor-Hadattah, Kiriath-Hezron—that is, Hazor—·Amam, 25, 26
Shema, Moladah, ·Hazar-Gaddah, Heshmon, Beth-Pelet, ·Hazar-Shual, 27, 28
Beersheba and its dependencies, [g] ·Baalah, Iim, Ezem, ·Eltolad, Chesil, Hormah, 29, 30
Ziklag, Madmannah, Sansannah, ·Lebaoth, Shilhim, Ain and Rimmon: in all, 31, 32
twenty-nine towns with their villages.
In the lowlands: 33
Eshtaol, Zorah, Ashnah, ·Zanoah, En-Gannim, Tappuah, Enam, ·Jarmuth, 34, 35
Adullam, Socoh, Azekah, ·Shaaraim, Aditaim, Ha-Gederah and Gederothaim: [h] 36
fourteen towns with their villages.
Zenan, Hadashah, Migdal-Gad, ·Dilean, Ha-Mizpeh, Jokteel, ·Lachish, Boz- 37, 38, 39
kath, Eglon, ·Cabbon, Lahmas, Chitlish, ·Gederoth, Beth-Dagon, Naamah and 40, 41
Makkedah: sixteen towns with their villages.
Libna, Ether, Asham, ·Iphtah, Ashnah, Nezib, ·Keilah, Achzib and Mareshah: 42, 43, 44
nine towns with their villages.
Ekron [i] with its dependencies and its villages. ·From Ekron to the sea, everything 45, 46
to the side of Ashdod, with its villages. ·Ashdod with its dependencies and its 47
villages; Gaza with its dependencies and its villages as far as the Torrent of Egypt,
the Great Sea forming the boundary.
In the highlands: 48
Shamir, Jattir, Socoh, ·Dannah, Kiriath-Sepher, now Debir, ·Anab, Eshtemoh, 49, 50
Anim, ·Goshen, Holon and Giloh: eleven towns with their villages. 51
Arab, Dumah, Eshan, ·Janum, Beth-Tappuah, Aphekah, ·Humtah, Kiriath- 52, 53, 54
Arba, now Hebron, and Zior: nine towns with their villages.
Maon, Carmel, Ziph, Juttah, ·Jezreel, Jokdeam, Zanoah, ·Ha-Kain, Gibeah 55, 56, 57
and Timnah: ten towns with their villages.
Halhul, Beth-Zur, Gedor, ·Maarath, Beth-Anoth and Eltekon: six towns with 58, 59
their villages.
Tekoa, Ephrathah, now Bethlehem, Peor, Etam, Kulon, Tatam, Sores, Carem,
Gallim, Bether and Manach: eleven towns with their villages. [j]
Kiriath-Baal, that is Kiriath-Jearim, and Rabbah: two towns with their villages. 60
In the desert: 61
Beth-Arabah, Middin, Secacah, ·Nibshan, Salt Town and En-Gedi: six towns 62
with their villages.
The Jebusites, however, who lived in Jerusalem, the sons of Judah were unable 63
to dispossess, and the Jebusites still live in Jerusalem today, side by side with the
Jg 1:8,21 2 S 5:6–9,9f sons of Judah.

The tribe of Ephraim

Gn 49:22–26 Dt 33:13–17 **16** The portion of the sons of Joseph started on the east at the Jordan opposite 1
Jericho (the Waters of Jericho) through the desert rising from Jericho into
the highlands of Bethel; [a] ·from Bethel it went to Luz, and on towards the frontier 2
of the Archites at Ataroth; ·then passed downwards and westwards to the frontier 3
of the Japhletites as far as the border of Lower Beth-Horon and on to Gezer, and
reached as far as the sea.
Such was the heritage of the sons of Joseph, Manasseh and Ephraim. 4
As regards the territory of the sons of Ephraim, by clans, the frontier of their 5
heritage ran from Ataroth-Arach [b] to Upper Beth-Horon; ·the frontier then 6

reached as far as the sea . . . the Michmethath[c] in the north, and the frontier
7 turned east to Tanaath-Shiloh which it crossed in an easterly direction to Janoah;
it ran down to Ataroth and Naarah, touched Jericho and ended at the Jordan.
8 From Tappuah, the frontier ran westwards to the Torrent of Kanah and reached as
far as the sea.
9 Such was the heritage of the tribe of the sons of Ephraim, by clans, •apart from
the towns reserved for the sons of Ephraim inside the heritage of the sons of 17:9
10 Manasseh, all these towns and their villages. •The Canaanites living in Gezer were Jg 1:29*f*
not driven out; they have remained in Ephraim to the present day but are obliged
to do forced labour.

The tribe of Manasseh[a] Gn 49:22–26
Dt 33:13–17

1 17 The portion of the tribe of Manasseh, who was in fact Joseph's first-born—
went to Machir, Manasseh's first-born, father of Gilead, for he was a
2 warrior; he had Gilead and Bashan. •The other sons of Manasseh had theirs, by
clans: for the sons of Abiezer, for the sons of Helek, for the sons of Asriel, for the
sons of Shechem, for the sons of Hepher, and for the sons of Shemida: these were
3 the male children of Manasseh son of Joseph, by clans. •Zelophehad son of Nb 27:1–11
Hepher, son of Gilead, son of Machir, son of Manasseh, had no sons but only
daughters, whose names were these: Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah and Tirzah.[b]
4 These approached the priest Eleazar, Joshua son of Nun and the leaders, and
said, 'Yahweh ordered Moses to give us a heritage among our brothers.' In
compliance with Yahweh's order, therefore, they were given a heritage among
5 their father's brothers. •In this way ten portions fell to Manasseh, apart from
6 Gilead and Bashan lying on the further side of the Jordan, •since Manasseh's
daughters received a heritage as well as his sons. Gilead itself belonged to Manas-
seh's other sons.
7 On the side of Asher, the frontier of Manasseh was the Michmethath, which is
opposite Shechem, and thence continued to the right to Jashib, which is at the
8 spring[c] of Tappuah. •The territory of Tappuah belonged to Manasseh, but Tap-
9 puah on Manasseh's border belonged to the sons of Ephraim. •The boundary went
down to the Torrent of Kanah; south of the Torrent were the towns of Ephraim,
excluding those owned by Ephraim[d] among the towns of Manasseh; the boundary
of Manasseh was north of the Torrent and reached as far as the sea.
10 The south belonged to Ephraim and the north to Manasseh and reached as far as
11 the sea; they touched Asher to the north and Issachar to the east. •With Issachar
and Asher, Manasseh shared Beth-Shean and its dependent towns, Ibleam and its Jg 1:27–28

f. The text is not very well preserved. Some of the names of towns have been emended in the light of the Gk or of other biblical texts, and of modern place-names.

g. 'and its dependencies' *benoteha* conj.; *bitzyotyah* Hebr., unintelligible.

h. The last name is doubtful and the total number of towns comes to fifteen. Some propose to emend, following Gk, to read: 'Gederah and its enclosures', but the entire list in Gk is rather different. Hebr. might be explained as understanding dependence on some town (perhaps Tappua), or possibly the two last names were alternatives for the same place.

i. In fact, Ekron remained a Philistine town probably until the time of David, and from Ahaz (736–716) until the Persian period. *see* Am 1:8; Zc 9:5–7.

j. From 'Tekoa' to the end of the v. is restored from the Gk, missing from Hebr.

16 a. Text corrupt, translation approximate.

b. 'Ataroth-Arach', i.e. Ataroth of the Archites, conj. following Gk and v. 2; 'Ataroth-Addar' Hebr.; as also in 18:13.

c. The 'Michmethath' seems to have been a topographical feature, possibly a very narrow defile, or the rift of the Wadi Beidan, not far from Nablus-Shechem. *see* 17:7. Before 'Michmethath', some words have dropped out of the text.

17 a. The half-tribe of Manasseh (for the other half-tribe, *see* 13:29seq.) which settled west of the Jordan, suffered from the expansion of Ephraim, *see* 16:9; 17:8–9. The shift in balance is reflected in the story of Ephraim's being given the place of his elder brother, Manasseh, Gn 48:14seq.

b. The names of Zelophehad's daughters, the great-granddaughters of Machir son of Manasseh, are those of places situated north of Shechem. This location for a part of the clan of Machir is supported by a story attributed in Nb 27 and 36 to the time of Moses, laying down inheritance rights for daughters.

c. 'Jashib, which is on the spring' Gk; 'the inhabitants (*yoshebe*) of the spring' Hebr.

d. 'excluding those owned by Ephraim' added in the light of 16:9 for the sake of the sense.

dependent towns, the inhabitants of Dor and of its dependent towns, [e] the inhabitants of Taanach and Megiddo and of their dependent towns: the Three of the Slopes. 12 But because the sons of Manasseh could not take possession of these
1 K 9:20–21 towns, the Canaanites managed to live on in that territory. 13 When, however, the
9:27 Israelites became stronger, they subjected the Canaanites to forced labour, though they never dispossessed them.

Land reclamation by the sons of Joseph [f]

14 The sons of Joseph spoke as follows to Joshua, 'Why have you given me only one share, only one portion, as heritage, when I am a numerous people, since Yahweh has so blessed me?' 15 Joshua replied, 'If your people are so many, go up to the wooded area and clear space for yourselves in the area belonging to the Perizzites and Rephaim, since the highlands of Ephraim are too small for you.' 16 The sons of
Jg 1:19 Joseph replied, 'The highlands are not enough for us, and what is more, all the Canaanites living on the land of the plain have iron chariots, so do those in Beth-Shean and its dependent towns, and those in the plain of Jezreel.' 17 Joshua said to the House of Joseph, to Ephraim and to Manasseh, 'You are a numerous people and your strength is great; you will not only have one share, 18 but a mountain will be yours as well; even if it is a forest, you can clear it and its territories will be yours. And you will dispossess the Canaanites, although they have iron chariots and although they are strong.'

C: DESCRIPTION OF THE SEVEN OTHER TRIBES

The land survey for these seven tribes

Ex 33:7e 18 1 The whole community of the Israelites assembled at Shiloh, [g] and the Tent of Meeting was set up there; the whole country had been subdued for them.
2 But among the Israelites there were still seven tribes left who had not received their heritage. 3 Joshua then said to the Israelites, 'How much more time are you going to waste before you go and take possession of the country which Yahweh, God of your ancestors, has given to you? 4 Choose three men from each tribe for me to send all over the country so that they can make a survey with a view to their inheritances and then come back to me. 5 They will divide the country into seven portions. Judah will remain in his territory in the south, and those of the House of Joseph will remain in their territory in the north. 6 You must survey the country in seven sections and bring your findings to me here, so that I can cast lots for you here, in the presence of Yahweh our God. 7 The Levites, however, will have no portion with the rest of you; the priesthood of Yahweh will be their heritage. As regards Gad and Reuben and the half-tribe of Manasseh, they have received their heritage on the further, eastern side of the Jordan, the one given them by Moses, servant of Yahweh.'

8 The men stood up and set off. To those who were to survey the country Joshua gave this order, 'Start out, then, go all over the country, survey it, and then come back to me; and I shall cast lots for you here, in the presence of Yahweh, at Shiloh.' 9 The men left, went all over the country and surveyed it by towns, in seven sections, writing down their findings in a book, and then went back to Joshua in the camp at Shiloh.

10 Joshua cast lots for them in Yahweh's presence at Shiloh, and there Joshua divided the country between the Israelites, share by share.

Gn 49:27
Dt 33:12 **The tribe of Benjamin**

11 A portion fell first to the tribe of the sons of Benjamin, by clans: the territory of their portion lay between the sons of Judah and the sons of Joseph. 12 Their northern frontier began at the Jordan, went up the flank of Jericho to the north, climbed

westwards through the highlands and came out at the desert of Beth-Aven.
13 Thence, the frontier went on to Luz, on the southern flank of Luz—now Bethel—
and then down to Ataroth-Arach, on the mountain south of Lower Beth-Horon.
14 At this westerly point, the frontier curved round and turned south, from the
mountain facing Beth-Horon from the south and came out at Kiriath-Baal, now
Kiriath-Jearim, a town of the sons of Judah. That was the western side.
15 This was the south side: from the tip of Kiriath-Jearim, the frontier went to
16 Gasin[b] and came out near the spring of the Waters of Nephtoah, ·it then went
down to the edge of the mountain facing the Valley of Hinnom, in the Valley of the 15:8c
Rephaim to the north; it then went down into the Valley of Hinnom, past the
17a southerly flank of the Jebusite, and went down to En-Rogel. ·It then curved
northwards, coming out at En-Shemesh, and came out at the stone circle opposite
17b the Ascent of Adummim, ·then went down to the Stone of Bohan son of Reuben.
18 It then went on to Cheteph on the flank of Beth-ha-Arabah[c] northwards, and
19 went down into the Arabah; ·the frontier then passed round the northern flank of
Beth-Hoglah, and the frontier came out at the northern bay of the Salt Sea, at the
20 southern end of the Jordan. Such was the southern frontier. ·The Jordan itself
formed the frontier on the east.

Such was the heritage of the sons of Benjamin as defined by their frontier, by clans.

The towns of Benjamin

21 The towns of the tribe of the sons of Benjamin, by clans, were:
22, 23 Jericho, Beth-Hoglah, Emek-Keziz; ·Beth-Arabah, Zemaraim, Bethel; Avvim,
24 Parah, Ophrah; ·Chephar-Ammoni, Ophni, Geba: twelve towns and their villages.
25–27 Gibeon, Ramah, Beeroth; ·Mizpeh, Chephirah, Mozah; ·Rekem, Irpeel, Tara-
28 lah; ·Zela-ha-Eleph, the Jebusite—that is, Jerusalem—Gibeah and Kiriath: four-
teen towns with their villages.

Such was the heritage of the sons of Benjamin, by clans.

The tribe of Simeon[a]

Gn 49:5–7
1 Ch 4:28–33

1 **19** The second lot to come out was for Simeon, for the tribe of the sons of
Simeon, by clans; their heritage was within the heritage of the sons of
2 Judah. ·As heritage, they received:
3, 4 Beersheba, Shema, Moladah, ·Hazar-Shual, Balah, Ezem, Eltolad, Bethul,
5, 6 Hormah, ·Ziklag, Beth-ha-Marcaboth, Hazar-Susa, ·Beth-Lebaoth and Sharu-
hen: thirteen towns and their villages.
7, 8 Ain, Rimmon,[b] Ether and Ashan: four towns and their villages, ·with all the
villages situated near these towns as far as Baalath-Beer and Ramah of the Negeb.
9 Such was the heritage of the tribe of the sons of Simeon, by clans. ·The heritage
of the sons of Simeon was taken out of the portion of the sons of Judah, because
the share of the sons of Judah was too large for them; hence, the sons of Simeon
received their heritage within the heritage of the sons of Judah.

e. Hebr. adds: 'the inhabitants of En-Dor and of its dependent towns'; probably a dittography, missing in Gk.

f. This passage juxtaposes two versions of the same tradition; the more ancient is that of vv. 16–18, which recalls how the House of Joseph cleared and reclaimed the afforested highlands of Ephraim; the second, vv. 14–15, possibly alludes to the settlement in Gilead of part of the tribe of Manasseh. *see* Nb 32:1a.

18 a. The distribution of territories to the seven remaining tribes is set in an editorial frame, 18:1–10 and 19:51, which sites this event at Shiloh where, we are given to understand, the Tent of Meeting had been set up; Shiloh later became one of the principal sanctuaries of Israel. *see* 21:2; 22:9.12, and was the sanctuary of the ark in the time of the Judges, 1 S 1:3d.

b. 'Gasin' Gk; 'to the west' Hebr., makes no sense. *see* 15:9.

c. 'Beth-ha-Arabah' Gk; 'opposite the Arabah' Hebr.

19 a. The once powerful tribe of Simeon, Gn 34:25seq.; 49:5, is not even mentioned in the later blessings of Dt 33. The tribe had been absorbed by Judah, which explains why there is no description of its territory here. Furthermore, the list of Simeonite towns, here and in 1 Ch 4:28–33, parallels the second part of the list of villages of Judah in the Negeb, Jos 15:26b–32.

b. Some propose that En-Rimmon be read, here (following part of the Gk) and at 15:32; 1 Ch 4:32, *see also* Ne 11:29. But here and in the text of 1 Ch, this emendation gives a false total of towns.

Gn 49:13 Dt 33:18–19 Jg 1:30

The tribe of Zebulun

The third lot fell to the sons of Zebulun, by clans; the territory of their heritage 10
stretched as far as Sadud; [c] ·their frontier climbed westwards to Maraalah, touching 11
Dabbesheth and the torrent facing Jokneam. ·From Sadud, the frontier turned 12
east, towards the rising sun, as far as the frontier of Chisloth-Tabor; it came out at
Dobrath and went up to Japhia. ·Thence, it went east, towards the sunrise, to 13
Gath-Hepher and Ittah-Kazin, came out at Rimmon and turned towards Neah. [d]
The northern frontier turned towards Hannathon and came to an end in the 14
Valley of Iphtah-El; ·with Kattath, Nahalal, Shimron, Iralah and Bethlehem: [e] 15
twelve towns with their villages.

Such was the heritage of the sons of Zebulun, by clans: these towns with their 16
villages.

Gn 49:14–15 Dt 33:18–19

The tribe of Issachar

The fourth lot came out for Issachar, for the sons of Issachar, by clans. ·Their 17, 18
territory stretched towards Jezreel and included Chesulloth, Shunem,
Hapharaim, Shion, Anaharath, ·Dobrath, [f] Kishion, Ebez, ·Remeth, En-Gannim, 19–21
En-Haddah and Beth-Pazzez. ·Their frontier touched Tabor, Shahazimah and 22
Beth-Shemesh, and the frontier came to an end at the Jordan: sixteen towns with
their villages.

Such was the heritage of the tribe of the sons of Issachar, by clans: the towns and 23
their villages.

Gn 49:20 Dt 33:24–25 Jg 1:31–32

The tribe of Asher

The fifth lot came out for the tribe of the sons of Asher, by clans. ·Their territory 24, 25
included Helkath, Hali, Beten, Achshaph, ·Alammelech, Amad and Mishal. 26
On the west, it touched Carmel and the course of the Libnath. On the side of the 27
rising sun, it went as far as Beth-Dagon, touched Zebulun, the Valley of Iphtah-El
on the north side, Beth-ha-Emek and Neiel, coming out with Cabul on the left,
with Abdon, [g] Rehob, Hammon and Kanah as far as Sidon the Great. The frontier 28
then turned towards Ramah, as far as the fortress-town of Tyre; ·the frontier then 29
went to Hosah and reached as far as the sea at Mahalab and Achzib, [h]
with Acco, [i] Aphek and Rehob: twenty-two towns with their villages. 30

Such was the heritage of the tribe of the sons of Asher, by clans; these towns and 31
their villages.

Gn 49:21 Dt 33:23 Jg 1:33

The tribe of Naphtali

To the sons of Naphtali fell the sixth portion, to the sons of Naphtali, by clans. 32
Their frontier went from Heleph and the Oak of Zanaannim, with Adami-ha- 33
Negeb and Jabneel, as far as Lakkum, and ended at the Jordan. ·The westward 34
boundary ran to Aznoth-Tabor and thence came out at Hukkok, marching with
Zebulun in the south, Asher in the west and the Jordan in the east. [j] ·The fortified 35
towns were Ziddim, Zer, Hammath, Rakkath, Chinnereth, ·Adamah, Ramah, 36
Hazor, ·Kedesh, Edrei, En-Hazor, ·Jiron, Migdal-El, Horem, Beth-Anath and 37, 38
Beth-Shemesh: nineteen towns and their villages.

Such was the heritage of the sons of Naphtali, by clans: the towns and their 39
villages.

Gn 49:16–17 Dt 33:22

The tribe of Dan [k]

To the tribe of the sons of Dan, by clans, fell the seventh portion. ·The territory 40, 41
of their heritage comprised: Zorah, Eshtaol, Ir-Shemesh, ·Shaalbim, Aijalon, 42
Silatha, [l] ·Elon, Timnah, Ekron, ·Eltekeh, Gibbethon, ·Baalath, Azor, [m] Bene- 43–45
Berak and Gath-Rimmon; ·and, by the sea, Jerakon [n] with the territory facing 46
Jaffa.

Jg 1:34–35:18 The territory of the sons of Dan eluded them, however, and the sons of Dan 47

consequently went up and attacked Leshem, captured it and put it to the sword. Having gained possession of it, they settled there and called Leshem, Dan, after Dan their ancestor.

48 Such was the heritage of the tribe of the sons of Dan, by clans: these towns and their villages.

49 Having finished dividing the country, frontier by frontier, the Israelites gave
50 Joshua son of Nun a heritage among themselves; •at Yahweh's command, they gave him the town which he had asked for, Timnath-Serah in the highlands of Ephraim; he rebuilt the town and settled there. *o* 24:30 Jg 2:9

51 Such are the heritages which the priest Eleazar, Joshua son of Nun, and the heads of each family apportioned by lot between the tribes of Israel at Shiloh, in Yahweh's presence, at the door of the Tent of Meeting; and thus the apportioning of the country was completed.

D: PRIVILEGED TOWNS

The cities of refuge *a*

Ex 21:13e Nb 35:9–34 Dt 19:1–13

1, 2 **20** Yahweh said to Joshua, •'Speak to the Israelites and say to them, "Choose
3 yourselves the cities of refuge of which I spoke to you through Moses, •to which anyone who has accidentally (unintentionally) killed someone else may flee,
4 and which will serve you as refuge from the avenger of blood. •(The killer must flee to one of these towns. He will stop at the entrance to the town gate and explain his case to the town elders. These will admit him to their town and assign him a
5 place to live among them. •If the avenger of blood pursues him, they must not hand the killer over to him, since he has killed his fellow unintentionally and was not
6 motivated by long-standing hatred for him. •He must stay in this town) until he is brought to trial before the community (until the death of the high priest then in office. Only then may the killer go back to his own town and to his own house in the town from which he has fled)." ' Nb 35:19c

7 For this purpose they designated Kedesh in Galilee, in the highlands of Naphtali, Shechem in the highlands of Ephraim, and Kiriath-Arba—now Hebron—in the
8 highlands of Judah. •On the other, eastern, side of the Jordan opposite Jericho, in the desert of the tableland, they chose Bezer of the tribe of Reuben, Ramoth in Dt 4:43
9 Gilead of the tribe of Gad, and Golan in Bashan of the tribe of Manasseh. •Such were the towns designated for all the Israelites and for foreigners living among them, so that anyone who had accidentally killed someone could flee there and might escape the hand of the avenger of blood, until brought to trial before the community.

c. 'Sadud' Gk MSS, Syr.; as also in v. 12; 'Sarid' Hebr.

d. 'at Rimmon and turned' *rimmonah weta'ar* conj.; Hebr. *rimmon hammeto'ar* unintelligible.

e. This town in Lower Galilee is not to be confused with Bethlehem in Judah. 'Iralah' MSS, versions; 'Idalah' Hebr.

f. 'Dobrath' Gk. *see* v. 12 and 21:28; 'Ha-Rabbith' Hebr.

g. 'Abdon' MSS. *see* 21:30; 1 Ch 6:59; 'Ebron' Hebr.

h. 'Mahalab' following an Assyrian text and the modern name; 'Mehebel' Hebr. 'and Achzib' Gk; 'to Achsib' (or 'Achzibah') Hebr.

i. 'Acco' following Jg 1:31; 'Ummah' Hebr.

j. 'and the Jordan' Gk; 'and in Judah the Jordan' Hebr.

k. The towns attributed to the tribe of Dan are situated to the west of the territory of Benjamin, between Ephraim and Judah, and for the most part in Canaanite territory. The Danites were not in fact able to settle in this territory; they were expelled by Amorite pressure, according to Jg 1:34–35, and later by the Philistines: *see* Jg 13–16. Their migration to the north, recalled here, v. 47, is related in Jg 18.

l. 'Silata' following part of the Gk and the modern name; 'Ithlah' Hebr.

m. 'Azor' following part of the Gk and the modern name; 'Jehud' Hebr.

n. 'and, by the sea, Jerakon' Gk; 'and the waters of the Jarkon and the Rakkon' Hebr.

o. The distribution of the territory ends with an editorial note on the share awarded personally to Joshua; the note is based on the information about his tomb. 24:30= Jg 2:9.

20 **a.** Ch. 20–21 complement the account of the territorial distribution. Ch. 20 is presented as the application of the law of asylum of Ex 21:13e. The figure of six towns, though without their names, had already been given in Nb 35:9seq. Dt 4:41–43 designated the three Transjordanian cities of refuge by name. Dt 19 ordains that three other towns shall be chosen, once Canaan has been conquered. This is what is done here, where the six towns are named. In fact, however, the institution of cities of refuge was probably not earlier than the reign of Solomon. The passages in brackets, missing from Gk, are sometimes taken word for word from Nb 35 and Dt 19.

Nb 35:1–8
‖1 Ch 6:39–66

The levitical cities [a]

21 The heads of families of the Levites then came to the priest, Eleazar, Joshua 1
son of Nun and the heads of families of the tribes of Israel—·they were then 2
at Shiloh in Canaan. They said to them, 'Through Moses, Yahweh ordered us to be
given towns to live in, with their pasture lands for our livestock.' ·In compliance 3
with Yahweh's order, the Israelites consequently and from their own heritage gave
the Levites the following towns with their pasture lands:

Lots were cast for the clans of the Kohathites: to those Levites who were sons of 4
Aaron the priest, fell thirteen towns from the tribes of Judah, Simeon and Benja-
min; ·to the other sons of Kohath, by clans, [b] ·fell ten towns from the tribes of 5, 6
Ephraim, Dan, and the half-tribe of Manasseh. To the sons of Gershon, by clans,
fell thirteen towns from the tribes of Issachar, Asher, Naphtali and the half-tribe
of Manasseh in Bashan. ·To the sons of Merari, by clans, fell twelve towns from 7
the tribes of Reuben, Gad and Zebulun.

The Israelites assigned these towns and their pasture lands to the Levites by lot, 8
as Yahweh had ordered through Moses.

The portion of the Kohathites

From the tribe of Judah and the tribe of Simeon, they gave the towns named 9
below. [c] ·The first portion was for the sons of Aaron, belonging to the clans of the 10
Kohathites, to the sons of Levi, since the first lot was theirs. ·They gave them 11
Kiriath-Arba, Anak's father's town—now Hebron—in the highlands of Judah,
with its surrounding pasture lands. ·The fields and villages of this town, however, 12
14:13–14 they gave to Caleb son of Jephunneh as his property. ·To the sons of Aaron the 13
priest they gave Hebron, a city of refuge for those who had killed, with its pasture
lands, as well as Libnah with its pasture lands, ·Jattir with its pasture lands, 14
Eshtemoa with its pasture lands, ·Holon with its pasture lands, Debir with its 15
pasture lands, ·Ashan [d] with its pasture lands, Juttah with its pasture lands, and 16
Beth-Shemesh with its pasture lands: nine towns taken from these two tribes;
and, from the tribe of Benjamin, Gibeon with its pasture lands, Geba with its 17
pasture lands, ·Anathoth with its pasture lands and Almon with its pasture lands: 18
four towns.

Total number of towns for the priests, the sons of Aaron: thirteen towns with 19
their pasture lands.

As regards the clans of the sons of Kohath, those Levites still left of the sons of 20
Kohath, the towns of their lot were taken from the tribe of Ephraim. ·They were 21
given Shechem, a city of refuge for those who had killed, with its pasture lands, in
the highlands of Ephraim, as well as Gezer with its pasture lands, ·Kibzaim with its 22
pasture lands, and Beth-Horon with its pasture lands: four towns; ·from the tribe 23
of Dan, Elteke with its pasture lands, Gibbethon with its pasture lands,
Aijalon with its pasture lands and Gath-Rimmon with its pasture lands: four towns; 24
and, from the half-tribe of Manasseh, Taanach with its pasture lands and Jibleam [e] 25
with its pasture lands: two towns.

In all: ten towns with their pasture lands for the remaining clans of the sons of 26
Kohath.

The portion of the sons of Gershon

To the sons of Gershon, of the levitical clans, were given: from the half-tribe of 27
Manasseh, Golan in Bashan, a city of refuge for those who had killed, with its
pasture lands, and Ashtaroth [f] with its pasture lands—two towns; ·from the tribe of 28
Issachar, Kishion with its pasture lands, Dobrath with its pasture lands,
Jarmuth with its pasture lands and En-Gannim with its pasture lands—four towns; 29
from the tribe of Asher, Mishal with its pasture lands, Abdon with its pasture 30
lands, ·Helkath with its pasture lands and Rehob with its pasture lands—four 31
towns; ·and, from the tribe of Naphtali, Kedesh in Galilee, a city of refuge for 32

those who had killed, with its pasture lands, Hammoth-Dor with its pasture lands and Kartan with its pasture lands—three towns.

33 Total number of towns of the Gershonites, by clans: thirteen towns with their pasture lands.

The portion of the sons of Merari

34 To the clans of the sons of Merari, the remainder of the Levites, fell: from the tribe of Zebulun, Jokneam with its pasture lands, Kartah with its pasture lands,
35 Rimmon[g] with its pasture lands and Nahalal with its pasture lands—four towns;
36 on the other side of the Jordan opposite Jericho, from the tribe of Reuben, Bezer in the desert, on the tableland, a city of refuge for those who had killed, with its
37 pasture lands, Jahaz with its pasture lands, ·Kedemoth with its pasture lands and
38 Mephaath with its pasture lands—four towns;[h] ·and, from the tribe of Gad, Ramoth in Gilead, a city of refuge for those who had killed, with its pasture lands,
39 Mahanaim with its pasture lands, ·Heshbon with its pasture lands and Jazer with its pasture lands—four towns.[i]

40 Total number of towns forming the lot of the sons of Merari by clans, of the remaining levitical clans: twelve towns.

41 The total number of towns for the Levites in Israelite territory was forty-eight
42 towns with their pasture lands. ·These towns consisted in each case of the town itself and the pasture land round it. This was the case with all the towns.

End of the distribution

43 This was how Yahweh gave the Israelites the entire country which he had sworn to
44 give to their ancestors. They took possession of it and settled in it. ·Yahweh granted them tranquillity on all their frontiers just as he had sworn to their ancestors and, of all their enemies, not one succeeded in resisting them. Yahweh
45 put all their enemies at their mercy. ·Of all the promises that Yahweh had made to the House of Israel, not one failed; all were fulfilled. 23:14 Is 55:11

III: THE CLOSE OF JOSHUA'S CAREER

A: THE RETURN OF THE EASTERN TRIBES THE QUESTION OF THEIR ALTAR[a]

The Transjordanian tribes are sent home

1 **22** Joshua then summoned the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of 1:12–18; 13:8–32
2 Manasseh ·and said to them, 'You have observed everything that Moses, Nb 32
servant of Yahweh, ordered you, and whenever I have given you an order you have
3 listened to me. ·You have not deserted your brothers, from long ago until today,

21 a. Levi is not an independent political unit and is awarded no territory, 13:14,33; 14:3–4; 18:7, but the Levites are allowed residence in certain towns and rights over the adjacent pastures, *see* Nb 35:1–8. This ch., one of the latest to be written, is a utopian systematisation of a state of affairs possibly dateable to the reign of Solomon when all the towns named were effectively under Israelite control. The list is perhaps governed by the division of the Levites after the founding of the Temple in Jerusalem; it includes the six cities of refuge, although these were designated for an entirely different purpose.

b. 'by their clans' conj.; *see* v. 7; 'of the clans of the tribe' Hebr.; as also in v. 6.

c. End of v. uncertain.

d. 'Ashan' Gk MSS, *see* 1 Ch 6:44; 'Ain' ('the spring') Hebr.

e. 'Jibleam' conj., *see* 17:11; Hebr. repeats 'Gath-Rimmon'.

f. 'Ashtaroth' Syr., *see* 1 Ch 4:32; 6:62; *be'eshterah* Hebr.

g. 'Rimmon' conj. following 19:13; 1 Ch 6:26; 'Dimnah' Hebr.

h. vv. 36–37, missing from MT, are included here with corrections from the Gk and 1 Ch 6:62–63.

i. 'four towns' Syr.; 'total of towns, four' Hebr.

22 a. Ch. 22 is composite: vv. 1–6 are deuteronomist and correspond to 1:12–18; vv. 7–9 add the half-tribe of Manasseh, which did not originally figure in the story; vv. 10–34 show signs of Priestly editing. The narrative does, however, draw on an ancient tradition, and perhaps preserves the memory of cultic rivalry between the sanctuary of Shiloh, *see* vv. 9 and 12, with its priesthood, *see* vv. 13seq., 30seq., and the Transjordanian tribes, who were perhaps regarded as living outside the Promised Land, which stopped at the Jordan.

keeping the observance of the commandment of Yahweh your God. ·Now that 4
Yahweh your God has granted your brothers the rest that he promised them, go
back to your tents, to the country belonging to you which Moses, servant of
Yahweh, gave you on the other side of the Jordan. ·But take great care to practise 5
the commandments and the Law which Moses, servant of Yahweh, has given you:
Dt 6:5c to love Yahweh your God, always to follow his paths, to keep his commandments,
to be loyal to him and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul.'
Joshua blessed them and sent them away, and they went home to their tents. 6
To one half of the tribe of Manasseh, Moses had given a territory in Bashan; to 7
the other half, Joshua gave another among their brothers on the west bank of the
Jordan. As Joshua sent them home to their tents, he blessed them ·and said to 8
them, 'You are going back to your tents with great wealth, with a great deal of
livestock, with silver and gold, bronze and iron and great quantities of clothing;
share the spoils of your enemies with your brothers.'

An altar is built beside the Jordan

The Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh returned home, 9
leaving the Israelites at Shiloh in Canaan, and made for Gilead, the territory which
belonged to them as a result of Yahweh's order given through Moses. ·When they 10
came to the stone circle by the Jordan, in Canaanite territory, the Reubenites, the
Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh built an altar there beside the Jordan, a
large, imposing altar.
This came to the ears of the Israelites. 'Look,' the word went round, 'the 11
Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh have built this altar on the
Canaanite side, near the stone circle by the Jordan, on the Israelites' bank.'
At this news, the whole community of the Israelites mustered at Shiloh, to march 12
against them and make war on them.

Reproaches addressed to the eastern tribes

Ex 6:25
Nb 25:7,11seq. The Israelites sent the priest Phinehas son of Eleazar to the Reubenites, the 13
Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh, in Gilead, ·and with him ten leading men, 14
one man from a leading family from each of the tribes of Israel, each of them being
head of his family in the clans of Israel. ·Having reached the Reubenites, the 15
Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh in Gilead, they said this:
'The whole community of Israel says as follows, "What do you mean by this 16
infidelity, [b] which you have committed against the God of Israel by now repudiating
your allegiance to Yahweh, and by building yourselves an altar with the intention
now of rebelling against Yahweh?
Nb 25:3–5
Dt 4:3 "Was the crime which we committed at Peor so slight—although we have not 17
managed to purify ourselves from that even now, in spite of the plague which has
ravaged the community of Yahweh—·that you must now repudiate your allegiance 18
to Yahweh? For since you are in rebellion against him today, tomorrow his anger
will be aroused against the whole community of Israel.
"Is the country in which you have settled unclean? Then cross over into the 19
country where Yahweh has settled, there where Yahweh's Dwelling now stands,
and settle among us. But do not rebel against Yahweh or involve us in your
7 rebellion by building a rival altar to the altar of Yahweh our God. ·When Achan 20
son of Zerah was unfaithful to the curse of destruction, did not the retribution
come down on the whole community of Israel, although he was only one man? Did
he not have to die for his crime?' "

The Transjordanian tribes justify their action

The Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh spoke in their turn 21
and answered the heads of the clans of Israel:
Dt 10:17 'The God of gods, [c] Yahweh, the God of gods, Yahweh well knows, and let 22
Israel know it too: if there has been rebellion or infidelity to Yahweh on our part,

23 may he refuse to save us today! ·And if we have built ourselves an altar with the intention of repudiating our allegiance to Yahweh and of presenting burnt offering Lv 1–3
and oblation or of offering communion sacrifices on it, may Yahweh himself call us
24 to account for it! ·The truth is, we have done this as a precaution: in the future,
your descendants might say to ours, "What connection do you have with Yahweh,
25 God of Israel? ·Has not Yahweh set the frontier of the Jordan between us and you,
you Reubenites and Gadites? You have no share in Yahweh." Thus, your descendants would be the cause of stopping ours from fearing Yahweh.
26 'So we said to each other, "Let us build this altar, not for burnt offerings or other
27 sacrifices ·but as a witness between us and you and between our descendants after us, attesting that we too have the right to worship Yahweh, in his presence, with our burnt offerings, our victims and our communion sacrifices. And so, in the future your descendants will not be able to say to ours: You have no share in
28 Yahweh." ·And we furthermore said, "If ever it were to happen that they did say this either to us or to our descendants in the future, we should reply: Look at this structure, Yahweh's altar, made by our ancestors not for burnt offerings or other
29 sacrifices but as a witness between us and you." ·Far be it from us to rebel against Yahweh or now to repudiate our allegiance to Yahweh by building an altar for burnt offerings or oblations or sacrifices, in rivalry with the altar of Yahweh our God that stands before his Dwelling!'

Peace restored

30 When the priest Phinehas, the leaders of the community and the heads of the clans of Israel who were with him, heard the words spoken by the Gadites, the Reuben-
31 ites and the Manassehites, they approved of them. ·The priest Phinehas son of Eleazar then said to the Reubenites, the Gadites and the Manassehites, 'Today, we can see that Yahweh is among us, since you have not been unfaithful to Yahweh in this matter; this means that you have spared the Israelites from Yahweh's avenging hand.'
32 The priest Phinehas son of Eleazar and the leaders left the Reubenites and the Gadites and went back from Gilead to Canaan and the Israelites, to whom they
33 reported the answer. ·The Israelites were pleased to hear this; the Israelites gave thanks to God and spoke no more of marching against them to make war on them
34 and to ravage the country inhabited by the Reubenites and the Gadites. ·The Reubenites and the Gadites called the altar . . . ,[d] 'Because', they said, 'it will be a witness between us that Yahweh is God.' 24:27d Gn 31:48,52

B: LAST DISCOURSE OF JOSHUA[a]

Joshua sums up his work

1 2 **23** Now long after Yahweh had given Israel rest from all the enemies surrounding them—Joshua was old now, far advanced in years—·Joshua summoned all Israel, their elders, leaders, judges and officials, and said to them, 'I 13:1;14:10; 24:29
3 myself am old, far advanced in years; ·you for your part have witnessed all that Yahweh your God has done to all these nations for your sake; Yahweh your God
4 himself has fought for you. ·Look, these nations still remaining, and all the nations which I have exterminated from the Jordan all the way to the Great Sea in the 13:6

b. The action of the Reubenites and Gadites is condemned, here and at v. 19, as a violation of the law of the one, central sanctuary, Dt 12:5, laid down long after this incident.

c. The formula does not imply any polytheism on the part of the Israelites but is a literary archaism derived from Gn 33:20; 46:3; Nb 16:22; *see also* Dt 10:17; Ps 50:1; Dn 11:36.

d. The name has disappeared from the text; the word 'witness' must have been part of it; *see* the explanation of the name Gilead in Gn 31:47–48.

23 a. Farewell discourse, the proper conclusion to which appears in Jg 2:6–9; compare the last discourse of Moses, Dt 31, but also the farewells of Samuel, 1 S 12, the testament of David, 1 K 2:1–9, and the last words of Mattathias, 1 M 2:49–68. In the first deuteronomic edition of the book, this ch. presumably served as conclusion, before the addition of ch. 24.

west, [b] I have allotted to you as the heritage for your tribes. •Yahweh your God will 5
himself drive them out before you; he will dispossess them before you and you will
take possession of their country, as Yahweh your God has promised you.

Rules of conduct when living among foreigners

'So be very firm about keeping and doing everything written in the Book of the 6
Law of Moses, not swerving from that either to right or to left. •Never mix with the 7
Dt 7:1 peoples who are still left beside you. Do not utter the names of their gods, do not
Ex 23:13 swear by them, do not serve them and do not bow down to them. •On the con- 8
trary, you must be loyal to Yahweh your God as you have been till now.
Yahweh has dispossessed great and powerful nations before you, and no one so 9
Lv 26:8 far has been able to resist you. •One man of you was able to rout a thousand of 10
Dt 32:30 them, since Yahweh your God was himself fighting for you, as he had promised
Dt 6:5c you. •Be very careful, as you value your life, to love Yahweh your God. 11

'But should you in any way relapse, if you make friends with the remnant of 12
Ex 34:16 these nations still living beside you, if you intermarry with them, if you mix with
Dt 7:1–6
Jg 2:2–3 them and they with you, •then know for certain that Yahweh your God will stop 13
dispossessing these nations before you, and for you they will be a snare, a pitfall,
thorns [c] in your sides and thistles in your eyes, until you vanish from this fine
country given you by Yahweh your God.

'Today, you see, I am going the way of all the earth. Acknowledge with all your 14
21:45 heart and soul that of all the promises made to you by Yahweh your God, not one
1 K 2:2 has failed: all have been fulfilled—not one has failed.

Dt 28 'As every promise made to you by Yahweh your God has been fulfilled for you, 15
by the same token Yahweh will fulfil all his threats against you, even to exterminating you from this fine country given you by Yahweh your God.

'For if you violate the covenant which Yahweh your God has imposed on you, if 16
you go and serve other gods and bow down to them, then Yahweh's anger will be
Dt 4:26 roused against you and you will quickly vanish from the fine country which he has
given you.'

C: THE GREAT ASSEMBLY AT SHECHEM [a]

24 Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel together at Shechem; [b] he then 1
summoned all the elders of Israel, its leaders, judges and officials, and they
presented themselves in God's presence. •Joshua then said to all the people: 2

'Yahweh, the God of Israel, says this, "From time immemorial, your ancestors,
Gn 11:27–32 Terah, father of Abraham and Nahor, lived beyond the River, and served other
Gn 12–24; 35:2–4 gods. •I then brought your ancestor Abraham from beyond the River and led him 3
through the length and breadth of Canaan. I increased his descendants and I gave
Gn 25:19–26; 27;36:1–8 him Isaac. •To Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau. To Esau I gave possession of the 4
Gn 46:1–7 mountainous country of Seir. Jacob and his sons went down into Egypt. •I then 5
Ex 3–15 sent Moses and Aaron, and plagued Egypt with the wonders that I worked [c] there;
finally I brought you out. •I brought your ancestors out of Egypt, and you came to 6
the Sea; the Egyptians pursued your ancestors with chariots and horsemen, to the
Sea of Reeds. •They then called to Yahweh, and he spread a thick fog between you 7
and the Egyptians, and made the sea go back on them and cover them. You saw
with your own eyes what I did in Egypt. Then, for a long while, you lived in the
desert. •I then brought you into the country of the Amorites, who used to live on 8
Nb 21:21–35 Dt 2:26–3:11 the further side of the Jordan; they made war on you and I put them at your mercy;
after which, you took possession of their country, since I destroyed them before
Nb 22–24 you. •Next, Balak son of Zippor, king of Moab, rose to make war on Israel, and 9
sent for Balaam son of Beor to come and curse you. •But I would not listen to 10
Balaam; instead, he had to bless you, and I saved you from his power.

"You then crossed the Jordan and came to Jericho, but the inhabitants of Jericho 11

made war on you: Amorites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hittites, Girgashites, Hivites Dt 7:1a
12 and Jebusites, and I put them all at your mercy. •I sent hornets ahead of you, which Dt 7:20
drove out the two Amorite kings before you; this was not the work of your sword
13 or of your bow. •And now I have given you a country for which you have not toiled, Dt 6:10–13
towns you have not built, although you live in them, vineyards and olive groves
you have not planted, although you eat their fruit."

Israel chooses Yahweh

14 'So now, fear Yahweh and serve him truly and sincerely; banish the gods whom Gn 35:2
15 your ancestors served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve Yahweh. •But if Ezk 20:7
serving Yahweh seems a bad thing to you, today you must make up your minds
whom you do mean to serve, whether the gods whom your ancestors served beyond
the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose country you are now living. As
regards my family and me, we shall serve Yahweh.'
16 The people replied, 'Far be it from us to desert Yahweh and to serve other gods!
17 Yahweh our God was the one who brought us and our ancestors here from Egypt, Ex 13:3
from the place of slave-labour, who worked those great wonders before our eyes Dt 5:6
and who kept us safe all along the way we travelled and among all the peoples
18 through whom we passed. •And Yahweh has driven all the nations out for us,
including the Amorites who used to live in the country. We too shall serve Yahweh,
for he is our God.'
19 Joshua then said to the people, 'You will not be able to serve Yahweh, since he
is a holy God, he is a jealous God who will not tolerate either your misdeeds or Lv 17:1a
20 your sins. •If you desert Yahweh and serve the foreigners' gods, he will turn and Dt 4:24;6:15
maltreat you anew and, in spite of having been good to you in the past, will destroy
21 you.' •The people replied to Joshua, 'No! Yahweh is the one we mean to serve.'
22 Joshua then said to the people, 'You are witnesses to yourselves that you have
23 chosen Yahweh, to serve him.' They replied, 'Witnesses we are!' •'Then banish the
foreign gods which you have with you and give your allegiance to Yahweh, God of
24 Israel!' •The people replied to Joshua, 'Yahweh our God is the one whom we shall
serve; his voice we shall obey!'

The covenant at Shechem

25 That day Joshua made a covenant for the people; he laid down a statute and Ex 15:25
26 ordinance for them at Shechem. •Joshua wrote these words in the Book of the Law
of God. He then took a large stone and set it up there, under the oak tree in Gn 12:6; 35:4 Dt 11:30
27 Yahweh's sanctuary. •Joshua then said to all the people, 'Look, this stone will be a Jg 9:6 Jg 2:6
witness to us, since it has heard all the words that Yahweh has spoken to us: it will
28 be a witness against you,[d] in case you should deny your God.' •Joshua then
dismissed the people, every one to his own heritage. Jg 2:6

b. 'all the nations which I have exterminated' is accidentally misplaced in Hebr. after 'the Jordan'. • 'all the way to the Great Sea' Gk; 'and the Great Sea' Hebr.

c. 'thorns' Gk, *see* Nb 33:55; Hebr. unintelligible.

24 a. Part One (vv. 2–13): Joshua asks his hearers to recognise God's interventions on behalf of Israel, *see* the profession of faith in Dt 6:21–24 and 26:5–9. Part Two (vv. 14–24): all declare for Yahweh and renounce gentile gods. Part Three (vv. 25–28): the covenant is adopted and its statutes committed to writing. This ch. was added either during or after the Exile, but the tradition which it preserves is an ancient one. The religion of Yahweh, introduced into Canaan by the group led by Joshua, is proposed by him to other groups who have not yet heard of it. They have not been to Egypt and have not benefited from the marvels of the Exodus and of the revelation in Sinai; these groups, nonetheless, are not Canaanites and share a common origin with Joshua's group: the people concerned are the tribes of the north who, by this pact, accept the religion of Yahweh and thus become part of the people of God.

b. For a similar event, *see* 8:30–35. Shechem with its central position was suitable for tribal gatherings, *see also* 1 K 12; and its history made it the ideal place for making this religious pact: Abraham had built an altar there, Gn 12:6–7, Jacob had bought land there, Gn 33:18–20, and there had buried the idols brought from Mesopotamia, Gn 35:2–4.

c. 'the wonders that I worked' Gk MSS, Syr.; 'what I worked' Hebr.

d. Just like the heap of stones, Gn 31:48,52, the altar, Jos 22:26seq., and the *stele*, Is 19:19–20, set up as 'witnesses'.

D: TWO ADDITIONS

‖Jg 2:6–10 The death of Joshua [e]

After this, Joshua son of Nun, servant of Yahweh,[f] died; he was a hundred and ten 29
years old. ·He was buried on the estate which he had received as his heritage, at 30
Timnath-Serah which lies in the highlands of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash.[g]
Israel served Yahweh throughout the lifetime of Joshua and throughout the life- 31
time of those elders who outlived Joshua and had known all the deeds which
Yahweh had done for the sake of Israel.

The bones of Joseph. The death of Eleazar [h]

Gn 50:24–25 Ex 13:19 Gn 33:18–20 As regards the bones of Joseph, which the Israelites had brought from Egypt, these 32
were buried at Shechem in the plot of ground which Jacob had bought for a
hundred pieces of silver from the sons of Hamor father of Shechem, and which had
become[i] the heritage of the sons of Joseph. ·Eleazar son of Aaron then died and 33
was buried at Gibeah, the town of his son Phinehas, which had been given to him
in the highlands of Ephraim.[j]

e. vv. 28–31 are almost exactly repeated at the beginning of the second introduction to Judges, 2:6–10, showing how the two books have been edited together.

f. This same title was given to Moses, 1:1; Ex 14:31; *see* Dt 34:5, and later to David, Ps 18: preface; Ps 89:3,20, presages of the 'servant of Yahweh', Is 42:1a.

g. LXX adds: 'There (in Timnath-Serah) they laid with him, in the tomb where they had buried him, the flint knives with which he had circumcised the Israelites at Galgala when he had led them out of Egypt as the Lord ordered him; and they are still there today.' Even today, a great number of prehistoric worked flints are to be found round the village now standing on the site of Timnath-Serath.

h. Joshua and Eleazar die where Moses and Aaron should have died—in the Promised Land. Even the bones of Joseph are brought back to the country originally given to the Patriarchs. Thus, with the Book of Joshua, the return from Egypt is completed.

i. 'which had become' versions; 'they (the bones) had become' Hebr.

j. LXX adds: 'The Israelites then went away, each to his house and each to his town. The Israelites worshipped Astarte and Ashtaroth and the gods of the nations round them. Hence, the Lord put them into the power of Eglon, king of Moab, who oppressed them for eighteen years.' *See* Jg 3:14.

THE BOOK OF

JUDGES

I: FIRST INTRODUCTION[a]

SUMMARY OF THE SETTLEMENT IN CANAAN

The settlement of Judah, Simeon, Caleb and the Kenites

1 Now after Joshua's death, the Israelites consulted Yahweh, asking, 'Which of us is to march on the Canaanites first, to make war on them?' ·And Yahweh replied, 'Judah is to march on them first; I am delivering the country into his hands.' ·Judah then said to his brother Simeon,[b] 'March with me into the territory allotted to me; we shall make war on the Canaanites, and then I in my turn shall march into your territory with you.' And Simeon marched with him. ·So Judah marched on them, and Yahweh delivered the Canaanites and Perizzites into their hands, and they defeated them at Bezek—ten thousand of them![c] ·At Bezek they came upon Adoni-Bezek; they joined battle with him and defeated the Canaanites and Perizzites. ·Adoni-Bezek took to flight, but they chased and captured him and cut off his thumbs and big toes. ·Adoni-Bezek said, 'Seventy kings with their thumbs and big toes cut off used to pick up the crumbs under my table. As I did, God does to me.' He was taken to Jerusalem, and there he died. ·(The sons of Judah attacked Jerusalem and took it: they put its people to the sword and set fire to the city.)

Ex 33:7e
20:18
Jos 10:3
Jos 10:1–27
1:21
Jos 15:63
1 S 5:6g

After this the sons of Judah went down to make war on the Canaanites who were living in the highlands, the Negeb and the lowlands.[d] ·Judah next marched on the Canaanites living in Hebron—the name of Hebron in olden days was Kiriath-Arba—and beat Sheshai, Ahiman and Talmai. ·From there, he marched on the inhabitants of Debir—the name of Debir in olden days was Kiriath-Sepher. Caleb said, 'To the man who conquers and captures Kiriath-Sepher, I shall give my daughter Achsah as wife.' ·The man who captured it was Othniel son of Kenaz, younger brother of Caleb, who gave him his daughter Achsah as wife. When she arrived, he urged her[e] to ask her father for arable land, but when she

Jos 9:1; 10:40
‖Jos 15:13–19
Jos 10:36–39; 11:21–22
Jos 14:6b
3:9–10

1 a. Jg 1 assembles material giving a very different picture of the conquest from that in Jos 1–12: the conquest is the result of individual tribal action and far from complete. As far as the settlement of the south is concerned, this account is much nearer to historical reality than the schematised version in Jos 10. In Jg, we have Yahwistic traditions, which emphasise the part played by Judah, *see* vv. 9 and 17; these were removed in the first editing of Jos, as consistent neither with its plan nor with its theological intentions. Some were restored in a further editing of Jos, *see* 14:6–15; 15:13–19. The Deuteronomic editor of Jg recovered these traditions but, to avoid conflict with Jos, dated these events to a time after Joshua's death, v. 1.

b. These are the two tribes of the south. *see* v. 17seq., which seem to have entered Canaan without making the detour through Transjordan. They had a long-established history, independent of that of the other tribes, *see* ch. 5; Nb 14:39; 21:1.

c. It seems that there is some confusion between this Adoni-Bezek king of Bezek, and Adoni-Zedek king of Jerusalem, *see* Jos 10:1–3, whence the mention of that city, v. 7, and the later gloss of v. 8 which contradicts v. 21 (and *see* 2 S 5:6seq.). The victory at Bezek raises a problem, the only known town of this name lying between Shechem and Beth-Shean in the region then occupied by the Perizzites, but a long way from the territory of Judah and Simeon. It is perhaps a memory preserved from the patriarchal age, when Simeon lived in central Palestine.

d. Editorial introduction to the rest of the narrative, ascribing conquests to Judah which were in fact achieved by groups only later assimilated to Judah: Caleb (conquest of Hebron, v. 20, *see* Jos 14:6seq.), Othniel (capture of Debir, v. 13, *see* Jos 15:15–17), the Kenites (occupation of the Negeb of Arad, v. 16) and Simeon (capture of Hormah, v. 17).

e. 'he (Othniel) urged her' Gk; 'she urged him' Hebr.

alighted from the donkey and Caleb asked her, 'What is the matter?' ·she said to 15
him, 'Grant me a blessing! As the land you have given me is the Negeb, give me
springs of water, too!' So Caleb gave her what she wanted: the upper springs and
the lower springs.

Ex 2:16f
Nb 10:29–32;
24:21k
The sons of Hobab the Kenite, father-in-law of Moses,[f] marched up with the 16
sons of Judah from the City of Palm Trees into the desert of Judah lying in the
Negeb of Arad, where they went and settled among the people.

Nb 21:1–3
Judah then set out with his brother Simeon. They beat the Canaanites who lived 17
in Zephath and delivered it over to the curse of destruction; hence the town was
given the name of Hormah. ·Judah then captured Gaza and its territory, Ashkelon 18
and its territory, Ekron and its territory.[g] ·And Yahweh was with Judah, who 19b
Jos 17:16,18
made himself master of the highlands; ·he could not, however, dispossess the 19a
inhabitants of the plain, since they had iron chariots.

1:10+
Dt 1:28g
As Moses had directed, Hebron was given to Caleb, and he drove the three sons 20
of Anak out of it. ·As regards the Jebusites living in Jerusalem, the sons of 21
Benjamin did not dispossess them, and the Jebusites have been living in Jerusalem
with the sons of Benjamin ever since.[h]

The capture of Bethel[i]

Similarly, the House of Joseph marched on Bethel, and Yahweh was with them. 22
Gn 28:18
Jos 7:2b
Jos 18:13
The House of Joseph made a reconnaissance of Bethel. (In olden days, the name 23
of the town was Luz.) ·The scouts saw a man coming out of the town and said to 24
him, 'Show us how to get into the town and we shall show you faithful love.' ·And 25
when he had shown them a way into the town, they put the town to the sword but
Jos 6:23
let the man and his whole clan go. ·The man went off to the country of the Hittites 26
and built a town which he called Luz; and that has been its name ever since.

The northern tribes

Jos 17:11–13
Manasseh did not dispossess Beth-Shean and its dependencies, nor Taanach and 27
its dependencies, nor the inhabitants of Dor and its dependencies, nor the inhabi-
tants of Ibleam and its dependencies, nor the inhabitants of Megiddo and its
dependencies; in those parts the Canaanites held their ground. ·But when the 28
Jos 16:10
Israelites became stronger, they subjected the Canaanites to forced labour,
although they did not dispossess them.[k] ·Nor did Ephraim dispossess the Canaan- 29
ites living in Gezer;[l] thus, the Canaanites went on living in Gezer with him.
Jos 19:10–16
Zebulun did not dispossess the inhabitants of Kitron or of Nahalol. The Canaanites 30
Jos 19:24–31
lived on with Zebulun but were subjected to forced labour. ·Asher did not dispos- 31
sess the inhabitants of Acco, nor those of Sidon, of Mahalab,[m] of Achzib, of
Helbah, of Aphek or of Rehob. ·So the Asherites lived among the Canaanite 32
Jos 19:32–39
inhabitants of the country, not having dispossessed them. ·Naphtali did not dispos- 33
sess the inhabitants of Beth-Shemesh or of Beth-Anath; they settled among the
Canaanite inhabitants of the country, but the inhabitants of Beth-Shemesh and of
Beth-Anath were subjected to forced labour for them. ·The Amorites drove the 34
17:1b
Jos 19:47
Danites back into the highlands and would not let them come down into the plain.
The Amorites held their ground at Har-Heres and Shaalbim, but when the hand 35
of the House of Joseph grew heavier, they were subjected to forced labour.

Nb 34:3–5
Jos 15:3
2 K 14:7
(The territory of the Edomites[n] begins at the Ascent of Scorpions, runs to the 36
Rock and continues on upwards.)

6:7–10
The Angel of Yahweh tells Israel of disasters to come[a]

2 The Angel of Yahweh[b] went up from Gilgal to Bethel[c] and said, 'I have 1
brought you out of Egypt and led you into this country, which I promised on
Dt 7:1–5
oath to your ancestors. I said, "I shall never break my covenant with you. ·You for 2
your part must make no covenant with the inhabitants of this country; you will
destroy their altars." But you have not listened to my voice. What is the reason for
this? ·Very well, I now say this, "I am not going to drive these nations out before 3

you. They will become your oppressors,[d] and their gods will be a snare for you." '
4 When the angel of Yahweh had spoken these words to all the Israelites, the people
5 began to wail at the top of their voices. ·And they called the name of the place
Bochim,[e] and offered sacrifices to Yahweh there. 20:26

II: SECOND INTRODUCTION

GENERAL REFLECTIONS ON THE PERIOD OF THE JUDGES[f]

6 Joshua having dismissed the people, the Israelites then went away, each one to his ‖Jos 24:28
7 own heritage, to occupy the country. ·The people served Yahweh throughout the ‖Jos 24:31
lifetime of Joshua and throughout the lifetime of those elders who outlived Joshua
and had known all the great deeds which Yahweh had done for the sake of Israel.
8 Joshua son of Nun, servant of Yahweh, was a hundred and ten years old when he ‖Jos 24:29–30
9 died. ·He was buried on the estate which he had received as his heritage at
10 Timnath-Heres in the highlands of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash. ·And when Jos 19:50
that whole generation had been gathered to its ancestors, another generation
followed it which knew neither Yahweh nor the deeds which he had done for the
sake of Israel.[g]

Religious interpretation of the period of the Judges[h]

11, 12 The Israelites then did what is evil in Yahweh's eyes and served the Baals. ·They
deserted Yahweh, God of their ancestors, who had brought them out of Egypt,
and they followed other gods, from those of the surrounding peoples. They bowed
13 down to these; they provoked Yahweh; ·they deserted Yahweh to serve Baal and
14 Astartes.[i] ·Then Yahweh's anger grew hot against Israel. He handed them over to
pillagers who plundered them; he delivered them to the enemies surrounding
15 them, and they were no longer able to resist their enemies. ·Whenever they

f. 'The sons of Hobab the Kenite' versions, *see* 4:11; 'the sons of a Kenite' Hebr.

g. Judah did not conquer these towns in Philistia, either at the time of the settlement or later, and this v. is in contradiction with v. 19[b]. LXX overcomes the difficulty by inserting a negative: 'Judah did not conquer . . .'. Hebr. possibly reflects and amplifies David's victories over the Philistines, 2 S 5:17–25; 8:1.

h. Jerusalem was certainly reckoned as a Benjaminite town, Jos 18:28, but was not in fact conquered until it was taken by David, 2 S 5:6–9. The passage was interpolated in Jos 15:63, with the substitution of Judah for Benjamin.

i. The capture of Bethel owing to the treachery of one of its inhabitants does not figure in the account of the conquest in Jos.

j. In contrast with the triumphs ascribed to Judah in the first part of the ch., the second part is devoted to the checks sustained by the northern tribes.

k. These towns were not actually conquered until the early days of the monarchy, 1 K 9:15–22.

l. On the Jerusalem–Jaffa road, dominating the Philistine plain. The southern tribes were thus almost completely cut off from the northern ones.

m. 'Mahalab' following Jos 19:29; 'Ahlab' Hebr.; 'Helbah' is presumably a doublet.

n. 'Edomites' Gk; 'Amorites' Hebr. The v. is a gloss.

2 **a.** The deuteronomic editor, having added ch. 1 to the book, now gives a theological explanation for the partial failure of the conquest, referring back to Jos 23:12–13. He attaches this teaching to the explanation of a place-name in the region of Bethel, vv. 4–5.

b. God himself in visible form, *see* Gn 16:7c; cf. the apparition to Joshua near Gilgal, Jos 5:13–15. On Gilgal, *see* Jos 4:19b.

c. 'Bethel' Gk; 'Bochim' Hebr.

d. 'oppressors' versions; 'on your flanks' Hebr.

e. 'Bochim': 'the Weepers', unidentified place; *see* perhaps the 'Oak of Tears', near Bethel, Gn 35:8.

f. The introduction to the accounts of the Judges, 2:6–3:6, is constructed round 2:11–19, which, in the first edition of the book, immediately preceded 3:7seq. vv. 6–10 form the link with Jos, the concluding vv. of which they repeat (as Ezr 1:1–3 repeat 2 Ch 36:22–23). vv. 2:20–3:6 have been added to explain the persistence of foreign nations in Israelite territory.

g. This v. does not occur in the parallel passage of Jos 24. The death of Joshua and of the generation of the conquest leaves the way free for Israel to lapse into infidelity.

h. Here, the first deuteronomic editor of the book states the theme to be restated in the history of each of the major Judges (*see* 3:7c), 3:7–9,12–15; 4:1seq.; 6:10; 10:6seq.; etc.: Israel deserts Yahweh for Baal, Yahweh hands Israel over to oppressors, Israel cries to Yahweh, Yahweh sends Israel a saviour; and the cycle begins again. This theological view of history, based on the assumption that the judges succeeded one another in the chronological order given in the book and that each acted for the whole nation, hardly corresponds to historical fact, the book being a compilation of originally independent accounts of local heroes, to whom an arbitrary relationship in time has been ascribed.

i. In the Bible the phrase 'Baal and Astarte' or, in the plural, 'the Baals and Astartes' is the common expression for the Canaanite divinities. Baal, 'the Lord', is the divine male principle, often regarded as owner of the soil. Astarte, the Assyrian Ishtar, is the goddess of love and fecundity. The name Asherah, another female divinity of the same type, *see* Ex 34:13e, is sometimes used instead, Jg 3:7; 2 K 23:4.

Dt 28:15–46 mounted an expedition, Yahweh's hand was there to foil them, as Yahweh had told them and as Yahweh had sworn to them, so that they were in dire distress.

Yahweh then appointed them judges,[j] who rescued them from the hands of their 16
8:27 plunderers. ·But even to their judges they refused to listen. They prostituted 17
themselves[k] to other gods and bowed down before these. Very quickly they left the path which their ancestors had trodden in obedience to the orders of Yahweh; they did not follow their example. ·When Yahweh appointed judges for them, 18
Yahweh was with the judge and rescued them from the hands of their enemies as long as the judge lived, since Yahweh relented at their groans under their persecutors and oppressors. ·But once the judge was dead, they relapsed into even 19
worse corruption than their ancestors. They followed other gods; they served them and bowed before them and would not give up the practices and stubborn ways of their ancestors at all.

Why foreign nations survived in Canaan[l]

Yahweh's anger then blazed out against Israel, and he said, 'Since this people has 20
broken the covenant which I laid down for their ancestors, since they have not
2:3 listened to my voice, ·in future I shall not drive before them any one of those 21
nations which Joshua left when he died, ·in order, by means of them, to put Israel 22
to the test, to see whether or not they would tread the paths of Yahweh as once
Jos 13:1 their ancestors had trodden them.' ·Hence, Yahweh allowed these nations to 23
remain; he did not hurry to drive them out, and did not deliver them into the hands of Joshua.

3 These are the nations which Yahweh allowed to remain, by their means to put 1
all those Israelites to the test who had not experienced any of the Canaanite wars ·(this was only to instruct the Israelites' descendants, to teach them the art of 2
1:27–35 war, those at least who had not experienced it previously): ·the five chiefs of the 3
‖Jos 13:2–6 Philistines, all the Canaanites, the Sidonians, and the Hittites[a] who lived in the range of the Lebanon, from the uplands of Baal-Hermon to the Pass of Hamath.
They were used to put Israel to the test and see if they would keep the orders 4
which Yahweh had given their ancestors through Moses. ·The Israelites lived 5
Dt 7:1a among the Canaanites, Hittites and Amorites, the Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites; ·they married their daughters, they gave their own sons to their daughters 6
and they served their gods.

III: HISTORY OF THE JUDGES[b]

A: OTHNIEL[c]

2:13i The Israelites did what is evil in Yahweh's eyes. They forgot Yahweh their God 7
and served Baals and Asherahs. ·Then Yahweh's anger blazed out against Israel: 8
he handed them over to Cushan-Rishathaim king of Edom,[d] and the Israelites were enslaved to Cushan-Rishathaim for eight years.

The Israelites then cried to Yahweh and Yahweh raised for the Israelites a 9
1:13 deliverer who rescued them, Othniel son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother.
Jos 15:17
•6:34; 11:29; 14:6 The spirit of Yahweh was on him; he became judge in Israel and set out for war. 10
1 S 10:6; 16:13 Yahweh delivered Cushan-Rishathaim king of Edom into his hands, and he
Is 11:2c triumphed over Cushan-Rishathaim. ·The country then had peace for forty years. 11
•3:30;5:31; 8:28
Jos 11:23; 14:15 Othniel son of Kenaz then died.

B: EHUD[e]

Again the Israelites began doing what is evil in Yahweh's eyes, and Yahweh 12
strengthened Eglon king of Moab against Israel, since they were doing what is evil

13 in Yahweh's eyes. ·Eglon in conjunction with the sons of Ammon and Amalek
14 marched on Israel, beat them and captured the City of Palm Trees. ·The Israelites
were enslaved to Eglon king of Moab for eighteen years.
15 The Israelites then cried to Yahweh, and Yahweh raised a deliverer for them,
Ehud son of Gera, a Benjaminite; he was left-handed. The Israelites appointed
16 him to take their tribute to Eglon king of Moab. ·Ehud made himself a short
sword—it was double-edged and a foot and a half long—and strapped it under his
17 clothes on his right thigh. ·He presented the tribute to Eglon king of Moab. This
18 Eglon was a very fat man. ·Having presented the tribute, Ehud sent away the men
19 who had been carrying it; ·but he himself, on reaching the Idols which are near Jos 4:19b
Gilgal,[f] went back and said, 'I have a secret message for you, O king.' The king
20 commanded silence, and all his attendants withdrew. ·Ehud went up to him; he
was sitting in his private room upstairs, where it was cool. Ehud said to him, 'I have
a message from God for you, O king.' The latter immediately rose from his seat.
21 Then Ehud, reaching with his left hand, drew the dagger he was carrying on his
22 right thigh and thrust it into the king's belly. ·The hilt too went in after the blade,
and the fat closed over the blade, since Ehud did not pull the dagger out of his belly
23 again.[g] ·Ehud went out through the privies, having shut and bolted the doors of
the upstairs room behind him.
24 When he had gone, the servants came back and looked; the doors of the upstairs
room were bolted. They thought, 'He is probably covering his feet[h] in the inner
25 part of the cool room.' ·They waited until they became embarrassed, but still he
did not open the doors of the upstairs room. Eventually, they took the key and
opened the door; and there lay their master, dead, on the ground.
26 Meanwhile, Ehud had got away, passed the Idols and made good his escape to
27 safety in Seirah. ·Once there, he sounded the horn in the highlands of Ephraim,

j. *see* 3:7*b*.

k. Customary figure of speech for idol-worship, *see* Lv 17:7; Dt 31:16; Is 1:21; Ezk 16:16; Ho 1:2.

l. According to 2:11–15; *see also* 2:3, the foreign nations were left as a punishment for the infidelities of Israel. Here, however, their presence is explained as a way of putting Israel's fidelity to the test, vv. 22–23; 3:1,4. The gloss, 3:2, offers another explanation: to maintain the warrior spirit. Other reasons are given in Ex 23:29 and Dt 7:22: to prevent the country from being overrun with wild animals; and in Ws 12:3–22: to allow the former inhabitants time to repent.

3 **a.** 'Hittites', following Jos 11:3 and 2 S 24:6; 'Hivites' Hebr.

b. It is customary to call those judges 'major', whose history is related in some detail: Othniel, Ehud, Deborah (and Barak), Gideon, Jephthah, Samson; and those judges 'minor' who receive only a brief mention: Shamgar, Tola, Jair, Ibzan, Elon, Abdon. The distinction is not made in the text but it approximately corresponds to two different types of person presented in it. The first are raised up by God to deliver the people from oppression; they are charismatic leaders and saviours. The second also clearly fulfil a function, but it is not so easy to say exactly what it is. They 'judge', and this includes administering justice but goes beyond it. The same verb, though rarely in Hebrew, in other western-semitic languages often means 'to govern', 'judge' then being synonymous with 'king'. With the 'Judge' (*shophet*) may be compared the 'Suffetes' of Tyre and Carthage. The precision of the figures given for the time while each was in power suggests a good historical source, but the extension of their authority to the whole nation, and their chronological succession, seem to be of secondary construction. The author of Jg extends the function to those liberating heroes whose stories he has collected. And he represents them too as having 'judged' Israel, and their succession, filled out by the 'minor' judges to correspond to the number of the twelve tribes, is used by him to fill the time-gap between the death of Joshua and the accession of Saul. In fact, the authority of the judges extended over a town and its surrounding district, representing a stage intermediate between tribal government and monarchy.

c. This brief account is puzzling. Othniel is certainly the same man as the conqueror of Debir, at the time of the settlement. The oppressor is Cushan-Rishathaim king of Aram-Naharaim according to the Hebr., that is to say, of Upper Mesopotamia. Presented thus, the episode is improbable. More probably, the name Aram is an early misreading for Edom, to which Naharaim has been added later under the influence of Gn. An Edomite attempt to gain a footing in southern Palestine would not be surprising. The whole passage is by the deuteronomic editor, who seems to have used an ancient tradition current in the south to give Judah, having absorbed the Calebites, a place in his gallery of judges.

d. 'Edom' conj.; 'Aram' Hebr. (as also in v. 10), suppressing 'Naharaim'. • The king's name means 'Cushan-of-double-wickedness'; an ancient name perhaps, derisively modified.

e. The story postulates that the Moabites have crossed the River Arnon, occupied the 'Plains of Moab' and crossed the Jordan: their king resides at Jericho (the 'City of Palm Trees'). They are thus in the territory of Benjamin. Their expansion presumably corresponds to the weakening of the tribe of Reuben, at the beginning of the period of the judges. Interference by the Deuteronomic editor is minimal here: vv. 12,15[a] and 30. He uses a story perhaps formerly told at Gilgal, v. 19, in which Ehud the Benjaminite's ruse was related with satisfaction and no moral scruples. The extension of the action to the whole of Israel, vv. 27–29, is secondary, but possibly earlier than the deuteronomist's use of the story.

f. These stone idols (*pesilim*), well known to local tradition, occur as landmarks, here and at v. 26. We do not know what they were, but the stones set up by Joshua, Jos 4:19–20, would hardly have acquired so disrespectful a name.

g. Following Gk, Hebr. adds 'and took out the *parshedonah*', or 'and he went out through the *parshedonah*', an unknown word. This is perhaps a doublet of the beginning of the next v. 'he went out through the privies' where 'privies' seems the most plausible translation, *see* v. 24, for a word which is used nowhere else.

h. Euphemism: to relieve nature.

and the Israelites came down from the hills with him at their head. ·And he said to 28
them, 'Follow me, because Yahweh has delivered your enemy Moab into your
hands.' So they followed him, seized the fords of the Jordan against Moab and
allowed no one to cross. ·On that occasion they beat the Moabites, some ten 29
thousand men, all tough and seasoned fighters, and not one escaped. ·That day 30
3:11+ Moab was humbled under the hand of Israel, and the country had peace for eighty
years.

C: SHAMGAR [i]

5:6
2 S 23:11–12 After him came Shamgar son of Anath. He routed six hundred of the Philistines 31
with an ox-goad; he too was a deliverer of Israel.

D: DEBORAH AND BARAK [a]

Israel oppressed by the Canaanites

4 Once Ehud was dead, the Israelites again began doing what is evil in Yahweh's 1
Jos 11:1b eyes, ·and Yahweh handed them over to Jabin king of Canaan, who reigned 2
1 S 12:9 at Hazor. The commander of his army was Sisera, who lived in Haroshet-ha-
Goiim.

The Israelites then cried to Yahweh; for Jabin had nine hundred iron chariots 3
and had cruelly oppressed the Israelites for twenty years.

Deborah

Deborah, a prophetess, [b] wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel at the time. ·She 4, 5
used to sit under Deborah's Palm [c] between Ramah and Bethel in the highlands of
↗Heb 11:32 Ephraim, and the Israelites would come to her for justice. ·She sent for Barak son 6
of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali, and said to him, 'Has not Yahweh, God of
Israel, commanded, "Go! March to Mount Tabor and with you take ten thousand
of the sons of Naphtali and the sons of Zebulun. ·I shall entice Sisera, the 7
↗Ps 83:9 commander of Jabin's army, to encounter you at the Torrent of Kishon with his
chariots and troops; and I shall put him into your power"? ' ·Barak replied, 'If you 8
4:14 come with me, I shall go; if you will not come, I shall not go, for I do not know how
Gn 16:7c to choose the day when the angel of Yahweh will grant me success.' [d] ·'I shall go 9
with you then,' she said, 'but, the way you are going about it, the glory will not be
yours; for Yahweh will deliver Sisera into the hands of a woman.' Deborah then
stood up and went with Barak to Kedesh. ·Barak summoned Zebulun and 10
Naphtali. Ten thousand men marched behind him, and Deborah went with him.

Nb 24:21k **Heber the Kenite** [e]

Heber the Kenite had parted company with the tribe of Kain and with the 11
1:16f sons of Hobab, father-in-law of Moses; he had pitched his tent near the Oak of
Zaanannim, not far from Kedesh.

Defeat of Sisera

Sisera was informed that Barak son of Abinoam had encamped on Mount Tabor. 12
Sisera summoned all his chariots—nine hundred iron chariots—and all the troops 13
5:19 he had, from Harosheth-ha-Goiim to the Torrent of Kishon. ·Deborah said to 14
4:8;5:21 Barak, 'Up! For today is the day when Yahweh has put Sisera into your power. Is
Dt 9:3 not Yahweh marching at your head?' And Barak charged down from Mount Tabor
2 S 5:24
Ps 68:7 with ten thousand men behind him. ·At Barak's advance, Yahweh struck terror 15
Is 52:12
•Ex 14:24 into Sisera, all his chariots and his entire army. [f] Sisera leapt down from his chariot
and fled on foot. ·Barak pursued the chariots and the army as far as Harosheth- 16

ha-Goiim. Sisera's whole army fell by the edge of the sword; not one man was spared.

Death of Sisera

17 Sisera meanwhile fled on foot towards the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite. For there was peace between Jabin king of Hazor and the family of Heber
18 the Kenite. ·Jael came out to meet Sisera and said to him, 'Stay here, my lord, with me; do not be afraid!' He stayed with her in her tent, and she covered him with a
19 rug. ·He said to her, 'Please give me a little water to drink, for I am thirsty.' She opened the skin of milk,[g] gave him some to drink and covered him up again.
20 Then he said to her, 'Stand at the tent door, and if anyone comes and questions
21 you—if he asks, "Is there a man here?" say, "No." ' ·But Jael the wife of Heber took a tent-peg and picked up a mallet; she crept up softly to him and drove the peg into his temple right through to the ground. He was lying fast asleep, worn out;
22 and so he died. ·And now Barak came up in pursuit of Sisera, Jael went out to meet him and said, 'Come in, and I will show you the man you are looking for.' He went into her tent; and there was Sisera dead, with the tent-peg through his temple.

Jdt 13:8

Israel delivered

23, 24 Thus God that day humbled Jabin king of Canaan before the Israelites. ·And the Israelites bore down more and more heavily on that king of Canaan, Jabin, until he was utterly destroyed.

THE SONG OF DEBORAH AND BARAK[a]

1 5 They sang a song that day, Deborah and Barak son of Abinoam, and the words were:

2 That the warriors in Israel unbound their hair,[b]
that the people came forward with a will,
bless Yahweh!

3 Listen, you kings! Give ear, you princes! — Ps 2:10
From me, from me comes a song for Yahweh.
I shall glorify Yahweh, God of Israel. — Dt 32:3

4 Yahweh, when you set out from Seir, — Dt 33:2
when you marched from the field of Edom, — Ps 68:7–8
the earth shook, — Ex 19:16g
Hab 3:3f

i. This v. is an addition, *see* 4:1 Shamgar does not seem to be an Israelite: his name is foreign and he is apparently a native of Beth-Anath in Galilee, which was still Canaanite, 1:33. His insertion in the list of Judges is probably due to a misunderstanding of 5:6.

4 a. The story of Deborah and Barak is given first in a prose narrative, ch.4, then in a poem, ch.5. According to the prose narrative in its original form, the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali win a decisive victory over Sisera of Harosheth-ha-Goiim, north-west of the Plain of Jezreel. To this, there is the secondary addition of Jabin king of Hazor, previously conquered by Joshua, Jos 11:10–15: he is mentioned in the prose narrative but not in the poem. The victory, certainly historical, broke down the barrier separating the northern tribes from those in central Palestine. It probably occurred in the middle of the 12th century BC.

b. A prophetess like Miriam, Ex 15:20, and Huldah. 2 K 22:14, Deborah dispenses justice in Yahweh's name.

c. 'palm' *tamar* conj.; Hebr. *tomer*.

d. 'for I do not know . . . success' Gk; omitted by Hebr. Barak wants to be able to consult Yahweh (*see* Ex 33:7c) through Deborah during the campaign.

e. This v., interrupting the story, introduces the episode of Jael, v. 17, originally perhaps independent.

f. After 'army', Hebr. adds 'by the edge of the sword', *see* v. 16.

g. i.e. *leben*, the sour milk of the nomad.

5 a. The song of Deborah is one of the oldest pieces of poetry in the Bible, and was composed shortly after the events that it describes. It is a victory-song, set in the framework of a hymn. It celebrates an action of the holy war in which Yahweh fights against his people's enemies, vv. 20–21,23, who are also his enemies, v. 31. The song extols the tribes who responded to Deborah's summons, and blames those that did not come to fight. The ten groups named here cannot be made to correspond with the tribes in the conventional list which was standardised later. Machir, however, is named instead of Manasseh, v. 14; Gilead stands for Gad, v. 17; Meroz, v. 23, does not appear in any tribal list and is a town in Naphtali. Four out of the ten did not rally to the call. Judah and Simeon are not mentioned, either because of their isolation in the south or because they had not yet joined the Israelite confederation.

b. A rite of war, *see* Dt 32:42. Combatants in a holy war are consecrated to God like nazirites; *see* Jg 13:5; 16:17.

the heavens pelted,
the clouds pelted down water.
Ps 97:5 The mountains melted before Yahweh of Sinai, 5
before Yahweh, God of Israel.

3:31i; 4:17 In the days of Shamgar son of Anath, 6
in the days of Jael,
there were no more caravans;[c]
Is 33:8 those who went forth on their travels
took their way along by-paths.

The villages in Israel were no more, 7
they were no more
until you arose, O Deborah,
until you arose, mother of Israel!

They were choosing new gods 8
when war was at the gates.
1 S 13:19–22 Was there one shield, one spear to be found
among the forty thousand men in Israel?

My heart is with the leaders of Israel, 9
with the people who came forward with a will!
Bless Yahweh!

You who ride white donkeys 10
and sit on saddle-blankets as you ride,
and you who go on foot,[d]
sing—to the sound of the shepherds[e] 11
at the watering places!
There they extol Yahweh's blessings,
his saving acts for his villages in Israel!
(Then Yahweh's people marched down to the gates.)[f]

Awake, awake, Deborah! 12
Awake, awake, declaim a song!
Take heart, to your feet, Barak,
capture your captors, son of Abinoam![g]

Then Israel marched down to the gates; 13
like champions, Yahweh's people marched down to fight for him![h]

The princes of Ephraim are in the valley.[i] 14
Behind you, Benjamin is in your ranks.

Nb 32:39 Jos 17:1 Captains have come down from Machir,
those who wield the commander's staff,[j] from Zebulun.
The princes of Issachar are with Deborah; 15
Naphtali,[k] with Barak, in the valley follows in hot pursuit.

In the clans of Reuben
there was much searching of heart.
Why did you stay among the sheepfolds, 16
listening for the whistle, with the flocks?[l]
(In the clans of Reuben,
there was much searching of heart.)

Gilead[m] stayed on the other side of the Jordan, 17
17:1b Jos 19:40k and why should Dan have stayed aboard ship?[n]
Asher remained beside the sea,
peacefully living within his ports.

18 Zebulun is a people who have braved death,
Naphtali too, on the high ground of the country. [o]

19 The kings came and they fought, 4:14 Ps 48:4
how they fought, those kings of Canaan,
at Taanach, near the Waters of Megiddo,
but no booty of silver did they take!

20 The stars fought from heaven, Jos 10:10–14 2 S 5:24 Ps 18:13–14
from their orbits they fought against Sisera.

21 The torrent of Kishon swept them away,
the torrent of old, [p] the torrent of Kishon.
—March on, be strong my soul!

22 The horses' hooves then hammer the ground:
galloping, galloping go his steeds.

23 'Curse Meroz,' [q] said the Angel of Yahweh,
'curse, curse the people living there
for not having come to Yahweh's help,
to Yahweh's help as warriors!'

24 Most blessed of women be Jael Jdt 13:18 Lk 1:42
(the wife of Heber the Kenite); [r]
of tent-dwelling women, may she be most blessed!

25 He asked for water; she gave him milk;
she offered him curds in a lordly dish.
26 She reached [s] her hand out to seize the peg,
her right hand to seize the workman's mallet.

She hammered Sisera, she crushed his head,
she pierced his temple and shattered it.
27 Between her feet, he crumpled, he fell, he lay;
at her feet, he crumpled, he fell.
Where he crumpled, there he fell, destroyed.

28 At the window, she leans and watches, [t]
Sisera's mother, through the lattice,
'Why is his chariot so long coming?
Why so delayed the hoof-beats from his chariot?'

29 The wisest of her ladies answers,
and she to herself repeats,
30 'Are they not collecting and sharing out the spoil:
a girl, two girls for each warrior;

c. 'caravans' *'orehot* conj.; Hebr. *'arahot* 'roads'.
d. 'sing' *shiru* conj.; Hebr. *sihu* 'meditate'.
e. lit. 'those who divide' (water, fodder or flocks).
f. This line represents the correct reading of the beginning of v. 13 which was corrupt; it has, however, been inserted in the wrong place in the text.
g. 'Take heart' Gk; omitted by Hebr. • 'capture your captors' Syr., *see* Is 14:2; 'capture your captives' Hebr.
h. First line emended after last line of v. 11, *see* note; 'like champions for him' conj.; 'against the champions for me' Hebr.
i. 'The princes (of Ephraim) are in the valley' *sarim ba'emeq* Gk; Hebr. *shorsham ba 'amaleq*. 'their root is in Amalek'.
j. After 'commander's staff', Hebr. adds 'of the scribe', probably a gloss.
k. 'Naphtali' conj.; Hebr. reads 'Issachar', probably a copyist's error.
l. The Reubenites, as pastoral people, stayed at home to guard their flocks from nomadic raiders: the whistles are the alarm signal and the method of calling the sheep, *see* Is 5:26; 7:18; Zc 10:8.
m. Not a tribe of that name, but Gad indicated by the name of its tribal territory, *see* Nb 32:1seq., Reuben and Gad, the Transjordanian tribes, being normally mentioned together.
n. By this time Dan had presumably migrated northwards, *see* 1:34–35; 17–18; Jos 19:40k. Apparently the men of Dan hired out their labour to Phoenician ship-masters.
o. This v. is in a different metre from the rest of the poem and is a proverbial saying about these two tribes, after the style of Gn 49, apparently referring to the battle at the Waters of Merom, Jos 11.
p. The meaning is not clear.
q. Unknown place or group.
r. Probably a gloss derived from 4:11,17,21.
s. 'She reached out' Gk; plural Hebr.
t. 'watches' Gk; 'she utters shrieks' Hebr.

a booty of coloured and embroidered stuff for Sisera,
one scarf, two embroidered scarves for me!' [a]

So perish all your enemies, Yahweh! 31
2 S 23:3–7 And let those who love you [r] be like the sun
Dn 12:3 when he emerges in all his strength!
Mt 13:43
Rv 1:16

3:11+ And the country had peace for forty years.

E: GIDEON AND ABIMELECH [a]

1: THE CALL OF GIDEON

Israel oppressed by the Midianites

6 The Israelites did what is evil in Yahweh's eyes, and for seven years Yahweh 1
Ex 2:11c handed them over to Midian; •and Midian bore down heavily on Israel. To 2
1 S 13:6 escape from the Midianites the Israelites used the mountain clefts and the caves
Heb 11:38 and shelters. •Whenever Israel sowed seed the Midianites would march up with 3
Amalek and the sons of the East. [b] They would march on Israel.
Lv 26:16 They would pitch camp on their territory and destroy the produce of the country as 4
Dt 28:31seq. far as Gaza. They left Israel nothing to live on, not a sheep or an ox or a donkey,
•for they came up as thick as locusts with their cattle and their tents; they and their 5
camels were innumerable, they invaded the country to pillage it. •Thus, Midian 6
brought Israel to great distress, and the Israelites cried to Yahweh.

A message from a prophet [c]

When the Israelites cried to Yahweh because of Midian, •Yahweh sent a prophet 7, 8
to the Israelites. He said to them, 'This is what Yahweh, God of Israel, says, "It
was I who brought you out of Egypt, and led you out of the place of slave-labour.
I rescued you from the power of the Egyptians and from the power of all who 9
oppressed you. I drove them out before you and gave their country to you. •And I 10
said to you: I am Yahweh your God. You are not to fear the gods of the Amorites
in whose country you are now living. But you have not listened to my voice." '

The Angel of Yahweh appears to Gideon [d]

Gn 16:7c The Angel of Yahweh came and sat under the terebinth at Ophrah [e] which belonged 11
Jos 17:2 to Joash of Abiezer. Gideon his son was threshing wheat inside the wine-press, to
Nb 26:30
•Heb 11:32;13:2 keep it hidden from Midian, •and the Angel of Yahweh appeared to him and said, 12
Lk 1:28 'Yahweh is with you, valiant warrior!' •Gideon replied, 'Excuse me, my lord, but 13
if Yahweh is with us, why is all this happening to us? And where are all his miracles
which our ancestors used to tell us about when they said, "Did not Yahweh bring
us out of Egypt?" But now Yahweh has deserted us; he has abandoned us to
Midian.'
Ex 3:10–12 At this, Yahweh turned to him and said, 'Go in this strength of yours, and you 14
will rescue Israel from the power of Midian. Am I not sending you myself?'
Gideon replied, 'Forgive me, my lord, but how can I deliver Israel? My clan is the 15
weakest in Manasseh and I am the least important of my father's family.'
Yahweh replied, 'I shall be with you and you will crush Midian as though it were 16
Ex 4:1–9 one man.' •Gideon said, 'If I have found favour in your sight, give me a sign that 17
1 S 14:10c you are speaking to me. •Please do not go away from here until I come back to 18
you, bringing you my offering and laying it before you.' And he replied, 'I shall
stay until you come back.'
Gideon went away, he prepared a young goat and from an *ephah* of flour he 19
made unleavened cakes. He put the meat into a basket and the broth into a pot,
then brought it all to him under the terebinth. As he approached, •the Angel of 20

Yahweh said to him, 'Take the meat and unleavened cakes, put them on this rock
21 and pour the broth over them.' Gideon did so. ·The Angel of Yahweh then
stretched out the tip of the staff which he was carrying, and touched the meat and
unleavened cakes. Fire sprang from the rock and consumed the meat and unleav- Lv 9:24
22 ened cakes, and the Angel of Yahweh vanished before his eyes.[f] ·Gideon then 1 K 18:38 1 Ch 21:26 2 Ch 7:1
knew that this was the Angel of Yahweh, and he said, 'Alas, my Lord Yahweh!
23 Now I have seen the Angel of Yahweh face to face!' ·Yahweh answered, 'Peace be Gn 32:31g Ex 33:20i
24 with you; have no fear; you will not die.' ·Gideon built an altar there to Yahweh ·Gn 33:20 Ex 17:15
and called it Yahweh-Peace. This altar stands in our own day at Ophrah of Abiezer. Jos 22:34

Gideon against Baal[g]

25 Now that night, Yahweh said to Gideon, 'Take your father's bull, the seven-year-
old bull,[h] and pull down the altar to Baal belonging to your father and cut down Ex 34:13e
26 the sacred pole beside it. ·Then, on top of this strong-point, build a proper altar to
Yahweh your God. Then take the bull and burn it as a burnt offering on the wood
27 of the sacred pole which you have cut down.' ·Gideon then took ten of his servants
and did as Yahweh had ordered him. But, being too frightened of his family and of
28 the townspeople to do it in daylight, he did it at night. ·Next morning, when the
townspeople got up, they found that the altar to Baal had been destroyed, the
sacred pole standing beside it had been cut down and the bull had been sacrificed
29 as a burnt offering on the newly built altar. ·'Who has done this?' they asked one
another. They searched, made enquiries and declared, 'Gideon son of Joash has
30 done it.' ·The townspeople then said to Joash, 'Bring out your son; he must die for
having destroyed Baal's altar and cut down the sacred pole which stood beside it.'
31 To the people all crowding round him, Joash replied, 'Is it your job to plead for
Baal? Is it your job to champion his cause? (Anyone who pleads for Baal must be 1 K 18:27 Dt 17:2–5
put to death before dawn.) If he is a god, let him plead for himself, now that
32 Gideon has destroyed his altar.' ·That day, Gideon was given the name Jerubbaal,[i]
because, they said, 'Baal must plead against him, because he has destroyed his
altar!'

The call to arms

33 All Midian and Amalek and the sons of the East joined forces and, having crossed
34 the Jordan, pitched camp in the plain of Jezreel. ·And the spirit of Yahweh clothed 3:10+
Gideon around; he sounded the horn and Abiezer rallied behind him.
35 He sent messengers throughout Manasseh, and Manasseh too rallied behind him; 3:27;7:23seq.

u. The end of the v. is probably corrupt and overloaded. Hebr. 'a coloured stuff, two embroideries for the neck of the booty'.

v. 'who love you' Gk, Lat.; 'who love him' Hebr.

6 a. The long story of Gideon comprehends several traditions native to the tribe of Manasseh. The deuteronomic editor found them much as they are now, but made a few alterations. Some of the traditions are about Gideon's military exploits against the Midianites, whether in Israelite territory, or on the other side of the Jordan. Others are cultic stories: the legitimisation of an altar at Ophrah, the destruction of an altar to Baal, the sign of the fleece. These narratives throw valuable light on the religious crisis caused by the adoption of an agricultural way of life and the influence of the cult of Baal, and on the political crisis culminating in the offer of the throne to Gideon and the unfortunate experiment with Abimelech.

b. The Midianites were a nomadic people living in north-western Sinai, *see* Ex 2:11c. The Amalekites were mainly settled in southern Palestine, but the name here may apply vaguely to nomadic groups. The 'sons of the East' were desert tribes living to the east of the Jordan. • This narrative contains the first historical reference to the intensive raising of camels and to their use in tribal warfare.

c. First appearance of a prophet in Israelite history. The passage is the work of the deuteronomic editor.

d. This passage combines an account of the calling of Gideon, continued at vv. 36–40, and an account of the founding of a sanctuary, in the manner of those in Genesis, with a theophany, message of salvation and inauguration of the cult. The Angel of Yahweh, v. 11, is simply called Yahweh in vv. 14,16 and 23. In v. 22, Gideon identifies Yahweh with his Angel, *see* Gn 16:7c.

e. A sacred tree, *see* 4:5,11; 9:37; Jos 24:26. The location of this particular Ophrah is unknown.

f. The meal prepared by Gideon for the Angel of Yahweh—whether it has a sacrificial character or not—is turned into a burnt offering by the divine fire, compare Manoah's sacrifice, 13:15–20. The rock is thus consecrated and Gideon builds an altar on it, v. 24.

g. This second cultic narrative, apparently referring to the same sanctuary as the foregoing, is substantially different: here, the cult of Baal is violently replaced by that of Yahweh.

h. Hebr. reads 'your father's bull and a second seven-year-old bull', and at vv. 26,28: 'the second bull'; but only one sacrifice takes place. Possibly 'and a seven-year-old bull' is a description, mistakenly read as referring to a second victim: hence the present disorder in the text.

i. The etymology explaining Gideon's second name, *see* 7:1, etc., is of the popular kind. The name in fact has the opposite sense 'May Baal strive for', i.e. defend (the one who bears the name). A Yahwistic shrine replaces the Canaanite one.

he sent messengers to Asher, Zebulun and Naphtali, and they marched out to meet him.

The sign of the fleece [j]

6:17 Gideon said to God, 'If it is really you delivering Israel by means of me, as you 36
have said, ·look, I am going to put a woollen fleece on the threshing-floor; if there 37
is dew only on the fleece and all the ground stays dry, then I shall know that you
will deliver Israel by means of me, as you have said.' ·And so it happened. Early 38
next morning, Gideon got up, squeezed the fleece and wrung enough dew out of
the fleece to fill a cup. ·Gideon then said to God, 'Do not be angry with me if I 39
speak just once more. Allow me to make the fleece-test just once more: let the
fleece alone be dry and there be dew all over the ground!' ·And God did so that 40
night. The fleece alone stayed dry, and there was dew all over the ground.

2: GIDEON'S CAMPAIGN TO THE WEST OF THE JORDAN

1 S 14:6
1 Co 1:25seq.

Yahweh reduces the numbers of Gideon's army [a]

7 Jerubbaal (that is, Gideon) got up very early, as did all the people who were 1
with him; he pitched camp at En-Harod; [b] the camp of Midian was north of his,
under the Hill of Moreh in the valley. ·Yahweh then said to Gideon, 'There are 2
Dt 8:17+
Is 10:13
too many people with you for me to put Midian into their power; Israel might claim
the credit for themselves at my expense: they might say, "My own hand has rescued
me." ·So now make this proclamation to the people, "Anyone trembling with fear 3
Dt 20:8
1 M 3:56
is to go back and watch from Mount Gilboa." [c] Twenty-two thousand of the people
went back, and ten thousand remained.

Yahweh said to Gideon, 'There are still too many people. Take them down to 4
the waterside and I shall sort them out for you there. If I say of someone, "He is to
go with you," that man is to go with you. And if I say of anyone, "He is not to go
with you," that man is not to go.' ·So Gideon took the people down to the 5
waterside, and Yahweh said to him, 'All those who lap the water with their
tongues, as a dog laps, put these on one side. And all those who kneel down to
drink, put these on the other side.' [d] ·The number of those who lapped with their 6
hands to their mouth [e] was three hundred; all the rest of the people had knelt to
drink. ·Yahweh then said to Gideon, 'With the three hundred who lapped the 7
water, I shall rescue you and put Midian into your power. Let the people as a whole
disperse to their homes.' ·So they took the people's provisions and their horns, 8
and then Gideon sent all the Israelites back to their tents, keeping only the three
hundred. The camp of Midian was below his in the valley.

An omen of victory

Now it happened, that same night, that Yahweh said to him, 'Get up and go down 9
to the camp. I am putting it into your power. ·If, however, you are nervous about 10
going down, go down to the camp with your servant Purah; ·listen to what they are 11
saying, and that will encourage you to go down to the camp.' So, with his servant
Purah, he went down to the edge of the outposts of the camp.

Midian, Amalek and all the sons of the East were deployed in the valley as thick 12
6:5
Ex 10:14–15
Jr 46:23
Jl 1:6seq.
as locusts; their camels were as innumerable as the sand on the seashore. ·Gideon 13
got there just as a man was telling his comrade a dream; he was saying, 'This was
the dream I had: a cake made of barley bread came rolling into the camp of Midian;
it came to a tent, struck against it [f] and turned it upside down.' ·His comrade 14
replied, 'This can only be the sword of Gideon son of Joash the Israelite. God has
put Midian and the whole camp into his power.' ·When Gideon heard the dream 15
thus told and interpreted, he bowed in reverence; he then went back to the camp
of Israel and said, 'On your feet, for Yahweh has put the camp of Midian into your
power!'

The surprise attack

16 Gideon then divided his three hundred men into three groups. To each he gave a
17 horn and an empty pitcher, with a torch inside each pitcher. ·He said to them,
'Watch me, and do as I do. When I reach the edge of the camp, whatever I do, you
18 must do also. ·I shall blow my horn, and so will all those who are with me; you too
will then blow your horns all round the camp and shout, "For Yahweh and for
Gideon!" '
19 Gideon and his hundred companions reached the edge of the camp at the
beginning of the middle watch, when the new sentries had just been posted; they
20 blew their horns and smashed the pitchers in their hands. ·The three groups blew
their horns and smashed their pitchers; with their left hands they grasped the
torches, with their right hands the horns for blowing them; and they shouted, 'The
21 sword for Yahweh and for Gideon!' ·And they stood still, spaced out round
the camp. The whole camp was thrown into confusion and the Midianites fled,
22 shouting. ·While the three hundred blew their horns, Yahweh made each man 1 S 14:20
turn his sword against his comrade[g] throughout the entire camp. They all fled as
far as Beth-ha-Shittah in the direction of Zarethan,[h] as far as the bank of Abel-
Meholah opposite Tabbath.

The pursuit

23 The men of Israel mustered from Naphtali, Asher and all Manasseh, and pursued 6:35
24 Midian. ·Gideon sent messengers throughout the highlands of Ephraim to say,
'Come down to meet Midian, seize the water-points ahead of them as far as Beth-
Barah and the Jordan.' All the men of Ephraim mustered and seized the water-
25 points as far as Beth-Barah and the Jordan. ·They captured the two Midianite Jn 1:28
chieftains, Oreb and Zeeb;[i] they killed Oreb at Oreb's Rock and Zeeb at Zeeb's Ps 83:11 Is 10:26
Winepress. They pursued Midian; and they brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb
to Gideon on the other side of the Jordan.

The Ephraimites take offence[a] 12:1–6

1 Now the men of Ephraim said to Gideon, 'What do you mean by treating us
like this, not summoning us when you went to fight Midian?' And they re- 6:35;7:24
2 proached him bitterly. ·He replied, 'What have I achieved, compared with you? Is
3 not the gleaning of Ephraim's grapes better than the vintage of Abiezer? ·God
delivered Oreb and Zeeb, the chieftains of Midian, into your power. What was I
able to do, in comparison with what you have done?' At these words, their anger
with him died down.

j. This is the sign asked for by Gideon in v. 17; cf. Ex 4:1–7, where two signs authenticate the mission of Moses.

7 **a.** Victory over the Midianites was not to be attributable to the military strength of Israel: it was a holy war, in which God was the giver of victory.

b. *Harod* means 'trembling', *see* v. 3.

c. 'watch from Mount Gilboa' conj.: 'is to escape (?) from Mount Gilead' Hebr.

d. 'put these on the other side' versions; omitted in Hebr.

e. The phrase, possibly misplaced, would come better at the end of the v.

f. The Hebr. here adds 'and it fell', omitted by Gk, and also (at end of v.) 'and the tent lay flat'. The tent symbolises the nomad; the barley cake the agricultural Israelites. Hence the reply in v. 14, the dream being recognised as a divine revelation, cf. Gn 20:3.

g. Another characteristic of the holy war: the Israelites do not have to fight, God sows panic in the enemy ranks, cf. Ex 14:14; Jos 6:20.

h. 'Zarethan', following 1 K 4:12; 'Zerera' Hebr. The Midianites flee towards one of the fords of the Jordan.

i. Oreb 'the raven', *see* Is 10:26. Zeeb 'the wolf'. This incident, mentioned again 8:3, comes from an independent, probably Ephraimite, tradition, attached to two place-names.

8 **a.** Ephraim here appears in a subordinate role to Manasseh, *see* 7:24,25, but the Ephraimites do not care to play second fiddle. Ultimately, Ephraim will become much more powerful than Manasseh, hence Jacob's preferential treatment of the former in Gn 48:17.

3: GIDEON'S CAMPAIGN IN TRANSJORDAN. HIS END

Gideon pursues the enemy beyond the Jordan [b]

Gideon reached the Jordan and crossed it, but he and his three hundred companions were exhausted with the pursuit. 4 ·So he said to the men of Succoth, 'Please 5
give my followers some loaves of bread, since they are exhausted, and I am
pursuing Zebah and Zalmunna the kings of Midian.' [c] ·The headmen of Succoth 6
replied, 'Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna already in your grasp, that we
should give bread to your army?' ·'Very well,' retorted Gideon, 'when Yahweh 7
has put Zebah and Zalmunna into my power, I shall tear your flesh off with
desert-thorn and thistles.' ·From there he went up to Penuel and asked the men of 8
Penuel the same thing; they replied as those of Succoth had done. ·And to those of 9
Penuel he made a similar retort, 'When I return victorious, I shall destroy this
tower.'

The defeat of Zebah and Zalmunna

Zebah and Zalmunna were in Karkor with their army, about fifteen thousand men, 10
all that was left of the entire army of the sons of the East. Of men bearing arms, a
hundred and twenty thousand had fallen. ·Gideon approached them by the tent- 11
dwellers' route, east of Nobah and Jogbehah, and attacked the army when it
thought itself in safety. ·Zebah and Zalmunna fled. He pursued them; he took the 12
two kings of Midian prisoner—Zebah and Zalmunna—and the whole army he
routed in panic.

Gideon's acts of vengeance

After the battle Gideon came back by the Ascent of Heres. [d] ·He caught a young 13, 14
man, one of the people of Succoth, and questioned him, and the latter wrote down
the names of the headmen and elders of Succoth for him—seventy-seven men.
Gideon son of Joash then went to the people of Succoth and said, 'Here you 15
see Zebah and Zalmunna, about whom you taunted me and said, "Are the
hands of Zebah and Zalmunna already in your grasp, that we should give bread to
your exhausted troops?" ' ·He then seized the elders of the town and, taking 16
desert-thorn and thistles, tore the men of Succoth to pieces. [e] ·He destroyed the 17
tower of Penuel and slaughtered the townsmen. ·He then said to Zebah and 18
Zalmunna, 'The men you killed at Tabor [f]—what were they like?' They replied,
'They looked like you. Every one of them carried himself like the son of a king.'
Gideon replied, 'They were my brothers, the sons of my own mother; as Yahweh 19
lives, if you had spared their lives I would not kill you.' ·To Jether his eldest son he 20
said, 'Stand up and kill them!' But the boy did not draw his sword; he dared not; he
9:54 was still only a lad. ·Zebah and Zalmunna then said, 'Stand up yourself, and strike 21
Ps 83:11 us down; for as a man is, so is his strength.' Then Gideon stood up and killed Zebah
and Zalmunna; and he took the crescents from round their camels' necks.

Latter days of Gideon

The men of Israel said to Gideon, 'Rule over us, you, your son and your grandson, 22
since you have rescued us from the power of Midian.' ·But Gideon replied, 'I will 23
1 S 8:7 not rule you, neither will my son. Yahweh shall rule you.' [g] ·Gideon went on, 24
Ex 32 however, 'Let me make you one request. Each of you give me one ring out of his
Nb 31:28seq., 50seq. booty'—for the vanquished had had gold rings, being Ishmaelites. ·'We shall give 25
2 S 8:11–12 them gladly,' they replied. So he spread out his cloak, and on it each of them threw
a ring from his booty. [h] ·The weight of the gold rings which he had asked for 26
amounted to seventeen hundred shekels of gold, besides the crescents and the
earrings and purple garments worn by the kings of Midian, and besides the collars
Ex 28:6–35,6a round their camels' necks. ·From this Gideon made an *ephod* [i] and set it up in his 27

town, in Ophrah. All Israel, following his example, prostituted themselves to it, and it was a snare for Gideon and his family. ▶17–18 1 K 12:26–32

28 Thus Midian was humbled before the Israelites. He did not raise his head again,
29 and the country had peace for forty years, as long as Gideon lived. ·So Jerubbaal 3:11+
30 son of Joash went to live at home. ·Gideon had seventy sons begotten by him, for
31 he had many wives. ·His concubine, who lived in Shechem, also bore him a son, to
32 whom he gave the name Abimelech. ·Gideon son of Joash died after a happy old 9
age and was buried in the tomb of Joash his father, at Ophrah of Abiezer.[j]

Israel relapses into idolatry

33 After Gideon's death, the people of Israel again began to prostitute themselves to
34 the Baals, taking Baal-Berith[k] for their god. ·The Israelites no longer remembered
Yahweh their God, who had rescued them from all the enemies round them.
35 And to the family of Jerubbaal—Gideon—they showed no faithful gratitude for all 9:16
the good which it had done for Israel.

4: THE REIGN OF ABIMELECH[a]

1 **9** Abimelech son of Jerubbaal confronted his mother's brothers at Shechem and,
to them and to the whole clan of his maternal grandfather's family, he said,
2 'Please put this question to the leading men of Shechem: Which is better for you:
to be ruled by seventy people—all Jerubbaal's sons—or to be ruled by one?
3 Remember too that I am your own flesh and bone.' ·His mother's brothers said all
this on his behalf to all the leading men of Shechem, and their feelings swayed them
4 to follow Abimelech, since they argued, 'He is our brother.' ·So they gave him
seventy shekels of silver from the temple of Baal-Berith, and with this Abimelech 8:33k
5 paid violent adventurers to follow him. ·He then went to his father's house at
Ophrah and put his brothers, Jerubbaal's seventy sons, to death on one and the 11:1–3 2 K 10:1–17
same stone. Jotham, however, Jerubbaal's youngest son, escaped by going into
6 hiding. ·All the leading men of Shechem and all Beth-Millo then met and pro-
claimed Abimelech king at the oak of the cultic stone at Shechem.[b] Jos 24:26+

b. This campaign is represented as the sequel to that of 7:1–22; *see* 8:4, but comes originally from an independent tradition, probably about another Midianite raid. It is in any case quite distinct from the incident in 7:25, where the Midianite 'chieftains' have different names from the Midianite 'kings', v. 5. Geographical details about Succoth, Penuel and Transjordan, indicate a Transjordanian tradition.

c. Zebah, 'victim' and Zalmunna, 'wandering shade', are apparently invented names.

d. 'by the Ascent' Gk; 'from above' (?) Hebr.

e. 'tore to pieces' versions and v. 7; 'taught (them) a lesson' Hebr.

f. 'what were (they) like' Vulg.; 'where were (they)' Hebr. We know nothing else about this battle of Tabor. Gideon informs the kings that they have killed his brothers, and hence justifies his actions as avenger of blood, *see* Nb 35:19c.

g. vv. 22–23 interrupt the narrative, but it is conceivable that the people in the Shechem area offered Gideon the crown after his victory; the offer, however, was certainly made by all Israel. Gideon's refusal perhaps only reflects the deuteronomist's own prejudice, in the anti-monarchical vein of 9:7–15 and 1 S 8:12, since the sons of Gideon-Jerubbaal ruled Shechem, Jg 9:2.

h. 'he spread out' Gk; plural, Hebr.

i. This is not a loincloth-*ephod* but a cultic object used for divination, *see* 1 S 2:28*l*. Gideon evidently intended it for the worship of Yahweh, but the deuteronomic editor condemns it, as he later condemns Micah's *ephod*, Jg 17:3seq.

j. vv. 30–32 are stylistically similar to the notices on the 'minor' judges, *see* 10:1–5; 12:8–15, and perhaps come from the same terse register, serving as nucleus for the traditional stories about the hero Gideon; v. 29, which reverts to the use of the name Jerubbaal, might be better placed after 6:25–32.

k. Baal-Berith or El-Berith was the god of oaths and contracts, venerated by the mercantile Canaanites at Shechem, 9:46. Shechem being the place where the Israelites had concluded a covenant with Yahweh, Jos 24, syncretism was practically inevitable.

9 a. This story is preserved here since Abimelech was the son of Gideon-Jerubbaal, though in point of fact it is neither the story of a judge nor the history of Israel: Abimelech was the son of a Shechemite woman, he was made king by the Canaanites of Shechem as the result of intrigue and a show of force on his part, he had mercenary troops of a sort, and his only exploits were the massacre of his brothers, his struggle with the rebels of Shechem and his assault on the Israelite town of Thebez, where he was ignominiously killed. The narrative is undoubtedly historical and throws light on conditions of that period: Israel and Canaan were living as good neighbours and the political situation reflected by this form of government shows the same general conditions still prevailing as are revealed in the Tell el-Amarna letters for this region in the 14th century BC. Abimelech's failure served the deuteronomic editor's contention that there could be no other king in Israel but one chosen by Yahweh.

b. Beth-Millo is probably another name for the 'Migdal-Shechem' of vv. 46 and 49. • 'The cultic stone' *hammatztzebah* conj.; Hebr. *mutztzab* 'set up'.

Jotham's diatribe [c]

News of this was brought to Jotham. He went and stood on the top of Mount 7
Jos 8:33i Gerizim and shouted at the top of his voice:

Hear me, leaders of Shechem,
so that God may also hear you!

2 K 14:9 One day the trees went out 8
to anoint a king to rule them.
They said to the olive tree, 'Be our king!'

The olive tree replied, 9
Lv 2
1 S 10:1;16:13 'Must I forgo my oil
Ps 104:15 which gives honour to gods and men,
to stand and sway over the trees?'

Then the trees said to the fig tree, 10
'You come and be our king!'

The fig tree replied, 11
'Must I forgo my sweetness,
forgo my excellent fruit,
to go and sway over the trees?'

Then the trees said to the vine, 12
'You come and be our king!'

The vine replied, 13
Ps 104:15 'Must I forgo my wine
Pr 31:6 which cheers gods and men,
Qo 9:7 to go and sway over the trees?'
Si 31:27–28

Then the trees all said to the thorn bush, 14
'You come and be our king!'

And the thorn bush replied to the trees, 15
'If you are anointing me in good faith to be your king,
come and shelter in my shade.
But, if not, fire will come out of the thorn bush
and devour the cedars of Lebanon.'

[d]"Now then, if you have acted in sincerity and good faith in making Abimelech 16
king, if you have dealt honourably with Jerubbaal and his family, and have treated
him as his actions deserved, ·my father having fought for you, risked his life and 17
rescued you from the power of Midian, ·and you today having risen up against my 18
father's family, murdered his sons—seventy of them on one and the same stone—
and appointed Abimelech, his slave-girl's son, to rule the leading men of Shechem,
because he is your brother!—·if, I say, you have acted in sincerity and good faith 19
towards Jerubbaal and his family, then may Abimelech be your joy and may you
9:49 be his! ·If not, may fire come out of Abimelech and devour the leading men of 20
Shechem and Beth-Millo, and fire come out of the leading men of Shechem and
Beth-Millo to devour Abimelech!'

Jotham then took to his heels; he fled and made his way to Beer; and there he 21
stayed, to be out of his brother Abimelech's reach.

Shechem revolts against Abimelech

1 S 16:14e Abimelech ruled Israel for three years.[e] ·God then sent a spirit of discord 22, 23
1 K 22:23 between Abimelech and the leaders of Shechem, and the leaders of Shechem
betrayed Abimelech. ·And this was so that the crime committed against Jerub- 24
baal's seventy sons should be avenged,[f] and their blood recoil on their brother

Abimelech who had murdered them, and on those leaders of Shechem who had helped him to murder his brothers.

25 The leaders of Shechem put men to ambush him on the mountain tops, and these
26 robbed anyone travelling their way. Abimelech was told of this. ·Gaal son of Obed,[g] with his brothers, happened to pass through Shechem and win the confi-
27 dence of the leaders of Shechem. ·These went out into the countryside to harvest their vineyards; they trod the grapes and made merry and went into the temple of
28 their god. They ate and drank there[h] and cursed Abimelech. ·Gaal son of Obed said, 'Who is Abimelech, and what is Shechem, for us to be his slaves? Should not Jerubbaal's son and his lieutenant, Zebul, be serving[i] the men of Hamor, father of Gn 34
29 Shechem? Why should we be his slaves? ·Who will put this people under my command, so that I can expel Abimelech? I should say to him,[j] "Reinforce your
30 army and come out!" ' ·Zebul the governor of the town was told what Gaal son of
31 Obed had said, and he was furious. ·He sent messengers secretly to Abimelech to say, 'Look! Gaal son of Obed has come to Shechem with his brothers, and they are
32 stirring up the town against you.[k] ·So, move under cover of dark, you and the men
33 you have with you, and take up concealed positions in the countryside; ·then in the morning at sunrise, break cover and rush on the town. When Gaal and his
34 supporters come out to meet you, treat them as occasion offers.' ·So Abimelech set off under cover of dark with all his own supporters and took up concealed
35 positions over against Shechem, in four groups. ·As Gaal son of Obed was coming out and pausing at the entrance of the town gate, Abimelech and his supporters
36 rose from their ambush. ·Gaal saw these men and said to Zebul, 'Look, there are men coming down from the tops of the mountains!' Zebul answered, 'You mistake
37 the shadow of the mountains for men.' ·But Gaal insisted, 'Look, there are men coming down from the Navel of the Earth and another group is coming from the
38 direction of the Diviners' Oak.'[l] ·Zebul then said, 'Where are your mouthings now about "Who is Abimelech, for us to be his slaves?" Are not these the men
39 you made light of? Sally out, then, and fight him.' ·Gaal sallied out at the head of
40 the leaders of Shechem and engaged Abimelech. ·Abimelech drove Gaal off, who turned tail, many of his men falling dead before they could reach the gate.
41 Abimelech then stayed at Aruma, and Zebul expelled Gaal and his brothers and prevented them from living in Shechem.

Destruction of the town and citadel of Shechem[m]

42 Next day, when the people went out into the countryside, Abimelech was told of
43 this. ·He took his men, divided them into three groups and lay in wait in the fields. When he saw the people leaving the town, he bore down on them and slaughtered
44 them. ·While Abimelech and his group rushed forward and took position at the entrance to the town gate, the two other groups fell on everyone in the fields and
45 slaughtered them. ·All that day Abimelech attacked the town. He stormed it and

c. This is the earliest example in the Bible of a fable using plants or animals to point a human moral, *see* 2 S 12:1–4; 2 K 14:9; Ezk 17:3–10 and several in Pr. As a literary form, it is universal (Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, etc.). The one here may have existed independently before being used to illustrate the story of Jerubbaal and Abimelech.

d. vv. 16–20 apply the fable to the situation produced by Abimelech's reign, and conclude with an appeal to 'good faith', in one long turgid sentence, of which any outdoor orator might be proud.

e. Editorial note. Abimelech did not rule Israel.

f. 'so that (the crime) should be avenged', lit. 'to make (the crime) rebound on' Gk; 'so that (the crime) should come' Hebr.

g. 'son of Obed' Vulg.; 'son of a slave' (*'ebed*) Hebr.; as in following vv. He was a Canaanite allied to the Shechemites, or perhaps a Shechemite himself, v. 28. He roused the Shechemites against Abimelech, who did not reside in the town, being represented there by Zebul.

h. A religious festival at the end of harvest.

i. 'Should not . . . be serving' conj.; 'serve!' (pl) Hebr.

j. 'I should say to him' Gk; Hebr. 'he said to Abimelech'.

k. 'stirring up' *me'irim* conj.; Hebr. *tzarim* 'besieging'.

l. The 'Navel of the Earth', possibly the holy mountain, Mt Gerizim; the same title is apparently applied to Jerusalem in Ezk 38:12. The 'Diviners' Oak' is presumably the same as the 'Oak of Moreh' (i.e. 'oak of the instructor' or 'of the diviner'), Gn 12:6; Dt 11:30.

m. It is possible that Migdal-Shechem (the 'Tower of Shechem') is a place different from Shechem. Or perhaps two different traditions are put side by side, vv. 41–45, 46–49, describing the destruction of the town; or perhaps v. 45 is an anticipation and vv. 46–49 take up a detail of the siege. Migdal-Shechem and the temple of El-Berith will be the fortified temple found in the excavations.

slaughtered the people inside, razed the town and sowed it with salt. [n] ·On hearing 46
this, all the leading men inside Migdal-Shechem took refuge in the crypt [o] of the
8:33;9:4 temple of El-Berith. ·As soon as Abimelech heard that the leading men inside 47
Migdal-Shechem had all gathered there, ·he went up Mount Zalmon with all his 48
men. Then taking an axe in his hands, he cut off the branch of a tree, picked it up
and put it on his shoulder, and said to the men with him, 'Hurry and do what you
have seen me do.' ·Each of his men similarly cut off a branch; then, following 49
9:20 Abimelech, they piled the branches over the crypt and set it on fire over those who
were inside; so that all the people in Migdal-Shechem died too, about a thousand
men and women.

Siege of Thebez and death of Abimelech

Abimelech then marched on Thebez, [p] besieged it and captured it. ·In the middle 50, 51
of the town there was a fortified tower in which all the men and women and all the
leading men of the town took refuge. They locked the door behind them and
climbed up to the roof of the tower. ·Abimelech reached the tower and attacked it. 52
As he was approaching the door of the tower to set it on fire, ·a woman threw down 53
a millstone on his head and cracked his skull. ·He instantly called his young 54
1 S 31:4 armour-bearer and said, 'Draw your sword and kill me, so that it will not be said of
me that "A woman killed him". ' His armour-bearer ran him through, and he died.
When the men of Israel saw that Abimelech was dead, they dispersed to their 55
homes.

Thus God made to recoil on Abimelech the evil he had done his father by 56
murdering his seventy brothers, ·and all the evil that the men of Shechem had done 57
9:20 God made recoil on their heads too. And so the curse of Jotham son of Jerubbaal
came true for them.

JEPHTHAH AND THE 'MINOR' JUDGES [a]

F: TOLA

Gn 46:13 10 After Abimelech, Tola son of Puah, son of Dodo, rose to deliver Israel. He 1
Nb 26:23 belonged to Issachar and lived at Shamir in the mountain country of
1 Ch 7:1–5 Ephraim. ·He was judge in Israel for twenty-three years; he then died and was 2
buried at Shamir.

G: JAIR [b]

12:14 After him rose Jair of Gilead, who judged Israel for twenty-two years. ·He had 3, 4
Nb 32:41 thirty sons who rode on thirty young donkeys and who owned thirty towns, still
Dt 3:14 known today as the Encampments of Jair, [c] in the territory of Gilead. ·Jair then 5
1 K 4:13
1 Ch 2:21–23 died and was buried at Kamon.

H: JEPHTHAH [d]

Oppression by the Ammonites

2:13i The Israelites again began doing what is evil in Yahweh's eyes. They served Baal 6
and Astarte, and the gods of Aram and Sidon, the gods of Moab and those of the
Ammonites and Philistines. They deserted Yahweh and served him no more.
Yahweh's anger then grew hot against Israel and he gave them over into the power 7
of the Philistines and the power of the Ammonites, ·who from that year onwards 8
Nb 21:21–35 crushed and oppressed the Israelites for eighteen years—all those Israelites

living on the other side of the Jordan in Amorite territory, in Gilead.
9 Furthermore, the Ammonites would cross the Jordan and also make war on Judah,
10 Benjamin and the House of Ephraim, so that Israel was in distress. •The Israelites
then cried to Yahweh and said, 'We have sinned against you, because we have
11 turned from Yahweh our God to serve Baals.' •And Yahweh said to the Israelites,
12 'When Egyptians and Amorites, Ammonites and Philistines, •when the Sidonians,
Amalek and Midian [e] oppressed you and you cried to me, did I not rescue you from
13 their power? •But it is you who have forsaken me and served other gods; and so I
14 shall rescue you no more. •Go and cry to the gods whom you have chosen. Let Jr 11:12
15 them rescue you in your time of trouble.' •The Israelites replied to Yahweh, 'We
have sinned. Treat us as you see fit, but please rescue us today.'
16 They got rid of their foreign gods and served Yahweh, who could bear Israel's
suffering no longer.
17 The Ammonites gathered and pitched camp in Gilead. The Israelites rallied and
18 pitched camp at Mizpah. •The people, the chieftains of Gilead, then said to one Gn 31:49
another, 'Who will volunteer to attack the Ammonites? He shall be chief of all
who live in Gilead!'

Jephthah lays down his terms

1 **11** Jephthah the Gileadite was a valiant warrior. He was a prostitute's son.
2 Gilead [a] was Jephthah's father, •but Gilead's wife also bore him sons, and
the sons of this wife, when they grew up, drove Jephthah away, saying, 'No share Gn 21:10
3 of the paternal heritage for you, since you are a son of another woman.' •Jephthah
fled far from his brothers and settled in the territory of Tob. Jephthah enlisted a
group of adventurers who used to go raiding with him. [b]
4, 5 It was some time after this that the Ammonites made war on Israel. •And when
the Ammonites had attacked Israel, the elders of Gilead went to fetch Jephthah
6 from the territory of Tob. •'Come', they said, 'and be our commander, so that we
7 can fight the Ammonites.' •Jephthah replied to the elders of Gilead, 'Didn't you
hate me and drive me out of my father's house? Why come to me now, when you
8 are in trouble?' •The elders of Gilead said to Jephthah, 'That is why we are turning
to you now. Come with us; fight the Ammonites and be our chief, chief of all the
9 people living in Gilead.' •Jephthah then said to the elders of Gilead, 'If you bring
me home to fight the Ammonites and Yahweh defeats them for me, I am to be
10 your chief?' [c] •And the elders of Gilead then said to Jephthah, 'Yahweh be witness
11 between us, if we do not do as you have said!' •So Jephthah set off with the elders

n. Symbolic gesture to assure the barrenness of the soil. Excavations at Shechem reveal a destruction of the town in the course of the 12th century BC.

o. 'crypt' or perhaps 'tower'. The temple served as fortress and refuge.

p. Modern Tubas, about 10 miles (16 km) north of Shechem.

10 a. On the 'minor' Judges, see 3:7b.

b. It has been suggested that this minor judge was invented on the basis of the clan of Jair, living in northern Gilead, Nb 32:41, but there is no reason why there should not have been a person of this name who actually was a 'judge'. The mention of the 'Encampments of Jair' is presumably an addition, derived from Nb 32:41.

c. '(thirty) towns' versions; Hebr. repeats 'young donkeys'; play on words: *'air*, 'young donkey', *'ir*, 'town' and *jair*.

d. Jephthah was a 'minor' judge, like those preceding and following him, and the same sort of information is given about him as about them: on his family, 11:1–2, on the length of his tenure of office and on his burial-place, 12:7. Since there was a story of rescue to be told about him, however, he joined the ranks of the 'major' judges, compare Gideon and the note to 8:32. • The introduction to this story, 10:6–18, has been much expanded by the deuteronomic editor, on the same lines as 2:6–19. The account of the war of liberation against the Ammonites, 11:1–11,29,32–33, has been overloaded with the pseudo-historical addition of Jephthah's message to the king of the Ammonites, 11:12–28, and by the story of Jephthah's vow, 11:19–31,34–40; to which add the conflict between Ephraim and Gilead, 12:1–6.

e. 'Midian' Gk; 'Maon' Hebr.

11 a. Gilead is clearly a geographical name in 10:18 and 11:8—the territory occupied by the Gadites, *see* Nb 32:1a. The name is used here as a personal name, as in the genealogies, *see* Nb 26:29.

b. Cf. Abimelech, 9:4, and David, 1 S 22:1–2; 25:13. For 'enlist', *see* note to 9:4.

c. This concrete example possibly shows one of the ways in which a 'judge' of Israel was chosen: Jephthah had saved the people and had charismatic qualities as well, 11:29. These two characteristics are also found in one of the traditions about how Saul was elected as king, 1 S 11. The title of king does not occur here, but royal power is certainly what Jephthah demands and gets. Contrast with this Gideon's refusal, and Abimelech's ill-fated acceptance of it. The story of Jephthah shows that the distinction between 'major' and 'minor' judges is not absolute, and that the institution of judges anticipated that of the monarchy.

of Gilead. The people put him at their head as chief and commander; and Jephthah repeated all his conditions at Mizpah in Yahweh's presence. [d]

Jephthah negotiates with the Ammonites [e]

Dt 2:19seq..27 Jephthah sent messengers to the king of the Ammonites to say to him, 'What do 12
you have against us, for you to come and make war on my country?' ·The king of 13
the Ammonites replied to Jephthah's messengers, 'The reason is that when Israel
came up from Egypt, they seized my country from the Arnon to the Jabbok and to
the Jordan; so now restore it to me peacefully.' ·Jephthah sent messengers back to 14
the king of the Ammonites ·with this answer, 'Jephthah says this, "Israel seized 15
neither the country of Moab nor the country of the Ammonites. ·When Israel came 16
out of Egypt, they marched through the desert as far as the Sea of Reeds and,
Nb 20:14–21 having reached Kadesh, ·Israel then sent messengers to the king of Edom to say: 17
Please let me pass through your country, but the king of Edom would not listen.
They sent similarly to the king of Moab, but he refused, and Israel remained at
Kadesh; ·later, moving on through the desert and skirting the countries of Edom 18
and Moab until arriving to the east of Moabite territory, the people camped on the
other side of the Arnon but did not enter Moabite territory, the Arnon being the
Nb 21:21–31 Moabite frontier. ·Israel then sent messengers to Sihon, king of the Amorites, 19
Dt 2:26–37 ruling in Heshbon. Israel's message was: Please let me pass through your country
to my destination. ·But Sihon would not let[f] Israel pass through his territory; he 20
mustered his whole army; they encamped at Jahaz, and he then joined battle with
Israel. ·Yahweh, God of Israel, delivered Sihon and his whole army into the power 21
of Israel, who defeated them; as the result of which, Israel took possession of the
entire territory of the Amorites living in that region. ·Israel took possession of 22
all the Amorite territory from the Arnon to the Jabbok and from the desert to
the Jordan. ·And now that Yahweh, God of Israel, has dispossessed the 23
Amorites before his people Israel, do you think you can dispossess us? ·Will you 24
not keep as your possession whatever Chemosh, your god, has given you? And,
just the same, we shall keep as ours whatever Yahweh our God has given us, to
Nb 22–24 inherit from those who were before us! ·Are you a better man than Balak son of 25
Jos 24:9–10 Zippor, king of Moab? Did he pick a quarrel with Israel? Did he make war on
them? ·When Israel settled in Heshbon and its dependencies, and in Aroer and its 26
dependencies, or in any of the towns on the banks of the Arnon (three hundred
years ago), why did you not recover them then? ·I for my part have done you no 27
Gn 18:25 harm, but you are wronging me by making war on me. Let Yahweh the Judge give
judgement today between the Israelites and the king of the Ammonites." ' ·But 28
the king of the Ammonites took no notice of the message that Jephthah sent him.

Jephthah's vow and his victory [g]

3:10+ The spirit of Yahweh was on Jephthah, who crossed Gilead and Manasseh, crossed 29
by way of Mizpah in Gilead, and from Mizpah in Gilead crossed into Ammonite
Nb 30:2–17+ territory. ·And Jephthah made a vow to Yahweh, 'If you deliver the Ammonites 30
into my grasp, ·the first thing to come out of the doors of my house to meet me 31
when I return in triumph from fighting the Ammonites shall belong to Yahweh,
Gn 22:1–19 and I shall sacrifice it as a burnt offering.' ·Jephthah crossed into Ammonite 32
2 K 3:27
Mi 6:7 territory to attack them, and Yahweh delivered them into his grasp. ·He beat them 33
from Aroer to the border of Minnith (twenty towns) and to Abel-Keramim. It was
a very severe defeat, and the Ammonites were humbled by the Israelites.

1 S 18:6–7 As Jephthah returned to his house at Mizpah, his daughter came out to meet 34
him, dancing to the sound of tambourines. She was his only child; apart from her,
he had neither son nor daughter. ·When he saw her, he tore his clothes and 35
exclaimed, 'Oh my daughter, what misery you have brought upon me! You have
joined those who bring misery into my life! I have made a promise before Yahweh
Nb 30:3 which I cannot retract.' ·She replied, 'Father, you have made a promise to Yahweh; 36
treat me as the promise that you have made requires, since Yahweh has granted

37 you vengeance on your enemies the Ammonites.' •She then said to her father,
'Grant me this! Let me be free for two months. I shall go and wander in the
38 mountains, and with my companions bewail my virginity.' [h] •He replied, 'Go,' and
let her go away for two months. So she went away with her companions and
39 bewailed her virginity in the mountains. •When the two months were over she went
back to her father, and he treated her as the vow that he had uttered bound him.
40 She had remained a virgin. And hence, the custom in Israel •for the daughters of
Israel to leave home year by year and lament [i] over the daughter of Jephthah the 2 Ch 35:25
Gileadite for four days every year.

War between Ephraim and Gilead. [d] The death of Jephthah

1 12 The men of Ephraim mobilised; they crossed the Jordan near Zaphon 8:1–3
and said to Jephthah, 'Why did you go and make war on the Ammonites
without asking us to go with you? We shall burn down your house over your head!'
2 Jephthah replied, 'My people and I were in serious conflict with the Ammonites. I
3 summoned you, but you did not come to rescue me from them. •When I saw that
no one [b] was coming to rescue me, I took my life in my hands and marched against
the Ammonites, and Yahweh handed them over to me. So why advance on me
4 today to make war on me?' •Jephthah then mustered all the men of Gilead and
made war on Ephraim, and the men of Gilead defeated Ephraim—since the latter
used to say, 'You are only fugitives from Ephraim, you Gileadites in the heart of
5 Ephraim and Manasseh.' •Gilead then cut Ephraim off from the fords of the 3:28;7:24
Jordan, and whenever Ephraimite fugitives said, 'Let me cross,' the men of Gilead
6 would ask, 'Are you an Ephraimite?' If he said, 'No,' •they then said, 'Very well,
say Shibboleth.' If anyone said, "Sibboleth", because he could not pronounce it, [c] Mt 26:73
then they would seize him and kill him by the fords of the Jordan.
Forty-two thousand Ephraimites fell on this occasion.
7 Jephthah judged Israel for six years. Jephthah the Gileadite then died and was
buried in his town, in Gilead. [d]

I: IBZAN

8, 9 After him, Ibzan of Bethlehem [e] was judge in Israel. •He had thirty sons and thirty
daughters. He gave his daughters in marriage outside his clan and brought in thirty
brides from outside for his sons. He was judge in Israel for seven years.
10 Ibzan then died and was buried in Bethlehem.

J: ELON

11 After him, Elon of Zebulun was judge in Israel. He was judge in Israel for ten Gn 46:14 Nb 26:26
12 years. •Elon of Zebulun then died and was buried at Aijalon in the territory of
Zebulun.

d. Evidently there was a sanctuary at Mizpah where Yahweh was invoked as witness of oaths.

e. This historical survey is a secondary composition based on Nb 20–21 and Dt 2 and confusing the Ammonites with the Moabites. The territory taken by Israel, vv. 13 and 26, had in fact belonged to the Moabites; Chemosh, v. 24, was the principal god of the Moabites; the Ammonites' god was Milcom.

f. 'would not let' versions, *see* Nb 20:21; 'had no confidence' Hebr.

g. The story of Jephthah's vow, vv. 30–31,34–40, was intended to explain an annual festival celebrated in Gilead, v. 40, the real significance of which was unknown. In plain terms, Jephthah immolates his daughter, v. 39, rather than break the vow that he has made, v. 31. Human sacrifice was always regarded with abhorrence in Israel, *see* as early as Gn 22, but this story is told without any expression of blame, the emphasis apparently falling on the importance of fulfilling a vow once made.

h. 'I shall go and wander' versions; 'I shall go down' Hebr. To be childless was considered a misfortune and, for a woman, a disgrace.

i. 'lament' Gk; 'sing' Hebr.

12 a. The episode is parallel to that in 8:1–3 but is independent. Ephraim, struggling for supremacy, is alarmed at the wide powers granted to Jephthah.

b. 'no one was coming' versions; 'you were not coming' Hebr.

c. This difference in pronunciation indicates the dialectical variations in Hebrew, most of which were eliminated in the final editing of the Bible. The word *shibbolet* means 'ear of wheat'.

d. 'in his town, in Gilead' Gk; 'in the towns of Gilead' Hebr.

e. It is not clear whether this is Bethlehem of Judah, or Bethlehem of Zebulun, Jos 19:15, near Nazareth.

K: ABDON

10:4 After him, Abdon son of Hillel of Pirathon was judge in Israel. 13. 14
·He had forty sons and thirty grandsons who rode seventy young donkeys. He was judge in Israel for eight years. 15
·Abdon son of Hillel of Pirathon then died and was buried at Pirathon in the territory of Ephraim, in the Amalekite highlands.[f]

L: SAMSON[a]

Samson's birth foretold

Jos 13:2b 13 Again the Israelites began doing what is evil in Yahweh's eyes, and Yahweh delivered them into the power of the Philistines for forty years. 1

Jos 15:33 There was a man of Zorah of the tribe of Dan,[b] called Manoah. His wife was 2
Gn 11:30;18: 1–15 barren; she had borne no children. 3
·The Angel of Yahweh[c] appeared to this
1 S 1 woman and said to her, 'You are barren and have had no child, but you are going
Lk 1:5–25 to conceive and give birth to a son.[d] 4
·From now on, take great care. Drink no wine or fermented liquor, and eat nothing unclean. 5
·For you are going to conceive and give birth to a son. No razor is to touch his head, for the boy is to be God's nazirite from his mother's womb; and he will start rescuing Israel from the power of the Philistines.'[e] 6
·The woman then went and told her husband, 'A man of God has just come to me, who looked like the Angel of God, so majestic was he. I did not ask him where he came from, and he did not tell me his name. 7
·But he said to me, "You are going to conceive and will give birth to a son. From now on, drink no wine or fermented liquor, and eat nothing unclean. For the boy is to be God's
Nb 6:1a nazirite from his mother's womb to his dying day." '
1 S 1:11h

The Angel appears a second time

Manoah then pleaded with Yahweh and said, 'I beg you, Lord, let the man of God 8
that you sent come to us again and instruct us what to do about the child when he is born.' 9
·Yahweh heard Manoah's prayer, and the Angel of Yahweh visited the woman again while she was sitting in a field and when her husband Manoah was not with her. 10
·The woman quickly ran and told her husband, 'Look,' she said, 'the man who came to me the other day has appeared to me again.' 11
·Manoah got up, followed his wife, came to the man and said to him, 'Are you the man who spoke to this woman?' He replied, 'I am.' 12
·Manoah then said, 'When your words come true, what will be the boy's way of life?' 13
·The Angel of Yahweh replied to Manoah, 'From everything that I forbade this woman, let her abstain. 14
·Let her swallow nothing that comes from the vine, let her drink no wine or fermented liquor, let her eat nothing unclean and let her obey all the orders that I have given her.'[f]
Manoah then said to the Angel of Yahweh, 'Allow us to detain you while we 15
prepare a kid for you'— 16b
·for Manoah did not know that this was the Angel of Yahweh. 16a
·The Angel of Yahweh said to Manoah, 'Even if you did detain me, I should not eat your food; but if you wish to prepare a burnt offering, offer it to
Gn 32:30 Yahweh.'
Ex 3:13g,14+ ·Manoah then said to the Angel of Yahweh, 'What is your name, so that 17
Rv 19:12 we may honour you when your words come true?' 18
·The Angel of Yahweh replied, 'Why ask my name? It is a name of wonder.'[g] 19
·Manoah then took the kid and the oblation and offered it on the rock as a burnt offering to Yahweh the Wonder-
Lv 9:24 worker. Manoah and his wife looked on. 20
Ezk 1:28 ·Now, as the flame rose heavenwards from the altar, the Angel of Yahweh ascended in this flame[h] before the eyes of
Rv 1:17 Manoah and his wife, and they fell face downwards on the ground. 21
·After this, the Angel of Yahweh did not appear any more to Manoah and his wife, but Manoah understood that this had been the Angel of Yahweh.[i] 22
·And Manoah said to his
Ex 33:20i wife, 'We are certain to die, because we have seen God.' 23
·His wife replied, 'If Yahweh had meant to kill us, he would not have accepted a burnt offering and oblation from us, he would not have let us see all this and, at the same time, have
↗Heb 11:32 told us such things.'
·The woman gave birth to a son and called him Samson. The 24

25 child grew, and Yahweh blessed him; •and the spirit of Yahweh began to stir him in the Camp of Dan, between Zorah and Eshtaol. Lk 1:80;2:40,52 •3:10+ •18:12 Jos 19:41

Samson marries

1 **14** Samson went down to Timnah, and at Timnah he noticed a woman, a 2 Philistine girl. •He went home again and told his father and mother this. 'At Timnah', he said, 'I noticed a woman, a Philistine girl. So now get her for me, to be 3 my wife.' •His father and mother said to him, 'Is there no woman among your brothers' daughters or in our entire nation, for you to go and take a wife among these uncircumcised Philistines?' But Samson said to his father, 'Get that one for 4 me; she is the one I am fond of.' •His father and mother did not know that all this came from Yahweh, who was seeking grounds for a quarrel with the Philistines, since at this time the Philistines dominated Israel. [a]

Gn 38:12 Jos 15:10;19:43 Gn 34:4 Gn 24:3–4; 28:1–2

5 Samson went down to Timnah [b] and, as he reached the vineyards of Timnah, he 6 saw a young lion coming roaring towards him. •The spirit of Yahweh seized on him and he tore the lion to pieces with his bare hands as though it were a kid; but he did 7 not tell his father or mother what he had done. •He went down and talked to the 8 woman, and he became fond of her. •Not long after this, Samson went back to marry her. He went out of his way to look at the carcase of the lion, and there was 9 a swarm of bees in the lion's body, and honey. •He took up some honey in his hand and ate it as he went along. On returning to his father and mother, he gave some to them, which they ate too, but he did not tell them that he had taken it from the 10 lion's carcase. •His father then went down to the woman, and Samson made a feast 11 there, as is the custom for young men. •And when the Philistines saw him, they chose thirty companions to stay with him. [c]

3:10+ 1 S 17:34seq. 2 S 23:20

Samson's riddle

12 Samson then said to them, 'Let me ask you a riddle. If you can give me the answer during the seven days of feasting, [d] I shall give you thirty pieces of fine linen and 13 thirty festal robes. •But if you cannot tell me the answer, then you in your turn must give me thirty pieces of fine linen and thirty festal robes.' 'Ask your riddle,' 14 they replied, 'we are listening.' •So he said to them:

1 K 10 Ezk 17

f. Pirathon was south west of Shechem, in the highlands of Ephraim, called here, for some reason unknown, 'the Amalekite highlands'.

13 a. The story of Samson is different in type from the others in the book, telling, from birth to death, the life of a local hero. Samson is as strong as a giant and as feeble as a child, he seduces women and is deceived by them, he plays a series of tricks on the Philistines but does not deliver the country from them. It has the wry quality of folk-tales in which an oppressor is worsted and can be mocked, though he has to be endured. As against this popular and profane element, Samson has been consecrated to God from his mother's womb, and his 'nazirate' is the source of his strength. This charismatic quality rated him a place among the judges. The narrative consists of a collection of anecdotes: birth of Samson, 13:2–25; marriage and riddle, 14:1–20; Samson and the Philistines, 15:1–8,9–19, and first conclusion, v. 20; Samson at Gaza, 16:1–3; Samson and Delilah, 16:4–21; captivity and death of Samson, 16:22–30, and second conclusion, v. 31.

b. The tribe of Dan originally received a territory containing the places mentioned here: Zorah, Eshtaol, Timnah, *see* Jos 19:40k; the tribe later emigrated to the north, Jg 17–18. The stories of Samson apparently relate to times later than this migration, in which the Philistines play no part. Clans who did not migrate lived with the Canaanites under Philistine domination.

c. *see* 2:1; 6:11 and Gn 16:7c. In 13:22 the Angel is identified with Yahweh, as in 6:22–23.

d. 'you are going to conceive . . . a son', probably a doublet of v. 5[a].

e. The prophecy justifies Samson's inclusion with the judges, while conceding that victory over the Philistines will not be achieved by him: this will be the work of Saul and David.

f. Like Jeremiah, Jr 1:5, and the servant, Is 49:1, Samson is consecrated to God from his mother's womb. She must herself observe the rules of the nazirate which will later bind her son.

g. The Angel, like the mysterious being at the Jabbok, Gn 32:30, again evades the question.

h. 'in this flame' Gk MSS; 'in the altar flame' Hebr.

i. Like Abraham for his three visitors, Gn 18, Manoah intends to discharge the duties of hospitality. On the angel's order, the meal is transformed into a burnt offering in the course of which Yahweh reveals himself; compare Gideon's sacrifice, 6:19–22.

14 a. The Deuteronomic editor attempts to reconcile Samson's marriage with his role as adversary of the Philistines. The Philistines had spread inland from the coast and were infiltrating the highlands; they would soon be threatening to dominate the whole of Israel.

b. Hebr. adds 'with his father and mother', probably an addition, *see* v. 6.

c. Samson contracts the type of marriage in which the husband does not set up house with his wife but pays her occasional visits, bringing presents, *see* 15:1. This form of marriage is known to ancient oriental law, and also among the Arabs. Samson does not take his bridegroom's escort with him, as custom would require; this is provided by the bride's clan. The figure of thirty is unusually large: perhaps the Philistines wanted to honour him or were frightened of him.

d. Cf. Gn 29:27: the marriage, however, was consummated on the first night, Gn 29:23. • Hebr. adds here 'and if you find'; omitted by some versions.

Out of the eater came what is eaten,
and out of the strong came what is sweet.'

But three days went by and they could not solve the riddle.
16:5–21 On the fourth day[e] they said to Samson's wife, 'Cajole your husband into 15
explaining the riddle to us, or we shall burn you and your father's family to death.
Did you invite us here to rob us?' ·Samson's wife then went to him in tears and 16
said, 'You only hate me, you do not love me. You have asked my fellow countrymen a riddle and told not even me the answer.' He said to her, 'I have not told even
my father or mother; why should I tell you?' ·She wept on his neck for the seven 17
Lk 11:8 days that their feasting lasted. She was so persistent that on the seventh day he told her the answer, and she told her fellow-countrymen.
So on the seventh day, before he went into the bedroom,[f] the men of the town 18
said to him:

What is sweeter than honey,
and what stronger than a lion?

He retorted:

If you had not ploughed with my heifer,
you would never have solved my riddle.

Then the spirit of Yahweh seized on him. He went down to Ashkelon, killed 19
thirty men there, took what they wore and gave the festal robes to those who had answered the riddle, then burning with rage returned to his father's house.
Samson's wife was then given to the companion who had acted as his best man. 20

Samson burns the Philistines' harvest

15 Not long after this, at the time of the wheat harvest, Samson visited his wife, 1
with a kid; he said, 'I wish to go to my wife in her room.' But her father would not let him enter. ·'I felt sure', he said, 'that you had taken a real dislike to 2
her, so I gave her to your companion. But would not her younger sister suit you better? Have her instead.' ·But Samson answered them, 'I can get my revenge on 3
the Philistines now only by doing them some damage.' ·So Samson went off and 4
caught three hundred foxes, then took torches and, turning the foxes tail to tail, put a torch between each pair of tails. ·He lit the torches and set the foxes free in 5
the Philistines' cornfields. In this way he burned both sheaves and standing corn, and the vines and olive trees as well.
The Philistines asked, 'Who has done this?' and received the answer, 'Samson, 6
who married the Timnite's daughter; his father-in-law took the wife back again and gave her to his companion instead.' The Philistines then went and burned the woman and her father's family[g] to death. ·Samson said to them, 'If that is how you 7
behave, I swear I will not rest till I have had my revenge on you.' ·And he fell on 8
them systematically and caused great havoc. Then he went down to the cave in the Rock of Etham and lived there.

The donkey's jawbone

2 S 23:11 The Philistines came up and encamped in Judah and made a foray against Lehi. 9
The men of Judah said to them, 'Why are you attacking us?' They replied, 'We 10
have come to seize Samson and to treat him as he has treated us.' ·Three thousand 11
men of Judah then went down to the cave of the Rock of Etham and said to him, 'Don't you know that the Philistines have us in their power? Now what have you done to us?' He replied, 'I have treated them only as they treated me.' ·They then 12
said, 'We have come down to take you, to hand you over to the Philistines.' He said, 'Swear to me not to kill me yourselves.' ·They replied, 'No; we only want to 13
bind you and hand you over to them; we certainly do not want to kill you.' They then bound him with two new ropes and brought him up from the Rock.

14 As he was approaching Lehi, and the Philistines came running towards him with
triumphant shouts, the spirit of Yahweh was on him; the ropes on his arms became
15 like burnt strands of flax and the cords round his hands came untied. •Coming
across the fresh jawbone of a donkey, he reached out and snatched it up; and with
16 it he slaughtered a thousand men. •And Samson said:

With the jawbone of a donkey I have laid them in heaps,[b]
with the jawbone of a donkey I have felled a thousand men.

17 And with that he hurled the jawbone away; and that is why the place was called
18 Ramath-Lehi.[c] •And as he was very thirsty, he called on Yahweh and said, 'You
yourself have worked this great deliverance by the hand of your servant; and now
19 must I die of thirst and fall into the hands of the uncircumcised?' •Then God
opened a hollow in the ground, the hollow there is at Lehi, and water gushed out of
it. Samson drank; his vigour returned and he revived. And therefore this spring
20 was called En-ha-Kore;[d] it is still at Lehi today. •Samson was judge in Israel in the 16:31
days of the Philistines for twenty years.

The gates of Gaza

1 16 Samson then went to Gaza and, seeing a prostitute there, went in to her.
2 The men of Gaza being told, 'Samson has arrived,' surrounded the place
and kept watch for him the whole night at the town gate. All that night they were
going to make no move, thinking, 'Let us wait until daybreak, and then kill him.'
3 Till midnight, however, Samson stayed in bed, and then at midnight he got up,
seized the doors of the town gate and the two posts as well; he tore them up, bar
and all, hoisted them on to his shoulders and carried them to the top of the hill
overlooking Hebron.[a]

Samson is betrayed by Delilah[b]

4 After this, he fell in love with a woman in the Vale of Sorek; she was called Delilah.
5 The Philistine chiefs visited her and said, 'Cajole him and find out where his great 14:15–18
strength comes from, and how we can master him, so that we can bind him and
subdue him. In return we shall each give you eleven hundred silver shekels.'
6 Delilah said to Samson, 'Please tell me where your great strength comes from,
7 and what would be needed to bind and subdue you.' •Samson replied, 'If I were
bound with seven new bowstrings which had not yet been dried, I should lose my
8 strength and become like any other man.' •The Philistine chiefs brought Delilah
seven new bowstrings which had not yet been dried and she took them and bound
9 him with them. •She had men concealed in her room, and she shouted, 'The
Philistines are on you, Samson!' Then he snapped the bowstrings as a strand of tow
snaps at a touch of the fire. So the secret of his strength remained unknown.
10 Delilah then said to Samson, 'You have been laughing at me and telling me lies.
11 But now please tell me what would be needed to bind you.' •He replied, 'If I
were bound tightly with new ropes which have never been used, I should lose
12 my strength and become like any other man.' •Delilah then took new ropes
and bound him with them, and she shouted, 'The Philistines are on you, Samson!'

e. 'fourth day' versions; 'seventh day' Hebr., but *see* v. 17.

f. 'into the bedroom' *hahadrah* conj., *see* 15:1; Hebr. *haharsah* unintelligible.

15 a. 'her father's family' MSS, versions, *see* 14:15; 'her father' Hebr.

b. 'laid them in heaps' *hamor hamarti* conj.; Hebr. *hamor hamoratayim* unintelligible. There is a play on words here between *hamor* 'donkey' and *hamar* 'to heap' or 'mass'.

c. lit. 'the height of the jawbone'.

d. That is, 'the spring of the Partridge'. The Hebr. word for 'partridge' means the 'caller'. The topographical name is accounted for by Samson's having called to God, v. 18. The previous story similarly accounts for the name Ramath-Lehi.

16 a. Hebron is about 40 miles (64 km) from Gaza. This exploit of the Danite Hercules perhaps accounted for a place-name near Hebron, at the beginning of the track leading down to Gaza.

b. Women have led Samson into all his adventures, and from these he has escaped, thanks to his strength given by God to his *nazir*. Delilah, the last of them, destroys him by making him break his *nazir*'s vow.

She had men concealed in her room, but he snapped the ropes round his arms like thread.

Delilah then said to Samson, 'Up to now you have been laughing at me and 13
telling me lies. Tell me what would be needed to bind you.' He replied, 'If you
wove the seven locks of my hair into the warp of a cloth and beat them together
tight with the reed, I should lose my strength and become like any other man.'
She lulled him to sleep, then wove the seven locks of his hair into the warp, beat 14
them together tight with the reed and shouted, 'The Philistines are on you,
Samson!' He woke from his sleep and pulled out both reed and warp. [c] So the secret
of his strength remained unknown.

Delilah said to him, 'How can you say that you love me, when your heart is not 15
with me? Three times now you have laughed at me and have not told me where
your great strength comes from.' •And day after day she pestered him with her 16
talk, nagging him till he grew sick to death of it. •At last he confided everything to 17
her; he said to her, 'A razor has never touched my head, because I have been
God's nazirite from my mother's womb. If my head were shorn, then my power
would leave me and I should lose my strength and become like any other man.'
Delilah then realized that he had really confided in her; she sent for the Philistine 18
princes with the message, 'Come just once more: he has confided everything to
me.' And the Philistine chiefs came to her with the money in their hands. •She 19
lulled Samson to sleep in her lap, summoned a man and had him shear off the seven
locks from his head. Thus for the first time she got control over him, and his
strength left him. •She cried, 'The Philistines are on you, Samson!' He awoke from 20
sleep, thinking, 'I shall break free as I have done time after time and shake myself
1 S 16:14c clear.' But he did not know that Yahweh had left him. •The Philistines seized him, 21
put out his eyes and took him down to Gaza. They fettered him with a double chain
of bronze and he spent his time turning the mill in the prison.

But his hair began to grow again when it had been cut off. 22

Samson's revenge and death

The Philistine chiefs assembled to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their god. [d] And 23
amid their festivities they said:

> Into our hands our god has delivered
> Samson our enemy.

And as soon as the people saw their god, they acclaimed him, shouting his praises: 24

> Into our hands our god has delivered
> Samson [e] our enemy,
> the man who laid our country waste
> and killed so many of us.

And as their hearts were full of joy, they shouted, 'Summon Samson out to amuse 25
us.' So Samson was summoned from prison, and he performed feats in front of
them; then he was put to stand between the pillars. •Samson then said to the boy 26
who was leading him by the hand, 'Lead me where I can touch the pillars supporting
the building, so that I can lean against them.' •Now the building was crowded with 27
men and women. All the Philistine chiefs were there, while about three thou-
sand men and women were watching Samson's feats from the terrace.
Samson called on Yahweh and cried out, 'Lord Yahweh, I beg you, remember 28
me; give me strength again this once, O God, and let me be revenged on the
Philistines at one blow for my two eyes.' •And Samson took hold of the two central 29
pillars supporting the building, and braced himself with his right arm round one
and his left round the other; •and he shouted, 'Let me die with the Philistines!' He 30
then heaved with all his might, and the building fell on the chiefs and on all the
people there. Those whom he brought to their death by his death outnumbered

31 those whom he had done to death during his life.[f] ·His brothers and the whole of
his father's family came down and carried him away. They took him back and
buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the tomb of Manoah his father. He had
judged Israel for twenty years.[g] 15:20

IV: APPENDICES[a]

A: THE SANCTUARY OF MICAH AND THE SANCTUARY OF DAN[b]

Micah's domestic shrine

1, 2 **17** In the highlands of Ephraim there was a man called Micayehu.[c] ·He said to
his mother, 'The eleven hundred silver shekels which were taken from you
and concerning which you uttered a curse, having said in my hearing . . .[d] Look, I
have got that silver. I was the one who took it.' His mother said, 'May Yahweh
3 bless my boy!' ·He gave the eleven hundred shekels back to his mother, who said,
'I have indeed vowed to give this silver to Yahweh for my son, to have a statue
carved and an idol cast in metal, but now I should like to give it back to you.' He,
however, returned the money to his mother.
4 His mother then took two hundred silver shekels and gave them to the metal-
worker. With them, he carved a statue (and cast an idol in metal)[e] which was put in
5 Micayehu's house. ·This man Micah owned a shrine; he made an *ephod* and some
6 domestic images, and installed one of his sons to be his priest.[f] ·In those days there Gn 31:19e
was no king in Israel, and everyone did as he saw fit. 1 S 2:28*l*
·1 S 7:1
·18:1;19:1;
21:25
7 There was a young man of Bethlehem in Judah,[g] of the clan of Judah, who was ·Dt 12:8
8 a Levite and resided there as a stranger. ·This man left the town of Bethlehem in Ex 12:48*o*
Judah to settle wherever he could find a home. On his travels he came to the
9 highlands of Ephraim and to Micah's house. ·Micah asked him, 'Where do you
come from?' The other replied, 'I am a Levite from Bethlehem in Judah. I am
10 travelling, and am going to settle wherever I can find a home.' ·Micah said to him,
'Stay here with me; be my father and priest and I shall give you ten silver shekels a

c. vv. 13–14 have been completed, following Gk; a phrase is missing from Hebr. The loom is a horizontal one. The warp of the material being woven is stretched between uprights driven into the ground. After each transverse movement of the shuttle, the woof is beaten in with the reed.

d. Dagon was originally the major god of the region of the Middle-Euphrates. His cult spread into Syria and Palestine, *see* the place-name Beth-Dagon, Jos 15:41; 19:27. He was adopted by the Philistines, who seem very quickly to have forgotten their own ancestral religion. Dagon reappears in the story of the ark, 1 S 5:2seq.

e. Added for the sake of the rhythm and to correspond with v. 23; omitted by Hebr.

f. Samson's end is truly heroic: he gives his life by using his God-given strength, for the last time, against the enemies of his people.

g. Second Deuteronomic conclusion, in the style of the notices on the 'minor' judges.

17 a. The two narratives, 17–18 and 19–21, of differing origins, have been added here since they relate to events previous to the monarchy. Though in themselves very old, they were probably added to Jg in post-exilic times.

b. The main subject of 17–18 is the founding of the sanctuary at Dan and the origin of its priesthood. The tradition is certainly Danite in origin, though presented in an unfavourable light: the idol of the sanctuary is obtained by a double theft; the priesthood derives from a foot-loose Levite who deserts his first employer for the prospect of gain. Conceivably, this unfavourable construction was put about by the ministers of the royal sanctuary at Dan founded by Jeroboam, who installed priests of another line, 1 K 12:28–31. The royal prerogative in matters religious is referred to approvingly in 17:6; 18:1—a notion very alien to the Dt school of thought. This story is linked to that of the Danite migration, *see* 18:1a.

c. 'Micayehu' means 'Who is like Yahweh?' and is elsewhere abbreviated to 'Micah'.

d. The words of a curse, being charged with power, are not repeated, and their effect is counteracted by the subsequent blessing, and perhaps by the consecration of some of the silver. vv. 2–3, translated as they stand, are obscure.

e. Very possibly there was only one idol, *see* 18:20,30,31, carved out of wood and plated with silver, and the distinction in 18:17,18 is merely editorial, one or the other having been added under the influence of Dt 27:15. This is the only reasonably certain example of a cult-statue of Yahweh, the oft-repeated prohibition in the Decalogue, *see* Ex 20:4, notwithstanding. It is not condemned, and nor are the *ephod* and smaller cultic statues (*teraphim*), v. 5, although these later became suspect to official Yahwism.

f. i.e. according to the ancient custom authorising the head of clans and families to exercise the functions of priest themselves and to appoint their own priests. The rest of the narrative will, however, show that the superior rights of the Levites were admitted nonetheless.

g. Unless Levite is taken here to designate function and not membership of the priestly tribe (which is contradicted in 18:30), the young man could not be both a Levite and a member of the clan of Judah. He could, however, live in Bethlehem as a 'resident stranger', *see* Ex 12:48*o*.

year, and clothing and food.'[h] ·The Levite agreed to remain in the man's house, 11
and the young man became like one of his sons to him. ·Micah installed the Levite; 12
the young man became Micah's priest and stayed in his house. ·And 13
Micah said, 'Now I know that Yahweh will treat me well, since I have this Levite
as priest.'

1:34;5:17 Jos 19:40k **The Danites in search of a territory**[a]

17:6+ 18 In those days there was no king in Israel. 1
Now in those days the tribe of Dan was in search of a territory to live in, for
Jos 19:47 until then no territory had fallen to them among the tribes of Israel. ·From their 2
13:2b clan the Danites sent five brave men[b] from Zorah and Eshtaol to reconnoitre the
country and explore it. They said to them, 'Go and explore the country.' The five
men came to the highlands of Ephraim, as far as Micah's house, and spent the night
there. ·When they were near Micah's house, they recognised the voice of the young 3
Levite and, going nearer, said to him, 'Who brought you here? What are you doing
here? What is keeping you here?' ·He replied, 'Micah has made certain arrange- 4
ments with me. He pays me a wage and I act as his priest.' ·They replied, 'Then 5
Dt 33:8 consult God, so that we may know whether the journey we are on will
lead to success.' ·The priest replied, 'Go in peace; Yahweh is watching over 6
your journey.'

The five men then left and, arriving at Laish, saw that the people living there had 7
an untroubled existence, according to the customs of the Sidonians, peaceful and
trusting, that there was no lack or shortage of any sort in the territory, that they
were a long way away from the Sidonians and that they had no contact with
the Aramaeans.[c]

They then went back to their brothers at Zorah and Eshtaol and, when the latter 8
asked them, 'What have you to report?' ·they said, 'Up! we must go against them, 9
since we have looked at the country and it is excellent, though you take no action!
Waste no time in setting out and taking possession of the country. ·When you get 10
there, you will find a trusting people. The country is wide, and God has put it at
your mercy. It is a place where there is no lack of anything on earth.'

The migration of the Danites

13:2;18:2 From these places, consequently, from the clan of Danites at Zorah and Eshtaol, 11
six hundred men set out equipped for war. ·They went up and camped at Kiriath- 12
13:25 Jearim in Judah; and for this reason the place is still called the Camp of Dan today.
It lies to the west of Kiriath-Jearim. ·From there they entered the highlands of 13
Ephraim and came to Micah's house.

The five men who had been to reconnoitre the country[d] then spoke to their 14
brothers. 'Do you know', they said, 'that in these houses there is an *ephod*, some
domestic images, a carved statue and an idol cast in metal? So now work out what
you have got to do!'

So, turning off the road, they went to the young Levite's dwelling, to Micah's 15
house, and greeted him peacefully. ·While the six hundred men of the Danites,[e] 16
equipped for war, stood at the threshold of the gate, ·the five who had been to 17
reconnoitre the country went on into the house and took the carved statue, the
ephod, the domestic images and the idol cast in metal; meanwhile the priest
remained at the threshold of the gate with the six hundred men equipped for war.
These men, having entered Micah's house, took the carved statue, the *ephod*, the 18
domestic images and the idol cast in metal. The priest, however, said, 'What are
you doing?' ·'Be quiet,' they replied. 'Put your hand over your mouth and come 19
with us, and become our father and priest. Are you better off as domestic priest to
one man, or as priest to a tribe and clan in Israel?' ·The priest was delighted; he 20
took the *ephod*, the domestic images and the carved statue, and went off among
the people.

Resuming their original line of march, they set off, having put the women, 21

22 children, livestock and baggage out in front. ·They had gone some distance from
Micah's house, when the people living in the houses near Micah's house raised the
23 alarm and set off in pursuit of the Danites. ·As they shouted after the Danites, the Gn 31:22seq.
latter, turning about, said to Micah, 'What is the matter with you, that you are
24 shouting like this?' ·He replied, 'You have taken away my god, which I have had
made, and the priest as well. You are going away, and what have I got left? And
25 now you ask me, "What is the matter?" ' ·The Danites said, 'Let us hear no more
from you, or quick-tempered men may set about you, and this might cost you your
26 life and the lives of your family!' ·So the Danites went on their way; and Micah,
seeing that they were the stronger, turned and went home.

Capture of Laish. Foundation of Dan and the sanctuary there

27 So, having taken the god made by Micah, and the priest who had been his, the
Danites marched on Laish, on a peaceful and trusting people. They put it to the
28 sword and they burned down the town. ·There was no one to come to the rescue,
since it was a long way from Sidon and had no contact with the Aramaeans. It lay
in the valley running towards Beth-Rehob. They rebuilt the town and settled in it
29 and called it Dan, from the name of Dan their ancestor who had been born to Jos 19:47
30 Israel; originally, however, the town had been called Laish. ·The Danites erected
the carved statue for themselves. Jonathan son of Gershom, son of Moses, and his Ex 2:22;18:3
sons after him were priests for the tribe of Dan till the day when the inhabitants of 2 K 15:29
31 the country were carried away into exile.[f] ·The carved statue made by Micah they
installed for their own use, and there it stayed as long as the house of God remained
at Shiloh.[g]

B: THE CRIME AT GIBEAH AND THE WAR AGAINST BENJAMIN[a]

The Levite of Ephraim and his concubine

1 **19** In those days, when there was no king in Israel, there was a man, a Levite, 17:6+
whose home was deep in the highlands of Ephraim. He took as concubine a
2 woman from Bethlehem in Judah. ·In a fit of anger[b] his concubine left him and
went back to her father's house at Bethlehem in Judah, and she stayed there for
3 some time—four months. ·Her husband then set out after her, to appeal to her
affections and fetch her back; he had his servant and two donkeys with him. As he

h. Hebr. adds 'the Levite went', doublet of opening words of v. 11.

18 a. The Danites who lived for some time in the region of Zorah and Eshtaol, *see* 13:2b, could not hold their ground there, *see* Jos 19:40k, and were expelled by the Amorites, according to Jg 1:34–35. Their migration northwards was preceded by a reconnaissance, reminiscent of that conducted by Caleb from Kadesh, Nb 13. The date is uncertain. Absence of any mention of the Philistines, here and in 1:34–35, suggests the very beginning of the period of the Judges; furthermore, Dan's positioning beside Asher in the song of Deborah, 5:17, suggests that Dan was already settled in the north. This argument, however, is not certain, and the ease with which the migration took place would seem more probable after the victory of Deborah and Barak than before it. We have here a further example of individual tribal action, *see* ch.1, and a proof that tribes continued to move about after the death of Joshua; *see* the half-tribe of Manasseh, Nb 32:1a.

b. Hebr. adds 'from their borders, some men', omitted by Gk.

c. 'there was no . . . the territory' minimal emendation to a doubtful text. • 'the Aramaeans' Gk; 'the man' Hebr.; as in v. 28.

d. Hebr. adds 'Laish', gloss absent in Gk.

e. 'of the Danites', accidentally misplaced at the end of the v. in Hebr. The following passage seems from its repetitions to be a conflation of two sources: one tells of the visit of the five explorers to the young Levite, while the six hundred Danites carry off the statue, v. 18[a]; according to the other, the former explorers are the ones who steal the statue, while the priest, standing at the door with the main body of men, protests, vv. 16–17,18[b].

f. This v. is an addition. To a doublet in v. 31[a], it adds a note on the priesthood of this first Danite sanctuary. That its first ministrant was of levitical descent is very likely, although it shocked the copyists, who added an *n* above the line, thus transforming the name Moses (*mosheh*) into Manasseh (*manasheh*). The exile mentioned here is the deportation following Tiglath-Pileser's campaign of 734.

g. The end of the v., in contradiction with v. 30, is another addition and takes as point of reference the closing of the sanctuary at Shiloh, after the capture of the ark in the days of Samuel, 1 S 4.

19 a. A post-exilic editor has combined two traditions here, as clearly appears in ch.20–21: one of them belongs to the sanctuary at Mizpah, the other to that at Bethel. This explains the two accounts of the defeat of Benjamin and the fall of Gibeah (*see*, for example, 20:30–32 and 36[b]–44), and the two means adopted for assuring the survival of the tribe of Benjamin, 21:1–12,15–23.

b. 'in a fit of anger' versions; 'she was unfaithful to him' Hebr., but *see* v. 3.

was arriving at the house of the girl's father, the father saw him and came happily
to meet him. ·His father-in-law, the girl's father, kept him there; and he stayed 4
with him for three days; they ate and drank and spent the nights there. ·On the 5
fourth day they got up early, and the Levite was preparing to leave when the girl's
father said to his son-in-law, 'Have something to eat to gather strength; you can
leave later.' ·So they sat down and began eating and drinking, the two of them 6
together; then the girl's father said to the young man, 'Please agree to spend
tonight here too and enjoy yourself.' ·And when the man got up to leave, the 7
father-in-law pressed him again, and he spent another night there. ·On the fifth 8
day, the Levite got up early to leave, but the girl's father said to him, 'Please gather
strength first!' So they stayed on[c] until the sun began to go down, and the two men
had a meal together. ·The husband was getting up to leave with his concubine and 9
his servant when his father-in-law, the girl's father, said, 'Look, day is fading into
evening. Please spend the night here. Look, the day is nearly over. Spend the night
here and enjoy yourself. Then, early tomorrow, you can leave on your journey and
go back home.' ·But the man, refusing to stay the night, got up and went on his 10
Jos 15:8; 18:16,28 2 S 5:9f 1 Ch 11:4–5 way, until he arrived within sight of Jebus[d]—that is, Jerusalem. He had with him
two donkeys saddled, his concubine and his servant.[e]

Gn 19:1–11 Ho 9:9;10:9 **The crime of the men of Gibeah**[f]

By the time they were near Jebus, the light was going fast. The servant said to his 11
master, 'Come on, please, let us turn off into this Jebusite town and spend the night
there.' ·His master replied, 'We shall not turn off into a town of foreigners, of 12
people who are not Israelites; we shall go on to Gibeah.' ·He then said to his 13
servant, 'Come on, we shall try to reach one or other of those places, either Gibeah
or Ramah, and spend the night there.' ·So they kept going and went on with their 14
journey. As they approached Gibeah in Benjamin, the sun was setting. ·So they 15
turned that way to spend the night in Gibeah. Once inside, the Levite sat down in
the town square, but no one offered to take them in for the night.

Eventually, an old man came along at nightfall from his work in the fields. He 16
too was from the highlands of Ephraim, although he was living in Gibeah; the
people of the place, however, were Benjaminites. ·Looking up, he saw the traveller 17
in the town square. 'Where are you going?' said the old man, 'And where have you
come from?' ·'We are on our way', the other replied, 'from Bethlehem in Judah to 18
a place deep in the highlands of Ephraim. That is where I come from. I have been
to Bethlehem in Judah and now I am going home,[g] but no one has offered to take
me into his house, ·although we have straw and provender for our donkeys, and I 19
also have bread and wine for myself, and this maidservant and the young man
who is travelling with your servant; we are short of nothing.' ·'Welcome,' 20
said the old man. 'I shall see that you have all you want. You cannot spend the
night in the square.' ·So he took him into his house and gave the donkeys proven- 21
der. The travellers washed their feet, then ate and drank.

Gn 19:4seq. While they were enjoying themselves, some townsmen, scoundrels, came crowd- 22
ing round the house; they battered on the door and said to the old man, master of
the house, 'Send out the man who went into your house, we should like to have
intercourse with him!' ·The master of the house went out to them and said, 'No, 23
brothers, please, do not be so wicked. Since this man is now under my roof, do not
commit such an infamy.[h] ·Here is my daughter; she is a virgin;[i] I shall bring her 24
out to you. Ill-treat her, do what you please with her, but do not commit such an
infamy against this man.' ·But the men would not listen to him. So the Levite took 25
hold of his concubine and brought her out to them. They had intercourse
with her and ill-treated her all night till morning; when dawn was breaking they
let her go.

At daybreak the girl came and fell on the threshold of her husband's host, and 26
she stayed there until it was light. ·In the morning her husband got up and, opening 27
the door of the house, was going out to continue his journey when he saw the

woman, his concubine, lying at the door of the house with her hands on the
28 threshold. •'Get up,' he said, 'we must leave!' There was no answer. He then
29 loaded her on his donkey and began the journey home. •Having reached his house,
he took his knife, took hold of his concubine and cut her, limb by limb, into twelve 1 S 11:7
30 pieces; he then sent her throughout the territory of Israel.[j] •He gave instructions
to his messengers, 'This is what you are to say to all the Israelites, "Has anything
like this been done since the day when the Israelites came out of Egypt until today?
Take this to heart, discuss it; then give your verdict." '[k] And all who saw it
declared, 'Never has such a thing been done or been seen since the Israelites came
out of Egypt until today.'

The Israelites vow to avenge the crime at Gibeah

1 **20** The Israelites then all turned out and, as one man, the entire community
from Dan to Beersheba,[a] including Gilead, assembled in Yahweh's pres-
2 ence at Mizpah. •The leaders of the entire people, of all the tribes of Israel, were
present at this assembly of God's people, four hundred thousand trained infantry.[b] 20:17
3 The Benjaminites heard that the Israelites had gone up to Mizpah. The Israelites
4 then said, 'Tell us how this crime was committed.' •The Levite, husband of
5 the murdered woman, spoke in reply and said, •'The men of Gibeah ganged up
against me and, during the night, surrounded the house where I was lodging. They
6 intended to murder me. They raped my concubine to death. •I then took my
concubine, cut her up and sent her throughout the entire territory of the heri-
tage of Israel, since these men had committed a shameful act, an infamy, in Israel.
7 Now, all you Israelites, discuss the matter and give your decision here and now.'
8 The whole people stood up as one man and said, 'None of us will go home, none
9 of us will go back to his house! •And this is what we are now going to do to Gibeah.
10 We shall draw lots[c] •and, throughout the tribes of Israel, select ten men out of a
hundred, a hundred out of a thousand and a thousand out of ten thousand to collect
food for the people, so that, on their arrival, the latter may treat Gibeah[d] in
11 Benjamin as this infamy perpetrated in Israel deserves.' •Thus, as one man, all the
men of Israel mustered against the town.

Obduracy of the Benjaminites

12 The tribes of Israel sent messengers throughout the tribe[e] of Benjamin to say,
13 'What is this crime which has been committed in your territory? •Now, give up
these men, these scoundrels, living in Gibeah, so that we can put them to death Dt 17:12

c. 'they stayed on' conj.; 'stay!' (plural) Hebr.

d. This name for Jerusalem is found only here, vv. 10–11, and in 1 Ch 11:4seq. It is derived from the name of its inhabitants at the time of the conquest—the Jebusites—but the city was in fact always called Jerusalem.

e. 'and his servant' versions; 'with him' repeated in Hebr.

f. At Gibeah in Benjamin, the only person prepared to take the Levite in is another Ephraimite, v. 16, and he is willing to fulfil the duties of hospitality to the point of heroism, v. 24. The Benjaminites of the town fall gravely short in this respect, v. 15 and their later behaviour is monstrous. The story serves as cloak for denigrating Saul (Judaean in inspiration?), Gibeah having been his capital. The whole narrative, in its present form, is reminiscent of the story of Lot, Gn 19:1–11.

g. 'going home' emended in line with v. 29; 'going to the house of Yahweh' Hebr.

h. The Hebr. term, translated as 'infamy', is applied to grave transgressions of the divine Law, above all moral transgressions which, in reaction to the licentiousness of Canaanite cults, are regarded as peculiarly reprehensible. Here, whatever crime was intended, it was compounded by the breach of the sacred laws of hospitality.

i. Hebr. adds 'and his (the Levite's) concubine'.

j. The grim appeal for vengeance is addressed to all Israel, *see* 20:1,2,10. This might be taken to stress the solidarity of the tribes when faced with a gross breach of the religious law; their common reaction, however, would appear to be unique, and it is more likely that the scope of the original story has been extended from a more limited encounter between Ephraim and Benjamin. Hence it should probably be regarded as one further episode in Ephraim's struggle for tribal supremacy, *see* 8:1a; 12:1.

k. 'He gave instructions . . . to say' restored following some Gk MSS; missing from Hebr., which only has 'Take this to heart . . . then give your verdict' retained at the end of v.

20 a. Stereotyped formula, used outside the Pentateuch, to indicate the northern and southern extremities of the territory occupied by Israel, *see* 1 S 3:20; 2 S 3:10; 1 K 5:5. Here, as an exception, the territory of Gilead is mentioned too, for the sake of the story told in 21:8–12. Other stereotyped definitions of the territory: from north to south, 'from the Pass of Hamath to the Torrent of Egypt (or of the Arabah)', 1 K 8.65; 2 K 14:25; and from south to north, 'from the Torrent of Egypt to the Great River (the Euphrates)', Gn 15:18; 2 K 24:7; *see* Nb 34:1a.

b. This figure, like those in the description of the battles, *see* vv. 15,21, is obviously exaggerated.

c. 'We shall draw lots' Gk; 'against it, by lot' Hebr.

d. 'Gibeah' versions; 'Geba' Hebr.

e. 'tribe' versions; 'tribes' Hebr.

and wipe out this evil from Israel.' The Benjaminites, however, would not listen to their brother Israelites.

The first engagements[f]

The Benjaminites left their towns and mustered at Gibeah to fight the Israelites. 14
At the time, a count was made of the Benjaminites from the various towns: there 15
were twenty-six thousand swordsmen; and the count excluded the inhabitants of Gibeah.[g] ·In this great army there were seven hundred first-rate left-handers, 16
every man of whom could sling a stone at a hair and not miss it.

A count was also held of the men of Israel, excluding Benjamin: there were four 17
hundred thousand men, all experienced swordsmen. ·They moved off, up to 18
20:27 Ex 33:7e 1:2 Bethel, to consult God. The Israelites put the question, 'Which of us is to go first into battle against the Benjaminites?' And Yahweh replied, 'Judah is to go first.'

In the morning, the Israelites moved off and pitched their camp over against 19
Jos 7:4,5 Gibeah. ·The men of Israel advanced to do battle with Benjamin; they drew up 20
their battle line in front of Gibeah. ·But the Benjaminites sallied out from Gibeah 21
and that day massacred twenty-two thousand Israelites. ·[h] The Israelites went and 23
wept before Yahweh until evening; they then consulted Yahweh; they asked, 'Shall we join battle again with the sons of our brother Benjamin?' Yahweh replied, 'March against him!' ·The army of the men of Israel then took fresh heart 22
and again drew up their battle line in the same place as the day before. ·This second 24
day, the Israelites advanced against the Benjaminites, ·and, this second day, 25
Benjamin sallied out from Gibeah to meet them and massacred another eighteen thousand Israelites, all experienced swordsmen.

Jos 7:6–9; 8:1 Then all the Israelites and the whole people went off to Bethel; they wept and 26
sat in Yahweh's presence; they fasted all day till the evening and presented burnt offerings and communion sacrifices before Yahweh. ·The Israelites then consulted 27
Nb 25:7–13 Yahweh. In those days, the ark of the covenant of God was there, ·and Phinehas 28
son of Eleazer, son of Aaron was its minister at the time. They said, 'Ought I to go into battle against the sons of my brother Benjamin again, or should I stop?' Yahweh replied, 'March! For tomorrow I shall deliver him into your hands.'[i]

Defeat of Benjamin[j]

Jos 8:4–9 Israel then positioned troops in ambush all round Gibeah. ·On the third day the 29, 30
Israelites marched against the Benjaminites and, as before, drew up their line in
Jos 8:6.16 front of Gibeah. ·The Benjaminites sallied out to engage the people and let 31
themselves be drawn away from the town. As before, they began by killing those of the people who were on the roads, one of which runs up to Bethel, and the other to Gibeah[k] through open country: some thirty men of Israel. ·The Benjaminites 32
thought, 'We have beaten them, as we did the first time,' but the Israelites had decided, 'We shall run away and draw them away from the town along the roads.'

All the Israelites then retreated and re-formed at Baal-Tamar, while the Israelite 33
troops in ambush surged from their positions to the west of Gibeah.[l] ·Ten thousand 34
picked men, chosen from the whole of Israel, launched their attack on Gibeah. The battle was fierce; and the others knew nothing of the disaster impending. Yahweh defeated Benjamin before Israel and that day the Israelites killed twenty- 35
five thousand one hundred men of Benjamin, all of them trained swordsmen.

The Benjaminites saw that they were beaten.[m] The Israelites had given ground 36
to Benjamin, since they were relying on the ambush which they had positioned close to Gibeah. ·The troops in ambush threw themselves against Gibeah at top 37
Jos 8:19 speed; fanning out, they put the whole town to the sword. ·Now it had been 38
agreed between the Israelites and those of the ambush[n] that the latter should raise a smoke signal from the town, ·whereupon the Israelites in the thick of the battle 39
would turn about.[o] Benjamin began by killing some of the Israelites, about thirty men, and thought, 'We have certainly beaten them, as we did in the first battle.'
Jos 8:20 But the signal, a column of smoke, began to rise from the town, and the Benjamin- 40

ites looking back saw the whole town going up in flames to the sky.
41 The Israelites then turned about, and the Benjaminites were seized with terror, for
they saw that disaster had struck them.
42 They broke before the Israelite onslaught and made for the desert, but the
fighters pressed them hard, while the others coming out of the town[p] took and Jos 8:21–22
43 slaughtered them from the rear. ·They hemmed in the Benjaminites, pursued them
44 relentlessly,[q] crushing them opposite Gibeah on the east. ·Of Benjamin, eighteen
45 thousand men fell, all of them brave men. ·They then turned tail and fled into the
desert, towards the Rock of Rimmon. Five thousand of them were picked off on
the roads, and the rest were relentlessly pursued as far as Gideon,[r] two thousand
46 of them being killed. ·The total number of Benjaminites who fell that day was
47 twenty-five thousand swordsmen, all of them brave men. ·Six hundred men,
however, turned tail and escaped into the desert, to the Rock of Rimmon, and
there they stayed for four months.
48 The men of Israel then went back to the Benjaminites, and put them to the
sword—people,[s] livestock and everything else that came their way in the town.
And they fired all the towns involved.

Remorse of the Israelites[a]

1 21 The men of Israel had sworn this oath at Mizpah, 'None of us is to give his
2 daughter in marriage to Benjamin.' ·The people went to Bethel and stayed
there until evening, sitting before God and raising their voices, made a great
3 lament, ·and exclaiming, 'Yahweh, God of Israel, why has this happened in Israel
4 that a tribe should be missing from Israel today?[b] ·The next day the people got up
early and built an altar there; they presented burnt offerings and communion
5 sacrifices. ·The Israelites then said, 'Out of all the tribes of Israel, who has not
come to Yahweh, to the assembly?'—for they had sworn a solemn oath that anyone
who did not come to Yahweh at Mizpah would certainly die.
6 Now the Israelites felt sorry about Benjamin their brother. 'Today', they said,
7 'a tribe has been amputated from Israel. ·What shall we do to provide wives for
those who are left, since we have sworn by Yahweh not to give them any of our
own daughters in marriage?'

The girls of Jabesh given to the Benjaminites

8 They then asked, 'Out of the tribes of Israel, who is it that has not come to Yahweh

f. The account of the battle of Gibeah is similar both in incident and in style to the account of the capture of Ai, Jos 7–8. Rather than allow an editorial influence of Jos on Jg, it is better to hold that the fictitious account of the latter has been modelled on this historic victory.

g. Hebr. adds 'seven hundred picked men', doublet of v. 16[a].

h. vv. 22 and 23 have been interchanged for the sake of the sense; in point of fact, the vv. belong to two distinct traditions.

i. The first two attempts had also been made on Yahweh's orders, vv. 18,23, but God promises victory only at the third consultation. In the parallel story, Jos 7, the initial failure is attributed to a violation of the curse of destruction. No reason, however, is given here.

j. The remainder of the ch. consists of the traditions of Mizpah and Bethel clumsily combined: hence the incoherence of the text.

k. The skirmish took place between Bethel, where the Israelites had their base, and Gibeah, where the Benjaminites had theirs.

l. 'to the west of Gibeah' versions; 'from the Plain of Geba' Hebr.

m. The sentence is concluded in v. 45; the intermediate vv. 36[b]–44 do not, however, come from a single source.

n. After 'ambush', Hebr. adds 'increases'; omitted by Gk.

o. 'would turn about' conj.; 'turned about' Hebr., but *see* v. 41.

p. 'town' Gk; 'towns' Hebr. 'took . . . them from the rear' *battawek* conj.; Hebr. *betoko* 'in the middle of it'. The Benjaminites were caught between the main body of troops and the ambush contingent, *see* for the same operation, Jos 8:21–22.

q. 'pursued them relentlessly' conj.; 'had them pursued' Hebr. • 'Geba' conj.; 'Gibeah' Hebr.

r. A place unknown. The primitive text had perhaps Geba or Gabaon.

s. the 'men' *metim* conj.; Hebr. *metom* (the city) as a whole.

21 **a.** This ch. juxtaposes two traditions, linked together by the concluding words of v. 14. The first possibly derives from the sanctuary at Mizpah, and the second from the one at Bethel, but the post-exilic editor has worked on them so much that it is hard to be sure. The Jabesh-Gilead incident is intended to explain the links subsisting between that town and Benjamin in the days of Saul, *see* 1 S 11:1; 30:11–13. The story of the rape of the daughters of Shiloh is built on a cultic memory of an ancient grape-harvest festival, attended by girls who wanted to find a husband.

b. Inter-tribal conflicts do not weaken the sense of solidarity binding the people of Israel together, and the post-exilic editor emphasises this by frequently speaking of the 'community'.

at Mizpah?' It was discovered that no one from Jabesh in Gilead had come to the camp for the assembly; ·for, a count having been made of the people, none of the 9
inhabitants of Jabesh in Gilead was present. ·The community then despatched 10
Nb 31:5–6 twelve thousand of their bravest men there, with these orders: 'Go and slaughter all the inhabitants of Jabesh in Gilead, including the women and children. ·This is 11
what you are to do. All males and all those women who have ever slept with a man,
Nb 31:17–18 Jos 6:17c you will put under the curse of destruction, but the lives of the virgins you will spare.' And this they did. [c] ·Among the inhabitants of Jabesh in Gilead they found 12
four hundred young virgins who had never slept with a man, and brought them to the camp (to Shiloh in the territory of Canaan).

The whole community then sent messengers to offer peace to the Benjaminites 13
who were at the Rock of Rimmon. ·Benjamin then came home: they were given 14
those of the women of Jabesh in Gilead whose lives had been spared, but there were not enough for all.

The rape of the daughters of Shiloh

The people felt sorry about Benjamin, Yahweh having made a breach in the tribes 15
of Israel. ·And the elders of the community said, 'What shall we do to provide 16
wives for the survivors, since the women of Benjamin have been wiped out?' They went on, 'How can we preserve a remnant [d] for Benjamin so that a tribe may 17
not be lost to Israel?' ·We cannot give them our own daughters in marriage'—for 18
the Israelites had taken an oath, 'Accursed be the man who gives a wife to Benjamin!'

1 S 1:3d 'However,' they said, 'there is the feast of Yahweh, held every year at Shiloh.' [e] 19
(The town lies north of Bethel, east of the highway that runs from Bethel up to Shechem, and south of Lebonah.) ·So they told the Benjaminites to do as follows, 20
Ex 15:20+ 'Put yourselves in ambush in the vineyards. ·Keep watch: when the girls of Shiloh 21
come out in groups to dance, you then come out of the vineyards, each of you seize a wife from the girls of Shiloh and make for Benjaminite territory. ·If their fathers 22
or brothers come and complain to us, we shall say, "Let us have them, since we could not take wives for everyone in the battle; and you could not give them to them, or you would then have been guilty." ' [f]

The Benjaminites did this and, from the dancers whom they caught, took as 23
many wives as there were men and then, setting off, went back to their heritage, rebuilt the towns and settled down in them.

The Israelites then dispersed, each man to rejoin his tribe and clan, each leaving 24
that place for his own heritage.

17:6+ In those days there was no king in Israel, and everyone did as he saw fit. [g] 25

c. 'but the lives . . . they did' versions; Hebr. omits.

d. lit. 'cause those who have escaped to remain' following some Gk; 'the heritage of those who have escaped' Hebr.

e. Canaanite festival, *see* 9:27, later identified with the Harvest Festival, Ex 23:16, or the feast of Shelters, Dt 16:13.

f. The text of this v. is obscure, but apparently alludes to the Jabesh-Gilead incident and the oath at Mizpah: perhaps an editorial insertion.

g. The narrative in 19:1–21:25 is introduced and concluded by the same comment as at 17:6 and 18:1. Here, it may be an editorial insertion, or a comment by the priests of the official sanctuary at Bethel, who take a point of view similar to the priests of the royal sanctuary at Dan in the previous story, *see* 17:1b.

THE BOOK OF
RUTH

I: RUTH AND NAOMI

1 In the days when the Judges were governing, a famine occurred in the country
and a certain man from Bethlehem of Judah went—he, his wife and his two
2 sons—to live in the Plains of Moab. ·The man was called Elimelech, his wife
Naomi and his two sons Mahlon and Chilion; [a] they were Ephrathites from Bethle- 1 S 17:12 1 Ch 4:4
3 hem of Judah. Going to the Plains of Moab, they settled there. ·Elimelech, Mi 5:1
4 Naomi's husband, died, and she and her two sons were left. ·These married
Moabite women: one was called Orpah and the other Ruth. They lived there for
5 about ten years. ·Mahlon and Chilion then both died too, and Naomi was thus
6 bereft of her two sons and her husband. ·She then decided to come back from the
Plains of Moab with her daughters-in-law, having heard in the Plains of Moab that
7 God had visited [b] his people and given them food. ·So, with her daughters-in-law,
she left the place where she was living and they took the road back to Judah.
8 Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, 'Go back, each of you to your mother's
9 house. ·May Yahweh show you faithful love, as you have done to those who have
died and to me. Yahweh grant that you may each find happiness with a husband!'
10 She then kissed them, but they began weeping loudly, ·and said, 'No, we shall go
11 back with you to your people.' ·'Go home, daughters,' Naomi replied. 'Why come
with me? Have I any more sons in my womb to make husbands for you? [c] Gn 38:8–11 Dt 25:5–10
12 Go home, daughters, go, for I am now too old to marry again. Even if I said, "I still
have a hope: I shall take a husband this very night and shall bear more sons,"
13 would you be prepared to wait for them until they were grown up? Would you
refuse to marry for their sake? No, daughters, I am bitterly sorry for your sakes
14 that the hand of Yahweh should have been raised against me.' ·They started
weeping loudly all over again; Orpah then kissed her mother-in-law and went back
to her people. [d] But Ruth stayed with her.
15 Naomi then said, 'Look, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to
her god. Go home, too; follow your sister-in-law.'
16 But Ruth said, 'Do not press me to leave you and to stop going with you, for

wherever you go, I shall go,
wherever you live, I shall live.
Your people will be my people,
and your God will be my God. [e]

2 S 15:21 2 K 2:2–4

Dt 23:2–9

1 **a.** The names may be fictitious and chosen for their meaning: the two sons, who die young, are Mahlon ('sickness') and Chilion ('pining away'); Orpah means 'she who turns away' (1:14), Ruth 'the beloved', Naomi 'my sweetness', Elimelech 'my God is king'.

b. lit. 'visited', *see* Ex 3:16h. The 'visitation' is here an act of divine favour, not of judgement.

c. In accordance with the law of the levirate, Dt 26:5–10a.

d. 'and went back to her people' Gk; omitted in Hebr.

e. Whereas Orpah returns to Moab and its god Chemosh, Ruth, on entering Yahweh's territory and joining his people, will have no other God but him. The Moabites, however, were not allowed to take part in Yahweh's 'assemblies', Dt 23:4.

Where you die, I shall die 17
and there I shall be buried.
Let Yahweh bring unnameable ills on me
and worse ills, too,[f]
if anything but death
should part me from you!'

Seeing that Ruth was determined to go with her, Naomi said no more. 18
The two of them went on until they came to Bethlehem. Their arrival set the 19
whole town astir, and the women said, 'Can this be Naomi?' ·To this she replied, 20
Ex 15:23 'Do not call me Naomi, call me Mara,[g] for Shaddai has made my lot bitter.

Jb 1:21 I departed full, 21
and Yahweh has brought me home empty.
Why, then, call me Naomi,
since Yahweh has pronounced against me
and Shaddai has made me wretched?'

This was how Naomi came home with her daughter-in-law, Ruth the Moabitess, 22
on returning from the Plains of Moab. They arrived in Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest.

II: RUTH IN THE FIELDS OF BOAZ

2 Naomi had a kinsman on her husband's side, well-to-do and of Elimelech's 1
clan. His name was Boaz.
Lv 19:9–10; 23:32 Dt 24:19–22 Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, 'Let me go into the fields and glean ears of 2
corn[a] in the footsteps of some man who will look on me with favour.' She replied,
'Go, daughter.' ·So she set out and went to glean in the fields behind the reapers. 3
Chance led her to a plot of land belonging to Boaz of Elimelech's clan. ·Boaz, as it 4
happened, had just come from Bethlehem. 'Yahweh be with you!' he said to the
Ps 129:7–8 reapers. 'Yahweh bless you!' they replied. ·Boaz said to a servant of his who was in 5
charge of the reapers, 'To whom does this young woman belong?'[b] ·And the 6
servant in charge of the reapers replied, 'The girl is the Moabitess, the one who
came back with Naomi from the Plains of Moab. ·She said, "Please let me glean 7
and pick up what falls from the sheaves behind the reapers." Thus she came, and
here she stayed, with hardly a rest from morning until now.'[c]
Boaz said to Ruth, 'Listen to me, daughter. You must not go gleaning in any 8
other field. You must not go away from here. Stay close to my work-women.
Keep your eyes on whatever part of the field they are reaping and follow behind. 9
I have forbidden my men to molest you. And if you are thirsty, go to the pitchers
and drink what the servants have drawn.' ·Ruth fell on her face, prostrated herself 10
and said, 'How have I attracted your favour, for you to notice me, who am only a
foreigner?' ·Boaz replied, 'I have been told all about the way you have behaved to 11
your mother-in-law since your husband's death, and how you left your own father
and mother and the land where you were born to come to a people of whom you
previously knew nothing. ·May Yahweh repay you for what you have done, and 12
Ps 17:8;91:1,4 may you be richly rewarded by Yahweh, the God of Israel, under whose wings you
have come for refuge!' ·She said, 'My lord, I hope you will always look on me with 13
favour! You have comforted and encouraged me, though I am not even the equal
of one of your work-women.'
When it was time to eat, Boaz said to her, 'Come and eat some of this bread and 14
dip your piece in the vinegar.'[d] Ruth sat down beside the reapers and Boaz made a
heap[e] of roasted grain for her; she ate till her hunger was satisfied, and she had
some left over. ·When she had got up to glean, Boaz gave orders to his work- 15
people, 'Let her glean among the sheaves themselves.[f] Do not molest her. ·And 16

be sure you pull a few ears of corn out of the bundles and drop them. Let her glean
17 them, and do not scold her.'[g] ·So she gleaned in the field till evening. Then she
beat out what she had gleaned and it came to about a bushel of barley.
18 Taking it with her, she went back to the town. Her mother-in-law saw what she
had gleaned. Ruth also took out what she had kept after eating all she wanted, and
19 gave that to her. ·Her mother-in-law said, 'Where have you been gleaning today?
Where have you been working? Blessed be the man who took notice of you!'[h]
Ruth told her mother-in-law in whose field she had been working. 'The name of
20 the man with whom I have been working today', she said, 'is Boaz.' ·Naomi said to
her daughter-in-law, 'May he be blessed by Yahweh who does not withhold his
faithful love from living or dead! This man', Naomi added, 'is a close relation of 2:1
21 ours. He is one of those who have the right of redemption over us.'[i] ·Ruth the
Moabitess said to her mother-in-law, 'He also said, "Stay with my work-people
22 until they have finished my whole harvest." ' ·Naomi said to Ruth, her daughter-
in-law, 'It is better for you, daughter, to go with his work-women than to go to
23 some other field where you might be ill-treated.' ·So she stayed with Boaz's work-
women, and gleaned until the barley and wheat harvests were finished. And she
went on living with her mother-in-law.[j]

III: BOAZ SLEEPS

1 **3** Her mother-in-law Naomi then said, 'Daughter, is it not my duty to see you
2 happily settled? ·And Boaz, the man with whose work-women you were, is he
not our kinsman? Tonight he will be winnowing the barley on the threshing-floor.
3 So wash and perfume yourself, put on your cloak and go down to the threshing-
4 floor. Don't let him recognise you while he is still eating and drinking. ·But when
he lies down, take note where he lies, then go and turn back the covering at his feet
5 and lie down yourself. He will tell you what to do.' ·Ruth said, 'I shall do everything
you tell me.'
6 So she went down to the threshing-floor and did everything her mother-in-law
7 had told her. ·When Boaz had finished eating and drinking, he went off happily
and lay down beside the pile of barley. Ruth then quietly went, turned back the
8 covering at his feet and lay down. ·In the middle of the night, he woke up with a
9 shock and looked about him; and there lying at his feet was a woman. ·'Who are
you?' he said; and she replied, 'I am your servant Ruth. Spread the skirt of your
10 cloak over your servant for you have the right of redemption over me.'[a] ·'May
Yahweh bless you, daughter,' he said, 'for this second act of faithful love[b] of yours
is greater than the first, since you have not run after young men, poor or rich.

f. Formula of imprecatory oath, *see* 1 S 3:17; 14:44; 20:13; 25:22; 2 S 3:9,35; 19:14; 1 K 2:23; 2 K 6:31. Ruth would have named the disasters invoked but the narrator uses a vague formula since the mere naming was considered dangerous.

g. Mara, 'the bitter one', or, amending to *mari*, 'my bitterness', balancing Naomi, 'my sweetness'.

2 **a.** According to the Law the poor had this right, but its exercise depended on the goodwill of the owner of the property.

b. In the east every woman 'belongs' to someone, father, husband, brother or master.

c. Following Gk; end of v. corrupt.

d. In fact, a mixture of water, wine, vinegar and some sort of fermented liquor; on this account forbidden to the Nazirites, Nb 6:3.

e. 'made a heap for her' Gk; 'offered her' Hebr.

f. The Law allowed the poor to glean anything that fell from the sheaves as the harvesters carried them away, Lv 19:19; 23:22; Dt 24:19, but to be allowed to glean while the sheaves were still in place was an unusual favour.

g. These repeated instructions show that, despite the legality of gleaning, harvesters were often harsh with those who tried to glean.

h. Naomi is taken aback at the amount of barley brought home by Ruth; such a quantity (some 40 litres) could be only the product of someone's generosity.

i. lit. 'he is one of our *go'elim*', *see* Nb 35:19c. Here, the duty of Elimelech's or Mahlon's closest relative combines two different customs: **1** The *go'el*'s duty was to prevent the alienation of the family's land, *see* Lv 25:23–25; Jr 32:6–9, hence he has to redeem Ruth's field. **2** The custom of the levirate, *see* Dt 25:5–10a, which required that a widow should be married by the brother or nearest male relative of her late husband, thus to raise posthumous descendants for him. Boaz, however, is not the nearest male relative, *see* 3:12.

j. In the versions, this sentence forms the beginning of ch. 3.

3 **a.** By this gesture Ruth asks Boaz, her *go'el*, to marry her, *see* Dt 23:1; 27:20; Ezk 16:8.

b. Ruth has not only stayed with her mother-in-law, 2:11, but is also willing to perpetuate the family by agreeing to marry Boaz.

Don't be afraid, daughter, I shall do everything you ask, since the people at the 11
2:11 gate of my town all know that you are a woman of great worth. ·But, though it is 12
2:20 true that I have the right of redemption over you, you have a kinsman closer than
myself. ·Stay here for tonight and, in the morning, if he wishes to exercise his right 13
over you, very well, let him redeem you. But if he does not wish to do so, then as
Yahweh lives, I shall redeem you. Lie here till morning.' ·So she lay at his feet till 14
morning, but got up before the hour when one man can recognise another; and he
thought,[c] 'It must not be known that this woman came to the threshing-floor.'
He then said, 'Let me have the cloak you are wearing, hold it out!' She held it out 15
while he put six measures of barley into it and then loaded it on to her; and off she
went to the town.

When Ruth got home, her mother-in-law asked her, 'How did things go with 16
you, daughter?' She then told her everything that the man had done for her. ·'He 17
gave me these six measures of barley and said, "You must not go home empty-
handed to your mother-in-law." ' ·Naomi said, 'Do nothing, daughter, until you 18
see how things have gone; I am sure he will not rest until he has settled the matter
this very day.'

IV: BOAZ MARRIES RUTH

4 Boaz, meanwhile, had gone up to the gate and sat down, and the relative of 1
whom he had spoken then came by. Boaz said to him, 'Here my friend, come
and sit down'; the man came and sat down. ·Boaz then picked out ten of the 2
town's elders and said, 'Sit down here'; they sat down. ·Boaz then said to the man 3
who had the right of redemption, 'Naomi, who has come back from the Plains of
Moab, is selling the piece of land that belonged to our brother, Elimelech. ·I 4
Lv 25:25 thought I should tell you about this and say, "Acquire it in the presence of the men
who are sitting here and in the presence of the elders of my people. If you want to
use your right of redemption, redeem it; if you do not, tell me so that I know, for I
am the only person to redeem it besides yourself, and I myself come after you." '
Dt 25:5–10 The man said, 'I am willing to redeem it.' ·Boaz then said, 'The day you acquire 5
the field from Naomi, you also acquire Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the man
who has died, to perpetuate the dead man's name in his inheritance.' ·The man 6
with the right of redemption then said, 'I cannot use my right of redemption
without jeopardising my own inheritance. Since I cannot use my right of redemp-
tion, exercise the right yourself.'[a]

Now, in former times, it was the custom in Israel to confirm a transaction in 7
Dt 25:9–10 matters of redemption or inheritance by one of the parties taking off his sandal and
Ps 60:8;108:9 giving it to the other. This was how agreements were ratified in Israel. ·So, when 8
the man with the right of redemption said to Boaz, 'Acquire it for yourself,' he
took off his sandal.[b]

Boaz then said to the elders and all the people there, 'Today you are witnesses 9
that from Naomi I acquire everything that used to belong to Elimelech, and
everything that used to belong to Mahlon and Chilion ·and that I am also acquiring 10
Ruth the Moabitess, Mahlon's widow, to be my wife, to perpetuate the dead man's
name in his inheritance, so that the dead man's name will not be lost among his
brothers and at the gate of his town. Today you are witnesses to this.'
All the people at the gate said, 'We are witnesses'; and the elders said, 'May 11
Gn 35:23–26 Yahweh make the woman about to enter your family like Rachel and Leah who
together built up the House of Israel.

Grow mighty in Ephrathah,
Gn 35:19–20 be renowned in Bethlehem!

And through the children Yahweh will give you by this young woman, may your 12
Gn 38 family be like the family of Perez,[c] whom Tamar bore to Judah.'

13 So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. And when they came together, ▶1 Ch 2:5,9–12, 19,50seq.
14 Yahweh made her conceive and she bore a son. ·And the women said to Naomi, 'Blessed be Yahweh who has not left you today without anyone to redeem you. Lk 1:58
15 May his name be praised in Israel! ·The child will be a comfort to you and the prop of your old age, for he has been born to the daughter-in-law who loves you and is
16 more to you than seven sons.' ·And Naomi, taking the child, held him to her 1 S 1:8 Gn 30:3
breast; [d] and she it was who looked after him.
17 And the women of the neighbourhood gave him a name. 'A son', they said, 'has been born to Naomi,' and they called him Obed. [e] This was the father of Jesse, the father of David.

THE GENEALOGY OF DAVID [f]

‖1 Ch 2:5–15 ↗Mt 1:3–6 ↗Lk 3:31–33

18, 19 These are the descendants of Perez. Perez fathered Hezron, ·Hezron fathered
20 Ram, Ram fathered Amminadab, ·Amminadab fathered Nahshon, Nahshon
21, 22 fathered Salmon, ·Salmon fathered Boaz, Boaz fathered Obed, ·Obed fathered Jesse, and Jesse fathered David.

c. 'he' conj.; 'she' Hebr.

4 **a.** To the purchase of the land, to which the man as *go'el* agrees, Boaz links the levirate marriage with Ruth. The child of such a marriage would be legal heir to Mahlon and Elimelech, and the land in question would revert to him. The first *go'el* is afraid of losing by the transaction, and renounces his rights in favour of Boaz.

b. The custom mentioned in Dt 25:9–10 has a different significance. There it is the woman herself who shows her contempt for the man who is unwilling to marry her on behalf of his dead brother, her husband. Here the gesture merely validates a contract of exchange. To put one's foot on a field, or to throw a sandal on to it, is to take possession of it, Ps 60:8; 108:9. The sandal thus becomes the symbol of the right of ownership. By taking it off and handing it to the purchaser, the owner transfers this right to him.

c. Ancestor of Boaz *see* vv. 18–22.

d. An adoption ritual, *see* Gn 48:5, also used by other peoples in the ancient Near East.

e. Obed = servant (i.e. of Yahweh).

f. This second genealogy cannot be the work of the author of Ruth. Contrary to the whole point of the story, Boaz is named as the father of Obed, Elimelech's name disappears, and Ruth's piety no longer has the same meaning; the law of the levirate and the filial piety implicit in this are lost to view. But a different, universalist theme emerges: the foreigner, Ruth, is the ancestress of David, and hence of Christ, as the gospel was later to emphasise.

THE BOOKS OF
SAMUEL
THE FIRST BOOK OF SAMUEL

Si 46:13–20

I: SAMUEL

A: THE CHILDHOOD OF SAMUEL [a]

The pilgrimage to Shiloh

1 There was a man of Ramathaim, [b] a Zuphite from the highlands of Ephraim 1
1 Ch 6 19–23 whose name was Elkanah son of Jeroham, son of Elihu, son of Tohu, son of
Zuph, an Ephraimite. ·He had two wives, one called Hannah, the other Peninnah; 2
Ex 23:14d Peninnah had children but Hannah had none. ·Every year this man used to go up 3
Lv 23:39
Jg 21:19 from his town to worship, and to sacrifice to Yahweh Sabaoth [c] at Shiloh. [d] (The
two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there as priests of Yahweh.)
Dt 12:18 One day Elkanah offered a sacrifice. Now he used to give portions to Peninnah 4
and to all her sons and daughters; ·to Hannah, however, he would give only one 5
portion: for, although [e] he loved Hannah more, Yahweh had made her barren.
Gn 16:4–5 Furthermore, her rival would taunt and provoke her, because Yahweh had made 6
her womb barren. ·And this went on year after year; every time they went up to 7
the temple of Yahweh [f] she used to taunt her. On that day she wept and would not
eat anything; ·so her husband Elkanah said, 'Hannah, why are you crying? Why 8
Rt 4:15 are you not eating anything? Why are you so sad? Am I not more to you than ten
sons?'

Prayer of Hannah

When they had finished eating in the room, Hannah got up and stood before 9
Yahweh. [g] Eli the priest was sitting on his seat by the doorpost of the temple of
Yahweh. ·In the bitterness of her soul she prayed to Yahweh with many tears, 10
and she made this vow, 'Yahweh Sabaoth! Should you condescend to notice the 11
↗Lk 1:48 humiliation of your servant and keep her in mind instead of disregarding your
Nb 6:1a servant, and give her a boy, I will give him to Yahweh for the whole of his life and
Jg 13:5; 16:17 no razor shall ever touch his head.' [h]

While she went on praying to Yahweh, Eli was watching her mouth, ·for Hannah 12, 13
was speaking under her breath; her lips were moving but her voice could not be
heard, and Eli thought that she was drunk. [i] ·Eli said, 'How much longer are you 14
going to stay drunk? Get rid of your wine.' ·'No, my lord,' Hannah replied, 'I am 15
a woman in great trouble; I have not been drinking wine or strong drink—I am
pouring out my soul before Yahweh. ·Do not take your servant for a worthless 16
woman; all this time I have been speaking from the depth of my grief and my
resentment.' ·Eli then replied, 'Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant what 17
you have asked of him.' ·To which she said, 'May your servant find favour in your 18

sight.' With that, the woman went away; she began eating and was dejected no longer.

Birth and consecration of Samuel

19 They got up early in the morning and, after worshipping Yahweh, set out and went
home to Ramah. Elkanah lay with his wife Hannah, and Yahweh remembered her.
20 Hannah conceived and, in due course, gave birth to a son, whom she named
21 Samuel, 'since', she said, 'I asked Yahweh for him.'[j] ·Elkanah, the husband, went
up with all his family to offer the annual sacrifice to Yahweh and to fulfil his vow.
22 However, Hannah did not go up, having said to her husband, 'Not before the
child has been weaned.[k] Then I shall bring him and present him before Yahweh
23 and he will stay there for ever.' ·Elkanah her husband then said to her, 'Do what
you think fit; wait until you have weaned him. May Yahweh bring about what he
has said.'[l] So the woman stayed behind and nursed her child until she weaned him.
24 When she had weaned him, she took him up with her, as well as a three-year-old
bull,[m] an *ephah* of flour and a skin of wine, and took him into the temple of
25 Yahweh at Shiloh; the child was very young. ·They sacrificed the bull and led the
26 child to Eli. ·She said, 'If you please, my lord! As you live, my lord, I am the
27 woman who stood beside you here, praying to Yahweh. ·This is the child for which
28 I was praying, and Yahweh has granted me what I asked of him. ·Now I make him
over to Yahweh for the whole of his life. He is made over to Yahweh.' They then
worshipped Yahweh there.

Song of Hannah[a]

Ps 2:18
↗Lk 1:45–55

1 **2** Hannah then prayed as follows:

My heart exults in Yahweh,
in my God is my strength lifted up,
my mouth derides my foes,
for I rejoice in your deliverance.

Is 61:10
Lk 1:47

2 There is no Holy One like Yahweh,
(indeed, there is none but you)
no Rock like our God.

Lv 17:1a
Ps 18:2c

1 a. Ch. 1–3 represent a literary unit already complete (except for 2:27–36 which is an addition) before insertion in 1 S, recording a three-part tradition of the sanctuary at Shiloh: **1** Birth and admittance of Samuel to the sanctuary of Shiloh. **2** The sons of Eli. **3** Yahweh reveals himself to Samuel. Parts 1 and 3 are linked by the person of Samuel; parts 2 and 3, by the misdeeds of Eli's sons and their ensuing punishment. The narrative is ancient, with a good historical basis.

b. Also called Ramah.

c. The interpretation 'Yahweh of hosts, armies, the battle-lines, etc.' (be these the armies of Israel, or the armies of heaven, stars, angels and cosmic forces at large) is not certain. The title appears here for the first time and is connected with the cult at Shiloh; the expression 'Yahweh Sabaoth, whose throne is on the winged creatures' occurs for the first time at 4:4, in connection with the moving of the ark from Shiloh. The title remained associated with the ritual of the ark and passed into usage in Jerusalem, once the ark had been installed there, 2 S 6:2.18; 7:8.27. It occurs in the Ps and was adopted by the major prophets (excluding Ezekiel) and by the post-exilic prophets (particularly Zechariah).

d. Now Seilun, about twelve miles (19 km) south of Nablus. This was the home of the ark in the period of the Judges, possibly even in the time of Joshua, *see* Jos 18:1a; its sanctuary there was destroyed, *see* Ps 78:60; Jr 7:12; 26:6.9, probably by the Philistines after the defeat recorded in 1 S 4. The yearly pilgrimage was that of the feast of Shelters.

e. 'although he' Gk; Hebr. uncertain.

f. In the desert the shrine of the ark was a tent, but at Shiloh a stone building, *see* 1:9; 3:2.3.15.

g. Following Gk; 'after she had eaten at Shiloh and after they had drunk' Hebr.

h. Like Isaac, Samson and John the Baptist, Samuel is a son granted by God to a hitherto childless woman. His mother dedicates the unborn child to God as a minister in the sanctuary. The uncut hair is, like Samson's, a sign of this dedication. But it is not explicitly said that Samuel is to be a nazirite, *see* Nb 6:1a, as is said of Samson, Jg 13:5.

i. People usually prayed aloud. Feastdays were sometimes an occasion for heavy drinking, Is 22:13; Am 2:8. Hence Eli's contemptuous attitude.

j. A derivation from the root *sha'al* (to ask) would give *sha'ul* 'Saul'. Biblical etymology is often, as here, content with a certain similarity of sound. The actual derivation of 'Samuel' is from Shem-El, 'the name of God' or '(God's) name is El'.

k. Children were weaned late.

l. 'what you have said' versions and 4 Q, which may seem preferable.

m. 'a three-year-old bull' Gk, Syr.; 'three bulls' Hebr.; but *see* v. 25.

2 a. This poem has been called the prototype of the *Magnificat*; but the tone of the *Magnificat* is far more personal. It is placed here by the compiler of the book on the strength of its reference to the childless woman, v. 5. It glorifies Yahweh for his triumphal vindication of his faithful followers and, if an integral work, would appear from its reference to the Davidic king in v. 10 to have been composed under the monarchy. It expresses the theology of the 'poor of Yahweh', *see* Zp 2:3d.

Do not keep talking so proudly, 3
let no arrogance come from your mouth,
for Yahweh is a wise God,
his to weigh up deeds.

The bow of the mighty has been broken 4
Is 40:29 but those who were tottering are now braced with strength.
The full fed are hiring themselves out for bread 5
but the hungry need labour no more; [b]
Ps 113:9 the barren woman bears sevenfold
Is 54:1 but the mother of many is left desolate.

Dt 32:39 Yahweh gives death and life, 6
2 K 5:7
Tb 13:2 brings down to Sheol and draws up;
Ps 30:3
Ws 16:13 Yahweh makes poor and rich, 7
Jm 4:12
•↗Lk 1:52–53 he humbles and also exalts.

Ps 113:7–8 He raises the poor from the dust, 8
he lifts the needy from the dunghill
to give them a place with princes,
to assign them a seat of honour;
Jb 9:6;38:6 for to Yahweh belong the pillars of the earth,
Ps 75:4;104:5 on these he has poised the world.

He safeguards the steps of his faithful 9
but the wicked vanish in darkness
(for human strength can win no victories).
Yahweh, his enemies are shattered, 10
the Most High [c] thunders in the heavens.

Ps 98:9 Yahweh judges the ends of the earth,
he endows his king with power,
Ps 89:24 he raises up the strength of his Anointed.

Elkanah then went home to Ramah, but the child stayed in Yahweh's service, in 11
the presence of Eli the priest.

The sons of Eli

Now the sons of Eli were scoundrels; they cared nothing for Yahweh •nor for what 12, 13
Dt 18:3 was due to the priests from the people. [d] Whenever anyone offered a sacrifice, the
priest's servant would come with a three-pronged fork in his hand while the meat
was being cooked; •he would thrust this into cauldron or pan, or dish or pot, and 14
the priest claimed for his own whatever the fork brought up. That was how they
Lv 7:29–36 behaved with all the Israelites who came there to Shiloh. •The priest's servant 15
would even come up before the fat had been burnt and say to the person who was
making the sacrifice, 'Give the priest some meat for him to roast. He will not accept
Lv 3:3–5 boiled meat from you, only raw.' •Then, if the person replied, 'Let the fat be burnt 16
first, and then take for yourself whatever you choose,' he would retort, 'No! You
must give it to me now or I shall take it by force.' •The young men's sin was very 17
great in Yahweh's eyes, because they treated with contempt the offering made to
Yahweh.

Samuel at Shiloh

Samuel was in Yahweh's service, a child wearing a linen loincloth. [e] •His mother 18, 19
used to make him a little coat which she brought him each year when she came up
with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice. •Eli would bless Elkanah and his 20
wife and say, 'May Yahweh grant you an heir by this woman in exchange for the
one which she has made over to Yahweh,' and they would go home. [f] •Yahweh 21

visited Hannah; she conceived and gave birth to three sons and two daughters.
Meanwhile, the child Samuel grew up in Yahweh's presence.

More about the sons of Eli

22 Although very old, Eli heard about everything that his sons were doing to all
23,24 Israel,[g] ·and said, 'Why are you behaving as all the people say you are?[h] ·No, my
25 sons, what I hear reported by the people of Yahweh is not good. ·If one person sins against another, God will be the arbiter, but if he sins against Yahweh, who will intercede for him?' But they did not listen to their father's words, for Yahweh was bent on killing them.[i]

26 Meanwhile, the child Samuel went on growing in stature and in favour both with Yahweh and with people. Si 46:13 ↗Lk 2:52

Punishment foretold[j] 3:11–14

27 A man of God came to Eli and said to him, 'This is what Yahweh says, "Did I not reveal myself to your father's[k] family when they were in Egypt as slaves in
28 Pharaoh's household? ·Did I not single him out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, to go up to my altar, to burn the offering, to carry the *ephod*[l] in my presence; and did I not grant all the burnt offerings made by the Israelites to your father's
29 family? ·Why do you trample on the offering and on the sacrifice which I have ordered for my Dwelling, and honour your sons more than me, by growing fat on
30 the best of the offerings of Israel, my people?[m] ·Whereas—this is what Yahweh, God of Israel, declares—I had promised that your family and your father's family would walk in my presence for ever,[n] now, however—this is what Yahweh declares—nothing of the sort! Those who honour me I honour in my turn, and those 2 S 22:26 Ps 18:25
31 who despise me will be an object of contempt. ·Be sure, the days are coming when I shall cut off your strength and the strength of your father's family, so that no one 1 K 2:27
32 in your family will live to old age. ·Beside the Dwelling, you will see all the benefits
33 that I shall confer on Israel, but no one in your family will ever live to old age. ·I shall keep one of you at my altar for his eyes to go blind and his soul to wither, but the bulk of your family will die by the sword.[o] 22:18–19

34 ' "What happens to your two sons Hophni and Phinehas will be a sign for you: 14:10c
35 on the same day both will die. ·I shall raise myself a faithful priest, who will do as 4:11 I intend and as I desire. I shall build him an enduring House and he will walk in the
36 presence of my Anointed for ever. ·The members of your House who survive will 9:26n come and beg him on their knees for a silver coin and a loaf of bread and say: Please give me some priestly work, so that I can have a scrap of bread to eat." '

b. 'labour' *'abod* conj.; Hebr. *'ad* 'until'.

c. 'the Most High' *'elyon* conj.; Hebr. *'alaw* 'against him'.

d. Eli's sons ignore the regulations governing the priest's share, *see* Lv 7:28seq.; Nb 18:8seq.; Dt 18:3–4.

e. 'loincloth', *ephod*, a priestly vestment, *see* 22:18; 2 S 6:14. It is to be distinguished from the *ephod*, an instrument of divination; *see* v. 28 and note *l*. On the high priest's *ephod*, *see* Ex 28:6a.

f. v. emended in line with Gk, Sam., and 4 Q; Hebr. uncertain.

g. Hebr. adds 'and how they slept with the women who served at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting', a gloss suggested by Ex 38:8, and missing in Gk.

h. Hebr. adds 'these wicked things', gloss.

i. As elsewhere in the Bible, Ex 4:21; Jos 11:20; Is 6:9–10; etc., the 'hardening' of the sinner is attributed to Yahweh as its ultimate cause. But this form of expression in no way denies man's free will.

j. The episode is a later insertion; it makes the briefer passage of 3:11–14 unnecessary. The death of Hophni and Phinehas, 4:11, is to be merely an omen, v. 34, of the coming misfortunes foretold in v. 33: the massacre of the priests of Nob, Eli's descendants, 22:18–19 (with the exception of Abiathar 22:22–23, later deposed by Solomon, 1 K 2:27), and (in v. 35) the substitution of Zadok's family which, from the time of Solomon onwards, will enjoy royal favour, i.e. of 'Yahweh's anointed'; but v. 36 does not tally with the situation described in 2 K 23:9 and the passage therefore pre-dates the reign of Josiah.

k. Levi.

l. Not a vestment worn, like the *ephod* of v. 18, but something that is 'carried' or 'fetched', 14:3; 23:6; 30:7, and holds the sacred lots by which Yahweh is consulted, 14:18seq.; 23:9seq.; 30:7–8; see 14:41r. It first appears in the period of the Judges, Jg 17:5; 18:14seq. (Gideon's *ephod*, Jg 8:26seq., is censured as an idolatrous object), but it is not mentioned in post-Davidic narratives (one allusion in Ho 3:4).

m. Text and meaning uncertain, as v. 32.

n. i.e. would serve him faithfully and enjoy his favour.

o. 'his' Gk; 'your' Hebr. 'by the sword' Gk; omitted by Hebr.

God calls Samuel [a]

3 Now, the boy Samuel was serving Yahweh in the presence of Eli; in those days 1
it was rare for Yahweh to speak; visions were uncommon. ·One day, it hap- 2
pened that Eli was lying down in his room. His eyes were beginning to grow dim;
Ex 27:20seq. Lv 24:3 he could no longer see. ·The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was 3
lying in Yahweh's sanctuary, where the ark of God was, [b] ·when Yahweh called, 4
'Samuel! Samuel!' He answered, 'Here I am,' ·and, running to Eli, he said, 'Here 5
I am, as you called me.' Eli said, 'I did not call. Go back and lie down.' So he went
Ex:25:22 and lay down. ·And again Yahweh called, 'Samuel! Samuel!' He got up and went 6
to Eli and said, 'Here I am, as you called me.' He replied, 'I did not call, my son;
go back and lie down.' ·As yet, Samuel had no knowledge of Yahweh and the word 7
of Yahweh had not yet been revealed to him. ·Again Yahweh called, the third 8
time. He got up and went to Eli and said, 'Here I am, as you called me.' Eli then
understood that Yahweh was calling the child, ·and he said to Samuel, 'Go and lie 9
down, and if someone calls say, "Speak, Yahweh; for your servant is listening." '
So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

Yahweh then came and stood by, calling as he had done before, 'Samuel! 10
Samuel!' Samuel answered, 'Speak, Yahweh; for your servant is listening.'
Yahweh then said to Samuel, 'I am going to do something in Israel which will 11
2:27–36 make the ears of all who hear of it ring. ·I shall carry out that day against Eli 12
everything that I have said about his family, from beginning to end. [c] ·You are to 13
tell him [d] that I condemn his family for ever, since he is aware that his sons have
been cursing God and yet has not corrected them. ·Therefore—I swear it to the 14
family of Eli—no sacrifice or offering shall ever expiate the guilt of Eli's family.'

Samuel lay where he was until morning and then opened the doors of Yahweh's 15
temple. Samuel was afraid to tell Eli about the vision, ·but Eli called Samuel and 16
said, 'Samuel, my son.' 'Here I am,' he replied. ·Eli asked, 'What message did he 17
Rt 1:17f give you? Please do not hide it from me. May God bring unnameable ills on you
and worse ones, too, if you hide from me anything of what he said to you.'
Samuel then told him everything, hiding nothing from him. Eli said, 'He is 18
Jb 1:21 Yahweh; let him do what he thinks good.'

2:21 Gn 39:2 Samuel grew up. Yahweh was with him and did not let a single word fall to the 19
Jg 20:1a ground of all that he had told him. ·All Israel knew, from Dan to Beersheba, that 20
Samuel was attested as a prophet of Yahweh. ·Yahweh continued to manifest 21
himself at Shiloh, revealing himself to Samuel there,

4 and, for all Israel, the word of Samuel was as the word of Yahweh; [a] since Eli 1
was very old and his sons persisted in their wicked behaviour towards
Yahweh. [b]

B: THE ARK IN PHILISTINE HANDS [c]

Defeat of the Israelites and capture of the ark

It happened at that time that the Philistines mustered to make war on Israel [d] and
Israel went out to meet them in war, pitching camp near Ebenezer while the
29:1 Jos 13:2b Philistines pitched camp at Aphek. [e] ·The Philistines drew up their battle-line 2
against Israel, the fighting was fierce, and Israel was beaten by the Philistines:
about four thousand men in their ranks were killed on the field of battle. [f] ·When 3
the troops returned to camp, the elders of Israel said, 'Why has Yahweh caused us
to be beaten by the Philistines today? Let us fetch the ark of our God [g] from Shiloh
Nb 10:35seq. 2 S 11:11 so that, when it goes with us, it may save us from the clutches of our enemies.' [h]
So the troops sent to Shiloh and brought away the ark of Yahweh Sabaoth 4
enthroned on the winged creatures; [i] the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas,
came with the ark. ·When the ark of Yahweh arrived in the camp, all Israel raised 5
a great war cry [j] so that the earth resounded. ·When the Philistines heard the noise 6

of the war cry, they said, 'What can this great war cry in the Hebrew camp mean?'
7 And they realised that the ark of Yahweh had come into the camp. •At this, the
Philistines were afraid; for they said, 'God has come into the camp. Disaster!' they
8 said. 'For nothing like this has ever happened before. • Disaster! Who will rescue
us from the clutches of this mighty God? This was the God who struck down Egypt
9 with every kind of misfortune in the desert. •But take courage and be men,
Philistines, or you will become slaves to the Hebrews as they have been slaves to
10 you. Be men and fight.' •So the Philistines gave battle and Israel was defeated,
each man fleeing to his tent. The slaughter was very great: on the Israelite side,
11 thirty thousand foot soldiers fell. •The ark of God was captured too, and Hophni Ps 78:61k •2:34
and Phinehas the two sons of Eli died.

Death of Eli

12 A Benjaminite ran from the battle-line and reached Shiloh the same day, his
13 clothes torn and dust on his head. •When he arrived, Eli was sitting on his seat
beside the gate watching the road, [k] for his heart was trembling for the ark of God.
The man came into the town and told the news, whereupon cries of anguish filled
14 the town. •Eli heard the sound and asked, 'What does this uproar mean?' The man
15 hurried on and told Eli. •Eli was ninety-eight years old; his gaze was fixed; he was
16 blind. •The man said to Eli, 'I have come from the camp. [l] I escaped from the
17 battle-line today.' 'My son,' said Eli, 'what happened?' •The messenger replied,
'Israel has fled before the Philistines; the army has been utterly routed. What is
worse, your two sons are dead and the ark of God has been captured.'
18 When he mentioned the ark of God, Eli fell backwards off his seat by the gate and
broke his neck and died, for he was old and heavy. He had been judge of Israel for
forty years. [m]

Death of the wife of Phinehas

19 Now his daughter-in-law, the wife of Phinehas, was with child and near her time.
When she heard the news that the ark of God had been captured and that her Gn 35:16seq.
father-in-law and husband were dead she crouched down and gave birth, for
20 her labour pains had come on. •When she was at the point of death, the women at
her side said, 'Do not be afraid; you have given birth to a son.' But she did not
21 answer and took no notice. •She named the child Ichabod, saying, 'The glory has
gone from Israel,' [n] alluding to the capture of the ark of God and to her father-in-
22 law and husband. •She said, 'The glory has gone from Israel, because the ark of
God has been captured.'

3 **a.** Initial revelation, consecrating Samuel as prophet, v. 20. It is not a dream; the voice awakens Samuel. Nor is it a 'vision' except in the wide sense, since Samuel hears but does not see Yahweh.

b. Above this ark is where Yahweh manifests his presence and issues his commands, *see* Ex 25:22; Is 6.

c. Probably added after 2:27–36 had been inserted.

d. 'You are to tell him' conj.; 'I have told him' Hebr. • *'Elohim* following Gk; Hebr. *lahem* 'to them'.

4 **a.** 'as the word of Yahweh' conj.; Hebr. has 'in the word of Yahweh' at end of previous v.

b. 'Eli . . . Yahweh' Gk; omitted by Hebr.

c. This episode, 4:1–7, has only superficial connections with the preceding: the mention of Shiloh and of Eli and his sons. Samuel no longer figures. The ark (*see* Ex 25:10e and 2 S 6:7f) is now the main theme. In content, flavour and geographical setting, it is related to the story of Samson, Jg 13–16. At first an independent unit, it has been used to introduce the royalist account of the institution of the monarchy, ch. 9–11, which is followed by the resumption of the Philistine wars, ch. 13–14. For the continuation of the history of the ark, see 2 S 6, then 1 K 8:1–11.

d. 'It happened . . . Israel' Gk; omitted by Hebr.

e. A little to the north of Philistine territory.

f. 'were killed' versions; '(the Philistines) killed' Hebr.

g. The phrase in the Hebr. is overloaded: 'the ark of the covenant of Yahweh' (or 'of God'); so also in vv. 4–5.

h. The ark is the sign of Yahweh's presence, v. 7, but this same v. indicates that the ark accompanied the army only on exceptional occasions, *see* Jos 6:6; 2 S 11:11.

i. First instance of this title, connected with the sanctuary of Shiloh, *see* 1:3d. The winged creatures are the sphinxes (supporting divinities) flanking the thrones of gods and kings in ancient Syria. At Shiloh, as in the Temple at Jerusalem, 1 K 8:6, the winged creatures and the ark formed the 'throne' for the invisible presence of Yahweh.

j. This sacred war cry is part of the ark ritual, *see* Nb 10:5a.

k. Following Gk; Hebr. uncertain.

l. 'from the camp' Gk; 'from the lines' Hebr., influenced by the end of the v.

m. Eli was not, strictly speaking, one of the judges of Israel, *see* Jg 3:7b. • 'forty years': round number for a 'generation'.

n. *'Ei-kabod*: 'Where is the glory?'—the glory of Yahweh enthroned on the ark.

The ark brings disaster to the Philistines[a]

5 When the Philistines had captured the ark of God, they took it from Ebenezer 1
to Ashdod.[b] ·Taking the ark of God, the Philistines put it in the temple of 2
Jg 16:23d Dagon, setting it down beside Dagon.[c] ·When the people of Ashdod got up the 3
Is 45:5seq.; 20seq. following morning and went to the temple of Dagon,[d] there lay Dagon face down on the ground before the ark of Yahweh. They picked Dagon up and put him back in his place. ·But when they got up on the following morning, there lay Dagon face 4
down on the ground before the ark of Yahweh, and Dagon's head and two hands lay severed on the threshold; only the trunk of Dagon was left in its place.[e] This is why the priests of Dagon and the people frequenting Dagon's temple never 5
step on Dagon's threshold in Ashdod, even today.[f]
Ps 78:66 Yahweh oppressed the people of Ashdod; he ravaged them and afflicted them 6
with tumours—Ashdod and its territory.[g] When the people of Ashdod saw what was happening they said, ·'The ark of the God of Israel must not stay here with us, 7
Jos 13:2b for he is oppressing us and our god Dagon.' ·So they summoned all the Philistine 8
chiefs to them, and said, 'What shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel?' They decided, 'The ark of the God of Israel shall be taken away to Gath.' So they took the ark of the God of Israel to Gath. ·But after they had taken it there, Yahweh 9
oppressed that town and a great panic broke out; afflicting the people of the town from highest to lowest, he brought them out in tumours too. They then sent the ark of God to Ekron, but when it came to Ekron the Ekronites 10
shouted, 'They have brought me the ark of the God of Israel to kill me and my people!' ·They summoned all the Philistine chiefs and said, 'Send the ark of the 11
God of Israel away; let it go back to where it belongs and not kill me and my people'—for there was mortal panic throughout the town; God was oppressing them. ·The people who did not die were afflicted with tumours, and the wailing 12
from the town rose to the sky.

Return of the ark

6 The ark of Yahweh was in Philistine territory for seven months. ·The Philistines 1, 2
then called for their priests and diviners and asked, 'What shall we do with the ark of Yahweh? Tell us how to send it back to where it belongs.' ·They replied, 'If 3
you send the ark of the God of Israel away, you must certainly not send it away without a gift; you must pay him a guilt offering. You will then recover and will realise why he continually oppressed you.' ·They then asked, 'What guilt offering 4
ought we to pay him?' They replied, 'Corresponding to the number of Philistine chiefs: five golden tumours and five golden rats,[a] since the same plague afflicted your chiefs as the rest of you. ·So make models of your tumours and models of 5
Jos 7:19 Jn 9:24 your rats ravaging the territory, and pay honour to the God of Israel.[b] Then perhaps he will stop oppressing you, your gods and your country. ·Why should you 6
be as stubborn as Egypt and Pharaoh were? After he had brought disasters on them, did they not let the people leave? ·Now, then, take and fit out a new cart, 7
Nb 19:2 Dt 21:3 and two milch cows that have never borne the yoke.[c] Then harness the cows to the
2 K 2:20 cart and take their calves back to the byre.[d] ·Then take the ark of Yahweh, place it 8
on the cart, and put the golden objects which you are paying him as guilt offering in a box beside it; and then send it off on its own. ·Watch it; if it goes up the road to its 9
own territory, towards Beth-Shemesh, then he was responsible for this great harm to us; but if not, we shall know that it was not his hand that struck us, and that this has happened to us by chance.'[e]

The people did this. They took two milch cows and harnessed them to the cart, 10
shutting their calves in the byre. ·They then put the ark of Yahweh on the cart, 11
with the box and the golden rats and the models of their tumours.

The cows made straight for Beth-Shemesh, keeping to the one road, lowing as 12
they went and turning neither to right nor to left. The Philistine chiefs followed them as far as the boundaries of Beth-Shemesh.

The ark at Beth-Shemesh

13 The people of Beth-Shemesh were reaping the wheat harvest in the plain when
14 they looked up and saw the ark and went joyfully to meet it.[f] ·When the cart came to the field of Joshua of Beth-Shemesh, it stopped. There was a large stone[g] there, and they cut up the wood of the cart and offered the cows as a burnt offering to
15 Yahweh. ·The Levites had taken down[h] the ark of Yahweh and the box with it containing the golden objects and put these on the large stone. That day the people of Beth-Shemesh presented burnt offerings and made sacrifices to Yahweh.
16 The five chiefs of the Philistines, having witnessed this, went back to Ekron the same day.
17 The golden tumours paid by the Philistines as a guilt offering to Yahweh were as follows: one for Ashdod, one for Gaza, one for Ashkelon, one for Gath, one for
18 Ekron; ·and golden rats to the number of all the Philistine towns, those of the five chiefs, and from fortified towns down to open villages: still to this day the large stone[i] in the field of Joshua of Beth-Shemesh, on which they put the ark of
19 Yahweh, is a witness. ·Of the people of Beth-Shemesh the sons of Jeconiah had not rejoiced when they saw the ark of Yahweh, and Yahweh struck down seventy[j] of them. The people mourned because Yahweh had struck them so fiercely.[k]

The ark at Kiriath-Jearim

20 The people of Beth-Shemesh then said, 'Who can stand his ground before Yahweh, Ps 76:7
21 this holy God? To whom shall he go, so that we are rid of him?' ·So they sent Mi 3:2
messengers to the inhabitants of Kiriath-Jearim,[l] to say, 'The Philistines have sent back the ark of Yahweh; come down and take it up to your town.'

1 7 The men of Kiriath-Jearim came and, taking up the ark of Yahweh, brought it to the house of Abinadab on the hill, and consecrated his son Eleazar[a] to guard 2 S 6:2–4
the ark of Yahweh.

Samuel, judge and liberator[b]

2 From the day when the ark was installed at Kiriath-Jearim, a long time went by—
3 twenty years—and the whole House of Israel longed for Yahweh. ·Samuel then Jg 6:6–10; 10:10–16
spoke as follows to the whole House of Israel, 'If you are returning to Yahweh with

5 **a.** The Philistines and their god Dagon, *see* Jg 16:23d, are now to feel the redoubtable effects of the holiness of the ark where Yahweh is present, 1 S 6:7c.

b. One of the five Philistine towns, as also Gath, v. 8, and Ekron, v. 10; *see* 6:17; Jos 13:2b.

c. As a trophy captured from the defeated god.

d. 'went to the temple of Dagon' Gk; omitted by Hebr.

e. 'the trunk of Dagon' versions; 'Dagon' Hebr.

f. It was, in fact, an ancient and widespread custom to avoid stepping on the doorstep, considered to be the abode of spirits.

g. The 'tumours' were probably haemorrhoids, which is well in keeping with the rather wry humour of the story.

6 **a.** If the 'tumours' were the symptoms of bubonic plague, the rats here mentioned for the first time could be the carriers of the plague (on the assumption that their part in carrying disease was known at that time). But v. 5 implies an invasion of field rats. Ch. 6 mentions two scourges: the tumours which the people suffer, and rats ravaging the countryside. Or perhaps two traditions are combined.

b. i.e. 'acknowledge that you have wronged him'; *see* Jos 7:19.

c. New cart and unworked beasts since they are to be used for a sacred task, *see* Nb 19:2; Dt 21:3–5; 2 K 2:20.

d. Though separated from their calves, the cows go forward, v. 12—striking evidence that God is leading them, v. 9; cf. 1 K 18 where Elijah deliberately makes the miracle more difficult.

e. Throughout the narrative the pronouns could refer either to God or to the ark (masculine in Hebr.). But the meaning is the same, since no distinction is made between God and the ark which is the sign of his presence.

f. 'to meet it' Gk; 'to see' Hebr.

g. Any large stone could serve as an altar, 14:33.

h. v. 15[a] which interrupts the narrative has been inserted by a scrupulous editor, shocked that profane hands should touch the ark.

i. 'the large stone is a witness', corr. following Targ.; 'as far as the large meadow' Hebr.

j. Following Gk, Hebr. adds a gloss: 'fifty thousand men'.

k. The Israelites in their turn discover how terrible the ark can be for those who do not revere it, *see* 2 S 6:6–7, 7f.

l. A Gibeonite town, Jos 9:17, where the ark would be on neutral ground, between Philistines and Israelites.

7 **a.** Though not a Levite, *see* Jg 17:4seq.

b. This ch. is not the continuation of the narrative of the ark, 4:1–6: Here the story returns to Samuel; it is generally considered to be the preface to the 'anti-monarchist' version of the foundation of the monarchy, found in 8; 10:17–24; 12. More correctly, it is a tradition peculiar to Mizpah, explaining the name Ebenezer by a divine intervention in response to a penitential liturgy. Samuel acts as intercessor, like Moses, Ex 32:11e; *see* Jr 15:1, and as judge, also like Moses, Ex 18:13seq. According to vv. 15–17, Samuel and his succeeding sons, 8:1–3, were the last of the 'minor' judges, Jg 10:1–5; 12:8–15. vv. 13–14 transform him into a 'major' judge, a liberator, but this is not in accord with 9:16; 10:5; 13–14, the liberation of the territory being attempted by Saul and achieved by David.

all your heart, banish the foreign gods and Astartes which you now have, and set
Dt 6:13 your heart on Yahweh and serve him alone; and he will deliver you from the power
Jg 2:13i of the Philistines.' ·And the Israelites banished the Baals and Astartes and served 4
Yahweh alone.

Samuel then said, 'Muster all Israel at Mizpah[c] and I shall plead with Yahweh 5
for you.' ·So they mustered at Mizpah and drew water and poured it out before 6
Yahweh. They fasted that day and declared, 'We have sinned against Yahweh.'
And Samuel was judge over the Israelites at Mizpah.

10:17 When the Philistines heard that the Israelites had mustered at Mizpah, the 7
Jg 20:1 Philistine chiefs marched on Israel; and when the Israelites heard this, they were
Ex 17:6–13 afraid of the Philistines. ·They said to Samuel, 'Do not stop calling on Yahweh our 8
Si 46:16–18 God to rescue us from the power of the Philistines.' ·Samuel took a sucking lamb 9
and presented it as a burnt offering to Yahweh, and he called on Yahweh on behalf
of Israel and Yahweh heard him. ·While Samuel was in the act of presenting burnt 10
offering, the Philistines joined battle with Israel, but that day Yahweh thundered
violently over the Philistines, threw them into panic and Israel defeated them.
The men of Israel sallied out from Mizpah in pursuit of the Philistines and beat 11
them all the way to below Beth-Car.[d] ·Samuel then took a stone and erected it 12
between Mizpah and the Tooth, and gave it the name Ebenezer, saying, 'Yahweh
helped us as far as this.'[e]

Jg 3:30; 8:28;11:33 So the Philistines were humbled and no longer came into Israelite territory; 13
Yahweh oppressed the Philistines throughout the life of Samuel. ·The towns which 14
the Philistines had taken from Israel were given back to Israel, from Ekron all the
way to Gath, and Israel freed their territory from the power of the Philistines.
There was peace, too, between Israel and the Amorites.

Jg 12:7,9,11, 14;16:31 Samuel was judge over Israel throughout his life. ·Each year he went on circuit 15, 16
through Bethel and Gilgal and Mizpah and judged Israel in all these places. ·He 17
would then return to Ramah, since his home was there; there too he judged Israel.
And there he built an altar to Yahweh.

II: SAMUEL AND SAUL

A: THE INSTITUTION OF THE MONARCHY[a]

The people ask for a king[b]

8 When Samuel grew old, he appointed his sons as judges[c] of Israel. ·His eldest 1, 2
son was called Joel and his second one, Abijah; they were judges at Beersheba.
His sons did not follow his example but, seduced by the love of money, took bribes 3
and gave biased verdicts. ·The elders of Israel all assembled, went back to Samuel 4
at Ramah, and said, ·'Look, you are old, and your sons are not following your 5
Dt 17:14 ↗Ac 13:21 example. So give us a king to judge us, like the other nations.'[d] ·Samuel thought 6
that it was wrong of them to say, 'Let us have a king to judge us,' so he prayed to
Yahweh. ·But Yahweh said to Samuel, 'Obey the voice of the people in all that 7
12:12 Jg 8:22–23 they say to you: it is not you they have rejected ·but me, not wishing me to reign 8
over them any more. They are now doing to you exactly what they have done to me
Jg 10:13 1 K 9:9 since the day I brought them out of Egypt until now, deserting me and serving
other gods. ·So, do what they ask; only, you must give them a solemn warning, and 9
must tell them what the king who is to reign over them will do.'

Disadvantages of a monarchy

Everything that Yahweh had said, Samuel then repeated to the people who were 10
Dt 17:14–20 1 K 12 asking him for a king. ·He said, 'This is what the king who is to reign over you will 11
do.[e] He will take your sons and direct them to his chariotry and cavalry, and they
1 K 1:5 will run in front of his chariot. ·He will use them as leaders of a thousand and 12

leaders of fifty; he will make them plough his fields and gather in his harvest and ▶2 K 15:1
13 make his weapons of war and the gear for his chariots. ·He will take your daughters
14 as perfumers, cooks and bakers. ·He will take the best of your fields, your vineyards 1 K 21:1–24
15 and your olive groves and give them to his officials. ·He will tithe your crops and
16 vineyards to provide for his courtiers and his officials. ·He will take the best of
your servants, men and women, of your oxen[f] and your donkeys, and make them
17 work for him. ·He will tithe your flocks, and you yourselves will become his slaves.
18 ·When that day comes, you will cry aloud because of the king you have chosen for 1 K 12:4 Pr 1:25–33 Mi 3:4
yourselves, but on that day Yahweh will not hear you.'
19 The people, however, refused to listen to Samuel. They said, 'No! We are
20 determined to have a king, ·so that we can be like the other nations, with our own
21 king to rule us and lead us and fight our battles.' ·Samuel listened to all that the
22 people had to say and repeated it in Yahweh's ear. ·Yahweh then said to Samuel,
'Do as they ask and give them a king.' Samuel then said to the Israelites, 'Go
home, each of you, to his own town.'[g]

Saul and his father's donkeys[a]

1 9 Among the men of Benjamin was a man called Kish son of Abiel, son of Zeror, 1 Ch 8:33
2 son of Becorath, son of Aphiah; a Benjaminite and a person of rank. ·He had
a son called Saul,[b] a handsome man in the prime of life. Of all the Israelites there 10:23;16:12
was no one more handsome than he; he stood head and shoulders taller than
anyone else.
3 Now since the donkeys belonging to Kish, Saul's father, had strayed, Kish said
to his son Saul, 'My son, take one of the servants with you and be off; go and look
4 for the donkeys.' ·They went through the highlands of Ephraim, they went through
the territory of Shalishah, and did not find them; they went through the territory of
Shaalim but they were not there; they went through the territory of Benjamin and
5 did not find them. ·When they reached the territory of Zuph, Saul said to the
servant who was with him, 'Come on, let us go back or my father will stop worrying
6 over the donkeys and start being anxious about us.' ·The servant, however, replied,
'Look, there is a man of God in this town,[c] a man who is held in honour; everything Dt 33:1 Jg 13:6 1 K 13:1

c. Mizpah was a sanctuary where ancient Israel held its general assemblies, v. 6; 10:17–24, *see* Jg 20:1,3; 21:1,5,8, not to be confused with the Mizpah of 1 K 15:22 and Jr 40:13, identified as Tell en-Nasbah, where there was no significant Israelite settlement until after Solomonic times. Mizpah is a common place-name, meaning 'Look-out', and it is tempting to identify the Mizpah of the times of the judges and of Samuel with the heights of Nebi-Samwil, a perfect observation post, to the north of Jerusalem, which would also be the high place of Gibeah—'the principal high place' in the days of Solomon, 1 K 3:4.

d. Site unknown; some emend to 'Beth-Horon'.

e. i.e. 'stone of help'. The Ebenezer of 4:1 is situated elsewhere.

8 **a.** A turning point of Israel's political and religious history. The sanctuary of the ark of Shiloh has been destroyed and unity is menaced as the Philistine threat increases. A section of the people (repeating the offer made to Gideon, Jg 8:22seq., and cf. the attempt made by Abimelech, Jg 9:1seq.) asks for a king 'such as other nations have', but others hold the opposite view that Yahweh, Israel's only lord, should be left to provide leaders as circumstances required, as he did in the days of the judges. These two schools of thought find expression in juxtaposed accounts of the institution of the monarchy. But it is incorrect to talk of an 'anti-monarchist version' 8; 10:17–24; 12, and of a 'monarchist version' 9:1–10:16. These differing traditions, deriving from different sanctuaries, agree on the historic and religious role of Samuel. His importance was to have established a monarchy which respected the rights of God over the people. After the set-back with the reign of Saul, this was actually achieved under David, whose personality was such that he could reconcile the religious and profane aspects of the Israelite throne, and combine the qualities of political leader with the duties incumbent on Yahweh's Anointed. This ideal balance was never again achieved by his successors, hence David became the type of the Future King by whose means God would save his people, the Anointed of the Lord, the Messiah.

b. This account derives from the sanctuary at Ramah. Samuel opposes the popular demand for a king such as other nations have, *see* v. 5d, but is not opposed to a monarchy in which Yahweh's prerogatives will be acknowledged.

c. *see* ch. 7:2b.

d. Israel forgets that it is not like other nations: by following their example and by rejecting its true king, Yahweh, *see* v. 7 and 12:12, it plays false to its own peculiar vocation.

e. The 'royal rights' have generally been considered to reflect abuses of royal power under Solomon and his successors. But recently discovered texts show that this sort of thing went on in Canaanite kingdoms pre-dating Israel.

f. 'oxen' Gk; 'young people' Hebr.

g. The last sentence of the v. is an editorial insertion to prepare for the anointing of Saul, 9:1–10:16.

9 **a.** The narrative 9:1–10:16 has no connection with what has gone before. It derives from Ramah and relates that Saul was anointed as a young man and that the anointing remained a secret, as with David, 16. Saul is the central figure of the story and Samuel is represented, not as a judge, but as a prophet whom Saul accidentally meets. The monarchy is intended by Yahweh, and Saul is chosen by him. Saul certainly was anointed, as 24:7,11; 26:9,11,16,23; 2 S 1 14–15 bear witness, and very probably by Samuel, though in what circumstances we do not know.

b. i.e. 'asked for' (from God).

c. Ramah, Samuel's town, 7:17.

he says comes true. Let us go there, then; perhaps he will be able to show us the
way that we should take.' •Saul said to his servant, 'But if we do go, what can we 7
Nb 22:7 2 K 5:15 take to the man? The food in our sacks is finished, and we have no present to offer
the man of God. What else have we got?' [d] •The servant spoke up again and said to 8
Saul, 'Look, I happen to have a quarter of a silver shekel; I shall give that to the
man of God, for him to tell us which way to go.' •Saul then said to his servant, 10
'Well said! Come on, let us go.' And they went off to the town where the man of
God was.

Saul meets Samuel

Gn 24:11 Ex 2:16 As they were going up the slope to the town they came across some girls going out 11
to draw water, and said to them, 'Is the seer [e] there?' •In Israel, in olden days, when 9
anyone used to go to consult God, he would say, 'Come on, let us go to the seer,'
Si 46:15 for a man who is now called a 'prophet' used to be called a 'seer' in olden days.
The girls replied, 'He is. He arrived a moment or two ahead of you. You had better 12
hurry: he has just come to town because the people are having a sacrifice today on
the high place. [f] •You can catch him as soon as you go into the town, before he goes 13
up to the high place for the meal. The people will not eat until he comes, since he
Lv 3:1a must bless the sacrifice; after that, the guests will start eating. [g] If you go up now,
you will find him straight away.'

So they went up to the town and, as they were going through the gate, [h] Samuel 14
came out towards them on his way to the high place. •Now, Yahweh had given 15
Ac 9:10–16 Samuel a revelation the day before Saul came, saying, •'About this time tomorrow, 16
I shall send you a man from the territory of Benjamin; you are to anoint him as
Ex 3:7.10 prince of my people Israel, and he will save my people from the power of the
Philistines; for I have seen the misery [i] of my people and their cries of anguish have
come to me.' •When Samuel saw Saul, Yahweh told him, 'That is the man of whom 17
16:12 Jn 1:33 I said to you, "He is to govern my people." ' •Saul accosted Samuel in the gateway 18
and said, 'Tell me, please, where the seer's house is.' •Samuel replied to Saul, 'I 19
am the seer. Go up ahead of me to the high place. You must eat with me today.
Tomorrow, when I let you go, I shall tell you whatever is on your mind.
As regards your donkeys, however, which strayed three days ago, do not worry 20
about them; they have been found. And for whom is the whole wealth of Israel
destined, if not for you and for all the members of your father's family?' [j] •To this, 21
Saul replied, 'Am I not a Benjaminite, from the smallest [k] of the tribes of Israel?
And is not my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? Why are
you saying a thing like this to me?'

Samuel then took Saul and his servant and brought them into the hall and gave 22
them a place at the head of the guests, of whom there were about thirty. •Samuel 23
then said to the cook, 'Serve the portion which I gave you and told you to put on
one side.' •The cook then picked up the leg and the tail and put it in front of Saul, 24
saying, 'This is for you. This is what was left. Make a good meal . . .' That day,
Saul ate with Samuel. [l]

They came down from the high place into the town. A bed was made for Saul on 25
the roof and he lay down there. [m]

Consecration of Saul [n]

At dawn, Samuel called to Saul on the roof, 'Get up, and I shall send you on your 26
way.' Saul got up, and Samuel and he went outside together. •They had walked as 27
far as the end of the town when Samuel said to Saul, 'Tell the servant to go on
ahead of us, [o] but you stand still for a moment, so that I can make known to you the
word of God.'

10 Samuel took a phial of oil and poured it on Saul's head; he then kissed him 1
9:16–17 and said, 'Has not Yahweh anointed you as leader of his people Israel? You
are the man who is to govern Yahweh's people and save them from the power of
14:10c the enemies surrounding them. The sign for you that Yahweh has anointed you as

prince of his heritage [a] is this: ·after leaving me today, you will meet two men near Dt 7:6b;32:9
the tomb of Rachel, on the frontier of Benjamin . . .[b] and they will say to you,
"The donkeys which you went looking for have been found, and your father has
lost interest in the matter of the donkeys and is worrying about you and wondering,
What am I to do about my son?" ·Going on from there, you will come to the Oak
of Tabor, where you will meet three men going up to God at Bethel; one will be
carrying three kids, one three loaves of bread and the third a skin of wine. ·They
will greet you and give you two loaves of bread which you must accept from them.
After this, you will come to Gibeah of God [c] (where the Philistine garrison [d] is) and, 13:3
when you are just outside the town, you will meet a group of prophets coming
down from the high place, headed by lyre, tambourine, pipe and harp; they will be
in a state of ecstasy. [e] ·The spirit of Yahweh will then seize on you, and you will go Jg 3:10+
into ecstasy with them, and be changed into another man. ·When these signs have
occurred, act as occasion serves, for God is with you. ·You will then go down, Gn 39:2
ahead of me, to Gilgal,[f] and I shall join you there to make burnt offerings and to Lv 1:1b;3:1a
offer communion sacrifices. You must wait seven days for me to come to you, and
I shall then reveal to you what you must do.'

Return of Saul

As soon as he had turned his back to leave Samuel, God changed his heart. And all
these signs occurred that very day . . . ·From there,[g] they came to Gibeah: and
there was a group of prophets coming to meet him! The spirit of God seized on him 19:20–24
and he fell into ecstasy with them. ·Seeing him prophesying with the prophets, all
the people who had known him previously said to one another, 'What has come
over the son of Kish? Is Saul one of the prophets too?' ·And one of the local people
retorted, 'But who is their father?'[h] Hence the origin of the proverb: Is Saul one of
the prophets too?
When he came out of his ecstasy, he went into Gibeah.[i] ·Saul's uncle asked him
and his servant, 'Where have you been?' 'Looking for the donkeys,' he replied,
'and when we could not find them anywhere, we went to Samuel.' ·Saul's uncle
said, 'Tell me please what Samuel said to you.' ·Saul said to his uncle, 'He merely
told us that the donkeys were already found,' but did not mention anything that
Samuel had said about the kingship.

d. People did not consult a prophet without giving him a present, Nb 22:7; 1 K 14:3; 2 K 4:42; 5:15; 8:8, *see* Ezk 13:19; Am 7:12; Mi 3:11.

e. A rare word for prophet, used in ancient prose narrative. Hence the explanatory gloss of v. 9, which is to be read after v. 11.

f. The 'high place' was a shrine set on a hilltop near a town. In these originally Canaanite sanctuaries, the Israelites substituted Yahweh for Baal, Jg 6:25seq., and the high places were for many years tolerated by official Yahwism, 1 K 3:4seq., until their prohibition by the law imposing a single sanctuary. Dt 12:2b.

g. The sacred meal was an essential part of the communion sacrifice, *see* Lv 3:1a.

h. 'the gate' conj.; *see* v. 18; 'the town' Hebr.

i. 'misery' Gk; omitted by Hebr.

j. Saul's royal destiny is foretold for the first time.

k. 'the smallest' versions; 'one of the smallest' Hebr. 'of the tribe (of Benjamin)' versions; 'of the tribes' Hebr.

l. Hebr. uncertain: 'because for the time appointed for you saying: I have invited the people'.

m. 'A bed . . . lay down there' Gk and *Vet. Lat.*; 'he had a talk with Samuel on the roof, and went to bed' Hebr.

n. The kings of Israel were anointed by a man of God, either priest or prophet, *see* 16:13; 1 K 1:39; 2 K 9:6; 11:12. The rite gave them a sacred character, making them Yahweh's vassals. The king was 'Yahweh's Anointed', *see* 2:35; 24:7,11; 26:9,16, and *see* Ex 30:22d.

o. After 'ahead of us', Hebr. has 'and he went past', omitted by Gk.

10 **a.** Following Gk; Hebr. omits all but the first sentence.

b. The word omitted is incomprehensible in Hebr. The frontier was the one between Benjamin and Ephraim; Saul is on his way from there. Ancient tradition (and *see* Jr 31:15) located Rachel's tomb there; later it was said to be near Bethlehem where it is still shown, *see* the gloss of Gn 35:19.

c. Another name for Gibeah, Saul's home, vv. 10seq.; 11:4; 15:34.

d. Others translate 'post' or '*stele*'. • The parenthesis is a gloss in preparation for 13:3.

e. These 'prophets' lived in groups; they made use of music and gesticulation to stimulate an ecstasy which communicated itself to others, 19:20–24; 1 K 22:10seq. They have been compared with the dervishes of today. Israel's neighbours (compare the prophets of Baal, 1 K 18:25–29) were familiar with this lower form of religious life, which was long tolerated in the cult of Yahweh, 1 K 18:4. The 'prophets' reappear, with diminished frenzy, in Elisha's company, 2 K 2:3c. The great prophets of Israel are of a different calibre, *see* Introduction to the Prophets §2.

f. Near Jericho, *see* Jos 4:19b; v. 8 is an insertion preparing for 13:8–15, a passage from a different source.

g. The original narrative must have described the fulfilment of the first two signs.

h. They are surprised that someone of Saul's standing should mix with these enthusiasts, no doubt of lowly origin.

i. 'Gibeah' Gk; 'the high place' Hebr.

Saul is designated king by lot[j]

7:5c Samuel summoned the people to Yahweh at Mizpah ·and said to the Israelites, 17, 18
Jg 6:8–9 'Yahweh, God of Israel, says this, "I brought Israel out of Egypt and delivered you
Ex 20:2 Lv 25:38 from the power of the Egyptians and of all the kingdoms that were oppressing you." ·But today you have rejected your God, him who saves you from all your 19
difficulties and troubles; and you have said, "No, you must set a king over us." Very well, take your positions before Yahweh, tribe by tribe and clan by clan.'

Jos 7:16–18 Samuel then made all the tribes of Israel come forward, and the lot indicated the 20
tribe of Benjamin. ·He then made the tribe of Benjamin come forward clan by 21
clan, and the lot indicated the clan of Matri; he then made the clan of Matri come forward one by one,[k] and the lot indicated Saul son of Kish, but when they looked for him, he was not to be found.

Again they consulted Yahweh, 'Has the man come here?'[l] Yahweh replied, 22
'There he is, hiding among the baggage.' ·So they ran and fetched him out and, as 23
9:2 he stood among the people, he was head and shoulders taller than any of them.
Samuel then said to all the people, 'You have seen the man whom Yahweh has 24
chosen, and that among the whole people he has no equal.' And all the people
1 K 1:39 2 K 11–12 acclaimed him, shouting, 'Long live the king!'

8:11–18 Dt 17:18–20 Jos 24:26–28 Samuel then explained the king's constitutional position[m] to the people and 25
inscribed this in a book which he placed before Yahweh. Samuel then sent all the people away, everyone back to his home. ·Saul too went home to Gibeah and with 26
him went those strong men[n] whose hearts God had touched. ·But there were some 27
11:12–14 scoundrels who said, 'How can this fellow save us?' These treated him with contempt and offered him no present.

Victory over the Ammonites[a]

11 About a month later,[b] Nahash the Ammonite marched up and laid siege to 1
Jabesh in Gilead. All the men of Jabesh said to Nahash, 'Make a treaty with us and we will be your subjects.' ·Nahash the Ammonite replied, 'I shall make a 2
treaty with you only on this condition, that I put out all your right eyes, and I will make it a taunt to the whole of Israel.' ·The elders of Jabesh said to him, 'Give us 3
seven days' grace while we send messengers throughout the territory of Israel, and if no one comes to our help, we will come out to you.'[c] ·The messengers came to 4
Gibeah of Saul, and reported this to the people, and all the people wept aloud.

Now Saul was just then coming in from the fields behind his oxen, and he said, 5
'What is wrong? Why are the people weeping?' They explained to him what the
10:10 Jg 3:10+ Jg 19:29 men of Jabesh had said. ·And the spirit of Yahweh seized on Saul when he heard 6
these words, and he fell into a fury. ·He took a yoke of oxen, cut them into pieces 7
and sent these by messengers throughout the territory of Israel with these words, 'Anyone who will not march with Saul will have the same done to his oxen!' At
14:15 Gn 35:5 this, a panic from Yahweh[d] swept on the people and they marched out as one man.
Saul inspected them at Bezek; there were three hundred thousand of Israel and 8
thirty thousand of Judah.[e] ·Then he said to the messengers who had come, 'This is 9
what you are to say to the people of Jabesh in Gilead, "Tomorrow, by the time that the sun is hot, help will reach you." ' The messengers went and reported this to the people of Jabesh who were overjoyed; ·they said to Nahash,[f] 'Tomorrow we shall 10
come out to you and you can do whatever you like to us.'

The next day, Saul disposed the army in three companies, which burst into the 11
Ex 14:24 middle of the camp during the dawn watch and slaughtered the Ammonites until high noon. The survivors were so scattered that no two of them were left together.

Saul is proclaimed king[g]

10:27 The people then said to Samuel, 'Who said, "Must we have Saul reigning over us?" 12
Hand the men over, for us to put them to death.' ·'No one must be put to death 13

14 today,' Saul said, 'for today Yahweh has intervened to rescue Israel.' ·Samuel then 2 S 19:23
said to the people, 'Let us now go to Gilgal and reaffirm the monarchy there.'
15 The people then all went to Gilgal. And there, at Gilgal, they proclaimed Saul Jos 4:19b
king before Yahweh; they offered communion sacrifices before Yahweh, and there Lv 3:1a
Saul and all the people of Israel gave themselves over to great rejoicing.

Samuel gives way to Saul [a] Jos 24:1–28

1 12 Samuel said to all Israel, 'I have faithfully done all that you asked of me,
2 and have appointed you a king. ·In future, the king will lead you. As for Nb 27 16:17
me, I am old and grey, and in any case you have my sons. I have been your leader
3 ever since I was young until today. ·Here I am. Bear witness against me before
Yahweh and before his anointed. Whose ox have I taken? Whose donkey have I 8:11–17
taken? Have I wronged or oppressed anyone? Have I taken a consideration from Nb 16:15
4 anyone for looking the other way? If so, I will make amends.' ·They said, 'You Si 46:19
5 have neither wronged nor oppressed us nor accepted anything from anyone.' ·He
said to them, 'Yahweh is your witness and his anointed is witness today that you
have found nothing in my hands?' They replied, 'He is witness.'
6 Samuel then said to the people, [b] 'Yahweh is witness, [c] he who raised up Moses
7 and Aaron and who brought your ancestors out of Egypt. ·So now, stay where you
are, while I plead with you before Yahweh and remind you [d] of all the saving acts
8 which he has done for you and for your ancestors. ·After Jacob had arrived in
Egypt, the Egyptians oppressed them, [e] and your ancestors cried to Yahweh.
Yahweh then sent Moses and Aaron, who brought your ancestors out of Egypt and
9 gave them a settled home here. ·They then forgot Yahweh their God and he sold Mi 6:4
them into the power of Sisera, general of the army of Hazor, and also into the Jg 4–5;
10 power of the Philistines and of the king of Moab, who made war on them. ·They Jg 13–16
cried to Yahweh, "We have sinned," they said, "for we have deserted Yahweh Jg 3:12–30
and served the Baals and the Astartes. Rescue us now from the power of our
11 enemies, and we will serve you." ·Yahweh then sent Jerubbaal, Barak, [f] Jephthah, Jg 4–5;6–8;
and Samuel. He rescued you from the power of the enemies surrounding you, and 11–12
you lived in security.
12 'But when you saw Nahash, king of the Ammonites, marching on you, you said 11:1seq.
to me, "No, we must have a king to rule us"—although Yahweh your God is your 8:7
13 king. ·So, here is the king whom you have chosen: Yahweh has appointed you a
14 king. [g] ·If you fear and serve Yahweh and obey his voice and do not rebel against

j. Tradition deriving from the sanctuary at Mizpah, *see* 7:5c, parallel to the one about the anointing, 9:26–10:16. For the drawing of lots, *see* Jos 7:14–18.

k. 'he made the clan of Matri come forward one by one' Gk; omitted by Hebr.

l. 'Has the man come here?' Gk; 'Has a man come here?' Hebr.

m. *see* 8:11–13, though here it means a written constitution or contract governing relations between sovereign and subjects, *see* 2 K 11:17.

n. 'strong' Gk; Hebr. uncertain.

11 a. A tradition deriving from Gilgal and independent of the foregoing: there is no indication of Saul's having already been anointed, or acclaimed king by the people. The narrative is reminiscent of those of the 'major' judges, the difference being that, after the victory, Saul is not recognised as judge but is proclaimed as king, a new and serious departure.

b. 'About a month later' versions, introducing 11:1; 'and he kept rather quiet' Hebr., completing 10:27.

c. The people of Jabesh give a deliberately ambiguous reply; 'come out' can mean either 'to surrender' or 'to attack', as also v. 10.

d. After 'with Saul', Hebr. adds 'and Samuel', a gloss in the spirit of ch. 7.

e. The large numbers and the distinction between Israel and Judah betray a late hand.

f. 'to Nahash' added for the sense.

g. v. 15 originally followed v. 11; Saul was acclaimed king on the day after the victory. But according to the parallel narrative, Saul had already been proclaimed at Mizpah, 10:24. vv. 12–14 harmonise the two narratives; Saul was not acknowledged by all, *see* 10:27, and his investiture had to be 'renewed', Hosea, hostile to monarchical government, seems to condemn the proclamation as sinful, Ho 8:4; 9:15.

12 a. With Samuel's 'farewell discourse', cf. those of Moses, Dt 29–30, and of Joshua, Jos 23. At the beginning of each new stage in history—the conquest, the judges, the monarchy—the leading personality of the previous period recalls God's great achievements in the past and promises his help for the future on condition that the people remain faithful. For Moses and for Joshua these farewells are linked to a renewal of the covenant, Dt 31; Jos 24, and this is also implicit here, vv. 7–15. The place is probably Gilgal, as in 11:15.

b. A short discourse in the Dt manner.

c. 'is witness' Gk; omitted by Hebr.

d. 'and remind you' Gk; omitted by Hebr.

e. 'the Egyptians oppressed them' Gk; omitted by Hebr.

f. 'Barak' Gk; 'Bedan' Hebr. Samuel is ranked with the judges, *see* ch. 7.

g. Hebr. adds 'for whom you have asked'; omitted in Gk.

his commands, and if both you and the king who rules you follow Yahweh your God, all will be well. •But if you do not obey Yahweh's voice but rebel against his 15
commands, Yahweh's hand will be against you and against your king. [h]

'Stay where you are and see the wonder which Yahweh will do before your eyes. 16
1 K 18 Is it not now the wheat harvest? [i] I shall call on Yahweh and he will send thunder 17
and rain, so that you may clearly understand what a very wicked thing you have done, in Yahweh's eyes, by asking for a king.' •Samuel then called on Yahweh, 18
and Yahweh sent thunder and rain the same day, and all the people held Yahweh and Samuel in great awe. •They all said to Samuel, 'Pray for your servants to 19
Yahweh your God, to save us from death; for to all our sins we have added this wrong of asking for a king.'

Samuel said to the people, 'Do not be afraid. Although you have done all these 20
wicked things, do not withdraw your allegiance from Yahweh. Instead, serve
Dt 32:37–39 Yahweh with all your heart. •Do not transfer your allegiance to useless idols which, 21
being useless, are futile and cannot save anybody; •Yahweh, for the sake of his 22
Dt 7:6b great name, will not desert his people, for it has pleased Yahweh to make you his
Jr 14:21
Ezk 20:9 people. •For my part, far be it from me to sin against Yahweh by ceasing to pray 23
Dn 3:34
•Ex 32:11e for you or to instruct you in the good and right way. •Fear none but Yahweh, and 24
serve him faithfully with all your heart, bearing in mind the wonder which he has just performed. But, if you persist in wickedness, you and your king will perish.'

B: THE BEGINNING OF SAUL'S REIGN

Revolt against the Philistines [a]

13 Saul was . . . years old when he became king, and reigned over Israel for 1
. . . years. [b] •Saul selected three thousand men of Israel; two thousand of 2
them were with Saul at Michmash and in the highlands of Bethel, and one thousand with Jonathan at Geba [c] of Benjamin; the rest of the people Saul sent home, everyone to his tent. [d]

10:5;14:1–15 Jonathan killed the Philistine governor stationed at Gibeah [e] and the Philistines 3
were informed that the Hebrews had risen in revolt. Saul had the trumpet sounded throughout the country, •and all Israel heard the news, 'Saul has killed the Philis- 4
tine governor, and now Israel has antagonised the Philistines.' So all the people rallied behind Saul at Gilgal. •The Philistines mustered to make war on Israel, 5
three thousand [f] chariots, six thousand horse and a force as numerous as the sand on the seashore. They came up and pitched camp at Michmash, to the east of
Jos 7:2b Beth-Aven. [g] •When the Israelites saw that their plight was desperate, being so 6
14:11 hard pressed, the people hid in caves, in holes, [h] in crevices, in vaults, in wells. Some also crossed the Jordan fords [i] into the territory of Gad and Gilead. 7

15 Samuel breaks with Saul [j]

Saul was still at Gilgal and all the people who followed him were trembling. •He 8
10:8 waited for seven days, the period fixed by Samuel, but Samuel did not come to Gilgal, and the army, deserting Saul, began dispersing. •Saul then said, 'Bring me 9
the burnt offering and the communion sacrifices.' And he presented the burnt offering. •Just as he had finished presenting the burnt offering, Samuel arrived, 10
and Saul went out to meet and greet him. •Samuel said, 'What have you been 11
doing?' Saul replied, 'I saw the army deserting me and dispersing, and you had not come at the time fixed, while the Philistines were mustering at Michmash. •So I 12
thought: Now the Philistines are going to fall on me at Gilgal and I have not implored the favour of Yahweh. So I felt obliged to make the burnt offering myself.' •Samuel said to Saul, 'You have acted like a fool. You have not obeyed 13
the order which Yahweh your God gave you. Otherwise, Yahweh would have confirmed your sovereignty over Israel for ever. [k] •But now your sovereignty will 14

not last; Yahweh has discovered a man after his own heart and designated him as ↗Ac 13:22
leader of his people,[l] since you have not carried out what Yahweh ordered you.'
15 Samuel then got up and left Gilgal to continue his journey.

Those people remaining followed Saul as he went to join the warriors, and went from Gilgal to Geba of Benjamin. Saul reviewed the force that was with him; there were about six hundred men.[m]

Preparations for battle[n]

16 Saul, his son Jonathan, and the force that was with them took up their quarters in
17 Geba of Benjamin while the Philistines camped at Michmash.[o] ·The raiding company sallied out of the Philistine camp in three groups: one group made for Ophrah
18 in the territory of Shual; ·one group made for Beth-Horon; and one group made for the high ground overlooking the Valley of the Hyenas, in the direction of the desert.[p]

19 There was not a single blacksmith throughout the territory of Israel, the Philistines' reasoning being, 'We do not want the Hebrews making swords or spears.'
20 Hence, the Israelites were all in the habit of going down individually to the
21 Philistines to sharpen their ploughshares, axes, mattocks and scythes. ·The price was two-thirds of a shekel for ploughshares and axes, and one-third for sharpening
22 mattocks and straightening goads.[q] ·So it was that on the day of the battle, no one in the army with Saul and Jonathan was equipped with either sword or spear; only Saul and his son Jonathan were so equipped.

23 A Philistine unit set out for the Pass of Michmash.

Jonathan attacks the outpost

1 **14** One day, Jonathan son of Saul said to his armour-bearer, 'Come on, let us
2 go across to the Philistine outpost over on the other side.' But he did not inform his father. ·Saul was on the outskirts of Geba, sitting under the pomegranate tree that stands near the threshing-floor;[a] the force with him numbered
3 about six hundred men. ·Ahijah son of Ahitub, brother of Ichabod, son of Phine- 4:21
has, son of Eli, the priest of Yahweh at Shiloh, was carrying the *ephod*. The force 2:28*l*; 14:18
did not know that Jonathan had left.

4 In the pass that Jonathan was trying to cross to reach the Philistine outpost, there

h. 'and against your king' Gk; 'and against your ancestors' Hebr. .

i. A season when it never rains in Palestine.

13 a. Ch. 13–14 are presented as an account of the reign of Saul, with introduction, 13:1, and conclusion, 14:47–52. But they recount only the assassination of the Philistine governor, the reactions of the Philistines and the battle of Michmash which only lasted one day. The reign of Saul is further described in ch. 15–31. Ch. 13 is composite, vv. 16–18 and 23 belong to the primitive account which is continued in ch. 14. vv. 7b–15 are of later origin. There will be no further allusion to this first rejection of Saul, apparently an anticipation of ch. 15.

b. Hebr. reads 'Saul was one year old when he became king, and he reigned over Israel for two years,' which is absurd. Saul's age at his accession either was not known or has accidentally fallen out of the text. The length of his reign was possibly reduced for theological reasons, compare Ishbaal, another bad king, 2 S 2:10.

c. 'Geba' conj., *see* v. 15; 'Gibeah' Hebr. The confusion between Geba and Gibeah in Hebr. and versions creates difficulties throughout ch. 13–14. The choices made here are based on parallel texts and geographical considerations. • Jonathan was Saul's son, *see* v. 16 and the rest of the narrative.

d. Remnant of an independent tradition.

e. 'Gibeah' Gk; *see* 10:5; 'Geba' Hebr. • 'had risen in revolt' Gk; 'had heard' Hebr.

f. 'three thousand' versions; 'thirty thousand' Hebr.

g. Construed to mean 'house of futility' and applied as a nickname to Bethel, *see* Am 5:5. But here and elsewhere, the name designates some other town, as yet unidentified.

h. 'holes' *horim* conj.; Hebr. *hawahim* 'bushes'.

i. 'Some also . . . fords' Gk; 'Some Hebrews crossed the Jordan' Hebr.

j. The tragedy of King Saul: though he is Yahweh's chosen one and the saviour of his people, ch. 11 and 14, Yahweh casts him off, ch. 13 and 15. The Bible, from the preference shown to Jacob rather than to Esau, Gn 25:23, *see* Rm 9:13, from the election of Israel, Dt 7:6; Am 3:2, to the calling of the apostles, of Paul and of all Christians, teaches the free bestowal of God's choice. But it teaches also that continuance in God's favour depends on the faithfulness of the one chosen: Saul betrayed his choice.

k. It is not easy to see what Saul's fault was: he waited seven days, as instructed. That he himself should offer sacrifice would not be opposed to ancient custom, *see* 14:32–35. The reason for his rejection is put more clearly in ch. 15.

l. i.e. David.

m. Following Gk; Hebr. omits 'these people . . . from Gilgal'.

n. With v. 16 the ancient narrative of the battle of Michmash begins. vv. 19–22 are parenthetical.

o. With the deep Wadi Suweinit between; Jonathan crosses it, 14:4seq.

p. 'high ground' Gk; 'frontier' Hebr. The raiding parties are to ravage the whole country.

q. Text uncertain.

14 a. 'Geba' in line with v. 5 and 13:16; 'Gibeah' Hebr. 'near the threshing-floor' *bammigran* conj., Hebr. *bamigron* 'at Migron'.

is a rocky spur on one side and a rocky spur on the other; one is called Bozez, the other Seneh. ·The first spur stands to the north facing Michmash, the other to the south facing Geba. ·Jonathan said to his armour-bearer, 'Come on, let us go across to these uncircumcised people's outpost; perhaps Yahweh will do something for us, for Yahweh is free to grant deliverance through a few men, just as much as through many.' ·His armour-bearer replied, 'Do exactly as you think. I am with you; our hearts are as one.'[b] ·Jonathan then said, 'Look, we will go across to these people and let ourselves be seen. ·If they say, "Do not move until we come to you," we shall stay where we are and not go up to them. ·But if they say, "Come up to us," we shall go up, for that will be the sign[c] for us that Yahweh has given them into our power.'

17:47

When the two of them let themselves be seen by the Philistine outpost, the Philistines said, 'Look, the Hebrews are coming out of the holes where they have been hiding.' ·The men of the outpost then hailed Jonathan and his armour-bearer. 'Come up to us,' they said, 'we have something to tell you.' Jonathan then said to his armour-bearer, 'Follow me up; Yahweh has given them into the power of Israel.' ·Jonathan clambered up on hands and feet, with his armour-bearer behind him; the Philistines fell at Jonathan's onslaught, and his armour-bearer, coming behind, finished them off. ·This first killing made by Jonathan and his armour-bearer accounted for about twenty men . . .[d]

13:6

Battle is engaged

13:16
13:23
·13:17
11:7

There was panic in the camp, in the field and throughout the army; outpost and raiding company too were panic-stricken; the earth quaked: it was a panic from Yahweh. ·Saul's look-out men in Geba[e] of Benjamin could see the camp scattering in all directions. ·Saul then said to the force that was with him, 'Call the roll and see who has left us.' So they called the roll, and Jonathan and his armour-bearer were missing.

2:28*l*; 14:3

Saul then said to Ahijah, 'Bring the *ephod*,' since he was the man who carried the *ephod* in Israel.[f] ·But while Saul was speaking to the priest, the turmoil in the Philistine camp grew worse and worse; and Saul said to the priest, 'Withdraw your hand.'[g] ·Saul and the whole force with him then formed up and advanced to where the fighting was going on: and there they all were, drawing their swords on one another in wild confusion. ·Those Hebrews who had earlier taken service with the Philistines and had accompanied them into camp, now defected[h] to the Israelites who were with Saul and Jonathan. ·Similarly, all those Israelites who had been hiding in the highlands of Ephraim, hearing that the Philistines were on the run, chased after them and joined in the fight. ·That day Yahweh gave Israel the victory.

Jonathan violates Saul's prohibition[i]

The fighting reached the other side of Beth-Horon.[j] ·As the men of Israel were hard-pressed that day, Saul pronounced this imprecation over the people, 'A curse on anyone who eats food before evening, before I have taken revenge on my enemies!' So none of the people so much as tasted food.[k]

Now there was a honeycomb out in the open.[l] ·The people came to the honeycomb, the honey was dripping out, but no one put a hand to his mouth, the people being in awe of the oath. ·Jonathan, however, not having heard his father bind the people with the oath, reached with the end of the stick which he was carrying, thrust it into the honeycomb and put it to his mouth; whereupon his eyes grew brighter. ·One of the people then spoke up. 'Your father', he said, 'has bound the people with this oath: "A curse on anyone who eats anything today." '[m] 'My father has brought trouble on the country,' Jonathan replied. 'See how much brighter my eyes are for having eaten this mouthful of honey. ·By the same token, if the people had been allowed to eat some of the booty which they had captured from the enemy today, would not the defeat of the Philistines have been all the greater?'

The people commit a ritual fault

31 That day the Philistines were beaten from Michmash all the way to Aijalon,[n] until Jos 10:10–12
32 the people were utterly exhausted. ·The people flung themselves on the booty and,
taking sheep, bullocks and calves, slaughtered them there on the ground and ate
33 them with the blood. ·Saul was informed, 'The people are sinning against Yahweh Lv 1:5e
by eating with the blood!' He said, 'You have not kept faith! Roll me a large stone
34 here!'[o] ·Saul then said, 'Scatter among the people and say, "Everyone is to bring
his bullock or his sheep to me here." You will slaughter them here and eat, and not
sin against Yahweh by eating with the blood.' Each individual brought what he
happened to have that night,[p] and they all slaughtered in the same place.
35 Saul built an altar to Yahweh; it was the first altar he had built to Yahweh. Jg 6:24

Jonathan's guilt is discovered, but he is saved by the people

36 Saul said, 'Let us go down under cover of dark and plunder the Philistines until
dawn; we shall not leave one of them alive.' 'Do whatever you think right,' they
37 replied. But the priest said, 'Let us approach God here.'[q] ·Saul consulted God,
'Shall I go down and pursue the Philistines? Will you hand them over to Israel?'
38 But he gave him no reply that day. ·Saul then said, 'Come forward, all you leaders 28:6
39 of the people; consider carefully where today's sin may lie; ·for as Yahweh lives
who gives victory to Israel, even if the sin lies with Jonathan my son, he shall be put
40 to death.' But not one out of all the people answered. ·He then said to all Israel,
'Stand on one side, and I and Jonathan my son will stand on the other.' And the
41 people replied to Saul, 'Do as you think right.' ·Saul then said, 'Yahweh, God of
Israel, why did you not answer your servant today? Yahweh, God of Israel, if the
fault lies with me or with my son Jonathan, give *urim*: if the fault lies with your
people Israel, give *thummim*.'[r] Jonathan and Saul were indicated and the people
42 went free. ·Saul said, 'Cast the lot between me and my son Jonathan,' and Jonathan
was indicated.
43 'I only tasted a mouthful of honey off the end of the stick which I was carrying.
44 But I am ready to die.' ·Saul said, 'May God bring unnameable ills on me, and Rt 1:17f
45 worse ones too, if you do not die, Jonathan!' ·But the people said to Saul, 'Must
Jonathan die after winning this great victory for Israel? We will never allow that!
As Yahweh lives, not one hair of his head shall fall to the ground, for his deeds
today have been done with the help of God.' And so the people ransomed[s]
Jonathan and he was not put to death.

b. lit. 'my heart is as your heart' Gk; 'my heart is with you' Hebr.

c. An event, imminent or remote, that will show God's will. It is foretold either by God, Ex 3:12, or by a man of God, 1 S 2:34; 10:7–9; 2 K 19:29, or else, as here and in Gn 24:12seq.; Jg 6:17–18,36–40; 2 K 20:8–10, it is suggested by the person himself, to invite an answer from God.

d. The remainder of the v. is very obscure.

e. 'Geba' *see* 13:16; 'Gibeah' Hebr. • 'the camp' Gk; 'the tumult' Hebr.

f. Following Gk; Hebr. reads ' "Bring the ark of God." For the ark of God was then in Israelite hands.' • On the *ephod* as an instrument of divination, *see* 2:28*l*. Saul wishes to consult God before joining battle, *see* v. 37; of this chapter and 30:7seq.: A later scribe, thinking of Jg 8:27 where the *ephod* is an idolatrous object, has corrected '*ephod*' here to 'ark of God'.

g. The priest is about to draw lots. Saul stops him and goes out to battle without consulting the oracle.

h. 'themselves defected to' Gk; Hebr. uncertain.

i. Two traditions are combined here. **1** Saul orders a fast until evening, v. 24, the people observe it, then throw themselves on the booty, ignoring the ritual regulations, vv. 31–35. **2** Saul orders a fast, v. 24, but Jonathan does not hear this and violates it, vv. 25–30, the lot then singles him out as guilty, vv. 26–46.

j. 'Beth-Horon' versions; 'Beth-Aven' Hebr.

k. The special fast is a means of obtaining victory, God being the giver and withholder of victory.

l. Conjectural restoration, suppressing the first words of the v. as an ill-conceived doublet of v. 26.

m. Hebr. adds 'and the people were exhausted', gloss inspired by v. 31.

n. The Philistines are rolled back along their normal invasion route. This really was a great victory, liberating the highlands which were the very heart of the kingdom.

o. The stone was to serve as an altar, *see* 6:14; Jg 6:20; 13:19, thus making the slaughter a sacrificial rite, *see* Lv 17:1a.

p. 'what he happened to have' Gk; 'his bullock' Hebr.

q. To consult him by means of the *ephod*, as in v. 18 above, *see* 30:8.

r. The v., restored following the versions (Hebr. is corrupt and jumps from first to third 'Israel'), shows how the *ephod* was used for divination: it held two lots (small sticks, or dice?) called *urim* and *thummim* (the meaning of the words is uncertain), their import being determined according to convention. The one drawn out gave the divine answer—a simple 'yes' or 'no', *see* 23:10–12. The process was frequently a long one. The care of the sacred lots was reserved to the levitical priests, Nb 27:21; Dt 33:8. After the reign of David the practice was discontinued and never resumed, *see* Ezr 2:63 = Ne 7:65. But the name was still used for part of the high priest's vestment, *see* Ex 28:30; Lv 8:8, and Ex 28:6a.

s. Like some victim dedicated to Yahweh, Ex 13:13–15; 34:20; Lv 27:27.

Saul decided not to pursue the Philistines, and the Philistines retired to their own territory. 46

Summary of Saul's reign [i]

Saul consolidated his rule over Israel and made war on all his enemies on all fronts: 47
2 S 8:2seq.; 10:6seq. on Moab, the Ammonites, Edom, the king of Zobah and the Philistines; whichever way he turned, he was victorious. [u] ·He did great deeds of valour; he defeated the 48
15 Amalekites and delivered Israel from those who used to pillage him.

Saul's sons were: Jonathan, Ishvi [v] and Malchishua. The names of his two 49
18:17seq., 20seq. daughters were: the elder, Merab, and the younger, Michal. ·The name of Saul's 50
wife was Ahinoam daughter of Ahimaaz. The name of his army commander was
9:1 Abner son of Ner, Saul's uncle. ·Kish father of Saul, and Ner father of Abner were 51
the sons of Abiel.

There was fierce warfare with the Philistines throughout Saul's life. Any strong 52
or valiant man who caught Saul's eye, he recruited into his service. [w]

Holy war against the Amalekites [a]

15 Samuel said to Saul, 'I am the man whom Yahweh sent to anoint you as 1
king of his people Israel, so now listen to the words of Yahweh. ·This is 2
Ex 17:8–16 Dt 25:17–19 what Yahweh Sabaoth says, "I intend to punish what Amalek did to Israel—laying
a trap for him on the way as he was coming up from Egypt. ·Now, go and crush 3
Jos 6:17c Amalek; put him under the curse of destruction with all that he possesses. Do not
spare him, but kill man and woman, babe and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and
donkey." '

Saul summoned the people and reviewed them at Telaim: two hundred thousand 4
foot soldiers (and ten thousand men of Judah). ·Saul advanced on the town of 5
Ex 17:8d Nb 10:29d Amalek and lay in ambush in the river bed. ·Saul said to the Kenites, 'Go away, 6
leave your homes among the Amalekites, in case I destroy you with them—you
acted with faithful love towards all the Israelites when they were coming up from
Egypt.' So the Kenites moved away from the Amalekites.

Saul then crushed the Amalekites, beginning at Havilah in the direction of Shur, 7
which is to the east of Egypt. ·He took Agag king of the Amalekites alive and, 8
executing the curse of destruction, put all the people to the sword. ·But Saul and 9
the army spared Agag with the best of the sheep and cattle, the fatlings and
lambs and all that was good. They did not want to consign these to the curse of
destruction; they consigned only what was poor and worthless. [b]

Saul is rejected by Yahweh

Gn 6:7 The word of Yahweh came to Samuel, ·'I regret having made Saul king, since he 10, 11
has broken his allegiance to me and not carried out my orders.' Samuel was
appalled and cried to Yahweh all night long.

In the morning, Samuel set off to find Saul. Samuel was told, 'Saul has been to 12
Carmel, [c] to raise himself a monument there, but now has turned about, moved on
and gone down to Gilgal.' ·When Samuel reached Saul, Saul said, 'May you be 13
blessed by Yahweh! I have carried out Yahweh's orders.' ·Samuel replied, 'Then 14
what is this bleating of sheep in my ears and the lowing of cattle that I hear?'
Saul said, 'They have been brought from Amalek, the people having spared the 15
best of the sheep and cattle to sacrifice them to Yahweh, your God; the rest we
have consigned to the curse of destruction.'

Samuel then said to Saul, 'Stop! Let me tell you what Yahweh said to me last 16
night.' He said, 'Go on.' ·Samuel said, 'Small as you may be in your own eyes, are 17
you not the leader of the tribes of Israel? Yahweh has anointed you as king of
Israel. ·When Yahweh sent you on a mission he said to you, "Go and put those 18
sinners, the Amalekites, under the curse of destruction and make war on them
until they are exterminated." ·Why then did you not obey Yahweh's voice? Why 19
did you fall on the booty and do what is wrong in Yahweh's eyes?' ·Saul replied to 20

Samuel, 'But I did obey Yahweh's voice. I went on the mission which Yahweh gave
me; I brought back Agag king of the Amalekites; I put Amalek under the curse of
21 destruction; ·and from the booty the people have taken the best sheep and cattle
of what was under the curse of destruction only to sacrifice them to Yahweh your
22 God in Gilgal.' ·To which, Samuel said: [d]

Is Yahweh pleased by burnt offerings and sacrifices — Am 5:21–25,21n
or by obedience to Yahweh's voice? — Ho 6:6
Truly, obedience is better than sacrifice,
submissiveness than the fat of rams.
23 Rebellion is a sin of sorcery,
presumption a crime of idolatry! [e]

'Since you have rejected Yahweh's word, he has rejected you as king.'

Saul asks in vain for pardon

24 Saul then said to Samuel, 'I have sinned, having broken Yahweh's order and your
instructions because I was afraid of the people and yielded to their demands.
25 Now, please forgive my sin and come back with me, so that I can worship Yahweh.'
26 ·Samuel said to Saul, 'I will not come back with you, since you have — 1 K 11:11
27 rejected Yahweh's word and Yahweh has rejected you as king of Israel.' ·As
28 Samuel turned away to leave, Saul caught at the hem of his cloak and it tore, ·and — 1 K 11:30seq. Jr 18:1a
Samuel said to him, 'Today Yahweh has torn the kingdom of Israel from you and
29 given it to a neighbour of yours who is better than you.' ·(The Glory of Israel,
however, does not lie or go back on his word, not being human and liable to go — 15:11 Nb 23:19
30 back on his word.) [f] ·'I have sinned,' Saul said, 'but please still show me respect in
front of my people's elders and in front of Israel, and come back with me, so that I
31 can worship Yahweh your God.' [g] ·Samuel followed Saul back and Saul wor-
shipped Yahweh.

Death of Agag and departure of Samuel

32 Samuel then said, 'Bring me Agag king of the Amalekites!' Agag came towards
33 him unsteadily saying, 'Truly death is bitter!' [h] ·Samuel said:

As your sword has left women childless,
so will your mother be left childless among women!

Samuel then butchered [i] Agag before Yahweh at Gilgal.

t. A summary like that of 7:13–15 (Samuel) and 2 S 8 (David); *see also* 2 S 3:2–5; 5:13–16; 20:23–26.

u. 'was victorious', versions; Hebr. 'did evil'.

v. i.e. 'the man of Yahweh'. The same person is called Ishbaal, 'the man of the Master', in 1 Ch 8:33, and Ish-bosheth, 'the man of shame', in the Hebr. of 2 S 2:8, etc. where 'shame' is substituted for 'Baal', the name of the Canaanite god.

w. The beginnings of a professional army as distinct from the national mass levy.

15 a. Ch. 15 makes no mention of Saul's first rejection, 13:8–15. Though condemning Saul personally, it does not condemn the monarchical system as such. It does, however, emphasise the opposition, inherent in the Israelite monarchy, between profane politics and the demands of Yahweh, as exemplified in the struggle between King and Prophet (Saul and Samuel, Ahab and Elijah, Hezekiah and Isaiah, Zedekiah and Jeremiah).

b. 'poor and worthless' versions; Hebr. uncertain. • Saul and the people have failed to implement the curse of destruction, which should have fallen on all living things; even though their motive is not to deprive Yahweh of the best of the booty but to sacrifice it to him, v. 15. Saul acts in good faith, and in this lies his tragedy: his sin consists in choosing his individual way of honouring God, with a view to his own popularity. He seeks to compromise between Yahweh who has chosen him, and the people who have acknowledged him as king; he has not declared himself for Yahweh alone.

c. A town to the south of Hebron, *see* 25:2seq., modern Kermel, lying on Saul's way back from the Negeb to Gilgal.

d. Samuel does not condemn sacrificial practice as a whole, but obedience of the heart is what pleases God, not mere external ritual. To practise the latter against God's will is to do homage to something that is not God, to be guilty of apostasy and idolatry, here connected with magic and the *teraphim*, idols by which houses and property were guarded, Gn 31:19,30seq.; 1 S 19:13.

e. 'a crime' Symm.; 'futility' Hebr.

f. Gloss quoting Nb 23:19.

g. There are no witnesses to the interview, and Saul's rejection does not immediately become effective (because the king has confessed his fault?). Samuel agrees to support Saul's authority by accompanying him to the sanctuary.

h. 'unsteadily', text and meaning uncertain. 'truly death is bitter', Gk; 'the bitterness of death is over', Hebr. (Agag thinking he has escaped death).

i. 'butchered' or 'cut to pieces': Samuel executes the curse of destruction himself.

Samuel left for Ramah, and Saul went up home to Gibeah of Saul. ·Samuel did 34. 35
not see Saul again till his dying day.[j] Samuel indeed mourned over Saul, but
Yahweh regretted having made Saul king of Israel.

III: SAUL AND DAVID

A: DAVID AT COURT

David is anointed[a]

16 Yahweh said to Samuel, 'How much longer do you mean to go on mourning 1
over Saul, now that I myself have rejected him as ruler of Israel? Fill your
Rt 4:17–22 Is 11:1 horn with oil and go. I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem, for I have found
myself a king from among his sons.' ·Samuel replied, 'How can I go? When Saul 2
hears of it he will kill me.' Yahweh then said, 'Take a heifer with you and say, "I
have come to sacrifice to Yahweh." ·Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I shall reveal 3
to you what you must do; and you will anoint for me the one I indicate to you.'

Samuel did what Yahweh ordered and went to Bethlehem. The elders of the 4
town came trembling to meet him and asked, 'Seer, is your coming favourable for
us,' ·'Yes,' he replied. 'I have come to sacrifice to Yahweh. Purify yourselves and 5
come with me to the sacrifice.' He purified Jesse and his sons and invited them to
the sacrifice.

When they arrived, he looked at Eliab and thought, 'This must be Yahweh's 6
9:2;10:23seq. anointed now before him,' ·but Yahweh said to Samuel, 'Take no notice of his 7
Jb 10:4 Ps 147:10seq. Pr 15:11 Is 55:8–9 Jr 11:20+ appearance or his height, for I have rejected him; God does not see[b] as human
beings see; they look at appearances but Yahweh looks at the heart.' ·Jesse then 8
called Abinadab and presented him to Samuel, who said, 'Yahweh has not chosen
this one either.' ·Jesse then presented Shammah, but Samuel said, 'Yahweh has 9
not chosen this one either.' ·Jesse thus presented seven of his sons to Samuel, but 10
Samuel said to Jesse, 'Yahweh has not chosen these.' ·He then asked Jesse, 'Are 11
these all the sons you have?' Jesse replied, 'There is still one left, the youngest; he
is looking after the sheep.' Samuel then said to Jesse, 'Send for him, for we shall
Gn 39:6 2 S 14:25seq. not sit down to eat until he arrives.' ·Jesse had him sent for; he had ruddy cheeks, 12
with fine eyes and an attractive appearance. Yahweh said, 'Get up and anoint him:
he is the one!' ·At this, Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him, surrounded 13
10:6 Jg 3:10+ by his brothers; and the spirit of Yahweh seized on David[c] from that day onwards.
Samuel, for his part, set off and went to Ramah.

David enters Saul's service[d]

Now the spirit of Yahweh had withdrawn from Saul, and an evil spirit from 14
Yahweh[e] afflicted him with terrors. ·Saul's servants said to him, 'An evil spirit 15
from God is undoubtedly the cause of your terrors. ·Let our lord give the order, 16
and your servants who wait on you will look for a skilled harpist; when the evil
spirit from God comes over you, he will play and it will do you good.'[f] ·Saul said to 17
his attendants, 'Find me, please, a man who plays well, and bring him to me.'
One of the servants then spoke up and said, 'I have seen one of the sons of Jesse 18
the Bethlehemite: he is a skilled player, a brave man and a fighter, well spoken,
good-looking and Yahweh is with him.' ·So Saul sent messengers to Jesse with the 19
order, 'Send me your son David (who is with the sheep).' ·Jesse took five[g] loaves, 20
a skin of wine and a kid, and sent them to Saul by his son David. ·David went to 21
Saul and entered his service; Saul became very fond of him and David became his
armour-bearer. ·Saul then sent a message to Jesse, 'Let David stay in my service, 22
since he has won my favour.' ·And whenever the spirit from God came over Saul, 23
David would take a harp and play; Saul would then be soothed; it would do him
good, and the evil spirit would leave him.

Goliath challenges the Israelite army

17 The Philistines mustered their troops for war; they assembled at Socoh in
Judah and pitched camp between Socoh and Azekah, in Ephes-Dammim.
Saul and the Israelites also mustered, pitching camp in the Valley of the Terebinth,
and drew up their battle-line opposite the Philistines. ·The Philistines occupied the
high ground on one side and the Israelites occupied the high ground on the other
side, with the valley between them.
A champion stepped out from the Philistine ranks; his name was Goliath, [a] from 2 S 21:19
Gath; he was six cubits and one span tall. ·On his head was a bronze helmet and he
wore a breastplate of scale-armour; the breastplate weighed five thousand shekels
of bronze. ·He had bronze greaves on his legs and a bronze scimitar slung across
his shoulders. ·The shaft of his spear was like a weaver's beam, and the head of his
spear weighed six hundred shekels of iron. A shield-bearer walked in front of him.
Taking position in front of the Israelite lines, he shouted, 'Why have you come
out to range yourselves for battle? Am I not a Philistine and are you not Saul's
lackeys? Choose [b] a man and let him come down to me. ·If he can fight it out with
me and kill me, we will be your servants; but if I can beat him and kill him, you
become our servants and serve us.' ·The Philistine then said, 'I challenge the ranks
of Israel today. Give me a man and we will fight it out!' ·When Saul and all Israel
heard what the Philistine said, they were dismayed and terrified.

David arrives in the camp

David was the son of an Ephrathite from Bethlehem of Judah whose name was 16:10seq.
Rt 1:2a
Jesse; Jesse had eight sons and, by Saul's time, he was old and well on in years. [c]
Jesse's eldest three sons followed Saul to the war. The names of the three sons who
went to the war were: the eldest Eliab, the second Abinadab and the third
Shammah. ·David was the youngest; the eldest three followed Saul. ·David alter-
nated between serving Saul and looking after his father's sheep at Bethlehem. [d]
Morning and evening, the Philistine advanced, presenting himself thus for forty
days. ·Jesse said to his son David, 'Take your brothers this *ephah* of roasted grain
and these ten loaves, and hurry to the camp, to your brothers. ·And take these ten
cheeses to their commanding officer; find out how your brothers are and bring
some token back from them; ·they are with Saul and all the men of Israel in the
Valley of the Terebinth, fighting the Philistines.'
David got up early in the morning and, leaving the sheep with someone to guard
them, took up his load and went off as Jesse had ordered; he reached the

j. Though *see* 19:22–24 which records a different tradition.

16 a. The episode appears to derive from the prophetic tradition and remains unrelated to the subsequent history in which David is anointed at Hebron by the men of Judah, 2 S 2:4, and then by the elders of Israel, 2 S 5:3, without any further mention of the present anointing of which, according to 1 S 17:28, and despite 1 S 16:13, Eliab knows nothing. As ch. 9 for Saul, so this narrative serves as introduction to the story of the 'rise' of David.

b. Following Gk; Hebr. omits.

c. Without exterior manifestation and in immediate association with the anointing, 'the spirit of God', here, is the grace imparted to a consecrated person.

d. David's early association with Saul is recounted in two traditions. According to one, David is summoned to court as a minstrel and becomes Saul's armour-bearer, 16:14–23, in which capacity he accompanies the king in his war against the Philistines, 17:1–11, and distinguishes himself in single combat, 17:32–53 (fusion of both traditions). According to the second, David is a young shepherd unknown to Saul; he visits his soldier brothers at the very moment the Philistine champion is gibing at the Israelites, 17:12–30 (v. 31 is a link-verse and the first tradition is then resumed, 17:32–53). Saul then summons the young hero and enlists him in his service, 17:55–18:5.

e. The spirit of Yahweh, *see* Jg 3:10, leaves Saul, 15:23, and he is 'possessed' by an evil spirit, which is said to come from Yahweh and will be called the 'evil spirit of God', vv. 15,16, *see* 18:10; 19:9, because the Israelite attributed everything to God as first cause (*see* the spirit of discord, Jg 9:23, the spirit of lies, 1 K 22:19–23, the spirit of giddiness, Is 19:14, the spirit of lethargy, Is 29:10). Aware of having been rejected by God and deserted by Samuel, the excitable king suffers attacks of madness, 18:10seq.; 19:9seq.

f. The ancients commonly used music either to stimulate the good spirit, *see* 10:5, or to expel the evil spirit.

g. 'five' *hamishah* conj.; Hebr. *hamor* 'donkey'.

17 a. 2 S 21:19 assigns the defeat of Goliath to one of David's warriors—the more ancient tradition, as it seems. The original tradition behind ch. 17 spoke only of David's victory over an unnamed opponent, 'the Philistine'. Goliath's name has been added in vv. 4 and 23. • 'ranks' Gk; 'camps' Hebr.

b. 'Choose' Gk; Hebr. uncertain.

c. 'in years' *bashshanim* versions; Hebr. *ba'anashim* 'among men'. The old Gk version omits vv. 12–31, belonging to the tradition according to which David is still unknown to Saul, *see* 16:14d.

d. Editorial gloss inserted to harmonise the two traditions.

encampment just as the troops were leaving to take up battle stations and shouting the war cry. ·Israel and the Philistines drew up their lines facing one another. 21, 22
·David left his bundle in charge of the baggage guard and, running to the battle-line, went and asked his brothers how they were.

17:8–10 While he was talking to them, the champion (Goliath, the Philistine from Gath) 23
came up from the Philistine ranks and made his usual speech, which David heard.
As soon as the Israelites saw this man, they all ran away from him and were 24
terrified. ·The Israelites said, 'You saw that man who just came up? He comes to 25
challenge Israel. The king will lavish riches on the man who kills him, he will give
him his daughter in marriage and exempt his father's family from all taxes in Israel.'
David asked the men who were standing near him, 'What would be the reward 26
Jos 5:9c for killing this Philistine and saving Israel from disgrace? Who is this uncircumcised
Jg 14:3;15:18 Philistine, to challenge the armies of the living God?' ·The people told him what 27
2 K 19:4,16 they had been saying, 'That would be the reward for killing him,' they said. ·His 28
Is 37:4, 17 eldest brother Eliab heard David talking to the men and grew angry with him.
'Why have you come down here?' he said. 'Whom have you left in charge of those
few sheep in the desert? I know how impudent and artful you are; you have come
to watch the battle!' ·David retorted, 'What have I done? May I not even speak?' 29
And he turned away from him to someone else and asked the same question, to 30
which the people replied as before. ·David's words were noted, however, and 31
reported to Saul, who sent for him.

David volunteers to accept the challenge

David said to Saul, 'Let no one be discouraged on his account; [e] your servant will 32
go and fight this Philistine.' ·Saul said to David, 'You cannot go and fight the 33
Philistine; you are only a boy and he has been a warrior since his youth.'
David said to Saul, 'Your servant used to look after the sheep for his father and 34
whenever a lion or a bear came and took a sheep from the flock, ·I used to follow it 35
up, lay into it and snatch the sheep out of its jaws. If it turned on me, I would seize
it by the beard and batter it to death. ·Your servant has killed both lion and bear, 36
and this uncircumcised Philistine will end up like one of them for having challenged
Lv 26:8 the armies of the living God.' ·'Yahweh,' David went on, 'who delivered me from 37
Dt 30:3–4 the claws of lion and bear, will deliver me from the clutches of this Philistine.'
Ps 18:17 Then Saul said to David, 'Go, and Yahweh be with you!'
Pr 28:1
Saul dressed David in his own armour; he put a bronze helmet on his head, 38
dressed him in a breastplate ·and buckled his own sword over David's armour. 39
David tried to walk but, not being used to them, said to Saul, 'I cannot walk in
these; I am not used to them.' So they took them off again. [f]

David and Goliath [g]

He took his stick in his hand, selected five smooth stones from the river bed and 40
put them in his shepherd's bag, in his pouch; then, sling in hand, he walked towards
the Philistine. ·The Philistine, preceded by his shield-bearer, came nearer and 41
nearer to David. ·When the Philistine looked David up and down, what he saw 42
16:12 filled him with scorn, because David was only a lad, with ruddy cheeks and an
attractive appearance. ·The Philistine said to David, 'Am I a dog for you to come 43
after me with sticks?' And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. ·The Philistine 44
said to David, 'Come over here and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and
the wild beasts!' ·David retorted to the Philistine, 'You come to me with sword, 45
spear and scimitar, but I come to you in the name of Yahweh Sabaoth, God of the
armies of Israel, whom you have challenged. ·Today, Yahweh will deliver you into 46
my hand; I shall kill you, I shall cut off your head; today, I shall give your corpse
and the corpses [h] of the Philistine army to the birds of the air and the wild beasts, so
Jos 4:24 that the whole world may know that there is a God in Israel, ·and this whole 47
14:6 assembly know that Yahweh does not give victory by means of sword and spear—
2 K 19:34seq. for Yahweh is lord of the battle and he will deliver you into our power.'
Ho 1:7

48 No sooner had the Philistine started forward to confront David than David
49 darted out of the lines and ran to meet the Philistine. ·Putting his hand in his bag,
he took out a stone, slung it and struck the Philistine on the forehead; the stone
50 penetrated his forehead and he fell face downwards on the ground. ·Thus David
triumphed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone; he hit the Philistine and
51 killed him, though he had no sword in his hand. ·David ran and stood over the
Philistine, seized his sword, pulled it from the scabbard, despatched him and cut
off his head.
52 When the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled. ·The men of
Israel and of Judah started forward, shouting their war cry, and pursued the
Philistines as far as the approaches of Gath and the gates of Ekron. The Philistine
53 dead lay all along the road from Shaaraim as far as Gath[f] and Ekron. ·Turning
back from their ferocious pursuit of the Philistines, the Israelites plundered their
54 camp. ·And David took the Philistine's head and brought it to Jerusalem; his 17:57;21:10
weapons, however, he put in his own tent.[j]

David the conqueror of Goliath is presented to Saul[k]

55 When Saul saw David going to engage the Philistine he said to Abner, the army
commander, 'Abner, whose son is that boy?' 'On your life, O king,' Abner replied,
56 'I do not know.' ·The king said, 'Find out whose son the lad is.'
57 When David came back after killing the Philistine, Abner took him and brought
58 him before Saul with the Philistine's head in his hand. ·Saul asked him, 'Whose son
are you, young man?' David replied, 'The son of your servant Jesse of Bethlehem.'
1 **18** When David had finished talking to Saul, Jonathan felt an instant affection 19:1–7;20;
2 for David; Jonathan loved him like his very self;[a] ·Saul engaged him that 23:16–18
3 very day and would not let him go home to his father. ·Jonathan made a pact with 2 S 1:26
4 David, since he loved him like his very self; ·Jonathan took off the cloak which he
was wearing and gave it to David, and his armour too, even including his sword,
5 his bow and his belt.[b] ·Wherever David was sent on a mission by Saul, he was
successful, and Saul put him in command of the fighting men; all the people
respected him and so did Saul's staff.

Saul starts being jealous[c]

6 On their return, when David was coming back from killing the Philistine, the
women came out of all the towns of Israel singing and dancing to meet King Saul, Ex 5:20seq.
7 with tambourines, sistrums and cries of joy; ·and as they danced the women sang: Jg 5;11:34

> Saul has killed his thousands, 21:12;29:5
> and David his tens of thousands.

8 Saul was very angry; the incident displeased him. 'They have given David the
tens of thousands,' he said, 'but me only the thousands; what more can he have,
9 except the throne?' ·And Saul watched David jealously from that day onwards.
10 The following day, an evil spirit from God seized on Saul and he fell into a frenzy 16:14e;
=19:9–10

e. Resumption of the first tradition (v. 32 follows on from v. 11). The traditions are then fused.

f. Following the Gk; Hebr. has 'David buckled on' and 'David took them off', but *see* v. 38.

g. A single combat between two champions, to put an end to the war and to decide the fate of the two peoples, *see* vv. 8–10; *see* 2 S 2:12–17; 21:15–22; 23:20–21; compare the single combats in the *Iliad*.

h. 'your corpse and the corpses' Gk; 'the corpse' Hebr.

i. 'Gath' Gk; 'valley' Hebr.

j. i.e. kept for himself. The v. is an addition: Jerusalem was captured somewhat later, 2 S 5:6–9, and David had no tent of his own.

k. Same tradition as 17:12–30. David is still unknown to Saul. This is at variance with 16:14–23, and 17:55–18:5 is therefore omitted, like 17:12–31, from the ancient Greek version.

18 **a.** The friendship of David and Jonathan is an attractive feature of the subsequent bitter episodes; it lasts till Jonathan's death.

b. The accoutrement is part of the man, *see* 24:5–6; Rt 3:9; 2 K 2:13; Jonathan's gesture thus expresses his devotion for David, v. 1.

c. The text of this chapter is overloaded: v. 6 is unnecessary, as also vv. 10–11 (first attempt on David's life), vv. 17–19 (thwarted marriage with Merab), v. 30 (David's triumph, repeating vv. 14–16). The ancient Greek version omits these doublets.

while he was indoors. David played the harp as on other occasions; Saul had a spear in his hand. ·Saul brandished the spear; he said, 'I will pin David to the wall!' 11
David evaded him twice. [d]

Saul feared David, since Yahweh was with him and had withdrawn from Saul. 12
So Saul removed him from his presence and appointed him commander of a 13
thousand; he led the people on campaign. ·In all his expeditions, David was 14
Gn 39:2 successful and Yahweh was with him. ·And Saul, seeing how very successful he 15
was, was afraid of him. ·All Israel and Judah loved David, however, since he was 16
2 S 5:2 their leader on campaign.

David's marriage [e]

17:25 Saul said to David, 'This is my elder daughter Merab; I shall give her to you in 17
marriage; but you must serve me bravely and fight Yahweh's wars.' Saul thought,
'Better than strike the blow myself, let the Philistines do it!' ·David replied to Saul, 18
2 S 7:18 'Who am I and what is my lineage [f]—and my father's family—in Israel, for me to
become the king's son-in-law?' ·When the time came for Merab daughter of Saul 19
2 S 21:8 to be given to David, she was given to Adriel of Meholah instead.

Now Michal daughter of Saul fell in love with David. When Saul heard this he 20
was pleased. ·He thought, 'Yes, I shall give her to him; she can be the snare for 21
him, so that the Philistines will get him.' (On two occasions, [g] Saul told David,
'Today, you shall be my son-in-law.') ·Saul gave instructions to his servants, 'Have 22
a private word with David and say, "Look, the king is fond of you and all his
servants love you—why not be the king's son-in-law?" ' ·Saul's servants repeated 23
these words in David's ear, to which David replied, 'Do you think that becoming
the king's son-in-law is a trivial matter; I have neither wealth nor position.' ·Saul's 24
servants then reported back, 'This is what David said.' ·Saul replied, 'Tell David 25
17:26+ this, "The king desires no bride-price [h] except one hundred Philistine foreskins, [i] in
vengeance on the king's enemies." ' Saul was counting on getting David killed by
the Philistines.

When his servants repeated this to David, David thought it would be a fine thing 26
to be the king's son-in-law. And no time was lost ·before David got up to go, he 27
and his men, and killed two hundred of the Philistines. David brought their
foreskins back and counted them out before the king, so that he could be the king's
son-in-law. Saul then gave him his daughter Michal in marriage.

Saul could not but see that Yahweh was with David, and that the whole House 28
of Israel [j] loved him; ·Saul became more afraid of David than ever, and became his 29
inveterate enemy. ·The Philistine chiefs kept mounting their campaigns but, when- 30
ever they did so, David proved more successful than any of Saul's staff; conse-
quently he gained great renown.

20 **Jonathan intercedes for David** [a]

19 Saul let his son Jonathan and all his servants know of his intention to kill 1
David. But Jonathan, Saul's son, held David in great affection; ·and Jona- 2
than warned David, 'My father Saul is looking for a way to kill you, so be on your
guard tomorrow morning; go into hiding, stay out of sight. ·I shall go out and keep 3
my father company in the countryside where you will be, and shall talk to my father
about you; I shall see what the situation is and then tell you.'

Jonathan spoke highly of David to Saul his father and said, 'The king should not 4
harm his servant David; far from harming you, what he has done has been greatly
to your advantage. ·He took his life in his hands, he killed the Philistine, and 5
Yahweh brought about a great victory for all Israel. You saw for yourself. How
pleased you were! Why then sin against innocent blood by killing David for no
reason?' ·Saul was impressed by Jonathan's words. Saul swore, 'As Yahweh lives, 6
I will not kill him.' ·Jonathan called David and told him all this. Jonathan then 7
brought him to Saul, and David remained in attendance as before.

B: THE FLIGHT OF DAVID

Saul's attempt on David's life

=18:10–11

8 War broke out again and David sallied out to fight the Philistines; he inflicted a
9 great defeat on them and they fled before him. •An evil spirit from Yahweh came 16:14a
over Saul while he was sitting in his house with his spear in his hand; David was
10 playing the harp. •Saul tried to pin David to the wall with his spear, but he avoided
Saul's thrust and the spear stuck in the wall. David fled and made good his escape.

David is saved by Michal

11 That same night [b] •Saul sent agents to watch David's house, intending to kill him in Ps 59
the morning. But Michal, David's wife, warned him, 'If you do not escape tonight,
12 you will be a dead man tomorrow!' •Michal then let David down through the
window, and he made off, took to flight and so escaped.
13 Michal then took a domestic image, laid it on the bed, put a tress of goats' hair at 15:22d
14 the head of the bed and put a cover over it. •When Saul sent the agents to arrest
15 David, she said, 'He is ill.' •Saul sent the agents back to see David, with the words,
16 'Bring him to me on his bed, for me to kill him!' •So in the agents went, and there
17 in bed was the image, with the tress of goats' hair on its head! •Saul then said to
Michal, 'Why have you deceived me like this and let my enemy go, and so make his
escape?' Michal replied to Saul, 'He said, "Let me go, or I shall kill you!" '

Saul and David at Ramah with Samuel [c]

18 David, having fled and made his escape, went to Samuel at Ramah and told him
exactly how Saul had treated him; he and Samuel went and lived in the huts. [d]
19, 20 Word was brought to Saul, 'David is in the huts at Ramah.' •Saul accordingly sent 2 K 1:9–14
agents to capture David; when they [e] saw the community of prophets prophesying, 10:5e
and Samuel there as their leader, the spirit of God came over Saul's
21 agents, and they too fell into frenzy. •When Saul was told of this, he sent
other agents, and they too fell into frenzy; Saul then sent a third group of agents,
and they fell into frenzy too.
22 He then went to Ramah himself and, arriving at the large storage-well at Seku,
asked, 'Where are Samuel and David?' And someone said, 'Why, they are in the
23 huts at Ramah!' •Making his way from there to the huts at Ramah, the spirit of
God came over him too, and he went along in a frenzy until he arrived at the huts
24 at Ramah. •He too stripped off his clothes and he too fell into a frenzy in Samuel's
presence, then collapsed naked on the ground for the rest of that day and all night.
Hence the saying: Is Saul one of the prophets too? 10:10–12

d. vv. 10–11, belonging to the same tradition as 16:14–23, anticipate the episode of 19:8–10 and here interrupt the narrative.

e. vv. 17–19 are ill-matched with what follows; with the exception of the gloss in v. 21 there is no allusion in vv. 20–27 to any previous broken engagement, and vv. 20–27 develop the ideas of vv. 17–19 concerning Michal.

f. 'my lineage' *hayyi* conj.; Hebr. *hayyay* 'my life'.

g. As prospective husband first of Merab, then of Michal. The sentence is a gloss, *see* note **e** above.

h. Hebr. *mohar*, the sum paid by the bridegroom to the father of his future bride.

i. To assist reckoning of the enemy dead some part of their bodies was sometimes cut off. The foreskins prove that those killed are uncircumcised, i.e. are Philistine.

j. 'whole . . . Israel' Gk; 'Michal daughter of Saul' Hebr.

19 a. This episode does not square with the narrative of ch. 20 where Jonathan as yet knows nothing, v. 2, of his father's vicious intentions. These are two different traditions about Jonathan's intervention on behalf of David.

b. David's wedding night; the narrative is connected with 18:27 rather than with what immediately precedes.

c. Independent and probably late narrative. According to 15:35, Saul and Samuel were never to meet again. The passage is a doublet of 10:10–12.

d. The place where the prophets lived, 2 K 6:1seq., at Ramah, or nearby. Or perhaps a place-name for Ramah, 'at Navith' or 'Naioth'.

e. 'they', versions; 'he', Hebr.

19:1-7,11-17 **Jonathan helps David to escape** [a]

20 Fleeing from the huts at Ramah, [b] David went and confronted Jonathan, 1
'What have I done, what is my guilt, how have I wronged your father, for
him to want to take my life?' ·He replied, 'You must not think that! You are not 2
going to die. My father, you see, does nothing, important or unimportant, without
confiding in me, so why should my father hide this from me? It is not true.' ·In 3
reply, David swore, 'Your father knows very well that I enjoy your favour, and
thinks, "Jonathan must not know about this or he will be upset." But, as Yahweh
lives and as you yourself live, there is only a step between me and death.'

At which, Jonathan said to David, 'Whatever you think best, I will certainly do 4
for you.' ·David replied, 'Look, tomorrow is New Moon [c] and I ought to sit at table 5
with the king, but you must let me go and hide in the countryside until the evening. [d]
If your father notices my absence, you must say, "David insistently asked me for 6
permission to hurry over to Bethlehem, his home town, because they are holding
the annual sacrifice there for the whole clan." ·If he says, "Very well," your 7
servant is safe, but if he flies into a rage, you may be sure that he has some evil
plan. ·Show your servant faithful love, since you have bound your servant to you 8
by a pact in Yahweh's name. But if I am guilty, then kill me yourself—why take me
to your father?' ·Jonathan replied, 'Perish the thought! If I knew for sure that my 9
father was determined to do you a mischief, would I not have told you?' ·David 10
then said to Jonathan, 'Who will let me know if your father gives you a harsh
answer?' [e]

Jonathan then said to David, 'Come on, let us go out into the country,' and the 11
pair of them went out into the country. ·Jonathan then said to David, 'By Yahweh, 12
God of Israel! I shall sound my father this time tomorrow; if all is well for David
Rt 1:17f and I do not then send and inform you, ·may Yahweh bring unnameable ills to 13
Jonathan and worse ones too! If my father intends to do you a mischief, [f] I shall tell
you so and let you get away, so that you can be safe. And may Yahweh be with you
as he used to be with my father! ·If I am still alive, show your servant faithful love; 14
if I die, ·never withdraw your faithful love from my family. When Yahweh has 15
exterminated every enemy of David's from the face of the earth, ·do not let 16
2 S 9:21:7 Jonathan's name be exterminated with Saul's family, or may Yahweh call David to
account!' [g] ·Jonathan then renewed his oath [h] to David, since he loved him like his 17
very soul.

Jonathan then said to David, 'Tomorrow is New Moon; your absence will be 18
noticed, since your place will be empty. ·The day after tomorrow your absence will 19
be very marked, and you must go to the place where you hid on the day of the
deed, [i] and stay beside that mound. ·For my part, the day after tomorrow I shall 20
shoot three arrows in that direction, as though at a target. ·I shall then send a 21
servant to go and find the arrows. If I say to him, "The arrows are this side of you,
get them," come out, since all will be well for you and nothing the matter, as sure
as Yahweh lives. ·But if I say to him, "The arrows are ahead of you," then be off, 22
for Yahweh himself will be sending you away. ·And as regards the agreement we 23
made, you and I, why, Yahweh is witness [j] between us for ever.'

So David hid in the country; New Moon came and the king sat down to his meal. 24
He sat in his usual place with his back to the wall, Jonathan sat facing him [k] and 25
Abner sat next to Saul; but David's place was empty. ·Saul said nothing that day, 26
thinking, 'It is sheer chance; he is unclean.' [l] ·On the day after New Moon, the 27
second day, David's place was still empty. ·Saul said to his son Jonathan, 'Why did 28
not the son of Jesse come to the meal either yesterday or today?' ·Jonathan 29
answered Saul, 'David insistently asked me for permission to go to Bethlehem.
"Please let me go," he said, "for we are holding the clan sacrifice in the town and
my brothers have ordered me to attend. So now, if I enjoy your favour, let me get
away and see my brothers." That is why he has not come to the king's table.'

Saul flew into a rage with Jonathan and said, 'Son of a rebellious slut! Don't I 30

know that you side with the son of Jesse to your own shame and your mother's
31 dishonour? ·As long as the son of Jesse lives on earth, neither you nor your royal
rights are secure. Now have him fetched and brought to me; he deserves to die.
32 Jonathan retorted to his father Saul, 'Why should he die? What has he done?'
33 But Saul brandished his spear at him to strike him, and Jonathan realised that his
34 father was determined that David should die. ·Hot with anger, Jonathan got up
from the table and ate nothing on the second day of the month, being upset about
David [m]—and because his father had insulted him.
35 Next morning, Jonathan went out into the country at the time agreed with
36 David, taking a young servant with him. ·He said to his servant, 'Run and find the
arrows which I am going to shoot,' and the servant ran while Jonathan shot an
37 arrow ahead of him. ·When the servant reached the spot to which Jonathan had
shot the arrow, Jonathan shouted after him, 'Is not the arrow ahead of you?' 20:22
38 Again Jonathan shouted after the servant, 'Quick! Hurry, do not stand around.'
39 Jonathan's servant picked up the arrow and brought it back [n] to his master. ·The
servant suspected nothing; only Jonathan and David knew what was meant.
40 Jonathan then gave his weapons to his servant and said, 'Go and carry them to
41 the town.' ·As soon as the servant had gone, David stood up beside the mound,
threw himself to the ground, prostrating himself three times. They then embraced
42 each other, both weeping copiously. [o] ·Jonathan then said to David, 'Go in peace.
And as regards the oath that both of us have sworn by the name of Yahweh, may
Yahweh be witness between you and me, between your descendants and mine for 2 S 9:1;21:7
ever.' [p]

1 **21** David then got up and left, and Jonathan went back to the town.

David and the priest at Nob

21:1 2 David then went to Nob, [a] to Ahimelech the priest. [b] Ahimelech came out trembling
2 3 to meet David and said, 'Why are you alone? Why is nobody with you?' ·David
replied to Ahimelech the priest, 'The king has given me an order and said to me,
"Do not let anyone know anything about the mission on which I am sending you,
or about the order which I have given you." I have arranged to meet the guards [c] at
3 4 such and such a place. ·Meanwhile, if you have five loaves of bread to hand, give
4 5 them to me, or whatever there is.' ·The priest replied to David, 'I have no ordinary
bread to hand; there are only consecrated loaves of permanent offering [d]—pro- Ex 25:30
vided that the men have kept themselves from women?' Lv 24:5–9
↗Mt 12:3–4
5 6 David replied to the priest, 'Certainly, women have been forbidden to us, as par.
always when I set off on a campaign. The men's things are clean. Though this is a
profane journey, they are certainly clean today as far as their things are

20 **a.** Narrative from a tradition different from 19:1–7 and parallel with 19:11–17. In one case it is Saul's daughter, in the other his son, who saves David.

b. Editorial link; in the narrative that follows David has not yet left Saul.

c. A festival held at the beginning of each lunar month, celebrated with sacrifices and feasting, Nb 10:10; 28:11seq.; Is 1:13–14; Ho 2:13; Am 8:5.

d. Omitting 'of the third day' with the Gk.

e. The question presupposes that a meeting would be dangerous. The answer is given in v. 18seq.; vv. 11–17 are an addition anticipating the passing of Saul's authority to David.

f. 'to do' conj.; Hebr. omits.

g. vv. 14–16 restored following Gk.

h. 'renewed his oath' Gk; 'made (David) swear in return' Hebr. End of v. follows Gk, Hebr. being overloaded.

i. What 'deed' is not clear, whether the spear-throwing incident, 18:10–11, or some other adventure not preserved: perhaps merely an editorial reference to 19:1–7. • The text of vv. 19–20 being uncertain, we emend in the light of Gk and v. 18.

j. 'witness' Gk; Hebr. omits, as also in v. 42.

k. 'sat facing him' Gk; 'got up' Hebr.

l. According to Lv 15:16; Dt 23:11, an involuntary pollution makes a man unclean till evening. At the end of v., Hebr. repeats 'since he is unclean', dittography.

m. Omitted by Gk; probably a gloss inspired by v. 3. The end of the v. refers to v. 30.

n. 'brought it back' Gk; 'came' Hebr.

o. 'mound' *regeb* conj.; Hebr. *negeb* 'south'. • 'copiously' Gk; Hebr. uncertain.

p. vv. 40–42 have been added: there is no point in the arrow stratagem unless David and Jonathan cannot meet.

21 **a.** On the eastern slope of Mt Scopus, east of Jerusalem, then still in Canaanite hands; a traveller from Benjamin to Judah had to pass by that way. The episode prepares for 22:9–23.

b. A descendant of Eli, 22:9, and the same person as Ahijah, 14:3. The priests of Shiloh had taken refuge at Nob after the disaster of ch. 4.

c. 'have arranged to meet' Gk; 'have told' Hebr.

d. The 'loaves of permanent offering'. This was reserved for the priests, Lv 24:5–9. Exception to this law was admitted in the time of David, but ritual purity was essential.

concerned.'[e] ·The priest then gave him what had been consecrated, for the only 7 6
bread there were the loaves of permanent offering, which is taken out of
Lv 24:8 Yahweh's presence, to be replaced by warm bread on the day when it is removed.
Now one of Saul's servants happened to be there that day, detained in Yahweh's 8 7
22:9seq. Ps 52 presence; his name was Doeg the Edomite and he was the strongest of Saul's
shepherds.
David then said to Ahimelech, 'Have you no spear or sword here to hand? I did 9 8
not bring either my sword or my weapons with me, because the king's business was
17:51,54 urgent.' ·The priest replied, 'The sword of Goliath the Philistine whom you killed 10 9
in the Valley of the Terebinth is here, wrapped in a piece of clothing behind the
ephod;[f] if you care to take it, do so, for that is the only one here.' David said,
'There is nothing like that one; give it to me.'

27 David with the Philistines[g]

David journeyed on and that day fled out of Saul's reach, going to Achish king of 11 10
Ps 34;56 Gath. ·Achish's servants said to him, 'Is not this David, the king of the country? 12 11
Was it not of him that they sang as they danced:

18:7;29:5
Saul has killed his thousands,
and David his tens of thousands?'

David pondered on these words and became very frightened of Achish king of 13 12
Gath. ·When their eyes were on him, he played the madman and, when they held 14 13
him, he feigned lunacy. He drummed his feet[h] on the doors of the gate and let his
spittle run down his beard.
Achish said to his servants, 'You can see that this man is mad. Why bring him to 15 14
me? ·Have I not enough madmen, without your bringing me this one to weary me 16 15
with his antics? Is he to join my household?'

C: DAVID THE OUTLAW

Ps 142 **22** David left there and took refuge in the Cave of Adullam;[a] his brothers and 1
his father's whole family heard this and joined him there. ·All those in 2
distress, all those in debt, all those who had a grievance, gathered round him and
he became their leader. There were about four hundred men with him.
From there David went to Mizpah in Moab and said to the king of Moab, 'Allow 3
my father and mother to stay with you[b] until I know what God intends to do for
me.' ·He left them[c] with the king of Moab and there they stayed all the time that 4
David was in the stronghold.
The prophet Gad[d], however, said to David, 'Do not stay in the stronghold; leave 5
and make your way into the territory of Judah.' David then left and went to the
forest of Hereth.

Massacre of the priests of Nob

When Saul heard that David and the men with him had been discovered, Saul was 6
at Gibeah, seated under the tamarisk on the high place, spear in hand, with all his
staff standing round him. ·'Listen, Benjaminites!' said Saul to them, 'Is the son of 7
8:14 Jesse going to give you all fields and vineyards and make all of you commanders of
thousands and commanders of hundreds ·that you all conspire against me? No one 8
warned me when my son made a pact with the son of Jesse; none of you felt sorry[e]
for me or warned me when my son incited my servant to become my enemy, as he
is now.'
21:2-10 Then, up spoke Doeg the Edomite, who was in command of Saul's staff, 'I saw 9
the son of Jesse coming to Nob, to Ahimelech son of Ahitub. ·That man consulted 10
Yahweh on his behalf, gave him provisions and also the sword of Goliath the

11 Philistine.' ·The king then sent for the priest Ahimelech son of Ahitub and his whole family, the priests of Nob; they all came to the king.
12, 13 Saul said, 'Now listen, son of Ahitub!' He replied, 'Here I am, my lord.' ·'Why have you conspired against me,' said Saul, 'you and the son of Jesse, giving him bread and a sword and consulting God on his behalf, for him to rebel against me as
14 is now the case?' ·Ahimelech replied to the king, 'Of all those in your service, who is more loyal than David son-in-law to the king, captain[f] of your bodyguard,
15 honoured in your household? ·Was today the first time I ever consulted God on his behalf? Indeed it was not! The king has no grounds for bringing any charge against his servant or against his whole family, for your servant knew nothing whatever
16 about all this.' ·The king retorted, 'You must die, Ahimelech, you and your whole family.'
17 The king said to the scouts who were standing round him, 'Forward! and put the 2:31–33
priests of Yahweh to death, for they too are on David's side, they knew that he was escaping, yet did not warn me of it.' The king's professional soldiers, however,
18 would not lift a hand to strike the priests of Yahweh. ·The king then said to Doeg, 'Forward, you! Fall on the priests!' Doeg the Edomite stepped forward and fell on the priests, himself that day killing eighty-five men who wore the linen *ephod*. 2:18e
19 Nob, the town of the priests, Saul put to the sword: men and women, children and infants, cattle, donkeys and sheep.
20 One son of Ahimelech son of Ahitub alone escaped. His name was Abiathar,
21 and he fled away to join David. ·When Abiathar told David that Saul had slaugh-
22 tered the priests of Yahweh, ·David said to Abiathar, 'I knew, that day when Doeg the Edomite was there, that he would be sure to inform Saul. I am responsible[g] for
23 the death of all your kinsmen. ·Stay with me, do not be afraid, for he who seeks your life seeks mine; you will be safe with me.'[h]

David at Keilah

1 23 News was then brought to David, 'The Philistines are besieging Keilah and
2 plundering the threshing-floors'. ·David consulted Yahweh, 'Shall I go and fight these Philistines?' Yahweh replied to David, 'Go and fight the Philistines
3 and save Keilah.' ·But David's men said to him, 'We are already afraid here in
4 Judah; how much more, then, if we go to Keilah to fight the Philistine troops!' ·So David consulted Yahweh again and Yahweh replied, 'Be on your way; go down to
5 Keilah, since I shall give the Philistines into your power.' ·So David and his men went to Keilah and fought the Philistines and carried off their cattle and inflicted
6 a great defeat on them. Thus David saved the inhabitants of Keilah. ·When Abiathar son of Ahimelech took refuge with David, he went down to Keilah with 22:20–23
the *ephod* in his hand.[a] 2:28*l*
7 When word was brought to Saul that David had gone to Keilah he said, 'God has delivered him[b] into my power: he has trapped himself by going into a town with
8 gates and bars.' ·Saul called all the people to arms, to go down to Keilah and
9 besiege David and his men. ·David, however, was aware that Saul was plotting evil
10 against him, and said to Abiathar the priest, 'Bring the *ephod*.' ·David said, 2:28*l*

e. Difficult v. We interpret thus: although the journey had no religious purpose, David and his companions behaved as on a military expedition for which continence was a religious obligation; their 'things' (euphemism) were ritually pure, *see* Dt 23:11.

f. The *ephod* of Nob reappears at 23:6,9 and determines David's decisions from 23:10. This was the oracular *ephod* and, if the same sort of object as the one mentioned in Jg 8:27, must have been quite large. Goliath's sword was kept behind the *ephod* as a trophy.

g. Independent tradition of David's flight; it anticipates the narrative of ch. 27 and humorously emphasises David's artfulness.

h. 'drummed' versions; 'scribbled' Hebr.

22 a. The caves of the desert of Judah have always provided refuge for outlaws. Adullam was a town in the Shephelah, or 'lowlands'.

b. 'stay' conj.; 'go out' Hebr. • David puts his parents out of reach of Saul's vengeance; he had family ties with Moab, according to Rt 1:4seq.; 4:17–21; *see* Mt 1:5–6.

c. 'left' versions; 'led' Hebr.

d. He was to remain David's 'seer', 2 S 24:11seq.

e. 'felt sorry' Gk; 'was sick' Hebr. • 'enemy' Gk; 'spy' Hebr.

f. 'captain' *sar* following Gk; Hebr. *sār* 'distant'.

g. 'am responsible for' Gk; 'have turned' Hebr.

h. Abiathar was to remain David's priest until the king's death. He was dismissed by Solomon, 1 K 2:26–27.

23 a. Following Gk; the Hebr. word order is confused.

b. 'delivered' Gk; 'rejected' Hebr.

'Yahweh, God of Israel, your servant has heard that Saul is preparing to come to Keilah and destroy the town because of me. • [c] Will Saul come down as your servant 11
has heard? Yahweh, God of Israel, I beg you, let your servant know.' Yahweh replied, 'He will come down.' •David then went on to ask, 'Will the notables of 12
Keilah hand me and my men over to Saul?' Yahweh replied, 'They will hand you over.' [d] •At this, David made off with his men, about six hundred in number; they 13
left Keilah and went where they could. When Saul was told that David had escaped from Keilah, he abandoned the expedition.

David stayed in the desert, in the strongholds; he stayed in the mountains, in the 14
desert of Ziph; [e] Saul kept looking for him day after day, but God did not deliver him into his power.

David at Horesh. Visit from Jonathan [f]

David was aware that Saul had mounted an expedition to take his life. David was 15
then at Horesh in the desert of Ziph. •Jonathan son of Saul set off and went to 16
David at Horesh and encouraged him in the name of God. •'Do not be afraid,' he 17
said, 'for my father Saul's hand will not reach you. You are to reign over Israel, and I shall be second to you. Saul my father is himself aware of this.' •And 18
the two made a pact before Yahweh. David stayed at Horesh and Jonathan went home.

David has a narrow escape from Saul

Ps 54 Some men from Ziph then went up to Saul at Gibeah and said, 'Look, David is 19
hiding among us in the strongholds at Horesh, on the Hill of Hachilah to the south of the wastelands. •Now whenever you wish to go down, my lord king, do so; we 20
shall make it our task to hand him over to the king.' •Saul replied, 'May you be 21
blessed by Yahweh for sympathising with me. •Go and make doubly sure, find out 22
exactly what place he frequents, [g] for I have been told that he is very cunning. Take careful note of all the hiding places where he lurks, and come back to me 23
when you are certain. I shall then come with you and, if he is in the country, I shall track him down through every clan in Judah!'

Setting off they went to Ziph ahead of Saul. Meanwhile, David and his men 24
were in the desert of Maon, in the plain to the south of the wastelands. •When Saul 25
and his men set out in search, David was told and went down to the gorge [h] running through the desert of Maon. •Saul and his men [i] proceeded along one side of the 26
mountain, David and his men along the other. David was hurrying to escape from Saul, while Saul and his men were trying to cross over to David and his men's side, to capture them, •when a messenger came to Saul and said, 'Come at once, the 27
Philistines have invaded the country.' •So Saul broke off his pursuit of David and 28
went to oppose the Philistines. That is why the place is called the Gorge of Separations.

=26 **David spares Saul**

24 From there David went up and installed himself in the strongholds of En- 1
Gedi. [a] •Once Saul was back from pursuing the Philistines, he was told, 2
'David is now in the desert of En-Gedi.' •Saul thereupon took three thousand men 3
selected from all Israel and went in search of David and his men east of the Rocks of the Mountain Goats. •He came to the sheepfolds [b] along the route, where there 4
was a cave, and went in to cover his feet. [c] Now David and his men were sitting in the recesses of the cave; •David's men said to him, 'Today is the day of which 5
Yahweh said to you, "I shall deliver your enemy into your power; do what you like with him." ' David got up and, unobserved, cut off the border of Saul's cloak.
Afterwards David reproached himself for having cut off the border of Saul's 6
26:9:31:4 2 S 1:14 cloak. [d] •He said to his men, 'Yahweh preserve me from doing such a thing to my 7
lord [e] as to raise my hand against him, since he is Yahweh's anointed.'
By these words David restrained his men and would not let them attack Saul. 8

9 Saul then left the cave and went on his way. After this, David too left the cave
and called after Saul, 'My lord king!' Saul looked behind him and David, bowing
10 to the ground, prostrated himself. ·David then said to Saul, 'Why do you listen to
11 people who say, "David intends your ruin"? ·This very day you have seen for
yourself how Yahweh put you in my power in the cave and how, refusing[f] to kill
you, I spared you saying, "I will not raise my hand against my lord, since he is 24:7e
12 Yahweh's anointed." ·Look, father, look at the border of your cloak in my hand.
Since, although I cut the border off your cloak, I did not kill you, surely you realise
that I intend neither mischief nor crime. I have not wronged you, and yet you hunt
13 me down to take my life. ·May Yahweh be judge between me and you, and may
14 Yahweh avenge me on you; but I shall never lay a hand on you! ·(As the old
proverb says: Wickedness comes out of wicked people, but I shall never lay a hand
15 on you!)[g] ·On whose trail is the king of Israel campaigning? Whom are you
16 pursuing? On the trail of a dead dog, of a flea! ·May Yahweh be the judge and 2 S 9:8;16:9
decide between me and you; may he examine and defend my cause and give
judgement for me by rescuing me from your clutches!'
17 When David had finished saying this to Saul, Saul said, 'Is that your voice, my
18 son David?' And Saul began to weep aloud. ·'You are upright and I am not,' he
said to David, 'since you have behaved well to me, whereas I have behaved badly
19 to you. ·And today you have shown how well you have behaved to me, since
20 Yahweh had put me in your power but you did not kill me. ·When a man comes on
his enemy, does he let him go unmolested? May Yahweh reward you for the good
21 you have done me today! ·Now I know that you will indeed reign and that the
22 sovereignty in Israel will pass into your hands. ·Now swear to me by Yahweh that
you will not suppress my descendants once I am gone, or blot my name out of my
23 family.' ·This David swore to Saul,[h] and Saul went home while David and his men
went back to the stronghold.

Death of Samuel. Story of Nabal and Abigail =28:3

1 25 Samuel died and all Israel assembled to mourn for him. They buried him at
his home in Ramah.
David then set off and went down to the desert of Maon.[a]
2 Now, there was a man in Maon whose business was at Carmel; the man was very 15:12
rich: he owned three thousand sheep and a thousand goats. He was then at Carmel,
3 having his sheep shorn. ·The man's name was Nabal and his wife's Abigail. She
was a woman of intelligence and beauty, but the man was miserly and churlish. He
was a Calebite.
4, 5 **When David heard in the desert that Nabal was at his sheepshearing, ·he sent
ten men off, having said to them,[b] 'Go up to Carmel, visit Nabal and greet him**

c. Here Hebr. has 'Will the notables of Keilah hand me over to him?' omitted by Gk but repeated in v. 12.

d. David has liberated the people of Keilah, but he makes them pay for it: he and his followers live at their expense, *see* 25:4–8b. But Keilah betrays him and appeals to the established authority: *see* 23:19–20; 24:2; 26:1.

e. To the south of Hebron. The v. links the Keilah episode, vv. 1–13, with that of Ziph, vv. 19–27.

f. vv. 15–18 are part of the traditions relating to David's friendship with Jonathan, *see* especially 20:11–17. Here the prophecy of David's accession is explicit, and Jonathan is content with second place, v. 17. It does not mean, however, that the two friends were actually plotting against Saul (*see* 20:30; 22:8). The stories are told in the light of subsequent events.

g. 'make sure' with some MSS; 'prepare' Hebr. • 'frequents' conj. after Gk; Hebr. uncertain.

h. Saul and his party are on one side of the gorge, David and his on the other. Saul's aim is to cross this difficult obstacle and trap David, but before he can do this, he is obliged to deal with a sudden Philistine invasion elsewhere. For similar situations, *see* 26:13,22; 2 S 16:13.

i. 'and his men' Gk; omitted by Hebr. • 'were trying to cross'. Gk; 'had surrounded' Hebr.

24 **a.** The 'Spring of the Kid'; near the shore of the Dead Sea in the same latitude as Ziph.

b. Drystone enclosures to house flocks at night.

c. Euphemism for 'relieve nature'.

d. David feels remorse (see 2 S 24:10), since the garment is, as it were, the man himself, *see* 18:4, and to touch it is to lay hands on the person.

e. Hebr. adds 'Yahweh's anointed', probably a gloss.

f. 'refusing' Gk; 'he said' Hebr.

g. Proverb inserted by a glossator; contact with the wicked brings misfortune.

h. vv. 21–23[a], foretelling David's sovereignty, are an addition similar to those of 20:12–17; 41–42; 23:15–18.

25 **a.** 'Maon' Gk-Luc.; 'Paran' Hebr.

b. The shearing is a festive occasion, 2 S 13:23seq. on which the rich sheep-owner should display his generosity. David takes advantage of this to demand the sum that nomads levy on neighbouring villages in return for the 'protection' they afford by abstaining from pillage and by restraining marauders, v. 16. This is called the 'law of brotherhood'.

from me. ·And this is what you are to say to my brother,[c] "Peace to you, peace to 6
your family, peace to all that is yours! ·I hear that you now have the shearers; your 7
shepherds were with us recently: we did not molest them, nor did they lose
anything all the while they were at Carmel. ·Ask your young men and they will tell 8
you. I hope that you will give the men a welcome, coming as we do on a festival.
Whatever you have to hand please give to your servants and to your son David." '

David's men went and said all this to Nabal for David, and waited. ·Nabal 9, 10
retorted to the men in David's service, 'Who is David? Who is the son of Jesse?
There are many servants nowadays who run away from their masters. Am I to take 11
my bread and my wine[d] and the meat that I have slaughtered for my shearers and
give it to men who come from I know not where?' ·David's men turned on their 12
heels and went back, and on their arrival told him exactly what had been said.
David then said to his men, 'Every man buckle on his sword!' And they buckled on 13
their swords, and David buckled on his too; about four hundred followed David
while two hundred stayed with the baggage.

Now one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal's wife. He said, 'David sent 14
messengers from the desert to greet our master, but he flared up at them. ·Now, 15
these men were very good to us; they did not molest us and we lost nothing all the
time we had anything to do with them while we were out in the country. ·Night and 16
day, they were like a rampart to us, all the time we were with them, minding the
sheep. ·So now make up your mind what you should do, for the ruin of our master 17
and his whole family is a certainty, and he is such a brute that no one can say a
word to him.'

Abigail hastily took two hundred loaves, two skins of wine, five sheep ready 18
prepared, five measures of roasted grain, a hundred bunches of raisins and two
hundred cakes of figs and loaded them on donkeys. ·She said to her servants, 'Go 19
on ahead, I shall follow you'—but she did not tell her husband Nabal.

As she was riding her donkey down behind a fold in the mountain, David and his 20
men happened to be coming down in her direction; and she met them. ·Now, 21
David had decided, 'It was a waste of time my guarding all this man's property in
the desert so that he lost nothing at all! He has repaid me bad for good. ·May God 22
Rt 1:17f bring unnameable ills on David[e] and worse ones, too, if by morning I leave a single
manjack[f] alive of all who belong to him!' ·As soon as Abigail saw David, she 23
quickly dismounted from the donkey and, falling on her face in front of David,
prostrated herself on the ground. ·She fell at his feet and said, 'Let me take the 24
blame, my lord. Let your servant speak in your ear; listen to what your servant has
to say! ·My lord, please pay no attention to this brute Nabal for his nature is like 25
his name; "Brute"[g] is his name and brutal he is. But I, your servant, did not see the
men whom my lord sent. ·And now, my lord, as Yahweh lives and as your soul 26
lives, by Yahweh who kept you from the crime of bloodshed and from taking
vengeance with your own hand, may your enemies and all those ill-disposed
towards you become like Nabal.[h] ·As for the present which your servant has 27
brought my lord, I should like this to be given to the men in your service. ·Please 28
forgive your servant for any offence I have given you, for Yahweh will certainly
assure you of a lasting dynasty, since you are fighting Yahweh's battles and no fault
has been found in you throughout your life. ·Should anyone set out to hunt you 29
Ps 69:28 Is 4:3 Dn 12:1 Rv 3:5 down and try to kill you, your life will be kept close in the wallet of life[i] with
Yahweh your God, while your enemies' lives he will fling out of the pouch of the
sling. ·Once Yahweh has done for you all the good things which he has said he will 30
do for you, and made you ruler of Israel, ·you must have no anxiety, my lord, no 31
remorse, over having wantonly shed blood, over having taken a revenge. When
Yahweh has done well by you, then remember your servant.'

David said to Abigail, 'Blessed be Yahweh, God of Israel, who sent you to meet 32
me today! ·Blessed be your wisdom and blessed you yourself for today having 33
restrained me from the crime of bloodshed and from exacting revenge! ·But as 34
Yahweh, God of Israel, lives, who prevented me from harming you, had you not

hurried out to meet me, I swear Nabal would not have had a single manjack left
35 alive by morning!' •David then accepted what she had brought him and said, 'Go
home in peace; yes, I have listened to you and have pardoned you.'
36 Abigail returned to Nabal. He was holding a feast, a princely feast, in his house;
Nabal was in high spirits, and as he was very drunk she told him nothing at all till it
37 was daylight. •In the morning, when Nabal's wine had left him and his wife told
him everything that had happened, his heart died within him and he became like a
38 stone. •About ten days later Yahweh struck Nabal, and he died.
39 When David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, 'Blessed be Yahweh for having defended my cause over the insult which I received from Nabal, and for having restrained his servant from doing wrong! Yahweh has made Nabal's wickedness rebound on his own head!'
40 David then sent Abigail an offer of marriage. When the men in David's service
came to Abigail at Carmel, they said, 'David has sent us to take you to him, to be
41 his wife.' •She stood up, then prostrated herself on the ground. 'Consider your
42 servant a slave', she said, 'to wash the feet of my lord's servants.' •Quickly Abigail
stood up again and mounted a donkey; followed by five of her servant-girls, she
followed David's messengers and became his wife.
43 David had also married Ahinoam of Jezreel and he kept them both as wives.
44 Saul had given his daughter Michal, David's wife, to Palti son of Laish, from 18:30 19:10seq. 2 S 3:13seq.
Gallim.

David spares Saul [a] =24

1 **26** Some men from Ziph went to Saul at Gibeah and said, 'Look, David is 23:19seq.
2 hiding on the Hill of Hachilah on the edge of the wastelands!' •So Saul set
off and went down to the desert of Ziph, accompanied by three thousand picked
3 men of Israel, to search for David in the desert of Ziph. •Saul pitched camp on the
Hill of Hachilah, which is on the edge of the wastelands near the road. David was
then living in the desert and saw that Saul had come after him into the desert.
4 Accordingly, David sent out spies and learned that Saul had indeed arrived.
5 Setting off, David went to the place where Saul had pitched camp. He saw the
place where Saul and Abner son of Ner, commander of his army, had bedded
down. Saul had bedded down inside the camp with the troops bivouacking round
him.
6 Speaking to Ahimelech the Hittite and Abishai son of Zeruiah and brother of 1 Ch 2:16
Joab, David said, 'Who will come down with me to the camp, to Saul?' Abishai
7 answered, 'I will go down with you.' •So in the dark David and Abishai made their
way towards the force, where they found Saul lying asleep inside the camp, his
spear stuck in the ground beside his head, with Abner and the troops lying round
him.
8 Abishai then said to David, 'Today God has put your enemy in your power; so
now let me pin him to the ground with his own spear. Just one stroke! I shall not 18:11;19:10
9 need to strike him twice.' •David said to Abishai, 'Do not kill him, for who could
10 raise his hand against Yahweh's anointed and go unpunished? •As Yahweh lives,' 9:26n;24:7; 31:4
David said, 'Yahweh himself will strike him down: either the day will come for him 2 S 1:16
11 to die, or he will go into battle and perish then. •Yahweh forbid that I should raise
my hand against Yahweh's anointed! But now let us take the spear beside his head
and the pitcher of water, and let us go away.'
12 David took the spear and the pitcher of water from beside Saul's head, and they

c. 'to my brother' conj.; 'to a living man' Hebr.
d. 'my wine' Gk; 'my water' Hebr.
e. 'David' Gk; 'David's enemies' Hebr.
f. lit. 'one who urinates against the wall'.
g. In Hebr. *nabal* indicates the fool whose conduct displeases both God and people, at once stupid, godless and malicious.
h. Sharing his tragic end as foreseen by Abigail.
i. God takes care of his friends' lives as human beings would of a treasure. The image is similar to that of the 'book of life', Ps 69:28; Is 4:3; Dn 12:1; Rv 3:5.

26 a. The narrative of ch. 26 is very like that of ch. 24. We have here either two similar events to which oral, and then written, tradition has given the same contours; or else (more probably) a doublet, i.e. two parallel narratives illustrating David's magnanimity and his respect for the sacred character of the king, 'Yahweh's anointed', *see* 9:26n.

made off. No one saw, no one knew, no one woke up; they were all asleep, because
Gn 2:21;15:12 a torpor from Yahweh had fallen on them.

David crossed to the other side[b] and halted on the top of the mountain a long 13
way off; there was a wide space between them. ·David then called out to the troops 14
and to Abner son of Ner, 'Abner, why don't you answer?' Abner replied, 'Who is
that calling?'[c] ·David said to Abner, 'Are you not a man? Who is your equal in 15
Israel? Why, then, did you not guard the king your lord? One of the people came
to kill the king your lord. ·What you did was not well done. As Yahweh lives, you 16
all deserve to die since you did not guard your lord, Yahweh's anointed. Look
where the king's spear is now, and the pitcher of water which was beside his head!'

Recognising David's voice, Saul said, 'Is that your voice, my son David?' David 17
replied, 'It is my voice, my lord king. ·Why is my lord pursuing his servant?' he 18
said. 'What have I done? What crime have I committed? ·May my lord king now 19
listen to his servant's words: if Yahweh has incited you against me, may he be
appeased with an offering; but if human beings have done it, may they be accursed
Dt 7:6b before Yahweh, since they have as effectively banished me today from sharing in
Yahweh's heritage as if they had said, "Go and serve other gods!"[d] ·So I pray now 20
that my blood shall not be shed on soil remote from Yahweh's presence,[e] when the
king of Israel has mounted an expedition to take my life,[f] as one might hunt a
partridge in the mountains!'

Saul replied, 'I have done wrong! Come back, my son David; I shall never harm 21
you again, since today you have shown respect for my life. Yes, I have behaved
like a fool, I have been profoundly in the wrong.' ·In reply, David said, 'Here is 22
the king's spear. Let one of the men come across and get it. ·May Yahweh reward 23
Ps 7:8; 18:20 each as each has been upright and loyal. Today Yahweh put you in my power but
I would not raise my hand against Yahweh's anointed. ·As today I set great value 24
by your life, so may Yahweh set great value by my life and deliver me from every
tribulation!'

Saul then said, 'May you be blessed, my son David! In what you undertake, you 25
24:21 will certainly succeed.' David then went on his way and Saul returned home.

D: DAVID AMONG THE PHILISTINES

David takes refuge at Gath

27 'One of these days,' David thought, 'I shall perish at the hand of Saul. The 1
best thing that I can do is to get away[a] into the country of the Philistines;[b]
then Saul will give up tracking me through the length and breadth of Israel and I
shall be safe from him.' ·So David set off and went over, he and his six hundred 2
21:11-16 men, to Achish son of Maoch, king of Gath. ·He settled at Gath with Achish, he 3
and his men, each with his family and David with his two wives, Ahinoam of
Jezreel and Abigail widow of Nabal of Carmel. ·When news reached Saul that 4
David had fled to Gath, he stopped searching for him.

David as vassal of the Philistines

David said to Achish, 'If I have won your favour, let me be given a place in one of 5
the outlying towns, where I can live. Why should your servant live in the royal city
with you?' ·That very day Achish gave him Ziklag;[c] and this is why Ziklag has been 6
29:3 the property of the kings of Judah[d] to the present day. ·The time that David stayed 7
in Philistine territory amounted to a year and four months.

15 David and his men went out on raids against the Geshurites, Girzites and 8
Ex 17:8d
Jos 13:2 Amalekites, for these are the tribes inhabiting the region which, from Telam,[e]
goes in the direction of Shur, as far as Egypt. ·David laid the countryside waste 9
and left neither man nor woman alive; he carried off the sheep and cattle, the
donkeys, camels and clothing, and then came back again to Achish. ·Achish would 10

ask, 'Where did you go raiding today?' David would reply, 'Against the Negeb of
11 Judah,' or 'the Negeb of Jerahmeel,' or 'the Negeb of the Kenites.'[f] •David spared
neither man nor woman to bring back alive to Gath, 'in case', as he thought, 'they
inform on us and say, "David did such and such." ' This was the way David
12 conducted his raids all the time he stayed in Philistine territory. •Achish trusted
David. 'He has made himself detested by his own people Israel,' he thought, 'and
so will be my servant for ever.'

The Philistines go to war with Israel

1 28 It then happened that the Philistines mustered their forces for war, to fight
Israel, and Achish said to David, 'It is understood that you and your men go
2 into battle with me.' •David said to Achish, 'In that case, you will soon see what
your servant can do.'[a] Achish replied to David, 'Right, I shall appoint you as my
permanent bodyguard.'

Saul and the witch of En-Dor

3 Now Samuel was dead, and all Israel had mourned him and buried him at Ramah, =25:1
his own town. Saul had expelled the necromancers and wizards from the country.[b]
4 Meanwhile the Philistines had mustered and had come and pitched camp at
5 Shunem.[c] Saul mustered all Israel and they encamped at Gilboa. •When Saul saw
6 the Philistine camp, he was afraid and his heart trembled violently. •Saul consulted 14:41r
Yahweh, but Yahweh gave him no answer, either by dream, divination or prophet. Ex 33:7e
7 Saul then said to his servants, 'Find a necromancer for me, so that I can go and
consult her.' His servants replied, 'There is a necromancer at En-Dor.'
8 And so Saul, disguising himself and changing his clothes, set out accompanied 1 K 14:2
by two men; their visit to the woman took place at night. 'Disclose the future to
9 me', he said, 'by means of a ghost. Conjure up the one I shall name to you.' •The
woman replied, 'Look, you know what Saul has done, how he has outlawed
necromancers and wizards from the country; why are you setting a trap for my life,
10 then, to have me killed?' •But Saul swore to her by Yahweh, 'As Yahweh lives,' he
11 said, 'no blame shall attach to you for this business.' •The woman asked, 'Whom
shall I conjure up for you?' He replied, 'Conjure up Samuel.' Si 46:20
12 The woman then saw Samuel and, giving a great cry, she said to Saul, 'Why have
13 you deceived me? You are Saul!'[d] •The king said, 'Do not be afraid! What do you

b. To the other side of the valley.

c. 'calling?' Gk; 'calling the king?' Hebr.

d. Yahweh and his 'heritage', the country of Israel, were so intimately linked that it was thought impossible to worship Yahweh in another country where alien gods held sway, Ps 137:4. Thus Naaman takes soil to Damascus from Israel, 2 K 5:17. To condemn David to exile is to force him to abandon Yahweh.

e. In the desert, the domain of evil spirits, Lv 16:10; Is 13:21; 34:13–14. David already feels remote from Yahweh's protective presence.

f. 'my life' Gk; 'a flea' Hebr., influenced by 24:15.

27 a. Following Gk; Hebr. 'I shall certainly escape'.

b. A sure way of eluding Saul but a seeming desertion to the enemy, putting David in a false position from which circumstances, ch. 29, and his own cunning, vv. 8–12, extricate him.

c. On the borders of Philistia, to the north east of Beersheba. Achish assigns the town to David whose followers he relies on to police the neighbouring desert country.

d. That is, it became the king's private domain.

e. 'from Telam' some Gk MSS; 'from of old' Hebr.

f. The Negeb is the sparsely populated, mainly pastoral district lying to the south of Palestine. It belongs to the tribe of Judah and its allies, such as the Kenites, *see also* 30:14. David represents his raids as made against these; in fact they are made against the marauders from the desert and they reconcile him with his own countrymen who regarded him as a traitor, *see* v. 12 and David's conciliatory gesture to the elders of Judah, 30:26–31.

28 a. An ambiguous answer which Achish takes for a promise of valour in war. David is hoping that circumstances will excuse him from fighting against Israel, as in fact they did, Ch 29.

b. Necromancy was practised in Israel, 2 K 21:6; Is 8:19, though forbidden by the Law, Lv 19:31; 20:6,27; Dt 18:11. Saul himself is said to have banished practitioners of the black arts, v. 9, and although this has not been mentioned elsewhere, it may be implied in the last part of 14:47. The narrator seems to share the popular belief in ghosts (though he regards it unlawful to consult them); the Fathers and commentators, however, seek an explanation of the incident itself: divine power, demonic activity, the woman's trickery. Doubtless, as in other seances, credulity and trickery were at work; but the incident is presented as a genuine recalling of Samuel's spirit (hence the woman's fear) to foretell the future; *see* 1 Ch. 10:13 (LXX) and Si 46:20. A simpler approach would be to think that the narrator has chosen this set-piece to illustrate (not for the first time) the rejection of Saul and his replacement by David, the theme running through all these stories, *see* v. 17 with 15:28 and the reference to Amalek in v. 18, as also 13:13–14; 16:1; 23:17; 24:21; 25:30.

c. In the plain of Jezreel. South of Shunem the Gilboa range borders this plain. En-Dor lies at the foot of Tabor and north of Shunem; to reach it, therefore, Saul had to pass round the Philistine encampment.

d. The woman knows of the relations between Samuel and Saul; that the dead prophet appears, she concludes, means that her client is the king of Israel.

see?' The woman replied to Saul, 'I see a ghost[f] rising from the earth.'[f] •'What is 14
he like?' he asked. She replied, 'It is an old man coming up; he is wrapped in a
cloak.' Saul then knew that it was Samuel and, bowing to the ground, prostrated
himself.
15:27-28 Samuel said to Saul, 'Why have you disturbed my rest by conjuring me up?' Saul 15
replied, 'I am in great distress; the Philistines are waging war on me, and God has
abandoned me and no longer answers me either by prophet or by dream; and so I
have summoned you to tell me what I ought to do.' •Samuel said, 'Why consult 16
me, when Yahweh has abandoned you and has become your enemy? •Yahweh has 17
treated you as he foretold through me; he has snatched the sovereignty from your
hand and given it to your neighbour, David, •because you disobeyed Yahweh's 18
voice and did not execute his fierce anger against Amalek. That is why Yahweh is
treating you like this today. •What is more, Yahweh will deliver Israel and you 19
too, into the power of the Philistines. Tomorrow you and your sons will be with
31:2-6 me;[g] and Yahweh will hand over the army of Israel into the power of the
Philistines.'
Immediately Saul fell full length on the ground. He was terrified by what Samuel 20
had said and was also weak from having eaten nothing all that day and night. •The 21
woman went to Saul and, seeing his terror, said, 'Look, your servant has obeyed
your order; I have taken my life in my hands and obeyed the command which you
gave me. •Now please, you in your turn listen to what your servant has to say. Let 22
me offer you a piece of bread. Eat something and get some strength for your
journey.' •But he refused. 'I will not eat,' he said. His servants however pressed 23
him, and so did the woman. Allowing himself to be persuaded by them, he got up
from the ground and sat on the bed. •The woman owned a fattened calf which she 24
quickly slaughtered, and she took some flour and kneaded it and with it baked
some unleavened cakes •which she served to Saul and his servants; they ate, and 25
then set off and left the same night.

4:1 **David is sent away by the Philistine leaders**[a]

29 The Philistines mustered all their forces at Aphek while the Israelites 1
pitched camp near the spring in Jezreel. •The Philistine commanders 2
marched past with their hundreds and their thousands, and David and his men
brought up the rear with Achish. •The Philistine chiefs asked, 'What are these 3
Hebrews doing?' Achish replied to them, 'Why, this is David the servant of Saul,
king of Israel, who has been with me for the last year or two.[b] I have had no fault to
find with him from the day he gave himself up to me until the present time.' •But 4
the Philistine chiefs were angry with him. 'Send the man back,' they said, 'make
14:21 him go back to the place which you assigned to him. He cannot go into battle with
us, in case he turns on us once battle is joined. Would there be a better way for the
man to regain his master's favour than with the heads of these men here? •Is not 5
this the David of whom they sang as they danced:

18:7;21:12 Saul has killed his thousands,
and David his tens of thousands'?

So Achish called David and said, 'As Yahweh lives, you are loyal, and I am quite 6
content with all your doings in our campaigning together, since I have found no
fault with you from the day you came to me until the present time. But you are not
acceptable to the chiefs. •So go home, in peace, rather than antagonise them.' 7
'But what have I done,' David asked Achish,[c] 'what fault have you had to find 8
with your servant from the day I entered your service to the present time, for me
not to be allowed to go and fight the enemies of my lord the king?' •In reply, 9
2 S 14:17,20; 19:28 Achish said to David, 'In my opinion, it is true, you are as good as an angel of God;
but the Philistine chiefs have said, "He must not go into battle with us." •So get up 10
early tomorrow morning, with your master's servants who came with you, and go
to the place which I assigned to you. Do not harbour resentment, since personally

I have no fault to find with you. [d] Get up early tomorrow morning and, as soon as it is light, be off.'

11 So David and his men got up early to leave at dawn and go back to Philistine territory. And the Philistines marched on Jezreel.

Reprisals against the Amalekites

1 30 Now by the time David and his men reached Ziklag three days later, the Amalekites had raided the Negeb and Ziklag; they had sacked Ziklag and
2 burnt it down. •They had taken the women prisoner, and everyone [a] who was there, both small and great. They had not killed anyone, but had carried them off
3 and gone away. •When David and his men arrived, they found the town burnt
4 down and their wives and sons and daughters taken captive. •Then David and the
5 people with him wept aloud till they were too weak to weep any more. •David's two wives had been captured: Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail widow of Nabal of 27:3
Carmel.

6 David was in great trouble, since the people were talking of stoning him; the people all felt very bitter, each man for his own sons and daughters. But David
7 took courage from Yahweh his God. •To the priest Abiathar son of Ahimelech,
8 David said, 'Bring me the *ephod*.' Abiathar brought the *ephod* to David. •David 2:28*l*
then consulted Yahweh, 'Shall I go in pursuit of these raiders? Will I overtake them?' The answer was, 'Go in pursuit; you will certainly overtake them and rescue
9 the captives.' •David accordingly set off with the six hundred men who were with
10 him and reached the torrent of Besor. [b] •David then continued the pursuit with four hundred men, two hundred staying behind who were too exhausted to cross the torrent of Besor.

11 Out in the country they found an Egyptian and brought him to David. They
12 gave him some bread to eat and some water to drink; •they also gave him a piece of fig cake and two bunches of raisins; he ate these and his spirits revived—he had
13 had nothing to eat or drink for three days and three nights. •David then said to him, 'Whose man are you and where do you come from?' He replied, 'I am a young Egyptian, the slave of an Amalekite; my master abandoned me because I fell sick
14 three days ago. •We raided the Negeb of the Cherethites, [c] and the Negeb of Judah, 27:10
15 and the Negeb of Caleb too, and we burnt Ziklag down.' •David said, 'Will you guide me to these raiders?' He replied, 'Swear to me by God not to kill me or hand me over to my master, and I will guide you to these raiders.'

16 He guided him to them, and there they were, scattered over the whole countryside, eating, drinking and celebrating, on account of the enormous booty which they had brought back from the territory of the Philistines and the territory of
17 Judah. •David slaughtered them from dawn until the evening of the following day. No one escaped, except four hundred young men who mounted camels and fled.
18 He rescued everything that the Amalekites had taken—David also rescued his
19 two wives. •Nothing of theirs was lost, whether small or great, from the booty or sons and daughters [d]—everything that had been taken from them; David recovered
20 everything. •They captured the flocks and herds as well and drove them in front of him. 'This is David's booty,' they shouted.

e. In Hebr. an *elohim* (plural of majesty) or superhuman being, *see* Gn 3:5; Ps 8:5. Only in this place is it used of the dead.

f. From Sheol, the subterranean abode of the dead, *see* Nb 16:33f.

g. In Sheol, the destination of all, whether good or bad.

29 **a.** Following immediately on 28:2.

b. 'for the last year or two' Gk; 'some days or years' Hebr.

c. David is rescued from his awkward position by the decision of Achish but still pretends that his loyalty has been impugned.

d. 'and go . . . with you' Gk and *Vet. Lat.*; omitted in Hebr.

30 **a.** 'and everyone' Gk; Hebr. omits.

b. Hebr. adds 'and the rest stayed behind', a gloss based on v. 10.

c. The Cherethites are kin to the Philistines and David later chooses part of his bodyguard from them, 2 S 8:18; 15:18.

d. Following Gk word order.

When David reached the two hundred men who had been too exhausted to 21
follow him and whom he had left at the torrent of Besor, they came out to meet
David and the party accompanying him: David approached with his party and
greeted them. ·But all the rogues and scoundrels among the men who had gone 22
with David began saying, 'Since they did not go with us, we shall not give them any
of the booty which we have rescued, except that each of them can have his wife and
children. Let them take them away and be off.' ·But David said, 'Do not behave 23
like this, brothers, with what Yahweh has given us; he has protected us and has
handed over to us the raiders who attacked us. ·Who would agree with you on this? 24
No:

As the share of the man who goes into battle,
so is the share of the man who stays with the baggage.

Nb 31:27 They will share alike.' ·And from that day on, he made that a rule and custom for 25
Israel, which obtains to the present day.

When David reached Ziklag, he sent parts of the booty to the elders of Judah, 26
town by town, [e] with this message, 'Here is a present for you, taken from the booty
of Yahweh's enemies':

Jos 15:19 to those in Bethel, 27
to those in Ramoth of the Negeb,
to those in Jattir, 28
to those in Aroer,
to those in Siphmoth,
to those in Eshtemoa,
to those in Carmel, 29
to those in the towns of Jerahmeel,
to those in the towns of the Kenites,
to those in Hormah, 30
to those in Borashan,
to those in Athach,
to those in Hebron 31

and to all the places which David and his men had frequented. [f]

Battle of Mount Gilboa and death of Saul [a]

2 S 1:1–16 ‖1 Ch 10:1–12 31 The Philistines gave battle to Israel, and the Israelites, fleeing from the 1
Philistines, fell and were slaughtered on Mount Gilboa. ·The Philistines 2
14:49 bore down on Saul and his sons, and they killed Jonathan, Abinadab and Mal-
chishua, Saul's sons. ·The fighting grew fiercer round Saul; the archers came upon 3
him, and he was severely wounded [b] ·by the archers. Saul then said to his armour- 4
Jg 9:54 bearer, 'Draw your sword and run me through with it; I do not want these
17:26 uncircumcised men to come and make fun of me.' [c] But his armour-bearer was very
9:26n;26:9 much afraid and would not do it. So Saul took his own sword and fell on it. ·His 5
2 M 14:41–42 armour-bearer, seeing that Saul was dead, fell on his sword too and died with him.
Thus died Saul, his three sons and his armour-bearer, [d] together on the same day. 6
When the Israelites who were on the other side of the Jordan saw that the 7
Israelites had been routed and that Saul and his sons were dead, they abandoned
their towns and fled. The Philistines then came and occupied them.

When the Philistines came on the following day to strip the dead, they found 8
17:54 Saul and his three sons lying on Mount Gilboa. ·They cut off his head and, stripping 9
him of his armour, had these carried [e] round the territory of the Philistines to
5:2;21:10 proclaim the good news to their idols and their people. ·They put his armour in the 10
temple of Astarte; and his body they fastened to the walls of Beth-Shean.

2 S 2:4–7 When the inhabitants of Jabesh in Gilead [f] heard what the Philistines had done 11
to Saul, ·the warriors all set out and, having marched all night, took the bodies of 12

Saul and his sons off the walls of Beth-Shean; they brought them[g] to Jabesh and
13 burned them there.[h] ·They then took their bones and buried them under the
tamarisk of Jabesh, and fasted for seven days.[i] Gn 50:10

e. 'town by town' conj.; 'to his friend' Hebr.

f. To repay hospitality and, still more, to win friends who will put David on the throne, 2 S 2:4. The towns mentioned (some of the names have been emended, following Gk and Jos) all lie to the south of Hebron.

31 a. This follows on ch 28.

b. 'the archers' 1 Ch 10:3; 'the archers, men with bows' Hebr. • 'and he was wounded' Gk; 'and he trembled' Hebr.

c. Following the parallel version in 1 Ch 10:4; after 'come', Hebr. reads 'and run me through'.

d. Hebr. adds 'and all his men', omitted by Gr.

e. Translation uncertain. 'to their idols' Gk; 'to the temple of their idols' Hebr.

f. They had been rescued by Saul, ch. 11, and wanted to pay him their last respects.

g. 'They brought them' Gk and 1 Ch 10:12; 'they came back' Hebr.

h. Practice alien to Israel.

i. On fasting for the dead *see* 2 S 1:12; 3:35, and contrast 2 S 12:23. On the seven days' mourning *see* Gn 50:10; Jdt 16:24; Si 22:12.

THE SECOND BOOK OF SAMUEL

David learns of Saul's death [a]

1 S 30; 31:1–13 / 1 S 4:12–17

1 Saul was dead and David, returning after his victory over the Amalekites, had 1
been at Ziklag for two days. ·On the third day, a man arrived from Saul's camp 2
with his clothes torn and earth on his head. When he came to David, he fell to the
ground and prostrated himself. ·David asked him, 'Where have you come from?' 3
'I have escaped from the Israelite camp,' he said. ·David said, 'What has hap- 4
pened? Tell me.' He replied, 'The people fled from the battle, and many of them
have fallen and are dead. Saul and his son Jonathan are dead too.'

Then David asked the young man who brought the news, 'How do you know 5
that Saul and his son Jonathan are dead?' ·The young man replied, 'I happened to 6
be on Mount Gilboa, and there was Saul, leaning on his spear, with the chariots
and the cavalry bearing down on him. ·Glancing behind him and seeing me, he 7
shouted to me. I replied, "Here I am!" ·He said, "Who are you?" I replied, "I am 8
an Amalekite." ·He then said, "Come here and kill me. My head is swimming, 9
although I still have all my strength." ·So I went over to him and killed him, 10
2 K 11:12 because I knew that once he fell he could not survive. I then took the crown which
he had on his head and the bracelet on his arm, and have brought them here to my
lord.'

David then took hold of his clothes and tore them, and all the men with him did 11
1 S 31:13i the same. ·They mourned and wept and fasted until the evening for Saul and his 12
son Jonathan, for the people of Yahweh and for the House of Israel, because they
had fallen by the sword.

David said to the young man who had brought the news, 'Where are you from?' 13
He replied, 'I am the son of a resident foreigner, an Amalekite.' ·David said, 'How 14
1 S 26:9 was it that you were not afraid to lift your hand to destroy Yahweh's
anointed?' ·Then David called one of the young men. 'Come here,' he said, 'strike 15
Lv 20:9 Jos 2:19 him down.' The man struck him and he died. ·David said, 'Your blood be on your 16
own head. [b] You convicted yourself out of your own mouth by saying, "I killed
Yahweh's anointed." '

David's elegy over Saul and Jonathan [c]

David sang the following lament over Saul and his son Jonathan ·(it is for teaching 17, 18
Jos 10:13c archery to the children of Judah; it is written in the Book of the Just): [d]

Does the splendour of Israel 19
lie dead on your heights?
↗1 M 9:21 How did the heroes fall?

↗Mi 1:10 Do not speak of it in Gath, 20
Jg 16:23–24 1 S 31:9 nor broadcast it in the streets of Ashkelon,
for fear the daughters of the Philistines rejoice,
for fear the daughters of the uncircumcised gloat.

You mountains of Gilboa, 21
Gn 27:28 Dt 33:13 no dew, no rain fall on you,
O treacherous fields [e]
where the heroes' shield lies dishonoured!

Is 21:5 Not greased with oil, the shield of Saul,
but with the blood of wounded men, the fat of warriors! 22

The bow of Jonathan never turned back,
the sword of Saul never came home unsated! 1 S 14:47

23 Saul and Jonathan, beloved and handsome,
were divided neither in life, nor in death.
Swifter than eagles were they,
stronger than lions.

24 O daughters of Israel, weep for Saul
who gave you scarlet and fine linen[f] to wear, Jg 5:30
who pinned golden jewellery
on your dresses!

25 How did the heroes fall
in the thick of the battle?

Jonathan, by your dying I too am stricken,[g]
26 I am desolate for you, Jonathan my brother.
Very dear you were to me,
your love more wonderful to me 1 S 18:1a+
than the love of a woman.

27 How did the heroes fall
and the weapons of war succumb!

I: DAVID

A: DAVID KING OF JUDAH

David consecrated king at Hebron

1 2 After this David consulted Yahweh, asking, 'Shall I go up to one of the towns 1 S 2:28*l*
of Judah?' Yahweh replied, 'Go up!' 'Which one shall I go to?' David asked.
2 'To Hebron,' was the reply.[a] •So David went up, with his two wives Ahinoam of
3 Jezreel and Abigail widow of Nabal of Carmel. •In addition David brought up the
men who were with him, each with his family, and they settled in the towns of
4 Hebron.[b] •The men of Judah came, and there they anointed David as king of the
House of Judah.[c]

David's message to the people of Jabesh

5 They told David that the people of Jabesh in Gilead had given Saul burial, •so 1 S 31:11–13
David sent messengers to the people of Jabesh in Gilead. 'May you be blessed by
Yahweh,' he said, 'for showing this faithful love to Saul your lord, and for burying
6 him. •And now may Yahweh show faithful love and constancy towards you! I too
7 shall treat you well because you have done this.[d] •And now take courage and be

1 **a.** A second tradition concerning Saul's death. The narrative, following immediately on 1 S 30, is itself composite. According to one form of the tradition, a soldier brings news of the death of Saul and Jonathan, and David laments with his followers, vv. 1–4 and 11–12. In the other form, a young Amalekite boasts of having killed Saul and brings the royal insignia, expecting a reward; David orders his execution, vv. 5–10 and 13–16.

b. David addresses the dead man: the man's blood will not cry for vengeance (on David) because he has been justly executed, *see* 1 K 2:32.

c. The poem is certainly authentic.

d. An ancient collection now lost, but quoted also in Jos 10:13. The song accompanied archery exercises, *see* 2 S 22:35 and the same verb in Ps 144:1.

e. 'treacherous fields' *sede tarmit* conj.; Hebr. *usede terumot* 'and fields of offerings'.

f. 'and fine linen' *usedinim* conj.; Hebr. *'im 'adanim* 'with delights'.

g. 'by your dying I too am stricken' *bemoteka hulleti* conj.; Hebr., duplicating v. 19[b] *'al bamoteka halal* 'a corpse is lying on your heights'.

2 **a.** Hebron was the most important city in Judah. At the time of the conquest it had been captured and occupied by the Calebites, Jos 15:13seq.; Jg 1:20, but these had soon been absorbed by the tribe of Judah.

b. The villages dependent on Hebron.

c. David had won supporters in Judah, 1 S 27:10–12; 30:26–31. He was later to be anointed by the elders of Israel, 5:3. This form of the tradition knows nothing of Samuel's anointing of the young David. 1 S 16:1–13.

d. 'well because' conj.; 'this good which' Hebr.

men of valour. Saul your lord is dead, but the House of Judah has anointed me to be their king.'[e]

1 S 14:49v **Abner imposes Ishbaal as king of Israel**

Abner son of Ner, Saul's army commander, had taken Ishbaal[f] son of Saul and 8
brought him over to Mahanaim.[g] •He had made him king of Gilead, of the 9
Asherites,[h] of Jezreel, of Ephraim, of Benjamin and indeed of all Israel. •Ishbaal 10
son of Saul was forty years old when he became king of Israel, and he reigned for
=5:5 two years. Only the House of Judah supported David. •The length of David's reign 11
over Judah in Hebron was seven years and six months.[i]

War between Israel and Judah. The battle of Gibeon

Abner son of Ner, with the retainers of Ishbaal son of Saul, marched out from 12
Mahanaim to Gibeon. •Joab son of Zeruiah, with David's retainers, also took the 13
field, encountering them at the pool of Gibeon.[j] There they halted, one party on
one side of the pool, and the other opposite.

Abner then said to Joab, 'Let the men come forward and fight it out between 14
us!'[k] Joab replied, 'Let them come forward.' •So they came forward and were 15
numbered off, twelve from Benjamin for Ishbaal son of Saul, and twelve of David's
retainers. •Each caught his opponent by the head and drove his sword into his side; 16
and thus they all fell together. Hence the place was called the Field of Sides;[l] it is at
Gibeon.

That day a very fierce battle took place, and Abner and the men of Israel were 17
beaten by David's retainers. •The three sons of Zeruiah were there, Joab, Abishai, 18
and Asahel. Now Asahel could run like a wild gazelle. •Asahel chased Abner, not 19
swerving to the right or left from pursuing him. •Abner turned and said, 'Asahel, is 20
that you?' He replied, 'It is.' •Abner said, 'Turn to your right or your left, catch 21
one of the men and take his spoil!' But Asahel would not break off the pursuit.
3:27 Again Abner spoke to Asahel, 'Stop following me, unless you want me to strike 22
you to the ground; and then how could I look your brother Joab in the face?'[m] •But 23
he refused to be diverted, so Abner struck him in the belly with the butt[n] of his
spear so that the shaft came out through his back; and he fell at his feet and died on
the spot. On coming to the place where Asahel had fallen and died, everyone
halted.

Joab and Abishai took up the pursuit of Abner and at sunset reached the Hill of 24
Ammah, which is to the east of Giah on the road through the desert of Gibeon.[o]
The Benjaminites gathered in close formation behind Abner and halted on the 25
top of a hill. •Abner called out to Joab, 'Is the sword to go on devouring for ever? 26
Surely you see that this can only end in bitterness? How long will it be before you
order those people to stop pursuing their brothers?' •Joab replied, 'As Yahweh[p] 27
lives, if you had not spoken, these men would not have given up the pursuit of their
brothers until morning.'[q] •Joab then sounded the trumpet and all the troops halted; 28
they pursued Israel no further and fought no more.

All that night Abner and his men made their way through the Arabah;[r] they 29
crossed the Jordan and, marching throughout the morning, came to Mahanaim.
Joab, having stopped pursuing Abner, mustered the whole contingent; David's 30
retainers had lost nineteen men in addition to Asahel, •but had killed three 31
hundred and sixty of Benjamin, Abner's men. •They took up Asahel and buried 32
him in his father's tomb, which is at Bethlehem. Joab and his men then marched
throughout the night, reaching Hebron at daybreak.

3 So the war dragged on between the House of Saul and the House of David, but 1
David grew steadily stronger and the House of Saul steadily weaker.

5:13–16 **The sons born to David at Hebron**
‖1 Ch 3:1–4

The sons born to David at Hebron were: his first-born Amnon, by Ahinoam of 2
Jezreel; •his second Chileab, by Abigail widow of Nabal of Carmel; the third 3

4 Absalom son of Maacah, daughter of Talmai king of Geshur;[a] 5 •the fourth Adonijah son of Haggith; the fifth Shephatiah son of Abital; •the sixth Ithream, by David's wife, Eglah. These were born to David at Hebron.

The rift between Abner and Ishbaal

6 This is what took place during the war between the House of Saul and the House of
7 David. Abner took complete control in the House of Saul. •Now, there was a concubine of Saul's called Rizpah daughter of Aiah, and Abner took her.[b] Ishbaal 21:8–10
8 said to Abner, 'Why have you slept with my father's concubine?' •At these words of Ishbaal, Abner flew into a rage. 'Am I a dog's head?'[c] he shouted. 'Here am I, full of faithful love towards the House of Saul your father, his brothers and his friends, not leaving you to the hands of David, and now you find fault with me over
9 a woman! •May God bring unnameable ills on Abner, and worse ones, too, if I do Rt 1:17f
10 not bring about what Yahweh has sworn to David: •to take the sovereignty from 3:18;5:2 1 S 25:30 the House of Saul, and establish David's throne over Israel as well as Judah, from
11 Dan to Beersheba!'[d] •Ishbaal dared not say a single word to Abner in reply, as he was afraid of him.

Abner negotiates with David

12 Abner sent messengers on his own behalf to say to David, '. . .[e] and furthermore, come to an agreement with me and I will give you my support to win all Israel over
13 to you.' •'Very well,' David said, 'I will come to an agreement with you. I impose one condition however; you will not be admitted to my presence unless you bring
14 me Michal, Saul's daughter, when you come to see me.' •David then sent messen- 1 S 18:20–27
15 gers to say to Ishbaal son of Saul, 'Give me back my wife Michal, whom I acquired for a hundred foreskins of the Philistines.' •So Ishbaal sent for her to be taken from
16 her husband Paltiel son of Laish. •Her husband set off with her and followed her, 1 S 25:44 weeping as he went, as far as Bahurim; but Abner said to him, 'Go back!' and he went.
17 [f]Now Abner conferred with the elders of Israel. 'For a long time now,' he said,
18 'you have wanted David as your king. •Now you must take action, since Yahweh has said of David, "By the hand of my servant David I shall deliver[g] my people 3:10d
19 Israel from the clutches of the Philistines and all their enemies." ' •Abner also spoke to the men of Benjamin and then went to Hebron to tell David everything that had been agreed by Israel and the House of Benjamin.
20 Abner, accompanied by twenty men, came to David at Hebron, and David held
21 a feast for Abner and the men who were with him. •Abner then said to David, 'I must get up and go. I am going to rally all Israel to my lord the king, so that they will make an alliance with you, and you will reign over all that you desire.' So David allowed Abner to go, and he went unmolested.

e. David invites the Jabeshites to acknowledge him as Saul's successor. Their reply is not given; they had little choice but to stay within the Israelite sphere of influence.

f. 'Ishbaal', here and subsequently, as in 1 Ch 8:33, *see* 9:39, and in certain of the versions; 'Ishbosheth' Hebr. *See* 1 S 14:49v.

g. A town in Transjordan, *see* 17:24; Gn 32:3.

h. 'Asherites' Targ., *see* Jg 1:32, members of the tribe of Asher; 'Assyrians' Hebr.

i. Editorial note.

j. Six miles (10 km or so), north of Jerusalem, *see* Jr 41:12.

k. Abner suggests that the dispute should be settled by a contest between a few warriors from each side, *see* 1 S 17:8–9. Since all are killed, however, the decision remains open and a general battle ensues, v. 17.

l. 'Field of Sides' *hassiddim* conj.; Hebr. *hassurim* 'Field of Rocks'.

m. Abner does not wish to draw blood-vengeance on himself. But *see* 3:27.

n. lit. 'back end'.

o. 'to the east . . . Gibeon' text uncertain.

p. 'Yahweh' Gk; 'God' Hebr.

q. Joab accepts the truce.

r. Here the term indicates the Jordan valley. 'throughout the morning' meaning uncertain.

3 **a.** To the east of the Lake of Tiberias.

b. 'and Abner took her' Gk; omitted by Hebr. By appropriating one of Saul's concubines Abner sets himself up as a claimant to the throne, since the harem of a deceased king passed to his successor, *see* 12:8; 16:20–22; 1 K 2:22.

c. Hebr. adds 'belonging to Judah' missing from Gk.

d. We are not told on what occasion this promise was made to David, but *see* 5:2; 1 S 28:3b.

e. A few words are corrupt.

f. vv. 17–19 are by a later editor, but it is likely that many people in Israel favoured David even during Saul's lifetime, 1 S 18:7,16,28, still more under Ishbaal, Saul's colourless successor.

g. 'I shall deliver' versions; 'he has delivered' Hebr.

The murder of Abner

David's retainers were just then coming back with Joab from a raid, bringing a great quantity of booty with them. Abner was no longer with David at Hebron, since David had allowed him to go, and he had gone unmolested. 23 When Joab and the whole company with him had arrived, Joab was told, 'Abner son of Ner has been to the king, and the king has allowed Abner to go away unmolested.' Joab then went to the king and said, 'What have you done? Abner comes to you and you let him go away and now he has gone—why? 25 You know Abner son of Ner! He came to trick you, to discover your every move, to find out what you are doing.'

Joab left David's presence and sent messengers after Abner and these, unknown to David, brought him back from the storage-well at Sirah. 27 When Abner reached Hebron, Joab took him aside in the town-gate, as if to have a quiet word with him, 2:22–23 and there struck him a mortal blow in the belly to avenge the blood of his brother Asahel. 28 Afterwards, when David heard of this, he said, 'I and my kingdom are for ever innocent before Yahweh of the blood of Abner son of Ner; 29 may it fall on the head of Joab and on all his family! May the House of Joab never be free of men afflicted with haemorrhage or a virulent skin-disease, whose strength is in the distaff, who fall by the sword, who lack food.' 30 (Joab and his brother Abishai had 2:22–23 murdered Abner because he killed their brother Asahel at the battle of Gibeon.)

David then said to Joab and the whole company with him, 'Tear your clothes, put on sackcloth, and mourn over Abner,' and King David walked behind the bier. They buried Abner at Hebron, and the king wept aloud on his grave, and the people all wept too. 33 The king made this lament over Abner:

> Should Abner have died as a brute dies?
> Your hands were not tied, your feet not chained; 34
> you fell as a man falls at the hands of criminals. [h]

And all the people wept for him louder than ever.

The people then all tried to persuade David to have some food while it was still Rt 1:17f daylight, but David swore this oath, 'May God bring unnameable ills on me, and 1 S 31:13 worse ills, too, if I taste bread or anything whatever until the sun is down!' 36 All the people took note of this and it pleased them; indeed, everything the king did pleased the people. 37 That day, all the people and all Israel understood that the king had had no part in the murder of Abner son of Ner.

The king said to his retainers, 'Do you not realise that a prince, a great man, has fallen in Israel today? 39 I, though anointed king, [i] am weak at present, and these Ps 28:4 Is 3:11 men, the sons of Zeruiah, are too strong for me. May Yahweh repay the criminal as his crime deserves!'

The murder of Ishbaal

4 When Saul's son heard that Abner had died at Hebron, his heart failed him, and all Israel was alarmed. 2 Now, Saul's son had two freebooting chieftains; one was called Baanah, the other Rechab. They were the sons of Rimmon of Jos 18:25 Beeroth, and Benjaminites—for Beeroth is regarded as belonging to Benjamin. The people of Beeroth had taken refuge in Gittaim, where they have remained to Ex 12:48o this day as resident foreigners.

4 [a] Jonathan son of Saul had a son with crippled feet. He was five years old when 1 S 31 the news about Saul and Jonathan came from Jezreel. His nurse picked him up and fled but, as she hurried away, he fell and was lamed. His name was Meribbaal. [b]

The sons of Rimmon of Beeroth, Rechab and Baanah, set out; they came to Ishbaal's house at the hottest part of the day when he was taking his midday rest. The woman who kept the door had been cleaning wheat and had drowsed off to sleep. 7 Rechab and his brother Baanah stole past her [c] and entered the house, where he was lying on his bed in his bedroom. They struck him and killed him,

then cut off his head and, taking the head with them, travelled all night by way of
8 the Arabah.[d] ·They brought Ishbaal's head to David at Hebron. 'Here', they said
to the king, 'is the head of Ishbaal son of Saul, your enemy, who meant to take
your life. Yahweh has avenged my lord the king today on Saul and on his offspring.'
9 But David answered Rechab and his brother Baanah, the sons of Rimmon, by
10 saying, 'As Yahweh lives, who has rescued me from every danger, ·when someone
told me, "Saul is dead!" supposing himself to be bringing me good news, I seized 1:1–16
and put him to death at Ziklag, and that was how I rewarded him for his news!
11 How much more when bandits have killed an upright man in his house, and on his
bed! Am I not to demand an account of his blood from you, and rid the earth of
12 you?'[e] ·David then gave an order to the men, who put them to death, cut off their Dt 21:22–23
1 S 31:10
hands and feet, and hung them up beside the pool of Hebron. Ishbaal's head they
took and buried in Abner's grave at Hebron.

B: DAVID KING OF JUDAH AND OF ISRAEL

David is anointed king of Israel ‖1 Ch 11:1–3

1 5 All the tribes of Israel then came to David at Hebron and said, 'Look, we are
2 your own flesh and bone. ·In days past when Saul was our king, it was you who Dt 17:15
led Israel on its campaigns, and to you it was that Yahweh promised, "You are to 1 S 18:16
3 shepherd my people Israel and be leader of Israel." ' ·So all the elders of Israel 3:10d
came to the king at Hebron, and King David made a pact with them in Yahweh's
presence at Hebron, and they anointed David as king of Israel.
4 David was thirty years old when he became king, and he reigned for forty years.
5 In Hebron he reigned over Judah[a] for seven years and six months; then he reigned =2:11
‖1 Ch 3:4
in Jerusalem over all Israel and Judah for thirty-three years.

The capture of Jerusalem[b] ‖1 Ch 11:4–9

6 The king and his men then marched on Jerusalem, on the Jebusites living in the
territory. These said to David, 'You will not get in here. The blind and the lame
7 will hold you off.'[c] (That is to say: David will never get in here.) ·But David
8 captured the citadel of Zion, that is, the City of David. ·That day, David said,
'Whoever gets up the tunnel and kills a Jebusite . . .'[d] As for the blind and the
lame, David hated them with his whole being.[e] (Hence the saying: the blind and Lv 21:18
Mt 21:14–15
9 the lame may not enter the Temple.) ·David went to live in the citadel and called it

h. Though not shackled in any way, Abner died unresisting. This would have proved him unmanly, were it not that he had been killed by treachery.

i. Meaning uncertain. David excuses himself for his inability to proceed against the assassins: it is too soon after his accession and he commits their punishment to God. In the end he bequeaths this task to Solomon, 1 K 2:5–6, *see* 31–34.

4 a. A piece of information alien to the context. Its purpose is possibly to remind the reader that, Ishbaal excepted, Saul's only heir was a cripple.

b. 'Meribbaal' here and subsequently, as in 1 Ch 8:34; 9:40. To avoid mention of the Canaanite Baal, the Hebr. of 2 S altered the name to 'Mephibosheth' (meaning uncertain 'he who diffuses (?) shame'). Similarly, Ishbosheth was read for Ishbaal, 2:8g, and Jerubbesheth for Jerubbaal, 11:21.

c. The v. is translated according to the Gk. The Hebr., apparently corrupt, represents another tradition, lit. 'They entered the heart of the house, taking wheat, and struck him in the belly; Rechab and his brother ran off.' Perhaps a corrupt doublet of v. 7.

d. The Jordan valley, *see* 2:29.

e. David's indignation is sincere. Nevertheless, Ishbaal's death, following that of Abner, assures him the throne of Israel, 5:1–3.

5 a. David, already anointed king by the Judaeans, 2:4, is now acknowledged by the Israelites. The two groups, however, remain distinct (David is king 'of all Israel and Judah'), and internal tension troubles the dual monarchy until the schism provoked by the imprudent policies of Jeroboam I in about 931 BC, *see* 1 K 12.

b. This took place after the victories over the Philistines described in vv. 17–25.

c. They consider the position impregnable: cripples could defend it.

d. 'get up' conj.; 'attack' or 'reach' Hebr. • The sentence should end: 'will receive such and such a reward'. But the text is uncertain. • The 'conduit' (if this is what the word means) is the tunnel bored through the hill of ancient Jerusalem as a way down to the spring of Gihon (1 K 1:33seq.) without having to leave the city. Resolute men could climb up it into the town. The text of 1 Ch 11:6 is easier 'The first man to kill a Jebusite will be made army commander and prince.' Joab was the first man to go up.

e. These words are alien to the context and are absent from 1 Ch 11:4–8.

the City of David.[f] David then built a wall round it, from the Millo inwards.[g]
Gn 39:2 1 S 1:3c David grew stronger and stronger, and Yahweh, God of Sabaoth, was with him. 10
•1 K 5:15 ‖1 Ch 14:1–2 Hiram king of Tyre sent envoys to David, with cedar wood, carpenters and 11
stone-cutters, who built David a palace. •David then knew that Yahweh had 12
confirmed him as king of Israel and, for the sake of his people Israel, had extended
his sovereignty.

3:2–5 ‖1 Ch 14:3–7 **The sons born to David in Jerusalem**

After coming from Hebron, David took other concubines and wives in Jerusalem, 13
‖1 Ch 3:5–8 and sons and daughters were born to him. •These are the names of those born to 14
him in Jerusalem: Shammua, Shobab, Nathan, Solomon, •Ibhar, Elishua, Nepheg, 15
Japhia, •Elishama, Eliada, Eliphelet. 16

‖1 Ch 14:8–16 **Victory over the Philistines**[h]

When the Philistines heard that David had been anointed as king of Israel, they all 17
went up to seek him out. On hearing this, David went down to the stronghold.[i]
When the Philistines arrived, they deployed in the Valley of the Rephaim.[j] 18
David consulted Yahweh and asked, 'Shall I attack the Philistines? Will you 19
deliver them into my power?' Yahweh replied to David, 'Attack! I shall certainly
deliver the Philistines into your power.' •Accordingly, David went to Baal-Perazim 20
and there David defeated them. He said, 'Yahweh has made a breach in my
enemies for me, as though they had been breached by a flood.' This is why the
place was given the name Baal-Perazim.[k] •They had left their gods behind them 21
there, and David and his men carried them off.

Again the Philistines invaded and deployed in the Valley of the Rephaim. 22
1 S 2:28*l* David consulted Yahweh, who replied, 'Do not attack them from the front; go 23
round to their rear and engage them opposite the balsam trees. •When you hear 24
Gn 3:8 2 K 7:6 Ps 84:6 the sound of footsteps[l] in the tops of the balsam trees, advance, for that will be
Yahweh going out ahead of you to defeat the Philistine army.' •David did as 25
Yahweh had ordered and beat the Philistines from Gibeon to the Pass of Gezer.[m]

1 Ch 13 Ps 132:6–10, 13–14 **The ark in Jerusalem**[a]

6 David again mustered all the picked troops of Israel, thirty thousand men. 1
Jos 15:9–60 Setting off with the whole force then with him, David went to Baalah[b] of 2
Ex 25:10*d* 1 S 4:3–4 1 S 6:7 Judah, from there to bring up the ark of God, who bears the title 'Yahweh Sabaoth,
enthroned on the winged creatures'. •They transported the ark of God on a new 3
cart and brought it out of Abinadab's house which is on the hill. Uzzah and Ahio,
the sons of Abinadab, drove the cart, •Uzzah walked[c] alongside the ark of God 4
and Ahio went in front. •David and the whole House of Israel danced before 5
Ps 68:24seq.; 150:3,5 Yahweh with all their might, singing[d] to the accompaniment of harps, lyres,
tambourines, sistrums and cymbals. •When they came to Nacon's threshing-floor, 6
Uzzah reached his hand out to[e] the ark of God and steadied it, as the oxen were
making it tilt. •This roused Yahweh's anger against Uzzah, and for this crime[f] God 7
struck him down on the spot, and there he died beside the ark of God. •David 8
resented Yahweh's having broken out against Uzzah, and the place was given the
name Perez-Uzzah,[g] which it still has today.

That day David felt afraid of Yahweh. 'How can the ark of Yahweh come to be 9
with me?' he said. •So David decided not to take the ark of Yahweh with him into 10
the city of David but diverted it to the house of Obed-Edom of Gath. •The ark of 11
Yahweh remained in the house of Obed-Edom of Gath for three months, and
Yahweh blessed Obed-Edom and his whole family.

‖1 Ch 15 King David was informed that Yahweh had blessed Obed-Edom's family and 12
everything belonging to him on account of the ark of God. David accordingly went
and, amid great rejoicing, brought the ark of God up from Obed-Edom's house to
the City of David. •When the bearers of the ark of Yahweh had gone six paces, he 13
1 K 18:26 sacrificed an ox and a fat sheep. •And David danced whirling round before Yahweh 14

with all his might, wearing a linen loincloth. [h] •Thus with war cries and blasts on the horn, David and the entire House of Israel brought up the ark of Yahweh. •Now as the ark of Yahweh entered the City of David, Michal daughter of Saul was watching from the window and when she saw King David leaping and whirling round before Yahweh, the sight of him filled her with contempt. •They brought the ark of Yahweh in and put it in position, inside the tent which David had erected for it; and David presented burnt offerings and communion sacrifices in Yahweh's presence. •And when David had finished presenting burnt offerings, he blessed the people in the name of Yahweh Sabaoth. •To all the people, to the whole multitude of Israelites, men and women, he then distributed to each a loaf of bread, a portion of dates [i] and a raisin cake. Then the people all went back to their homes.

1 S 2:18e

‖1 Ch 16:1–3
Lv 1:1b;3:1a

As David was coming back to bless his household, Michal daughter of Saul came out to meet him. 'Much honour the king of Israel has won today,' she said, 'making an exhibition of himself under the eyes of his servant-maids, making an exhibition of himself like a buffoon!' [j] •David replied to Michal, 'I was dancing for Yahweh, not for them. As Yahweh lives, [k] who chose me in preference to your father and his whole family to make me leader of Israel, Yahweh's people, I shall dance before Yahweh and •lower myself even further than that. In your eyes I may be base, but by the maids you speak of, by them, I shall be held in honour!' [l] •And to the day of her death, Michal, daughter of Saul, had no children.

20:3

f. David's choice is explained by Jerusalem's central position between the northern and southern tribes. The city's name is attested as early as 2000 BC. The old Jebusite town (Dt 7:1a) stood on Mount Ophel between the Tyropoeon Valley and the Valley of the Kidron. It was overlooked on the north by the high ground of Mount Zion where David later built an altar, 24:16seq., and Solomon the Temple, 1 K 6; Solomon's palaces, 1 K 7:1–12 were built south of the Temple. Only much later did the city spread over the large hill to the west, the northern wall of which had twice to be pushed further north, 2 K 14:13a. The water system, v. 8d, was improved, particularly by Hezekiah, 2 K 20:20k. In 587 BC, Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the city, 2 K 25, but the rebuilding of the Temple was completed in 515, Ezr 6:15, and of the walls in 445, Ne 2–6. Antiochus Epiphanes built the citadel of the Acra opposite the Temple, 1 M 1:33*o*, and the Hasmonaeans turned it into a palace. Herod, however, set up his official residence more to the west. Herod also made the ancient citadel of the Temple, Ne 7:2, into a huge fortress, the Antonia, and rebuilt the Temple, Jn 2:20. The city was ultimately destroyed by Titus in AD 70; *see* Lk 21:20. Mentioned for the first time in the Bible together with its priest-king Melchizedek, Gn 14:18g, and destined to be, under David, the political and religious capital of Israel, Jerusalem (or Zion) came to personify the chosen people, Is 62; Ezk 23. It is the home of Yahweh, Ps 76:2b, and of his Anointed, Ps 2 and 110, the future meeting place of all the nations, Is 2:1–5; 60. With the vision of the new Jerusalem, Is 54:11, the Bible closes, Rv 21seq.

g. 'a wall' in some texts accidentally transposed to v. 11, 'stone cutters for the walls'. • On the 'Millo', *see* 1 K 9:15. The wall in question probably followed the line of the Tyropoeon.

h. David, while king of Judah at Hebron, was still nominally a vassal of the Philistines, 1 S 27:5–6. Now his growing power challenges their own supremacy.

i. To Adullam perhaps, 1 S 22:1–5. Jerusalem was evidently not yet captured, *see* v. 5:6b.

j. Sunken plain to the southwest of Jerusalem, Jos 15:8; 18:16; *see* Dt 2:10.

k. *peretz* means 'breach', *see* Gn 38:29.

l. The advancing footsteps of Yahweh.

m. 'Gibeon' 1 Ch 14:16 and Gk; 'Geba' Hebr. • Gezer is just within Philistine territory; the enemy is forced back to his own country.

6 **a.** This narrative takes up the story of the ark where a previous narrator left it, 1 S 7:1. By receiving the ark where Yahweh manifests his presence, Ex 25:8d; Dt 4:7b, Jerusalem is no longer the political capital only, but the religious centre, the holy city of Israel.

b. 'Baalah', *see* Ch; Hebr. *mibba'ale* 'some of the citizens'. • The old name of Kiriath-Jearim, Jos 15:9, *see* Jos 15:60; 18:14.

c. 'Uzzah walked' conj.; Hebr. has dittography of v. 3, 'a new cart . . . hill'.

d. 'with all their might, singing' Gk, 1 Ch 13:8; Hebr. meaning uncertain.

e. 'his hand out to' 1 Ch 13:9; omitted by Hebr.

f. Meaning very uncertain, but *see* 1 Ch 13:10 'because he had laid his hand on the ark'. The ark was terrible to its foes, 1 S 5, or to those who treated it with disrespect, 1 S 6:19. Our text goes further; the ark where Yahweh sits enthroned is sacred and may not be handled. Behind this primitive conception of the sacred (*see* Lv 17:1a) lies an acute sense of God's terrible majesty, *see* Ex 33:20i. The Priestly code provides for this instinct: even the Levites may not approach the ark without mortal peril until it has been covered by the priests, Nb 4:5,15,20. Nor do they touch it, but carry it on shafts, Ex 25:14.

g. 'Uzzah's Breach', *see* 5:20. Popular etymology: Yahweh has brought destruction (lit. 'broken through') on Uzzah.

h. A priestly garment; David has just offered sacrifice and is about to give a blessing, v. 18.

i. Sense conjectural. Alternative translation: 'a portion of meat'.

j. By wearing nothing but a loincloth, *see* Ex 20:26; 28:42–43.

k. Following Gk-Luc.; Hebr. jumps from the first to the second 'Yahweh'.

l. 'In your eyes' Gk; 'in my eyes' Hebr. • The whole episode brings out the depth and simplicity of David's religious faith.

‖1 Ch 17:1–15
1 K 5:4

Nathan's prophecy [a]

7 Once the king had settled into his palace and Yahweh had granted him rest 1
from all the enemies surrounding him, •the king said to the prophet Nathan, 2
Dt 12:10;25:19
Ps. 132:1–5
'Look, I am living in a cedar-wood palace, while the ark of God is under awnings.'
'Nathan said to the king, 'Go and do whatever you have in mind, for Yahweh is 3
with you.'

But that very night, the word of Yahweh came to Nathan: 4

'Go and tell my servant David, "Yahweh says this: Are you to build me a temple 5
1 K 8:16, 27
Is 66:1
↗Ac 7:48
for me to live in? •I have never lived in a house from the day when I brought the 6
Israelites out of Egypt until today, but have kept travelling with a tent for shelter.
Ex 40:34–38
In all my travels with all the Israelites, did I say to any of the judges [b] of Israel, 7
whom I had commanded to shepherd my people Israel: Why do you not build me
a cedar-wood temple?" [c] •This is what you must say to my servant David, 8
1 S 16:11;
17:15,20,28,34
"Yahweh Sabaoth says this: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep,
to be leader of my people Israel; •I have been with you wherever you went; I have 9
Ps 78:70seq.;
89:27
got rid of all your enemies for you. I am going to make your fame as great as the
fame of the greatest on earth. •I am going to provide a place for my people Israel; 10
I shall plant them there, and there they will live and never be disturbed again; nor
will they be oppressed by the wicked any more, as they were in former times •ever 11
since the time when I instituted judges to govern my people Israel; and I shall grant
23:5
Ps 89:29–37;
132:11–12
you rest from all your enemies. Yahweh furthermore tells you that he will make
you a dynasty. •And when your days are over and you fall asleep with your 12
↗Ac 2:30
ancestors, I shall appoint your heir, your own son [d] to succeed you (and I shall
make his sovereignty secure. •He will build a temple for my name) and I shall make 13
1 K 5:19; 8:19
1 Ch 17:11–
14;
22:10;28:6
•Dt 8:5+
↗Heb 1:5
•1 S
13:14;15:28
23:5
Lk 1:32–33
his royal throne secure for ever. •I shall be a father to him and he a son to me; [e] if he 14
does wrong, I shall punish him with a rod such as men use, with blows such as
mankind gives. •But my faithful love will never be withdrawn from him as I 15
withdrew it from Saul, whom I removed from before you. •Your dynasty and your 16
sovereignty will ever stand firm before me [f] and your throne be for ever secure." '
Nathan related all these words and this whole revelation to David. 17

‖1 Ch 17:16–
27

David's prayer [g]

King David then went in, sat down in Yahweh's presence [h] and said: 18

1 S 18:18
'Who am I, Lord Yahweh, and what is my lineage, for you to have led me as far
as this? •Yet, to you, Lord Yahweh, this seemed too little, and now you extend 19
your promises for your servant's family into the distant future. Such is human
destiny, Lord Yahweh. [i] •What more can David say to you, since you, Lord 20
Yahweh, know all about your servant? •Because of your promise and since you 21
were so inclined, you have had the generosity to reveal this to your servant. [j]
Ex 15:11
That is why you are great, Lord Yahweh; there is no one like you, no God but you 22
alone, as everything that we have heard confirms. •Is there another people on earth 23
like your people, like Israel, whom a god proceeded to redeem, to make them his
people and to make a name for himself by performing great and terrible things on
Dt 4:7,34
Ps 44:1–2
their behalf, by driving out nations and their gods before his people? [k]—
Ex 6:7;Dt 7:6b;
26:17;29:12
for you constituted your people Israel your own people for ever and you, Yahweh, 24
became their God.

'Now, Yahweh God, may the promise which you have made for your servant 25
and for his family stand firm forever as you have said, •so that your name will be 26
exalted for ever and people will say, "Israel's God is Yahweh Sabaoth." Your
servant David's dynasty will be secure before you, •since you, Yahweh Sabaoth, 27
the God of Israel, have disclosed to your servant, "I am going to build you a
dynasty." Hence, your servant has ventured to offer this prayer to you. •Yes, Lord 28
Nb 23:19
Jn 17:17
Yahweh, you are God indeed, your words are true and you have made this
generous promise to your servant. •What is more, you have deigned to bless your 29
servant's dynasty, so that it may remain for ever before you; for you, Lord Yahweh,

have spoken; and may your servant's dynasty be blessed with your blessing for ever.'

David's wars [a] ‖1 Ch 18:1–13

8 After this, David defeated the Philistines and subdued them. From the grip of the Philistines he wrested . . .[b] ·He also defeated the Moabites and, making them lie on the ground, measured them off by the line; he measured out two lines to be put to death and one full line to have their lives spared. The Moabites became David's subjects and paid him tribute.

David defeated Hadadezer son of Rehob, king of Zobah, when the latter mounted an expedition to extend his power over the River.[c] ·David captured one thousand seven hundred charioteers and twenty thousand foot soldiers from him; David hamstrung all the chariot teams, keeping only a hundred of them.[d] ·The Aramaeans of Damascus came to the help of Hadadezer king of Zobah, but David killed twenty-two thousand of the Aramaeans. ·David then imposed governors on Aram of Damascus, and the Aramaeans became David's subjects and paid him tribute. Wherever David went, Yahweh gave him victory. ·David took the golden shields carried by Hadadezer's guards and brought them to Jerusalem. ·From Betah and Berothai, towns belonging to Hadadezer, King David captured a great quantity of bronze.

Dt 17:16
Jos 11:6,9

2 K 11:10

When Tou king of Hamath[e] heard that David had defeated Hadadezer's entire army, ·he sent his son Hadoram[f] to King David to greet him and to congratulate him on having made war on Hadadezer and on having defeated him, since Hadadezer was at war with Tou. Hadoram brought with him objects made of silver, gold and bronze, ·which King David also consecrated to Yahweh, as he had already consecrated the silver and gold taken from all the nations which he had subjugated—·from Aram, Moab, the Ammonites, the Philistines and Amalek; and from the spoil of Hadadezer son of Rehob, king of Zobah.

David became famous when he came home from defeating the Edomites[g] in the

7 **a.** This ch. is constructed on the range of meanings attaching to the Hebr. word for 'house': palace, v. 1, temple, v. 5, dynasty, v. 12, family or lineage, v. 18, and more particularly on the antithesis: David is not to build a house (a temple) for God, v. 5; God is to build a House (a dynasty) for him, v. 11. The substance of the prophecy is the perpetuity of the Davidic dynasty in Israel, vv. 12–16. David himself thus understood it, vv. 19,25,27,29, *see* 23:5; so also Ps 89:29–37; 132:11–12. The prophecy, therefore, stretches beyond Solomon, David's immediate successor, to whom it is applied by v. 13 and by 1 K 5:19; 8:16–19 and 1 Ch 17:11–14; 22:10; 28:6. There is an interplay of light and shade in the prophecy, however, and it allows us a glimpse of one privileged descendant who is to enjoy God's special favour. It is the first in the series of prophecies relating to the Davidic Messiah, Is 7:14f; Mi 4:14h; Hg 2:23p. Ac 2:30 applies the text to Jesus.

b. 'judges' 1 Ch 17:6; 'tribes' Hebr.

c. vv. 6–7 seem to be the earliest expression of a current of opinion hostile to the Temple, more overtly stated in 1 K 8:27; Is 66:1–2; Ac 7:48. Nathan is himself a supporter of the ancient tradition represented by the ark, and is opposed to the innovation of a temple on Canaanite lines. The problem is ultimately solved by instal''ng the ark in the Temple built by Solomon, 1 K 8:1,10–12.

d. v. 13, with its clear reference to Solomon, is commonly thought to be an addition; in which case, the prophecy would presumably date from the reign of David. If, however, the v. is original, the prophecy should be dated to the reign of Solomon. There is no reason for supposing it to be more recent.

e. A formula of adoption, as in Ps 2:7; 110:3d (Gk), but also the earliest expression of Davidic messianism: each king of the Davidic dynasty will be an (imperfect) type, *see* the end of the v., and Ps 89:30–33, of the ideal king to come. In applying this text to the Messiah, 1 Ch 17:13 suppresses the second part of the v.

f. 'before me' Gk and some MSS; 'before you' Hebr.

g. A prayer of praise and thanksgiving for the promise of vv. 8–16.

h. In the tent where the ark was.

i. Translation uncertain.

j. Translation uncertain.

k. To avoid giving the impression that these gods actually existed, the scribal tradition modified the Hebr. text (here restored in accordance with 1 Ch 17:21 and versions) by relating everything to Yahweh ('God' instead of 'a god') and Israel ('your people whom you have redeemed from Egypt' instead of 'his people').

8 **a.** Summary of the campaigns of David's reign. The Ammonite war is not mentioned because it is to be described, ch. 10–12, in connection with the story of Bathsheba.

b. Two unintelligible words. The customary translation 'control of the capital' is without basis; a place-name or geographical area would be more appropriate. 1 Ch 18:1 reads: 'Gath and its dependent towns'.

c. Meaning uncertain; interpretation adopted: Hadadezer, head of the small kingdom of Zobah in Anti-Lebanon and overlord of the neighbouring Aramaean principalities, was trying to extend his sphere of influence to the Euphrates (the River); David took advantage of this situation to attack him in the rear. But possibly we have here another account of the campaign of ch. 10.

d. Before the time of Solomon the Israelite army had no chariots.

e. On the Orontes, to the north of the territories controlled by Hadadezer.

f. 'Hadoram' 1 Ch 18:10, *see* Gk; 'Joram' Hebr., changing a gentile into a Yahwist name.

g. 'Edomites' 1 Ch 18:12 and versions; 'Aramaeans' Hebr., *see* title of Ps 60.

2 K 14:7
1 K 11:14–25
Valley of Salt[h]—eighteen thousand of them. ·He imposed governors on Edom[i] 14
and all the Edomites became David's subjects. Wherever David went, Yahweh
gave him victory.

||1 Ch 18:14–17
The administration of the kingdom

=20:23–26
1 K 4:1–6.1a
David ruled over all Israel, administering law and justice to all his people. ·Joab 15, 16
son of Zeruiah was in command of the army; Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud was
herald; ·Zadok and Abiathar son of Ahimelech, son of Ahitub, were priests;[j] 17
Seraiah[k] was secretary; ·Benaiah son of Jehoiada was in command of the Chere- 18
thites and Pelethites;[l] David's sons were priests.[m]

C: DAVID'S FAMILY AND THE INTRIGUES OVER THE SUCCESSION[a]

1: MERIBBAAL

David's kindness to Jonathan's son

21:1–14
1 S 18:1–4+;
20:15seq.,4–2
·16:1–4;
19:27–31
4:4
9 David asked, 'Is there anyone belonging to Saul's family left, to whom I might 1
show faithful love for Jonathan's sake?' ·Now Saul's family had a servant 2
whose name was Ziba. When he had been summoned to David, the king said, 'Are
you Ziba?' 'At your service,' he replied. ·The king said, 'Is there no one left, 3
belonging to Saul's family, for me to treat with God's own faithful love?' Ziba said
to the king, 'There is still one of Jonathan's sons. He has crippled feet.' ·The king 4
17:27
asked 'Where is he?' Ziba replied, 'He is living in the household of Machir son of
Ammiel, at Lo-Debar.' ·So King David sent for him to be fetched from the house 5
of Machir son of Ammiel at Lo-Debar.

On entering David's presence, Meribbaal[b] son of Jonathan, son of Saul, fell on 6
his face and prostrated himself. David said, 'Meribbaal!' He replied, 'Here I am,
at your service.' ·David then said, 'Do not be afraid; I will indeed treat you with 7
faithful love for your father Jonathan's sake. I shall restore all your grandfather
Saul's estates to you, and you will always eat at my table.' ·Meribbaal prostrated 8
himself and said, 'Who is your servant, for you to show favour to a dead dog like
me?'

The king then summoned Saul's servant Ziba and said, 'Everything belonging to 9
Saul and his family, I give to your master's son. ·You must work the land for him, 10
you and your sons and your slaves; you must harvest the produce to provide food
1 Ch 8–34seq.
for your master's family[c] to eat. But Meribbaal, your master's son, will always take
his own meals at my table.' Now, Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty slaves. ·Ziba 11
said to the king, 'Your servant will do everything my lord the king has ordered his
servant.'

So Meribbaal ate at David's table like one of the king's sons. ·Meribbaal had a 12
16:1–4;19:25–31;21:7
young son whose name was Micha. All the people living in Ziba's household
entered Meribbaal's service. ·Meribbaal lived in Jerusalem, since he always ate at 13
the king's table. He was crippled in both feet.

2: THE AMMONITE WAR—BIRTH OF SOLOMON

||1 Ch 19:1–5
David's ambassadors are insulted

10 After this, when the king of the Ammonites died and his son Hanun 1
succeeded him, ·David thought, 'I shall show Hanun son of Nahash the 2
same faithful love as his father showed me.' And David sent his representatives to
offer him condolences over his father. But, when David's representatives reached
3:24–25
the Ammonites' country, ·the Ammonite princes said to Hanun their master, 'Do 3

you really think David means to honour your father when he sends you messengers ▶1 S 21:12
with sympathy? On the contrary, the reason why David has sent his representatives
4 to you is to explore the city,[a] to reconnoitre and so overthrow it.' •Whereupon
Hanun seized David's representatives, shaved off half their beards, cut their Is 20:4
5 clothes off halfway up, at their buttocks, and sent them away. •When David was
told, he sent someone to meet them, since the men were overcome with shame.
'Stay in Jericho', the king said, 'until your beards have grown again, and come
back then.'

The first Ammonite campaign ‖1 Ch 19:6–15

6 When the Ammonites realised that they had antagonised David, they sent agents
to hire twenty thousand foot soldiers from the Aramaeans of Beth-Rehob and the 8:3
Aramaeans of Zobah,[b] one thousand men from the king of Maacah and twelve
7 thousand men from the prince of Tob. •When David heard this, he sent Joab with
8 the whole army, the champions.[c] •The Ammonites marched out and drew up their 21:15–22; 23:8–39
line of battle at the city gate, while the Aramaeans of Zobah and of Rehob and the
9 men of Tob and Maacah kept their distance in the open country. •Joab, seeing that
he had to fight on two fronts, to his front and to his rear, chose the best of Israel's
10 picked men and drew them up in line facing the Aramaeans. •He entrusted the rest
of the army to his brother Abishai, and drew them up in line facing the Ammonites.
11 'If the Aramaeans prove too strong for me,' he said, 'you must come to my help; if
12 the Ammonites prove too strong for you, I shall come to yours. •Be brave! Let us
acquit ourselves like men for the sake of our people and for the cities of our God.
13 And let Yahweh do as he thinks right!' •Joab and the force with him joined battle
14 with the Aramaeans, who fled at his onslaught. •When the Ammonites saw that
the Aramaeans had fled, they too fled from Abishai and withdrew into the city.
Hence, Joab broke off his campaign against the Ammonites and returned to
Jerusalem.

Victory over the Aramaeans[d] 8:3–8 1 Ch 19:16–19

15 The Aramaeans, realising that Israel had got the better of them, concentrated their
16 forces. •Hadadezer sent messengers and mobilised the Aramaeans living on the
other side of the river; and these arrived at Helam, with Shobach the commander
17 of Hadadezer's army, at their head. •David, being informed of this, mustered all
Israel, crossed the Jordan and arrived at Helam. The Aramaeans drew up in line
18 facing David and engaged him. •But the Aramaeans fled from Israel, and David
killed seven hundred of their chariot teams and forty thousand men;[e] he also cut

h. The Arabah, the valley running south from the Dead Sea.

i. Here the text adds 'on the whole of Edom he imposed governors', but 1 Ch 18:13 omits the addition.

j. The genealogy of Abiathar is restored in accordance with 1 S 22:20. Hebr. has: 'Zadok son of Ahitub and Ahimelech son of Abiathar' probably intending to give Zadok a lineage to which he had no claim, *see also* 1 Ch 5:34; 6:37–38. But Zadok was a 'new' man and later supplanted Abiathar, 1 K 2:26–27,35, thus fulfilling the prophecy against the descendants of Eli, 1 S 2:30–36; his family enjoyed a monopoly of the priesthood in Jerusalem until the Exile.

k. The name seems original in this ancient list, but reappears as Shiya or Shuwa in 20:25; Shisha, 1 K 4:3; Shusha, 1 Ch 18:16. Since his father's name is not given, he was probably a foreigner. Perhaps the variant forms are corruptions of his Egyptian title 'scribe'.

l. 'in command of', restored following 1 Ch 18:17 and versions; Hebr. omits. • Foreign mercenaries from Philistia who constituted David's bodyguard, 15:18; 20:7,23; 1 K 1:38,44.

m. An odd statement, probably meaning that David's sons assisted or deputised for him in those priestly functions lawfully exercised by the king, *see* 6:13–20.

9 **a.** Ch. 9–20, which are continued in 1 K 1–2, are derived from an ancient and well-informed narrative which the author of Samuel uses almost unchanged. Nathan's prophecy, ch. 7, was perhaps the preface to it. The narrative told how David's crown eventually passed to Solomon, despite the fact that Meribbaal, Saul's grandson, was still alive, ch. 9, despite Sheba's hostility, ch. 20, and notwithstanding the tragic history of the royal family: David's adultery and the birth of Solomon, ch. 10–12, the murder of Amnon, ch. 13, Absalom's revolt, ch. 15–18, and Adonijah's intrigues, 1 K 1–2.

b. 'Meribbaal' corr.; 'Mephibosheth' Hebr., *see* 4:4b.

c. 'family' Gk-Luc.; 'son' Hebr.

10 **a.** Rabbah, the capital, 11:1; 12:26, the modern Amman.

b. Zobah and Beth-Rehob, to the north of the sources of the Jordan, were united under Hadadezer's suzerainty. Maacah and Tob lay to the north of Transjordan.

c. The apposition indicates that in this first battle only the mercenary troops went into action. The volunteers and levies took part in the second phase of the first campaign, v. 17, and in the second campaign, 11:1.

d. This short narrative seems to come from a different source.

e. 'men', 1 Ch 19:18; 'charioteers' Hebr.

down Shobach the commander of their army, who died there. ·When all Hadadezer's vassal kings saw that Israel had got the better of them, they made peace with the Israelites and became their subjects. The Aramaeans were afraid to give any more help to the Ammonites. 19

‖1 Ch 20:1 **The second Ammonite campaign. David's sin** [a]

10:7 11 At the turn of the year, [b] at the time when kings go campaigning, David sent Joab and with him his guards and all Israel. They massacred the Ammonites and laid siege to Rabbah-of-the-Ammonites. David, however, remained in Jerusalem. 1

It happened towards evening when David had got up from resting and was strolling on the palace roof, that from the roof he saw a woman bathing; the woman was very beautiful. ·David made enquiries about this woman and was told, 'Why, that is Bathsheba daughter of Eliam and wife of Uriah the Hittite.' [c] ·David then sent messengers to fetch her. She came to him, and he lay with her, just after she 2 3 4

Lv 15:19 had purified herself from her period. She then went home again. ·The woman conceived and sent word to David, 'I am pregnant.' 5

David then sent word to Joab, 'Send me Uriah the Hittite,' whereupon Joab sent Uriah to David. ·When Uriah reached him, David asked how Joab was and how the army was and how the war was going. ·David then said to Uriah, 'Go down to your house and wash your feet.' Uriah left the palace and was followed by a present from the king's table. ·Uriah, however, slept at the palace gate with all his master's bodyguard and did not go down to his house. 6 7 8 9

This was reported to David; 'Uriah', they said 'has not gone down to his house.' So David asked Uriah, 'Haven't you just arrived from the journey? Why didn't 10

1 S 4:3seq. you go down to your house?' ·To which Uriah replied, 'The ark, Israel and Judah are lodged in huts; my master Joab and my lord's guards are camping in the open. Am I to go to my house, then, and eat and drink and sleep with my wife? [d] As Yahweh lives, and as you yourself live, I shall do no such thing!' ·David then said to Uriah, 'Stay on here today; tomorrow I shall send you off.' So Uriah stayed that day in Jerusalem. ·The next day, David invited him to eat and drink in his presence and made him drunk. In the evening, Uriah went out and bedded down with his master's bodyguard, but did not go down to his house. 11 12 13

Next morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it by Uriah. ·In the letter he wrote, 'Put Uriah out in front where the fighting is fiercest and then fall back, so that he gets wounded and killed.' ·Joab, then besieging the city, stationed Uriah at a point where he knew that there would be tough fighters. ·The people of the city sallied out and engaged Joab; there were casualties in the army, among David's guards, and Uriah the Hittite was killed as well. 14, 15 16 17

Joab sent David a full account of the battle. ·To the messenger he gave this order: 'When you have finished telling the king all about the battle, ·if the king's anger is aroused and he says, "Why did you go near the town to give battle? Didn't 18, 19 20

Jg 9:50–54 you know that they would shoot from the ramparts? ·Who killed Abimelech son of Jerubbaal? [e] Wasn't it a woman who dropped a millstone on him from the ramparts, causing his death at Thebez? Why did you go near the ramparts?" you are to say, "Your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead too." ' 21

So the messenger set off and, on his arrival, told David everything that Joab had instructed him to say. David flew into a rage with Joab and said to the messenger, 'Why did you go near the ramparts? Who killed Abimelech son of Jerubbaal? Wasn't it a woman who dropped a millstone on him from the ramparts, causing his death at Thebez? Why did you go near the ramparts?' [f] ·The messenger replied to David, 'Their men had won an initial advantage and then came out to engage us in the open. We then drove them back into the gateway, ·but the archers shot at your retainers from the ramparts; some of the king's retainers lost their lives, and your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead too.' 22 23 24

David then said to the messenger, 'Say this to Joab, "Do not take the matter to 25

heart; the sword devours now one and now another. Attack the town in greater
26 force and destroy it." That will encourage him.' ·When Uriah's wife heard that her
27 husband Uriah was dead, she mourned for her husband. ·When the period of mourning was over, David sent to have her brought to his house; she became his wife and bore him a son. But what David had done displeased Yahweh.

David is rebuked by Nathan. His repentance [a]

1 **12** Yahweh sent the prophet Nathan to David. He came to him and said: 14:4–17

In the same town were two men,
one rich, the other poor.
2 The rich man had flocks and herds
in great abundance;
3 the poor man had nothing but a ewe lamb,
only a single little one which he had bought.
He fostered it and it grew up with him and his children,
eating his bread, drinking from his cup,
sleeping in his arms; it was like a daughter to him.
4 When a traveller came to stay, the rich man
would not take anything from his own flock or herd
to provide for the wayfarer who had come to him.
Instead, he stole the poor man's lamb
and prepared that for his guest.

5 David flew into a great rage with the man. 'As Yahweh lives,' he said to Nathan
6 'the man who did this deserves to die. ·For doing such a thing and for having shown
no pity, he shall make fourfold restitution for the lamb.' Ex 21:37 Lk 19:8
7 Nathan then said to David, 'You are the man! Yahweh, God of Israel, says this,
8 "I anointed you king of Israel, I saved you from Saul's clutches, ·I gave you your
master's household and your master's wives into your arms, I gave you the House 3:7b
of Israel and the House of Judah; and, if this is still too little, I shall give you other
9 things as well. ·Why did you show contempt for Yahweh, [b] by doing what displeases
him? You put Uriah the Hittite to the sword, you took his wife to be your wife,
10 causing his death by the sword of the Ammonites. ·For this, your household will
never be free of the sword, [c] since you showed contempt for me and took the wife
of Uriah the Hittite, to make her your wife."
11 'Yahweh says this, "Out of your own household I shall raise misfortune for you.
Before your very eyes I shall take your wives and give them to your neighbour, 16:22
12 who will lie with your wives in broad daylight. ·You have worked in secret, but I
shall work this for all Israel to see, in broad daylight." '
13 David said to Nathan, 'I have sinned against Yahweh.' Nathan then said to
14 David, 'Yahweh, for his part, forgives your sin; you are not to die. ·But, since you
15 have outraged Yahweh [d] by doing this, the child born to you will die.' ·And Nathan
went home.

11 **a.** For the author of ch. 9–20 the Ammonite war is no more than a background for the story of David and Bathsheba.

b. The Spring equinox.

c. A foreign mercenary. For Hittites, *see* Dt 7:1a.

d. Continence in war was a religious obligation, *see* 1 S 21:6. Uriah regards himself as still on campaign.

e. 'Jerubbaal' Gk, *see* Jg 7:1seq.; 'Jerubbesheth' Hebr., *see* 2 S 2:8g; 4:4b.

f. From 'David flew into a rage' Gk; omitted by Hebr.

12 **a.** Possibly Nathan's intervention, 12:1–15[a], did not figure in the original narrative: in v. 22 David seems unaware of the child's doom. Both traditions, however, are of equal antiquity and display the same religious sentiment: David's crime is condemned, but his repentance wins forgiveness.

b. 'Yahweh' versions; 'the word of Yahweh' Hebr.

c. Allusion to the violent deaths of Amnon, 13:28–29, Absalom, 18:9–15, and Adonijah, 1 K 2:22–25, three of David's sons.

d. 'outraged Yahweh' conj.; Hebr. reads 'outraged Yahweh's enemies', to avoid a blasphemy. • Sin is not only a violation of the moral or social order, but primarily the breach of a personal relationship between human beings and God, *see* Gn 39:9; Ps 51:1f; Is 59:2, which only God can re-establish, Ps 65:3seq.; *see* Mk 2:5.

Death of Bathsheba's child. Birth of Solomon

Yahweh struck the child which Uriah's wife had borne to David and it fell gravely
21:10 1 K 21–27 ill. •David pleaded with Yahweh for the child; he kept a strict fast and went home 16
and spent the night lying on the ground, covered with sacking. •The officials of his 17
household stood round him, intending to get him off the ground, but he refused,
nor would he take food with them. •On the seventh day the child died. David's 18
retinue were afraid to tell him that the child was dead. 'Even when the child was
alive', they thought, 'we reasoned with him and he would not listen to us. How can
we tell him that the child is dead? He will do something desperate.' •David, 19
however, noticed that his retinue were whispering among themselves, and realised
that the child was dead. 'Is the child dead?' he asked the officers. They replied, 'He
is dead.'

David got off the ground, bathed and anointed himself and put on fresh clothes. 20
Then he went into Yahweh's sanctuary and prostrated himself. On returning to his
house, he asked to be served with food and ate it. •His retinue said, 'Why are you 21
acting like this? When the child was alive, you fasted and wept; now that the child
is dead, you get up and take food!'[e] •'When the child was alive', he replied, 'I 22
fasted and wept because I kept thinking, "Who knows? Perhaps Yahweh will take
pity on me and the child will live." •But now that he is dead, why should I fast? Can 23
Jb 7:9e I bring him back again? I shall go to him[f] but he cannot come back to me.'

David consoled his wife Bathsheba. He went to her and slept with her. She 24
conceived[g] and gave birth to a son, whom she called Solomon. Yahweh loved him
and made this known by means of the prophet Nathan, who named him Jedidiah, 25
as Yahweh had instructed.[h]

‖1 Ch 20:1b–3 **Capture of Rabbah**

Joab assaulted Rabbah-of-the-Ammonites and captured the royal town. •He then 26, 27
sent messengers to tell David, 'I have assaulted Rabbah and captured the water
supply.[i] •So now muster the rest of the army, lay siege to the town and take it, or I 28
will take it and the town will be called after me!' •So David mustered the whole 29
army and marched on Rabbah; he assaulted the town and captured it. •He took the 30
crown off Milcom's[j] head; it weighed one talent of gold, and in it was set a precious
stone which went on David's head instead. He carried off great quantities of booty
‖Ex 1:13–14 1 Ch 20:3 from the town.' •And he expelled its inhabitants, setting them to work with saws, 31
iron picks and iron axes, employing them at brickmaking. He treated all the
Ammonite towns in the same way. David and the whole army returned to
Jerusalem.

3: ABSALOM[a]

Amnon violates his sister Tamar

3:2–3 13 After this, the following events took place. Absalom son of David had a 1
beautiful sister whose name was Tamar; Amnon son of David fell in love
with her. •Amnon was so obsessed with his sister Tamar that it made him ill, since 2
she was a virgin and Amnon thought it impossible to do anything with her. •But 3
Amnon had a friend called Jonadab son of Shimeah, David's brother, and Jona-
dab was a very shrewd man. •'Son of the king,' he said, 'tell me why, morning after 4
morning, you look so worn? Won't you tell me?' Amnon replied, 'I am in love with
Tamar, my brother Absalom's sister.' •Then Jonadab said, 'Take to your bed, 5
pretend to be ill and, when your father comes to visit you, say, "Please let my sister
Tamar come and give me something to eat; let her prepare the food where I can
see. What she gives me I shall eat." ' •So Amnon lay down and pretended to be ill. 6
The king then came to visit him and Amnon said to the king, 'Please let my sister
Tamar come and make a cake or two where I can watch. What she gives me, I shall

eat.' •David then sent word to Tamar at the palace, 'Go to your brother Amnon's house and prepare some food for him.' •Tamar went to the house of her brother Amnon who was lying there in bed. She took dough and kneaded it, and she made some cakes while he watched, and baked the cakes. •She then took the pan and dished them up in front of him, but he refused to eat. Amnon said, 'Let everyone leave me!' So everyone withdrew. •Amnon then said to Tamar, 'Bring the food to the inner room, so that I can eat what you give me.' So Tamar took the cakes which she had made and brought them to her brother Amnon in the inner room. •And as she was offering the food to him, he caught hold of her and said, 'Come to bed with me, sister!' •She replied, 'No, brother! Do not force me! This is no way to behave in Israel. Do not do anything so disgraceful! •Wherever should I go? I should be marked with this shame, while you would become disgraced in Israel. Why not go and speak to the king? He will not refuse to give me to you.'[b] •But he would not listen to her; he overpowered her and raped her.

Gn 34:7 Dt 22:21 Jg 20:6,10 Jr 29:23

Amnon was then seized with extreme hatred for her; the hatred he now felt for her was greater than his earlier love. 'Get up and go!' he said. •She said, 'No, brother! To send me away would be worse than the other wrong you have done me!'[c] But he would not listen to her. •He called his personal servant. 'Rid me of this woman!' he said. 'Throw her out and bolt the door behind her!' •(She was wearing a magnificent dress, for this was what the king's unmarried daughters wore in days gone by.) So the servant put her out and bolted the door behind her.

Gn 37:3

Tamar put dust on her head, tore the magnificent dress which she was wearing, laid her hand on her head, and went away, crying aloud as she went.[d]

Her brother Absalom said to her, 'Has Amnon your brother been with you? Sister, be quiet; he is your brother; do not take the matter to heart!' Tamar, however, went back to her brother Absalom's house inconsolable.

When King David heard the whole story, he was very angry; but he had no wish to harm his son Amnon, whom he loved because he was his first-born.[e] •Absalom, however, would not so much as speak to Amnon,[f] since he hated Amnon for having raped his sister Tamar.

Absalom kills Amnon and flees

Two years later, when Absalom had the sheep-shearers at Baal-Hazor, which is near Ephraim, he invited all the king's sons. •Absalom went to the king and said, 'Now sir, your servant has the sheep-shearers. Will the king and his retinue be pleased to come with your servant?' •'No, my son,' the king replied, 'we must not all come and be a burden to you.' And though Absalom was insistent, he would not go but dismissed him. •Absalom persisted, 'Then at least let my brother Amnon come with us.' The king said, 'Why should he go with you?' •On Absalom's insistence, however, he let Amnon and all the king's sons to go with him.

1 S 25:4seq.

Absalom prepared a royal banquet[g] •and then gave this order to the servants, 'Listen carefully; when Amnon's heart is merry with wine and I say, "Strike Amnon down", then kill him. Don't be afraid. Have I not myself given you the

e. David breaks all the conventions. His religion is spontaneous, not conformist, *see* vv. 22–23 and 6:21–22.

f. To Sheol, the abode of the dead, *see* Nb 16:33f.

g. 'She conceived' Gk; omitted by Hebr.

h. 'as Yahweh had instructed' versions; 'because of Yahweh' Hebr. • The birth of Solomon, Bathsheba's son, 'beloved of Yahweh' (the meaning of *yedidyah*), is the assurance of God's pardon. Moreover, it will be Solomon and not the better-qualified heirs whom God elects to place on David's throne.

i. The lower town, dominated by the 'royal town' or citadel.

j. 'Milcom's' Gk; Hebr. *malkam* 'their king'. Milcom was the Ammonites' idol, 1 K 11:5. • 'in it was set a stone' versions and 1 Ch 20:2; 'and a stone' Hebr.

13 **a.** Absalom, fratricidal and rebellious son, is the central figure of the dramatic events within David's family, ch. 13–20. This domestic drama gives rise to a series of political crises, exposing the dissensions within the nation and threatening the future of the kingdom.

b. According to ancient usage, *see* Gn 20:12, Amnon could have married Tamar, who was only his half-sister. Such marriages were, however, forbidden by the laws of Lv 18:9; 20:17; Dt 27:22.

c. The translation of the v. follows some Gk MSS and *Vet. Lat.*; Hebr. dubious.

d. Gestures of mourning and grief, *see* 1:2; Est 4:1; Jr 2:37.

e. From 'but he had . . .' Gk; Hebr. omits.

f. lit. 'spoke neither good nor bad'. Absalom breaks with Amnon.

g. 'Absalom . . . banquet' versions; Hebr. omits.

order? Use your strength and show your mettle!' ·Absalom's servants treated 29
Amnon as Absalom had ordered. The king's sons all leapt to their feet, mounted
their mules and fled.

While they were on the road, word reached David, 'Absalom has killed all the 30
1:11 king's sons; not one of them is left.' ·The king stood up, tore his clothes and threw 31
himself on the ground. All his officers tore their clothes too. ·Jonadab son of 32
Shimeah, David's brother, then spoke up and said, 'Do not let my lord take to
heart the report that all the young men, the king's sons, have been killed, since
only Amnon is dead: for Absalom has been promising himself to do this since the
day when Amnon raped his sister Tamar. ·So my lord the king must not imagine 33
that all the king's sons are dead; only Amnon is dead ·and Absalom has fled.' 34

The man on sentry duty looked up and saw a large troop coming along the road
from Bahurim. [h] The sentry came to tell the king, 'I have seen some people coming
down the Bahurim road on the mountainside.' ·Jonadab then said to the king, 35
'These are the king's sons arriving: what your servant said is exactly what hap-
pened.' ·He had scarcely finished speaking when the king's sons arrived and wept 36
3:3 aloud; the king and all his retinue wept aloud too. ·Absalom had gone to Talmai 37
son of Ammihud, king of Geshur. The king mourned for his son every day.

Joab negotiates Absalom's return

When Absalom had gone to Geshur, he stayed there for three years. ·Once the 38, 39
king was consoled over Amnon's death, his anger against Absalom subsided. [i]

14 Now, Joab son of Zeruiah observed that the king was [a] favourably inclined 1
to Absalom. ·Joab therefore sent to Tekoa [b] for a wise woman. 'Pretend to 2
be in mourning,' he said. 'Dress yourself in mourning, do not perfume yourself;
act like a woman who has long been mourning for the dead. ·Then go to the king 3
12:1seq. and say this to him.' And Joab put the words into her mouth which she was to say. [c]
1 K 3:16seq. 2 K 8:3seq. So the woman of Tekoa went to the king and, falling on her face to the ground, 4
2 K 6:26seq. prostrated herself. 'Help, my lord king!' [d] she said. ·The king said, 'What is the 5
matter?'

'As you see,' she replied, 'I am a widow; my husband is dead. ·Your servant had 6
two sons and out in the fields, where there was no one to intervene, they had a
quarrel. And one of them struck the other one and killed him. ·And now the whole 7
Nb 35:19c clan has risen against your servant. "Give up the man who killed his brother," they
say, "so that we can put him to death, to atone for the life of the brother whom he
has murdered; and thus we shall destroy the heir as well." By this means, they will
extinguish the ember still left to me, leaving my husband neither name nor survivor
on the face of the earth.' ·Then the king said to the woman, 'Go home; I myself 8
shall give orders about your case.' ·The woman of Tekoa said to the king, 'My lord 9
king! May the guilt be on me and on my family; the king and his throne are innocent
of it.' ·'Bring me the man who threatened you,' the king replied, 'and he shall 10
never hurt you again.' ·She then said, 'Let the king be pleased to pronounce the 11
Nb 35:19c name of Yahweh your God, so that the avenger of blood may not do greater harm
and destroy my son.' 'As Yahweh lives,' he said, 'not one of your son's hairs shall
fall to the ground!'

Then the woman said, 'Permit your servant to say something else to my lord the 12
king.' 'Go on,' he said. ·The woman said, 'Why then has the king, who by giving 13
this verdict has condemned himself, conceived the idea, against God's people's
Jb 7:9;14:7-12 Ps 88:5,10 interests, of not bringing home the son whom he has banished? ·We are all mortal; 14
we are like water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again, nor does
God raise up a corpse; let the king therefore make [e] plans for his banished son not
to remain far away from him in exile. [f]

[g]'Now, the reason why I came to speak about this to my lord the king is that I 15
was being intimidated, and your servant thought, "I shall speak to the king;
perhaps the king will do what his servant asks. ·Surely the king will consent to save 16
his servant from the clutches of the man who is trying to cut both me and my son off

17 from God's heritage. •Let a word from my lord the king, restore the peace!" your servant thought, "for my lord the king is like the Angel of God[h] in understanding good and evil."[i] May Yahweh your God be with you!' 19:28 1 S 29:9

18 Replying to the woman, the king said, 'Now do not evade the question which I am going to ask you.' The woman said, 'Let my lord the king ask his question.'
19 'Is not Joab's hand behind you in all this?' the king asked. The woman replied, 'As you live, my lord king, I cannot escape what my lord the king says, either to right or to left. Yes, it was your servant Joab who gave me my orders; he put all
20 these words into your servant's mouth. •Your servant Joab did this to approach the matter indirectly, but my lord has the wisdom of the Angel of God; he knows everything that happens on earth!'

21 The king then said to Joab, 'Very well, the suit is granted. Go and bring the
22 young man Absalom back.' •Joab fell on his face to the ground, prostrated himself and blessed the king. 'My lord king,' Joab said, 'today your servant knows that he has won your favour, since the king has done what his servant asked.'
23 Joab then set off, went to Geshur, and brought Absalom back to Jerusalem.
24 The king, however, said, 'Let him retire to his own house; he is not to appear in my presence.' So Absalom retired to his own house and was not received by the king.

Some details about Absalom[j]

25 In all Israel there was no one more praised for his beauty than Absalom; from the
26 sole of his foot to the crown of his head, he could not be faulted. •When he cut his hair—he shaved it once a year because his hair got too heavy—he would weigh the
27 hair: two hundred shekels, king's weight. •To Absalom were born three sons and one daughter called Tamar; she was a beautiful woman. 18:18

Absalom obtains his pardon

28 Absalom lived in Jerusalem for two years without being received by the king.
29 Absalom then summoned Joab, intending to send him to the king, but Joab would not come to him. He sent for him a second time, but still he would not come.
30 At this, Absalom said to his retainers, 'Look, Joab's field is next to mine and he has barley in it; go and set it on fire.' Absalom's retainers set fire to the field. Jg 15:4–5
31 Joab then stirred himself, went to Absalom in his house and asked, 'Why have
32 your retainers set my field on fire?' •Absalom replied to Joab, 'Look, I sent word to you: Come here, so that I can send you to the king to say, "Why come back from Geshur? Better for me to have been there still!" Now I want to be received by the
33 king, and if I am guilty, let him put me to death!' •Joab went to the king and told him this. He then summoned Absalom, who prostrated himself with his face to the ground before the king. And the king kissed Absalom.

Absalom's intrigues

1 **15** After this, Absalom procured a chariot and horses, with fifty men to run 1 S 8:11
2 ahead of him. •He would get up early and stand beside the road leading to 1 K 1:5
the city gate; and whenever a man with some lawsuit had to come before the king's

h. 'along the road from Bahurim' conj.; 'down the road behind him' Hebr. Hebr. omits all as far as second 'Bahurim'; v. restored following Gk. • Bahurim lies east of the Mount of Olives, on the road to Jericho, 16:5.

i. The text of vv. 37–38 is confused. We reject 38[a], a repetition of 37[a].

14 a. 'the king'; lit. 'the king's heart' Gk-Luc.; 'David the king' Hebr.

b. 11 miles (18 km) south of Jerusalem, home of the prophet Amos.

c. Like Nathan, 12:1seq., Joab puts an imaginary case to get the king to commit himself.

d. Formula of appeal to the crown.

e. 'let the king make' Gk; 'and he (God) has made' Hebr.

f. Amnon is dead; nothing more can be done for him; the banished Absalom may as well return.

g. The woman, having opened the king's eyes by applying the case to Absalom, reverts to her former role. v. 17 is applicable to both cases, imaginary and real.

h. In early texts, Gn 16:7c, the angel of God is God himself in the visible form in which he appears on earth. So David is accorded a divine wisdom; similarly in v. 20.

i. i.e. absolutely everything, *see* 13:22.

j. vv. 25–27 interrupt the story and come from another source.

tribunal, Absalom would call out to him and ask, 'Which town are you from?' If he answered, 'Your servant is from one of the tribes of Israel,'[a] ·then Absalom would 3
say, 'Look, your case is sound and just, but not one of the king's deputies will listen to you.' ·Absalom would say, 'Oh, who will appoint me judge in the land? Then 4
anyone with a lawsuit or a plea could come to me and I should see he had justice!' And whenever anyone came up to him to prostrate himself, he would stretch out 5
his hand, draw him to him and kiss him. ·Absalom acted like this with every 6
Israelite who appealed to the king's tribunal, and so Absalom won the Israelites' hearts.

Absalom's rebellion

When four[b] years had gone by, Absalom said to the king, 'Allow me to go to 7
Hebron[c] and fulfil the vow which I have made to Yahweh; ·for, when I was in 8
13:37 Geshur, in Aram, your servant made this vow, "If Yahweh brings me back to Jerusalem, I shall pay my devotions to Yahweh in Hebron." '[d] ·The king said to 9
him, 'Go in peace.' So he set off and went to Hebron.

Absalom sent couriers throughout the tribes of Israel to say, 'When you hear the 10
trumpet sound, you are to say, "Absalom is king at Hebron!" ' ·With Absalom 11
went two hundred men from Jerusalem; they had been invited and had gone in all
16:23 innocence, unaware of what was going on. ·Absalom sent for[e] Ahithophel the 12
Gilonite, David's counsellor, from Giloh his town, and had him with him while offering the sacrifices. The conspiracy grew in strength, since Absalom's supporters grew in number.

David's flight

Ps 3 A messenger came and told David, 'The men of Israel have shifted their allegiance 13
to Absalom.' ·David said to all his retinue then with him in Jerusalem, 'Up, let us 14
flee, or we shall not escape from Absalom! Leave as quickly as you can, in case he mounts a sudden attack, overcomes us and puts the city to the sword.'[f] ·The king's 15
retinue replied, 'Whatever my lord the king decides, we are at your service.'
16:21–22; 20:3 The king set out on foot with his whole household, leaving ten concubines to look 16
after the palace. ·The king set out on foot with everyone following, and they halted 17
8:18 at the last house. ·All his officers stood[g] at his side. All the Cherethites and all the 18
Pelethites, with Ittai and all the six hundred Gittites who had come in his retinue from Gath, marched past the king. ·The king said to Ittai the Gittite, 'You, why 19
are you coming with us? Go back and stay with the king, for you are a foreigner, indeed an exile from your homeland. ·You arrived only yesterday; should I take 20
you wandering with us today, when I do not know myself where I am going? Go back, take your fellow countrymen with you, and may Yahweh show[h] you mercy and faithful love!' ·Ittai replied to the king, 'As Yahweh lives, and as my lord the 21
king lives, wherever my lord the king may be, for death or life, your servant will be there too.' ·David then said to Ittai, 'Go ahead, march past!' And Ittai of Gath 22
marched past with all his men and with all his children too.[i] ·The entire population 23
was weeping aloud as the king stood in the bed of the Kidron and everyone marched past him, making for the desert.

The ark is left in Jerusalem

Zadok was there too, and all the Levites with him, carrying the ark of God. They 24
set the ark of God down beside Abiathar until everyone had finished marching out of the town. ·The king then said to Zadok, 'Take the ark of God back into the city. 25
Should I win Yahweh's favour, he will bring me back and allow me to see it and its
16:10 tent once more. ·But should he say, "You displease me," here I am: let him treat 26
me as he sees fit.' ·The king said to Zadok the priest, 'Look, you and Abiathar go 27
back[j] quietly into the city, with your two sons, your own son Ahimaaz and Jonathan son of Abiathar. ·You see, I shall wait in the passes of the desert plain 28

29 until word comes from you bringing me news.' ·So Zadok and Abiathar took the ark of God back to Jerusalem and stayed there.

Hushai is briefed to work for David

30 David then made his way up the Mount of Olives, weeping as he went, his head covered and his feet bare. [k] And all the people with him had their heads covered
31 and made their way up, weeping as they went. ·David was then informed [l] that Ahithophel was among the conspirators with Absalom. David said, 'I beg you, 16:23; 17:14, 23
Yahweh, turn Ahithophel's advice to folly.'
32 As David reached the summit, where God is worshipped, [m] he saw Hushai the Archite, his friend, coming to meet him with his tunic torn and with earth on his
33, 34 head. ·David said, 'If you go along with me, you will be a burden to me. ·But if you go back to the city and say to Absalom, "I am at your service, my lord [n] king; once I was in your father's service, but now I shall serve you," you will be able to thwart
35 Ahithophel's advice for me. ·Surely the priests Zadok and Abiathar will be with you? Anything you hear from the palace you must report to the priests Zadok and
36 Abiathar. ·You see, their two sons are there with them, Zadok's son Ahimaaz, and Abiathar's son Jonathan; through these, you will send me word of everything
37 you hear.' ·Hushai, David's friend, entered the city just as Absalom was reaching Jerusalem.

David and Ziba

1 **16** When David had passed a little beyond the summit, Meribbaal's retainer, 4:4;9:1–13
Ziba, met him with a pair of donkeys, saddled and laden with two hundred loaves of bread, a hundred bunches of raisins, a hundred of the season's fruits, and
2 a skin of wine. ·The king said to Ziba, 'What are you going to do with that?' 'The donkeys', Ziba replied, 'are for the king's family to ride, the bread and the fruit for the soldiers to eat, the wine is for drinking by those who get exhausted in the
3 desert.' ·The king asked 'And where is your master's son?' Ziba replied to the king, 'Why, he has stayed in Jerusalem because, he says, "Today, the House of
4 Israel will give me back my father's kingdom." ' ·Then the king said to Ziba, 'Everything owned by Meribbaal is yours.' Ziba said, 'I prostrate myself! May I be 19:25–31
worthy of your favour, my lord king!'

Shimei curses David

5 As David was reaching Bahurim, out came a man of the same clan as Saul's family. 3:16
His name was Shimei son of Gera and, as he came, he uttered curse after curse
6 and threw stones at David and at all King David's retinue, even though the whole
7 army and all the champions formed an escort round the king on either side. ·The words of his curse were these, 'Off with you, off with you, man of blood, scoundrel!
8 Yahweh has paid you back for all the spilt blood of the House of Saul [o] whose sovereignty you have usurped; and Yahweh has transferred the sovereign power to Absalom your son. Now your wickedness has overtaken you, man of blood that

15 **a.** Here presumably the northern tribes as opposed to Judah. Absalom exploits the latent antagonism of the two sections within the nation, see 19:42seq.
b. 'four' Gk-Luc.; 'forty' Hebr.
c. Absalom has canvassed in the north and now seeks support in the south. Hebron, the original capital, 2:1seq., perhaps resented David's preference for Jerusalem.
d. 'in Hebron' Gk-Luc.; Hebr. omits.
e. 'sent for' Gk-Luc.; 'sent' Hebr. • 'and had him with him' conj.; Hebr. omits.
f. David does not consider that all is lost, since he leaves supporters behind, vv. 27seq., 34seq.; caught between the northern and southern rebels, however, he makes a strategic withdrawal.
g. 'stood' conj.; 'marched past' Hebr. • 'Ittai' restored to square with vv. 19–22.
h. 'and may Yahweh show you' Gk; Hebr. omits.
i. The text of vv. 23–24 is uncertain.
j. 'You and Abiathar go back' conj., *see* what follows; Hebr. has singular.
k. Mourning customs, 19:5; Ezk 24:17, generally expressive of grief. Est 6:12; Jr 14:3seq.; Mi 1:8.
l. 'David was then informed' Gk; David informed' Hebr.
m. Possibly the sanctuary of Nob, 1 S 21:2. • 'David's friend' Gk, *see* v. 37; Hebr. omits.
n. 'my lord' conj.; 'I' Hebr.

16 **a.** Allusion to the massacre of 21:1–14, taking place at the beginning of the reign, *see* 9:1.

you are.' ·Abishai son of Zeruiah said to the king, 'Why should this dead dog curse 9
1 S 26:6 my lord the king? Let me go over and cut his head off.' ·But the king replied, 'What 10
19:23 concern is my business to you, sons of Zeruiah? Let him curse! If Yahweh has said
15:25–26 to him, "Curse David!" what right has anyone to say, "Why have you done so?" ' ·David said to Abishai and all his retinue, 'Why, the son sprung from 11
my own body is now seeking my life; all the more reason for this Benjaminite to do so! Let him curse on, if Yahweh has told him to! ·Perhaps Yahweh will look on 12
my wretchedness[b] and will repay me with good for his curses today.' ·So 13
David and his men went on their way, and Shimei kept pace with him along
19:19–24 the opposite mountainside, cursing as he went, throwing stones[c] and flinging dust.
The king and all the people who were with him arrived exhausted at . . .[d] . . . and 14
there they drew breath.

Hushai ingratiates himself with Absalom

Absalom entered Jerusalem with all the men of Israel; with him was Ahithophel. 15
15:32–37 When Hushai the Archite, David's friend, reached Absalom, Hushai said to 16
Absalom, 'Long live the king! Long live the king!' ·Absalom said to Hushai, 'Is 17
this your faithful love for your friend? Why didn't you go away with your friend?'
Hushai replied to Absalom, 'No, the man whom Yahweh and this people and all 18
the men of Israel have chosen, he is the man for me, and with him will I stay!
Besides, whom should I serve, if not his son? As I served your father, so shall I 19
serve you.'

Absalom and David's concubines

Absalom said to Ahithophel, 'Think carefully. What shall we do?' ·Ahithophel 20, 21
15:16 replied to Absalom, 'Go to your father's concubines whom he left to look after the
palace; then all Israel will hear that you have thoroughly antagonised your father,
and the resolution of all your supporters will be strengthened.'[e] ·So a tent was 22
12:11–12 pitched for Absalom on the flat roof and, with all Israel watching, Absalom went
to his father's concubines. ·At the time, whatever advice Ahithophel gave was 23
treated like a decision obtained from God; as by David, so by Absalom, was all
Ahithophel's advice regarded.

Hushai thwarts Ahithophel's plans

17 Ahithophel said to Absalom, 'Let me choose twelve thousand men and set 1
off this very night in pursuit of David. ·I shall fall on him while he is tired 2
and dispirited; I shall strike terror into him, and all the people who are with him
will run away. I shall kill only the king, ·and I shall then bring all the people back to 3
you, like a bride returning to her husband. You seek the life of one individual
only;[a] the people as a whole will have peace.' ·The suggestion seemed a good one 4
to Absalom and all the elders of Israel.

Then Absalom said, 'Now call Hushai the Archite, for us to hear what he too has 5
to say.' ·When Hushai had come to Absalom, Absalom said, 'This is what 6
Ahithophel says. Are we to do as he suggests? If not, suggest something yourself.'
Hushai said to Absalom, 'On this occasion the advice given by Ahithophel is not 7
good. ·You know', Hushai went on, 'that your father and his men are great fighters 8
and that they are now as angry as a wild bear robbed of her cubs. Your father is a
man of war: he will not let the army rest during the night. ·At this moment he is 9
concealed in some hollow or other place. If at the outset there are casualties among
our troops, word will go round that the army supporting Absalom has met with
disaster. ·And then even the valiant, the truly lion-hearted, will be demoralised; 10
for all Israel knows that your father is a champion and that the men with him are
valiant. ·For my part, I offer this advice: Summon all Israel, from Dan to Beer- 11
sheba, to rally to you, as numerous as the sand on the seashore, and you take the
field in person with them.[b] ·We shall reach him wherever he is to be found; we 12
shall fall on him as the dew falls on the ground, and not leave him or any one of the

13 men with him. •Should he retire into a town, all Israel will bring[c] ropes to that
town, and we shall drag it into the river-bed until not a pebble of it is to be found.'
14 Then Absalom and all the people of Israel said, 'Hushai the Arkite's advice is
better than Ahithophel's,' Yahweh having resolved to thwart Ahithophel's shrewd 15:31
advice and so bring disaster on Absalom.
15 Hushai then told the priests Zadok and Abiathar, 'Ahithophel gave such and
16 such advice to Absalom and the elders of Israel, but I advised so and so. •Send with 15:27–28
all speed to David and say, "Do not camp in the desert passes tonight, but get
through them as fast as you can, or the king and his whole army may be
annihilated." '

David is warned and crosses the Jordan

17 Jonathan and Ahimaaz were posted at the Fuller's Spring; a servant-girl was to go 15:27
and warn them and they in turn were to warn King David, since they could not give 1 K 1:9
18 themselves away by coming into the city themselves. •A young man saw them
nonetheless and told Absalom. The pair of them, however, made off quickly,
reaching the house of a man in Bahurim. In his courtyard was a storage-well and
19 they got down into it. •The woman took a piece of canvas and, spreading it over Jos 2:4seq., 15seq.
the mouth of the storage-well, scattered crushed grain on it so that nothing showed.
20 When Absalom's servants reached the woman at the house, they said, 'Where
are Ahimaaz and Jonathan?' The woman said, 'They have gone further on, towards
the water.'[d] They searched but, having found nothing, went back to Jerusalem.
21 When they had gone, the men climbed out of the storage-well and went to warn
King David. 'Set out!' they told David. 'Cross the water quickly, for Ahithophel
22 has given such and such advice against you!' •So David and all the troops with him
set off and crossed the Jordan. By dawn no one was left, all had crossed the Jordan.
23 When Ahithophel saw that his advice had not been followed, he saddled his 15:31
donkey and set off and went home to his own town. Then, having set his house in
order, he hanged himself.[e] He was buried in his father's tomb.

Absalom crosses the Jordan. David at Mahanaim

24 David had reached Mahanaim by the time that Absalom crossed the Jordan with
25 all the men of Israel. •Absalom had put Amasa in command of the army in place of 19:14; 20:4–13
Joab. This Amasa was the son of a man called Ithra the Ishmaelite,[f] who had 1 K 2:5b
26 married Abigail, daughter of Jesse and sister of Zeruiah, mother of Joab. •Israel
and Absalom pitched their camp in the territory of Gilead.
27 When David reached Mahanaim, Shobi son of Nahash from Rabbah-of-the- 10:2
Ammonites, Machir son of Ammiel from Lo-Debar, and Barzillai the Gileadite 9:4; 19:32
28 from Rogelim •brought bedding,[g] rugs, bowls and crockery; and wheat, barley,
29 meal, roasted grain, beans, lentils,[h] •honey, curds and cows' cheese and sheep's
cheese, which they presented to David and the people with him for them to eat.
'The army', they said, 'must have been hungry, tired and thirsty in the desert.'

b. 'my sufferings' versions; 'my fault' Hebr. *ketib*; 'my eye' *qere*.

c. After 'throwing stones', Hebr. repeats 'opposite him'.

d. A place-name has dropped out of the text.

e. Absalom's action is more than an indecent exhibition; by usurping his father's harem, he asserts his right to the throne, *see* 3:7b; 1 K 2:13–25.

17 a. 'like a bride . . . one individual' Gk; Hebr. uncertain.

b. 'with them' versions; 'to the battle' Hebr. This will involve delay and David, now waiting for news, 15:28, will have time to make good his escape.

c. 'will bring' Gk-Luc.; 'will raise' Hebr.

d. 'further on, towards the water' conj., the water being the Jordan, *see* vv. 21–22; Hebr. uncertain.

e. The only case of suicide mentioned in the OT, apart from those of soldiers killing themselves to avoid capture in battle, Jg 9:54; 1 S 31:4seq.; 1 K 16:18; 2 M 14:41seq., and the very exceptional case of Samson, Jg 16:28seq.

f. 'the Ishmaelite' Gk, *see* 1 Ch 2:17; 'the Israelite' Hebr. • 'Jesse' Gk-Luc., *see* 1 Ch 2:16; 'Nahash' Hebr. Amasa is therefore Joab's cousin. Both are cousins of Absalom and nephews of David.

g. 'brought bedding' Gk; 'beds' Hebr. 'rugs' Gk; Hebr. omits.

h. Text uncertain.

Defeat of Absalom's party

18 David reviewed the troops who were with him and appointed commanders 1
Jg 7:16 of thousands and commanders of hundreds to lead them. ·David divided 2
1 S 11:11 the army into three groups,[a] one under the command of Joab, another under the command of Abishai son of Zeruiah and brother of Joab, and the third under the command of Ittai the Gittite. David then said to the troops, 'I shall take the field in
21:17 person with you.' ·But the troops replied, 'You are not to take the field. No one 3
will bother about us if we run away, they will not even bother about us if half of us are killed, but you are ten thousand times more valuable. So it is better if you stay inside the town, in case we need reinforcements.' ·David said, 'I will do what you 4
think best.' And the king stood beside the gate as the troops marched out by their hundreds and their thousands. ·The king gave orders to Joab, Abishai and Ittai, 5
18:12 'For my sake, treat young Absalom gently!' And the troops all heard the king give all the commanders these orders about Absalom. ·So the troops marched out into 6
the open to engage Israel, and the battle took place in the Forest of Ephraim.[b] There, the army of Israel was beaten by David's retainers; it was a great defeat that 7
day, with twenty thousand casualties. ·The fighting spread throughout the region 8
and that day the forest claimed more victims than the sword.

Death of Absalom

Absalom happened to run into some of David's guards. Absalom was riding his 9
mule and the mule passed under the thick branches of a great oak. Absalom's head got caught in the oak and he was left hanging[c] between heaven and earth, while the mule he was riding went on. ·Someone saw this and reported to Joab, 'I have 10
just seen Absalom hanging from an oak.' ·Joab said to the man who had informed 11
him, 'If you saw him, why did you not strike him to the ground then and there? I, would have made it my business to give you ten silver shekels and a belt!' ·The man 12
replied to Joab, 'Even if I could feel the weight of a thousand silver shekels in my hand, I would not lift my hand against the king's son. In our own hearing, the king
18:5 gave you and Abishai and Ittai these orders, "For my sake,[d] spare young Absa-
lom." ·Even if I had deceived myself, nothing stays hidden from the king and you 13
would have dissociated yourself from me.' ·Joab then said, 'I cannot waste time 14
arguing with you!' And, taking three darts[e] in his hand, he planted them in Absalom's heart, while he was still alive, deep in the oak-tree. ·Ten soldiers, Joab's 15
1 S 14:13 armour-bearers, then came in close, struck Absalom and killed him.

Joab then had the trumpet sounded, and the troops left off pursuing Israel, since 16
Joab held the troops back. ·They took Absalom, flung him into a deep pit in the 17
Jos 7:26; 8:29;10:27 forest and raised a huge cairn over him. All the Israelites had fled, dispersing to their homes.

Now, during his lifetime, Absalom had made and erected a pillar to himself, 18
14:27 which is in the Valley of the King. 'I have no son', he said, 'to preserve the memory
Gn 14:17 of my name.' He gave his own name to the pillar, and today it is still called Absalom's Monument.[f]

The news is brought to David

Ahimaaz son of Zadok said, 'Let me run and tell the king the good news that 19
Yahweh has vindicated his cause by ridding him of his enemies.' ·But Joab said, 20
'Today you would be no bearer of good news, some other day you may be; but today you would not be bringing good news, since the king's son is dead.' ·Joab 21
then said to the Cushite,[g] 'Go and tell the king what you have seen.' The Cushite prostrated himself to Joab and ran off. ·But Ahimaaz son of Zadok persisted. 22
'Come what may,' he said to Joab, 'please let me run after the Cushite.' 'My son,' Joab said, 'why run? You will get no reward for your news.'[h] ·But he replied, 23
'Come what may, let me run!' and Joab said 'Run, then!' So Ahimaaz ran off along the road through the Plain, outrunning the Cushite.

24 David was sitting between the two gates. The sentry, having gone up to the roof
25 of the gate, looked out from the ramparts and saw a man running alone. •The
sentry called down to the king and told him. The king said, 'If he is alone, he is
26 bringing good news.'[i] •As the man drew steadily nearer, the lookout man saw
another man running, and the sentry above the gate[j] shouted, 'Here comes another
27 man, running alone!' David said, 'He too is a bearer of good news.' •The sentry 2 K 9:20
said, 'I recognise the way the first man runs; Ahimaaz son of Zadok runs like that.'
'He is a good man', said the king, 'and comes with good news.' 1 K 1:42
28 Ahimaaz went up to[k] the king. 'All hail!' he said, prostrating himself on the
ground before the king. 'Blessed be Yahweh your God', he said, 'who has handed
29 over the men who rebelled against my lord the king!' •'Is all well with young
Absalom?' the king asked. Ahimaaz replied, 'I saw a great commotion when Joab,
30 the king's servant, sent your servant off, but I do not know what it was.'[l] •The king
said, 'Go and stand over there.' He stood to one side and waited.
31 Then the Cushite arrived. 'Good news for my lord the king!' the Cushite
shouted. 'Today Yahweh has vindicated your cause, by ridding you of all who had
32 risen up against you.' •'Is all well with young Absalom?' the king asked the Cushite.
'May the enemies of my lord the king', the Cushite answered, 'and all who rise up
to harm you, share the fate of that young man!'

David mourns for Absalom

33 1 **19** The king shuddered. He went up to the room over the gate and burst into
tears; and, as he wept,[a] he kept saying, 'Oh, my son Absalom! My son! My
son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you! Oh, Absalom my son, my son!'
19.1 2 Word was brought to Joab, 'The king is weeping and mourning for Absalom.'
2 3 And for the entire army that day, victory was turned to mourning, the troops
3 4 having learnt that the king was grieving for his son. •And that day the troops came
furtively back into town, like troops creeping shamefacedly away when deserting
4 5 in battle. •The king had covered his face and kept crying aloud, 'My son Absalom! 15:30
Oh, Absalom my son, my son!'
5 6 Joab went inside to the king and said, 'Today you have made all your servants
feel ashamed—today, when they have saved your life, the lives of your sons and
daughters, the lives of your wives and the lives of your concubines!—because you
6 7 love those who hate you and hate those who love you. •Today you have made it
plain that commanders and soldiers mean nothing to you—for today I can see that
7 8 you would be content if we were all dead, provided that Absalom was alive! •Now
get up, come out and reassure your soldiers; for if you do not come out, I swear by
Yahweh, not one man will stay with you tonight; and this will be a worse misfortune
8 9 for you than anything that has happened to you from your youth until now!' •The
king got up and took his seat at the gate. An announcement was made to the whole
army: 'The king is sitting at the gate.' And the whole army assembled in front of
the king.

Preparations for David's return

9 10 Israel had fled, dispersing to their homes. Throughout the tribes of Israel all was
dissension and people began saying, 'The king, having freed us from the clutches
of our enemies, having saved us from the clutches of the Philistines, has himself

18 **a.** 'divided into' Gk-Luc.; 'sent in' Hebr.
b. Place uncertain.
c. 'was left hanging' versions; 'was put' Hebr.
d. 'For my sake' versions; 'For anybody's sake' Hebr.
e. 'darts' Gk; 'sticks' Hebr.: throwing-sticks tipped with metal.
f. The monument, lit. 'hand of Absalom', was not the Hellenistic tomb still to be seen in the Valley of the Kidron, but a funerary *stele*, *see* Gn 35:20.
g. Ethiopian slave (Cush is Ethiopia) and therefore black, and considered to be an ill-omened messenger.
h. 'you will get no' conj.; 'not finding there' Hebr. A bringer of good news gets a present, 4:10.
i. Defeat would have been signalled by a group of fugitives.
j. 'above the gate' versions; 'to the gate-keeper' Hebr.
k. 'went up to' Gk; 'shouted to' Hebr.
l. 'when . . . off' conj.; 'at the moment of sending the king's servant Joab and your servant' Hebr. • A discreet lie: Ahimaaz leaves the bad news to the second messenger.

19 **a.** 'as he wept' Gk-Luc.; 'as he walked' Hebr.

had to flee the country to escape from Absalom; ·and now Absalom, whom we had 11 10
anointed to reign over us, has died in battle. Why does no one suggest that the king
should be brought back?'

What was being said throughout Israel reached the king. [b] ·King David then sent 12a
word to the priests Zadok and Abiathar, 'Say to the elders of Judah, [c] "Why should 12b. 11
you be the last to bring the king home? ·You are my brothers, you are my 13 12
own flesh and bone: why should you be the last to bring the king back?"
And say to Amasa, [d] "Are you not my own flesh and bone? May God bring 14 13
Rt 1:17+ unnameable ills on me and worse ills, too, if you do not become my permanent
army commander instead of Joab!" ' ·Thus he rallied the hearts of the men of 15 14
Judah to a man and, as a result, they sent word to the king, 'Come back, you and
all who serve you.'

Episodes connected with David's return: Shimei

So the king started home and reached the Jordan. Judah, coming to meet the king 16 15
16:5–13 to escort him across the Jordan, had arrived at Gilgal. ·Shimei son of Gera, the 17 16
Benjaminite of Bahurim, hurried down with the men of Judah to meet King David.
16:1–4; 19:25–31 With him were a thousand men from Benjamin. Ziba, servant of the House of 18 17
Saul, with his fifteen sons and twenty servants, arrived at the Jordan before the
king ·and worked manfully [e] ferrying the king's family across and doing whatever 19 18
he required.

While the king was crossing the Jordan, Shimei son of Gera fell at the king's feet
and said to the king, 'I hope my lord does not regard me as guilty of a crime! 20 19
Forget about the wrong your servant did on the day my lord the king left Jerusalem.
Let my lord not hold my guilt against me. ·For your servant is aware of having 21 20
sinned, and that is why I have come today—the first member of the whole House
of Joseph [f] to come down to meet my lord the king.'

At this, Abishai son of Zeruiah spoke up and said, 'Does Shimei not deserve 22 21
death for having cursed Yahweh's anointed?' ·To which David replied, 'What 23 22
16:9–10 concern is my business to you, sons of Zeruiah, that you should oppose my wishes
1 S 11:13 today? Could anyone be put to death in Israel today? Today I know for sure that I
am king of Israel?' ·'Your life is spared,' the king said. And the king gave him his 24 23
oath. [g]

9:2–13; 16:1–4 **Meribbaal**

Dt 21:12 Meribbaal son of Saul also went down to meet the king. He had not cared for his 25 24
feet or hands, [h] he had not trimmed his moustache or washed his clothes from the
day of the king's departure till the day of his peaceful return.

When he arrived from Jerusalem [i] to greet the king, the king asked him, 'Why 26 25
did you not come with me, Meribbaal?' ·'My lord king,' he replied, 'my retainer 27 26
deceived me. Your servant said to him, "Saddle the donkey [j] for me to ride, so that
I can go with the king," your servant being lame. ·He has slandered your servant 28 27
to my lord the king. My lord the king, however, is like the Angel of God, so do as
you think right. ·My father's entire family deserved no better than death from my 29 28
9:10 lord the king, and yet you admitted your servant to the ranks of those who eat at
your table. What right have I to make any further appeal to the king?' ·The king 30 29
said, 'You need say no more. I rule that you and Ziba divide the property between
you.' ·'Let him take it all,' Meribbaal said to the king, 'since my lord the king has 31 30
come back home in peace!'

Barzillai

Barzillai the Gileadite had come down from Rogelim and accompanied the king 32 31
towards the Jordan, intending to take leave of him at the Jordan. ·Barzillai was a 33 32
man of great age; he was eighty years old. He had kept the king in provisions
17:27–29 during his stay at Mahanaim, being a very wealthy man. ·'Come with me', the king 34 33
said to Barzillai, 'and I will provide for you at my side in Jerusalem.' ·Barzillai 35 34

replied to the king, 'How many years have I left to live, for me to go up to
35 36 Jerusalem with the king? ·I am now eighty years old; can I tell the good from the
bad? Has your servant any taste for his food and drink? Can I still hear the voices
of men and women singers? Why should your servant be a further burden to my
36 37 lord the king?[k] ·Your servant will go a little way across the Jordan with the king;
37 38 but why should the king reward me so generously for that? ·Please allow your
servant to go home again, so that I can die in my own town near the grave of my
father and mother. But here is your servant Chimham;[l] let him go with my lord the
38 39 king; treat him as you think right.' ·The king said, 'Let Chimham come along with
me then; I shall do whatever you wish for him, and anything you request I shall do
39 40 for your sake.' ·The people then all crossed the Jordan, and the king, having
crossed, kissed Barzillai and blessed him, and the latter went home.

Judah and Israel dispute over the king

40 41 The king went on to Gilgal and Chimham went with him. All the people of Judah
41 42 accompanied[m] the king, and also half the people of Israel. ·All the men of Israel
then came to the king. 'Why', they asked the king, 'have our brothers, the men of
Judah, carried you off and brought the king and his family across the Jordan, and
42 43 all David's men with him?' ·All the men of Judah retorted to the men of Israel,
'Because the king is more closely related to us. Why do you take offence at this?
Have we been eating at the king's expense? Have we taken any position for
43 44 ourselves?'[n] ·The men of Israel replied to the men of Judah, 'We have ten shares 1 K 11:31
in the king and, what is more, we are your elder brothers,[o] so why have you
slighted us? Were we not the first to suggest bringing back our king?' The men of
Judah's words were even more intemperate than those of the men of Israel.

Sheba's revolt[a]

1 **20** Now there happened to be a scoundrel there called Sheba son of Bichri, a
Benjaminite, who sounded the trumpet and shouted:

> We have no share in David, 1 K 12:16
> we have no heritage in the son of Jesse.
> Every man to his tents, O Israel!

2 At this all the men of Israel deserted David and followed Sheba son of Bichri.
But the men of Judah stuck close to their king, from the Jordan all the way to
Jerusalem.

3 David returned to his palace in Jerusalem. The king took the ten concubines, 15:16; 16: 20–22
whom he had left to look after the palace, and put them under guard. He provided
for their upkeep but never went near them again; they were shut away until the day
they died, widows, as it were, of a living man.

Assassination of Amasa

4 The king said to Amasa, 'Summon me the men of Judah and be here yourself 19:14
5 within three days.' ·Amasa went off to summon Judah, but he took longer than the
6 time fixed by David. ·David then said to Abishai, 'Sheba son of Bichri is now in a

b. v. 12[b] has been transposed, following some versions. The final 'home', repeated from 12[a], is omitted.

c. David wants his own tribe to recall him first: blood-ties prompt him, but also a suspicion that his dynasty can count only on the loyalty of Judah.

d. The military leader of the rebellion, 17:25; he especially must be won over. David mistrusts the bloodthirsty Joab and is prepared to dismiss him, but Joab gets rid of his rival, 20:8–13, and remains at his post till David's death, 1 K 2:5seq., 28seq.

e. 'and worked manfully' Gk: 'and it (fem.) had crossed the crossing' Hebr.

f. The expression sometimes includes Benjamin.

g. Promising himself a posthumous revenge, 1 K 2:8seq., 36–46.

h. 'or hands' Gk; Hebr. omits.

i. 'from Jerusalem' some Gk MSS; 'in Jerusalem' Hebr.

j. 'said to him . . . donkey' versions; 'said to myself, "I shall saddle" ' Hebr.

k. Translation uncertain.

l. Barzillai's son.

m. 'accompanied' Gk; 'caused to cross' Hebr.

n. 'portion' Targ.; Hebr. uncertain.

o. 'elder brothers' versions; 'in David' (?) Hebr.

20 **a.** Instigated by a Benjaminite, the revolt demonstrates not only the resentment of Saul's own tribe, but also the innate hostility between Israel and Judah.

position to do us more damage even than Absalom. Take your master's retainers and be after him, before he can reach any fortified towns and elude us.'[b]
8:18;23:8seq. Joab, the Cherethites, the Pelethites and all the champions took the field under 7
Abishai,[c] setting off from Jerusalem in pursuit of Sheba son of Bichri. ·They were 8
2:13 near the great stone at Gibeon when Amasa met them, coming the other way. Joab was wearing his uniform, over which he had buckled on a sword hanging from his waist in its scabbard; the sword came out[d] and fell. ·Joab said to Amasa, 'Are you 9
well, brother?' and, with his right hand, took Amasa by the beard to kiss him. Amasa paid no attention to the sword, which Joab had now picked up, and Joab 10
struck him with it in the belly, spilling his entrails all over the ground. He did not
1 K 2:5 need to strike a second blow; and Amasa died, while Joab and Abishai hurried on in pursuit of Sheba son of Bichri.

One of Joab's men stood on guard beside Amasa, shouting, 'Whoever is on 11
Joab's side, whoever is for David, follow Joab!' ·Amasa meanwhile lay wallowing 12
in his blood in the middle of the road. Seeing that everyone was stopping, the man dragged Amasa off the road into the field and threw a cloak over him, having realised that everyone passing would stop. ·Once Amasa had been taken[e] off the 13
road, the men all carried on, following Joab[f] in pursuit of Sheba son of Bichri.

End of the revolt

Sheba crossed all the tribes of Israel as far as Abel Beth-Maacah,[g] and the Bichrites 14
all . . .[h] They formed up and followed him.[i] ·Laying siege to him in Abel Beth- 15
Maacah, they threw up a ramp against the outer wall of the town, while the whole army accompanying Joab undermined the wall to bring it down. A 16
quick-witted woman shouted from the town, 'Listen! ·Listen! Say to Joab, "Come 17
here, I want to speak to you." ' He came forward, and the woman said, 'Are you Joab?' 'I am', he replied. She said, 'Listen to what your servant says.' 'I am listening,' he replied. ·She then spoke as follows, 'In olden days people used to 18
say, "Abel and Dan are where you should enquire ·whether a tradition established 19
by the faithful of Israel has finally died out."[j] And yet you are trying to destroy a town, a metropolis of Israel. Why do you want to devour Yahweh's heritage?' 'The last thing I want to do', said Joab, 'is either to devour or to destroy. ·This is 20, 21
not the issue; a man from the highlands of Ephraim, called Sheba son of Bichri, has revolted against the king, against David. Hand that one man over and I will raise the siege of the town.' 'Very well,' the woman said to Joab, 'his head will be thrown over the wall to you.' ·The woman went and spoke to all the people as her 22
wisdom dictated. They cut off the head of Sheba son of Bichri and threw it down to Joab. He had the trumpet sounded and they withdrew from the town and all went home, while Joab himself went back to the king in Jerusalem.

=8:16–18
1 K 4:3–6 **David's principal officials**

Joab commanded the whole army;[k] Benaiah son of Jehoiada commanded the 23
Cherethites and Pelethites; ·Adoram was in charge of forced labour; Jehoshaphat 24
son of Ahilud was herald; ·Shiya was secretary; Zadok and Abiathar were priests; 25
8:18m also: Ira the Jairite was David's priest. 26

II: SUPPLEMENTS[a]

The great famine and the execution of Saul's descendants[b]

21 In the days of David there was a famine which lasted for three years on end. 1
David consulted Yahweh,[c] and Yahweh said, 'Saul and his family have
Jos 9:3–27 incurred blood-guilt, by putting the Gibeonites to death.' ·Then the king sum- 2
moned the Gibeonites and said—now, the Gibeonites were not Israelites, but were a remnant of the Amorites, to whom the Israelites had bound themselves by oath;

Saul, however, in his zeal for the Israelites and for Judah, had done his best to
3 exterminate them[d]—hence David said to the Gibeonites, •'What can I do for you?
How can I make amends, so that you will call a blessing[e] down on Yahweh's
4 heritage?' •The Gibeonites replied, 'Our quarrel with Saul and his family cannot
be settled for silver or gold, nor by putting to death one man in Israel.' David said,
5 'Say what you want and I will do it for you.' •Then they replied to the king, 'The
man who decimated us and planned to annihilate us, so that we should not exist
6 anywhere in Israelite territory—•we want seven of his descendants handed over to
us; and we shall dismember them before Yahweh at Gibeon on Yahweh's hill.'[f] 'I
7 shall hand them over,' said the king. •The king, however, spared Meribbaal son of 1 S 20:15 seq.,42
Jonathan, son of Saul, on account of the oath by Yahweh binding them together,
8 binding David and Jonathan son of Saul. •The king took the two sons born to Saul
by Rizpah daughter of Aiah: Armoni and Meribbaal; and the five sons borne by 3:7
9 Merab[g] daughter of Saul to Adriel son of Barzillai, of Meholah. •He handed these 1 S 18:19
over to the Gibeonites who dismembered them before Yahweh on the hill. The
seven of them perished together; they were put to death in the first days of the
harvest, at the beginning of the barley harvest.

10 Rizpah daughter of Aiah, wearing sacking[h] and spreading some out for herself 3:31;12:16
on the rock, from the beginning of the barley harvest until the rain[i] fell on them
from heaven, kept the birds of the sky away from them in the daytime, and the wild
11 animals away at night. •David was told of what Saul's concubine, Rizpah daughter
of Aiah, had done.

12 David went and recovered the bones of Saul and his son Jonathan from the
notables of Jabesh in Gilead. The latter had stolen them from the square in Beth- 1 S 31:10–13
Shean, where the Philistines had hung them, when the Philistines had defeated
13 Saul at Gilboa. •David fetched the bones of Saul and his son Jonathan. The bones
14 of the men who had been dismembered were collected •and these, with[j] the bones
of Saul and his son Jonathan, were buried in the territory of Benjamin, at Zela, in
the tomb of Saul's father, Kish. The king's orders were carried out to the letter
and after that, God took pity on the country.

Various exploits against the Philistines[k]

15 Once again the Philistines made war on Israel. David went down with his retainers;
16 they fought the Philistines and David began to tire. •There was a champion,[l] one
of the sons of Rapha. His spear weighed three hundred shekels of bronze; he was Dt 1:28g

b. 'and elude us' Gk-Luc.; Hebr. uncertain.

c. 'under Abishai' lit. 'behind Abishai' Gk; 'the men of (Joab) (took the field) behind him' Hebr.

d. 'it (the sword) came out' Gk; 'he came out' Hebr.

e. 'had been taken' conj.; Hebr. uncertain.

f. Joab uses his prestige to re-establish his command, the king's wishes notwithstanding; and the army rallies to him.

g. A fortified town near Dan, v. 18, in the extreme north of Israelite territory.

h. A gap left in the MSS suggests that some words have been lost. The text of the v. is uncertain.

i. Into the town.

j. vv. 18–19 following Gk; Hebr. uncertain. • The woman's otherwise unattested proverb alludes to the traditional conservatism of these remote towns at the foot of Mount Hermon.

k. After 'army', Hebr. adds 'Israel', gloss.

21 a. Ch. 21–24 interrupt the long story of David's family and of the royal succession, which is resumed in 1 K: 1. They embody six appendices arranged in pairs: the two narratives of 21:1–14 (three years' famine) and ch. 24 (three days' pestilence); two series of military exploits: 21:15–22 (the four Philistine giants) and 23:8–39 (David's warriors); two poetic passages: ch. 22 (canticle of David) and 23:1–7 (last words of David).

b. This narrative is detached from its context and the events are probably to be placed before 9:1. v. 7 must be a subsequent gloss.

c. lit. 'sought the face of Yahweh', just as one seeks audience of a king, 1 K 10:24. • 'Saul . . . blood-guilt' Gk; Hebr. doubtful.

d. The account of these events has not been preserved.

e. The offended Gibeonites have laid Israel under a curse, e.g. the famine, and only they can reverse its effects, by pronouncing a contrary blessing, *see* Jg 17:2; 1 K 2:33,44–45.

f. Saul being dead, blood-vengeance is transferred to his descendants. • 'at Gibeon on Yahweh's hill' following part of Gk; 'at Gibeah of Saul, the elect of Yahweh' Hebr. • 'before Yahweh', a cultic expression, here meaning ritual execution.

g. 'Merab' versions, *see* 1 S 18:19; 'Michal' Hebr.

h. Worn as a sign of mourning, 3:31; 12:16.

i. The coming of the rain shows that the famine will soon be over and that God has accepted the expiation. Only then does David have the bodies removed. In this particular case, Dt 21:22–23 (cf. Jos 10:27) does not apply.

j. 'these, with' Gk; Hebr. omits.

k. These episodes of the Philistine wars would be better placed after 5:17–25, at the beginning of David's reign. They were single combats, *see* 1 S 17:40g, between Philistine champions and David or one of his champions, *see also* 2 S 23:20–21. In the first episode, vv. 15[b]–17, David is saved, despite the rules governing single combat, by the intervention of Abishai; his men consequently make him promise not to expose himself in single combat again, v. 17.

l. 'a champion' conj.; Hebr. doubtful. • 'a sword' versions; Hebr. omits.

wearing a new sword and was confident of killing David. ·Abishai son of Zeruiah 17
came to his rescue, however, attacking the Philistine and killing him. Then it was
that David's men swore the following oath to him, 'You are never to go into battle
14:7 with us again, in case you should extinguish the lamp of Israel!'
1 K 11:36; 15:4 After this, war with the Philistines broke out again at Gob. This was when 18
2 K 8:19 23:27 Sibbecai of Hushah killed Saph, one of the sons of Rapha.
‖1 Ch 20:4–8 Again, war with the Philistines broke out at Gob, and Elhanan son of Jair, " of 19
1 S 17:4a;17:7 Bethlehem, killed Goliath of Gath, the shaft of whose spear was like a weaver's
beam.
There was further warfare at Gath, where there was a man of huge stature " with 20
six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot, twenty-four in all. He too was a
13:3 son of Rapha. ·When he defied Israel, Jonathan son of Shimea, brother of David 21
1 S 16:9 cut him down.
These four were sons of Rapha in Gath and fell at the hands of David and his 22
retainers.

A hymn of victory [a]

22 David addressed the words of this song to Yahweh, when Yahweh had 1
delivered him from the clutches of all his enemies and from the clutches of
Saul. ·He said: 2

‖Ps 18 Yahweh is my rock and my fortress,
my deliverer is my God. 3
I take refuge in him, my rock,
1 S 2:2 my shield, my saving strength,
1 S 2:1 my stronghold, my place of refuge.

My Saviour, you have saved me from violence;
I call to Yahweh, who is worthy of praise, 4
and I am saved from my foes.

With Death's breakers closing in on me, 5
23:6 Belial's torrents ready to swallow me,
Sheol's snares on every side of me, 6
Death's traps lying ahead of me,

I called to Yahweh in my anguish, 7
I cried for help to my God,
from his Temple he heard my voice,
my cry came to his ears!

Ex 19:16g Then the earth quaked and rocked, 8
the heavens' foundations shuddered,
they quaked at his blazing anger.
Smoke rose from his nostrils, 9
from his mouth devouring fire,
(coals were kindled at it).

Ps 144:5 He parted the heavens and came down, 10
a storm-cloud underneath his feet;
Ex 25:18i riding one of the winged creatures, he flew, 11
soaring on the wings of the wind.

He wrapped himself in darkness, 12
his pavilion dark waters and dense cloud.
A brightness lit up before him, 13
hail and blazing fire.

Yahweh thundered from the heavens, 14

the Most High made his voice heard.
15 He shot his arrows and scattered them,
his lightning flashed [b] and routed them. Ps 144:6

16 The very springs of ocean were exposed,
the world's foundations were laid bare,
at the roaring of Yahweh,
at the blast of breath from his nostrils!

17 He reached down from on high, snatched me up,
pulled me from the watery depths, Ps 144:7
18 rescued me from my mighty foe,
from my enemies who were stronger than I.

19 They assailed me on my day of disaster,
but Yahweh was there to support me,
20 he freed me, set me at large,
he rescued me, because he loves me.

21 Yahweh rewards me for my uprightness,
as my hands are pure so he repays me,
22 since I have kept the ways of Yahweh,
and not fallen away from my God.

23 His judgements are all before me,
his statutes I have not put away from me;
24 I am blameless before him,
I keep myself clear of evil.

25 Hence Yahweh repaid me for acting uprightly
because he could see I was pure.
26 Faithful you are to the faithful,
blameless with the blameless,

27 sincere to the sincere
but cunning to the crafty,
28 you save a people that is humble
and humiliate those with haughty looks.

29 Yahweh, you yourself are my lamp,
my God lights up my darkness;
30 with you I storm the rampart
with my God I can scale any wall. [c]

31 This God, his way is blameless;
the word of Yahweh is refined in the furnace,
for he alone is the shield
of all who take refuge in him.

32 For who is God but Yahweh,
who is a rock but our God:
33 this God who girds me with strength,
who makes my way free from blame,

34 who makes me as swift as a deer
and sets me firmly on the heights,

m. 'son of Jair' following 1 Ch 20:5; Hebr. dubious.
n. 'of huge stature' 1 Ch 20:6; 'of strife' Hebr.

22 **a.** With minor variants, this song is identical to Ps 18. *see* notes on that Psalm, which forms the basis for the correction to the frequently corrupt text. This song is ancient, but its attribution to David is uncertain.
b. 'flashed' Gk-Luc., omitted by Hebr.
c. 'I can scale any wall' *'arotz gader* conj.; following Gk-Luc.; Hebr. *'arutz gedud* 'I go off hunting'.

who trains my hands for battle
my arms to bend a bow of bronze.

You give me your invincible shield, 36
you never cease to listen to me.[d]
you give me the strides of a giant, 37
give me ankles that never weaken—

I pursue my enemies and exterminate them, 38
not turning back till they are annihilated;
I strike them down, and they cannot rise, 39
they fall, they are under my feet.

You have girded me with strength for the fight, 40
bent down my assailants beneath me,
made my enemies retreat before me; 41
and those who hate me I destroy.

They cry out, there is no one to save, 42
to Yahweh, but no answer comes.
I crumble them like the dust of the squares,[e] 43
trample them like the mud of the streets.

You free me from the quarrels of my people,[f] 44
you place me at the head of the nations,
a people I did not know are now my servants,

foreigners come wooing my favour, 45
no sooner do they hear than they obey me,
foreigners grow faint of heart, 46
they come trembling out of their fastnesses.

Life to Yahweh! Blessed be my rock! 47
Exalted be the God of my salvation,
the God who gives me vengeance 48
and crushes[g] the peoples under me,

who takes me away from my enemies. 49
You lift me high above those who attack me,
you deliver me from the man of violence.

Ps 22:22 For this I will praise you, Yahweh, among the nations, 50
and sing praise to your name.
He saves his king, time after time, 51
displays faithful love for his anointed,
for David and his heirs for ever.

1 K 2:1–9 **Last words of David**[a]

23 These are the last words of David: 1

Nb 24:3seq., 15seq. Thus speaks David son of Jesse,
thus speaks the man raised to eminence,
the anointed of the God of Jacob,
the singer of the songs of Israel:

Is 59:21 Jr 1:9 The spirit of Yahweh speaks through me, 2
his word is on my tongue;
the God of Jacob has spoken,[b] 3
the Rock of Israel has said to me:

He whose rule is upright on earth, Ps 72:1–6
who rules in the fear of God,
4 is like the morning light at sunrise
(on a cloudless morning)
making the grass of the earth sparkle after rain. [c]

5 Yes, my House stands firm [d] with God:
he has made an eternal covenant with me, 7:11–16
all in order, well assured; Is 55:3
does he not bring to fruition my every victory and desire?

6 But men of Belial he rejects like thorns, Dt 13:14b
for these are never taken up in the hand:
7 no one touches them
except with a pitchfork or spear-shaft,
and then only to burn them to nothing! [e]

David's champions [f] 1 Ch 11:11–47; 27:2–15

8 These are the names of David's champions: Ishbaal the Hachmonite leader of the Three; [g] it was he who brandished his spear over eight hundred men whom he had
9 killed at one time. ·Next, there was Eleazar son of Dodo, the Ahohite, one of the three champions. He was with David at Pas-Dammim when the Philistines [h] mus- 1 S 17:1
10 tered for battle there and the men of Israel had disbanded. ·But he stood his ground and cut down the Philistines until his hand was so stiff that he could not let go of the sword. Yahweh brought about a great victory that day, and the people
11 rallied behind him, although only to plunder. ·Next, there was Shamma son of Elah, the Hararite. The Philistines had mustered at Lehi. There was a field full of
12 lentils there; the people fled from the Philistines, ·but he took his stand in the middle of the field, held it, and cut down the Philistines; and Yahweh brought about a great victory.

13 Three [i] members of the Thirty went down at the beginning of the harvest and came to David at the Cave of Adullam while a company of Philistines was en- 1 S 22:1
14 camped in the Valley of the Rephaim. ·David was then in the stronghold, and 5:18
15 there was a Philistine garrison in Bethlehem. ·Longingly David said, 'If only someone would fetch me a drink of water from the well that stands by the gate at
16 Bethlehem!' ·At this, the three champions, forcing their way through the Philistine camp, drew water from the well that stands by the gate of Bethlehem and, taking it away, presented it to David. He, however, would not drink any of it, but poured it
17 out as a libation to Yahweh. ·'Yahweh preserve me', he said, 'from doing such a thing! This is the blood of men who went at risk of their lives.' That was why he would not drink. Such were the deeds of these three champions.

18 Abishai, brother of Joab and son of Zeruiah, was leader of the Thirty. [j] It was he

d. Translation uncertain; lit. 'you multiply for me (favourable) answers'.

e. 'squares' conj., 'of the earth' Hebr.; 'in the wind' Gk and Ps.

f. 'of the nations' Gk, Targ.; 'of my people' Hebr.

g. 'crushes' *umered* conj.; Hebr. *umorid* 'lowers'.

23 a. 'Last words' are ascribed to David (as to Jacob, Gn 49, and Moses, Dt 33). The text has suffered considerably. The poem may date from the beginning of the monarchy. David's testament in 1 K 2:5–9 gives the king's last wishes in more concrete terms.

b. 'Jacob' *Vet. Lat.*; 'Israel' Hebr.

c. 'making sparkle' *menaggeah* conj.; Hebr. *minnogah* unintelligible.

d. 'stands firm' *nakon* conj.; Hebr. *lo'ken* 'not thus'. • 'does he not' conj.; 'for he does not' Hebr.

e. lit. 'unless with iron' *im lo' babarzel* conj.; Hebr. *yimmale' barzel* 'he is filled with iron'. • At the end of the v., 'residence' has been suppressed as a dittography of disordered v. 8.

f. This section originally followed ch. 21. It groups: vv. 8–12, information on the Three, the peerless warriors; vv. 13–17, an episode from the Philistine wars, here introduced because it shows 'three' heroes in action; vv. 18–24[a], information on Abishai, Benaiah, and probably on Asahel (*see* note n below); vv. 24[b]–39, a list of the Thirty.

g. 'Ishbaal the Hachmonite' Gk-Luc.; 1 Ch 11:11; 'living in the Tachmonite residence' Hebr. • 'Three' Gk; 'Thirty' Hebr. • 'brandished his spear' 1 Ch 11:11, *see* 2 S 23:18; Hebr. doubtful. Here and subsequently, Hebr., versions and 1 Ch give variant forms of the proper names.

h. 'at Pas-Dammin when the Philistines' following 1 Ch 11:13; 'when they defied the Philistines' Hebr.

i. 'Three' *qere*, versions, 1 Ch 11:15; 'Thirty' *ketib*. • 'at the beginning of the harvest and came' conj.; word-order confused in Hebr.

j. 'Thirty' Syr.; 'Three' Hebr., both times.

who brandished his spear over three hundred men whom he had killed, winning himself a name among the Thirty. [k] ·He was a most illustrious member of the Thirty 19
and became their captain, but he was not equal to the Three.

8:18;20:23 1 K 2 29seq. Benaiah of Kabzeel was the son of Jehoiada and hero [l] of many exploits. He it 20
was who slaughtered two formidable Moabites and, one snowy day, climbed down
and slaughtered the lion in the storage-well. ·He also slaughtered an Egyptian of 21
great stature. [m] The Egyptian was armed with a spear, but he took him on with a
staff, tore the spear from the Egyptian's hand and killed the man with it. ·Such 22
were the exploits of Benaiah son of Jehoiada, winning him a name among the thirty
champions. ·He was a most illustrious member of the Thirty, but he was not equal 23
1 S 22:14 to the Three. David put him in command of his bodyguard.

2:18–23 Asahel brother of Joab was one of the Thirty; [n] 24
Elhanan son of Dodo, of Bethlehem;
Shammah of Harod; 25
Elika of Harod;
Helez of Beth-Pelet; 26
Ira son of Ikkesh, of Tekoa;
Abiezer of Anathoth; 27
21:18 Sibbecai of Hushah;
Zalmon of Ahoh; 28
Maharai of Netophah;
Heled son of Baanah, of Netophah; 29
Ittai son of Ribai, of Gibeah in Benjamin;
Benaiah of Pirathon; 30
Hiddai of the Torrents of Gaash;
Abibaal of Beth-ha-Arabah; 31
Azmaveth of Bahurim;
Eliahba of Shaalbon; 32
Jashen of Gimzo;
Jonathan · son of Shammah, of Harar; 33
Ahiam son of Sharar, of Harar;
Eliphelet son of Ahasbai, of Beth-Maacah; 34
Eliam son of Ahithophel, of Gilo;
Hezro of Carmel; 35
Paarai of Arab;
Igal son of Nathan, of Zobah; 36
Bani the Gadite;
Zelek the Ammonite; 37
Naharai of Beeroth squire to Joab, son of Zeruiah;
Ira of Jattir; 38
Gareb of Jattir;
11:3seq. Uriah the Hittite— 39

thirty-seven in all. [o]

‖1 Ch 21:1–5 **The census** [a]

24 Again, Yahweh's anger was aroused against Israel, and he incited David 1
against them. 'Go,' he said, 'take a census of Israel and Judah.' [b] ·The king 2
said to Joab and the senior army officers [c] who were with him, 'Now, go through all
the tribes of Israel from Dan to Beersheba, and take a census of the people; I wish
to know the size of the population.' ·Joab said to the king, 'May Yahweh your God 3
multiply the people a hundred times—however many there are—while my lord the
king still has eyes to see it, but why should my lord the king be set on this?'
The king nonetheless enforced his order on Joab and the senior officers, and Joab 4
and the senior officers left the king's presence, to take a census of the people of
Israel.

They crossed the Jordan and made a start with Aroer and the town in the middle
of the valley,[d] then moved on to the Gadites and to Jazer. ·They then went to
Gilead and the territory of the Hittites, to Kadesh; they then went to Dan and from
Dan cut across to Sidon.[e] ·They then went to the fortress of Tyre and to all the
towns of the Hittites and Canaanites ending up in the Negeb of Judah at Beersheba.
Having travelled throughout the country, after nine months and twenty days they
returned to Jerusalem.
Joab gave the king the census results for the people; Israel had eight hundred
thousand fighting men who could wield a sword, and Judah five hundred thousand.[f]

The pestilence. God's forgiveness

‖Ch 21:7–17

But afterwards David's heart misgave him for having taken a census of the people. 1 S 24:6
David then said to Yahweh, 'I have committed a grave sin by doing this. But now,
Yahweh, I beg you to forgive your servant for this fault, for I have acted very
foolishly.' ·When, however, David got up next morning, the following message
had come from Yahweh to the prophet Gad, David's seer, ·'Go and say to David, 1 S 22:5
"Yahweh says this: I offer you three things; choose which one of them I am to
inflict on you." ' ·So Gad went to David and said, 'Which do you prefer: to have
three years of famine befall your country; to flee for three months before a pursuing 21:1, 15–17
army;[g] or to have three days of epidemic in your country? Now think, and decide
how I am to answer him who sends me.' ·David said to Gad, 'I am very apprehen-
sive . . . Better to fall into Yahweh's hands, since his mercies are great, than to fall
into the hands of men!' ·So David chose the epidemic.
It was the time of the wheat harvest. So Yahweh unleashed an epidemic on Israel
from that morning until the time determined; plague ravaged the people[h] and, of
the people from Dan to Beersheba, seventy thousand died. ·But when the angel Ex 12:23j
stretched his hand towards Jerusalem to destroy it, Yahweh felt sorry about the 2 K 19:35
calamity and said to the angel who was destroying the people, 'Enough now! Hold
your hand!' The angel of Yahweh was standing by the threshing-floor of Araunah
the Jebusite.[i] ·When David saw the angel who was ravaging the people, he said to
Yahweh, 'I was the one who sinned. I was the one who acted wrongly. But these,
the flock, what have they done? Let your hand lie heavy on me and on my family!'

The building of an altar

‖1 Ch 21:18–28

Gad went to David that day and said, 'Go up and raise an altar to Yahweh on the
threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite.' ·So, at Gad's bidding, David went up, as

k. 'Thirty' conj.; 'Three' Hebr., as also in v. 22.

l. 'hero' Gk; 'son of a hero' *qere*; 'son of a living man' *ketib*. • 'formidable' trans. approx.; Gk reads 'the two sons of Ariel'.

m. 'of great stature' 1 Ch 11:23; 'of (good) looks' Hebr.

n. Possibly information similar to the preceding was originally given about Asahel before the list of the Thirty, which begins with Elhanan. This small group of picked warriors is mentioned only here and presumably consisted of the cream of those who had shared David's adventurous life. The Thirty was possibly constituted as a regular unit during David's stay at Ziklag, *see* 2:3; 1 S 27:6–28:2; 29:4; 30:1–24.

o. An editorial calculation which seems to include the Thirty (vv. 24b–39) plus Joab (mentioned in v. 37) plus Abishai, Benaiah, Asahel (vv. 18–24a), plus the Three (vv. 8–12).

24 a. The whole ch. forms a pendant to 21:1–14; *see* 21:1a.

b. The carrying out of what seems to be a divine command comes to be seen by David as a 'sin', v. 10, and is punished by pestilence, vv. 15seq. In ancient Israel everything that happened was attributed to God as first cause. In those days a census was considered impious, because it infringed the prerogatives of God who keeps the register of those who are to live and die, Ex 32:32–33, but compare Ex 30:12.

c. 'officers', *see* v. 4, 'officer' Hebr.

d. 'made . . . town' Gk; 'bivouacked at Aroer, to the south of the town' Hebr. Aroer, on the River Arnon, marked the southern boundary of Israelite territory in Transjordan, Dt 2:36; Jos 13:9,16. To the west of the Jordan, the boundaries were Dan to the north, Beersheba to the south, vv. 2,6,7,15. Thus the whole territory of Israel was covered. But the text adds Tyre and Sidon and, it seems, Hittite Kadesh, far to the north on the Orontes, which can be justified only by involving Nb 34:7–9; Ezk 47:15–17 and the conquests of David 2 S 8:3–12.

e. 'the territory of the Hittites, to Kadesh', Gk. Luc.; Hebr. corrupt. • 'and from Dan cut across' after the Gk; Hebr. corrupt.

f. Like many similar figures in the OT these are clearly too high. 1 Ch 21:5 makes them higher still. Israel and Judah were counted separately, *see* 5:5a.

g. 'three years' Gk, *Vet. Lat.*; 'seven years' Hebr. • 'enemy' conj.; 'enemies' Hebr., but with sing. verb.

h. Following Gk; Hebr. omits 'So David . . . wheat harvest' and 'plague ravaged the people'.

i. The narrative probably fuses two traditions: according to one, Yahweh halts the plague at the gates of Jerusalem out of love for the city, v. 16, and David offers a sacrifice of thanksgiving 'as Yahweh had ordered', v. 19. According to the other, the city is saved by David's prayer and the building of an altar, vv. 17,21,25.

Yahweh had ordered. ·When Araunah looked up and saw the king and his retinue 20
advancing towards him—Araunah was threshing the wheat[j]—Araunah came for-
ward and prostrated himself on the ground at the king's feet. ·'Why has my lord 21
the king come to his servant?' Araunah asked. David replied, 'To buy the
threshing-floor from you, to build an altar to Yahweh, so that the plague may be
lifted from the people.' ·Araunah said to David, 'Let my lord the king take it and 22
make what offerings he thinks fit. Here are the oxen for the burnt offering, the
1 S 6:14 threshing-sleds[k] and the oxen's yokes for the wood. ·My lord the king's servant[l] 23
1 K 19:21 will give the king everything. And', Araunah said to the king, 'may Yahweh your
God accept what you offer!'

'No,' said the king to Araunah, 'I shall give you a price for it; I will not offer 24
Yahweh my God burnt offerings which have cost me nothing.' David bought the
threshing-floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver.[m] ·David built an altar to 25
21:14 Yahweh and offered burnt offerings and communion sacrifices. Yahweh then took
pity on the country and the plague was lifted from Israel.

j. This detail, omitted by Hebr., is restored from 1 Ch 21:20.

k. A board with stones set in the underside, still used in Palestine for threshing.

l. 'My lord the king's servant' conj.; 'Araunah the king' Hebr.

m. Six hundred shekels in gold (15lb, 6.8 kg), according to 1 Ch 21:25. Araunah's threshing-floor lay outside the Davidic and Jebusite city, on the hill dominating it to the north, and was later to be the site of Solomon's Temple, *see* 5:9f.

THE BOOKS OF THE
KINGS
THE FIRST BOOK OF THE KINGS

I: THE DAVIDIC SUCCESSION[a]

Last days of David and activities of Adonijah

1 1 King David was now a very old man, and though wrapped in bedclothes he
2 could not keep warm. ·So his servants said to him, 'Let us find a young girl for
my lord the king, to wait on the king and look after him; she will lie close beside
3 you and this will keep my lord the king warm.' ·Having searched for a beautiful girl
throughout the territory of Israel, they found Abishag of Shunem and brought her
4 to the king. ·The girl was very beautiful. She looked after the king and waited on
5 him but the king did not have intercourse with her. ·Now Adonijah son of Haggith 2 S 3:4
was growing pretentious and saying, 'I shall be king!' Accordingly, he procured a
6 chariot and team with fifty guards to run ahead of him. ·Never once in his life had 2 S 15:1
his father crossed him by saying, 'Why are you behaving like that?' He was very
7 handsome too; his mother had given birth to him after Absalom. ·He conferred
with Joab son of Zeruiah and with the priest Abiathar,[b] who both rallied to
8 Adonijah's cause; ·but neither Zadok the priest, nor Benaiah son of Jehoiada, nor
the prophet Nathan, nor Shimei and Rei,[c] nor David's champions, supported
Adonijah.
9 One day when Adonijah was sacrificing sheep, oxen and fattened calves at the
Sliding Stone which is beside the Fuller's Spring, he invited all his brothers, the
10 royal princes, and all the men of Judah in the king's service; ·but he did not invite
the prophet Nathan, or Benaiah, or the champions, or his brother Solomon.

The intrigues of Nathan and Bathsheba

11 Nathan then said to Bathsheba, Solomon's mother, 'Have you not heard that, 2 S 12:24
12 unknown to our lord David, Adonijah son of Haggith has become king? ·Well,
this is my advice to you if you want to save your own life and the life of your son
13 Solomon. ·Go straight in to King David and say, "My lord king, did you not make
your servant this promise on oath:[d] Your son Solomon is to be king after me; he is
the one who is to sit on my throne? How is it, then, that Adonijah is king?"
14 And while you are still there talking to the king, I shall come in after you and
confirm what you say.'
15 So Bathsheba went to the king in his room (he was very old and Abishag of

1 **a.** Ch. 1–2 continue the narrative of 2 S 13–20.
b. Joab, David's nephew and companion of his early days, still commander-in-chief, 2 S 19:14; Abiathar sole survivor of the priests of Nob. 1 S 22:20, and still loyal to David.
c. The factions of Solomon and Adonijah were opposed on personal grounds. Zadok and Abiathar were rivals; Benaiah, captain of the guard, was jealous of Joab, commander-in-chief; Nathan had been God's mouthpiece for David, especially at the time of Solomon's birth, 2 S 12:24–25.
d. This oath has not hitherto been mentioned in the history of David.

Shunem was in attendance on him). ·She knelt, prostrated herself before the king, 16
and the king said, 'What do you want?' ·'My lord,' she replied, 'you swore to your 17
servant by Yahweh your God, "Your son Solomon is to be king after me; he is the
one who is to sit on my throne." ·And now here is Adonijah king, and you, my 18
lord king, knowing nothing about it! ·He has sacrificed quantities of oxen, fattened 19
calves and sheep, and invited all the royal princes, the priest Abiathar, and Joab
the army commander; but he has not invited your servant Solomon. ·Yet you are 20
the man, my lord king, to whom all Israel looks, to tell them who is to succeed my
lord the king. ' ·And when my lord the king falls asleep with his ancestors, Solomon 21
and I shall be made to suffer for this.'

She was still speaking to the king when the prophet Nathan came in. ·The king 22, 23
was told, 'The prophet Nathan is here'; and he came into the king's presence and
prostrated himself on his face before the king. ·'My lord king,' said Nathan, 'is 24
this, then, your decree, "Adonijah is to be king after me; he is the one who is to sit
on my throne"? ·For he has gone down today and sacrificed quantities of oxen, 25
fattened calves and sheep, and invited all the royal princes, the army commanders,
and the priest Abiathar; and they are there now, eating and drinking in his presence
and shouting, "Long live King Adonijah!" ·He has not, however, invited me your 26
servant, Zadok the priest, Benaiah son of Jehoiada, or your servant Solomon.
Can it be that this is done with my lord the king's approval and that you have not 27
told those loyal to you who is to succeed to the throne of my lord the king?'

Solomon is consecrated king on David's nomination

King David then spoke. 'Call Bathsheba to me,' he said. And she came into the 28
king's presence and stood before him. ·Then the king swore this oath, 'As Yahweh 29
lives, who has delivered me from all adversity, ·just as I swore to you by Yahweh, 30
God of Israel, that your son Solomon should be king after me and take my place on
my throne, so I shall bring it about this very day.' ·Bathsheba knelt down, pros- 31
trated herself on her face before the king and said, 'May my lord King David live
forever!' ·Then King David said, 'Summon Zadok the priest, the prophet Nathan 32
1 K 11:11–20 and Benaiah son of Jehoiada.' So they came into the king's presence. ·'Take the 33
royal guard with you,' said the king, 'mount my son Solomon on my own mule and
escort him down to Gihon. ·There Zadok the priest and the prophet Nathan are to 34
1 S 9:26n anoint him king of Israel; then sound the trumpet and shout, "Long live King
Solomon!" ·Then you are to escort him back, and he is then to assume my throne 35
and be king in place of me, for he is the man whom I have appointed as ruler of
Israel and of Judah.' ·Benaiah son of Jehoiada answered the king. 'Amen!' he said. 36
'And may Yahweh, God of my lord the king, confirm it! ·As Yahweh 37
has been with my lord the king, so may he be with Solomon and make his
throne even greater than the throne of my lord King David!'

2 S 8:18i Zadok the priest, the prophet Nathan, Benaiah son of Jehoiada, and the Chere- 38
thites and Pelethites then went down; they mounted Solomon on King David's
mule and escorted him to Gihon. ·Zadok the priest took the horn of oil from the 39
Ex 30:22d Tent and anointed Solomon. They sounded the trumpet and all the people shouted,
1 S 10:1; 16:1,13 'Long live King Solomon!' ·The people all escorted him back, with pipes playing 40
and loud rejoicing and shouts to split the earth.

Adonijah is afraid

Adonijah and his guests, who had by then finished their meal, all heard the noise. 41
Joab too heard the sound of the trumpet and said, 'What is that noise of uproar in
the city?' ·While he was still speaking, Jonathan son of Abiathar the priest arrived. 42
2 S 18:27 'Come in,' Adonijah said, 'you are an honest man, so you must be bringing good
news.' ·'The truth is,' Jonathan answered, 'our lord King David has made Solomon 43
king. ·With him, the king sent Zadok the priest, the prophet Nathan, Benaiah son 44
of Jehoiada and the Cherethites and Pelethites; they mounted him on the king's
mule, ·and Zadok the priest and the prophet Nathan have anointed him king at 45

Gihon; and they have gone back again with shouts of joy and the city is now in an
46 uproar; that was the noise you heard. •What is more, Solomon is seated on the
47 royal throne. •And further, the king's officers have been to congratulate our lord
King David with the words, "May your God make the name of Solomon more
glorious than yours, and his throne more exalted than your own!" And the king
48 bowed down on his bed, •and then said, "Blessed be Yahweh, God of Israel, for
setting one of my own sons[f] on the throne while I am still alive to see it!" '
49 At this, all Adonijah's guests, taking fright, got up and made off in their several
50 directions. •Adonijah, in terror of Solomon, got up and ran off to cling to the horns 2:28 Ex 21:13–14; 27:2b
51 of the altar. •Solomon was told, 'You should know that Adonijah is terrified of
King Solomon and is now clinging to the horns of the altar, saying, "Let King
Solomon first swear to me that he will not have his servant executed." '
52 'Should he bear himself honourably,' Solomon answered, 'not one hair of his shall
53 fall to the ground; but if he proves difficult, he shall die.' •King Solomon then sent
for him to be brought down from the altar; he came and threw himself prostrate
before King Solomon; Solomon said to him, 'Go to your house.'

David's testament. His death[a]

1, 2 2 As David's life drew to its close he laid this charge on his son Solomon, •'I am Jos 23:14
3 going the way of all the earth. Be strong and show yourself a man. •Observe Dt 17:18–20
the injunctions of Yahweh your God, following his ways and keeping his laws, his
commandments, his ordinances and his decrees, as stands written in the Law of
4 Moses, so that you may be successful in everything you do and undertake, •and Dt 29:8
that Yahweh may fulfil the promise which he made me, "If your sons are careful 2 S 7:11–16
how they behave, and walk loyally before me with all their heart and soul, you will
never want for a man on the throne of Israel."
5 'You know too what Joab son of Zeruiah did to me, and what he did to the two
commanders of the army of Israel, Abner son of Ner and Amasa son of Jether; 2 S 3:27; 20:10
how he murdered them, shedding the blood of war in time of peace and staining
6 the belt round my waist and the sandals on my feet with the blood of war.[b] •You
7 will be wise not to let his grey head go down to Sheol in peace. •As regards the sons Nb 16:33f
of Barzillai of Gilead, treat them with faithful love, let them be among those who
eat at your table, for they were as kind to me when I was fleeing from your brother 2 S 17:27seq.; 19:32seq.
8 Absalom. •You also have with you Shimei son of Gera, the Benjaminite from •2 S 16:5seq.
Bahurim. He called down a terrible curse on me the day I left for Mahanaim, but
he came down to meet me at the Jordan and I swore to him by Yahweh that I would 2 S 19:19seq.
9 not put him to death.[c] •But you,[d] you must not let him go unpunished; you are a
wise man and will know how to deal with him, to bring his grey head down to Sheol
in blood.'
10 So David fell asleep with his ancestors and was buried in the City of David. 2 S 5:9f
11 David was king of Israel for a period of forty years: he reigned at Hebron for seven ‖1 Ch 29:26–27
years, and in Jerusalem for thirty-three.

The death of Adonijah

12 Solomon then sat on the throne of David, and his sovereignty was securely established.

e. The order of succession was not yet legally fixed by statute. Saul and David had been the choice of God and of the people. Primogeniture did not of itself confer sufficient title and the king himself was expected to choose between his sons. David not only chooses Solomon but actually transfers the royal authority by the ritual he prescribes. vv. 33–35.

f. 'of my own sons' Gk; Hebr. omits.

2 a. This 'testament' by which Solomon is appointed to execute vengeance on David's personal enemies reflects the ideas of this period of the OT on blood-revenge and the lasting efficacy of the curse, *see* v. 8. vv. 3–4 are an addition, in the deuteronomic style, to the original narrative.

b. End of the verse corrected according to the versions; Hebr. corrupt. • Thus by his treachery Joab brought the king's peacetime administration into disrepute and laying David open to the charge of complicity, 2 S 16:7, and made him and his descendants liable to blood-vengeance until the real culprit had been killed.

c. Shimei's curse will lie heavy on David's descendants since a curse, like a blessing, retains its efficacy. Only by being turned against its originator can it be undone, vv. 44–45. David's oath has prevented him from doing this, but Solomon is free.

d. 'But you' Vulg.; 'Now' Hebr.

Adonijah son of Haggith went to Bathsheba mother of Solomon. 'Do you bring 13
peace?' she asked. He replied, 'Yes, peace.' ·Then he said, 'I have something to 14
say to you.' 'Say on,' she replied. ·'You know', he said, 'that the kingdom should 15
Gn 4:5c have come to me, [e] and that all Israel expected me to be king; but the crown eluded
me and fell to my brother, since it came to him from Yahweh. ·Now I have one 16
request to make you; do not refuse me.' 'Go on,' she said. ·He went on, 'Please 17
ask King Solomon—for he will not refuse you—to give me Abishag of Shunem in
marriage.' ·'Very well,' Bathsheba replied, 'I shall speak to the king about you.' 18
So Bathsheba went to King Solomon to speak to him about Adonijah; the king 19
got up to meet her and bowed before her; he then sat down on his throne; a seat
was brought for the king's mother, and she sat down on his right. ·She said, 'I have 20
one small request to make you; do not refuse me.' 'Mother,' the king replied,
'make your request, for I shall not refuse you.' ·'Let Abishag of Shunem', she said, 21
'be given in marriage to your brother Adonijah.' ·King Solomon replied to his 22
mother, 'And why do you request Abishag of Shunem for Adonijah? You might as
well request the kingdom for him, [f] since he is my elder brother and Abiathar the
priest and Joab son of Zeruiah are on his side.' ·And King Solomon swore by 23
Rt 1:17f Yahweh: 'May God bring unnameable ills on me, and worse ills, too,' he said, 'if
Adonijah does not pay for these words of his with his life! ·As Yahweh lives who 24
has set me securely on the throne of my father David, and who, as he promised,
2 S 7:11–16 has given [g] him a dynasty, Adonijah shall be put to death this very day.'
And King Solomon commissioned Benaiah son of Jehoiada to strike him down, 25
and that was how he died.

The fate of Abiathar and Joab

1 S 22:20–23h Jr 1:1 As for Abiathar the priest, the king said to him, 'Go to Anathoth [h] to your estate. 26
You deserve to die, but I am not going to put you to death now, since you carried
the ark of Yahweh in the presence of my father David and shared all my father's
hardships.' ·Solomon deprived Abiathar of the priesthood of Yahweh, thus fulfil- 27
1 S 2:30–36 ling the prophecy which Yahweh had uttered against the House of Eli at Shiloh.
When the news reached Joab—for Joab had lent his support to Adonijah, 28
though he had not supported Absalom—he fled to the Tent of Yahweh and clung
1:50 Ex 27:2b to the horns of the altar. ·King Solomon was told, 'Joab has fled to the Tent of 29
Yahweh; he is there beside the altar.' On this, Solomon sent [i] word to Joab, 'What
reason did you have for fleeing to the altar?' Joab replied, 'I was afraid of you and
fled to Yahweh.' Solomon then sent Benaiah son of Jehoiada. 'Go', he said, 'and
strike him down.' ·Accordingly Benaiah went to the Tent of Yahweh. 'By order of 30
Ex 21:14 the king,' he said, 'come out!' 'No,' he said, 'I will die here.' [j] So Benaiah brought
word back to the king, 'This is what Joab said, and the answer he gave me.' ·'Do as 31
he says,' the king replied. 'Strike him down and bury him, and so rid me and my
2:5b family today of the innocent blood which Joab has shed. ·Yahweh will bring his 32
blood down on his own head, because he struck down two more upright and better
men than he, and, without my father David's knowledge, put to the sword Abner
son of Ner, commander of the army of Israel, and Amasa son of Jether, commander
of the army of Judah. ·May their blood come down on the head of Joab and his 33
descendants for ever, but may David, his descendants, his dynasty, his throne,
have peace for ever from Yahweh.' ·Whereupon Benaiah son of Jehoiada went 34
out, struck Joab down and put him to death; he was buried at his home in the
desert. ·In his place as head of the army the king appointed Benaiah son of 35
Jehoiada and, in place of Abiathar, the priest Zadok.

The disobedience and death of Shimei [k]

The king had Shimei summoned to him. 'Build yourself a house in Jerusalem,' he 36
told him. 'You are to live there; do not leave it to go anywhere at all. ·The day you 37
go out and cross the ravine of the Kidron, be sure you will certainly die. Your
blood will be on your own head.' ·'That is a fair demand,' Shimei replied to the 38

king, 'your servant will do as my lord the king orders.' And for a long time Shimei lived in Jerusalem.

39 But when three years had gone by, it happened that two of Shimei's slaves ran away to Achish son of Maacah, king of Gath; Shimei was told, 'Your slaves are in 1 S 21:11; 27:2seq.
40 Gath.' ·On this, Shimei got up and saddled his donkey and went to Akish at Gath to find his slaves. He went off and brought his slaves back from Gath.
41 Solomon was informed that Shimei had left Jerusalem for Gath and come back again.
42 The king had Shimei summoned to him. 'Did I not make you swear by Yahweh,' he said, 'and did I not warn you, "The day you leave to go anywhere at all, be sure
43 you will certainly die"? To which you replied, "That is a fair demand." ·Why did
44 you not keep the oath to Yahweh and the order which I imposed on you?' ·The king then said to Shimei, 'You know well all the evil you did to my father David.
45 Yahweh is about to bring your wickedness down on your own head. ·But may King Solomon be blessed,[l] and may the throne of David be kept secure before Yahweh
46 for ever!' ·The king gave orders to Benaiah son of Jehoiada; he went out and struck Shimei down; and that was how he died. And now the kingdom was securely in Solomon's hands.

II: SOLOMON IN ALL HIS GLORY

A: SOLOMON THE SAGE

Introduction

1 **3** Solomon became the son-in-law of Pharaoh[a] king of Egypt; he married Phar- 7:8; 9:16seq.,24; 2 S 5:9f
aoh's daughter, and took her to the City of David until he could complete the building of his palace, the Temple of Yahweh and the ramparts of Jerusalem.
2 The people, however, were still sacrificing on the high places, because at that time 1 S 9:12f
3 a dwelling-place for the name of Yahweh had not yet been built. ·Solomon loved Yahweh: he followed the precepts of his father David, except that he offered sacrifice and incense on the high places.

Solomon's dream at Gibeon

‖2 Ch 1:3–12; Ws 8:19–9:12; Si 47:14

4 The king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there, since that was the principal high place—
5 Solomon presented a thousand burnt offerings on that altar. ·At Gibeon Yahweh appeared to Solomon in a dream[b] during the night. God said, 'Ask what you would
6 like me to give you.' ·Solomon replied, 'You showed most faithful love to your servant David, my father, when he lived his life before you in faithfulness and uprightness and integrity of heart; you have continued this most faithful love to
7 him by allowing a son of his to sit on his throne today. ·Now, Yahweh my God, you have made your servant king in succession to David my father. But I am a very
8 young man, unskilled in leadership. ·And here is your servant, surrounded with your people whom you have chosen, a people so numerous that its number cannot 4:20

e. Since he was the elder.

f. To take the concubine of a dead or deposed king gave a title to succession, *see* 2 S 3:7; 16:22. • 'and he has the priest Abiathar for him' versions; 'for him and for the priest Abiathar and for Joab' Hebr.

g. 'given him' conj.; 'given me' Hebr.

h. Levitical town near Jerusalem.

i. Hebr. jumps from this 'Solomon sent' to the second 'sent' later in the v.; Gk preserves the full text.

j. Benaiah tries to adopt the procedure of Ex 21:14, which is precisely Joab's case, 'If a man kills his neighbour treacherously, you are to take him even from my altar and put him to death.' Joab, however, is determined that Solomon shall incur the odium of profanation.

k. On pain of death, Solomon orders Shimei to take up residence in Jerusalem and binds him with an oath. Having broken his oath, Shimei is 'justly' executed. But Solomon reveals, v. 44, that the real reason is the curse he once pronounced against David.

l. As in v. 33, Solomon immediately adds a blessing so that his curse may not recoil on himself.

3 **a.** Probably Psusennis, last king of the 21st Dynasty. • The 'City of David': the part of Jerusalem that had been the old Jebusite town, *see* 2 S 5:9f.

b. Before the prophetic period, dreams were one of God's main channels of communication with humanity, *see* Gn 20:3; 28; 31:11, 24; 37:5d; Nb 12:6.

Pr 2:6–9 be counted or reckoned. ·So give your servant a heart to understand[c] how to 9
govern your people, how to discern between good and evil, for how could one
otherwise govern such a great people as yours?' ·It pleased Yahweh that Solomon 10
should have asked for this. ·'Since you have asked for this,' God said, 'and not 11
asked for long life for yourself or riches or the lives of your enemies but have asked
for a discerning judgement for yourself, ·here and now I do what you ask. I give 12
Qo 1:16 Si 47:14 you a heart wise and shrewd as no one has had before and no one will have after
Mt 6:33 you. ·What you have not asked I shall give you too: such riches and glory as no 13
Qo 2:4–10 Dt 5:33 other king can match.[d] ·And I shall give you a long life, if you follow my ways, 14
Pr 3:1–2 keeping my laws and commandments, as your father David followed them.'
Then Solomon woke up; it had been a dream. He returned to Jerusalem and stood 15
Lv 1:1b; 3:1a before the ark of the covenant of Yahweh; he presented burnt offerings and
communion sacrifices and held a banquet for all those in his service.

The judgement of Solomon

Later two prostitutes came to the king and stood before him. ·'If it please you, 16, 17
my lord,' one of the women said, 'this woman and I live in the same house, and
while she was in the house I gave birth to a child. ·Now it happened on the third 18
day after my delivery that this woman also gave birth to a child. We were alone
together; there was no one else in the house with us; just the two of us in the house.
Now one night this woman's son died; she overlaid him. ·And in the middle of the 19, 20
night she got up and took my son from beside me while your servant was asleep;
she took him in her arms and put her own dead son in mine. ·When I got up[e] to 21
suckle my child, there he was, dead. But in the morning I looked at him carefully,
and he was not the child I had borne at all.' ·Then the other woman spoke. 'That is 22
not true! My son is the live one, yours is the dead one'; and the first retorted, 'That
is not true! Your son is the dead one, mine is the live one.' And so they wrangled
before the king. ·'This one says,' the king observed, ' "My son is the one who is 23
alive; your son is dead," while the other says, "That is not true! Your son is the
dead one, mine is the live one." ·Bring me a sword,' said the king; and a sword was 24
brought into the king's presence. ·'Cut the living child in two,' the king said, 'and 25
give half to one, half to the other.' ·At this the woman who was the mother of the 26
living child addressed the king, for she felt acutely for her son. 'I beg you, my lord,'
she said, 'let them give her the live child; on no account let them kill him!' But the
other said, 'He shall belong to neither of us. Cut him in half!' ·Then the king gave 27
his decision. 'Give the live child to the first woman,' he said, 'and do not kill him.
She is his mother.' ·All Israel came to hear of the judgement which the king had 28
pronounced and held the king in awe, recognising that he possessed divine wisdom
for dispensing justice.[f]

Solomon's high officials

4 King Solomon was king of all Israel, ·and these were his high officials:[a] 1, 2
Azariah son of Zadok, priest;
Elihaph and Ahijah sons of Shisha, secretaries; 3
Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud, herald.
(Benaiah son of Jehoiada, commander of the army. 4
Zadok and Abiathar, priests);[b]
4:7seq. Azariah son of Nathan, chief administrator; 5
Zabud son of Nathan, Friend of the King;[c]
Ahishar, master of the palace; 6
Eliab son of Joab, commander of the army;[d]
5:27 Adoram son of Abda, in charge of forced labour.

Solomon's administrators

Solomon had twelve administrators[e] for all Israel who saw to the provisioning of 7
the king and his household; each had to provide for one month in the year.

8 These are their names:[f]
Son of Hur, in the mountain country of Ephraim.
9 Son of Deker, in Makaz, Shaalbim, Beth-Shemesh, Aijalon, Beth-Hanan.
10 Son of Hesed, in Arubboth; his district was Socoh and the whole territory of Hepher.
11 Son of Abinadab, all the Slopes of Dor. Tabaath Solomon's daughter was his wife.
12 Baana son of Ahilud, in Taanach and Megiddo as far as the other side of Jokmeam, and all Beth-Shean below Jezreel, from Beth-Shean as far as Abel-Meholah by Zarethan.[g]
13 Son of Geber, in Ramoth-Gilead: his district was the Encampments of Jair son of Manasseh, which are in Gilead; he had the region of Argob, which is in Bashan: sixty fortified towns, walled and with bolts of bronze.
14 Ahinadab son of Iddo, in Mahanaim.
15 Ahimaaz in Naphtali; he too married a daughter of Solomon, Basemath.
16 Baana son of Hushai, in Asher and in the highlands.[h]
17 Jehoshaphat son of Paruah, in Issachar.
18 Shimei son of Ela, in Benjamin.
19 Geber son of Uri, in the territory of Gad, the territory of Sihon king of the Amorites and of Og king of Bashan.
In addition, there was one administrator in the country.[i]

4:27 7 **5** [a]These administrators provided the food for Solomon and for all those who
were admitted by him to the royal table,[b] each for the period of a month; they
28 8 ensured that nothing was wanting. ·They also provided the barley and straw for
the horses and draught animals, where required, each according to the quota
22 2 demanded of him. ·The daily provisions for Solomon were: thirty measures of fine
23 3 flour and sixty measures of meal, ·ten fattened oxen, twenty free-grazing oxen, one
24 4 hundred sheep, besides deer and gazelles, roebucks and fattened poultry. ·For he
was master of all Transeuphrates[c]—of all the kings of Transeuphrates from Tiph-
25 5 sah to Gaza—and he enjoyed peace on all his frontiers. ·Judah and Israel lived in
security, everyone under his vine and his fig tree, from Dan to Beersheba, Si 47:13
throughout the lifetime of Solomon.

26 20 **4** Judah and Israel were numerous, as numerous as the sand on the sea-shore;
they ate and drank and were happy. Qo 3:12–13

c. Solomon asks for practical wisdom, not in his own interest but in that of the nation. *see* 5:13g; Ex 31:3a.

d. Hebr. adds 'all your life' influenced by v. 14; Gk omits.

e. Hebr. adds 'in the morning' influenced by what follows.

f. Throughout the ancient East, the first of all royal qualities was fair government. For Israel, *see* Ps 72:1–2; Pr 16:12; 25:5; 29:14; Is 9:6. Solomon asked for this quality, v. 9, God granted it, vv. 11–12, and the story in vv. 16–28 shows it in action.

4 **a.** The herald (lit. 'remembrancer') was head of the diplomatic service and intermediary between king and people. The master of the palace was the prime minister, the 'vizir' of oriental courts. The title 'Friend of the King' was one of honour rather than of jurisdiction. The priest, chief representative of the priestly class, ranked with the royal officials. Solomon retained David's recorder and appointed the sons of his priest and his secretary, 2 S 8:16seq.; 20:23seq. • The names Elihaph and Adoram are emendations; Hebr. 'Elihoreph' and 'Adoniram'.

b. Gloss, the second part of which contradicts v. 2 and 2:26seq.

c. Before 'Friend of the King', we omit 'priest' with some Gk MSS and *Vet. Lat.*

d. The name and title of the commander-in-chief are missing in Hebr. and are restored from Gk.

e. The office was created by Solomon; it concerned the raising of the labour force and the application of taxes to public works. The 12 districts fall into three groups; first, the territory of Ephraim and Manasseh, sons of Joseph, v. 8, with the conquered or recaptured Canaanite towns, vv. 9–12, and the annexed districts of Transjordan, vv. 13–14; second, the northern tribes, vv. 15–17; third, Benjamin, v. 18, and Gad, v. 19. There was a special arrangement for Judah, v. 19 and note.

f. This document from the state archives was damaged at the edges; this explains why, for the first administrators, only their fathers' names are preserved. The place-names Makaz and Aijalon, v. 9, are emendations. (In v. 11 'Tabaath' follows Gk; Hebr. reads 'Tapath'.)

g. Our translation corrects the confused geographical order.

h. lit. 'ascents' *ma'alot* following Gk; 'to Baaloth' Hebr., the hilly country between Acre and Tyre.

i. 'Gad' Gk; 'Gilead' Hebr. • 'The country' without specification, is the royal territory of Judah as opposed to the provinces of Israel. Judah, therefore, had a special administration, emphasising the dual nature of Solomon's kingdom.

5 **a.** The translation follows the order of the Gk which gives the list of administrators in logical order. The Hebr. order has been upset by glosses; v. 4 dates, at the earliest, from the Exile; the remainder, up to the end of the paragraph, is late and missing from Gk.

b. Not only the royal family and its dependants, but all the servants, officials, regular troops.

c. Official title for the area between the Euphrates and the Mediterranean during the Persian period, when this verse was added.

5 Solomon was overlord of all the kingdoms from the River[d] to the territory of the Philistines and the Egyptian border. They brought tribute and served him
||2 Ch 9:26 all his life long. ·And Solomon had four thousand[e] stalls of horses for his chariots
9:25=10:26 and twelve thousand cavalrymen.
||2 Ch 1:14

Solomon's fame

3:12 God gave Solomon immense wisdom and understanding, and a heart as vast as the
Gn 22:1; 32:13 sand on the sea-shore. ·The wisdom of Solomon surpassed the wisdom of all the sons of the East and all the wisdom of Egypt. ·He was wiser than anyone else,
1 Ch 2:6 wiser than Ethan the Ezrahite,[f] than the sons of Mahol, Heman, Calcol and Darda;
Si 47:16 his fame spread to all the surrounding nations. ·He composed three thousand proverbs, and his songs numbered a thousand and five. ·He could discourse on plants from the cedar in Lebanon to the hyssop growing on the wall; and he could discourse on animals and birds and reptiles and fish.[g] ·Men from all nations came to hear Solomon's wisdom, and he received gifts[h] from all the kings in the world,

9 29
10 30
11 31
12 32
13 33
14 34

B: SOLOMON THE BUILDER

Preparations for building the Temple

Hiram king of Tyre sent an embassy to Solomon, having learnt that he had been anointed king in succession to his father and because Hiram had always been a
2 S 5:11
||2 Ch 2:2–3 friend of David. ·And Solomon sent this message to Hiram, ·'You are aware that my father David was unable to build a temple for the name of Yahweh his God, on account of the wars waged on him from every side, until Yahweh put his enemies under the soles of his feet. ·But now Yahweh my God has given me peace on every side: not one enemy, no calamities. ·I propose, then, to build a temple for the name of Yahweh my God, in accordance with what Yahweh told my father David,
2 S 7:12–13 "Your son whom I shall place on your throne to succeed you will be the man to build a temple for my name." ·So now have cedars of Lebanon cut down for me; my servants will work with your servants, and I shall pay for the hire of your servants at whatever rate you fix. As you know, we have no one as skilled in felling
||2 Ch 2:10–11 trees as the Sidonians.'[i] ·When Hiram heard what Solomon had said, he was delighted. 'Now blessed be Yahweh,' he said, 'who has given David a wise son to rule over this great people!' ·And Hiram sent word to Solomon, 'I have received
||2 Ch 2:15 your message. For my part, I shall supply you with all you require in the way of cedar wood and juniper. ·Your servants will bring these down from Lebanon to the sea, and I shall have them towed by sea to any place you name; I shall discharge them there, and you will take them over. For your part, you will see to the provisioning of my household as I desire.' ·So Hiram provided Solomon with all
||2 Ch 2:9 the cedar wood and juniper he wanted ·while Solomon gave Hiram twenty thousand *kor* of wheat to feed his household, and twenty thousand *kor*[j] of pure oil. Solomon gave Hiram this every year. ·Yahweh gave Solomon wisdom as he had promised him; good relations persisted between Solomon and Hiram, and the two of them concluded a treaty.

15 5:1
16 2. 17 3
18 4
19 5
20 6
21 7
22 8
23 9
24 10
25 11
26 12

[k]King Solomon raised a levy throughout Israel for forced labour: the levy numbered thirty thousand men. ·He sent these to Lebanon in relays, ten thousand
4:6 a month; they spent one month in Lebanon and two months at home. Adoram was
||2 Ch 2:2.17 in charge of the forced labour. ·Solomon also had seventy thousand porters and eighty thousand quarrymen in the mountains, ·as well as the administrators, officials who supervised the work, three thousand three hundred of them in charge of the men employed in the work. ·At the king's orders they quarried huge stones, special stones for the laying of the temple foundations, dressed stones. ·Solomon's workmen and Hiram's workmen and the Giblites[l] cut and assembled the wood and stone for the building of the Temple.

27 13
28 14
29 15
30 16
31 17
32 18

The Temple building

||2 Ch 3:1–7

6 In the four hundred and eightieth year after the Israelites came out of Egypt,[a] in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv, which is
2 the second month, he began building the Temple of Yahweh. ·The temple[b] which
King Solomon built for Yahweh was sixty cubits long, twenty cubits wide and
3 twenty-five high.[c] ·The portico in front of the Hekal of the Temple was twenty
cubits long across the width of the Temple and ten cubits wide along the length of
4 the Temple. ·He made windows for the Temple with frames and latticework.[d]
5 He also built an annex against the Temple wall,[e] right round the Hekal and Debir.
6 He built lateral storeys all round; ·the lowest lateral storey[f] was five cubits wide,
the middle one six cubits, and the third seven cubits, for he had made the outside
of the Temple wall correspondingly stepped back all round, so that the annex was
7 not attached to the Temple walls. ·(The building of the Temple was done with
quarry-dressed stone; no sound of hammer or pick or any iron tool was to be heard
8 in the Temple while it was being built.) ·The entrance to the lowest storey was at
the right-hand corner of the Temple; access to the middle storey was by a spiral
9 staircase, and so from the middle storey to the third. ·Having finished building the
10 Temple, he roofed the Temple with a coffered ceiling[g] of cedar wood. ·Round the
outside of the Temple he then built the annex which was five cubits high and was
11 joined to the Temple by cedar-wood beams. ·And the word of Yahweh came to
12 Solomon, ·'With regard to this temple which you are now building, if you follow 2 S 7:11–16
my statutes and obey my ordinances and faithfully follow my commandments, I
13 shall fulfil the promise which I made about you to your father David. ·And I shall
make my home among the Israelites and never forsake Israel my people.'
14 Solomon finished building the Temple.

Interior furnishings. The Holy of Holies

||2 Ch 3:8–9

15 He lined the inside of the Temple walls with panels of cedar wood—panelling them
on the inside from the floor of the Temple to the beams of the ceiling—and laid the
16 floor of the Temple with juniper planks. ·The twenty cubits measured from the
end of the Temple he built of cedar planks from the floor to the beams, and this
17 part was reserved[h] as the Debir, the Holy of Holies. ·The Temple measured forty Ex 26:33e
18 cubits—the Hekal—in front of the Debir.[i] ·There was cedar wood round the inside
of the Temple, ornamentally carved with gourds and rosettes; all was cedar wood,
19 with no stone showing. ·In the inner part of the Temple he designed a Debir, to
20 contain the ark of the covenant of Yahweh. ·The Debir was twenty cubits long,
twenty cubits wide, and twenty high, and he overlaid it on the inside with pure

d. The River Euphrates. *see* v. 4.

e. 'four thousand' following 2 Ch 9:25; 'forty thousand' Hebr.

f. i.e. 'the native-born'. Names of famous Canaanite sages. Ps 89 is attributed to Ethan. Their fame earned them incorporation in the Hebrew genealogies. *see* 1 Ch 2:6; 6:18.

g. Solomon is the first of the 'sages of Israel' (*see* Introduction to the Wisdom Books, last paragraph). That he engaged in literary and poetic activity there is no doubt. *see* 8:12–13, and part of Pr may derive from him. Ps 72 and 127, Qo, Sg, Ws all bear his name.

h. 'and I received gifts' versions, omitted by Hebr.

i. The 'Sidonians' were the Phoenicians as a whole. Hiram was king of Tyre and Sidon.

j. 'twenty thousand' Gk. *see* 2 Ch 2:9; 'twenty' Hebr.

k. vv. 27–32 are additions.

l. Workmen from Gebal (the Gk Byblos) to the north of Beirut.

6 **a.** According to a chronological system by which the tabernacle, Solomon's Temple, and the post-exilic Temple, were reckoned equidistant in time. In fact the date was about 960 BC.

b. The Temple was an oblong building consisting of three successive compartments: the Portico or *ulam*; the great Chamber for worship or *hekal*, later called the Holy (Place); and the Sanctuary or *debir*, i.e. back room, later called the Holy of Holies, i.e. Holiest (Place), containing the ark of the covenant, 6:19. The difference in height between the *hekal* and the *debir* (6:2,10), indicates that the floor of the *debir* was raised to form a kind of rostrum for the ark. The *debir* was presumably separated from the *hekal* by a partition. Three outer walls of the Temple sustained a low three-storey building (6:10). Compare the description of the tabernacle in the desert, Ex 26–36, and that of the future Temple in Ezk 40–42.

c. 'twenty-five' Gk; 'thirty' Hebr. Information concerning ancient weights and measures will be found in the Tables of measures and money.

d. Sense uncertain, as with other technical terms in vv. 5–10.

e. Hebr. repeats 'round the Temple walls', omitted by Gk.

f. 'storey' Gk; 'annex' Hebr.

g. 'coffered ceiling' conj.

h. 'to the beams', *see* v. 15, Gk; 'to the walls' Hebr. • 'was reserved' *wayyibbadlu* conj.; *wayyiben lo* 'of which he built'. Hebr.

i. 'in front of the Debir' detached from v. 20.

gold. He made an altar of cedar wood[j] •[k]in front of the Debir and overlaid it with 21
gold. •He overlaid the whole Temple with gold, the whole Temple entirely.[l] 22

Ex 25:18i
||2 Ch 3:10–13

The great winged creatures

In the Debir he made two great winged creatures of wild-olive wood[m] . . .It was 23
ten cubits high. •One winged creature's wing was five cubits long and the other 24
wing five cubits: ten cubits from wing tip to wing tip. •The other winged creature 25
also measured ten cubits; both had the same measurements and the same shape.
The height of one was the same as the other's. •He placed them in the middle of 26, 27
the inner chamber; their wings were spread out so that the wing of one touched
one of the walls and the wing of the other touched the other wall, while their wings
met in the middle of the chamber wing to wing. •And he overlaid them with gold. 28
All round the Temple walls he carved figures of winged creatures, palm trees and 29
rosettes, both inside and outside.[n] •He overlaid the floor of the Temple with gold, 30
both inside and outside.

The doors.[o] The court

He made the door of the Debir with uprights of wild-olive wood, and door jambs 31
with five indented sections, •and the two leaves of wild-olive wood. He carved 32
figures of great winged creatures, palm trees and rosettes which he overlaid with
gold, and he gilded winged creatures and palm trees. •Similarly, he made uprights 33
of wild-olive wood for the door of the Hekal, and door jambs with four indented
sections, •and the two leaves of juniper: one leaf had two ribs binding it, and the 34
other had two ribs binding it. •He carved winged creatures, palm trees and rosettes, 35
which he overlaid with gold laid evenly over the carvings.

He built the wall of the inner court[p] in three courses of dressed stone and one 36
course of cedar beams.[q]

The date

In the fourth year, in the month of Ziv, the foundations of the Temple were laid; 37
in the eleventh year, in the month of Bul—that is, the eighth month—the Temple 38
was completed exactly as it had been planned and designed. Solomon took seven
years to build it.

Solomon's palace[a]

7 As regards his palace, Solomon spent thirteen years on it before the building 1
was completed. •He built the House of the Forest of Lebanon,[b] a hundred 2
cubits long, fifty cubits wide, and thirty cubits high, on four rows of cedar-wood
pillars, •with lengths of cedar wood laid horizontally on the pillars. The upper part 3
was panelled with cedar right down to the tie-beams on forty-five pillars, fifteen in
each row.[c] •There were three rows of window-frames, with the windows corres- 4
ponding to one another at three levels. •All the doorways and windows were 5
rectangular, with the windows corresponding to one another at three levels. •He 6
also made the Colonnade, fifty cubits long and thirty cubits broad, with a cornice in
front.[d] •He also made the Hall of the Throne where he used to dispense justice, 7
that is, the Hall of Justice; it was panelled in cedar from floor to beams.[e] •His own 8
living quarters, in the other court and inwards from the Hall, were of the same
3:1a construction. And there was a house similar to this Hall for Pharaoh's daughter
whom he had taken in marriage.

All these buildings were of special stones cut to measure, trimmed on the inner 9
and outer sides with the saw, from the foundations to the coping[f]—•the founda- 10
tions were of special stones, huge stones, of ten and eight cubits, •and, above 11
these, special stones, cut to measure, and cedar wood—•and, on the outside, the 12
||2 Ch 4:9 great court had three courses of dressed stone round it and one course of cedar
beams; so also had the inner court of the Temple of Yahweh and the vestibule of
the Temple.

Hiram, the bronzeworker

‖2 Ch 2:12–14

13, 14 King Solomon sent for Hiram of Tyre; •he was the son of a widow of the tribe of Naphtali, but his father had been a Tyrian, a bronzeworker. He was a highly intelligent craftsman, skilled in all types of bronzework. He came to King Solomon Ex 35:30–35 and did all this work for him.

The bronze pillars

‖2 Ch 3:15–17

15 He cast the two bronze pillars;[g] the height of one pillar was eighteen cubits, and a cord twelve cubits long gave the measurement of its girth; so also was the second
16 pillar. •He made two capitals of cast bronze for the tops of the pillars; the height
17 of one capital was five cubits, and the height of the other five cubits.•[h] He made two sets of filigree to cover the moulding of the two capitals surmounting the
18 pillars, one filigree for one capital and one filigree for the other. •He also made
19b pomegranates: two rows of them round each filigree, •four hundred in all,
20 applied on the raised moulding behind the filigree; there were two hundred
19a pomegranates round one capital and the same round the other capital. •The
21 capitals surrounding the pillars were lily-shaped. •He erected the pillars in front of the portico of the Temple, he erected the right-hand pillar and named it Jachin; he
22 erected the left-hand pillar and named it Boaz.[i] •[j] Thus, the work on the pillars was completed.

The bronze Sea

‖2 Ch 4:2–5

23 He made the Sea[k] of cast metal, ten cubits from rim to rim, circular in shape and five cubits high; a cord thirty cubits long gave the measurement of its girth.
24 Under its rim and completely encircling it were gourds surrounding the Sea; over a length of thirty[l] cubits the gourds were in two rows, of one and the same casting
25 with the rest. •It rested on twelve oxen, three facing north, three facing west, three facing south, three facing east; on these, their hindquarters all turned inwards,
26 stood the Sea. •It was a hand's breadth in thickness, and its rim was shaped like the rim of a cup—lily-shaped. It could hold two thousand measures.[l]

The wheeled stands and the bronze basins[m]

27 He made the ten bronze stands; each stand was four cubits long, four cubits wide,
28 and three high. •They were designed as follows; they had an undercarriage and
29 crosspieces to the undercarriage. •On the crosspieces of the undercarriage were lions and bulls and winged creatures, and on top of the undercarriage was a
30 support; under the lions and oxen there were scrolls in the style of. . .•Each stand had four bronze wheels with bronze axles; its four feet had shoulderings under the
31 basin, and the shoulderings were cast. . .•Its mouth measured one and a half cubits

j. The altar of incense, *see* Ex 30:1a.

k. The Hebr. has some extra words at the beginning of v. 21 but the sense is uncertain.

l. Hebr. adds 'and he plated the whole altar of the Debir with gold'; Gk omits.

m. One or two words have dropped out of the text.

n. Here, as in v. 30, 'inside' (conj., Hebr. uncertain) means the Debir, or inner Temple, v. 27; 'outside' means the Hekal. The two vv. are additions.

o. The description is hard to understand. The text seems to have been corrected and the meaning of several technical terms is uncertain.

p. The Temple court itself as distinct from the great court, 7:12, surrounding Temple and palace.

q. The beams performed a stabilising function. The superstructure was probably made of brick.

7 **a.** The description is confined to the public rooms. The buildings lay to the south of the Temple area.

b. A great pillared hall; the columns were of cedar. It served as a guard-room, *see* 10:17, 21, and as an ante-chamber for audience with the king. It had a vestibule, v. 6, and communicated with the royal apartments, v. 8 and with the throne room, v. 7.

c. Inconsistency here. Possibly the numbers should be transposed to v. 4, but the sense of vv. 4–5 is itself in doubt.

d. 'cornice' conj. End of v. doubtful.

e. 'to beams' Syr.; Hebr. repeats 'floor'.

f. The text adds 'and on the outside as far as the great court', corrupted doublet of the end of v. 12.

g. These two columns stood in front of the porch of the Temple, one on each side of the entrance.

h. The text of vv. 17–20 is disordered and in places corrupt. Restoration conjectural.

i. The two names are obscure, possibly meaning 'it is firm' and 'it is strong'.

j. At the beginning of v., Hebr. repeats v. 19[a].

k. A supply of water for sacred uses.

l. 'thirty' conj.; 'ten' Hebr.

m. Text corrupt and intepretation difficult. (The words at the end of vv. 29, 30, 36 are unintelligible.) The stands were quadrangular and surmounted by a rounded support to hold the bowl. The original word for 'measures' is *bat*: a *bat* was 45 litres (10 gallons UK, 12 gallons USA).

from where the shoulderings met to the top; its mouth was round like a stand for a vessel, and on the mouth there were engravings too; the crosspieces, however, were rectangular and not round. ·The four wheels were under the crosspieces. The 32
axles of the wheels were inside the stands: the height of the wheels was one and a half cubits. ·The wheels were designed like chariot wheels: their axles, felloes, 33
spokes and naves had all been cast. ·There were four shoulderings at the four 34
corners of each stand: the stand and the shoulderings were all of a piece. ·At the 35
top of the stand there was a support, circular in shape and half a cubit high; and on top of the stand there were lugs. The crosspieces were of a piece with the stand.
On the bands he engraved winged creatures and lions and palm leaves. . . and 36
scrolls right round. ·He made the ten stands like this: the same casting and the 37
same measurements for all.

‖2 Ch 4:6 He made ten bronze basins; each basin held forty measures and each basin 38
measured four cubits, one basin to each of the ten stands. ·He arranged the stands, 39
five on the right-hand side of the Temple, five on the left-hand side of the Temple;
‖2 Ch 4:10 the Sea he placed on the right-hand side of the Temple, to the south east.

‖2 Ch 4:11–18 **The utensils. Summary**

Hiram made the ash containers,[n] the scoops and the sprinkling bowls. He finished 40
all the work that he did for King Solomon on the Temple of Yahweh:

Two pillars; the two mouldings of the capitals surrounding the pillars; the two 41
sets of filigree to cover the two mouldings of the capitals surmounting the pillars;
the four hundred pomegranates for the two sets of filigree—two rows of pomegran- 42
ates for each set of filigree;[o]

the ten stands and the ten basins on the stands; 43

the one Sea and the twelve oxen beneath the Sea; 44

the ash containers, the scoops, and sprinkling bowls. 45

All these objects made by Hiram for King Solomon for the Temple of Yahweh were of burnished bronze. ·He made them by the process of sand casting,[p] in the 46
plain of the Jordan between Succoth and Zarethan. ··[q] There were so many of 47
them, that the weight of the bronze was never calculated.

Solomon made all the objects designed for the Temple of Yahweh: the golden 48
6:20–31 altar[r] and the gold table for the loaves of permanent offering; ·the lamp-stands, 49
Ex 25:23j five on the right and five on the left in front of the Debir, of pure gold; the floral
‖2 Ch 4:7
‖2 Ch 4:8 work, the lamps, the tongs, of gold; ·the basins, the snuffers, the sprinkling bowls, 50
the incense ladles and the pans, of real gold; the door panels—for the inner shrine—that is, the Holy of Holies—and for the Hekal, of gold[s].

‖2 Ch 5:1 Thus all the work done by King Solomon for the Temple of Yahweh was 51
completed, and Solomon brought in the gifts which his father David had consecrated; and he had the silver, the gold and the utensils put into the treasuries of the Temple of Yahweh.

‖2 Ch 5:2–10 **The ark is brought into the Temple**

Ex 25:10e 8 Solomon then summoned the elders of Israel[a] to Jerusalem to bring the ark of 1
2 S 6:7f the covenant of Yahweh up from the City of David, that is, Zion. ·All the men 2
of Israel assembled round King Solomon in the month of Ethanim, at the time of
8:65 the feast[b] (that is, the seventh month). ·When all the elders of Israel had arrived, 3
the priests took up the ark[c] ·and the Tent of Meeting and all the sacred utensils 4
which were in the Tent.[d] ·King Solomon and all Israel,[e] present with him before 5
the ark, sacrificed countless, innumerable sheep and oxen. ·The priests brought 6
the ark of the covenant of Yahweh to its place, in the Debir of the Temple, that is,
in the Holy of Holies, under the wings of the winged creatures ·for the winged 7
creatures spread their wings over the place where the ark stood, forming a canopy
over the ark and its shafts. ·These were so long, however, that the ends of the 8
shafts could be seen from the Holy Place in front of the Debir, though they could
Ex 25:21; not be seen from outside. They are still there today.[f] ·There was nothing in the ark 9

except the two stone tablets which Moses had placed in it at Horeb, the tablets of the covenant[g] which Yahweh made with the Israelites when they came out of Egypt. ▶40:20 Dt 10:2,5

Yahweh takes possession of his Temple

||2 Ch 5:11–6:2

10 Now when the priests came out of the Holy Place, the cloud[h] filled the Temple of
11 Yahweh, ·and because of the cloud the priests could not stay and perform their duties. For the glory of Yahweh filled the Temple of Yahweh. Ex 24:16f; 40:34–35 Ezk 43:4–5 ↗Rv 15:8
12 Then Solomon said:[i]

Yahweh has chosen to dwell in thick cloud. Ps 18:11;97:2
13 I have built you a princely dwelling, Ps 132:13–14
a residence for you forever.

Solomon addresses the people

||2 Ch 6:3–11

14 The king then turned round and blessed the whole assembly of Israel, while the
15 whole assembly of Israel stood. ·He said, 'Blessed be Yahweh, God of Israel, who has carried out by his hand what he promised with his mouth to my father David, 2 S 7:4–16+ Ps 132
16 when he said, ·"From the day I brought my people Israel out of Egypt I chose no city, in any of the tribes of Israel, to have a temple built where my name should Ezk 48:35
17 be;[j] but I did choose David to rule my people Israel." ·My father David had set his heart on building a temple for the name of Yahweh, God of Israel,
18 but Yahweh said to my father David, "You have set your heart on building a
19 temple for my name, and in this you have done well; ·and yet, you are not the man to build the temple; but your son, yet to be born to you, will be the one to build the
20 temple for my name." ·Yahweh has kept the promise which he made: I have succeeded my father David and am seated on the throne of Israel, as Yahweh
21 promised; I have built the temple for the name of Yahweh, God of Israel, ·and in it I have made a place for the ark containing the covenant of Yahweh which he made with our ancestors when he brought them out of Egypt.'

Solomon's prayer for himself[k]

||2 Ch 6:12–20

22 Then, in the presence of the whole assembly of Israel, Solomon stood facing the
23 altar of Yahweh and, stretching out his hands towards heaven, ·said, 'Yahweh,

n. 'ash containers' some MSS, GK; 'basins' Hebr.

o. Hebr. has a doublet of v. 41 here, beginning 'to cover the two mouldings'.

p. 'He' Gk; 'the king' Hebr. • Succoth and Zarethan on the east bank of the Jordan are possibly modern Tell Akhsas and Tell es-Saidiyah.

q. Hebr. adds 'Solomon put all the objects', doublet of v. 48.

r. The altar of incense, *see* 6:20–21. • Emended following Gk and in line with v. 47 Hebr.; 'Solomon made all the objects' Hebr.

s. The end of the verse is redundant in Hebr.

8 **a.** Hebr. adds 'all the tribal chiefs and all the heads of families of the Israelites before King Solomon', omitted by some Gk MSS.

b. Ethanim was the month of the Canaanite calendar corresponding to the 7th month of the later Israelite one, as the gloss explains. The (pre-eminent) feast, mentioned here, was the feast of Shelters, *see* Ex 23:14d.

c. At the beginning, Hebr. reads 'all the elders of Israel came', omitted by Gk.

d. At the beginning, Hebr. reads, 'They transported the ark of Yahweh', and at the end, 'the priests and Levites transported them', omitted by some Gk MSS. This tent was the one erected by David to shelter the ark, 1:39; 2 S 7:8. A glossator calls it 'the Tent of Meeting', like the desert tent constructed by Moses, Ex 25, of which no more is heard once the Israelites had crossed the Jordan Jos 3–4.

e. 'all Israel with him' Gk; 'the whole community of Israel assembled near him' Hebr.

f. Transposition required by the sense; some Gk MSS omit.

g. 'the tablets of the covenant' Gk; Hebr. omits.

h. The cloud, *see* Ex 13:21–22h; 19:16g, was the visible manifestation of the presence of Yahweh who now took possession of his sanctuary.

i. This ancient poem, certainly authentic, occurs in the ancient Gk versions after 8:53 and with an extra line, 'Yahweh has set the sun firm in the heavens.' Though master of the universe and wrapped in mystery, Yahweh now has a dwelling-place on earth in the midst of his people Israel. Hence the peculiar significance of the Temple in Israelite religious thought. This longer form must be original; it is preserved, says the Gk, in the Book of Song (or Jasher).

j. 'The Name' of Yahweh dwells in the Temple in which Yahweh himself cannot be confined, *see* the insertion of v. 27, which excludes the naïve interpretation that God himself resides in the Temple. Nonetheless, a name is a person's true expression and representative, and where 'the Name of Yahweh' is, God is present in a very special way, though not in any exclusive sense.

k. The author here develops, in the manner of Dt, ideas contained in the discourse of vv. 15–21. He begins with the principle of mutual fidelity, v. 23; God's kindness to his people flows from the covenant concluded on Mt Sinai, but is conditional upon their faithfulness; in this it contained the whole theology of the OT. Then follow two particular applications: Yahweh has kept his promise concerning the Temple, v. 24; may he also keep it as regards the perpetuity of the dynasty, v. 25.

Dt 4:39;7:9 God of Israel, there is no god like you in heaven above or on earth beneath, as
loyal to the covenant and faithful in love to your servants as long as they walk
wholeheartedly in your way. ·You have kept the promise you made to your 24
servant, my father David, as you promised him you would. Today you have carried
2 S 7:11-16 it out by your power. ·And now, Yahweh, God of Israel, keep the promise which 25
you made to your servant David when you said, "You will never lack for a man to
sit before me on the throne of Israel, provided that your sons are careful how they
behave, walking before me as you yourself have done." ·So now, God of Israel, let 26
the words come true which you spoke to your servant, my father David. ·Yet will 27
Dt 4:7b
Jn 1:14
Is 66:1
Jr 23:24
↗Ac 7:49;
17:24
Dt 12:5,11
Ezk 48:35
God really live with human beings[l] on earth? Why, the heavens, the highest of the
heavens, cannot contain you. How much less this temple built by me! ·Even so, 28
listen favourably to the prayer and entreaty of your servant, Yahweh my God;
listen to the cry and to the prayer which your servant makes to you today: ·day and 29
night may your eyes watch over this temple, over this place of which you have said,
"My name will be there." Listen to the prayer which your servant offers in this
place.

‖2 Ch 6:21-31 **Solomon's prayer for the people**

Ps 123:1 'Listen to the entreaty of your servant and of your people Israel; whenever they 30
pray in this place, listen from the place where you reside in heaven; and when you
hear, forgive.

'If someone has wronged his neighbour and a curse is laid on him to make him 31
swear an oath[m] here before your altar in this Temple, ·then listen from the place 32
where you reside in heaven and do justice between your servants: condemning the
guilty one by making him suffer for his conduct, and acquitting the upright by
rewarding him as his uprightness deserves.

Lv 26:14,17
Dt 28:25,45
Jos 7
'When your people Israel are defeated by the enemy because they have sinned 33
against you, but then return to you and acknowledge your name, and pray and
seek your favours in this Temple, ·then listen from the place where you reside in 34
heaven; forgive the sin of your people Israel, and bring them back to the country
which you gave to their ancestors.

Dt 11:17;
28:23-24
'When the heavens are shut and there is no rain because they have sinned against 35
you, if they pray in this place and praise your name and, having been humbled by
you,[n] desist from their sin, ·then listen from the place where you reside in heaven 36
and forgive the sin of your servant and your people Israel—for you are constantly
showing them the good way which they must follow—and send rain on your
country, which you have given to your people as their heritage.

Dt 28:21,38,
42,51
'Should there be famine in the country, or pestilence, wind-blast or mildew, 37
locust or caterpillar; should their enemy lay siege to one of their gates;[o] should
there be any plague or any disease: ·whatever be the prayer or entreaty of any 38
individual[p] aware of a particular affliction: when that person stretches out the
hands towards this Temple, ·then listen from heaven where you reside; forgive 39
and, since you know what is in the heart, deal with each as their conduct deserves—
Gn 8:21c
Dt 12:1
for you alone know what is in every human heart—·so that they may reverence you 40
throughout their lives in the country which you gave to our ancestors.

‖2 Ch 6:32-39
Ex 12:48*o*
Is 2:2-5
Jr 16:19-21
Mi 4:1-3
Ac 8:27
Supplementary section[q]

Zc 8:20-23
Ml 28:19
'Even the foreigner, not belonging to your people Israel but coming from a distant 41
country, attracted by your name—·for they too will hear of your name, of your 42
mighty hand and outstretched arm—if a foreigner comes and prays in this Temple,
listen from heaven where you reside, and grant all that the foreigner asks of 43
you, so that all the peoples of the earth may acknowledge your name and,
like your people Israel, revere you and know that this Temple, which I have built,
bears your name.

Dn 6:11
'If your people go out to war against the enemy, on whatever missions you send 44
them, and they pray to Yahweh, turning towards the city which you have chosen

45 and towards the Temple which I have built for your name, ·then listen from heaven
to their prayer and their entreaty, and uphold their cause.
46 'When they sin against you—for there is no one who does not sin—and you are Pr 20:9 Qo 7:20 Rm 3:23 1 Jn 1:8–10
angry with them and abandon them to the enemy, and their captors carry them off
47 to a hostile country, be it far away or near, ·if they come to their senses in the
country to which they have been taken as captives and repent and entreat you in Dt 28:63–64; 30:1–2
the country of their captors, saying, "We have sinned, we have acted perversely
48 and wickedly," ·and turn back to you with all their heart and soul in the country of
the enemies who have taken them captive, and pray to you, turning towards the
country which you gave to their ancestors, towards the city which you have chosen Dt 9:5
49 and towards the Temple which I have built for your name, ·listen to their prayer
and their entreaty from the place where you reside in heaven, uphold their case,[r]
50 forgive your people for having sinned against you and for all the crimes against you
of which they have been guilty, and allow them to arouse the pity of their captors
51 so that these may have pity on them: ·for they are your people and your heritage Dt 4:20; 9:26; 32:9 Jr 11:4
whom you brought out of Egypt, that iron foundry!

Conclusion of the prayer and blessing of the people ||2 Ch 6:40

52 'May your eyes be open to the entreaty of your servant and the entreaty of your
53 people Israel, to listen to them, whatever they ask of you. ·For you it was who set Dt 7:6b
them apart from all the peoples of the earth to be your heritage, as you declared
through your servant Moses when you brought our ancestors out of Egypt, Lord
Yahweh.'
54 When Solomon had finished offering to Yahweh this whole prayer and entreaty,
he rose from where he was kneeling with hands stretched out towards heaven
55 before the altar of Yahweh, ·and stood upright. And in a loud voice he blessed the
56 whole assembly of Israel. ·'Blessed be Yahweh,' he said, 'who has granted rest to
his people Israel, keeping all his promises. Of all the promises of good that he
57 made through his servant Moses, not one has failed. ·May Yahweh our God be Is 55:10seq.
58 with us, as he was with our ancestors; may he never desert us or cast us off. ·May Dt 31:6 Jos 1:5
he turn our hearts towards him so that we may follow all his ways and keep the Jr 31:31*l*
59 commandments and laws and ordinances which he gave to our ancestors. ·May
these words of mine, of my entreaty before Yahweh, be present with Yahweh our
God day and night, that he may uphold the cause of his servant and the cause of
60 Israel his people, as each day requires, ·so that all the peoples of the earth may
61 come to know that Yahweh is God indeed and that there is no other. ·May your
hearts be wholly with Yahweh our God, following his laws and keeping his
commandments as at this present day.'

The sacrifices on the feast of Dedication ||2 Ch 7:4–10

62, 63 The king and all Israel with him offered sacrifice before Yahweh. ·Solomon offered
a communion sacrifice of twenty-two thousand oxen and a hundred and twenty Lv 3:1a
thousand sheep to Yahweh; and thus the king and all the Israelites dedicated the
64 Temple of Yahweh. ·On the same day the king consecrated the middle part of the
court in front of the Temple of Yahweh; for that was where he presented the burnt Lv 1–3 and notes
offerings, oblations and fatty parts of the communion sacrifices, since the bronze

l. 'with human beings', Gk, Targ., and 2 Ch 6:18; Hebr. omits.

m. 'curse is laid on him to make him swear on oath' Gk; 'lends on pledge' Hebr. Prayer for divine judgement: the accuser who lacks proof stands before the altar and calls down a curse on the accused. God will show the guilt or innocence of the accused by implementing or not implementing the curse. *See* Ex 22:6–10; Nb 5:19–28; Jg 17:1–3.

n. lit. 'you have humbled them' Gk; 'you have answered them' Hebr.

o. 'one of its gates' Syr.; 'the country of its gates' Hebr.

p. v. emended following Gk. After 'whoever', Hebr. reads 'all his people Israel'.

q. Added after the return from exile. Note the universalism of vv. 41–43, the custom of praying with the face turned to Jerusalem, v. 44, the concern for those still far from home, vv. 47seq.

r. Hebr. adds 'their prayer and their entreaty and uphold their cause', doublet of v. 45.

altar [s] which stood before Yahweh was too small to hold the burnt offering, oblation
and the fatty parts of the communion sacrifice. ·And then Solomon and with him 65
Jg 20:1a all Israel from the Pass of Hamath to the Torrent of Egypt—a great assembly—
celebrated the feast [t] before Yahweh our God for seven days. [u] ·On the eighth 66
day he dismissed the people, who bade farewell to the king and went home joyful
and happy of heart over all the goodness which Yahweh had shown to his servant
and his people Israel.

‖2 Ch 7:11–22 **Yahweh appears a second time**

9 When Solomon had finished building the Temple of Yahweh, the royal palace 1
3:5–15 and everything else which Solomon had wanted to do, ·Yahweh appeared to 2
Solomon a second time, as he had appeared to him at Gibeon. ·Yahweh said to 3
him, 'I have heard your prayer and the entreaty which you have before me. I
consecrate this temple which you have built: I place my name there for ever; my
eyes and my heart will be there always. ·For your part, if you walk before me in 4
innocence of heart and in honesty, like your father David, if you do everything that
I command and keep my laws and my ordinances, ·I shall make your royal throne 5
secure over Israel for ever, as I promised your father David when I said, "You will
never lack for a man on the throne of Israel." ·But if you turn away from me, either 6
Dt 28:15 you or your descendants, and instead of keeping my commandments and laws
which I have laid down for you, you go and serve other gods and worship them,
then I shall banish Israel from the country which I have given them, and shall 7
disown this Temple which I have consecrated for my name, and Israel will be a
Dt 28:37 proverb and a byword among all peoples. ·As for this once-exalted Temple, [v] 8
Jr 18:16; 19:8; 29:18 everyone who passes by will be appalled, and they will whistle and say, "Why has
·Dt 29:23–25 Yahweh treated this country and this Temple like this?" ·And the answer will be, 9
"Because they deserted Yahweh their God who brought their ancestors out of
Egypt, and they adopted other gods and worshipped and served them; that is why
Yahweh has brought all these disasters on them." '

‖2 Ch 8:1–6 **The bargain with Hiram**

At the end of the twenty years that it took Solomon to erect the two buildings, the 10
5:24–25 Temple of Yahweh and the royal palace ·(Hiram king of Tyre had provided 11
Solomon with all the cedar wood, juniper wood and gold that he wanted), [w] King
Solomon gave Hiram twenty towns in the territory of Galilee. ·But when Hiram 12
came from Tyre to view the towns that Solomon had given him, he was not pleased
with them. ·He said, 'What kind of towns are these you have given me, brother?' 13
And to this day they are known as 'cabul-land'. [x] ·Hiram sent the king one hundred 14
and twenty talents of gold.

Forced labour for Solomon's building programme

This is an account of the forced labour levied by King Solomon for building the 15
Temple of Yahweh, his own palace, the Millo [y] and the fortifications of Jerusalem,
Hazor, Megiddo, Gezer ·(Pharaoh king of Egypt mounted an expedition, captured 16
Gezer, burnt it down and massacred the Canaanites living there; he then
gave the town as a dowry to his daughter, Solomon's wife, ·and Solomon rebuilt 17
Gezer), Lower Beth-Horon, ·Baalath, Tamar in the desert, inside the country, 18
all Solomon's storage towns owned by Solomon, all the towns for his chariots 19
and horses, [z] and whatever Solomon was pleased to build in Jerusalem, in the
2 Ch 8:7–10 Lebanon and in all the countries under his rule. ·All those who survived of the 20
Dt 7:1a Amorite, Hittite, Perizzite, Hivite and Jebusite peoples, who were not Israelites—
their descendants still remaining in the country on whom the Israelites had not 21
Dt 7:2; 20:16 been able to enforce the curse of destruction—these Solomon levied as forced
labourers, as is still the case today. ·Solomon did not, however, impose forced 22
labour on the Israelites; [a] for they were soldiers: his officials, his administrators, his
officers and his chariot and cavalry commanders. ·There were five hundred and 23

fifty officials in charge of the foremen over Solomon's work, who supervised the people employed on the work.

24 After Pharaoh's daughter had moved from the City of David up to the palace which he had built for her, he then built the Millo. ‖2 Ch 8:11

25 Three times a year Solomon presented burnt offerings and communion sacrifices on the altar which he had built for Yahweh and set his burnt offerings smoking before Yahweh.[s] ‖2 Ch 8:12–16 Ex 23:14d Dt 16:16

Thus he completed the Temple.

C: SOLOMON THE TRADER

Solomon as ship-owner

‖2Ch 8:17–18

26 King Solomon equipped a fleet at Ezion-Geber, [h]which is near Elath on the shores
27 of the Red Sea, in Edom. ·For this fleet Hiram sent men of his, experienced sailors,
28 to serve with those in Solomon's service. ·They went to Ophir and took on four hundred and twenty talents of gold, which they brought back to Solomon.

The queen of Sheba visits Solomon[a]

‖2 Ch 9:1–12 ↗Mt 12:42par.

1 **10** The queen of Sheba heard of Solomon's fame[b] and came to test him with
2 difficult questions. ·She arrived in Jerusalem with a very large retinue, with camels laden with spices and an immense quantity of gold and precious stones. Having reached Solomon, she discussed with him everything that she had in mind,
3 and Solomon had an answer for all her questions; not one of them was too obscure
4 for the king to answer for her. ·When the queen of Sheba saw how very wise
5 Solomon was, the palace which he had built, ·the food at his table, the accommodation for his officials, the organisation of his staff and the way they were dressed, his cupbearers, and the burnt offerings which he presented in the Temple of
6 Yahweh, it left her breathless, ·and she said to the king, 'The report I heard in my
7 own country about your wisdom in handling your affairs was true then! ·Until I came and saw for myself, I did not believe the reports, but clearly I was told less
8 than half: for wisdom and prosperity, you surpass what was reported to me. ·How fortunate your wives are![c] How fortunate these courtiers of yours, continually in
9 attendance on you and listening to your wisdom! ·Blessed be Yahweh your God who has shown you his favour by setting you on the throne of Israel! Because of Yahweh's everlasting love for Israel, he has made you king to administer law and
10 justice.' ·And she presented the king with a hundred and twenty talents of gold and great quantities of spices and precious stones; no such wealth of spices ever

s. The altar of burnt offering stood before the entrance to the Temple. It was a metal structure which was movable. *See* 2 K 16:14, and recalled the movable altar of the Tent of Meeting, the description of which is idealised. Ex 27:1seq. The altar erected by Solomon, 9:25, remained in use till the time of Ahaz, 2 K 16:10.

t. The dedication of the Temple coincided with the feast of Shelters, v. 2, which lasted for seven days. Dt 16:13–15.

u. Hebr. adds 'and seven more days, that is fourteen days', a gloss inspired by 2 Ch 7:9, missing in Gk, and contradicted by v. 66.

9 **a.** 'this exalted Temple' versions; 'this Temple will be exalted' Hebr.

b. This reminiscence is a clumsy addition since it refers to a different bargain: Solomon sells part of his territory for gold, v. 14. Information concerning ancient weights and measures will be found in the Tables of measures and money.

c. It is not clear what connection there is between the place-name and Hiram's comment.

d. An earth fill against the rocky hill on which stood the Temple and the palace.

e. The towns just enumerated. The war chariots, core of Solomon's standing army, were stationed there. They formed a line of defence round what was strictly Israelite territory.

f. The author's remark does not square with the ancient, and preferable, data used in 5:27; 11:28.

g. 'burnt offerings' conj.; Hebr. unintelligible.

h. Ezion-Geber, near Aqaba, was a port at the head of the Gulf of Aqaba. Ophir was a gold-bearing region either in south Arabia or east Africa.

10 **a.** The kingdom of Sheba was the south-west portion of the Arabian peninsula, but this queen is more probably the ruler of one of the Sheban colonies in north Arabia. The reason for the visit could have been to establish trade relationships. Solomon, dominating Transjordan and holding Ezion-Geber, controlled the caravan route from north Arabia to Syria and Egypt. Sheba is several times mentioned with Dedan, another Arab people, Gn 10:7; 25:3; Ezk 38:13, which is considered one of the great caravan tribes, Ezk 27:20seq.; Jb 6:19; Jr 6:20; Jl 4:8. This distant nation will come to do homage to the future King, Ps 72:10, 15, in the new Jerusalem, Is 45:14; 60:6seq., *see* Mt 2:11.

b. After 'Solomon's fame' Hebr. adds 'for the name of Yahweh'; lacking in 2 Ch 9:1.

c. 'your wives' versions; 'the men' Hebr.

came again as those which the queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon. ·Similarly, 11
Hiram's fleet, which brought the gold from Ophir, also brought back great cargoes
of *almug* timber [d] and precious stones. ·Of the *almug* timber the king made supports 12
for the Temple of Yahweh and for the royal palace, and harps and lyres for the
musicians; no more of this *almug* timber has since come or been seen to this day.
And King Solomon, in his turn, presented the queen of Sheba with everything that 13
she expressed a wish for, besides those presents which he gave her with a munificence worthy of King Solomon. After which, she went home to her own country,
she and her servants.

‖2 Ch 9:13–24 **Solomon's wealth**

The weight of gold received annually by Solomon amounted to six hundred and 14
sixty-six talents of gold, ·besides what tolls and foreign trade, [e] as well as every- 15
thing the Arab kings and the provincial governors brought in. ·King Solomon 16
made two hundred great shields of beaten gold, six hundred shekels of gold going
into one shield; ·also three hundred small shields of beaten gold, three *mina* of 17
gold going into one shield; and the king put these into the House of the Forest of
Lebanon. ·The king also made a great ivory throne which he overlaid with refined 18
gold. ·The throne had six steps, a back with a rounded top, and arms on each side 19
of the seat; two lions stood beside the arms, ·and twelve lions stood on each side of 20
the six steps. Nothing like it has ever been made in any other kingdom.

All King Solomon's drinking vessels were of gold, and all the plate in the House 21
Si 47:18 of the Forest of Lebanon was of pure gold; silver was little thought of in Solomon's
days, ·since the king had a fleet of Tarshish [f] at sea with Hiram's fleet, and once 22
every three years the fleet of Tarshish would come back laden with gold and silver,
ivory, apes and baboons. ·For riches and for wisdom, King Solomon surpassed all 23
kings on earth, ·and the whole world consulted Solomon to hear the wisdom which 24
God had implanted in his heart; ·and everyone would bring a present with him: 25
things made of silver, things made of gold, robes, armour, spices, horses and
mules; and this went on year after year.

‖2 Ch 1:14–17 **Solomon's chariots and cavalry**

‖2 Ch 1:14= 9:25 Solomon then built up a force of chariots and cavalry; he had one thousand four 26
5:6;9:19 hundred chariots and twelve thousand horses, these he stationed in the chariot
‖2 Ch 1:15= 9:27 towns and near the king in Jerusalem. ·In Jerusalem the king made silver as 27
common as stones, and cedar wood as plentiful as sycamore in the lowlands.
‖2 Ch 1:16= 9:28 Solomon's horses were imported from Muzur and Cilicia. [g] The king's dealers 28
acquired them from Cilicia at the prevailing price. ·A chariot was imported from 29
Egypt for six hundred silver shekels and a horse from Cilicia for a hundred and
fifty. They also supplied the Hittite and Aramaean kings, who all used them as
middlemen. [h]

D: HIS DECLINE

Solomon's wives

Dt 17:17 Si 47:19 11 King Solomon loved many foreign women: not only Pharaoh's daughter but 1
Moabites, Edomites, Sidonians and Hittites, ·from those peoples of whom 2
Yahweh had said to the Israelites, 'You are not to go among them nor they among
Ex 34:16 Dt 7:3–4 you, or they will be sure to sway your hearts to their own gods.' But Solomon was
deeply attached to them. ·He had seven hundred wives of royal rank and three 3
2 Ch 11:23–12:1 hundred concubines. [a] ·When Solomon grew old his wives swayed his heart to other 4
gods; and his heart was not wholly with Yahweh his God as his father David's had
Jg 2:13j been. ·Solomon became a follower of Astarte, the goddess of the Sidonians, and 5
of Milcom, the Ammonite abomination. ·He did what was displeasing to Yahweh, 6
and was not a wholehearted follower of Yahweh, as his father David had been.

7 Then it was that Solomon built a high place for Chemosh, the abomination of
Moab, on the mountain to the east of Jerusalem, and to Milcom, the abomination
8 of the Ammonites.[b] ·He did the same for all his foreign wives, who offered incense
and sacrifice to their gods.
9 Yahweh was angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from
10 Yahweh, God of Israel, who had twice appeared to him ·and had forbidden him to
11 follow other gods; but he did not carry out Yahweh's order. ·Yahweh therefore
said to Solomon, 'Since you have behaved like this and have not kept my covenant
or the laws which I laid down for you, I shall tear the kingdom away from you and
12 give it to one of your servants. ·For your father David's sake, however, I shall not
13 do this during your lifetime, but shall tear it out of your son's hands. ·Even so, I
shall not tear the whole kingdom from him. For the sake of my servant David, and
for the sake of Jerusalem which I have chosen, I shall leave your son one tribe.'[c]

Solomon's foreign enemies

14 Yahweh raised an enemy against Solomon, Hadad the Edomite, of the kingly stock
15 of Edom. ·After David had crushed Edom, Joab the army commander had gone to 2 S 8:13–14
16 bury the dead and had slaughtered the entire male population of Edom ·(Joab
stayed there with all Israel for six months until he had exterminated the entire male
17 population of Edom), ·but Hadad with a number of Edomites in his father's service
18 had fled to Egypt. Hadad had been only a boy at the time. ·They set out from
Midian, and on reaching Paran, took a number of men from Paran with them and
went on to Egypt, to Pharaoh the king of Egypt, who provided him with a house,
19 undertook to maintain him, and assigned him an estate. ·Hadad became a great
favourite of Pharaoh who gave him his own wife's sister in marriage, the sister of
20 the Great Lady[d] Tahpenes. ·The sister of Tahpenes bore him his son Genubath
whom Tahpenes brought up[e] in Pharaoh's palace, Genubath living in Pharaoh's
21 palace with Pharaoh's own children. ·But when news reached Hadad in Egypt that
David had fallen asleep with his ancestors and that Joab the army commander
was dead, he said to Pharaoh, 'Give me leave to go that I may return to my
22 own country.' ·'What do you lack here with me,' Pharaoh said, 'for you to want
to go back to your country?' 'Nothing,' he replied, 'but please let me go.'
25b Hence the harm which Hadad caused: he loathed Israel and ruled Edom.
23 God raised a second enemy against Solomon, Rezon son of Eliada. He had fled
24 from his master, Hadadezer king of Zobah. ·A number of men having rallied to 2 S 8:3; 10:16seq.
him, he became leader of a marauding band (which was then massacred by David).
25a Rezon captured Damascus and settled there and became king of Damascus. ·He
was hostile to Israel as long as Solomon lived.[f]

The revolt of Jeroboam

26 Jeroboam was the son of Nebat, an Ephraimite from Zeredah; the name of his

d. Rare, unidentified and possibly scented wood. According to 2 Ch. 2:7, the wood came from the Lebanon. It is also mentioned in Accadian texts.

e. 'dues' Gk; 'men' Hebr.; 'Arab' Aq., Symm., Syr.; 'western' Hebr.

f. Identification with Tartessos, a Phoenician colony in Spain, is unlikely. The word may only mean 'foundry' or 'refinery', and Tarshish ships would therefore be those used for transporting metal or ore, *see* 22:49, hence very large and strong, *see* Ps 48:7; Is 23:1, 14; 60:9; Ezk 27:25.

g. 'from Muzur and Cilicia' *mimmutzur umiqqoweh* conj.; Hebr. *mimmitzrayim umiqweh* 'from Egypt and ?'.

h. vv. 28–29 perhaps indicate trade in two directions: Solomon's courtiers supplied to Egypt horses imported from Asia Minor, and to the 'Hittite kings' in northern Syria and the 'Aramaean kings' in southern Syria chariots imported from Egypt.

11 a. The Hebr. adds 'and his wives swayed his heart', duplicate of v. 4; absent in Greek.

b. 'Milcom' Gk; 'Molech' Hebr. Milcom was national god of the Ammonites, 2 S 12:30 (Gk); Jr 49:1, 3, Chemosh that of the Moabites, Nb 21:29; Jr 48:46.

c. Solomon's foreign marriages were contracted for political ends and the non-Yahwist shrines were intended for his wives and for traders. Such contacts, however, jeopardised the purity of the religion of Yahweh, and the author interprets the situation in the spirit and language of Dt: God punishes this form of impiety by raising up enemies abroad, vv. 14seq., and at home, vv. 26seq.

d. Tahpenes is not a proper name but an Egyptian title, 'The King's wife', approximately rendered by the Hebr. title 'the Great Lady', used to designate the Queen Mother, *see* 15:13c.

e. 'brought him up', Gk; 'weaned him' Hebr.

f. The order of the vv., disturbed by the insertion of the note on Rezon, has been restored and follows the Gk. • Damascus, once controlled by David, 2 S 8:6, became an independent kingdom and was to prove a bitter enemy of Israel.

mother, a widow, was Zeruah; he was in Solomon's service but revolted against the king. ·This is the account of his revolt. 27

9:15 2 S 5:9f Solomon was building the Millo and closing the breach in the City of David his father. ·Now this Jeroboam was a man of great energy; Solomon, noticing how the 28 young man set about his work, put him in charge of all the forced labour of the House of Joseph. ·One day when Jeroboam had gone out of Jerusalem, the 29
1 S 1:3 prophet Ahijah of Shiloh accosted him on the road. Ahijah was wearing a new cloak; the two of them were in the open country by themselves. ·Ahijah took the 30 new cloak which he was wearing and tore it into twelve strips,[g] ·saying to Jero- 31 boam: 'Take ten strips for yourself, for Yahweh, God of Israel, says this, "I am going to tear the kingdom from Solomon's hand and give ten tribes to you. ·He will 32 keep one tribe for the sake of my servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel; ·for he has forsaken me to 33 worship Astarte the goddess of the Sidonians, Chemosh the god of Moab, Milcom the god of the Ammonites; he has not followed my ways[h] by doing what I regard as right, or by keeping my laws and ordinances as his father David did. ·But it is not 34 from his hands that I will take the kingdom, since I have made him a prince for as long as he lives, for the sake of my servant David who kept my commandments and laws. ·I shall, however, take the kingdom from the hand of his son, and I shall give 35 it to you, that is, the ten tribes. ·I shall give one tribe to his son, so that my servant 36
15:4 2 S 21:17 David may always have a lamp[i] in my presence in Jerusalem, the city which I
2 K 8:19 have chosen as a dwelling-place for my name. ·You nonetheless I shall appoint 37 to rule over as much as you wish, and you will be king of Israel. ·If you listen to 38 all my orders and follow my ways, by doing what I regard as right and by keeping my laws and commandments as my servant David did, then I shall be with you and shall build you as enduring a dynasty as the one which I built for David. I shall give Israel to you, ·and I shall humble the descendants of David, but not 39 for ever." '

14:25 Solomon tried to kill Jeroboam but he made off and fled to Egypt, to Shishak 40 king of Egypt, and he remained in Egypt until Solomon's death.

‖2 Ch 9:29–31 **The end of the reign of Solomon**

The rest of the history of Solomon, his entire career, his wisdom, is this not 41 recorded in the Book of the Annals of Solomon?[j] ·Solomon's reign in Jerusalem 42 over all Israel lasted forty years. ·When Solomon fell asleep with his ancestors, he 43 was buried in the City of David his father; his son Rehoboam succeeded him.

III: THE POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS SCHISM

‖2 Ch 10 **The assembly at Shechem**

12 Rehoboam then went to Shechem, all Israel having come to Shechem to 1 proclaim him king. · [a](As soon as Jeroboam son of Nebat heard the news— 2 he was still in Egypt, where he had taken refuge from King Solomon—he returned from Egypt. ·They now sent for him, and Jeroboam and the whole assembly of 3 Israel[b] came.) And they spoke as follows to Rehoboam, ·'Your father laid a cruel 4 yoke on us; if you will lighten your father's cruel slavery, that heavy yoke which he imposed on us, we are willing to serve you.' ·He said to them, 'Go away for three 5 days and then come back to me.' And the people went away.

King Rehoboam then consulted the elders who had been in attendance on his 6 father Solomon while he was alive, and said, 'How do you advise me to answer this people?' ·They replied, 'If you become the servant of this people today, and submit 7 to them and give them a fair reply, then they will remain your servants for ever.' But he rejected the advice given him by the elders and consulted the young men in 8 attendance on him, who had grown up with him. ·He said, 'How do you advise us 9

to answer these people who have been saying, "Lighten the yoke which your father
10 imposed on us!"? ' ·The young men who had grown up with him replied, 'This is
the way to answer these people who have been saying, "Your father made our
yoke heavy, you must lighten it for us!" This is the right thing to say to them, "My
11 little finger is thicker than my father's loins. ·Although my father laid a heavy yoke
on you, I shall make it heavier still. My father controlled you with the whip, but I
shall apply a spiked lash!" '

12 On the third day Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam in obedience
13 to the king's instruction: 'Come back to me in three days' time.' ·And the king
14 gave the people a harsh answer, rejecting the advice given him by the elders ·and
speaking to them as the young men had recommended, 'My father made your yoke
heavy, I shall make it heavier still! My father controlled you with the whip, but I
shall apply a spiked lash!'

15 Thus the king refused to listen to the people, and this was brought about by
Yahweh to fulfil the promise which he had made through Ahijah of Shiloh to 11:29–39
16 Jeroboam son of Nebat. ·When all Israel saw that the king refused to listen to
them, the people answered the king thus:

What share have we in David? 2 S 20:1
—No heritage in the son of Jesse!
Away to your tents, Israel!
Now look after your own House, David!

17 So Israel went home again. ·Rehoboam, however, reigned over those Israelites
18 who lived in the towns of Judah. ·When King Rehoboam sent Adoram, who was in 4:6;5:27
charge of forced labour, all Israel stoned him to death, while King Rehoboam
19 managed to mount his chariot and escape to Jerusalem. ·And Israel has remained Si 47:12
in rebellion against the House of David from that day to this.

The political schism

20 When all Israel heard that Jeroboam had returned, they summoned him to the
assembly and made him king of all Israel; no one remained loyal to the House of
David, except the tribe of Judah.

21 When Rehoboam reached Jerusalem he mustered the whole House of Judah ‖2 Ch 11:1–4
and the tribe of Benjamin, a hundred and eighty thousand picked warriors, to fight
the House of Israel and win back the kingdom for Rehoboam son of Solomon.
22, 23 But the word of Yahweh came to Shemaiah, man of God, ·'Say this to Rehoboam
son of Solomon, king of Judah, to the whole House of Judah, to Benjamin and to
24 the rest of the people, ·"Yahweh says this: Do not go and make war on your
brothers, the Israelites; let everyone go home, for this is my doing." ' They obeyed
the command of Yahweh and turned back in accordance with his word.

25 Jeroboam fortified Shechem in the mountain country of Ephraim and made that
his residence. Then, leaving there, he fortified Penuel.

The religious schism

26 Jeroboam thought to himself, 'As things are, the kingdom will revert to the House
27 of David. ·If this people continues to go up to the Temple of Yahweh in Jerusalem
to offer sacrifices, the people's heart will turn back again to their lord, Rehoboam

g. The symbolic gestures of the prophets not only are meaningful but also have a real effect, *see* Jr 18:1a. The ten pieces assigned to Jeroboam are the ten northern tribes (*see* 2 S 19:44); the two pieces left for Solomon's successor represent only one tribe, Judah, which had absorbed Simeon, Jos 19:1.

h. Verbs in singular, with versions.

i. Symbolising an enduring dynasty.

j. This book, now lost, seems to have been one of the ancient sources of ch. 3–11.

12 a. vv. 2–3[a], in brackets, are a gloss taken from 2 Ch 10:2–3, missing in Gk. They contradict v. 20, which is missing from 2 Ch 10. The mention of Jeroboam in v. 12 is also probably a gloss. In the original account, he was probably not present at Shechem but was later recalled by the insurgents (v. 20). • 'he returned from' versions; 'he stayed in' Hebr.

b. Here, as in the ancient historical texts, 'all Israel' means the northern tribes as distinct from Judah. In Jerusalem the people of Judah recognise Rehoboam. In Shechem the Israelites, whose interests Solomon had subordinated to those of Judah, demand a charter. The crisis had long threatened.

king of Judah, and they will put me to death.'[c] ·So the king thought this over and 28
then made two golden calves;[d] he said to the people, 'You have been going up to
Ex 32:4 Ho 13:2 Jerusalem long enough. Here is your God, Israel, who brought you out of Egypt!'
He set one up at Bethel,[e] ·and the people went in procession in front of the other 29, 30
one all the way to Dan. In Israel this gave rise to sin, for the people went to
Bethel to worship the one, and all the way to Dan to worship the other. ·He set up 31
shrines on the high places and appointed priests from ordinary families, who
were not of levitical descent. ·Jeroboam also instituted a feast in the eighth month, 32
8:65 on the fifteenth of the month, like the feast kept in Judah, when he offered
sacrifices on the altar.[f] This he did at Bethel, offering sacrifices to the calves which
he had made and, at Bethel, installing the priests of the high places which he had
set up. ·On the fifteenth of the eighth month, the month which he had chosen 33
deliberately, he offered sacrifices on the altar which he had made at Bethel; he
instituted a feast for the Israelites and himself went up to the altar to burn the
sacrifice.

The condemnation of the altar in Bethel

13 There came to Bethel at Yahweh's command a man of God from Judah, 1
just as Jeroboam was standing by the altar to offer the sacrifice, ·and at 2
Yahweh's command this man denounced the altar. 'Altar, altar,' he said, 'Yahweh
2 K 23:15–16 says this, "A son is to be born to the House of David, Josiah by name, and on you
he will slaughter the priests of the high places who have offered sacrifice on you,
and on you he will burn human bones." '[a] ·At the same time he gave a sign. 'This 3
is the sign', he said, 'that Yahweh has spoken, "This altar will burst apart and the
ashes which are on it will be spilt." ' ·When the king heard how the man of God 4
denounced the altar of Bethel, he stretched out his hand from the altar, saying,
'Seize him!' But the hand he stretched out against the man withered, and he could
not draw it back, ·and the altar burst apart and the ashes from the altar were spilt, 5
in accordance with the sign given by the man of God at Yahweh's command. ·The 6
king said to the man of God, 'I beg you to placate Yahweh your God,[b] and so
restore me the use of my hand.' The man of God placated Yahweh; the king's hand
was restored as it had been before. ·The king then said to the man of God, 'Come 7
1 S 9:7d home with me and refresh yourself, and I shall give you a present,' ·but the man of 8
Nb 22:18 God replied to the king, 'Were you to give me half your palace, I would not go with
you. I will eat and drink nothing here, ·for I have had Yahweh's order, "You are to 9
eat or drink nothing, nor to return by the way you came." ' ·And he left by another 10
road and did not return by the way he had come to Bethel.

The man of God and the prophet[c]

Now there was an old prophet living in Bethel, and his sons came to tell him all that 11
the man of God had done in Bethel that day; and the words which he had said to
the king, they told these to their father too. ·'Which road did he take?' their father 12
asked. His sons showed him[d] the road which the man of God who came from Judah
had taken. ·'Saddle the donkey for me.' he said to his sons; they saddled the 13
donkey for him and he mounted. ·He followed the man of God and found him 14
sitting under a terebinth. 'Are you the man of God', he said, 'who came from
Judah?' 'I am,' he replied. ·'Come home with me,' he said, 'and take some food.' 15
'I cannot go back with you,' he answered, 'or eat or drink anything here,[e] ·for I 16, 17
have received Yahweh's order, "You are to eat or drink nothing there, nor to
return by the way you came." ' ·'I too am a prophet like you,' the other replied 18
'and an angel told me this by Yahweh's command, "Bring him back with you to
your house to eat and drink." ' He was lying to him.[f] ·The man of God went back 19
with him; he ate and drank at his house.
20:36o As they were sitting at table a word of Yahweh came to the prophet who had 20
brought him back, ·and he addressed the man of God who came from Judah. 21
'Yahweh says this,' he said. ' "Since you have defied Yahweh's command and not

22 obeyed the orders which Yahweh your God gave you, ·but have come back and
eaten and drunk where he forbade you to eat and drink, your corpse will never
23 reach the tomb of your ancestors." ' ·After he had eaten and drunk, the prophet
24 saddled the donkey for him, and he turned about and went away.[g] ·A lion met him
on the road and killed him; his corpse lay stretched out on the road; the donkey
25 stood there beside it; the lion stood by the corpse too. ·People going by saw the
corpse lying on the road and the lion standing by the corpse, and went and spoke
26 about it in the town where the old prophet lived. ·When the prophet who had made
the man turn back heard about it, he said, 'That is the man of God who defied
Yahweh's command! Yahweh has handed him over to the lion, which has mauled
27 and killed him, just as Yahweh had foretold it would.' ·He said to his sons,
28 'Saddle the donkey for me,' and they saddled it. ·He set off and found the man's
corpse lying on the road with the donkey and the lion standing beside
29 the corpse; the lion had neither eaten the corpse nor mauled the donkey. ·The
prophet lifted the corpse of the man of God and put it on the donkey and brought
30 it back to the town where he lived to hold mourning for him and bury him. ·He laid
the corpse in his own tomb, and they raised the mourning cry for him, 'Alas, my Jr 22:18
31 brother!' ·After burying him, the prophet said to his sons, 'When I die, bury me in
32 the same tomb as the man of God, lay my bones beside his. ·For the word he 2 K 23:17–18
uttered at Yahweh's command against the altar of Bethel and against all the shrines
of the high places in the towns of Samaria will certainly come true.'
33 Jeroboam did not give up his wicked ways after this incident, but went on
appointing priests for the high places from the common people. He consecrated as
34 priests of the high places any who wished to be. ·Such conduct made the House of
Jeroboam a sinful House, and caused its ruin and extinction from the face of the
earth.

IV: THE TWO KINGDOMS UNTIL ELIJAH

Continuation of the reign of Jeroboam I (931–910)

1, 2 **14** At that time Abijah, Jeroboam's son, fell sick, ·and Jeroboam said to his
wife, 'Come, please disguise yourself so that no one will recognise you as
Jeroboam's wife, and go to Shiloh; the prophet Ahijah is there, the man who said 11:29–39
3 I was to be king of this people. ·Go to him, and take ten loaves and some savoury 1 S 9:7d
4 food and a jar of honey; he will tell you what will happen to the child.' ·Jeroboam's
5 wife did this: she set out, went to Shiloh and came to Ahijah's house. ·Now Ahijah
could not see, his eyes were fixed with age, but Yahweh had told him, 'Jeroboam's
wife is now on her way to ask you for a prophecy about her son, as he is sick. You
will tell her such and such. When she comes, she will pretend to be some other
6 woman.' ·So when Ahijah heard her footsteps at the door, he called, 'Come in,

c. Hebr. adds 'They will return to Rehoboam, king of Judah', doublet; Gk omits.

d. Jeroboam had a political end in view, not a change of religion. As against the ark of the covenant in Jerusalem, symbolising Yahweh's presence there, he set up young bulls symbolising the foot-rest of Yahweh the Invisible. He acted within an ancient tradition, also to be detected in the episode of the 'golden calf', Ex 32. Both stories have been slanted by controversialists. By choosing the same symbol as that of Baal, however, Jeroboam opened the way for serious abuses, *see* Ho 13:2. This was 'the sin of Jeroboam', occurring as a damning refrain throughout the Deuteronomic historian's judgements on the kings of Israel.

e. The Hebr. continues 'and he put the other at Dan, this gave rise to sin', an addition which splits the phrase. ·Dan, near the source of the Jordan, and Bethel, on the road to Jerusalem, delimited the new kingdom. These places were already hallowed shrines. Gn 12:8; Jg 17–18.

f. The new temple of Bethel, like Solomon's Temple, was dedicated on the feast of Shelters.

13 a. 'he will burn' versions; 'will be burnt' Hebr. This forecast, the precision of which is foreign to the prophetic style, has been added to the original saying which was v. 3 only.

b. The Hebr. adds 'and pray for me' absent from versions.

c. The 'prophet', *nabi*, at this period, is of a lower grade than the true 'man of God'. Compare Elijah and Elisha with the 'prophetic brotherhood', 2 K 2; etc., *see* Am 7:14.

d. 'showed him' versions; 'saw' Hebr.

e. Hebr. is somewhat redundant.

f. To test him. What follows, written in a markedly popular style, teaches this lesson: God's orders must be obeyed absolutely; the man of God had no right to question the order which he had originally received, even at the bidding of an angel. *see* Ga 1:8.

g. 'turned about and went away' versions; Hebr. uncertain.

wife of Jeroboam; why pretend to be someone else? I have bad news for you. ·Go 7
and tell Jeroboam, "Yahweh, God of Israel, says this: I raised you from the people
and made you leader of my people Israel; ·I tore the kingdom from the House of 8
David and gave it to you. But you have not been like my servant David who kept
my commandments and followed me with all his heart, doing only what I regard as
right; ·you have done more evil than all your predecessors, you have gone and 9
Ex 20:3–5 made yourself other gods, idols of cast metal,[a] provoking my anger, and you have
turned your back on me. ·For this I shall bring disaster on the House of Jeroboam, 10
1 S 25:22 I shall wipe out every manjack[b] of the family of Jeroboam, fettered or free[c] in
Israel, I shall sweep away the House of Jeroboam as a man sweeps dung away till
15:27–30; 16:4; 21:24 none is left. ·Those of Jeroboam's family who die in the city, the dogs will eat; and 11
those who die in the open country, the birds of the air will eat,[d] for Yahweh has
spoken." ·Now get up and go home; at the moment your feet enter the town, the 12
child will die. ·All Israel will mourn for him, and bury him; and he alone of 13
Jeroboam's family will have a proper burial, for in him alone of the House of
Jeroboam can Yahweh, God of Israel, find anything good. ·Yahweh will set a king 14
over Israel, who will put an end to the House of Jeroboam.[e] ·Yahweh will make 15
Israel shake[f], till it quivers like a reed in the water; he will uproot Israel from this
prosperous land which he gave to their ancestors and scatter them beyond the
River for provoking Yahweh to anger by making their sacred poles. ·He will 16
abandon Israel for the sins which Jeroboam has committed and made Israel
commit.' ·Jeroboam's wife rose and left. She arrived at Tirzah,[g] and when she 17
crossed the threshold of the palace, the child was already dead. ·They buried him, 18
and all Israel mourned for him, just as Yahweh had foretold through his servant
Ahijah the prophet.

2 Ch 13:2–20 The rest of the history of Jeroboam, what wars he waged, how he governed, this 19
is recorded in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel. ·Jeroboam's reign 20
lasted twenty-two years. Then he fell asleep with his ancestors; his son Nadab
succeeded him.

The reign of Rehoboam (931–913)

‖2 Ch 12:13–14 In Judah, Rehoboam son of Solomon became king; he was forty-one years old 21
when he came to the throne and he reigned for seventeen years in Jerusalem, the
city which Yahweh had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, to give his name a
home there. His mother's name was Naamah, the Ammonite. ·He[h] did what is 22
displeasing to Yahweh, arousing his resentment more than his ancestors by all the
Ex 23:24k; 34:13e sins which they had committed; ·they had built themselves high places, and had set 23
Dt 12:2b up pillars and sacred poles on every high hill and under every spreading tree.
1 S 9:12f There were even male sacred prostitutes in the country. He copied all the shameful 24
Dt 23:19f practices of the nations whom Yahweh had dispossessed for the Israelites.

‖2 Ch 12:2,9–11 And so it happened that in the fifth year of King Rehoboam, Shishak[i] king of 25
Egypt advanced on Jerusalem ·and carried off all the treasures of the Temple of 26
Yahweh and the treasures of the royal palace; he took everything away, including
10:16 all the golden shields which Solomon had made. ·To replace those King Rehoboam 27
made bronze shields, entrusting them to the commanders of the guard[j] who
guarded the king's palace gate. ·Whenever the king went to the Temple of Yahweh, 28
the guards would carry them, returning them to the guardroom afterwards.

The rest of the history of Rehoboam, his entire career, is this not recorded in the 29
Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah? ·Warfare between Rehoboam and 30
‖2 Ch 12:16 Jeroboam went on throughout the period. ·When Rehoboam fell asleep with his 31
ancestors, he was buried in the City of David; his son Abijam succeeded him.[k]

The reign of Abijam in Judah (913–911)

‖2 Ch 13:1–2a **15** In the eighteenth year of King Jeroboam son of Nebat, Abijam became king 1
of Judah ·and reigned for three years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was 2
‖2 Ch 11:20 Maacah descendant[a] of Absalom. ·In everything he followed the sinful example of 3

his father before him; his heart was not wholly with Yahweh his God, as the heart
4 of David his ancestor had been. ·However, for David's sake, Yahweh his God gave
him a lamp in Jerusalem, with a son to succeed him, so keeping Jerusalem secure; 11:36i
5 for David had done what Yahweh regarded as right and had never in all his life 2 K 8:19
disobeyed whatever he commanded him (except in the matter of Uriah the Hittite).
(6b) 7 The rest of the history of Abijam, his entire career, is this not recorded in the
Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah? Abijam and Jeroboam made war on ‖2 Ch 13:2b
8 each other. ·When Abijam fell asleep with his ancestors, he was buried in the City ‖2 Ch 13:23
of David; his son Asa succeeded him.

The reign of Asa in Judah (911–870)

9, 10 In the twentieth year of Jeroboam king of Israel, Asa became king of Judah ·and ‖2 Ch 14:1–3
reigned for forty-one years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Maacah descen-
11 dant of Absalom. ·Asa did what Yahweh regards as right, as his ancestor David
12 had done. ·He drove the male prostitutes out of the country and got rid of all the ‖2 Ch 15:16–18
13 idols which his ancestors had made. ·He even deprived his grandmother Maacah Dt 23:19f
of the dignity of Great Lady[c] for having made an obscenity[d] for Asherah; Asa cut 11:19d
14 down her obscenity and burnt it in the ravine of the Kidron. ·Though the high
places were not abolished, Asa's heart was loyal to Yahweh throughout his life.
15 He deposited his father's and his own dedicated gifts of silver, gold and sacred
vessels in the Temple of Yahweh.
16 Asa and Baasha king of Israel were at war with each other throughout their ‖2 Ch 16:1–6
17 reigns. ·Baasha king of Israel marched on Judah and fortified Ramah to blockade
18 Asa king of Judah. ·Asa then took all the remaining silver and gold left in the
treasuries of the Temple of Yahweh and the royal palace. Entrusting this to his
servants, King Asa sent them with the following message to Ben-Hadad[e] son of
19 Tabrimmon, son of Hezion, the king of Aram who lived in Damascus, ·'Let us
make an alliance between myself and yourself, between my father and your father!
Look, I have sent you a gift of silver and gold. Come, break off your alliance with
20 Baasha king of Israel, which will make him withdraw from me.' ·Ben-Hadad
listened favourably to King Asa, and sent the generals of his armies to attack the
towns of Israel; he ravaged Ijon, Dan, Abel-Beth-Maacah, all Chinneroth,[f] and
21 the whole territory of Naphtali. ·When Baasha heard this he gave up fortifying
22 Ramah and retired[g] to Tirzah. ·King Asa then summoned all Judah, no one was
exempt; they took away the stones and timber with which Baasha had been
fortifying Ramah, and King Asa used them to fortify Geba of Benjamin and
Mizpah.
23 The rest of the history of Asa, all his valour, his entire career,[h] is this not ‖2 Ch 16:11–14
recorded in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah? In his old age, however,

14 **a.** The phrase reflects the reaction of true Yahwism: though Jeroboam intended his golden calves to serve for the worship of Yahweh, 12:28d, they were not suitable symbols for Yahweh, they were 'false gods' and no more.

b. lit. 'those who urinate against the wall'.

c. Two alliterative words, each of uncertain sense but together expressing totality: 'every single man'.

d. Whether in town or country they will lie unburied; *see* the contrasting v. 13.

e. The text adds 'Now is the day, and what more now?', an exilic gloss on v. 15.

f. 'will make Israel shake', conj., *see* what follows; Hebr. 'will strike'.

g. Capital of the kingdom of Israel before Samaria was built, 16:24. Modern Tell el-Farah, north of Nablus.

h. Verbs in singular, following Gk; Hebr. has plural, referring to Judah as a whole.

i. First Pharaoh of the 22nd Dynasty. It seems that he invaded Palestine but spared Judah, probably because Rehoboam paid tribute.

j. Bodyguards (or 'couriers', of 1 K 1:5) who escorted the king's chariot.

k. Text corrected in accordance with 2 Ch 12:16; Hebr. overloaded.

15 **a.** If descended from King David's favourite son, Maacah must in fact have been Absalom's granddaughter, *see* v. 10, where the same lady appears as (grand) 'daughter' of Absalom and (grand) 'mother' of Asa, *see* v. 13; 2 Ch 15:16–18. Hebr. terms of relationship were elastic.

b. v. 6, omitted here as in best Gk texts, is a doublet of 14:30.

c. In Judah, as in other eastern kingdoms, the queen mother enjoyed a position of honour, *see* 2:19, and certain prerogatives. She bore the title of 'Great Lady'. Her name is given without exception, in the introduction to each reign. Maacah had kept her rank under her descendant, who came to the throne very young.

d. Meaning uncertain. The word occurs only here and in the parallel 2 Ch. 15:16.

e. Ben-Hadad I. On the dynasty's subsequent history *see* 20:1. Asa inaugurated the policy of foreign alliance for which the major prophets were constantly to reproach the kings of Judah, *see* Is 7:4–9; 8:6–8.

f. The district west of Lake Tiberias.

g. 'retired to' Gk; 'resided at' Hebr.

h. Hebr. adds 'and the towns he built', influenced by previous v.

he contracted a disease of his feet. ·When Asa fell asleep with his ancestors, he was 24
buried with his ancestors in the City of his ancestor David; his son Jehoshaphat
succeeded him.

The reign of Nadab in Israel (910–909)

Nadab son of Jeroboam became king of Israel in the second year of Asa king of 25
Judah, and he reigned over Israel for two years. ·He did what is displeasing to 26
Yahweh; he copied his father's example and the sin into which he had led Israel.
Baasha son of Ahijah, of the House of Issachar, plotted against him and murdered 27
him at Gibbethon, a Philistine town which Nadab and all Israel were
besieging. ·Baasha killed Nadab and succeeded him in the third year of Asa king of 28
Judah. ·No sooner was he king than he butchered the entire House of Jeroboam, 29
14:10–11 not sparing a soul, and put an end to it, just as Yahweh had foretold through his
servant Ahijah of Shiloh, ·because of the sins which he had committed and into 30
which he had led Israel, and because he had provoked the anger of Yahweh, God
of Israel.

The rest of the history of Nadab, his entire career, is this not recorded in ·the 31, 32
Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel? [i]

The reign of Baasha in Israel (909–886)

In the third year of Asa king of Judah, Baasha son of Ahijah became king of Israel [j] 33
at Tirzah for twenty-four years. ·He did what is displeasing to Yahweh; he copied 34
the example of Jeroboam and the sin into which he had led Israel.

14:7–11 **16** The word of Yahweh came to Jehu son of Hanani against Baasha: ·'I raised 1, 2
you from the dust and made you leader of my people Israel, but you have
followed Jeroboam's example and led my people Israel into sins which provoke my
anger. ·Now I shall sweep away Baasha and his House; I shall make your House 3
14:11 like the House of Jeroboam son of Nebat. ·Those of Baasha's family who die in the 4
city, the dogs will eat; and those who die in the open country, the birds of the air
will eat.'

The rest of the history of Baasha, his career, his valour, is this not recorded in 5
the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel? ·When Baasha fell asleep with his 6
ancestors, he was buried in Tirzah; his son Elah succeeded him.

Furthermore, the word of Yahweh was delivered through the prophet Jehu son 7
of Hanani against Baasha and his House, first because of the many ways in which
he had displeased Yahweh, provoking him to anger by his actions and becoming
like the House of Jeroboam; secondly because he had destroyed that House. [a]

The reign of Elah in Israel (886–885)

In the twenty-sixth year of Asa king of Judah, Elah son of Baasha became king of 8
Israel at Tirzah, for two years. ·Zimri, one of his officers, captain of half his 9
Is 5:11 chariotry, plotted against him. While he was at Tirzah, drinking himself senseless
in the house of Arza who was master of the palace in Tirzah, ·Zimri came in, struck 10
him down and killed him in the twenty-seventh year of Asa king of Judah, and
succeeded him. ·On his accession, as soon as he was seated on the throne, he 11
1 S 25:22 butchered Baasha's entire family, not leaving him one manjack of them alive,
neither relative nor friend. ·Zimri destroyed the whole House of Baasha, in 12
16:1–4 accordance with the word which Yahweh had spoken against Baasha through the
prophet Jehu, ·because of all the sins of Baasha and his son Elah into which they 13
had led Israel, provoking the anger of Yahweh, God of Israel, with their worthless
idols.

The history of Elah, his entire career, is this not recorded in the Book of the 14
Annals of the Kings of Israel?

The reign of Zimri in Israel (885)

In the twenty-seventh year of Asa king of Judah, Zimri became king for seven 15

days, at Tirzah. The people were then encamped in front of Gibbethon, a Philistine
16 town. ·When news reached the camp of how Zimri had not only plotted against but
actually killed the king, all Israel proclaimed the army commander Omri as king of
17 Israel in the camp that very day. ·Omri, and all Israel with him, raised the siege of
18 Gibbethon and laid siege to Tirzah. ·When Zimri saw that the town had been
captured, he went into the keep of the royal palace, burned the palace over his
19 own head, and died. ·This was because of the sin which he had committed in doing
what is displeasing to Yahweh, by copying the example of Jeroboam and the sin
into which he had led Israel.
20 The rest of the history of Zimri and of his conspiracy, is this not recorded in the
Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel?
21 The people of Israel then split into two factions: one half following Tibni son of
22 Ginath to make him king, the other half following Omri. ·But the faction of Omri
proved stronger than that of Tibni son of Ginath; thus Tibni lost his life and Omri
became king.

The reign of Omri in Israel (885–874) [b]

23 In the thirty-first year of Asa king of Judah, Omri became king of Israel and
24 reigned for twelve years. He reigned for six years at Tirzah. ·Then for two talents
of silver he bought the hill of Samaria from Shemer and on it built a town which he
25 named Samaria after Shemer who had owned the hill. ·Omri did what is displeasing
26 to Yahweh, and was worse than all his predecessors. ·In every way he copied the
example of Jeroboam son of Nebat and the sins into which he had led Israel,
provoking the anger of Yahweh, God of Israel, with their worthless idols.
27 The rest of the history of Omri, his career, his valour, is this not recorded in the
28 Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel? ·When Omri fell asleep with his
ancestors, he was buried in Samaria; his son Ahab succeeded him.

Introduction to the reign of Ahab (874–853)

29 Ahab son of Omri became king of Israel in the thirty-eighth year of Asa king of
30 Judah, and reigned over Israel for twenty-two years in Samaria. ·Ahab son of Omri
did what is displeasing to Yahweh, and was worse than all his predecessors.
31 The least that he did was to follow the sinful example of Jeroboam son of Nebat:
he married Jezebel daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians, [c] and then pro-
32 ceeded to serve Baal and worship him. ·He erected an altar to him in the temple of
33 Baal which he built in Samaria. ·Ahab also put up a sacred pole and committed Ex 34:13e
other crimes as well, provoking the anger of Yahweh, God of Israel, more than all
34 the kings of Israel his predecessors. ·It was in his time that Hiel of Bethel rebuilt
Jericho. Laying its foundations cost him his eldest son Abiram and erecting its Lv 18:21h
gates cost him his youngest son Segub, [d] just as Yahweh had foretold through Jos 6:26
Joshua son of Nun.

i. v. 32, doublet of v. 16, is omitted by Gk.
j. 'Israel' Gk; 'all Israel' Hebr.

16 a. After 'Hanani', Hebr. adds 'the prophet'; Gk omits. The whole v. is an addition repeating vv. 1–4 and offering a second reason for Baasha's punishment, and not consistent with the spirit of the book.

b. Omri was without doubt a great ruler, but the Books of Kings, concerned with the kingdom of Israel exclusively from the religious point of view, mention only the founding of Samaria which was to remain the capital until the kingdom finally collapsed.

c. *Ethbaal (Ittobaal in Gk)* was a priest of Astarte who seized power in Tyre at the same time as Omri in Israel; the two usurpers came to terms and sealed their alliance by a family marriage. The effects on the religion of Israel of this association with the Phoenicians were to be increasingly felt throughout Ahab's reign.

d. Possibly his two sons were slaughtered as a foundation sacrifice.

V: THE ELIJAH CYCLE

A: THE GREAT DROUGHT

Elijah foretells the drought

↗Jm 5:17
↗Rv 11:6
17 Elijah the Tishbite, of Tishbe in Gilead,[a] said to Ahab, 'By the life of 1
Yahweh, God of Israel, whom I serve, there will be neither dew nor rain
these coming years unless I give the word.'

In the ravine of the Cherith

The word of Yahweh came to him, ·'Go away from here, go east and hide by the 2, 3
torrent of Cherith, east of the Jordan. ·You can drink from the stream, and I have 4
ordered the ravens to bring you food there.' ·So he set out and did as Yahweh had 5
said; he went and stayed by the torrent of Cherith, east of the Jordan. ·The ravens 6
Ex 16:8,12 brought him bread in the morning and meat in the evening,[b] and he quenched his
thirst at the stream.

2 K 4:1–7 **At Zarephath. The miracle of the flour and the oil**

But after a while the stream dried up, for the country had had no rain. ·And then 7, 8
↗Lk 4:25–26 the word of Yahweh came to him, ·'Up and go to Zarephath in Sidonia, and stay 9
there. I have ordered a widow there to give you food.' ·So he went off to Sidon. 10
And when he reached the city gate, there was a widow gathering sticks. Addressing
her he said, 'Please bring a little water in a pitcher for me to drink.' ·She was on her 11
way to fetch it when he called after her. 'Please', he said, 'bring me a scrap of bread
in your hand.' ·'As Yahweh your God lives,' she replied, 'I have no baked bread, 12
but only a handful of meal in a jar and a little oil in a jug; I am just gathering a stick
or two to go and prepare this for myself and my son to eat, and then we shall die.'
But Elijah said to her, 'Do not be afraid, go and do as you have said; but first 13
make a little scone of it for me and bring it to me, and then make some for yourself
and for your son. ·For Yahweh, God of Israel, says this: 14

> Jar of meal shall not be spent,
> jug of oil shall not be emptied,
> before the day when Yahweh sends
> rain on the face of the earth.'

The woman went and did as Elijah told her and they ate the food, she, himself 15
and her son.[c] ·The jar of meal was not spent nor the jug of oil emptied, just as 16
Yahweh had foretold through Elijah.

2 K 4:18–37
Lk 7:11–17
The widow's son raised to life

It happened after this that the son of the mistress of the house fell sick; his illness 17
was so severe that in the end he expired. ·And the woman said to Elijah, 'What 18
quarrel have you with me, man of God? Have you come here to bring my sins
home to me and to kill my son?'[d] ·'Give me your son,' he said and, taking him 19
from her lap, he carried him to the upper room where he was staying and laid him
on his bed. ·He cried out to Yahweh, 'Yahweh my God, do you mean to bring grief 20
2 K 4:33–36
Ac 20:10 even to the widow who is looking after me by killing her son?' ·He stretched 21
himself on the child three times and cried out to Yahweh, 'Yahweh my God, may
the soul of this child, I beg you, come into him again!' ·Yahweh heard Elijah's 22
prayer and the child's soul came back into his body and he revived. ·Elijah took 23
the child, brought him down from the upper room into the house, and gave him to
Heb 11:35 his mother. 'Look,' Elijah said, 'your son is alive.' ·And the woman replied, 'Now 24
I know you are a man of God and the word of Yahweh in your mouth is truth itself.'

Elijah and Obadiah

18 A long time went by, and the word of Yahweh came to Elijah in the third year, 'Go, present yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the country.'
So Elijah set off to present himself to Ahab.
As the famine was particularly severe in Samaria, ·Ahab summoned Obadiah,
the master of the palace—Obadiah held Yahweh in great reverence: ·when Jezebel 4:2a
was butchering the prophets of Yahweh, Obadiah took a hundred of them and
hid them, fifty at a time, in a cave, and kept them provided with food and
water[a]—·and Ahab said to Obadiah, 'Come along, we must scour the country,[b]
all the springs and all the ravines in the hope of finding grass to keep horses and
mules alive, or we shall have to slaughter some of our stock.' ·They divided the
country for the purpose of their survey; Ahab went one way by himself and
Obadiah went another way by himself. ·While Obadiah was on his way, whom
should he meet but Elijah. Recognising him he fell on his face and said, 'So
it is you, my lord Elijah!' ·'Yes,' he replied, 'go and tell your master, "Elijah
is here." ' ·But Obadiah said, 'What sin I have committed, for you to put your
servant into Ahab's power and cause my death? ·As Yahweh your God lives, there
is no nation or kingdom where my master has not sent in search of you; and when
they said, "He is not there," he made the kingdom or nation swear an oath that
they did not know where you were. ·And now you say to me, "Go and tell your
master: Elijah is here." ·But as soon as I leave you, the spirit of Yahweh will carry
you away and I shall not know where;[c] I shall go and tell Ahab; he will not be able
to find you, and then he will kill me. Yet from his youth your servant has revered
Yahweh. ·Has no one told my lord what I did when Jezebel butchered the prophets
of Yahweh, how I hid a hundred of them in a cave, fifty at a time, and kept them
provided with food and water? ·And now you say to me, "Go and tell your master:
Elijah is here." Why, he will kill me!' ·Elijah replied, 'As Yahweh Sabaoth lives, 1 S 1:3c
whom I serve, I shall present myself to him today!'

Elijah and Ahab

Obadiah went to find Ahab and tell him the news, and Ahab then went to find
Elijah. ·When he saw Elijah, Ahab said, 'So there you are, you scourge of Israel!'
'Not I,' he replied, 'I am not the scourge of Israel, you and your family are; because
you have deserted Yahweh[d] and followed Baal. ·Now give orders for all Israel to Jg 2:13i
gather round me on Mount Carmel, and also the four hundred prophets of Baal[e]
who eat at Jezebel's table.'

The sacrifice on Carmel

Ahab called all Israel together and assembled the prophets on Mount Carmel.
Elijah stepped out in front of all the people. 'How long', he said, 'do you mean to
hobble first on one leg[f] then on the other? If Yahweh is God, follow him; if Baal,
follow him.' But the people had nothing to say. ·Elijah then said to them, 'I, I 19:10,14

17 **a.** 'of Tishbe' Gk; 'of the inhabitants' *mittoshabe* Hebr. The document dealing with the history of Elijah, of which use is made henceforth, *see* p. 282, probably recounted the earlier life of the prophet, but the author takes it from the point where it fits into his own narrative: the drought is presented as a punishment for the introduction of the cult of Baal, 16:32–33.

b. Following Gk; 'bread and meat in the morning, bread and meat in the evening' Hebr.

c. 'and her son' Gk, *see* vv. 12–13; 'and her household, for a long while' Hebr.

d. The woman attributes her misfortune to Elijah's visit: a man of God is like a hostile witness; at his presence secret or unconscious sins are brought to light and draw down retribution.

18 **a.** The parenthesis prepares for v. 13. On these 'prophets' *see* 1 S 10:5,: they play a prominent part in the Elisha cycle.

b. Following Gk; 'Come into the country' Hebr.

c. These sudden disappearances seem to have been a feature of the story of Elijah, 2 K 2:16, until the last disappearance of all, 2 K 2:11 seq. The spirit of Yahweh is an external force transporting the prophet from place to place, *see* Ezk 3:12; 8:3; 11:1; 43:5; Ac 8:39.

d. 'Yahweh' Gk; 'the commandments of Yahweh' Hebr.

e. A gloss adds 'and the four hundred prophets of Asherah', who are not mentioned again. There were many such 'prophets' among the peoples contiguous to Israel, Jr 27:9seq.; they formed large groups, like the prophets of Yahweh, 1 K 18:4. Here they are the devotees of the Tyrian Baal, invited into Israel and maintained by Jezebel.

f. The meaning of the last word is uncertain but the translation (*see* Gk) accords with the performance in v. 26: the Israelites dance in honour both of Yahweh and of Baal.

alone, am left as a prophet of Yahweh, while the prophets of Baal are four hundred
and fifty. ·Let two bulls be given us; let them choose one for themselves, dismem- 23
ber it but not set fire to it. I in my turn shall prepare the other bull,[g] but not set fire
to it. ·You must call on the name of your god, and I shall call on the name of 24
Yahweh; the god who answers with fire, is God indeed.'[h] The people all answered,
'Agreed!' ·Elijah then said to the prophets of Baal, 'Choose one bull and begin, 25
for there are more of you. Call on the name of your god but light no fire.' ·They 26
took the bull[i] and prepared it, and from morning to midday they called on the
name of Baal. 'O Baal, answer us!' they cried, but there was no voice, no answer,
as they performed their hobbling dance round the altar which they had made.
Midday came, and Elijah mocked them. 'Call louder,' he said, 'for he is a god: 27
he is preoccupied or he is busy, or he has gone on a journey; perhaps he is
Dt 14:1a asleep and needs to be woken up!' ·So they shouted louder and gashed them- 28
Zc 13:6d selves, as their custom was, with swords and spears until the blood flowed down
18:36 them. ·Midday passed, and they ranted on until the time when the offering is 29
2 K 3:20
Dn 9:21 presented;[j] but there was no voice, no answer, no sign of attention.

Then Elijah said to all the people, 'Come over to me,' and all the people came 30
over to him. He repaired Yahweh's altar which had been torn down. ·Elijah took 31
twelve stones, corresponding to the number of tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom
Gn 32:29 the word of Yahweh had come, 'Israel is to be your name,' ·and built an altar in the 32
name of Yahweh.[k] Round the altar he dug a trench of a size to hold two measures
of seed. ·He then arranged the wood, dismembered the bull, and laid it on the 33
wood. ·Then he said, 'Fill four jars with water and pour it on the burnt offering and 34
on the wood.' They did this.[l] He said, 'Do it a second time;' they did it a second
time. He said, 'Do it a third time;' they did it a third time. ·The water flowed round 35
the altar until even the trench itself was full of water.[m] ·At the time when the 36
offering is presented, Elijah the prophet stepped forward. 'Yahweh, God of
Abraham, Isaac and Israel,' he said, 'let them know today that you are God in
Israel, and that I am your servant, that I have done all these things at your
command. ·Answer me, Yahweh, answer me, so that this people may know that 37
you, Yahweh, are God and are winning back their hearts.'[n]

Lv 9:24 Then Yahweh's fire fell and consumed the burnt offering and the wood[o] and 38
Nb 11:1; 16:35
Jg 6:21 licked up the water in the trench. ·When all the people saw this they fell on their 39
faces. 'Yahweh is God,' they cried, 'Yahweh is God!' ·Elijah said, 'Seize the 40
prophets of Baal: do not let one of them escape.' They seized them, and Elijah
took them down to the Kishon, and there he slaughtered them.[p]

The drought ends

Elijah said to Ahab, 'Go back now, eat and drink;[q] for I hear the approaching 41
↗Jm 5:18 sound of rain.' ·While Ahab went back to eat and drink, Elijah climbed to the top 42
of Carmel and bowed down to the ground, putting his face between his knees.
'Now go up', he told his servant, 'and look out to sea.' He went up and looked. 43
'There is nothing at all,' he said. Seven times Elijah told him to go back. ·The 44
seventh time, the servant said, 'Now there is a cloud, small as a man's hand, rising
from the sea.' Elijah said, 'Go and say to Ahab, "Harness the chariot and go down
before the rain stops you." ' ·And with that the sky grew dark with cloud and 45
storm, and rain fell in torrents. Ahab mounted his chariot and made for Jezreel.[r]
2 K 3:15
Ezk 1:3b But the hand of Yahweh had come on Elijah and, hitching up his clothes, he ran 46
ahead of Ahab all the way to Jezreel.

B: ELIJAH AT HOREB

The journey to Horeb

19 When Ahab told Jezebel everything that Elijah had done, and how he had 1
put all the prophets to the sword, ·Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah to say, 2

'May the gods bring unnameable ills on me and worse ills too, if by this time Rt 1:17f
3 tomorrow I have not made your life like one of theirs!' ·He was afraid [e] and fled for
4 his life. He came to Beersheba, a town of Judah, where he left his servant. ·He
himself went on into the desert, a day's journey, and sitting under a furze bush Gn 21:14–21
wished he were dead. 'Yahweh,' he said, 'I have had enough. Take my life; I am no Nb 11:14
5 better than my ancestors.' ·Then he lay down and went to sleep. Then all of a Tb 3:6
6 sudden an angel touched him and said, 'Get up and eat.' ·He looked round, and Jb 7:15
Jon 4:3,8
there at his head was a scone baked on hot stones, and a jar of water. He ate and
7 drank and then lay down again. ·But the angel of Yahweh came back a second
time and touched him and said, 'Get up and eat, or the journey will be too long for
8 you.' ·So he got up and ate and drank, and strengthened by that food he walked for
forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, God's mountain. [b] Ex 24:18
Mt 4:1a

The encounter with God Ex 33:18–34:9

9 There he went into a cave [c] and spent the night there. Then the word of Yahweh
10 came to him saying, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?' ·He replied, 'I am full of
jealous zeal for Yahweh Sabaoth, because the Israelites have abandoned your
covenant, have torn down your altars and put your prophets to the sword. I am the
11 only one left, and now they want to kill me.' [d] ·Then he was told, 'Go out and stand
on the mountain before Yahweh.' For at that moment Yahweh was going by. A
mighty hurricane split the mountains and shattered the rocks before Yahweh. But
Yahweh was not in the hurricane. And after the hurricane, an earthquake. But
12 Yahweh was not in the earthquake. ·And after the earthquake, fire. But Yahweh Ex 13:22h; 19:16g
13 was not in the fire. And after the fire, a light murmuring sound. [e] ·And
when Elijah heard this, he covered his face with his cloak and went out and stood Gn 3:8
at the entrance of the cave. Then a voice came to him, which said, 'What are you Ex 3:6;33:20i
14 doing here, Elijah?' ·He replied, 'I am full of jealous zeal for Yahweh, God Jb 4:16
Sabaoth, because the Israelites have abandoned your covenant, have torn down ↗Rm 11:3
your altars and put your prophets to the sword. I am the only one left and now they
15 want to kill me.' ·'Go,' Yahweh said, 'go back by the same way to the desert of
16 Damascus. You must go and anoint Hazael as king of Aram. ·You must anoint 2 K 8:7–15
Jehu son of Nimshi as king of Israel, [f] and anoint [g] Elisha son of Shaphat, of Abel- 2 K 9:1–13
17 Meholah, as prophet to succeed you. ·Anyone who escapes the sword of Hazael 19:19–21
will be put to death by Jehu; and anyone who escapes the sword of Jehu will be put
18 to death by Elisha. ·But I shall spare seven thousand in Israel; all the knees that Is 4:3c
have not bent before Baal, all the mouths that have not kissed him.' ↗Rm 11:4–5

g. Hebr. adds 'and lay it on the wood'.

h. It is not merely a matter of deciding whether Yahweh or Baal is lord of the mountain or which is the stronger, but simply which is God. Elijah's own statement, his prayer, v. 37, and the people's acclamation, v. 39, make this clear: monotheism itself is at stake.

i. Hebr. adds 'provided for them'.

j. The mention of the evening sacrifice, Ex 29:39; Nb 28:4; 2 K 16:15, is merely an indication of the time of day.

k. vv. 31–32[a] appear to be a gloss.

l. 'they did this' Gk; Hebr. omits.

m. This is not rain-making magic but a way of enhancing the fire miracle.

n. The miracle will demonstrate: **1** To the prophets of Baal and to Jezebel's entourage of foreigners ('let them know', v. 36) that there is no place for them in Israel where Yahweh is God; and **2** To the Israelites ('this people', v. 37) that Yahweh is the only God, the God who wins back wayward hearts.

o. Hebr. adds 'stones and soil', a gloss.

p. In this war between Yahweh and Baal those who serve Baal suffer the fate of the conquered in the warfare of the times.

q. A fast has been observed to prepare for the sacrifice and to bring rain.

r. Serving more or less as an alternative capital for the kings of Israel, 21:1; 2 K 8:29; 9:30seq.

19 **a.** 'He was afraid' versions; 'He saw' Hebr.

b. *see* Ex 19:1a. Zealous to maintain the covenant and restore the ancient faith, Elijah visits the place where the true God revealed himself, Ex 3 and 33:18–34:9, and where the covenant had been concluded, Ex 19; 24; 34:10–28. He sees his own task as that of continuing the work of Moses. Moses and Elijah have in common a theophany at Horeb; both also witness the NT theophany, Christ's transfiguration, Mt 17:1–9 and par.

c. The 'cleft in the rock' where Moses crouched when God appeared, Ex 33:22.

d. vv. 9[b]–10 are a doublet of vv. 13–14.

e. The storm, earthquake and lightning, which in Ex 19 manifested God's presence, are here only the heralds of his coming. The whispering murmur signifies that he converses intimately with his prophets; it does not mean that God's dealings are gentle—this common interpretation is refuted by the terrible commission of vv. 15–17.

f. This task was in fact later performed by Elisha.

g. Anointing, Ex 30:22d, was reserved for kings, 1 S 9:26n; parallelism explains the use of the word here.

The call of Elisha [h]

Leaving there, he came on Elisha son of Shaphat as he was ploughing behind 19
twelve yoke of oxen, he himself being with the twelfth. Elijah passed near to him
2 K 2:13 and threw his cloak over him. [i] ·Elisha left his oxen and ran after Elijah. 'Let me 20
Lk 9:61 kiss my father and mother, then I will follow you,' he said. Elijah answered, 'Go,
go back; for have I done anything to you?' ·Elisha turned away, took a yoke of 21
oxen and slaughtered them. He used the oxen's tackle for cooking the meat, which
2 K 3:11 he gave the people to eat. He then rose and, following Elijah, became his servant.

C: THE ARAMAEAN WARS

The siege of Samaria

20 Ben-Hadad king of Aram [a] mustered his whole army—thirty-two kings [b] 1
were with him, and horses and chariots—and marched on Samaria, to
besiege it and take it by assault. ·He sent messengers into the city to Ahab king of 2
Israel to tell him, 'Ben-Hadad says this, ·"Your silver and gold are mine. Your 3
wives and children remain yours." ' [c] ·The king of Israel replied, 'As you com- 4
mand, my lord king. [d] Myself and all I have are yours.'

The messengers came again; this time they said, 'Ben-Hadad says this, "I have 5
already sent you an order to hand over your silver and your gold, your wives and
your children; ·but I swear, this time tomorrow, I shall send my servants to ransack 6
your house and your servants' houses and lay hands on everything that they value [e]
and take it away." '

The king of Israel summoned all the elders of the country and said, 'You can see 7
clearly how this man intends to ruin us. He has already demanded my wives and
my children, although I have not refused him my silver and gold.' [f] ·All the elders 8
and all the people said, 'Take no notice. Do not consent.' ·So he gave this answer 9
to Ben-Hadad's messengers, 'Say to my lord the king, "All you first required of
your servant I will do, but this I cannot do." ' And the messengers went back with
the answer.

Rt 1:17f Ben-Hadad then sent him the following message, 'May the gods bring unname- 10
able ills on me and worse ills too, if there is enough dust in Samaria for each of my
followers to have a handful!' ·But the king of Israel returned this answer, 'Say: the 11
man who puts on his armour is not the one to boast, but the man who takes it off.'
When Ben-Hadad heard this message—he was under the awnings drinking with 12
the kings—he gave orders to his servants, 'Take up position!' And they took up
their positions against the city.

Victory for Israel

A prophet then arrived, looking for Ahab king of Israel. 'Yahweh says this,' he 13
said. "You have seen this huge army? This very day I shall deliver it into your
hands, and you will know that I am Yahweh." ' ·'By whose means?' Ahab asked. 14
The prophet replied, 'Yahweh says this, "By means of the guards of the district
governors." ' 'Who will co-ordinate the attack?' Ahab asked. 'You will,' the
prophet replied. [g]

So Ahab inspected the guards of the district governors: there were two hundred 15
and thirty-two. After these he reviewed the army, all the Israelites: there were
seven thousand. ·They made a sortie at midday, when Ben-Hadad was drinking 16
himself senseless under the awnings, he and the thirty-two kings who were allies.
The guards of the district governors led the sortie. A report was made to Ben- 17
Hadad: 'Some men have come out of Samaria.' ·He said, 'If they have come out 18
for peace, take them alive; if they have come out for war, take them alive too.' ·So 19
they made a sortie from the city, the district governors' guards and behind them
the army, ·and each struck down his man. Aram took to flight and Israel pursued; 20

21 Ben-Hadad king of Aram escaped on horseback. •The king of Israel then advanced, capturing[h] horses and chariots and inflicting a great defeat on Aram.

Respite

22 The prophet then went to the king of Israel and said, 'Now is the time to be resolute and think carefully about what you should do, for at the turn of the year the king of Aram will march against you.'[i]

23 The servants of the king of Aram said to him, 'Their gods are gods of the mountains; that is why they have proved stronger than we are. But if we fight them
24 on level ground, we shall certainly beat them. •This is what you must do: remove all these kings from their commands and appoint professional soldiers in their
25 place. •You, for your part, must recruit an army as large as the one which deserted you, with as many horses and as many chariots; then if we fight them on level ground, we shall certainly beat them.' He listened to their advice and acted accordingly.

The victory of Aphek

26 At the turn of the year, Ben-Hadad mustered the Aramaeans and marched on
27 Aphek to fight Israel. •The Israelites were already mobilised and provisioned, and marched out to meet them. Encamped opposite them, the Israelites looked like two herds of goats, whereas the Aramaeans filled the countryside.

28 The man of God[j] then went to the king of Israel and said, 'Yahweh says this, "Since Aram has said that Yahweh is a god of the mountains and not a god of the plains, I shall put the whole of this huge army into your power, and you will know
29 that I am Yahweh." ' •For seven days they were encamped opposite each other. On the seventh day battle was joined and the Israelites slaughtered the Aramaeans,
30 a hundred thousand foot soldiers[k] in one day. •The rest fled to Aphek, into the citadel, but the city walls collapsed on twenty-seven thousand of the survivors.

Now Ben-Hadad had fled and taken refuge in an inner room inside the citadel.
31 'Look,' his servants said to him, 'we have heard that the kings of Israel are faithful and kind kings. Let us put sackcloth round our waists and cords round our heads[l]
32 and go out to the king of Israel; perhaps he will spare your life.' •So they wrapped sackcloth round their waists and put cords round their heads and went to the king of Israel, and said, 'Your servant Ben-Hadad says, "Spare my life." '
33 'So he is still alive?' he replied. 'He is my brother.'[m] The men took this for a good omen and quickly seized on his words. 'Yes,' they said, 'Ben-Hadad is your brother.' Ahab said, 'Go and fetch him.' Then Ben-Hadad came out to him and
34 Ahab made him get up into his chariot. •Ben-Hadad said, 'I shall restore the towns which my father took from your father and you may set up a trading quarter for yourself in Damascus as my father did in Samaria.' 'With a treaty,' Ahab said,[n] 'I shall set you free.' Granting him a treaty, Ahab let him go.

h. vv. 19–21 come from the Elisha cycle.

i. The cloak symbolises the person and rights of its owner. That of Elijah has, moreover, miraculous properties, 2 K 2:8. Elijah thus acquires an authority over Elisha which the latter cannot resist. By destroying plough and oxen Elisha formally renounces his old way of life.

20 a. Ben-Hadad II, ruler of the Aramaean kingdom of Damascus, successor to Ben-Hadad I, 15:18e.

b. Princely vassals of Ben-Hadad, *see* v. 24.

c. To 'children' Hebr. adds 'handsome', omitted by Gk. • 'yours' conj.;

d. Ahab speaks as though vanquished and already a vassal. The siege had been preceded by Israelite reverses (the text only alludes to these, v. 34).

e. 'they value' versions; 'you value' Hebr.

f. In Gk (*see* note c above), Ahab says, 'I have not demurred over the treasure, but now he wants my wives and children too!'

g. God is consulted about military strategy, *see* 22:5seq; Jg 1:1seq.; 20:18; *see* Ex 33:7e, 1 S 14:18.

h. 'capturing' Gk; 'destroying' Hebr.

i. The spring equinox, *see* 2 S 11:1.

j. The prophet of vv. 13 and 22. • 'you' (plural) Hebr.; 'you' (sing.) Gk.

k. These figures, *see* v. 15, are suspect; this is popular history.

l. Signifying mourning and repentance.

m. Vassal kings referred to themselves as 'servants' of their suzerain, kings of equal standing were 'brothers'. Ben-Hadad now admits defeat but Ahab declines his homage, and the envoys, hearing the word 'brother', deduce that their master is now safe.

n. 'Ahab said' is added for clarity.

A prophet condemns Ahab's policy

2 K 2:3c At Yahweh's command a member of the brotherhood of prophets said to a 35
companion of his, 'Strike me,' but the man refused to strike him. ·So he said to 36
13:20–25 him, 'Since you have disobeyed Yahweh's order, the very moment you leave me a
lion will kill you.' And no sooner had he left him than he met a lion, which killed
him.[o] ·The prophet then went to find another man and said, 'Strike me,' and the 37
2 S 12:1–12; 14:1–20 man struck him and wounded him.[p] ·The prophet then went and stood waiting for 38
the king on the road, disguising himself with a bandage over his eyes. ·As the king 39
passed, he called out to him, 'Your servant was making his way to where the fight
was thickest when someone left the fighting to bring a man to me, and said, "Guard
this man; if he is found missing, your life will pay for his, or else you will have to
pay one talent of silver." ·But your servant was busy with one thing and another, 40
the man disappeared.' The king of Israel said, 'That is your sentence then. You
have pronounced it yourself.' ·At this the man quickly pulled off the bandage over 41
his eyes, and the king of Israel recognised him as one of the prophets.[q] ·He said to 42
the king, 'Yahweh says this, "Since you have let the man escape who was under my
Jos 6:17c curse of destruction, your life will pay for his, your people for his people." ' ·And 43
the king of Israel went home, gloomy and out of temper, back to Samaria.

Is 5:8–10,8c

D: NABOTH'S VINEYARD

Naboth refuses to hand over his vineyard

21 This is what happened next: Naboth of Jezreel had a vineyard close by the 1
palace of Ahab[a] king of Samaria, ·and Ahab said to Naboth, 'Give me your 2
vineyard to be my vegetable garden, since it adjoins my palace; I will give you a
better vineyard for it or, if you prefer, I will give you its value in money.'
Nb 36:7 Ezk 46:18 Naboth, however, said to Ahab, 'Yahweh forbid that I should give you my 3
ancestral heritage!'

Ahab and Jezebel

Ahab went home gloomy and out of temper at the words of Naboth of Jezreel, 'I 4
21:3 will not give you my heritage from my ancestors.' He lay down on his bed and
turned his face away and refused to eat. ·His wife Jezebel came to him. 'Why are 5
you so dispirited,' she said, 'that you refuse to eat?' ·He said, 'I have been talking 6
to Naboth of Jezreel I said, "Give me your vineyard either for money or, if you
prefer, for another vineyard in exchange." But he said, "I will not give you my
vineyard." ' ·Then his wife Jezebel said, 'Some king of Israel you make! Get up, 7
eat and take heart; I myself shall get you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite.'

Naboth is murdered

So she wrote a letter in Ahab's name and sealed it with his seal, sending the letter 8
to the elders and notables[b] of the city where Naboth lived. ·In the letter, she wrote, 9
'Proclaim a fast, and put Naboth in a prominent place among the people.[c]
There confront him with a couple of scoundrels[d] who will accuse him as follows, 10
Ex 22:27 Lv 24:14 "You have cursed God and the king." Then take him outside and stone him to
death.'[e]

The men of Naboth's city, the elders and notables living in his city, did what 11
Jezebel ordered, as was written in the letter which she had sent him. ·They 12
proclaimed a fast and put Naboth in a prominent place among the people. ·The 13
two scoundrels then came and confronted him, and the scoundrels then publicly
accused Naboth as follows, 'Naboth has cursed God and the king.' He was then
taken outside the city and stoned to death. ·They then sent word to Jezebel, 14
'Naboth has been stoned to death.' ·When Jezebel heard that Naboth had been 15
stoned to death, she said to Ahab, 'Get up! Take possession of the vineyard which

Naboth of Jezreel refused to sell you, for Naboth is no longer alive, he is dead.'
16 When Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, he got up to go down to the vineyard of
Naboth of Jezreel and take possession of it.

Elijah pronounces God's sentence [f] 2 S 12

17, 18 Then the word of Yahweh came to Elijah the Tishbite, ·'Up! Go down to meet
Ahab king of Israel, in Samaria. You will find him in Naboth's vineyard; he has
19 gone down to take possession of it. ·You are to say this to him, "Yahweh says this:
You have committed murder and now you usurp as well. For this [g]—and Yahweh
says this— in the place where the dogs licked the blood of Naboth, the dogs will 2 K 9:25–26 Ps 63:23m
20 lick your blood too." ' ·Ahab said to Elijah, 'So you have caught me, O my
enemy!' Elijah answered, 'I have caught you! For your double dealing, and since
21 you have done what is displeasing to Yahweh, ·I shall now bring disaster down on
you; I shall sweep away your descendants and wipe out every manjack of the 14:10–11; 16:3–4
22 House of Ahab, fettered or free in Israel. ·I shall treat your House as I treated the
House of Jeroboam son of Nebat and of Baasha son of Ahijah, for provoking my
23 anger and leading Israel into sin. ·(Against Jezebel too Yahweh spoke these words, 2 K 9:10
24 "The dogs will eat Jezebel in the Field [h] of Jezreel.") ·Those of Ahab's family who
die in the city, the dogs will eat; and those who die in the open country, the birds of
the air will eat.'
25 [i]And indeed there never was anyone like Ahab for double dealing and for doing 16:30–34
26 what is displeasing to Yahweh, urged on by Jezebel his wife. ·He behaved in the 11:4 Gn 3:12
most abominable way, adhering to idols, just as the Amorites had, whom Yahweh
had dispossessed for the Israelites.

Ahab repents

27 When Ahab heard these words, he tore his garments and put sackcloth next to his
28 skin and fasted; he slept in the sackcloth; he walked with slow steps. ·Then the
29 word of Yahweh came to Elijah the Tishbite, ·'Have you seen how Ahab has
humbled himself before me? Since he has humbled himself before me, I shall not 2 S 12:13–15
bring the disaster in his days; I shall bring the disaster down on his House in his 2 K 9–10
son's days.'

E: ANOTHER WAR WITH ARAM

Ahab plans a campaign against Ramoth in Gilead

1 **22** There was a lull of three years, with no fighting between Aram and Israel. ‖2 Ch 18:2–3
2 Then, in the third year, Jehoshaphat king of Judah paid a visit to the king
3 of Israel. [a] ·The king of Israel said to his officers, 'You are aware that Ramoth in

o. Similar story, in the same popular style as the one in 13:24seq.; any disobedience to the word of God or of a man of God, even for good motives, will be punished; a notion reflecting the mentality of ancient prophetic communities but surpassed by the major prophets.

p. The wound was to help the prophet to pose as a combatant, v. 39.

q. The prophets possibly had a distinguishing tattoo or incision on their foreheads, or shaved their heads, *see* 2 K 2:23.

21 a. His palace in Jezreel, 18:45, not the one in Samaria, 2 K 9:25–26. Hence the explanatory Hebr. gloss to 'vineyard': 'which was in Jezreel'.

b. Hebr. adds 'of the city'.

c. In times of disaster, public fasting and public prayer were proclaimed. Jg 20:26; Jl 1:14; 2:15 to placate God and to discover the fault which had provoked his anger. There must have been some widespread calamity (drought? famine?) to give Jezebel an opportunity for her plot.

d. For a capital conviction, two witnesses were required, Nb 35:30; Dt 17:6; *see* Mt 26:60seq. Hebr. cautiously substitutes 'blessed' for 'cursed' as in v. 13, so *also* Jb 1:5, 11; 2:5, 9.

e. Apparently the possessions of those condemned to death reverted to the king.

f. Note the similarity with the episode of Nathan and David in 2 S 12; on each occasion Yahweh defends the helpless against the powerful and there is the same reprieve for the repentant offender who is punished only through his son. But there are differences too: David's dynasty retains the divine promise, whereas Ahab's is 'swept away'. Nathan remains David's prophet and blesses Solomon, but Elijah is Ahab's 'enemy'.

g. 'For this' Gk; Hebr. repeats 'You are to say this to him'.

h. 'in the field' MSS, versions; 'below the rampart' Hebr.

i. vv. 25–26 are the remarks of an editor unconvinced of the sincerity of Ahab's repentance, vv. 27–29.

22 a. The two kingdoms had drawn closer together: Jehoshaphat's son Jehoram had married Athaliah, Ahab's sister or daughter, 2 K 8:18.

Gilead belongs to us? And yet we do nothing to wrest it away from the king of Aram.'[b] •He said to Jehoshaphat, 'Will you come with me to attack Ramoth in 4
2 K 3:7 Gilead?' Jehoshaphat replied to the king of Israel, 'I will be as you, my men with yours, my horses with yours.'

‖2 Ch 18:4–11 **The spurious prophets predict success**

20:13–14,14g Jehoshaphat, however, said to the king of Israel, 'First, please enquire what the 5
word of Yahweh is.' •The king of Israel then called the prophets together, about 6
four hundred of them.[c] 'Should I go and attack Ramoth in Gilead,' he asked, 'or
should I hold back?' 'Go ahead,' they replied, 'for Yahweh has already given it to
2 K 3:11 the king.' •Jehoshaphat, however, said, 'Is there no other prophet of Yahweh here, 7
so that we can enquire through him?' •The king of Israel said to Jehosha- 8
phat, 'There is one more man through whom we can consult Yahweh, but I hate
him because he never has a favourable prophecy for me, only unfavourable ones;
he is Micaiah son of Imlah.'[d] 'I hope the king's words are unjustified,' said Jeho-
shaphat. •The king of Israel then summoned a court official and said, 'Bring 9
Micaiah son of Imlah immediately.'

The king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah were sitting each on his throne, 10
wearing their robes, in an open space just outside the gate of Samaria, with all the
prophets in a state of ecstasy before them. •Zedekiah son of Kenaanah, who had 11
made himself some iron horns,[e] said, 'Yahweh says, "With horns like these you
will gore the Aramaeans till you make an end of them." ' •And all the prophets 12
cried ecstatically in the same vein, saying, 'March on Ramoth in Gilead! Success is
sure, for Yahweh has already given it to the king!'

‖2 Ch 18:12–27 **The prophet Micaiah predicts defeat**

The messenger who had gone to summon Micaiah said to him, 'Look here, what 13
the prophets are saying is uniformly favourable to the king. I hope you will say the
same as they do and speak favourably.' •Micaiah said, 'As Yahweh lives, I shall 14
speak as Yahweh tells me!' •When he came to the king, the king said, 'Micaiah, 15
should we go and attack Ramoth in Gilead, or should we hold back?' He replied,
'Go ahead! Success is sure, for Yahweh has already given it to the king!'[f] •The king 16
then said, 'How often must I put you on oath to tell me nothing but the truth in the
name of Yahweh?' •Then he spoke out: 17

Na 3:18 I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains
Nb 27:17+ like sheep without a shepherd.
And Yahweh said, 'These have no master,
22:35–36 let them all go safely home!'

At this the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, 'Did I not tell you that he never 18
gives me favourable prophecies, but only unfavourable ones?' •Micaiah went on, 19
Jb 1:6;2:1 Is 6:1 'Now listen to the word of Yahweh. I saw Yahweh seated on his throne with the
whole array of heaven[g] standing by him, on his right and on his left. •Yahweh said, 20
"Who will entice Ahab into marching to his death at Ramoth in Gilead?" At which
some answered one way, and some another. •A spirit[h] then came forward and 21
stood before Yahweh and said, "I will entice him." •"How?" Yahweh asked. He 22
replied, "I shall go and be a deceptive spirit in the mouths of all his prophets."
Yahweh said, "You will succeed in enticing him. Go and do it." •And now, you 23
see, Yahweh has put a deceptive spirit into the mouths of all your prophets here,
for in fact Yahweh has pronounced disaster on you.'

Zedekiah son of Chenaanah then came up, struck Micaiah on the cheek and 24
said, 'Which way did Yahweh's spirit leave me, to speak to you?' •'That is what 25
you will find out,' Micaiah retorted, 'the day you go from room to room, trying to
hide.' •The king of Israel said, 'Seize Micaiah and hand him over to Amon, 26
governor of the city, and Joash, the king's son, •and say, "These are the king's 27
orders: Put this man in prison and feed him on nothing but bread and water until I

28 am safely home." '[i] •Micaiah said, 'If you ever do get home safely, Yahweh has
not spoken through me.'[j]

Ahab falls at Ramoth in Gilead

||2 Ch 18:28–34

29 The king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah marched on Ramoth in Gilead.
30 The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, 'I shall disguise myself[k] to go into battle,
but you put on your robes.' So the king of Israel disguised himself and went into
31 battle. •Now, the king of Aram had given his chariot commanders[l] the following
32 order, 'Do not attack anyone of whatever rank, except the king of Israel.' •So,
when the chariot commanders saw Jehoshaphat, they thought, 'That is obviously
the king of Israel,' and surrounded him to attack. But when Jehoshaphat shouted
33 his war cry •the chariot commanders, realising that he was not the king of Israel,
broke off their pursuit.
34 Someone, however, drawing his bow without any special aim, shot the king of
Israel between the joints of his armour. 'Turn about!' said the king to his chario-
35 teer. 'Get me out of the fighting;[m] I am collapsing.' •But the battle grew fiercer as
the day went on and the king had to be held upright in his chariot facing the
Aramaeans, the blood from the wound running into the bottom of the chariot,
36 until in the evening he died. •At sundown a shout ran through the ranks, 'Every 22:17
37 man back to his town, every man back to his country! •The king is dead.'[n] He was
38 taken to Samaria and in Samaria the king was buried. •They washed the chariot[o] at
the Pool of Samaria; the dogs licked up the blood, and the prostitutes washed in it,
in accordance with the word which Yahweh had spoken.

F: AFTER THE DEATH OF AHAB

The end of the reign of Ahab

39 The rest of the history of Ahab, his entire career, the ivory house he erected, all Am 3:15
the towns he built, is this not recorded in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of
40 Israel? •When Ahab fell asleep with his ancestors, his son Ahaziah succeeded him.

The reign of Jehoshaphat in Judah (870–848)

||2 Ch 20:31–21:1

41 Jehoshaphat son of Asa became king of Judah in the fourth year of Ahab king of
42 Israel. •Jehoshaphat was thirty-five years old when he came to the throne, and he
reigned for twenty-five years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Azubah daugh-
43 ter of Shilhi. •In every way he followed the example of his father Asa undeviatingly,
44 doing what is pleasing to Yahweh. •The high places, however, were not abolished;
45 the people still offered sacrifice and incense on the high places. •Jehosha-
phat was at peace with the king of Israel.
46 The rest of the history of Jehoshaphat, the valour he showed, the wars he waged,
47 is this not recorded in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah? •The few

b. Probably still Ben-Hadad II, *see* 20:1. The town, captured by the Aramaeans during or before the reign of David, had not been handed back after the treaty of Aphek, 20:34. *see also* 2 K 8:28.

c. These 'prophets' were in the king's service and were not pure Yahwists, unlike the prophets slain or persecuted by Jezebel, 18:4, 13; 19:1–4. Hence Jehoshaphat's question, v. 7.

d. Not the Micaiah ('Micah') numbered among the twelve 'minor prophets' who lived 150 years later.

e. This Zedekiah, otherwise unknown, is apparently the spokesman for the troop of ecstatics. His mime, *see* 11:30g and Jr 18:1a is intended to symbolise and even effect the triumph of Ahab. The horns symbolise strength, Dt 33:17.

f. Micaiah takes up the exact words of the false prophets; but he is ridiculing the king, and the king knows.

g. Celestial spirits forming Yahweh's court.

h. Personification of the spirit of prophecy, which the divine intention will transform into a spirit of deceit, v. 22.

i. Or 'victorious', *see* 8:9; 2 S 19:25–31; Jr 43:12.

j. Hebr. adds 'And he said, "Listen, peoples all", the opening words of the Book of Micah (Mi 1:2), inserted by a glossator who confused this Micaiah with the canonical prophet.

k. 'I shall disguise myself' versions; 'Disguise yourself' Hebr. in contradiction to what follows.

l. Hebr. adds 'thirty-two', a gloss inspired by 20:1, 16, but missing in 2 Ch. 18:30.

m. 'the fighting' Gk; 'the camp' Hebr.

n. 'The king is dead' Gk; 'And the king died' Hebr.

o. 'They washed' Gk; 'He washed' Hebr. The verse is a gloss referring back to 21:19, though in fact Naboth had been killed at Jezreel, and Yahweh had reserved Ahab's punishment for his son.

15:12 Dt 23:19f male sacred prostitutes left over from the days of his father Asa, he expelled from the country. ·At the time, Edom[p] had no king, and King ·Jehoshaphat[q] built 48, 49
ships of Tarshish to go to Ophir for gold, but they never made the voyage since the
9:26–28;10:22 ships were wrecked at Ezion-Geber. ·Ahaziah son of Ahab then proposed to 50
Jehoshaphat, 'Let my men go to sea with yours.' But Jehoshaphat would not agree.
When Jehoshaphat fell asleep with his ancestors he was buried[r] in the City of his 51
ancestor, David; his son Jehoram succeeded him.

King Ahaziah of Israel (853–852) and the prophet Elijah

Ahaziah son of Ahab became king of Israel in Samaria in the seventeenth year of 52
Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and reigned over Israel for two years. ·He did what is 53
displeasing to Yahweh, by following the example of his father and mother, and of
Jeroboam son of Nebat who had led Israel into sin. ·He served Baal and wor- 54
shipped him, and provoked the anger of Yahweh God of Israel just as his father
had done.

THE SECOND BOOK OF THE KINGS[a]

3:4–27 **1** After Ahab's death Moab rebelled against Israel. 1
Ahaziah had fallen from the balcony of his upper room in Samaria, and was 2
lying ill; so he sent messengers, saying to them, 'Go and consult Baal-Zebub[b] god
of Ekron and ask whether I shall recover from my illness.' ·But the angel of 3
Yahweh said to Elijah the Tishbite, 'Up! Go and intercept the king of Samaria's
messengers. Say to them, "Is there no God in Israel, for you to go and consult
Baal-Zebub god of Ekron? ·Yahweh says this: You will never leave the bed you 4
have got into; you are certainly going to die." ' And Elijah set out.
The messengers returned to the king, who said, 'Why have you come back?' ·'A 5, 6
man came to meet us,' they answered. 'He said, "Go back to the king who sent you
and tell him: Yahweh says this: Is there no God in Israel, for you to go and consult
Baal-Zebub god of Ekron? For this, you will never leave the bed you have got into;
you are certainly going to die." '
He said, 'This man who met you and said all this, what was he like?' ·'A man 7, 8
Zc 13:4+ wearing a hair cloak', they answered, 'and a leather loincloth.'[c] 'It was Elijah the
Tishbite,' he said.
He then sent a captain of fifty soldiers with his fifty men to Elijah, whom they 9
found sitting on top of a hill; the captain went up to him and said, 'Man of God, the
king says, "Come down." ' ·Elijah answered the captain, 'If I am a man of God, 10
Lk 9:54–55 may fire fall from heaven and destroy both you and your fifty men.' And fire fell
from heaven and destroyed him and his fifty men. ·The king sent a second captain 11
of fifty to him, again with fifty men, and he too went up[d] and said, 'Man of God,
this is the king's order, "Come down at once." ' ·Elijah answered them, 'If I am a 12
Jb 1:16i man of God, may fire fall from heaven and destroy both you and your fifty men.'
And lightning fell from heaven and destroyed him and his fifty men. ·The king then 13
sent a third captain of fifty to him, with another fifty men. The third captain of fifty
came up to Elijah, fell on his knees before him and pleaded with him. 'Man of
God,' he said, 'may my life and the lives of these fifty servants of yours count for
something in your eyes. ·Fire has fallen from heaven and destroyed two captains of 14
fifties and their companies, but this time may my life count for something in your
eyes!' ·The angel of Yahweh said to Elijah, 'Go down with him; do not be afraid of 15
him.' He rose and accompanied him down to the king, ·and said to him, 'Yahweh 16
says this, "Since you sent messengers to consult Baal-Zebub god of Ekron,[e] you
will never leave the bed you have got into; you are certainly going to die." '[f]

17 And, in accordance with the word of Yahweh which Elijah had uttered, he died.
Since he had no son, his brother[g] Jehoram succeeded him, in the second year of
18 Jehoram son of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah.[h] •The rest of the history of Ahaziah,
and his career, is this not recorded in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel?

VI: THE ELISHA CYCLE

A: ITS OPENING

Elijah is taken up to heaven and Elisha succeeds him[a]

1 2 This is what happened when Yahweh took Elijah up to heaven in the whirl-
2 wind: Elijah and Elisha set out from Gilgal,[b] •and Elijah said to Elisha, 'You
stay here, for Yahweh is only sending me to Bethel.' But Elisha replied, 'As
Yahweh lives and as you yourself live, I will not leave you!' and they went down to
3 Bethel. •The brotherhood of prophets[c] living at Bethel came out to meet Elisha
and said, 'Do you know that Yahweh will carry your lord and master away today?'
4 'Yes, I know,' he said, 'be quiet.' •Elijah said, 'Elisha, you stay here, Yahweh is
only sending me to Jericho.' But he replied, 'As Yahweh lives and as you yourself
5 live, I will not leave you!' and they went on to Jericho. •The brotherhood of
prophets living at Jericho went up to Elisha and said, 'Do you know that Yahweh
will carry your lord and master away today?' 'Yes, I know,' he said, 'be quiet.'
6 Elijah said, 'Elisha, you stay here, Yahweh is only sending me to the Jordan.' But
he replied, 'As Yahweh lives and as you yourself live, I will not leave you!' And
they went on together.
7 Fifty of the brotherhood of prophets followed them, halting some distance away
8 as the two of them stood beside the Jordan. •Elijah took his cloak, rolled it up and 1 K 19:9i
struck the water; and the water divided to left and right, and the two of them Ex 14:16,22
9 crossed over dry-shod. •When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, 'Make your
request. What can I do for you before I am snatched away from you?' Elisha
10 answered, 'Let me inherit a double share of your spirit.'[d] •'Your request is diffi-
cult,' Elijah said. 'If you see me while I am being snatched away from you, it will
11 be as you ask; if not, it will not be so.' •Now as they walked on, talking as they
went, a chariot of fire appeared and horses of fire coming between the two of them; 6:16-17
12 and Elijah went up to heaven in the whirlwind. •Elisha saw it, and shouted, 'My Gn 5:24d
father! My father! Chariot of Israel and its chargers!' Then he lost sight of him, and Si 48:9,12
13 taking hold of his own clothes he tore them in half. •He picked up Elijah's cloak •Ac 1:9–10m
which had fallen, and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan.
14 He took Elijah's cloak[e] and struck the water. 'Where is Yahweh, the God of

p. Text uncertain and interpretation disputed.

q. 'Jehoshaphat' detached from v. 49. Edom had asserted its independence in the later days of Solomon, 11:17seq., but by the time of Jehoshaphat had evidently been resubjected to the influence of the Davidic kings: hence Jehoshaphat's free access to the port of Ezion-Geber and his maritime projects, v. 49.

r. Hebr. adds 'with his ancestors'.

1 a. The division of Kings into two volumes is artificial; the earliest Hebr. Bible made no division.

b. Baal-Zebub 'Baal of Flies'; mocking pun on the god's real name which was Baal-Zebul 'Baal the Prince', Mt 10:25.

c. Elijah wore a loincloth and a flowing cloak, *see* 2:8, 13; 1 K 18:46.. So, too, certain other prophets. Zc 13:4, and John the Baptist, 'the second Elijah', Mt 3:4 par.

d. 'went up' Gk-Luc.; 'replied' Hebr.

e. Hebr. repeats the question of vv. 3 and 6.

f. vv. 9–16 are apparently an addition traceable back to disciples of Elisha, compare 2:23–24, the intention being to inculcate the respect and obedience due to God's representatives; other moral considerations are ignored.

g. 'his brother' versions; omitted by Hebr.

h. The date does not agree with 3:1 and is taken from a different system of reckoning.

2 a. This fine passage properly belongs to the Elisha cycle to which it acts as introduction.

b. This Gilgal, to the north of Bethel, is not the Gilgal of Jos 4:19b.

c. lit. 'the sons of the prophets'; these prophets formed compact groups and lived in community. Elisha, unlike the lone prophet Elijah, was closely associated with them.

d. The elder son inherited a double portion of his father's goods, Dt 21:17. Elisha wants to be acknowledged as Elijah's principal spiritual heir—an ambitious request since the prophetic spirit is not inherited, but is a gift of God; God, however, indicates that the request is granted by allowing Elisha to see what is hidden from human eyes, *see* v. 12 and 6:17; the 'brotherhood of the prophets' will see only the physical framework of the mystery.

e. After 'Elijah's cloak' Hebr. adds 'which had fallen from him' repeating v. 13. • After 'God of Elijah' Hebr. adds 'he too', a gloss referring back to 'he struck' v. 8.

Elijah?' he cried. As he struck the water it divided to right and left, and Elisha crossed over. ·The brotherhood of prophets[f] saw him in the distance, and said, 15
'The spirit of Elijah has come to rest on Elisha'; they went to meet him and bowed to the ground before him. ·'Look,' they said, 'your servants have fifty strong men 16
with them, let them go and look for your master; the Spirit of Yahweh may have
1 K 18:12c taken him up and thrown him down on a mountain or into a valley.' 'Send no one,' he replied. ·But they so shamed him with their insistence that he consented. So 17
Dt 34:6 Ml 3:23–24,24k they sent fifty men who searched for three days without finding him. ·They then 18 came back to Elisha who had stayed in Jericho; he said, 'Didn't I tell you not to go?'[g]

Two miracles of Elisha[h]

The people of the city said to Elisha, 'The city is pleasant to live in, as my lord 19
indeed can see, but the water is foul and the country suffers from miscarriages.'
'Bring me a new bowl,' he said, 'and put some salt in it.' They brought it to him. 20
Then he went to the source of the water, threw salt into it and said, 'Yahweh says 21
Ex 15:25seq. this, "I make this water wholesome: neither death nor miscarriage shall come from it any more." ' ·And the water became wholesome, as it is today, exactly as Elisha 22
had said it would.

From there he went up to Bethel, and while he was on the road, some small 23
boys came out of the town and jeered at him. 'Hurry up, baldy!' they shouted.
'Come on up, baldy!' ·He turned round and looked at them; and he cursed them 24
in the name of Yahweh. And two bears came out of the forest and savaged forty-two of the boys. ·From there he went on to Mount Carmel and then returned to 25
Samaria.

B: THE MOABITE WAR

Introduction to the reign of Jehoram in Israel (852–841)

3 Jehoram son of Ahab became king of Israel in Samaria in the eighteenth year 1
of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and reigned for twelve years.[a] ·He did what is 2
displeasing to Yahweh, though not like his father and mother, for he did away with the pillar to Baal which his father had made. ·Nonetheless, he continued to practise 3
the sins into which Jeroboam son of Nebat had led Israel and did not give them up.

The expedition of Israel and Judah against Moab

Mesha king of Moab[b] was a sheep-breeder and used to pay the king of Israel a 4
hundred thousand lambs and a hundred thousand rams with their wool in tribute.
But when Ahab died, the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel. 5
1 K 22 At once King Jehoram left Samaria and mustered all Israel. ·After this he sent 6, 7
word to the king of Judah,[c] 'The king of Moab has rebelled against me. Will you
1 K 22:4 go to war with me against Moab?' 'I will,' he replied. 'I will be as you, my men with yours, my horses with yours,' ·and added, 'Which way are we to attack?' 'Through 8
the desert of Edom,' the other answered.

So they set out, the king of Israel, the king of Judah and the king of Edom.[d] 9
They carried out a flanking movement for seven days, until there was no water left for the troops or for the beasts of their baggage train. ·'Alas!' the king of Israel 10
exclaimed, 'Yahweh has summoned us three kings, only to put us into the power of
1 K 22:7 Moab.' ·But the king of Judah said, 'Is there no prophet of Yahweh here for us to 11
consult Yahweh through him?' One of the king of Israel's servants answered,
1 K 19:21 'Elisha son of Shaphat is here, who used to pour water on the hands of Elijah.'
'The word of Yahweh is with him,' the king of Judah said. So the king of Israel, the 12
king of Judah and the king of Edom went to consult him. ·But Elisha said to the 13

king of Israel, 'What business have you with me? Go to your father's and your mother's prophets.' 'No,' the king of Israel answered, 'Yahweh is the one who has summoned us three kings, only to put us into the power of Moab.' Elisha replied,
14 'By the life of Yahweh Sabaoth whom I serve, if I did not respect the king of Judah, 1 K 18:15
15 I would take no notice of you, nor so much as look at you. ·Now bring me someone 1 S 10:6
who can play the lyre.'[e] And as the musician played, the hand of Yahweh came on 1 K 18:46+
16, 17 him ·and he said, 'Yahweh says this, "Dig in this valley ditch after ditch," ·for
Yahweh says, "You will see no wind, you will see no rain, but this valley will become full of water, and you and your troops[f] and your baggage animals will
18 drink." ·But this is only a trifle in Yahweh's eyes, for he will put Moab itself into
19 your power. ·You will storm every fortified town,[g] fell every productive tree, block Dt 20:19
20 every water-hole, ruin all the best fields with stones.' ·Next morning at the time when the oblation was being offered, water came from the direction of Edom, and the whole terrain was flooded.

21 When the Moabites learned that the kings were advancing to fight them, all those of an age to bear arms were mobilised; they took up position on the frontier.
22 In the morning when they got up, the sun was shining on the water; and in the
23 distance the Moabites saw the water as red as blood.[h] ·'This is blood!' they said. 'The kings must have fought among themselves and killed one another. So now for
24 the booty, Moab!' ·But when they reached the Israelite camp, the Israelites launched their attack and the Moabites fled before them, and as they advanced[i]
25 they cut the Moabites to pieces. ·They laid the towns in ruins, and each man threw a stone into all the best fields to fill them up, and they blocked every water-hole and felled every productive tree. In the end, there was only Kir-Hareseth[j] left,
26 which the slingers surrounded and bombarded. ·When the king of Moab saw that the battle had turned against him, he mustered seven hundred swordsmen in the hope of breaking a way out and going to the king of Aram,[k] but he failed.
27 Then he took his eldest son who was to succeed him and offered him as a sacrifice Jg 11:29g,31+ Mi 6:7+ on the city wall. Alarmed at this,[l] the Israelites withdrew and retired to their own territory.

C: SOME MIRACLES OF ELISHA

The widow's oil

1 K 17:8–15

1 4 The wife of a member of the prophetic brotherhood appealed to Elisha. 'Your servant my husband is dead,' she said, 'and you know how your servant revered Yahweh. A creditor has now come to take my two children and make them his Mt 18:25

f. Hebr. adds 'who are at Jericho': gloss.

g. The fruitless search merely establishes the fact that Elijah is no longer in this world; what has become of him is a mystery on which Elisha is not prepared to elaborate. The text does not say that Elijah did not die, though this conclusion was in fact drawn. • On the 'second coming' of Elijah, *see* Ml 3:23–24,24k.

h. Narratives in the same vein as those of ch. 4. Elisha possesses a divine power to save or to destroy; those who recognise his mission benefit from it but those who mock the man of God come to grief.

3 a. This figure derives from some secondary chronological scheme. According to the most reliable dating, Jehoram of Israel probably reigned for only eight years.

b. The Mesha stone discovered at Dibon mentions the fact that Moab had been subject to Israel under Omri and Ahab, and it records the war of liberation, but it passes over the inglorious episode narrated here.

c. Here and in vv. 11, 12, 14 Hebr. gives the name of the king of Judah as Jehoshaphat; but the chronological data show that the war did not take place until the reign of his son, Jehoram of Judah. The name Jehoshaphat seems to have been added to the original text because of that king's piety and of the similar part he plays in 1 K 22: here, too, a king of Judah, as opposed to a king of Israel, appears as a devoted Yahwist, vv. 11, 13–14.

d. The king of Israel needs the co-operation of Judah and of the latter's vassal, Edom, to attack Moab from the south by passing round the Dead Sea through Edomite territory.

e. Music helps to stimulate ecstasy.

f. 'troops' Gk-Luc.; 'flocks' Hebr.

g. Hebr. adds 'and every choice town' Gk omits.

h. A tint due, probably, to the sands of the Wadi el-Hesa. There is a play on the words *'adom* 'red', *dam*, 'blood' and the name Edom.

i. 'and as they advanced' Gk; Hebr. uncertain.

j. conj.; Hebr. reads 'all that remained of Kir-Hareseth was its stones'. Kir-Hareseth was the capital of Moab, Is 16:7, 11; Jr 48:31, 36; on the site of modern Kerak.

k. 'Aram' conj.; 'Edom' Hebr.

l. Trans. conj. The king of Moab sacrificed his son in a desperate attempt to placate his god Chemosh. Performed on the ramparts, the sacrifice provoked panic among the besiegers, who seem to have expected Chemosh to intervene.

slaves.' •Elisha said, 'What can I do for you? Tell me, what have you got in the 2
house?' 'Your servant has nothing in the house,' she replied, 'except a flask of oil.'
Then he said, 'Go outside and borrow jars from all your neighbours, empty jars 3
and not too few. •When you come back, shut the door on yourself and your sons, 4
and pour the oil into all these jars, putting each aside when it is full.' •So she left 5
him; and she shut the door on herself and her sons; they passed her the jars and she
went on pouring. •When the jars were full, she said to her son, 'Pass me another 6
jar.' 'There are no more,' he replied. Then the oil stopped flowing. •She went and 7
told the man of God, [a] who said, 'Go and sell the oil and redeem your pledge; you
and your children can live on the remainder.'

The woman of Shunem and her son

1 K 1:3 One day as Elisha was on his way to Shunem, a woman of rank who lived there 8
pressed him to stay and eat there. After this he always broke his journey for a meal
when he passed that way. •She said to her husband, 'Look, I am sure the man who 9
is constantly passing our way must be a holy man of God. •Let us build him a small 10
walled room, and put him a bed in it, and a table and chair and lamp; whenever he
comes to us he can rest there.' •One day when he came, he retired to the upper 11
room and lay down. •He said to his servant Gehazi, 'Call our Shunammite.' He 12
called her and when she appeared, Elisha said, •'Tell her this: "Look, you have 13
gone to all this trouble for us, what can we do for you? Is there anything you would
like said for you to the king or to the commander of the army?" ' But she replied,
'I live with my own people about me.' [b] •'What can I do for you then?' he asked. 14
Gehazi replied, 'Well, she has no son and her husband is old.' •Elisha said, 'Call 15
her.' The servant called her and she stood at the door. •'This time next 16
Gn 18:10 year', he said, 'you will hold a son in your arms.' But she said, 'No, my lord, [c] do
not deceive your servant.' •But the woman did conceive, and she gave birth to a 17
son at the time [d] that Elisha had said she would.

The child grew up; one day he went to his father who was with the reapers, 18
1 K 17:17–24 and exclaimed to his father, 'Oh, my head! My head!' The father told a servant to 19
carry him to his mother. •He lifted him up and took him to his mother, and the boy 20
lay on her lap until midday, when he died. •She went upstairs, laid him on the bed 21
of the man of God, shut the door on him and went out. [e] •She called her husband 22
and said, 'Send me one of the servants with a donkey. I must hurry to the man of
God and back.' •'Why go to him today?' he asked. 'It is not New Moon or 23
Sabbath.' [f] But she replied, 'Never mind.' •She had the donkey saddled and said to 24
her servant, 'Lead on, go! Do not draw rein until I give the order.' •She set off 25
and made her way to the man of God at Mount Carmel. When the man of God saw
her in the distance, he said to his servant Gehazi, 'Look, here comes our Shunam-
mite! •Now run and meet her and ask her, "Are you well? Is your husband well? 26
Your child well?" ' 'Yes,' she replied. •When she came to the man of God there on 27
the mountain, she took hold of his feet. Gehazi stepped forward to push her away,
but the man of God said, 'Leave her; there is bitterness in her soul and Yahweh has
hidden it from me, he has not told me.' •She said, 'Did I ask my lord for a son? Did 28
I not say: Don't deceive me?'

Elisha said to Gehazi, 'Hitch up your clothes, take my staff in your hand and go. 29
Lk 10:4 If you meet anyone, do not greet him; if anyone greets you, do not answer him. [g]
You are to stretch out my staff [h] over the child.' •But the child's mother said, 'As 30
Yahweh lives and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.' Then he stood up and
followed her. •Gehazi had gone ahead of them and had stretched out the staff over 31
the child, but there was no sound or response. He went back to meet Elisha and
told him. 'The child has not woken up,' he said. •Elisha then went to the house, 32
and there on his bed lay the child, dead. •He went in and shut the door on the two 33
1 K 17:21 of them and prayed to Yahweh. •Then he climbed on to the bed and stretched 34
himself on top of the child, putting his mouth on his mouth, his eyes to his eyes,

and his hands on his hands, and as he lowered himself on to him, the child's flesh
35 grew warm. ·Then he got up and walked to and fro inside the house, and then climbed on to the bed again and lowered himself on to the child seven times in all;
36 then the child sneezed[i] and opened his eyes. ·He then summoned Gehazi. 'Call our Shunammite,' he said. He called her. When she came to him, he said, 'Pick up
37 your son.' ·She went in and, falling at his feet, prostrated herself on the floor and then picked up her son and went out.

The poisoned soup

38 Elisha went back to Gilgal while there was famine in the country. As the brother- 2:1
hood of prophets were sitting with him, he said to his servant, 'Put the large pot on
39 the fire and cook some soup for the brotherhood.' ·One of them went into the fields to gather herbs and came on some wild vine, off which he gathered enough gourds[j] to fill his lap. On his return, he cut them up into the pot of soup; they did
40 not know what they were. ·They then poured the soup out for the men to eat, but they had no sooner tasted the soup than they cried, 'Man of God, there is death in
41 the pot!' And they could not eat it. ·'Bring some meal then,' Elisha said. This he threw into the pot, and said, 'Pour out, for the company to eat!' And there was nothing harmful in the pot.

The multiplication of loaves

Mt 14:13–21,13c; 15:32–38+

42 A man came from Baal-Shalishah, bringing the man of God bread from the first-fruits, twenty barley loaves and fresh grain still in the husk.[k] 'Give it to the
43 company to eat,' Elisha said. ·But his servant replied, 'How can I serve this to a hundred men?' 'Give it to the company to eat,' he insisted, 'for Yahweh says this,
44 "They will eat and have some left over." ' ·He served them; they ate and had some left over, as Yahweh had said.

Naaman is healed

1 5 Naaman, army commander to the king of Aram, was a man who enjoyed his master's respect and favour, since through him Yahweh had granted victory to
2 the Aramaeans.[a] ·But the man suffered from a virulent skin-disease.[b] Now, on one of their raids into Israelite territory, the Aramaeans had carried off a little girl,
3 who became a servant of Naaman's wife. ·She said to her mistress, 'If only my master would approach the prophet of Samaria! He would cure him of his skin-
4 disease.' ·Naaman went and told his master. 'This and this', he reported, 'is what
5 the girl from Israel has said.' ·'Go by all means,' said the king of Aram, 'I shall send a letter to the king of Israel.' So Naaman left, taking with him ten talents of
6 silver, six thousand shekels of gold and ten festal robes. ·He presented the letter to the king of Israel. It read, 'With this letter, I am sending my servant Naaman to
7 you for you to cure him of his skin-disease.' ·When the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes. 'Am I a god to give death and life,' he said, 'for him to Gn 30:2 1 S 2:6+

4 **a.** Normal title for Elisha in stories emanating from the brotherhood of prophets, *see* ch. 4 *passim*, 7:17.

b. Elisha offers to approach the king on her behalf. The woman proudly replies that the protection of her own clan is enough for her.

c. 'my lord' Gk; 'my lord man of God' Hebr.

d. 'At the time' conj.; Hebr. repeats 'this time next year' from v. 16.

e. Her faith in Elisha is absolute: he has obtained a son for her, he can restore him; meanwhile, no one must know of the death, v. 23, which she conceals.

f. It was evidently the custom on feastdays to visit people with a reputation for holiness.

g. 'Do not greet him'; sign that the mission is urgent.

h. The staff of Elisha (like that of Moses, Ex 4:17) was apparently credited with magical powers, but the sequel shows that nothing could be done without the prophet's prayer and presence.

i. Following the order of the Gk and *Vet. Lat.* Hebr. reads 'seven times' after 'child sneezed'. God breathed the breath of life into Adam's nostrils, Gn 2:7, and it is through the nostrils that man breathes, Is 2:22. The sneeze shows that life has returned.

j. Very bitter and violently purgative.

k. Trans. conj. Some emend: 'in his scrip'.

5 **a.** Yahweh, God of all nations, guides the destiny of Aram as he guides that of Israel; the doctrine of this chapter is that of 1 K 18.

b. Before 'suffered from a virulent skin-disease', Hebr. reads 'was a brave man and'; Gk-Luc. omits. His skin disease, like that of Gehazi, v. 27, is perhaps no more than some lesser skin-disease since it does not preclude social contacts, *see* Lv 13:1a.

send a man to me and ask me to cure him of his skin-disease? Listen to this and take note of it and see how he intends to pick a quarrel with me.'

When Elisha [c] heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, he sent word to 8
the king, 'Why have you torn your clothes? Let him come to me, and he will find
there is a prophet in Israel.' •So Naaman came with his team and chariot and drew 9
up at the door of Elisha's house. •And Elisha sent him a messenger to say, 'Go and 10
Jn 9:7 bathe seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh will become clean once more.'
But Naaman was indignant and went off, saying, 'Here was I, thinking he would be 11
sure to come out to me, and stand there, and call on the name of Yahweh his God,
and wave his hand over the spot and cure the part that was diseased.
Surely, Abana and Parpar, the rivers of Damascus, are better than any water in 12
Israel? Could I not bathe in them and become clean?' And he turned round and
went off in a rage. •But his servants approached him and said, 'Father, if the 13
prophet had asked you to do something difficult, would you not have done it? All
the more reason, then, when he says to you, "Bathe, and you will become clean." '
Mt 3:13–15par. ↗Lk 4:27 So he went down and immersed himself seven times in the Jordan, as Elisha had 14
told him to do. And his flesh became clean once more like the flesh of a little child.

Returning to Elisha with his whole escort, he went in and, presenting himself, 15
said, 'Now I know that there is no God anywhere on earth except in Israel. [d] Now,
please, accept a present from your servant.' •But Elisha replied, 'As Yahweh lives, 16
whom I serve, I will accept nothing.' Naaman pressed him to accept, but he
refused. •Then Naaman said, 'Since your answer is "No," allow your servant to be 17
given as much earth as two mules may carry, since your servant will no longer make
burnt offerings or sacrifice to any god except Yahweh. •Only—and may Yahweh 18
forgive your servant for this—when my master goes to the temple of Rimmon to
worship there, he leans on my arm, and I bow down in the temple of Rimmon when
he does; [e] may Yahweh forgive your servant for doing this!' •'Go in peace,' [f] Elisha 19
replied.

Naaman had gone a small distance, when Gehazi, Elisha's servant, said to 20
himself, 'My master has let this Aramaean Naaman off lightly, by not accepting
what he offered. As Yahweh lives, I will run after him and get something out of
him.' •So Gehazi set off in pursuit of Naaman. When Naaman saw him running 21
after him, he jumped down from his chariot to meet him. 'Is all well?' he asked.
'All is well,' he said. 'My master has sent me to say, "This very moment two young 22
men of the prophetic brotherhood have arrived from the highlands of Ephraim. Be
kind enough to give them a talent of silver and two festal robes." '•'Please 23
accept two talents,' Naaman replied, and pressed him, tying up the two talents of
silver in two bags with the two festal robes and consigning them to two of his
servants who carried them ahead of Gehazi. •When he reached Ophel, [g] he took 24
these from them and put them away in the house. He then dismissed the men, who
went away.

He, for his part, went and presented himself to his master. Elisha said, 'Gehazi, 25
where have you been?' 'Your servant has not been anywhere,' he replied. •But 26
Elisha said to him, 'Was not my heart present there when someone left his chariot
to meet you? Now you have taken the money, you can buy gardens with it, and
olive groves, sheep and oxen, male and female slaves. •But Naaman's disease of 27
the skin will cling to you and your descendants for ever.' And Gehazi left his
Ex 4:6 Nb 12:10 presence white as snow from skin-disease. [h]

The axe lost and found

6 The brotherhood of prophets said to Elisha, 'Look, the place [a] where we are 1
living with you is too small for us. •Let us go to the Jordan, then, and each of us 2
cut a beam there, and we will make our living quarters there.' He replied, 'Go.'
'Be good enough to go with your servants,' one of them said. 'I will go,' he replied, 3
and went with them. On reaching the Jordan they began cutting down timber. 4
But, as one of them was felling his beam, the iron axehead fell into the water. 5

6 'Alas, my lord,' he exclaimed, 'and it was a borrowed one too!' ·'Where did it fall?'
the man of God asked; and he showed him the spot. Then, cutting a stick, Elisha
7 threw it in at that point and made the iron axehead float. ·'Lift it out,' he said; and
the man stretched out his hand and took it.

D: THE ARAMAEAN WARS

Elisha captures an armed band of Aramaeans

8 The king of Aram was at war with Israel. He conferred with his officers and said,
9 'You must attack[b] at such and such a place.' ·Elisha, however, sent word to the
king of Israel, 'Be on your guard about such and such a place, because the
10 Aramaeans are going to attack it.'[c] ·The king of Israel accordingly sent men to
the place which Elisha had named. And he kept warning the king, and the king
stayed on the alert; and this happened more than once or twice.
11 The king of Aram grew very much disturbed over this. He summoned his
officers, and said, 'Tell me which of you is betraying us[d] to the king of Israel.'
12 'No one, my lord king,' one of his officers replied. 'It is Elisha, the prophet in
Israel. The words you utter in your bedchamber, he reveals to the king of Israel.'
13 'Go and find out where he is,' the king said, 'so that I can send people to capture
14 him.' Word was brought to him, 'He is now in Dothan.' ·So he sent horses and
chariots there, and a large force; and these, arriving during the night, surrounded
the town.
15 Next day, Elisha got up early[e] and went out; and there surrounding the town
was an armed force with horses and chariots. 'Oh, my lord,' his servant said, 'what
16 are we to do?' ·'Do not be afraid,' he replied, 'for there are more on our side than
17 on theirs.' ·And Elisha prayed. 'Yahweh,' he said, 'open his eyes and make him
see.' Yahweh opened the servant's eyes, and he saw the mountain covered in fiery 2:10–12;7:6 Ps 68:17j
horses and chariots surrounding Elisha.
18 As the Aramaeans came down towards him, Elisha prayed to Yahweh, 'I beg
you to strike these people sun-blind.' And, at Elisha's word, he struck them sun- Gn 19:11
19 blind.[f] ·Then Elisha said to them, 'This is not the road, nor is this the town. Follow
me; I shall lead you to the man you are looking for.' But he led them to Samaria.
20 As they entered Samaria, Elisha said, 'Yahweh, open these people's eyes, and let
them see.' Yahweh opened their eyes and they saw; they were inside Samaria.
21 When the king of Israel saw them, he said to Elisha, 'Shall I kill them, father?'[g]
22 'Do not kill them,' he replied. 'Do you kill your own prisoners with sword
and bow?[h] Offer them food and water, so that they can eat and drink, and then
23 let them go back to their master.' ·So the king provided a great feast for them;

c. Gk reads 'Elisha' instead of Hebr. 'Elisha man of God' here and v. 20, or merely 'man of God, vv. 14–15; 6:9–10; 7:2:17. We follow Gk since the longer narratives about Elisha seem in their earliest form to have called him by his name unadorned. The anecdotes collected by the prophetic brotherhood on the other hand referred to him as 'the man of God', *see* 4:7, which title seems to have been added in other passages.

d. Although Yahweh is the only true God, his territorial relationship to Israel is uppermost in Naaman's mind. Hence Naaman takes soil from Samaria to raise an altar to Yahweh in Damascus. For the same mentality as regards territorial gods, *see* the panic of the allies at the human sacrifice offered by the king of Moab to Chemosh, 3:24–27.

e. 'when he does' Gk and Vulg.; 'when I bow down in the temple of Rimmon' Hebr., doublet. • Rimmon: another name for Hadad, the storm-god and territorial god of Damascus.

f. Elisha excuses this outward gesture of idolatry.

g. There was also an Ophel in Jerusalem. In both cases, it was the fortified eminence on which stood the royal palace. The word means 'excrescence'.

h. The end of the v. is uncertain, and is here reconstructed from the Gk.

6 **a.** Probably Gilgal where Elisha sometimes lived with the prophets, 4:38.

b. 'You are to attack' *tinhatu* conj.; Hebr. *tahanoti* unintelligible.

c. 'about' *ba'abur* conj.; Hebr. *me'abor* '(beware of) going to'. • 'attack' conj., *see* v. 8; Hebr. unintelligible.

d. 'betraying us' Gk; Hebr. uncertain

e. 'Next day (Elisha got up)' *mimmohorat* conj.; *see* rest of the v.; Hebr. *mesharet* 'the servant (of the man of God got up)'.

f. Not to blind them totally but to daze them, compare Gn 19:11, whereas to the servant, v. 17, God had revealed what was invisible to normal sight.

g. Term of address showing the king's respect for the prophet, *see* 8:9; 13:14.

h. Unless a curse of destruction had been pronounced by Yahweh, and apart from individual cases, it was not Israelite custom to kill prisoners of war, *see* 1 K 20:31.

and when they had eaten and drunk, he sent them off and they went back to their master. Aramaean raiding parties never invaded the territory of Israel again.

Samaria besieged; the famine

It happened after this that Ben-Hadad king of Aram,[i] mustering his whole army, 24
marched on and laid siege to Samaria. ·In Samaria there was great famine, and so 25
strict was the siege that the head of a donkey sold for eighty shekels of silver, and one quarter-*kab* of wild onions[j] for five shekels of silver.

Now as the king was passing along the city wall, a woman shouted, 'Help, my 26
lord king!' ·'If Yahweh does not help you,' he retorted, 'where can I find help for 27
you? From the threshing-floor? From the winepress?' ·Then the king asked, 'What 28
Dt 28:53–57 is the matter?' 'This woman here', she answered, 'said to me, "Give up your son; we will eat him today, and eat my son tomorrow." ·So we cooked my son and ate 29
him. Next day, I said to her, "Give up your son for us to eat." But she has hidden
1 K 20:31;21:27 her son.' ·On hearing the woman's words, the king tore his clothes; the king was 30
walking on the wall, and the people saw that underneath he was wearing sackcloth
Rt 1:17f next his body. ·'May God bring unnameable ills on me, and worse ills, too,' he 31
said, 'if the head of Elisha son of Shaphat remains on his shoulders today!'[k]

Elisha foretells imminent relief

Elisha was sitting in his house, and the elders were sitting with him. The king sent 32
a messenger ahead but, before the man arrived, Elisha had said to the elders, 'Do you see how this son of a murderer has given orders to cut off my head? Look, when the messenger comes, shut the door; hold the door against him. Isn't that the sound of his master's step behind him?' ·He was still actually speaking, when the 33
king[l] arrived and said, 'This misery plainly comes from Yahweh. Why should I still trust in Yahweh?'

7 'Listen to the word of Yahweh,' Elisha said. 'Yahweh says this, "By this time 1
tomorrow a measure of finest flour will sell for one shekel, and two measures of barley for one shekel, at the gate of Samaria." ' ·The equerry on whose arm the 2
Gn 7:11;8:2 Is 24:18 Ml 3:10 king was leaning retorted to Elisha, 'Even if Yahweh made windows in the sky, could this word come true?' 'You will see it with your own eyes,' Elisha replied,
7:17 'though you will eat none of it.'

19:35–36 **The Aramaean camp is found abandoned**

Lv 13:46 Now at the entrance to the gate—for they were afflicted with virulent skin-dis- 3
ease—there were four men and they debated among themselves, 'Why sit here waiting for death? ·If we decide to go into the city, what with the famine in it, we 4
shall die there; if we stay where we are, we shall die just the same. Come on, let us go over to the Aramaean camp; if they spare our lives, we live; if they kill us, well, then we die.' ·So at dusk they set out and made for the Aramaean camp, but when 5
they reached the confines of the camp there was not a soul there. ·For Yahweh had 6
6:17+ caused the Aramaeans in their camp to hear a noise of chariots and horses, the noise of a great army; and they had said to one another, 'Listen! The king of Israel has hired the Hittite and Egyptian[a] kings against us, to attack us.' ·So in the dusk 7
they had made off and fled, abandoning their tents, their horses and their donkeys; leaving the camp just as it was, they had fled for their lives. ·The men with skin- 8
disease, then, reached the confines of the camp. They went into one of the tents and ate and drank, and from it carried off silver and gold and clothing; these they took and hid. Then they came back and, entering another tent, looted it too, and took and hid their booty.

The siege at an end; the famine ceases

Then they said to one another, 'We are doing wrong. This is a day of good news, 9
yet we are holding our tongues! If we wait till morning, we shall certainly be punished. Come on, let us go and take the news to the palace.' ·Off they went and 10

shouted out to the guards on the city gate, 'We have been to the Aramaean camp.
There was not a soul there, no sound of anyone, only tethered horses and tethered
11 donkeys, and their tents just as they were.' •The gatekeepers shouted the news,
which was reported inside the palace.
12 The king got up while it was still dark and said to his officers, 'I can tell you what
the Aramaeans have done to us. They know we are starving, so they have left the
camp to hide in the open country. "They will come out of the city," they think,
13 "we shall catch them alive and get into the city." ' •One of his officers replied, 'Five
of the surviving horses still left us had better be taken—they would die in any case
14 like all the rest.[b] Let us send them and see.' •So they took two chariot teams and
15 the king sent them after the Aramaean army, saying, 'Go and see.' •They followed
them as far as the Jordan, finding the whole way strewn with clothes and gear which
the Aramaeans had thrown away in their panic. The scouts returned and informed
the king.
16 Then the people went out and plundered the Aramaean camp: a measure of
finest flour sold for one shekel, and two measures of barley for one shekel, as
17 Yahweh had promised they would. •The king had detailed the equerry, on whose
arm he leaned, as commander of the guard on the gate, but the people trampled on 7:2
him in the gateway and he died, as the man of God had foretold when the king had
18 come down to him. •(What Elisha had said to the king came true, 'Two measures
of barley will sell for one shekel, and a measure of finest flour for one shekel, by
19 this time tomorrow at the gate of Samaria.' •And the equerry in question had
replied to the man of God, 'Even if Yahweh made windows in the sky, could this
word come true?' 'You will see it with your own eyes,' Elisha had answered 'though
20 you will eat none of it.' •And that was what happened to him: for the people
trampled on him in the gateway and he died.[c])

Epilogue to the story of the woman of Shunem[a]

1 8 Elisha had said to the woman whose son he had raised to life, 'Move away with
your family, and live where you can in some foreign country, for Yahweh has
2 called up a famine—it is already coming on the country—for seven years.' •The
woman hurried to do what the man of God had told her: she set out, she and her
3 family, and for seven years she lived in Philistine territory. •When the seven years
were over, the woman returned from Philistine territory and went to lodge a claim
with the king for her house and land.[b]
4 Now the king was talking to Gehazi, the servant of the man of God. 'Tell me', he
5 was saying, 'all about the marvels which Elisha did.' •Gehazi was just telling the
king how Elisha had raised the dead child to life, when the woman whose son
Elisha had raised lodged her claim with the king for her house and land. 'My lord
king,' Gehazi said, 'this is the very woman, and that is her son whom Elisha raised
6 to life.' •The king questioned the woman, who told him the story. The king then
delegated one of the officials to her with this order, 'See that all her property is

i. Possibly Ben-Hadad III of Damascus, *see* ch. 13. The order of all these narratives seems to be artificial.

j. 'wild onions' *hartzonim* conj.; Hebr. *hary yonim* 'pigeon dung' is impossible here.

k. Elisha seems to have encouraged resistance by predicting that Yahweh would send help; the king, having originally believed him, now thinks that Elisha has deceived him.

l. 'the king' *melek* conj.; Hebr. *mal' ak* 'the messenger'.

7 **a.** The petty kings of northern Syria. There is no need to correct 'Mizraim' (Egypt) into 'Muzri', an unidentified region of Asia Minor, a suggestion made by some authorities.

b. They may as well sacrifice a few horses for the purpose of reconnaissance, as let them die of hunger. Text confused: Hebr. reads 'on their arrival as to the assembly of Israel' then repeats the same words again.

c. vv. 17[b]–20 are probably an addition; they repeat vv. 1,2 and 17[a].

8 **a.** Natural sequel of 4:37.

b. Taken over in her absence by neighbours or farmers.

restored to her, and all the revenue from her land from the day she left the country until now.'

Elisha and Hazael of Damascus

Elisha went to Damascus. Ben-Hadad[c] king of Aram was ill, and was told, 'The 7
man of God has come all the way to us.' ·Then the king said to Hazael,[d] 'Take a 8
5:1:2 present with you and go and meet the man of God; consult Yahweh through him, and find out if I shall recover from my illness.'

So Hazael went to meet Elisha, taking with him as a present the best that 9
Damascus could offer, a load for forty camels. He arrived and, presenting himself,
6:21g said, 'Your son Ben-Hadad king of Aram has sent me to ask you, "Shall I recover from my illness?" ' ·Elisha replied, 'Go and tell him, "You might recover," though 10
1 K 19:15 Yahweh has shown me that he will certainly die.'[e] ·Then the face of the man of 11
God went rigid, and his look grew strangely fixed,[f] and he wept. ·'Why', Hazael 12
asked, 'does my lord weep?' 'Because I know', Elisha replied, 'what harm you will do to the Israelites: you will burn down their fortresses, put their picked warriors
15:16 Am 1:13 to the sword, dash their little children to pieces, disembowel their pregnant women.' ·'But what is your servant?' Hazael said. 'How could this dog[g] achieve 13
anything so great?' 'In a vision from Yahweh,' Elisha replied, 'I have seen you king of Aram.'

Leaving Elisha, Hazael went back to his master who asked, 'What did Elisha say 14
to you?' He replied, 'He told me that you might recover.' ·Next day he took a 15
blanket, soaked it in water, and spread it over his face.[h] So died Ben-Hadad, and Hazael succeeded him.

The reign of Jehoram in Judah (848–841)

In the fifth year of Jehoram son of Ahab, king of Israel,[i] Jehoram son of Jeho- 16
‖2Ch 21:5–7 shaphat became king of Judah. ·He was thirty-two years old when he came to the 17
throne, and he reigned for eight years in Jerusalem. ·He followed the example of 18
the kings of Israel as the House of Ahab were doing; he had married one of Ahab's daughters;[j] and he did what is displeasing to Yahweh. ·But Yahweh was unwilling 19
2 S 7:11–16,14e 1 K 11:36i to destroy Judah, because of his servant David, and was faithful to the promise which he had made him to leave him a lamp for ever in his presence.[k]

‖2 Ch 21:8–10 Gn 27:40h In his time Edom threw off the domination of Judah and set up a king for itself.[l] 20
Jehoram crossed to Zair,[m] and with him all the chariots . . . Under cover of dark, 21
he and his chariot commanders broke through the Edomites surrounding him; the people fled to their tents. ·Even so, Edom threw off the domination of Judah, 22
remaining free to the present day. Libnah[n] also revolted at that time.

The rest of the history of Jehoram, his entire career, is this not recorded in the 23
‖2 Ch 21:20 Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah? ·Then Jehoram fell asleep with his 24
ancestors and was buried with them in the City of David; his son Ahaziah succeeded him.

‖2 Ch 22:1–6 The reign of Ahaziah in Judah (841)

In the twelfth year of Jehoram son of Ahab, king of Israel, Ahaziah son of 25
Jehoram, king of Judah, became king. ·Ahaziah was twenty-two years old when he 26
came to the throne, and he reigned for one year in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Athaliah granddaughter of Omri king of Israel. ·He followed the example of 27
the House of Ahab and did what is displeasing to Yahweh, as the House of Ahab were doing, to whom he was related by marriage.

9:14–15 1 K 22:3–4 He went with Jehoram son of Ahab to make war on Hazael king of Aram at 28
Ramoth in Gilead, but the Aramaeans wounded Jehoram. ·King Jehoram returned 29
to Jezreel to recover from the wounds which he had received at Ramah, fighting against Hazael king of Aram. Ahaziah son of Jehoram, king of Judah, went down to Jezreel to visit Jehoram son of Ahab because he was ailing.

E: THE HISTORY OF JEHU

A disciple of Elisha anoints Jehu king

1 9 The prophet Elisha summoned a member of the prophetic brotherhood to him,
'Hitch up your clothes, take this flask of oil, and go to Ramoth in Gilead.
2 When you arrive there, look for Jehu son of Jehoshaphat, son of Nimshi. Then,
when you find him, tell him to get up and leave his companions, and take him into
3 an inner room. •Take the flask of oil then and pour it over his head, and say,
"Yahweh says this: I have anointed you king of Israel." Then open the door and 1 K 19:16
flee as fast as you can.'
4, 5 The young man[a] left for Ramoth in Gilead •and when he arrived, found the
senior officers of the army sitting together. 'I have a message for you, commander,'
6 he said. 'For which of us?' asked Jehu. 'For you, commander,' he answered. •Jehu
then got up and went into the house. And the young man poured the oil on his
head, saying, 'Yahweh, God of Israel, says this, "I have anointed you king of
7 Yahweh's people, of Israel. •You will strike down the family of Ahab your master, 1 K 16:4,13; 19:10,21
and I shall avenge the blood of my servants the prophets and all of Yahweh's
8 servants, on Jezebel •and on[b] the whole family of Ahab. I shall destroy every 1 K 21:21–24
9 manjack of Ahab's family, fettered or free in Israel. •I shall make the House of
Ahab like the House of Jeroboam son of Nebat and of Baasha son of Ahijah. 1 K 14:10–11
10 As for Jezebel, the dogs will eat her in the field of Jezreel; no one will bury her." '[c] 1 K 16:3–4
With this, he opened the door and made his escape.

Jehu proclaimed king

11 Jehu came out to his master's officers. 'Is all well?' they asked him.[d] 'Why did this
madman[e] come to you?' 'You know the fellow and how he talks,' he answered.
12 'Evasion!' they cried, 'Come on, tell us.' He replied, 'He said this and that
to me. He said, "Yahweh says this: I have anointed you king of Israel." '
13 Whereupon they all took their cloaks and spread them under him[f] on the bare
steps; they sounded the trumpet and shouted, 'Jehu is king!'

Jehu prepares to usurp power

14 Jehu son of Jehoshaphat, son of Nimshi plotted against Jehoram. (At the time,
Jehoram, with all Israel, was holding Ramoth in Gilead[g] against an attack by 1 K 22:3
15 Hazael king of Aram, •but King Jehoram had gone back to Jezreel to recover from
the wounds which he had received from the Aramaeans while he was fighting
against Hazael king of Aram.) 'If you agree,' Jehu said, 'let no one leave the town

c. Ben-Hadad II, as in 1 K 20:1.

d. Evidently an official of Ben-Hadad; he was to seize the throne later, v. 15.

e. 'You might recover', idiomatic use of the infinitive absolute, *see* Gn 2:16. To absolve Elisha from deceit, Hebr. replaces 'him' by 'not' (*lo* by *lo'*): 'go and say, "You will not recover" ', thus hiding the deliberate ambiguity of Elisha's words. Whether or not the prophet implanted the thought of murder in Hazael's head, *see* v. 13, the revelation concerns Hazael rather than Ben-Hadad and Elisha sees the coming event as inevitably pre-ordained.

f. 'his face went rigid' *wayyiśhom* conj.; Hebr. *wayyasem* 'he placed'. The physical signs of prophetic ecstasy.

g. 'dog', here merely an expression of humility, *see* 1 S 24:15; 2 S 9:8: Hazael is surprised by this prophecy of future greatness.

h. The subject of the phrase is not expressed. Presumably Hazael murdered Ben-Hadad, rather than Ben-Hadad committing suicide.

i. Hebr. adds 'Jehoshaphat being king of Judah', absent from versions.

j. 'from the House' *mibbet* conj.; Hebr. *bat* 'the daughter'. • The woman in question was Athaliah, *see* ch. 11, daughter of Omri and sister, *see* v. 26 and 2 Ch 22:2, or daughter of Ahab, here (Hebr.) and 2 Ch 21:6. Chronology favours the first alternative.

k. 'in his presence', *see* 1 K 11:36; 'to his sons' Hebr.

l. Edom, *see* Nb 20:23, was a vassal and protectorate of Judah under Jehoshaphat, 3:8–10 seq.; 1 K 22:48.

m. Unidentified site in Transjordan; the remainder of the passage has been mutilated in an attempt to expunge the record of a defeat. So also in v. 22.

n. The town passed to the Philistines.

9 **a.** After 'The young man', text adds 'the young man, the prophet'.

b. 'and on' Gk; 'and will perish' Hebr.

c. vv. 7–10[a] have been added by the author of Kings: in the original story the young man must have fled immediately after anointing Jehu, as ordered by Elisha, v. 3.

d. 'they asked him' versions; Hebr. has singular.

e. Attitude of the people at large to the prophets, Jr 29:26; Ho 9:7. The term is not a direct insult though containing an element of mockery, and Jehu adopts the same tone.

f. As the crowd offered royal honours to Jesus, Mt 21:8 par.

g. The town had evidently been recaptured by the Israelites, despite the disaster related in 1 K 22; the Aramaeans were now trying to re-take it.

to go and take the news to Jezreel.' ·Jehu then mounted his chariot and left for 16
Jezreel; Jehoram had taken to his bed there, and Ahaziah king of Judah had gone
down to visit him.

The lookout posted on the tower of Jezreel saw Jehu's troop approaching. 'I can 17
see a body of men,' he shouted. Jehoram gave the order: 'Have a horseman sent to
meet them and ask, "Is all well?" '[h] ·The horseman went to meet Jehu and said, 18
'The king says, "Is all well?" ' 'What has it to do with you whether all is well?' Jehu
replied. 'Fall in behind me.' The lookout reported, 'The messenger has reached
them and is not coming back.' ·The king sent a second horseman who reached 19
them and said, 'The king says, "Is all well?" ' 'What has it to do with you whether
all is well?' Jehu replied. 'Fall in behind me.' ·The lookout reported, 'He has 20
reached them and is not coming back. The manner of driving is like that of Jehu
son of Nimshi: he drives like a madman.' ·'Harness!' Jehoram cried; and they 21
‖2 Ch 22:7–8 harnessed his chariot. Then Jehoram king of Israel and Ahaziah king of Judah,
each in his chariot, set out to meet Jehu. They reached him in the field of Naboth
of Jezreel.

The assassination of Jehoram

As soon as Jehoram saw Jehu he asked, 'Is all well, Jehu?' 'What a question!' he 22
replied, 'when all the while the prostitutions[i] and countless sorceries of your
mother Jezebel go on.' ·At this, Jehoram wheeled and fled, saying to Ahaziah, 23
'Treason, Ahaziah!' ·But Jehu had drawn his bow; he struck Jehoram between the 24
shoulder-blades, the arrow went through the king's heart, and he sank down in his
chariot. ·'Pick him up,' Jehu said to Bidkar, his equerry, 'and throw him into the 25
1 K 21 field of Naboth of Jezreel. Remember how, when you and I manned a chariot
together behind Ahab his father, Yahweh pronounced this sentence against him,
"This I swear. Yesterday I saw the blood of Naboth and the blood of his sons— 26
1 K 21:19 Yahweh says this. And in this same field I shall requite you—Yahweh says this."
So pick him up, and throw him into the field, as Yahweh declared should happen!'

‖2 Ch 22:8–9 **The assassination of Ahaziah**

When Ahaziah king of Judah saw this, he fled along the Beth-ha-Gan road, but 27
Jehu went in pursuit of him. 'Strike him down too,' he said. And they wounded
him[j] in his chariot at the slope of Gur, which is near Ibleam, and he took refuge in
Megiddo, where he died. ·His servants carried him in a chariot to Jerusalem and 28
buried him in his tomb[k] in the City of David. ·Ahaziah had become king of Judah 29
in the eleventh year of Jehoram son of Ahab.

The assassination of Jezebel

When Jehu went back to Jezreel, Jezebel was told. She made up her eyes with 30
mascara, adorned her head and appeared at the window. ·As Jehu came through 31
1 K 16:9–18 the gateway she said, 'How did Zimri get on after killing his master?'[l] ·Jehu looked 32
up to the window and said, 'Who is on my side? Who?' And two or three officials
looked down at him. ·'Throw her down,' he said. They threw her down and her 33
blood spattered the walls and the horses; and Jehu rode over her. ·He went in and 34
ate and drank, then said, 'See to this accursed woman, and give her burial; after
all, she was a king's daughter.' ·But when they went to bury her, they found 35
nothing but her skull, feet and hands. ·They came back and told Jehu, who said, 36
'This is the word of Yahweh which he spoke through his servant Elijah the Tishbite,
9:10 "The dogs will eat the flesh of Jezebel in the field of Jezreel; ·the corpse of Jezebel 37
1 K 21:23 will be like dung spread on the fields,[m] so that no one will be able to say: This was
Ps 68:23m Jezebel." '
Jr 8:2

11:1 **The massacre of the royal family of Israel**
Jg 9:5
1 K 15:29;16:11

10 There were seventy of Ahab's sons in Samaria.[a] Jehu sent to Samaria, to 1
the authorities of the city, to the elders and to the guardians of Ahab's

2 children. He said, •'Now, when this letter reaches you, you have your master's sons
with you; you also have chariots and horses, a fortified city and weapons.
3 See which of your master's sons is the best and worthiest, put him on his father's
4 throne and fight for your master's dynasty!' •They were utterly terrified. 'We have
seen how the two kings could not stand up to him,' they said, 'so how could we?'
5 Consequently the master of the palace, the governor of the city, the elders and the
guardians sent word to Jehu, 'We are your servants. We shall do whatever you
order us. We shall not proclaim a king; act as you think best.'
6 Jehu then wrote them a second letter. He said, 'If you are for me and if you are
prepared to accept orders from me, take the heads[b] of the men of your master's
family and come to me at Jezreel by this time tomorrow.' (There were seventy of
7 Ahab's sons being educated there by the leading men of the city.) •When this letter
reached them, they took the king's sons and butchered all seventy of them, put
their heads in baskets and sent them to him at Jezreel.
8 The messenger came and told Jehu, 'They have brought the heads of the king's
sons.' 'Leave them in two heaps at the entrance to the gate until morning,' he
9 replied. •When morning came, he went out and, standing, said to all the people,
'No guilt attaches to you! I did indeed plot against my master and have killed him;
10 but what about all these? Who struck them? •Know, then, that nothing will fail to 1 K 21:21-24
be fulfilled of the prophecy uttered by Yahweh against the House of Ahab; Yahweh
11 has done what he said through his servant Elijah.' •Jehu then killed every member
of the House of Ahab surviving in Jezreel, all his leading men, his close friends, his
priests; he did not leave a single one alive.

The massacre of the princes of Judah ‖2 Ch 22:8

12 Jehu then set out for Samaria. As he was on his way, at Beth-Eked of the
13 Shepherds, •he met the brothers[c] of Ahaziah king of Judah. 'Who are you?' he
asked. 'We are Ahaziah's brothers,' they replied, 'and we are on our way to pay
14 our respects to the king's sons and the queen mother's sons.' •'Take them alive,' he
said. They took them alive, and he slaughtered them at the storage-well of Beth-
Eked, forty-two of them; he did not spare a single one.

Jehu and Jehonadab

15 Leaving there, he came on Jehonadab son of Rechab who was on his way to meet Jr 35:1-11
him. He greeted him and said, 'Is your heart true to mine,[d] as my heart is to yours?'
Jehonadab replied, 'Yes.' 'If so,' Jehu said, 'give me your hand.' Jehonadab gave
16 him his hand, and Jehu took him up beside him in his chariot. •'Come with me,' he
17 said, 'and witness my zeal for Yahweh,' and took him along in his chariot. •When
he entered Samaria, he killed all the survivors of Ahab's family in Samaria; he
destroyed it, as Yahweh had told Elijah it would happen.

The destruction of Baal's adherents and temple

18 Then Jehu assembled all the people. 'Ahab did Baal some small service,' he said

h. The king does not at first suspect treason, but is uneasy about the news from Ramoth in Gilead.

i. As in the Prophets, in the metaphorical sense of worshipping false gods, with a possible allusion to sacred prostitution, *see* Dt 23:29f, a feature of Phoenician religion.

j. 'they wounded him' Syr.; Hebr. omits.

k. Hebr. adds 'with his ancestors'.

l. Sarcastic allusion to Zimri who reigned for only eight days after assassinating Elah, king of Israel.

m. Hebr. adds 'in the field of Jezreel', a gloss omitted by most Gk MSS.

10 a. 'Seventy': conventional number used to indicate the entire offspring. Gn 46:27; Jg 8:30; 9:2; 12:14. Here it means the sons and grandsons of Ahab, but more particularly the sons of Jehoram. • 'of the city' Gk-Luc.; 'of Jezreel' Hebr. 'of the children' Gk-Luc.; Hebr. omits.

b. The Hebrew *rosh* means both 'leader' and 'head'. Jehu's correspondents take grim advantage of the ambiguity, v. 7; perhaps they were intended to, though Jehu subsequently throws the responsibility on them, v. 9; *see* Elisha's ambiguous prophecy to Hazael for Ben-Hadad, 8:7-15.

c. 'brothers' in the extended sense of 'relations'. They were on their way to visit the sons of Jehoram and Jezebel respectively. It is unlikely that, having already passed Samaria, they could have known nothing of the massacre of vv. 6-7. The incident is misplaced.

d. 'Is your heart . . . mine' Gk; Hebr. uncertain. • Jehonadab son of Rechab was an ardent Yahwist and had imposed the simple desert régime on his clan, Jr 35:1-11. It was natural for him to support Jehu, but this episode, like the preceding, is certainly misplaced.

'but Jehu will do him a great one. ·Now call me all the prophets of Baal[e] and all his 19
priests. Not one is to be absent: I have a great sacrifice to offer to Baal. If anyone
is absent, he will forfeit his life.' This was a trick on Jehu's part to destroy the
devotees of Baal. ·'Summon a sacred assembly for Baal,' he commanded; and they 20
summoned it. ·Jehu sent messengers throughout Israel, and all the devotees of 21
1 K 16:32 Baal arrived, not a man was left who did not attend. They crowded into the temple
of Baal until it was full from wall to wall. ·Jehu then said to the keeper of the 22
wardrobe, 'Bring out vestments for all the devotees of Baal';[f] he brought out the
vestments for them. ·Jehu then went into the temple of Baal with Jehonadab son 23
of Rechab and said to Baal's devotees, 'Make quite sure that there are no devotees
of Yahweh in here with you, but only devotees of Baal.' ·He[g] then proceeded to 24
present sacrifices and burnt offerings.

Now Jehu had stationed eighty of his men outside, having said, 'Whoever lets
one of the people go whom I am now putting within your clutches, will pay for it
with his life.'[h] ·When he had finished making the burnt offering, he gave the order 25
to the guards and equerries, 'Go in, strike them down! Let no one out!'
The guards and equerries went in, putting everyone to the sword all the way to the
sanctuary of Baal's temple.[i] ·They took the sacred pole[j] out of Baal's temple and 26
burned it. ·They demolished Baal's image and demolished Baal's temple too, 27
making it into a latrine, which it still is today.

The reign of Jehu in Israel (841–814)

Thus Jehu rid Israel of Baal. ·Even so, Jehu did not give up the sins into which 28, 29
1 K 12:28–29 Jeroboam son of Nebat had led Israel, the golden calves of Bethel and Dan.[k]
Yahweh said to Jehu, 'Since you have done well in carrying out what pleases me, 30
and have done everything I required to be done to the House of Ahab, your sons
will occupy the throne of Israel down to the fourth generation.' ·Jehu, however, 31
did not faithfully and wholeheartedly follow the law of Yahweh, God of Israel;
he did not give up the sins into which Jeroboam son of Nebat had led Israel.

At that time Yahweh began to whittle Israel down, and Hazael defeated the 32
Israelites throughout the territory east of the Jordan: ·the whole territory of 33
Gilead—of the Gadites, the Reubenites and the Manassehites—from Aroer on the
River Arnon: Gilead and Bashan.[l]

The rest of the history of Jehu, his entire career, all his prowess, is this not 34
recorded in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel? ·Then he fell asleep with 35
his ancestors and was buried in Samaria; his son Jehoahaz succeeded him.
Jehu's reign over Israel in Samaria lasted twenty-eight years. 36

F: FROM THE REIGN OF ATHALIAH TO THE DEATH OF ELISHA

‖2 Ch 22:9–23:21 **Athaliah (841–835)**[a]

11 When Athaliah mother of Ahaziah learned that her son was dead, she 1
promptly murdered all those of royal stock.

But Jehosheba,[b] daughter of King Jehoram and sister of Ahaziah, surreptitiously 2
rescued Jehoash son of Ahaziah from among the princes who were to be
murdered, and put him with his nurse in the sleeping quarters; in this way she hid
him from Athaliah, and he was not killed. ·He stayed, hidden with her in the 3
Temple of Yahweh for six years, while Athaliah governed the country.

In the seventh year, Jehoiada[c] sent for the regimental commanders of the 4
Carians[d] and the guards, and had them brought to him in the Temple of Yahweh.
He made a pact with them, put them on oath,[e] then showed them the king's son.
He gave them this order,[f] ·'This is what you must do: a third of you who come on 5
duty on the Sabbath must mount guard at the royal palace, ·and your two other (6)7

sections who come off duty on the Sabbath and mount guard at the Temple of
8 Yahweh[g] must surround the king, each man with his weapons in his hand; anyone
forcing his way through the ranks is to be killed. And you will escort the king as he
leaves and as he comes in.'
9 The regimental commanders did everything as Jehoiada the priest had ordered,
and each one brought his men, those coming on duty on the Sabbath and those
10 going off duty on the Sabbath, and reported to Jehoiada the priest. The priest
then issued the regimental commanders with King David's spears and shields, 2 S 8:7
11 which were kept in the Temple of Yahweh.[h] The guards then took position, each
man with his weapons in his hand, from the south corner of the Temple to the north
12 corner of the Temple, all round the altar and the Temple.[i] Then Jehoiada brought
the king's son out—crowned him and gave him a copy of the covenant; and they
made him king[j] and anointed him, and they clapped their hands and shouted,
'Long live the king!'
13 On hearing the people[k] shouting, Athaliah joined the people in the Temple of
14 Yahweh. When she looked, there stood the king on a dais, as the custom was, 23:3
with the officers and trumpeters at the king's side, and all the people of the country
rejoicing and blowing the trumpets; then Athaliah tore her clothes and shouted,
15 'Treason, treason!' Jehoiada the priest then gave the orders to the commanders[l]
in charge of the troops, 'Take her out under guard and put to death anyone who
follows her.' 'For', the priest had already said, 'she must not be killed inside the
16 Temple of Yahweh.' They seized her, and when she reached the horses' entry to
the palace, she was killed there.
17 Jehoiada made a covenant between Yahweh, the king and the people that they
would remain Yahweh's people; and another one between the king and the
18 people.[m] All the people of the country then went to the temple of Baal and
demolished it; they smashed its altars and its images and killed Mattan the priest of
Baal in front of the altars.[n]
19 The priest made arrangements for the security of the Temple of Yahweh. He
then took the regimental commanders, the Carians, the guards and all the people

e. The text adds 'all his devotees', but *see* vv. 20–21.

f. The change of clothing was a purificatory observance before participation in public worship, attested among the Phoenicians and the pre-Islamic Arabs; *see* Gn 35:2.

g. 'He' Gk, in line with v. 25; 'They' Hebr., to spare Jehu's reputation for orthodox Yahwism.

h. 'Whoever lets go' conj.; 'If anyone gets away' Hebr.

i. Text obscure; trans. conj. 'The guards and the equerries went in, putting everyone to the sword and throwing them out, and went all the way to the city of Baal's temple.'

j. 'the sacred pole' conj., *see* 1 K 16:33; 'the pillar' or cultic stele (but this was of stone and would be difficult to burn).

k. The author's own verdict; the source he was following in the preceding narratives gave unstinted praise, v. 30, to Jehu's sincere, if brutal, zeal for Yahweh. By wiping out Baal's devotees, Jehu probably also intended to eliminate any remaining support for the dynasty of Ahab.

l. Thus the Israelites lost all their Transjordanian territory. The v. is overloaded with glosses inspired by Dt 3:12 seq.

11 a. Two combined narratives are recognisable here. The first, vv. 1–12 and 18[b]–20, attributes the fall of Athaliah to the action of the priesthood, supported by the royal guard. The second, which is incomplete, vv. 13–18[a], attributes it to a popular uprising.

b. According to 2 Ch 22:11 she was the wife of Jehoiada the priest, v. 4, which explains how she could keep Jehoash hidden in the Temple, v. 3.

c. Head of the Jerusalem priesthood, 12:8.

d. Mercenaries from Asia Minor. They were different from the Cherethites, who are not mentioned after the reign of Solomon, 1 K 1:38.

e. Hebr. adds 'in the Temple of Yahweh', missing in Gk and Syr.

f. On weekdays, it seems, one-third of the guard was posted at the Temple, two-thirds at the palace; on the Sabbath the proportion was reversed, Jehoiada takes advantage of a Sabbath: the two-thirds go on duty at the Temple as usual but he keeps the other third there too. We omit v. 6 'and one-third at the Gate Sur (?) and one-third at the gate behind the guards, and you are to go on duty at the house of (word unknown)'; obscure text, perhaps composed of several corrupt glosses.

g. The text adds 'at the king's side'.

h. Probably a gloss from the parallel narrative of 2 Ch 23:9 in which the Levites assume the role of the guards and have to be armed.

i. Last words uncertain. The Hebr. has a different order and adds 'at the king's side'.

j. At the moment of their anointing, the kings of Judah were apparently handed a copy of the covenant made between Yahweh and the Davidic dynasty. *See* the 'protocol' drawn up for the Pharaohs at their coronation. The same word in Aramaic and Assyrian means 'clause of a covenant'.

k. Hebr. inserts 'and guards', gloss.

l. 'commanders' *peqide* following Gk; Hebr. *pequde* 'enlisted men'. Hebr. inserts 'regimental commanders' before the word, probably a gloss.

m. The last words are possibly an addition: they are absent from 2 Ch 23:16. Even so, the existence of a pact between king and people is attested by 1 S 10:25 (Saul); 2 S 5:3 (David); 1 K 12:1 seq. (Rehoboam).

n. This revolution is parallel to that of Jehu's in the Northern Kingdom, 10:18–28. But here it had the support of the 'people of the country', the Judaean populace at large who were loyal to the Yahwist tradition, as opposed to the capital which had been infected by foreign and non-Yahwist influences.

of the country, and they escorted the king down from the Temple of Yahweh, entering the palace through the Gate of the Guards. Jehoash took his seat on the throne of the kings. ·All the people of the country were delighted; the city, 20
however, made no move. And Athaliah was put to death inside the palace.

‖2 Ch 24:1–16 **The reign of Jehoash in Judah (835–796)**

12 Jehoash was seven years old when he came to the throne. ·Jehoash became 1; 2 21; 12:1
king in the seventh year of Jehu, and reigned for forty years in Jerusalem.
His mother's name was Zibiah of Beersheba. ·All his life Jehoash did what Yahweh 32
regards as right, having been instructed by Jehoiada the priest,[a] ·The high places, 4 3
however, were not abolished, and the people still offered sacrifices and incense on
the high places.

Jehoash said to the priests, 'All the money from the sacred revenues brought to 5 4
the Temple of Yahweh, the money from personal taxes,[b] and all the money
voluntarily offered to the Temple—·the priests are to receive this individually from 6 5
people of their acquaintance and will carry out all the repairs to the Temple which
need to be made.'[c] ·Now in the twenty-third year of King Jehoash the priests had 7 6
done no repairs to the Temple; ·so King Jehoash summoned Jehoiada the priest 8 7
and the other priests. 'Why are you not repairing the Temple?' he asked. 'You are
no longer to accept money from people of your acquaintance but are to hand it
over for the Temple repairs.' ·The priests agreed to accept no money from the 9 8
people and no longer to be responsible for repairs to the Temple.

Jehoiada the priest took a chest, bored a hole in the lid and placed it beside the 10 9
pillar, to the right of the entry to the Temple of Yahweh; in it the priests who
guarded the threshold put all the money which was given for the Temple of
Yahweh.[d] ·Whenever they saw that there was a great deal of money in the chest, 11 10
the king's secretary would come, and they would empty it out and reckon the
money then in the Temple of Yahweh.[e] ·Once checked, they paid this money over 12 11
to the masters of works attached to the Temple of Yahweh, and these in turn spent
it on carpenters and builders working on the Temple of Yahweh, ·on masons and 13 12
stonecutters, and on buying timber and dressed stone to be used for repairs to the
Temple of Yahweh; in short, for all the costs of the Temple repairs. ·But no silver 14 13
basins, knives, sprinkling bowls, trumpets or gold or silver objects were made for
the Temple of Yahweh out of the money presented, ·which was all given to the 15 14
masters of works for repairing the Temple of Yahweh. ·No accounts were kept 16 15
with the men to whom the money was paid over to be spent on the workmen, since
Lv 5:14f they were honest in their work. ·Money offered in expiation of an offence or of a 17 16
sin was not given to the Temple of Yahweh; that was for the priests.

‖2 Ch 24:23–27 8:7–15 At that time Hazael king of Aram went to war against Gath, and captured it; he 18 17
then prepared to attack Jerusalem. ·Jehoash king of Judah took all the sacred 19 18
offerings dedicated by his ancestors, the kings of Judah, Jehoshaphat, Jehoram
and Ahaziah, with those which he himself had dedicated, and all the gold which
was to be found in the treasuries of the Temple of Yahweh and of the palace; he
sent it all to Hazael king of Aram, who retired from Jerusalem.

The rest of the history of Joash, his entire career, is this not recorded in the Book 20 19
of the Annals of the Kings of Judah? ·His own retainers rebelled and hatched a 21 20
plot; they murdered Joash in the palace of the Millo . . .[f] ·Jozacar son of Shimeath 22 21
and Jehozabad son of Shomer were the retainers who struck the blows from which
he died. He was buried with his ancestors in the City of David; his son Amaziah
succeeded him.

The reign of Jehoahaz in Israel (814–798)

13 In the twenty-third year of Joash son of Ahaziah, king of Judah, Jehoahaz 1
son of Jehu became king of Israel in Samaria. He reigned for seventeen
years. ·He did what is displeasing to Yahweh and copied the sin[a] into which 2
Jeroboam son of Nebat had led Israel; he did not give it up.

3 This aroused Yahweh's anger against the Israelites, and he delivered them
without respite into the power of Hazael king of Aram and of Ben-Hadad[b] son of
4 Hazael. ·Jehoahaz, however, tried to placate Yahweh, and Yahweh heard him, 14:26–27
for he had seen the oppression which the king of Aram was inflicting on Israel.
5 Yahweh gave Israel a saviour who freed them[c] from the grip of Aram, and the
6 Israelites lived in their tents as in the past. ·But they did not give up the sin into
which Jeroboam[d] had led Israel; they persisted in it, and even the sacred pole Ex 34:13e
7 stayed standing in Samaria.[e] ·Of Jehoahaz's army Yahweh left only fifty horsemen,
ten chariots and ten thousand foot soldiers. The king of Aram had destroyed them,
making them like dust trampled under foot.
8 The rest of the history of Jehoahaz, his entire career, his prowess, is this not
9 recorded in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel? ·Then Jehoahaz fell
asleep with his ancestors, and was buried in Samaria; his son Joash succeeded him.

The reign of Jehoash in Israel (798–783)

10 In the thirty-seventh year of Joash king of Judah, Jehoash son of Jehoahaz, became
11 king of Israel in Samaria. He reigned for sixteen years. ·He did what is displeasing
to Yahweh, he did not give up the sin into which Jeroboam son of Nebat had led
Israel; he persisted in it.
12 The rest of the history of Joash, his entire career, his prowess, how he waged =14:15–16
war on Amaziah king of Judah, is this not recorded in the Book of the Annals of 14:8–14
13 the Kings of Israel? ·Then Joash fell asleep with his ancestors, and Jeroboam
ascended his throne. Joash was buried in Samaria with the kings of Israel.

The death of Elisha

14 When Elisha had fallen ill of the illness of which he was to die, Joash king of Israel
went down to him and shedding tears over him said, 'Father! Father! Chariot of Gn 50:1
15 Israel and its chargers!' ·Elisha said to him, 'Bring bow and arrows,' and he sent 2:12
16 for a bow and arrows. ·Then Elisha said to the king,[f] 'Draw the bow,' and he drew
17 it. Elisha put his hands over the hands of the king, ·then he said, 'Open the window
towards the east,' and he opened it. Then Elisha said, 'Shoot!' And he shot. Elisha
said, 'Arrow of victory over Aram! You will defeat Aram at Aphek—completely.'[g]
18 Elisha said, 'Take the arrows,' and he took them. Then he said to the king,
19 'Strike the ground,' and he struck it three times, then stopped. ·At this the man of
God grew angry with him. 'You should have struck half a dozen times,' he said
'and you would have beaten Aram completely; now you will beat Aram only three
times.'
20 Elisha died and was buried. Bands of Moabites were making incursions into the
21 country every year.[h] ·Some people happened to be carrying a man out for burial;
at the sight of one of these bands, they flung the man into the tomb of Elisha and
made off. The man had no sooner touched the bones of Elisha than he came to life Si 48:13–14,13c
and stood up on his feet.

12 **a.** And not as it is sometimes translated to harmonise with 2 Ch 24:2,17 seq. 'as long as the priest Jehoiada was his instructor'.

b. Text doubtful, restored from Gk. • Hebr. adds 'the money from the persons whom he (the priest?) has assessed', explanatory gloss.

c. First of the new king's dispositions; payment for the repair of the Temple is to be made out of the revenues of the priesthood.

d. 'pillar' Gk; 'altar' Hebr. • The new royal edict is put into effect.

e. After 'secretary' Hebr. adds 'and the high priest'. • 'melt down' *wayyiseru* conj.; Hebr. *wayyasuru* 'attach'.

f. Part of Jerusalem, *see* 1 K 9:15. Two words corrupt at end of v.: 'on the way down to Silla'(?).

13 **a.** Hebr. reads 'the sins', but the pronoun referring to it is singular, as in v. 11.

b. Ben-Hadad III, enemy of Jehoash of Israel, v. 25.

c. 'who freed them' Gk; 'and they freed them' Hebr. • The liberator was not Jehoahaz nor, despite v. 25, his son Jehoash, but Jeroboam II, *see* 14:27 on which the editor who added vv. 4–5 drew by way of anticipation.

d. 'Jeroboam' Targ., Syr.; 'the House of Jeroboam' Hebr.

e. v. 7 follows on from v. 3; vv. 4–6 are a later addition.

f. 'to the king' Gk and at v. 18; 'to the king of Israel' Hebr., both times.

g. By laying his hands on the king Elisha bestows divine strength on him. The flight of the arrow is eastward, against the Aramaeans. The prophet's gesture prefigures the event and thus brings it about. *See* Jr 18:1a.

h. 'every year' *shanah beshanah* conj.; Hebr. *ba'shanah* corrupt.

Victory over the Aramaeans

Hazael king of Aram had oppressed the Israelites throughout the lifetime of 22
Jehoahaz, ·but Yahweh was kind and took pity on them. Because of the covenant 23
which he had made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, he relented towards them; he
had no wish to destroy them, he did not cast them out of his presence.[i] ·Hazael 24
king of Aram died, and his son Ben-Hadad succeeded him. ·From Ben-Hadad son 25
of Hazael, Jehoash son of Jehoahaz recaptured the towns which Hazael had seized
13:19 from his father Jehoahaz by force of arms. Joash defeated him three times and
recovered the Israelite towns.

VII: THE TWO KINGDOMS TO THE FALL OF SAMARIA

‖2 Ch 25:1–4, 11–12,17–28 **The reign of Amaziah in Judah (796–781)**

14 In the second year of Joash son of Jehoahaz, king of Israel, Amaziah son of 1
Joash became king of Judah. ·He was twenty-five years old when he came 2
to the throne, and he reigned for twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's
name was Jehoaddin of Jerusalem. ·He did what Yahweh regards as right, though 3
not like his ancestor David; he imitated his father Joash in all respects. ·The high 4
places, however, were not abolished, and the people still offered sacrifices and
incense on the high places.

12:21–22 Once the kingdom was firmly under his control, he killed those of his retainers 5
who had murdered the king his father. ·But he did not put the murderers' sons to 6
death, in accordance with what is written in the Book of Moses, where Yahweh has
Dt 24:16b Ezk 14:12d commanded: '*Parents may not be put to death for their children, nor children for parents, but each must be put to death for his own crime.*'

2 S 8:13 It was he who slaughtered the Edomites in the Valley of Salt, ten thousand of 7
them, and captured the Rock; he gave it the name Joktheel, which it bears to the
present day.

Amaziah then sent messengers to Jehoash son of Jehoahaz, king of Israel, 8
saying, 'Come and make a trial of strength!' ·Jehoash king of Israel sent back word 9
Jg 9:8–15 to Amaziah king of Judah, 'The thistle of Lebanon sent a message to the cedar of
Lebanon, saying, "Give my son your daughter in marriage"; but a wild animal of
the Lebanon ran over the thistle and squashed it. ·You have conquered Edom and 10
now aspire to even greater glory. Stay where you belong! Why challenge disaster,
to your own and Judah's ruin?'

But Amaziah would not listen, so Jehoash king of Israel marched to the attack. 11
And at Beth-Shemesh, which belongs to Judah, he and Amaziah king of Judah
made their trial of strength. ·Judah was defeated by Israel, and everyone fled to his 12
tent. ·The king of Judah, Amaziah son of Jehoash, son of Ahaziah, was taken 13
prisoner at Beth-Shemesh by Jehoash king of Israel who led him off[a] to Jerusalem,
where he demolished four hundred cubits of the city wall between the Ephraim
Gate and the Corner Gate;[b] ·all the gold and silver, and all the vessels to be found 14
in the Temple of Yahweh and in the palace treasury, and hostages besides, he then
took back with him to Samaria.

=13:12–13 The rest of the history of Jehoash, his entire career, his prowess, how he waged 15
war on Amaziah king of Judah, is this not recorded in the Book of the Annals of
the Kings of Israel? ·Then Joash fell asleep with his ancestors, and was buried in 16
Samaria with the kings of Israel; his son Jeroboam succeeded him.

Amaziah son of Joash, king of Judah, lived for fifteen years after the death of 17
Jehoash son of Jehoahaz, king of Israel.

The rest of the history of Amaziah, is this not recorded in the Book of the Annals 18
of the Kings of Judah? ·A plot having been hatched against him in Jerusalem, he 19
fled to Lachish; but he was followed to Lachish where he was murdered. ·He was 20
then transported by horse and buried in Jerusalem with his ancestors in the City of

David. ·All the people of Judah then chose Uzziah,[c] who was sixteen years old, ‖2 Ch 26:1–2
and made him king in succession to his father Amaziah. ·It was he who rebuilt
Elath,[d] recovering it for Judah, after the king had fallen asleep with his ancestors.

The reign of Jeroboam II in Israel (783–743)

In the fifteenth year of Amaziah son of Joash, king of Judah, Jeroboam son of
Joash became king of Israel in Samaria. He reigned for forty-one years. ·He did
what is displeasing to Yahweh and did not give up any of the sins into which
Jeroboam son of Nebat had led Israel.
It was he who recovered the territory of Israel from the Pass of Hamath to the
Sea of the Arabah, in accordance with the word which Yahweh, God of Israel, had
spoken through his servant Jonah[e] son of Amittai, the prophet from Gath-Hepher.
For Yahweh had seen how very bitter[f] the affliction of Israel was, with no one, 13:4–5
either fettered or free, to come to Israel's help. ·But Yahweh had resolved not to 1 K 14:10
blot out the name of Israel under heaven; he rescued them by means of Jeroboam
son of Joash.
The rest of the history of Jeroboam, his entire career, his prowess, what wars he
waged, how he brought Damascus and Hamath back to their allegiance to Judah
and Israel, is this not recorded in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel?[g]
Then Jeroboam fell asleep with his ancestors and was buried[h] with the
kings of Israel; his son Zechariah succeeded him.

The reign of Uzziah in Judah (781–740) ‖2 Ch 26:3–4, 21–23

15 In the seventeenth year of Jeroboam king of Israel, Uzziah son of Amaziah
became king of Judah. ·He was sixteen years old when he came to the
throne, and he reigned for fifty-two years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was
Jecoliah of Jerusalem. ·He did what Yahweh regards as right, just as his father
Amaziah had done. ·The high places, however, were not abolished, and the people
still offered sacrifices and incense on the high places.
But Yahweh struck the king, and he was afflicted with a virulent skin-disease till
his dying day. He lived confined to his room,[a] while Jotham the king's son, who 1 K 4:2a
was master of the palace, governed the country.
The rest of the history of Uzziah, his entire career, is this not recorded in the
Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah? ·Then Uzziah fell asleep with his
ancestors and was buried[b] in the City of David; his son Jotham then succeeded
him.

The reign of Zechariah in Israel (743)

In the thirty-eighth year of Uzziah king of Judah, Zechariah son of Jeroboam
became king of Israel in Samaria for six months. ·He did what is displeasing to
Yahweh, as his fathers had done; he did not give up the sins into which Jeroboam
son of Nebat had led Israel.
Shallum son of Jabesh plotted against him, murdered him at Ibleam,[c] ·and
succeeded him.

i. Hebr. adds 'yet', a gloss.

14 **a.** 'who led him off' versions, 2 Ch 25:23; 'and he came' *qere*; 'and they came' *ketib*.
b. The wall on the western height, *see* 2 S 5:9f. It was later moved further north, 2 Ch 32:5. Outside this new 'Ephraim Gate' (Ne 8:16; 12:39) lie Calvary and the Holy Sepulchre. A third wall, still further north, was built by Herod Agrippa I.
c. The text names him Azariah here and several times subsequently but, apart from 2 K, the usual form is Uzziah. The one may have been his personal and the other his regnal name.
d. An Edomite town very near Ezion-Geber, 1 K 9:28h, and later confused with it. Elath had been lost under Jehoram, 8:20–21.
e. The 'Book of Jonah' is pseudonymously assigned to him.
f. 'bitter' Gk; 'rebellious' Hebr.
g. Jeroboam II is represented as restoring the empire of David and Solomon, Damascus and Hamath having the status of vassal or allied kingdoms. The parallel justifies the mention of Judah, given the minor correction 'Judah and Israel'; 'Judah in Israel' Hebr. One may doubt the historical value of this statement but, apart from the small correction above, the text is certain.
h. 'they buried him in Samaria' Gk-Luc.; omitted by Hebr.

15 **a.** Translation uncertain. The expression translated 'confined to his room' occurs nowhere else in the Bible.
b. Hebr. adds 'with his ancestors; similarly in v. 38.
c. 'at Ibleam' Gk-Luc.; Hebr. corrupt.

The rest of the history of Zechariah is recorded in the Book of Annals of the 11
10:30 Kings of Israel. 12 This was the word which Yahweh had spoken to Jehu, 'Your sons 12
will sit on the throne of Israel to the fourth generation.' And so it turned out.

The reign of Shallum in Israel (743)

Shallum son of Jabesh became king in the thirty-ninth year of Uzziah king of 13
Judah and reigned for one month in Samaria.

Then Menahem son of Gadi marched from Tirzah, entered Samaria, murdered 14
Shallum son of Jabesh there and succeeded him.

The rest of the history of Shallum, and the plot he hatched, is recorded in the 15
Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel. 16 Menahem then sacked Tappuah[d]— 16
killing all who were in it—and its territory from Tirzah onwards, because it had not
8:12+ opened its gates to him; he sacked the town and disembowelled all the pregnant
women.

The reign of Menahem in Israel (743–738)

In the thirty-ninth year of Uzziah king of Judah, Menahem son of Gadi became 17
king of Israel. He reigned for ten years in Samaria. 18 He did what is displeasing to 18
Yahweh, he did not give up the sins into which Jeroboam son of Nebat had led
Israel.

In his days[e] 19 Pul[f] king of Assyria invaded the country. Menahem gave Pul a 19
thousand talents of silver in return for his support in strengthening his hold on the
royal power. 20 Menahem levied this sum from Israel, from all the men of rank, at 20
the rate of fifty shekels a head, to be given to the king of Assyria, who then
withdrew and did not stay in the country.

The rest of the history of Menahem, his entire career, is this not recorded in the 21
Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel? 22 Then Menahem fell asleep with his 22
ancestors; his son Pekahiah succeeded him.

The reign of Pekahiah in Israel (738–737)

In the fiftieth year of Uzziah king of Judah, Pekahiah son of Menahem became 23
king of Israel in Samaria. He reigned for two years. 24 He did what is displeasing to 24
Yahweh; he did not give up the sins into which Jeroboam son of Nebat had led
Israel.

Pekah son of Remaliah, his equerry, plotted against him and assassinated him in 25
the palace keep . . .[g] He had fifty Gileadites with him. He killed the king and
succeeded him.

The rest of the history of Pekahiah, his entire career, is recorded in the Book of 26
the Annals of the Kings of Israel.

The reign of Pekah in Israel (737–732)

In the fifty-second year of Uzziah king of Judah, Pekah son of Remaliah became 27
king of Israel in Samaria. He reigned for twenty years.[h] 28 He did what is displeasing 28
to Yahweh; he did not give up the sins into which Jeroboam son of Nebat had led
Israel.

In the days of Pekah king of Israel, Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria came and 29
captured Ijon, Abel-beth-Maacah, Janoah, Kedesh, Hazor, Gilead and Galilee—
the whole territory of Naphtali[i] and deported the population to Assyria.[j]
Hoshea son of Elah hatched a plot against Pekah son of Remaliah; he murdered 30
the king and succeeded him.[k]

The rest of the history of Pekah, his entire career, is recorded in the Book of the 31
Annals of the Kings of Israel.

‖2 Ch 27:1–4, 7–9 **The reign of Jotham in Judah (740–736)**

In the second year of Pekah son of Remaliah, king of Israel, Jotham son of Uzziah 32
became king of Judah. 33 He was twenty-five years old when he came to the throne, 33

and he reigned for sixteen years[l] in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jerusha
34 daughter of Zadok. ·He did what Yahweh regards as right, just as his father Uzziah
35 had done. ·The high places, however, were not abolished, and the people still offered sacrifices and incense on the high places.

It was he who built the Upper Gate of the Temple of Yahweh.

36 The rest of the history of Jotham, his entire career, is this not recorded in the
37 Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah? ·At that time Yahweh began sending
38 Razon[m] king of Aram and Pekah son of Remaliah against Judah. ·Then Jotham Is 7:1
fell asleep with his ancestors and was buried in the City of David, his ancestor; his son Ahaz succeeded him.

The reign of Ahaz in Judah (736–716)

1 **16** In the seventeenth year of Pekah son of Remaliah, Ahaz son of Jotham
2 became king of Judah. ·Ahaz was twenty years old when he came to the ‖2 Ch 28:1–4
throne, and he reigned for sixteen years in Jerusalem. He did not do what Yahweh
3 his God regards as right, as his ancestor David had done. ·He followed the example
of the kings of Israel, even causing his son to pass through the fire of sacrifice,[a] also Lv 18:21h
copying the disgusting practices of the nations whom Yahweh had dispossessed for
4 the Israelites. ·He offered sacrifices and incense on the high places, on the hills and Dt 12:2b
under every luxuriant tree.

5 Then it was that Razon king of Aram and Pekah son of Remaliah, king of Israel, 2 Ch 28:5seq. Is 7–8 ·Ho 5:8–6:6 ·‖2Ch 28:17
launched their campaign against Jerusalem. They besieged it but could not reduce
6 it.[b] ·(At that time, the king of Edom recovered Elath for Edom; he drove the
Judaeans out of Elath, and the Edomites occupied it and have been there ever
7 since.)[c] ·Ahaz then sent messengers to Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria to say, 'I am ‖2Ch 28:16
your servant and your son.[d] Come and rescue me from the king of Aram and the
8 king of Israel who are making war on me.' ·And Ahaz took what silver and gold ‖2 Ch 28:21
was to be found in the Temple of Yahweh and in the palace treasury, and sent this
9 as a present to the king of Assyria. ·The king of Assyria granted his request and,
marching on Damascus, captured it; he deported its population to Kir and put Am 1:5
Razon to death.[e]

10 When King Ahaz went to Damascus to meet Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria, he
saw the altar which was in Damascus.[f] King Ahaz then sent a picture and model of
11 the altar, with details of its construction, to Uriah the priest. ·Uriah the priest
constructed the altar; all the instructions sent by King Ahaz from Damascus were
carried out by Uriah the priest before King Ahaz returned from Damascus.
12 When the king arrived from Damascus, he inspected the altar, he approached it
13 and ascended it. ·And on the altar he made his burnt offering and his oblation; he 1 K 8:64 2 Ch 28:23

d. 'Tappuah' Gk-Luc., modern Sheikh Abu Zared, 33 miles (53 km) north of Jerusalem; 'Tipsah' Hebr. But Tipsah = Thapsacus on the Euphrates, and it is impossible that Menahem led an expedition that far.

e. 'In his days' Gk; 'throughout his time' (joined to the preceding phrase) Hebr.

f. According to Assyro-Babylonian documents Pulu was the coronation name taken by Tiglath-Pileser III, king of Assyria (745–727), when he assumed power in Babylon in 729. • The tribute of v. 20 is mentioned in the Assyrian texts in connection with the Syrian campaign of this king in 738.

g. Hebr. adds 'Argob and Arieh', which perhaps ought to be emended to 'Argob and the Encampments of Jair', a gloss on 'Gileadites' in the same sentence, or on 'Gilead', v. 29.

h. Five years at most, according to known dates.

i. The towns mentioned ('all Naphtali') were subdued as Tiglath-Pileser advanced in his campaign against Philistia in 734. Gilead and Galilee were conquered in the campaign of 733–732 aimed principally against Damascus, but are included summarily in this list.

j. First Israelite deportation.

k. Hebr. adds 'in the twentieth year of Jotham, son of Uzziah', not found in Gk-Luc. and contradicting v. 33.

l. If the figure is exact it includes the years of Jotham's regency, v. 5.

m. Razon was the last king of Damascus before the city fell into Assyrian hands, 16:9. The war now being prepared breaks out in the reign of Ahaz, 16:5–9.

16 a. An idolatrous practice forbidden to Israelites, Lv 18:21, but fashionable among neighbouring peoples, 17:17,31; 21:6; 23:10.

b. 'they besieged it' Syr., *see* Is 7:1; 'they besieged Ahaz' Hebr. • The purpose of this war, occasioning the prophecies of Is 7–8, was to bring Judah into an anti-Assyrian coalition.

c. The translation conjecturally reads 'Edom' for 'Aram' Hebr. (twice) and drops Hebr. 'Razon' before 'the king'. The Edomites avail themselves of this opportunity to retake Elath, *see* 14:22.

d. Ahaz acknowledges himself vassal of Tiglath-Pileser III (in 734) but this purchase of foreign protection paves the way for the downfall of his kingdom, *see* Is 8:5 seq.

e. Tiglath-Pileser's campaign against Damascus, 733–732.

f. The high altar of the temple of Rimmon at Damascus, 5:18, not an altar raised by the army of occupation.

poured out his libation and sprinkled the blood of his communion sacrifices.[g]
The altar which used to stand before Yahweh[h] he removed from the front of the 14
Temple, where it had stood between the new altar and the Temple of Yahweh, and
placed it at the north side of the new altar. ·King Ahaz gave this order to Uriah the 15
Ex 29:39 Nb 28:4 priest, 'In future you will present the morning burnt offering, the evening oblation,
the king's burnt offering and oblation, the burnt offering, the oblation and the
libations of all the people of the country on the large altar; on it you will pour out
all the blood of the burnt offerings and sacrifices. As regards the bronze altar, I
shall see to that.'[i] ·Uriah the priest did everything that King Ahaz had ordered. 16
‖2 Ch 28:34 King Ahaz broke up the wheeled stands: removed the crosspieces and the basins 17
1 K 7:27–37
1 K 7:23–26 from them, and took the bronze Sea off the oxen supporting it, and rested it on the
stone pavement.[j] ·And from the Temple of Yahweh, in deference to the king of 18
Assyria, he removed the dais for the throne which had been built inside, and the
royal entrance on the outside.[k]
‖2 Ch 28:26–27 The rest of the history of Ahaz, his entire career, is this not recorded in the Book 19
of the Annals of the Kings of Judah? ·Then Ahaz fell asleep with his ancestors and 20
was buried in the City of David; his son Hezekiah succeeded him.

The reign of Hoshea in Israel (732–724)

17 In the twelfth year of Ahaz king of Judah, Hoshea son of Elah became king 1
of Israel in Samaria, and reigned for nine years. ·He did what is displeasing 2
to Yahweh, though not like the preceding kings of Israel.
Am 3:11 Shalmaneser[a] king of Assyria made war on Hoshea who submitted to him and 3
paid him tribute. ·But the king of Assyria discovered that Hoshea was playing a 4
double game with him; he had sent messengers to Sais,[b] to the king of Egypt, and
had not, as in previous years, handed over the tribute to the king of Assyria. For
this the king of Assyria imprisoned him in chains.[c]

=18:9–11 ### The fall of Samaria (721)

The king of Assyria invaded the whole country and, coming to Samaria, laid siege 5
to it for three years. ·In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria captured 6
Dt 4:27 Samaria[d] and deported the Israelites to Assyria. He settled them in Halah on the
Habor, a river of Gozan,[e] and in the cities of the Medes.[f]

18:12 ### Observations on the fall of the Northern Kingdom[g]

This happened because the Israelites had sinned against Yahweh their God who 7
had brought them out of Egypt, out of the grip of Pharaoh king of Egypt. They
worshipped other gods, ·they followed the practices of the nations which Yahweh 8
had dispossessed for them.[h] ·The Israelites spoke slightingly of Yahweh their God. 9
They built themselves high places wherever they lived, from watchtower to forti-
Ex 23:24k; 34:13e Dt 12:2b fied town. ·They set up pillars and sacred poles for themselves on every high hill 10
and under every luxuriant tree. ·They sacrificed on all the high places like the 11
nations which Yahweh had expelled for them, and did wicked things there, provok-
ing Yahweh's anger. ·They served idols, although Yahweh had told them, 'This 12
you must not do.'
And yet through all the prophets and the seers, Yahweh had given Israel and 13
Judah this warning, 'Turn from your wicked ways and keep my commandments
and my laws in accordance with the entire Law which I laid down for your fathers
and delivered to them through my servants the prophets.' ·But they would not 14
Dt 9:13+ listen, they were as stubborn as their ancestors, who had no faith in Yahweh their
God. ·They despised his laws and the covenant which he had made with their 15
Jr 2:5 ancestors and the warnings which he had given them. Pursuing futility, they
themselves became futile through copying the nations round them, although
Yahweh had ordered them not to act as they did. ·They rejected all the command- 16
1 K 12:28 ·Ex 34:13e Dt 4:19;17:3 ments of Yahweh their God and cast themselves metal idols, two calves; they made
themselves sacred poles, they worshipped the whole array of heaven, and they

17 served Baal. ·They caused their sons and daughters to pass through the fire of sacrifice, also they practised divination and sorcery, they sold themselves to doing
18 what displeases Yahweh, provoking his anger. ·Because of which, Yahweh became enraged with Israel and thrust them away from him. The tribe of Judah was the only one left.
19 Judah did not keep the commandments of Yahweh their God either but copied
20 the practices which Israel had introduced. ·Yahweh rejected the whole race of Israel; he brought them low, delivering them into the hands of marauders, until at
21 length he thrust them away from him. ·And indeed he had torn Israel away from the House of David, and they had made Jeroboam son of Nebat king; Jeroboam
22 had drawn Israel away from Yahweh and led them into a great sin. ·The Israelites
23 copied the sin which Jeroboam had committed; they did not give it up, ·until at length Yahweh thrust Israel away from him, as he had foretold through all his servants the prophets; he deported the Israelites from their own country to Assyria, where they have been ever since.

Lv 18:21h Dt 18:10
1 K 12:20
1 K 12:26–33

The origin of the Samaritans[i]

24 The king of Assyria brought people from Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath and Sepharvaim, and settled them in the towns of Samaria to replace the Israelites; these took possession of Samaria and lived in its towns.
25 When they first came to live there, they did not worship Yahweh; hence, Yahweh
26 set lions on them, which killed a number of them. ·Consequently, the king of Assyria was informed as follows, 'The nations whom you deported and settled in the towns of Samaria do not know how to worship the local god, and he has set lions on them; and now these are killing them because they do not know how to
27 worship the local god.' ·So the king of Assyria gave this order, 'Send back one of the priests whom I deported from there;[j] let him go and live there and teach them
28 how to worship the local god.' ·Accordingly, one of the priests who had been deported from Samaria came to live in Bethel; he taught them how to worship Yahweh.
29 Each nationality made gods of its own and put them in the shrines on the high places built by the Samaritans; each nationality did this in the towns where it lived.
30 The people from Babylon had made a Succoth-Benoth, the people from Cuthah a

Jn 4:9e

g. The king himself consecrates the altar by exercising priestly functions, as on other special occasions. The king is also the administrator of the Temple, and lays down the ceremonial (see 12:5–17); Uriah figures only as a royal official.

h. The bronze altar (as the Hebr. gloss correctly notes) installed by Solomon, 1 K 8:64; 9:25, in front of the Temple entrance.

i. Trans. uncertain. lit. 'that will be for me to examine' (the entrails of victims for auguries?).

j. Hebr. text disturbed. • It is not known whether the changes introduced by Ahaz had a ceremonial purpose or whether they were made to provide him with the bronze which he needed (to pay his tribute to the Assyrian king?).

k. 'he removed from the Temple' conj.; 'he modified the Temple' Hebr. • 'the dais for the throne' Gk; Hebr. uncertain. Meaning uncertain. Probably 'the dais' and 'the royal entry' are symbols of sovereignty which Tiglath-Pileser makes his vassal remove.

17 a. Shalmaneser V (726–722) successor of Tiglath-Pileser III.

b. Hebr. has 'to So king of Egypt', but instead of So, unknown in the Egyptian king-lists, it is preferable to read a place-name, Sais in the Delta, residence of the Pharaoh Tefnakht, Hoshea's contemporary.

c. The imprisonment of Hoshea, who had marched against Shalmaneser or had fled from Samaria, took place at the beginning of the siege of Samaria and marked the end of his reign (9th year).

d. Shalmaneser had laid siege to the city in 724, but it held out until the beginning of the reign of Sargon his successor, probably early in 721. The 'ninth year of Hoshea' refers to the beginning of the siege.

e. Not far from Haran, to the extreme north of Mesopotamia.

f. East of Mesopotamia. Israelite settlements here replaced those of the natives whom Tiglath-Pileser had deported. This terrain forms the setting for the Book of Tobit.

g. These observations do not come from one source. For the principal author of the book the grievous fault of Israel is the religious schism, 1 K 12:26–33, an 'original sin' of which every king of Israel is accused in 2 K 17:7[a] and 21–23. A development rich in reminiscences of Dt and the prophets (especially Jr) has been added; it denounces religious compromise and the local shrines, vv. 7[b]–18. A second addition extends the condemnation to Judah, vv. 19–20.

h. Hebr. adds a few words 'and (the practices) of the kings of Israel which they made their own', gloss (to harmonise with v. 21) intended for the beginning of v. 9..

i. vv. 24–28 and 41 offer a simplified view of the resettlement of the Northern Kingdom; they presuppose a wholesale deportation of the Israelite population and fuse several successive colonisations; by the story of vv. 25–28 they explain the persistence of Yahwistic worship in these non-Jewish surroundings. The details of vv. 29–34[a] were added during the Exile. The development in vv. 34[b]–40 reverts to the sins responsible for the ruin of Israel, and would be more appropriately placed in the first part of the chapter.

j. 'I deported from there' Targ.; 'you deported from there' Hebr. 'let him go' versions; 'let them go' Hebr.

Nergal, the people from Hamath an Ashima, ·the Avvites a Nibhaz and a Tartak; 31
while the Sepharvites caused their children to pass through the fire of sacrifice to
Adrammelech and Anammelech, gods of Sepharvaim. ·They worshipped Yahweh 32
1 K 12:31 as well, and they appointed priests out of their own number for the high places,
and these officiated in the shrines on the high places. ·They worshipped Yahweh 33
and served their own gods at the same time, with the rites of the countries from
which they had been deported. ·They still follow their old rites even now. 34

They did not worship Yahweh [k] and did not conform to his statutes or ritual, or
the law or the commandments, which Yahweh had laid down for the sons of Jacob
Gn 32:29 to whom he gave the name Israel. ·Yahweh had made a covenant with them and 35
Ex 19:1a had given them this command, 'You are not to worship alien gods, you are not to
bow down to them or serve them or offer them sacrifices. ·You are to bow down 36
and offer sacrifice only to Yahweh who brought you out of Egypt with great power
and outstretched arm. ·You are to observe the statutes and ritual, the law and the 37
commandments which he has given you in writing and to which you are always to
conform; you are not to worship alien gods. ·Do not forget the covenant which I 38
have made with you, and do not venerate alien gods. ·But venerate Yahweh your 39
God, and he will deliver you from the clutches of all your enemies.' ·But they 40
would not listen and still followed their old rites.

These nationalities, then, worshipped Yahweh and served their idols as well, as 41
did their children; and their children's children still behave today as their ancestors
behaved in the past.

VIII: THE LAST YEARS OF THE KINGDOM OF JUDAH

A: HEZEKIAH, THE PROPHET ISAIAH, ASSYRIA

Introduction to the reign of Hezekiah (716–687)

‖2 Ch 29:1–2 **18** In the third year of Hoshea [a] son of Elah, king of Israel, Hezekiah son of 1
Ahaz became king of Judah. ·He was twenty-five years old when he came to 2
the throne, and he reigned for twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name
was Abijah [b] daughter of Zechariah. ·He did what Yahweh regards as right, just as 3
‖2 Ch 31:1 his ancestor David had done. ·He abolished the high places, broke the pillars, cut 4
Ex 23:24k; 34:13e down the sacred poles [c] and smashed the bronze serpent which Moses had made;
Dt 12:2b
Nb 21:4–9,4d for up to that time the Israelites had offered sacrifices to it; it was called
Ws 16:6 Nehushtan. [d]

He put his trust in Yahweh, God of Israel. No king of Judah after him could be 5
compared with him—nor any of those before him. ·He was devoted to Yahweh, 6
never turning from him, but keeping the commandments which Yahweh had laid
Gn 39:2 down for Moses. ·And so Yahweh was with him, and he was successful in all that 7
he undertook. He rebelled against the king of Assyria [e] and refused to serve him.
He beat the Philistines back to Gaza, laying their territory waste from watchtower 8
to fortified town.

=17:5–6 **The fall of Samaria; recapitulation** [f]

In the fourth year of Hezekiah, which was the seventh year of Hoshea son of Elah, 9
king of Israel, Shalmaneser king of Assyria marched on Samaria and laid siege to
it. ·He captured it after three years. Samaria fell in the sixth year of Hezekiah, 10
which was the ninth year of Hoshea king of Israel. ·The king of Assyria deported 11
the Israelites to Assyria and settled [g] them in Halah on the Habor, a river of Gozan,
17:7–18 and in the cities of the Medes. ·This happened because they had not obeyed the 12
voice of Yahweh their God and had broken his covenant, everything that Moses
servant of Yahweh had laid down. They neither listened to it nor put it into
practice.

Sennacherib's invasion

13 In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, Sennacherib king of Assyria advanced on ‖2 Ch 32 ‖Is 36:1
14 all the fortified towns of Judah and captured them. [h] •Then Hezekiah king of Judah sent this message to the king of Assyria at Lachish, 'I have been at fault. Call off the attack, and I will submit to whatever you impose on me.' The king of Assyria exacted three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold from Hezekiah
15 king of Judah, •and Hezekiah gave him all the silver in the Temple of Yahweh and
16 in the palace treasury. •At which time, Hezekiah stripped the facing from the leaves and jambs of the doors of the Temple of Yahweh, which an earlier [i] king of Judah had put on, and gave it to the king of Assyria. 1 K 6:20–22

The embassy of the cupbearer-in-chief

17 From Lachish the king of Assyria sent the cupbearer-in-chief with a large force to ‖2 Ch 32:9–19 ‖Is 36:2–22
King Hezekiah in Jerusalem. [j] He marched on Jerusalem and, on his arrival, [k] took
up position near the conduit of the upper pool which is on the road to the Fuller's Is 7:3
18 Field. •He summoned the king. The master of the palace, Eliakim son of Hilkiah, 1 K 4:2a
19 Shebnah the secretary and the herald Joah son of Asaph went out to him. •The Is 22:15–25
cupbearer-in-chief said to them, 'Say to Hezekiah,"The great king, the king of
20 Assyria, says this: What makes you so confident? •Do you think empty words are as good as strategy and military strength? Who are you relying on, to dare to rebel
21 against me? •There you are, relying on that broken reed Egypt, [l] which pricks and Is 30:1–7; 31:1–3
pierces the hand of whoever leans on it. That is what Pharaoh king of Egypt is like Ezk 29:6–7
22 to all who rely on him. •You may say to me: We rely on Yahweh our God. But have his high places and altars not been suppressed by Hezekiah who told Judah 18:4
and Jerusalem: Here, in Jerusalem, is the altar before which you must worship?
23 Very well, then, make a wager with my lord the king of Assyria: I will give you two
24 thousand horses if you can find horsemen to ride them. •How could you repel a single one [m] of the least of my master's soldiers? And yet you have relied on Egypt
25 for chariots and horsemen. •And lastly, have I marched on this place to lay it waste without warrant from Yahweh? Yahweh himself said to me: March on this country and lay it waste." '
26 Eliakim, [n] Shebnah and Joah said to the cupbearer-in-chief, 'Please speak to your servants in Aramaic, [o] for we understand it; do not speak to us in the Judaean
27 language within earshot of the people on the ramparts.' •But the cupbearer-in-chief said, 'Do you think my lord sent me here to say these things to your master or to you? On the contrary, it was to the people sitting on the ramparts who, like you, are doomed to eat their own dung and drink their own urine.' [p]

k. Not the non-Yahwists of the previous vv., but the faithless Israelites of vv. 14 seq. • 'his statutes' conj.; 'their statutes' Hebr. • vv. 34[b]–40 are additional, piling up general formulae unrelated to the historical situation.

18 **a.** Chronology uncertain.

b. 'Abijah' 2 Ch 29:1; 'Abi' Hebr.

c. 'sacred poles' versions; 'sacred pole' Hebr. • By thus centralising the cult and declaring war on idolatry Hezekiah prepares the way for the reforms of Josiah, ch. 23, and well deserves the eulogy of vv. 3 and 5–6.

d. The name alludes to the material of which it was made (*nehoshet*, bronze) and to its shape (*nahash*, serpent). It was said to be the image made by Moses in the desert, Nb 21:8–9, and was the object of idolatrous worship, Ws 16:6–7.

e. Either in 711 or, more probably, after Sargon's death in 705.

f. This passage recapitulates the events of 17:5–6, adding a reflection in the spirit of 17:7.

g. 'settled' versions; 'led' Hebr.

h. Sennacherib was son and successor of Sargon; his Palestinian campaign took place in 701. The Annals of his reign record it in detail, confirming the data of vv. 13–16, but saying nothing about his final failure and so containing nothing corresponding to 18:17–19:37. In the biblical text there are two parallel narratives: first, 18:17–19:9[a] with 19:36–37, and second, 19:9[b]–35; these report the events in the same order but in a slightly different way. Conceivably, the two accounts relate to two distinct campaigns waged by Sennacherib, *see* 19:9e. The whole of 18:13–19:37 is repeated with minor variations in Is 36–37.

i. 'an earlier' supplied; by an oversight the text reads 'Hezekiah'.

j. Hebr. inserts 'the commander-in-chief and the chief eunuch' (with verbs agreeing accordingly in vv. 17–18), missing in Is 32:2. These dignitaries do not figure in the rest of the episode.

k. Hebr. reads 'so they marched on Jerusalem and they arrived and they marched and they arrived'.

l. Attempts to form an alliance with Egypt were condemned by Isaiah.

m. 'a single one' conj.; 'a single satrap' Hebr.

n. 'Eliakim' Is 36:11; Hebr. adds 'son of Hilkiah'.

o. Aramaean was coming into use in the Middle East as the language of international relations and was later to be the language commonly spoken in Palestine. In the days of Hezekiah, however, the people only understood 'Judaean', the brand of Hebrew spoken in Jerusalem.

p. Graphic description of the straits to which the beleaguered city will be reduced.

The cupbearer-in-chief then drew himself up and shouted loudly in the Judaean 28
language, 'Listen to the word of the great king, the king of Assyria. •The king says 29
this, "Do not let Hezekiah delude you. He will be powerless to save you from my [q]
clutches. •Do not let Hezekiah persuade you to rely on Yahweh by saying: Yahweh 30
is sure to save us; this city will not fall into the king of Assyria's clutches.
Do not listen to Hezekiah, for the king of Assyria says this: Make peace with me, 31
surrender to me, and every one of you will be free to eat the fruit of his own vine
and of his own fig tree and to drink the water of his own storage-well •until I come 32
and take you away to a country like your own, a land of corn and good wine, a land
of bread and vineyards, a land of oil and honey: and so you will survive and not
die. Do not listen to Hezekiah; he is deluding you when he says: Yahweh will save
us. •Has any god of any nation been able to save his country from the king of 33
Assyria's clutches? •Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the 34
17:5,6,24 gods of Sepharvaim and Hena and Ivvah? [r] Where are the local gods of Samaria? [s]
Did they save Samaria from my clutches? •Of all the local gods, which ones have 35
saved their countries from my clutches, for Yahweh to be able to save Jerusalem
from my clutches?" '

The people, [t] however, kept quiet and said nothing in reply, since the king had 36
given the order, 'You are not to answer him.' •The master of the palace, Eliakim 37
son of Hilkiah, Shebnah the secretary and the herald Joah son of Asaph, with their
clothes torn, went to Hezekiah and reported what the cupbearer-in-chief had said.

‖Is 37:1–7 **The prophet Isaiah is consulted**

1 K 21:27 **19** On hearing this, King Hezekiah tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and went 1
to the Temple of Yahweh. •He sent Eliakim master of the palace, Shebnah 2
the secretary and the elders of the priests, wearing sackcloth, to the prophet Isaiah
son of Amoz. [a] •They said to him, 'This is what Hezekiah says, "Today is a day of 3
suffering, of punishment, of disgrace. Children come to birth, and there is no
strength to bring them forth. [b] •May Yahweh your God hear the words of the 4
cupbearer-in-chief whom his master, the king of Assyria, has sent to insult the
living God, and may Yahweh your God punish the words he has heard. Offer your
Is 4:3c prayer for the remnant still remaining." ' [c]

King Hezekiah's ministers went to Isaiah, •and Isaiah said to them, 'Say to your 5, 6
master, "Yahweh says this: Do not be afraid of the words which you have heard or
Is 10:5–19 the blasphemies which the king of Assyria's minions have uttered against me.
Look, I am going to put a spirit [d] in him and, on the strength of a rumour, he will 7
go back to his own country, and in that country I shall make him fall by the
sword." '

‖Is 37:8–9 **The cupbearer returns to his master**

The cupbearer turned about and rejoined the king of Assyria, who was then 8
attacking Libnah, as the cupbearer had learnt that the king had already left Lachish
on hearing that Tirhakah [e] king of Cush was on his way to attack him. 9

‖2 Ch 32:17 ‖Is 37:9–20 **Sennacherib's letter to Hezekiah**

Sennacherib again sent messengers to Hezekiah, saying, 'Tell Hezekiah king of 10
Judah this, "Do not let your God on whom you are relying deceive you with the
promise: Jerusalem will not fall into the king of Assyria's clutches. •You have 11
learnt by now what the kings of Assyria have done to all the other countries,
17:6 devoting them to destruction. Are you likely to be saved? •Did the gods of the 12
nations whom my ancestors devastated save them—Gozan, Haran, Rezeph and
18:34 the Edenites who were in Tel Basar? [f] •Where is the king of Hamath, the king of 13
Arpad, the king of Lair, of Sepharvaim, of Hena, of Ivvah?" ' [g]

Hezekiah took the letter [h] from the messengers' hands and read it; he then went 14
up to the Temple of Yahweh and spread it out before Yahweh. •Hezekiah said this 15
‖2 Ch 32:30 prayer in the presence of Yahweh, 'Yahweh Sabaoth, God of Israel, enthroned on

the winged creatures, you alone are God of all the kingdoms of the world, you Ex 25:18i
16 made heaven and earth. ·Give ear, Yahweh, and listen; open your eyes, Yahweh,
17 and see! Hear the words of Sennacherib, who has sent to insult the living God. ·It
18 is true, Yahweh, that the kings of Assyria have destroyed the nations,[i] ·they have
thrown their gods on the fire, for these were not gods but human artefacts—wood Is 40:18/ Jr 10:1–16
19 and stone—and hence they have destroyed them. ·But now, Yahweh our God,
save us from his clutches, I beg you, and let all the kingdoms of the world know
that you alone are God, Yahweh.' 1 K 18:24h

Isaiah intervenes ‖Is 37:21–35

20 Isaiah son of Amoz then sent the following message to Hezekiah, 'Yahweh, God
of Israel, says this, "I have heard the prayer which you have addressed to me about
21 Sennacherib king of Assyria." ·Here is the pronouncement which Yahweh has
made about him:[j]

"She despises you, she scorns you,
the virgin daughter of Zion; Lm 2:13
she tosses her head at you,
the daughter of Jerusalem!
22 Whom have you insulted, whom have you blasphemed?
Against whom raised your voice
and lifted your haughty eyes?
Against the Holy One of Israel!
23 Through your envoys you have insulted the Lord,
thinking: With my many chariots
I have climbed the mountain-tops,
the utmost peaks of Lebanon.
I have felled[k]
its mighty cedars,
its finest cypresses,
have reached its furthest recesses,
its forest garden.
24 Yes, I have dug
and drunk of foreign waters;
under the soles of my feet
I have dried up all Egypt's rivers.

25 "Do you hear? Long ago
I prepared this,
from days of old I actually planned it,
now I carry it out.

q. 'my' versions; 'his' Hebr.

r. 'Ivvah', otherwise Avva, 17:24. These Syrian cities had been conquered by Sennacherib's immediate predecessors, 17:24.

s. 'Where are the local gods of Samaria?' versions; Hebr. omits.

t. 'The people' Hebr.; 'they' Is 36:21 and Gk.

19 **a.** Hezekiah consults Isaiah in the way in which earlier kings of Israel and Judah consulted the prophets Elijah and Elisha as their councillors in war, *see* 1:9 seq.; 3:11 seq.; 6:8 seq.; 1 K 22:8 seq.

b. Probably a proverbial expression for a desperate situation.

c. The saving of a 'remnant' of the chosen people is one of the themes of Isaiah's preaching, *see* Is 4:3c and, here, vv. 30–31.

d. Here not a celestial personal spirit, but an imperative inspiration from God.

e. Pharaoh of the XXVth Dynasty, of Ethiopian origin, hence his title 'king of Cush'. He reigned from 690 to 664 and was born in 715 at the earliest. In 701, he was not yet king and was not old enough to command an army. It may be that the Biblical account juxtaposes or combines accounts of two of Sennacherib's campaigns, the first waged in 701 and recorded in his Annals, the second in 689–688 and not mentioned in Assyrian documents. If the campaign of 701 was the only one, the mention here of Tirhakah must be a mistake, attributable to the great military reputation which he later acquired.

f. 'Tel Basar' conj.; 'Telassar' Hebr.

g. Uncertain, *see* Is 37:13.

h. 'letter' Gk-Luc.; 'letters' Hebr.

i. Hebr. adds 'and their countries'.

j. The poem, though Isaian in style, has been retouched by one of the prophet's disciples. Of the three prophecies assembled here, only the third, vv. 32–34, has any direct bearing on the deliverance of 701.

k. In vv. 23–25 the verbs are in the past tense, with the Gk; Hebr. has them in the future.

l. The first Assyrian king to invade Egypt was actually Esarhaddon, Sennacherib's successor.

You were to lay walled cities
in heaps of ruins;
that was why their inhabitants, 26
feeble of hand,
were dismayed and discomfited,
were weak as grass,
were frail as plants,
were like grass of housetop and meadow
under the east wind. [m]
Ps 139:2–3 But whether you stand up [n] or you sit down, 27
whether you go out or you come in, I know it.
Because you have raved against me, 28
and your arrogance has reached my ears,
I shall put a hook through your nostrils
and a muzzle on your lips,
and make you return by the road
by which you came.

1 S 14:10c
Is 37:30–32 **A sign for Hezekiah**

"And this will be the sign [o] for you: 29
this year will be eaten the self-sown grain,
next year what sprouts in the fallow;
but in the third year sow and reap,
plant vineyards and eat their fruit.
The surviving remnant of the House of Judah will bring forth 30
new roots below and fruits above;
for a remnant will issue from Jerusalem, 31
and survivors from Mount Zion.
Dt 4:24f Yahweh Sabaoth's jealous love will accomplish this.

"This, then, is what Yahweh says about the king of Assyria: 32
Is 37:33–35 "He will not enter this city,
will shoot no arrow at it,
confront it with no shield,
throw up no earthwork against it.
By the road by which he came, by that he will return; 33
he will not enter this city, declares Yahweh.
2 S 7:12–17,14e
Ho 1:7+ I shall protect this city and save it 34
for my sake and my servant David's sake."

‖2 Ch 32:21–22
‖Is 37:36–38
Si 48:21 **Sennacherib is punished**

That same night the angel of Yahweh went out and struck down a hundred and 35
eighty-five thousand men in the Assyrian camp. In the early morning when it was time to get up, there they lay, so many corpses. [p]

Sennacherib struck camp and left; he returned home and stayed in Nineveh. 36
One day when he was worshipping in the temple of his god Nisroch, [q] his sons 37
Adrammelech and Sharezer struck him down with the sword and escaped into the territory of Ararat. His son Esarhaddon succeeded him.

‖2 Ch 32:24
‖Is 38:1–8 **The illness and cure of Hezekiah** [a]

20 About then [b] Hezekiah fell ill and was at the point of death. The prophet 1
Isaiah son of Amoz came and said to him, 'Yahweh says this, "Put your affairs in order, for you are going to die, you will not live." ' ·Hezekiah turned his 2
face to the wall and addressed this prayer to Yahweh, ·'Ah, Yahweh, remember, 3
I beg you, that I have behaved faithfully and with sincerity of heart in your presence and done what you regard as right.' And Hezekiah shed many tears.

4 Isaiah had not left the middle court,[c] before the word of Yahweh came to him,
5 'Go back and say to Hezekiah, prince of my people, "Yahweh, the God of your
ancestor David, says this: I have heard your prayer and seen your tears. I shall cure
6 you: in three days' time you will go up to the Temple of Yahweh. ·I shall add
fifteen years to your life. I shall save you and this city from the king of Assyria's
clutches and defend this city for my sake and my servant David's sake." '
7 'Bring a fig poultice,' Isaiah said; they brought one, applied it to the ulcer, and
the king recovered.
8 Hezekiah[d] said to Isaiah, 'What is the sign to tell me that Yahweh will cure me 1 S 14:10c
9 and that I shall be going up to the Temple of Yahweh in three days' time?' ·'Here',
Isaiah replied, 'is the sign from Yahweh that he will do what he has said; would you
10 like the shadow to go forward[e] ten steps, or to go back ten steps?' ·'It is easy for
the shadow to lengthen ten steps,' Hezekiah replied. 'No, I would rather the
11 shadow went back ten steps.' ·The prophet Isaiah then called on Yahweh, who
made the shadow cast by the declining sun on the steps—the steps to Ahaz's roof-
room—go back ten steps.[f]

The Babylonian embassy ‖Is 39

12 At that time the king of Babylon, Merodach-Baladan son of Baladan,[g] sent letters
13 and a gift to Hezekiah, for he had heard of his illness and his recovery.[h] ·Hezekiah ‖2 Ch 32:23
was delighted at this[i] and showed the ambassadors his entire treasury, the silver, ‖2 Ch 32:25–29
gold, spices, precious oil, his armoury too, and everything to be seen in his
storehouses. There was nothing in his palace or in his whole domain that Hezekiah
did not show them.
14 The prophet Isaiah then came to King Hezekiah and asked him, 'What have
these men said, and where have they come from?' Hezekiah answered, 'They have
15 come from a distant country, from Babylon.' ·Isaiah said, 'What have they seen in
your palace?' 'They have seen everything in my palace,' Hezekiah answered.
'There is nothing in my storehouses that I have not shown them.'
16, 17 Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, 'Listen to the word of Yahweh, ·"The days are
coming when everything in your palace, everything that your ancestors have
amassed until now, will be carried off to Babylon. Not a thing will be left," Yahweh
18 says. ·"Sons sprung from you, sons fathered by you, will be abducted to be eunuchs
19 in the palace of the king of Babylon." ' ·Hezekiah said to Isaiah, 'This word of
Yahweh that you announce is reassuring,' for he was thinking, 'And why not? So
long as there is peace and security during my lifetime.'[j]

m. 'and meadow' Is 37:27; 'and burnt' (?) Hebr. • 'under the east wind' *liphneh qadim* conj.; Hebr. *liphneh qamah* 'before growing' (?).

n 'when you stand up' conj.; Hebr. omits, *see* Is 37:28. At end of v., text adds 'and your raving against me', doublet from v. 28; Gk omits.

o. Isaiah addresses Hezekiah. The 'sign' is hard to interpret; for two years it is impossible to sow, and at first they eat whatever springs from the grain dropped during the previous harvest, and after that whatever the neglected land has to offer; but Sennacherib did not stay even one year in Palestine, and deliverance came immediately, v. 35. Alternative explanations; either the prophecy was pronounced on some different occasion, or else its import is a very general one, namely that after lean days prosperity follows.

p. Apparently the Assyrian army was decimated by plague, *see* 2 S 24:15 seq. and Ps 91.

q. 'Nisroch' is unknown, probably a distorted from of Ninurta or Nusku, Assyrian deities. • 'his sons' versions and Is 37:38; Hebr. omits. Sennacherib was in fact assassinated in 681.

20 a. Ch. 20 is repeated in Is 38–39 with an abbreviated text, a somewhat different ordering of vv. and the addition of the song of Hezekiah.

b. Vague time indication. If Hezekiah died in 687, the 15 years of v. 6 would point to a time immediately preceding Sennacherib's invasion, to which the end of the same v. refers. This date seems to be confirmed by that ascribable to Merodach-Baladan's embassy, related to the king's cure in v. 12.

c. 'the court' versions; 'the city' Hebr.

d. vv. 8–11 are additional; Hezekiah has already been cured in v. 7.

e. 'Would you like the shadow to go forward' conj.; 'The shadow has gone forward' Hebr.

f. 'the sun', *see* Is 38:8, Gk, Syr., conj., conditioned by following verb. 'roof-room' Qumran MS Isaiah 38:8. Not therefore a sun-dial, but the stairs leading up to the roof-room built by Ahaz, *see* 23:12m.

g. In Assyrian: Marduch-Apal-Iddina ('Marduch has given me a son'), champion (against Assyria) of Babylonian independence. He reigned in Babylon first from 721 to 710 and again for nine months in 703. It was probably in 703 that he tried to make Hezekiah his ally against Assyria.

h. 'and his recovery' Is 39:1; 'Hezekiah' Hebr.

i. 'was delighted at this' versions, Is 39:2; 'heard' Hebr.

j. Isaiah foretells the sack of Jerusalem and the deportation of the nobility, *see* 24:13 seq. Hezekiah selfishly infers that his own reign at least will be peaceful; but the second half of the v., missing from some Gk MSS, may be a gloss. In this case, Hezekiah's answer would merely have expressed his resignation.

The end of the reign of Hezekiah

‖2 Ch 32:30 Si 48:17 The rest of the history of Hezekiah, all his prowess, how he constructed the pool 20
and the conduit to bring water into the city,[k] is this not recorded in the Book of the
Annals of the Kings of Judah? ·Then Hezekiah fell asleep with his ancestors; his 21
son Manasseh succeeded him.

B: TWO WICKED KINGS

‖2 Ch 33:1–10 **The reign of Manasseh in Judah (687–642)**

21 Manasseh was twelve years old when he came to the throne and he reigned 1
for fifty-five years[a] in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Hephzibah. ·He 2
did what is displeasing to Yahweh, copying the disgusting practices of the nations
whom Yahweh had dispossessed for the Israelites.

18:4 He rebuilt the high places which his father Hezekiah had destroyed, he set up 3
17:16 1 K 16:32–33 altars to Baal and made a sacred pole as Ahab king of Israel had done, he
worshipped the whole array of heaven and served it. ·He built altars[b] in the Temple 4
of Yahweh of which Yahweh had said, 'Jerusalem is where I shall put my name.'
He built altars to the whole array of heaven in the two courts of the Temple of 5
Lv 18:21h Yahweh. ·He caused his son to pass through the fire of sacrifice, he also practised 6
soothsaying and divination and set up mediums and spirit guides. He did very
many more things displeasing to Yahweh, thus provoking his anger. ·He had an 7
image of Asherah[c] carved and placed it inside the Temple of which Yahweh had
1 K 8:16 said to David and his son Solomon, 'In this Temple and in Jerusalem, the city
which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, I shall put my Name forever.
Nor shall I ever again set Israel's footsteps wandering outside the country which I 8
gave to their ancestors, provided they are careful to observe all I have commanded
them as laid down in the whole Law which my servant Moses prescribed for them.'[d]
But they would not listen, and Manasseh misled them into doing worse things than 9
the nations whom Yahweh had destroyed for the Israelites.

Then Yahweh spoke through his servants the prophets as follows, ·'Since Man- 10, 11
1 K 21:26 asseh king of Judah has done these shameful deeds, doing more wicked deeds than
anything which the Amorites did before him, and has led Judah too into sin
with his idols, ·Yahweh, God of Israel, says this, "Look, I shall bring such disas- 12
ter on Jerusalem and Judah as will make the ears of all who hear of it tingle.
Is 34:11 Lm 2:8 Am 7:7–9 Over Jerusalem I shall stretch the same measuring line as over Samaria, the same 13
plumb-rule as for the House of Ahab; I shall scour Jerusalem as someone scours a
dish and, having scoured it, turns it upside down.[e] ·I shall cast away the remnant of 14
my heritage,[f] delivering them into the clutches of their enemies and making them
the prey and booty of all their enemies, ·because they have done what is displeasing 15
to me and have provoked my anger from the day their ancestors came out of Egypt
until now." '

Manasseh shed innocent blood, too, in such great quantity that he flooded 16
Jerusalem from one end to the other,[g] besides the sins into which he led Judah by
doing what is displeasing to Yahweh.

‖2 Ch 33:18–20 The rest of the history of Manasseh, his entire career, the sins he committed, is 17
this not recorded in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah? ·Then Manasseh 18
fell asleep with his ancestors and was buried in the garden of his palace, the Garden
of Uzza; his son Amon succeeded him.

‖2 Ch 33:21–25 **The reign of Amon in Judah (642–640)**

Amon was twenty-two years old when he came to the throne, and he reigned for 19
two years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Meshullemeth daughter of Haruz,
of Jotbah. ·He did what is displeasing to Yahweh, as Manasseh his father had 20
done. ·In every respect he followed the example of his father, serving the idols 21

22 which his father had served, and worshipping them. ·He abandoned Yahweh, God
of his ancestors; he did not follow the way of Yahweh.
23.24 Amon's retinue plotted against the king and killed him in his own palace. ·The
people of the country,[h] however, slaughtered all those who had plotted against
King Amon and proclaimed his son Josiah as his successor.
25 The rest of the history of Amon, his entire career, is this not recorded in the
26 Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah? ·He was buried in his father's tomb[i] in
the Garden of Uzza; his son Josiah succeeded him.

C: JOSIAH AND THE RELIGIOUS REFORM

Introduction to the reign of Josiah (640–609)

‖2 Ch 34:1–2

1 **22** Josiah was eight years old when he came to the throne, and he reigned for
thirty-one years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jedidah daughter of
2 Adaiah, of Bozkath. ·He did what Yahweh regards as right, and in every respect
followed the example of his ancestor David, not deviating from it to right or left.

The Book of the Law discovered

‖2 Ch 34:8–18

3 In the eighteenth year of King Josiah, the king sent the secretary Shaphan son of
4 Azaliah, son of Meshullam to the Temple of Yahweh. ·'Go to Hilkiah the high 12:11–16
priest,' he told him, 'and tell him to melt down[a] the silver contributed to the
Temple of Yahweh and collected by the guardians of the threshold from the
5 people. ·He is to hand it over to the masters of works attached to the Temple of
Yahweh, for them to pay it over to men working on the Temple of Yahweh, to
6 repair the damaged parts of the Temple: ·to the carpenters, builders and masons,
7 and for buying timber and dressed stone for the Temple repairs.' ·The latter were
not required to render account of the money handed over to them, since they were
conscientious in their work.
8 The high priest Hilkiah said to Shaphan the secretary, 'I have found the Book of
the Law in the Temple of Yahweh.'[b] And Hilkiah gave the book to Shaphan, who
9 read it. ·Shaphan the secretary went to the king, reporting furthermore to him as
follows, 'Your servants have melted down the silver which was in the Temple and
have handed it over to the masters of works attached to the Temple of Yahweh.'
10 Then Shaphan the secretary informed the king, 'The priest Hilkiah has given me a
book'; and Shaphan read it aloud in the king's presence.

The prophetess Huldah consulted

‖2 Ch 34:19–28

11, 12 On hearing the words of the Book of the Law he tore his clothes. ·Then the king
gave the following order to the priest Hilkiah, Ahikam son of Shaphan, Achbor
13 son of Micaiah, Shaphan the secretary and Asaiah the king's minister:·'Go and
consult Yahweh on behalf of me and the people about the words of the book that
has been discovered; for Yahweh's furious wrath has been kindled against us

k. The spring of Gihon, 1 K 1:33, was outside the city. Hezekiah had a tunnel dug through the rock to bring the water to the pool called Siloam, Jn 9:7, the reservoir of Si 48:17 and Is 22:1, inside the city walls. This aqueduct replaced an older one which, for some of its length, lay open to the sky, on the eastern slopes of Mt Zion, and brought the water to a different pool, situated below the level of the Pool of Siloam, 18:17; Is 7:3; 22:9; 36:2.

21 **a.** 45 years would be the correct figure.
b. To those non-Yahwist gods.
c. Here an image of the Canaanite goddess Asherah, not one of the sacred poles bearing her name, Ex 34:13e.
d. Reference to Dt to which the whole passage alludes; *see* Dt 17:3; 12:5 and 29 seq.; 18:9–14.
e. 'having' conj.; 'he has' Hebr.
f. After the fall of the Northern Kingdom the inhabitants of Judah are the 'remnant' of the chosen people, *see* Is 4:3c, Yahweh's heritage.
g. According to Jewish tradition Isaiah was one of the victims of this persecution.
h. For the loyalty of the country people to the Davidic dynasty, *see* 11:20; 14:21, and to pure Yahwism, 11:18.
i. 'his father's tomb' Gk; 'his tomb' Hebr.

22 **a.** 'melt down' Gk, *see* v. 9; 'total up' Hebr.
b. This 'Book of the Law', called 'Book of the Covenant' in 23:2,21, was Deuteronomy or at least its legislative section, the prescriptions of which determined the ensuing reform. It was the document of the covenant with Yahweh, possibly edited in connection with Hezekiah's reform, 18:4, and hidden, or lost, or forgotten during the wicked reign of Manasseh. The discovery was not a fraud on the part of the priests in Jerusalem, *see* 23:9.

because our ancestors disobeyed the word of Yahweh by not doing what this book says they ought to have done.'[c]

The priest Hilkiah, Ahikam, Achbor, Shaphan and Asaiah went to the prophet- 14
ess Huldah[d] wife of Shallum son of Tikvah, son of Harhas the keeper of the wardrobe; she lived in Jerusalem in the new town. They put the matter to her, and she replied, 'Yahweh, God of Israel, says this, "To the man who sent you to 15
me say this: •Yahweh says this: I am going to bring disaster on this place and the 16
people who live in it—all the words of the book read by the king of Judah. Because they have abandoned me and sacrificed to other gods, so as to provoke 17
my anger by their every action, my wrath is kindled against this place, and nothing can stop it. •As for the king of Judah who sent you to consult Yahweh, say this to 18
him: As regards the words you have heard[e] . . . •But since your heart has been 19
touched and you have humbled yourself before Yahweh on hearing what I have decreed against this place and the people who live in it, how they will become an object of horror and cursing, and have torn your clothes and wept before me, I too have heard—Yahweh says this. •So look, when I gather you to your ancestors, you 20
will be gathered into your grave[f] in peace; you will not live to see the great disaster that I am going to bring on this place." ' They took this answer to the king.

‖2 Ch 34:29–31 **The solemn reading of the Law and renewal of the covenant**

23 The king then had all the elders of Judah and of Jerusalem summoned to 1
him, •and the king went up to the Temple of Yahweh with all the people of 2
Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, priests, prophets and the whole populace, high and low. In their hearing he read out the entire contents of the Book of the Covenant[g] discovered in the Temple of Yahweh. •The king then, standing on 3
the dais, bound himself by the covenant before Yahweh, to follow Yahweh, to keep his commandments, decrees and laws with all his heart and soul, and to carry out the terms of the covenant as written in this book. All the people pledged their allegiance to the covenant.

‖2 Ch 34:3–5 **Religious reform in Judah**

The king ordered Hilkiah[h] with the priest next in rank[c] and the guardians of the 4
21:3,7 threshold to remove all the cult objects which had been made for Baal, Asherah and the whole array of heaven; he burnt them outside Jerusalem in the fields of the Kidron and had the ashes taken to Bethel. •He exterminated the spurious priests 5
whom the kings of Judah had appointed and who offered sacrifice[d] on the high places, in the towns of Judah and the neighbourhood of Jerusalem; also those who
Dt 17:3 offered sacrifice to Baal, to the sun, the moon, the constellations and the whole
Dt 16:21+ 1 K 14:23 array of heaven.[e] •And from the Temple of Yahweh he took the sacred pole 6
outside Jerusalem to the Kidron valley and in the Kidron valley he burnt it, reducing it to ashes and throwing its ashes on the common burial-ground. •He 7
Dt 23:18–19,19f 1 K 14:24 pulled down the house[f] of the sacred male prostitutes which was in the Temple of Yahweh and where the women wove veils for Asherah.

He brought all the priests in from the towns of Judah, and from Geba to 8
Dt 12 Beersheba he rendered unsanctified the high places where these priests had offered sacrifice.[g] He pulled down the High Place of the Gates,[h] which stood at the gate of Joshua, the governor of the city, to the left of the entry to the city. •The priests of 9
the high places, however, did not officiate at the altar of Yahweh in Jerusalem, although they did share the unleavened bread of their brother-priests.[i] •He ren- 10
Lv 18:21h dered unsanctified Tophet[j] in the Valley of Ben-Hinnom, so that no one could pass his son or daughter through the fire of sacrifice to Molech. •He destroyed the 11
horses which the kings of Judah had dedicated to the sun[k] at the entrance to the Temple of Yahweh, near the apartment of Nathan-Melech the official, in the
21:5 precincts, and he burned the solar chariot.[l] •The king pulled down altars which 12
the kings of Judah had built on the roof[m] and those which Manasseh had built in the two courts of the Temple of Yahweh, and broke them to pieces on the spot,[n]

13 throwing their rubble into the Kidron valley. ·The king rendered unsanctified the high places facing Jerusalem, to the south of the Mount of Olives,[o] which Solomon 1 K 11:7
king of Israel had built for Astarte the Sidonian abomination, for Chemosh the
14 Moabite abomination, and for Milcom the Ammonite abomination. ·He also smashed the sacred pillars, cut down the sacred poles, and covered with human Dt 16:21–22+ 1 K 14:23
bones the places where they had stood.[p]

The reform is extended to the former Northern Kingdom[q]

15 As for the altar which was at Bethel, the high place built by Jeroboam son of Nebat 1 K 12:31–32
who had led Israel into sin, he demolished this altar and this high place as well, in the same way, breaking up its stones[r] and reducing them to powder. The sacred pole he burned.

16 On looking round, Josiah saw the tombs there on the hillside; he had the bones fetched from the tombs and burned them on the altar. This he rendered unsanctified, in accordance with the word of Yahweh which the man of God had proclaimed 1 K 12:33–13:32
when Jeroboam was standing by the altar at the time of the feast. On looking round, Josiah caught sight of the tomb of the man of God[s] who had foretold these
17 things. ·'What is that monument I see?' he asked. The townspeople replied, 'It is
18 the tomb of the man of God who came from Judah and foretold what you have done to the altar.'[t] ·'Let him rest,' the king said, 'and let no one disturb his bones.' So they left his bones untouched, with the bones of the prophet who came from 1 K 13:31
Samaria.[u]

19 Josiah also destroyed all the shrines on the high places which were in the ‖2 Ch 34:6–7
towns of Samaria and which the kings of Israel had built to provoke Yahweh's[v]
20 anger; he treated these places exactly as he had treated the one at Bethel. ·All the priests of the high places who were there he slaughtered on the altars, and on those altars burned human bones. Then he returned to Jerusalem.

The Passover ‖2 Ch 35:1, 18–19

21 The king gave this order to the whole people: 'Celebrate a Passover to Yahweh
22 your God, as prescribed in this Book of the Covenant.' ·No Passover like this had Dt 16:1–8
ever been celebrated since the days when the judges ruled Israel, nor throughout

c. After 'the people', Hebr. adds 'and for all Judah', gloss.

d. A prophetess not mentioned elsewhere.

e. The sentence breaks off. Perhaps supply 'they will be fulfilled'.

f. 'your grave' versions; 'your graves' Hebr. This narrative was composed after Josiah's tragic death, 23:29–30.

23 **a.** *see* 22:8b. Dt is presented as the code of the covenant with Yahweh, Dt 5:2–3; 28:69.

b. Hebr. adds 'the high priest', a post-exilic title.

c. 'the priest' Targ.; 'the priests' Hebr. Next in rank to the high priest, that is. The 'guardians of the threshold', *see* 12:10, were also priests of high rank; *see also* 25:18.

d. 'and who offered sacrifice' Gk, Targ.; 'and he offered sacrifice' Hebr.

e. vv. 4[b]–5 are possibly an addition.

f. 'the house', Gk; 'the houses' Hebr. 'veils' *saddim* conj.; Hebr. *battim* 'houses'.

g. Josiah imposed the law of the unique sanctuary by force; all worship in Judah was to be centralised in Jerusalem, Dt 12. The 'high places', 1 K 3:2, were Yahwistic shrines, condemned only because they contravened this law.

h. 'the high place' Gk; 'the high places' Hebr. Nothing is known about this shrine.

i. The law, Dt 18:6–8, provided that provincial priests who came to Jerusalem should enjoy the same privileges as their 'brothers', the priests of the city. But when all the 'priests of the high places' settled in Jerusalem it is probable that the city priests saw to it that their status was reduced.

j. A place where children were sacrificed as burnt offerings to Molech, Lv 18:21h. The word probably means 'burner' and seems to be described in Is 30:33.

k. A shrine dateable to the reign of Jehoshaphat (870–848), complete with sacred pillar and models of solar horses, has recently been excavated against the cliff-face of the City of David.

l. An isolated and puzzling reference 'at the entrance to' versions; 'so as not to enter' Hebr. 'the precincts' conj. 'chariot' Gk; 'chariots' Hebr.

m. Small altars dedicated to astral deities, Jr 19:13; Zp 1:5. After 'roof', Hebr. adds 'Ahaz's roof-room', a gloss and probably accurate.

n. 'broke them on the spot, *wayyerussem sham* conj.; Hebr. *wayyaras mishsham* 'ran from there'.

o. lit. 'of Oil' Targ.; 'of Perdition' Hebr.

p. To render the sites unsanctified once and for all, *see* vv. 16 and 20. Josiah takes steps, first to destroy the local shrines where a more or less contaminated worship of Yahweh was performed, and secondly to wipe out practices that were completely non-Yahwist, with gods and ritual borrowed from the Canaanites or, in the case of astral cults, imported from Assyria. All this gives a sad picture of the religious situation in Judah; the impression is confirmed by Jeremiah, Zephaniah and Ezekiel.

q. Josiah took advantage of the decline of Assyria to restore the independence of Judah and even to extend his control to the former territory of Israel.

r. 'breaking up its stones' Gk; 'burning the high place' Hebr.

s. 'when Jeroboam . . . man of God' Gk; Hebr. omits.

t. The text adds 'Bethel', a gloss.

u. This prophet was in fact from Bethel, *see* 1 K 13. Here 'Samaria' means not the city but the territory of the Northern Kingdom, of which Bethel formed part. For the same usage, *see* 17:24,28.

v. 'Yahweh's' versions; Hebr. omits.

the entire period of the kings of Israel and the kings of Judah. •The eighteenth year 23
of King Josiah was the only time when such a Passover was celebrated in Yahweh's
honour in Jerusalem.

21:6 Dt 18:11 **Final comments on the religious reform**

Gn 31:19e What is more, the spirit-guides and mediums, the household gods and idols, and all 24
Jg 18:14 the abominations to be seen in the country of Judah and in Jerusalem, were swept
away by Josiah to give effect to the words of the Law written in the book found by
the priest Hilkiah in the Temple of Yahweh. •No king before him turned to 25
Dt 6:5 Yahweh as he did, with all his heart, all his soul, all his strength, in perfect loyalty
to the Law of Moses; nor did any king like him arise again. [w]

Yet Yahweh did not renounce the heat of his great anger which had been aroused 26
against Judah by all the provocations which Manasseh had caused him. •Yahweh 27
said, 'I shall thrust Judah away from me too, as I have already thrust Israel; I shall
cast off Jerusalem, this city which I have chosen, and the Temple of which I have
said: My Name shall be there.'

‖2Ch 35:26–27 **The end of the reign of Josiah**

The rest of the history of Josiah, his entire career, is this not recorded in the Book 28
of the Annals of the Kings of Judah?

‖2 Ch 35:20–24 Jr 22:10–11 In his times, Pharaoh Necho king of Egypt was advancing to meet the king of 29
Assyria [x] at the River Euphrates, and King Josiah went to intercept him; but Necho
killed him at Megiddo in the first encounter. •His retainers carried his body from 30
Megiddo by chariot; they brought him to Jerusalem and buried him in his own
11:20;21:24 ‖2 Ch 36:1 tomb. The people of the country then took Jehoahaz son of Josiah and anointed
him, proclaiming him king in succession to his father.

D: THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM

‖2 Ch 36:2–4 **The reign of Jehoahaz in Judah (609)**

Jehoahaz was twenty-three years old when he came to the throne, and he reigned 31
for three months in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Hamutal daughter of
Jeremiah, [y] of Libnah. •He did what is displeasing to Yahweh, just as his ancestors 32
had done.

25:6 Ezk 6:14 Pharaoh Necho put him in chains at Riblah [z] in Hamath, to prevent his reigning 33
any longer in Jerusalem, [aa] and imposed a levy of a hundred talents of silver and ten
talents of gold on the country. •Pharaoh Necho then made Eliakim son of Josiah 34
king in succession to Josiah his father, and changed his name to Jehoiakim. [bb]
Carrying off Jehoahaz, he took him [cc] to Egypt, where he died.

Jehoiakim paid over the silver and gold to Pharaoh, but first had to tax the 35
people of the country before he could raise the sum which Pharaoh demanded: he
levied the silver and gold to be paid over to Pharaoh Necho from each according to
his means.

‖2 Ch 36:5–7 **The reign of Jehoiakim in Judah (609–598)**

Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he came to the throne, and he reigned 36
for eleven years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Zebidah daughter of Pedaiah
of Rumah. •He did what is displeasing to Yahweh, just as his ancestors had done. 37

24 In his times, Nebuchadnezzar [a] king of Babylon invaded, and Jehoiakim 1
became his vassal for three years, but then rebelled against him a second
time. •So he [b] sent armed bands of Chaldaeans, Aramaeans, Moabites and Am- 2
monites against him; he sent these against Judah to destroy it, in accordance with
the word which Yahweh had spoken through his servants the prophets. •That this 3
should happen to Judah was due entirely to Yahweh's anger; [c] he had resolved to

thrust them away from him because of Manasseh's sins and all that he had done,
4 and also because of the innocent blood which he had shed, flooding Jerusalem
with innocent blood. Yahweh would not forgive. 21:16
5 The rest of the history of Jehoiakim, his entire career, is this not recorded in the ‖2 Ch 36:8
6 Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah? ·Then Jehoiakim fell asleep with his
ancestors; his son Jehoiachin succeeded him.
7 The king of Egypt did not leave his own country again, because the king of
Babylon had conquered everywhere belonging to the king of Egypt, from the
Torrent of Egypt to the River Euphrates. [d]

Introduction to the reign of Jehoiachin (598–597) ‖2 Ch 36:9

8 Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he came to the throne, and he reigned for
three months in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Nehushta daughter of Elnathan
9 of Jerusalem. ·He did what is displeasing to Yahweh, just as his father had done.

The first deportation ‖2 Ch 36:10

10 At that time the troops of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon advanced on Jerusa-
11 lem, and the city was besieged. ·Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon advanced on the
12 city and his generals laid siege to it. ·Jehoiachin king of Judah—he, his mother, his
retinue, his nobles and his officials—then surrendered to the king of Babylon, and
the king of Babylon took them prisoner in the eighth year of his reign. [e]
13 The latter carried off all the treasures of the Temple of Yahweh and the treasures 20:17
of the palace and broke up all the golden furnishings which Solomon king of Israel
14 had made for the sanctuary of Yahweh, as Yahweh had foretold. ·He carried all
Jerusalem off into exile, all the nobles and all the notables, ten thousand of these
were exiled, with all the blacksmiths and metalworkers; only the poorest people in
15 the country were left behind. ·He deported Jehoiachin to Babylon, [f] as also the
king's mother, his officials and the nobility of the country; he made them all leave
16 Jerusalem for exile in Babylon. ·All the men of distinction, seven thousand of
them, the blacksmiths and metalworkers, one thousand of them, all the men
capable of bearing arms, were led off into exile in Babylon by the king of Babylon. [g]
17 The king of Babylon deposed Jehoiachin in favour of his paternal uncle Mattan-
iah, whose name he changed to Zedekiah. [h]

Introduction to the reign of Zedekiah in Judah (598–587) [i] ‖2 Ch 36:11–12 ‖Jr 52:1–3

18 Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he came to the throne, and he reigned
for eleven years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Hamital daughter of Jere-
19 miah, of Libnah. ·He did what is displeasing to Yahweh, just as Jehoiakim had

w. End of the account of the reform and perhaps of the first edition of the Book of the Kings.

x. And not 'against the king of Assyria'. Nechao (609–595), called Necho in the Bible, marched in 609 to the assistance of the last king of Assyria, driven from Babylonia and then from Haran by the Medes and Babylonians. Josiah wanted to prevent the joining of the Assyrians with the Egyptians since he calculated that the kingdom of Judah would profit from the final ruin of Assyria.

y. Not the prophet Jeremiah.

z. Necho was returning from his northern expedition, v. 29; the collapse of Assyria had left him master of Syria and Palestine.

aa. 'to prevent . . . Jerusalem' *qere* and versions, *see* 2 Ch 36:3; 'when he was king in Jerusalem' *ketib*. 'ten' Gk-Luc. and Syr.; 'a hundred and ten' other Gk MSS; Hebr. accidentally omits.

bb. The name is almost the same ('whom Yahweh sets firm' as opposed to 'whom God sets firm'). It was either a regnal name, *see* 14:21c, or one denoting vassalage, *see* 24:17.

cc. 'he took him' Gk; 'he went' Hebr.

24 a. Nabu-Kudur-Usur, founder of the Neo-Babylonian, or Chaldaean, empire which succeeded that of Assyria, ruled from 605 to 562. His first expedition to Palestine and Jehoiakim's surrender took place in 604, the revolt of Judah in 601.

b. 'he' (i.e. Nebuchadnezzar) Gk; 'Yahweh' Hebr.

c. 'due to the anger' versions and v. 20 'at the command' Hebr.

d. The defeat of the Egyptians at Carchemish in 605 had made Nebuchadnezzar master of Syria and Palestine.

e. To be precise, on 16 March 597, according to a Babylonian chronicle. This chronicle and Jr 52:28 date the conquest to the seventh year of Nebuchadnezzar, not reckoning the part-year of his accession, *see* also 2 K 25:8.

f. He was to remain there for 37 years until Nebuchadnezzar's death, *see* ch. 25:27; his captivity was not harsh.

g. vv. 13–14 and 15–16 are doublets slightly differing in their way of estimating the extent of the first deportation.

h. Mattaniah; 'Gift-of-Yahweh'; Zedekiah (more exactly Zedqiyyahu):: 'Yahweh-is-my-justice'. *See* 23:34bb.

i. The narrative of 24:18–25:30, used again as a conclusion to Jr (ch. 52). 25:1–12 is also made use of in Jr 39:1–10 (with an addition in v. 3), though possibly both passages are from a common source.

done. ·That this should happen to Jerusalem and Judah was due to Yahweh's 20
22:17;23:26–27 anger, resulting in his casting them from his presence. Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.

Jr 52:3–11 **The siege of Jerusalem**

‖2 Ch 36:13 ‖Jr 39:1–7 25 In the ninth year of his reign,[a] in the tenth month, on the tenth day of the 1
month, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon advanced on Jerusalem with his entire army; he pitched camp in front of the city and threw up earthworks round it. The city lay under siege till the eleventh year of King Zedekiah. ·In the fourth 2, 3
month,[b] on the ninth day of the month, when famine was raging in the city and there was no food for the populace, ·a breach was made in the city wall. The king 4
then made his escape[c] under cover of dark, with all the fighting men, by way of the gate between the two walls, which is near the king's garden—the Chaldaeans had surrounded the city—and made his way towards the Arabah.[d] ·The Chaldaean 5
troops pursued the king and caught up with him in the Plains of Jericho, where all his troops deserted. ·The Chaldaeans captured the king and took him to the king 6
23:33 Ezk 6:14 of Babylon at Riblah, who passed sentence on him.[e] ·He had Zedekiah's sons 7
slaughtered before his eyes, then put out Zedekiah's eyes and, loading him with chains, carried him off to Babylon.

‖Jr 39:8–10; 52:12–27 **The sack of Jerusalem. The second deportation**

In the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month—it was in the nineteenth year[f] 8
of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon—Nebuzaradan commander of the guard, a
‖2 Ch 36:19 member of the king of Babylon's staff, entered Jerusalem. ·He burned down the 9
Temple of Yahweh, the royal palace and all the houses in Jerusalem.[g] ·The Chal- 10
Ne 1:3d daean troops who accompanied the commander of the guard demolished the walls surrounding Jerusalem. ·Nebuzaradan commander of the guard deported 11
the remainder of the population left in the city, the deserters who had gone over to the king of Babylon, and the rest of the common people. ·But the commander 12
of the guard left some of the poor country people behind as vineyard workers and ploughmen.

1 K 7:15–39 16:17 The Chaldaeans broke up the bronze pillars from the Temple of Yahweh, the 13
wheeled stands and the bronze Sea, which were in the Temple of Yahweh, and
‖2 Ch 36:18 1 K 7:45, 50 took the bronze away to Babylon. ·They also took the ash containers, the scoops, 14
the knives, the incense boats, and all the bronze furnishings used in worship. ·The 15
commander of the guard also took the censers and the sprinkling bowls, everything made of gold and everything made of silver. ·As regards the two pillars, the one 16
Sea and the wheeled stands, which Solomon had made for the Temple of Yahweh, there was no reckoning the weight of bronze in all these objects. ·The height of 17
one pillar was eighteen cubits, and on it stood a capital of bronze, the height of the capital being five cubits; round the capital were filigree and pomegranates, all in bronze. So also for the second pillar.[h]

23:4 The commander of the guard took prisoner Seraiah the chief priest, Zephaniah 18
the priest next in rank, and the three guardians of the threshold. ·In the city he 19
took prisoner an official who was in command of the fighting men, five of the king's personal friends who were discovered in the city, the secretary to the army commander, responsible for military conscription, and sixty men of distinction discovered in the city. ·Nebuzaradan commander of the guard took these men and 20
brought them to the king of Babylon at Riblah, ·and at Riblah in the territory of 21
Hamath the king of Babylon had them put to death. Thus Judah was deported from its country.

Gedaliah governor of Judah[i]

For the people remaining in the country of Judah whom Nebuchadnezzar king of 22
Jr 40:5,7–41:18 Babylon had left behind, he appointed Gedaliah son of Ahikam, son of Shaphan as governor. ·When the military leaders and their men all heard that the king of 23

Babylon had appointed Gedaliah as governor, they went to him at Mizpah: Ishmael
son of Nethaniah, Johanan son of Kareah, Seraiah son of Tanhumeth the Neto-
24 phathite, Jaazaniah the Maacathite, they and their men. •To them and to their men
Gedaliah swore an oath. 'Do not be afraid of the Chaldaeans,'[j] he said, 'stay in the
country, serve the king of Babylon, and all will go well with you.'
25 But in the seventh month, Ishmael son of Nethaniah, son of Elishama, who was
of royal descent, and ten men with him, came and murdered Gedaliah, as well as
26 the Judaeans and Chaldaeans who were with him at Mizpah. •Then all the people, Jr 43:4–7
high and low, with the military leaders, set off and went to Egypt, being afraid of
the Chaldaeans.

King Jehoiachin pardoned ‖Jr 52:31–34

27 In the thirty-seventh year of the exile of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the twelfth
month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, Evil-Merodach[k] king of Babylon,
in the year he came to the throne, pardoned Jehoiachin king of Judah and released
28 him[l] from prison. •He treated him with kindness and allotted him a seat above
29 those of the other kings who were with him in Babylon. •So Jehoiachin laid aside
30 his prisoner's garb, and for the rest of his life always ate at the king's table. •And
his upkeep was permanently ensured by the king, day after day, for the rest of
his life.

25 **a.** The reign of Zedekiah. End of December 589.

b. 'In the fourth month' Jr 52:6; Hebr. omits. June–July 587.

c. 'The king then made his escape' Gk-Luc.; Hebr. omits.

d. The 'two walls': presumably an inner line of defence dating from the early years of the monarchy and an outer one built by Hezekiah. The king's garden lay outside, in the valley of the Kidron. The Arabah is the desolate valley of the River Jordan.

e. As a rebellious vassal. • 'who passed' versions, *see* Jr 52:9. Hebr. has plural, as in v. 7.

f. Still in the eleventh year of Zedekiah, v. 2, in 587. • Instead of 'nineteenth year', Jr 52:59 has 'eighteenth', *see* 2 K 24:12e for an explanation of the discrepancy.

g. At the end, Hebr. adds 'he burnt every magnate's house', gloss.

h. 'five cubits' Jr. 52:22, *see* 1 K 7:16; 'three cubits' Hebr. The last words are either intended as a gloss on 'pomegranates', or the remains of a more detailed description, *see* Jr 52:23.

i. The two passages, vv. 22–26 and 27–30, are appendices added during the Exile.

j. 'of the Chaldaeans' Gk-Luc. and Syr.; 'of the servants of the Chaldaeans' Hebr.

k. Evil-Merodach, son and successor of Nebuchadnezzar, came to the throne in 562, which was the 37th year of Jehoiachin's captivity.

l. 'and released him' Jr 52:31; Hebr. omits.

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOKS OF CHRONICLES, EZRA AND NEHEMIAH

§1 The Old Testament contains a second group of historical books which in large measure duplicate but ultimately extend the 'Deuteronomic' history beginning with Joshua and ending with Kings. These are the two Books of Chronicles, then the Book of Ezra and, according to generally received opinion, the Book of Nehemiah. Originally, the two Books of Chronicles were one book and those of Ezra and Nehemiah were part of the same collection, the whole being the work of one author. That the same style and the same fundamental ideas are found throughout, and that the closing verses of 2 Ch 36 are repeated at the beginning of Ezr 1, are evidence that the whole was composed as one work.

§2 The Books of Chronicles

The Books of Chronicles (to give them their Hebrew title; the Greek Bible and the Vulgate call them the Books of Paralipomena, of 'things left out' therefore 'complementary' books) are a work of post-exilic Judaism, in a period when the nation, despite its political dependence, enjoyed a measure of self-rule by favour of its eastern overlords. The priesthood was its guide, the Law its charter. The Temple and its ritual were the centre of national life. But this framework of law and ritual was quickened by a current of personal devotion, by wisdom doctrines, by the memory of past glories and failures, and by faith in the promises of the prophets.

The author of Chronicles, a Levite of Jerusalem, essentially belongs in such surroundings. He writes after Ezra and Nehemiah, considerably later, since he is in a position to make his own synthesis of sources concerning them. The beginning of the Greek period, before 300 BC, seems to be the most probable date. The work was later expanded by one or more hands, e.g. the genealogical tables in 1 Ch 2–9, additional lists of names, probably those of David's supporters, 1 Ch 12, those of the priests and Levites, 1 Ch 15, and the long addition, 23:3–27:34, listing David's cultic and administrative staff.

These additions are consistent with the Chronicler's dominant preoccupations. The Chronicler shows great interest in the Temple. Throughout his work the clergy play a leading part, not merely the priests and Levites (as in

Deuteronomy and the Priestly sections of the Pentateuch) but also the inferior clergy, the gate-keepers and cantors who are henceforth associated with the Levites. The sacred character of the clergy extends to the laity by their participation in communion sacrifices to which the Chronicler restores their primitive importance. This community of the faithful is restricted not merely to the citizens of Judah; despite the Northern Kingdom's apostasy, of which he says as little as possible, he contemplates the union of the twelve tribes under the sceptre of David; undismayed by the times in which he lives, he confidently awaits the ingathering of all the children of Israel. Not even the gentiles are excluded from praying in the Temple. For him 'Israel' means the community of God's faithful people with whom God made a covenant long ago, renewing this sacred covenant in the person of David. The kingdom of God on earth having achieved its highest form in the Davidic theocracy, the community must live in the spirit of David, always alert to the need for reform, that is to say, a return to tradition, if God is to continue his favour and fulfil his promises.

The permanent centre of interest throughout this long history is the Temple in Jerusalem and the worship offered there – from the preparations made by David to the restoration achieved by the community on its return from the Babylonian Captivity.

These dominant ideas of the Chronicler account for the form his work has taken. The earlier chapters, 1 Ch 1–8, give genealogical lists, principally concerned with the tribe of Judah and the descent of David. Ch. 9:2–34 lists those first to resettle Jerusalem after the Exile. This serves to introduce the history of David with which the remainder of the first book is concerned, 9:35–ch. 29. The hostility of Saul, David's sin with Bathsheba, the domestic disputes and dissensions, are all omitted; prominence, however, is given to the prophecy of Nathan, ch.17, and to religious activities, such as the transportation of the ark, the organisation of worship in Jerusalem, ch. 13; 15–16, and the preparations for the building of the Temple, ch. 21–29. David is responsible for the design, the collection of materials, the detailed assignment of clerical functions, leaving the task of putting all this into effect to his son Solomon. In the history of Solomon, 2 Ch 1–9, most of the space is devoted to the building of the Temple, the king's prayer at its dedication and the promises God makes in answer to that prayer. For the period following the schism the Chronicler treats only of the kingdom of Judah and the dynasty of David. The kings are assessed according to their fidelity or infidelity to the principles of the covenant and to the example set by David, 2 Ch 10–36. Religious infidelity is followed by reforms, of which the most radical are those of Hezekiah and Josiah, but the latter is succeeded by kings whose evil ways lead to disaster, and the Books of Chronicles end with Cyrus' permission to rebuild the Temple. The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah then continue the story.

The sources of Chronicles are, in the first place, the canonical books: Genesis and Numbers for the opening genealogies, Samuel and Kings for much of the rest. The author treats his sources with freedom, adding to them, subtracting, selecting what suits his purpose. Though we are able to identify these main sources, the author never explicitly mentions them. On the other hand, he appeals to certain other works like the 'Books' of the

kings of Israel, or of the kings of Israel and Judah, a *midrash* on the Books of Kings, the 'words' or the 'visions' of such and such a prophet. These writings are not extant and their contents and mutual relationships are disputed. Possibly they were accounts of the various reigns from the point of view of the part the prophets played in them. It is unlikely that the Chronicler also made use of oral traditions.

Merely because the Chronicler has used sources which, though unknown to us, may well have been trustworthy, there is no *a priori* reason to suspect what he adds to our canonical books. Each case must be judged on its own merits, and recent research has vindicated Chronicles on several points against many commentators who in the past have held a low opinion of the books. Nevertheless, there are times when the Chronicler gives facts at variance with the account offered by Samuel and Kings, or when he even deliberately modifies these accounts. This would be unforgivable in a historian of today whose job is to narrate and explain the sequence of events. But the author of Chronicles has no such intention. He is not a historian; he is a theologian. Contemplating the long history of Israel and particularly the Davidic episode, he paints a picture of the ideal kingdom. Past, present and future merge into one; into the age of David he projects a ritual organisation of his own, omitting all that might diminish his hero, David. Apart from certain fresh items of information, the value of which must be independently tested, the work is not so much a record of the past as a picture of the conditions and interests of the author's own period.

For he is writing for his contemporaries. He reminds them that the nation can truly live only if it remains faithful to God, that is to say, obedient to his Law, and worships in a spirit of sincere devotion. He wants his people to be a devout community for whom the promises made to David can come true.

§3 The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah

The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah formed only one 'Book of Esdras' in the Hebrew Bible and Septuagint. As the latter retained the apocryphal Greek Book of Esdras and accorded it pride of place (Esdras I), the Book of Ezra-Nehemiah is known in the LXX as Esdras II. In the Christian period, it was divided into two, and this usage was followed by the Vulgate, in which Esdras I is called Ezra and Esdras II is called Nehemiah, the apocryphal Greek Book of Esdras being known as Esdras III. In the present edition, the books of Ezra and Nehemiah are named after their respective leading characters, and apocryphal Esdras, when referred to in the notes, is called 1 Esd. For the relevance of 1 Esd to the canonical books, see Ezr 1:6g.

The Books of Ezra and of Nehemiah are, as we have said, a continuation of the Chronicler's work. After the fifty years of Exile, on which he is silent, he resumes his history with the edict of Cyrus, 538 BC, permitting the Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the Temple. The return begins forthwith, but the work of rebuilding is halted by the hostility of the Samaritans and not resumed until the reign of Darius I. The Temple is finished in 515. For the next fifty years attempts to restore the walls of Jerusalem are hindered, again by the Samaritans, Ezr 1–6. Under Artaxerxes, the scribe Ezra, representative for Jewish affairs at the Persian court, arrives in Jerusalem with

a new contingent of returning exiles, bringing with him an official authorisation to impose the Mosaic Law, now approved by the king. He has to take severe measures against those Jews already married to foreigners, Ezr 7–10. Next, Nehemiah, cupbearer to Artaxerxes, secures the king's commission to go to Jerusalem and rebuild the walls. Despite opposition, the work is soon finished and the city once more inhabited, Ne 1:1–7:72[a]. Meanwhile, Nehemiah has been appointed high commissioner. With all solemnity the Law is read to the people by Ezra, the feast of Shelters is celebrated, the people confess their sins and promise to observe the Law, Ne 7:72[b]–10:40. Then follow various lists of names, a few supplementary measures, and the dedication of the city walls, 11:1–13:3. After again visiting Persia, Nehemiah returns; on his second mission he finds it necessary to deal with certain irregularities which have already crept into the community, Ne 13:4–31.

This summary demonstrates the importance of these books for the history of the Jewish Restoration after the Exile. The first chapters of Ezra complement the information supplied by Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. The two books are the only source we have on the work of Ezra and Nehemiah. Their date is earlier than that of Chronicles, and, most important, they use, and quote verbatim, documents that are contemporary with the events recounted; lists of returned exiles, of the population of Jerusalem, acts of the kings of Persia, correspondence with the chancery, and in particular Ezra's report of his own mission and Nehemiah's apologetic memoir.

But for all this wealth of source material the interpretation of Ezra and Nehemiah is extremely difficult, because the documents are arranged in a baffling order. The list of immigrants is given twice, Ezr 2 and Ne 7; in Ezr 4:6–6:18, written in Aramaic, the events that took place under Darius are narrated after the events of the reigns of Xerxes and Artaxerxes, though in fact they occurred half a century before. Writings composed by Ezra and Nehemiah themselves have been dismembered and recombined. The dates given in those writings enable us to restore Ezra's report thus: Ezr 7:1–8:36; Ne 7:72[b]–8:18; Ezr 9:1–10:44; Ne 9:1–37.

Ezra's report has however been rewritten by the Chronicler, who has put certain passages into the third person; various additions have also been made: the list of the guilty in Ezr 10:18, 20–44, and the prayers in Ezr 9:6–15 and Ne 9:6–37. Nehemiah's memoir consists of the following passages: Ne 1–2; 3:33–7:5; 12:27–13:31. Into it, the Chronicler has inserted a document relating to the rebuilding of the city walls, 3:1–32. The list of the first returning exiles, 7:6–72[a], is taken from Ezr 2. Ch. 10 is another document from the archives, recording the promise made by the community at the time of Nehemiah's second mission, ch. 13. Ch. 11–12 consist of various lists to do with the repopulation of Jerusalem, the resettlement of the countryside, also priestly and Levitical families after the Exile.

Apparently the Chronicler wanted to proceed by a series of broad surveys. The main subject of Ezra 1–6 is the rebuilding of the Temple under Darius; the successive returns from Exile are all dealt with together; the figure of Sheshbazzar is blocked out to throw Zerubbabel into relief; various hostile activities of the Samaritans are narrated in adjacent sections. In the following chapters the books represent Ezra and Nehemiah as working side by side for the one great purpose.

Such methods of composition create grave problems for the historian, the most vexed and difficult being that of the order and dating of events within the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah. If we accept the book's own sequence, Ezra reached Jerusalem in 458, the seventh year of Artaxerxes I, Ezr 7:8. Nehemiah joined him in 445, the twentieth year of the same reign, Ne 2:1. He stayed for twelve years, Ne 13:6; it was therefore in 433 that he returned to Persia for an unstated period; he went back to Palestine before the death of Artaxerxes I, i.e. 423. This traditional order of events is upheld by able commentators who, however, restrict the mission of Ezra to a single year, accepting the precise figures given in the book, and make Ezra leave before the arrival of Nehemiah. Others reverse the order, judging that the work done by Ezra could have been done only after Nehemiah had finished his. In this hypothesis, the dates assigned to Ezra relate to the reign of Artaxerxes II, not, as for Nehemiah, to that of Artaxerxes I; Ezra did not therefore reach Palestine until 398. A third and recent school admits that Ezra followed Nehemiah but objects that the text gives no indication that two different reigns are being referred to; it therefore places the mission of Ezra between the two missions of Nehemiah. This theory requires a textual emendation of Ezr 7:8; Ezra arrives not in the seventh but in the thirty-seventh year of Artaxerxes, i.e. in 428.

Any one of these solutions has good arguments to support it and each encounters difficulties; the question is still open. One thing is certain: Nehemiah was active in Jerusalem from 445 to 433 BC.

In any case, so far as a religious appreciation of the books is concerned, the problem is of minor importance. The author's intention is to present a composite, though not misleading, picture of the Jewish Restoration; and to assess the significance of this event it is more important to appreciate the ideas inspiring it than to discover the precise sequence of its various stages. Taking advantage of the liberal religious policy that the Achaemenids applied in their empire, the Jews return to their Promised Land, restore the ancient worship, rebuild the Temple and the city walls, and live as a community governed by men of their own race and regulated by the Law of Moses. All that the imperial power requires is loyalty, no great price to pay when that power shows such respect for Jewish customs. This is an event of great importance—nothing less than the birth of Judaism, prepared by long meditation in Exile and assisted by the actions of leaders raised up by God.

After Zerubbabel, who rebuilt the Temple (but on whom the Chronicler does not confer the messianic titles awarded by Haggai and Zechariah, Hg 2:23; Zc 6:12seq.), come Ezra and Nehemiah as pioneers of this restoration. The real father of Judaism is Ezra with his three dominant conceptions: the chosen race, the Temple, the Law. If his reforming measures seem severe and his isolationism narrow, it is because his zeal was great and the need to safeguard the infant community urgent. He is the pattern of all scribes, the great and growing hero of Judaic tradition. Nehemiah, though inspired by the same ideals, acts in a different sphere, restoring and repopulating Jerusalem, and making it possible and attractive for its citizens to lead a national life. The record he has left us, more intimate than that of Ezra, reveals a vivid and human personality, ungrudging of effort yet prudent and deliberate, trusting in God whose help he seeks in frequent prayer. Behind

him he left a noble memory and Ben Sira sings the praises of the man who 'rebuilt our walls which lay in ruins', Si 49:13.

It is not surprising that in this restored community, gathered round the Temple and obedient to the Law, the Chronicler sees a realisation of the ideal God-governed society for which he has pleaded in the Books of Chronicles. He well knows that the realisation is not perfect, that the future has something better in store, but here he is more dependent on documents, which he reproduces, than he was in the Chronicles. He retains their exclusivist tone prompted by circumstances, and respects their silence—no doubt for reasons of political prudence—about their messianic aspirations. He writes midway through the fourth and third centuries BC, a time of which we know little and during which the community in Jerusalem, withdrawn into itself, grew quietly to maturity and deepened its spirituality.

THE BOOKS OF
CHRONICLES
THE FIRST BOOK OF CHRONICLES

I: THE GENEALOGIES[a]

A: FROM ADAM TO ISRAEL[b]

‖Gn 5 **The origin of the three ethnic groups**

1 Adam, Seth, Enosh, ·Kenan, Mahalalel, Jared, ·Enoch, Methuselah, 1, 2, 3
Lamech, ·Noah, Shem, Ham and Japheth. 4

‖Gn 10:2–4 **The Japhethites**

Sons of Japheth: Gomer, Magog, the Medes, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, Tiras. 5
Sons of Gomer: Ashkenaz, Riphath, Togarmah. ·Sons of Javan: Elishah, Tar- 6, 7
shish, the Kittim, the Dananites.

‖Gn 10:6–8 **The Hamites**

Sons of Ham: Cush, Mizraim, Put, Canaan. 8
Sons of Cush: Seba, Havilah, Sabta, Raama, Sabeteca. Sons of Raamah: Sheba, 9
Dedan. ·Cush fathered Nimrod, the first mighty warrior on earth. 10
‖Gn 10:13–18 Mizraim fathered the people of Lud, of Anam, of Lehab, of Naphtuh, ·of 11, 12
Pathros, Casluh and Caphtor, from which the Philistines came. ·Canaan fathered 13
Sidon, his first-born, then Heth, ·and the Jebusites, the Amorites, Girgashites, 14
Hivites, Arkites, Sinites, ·Arvadites, Zemarites, Hamathites. 15, 16

‖Gn 10:22–29 **The Semites**

Sons of Shem: Elam, Asshur, Arpachshad, Lud, Aram. 17
Sons of Aram: Uz, Hul, Gether and Meshech.
Arpachshad fathered Shelah, and Shelah fathered Eber. ·To Eber were born 18, 19
two sons; the first was called Peleg, because it was in his time that the earth was divided into districts, and his brother was called Joktan.
Joktan fathered Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah, ·Hadoram, Uzal, 20, 21
Diklah, ·Ebal, Abimael, Sheba, ·Ophir, Havilah, Jobab; all these are sons of 22, 23
Joktan.

‖Gn 11:10–26 **From Shem to Abraham**

Arpachshad, Shelah, ·Eber, Peleg, Reu, ·Serug, Nahor, Terah, ·Abram, that is, 24, 25, 26, 27
Abraham. ·Sons of Abraham: Isaac and Ishmael. ·These are their descendants: 28, 29

The Ishmaelites

‖Gn 25:13–16 The first-born of Ishmael, Nebaioth; then Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam, ·Mishma, 30
Dumah, Massa, Hada, Tema, ·Jetur, Naphish and Kedemah. These are the sons 31
of Ishmael.

32 Sons of Keturah, Abraham's concubine: she gave birth to Zimran, Jokshan, ‖Gn 25:2–4
33 Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah. Sons of Jokshan: Sheba and Dedan. ·Sons of Midian: Ephah, Epher, Hanoch, Abida, Eldaah. All these are sons of Keturah.

Isaac and Esau

34 Abraham fathered Isaac. Sons of Isaac: Esau and Israel. ‖Gn 25:19
35, 36 Sons of Esau: Eliphaz, Reuel, Jeush, Jalam and Korah. ·Sons of Eliphaz: ‖Gn 36:10–13
37 Teman, Omar, Zephi, Gatam, Kenaz, Timna, Amalek. ·Sons of Reuel: Nahath, ‖Gn 36:15–17
Zerah, Shammah, Mizzah.

Seir

‖Gn 36:20–28

38, 39 Sons of Seir: Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, Dishon, Ezer, Dishan. ·Sons of Lotan:
40 Hori and Homam. Sister of Lotan: Timma. ·Sons of Shobal: Alian, Manahath,
41 Ebal, Shephi, Onam. Sons of Zibeon: Aiah and Anah. ·Son of Anah: Dishon.
42 Sons of Dishon: Hamran, Eshban, Ithran, Cheran. ·Sons of Ezer: Bilhan, Zaavan,
Jaakan. Sons of Dishan: Uz and Aran.

The kings of Edom

‖Gn 36:31–39

43 These are the kings who ruled in Edom before an Israelite king ruled: Bela son of
44 Beor; his city was called Dinhabah. ·Bela died and Jobab son of Zerah, from
45 Bozrah, succeeded. ·Jobab died and Husham from the territory of the Temanites
46 succeeded. ·Husham died and Hada son of Bedad succeeded; he defeated the
47 Midianites in Moab, and his city was called Avith. ·Hadad died and Samlah of
48 Masrekah succeeded. ·Samlah died and Shaul of Rehoboth-ha-Nahar succeeded.
49, 50 Shaul died and Baal-Hanan son of Achbor succeeded. ·Baal-Hanan died and
Hadad succeeded. His city was called Pai; his wife's name was Mehetabel daughter
of Matred, daughter of Mezahab.

The chiefs of Edom

‖Gn 36:40–43

51 Hadad died, and then there were chiefs in Edom: Chief Timna, Chief Aliah, Chief
52, 53 Jetheth, ·Chief Oholibamah, Chief Elah, Chief Pinon, ·Chief Kenaz, Chief Te-
54 man, Chief Mibzar, ·Chief Magdiel, Chief Iram. These were the chiefs of Edom.

B: JUDAH

The sons of Israel

‖Gn 35:23–26

1 2 These are the sons of Israel: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and
2 Zebulun. ·Dan, Joseph, and Benjamin, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher.

The descendants of Judah [a]

‖Gn 38:2–5

3 Sons of Judah: Er, Onan and Shelah. These three were born to him by Bath-shua
the Canaanite woman. Er, Judah's first-born, displeased Yahweh who put him to ‖Gn 38:7
4 death. ·Tamar, Judah's daughter-in-law, bore him Perez and Zerah. Judah had ‖Gn 38:27–30
five sons in all.

1 **a.** Ch. 1–9 consist almost entirely of genealogical lists. The genealogies of Gn 1–12 issued in Abraham; those of 1 Ch issue in Saul, and thus prepare for David, the Chronicler's main hero. Compare the genealogies of Christ, Mt 1:1–17; Lk 3:23–28. The Chronicler makes use of the Pentateuch in its final form, as also of the earlier historical books; to these sources, he adds information, probably authentic, from other sources available to him. Additional material has also been contributed by later editors. As elsewhere in the Bible, these genealogies often indicate only vague links of relationship or vicinity. Geographical names are treated as personal ones. • Hebr. and versions show numerous variants, not noted in detail here.

b. Abridging the long treatments of Gn 5 and 11 and copying substantial passages from Gn 10, the Chronicler omits all those peoples descended from the first human couple, to concentrate on the Semite Abraham and then his sons Isaac and Jacob.

2 **a.** The Chronicler begins with Judah, the tribe of David, vv. 3–17. The remainder of the chapter consists of lists from various sources (two genealogies of Caleb) concerning groups integrated into Judah. They may well be later additions.

‖Gn 46:12 Sons of Perez: Hezron and Hamul. 5
‖1 K 5:11 Sons of Zerah: Zimri, Ethan, Heman, Calcol and Dara, five in all. 6
Jos 7 Sons of Carmi: Achar, who brought trouble on Israel by being unfaithful to the curse of destruction. 7
Sons of Ethan: Azariah. 8

The ancestors of David

Sons of Hezron: there were born to him Jerahmeel, Ram, Chelubai.[b] 9
‖Nb 1:7 ‖Rt 4:19–22 Ram fathered Amminadab, Amminadab fathered Nahshon chief of the sons of Judah, ·Nahshon fathered Salma, Salma fathered Boaz. ·Boaz fathered Obed, Obed fathered Jesse. ·Jesse fathered Eliab, his first-born, Abinadab second, Shimea third, ·Nethanel fourth, Raddai fifth, ·Ozem sixth, David seventh. ·Their sisters were Zeruiah and Abigail. Sons of Zeruiah: Abishai, Joab and Asahel: three. ·Abigail gave birth to Amasa; father of Amasa was Jether the Ishmaelite. 10, 11, 12, 13, 14–16, 17

Jos 14:6b **Caleb**

Caleb son of Hezron fathered Jerioth by Azubah his wife;[c] these are her sons: Jesher, Shobab and Ardon. ·Azubah died, and Caleb married Ephrath, who bore him Hur. ·Hur fathered Uri, Uri fathered Bezalel. 18, 19, 20
Afterwards, Hezron married the daughter of Machir, father of Gilead; he married her when he was sixty years old and she bore him Segub. ·Segub fathered Jair who held twenty-three towns in the territory of Gilead. ·From them, however, Geshur and Aram took the Encampments of Jair and Kenath with its dependencies: sixty towns. All these used to belong to[d] the sons of Machir father of Gilead. 21, 22, 23
After Hezron's death, Caleb married Ephrathah,[e] wife of Hezron his father, who bore him Ashhur father of Tekoa. 24

Jerahmeel

Jerahmeel, Hezron's eldest son, fathered Hezron, his first-born, Ram, Bunah, Oren, Ozem, Ahijah. ·Jerahmeel had another wife called Atarah; she was the mother of Onam. 25, 26
Sons of Ram, Jerahmeel's first-born: Maaz, Jamin and Eker. 27
Sons of Onam: Shammai and Jada. Sons of Shammai: Nadab and Abishur. Abishur's wife was called Abihail; she bore him Ahban and Molid. ·Sons of Nadab: Seled and Ephraim. Seled died leaving no son. ·Son of Ephraim: Ishi; son of Ishi: Sheshan; son of Sheshan: Ahlai. ·Sons of Jada, Shammai's brother: Jether and Jonathan. Jether died leaving no sons. ·Sons of Jonathan: Peleth and Zaza. 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33
These were the sons of Jerahmeel.
Sheshan had no sons,[f] only daughters. He had an Egyptian slave Jarha ·to whom Sheshan gave his daughter in marriage. She bore him Attai. ·Attai fathered Nathan, Nathan fathered Zabad, ·Zabad fathered Ephlal, Ephlal fathered Obed, Obed fathered Jehu, Jehu fathered Azariah, ·Azariah fathered Helez, Helez fathered Eleasah, ·Eleasah fathered Sismai, Sismai fathered Shallum, ·Shallum fathered Jekamiah, Jekamiah fathered Elishama. 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41

Caleb[g]

2:18seq.;2.24 2:50i;4:11seq. Nb 32:41–42 1 S 27:10 Jos 14:6b Sons of Caleb, Jerahmeel's brother: Mesha, his first-born, who fathered Ziph. His son was[h] Mareshah, father of Hebron. ·Sons of Hebron: Korah, Tappuah, Rekem and Shema. ·Shema fathered Raham, father of Jorkeam. Rekem fathered Shammai. ·Shammai's son was Maon, and Maon fathered Beth-Zur. 42, 43, 44, 45
Ephah, Caleb's concubine, gave birth to Haran, Moza and Gazez. Haran fathered Gazez. 46
Sons of Jahdai: Regem, Jotham, Geshan, Pelet, Ephah and Shaaph. 47
Maacah, Caleb's concubine, gave birth to Sheber and Tirhanah. ·She gave birth to Shaaph, who fathered Madmannah, and Sheva, who fathered Machbenah and Gibea. 48, 49

The daughter of Caleb was Achsah. Jos 15:16–19
50 These were the sons of Caleb.

Hur [i]

51 Sons of Hur, the first-born of Ephrathah: Shobal fathered Kiriath-Jearim; ·Salma 2:19;4:1seq.
52 fathered Bethlehem; Hareph fathered Beth-Gader. ·Shobal, father of Kiriath-
53 Jearim, had sons: Haroeh, that is, half of the Manahathites, ·and the clans of Kiriath-Jearim: the Ithrites, Puthites, Shumathites and Mishraites. Their descendants are the people of Zorah and Eshtaol. Jg 13:2;18:2
54 Sons of Salma: Bethlehem, the Netophathites, Atroth Beth-Joab, half of the
55 Manahathites, the Zorathites, ·the Sophrite clans living at Jabez, the Tirathites, the Shimeathites, the Sucathites. They were the Kenites descended from Hammath, father of the House of Rechab. Nb 24:21k 2 K 10:15

C: THE HOUSE OF DAVID [a]

The sons of David

1 3 These are the sons of David who were born to him in Hebron: the first-born ||2 S 3:2–5
2 Amnon, by Ahinoam of Jezreel; second, Daniel, by Abigail of Carmel; ·third, Absalom son of Maacah, daughter of Talmai king of Geshur; fourth, Adonijah son
3, 4 of Haggith; ·fifth, Shephatiah by Abital, sixth, Ithream by his wife Eglah. ·Six, therefore, were born to him in Hebron, where he reigned for three years and six months.
5 He reigned for thirty-three years in Jerusalem. ·These are the sons who were =14:3–7 ||2 S 5:14–16
born to him in Jerusalem: Shimea, Shobab, Nathan, Solomon, the four of them
6 children of Bath-Shua [b] daughter of Ammiel; ·Ibhar, Elishama, Eliphelet,
7, 8 Nogah, Nepheg, Japhia, ·Elishama, Eliada, Eliphelet: nine.
9 All these were sons of David, not counting the sons of the concubines. Tamar 2 S 13:1seq.
was their sister.

The kings of Judah [c]

10 Sons of Solomon: Rehoboam; Abijah his son, Asa his son, Jehoshaphat his son,
11, 12 Joram his son, Ahaziah his son, Joash his son, ·Amaziah his son, Azariah his son,
13, 14 Jotham his son, ·Ahaz his son, Hezekiah his son, Manasseh his son, ·Amon his
15 son, Josiah his son. ·Sons of Josiah: Johanan, [d] the first-born, Jehoiakim second,
16 Zedekiah third, Shallum fourth. ·The sons of Jehoiakim: Jeconiah his son, Zedekiah his son. 2 Ch 36:1seq.

The royal line after the exile [e]

17, 18 Sons of Jeconiah the captive: Shealtiel his son, ·then Malchiram, Pedaiah, Shen-
19 azzar, Jechamiah, Hoshama, Nedabiah. ·Sons of Pedaiah: Zerubbabel [f] and

b. Chelubai, like Chelub, 4:11, is apparently to be identified with Caleb, 2:18, *see* Jos 14:6b.

c. 'by Azubah his wife' versions and *see* v. 19; fathered Azubah' Hebr.

d. 'used to belong to' Gk; 'were' Hebr.

e. 'Caleb married Ephrathah' Gk; 'in Caleb of Ephrathah' Hebr.

f. According to a tradition differing from that in v. 31.

g. Another genealogical record of Caleb's descendants, cf. vv. 18seq., no doubt representing a different period when the relationships of the clans had changed.

h. 'His son' conj.; 'son of (Mareshah)' Hebr.

i. Hur, 'first-born of Ephrathah', is only once mentioned as a son of Caleb, v. 20, but *see* vv. 24,42; 3:15. Unlike Caleb, *see* Jos 14:6b, Hur apparently represents a pure Judaean line which, originating in Ephrathah-Bethlehem, spread north-west to Kiriath-Jearim, Zorah and Eshtaol.

3 **a.** This chapter, continuing the Davidic line into post-exilic times, is out of place in the tribal survey, where it ought by rights to follow 2:17. It is probably an addition. The list of David's sons born in Jerusalem, vv. 5–8, is repeated in 14:3–7.

b. Same as Bathsheba, 2 S 11–12; 1 K 1, and so written in Gk.

c. The list derives from 1 and 2 K. • Shallum son of Josiah is the same as Jehoahaz in 2 K 23:30seq., *see* Jr 22:11.

d. Some MSS read 'Joahaz' for 'Johanan'.

e. This list probably extends to the author's own day.

f. In all the other texts, *see* Ezr 3:2; Hg 1:1, Zerubbabel is son of Shealtiel.

Shimei. Sons of Zerubbabel: Meshullam and Hananiah; Shelomith was their sister.
Sons of Meshullam: [g] Hashubah, Ohel, Berechiah, Hasadiah, Jushab-Hesed: five. 20
Sons of Hananiah: Pelatiah; Jeshaiah his son, Rephaiah his son, Arnan his son, 21
Ezr 8:3 Obadiah his son, Shecaniah his son. [h] ·Sons of Shecaniah: Shemaiah, Hattush, 22
Igal, Bariah, Neariah, Shaphat: six. ·Sons of Neariah: Elioenai, Hizkiah, Azrikam: 23
three. ·Sons of Elioenai: Hodaviah, Eliashib, Pelaiah, Akkub, Johanan, Delaiah, 24
Anani: seven.

D: THE SOUTHERN TRIBES [a]

Judah. Shobal

2:3 4 Sons of Judah: Perez, Hezron, Carmi, Hur, Shobal. ·Reaiah son of Shobal 1, 2
fathered Jahath, and Jahath fathered Ahumai and Lahad. These are the
Zoreathite clans.

2:50h **Hur**

These are Abi-Etam, Jezreel, Ishma, and Idbash, whose sister was called 3
Hazzelelponi.
Penuel fathered Gedor, and Ezer fathered Hushah. 4
These were the sons of Hur, first-born of Ephrathah and father of Bethlehem.

Ashhur

Ashhur, father of Tekoa, had two wives: Helah and Naarah. 5
Naarah bore him Ahuzzam, Hepher, the Timnites, and the Ahashtarites—these 6
were the sons of Naarah.
Sons of Helah: Zereth, Zohar, Ethnan. 7
Koz fathered Anub, Hazzobebah and the clans of Aharhel son of Harum. 8
Jabez was better known than his brothers. His mother gave him the name 9
2:55 Gn 35:18 Jabez, 'because', she said, 'in distress I gave birth to him.' [b] ·Jabez called on the 10
God of Israel. 'If you truly bless me,' he said, 'you will extend my lands, your hand
will be with me, you will keep harm away and my distress will cease.' God granted
him what he had asked.

2:18seq.,42seq. Jos 14:6b **Caleb**

2:9b Chelub, Shuhah's brother, fathered Mehir, who fathered Eshton. ·Eshton fathered 11, 12
Bethrapha, Paseah and Tehinnah father of Irnahash. These were the men of
Recab.
‖Jg 1:13 Sons of Kenaz: Othniel and Seraiah. Sons of Othniel: Hathath and Meonothai; 13
Meonothai fathered Ophrah. Seraiah fathered Joab, father of Geharashim—for 14
Ne 11:35 they were craftsmen. [c]
‖Nb 13:6 Sons of Caleb son of Jephunneh: Iru, Elah and Naam. Sons of Elah: Kenaz. 15
Sons of Jehallelel: Ziph, Ziphah, Tiria, Asarel. 16
Sons of Ezrah: Jether, Mered, Epher, Jalon. She [d] conceived Miriam, Shammai, 17
and Ishbah, the father of Eshtemoa, ·whose Judaean wife gave birth to Jered 18
father of Gedor, Heber father of Soco, and Jekuthiel, father of Zanoah. These
were the sons of Bithiah the daughter of Pharaoh whom Mered had married.
The sons of Hodiah's wife, sister of Naham father of Keilah the Garmite and of 19
Eshtemoa the Maacathite . . .
Sons of Shimon: Amnon, Rinnah, Ben-Hanan, Tilon. 20
Sons of Ishi: Zoheth and Ben-Zoheth.

Shelah [e]

2:3 Sons of Shelah son of Judah: Er father of Lecah, Laadah father of Mareshah, and 21
the clans of linenworkers at Beth-Ashbea, ·Jokim, the men of Cozeba, Joash and 22
Saraph where Moab found wives [f] and then returned to Bethlehem. [g] (These are

23 old traditions.) •These were potters and lived at Netaim and Gederah; they resided there, working for the king.

Simeon[h]

24, 25 Sons of Simeon: Nemuel, Jamin, Jarib, Zerah, Saul; •Shallum was his son, ‖Gn 46:10 ‖Nb 26:12seq.
26 Mibsam his son, Mishma his son. •The sons of Mishma: Hammuel his son, Zaccur
27 his son, Shimei his son. •Shimei had sixteen sons and six daughters, but his brothers 1:29–30 Gn 25:13–14
did not have many children, and the sum of their clans did not multiply as the sons of Judah did.
28, 29 They lived in Beersheba, Moladah and Hazar-Shual, •Bilhah, Ezem and Tolad, ‖Jos 19:1–8
30, 31 Bethuel, Hormah and Ziklag, •Beth-Marcaboth, Hazar-Susim, Beth-Biri, Shaa-
32 raim. •These were their towns until the reign of David. Their settlements were:
33 Etam, Ain, Rimmon, Tochen and Ashan, five towns, •and all the dependencies surrounding these towns as far as Baalath. That was where they lived and they had
34, 35 an official genealogy. •Meshobab, Jamlech, Joshah son of Amaziah, •Joel, Jehu
36 son of Joshibiah, son of Seraiah, son of Asiel, •Elioenai, Jaakobah, Jeshohaiah,
37 Asaiah, Adiel, Jesimiel, Benaiah, •Ziza, Ben-Shiphi, Ben-Allon, Ben-Jedaiah,
38 Ben-Shimri, Ben-Shemaiah—•these above named were princes in their clans in Nb 1:2
39 their ancestral home. Their numbers increased enormously. •In search of pasture for their flocks, they spread from the Pass of Gerar[i] to the eastern end of the
40 valley, •where they found good, fat pasture; the land was broad, untroubled, peaceful. Hamites[j] had been living there before them.
41 These Simeonites, recorded by name, arrived there in the time of Hezekiah king of Judah; they overran their tents and the dwellings[k] which they found there. They put them under a curse of destruction still in force today and settled in their place, Jos 6:17c
since there was pasturage for their flocks.
42 Five hundred of them, of the Simeonites, went to Mount Seir, their leaders being Pelatiah, Neariah, Rephaiah, and Uzziel, the sons of Ishi.
43 They defeated the surviving fugitives of Amalek and still live there today. Ex 17:8d

E: THE TRANSJORDANIAN TRIBES

Reuben

1 5 Sons of Reuben, first-born of Israel. He was indeed the first-born but, when he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph son of Gn 35:22
Israel, and he was no longer reckoned as the eldest son.
2 Although Judah grew greater than his brothers and a leader came from him, the Mi 5:2b
birthright was Joseph's.[a]
3 Sons of Reuben, first-born of Israel: Henoch, Pallu, Hezron, Carmi. ‖Gn 46:9 ‖Nb 26:5seq.

g. 'Sons of Meshullam' restored; alternatively, a second family of Zerubbabel.

h. 'his son' (all four times), Gk; 'the sons of' Hebr.

4 a. The tables for Judah, Hur and Caleb are parallel to those of ch. 2 though differing considerably from them, with additional notices on Ashhur and Shelah. This section may be a later addition to the original work, using other ancient material. The original text possibly passed directly from the notice on Judah, 2:3–17, to the one on Simeon, 4:24–43.

b. Playing on *ya'betz* and *'otzeb* 'distress'.

c. The name means 'Valley of Craftsmen (in wood and iron)', *see* Ne 11:35.

d. Bithiah, v. 18.

e. This notice is out of character with the foregoing lists. Family relationships between Bethlehem and Moab are also emphasised in the Book of Ruth and in 1 S 22:3. The practice of a craft was a hereditary, family affair, *see* v. 14 above; where it was practised depended on geographical and economic factors.

f. *see* Rt 1. • Alternative translation 'ruled in Moab'.

g. 'returned to Bethlehem' *wayyashubu bet lehem* conj.; Hebr. *wayyashube lahem* corrupt.

h. The notice consists of a genealogy, vv. 24–27, a list of towns, vv. 28–33, and the movements of the Simeonite clans, vv. 34–43. v. 31[b] indicates that the integration of Simeon with Judah took place during the reign of David; compare the list in Jos 15 where these towns are reckoned as belonging to Judah. The Simeonites retained their semi-nomadic way of life for another three centuries, *see* v. 39seq.

i. 'Gerar' Gk; 'Gedor' Hebr.

j. According to 1:8, the sons of Ham lived in both Canaan and Africa. Here the expression merely means non-Israelites.

k. Alternative translation 'and the Meunites', *see* 2 Ch 20:1.

5 a. The Chronicler, so attached to David and his dynasty, reconciles the pre-eminence given to Judah by Gn 49:10 with the tradition which considered Joseph a first-born, *see* Dt 33:17j. The Gk text corrects 'birthright' to 'blessing'.

Joel [b]

Sons of Joel: Shemaiah his son, Gog his son, Shimei his son, ·Micah his son, 4, 5
Reaiah his son, Baal his son. ·Beerah his son, whom Tiglath-Pileser king of 6
Assyria [c] carried off into exile, was the chief of the Reubenites.

His brothers, by families, were grouped according to relationship. Jeiel was first, 7
then Zechariah ·and Bela son of Azaz, son of Shema, son of Joel. 8

Territory of Reuben

‖Nb 32:37seq. It was Reuben who lived in Aroer and his territory extended as far as Nebo and
Baal-Meon. ·To eastward, what he occupied extended to the edge of the desert 9
and the River Euphrates, for they had many herds in Gilead.

In the time of Saul, they made war on the Hagrites, whom they defeated and 10
who were then living in their tents throughout the eastern front of Gilead.

Gad [d]

Gn 46:16 Next to them, in Bashan as far as Salecah, lived the sons of Gad. ·Joel was the first, 11, 12
Nb 26:15–18 Shapham the second, then Janai and Shaphat in Bashan.
Dt 3:10seq.
Jos 13:24–28

Their brothers, by families, were Michael, Meshullam, Sheba, Jorai, Jacan, Zia, 13
Eber: seven. ·These were the sons of Abihail: Ben-Huri, Ben-Jaroah, Ben-Gilead, 14
Ben-Michael, Ben-Jeshishai, Ben-Jahdo, Ben-Buz. ·Ahi son of Abdiel, son of 15
Guni, was the head of their families. ·They inhabited Gilead, Bashan and its 16
dependencies, as well as all the pasture lands of Sharon [e] on their extremities.
In the time of Jotham king of Judah and in the time of Jeroboam king of Israel, all 17
of them were included in the official genealogy.

The sons of Reuben, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh had warriors, 18
men armed with shield and sword who could handle the bow and were trained for
war, to the number of forty-four thousand seven hundred and sixty fit for service.

Gn 25:15 They made war on the Hagrites, on Jetur, Naphish and Nodab. ·God came to 19, 20
their help, and the Hagrites and all their allies fell into their hands, for they called
Dt 33:20–21 on God as they fought, and because they put their trust in him he heard their
prayer. ·Of their livestock they carried off fifty thousand camels, two hundred 21
and fifty thousand sheep, two thousand donkeys and a hundred thousand people.
Because the war was of God, the slaughter was great. They continued to live in 22
their territory until the exile. [f]

The half-tribe of Manasseh

‖Nb 32:39 The sons of the half-tribe of Manasseh lived in the territory between Bashan and 23
Baal-Hermon, Senir and Mount Hermon.

They were numerous. ·These were the heads of their families: Epher, Ishi, Eliel, 24
Azriel, Jeremiah, Hodaviah, Jahdiel—stout fighting men, men of renown, heads
of their families.

But since they were unfaithful to the God of their ancestors and prostituted 25
themselves to the gods of the peoples of the country whom God had destroyed
before them, ·the God of Israel roused the hostility of Pul, [g] king of Assyria, that is 26
the wrath of Tiglath-Pileser, king of Assyria who deported them—the Reubenites,
the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh—taking them off to Halah, Habor,
Hara and the river of Gozan. [h] They are still there today.

F: LEVI [i]

The lineage of the high priests

‖Gn 46:11 Sons of Levi: Gershom, Kohath and Merari. ·Sons of Kohath: Amram, Izhar, 27 6:1, 28 2
Ex 6:18 Hebron, Uzziel. ·Children of Amram: Aaron, Moses and Miriam. Sons of Aaron: 29 3
‖Nb 26:59–60 Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar.

30, 31 4, 5 Eleazar fathered Phinehas, Phinehas fathered Abishua, ·Abishua fathered
6 32 Bukki, Bukki fathered Uzzi. ·Uzzi fathered Zerahiah, Zerahiah fathered Mer-
33, 34 7, 8 aioth. ·Meraioth fathered Amariah, Amariah fathered Ahitub, ·Ahitub fathered
9 35 Zadok, Zadok fathered Ahimaaz. ·Ahimaaz fathered Azariah, Azariah fathered
10 36 Johanan. ·Johanan fathered Azariah. He it was who officiated as priest in the
11 37 Temple which Solomon built in Jerusalem. ·Azariah fathered Amariah, Amariah
38, 39 12, 13 fathered Ahitub, ·Ahitub fathered Zadok, Zadok fathered Shallum, ·Shallum
14 40 fathered Hilkiah, Hilkiah fathered Azariah, ·Azariah fathered Seraiah, Seraiah
15 41 fathered Jehozadak, ·and Jehozadak went into exile when, at the hands of
Nebuchadnezzar, Yahweh exiled Judah and Jerusalem.

The line of Levi

1, 2 16, 17 18 3 19 4 6 Sons of Levi: Gershom, Kohath and Merari. ·These are the names of the sons of Gershom: Libni and Shimei. ·Sons of Kohath: Amram, Izhar, Hebron, Uzziel. ·Sons of Merari: Mahli and Mushi. ‖Nb 3:17–20

These are the levitical clans according to their father.

5, 6 20, 21 Of Gershom: [a] Libni his son, Jahath his son, Zimmah his son, ·Joah his son, Iddo his son, Zerah his son, Jeatherai his son.

7, 8 22, 23 24 9 10, 11 25, 26 12, 13 27, 28 Sons of Kohath: Amminadab his son, Korah his son, Assir his son, ·Elkanah his son, Ebiasaph his son, Assir his son. ·Tahath his son, Uriel his son, Uzziah his son, Shaul his son. ·Sons of Elkanah: Amasai and Ahimoth. ·Elkanah his son, Zophai his son, Nahath his son, ·Eliab his son, Jeroham his son, Elkanah his son. ·Sons of Elkanah: Samuel his first-born, the second Abijah. 1 S 1:1

14, 15 29, 30 Sons of Merari: Mahli, Libni his son, ·Shimei his son, Haggiah his son, Asaiah his son. Ex 6:19 Nb 26:58

The singers [b]

31 16 32 17 These are the men whom David nominated to lead the singing in the Temple of Yahweh after the ark had come to rest there. ·They were responsible for the singing before the Dwelling, the Tent of Meeting, until Solomon had built the Temple of Yahweh in Jerusalem and then continued their customary duties.

33 18 These were the persons in office, with their sons: [c]

34 19 35 20 36 21 Of the sons of Kohath: Heman the singer, son of Joel, son of Samuel, ·son of Elkanah, son of Jeroham, son of Eliel, son of Toah, ·son of Zuph, son of Elkanah, son of Mahath, son of Amasai, ·son of Elkanah, son of Joel, son of Azariah, son of

b. This material is unique to the Chronicler, who leaves the relationship between Reuben and Joel unexplained.

c. The deportation by Tiglath-Pileser in 732, *see* 2 K 15:29, had struck also Gilead, home of the tribe of Reuben.

d. The lists of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh are unique to the Chronicler and may be derived from a census taken in the reign of Jeroboam II, *see* v. 17.

e. Not the Sharon of the coastal plain of Palestine but an unidentified area in Transjordan, mentioned on the Mesha Stone.

f. The incident related in vv. 18–22, not mentioned elsewhere in the OT, the figures of which are out of all proportion, preserves the memory of the periodic conflicts between the Transjordanian tribes and their turbulent Arab neighbours. The exile in question was Tiglath-Pileser's deportation, *see* vv. 6 and 26.

g. Tiglath-Pileser III (745–727 BC) reigned over the dual empire of Assyria-Babylon. As monarch of Babylon, his regal name was Pula (Hebr. Pul), *see* 2 K 15:19.

h. The Chronicler combines the deportation of Gilead by Tiglath-Pileser, 2 K 15:29, with the localities to which the inhabitants of Samaria were deported by Sargon II in 721 BC.

i. These long lists are for the most part additional to the original work, being worked up from biblical material, unverifiable sources and arbitrary juxtapositions. The original work may not have contained much more about Levi than 6:1–4.34–38.

6 a. Gershom (called Gershon in Nb) was, according to the northern traditions, Ex 2:22; Jg 18:30, probably a descendant of Moses. This family had been in charge of the schismatic shrine at Dan; for this reason the 'Priestly' tradition gives preference to the Kohathites.

b. Sharing the outlook of Is 12; 25 and 26; Ho 14:3 and presumably Ml 1:11, the Chronicler regards sacred song (praise, confession, thanksgiving) as the essential element of sacrificial worship. He attributes its institution to David.

c. Here David's three singers, Heman, Asaph and Ethan (Jeduthun in 25:1.3, *see* ch. 16) are incorporated in the three levitical lines of Kohath, Gershom and Merari. Heman and Ethan were poet-sages of antiquity; Heman is specifically called 'native-born', i.e. a member of the indigenous, pre-Israelite population of Palestine, in the title of Ps 88, and Ethan is similarly described in 1 K 5:11 and in the title of Ps 89. David apparently co-opted Canaanite experts to organise and perform the Temple music in the first instance. • The inclusion of Heman and Ethan in the pedigree of Judah, 2:6, was probably due to confusion between the word *'ezrah*, 'native-born', and the proper name Zerah son of Judah, *see* Gn 38:30; 46:12.

Zephaniah, ·son of Tahath, son of Assir, son of Ebiasaph, son of Korah, ·son of 22, 23 38
Izhar, son of Kohath, son of Levi, son of Israel.
His brother Asaph stood on his right: Asaph son of Berechiah, son of Shimea, 24 39
son of Michael, son of Baaseiah, son of Malchijah, ·son of Ethni, son of Zerah, 25 40, 26 41
son of Adaiah, ·son of Ethan, son of Zimmah, son of Shimei, ·son of Jahath, son 27 42, 28 43
of Gershom, son of Levi.
On the left, the sons of Merari: Ethan son of Kishi, son of Abdi, son of Malluch, 29 44
son of Hashabiah, son of Amaziah, son of Hilkiah, ·son of Amzi, son of Bani, son 30 45, 31 46
of Shemer, ·son of Mahli, son of Mushi, son of Merari, son of Levi. 32 47

The other Levites

Their brother Levites were dedicated for all the other duties of the Dwelling, the 33 48
Temple of God, ·but Aaron and his sons burned the offerings on the altar of burnt 34 49
Lv 1:4;2:3b offering and on the altar of incense; they were entirely responsible for the most holy things and for the ritual of expiation for Israel, in accordance with all that Moses, servant of God, had commanded.
These were the sons of Aaron: Eleazar his son, Phinehas his son, Abishua his 35 50
son, ·Bukki his son, Uzzi his son, Zerahiah his son, ·Meraioth his son, Amariah 36 51, 37 52
his son, Ahitub his son, ·Zadok his son, Ahimaaz his son. 38 53

Jos 21:4–40 **Towns of the Aaronites**

These were their places of settlement within their prescribed territory: 39 54
‖Jos 21:4,10–19 The sons of Aaron of the Kohathite clan—for to these the first lot fell— ·were 40 55
given Hebron in the territory of Judah with its surrounding pasture lands. ·But the 41 56
open country of the town and its dependencies were given to Caleb son of Jephunneh. ·The sons of Aaron were also given the cities of refuge, Hebron, Libnah with 42 57
its pasture lands, Jattir, Eshtemoa with its pasture lands. ·Hilen with its pasture 43 58
lands, Debir with its pasture lands, ·Ashan with its pasture lands and Beth-Shemesh with its pasture lands; ·and, from the tribe of Benjamin, Geba with its 44 59 45 60
pasture lands, Alemeth with its pasture lands and Anathoth with its pasture lands. In all, the towns distributed among their clans numbered thirteen.

Towns of the other Levites

‖Jos 21:5–8 The remaining sons of Kohath were allotted ten towns from the clans of the tribe, 46 61
that is, from the half-tribe of Manasseh. ·The sons of Gershom and their clans were 47 62
allotted thirteen towns from the tribe of Issachar, from the tribe of Asher, from the tribe of Naphtali and from the tribe of Manasseh in Bashan. ·The sons of Merari 48 63
and their clans were allotted twelve towns from the tribe of Reuben, from the tribe of Gad and from the tribe of Zebulun. ·The Israelites gave these towns with their 49 64
‖Jos 21:9 pasture lands to the Levites. ·From the tribe of the sons of Judah, from the tribe of 50 65
the sons of Simeon and from the tribe of the sons of Benjamin, they also allotted them those towns to which they gave their names.
‖Jos 21:20–39 Towns from the tribe of Ephraim were also assigned to the territory of some 51 66
clans of the sons of Kohath. ·They were given the cities of refuge: Shechem in the 52 67
highlands of Ephraim with its pasture lands, Gezer and its pasture lands, Jokmeam with its pasture lands, Beth-Horon with its pasture lands, ·Aijalon 53 68, 54 69
with its pasture lands and Gath-Rimmon with its pasture lands ·and from the half-tribe of Manasseh, Aner with its pasture lands and Bileam with its pasture lands. 55 70
So much was given to the remaining families of the sons of Kohath.
From the half-tribe of Manasseh, the sons of Gershom according to family were 56 71
given Golan in Bashan with its pasture lands and Ashtaroth with its pasture lands; from the tribe of Issachar, Kedesh with its pasture lands, Daberath with its pasture 57 72
lands, ·Ramoth with its pasture lands and Anem with its pasture lands; ·from the 58 73, 59 74
tribe of Asher: Mashal with its pasture lands, Abdon with its pasture lands. Hukok with its pasture lands and Rehob with its pasture lands; ·from the tribe of 60 75, 61 76

Naphtali, Kedesh in Galilee with its pasture lands, Hammon with its pasture lands
and Kiriataim with its pasture lands.
77 62 To the remainder of the sons of Merari: from the tribe of Zebulun, Rimmon
78 63 with its pasture lands and Tabor with its pasture lands; ·in Transjordan, near
Jericho, east of the Jordan, from the tribe of Reuben: Bezer in the desert with its
79 64 pasture lands, Jahzah with its pasture lands, ·Kedemoth with its pasture lands and
80 65 Mephaath with its pasture lands; ·from the tribe of Gad: Ramoth in Gilead with its
81 66 pasture lands, Mahanaim with its pasture lands, ·Heshbon with its pasture lands
and Jazer with its pasture lands.

G: THE NORTHERN TRIBES [a]

Issachar

1 7 For the sons of Issachar: Tola, Puah, Jashub, Shimron: four. ‖Gn 46:13
2 Sons of Tola: Uzzi, Rephaiah, Jeriel, Jahmai, Ibsam, Shemuel, heads of ‖Nb 26:23–24 Jg 10:1
their families of Tola. In the time of David, these numbered twenty-two thousand
six hundred stout fighting men, grouped according to their kinship.
3 Sons of Uzzi: Izrahiah. Sons of Izrahiah: Michael, Obadiah, Joel, Isshiah. In all
4 five chiefs, ·responsible for fighting companies amounting to thirty-six thousand
troops, according to relationship and family, for they had many women and
5 children. ·They had kinsmen belonging to all the clans of Issachar, eighty-seven
thousand stout fighting men, all belonging to one related group.

Benjamin

8:1seq.
‖Gn 46:21
‖Nb 26:38

6 Sons of Benjamin: Bela, Becher, Jediael: three.
7 Sons of Bela: Ezbon, Uzzi, Uzziel, Jerimoth and Iri: five, chiefs of families and
warriors. Their official genealogy included twenty-two thousand and thirty-four
members.
8 Sons of Becher: Zemirah, Joash, Eliezar, Elioenai, Omri, Jeremoth, Abijah,
9 Anathoth, Alemeth, all these were the sons of Becher. ·The official genealogy of Jos 21:18
the descendants of the chiefs of their families included twenty thousand two
hundred warriors.
10 Sons of Jediael: Bilhan. Sons of Bilhan: Jeush, Benjamin, Ehud, Chenaanah,
11 Zethan, Tarshish, Ahishahar. ·All these sons of Jediael, became heads of families,
stout fighting men, numbering seventeen thousand two hundred men fit for active
service.

Naphtali

‖Gn 46:24
‖Nb 26:48–50

12 Shuppim and Huppim. Son of Ir: Hushim; his son: Aher. ‖Nb 26:39
13 Sons of Naphtali: Jahziel, Guni, Jezer, Shallum.
These were the sons of Bilhah.

Manasseh [b]

14 Sons of Manasseh: Asriel, born of his Aramaean concubine. She gave birth to
15 Machir, father of Gilead. ·Machir took a wife for Huppim and Shuppim. His
sister's name was Maacah.
The name of the second son was Zelophehad. Zelophehad had daughters. Nb 26:33
16 Maacah the wife of Machir gave birth to a son whom she called Peresh. His
brother was called Sheresh and his sons Ulam and Rakem.

7 **a.** The material in this ch. is drawn from various sources, not all of them identified. The figures relating to Issachar, Benjamin and Asher suggest the use of a census list, not however, that of Nb 1 and 26.
b. Some disorder has apparently crept into this notice, including Huppim and Shuppim who seem to have wandered from v. 12. Maacah appears as sister, v. 15, and wife, v. 16, of Machir. But the list concerns primarily Machir, settled in Gilead, that is the 'half-tribe' of Manasseh. Nb 32:39seq.

Sons of Ulam: Bedan. These were the sons of Gilead son of Machir, son of Manasseh. 17

Jg 6:11seq. His sister Hammoleketh gave birth to Ishod, Abiezer and Mahlah. 18
Shemida had sons: Ahian, Shechem, Likhi and Aniam. 19

Ephraim [c]

‖Nb 26:35 Sons of Ephraim: Shuthelah, Bered his son, Tahath his son, Eleadah his son, 20
Tahath his son, ·Zabad his son, Shuthelah his son and Ezer and Elead [d] whom the 21
men of Gath, natives of the country, killed when they came down to raid their
cattle. ·Their father Ephraim mourned for a long time and his brothers came to 22
comfort him. ·He had intercourse with his wife, who conceived and gave birth to a 23
8:13 son whom he called Beriah because his house was in misfortune. [e] ·He had a 24
Jos 16:3 daughter, Sheerah, who built Upper and Lower Beth-Horon and Uzzen-Sheerah.
Rephah was his son, Shuthelah his son, [f] Tahan his son, ·Ladan his son, Ammi- 25, 26
Nb 1:10 hud his son, Elishama his son, ·Nun his son, Joshua his son. 27
Ex 33:11
They had lands and settlements in Bethel and its dependencies from Naaran on 28
the east to Gezer and its dependencies on the west, as well as Shechem [g] and its
dependencies as far as Ayyah and its dependencies. ·Beth-Shean with its depen- 29
dencies, Taanach and its dependencies, Megiddo and its dependencies and Dor
with its dependencies were in the hands of the sons of Manasseh. There lived the
sons of Joseph son of Israel.

Asher [h]

‖Gn 46:17 Sons of Asher: Imnah, Ishvah, Ishvi, Beriah; their sister Serah. 30
‖Nb 26:44seq.
Sons of Beriah: Heber and Malchiel. He fathered Birzaith. ·Heber fathered 31, 32
Japhlet, Shomer, Hotham and their sister Shua.
Sons of Japhlet: Pasach, Bimhal and Ashvath. These were the sons of Japhlet. 33
Sons of Shomer his brother: Rohgah, Hubbah and Aram. 34
Sons of Helem his brother: Zophah, Imna, Shelesh and Amal. ·Sons of Zophah: 35, 36
Suah, Harnepher, Shual, Beri and Imrah. ·Bezer, Hod, Shamma, Shilshah, Ithran 37
and Beerah. ·Sons of Ithran: Jephunneh, Pispa, Ara. 38
Sons of Ulla: Arah, Hanniel, Rizia. 39
All these were the sons of Asher, heads of families, picked men, warriors and 40
senior princes. They were registered in fighting companies to the number of
twenty-six thousand men.

H: BENJAMIN AND JERUSALEM

The line of Benjamin [a]

‖Gn 46:21 8 Benjamin was father of Bela, his first-born, Ashbel second, Ahiram [b] third, 1
‖Nb 26:38–40 Nohah fourth, Rapha fifth. ·Bela had sons: Addar, Gera father of Ehud, [c] 2, 3
Jg 3:15seq. Abishua, Naaman, Ahoah, ·Gera, Shephuphan and Huram. 4, 5

In Geba [d]

These are the sons of Ehud. They were heads of families of the inhabitants of Geba 6
and led them into exile at Manahath: ·Naaman, Ahijah and Gera. It was he who 7
led them into exile; he became the father of Uzza and Ahihud.

In Moab

Shaharaim had children in the Plains of Moab after he had dismissed his wives, 8
Hushim and Baara. ·By his new wife he had sons: Jobab, Zibia, Mesha, Malcam, 9
Jeuz, Sachia, Mirmah. These were his sons, heads of families. 10

In Ono and Lud

11, 12 By Hushim he had sons: Abitub and Elpaal. ·The sons of Elpaal were Eber, Misham and Shemed, who built Ono and Lud and its dependencies.

In Aijalon

13 Beriah and Shema were the chiefs of the families who lived at Aijalon; they routed 7:23e
the inhabitants of Gath.
14 His brother was Shashak.

In Jerusalem

15, 16 Jeremoth, ·Zebadiah, Arad, Eder, ·Michael, Ishpah, Joha were the sons of Beriah.
17, 18 Zebadiah, Meshullam, Hizki, Haber, ·Ishmerai, Izliah, Jobab were the sons of Elpaal.
19, 20, 21 Jakim, Zichri, Zabdi, ·Elienai, Zillethai, Eliel, ·Adaiah, Beraiah, Shimrath were the sons of Shimei.
22, 23, 24 Ishpan, Eber, Eliel, ·Abdon, Zichri, Hanan, ·Hananiah, Elam, Anthothijah,
25 Iphdeiah, Penuel were the sons of Shashak.
26, 27 Shamsherai, Shehariah, Athaliah, ·Jaareshaiah, Elijah, Zichri were the sons of Jeroham.
28 These were chiefs of families according to their relationship. They lived in =9:34
Jerusalem.

In Gibeon =9:35–38

29, 30 At Gibeon lived Jeiel the father of Gibeon, whose wife was called Maacah. ·His
31 first-born son was Abdon, then Zur, Kish, Baal, Ner, Nadab, ·Gedor, Ahio,
32 Zecher ·and Mikloth. Mikloth fathered Shimeah. But they, unlike their brothers, lived at Jerusalem with their brothers. [e]

Saul and his family [f]

33 Ner fathered Kish, Kish fathered Saul, Saul fathered Jonathan, Malchishua, Abi- =9:39–43
34 nadab and Eshbaal. ·Son of Jonathan: Meribbaal. Meribbaal fathered Micah. ‖1 S 14:49–51
35, 36 Sons of Micah: Pithon, Melech, Tarea, Ahaz. ·Ahaz fathered Jehoaddah, Jehoad-
37 dah fathered Alemeth, Azmaveth and Zimri. Zimri fathered Moza, ·Moza fath-
38 ered Binea, Raphah his son, Eleasah his son and Azel his son. ·Azel had six sons, whose names were these: Azrikam, his first-born, then [g] Ishmael, Shearíah, Obadiah, Hanan. All these were sons of Azel.
39 Sons of Eshek his brother: Ulam, his first-born, Jeush second, Eliphelet third.

c. The pedigree of Ephraim ends with Joshua, v. 27, being interrupted by the anecdote of vv. 21[b]–24.

d. To the list in Nb 26:35seq., the Chronicler adds a further list containing two Benjaminite names: Zabad (Zabdi), 8:19, and Ezer, 4:4. Ephraim and Benjamin were neighbours and some clans seem to have passed from one tribe to the other.

e. The name Beriah is supposedly connected with the words *bera'ah*, 'in misfortune'. Beriah was an Ephraimite clan which later joined Benjamin, *see* 8:13.

f. Following v. 20 and Nb 26:35; 'Resheph and Telah'.

g. Shechem is elsewhere attributed to Manasseh. vv. 28–29 treat Ephraim and Manasseh, the 'sons of Joseph' as one entity.

h. Asher's territory lay between Carmel and Phoenicia, Jos 19:24–31, but this list contains place names south of the highlands of Ephraim. This is either a memory of Asher's original homeland, or more probably a record of Asherite groups migrating south to merge with the tribes of Ephraim and Benjamin.

8 **a.** Another Benjaminite list, differing in style and content from the previous one, 7:6–11. Here the Benjaminite families are classified according to where they lived. Source and date of the information contained in it are alike unknown.

b. 'Ahiram' according to Nb 26:38; 'Aharah' Hebr.

c. 'father of Ehud' according to Jg 3:15; 'Abihud' Hebr.

d. Ehud was the judge who liberated Benjamin from the Moabites, Jg 3:11–30, but the notice is far from clear. The exile of the inhabitants of Geba (confused with Gibeah?) is possibly a garbled sequel to the events related in Jg 20.

e. i.e. 'lived at Jerusalem with their other brothers'. Another possible translation of the last phrase is: 'they also, near their brothers, lived at Jerusalem.' • 'Jeiel', 'Ner' and first 'Mikloth' are restored in line with 9:35seq. • On Benjaminites living in Jerusalem, *see* Jg 1:21; Ne 11:7–9.

f. Saul's ancestors are different from those given in 1 S 9:1. In v. 30 and 1 S 14:50–51, Ner and Kish appear as brothers, not as father and son. From v. 35 onwards, the descendants of Saul, repeated in 9:41–44, are unparalleled elsewhere in the Bible. The line is traced to the twelfth generation, probably down to the Exile.

g. 'his first-born' Gk, but one of Azel's sons has dropped out of the list; 'Becheru' Hebr.

The sons of Ulam were warriors—archers. [k] They had as many as a hundred and 40
fifty sons and grandsons.
All these belonged to the sons of Benjamin.

Jerusalem, the holy city of Israel

9 Thus, all Israel's official genealogies had been entered in the records of 1
the kings of Israel and Judah before they were deported to Babylon for
their infidelity.
‖Ne 11:3–19 Now the first citizens [a] to return to their property in their cities were the Israe- 2
Ezr 2:43d lites, the priests, the Levites and the temple slaves. ·In Jerusalem, there settled 3
Judaeans, Benjaminites, Ephraimites and Manassehites. [b]
Uthai son of Ammihud, son of Omri, son of Imri, son of Bani, one of the sons of 4
Perez son of Judah. ·Of the descendants of Shelah: Asaiah, the first-born, 5
and his sons. ·Of the sons of Zerah: Jeuel. And six hundred and ninety of 6
their kinsmen.
And of the sons of Benjamin: Sallu son of Meshullam, son of Hodaviah, son of 7
Hassenuah; ·Ibneiah son of Jeroham; Elah son of Uzzi, son of Michri; and Me- 8
shullam son of Shephatiah, son of Reuel, son of Ibnijah. ·Their kinsmen, according 9
to their relationship, numbered nine hundred and fifty-six. All these men were
chiefs of their families.
Of the priests there were Jedaiah, Jehoiarib, Jachin, ·Azariah son of Hilkiah, 10, 11
son of Meshullam, son of Zadok, son of Meraioth, son of Ahitub, the chief of the
Temple of God; ·Adaiah son of Jeroham, son of Pashhur, son of Malchijah; and 12
Maasai son of Adiel, son of Jahzerah, son of Meshullam, son of Meshillemith, son
of Immer. ·Their kinsmen, heads of families, numbered one thousand seven 13
hundred and sixty—men expert in the ministerial service of the Temple of God.
Of the Levites there were Shemaiah son of Hasshub, son of Azrikam, son of 14
Hashabiah of the sons of Merari, ·Bakbakar, Heresh, Galai, Mattaniah son of 15
Mica, son of Zichri, son of Asaph. ·Obadiah son of Shemaiah, son of Galal, 16
son of Jeduthun and Berechiah son of Asa, son of Elkanah, who lived in the
dependencies of the Netophathites.
The gatekeepers [c] were Shallum, Akkub, Talmon, Ahiman and their kinsmen. 17
Shallum was the chief ·and is still gatekeeper of the King's Gate to the east. They 18
were the gatekeepers of the camps of the sons of Levi.
Shallum son of Kore, son of Ebiasaph, son of Korah, and his brothers belonging 19
to his family, the Korahites, were also in charge of the ministerial service as
doorkeepers of the Tent, as their ancestors had been keepers of the entrance to the
camp of Yahweh. [d] ·Formerly, Phinehas son of Eleazar had been in charge of 20
them—Yahweh be with him! ·Zechariah son of Meshelemiah was gatekeeper at 21
the door of the Tent of Meeting. ·All the keepers of the gate at the thresholds were 22
picked men; there were two hundred and twelve of them. They were grouped by
relationship in their various villages. These were confirmed in office by David and
Samuel the seer because of their dependability. ·They and their sons continued in 23
charge as guards of the gates of the Temple of Yahweh, the house of the Tent.
The gatekeepers were assigned to the four sides, east, west, north and south, 24
and their brothers in their villages were required to assist them from time to time 25
for a week, ·since the four head gatekeepers were permanently on duty. 26
They were Levites and were in charge of the accommodation and supplies of the
Temple of God. ·They spent the night in the precincts of the Temple of God, their 27
duties being to guard it and open it every morning. ·Some of them were in charge 28
of the implements of worship, having to count them when they took them out and
when they put them away. ·Others of them were put in charge of the implements, 29
of all the objects in the sanctuary and of the flour, the wine, the oil, the incense and
the perfume. ·Members of the priestly caste, however, mixed the ointment for the 30
perfume.
One of the Levites, Mattithiah—he was the first-born of Shallum the Korahite— 31

32 had regular charge of baking operations. •Some of their kinsmen the Kohathites Lv 2:4-7
were responsible for the loaves to be set out in rows Sabbath by Sabbath.
33 In addition, there were the singers,[e] the heads of the levitical families, who were
accommodated in the Temple, free of other responsibilities because they were on
duty day and night.
34 Such were the chiefs of the levitical families, according to their relationship; =8:28
these lived in Jerusalem.

I: SAUL, DAVID'S PREDECESSOR

The ancestors of Saul

35, 36 Jeiel father of Gibeon lived at Gibeon and his wife was called Maacah. •His first- =8:29-38
37 born son was Abdon, then Zur, Kish, Baal, Ner, Nadab, •Gedor, Ahio, Zechariah
38 and Mikloth. •Mikloth fathered Shimeam. But they, unlike their brothers, lived at
Jerusalem with their brothers.[f]
39 Ner fathered Kish, Kish fathered Saul, Saul fathered Jonathan, Malchishua,
40 Abinadab and Eshbaal. •Son of Jonathan: Meribbaal. Meribbaal fathered Micah.
41, 42 Sons of Micah: Pithon, Melech, Tahrea. •Ahaz fathered Jarah, Jarah fathered
43 Alemeth, Azmaveth and Zimri; Zimri fathered Moza, •Moza fathered Binea,
44 Rephaiah his son, Eleasah his son and Azel his son. •Azel had six sons; their names
were these: Azrikam his first-born, Ishmael, Sheariah, Obadiah, Hanan. These
were the sons of Azel.

Death of Saul[a]

‖1 S 31:1-13

1 **10** The Philistines gave battle to Israel and the Israelites, fleeing from the
2 Philistines, fell and were slaughtered on Mount Gilboa. •The Philistines
bore down on Saul and his sons, and they killed Jonathan, Abinadab and Malchi-
3 shua, Saul's sons. •The fighting grew fiercer round Saul; the archers came upon
4 him, and he was wounded by the archers. •Saul then said to his armour-bearer,
'Draw your sword and run me through with it. I do not want these uncircumcised
men to come and make fun of me.' But his armour-bearer was very much afraid
5 and would not do it. So Saul took his own sword and fell on it. •His armour-bearer,
6 seeing that Saul was dead, fell on his sword too and died with him. •Thus died Saul,
7 his three sons and his entire household together. •When all the Israelites who were
in the valley saw that the Israelites had been routed and that Saul and his sons were
dead, they abandoned their towns and fled. The Philistines then came and occupied
them.
8 When the Philistines came on the following day to strip the dead, they found
9 Saul and his sons lying on Mount Gilboa. •They stripped him and, taking his head
and his armour, had these carried round the territory of the Philistines to proclaim

h. A Benjaminite speciality, 12:2; 2 S 1:22; 2 Ch 14:7, also attributed to the Ephraimites, Ps 78:9.

9 **a.** This list, which v. 1 dates from before the Exile, in fact depends on the list of exiles returning to Jerusalem under Nehemiah, Ne 11; with certain differences which perhaps reflect the situation at an even later date. The whole chapter seems to be an addition.

b. Ephraim and Manasseh stand for the survivors of the Northern Kingdom. In this book Jerusalem, the holy city, is the city of all the tribes. But in the enumeration to follow, only Benjamin, Judah and Levi feature.

c. Of the Temple personnel, most space is devoted to the gatekeepers, vv. 17–26: their functions are said to date from the desert shrine, vv. 19–21, and to have continued under Samuel and David at 'the house of the Tent', v. 23; they are praised for their dependability, v. 22; they are all descended from Korah, who was descended from Levi, v. 19. In point of fact, the gatekeepers were assimilated to the Levites only at a period considerably later than the return from exile, *see* Ezr 2:42; Ne 7:45 and the list in Ne 11, where they still figure as a separate (and inferior) group. Once upgraded to levitical status, they aspire to parity of rank with the singers, *see* vv. 17–18,27 and 2 Ch 20:19—twelve psalms are attributed to the sons of Korah.

d. The Chronicler assimilates Jerusalem to the Israelite camp described in the 'Priestly' texts.

e. One would expect a list of singers, as in the case of the other groups.

f. *see* 8:32e.

10 **a.** As preface to the story of David, which takes up the rest of the first book, the Chronicler recalls the tragic end of the first King of Israel, rejected by God.

the good news to their idols and their people. •They placed his armour in the 10
temple of their gods and nailed his head up in the temple of Dagon.

When all the inhabitants of Jabesh in Gilead [b] heard everything that the Philis- 11
tines had done to Saul, •the warriors all set out and took the bodies of Saul and his 12
sons away; they brought them to Jabesh and buried their bones under the tamarisk
of Jabesh and fasted for seven days.

Thus died Saul in the infidelity of which he had been guilty towards Yahweh, in 13
that he had not obeyed the word of Yahweh and because he had consulted a
necromancer for guidance. •He had not consulted Yahweh, who therefore caused 14
his death and transferred the monarchy to David son of Jesse. [c]

II: DAVID, FOUNDER OF THE TEMPLE LITURGY

A: DAVID THE KING

‖2 S 5:1–3 **David is anointed as king of Israel** [a]

11 All Israel then rallied to David at Hebron and said, 'Look, we are your own 1
flesh and bone. •In days past when Saul was king, it was you who led Israel 2
on its campaigns, and Yahweh your God promised you, "You are to shepherd my
people Israel and be leader of my people Israel." ' •So all the elders of Israel came 3
to the king at Hebron, and David made a pact with them in Yahweh's presence at
1 S 16:1–13 Hebron, and they anointed David as king of Israel, in accordance with the word of
Yahweh through Samuel.

‖2 S 5:6–10 **The capture of Jerusalem**

Jg 19:10d David and all Israel [b] then marched on Jerusalem (that is to say, Jebus); the 4
inhabitants of the territory were the Jebusites. •The inhabitants of Jebus said to 5
David, 'You will not get in here.' But David captured the citadel of Zion, that is,
the City of David. •David said, 'The first man to kill a Jebusite will be made army 6
commander and chief.' Joab son of Zeruiah was the first man to go up, and was
made commander of the army. •David went to live in the citadel, and that is how it 7
came to be called the City of David. •He then built a wall round the city, all round, 8
beginning from the Millo, and Joab restored the rest of the city. [c] •Thus David grew 9
stronger and stronger, for Yahweh Sabaoth was with him.

David's champions

These are David's principal champions who joined forces with him in his kingdom, 10
with all Israel, to make him king in accordance with the word of Yahweh concern-
‖2 S 23:8–39 ing Israel. •This is the roll of David's champions: Jashobeam son of Hachmoni, 11
head of the Three; [d] he it was who brandished his spear over three hundred men
whom he had killed at one time.

Next, there was Eleazar son of Dodo, the Ahohite, one of the three champions. 12
He was with David at Pas-Dammim when the Philistines mustered for battle 13
there. There was a field full of barley there; and the people fled from the Philistines.
And they took their stand in the middle of the field, held it and cut down the 14
Philistines; and Yahweh brought about a great victory.

Three members of the Thirty went down to David at the rock near the Cave of 15
Adullam while a company of Philistines was encamped in the Valley of the
Rephaim. •David was then in the stronghold and there was a Philistine garrison in 16
Bethlehem. •Longingly, David said, 'If only someone would fetch me a drink of 17
water from the well that stands by the gate at Bethlehem!' •At this the three 18
champions, forcing their way through the Philistine camp, drew water from the
well that stands by the gate of Bethlehem and, bringing it away, presented it to
David. David, however, would not drink any of it, but poured it out as a libation to

19 Yahweh. ·'God preserve me', he said, 'from doing such a thing! Am I to drink
these men's blood? For at the risk of their lives they brought it.' And so he would
not drink. Such were the deeds of the three champions.
20 Abishai, brother of Joab, was leader of the Thirty.[e] He it was who brandished
his spear over three hundred men whom he had killed, winning himself a name
21 among the Thirty. ·He was a most illustrious member of the Thirty and became
their captain, but he was not equal to the Three.[f]
22 Benaiah son of Jehoiada from Kabzeel was the hero of many exploits; he it was
who slaughtered two formidable Moabites and, one snowy day, climbed down and
23 slaughtered the lion in the storage-well. ·He also slaughtered an Egyptian, a man
who was seven and a half feet tall. The Egyptian was armed with a spear in his
hand like a weaver's beam, but he took him on with a staff, tore the spear from the
24 Egyptian's hand and killed the man with it. ·Such were the exploits of Benaiah son
25 of Jehoiada, winning him a name among the thirty champions. ·He was a most
illustrious member of the Thirty, but he was not equal to the Three. David put him
in command of his bodyguard.
26 The military champions were:[g]

Asahel brother of Joab;
Elhanan son of Dodo, of Bethlehem;
27 Shammoth of Haror;
Helez the Pelonite;
28 Ira son of Ikkesh, of Tekoa;
Abiezer of Anathoth;
29 Sibbecai of Hushah;
Ilai of Ahoh;
30 Maharai of Netophah;
Heled son of Baanah, of Netophah.
31 Ithai son of Ribai, of Gibeah in Benjamin.
Benaiah of Pirathon;
32 Hurai of the Torrents of Gaash;
Abiel of Beth-ha-Arabah;
33 Azmaveth of Bahurim;
Eliahba of Shaalbon;
34 the sons of Hashem of Gizon;
Jonathan son of Shagee, of Harar;
35 Ahiam son of Sachar, of Harar;
Eliphelet son of Ur;
36 Hepher of Mecherah;
Ahijah the Pelonite;
37 Hezro of Carmel;
Naarai son of Ezbai;
38 Joel brother of Nathan;
Mibhar son of Hagri;
39 Zelek the Ammonite;
Naharai of Beeroth, armour-bearer to Joab son of Zeruiah;
40 Ira of Jattir;
Gareb of Jattir;

b. 'the inhabitants of Jabesh in Gilead', conj. following 1 S 31:11; 'all Jabesh in Gilead' Hebr.

c. The last two verses express the Chronicler's judgement on the reign of Saul, about which he recalls only the unfavourable elements.

11 a. In fact, the rallying of the northern tribes to David took place some years after Saul's death, but the Chronicler sees David primarily as the man who united the tribes around Yahweh.

b. According to 2 S 5:6, Jerusalem was captured by David and his little private army on their own.

c. David dealt with the fortifications, while Joab had the less urgent task of making the city habitable.

d. 'Three' Gk-Luc.; 'Thirty' Hebr., but *see* v. 20.

e. 'Thirty' Syr., Gk MSS; 'Three' Hebr., as in v. 24, but *see* vv. 21 and 25.

f. A gloss adds: 'among the two'.

g. As far as Uriah, v. 41[a], the list corresponds with that of 2 S 23:24–39. The sixteen additional heroes, vv. 41[b]–47, are for the most part natives of Transjordan, from a list available to the Chronicler or a later editor.

Uriah the Hittite; 41
Zabad son of Ahlai;
Adina son of Shiza the Reubenite, chief of the Reubenites and 42
commander of the Thirty;
Hanan son of Maacah; 43
Joshaphat the Mithnite;
Uzzia of Ashteroth; 44
Shama and Jeiel sons of Hotham of Aroer;
Jediael son of Shimri, and Joha his brother, the Tizite; 45
Eliel the Mahavite; 46
Jeribai and Joshaviah sons of Elnaam;
Ithmah the Moabite;
Eliel, Obed, and Jaasiel of Zobah. 47

Early defections to David [a]

12 These are the men who rallied to David at Ziklag while he was still being 1
kept away from Saul son of Kish; they were among the champions, the
8:40h warriors. ·They were equipped with bows and could sling stones or shoot arrows 2
from the bow with either right hand or left.

Of Saul's fellow-tribesmen from Benjamin: ·Ahiezer the leader, and Joash, sons 3
of Hassemar of Gibeah, Jeziel and Peleth, sons of Azmaveth, Berachah and Jehu
of Anathoth, ·Ishmaiah of Gibeon, one of the champions in the Thirty and 4
commander of the Thirty, ·Jeremiah, Jahaziel, Johanan and Jozabed of Gederoth, 5
Eluzai, Jerimoth, Bealiah, Shemariah, Shephatiah of Hariph, ·Elkanah, Isshiah, 6, 7
Azarel, Joezer and Jashobeam the Korahites, ·Joelah, Zebadiah, sons of Jeroham 8
of Gedor.

From the Gadites, some good, capable fighting men defected and came to David 9 8
Dt 33:20 at the stronghold in the desert—all skilled with shield and spear, fierce as lions and
nimble as mountain gazelles. ·Ezer was the leader, Obadiah second, Eliab third, 10 9
Mishmannah fourth, Jeremiah fifth, ·Attai sixth, Eliel seventh, ·Johanan eighth, 11–13 10–12
Elzabad ninth, ·Jeremiah tenth, Machbannai eleventh. ·These Gadites were the 14, 15 13, 14
leaders of the troops, the least of them a match for a hundred men and the greatest
a match for a thousand. ·These were the men who once crossed the Jordan in the 16 15
first month, when it had overflowed its banks and had driven out all the lowlanders
to east and west.

Some of the Benjaminites and Judahites also joined David at the stronghold. 17 16
When David came forward to meet them, he responded to them by saying, 'If you 18 17
have come to me with peaceful intent to help me, you will find me a good friend.
But if it is to betray me to my enemies, seeing that I have done nothing wrong, may
the God of our ancestors take note and condemn you.'

Then the Spirit invested Amasai the leader of the Thirty: 19 18

'We are your men, David; with you, son of Jesse!
Peace be with you, peace be with you; peace be with those who help
you!
For your God has helped you!'

And David accepted them, including them among his more senior officers.

Some Manassehites also defected to David as he was setting out with the 20 19
Philistines to fight Saul. But he did not help the Philistines because, after consul-
1 S 29 tation, their chiefs sent him away, saying, 'He will defect to his master Saul and it
will cost us our heads!' ·He was on his way to Ziklag when these Manassehites 21 20
deserted to him: Adnah, Jozabad, Jediael, Michael, Jozabad, Elihu, Zillethai,
chiefs of thousands in Manasseh. ·They helped David and his band, since they 22 21
were all men of standing and became officers in the army.

Indeed reinforcements reached David day after day, so that his camp grew into 23 22
a camp of prodigious size. [b]

The warriors who assured David's kingship

23 24 These are the numbers of fully armed men who joined David at Hebron to transfer
Saul's kingdom to him in accordance with the order of Yahweh:
24 25 Judahites carrying shield and spear: six thousand eight hundred fully armed
warriors;
25 26 Simeonites; seven thousand one hundred champions valiant in war;
27, 28 / 26, 27 Levites: four thousand six hundred, •in addition to Jehoiada,[c] in command of
28 29 the Aaronites, with three thousand seven hundred of these, •Zadok, a young and
valiant champion, and twenty-two commanders of his family;
29 30 Benjaminites: three thousand kinsmen of Saul, most of them hitherto in the
service of the House of Saul;
30 31 Ephraimites: twenty thousand eight hundred valiant champions, men famous in
their families;
31 32 of the half-tribe of Manasseh: eighteen thousand men assigned by name to go
and proclaim David king;
32 33 Issacharites, sound judges of the times when Israel should take action, and the
way to do it: two hundred chiefs and all their kinsmen under their command;
33 34 Zebulunites: fifty thousand men fit for service, marshalled for battle, with
warlike weapons of every kind, staunch-hearted auxiliaries;
34 35 Naphtalites: a thousand commanders, and with them thirty-seven thousand men
armed with shield and spear;
35 36 Danites: twenty-eight thousand six hundred men marshalled for battle;
36 37 Asherites: forty thousand men fit for service, marshalled for battle;
37 38 from Transjordan: a hundred and twenty thousand men of Reuben, Gad and the
half-tribe of Manasseh, with warlike weapons of every kind.
38 39 All these warriors in battle array came to David at Hebron with the firm
determination of making David king of all Israel; and the rest of Israel, too, was of
39 40 one mind in wanting to make David king. •For three days they stayed there with
David, eating and drinking, their fellow-tribesmen having made preparations for
40 41 them; •their neighbours too, from as far away as Issachar and Zebulun and
Naphtali, came bringing food on donkeys, camels, mules and oxen—supplies of
flour, fig cakes, bunches of raisins, wine, oil, quantities of oxen and sheep—for
there was joy in Israel.

The ark brought back from Kiriath-Jearim[a]

1 13 David conferred with the commanders of the thousands and the hundreds,
2 in fact with all the leaders. •Then, to the whole assembly of Israel, David
said, 'If this has your approval, and if Yahweh our God wills it so, we shall send
messengers to the rest of our brothers throughout the territories of Israel, and also
to the priests and Levites in their towns and pasture lands, bidding them join us.
3 And then we will go and recover the ark of our God, for in the days of Saul we
neglected to do it.'
4 The whole assembly agreed to this, because all the people thought that this was
5 the right thing to do. •So David summoned all Israel from the Shihor of Egypt to Jg 20:1a
6 the Pass of Hamath, to bring the ark of God from Kiriath-Jearim. •David and all ||2 S 6:2–11

12 a. The ch. falls into two parts: David's supporters before he came to power, vv. 1–23, and the companies from the twelve tribes who made him king of all Israel, vv. 24–41. The ch. has no parallel in Samuel. The first part probably relies on an early source. If the Chronicler was himself responsible for the second part—which may, however, be an addition—his intention was to show that David was brought to power by the entire nation, *see* 11:1, and not by a faction.

b. lit. 'a camp of the gods', a Hebr. form of the superlative.

c. The name Jehoiada has been substituted for that of Abiathar, which ought to appear here, *see* 2 S 8:17. Abiathar was, however, stripped of office for disloyalty by Solomon, 1 K 2:26–27. A Jehoiada was chief priest in Jerusalem, but very much later, *see* 2 K 11–12.

13 a. David's first action after taking Jerusalem, 11:4–9, was to recover the ark from Kiriath-Jearim. The Chronicler places this section before the victory over the Philistines, 14:8–16, which the Book of Samuel places after the return of the ark, and which historically should precede the capture of Jerusalem. The Chronicler's interest in the reign of David is centred on what concerns the sanctuary. Here he depends closely on the text of 2 S, but he adds the introduction, vv. 1–3, where once again the whole assembly of Israel features.

Israel then went up to Baalah, to Kiriath-Jearim in Judah, from there to bring up the ark of God, which bears the title 'Yahweh enthroned on the winged creatures'. They transported the ark of God out of Abinadab's house on a new cart. Uzzah 7
and Ahio drove the cart. ·David and all Israel danced before God with all their 8
might, singing to the accompaniment of harps, lyres, tambourines, cymbals and trumpets. ·When they came to the threshing-floor of the Javelin, Uzzah reached 9
out his hand to steady the ark, as the oxen were making it tilt. ·This roused 10
Yahweh's anger against Uzzah, and he struck him down because he had laid his hand on the Ark, and there he died before God. ·David resented Yahweh's having 11
broken out against Uzzah, and the place was given the name Perez-Uzzah, which it still has today.

That day David felt afraid of God. 'How can I bring the ark of God to be with 12
me?' he said. ·So David did not take the ark with him into the City of David but 13
had it put in the house of Obed-Edom of Gath. ·The ark of God remained with 14
Obed-Edom, in his house, for three months, and Yahweh blessed Obed-Edom's family and everything that belonged to him.

David in Jerusalem, his palace, his children [a]

‖2 S 5:11–16 14 Hiram king of Tyre sent envoys to David, with cedar wood, stone-cutters 1
and carpenters, to build him a palace. ·David then knew that Yahweh had 2
confirmed him as king of Israel and, for the sake of his people, had extended his sovereignty.

=3:5–8 David took more wives in Jerusalem and fathered more sons and daughters. 3
These are the names of the children born to him in Jerusalem: Shammua, 4
Shobab, Nathan, Solomon, ·Ibhar, Elishua, Elpelet, ·Nogah, Nepheg, Japhia, 5, 6
Elishama, Beeliada, Eliphelet. 7

‖2 S 5:17–25 **Victories over the Philistines**

When the Philistines heard that David had been anointed as king of all Israel, they 8
all invaded to seek him out. On hearing this, David marched out towards them. When the Philistines arrived, they deployed in the Valley of the Rephaim. 9
David consulted God and asked, 'Shall I attack the Philistines? Will you deliver 10
them into my power?' Yahweh replied to him, 'Attack! I shall deliver them into your power.' ·Accordingly, they went up to Baal-Perazim and there David de- 11
feated them. David said, 'Through me God has made a breach in my enemies, as though they had been breached by a flood.' This is why the place was given the name Baal-Perazim. ·They had left their gods behind there, and David ordered 12
them to be burnt.

Again the Philistines deployed in the valley. ·David again consulted God, and 13, 14
God replied, 'Do not attack them from the front; go round and engage them opposite the balsam trees. ·When you hear the sound of footsteps in the tops of the 15
balsam trees, launch your attack, for that will be God going out ahead of you to defeat the Philistine army.' ·David did as God had ordered, and they beat the 16
Philistine army from Gibeon to Gezer.

David's fame then spread to every country, and Yahweh made him feared by 17
every nation.

B: THE ARK IN THE CITADEL OF DAVID

Preparations for moving the ark [a]

Nb 1:50;3:5 seq.;4:7–9 Dt 31:25 15 After he had put up buildings for himself in the City of David, he prepared 1
a place for the ark of God and pitched a tent for it. ·David then said, 'No 2
one but the Levites should carry the ark of God, since Yahweh has chosen them to carry the ark of Yahweh and to minister to him for ever.' [b]

David then summoned all Israel to Jerusalem, to move the ark of Yahweh to the
place which he had prepared for it. ·David also called the sons of Aaron and the
Levites together: ·of the sons of Kohath: Uriel the chief and his hundred
and twenty kinsmen; ·of the sons of Merari: Asaiah the chief and his two
hundred and twenty kinsmen; ·of the sons of Gershom: Joel the chief and his hun-
dred and thirty kinsmen; ·of the sons of Elizaphan: Shemaiah the chief and his two
9, 10 hundred kinsmen; ·of the sons of Hebron: Eliel the chief and eighty kinsmen; ·of
the sons of Uzziel: Amminadab the chief and his hundred and twelve kinsmen.
11 David then sent for the priests Zadok and Abiathar, and the Levites Uriel,
12 Asaiah, Joel, Shemaiah, Eliel and Amminadab. ·To them he said, 'You are the
heads of the levitical families. Sanctify yourselves, you and your kinsmen, so that
you can move the ark of Yahweh, God of Israel, to the place which I have prepared
13 for it. ·Because you were not there the first time, Yahweh our God broke out at
14 us [c] because we did not handle it properly.' ·So the priests and the Levites sanctified
15 themselves, to move the ark of Yahweh, God of Israel, ·and the Levites carried Nb 7:9
the ark of God with the shafts on their shoulders, as Moses had ordered in
accordance with the word of Yahweh.
16 David also told the heads of the Levites to appoint their kinsmen as singers with
the accompaniment of musical instruments, lyres, harps, and cymbals to play
17 joyfully. ·The Levites then appointed Heman son of Joel, Asaph son of Bere-
chiah, one of his brothers, Ethan son of Kushaiah, one of their Merarite kinsmen;
18 and with them their kinsmen of the second rank: Zechariah, Uzziel, Shemiramoth,
Jehiel, Unni, Eliab, Benaiah, Maaseiah, Mattithiah, Eliphelehu, Mikneiah,
19 and Obed-Edom and Jehiel the gatekeepers. ·The singers, Heman, Asaph and
20 Ethan, were to play the bronze cymbals. ·Zechariah, Uzziel, Shemiramoth, Jehiel,
21 Unni, Eliab, Maaseiah and Benaiah were to play the lyre. ·Mattithiah, Eliphelehu,
Mikneiah, Obed-Edom, Jehiel and Azaziah, giving the beat, were to play the
22 harp. [d] ·Chenaniah, the levitical director of transport was in charge of the transport,
23, 24 being skilful at it. ·Berechiah and Elkanah were gatekeepers for the ark. ·The
priests Shebaniah, Joshaphat, Nethanel, Amasai, Zechariah, Benaiah and Eliezer
blew trumpets before the ark of God, while Obed-Edom and Jehiah were also
gatekeepers for the ark.

The ark is brought to Jerusalem ‖2 S 6:12–19

25 David, the elders of Israel and the commanders of the thousands accordingly went,
amid great rejoicing, to bring the ark of the covenant of Yahweh up from Obed-
26 Edom's house. ·and since God was helping the Levites who carried the ark of the
27 covenant of Yahweh, they sacrificed seven bulls and seven rams. ·David, all the
Levites who carried the ark, the singers and Chenaniah, director of transport, [e]
28 wore cloaks of fine linen. David also wore a linen *ephod*. ·Thus, with war-cries and
the sounding of the horn, the trumpets and the cymbals, and the music of lyres and
29 harps, all Israel transported the ark of the covenant of Yahweh. ·Now, as the ark
of the covenant of Yahweh entered the City of David, Michal daughter of Saul was
watching from the window and, when she saw King David dancing and playing, the
sight of him filled her with contempt.

14 **a.** The Chronicler uses the three-month interval when the ark was in the house of Obed-Edom, 13:14, to fit in material about David's new palace, his family, his defeat of the Philistines and his preparations for the reception of the ark, 15:1–3.

15 **a.** Before continuing the narrative of 2 S at 1 Ch 15:25, the original book of Ch seems to have contained only vv. 1–3,11–15: the erection of the tent for the ark, and the restatement of the levitical laws, breach of which caused the tragic incident at Perez-Uzzah, 13:9seq. Additions have been made since: a list of priests and Levites, vv. 4–10; and a description of the orchestra accompanying the ark, vv. 16–24.

b. The Chronicler is about to define the part played in the ceremony by priests and Levites, after the fashion of the 'Priestly' texts.

c. The absence of the Levites accounts for the disaster, to the author's way of thinking, 13:10seq; *see* 2 S 6:8g.

d. Translation doubtful. The other names of instruments recur in the Ps.

e. After 'transport' Hebr. adds 'singers' by dittography.

16 They brought the ark of God in and put it inside the tent which David had 1
erected for it, and brought burnt offerings and made communion sacrifices
in God's presence. ·And when David had finished making burnt offerings and 2
communion sacrifices, he blessed the people in the name of Yahweh. ·To all the 3
Israelites, both men and women, to each, he then distributed a loaf of bread, a
portion of meat and a raisin cake.

The service of the Levites before the ark [a]

He appointed some of the Levites as ministers before the ark of Yahweh, to extol, 4
glorify and praise Yahweh, God of Israel; ·first Asaph, second Zechariah, then 5
Uzziel, [b] Shemiramoth, Jehiel, Mattithiah, Eliab, Benaiah, Obed-Edom and Jeiel,
who played the lyre and harp, while Asaph played the cymbals. ·The priests 6
Benaiah and Jahaziel continually blew the trumpet before the ark of the covenant
of God. ·On that day, David was the first to assign to Asaph and his kinsmen the 7
giving of thanks to Yahweh: [c]

‖Ps 105:1–15

Give thanks to Yahweh, call his name aloud, 8
proclaim his deeds to the peoples.
Chant to him, play to him, 9
sing about all his wonders!

Take pride in his holy name, 10
let your heart rejoice, you seekers of Yahweh!
Seek out Yahweh, seek his strength, 11
continually seek out his presence!

Remember what wonders he has done, 12
what miracles, what rulings he has given,
you offspring of Israel his servant, 13
you children of Jacob his chosen one!

For he is Yahweh our God, 14
his authority extends throughout the world.

For ever remember his covenant, 15
the pact imposed for a thousand generations,
which he concluded with Abraham, 16
which was sworn by him to Isaac,

since he confirmed it as a law for Jacob, 17
as an eternal covenant for Israel,
saying, 'I will give you the country; 18
Canaan is the measure of your inheritance,

'though you are few in number, 19
only a few strangers there!'

As they wandered from nation to nation, 20
from this kingdom to that people,
he would not let anyone oppress them 21
and on their account he admonished kings,
'You are not to touch my anointed ones, 22
my prophets are not to be harmed!'

‖Ps 96

Sing to Yahweh, all the earth, 23
day after day proclaim his salvation!
Declare his glory among the nations, 24
his marvels to every people!

Great is Yahweh, worthy of all praise, 25

more awesome than any of the gods.
26 Nothingness, all the gods of the nations.

Yahweh it was who made the heavens,
27 in his presence are splendour and majesty,
in his sanctuary strength and joy.

28 Give Yahweh his due, families of peoples,
give Yahweh his due of glory and power,
29 give Yahweh the glory due to his name!

Bring an offering and enter his courts,
bow down to Yahweh in his sacred court,
30 tremble before him, all the earth!

The world is firm, it cannot be moved,
31 let the heavens rejoice and earth be glad!
Say among the nations, 'Yahweh is king!'
32 Let the sea thunder and all it holds,
the countryside exult and everything that is in it,
33 and all the trees of the forest cry out for joy
at Yahweh's approach, for he is coming to judge the earth.

34 Give thanks to Yahweh, for he is good, ‖Ps 106:1,47–48
for his faithful love lasts for ever!

35 Say, 'Save us, God of our salvation,
gather us together and free us from the nations,
so that we may give thanks to your holy name—
to be extolled whenever you are praised!'

36 Blessed be Yahweh, God of Israel,
from everlasting to everlasting!

To which all the people said, 'Amen, Alleluia!'

37 There before the ark of the covenant of Yahweh David left Asaph and his kinsmen to maintain a permanent ministry before the ark as each day's ritual
38 required, ·and also Obed-Edom with his sixty-eight kinsmen. Obed-Edom son of Jeduthun, and Hosah [d] were gatekeepers.
39 Zadok the priest and the priests, his kinsmen, he left before the dwelling of
40 Yahweh on the high place at Gibeon [e] ·to bring burnt offerings to Yahweh unfailingly, morning and evening, on the altar of burnt offering, and to carry out all that
41 is written in the Law of Yahweh laid down for Israel. ·With them were Heman and Jeduthun and the rest of those who were chosen and assigned by name to give
42 thanks to Yahweh, 'for his faithful love lasts for ever'. ·With them were Heman and Jeduthun to play trumpets and cymbals, as well as instruments for accompanying sacred song. The sons of Jeduthun were in charge of the gates.

16 **a.** The Chronicler logically dates the institution of the sung liturgy to the installation of the ark in its tent at Jerusalem, v. 7. According to him, the entire Temple liturgy could be traced back to David and conformed even in those remote times to the prescriptions of the Priestly Code. But *see* 15:16–24 where the addition dates the sung liturgy to even earlier.

b. 'Uzziel', *see* 15:18; 'Jeiel' Hebr.

c. The psalmody consists of Ps 105:1–15, a slightly disordered and shortened version of 96, and the antiphon and concluding lines of 106: with minor variants. For commentary, *see* Psalms.

d. Ps 39, 62 and 77 are ascribed to Jeduthun. Here he appears as father of Obed-Edom, v. 38, and hence of the gatekeepers, v. 42. Some Levites at the time of Nehemiah were descended from him, Ne 11:17. For Hosah, *see* 26:10.

e. The sanctuary at Gibeon had probably replaced the one at Shiloh after the Philistines captured the ark. Under Solomon, it was the most important of the high places, 1 K 3:4–15. The Chronicler takes historical account of this, justifying it on the grounds that the 'Dwelling', i.e. the Desert Tent, was there. *see* 21:29; 2 Ch 1:3. Hence he divides the cultic personnel between the sanctuary of the Dwelling and the new sanctuary of the ark in Jerusalem.

Then all the people went back to their homes, and David went back to bless his household. 43

‖2 S 6:19–20

‖2 S 7:1–17

Nathan's prophecy [a]

17 It happened, once David had settled into his palace, that David said to the prophet Nathan, 'Here am I living in a cedar-wood palace, while the ark of the covenant of Yahweh is under awnings.' ·Nathan said to David, 'Do whatever you have in mind, for God is with you.' 1 2

But that very night the word of God came to Nathan, as follows: 3

'Go and tell my servant David, "Yahweh says this: You must not build a temple for me to live in. ·I have never lived in a house from the day when I brought Israel out until today, but have kept travelling from tent to tent and from shelter to shelter. ·In all my travels with all Israel, did I say to any of the judges of Israel, whom I had commanded to shepherd my people: Why do you not build me a cedar-wood temple? ·This is what you must say to my servant David: Yahweh Sabaoth says this: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, to be leader of my people Israel. ·I have been with you wherever you went; I have got rid of all your enemies for you. I am going to make your fame like that of the greatest men on earth. ·I am going to provide a place for my people Israel; I shall plant them there and there they will live and never be disturbed again; nor will they be oppressed by the wicked as they were in former times ·ever since I instituted judges to govern my people Israel; I shall subdue all your enemies. Yahweh moreover tells you that he will build you a dynasty. [b] ·And when your days are over and you have gone to join your ancestors, I shall appoint your heir—who will be one of your sons—to succeed you, and I shall make his sovereignty secure. He will build a temple for me and I shall make his throne secure for ever. ·I shall be his father and he will be my son, and I shall not withdraw my favour from him, as I withdrew it from your predecessor. ·I shall set him over my temple and kingdom for ever and his throne will be for ever secure." ' 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12, 13 14

Nathan related all these words and this whole revelation to David. 15

‖2 S 7:18–29

David's prayer

King David then went in, sat down in Yahweh's presence and said: 16

'Who am I, Yahweh God, and what is my lineage, that you have led me as far as this? ·Yet, to you, O God, this seemed too little, and now you extend your promises for your servant's family into the distant future, making me see as it were a whole succession of men, and it is Yahweh God himself who raises it up. ·What more can David reply to you for the honour you have given to your servant? You yourself have singled out your servant. ·For your servant, and since you were so inclined, you have had the generosity to reveal all this greatness to come. Yahweh, there is no one like you, no God but you alone, as everything that we have heard confirms. ·Is there another people on earth like your people Israel, whom a god has proceeded to redeem, to make them his people and to make them famous and do for them great and terrible deeds, by driving out nations before your people, whom you redeemed from Egypt? [c]—·for you made your people Israel your own people for ever and you, Yahweh, became their God. 17 18 19 20 21 22

'Now, Yahweh, may the promise which you have made for your servant and as regards his family hold good for ever, and do as you have said. ·May it hold good, so your name will be exalted for ever and people will say, "Israel's God is Yahweh Sabaoth; he is God for Israel." Your servant David's dynasty will be secure before you ·since you, my God, have disclosed to your servant that you are going to build him a dynasty. Hence, your servant has ventured to offer this prayer to you. ·Yes, Yahweh, you are God indeed, and you have made this generous promise to your servant. ·What is more, you have deigned to bless your servant's dynasty, so that it may remain for ever before you; and since you, Yahweh, have blessed it, blessed will it be for ever.' 23 24 25 26 27

David's wars [a] ‖2 S 8:1–14

18 After this David defeated the Philistines and subdued them. From the grip of the Philistines he wrested Gath and its dependencies. •He also defeated the Moabites; the Moabites became David's subjects and paid him tribute.
David also defeated Hadadezer king of Zobah, which lies in the direction of Hamath, when the latter mounted an expedition to assert his rule on the River Euphrates. •David captured one thousand chariots, seven thousand charioteers and twenty thousand foot soldiers from him; David hamstrung all the chariot teams, keeping only a hundred of them. •The Aramaeans of Damascus came to the help of Hadadezer king of Zobah, but David killed twenty-two thousand of the Aramaeans. •David then imposed governors in Aram of Damascus, and the Aramaeans became David's subjects and paid him tribute. Wherever David went, Yahweh gave him victory. •David took the golden shields carried by Hadadezer's guards and brought them to Jerusalem. •From Tibhath and from Cun, towns belonging to Hadadezer, David captured a great quantity of bronze, with which 22:3
Solomon made the bronze Sea, the pillars and the bronze implements.
When Tou king of Hamath heard that David had defeated the entire army of Hadadezer king of Zobah, •he sent his son Hadoram to King David to greet him and to congratulate him on having made war on Hadadezer and on having defeated him, since Hadadezer was at war with Tou. He also sent all sorts of objects made of gold, silver and bronze, •which King David also consecrated to Yahweh, as well as the silver and gold which he had levied from all the nations, from Edom, Moab, the Ammonites, the Philistines and Amalek.
Abishai son of Zeruiah defeated the Edomites in the Valley of Salt—eighteen thousand of them. •He stationed garrisons in Edom, and all the Edomites became David's subjects. Wherever David went, Yahweh gave him victory.

The administration of the kingdom

David ruled over all Israel, administering law and justice to all his people. •Joab ‖2 S 8:15–18
son of Zeruiah was in command of the army; Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud was herald; •Zadok son of Ahitub and Abiathar son of Ahimelech were priests; [b] Shusha was secretary; •Benaiah son of Jehoiada was in command of the Cherethites and Pelethites; David's sons took first place after the king. [c]

David's ambassadors are insulted ‖2 S 10:1–5

19 After this, when Nahash king of the Ammonites died and his son Hanun succeeded him, •David thought, 'I shall show Hanun son of Nahash the same faithful love as his father showed me.' And David sent representatives to offer him condolences over his father. But when David's representatives reached Hanun in the Ammonites' country to present these condolences, •the Ammonite leaders said to Hanun, 'Do you really think David means to honour your father when he sends you messengers with sympathy? On the contrary, the reason why his representatives have come to you is to explore, overthrow and reconnoitre the country.' •Whereupon Hanun seized David's representatives, shaved them, cut their clothes off half-way up, right by their buttocks, and sent them away. •As soon as David was told how the men had been treated, he sent someone to meet them,

17 a. The Chronicler has taken over Nathan's prophecy in 2 S 7 almost word for word. It is a key text for him, since it embodies the covenant with David and the permanence of his dynasty as the recipient of the messianic promise. His only modifications are to make clear that the promise made to David will come true first of all in the person of one of his sons (Solomon), v. 11, and to suppress the possibility of misconduct in any of David's successors (2 S 7:14).

b. 'Yahweh, moreover, tells you that he will build you a dynasty' following 2 S 7: 'I tell you that Yahweh will build you a dynasty' Hebr.

c. Verse corrected, following parallel passage of Samuel, *see* 2 S 7:23k.

18 a. From the detailed history of David's reign, 2 S 9—1 K 2, the Chronicler omits anything which might tarnish the reputation of the king and his immediate family, e.g. the murders, intrigues and revolts, only mentioning the king's victories, to emphasise that David was not to build the Temple, 17:4–13, because he had been a man of war, 22:8; 28:3. The spoils of his victories, however, were to finance the building of it, vv. 7–8,10–11; 29:2–5.

b. The Chronicler uses the already retouched 2 S 8:17 to make Zadok of levitical descent.

c. According to 2 S 8:18, they were priests; but by the Chronicler's times the idea that priests could come from non-levitical families was no longer acceptable.

since the men were overcome with shame. 'Stay in Jericho,' the king said, 'until your beards have grown, and come back then.'

‖2 S 10:6–14 **The first Ammonite campaign**

When the Ammonites realised that they had antagonised David, Hanun and the 6
Ammonites sent a thousand talents of silver to hire chariots and cavalry from the
Aramaeans of Upper Mesopotamia, of Maacah and of Zobah. ·They hired thirty- 7
two thousand chariots and the king of Maacah with his people, who came and
encamped before Medeba, while the Ammonites, having left their towns and
mustered, were advancing to the war. ·When David heard this, he sent Joab with 8
the whole army, the champions. ·The Ammonites marched out and drew up their 9
line of battle at the city gate, while the kings who had come kept their distance in
the open country. ·Joab, seeing that he had to fight on two fronts, to his front and 10
to his rear, chose the best of Israel's picked men and drew them up in line facing
the Aramaeans. ·He entrusted the rest of the army to his brother Abishai, and 11
drew them up in line facing the Ammonites. ·'If the Aramaeans prove too strong 12
for me,' he said, 'you must come to my help; if the Ammonites prove too strong for
you, I shall come to yours. ·Be brave and let us fight valiantly, for the sake of our 13
people and for the cities of our God! And let Yahweh dispose as he thinks fit!'
Joab and the force with him joined battle with the Aramaeans, who fled at his 14
onslaught. ·When the Ammonites saw that the Aramaeans had fled, they too fled 15
from his brother Abishai and withdrew into the city. Joab then returned to
Jerusalem.

‖2 S 10:15–19 **Victory over the Aramaeans**

The Aramaeans, realising that Israel had got the better of them, sent messengers 16
and mobilised the Aramaeans living on the other side of the River, with Shophach,
commander of Hadadezer's army, at their head. ·David, being informed of this, 17
mustered all Israel, crossed the Jordan, made contact with them and took up
position near them. David drew up his line of battle facing the Aramaeans, who
then engaged him. ·But the Aramaeans fled from Israel, and David killed seven 18
thousand of their chariot teams and forty thousand men; and also Shophach, the
commander of the army. ·When Hadadezer's vassals saw that Israel had got the 19
better of them, they made peace with David and became his subjects. The Ara-
maeans were unwilling to give any more help to the Ammonites.

The second Ammonite campaign

‖2 S 11:1 **20** At the turn of the year, at the time when kings go campaigning, Joab led out 1
the troops and, having ravaged the Ammonites' territory, proceeded to lay
‖2 S 12:26 siege to Rabbah. David, however, remained in Jerusalem. Joab reduced Rabbah
‖2 S 12:30–31 and dismantled it. ·David took the crown off Milcom's[a] head and found that it 2
weighed a talent of gold, and in it was set a precious stone which went on David's
head instead. He carried off great quantities of booty from the city. ·And he 3
expelled its inhabitants, setting them to work with saws, iron picks and axes. David
treated all the Ammonite towns in the same way. David and all the people then
returned to Jerusalem.

Various exploits against the Philistines

‖2 S 21:18–22 After this war broke out with the Philistines at Gezer. This was when Sibbecai of 4
Dt 1:28g Hushah killed Sippai, one of the Rephaim, and the Philistines were subdued.

Again, war with the Philistines broke out, and Elhanan son of Jair killed Lahmi 5
brother of Goliath of Gath,[b] the shaft of whose spear was like a weaver's beam.

There was further warfare at Gath, where there was a man of huge stature with 6
six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot, twenty-four in all. He too was a
son of Rapha. ·When he defied Israel, Jonathan son of Shimea, brother of David 7
cut him down.

8 These men were sons of Rapha in Gath and fell at the hands of David and his guards.

C: PRELUDE TO THE BUILDING OF THE TEMPLE[a]

The census[b]

||2 S 24:1–9

1 21 Satan[c] took his stand against Israel and incited David to take a census of
2 Israel. •David said to Joab and the people's princes, 'Go, and take a census of Israel, from Beersheba to Dan, then bring it back to me and let me know the
3 total.' •Joab replied, 'May Yahweh multiply his people to a hundred times what they are today! But my lord king, are they not all my lord's servants in any case?
4 Why should my lord insist on this? Why should he involve Israel in guilt?' •But the king enforced his order on Joab, and Joab set out, travelled throughout all Israel,
5 and then returned to Jerusalem. •Joab gave David the census results for the people: all Israel had eleven hundred thousand men who could wield a sword; Judah had
6 four hundred and seventy thousand men who could wield a sword.[d] •Joab had found the king's command so distasteful that he did not include Levi and Benjamin.

The pestilence. God's forgiveness

||2 S 24:10–17

7, 8 God looked with displeasure on this and punished Israel in consequence. •David then said to God, 'I have committed a grave sin by doing this. But now I beg you to
9 forgive your servant for this fault, for I have acted very foolishly.' •Yahweh then
10 spoke to Gad, David's seer, •'Go and say to David, "Yahweh says this: I offer you
11 three things; choose which one of them I am to inflict on you." ' •So Gad went to
12 David and said, 'Yahweh says this, •"Take your choice between three years of famine; or three months of disaster at the hands of your enemies, with your enemies' sword overtaking you; or three days of Yahweh's sword, an epidemic in the country, while the angel of Yahweh wreaks havoc throughout the territory of
13 Israel." Now decide how I am to answer him who sends me.' •David said to Gad, 'I am very apprehensive. Better for me to fall into Yahweh's hand, since his mercies are very great, than for me to fall into the hands of human enemies.'

14 So Yahweh unleashed an epidemic on Israel, and seventy thousand Israelites
15 succumbed. •Next, God sent the angel to Jerusalem to destroy it, but as he was about to destroy it, Yahweh looked down and felt sorry about the calamity; and he said to the destroying angel, 'Enough now! Hold your hand!' The angel of Yahweh
16 was standing by the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite. •[e]David, raising his eyes, saw the angel of Yahweh standing between earth and heaven, a drawn sword Jos 5:13e
in his hand stretched out towards Jerusalem. David and the elders then put on
17 sackcloth and fell on their faces, •and David said to God, 'Did I not order the people to be counted? I was the one who sinned and actually committed the wrong. But these, the flock, what have they done? Yahweh my God, let your hand lie heavy on me and on my family; but spare your people from the plague!'

20 a. 'Milcom' LXX and Vulg.; 'their king' Hebr. • Between vv. 1 and 2, the Chronicler suppresses the long narrative of David and Bathsheba, 2 S 11:2–12:25.

b. The Chronicler thus interprets 2 S 21:19 with an eye to 1 S 17 where David is credited with defeating Goliath.

21 a. This chapter begins a most important section: the organisation of worship and sacred officials in the Davidic community to which the messianic promises of Nathan's prophecy were addressed.

b. The Chronicler has kept this episode, although David figures as a sinner in it, v. 8, since it ends with the building of an altar on the site where the future Temple was to stand, v. 18f.

c. The Chronicler, with his developed theology, attributes to Satan (*see* Jb 1:6g) what 2 S, with the ultimate cause in mind, ascribed to 'the anger of Yahweh'.

d. The figures in 2 S 24 are different, *see* 1 Ch 27:24. Levi is excluded from the census, as in Nb 1.

e. This passage, found only in Ch, presupposes a new conception of angels, close to that of Dn 9:21 and 2 M 10:29.

‖2 S 24:18–25 **The altar is built** [f]

The angel of Yahweh then ordered Gad to tell David that David should go up and 18
erect an altar to Yahweh on the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite. ·So, at 19
Gad's bidding, given in Yahweh's name, David went up. ·Ornan had turned 20
round and seen the angel, and he and his four sons with him had hidden. ·When 21
David arrived Ornan was threshing wheat. He looked up and saw David and came
off the threshing-floor and prostrated himself on the ground at David's feet.
David then said to Ornan, 'Let me have the site of the threshing-floor, so that I 22
can build an altar to Yahweh on it; let me have it at the full price—so that the
plague may be lifted from the people.' Ornan said to David, ·'Take it, and let my 23
lord the king do what he thinks fit. Look, I shall give you the oxen for burnt
offerings, the threshing-sleds for the wood and the wheat for the oblation. I shall
give everything.'

'No,' said King David to Ornan, 'I insist on buying it at the full price. I will not 24
offer Yahweh what belongs to you or bring burnt offerings which have cost me
nothing.' ·So David gave Ornan six hundred shekels of gold by weight 25
for the site.

There David built an altar to Yahweh and brought burnt offerings and peace 26
1 K 18:38 offerings. He called on Yahweh, and Yahweh answered him with fire from heaven
on the altar of burnt offering. ·Then Yahweh ordered the angel to sheathe his 27
sword. ·Whereupon, seeing that Yahweh had answered him on the threshing-floor 28
of Ornan the Jebusite, David offered sacrifice there. ·The Dwelling which Moses 29
had made in the desert and the altar of burnt offering were at that time on the high
place at Gibeon, ·but David could not go there to consult God because he was 30
terrified of the angel's sword. [g]

22 David then said, 'This is to be the house of Yahweh God and this the altar 1
of burnt offering for Israel.'

Preparations for the building of the Temple [a]

David then gave orders for all foreigners in Israel to be rounded up, and appointed [b] 2
1 K 5:31–32 quarrymen to cut dressed stone for building the house of God. ·David also pre- 3
pared great quantities of iron to make nails for the leaves of the doors and for the
clamps, and more bronze than could be weighed, ·as well as innumerable cedar- 4
wood logs, as the Sidonians and Tyrians had brought cedar logs to David in great
quantities.

David then said, 'My son Solomon is young and immature, and the house to be 5
built for Yahweh must be superlatively fine, the most famous and splendid in any
country. I shall now make the preparations for it.' And so, before he died, David
made ample preparations. ·He then summoned his son Solomon and commanded 6
2 S 7:1–16,1a him to build a house for Yahweh, God of Israel. ·'My son,' David said to Solomon, 7
'my heart was set on building a house for the name of Yahweh my God. ·But the 8
word of Yahweh came to me, "You have shed much blood and fought great wars;
it is not for you to build a house for my name, since you have shed much blood in
my sight on earth. [c] ·Look, a son will be born to you. He will be a man of peace, 9
and I shall give him peace from his enemies on all sides; for Solomon is to be his
name, [d] and in his days I shall give Israel peace and tranquillity. ·He must build a 10
house for my name; he will be my son and I shall be his father, and I shall make the
throne of his kingdom secure over Israel for ever." ·Now, my son, may Yahweh be 11
with you and give you success in building a house for Yahweh your God, as he has
promised about you. ·And especially, may Yahweh give you discretion and dis- 12
cernment, may he give you his orders for Israel, so that you may observe the Law
of Yahweh your God. ·Success will be yours, only if you observe the statutes and 13
Dt 31:23 ordinances which Yahweh gave Moses as regulations for Israel. Be strong and
stand fast, be fearless, be dauntless. ·Now, poor as I am, I have set aside for the 14
house of Yahweh a hundred thousand talents of gold, a million talents of silver and

more bronze and iron than can be weighed, there being so much. I have also
15 provided timber and stone, to which you may add more. •Furthermore, you have
a large number of workmen, quarrymen, masons, carpenters and all sorts of
16 craftsmen for every kind of work, •while your gold and silver, bronze and iron will
be beyond reckoning. Set to work, then, and may Yahweh be with you!'
17 David then commanded all the leaders of Israel to help his son Solomon.
18 'Has not Yahweh your God been with you and given you peace on all sides, having
put the inhabitants of the country into my power and the country now having been
19 subdued for Yahweh and his people? •So now devote heart and soul to searching
for Yahweh your God. Set to and build the sanctuary of Yahweh God, so that you
can bring the ark of the covenant of Yahweh and the holy vessels of God into the
house built for the name of Yahweh.'

The orders and functions of the Levites [a]

1 **23** When David had become old and full of days, he made his son Solomon 1 K 1:1–2:1
2 king of Israel, •and then summoned all the leaders of Israel, with the priests
and Levites.
3 A census was taken of those Levites thirty years old and upwards. On a count of Nb 4:3
4 heads, they numbered thirty-eight thousand men; [b] •twenty-four thousand were
responsible for the service [c] of the House of Yahweh, six thousand were officials
5 and judges, •four thousand were gatekeepers and four thousand praised Yahweh
on the instruments which David had [d] made for praising him. Am 6:5
6 David then divided the Levites into classes: [e] Gershon, Kohath and Merari.
7, 8 Of the Gershonites [f] there were Ladan and Shimei. •Sons of Ladan: Jehiel first, 26:21seq.
9 Zetham, Joel; three in all. •Sons of Shimei: Shelomoth, Haziel, Haran; three in
10 all. These are the heads of families of Ladan. •Sons of Shimei: Jahath, Zina, Jeush,
11 Beriah; these were the sons of Shimei; four in all. •Jahath was the eldest, Zizah the
second, then Jeush and Beriah, who had not many children and were reckoned as
one family.
12, 13 Sons of Kohath: Amram, Izhar, Hebron, Uzziel; four in all. •Sons of Amram:
Aaron and Moses. Aaron was set apart to consecrate the things that were especially
holy, he and his sons for ever, to burn incense in the presence of Yahweh, to serve
14 him and to bless in his name for ever. •Moses, man of God, and his sons were
15, 16 reckoned with the tribe of Levi. •Sons of Moses: Gershom and Eliezer. •Sons of
17 Gershom: Shebuel, the first. •Of the sons of Eliezer, Rehabiah was the first. 24:20–30; 26:24–25

f. The Chronicler elaborates the episode in 2 S 24; 18:25 into an account of the founding of the Temple: the altar raised by David will be the altar of the future Temple, 22:1. The Chronicler alone explicitly relates Solomon's Temple to Ornan's threshing-floor. After the exile similarly, the building of the altar preceded the building of the Temple, Ezr 3:1seq.

g. These two vv. use the intervention of the Angel of Yahweh to explain the transfer of the cult of Gibeon to Jerusalem (*see* 16:39–40), where was the Dwelling of Yahweh at which he was to be consulted. Ex 29:42; 30:36; 33:7seq.

22 a. Isolated vv. apart, this ch. has no biblical parallel. The Chronicler may have had other sources at his disposal or have worked up traditions deriving from the reign of Solomon. He may be right in assuming a short period during which David and Solomon reigned as co-sovereigns, *see* the hint of this in 1 K 1; 2:1–9. Information concerning ancient weights and measures will be found in the Tables of measures and money.

b. Like the Deuteronomic editor of Kings, *see* 1 K 9:20–22, the Chronicler finds the thought of Israelites' doing forced labour repugnant, although this is explicitly attested in 1 K 5:27; 11:28. According to Is 60:10, the messianic Jerusalem was to be built by foreigners.

c. *see* 18:1a.

d. The name Solomon comes from *shalom*, 'peace'. There is an intentional contrast between Solomon and David the man of war.

23 a. Ch. 23–27 consist of one unit, possibly additional to the main narrative. Ch. 23:1 is continued in 28:2. Ch. 23:2 is a link verse to introduce the priests and Levites who are the subject of the addition.

b. As in Nb 4:3,23,30; but twenty years according to 1 Ch 23:24.

c. These must be the singers; the categories are the same as in ch. 25 and 26: singers, *see* 25, gatekeepers, 26:1seq., scribes and judges, 26:29, finally instrumentalists, *see* 15:19seq.

d. 'David had' conj.; 'I have' Hebr.

e. vv. 6–32 are an introduction, modelled on Nb 8:5seq., to the organisation of the clergy. But the functions of the Levites are not those contemplated by Nb. God having chosen a settled home, they no longer have to see to transport, Nb 3–4, but stay in the Temple and help the priests in the tasks prescribed in Lv. True, the Aaronites have special powers, vv. 13seq., but the author does not distinguish here between priests and Levites. This new disposition, definitive and established, derives from David, just as the old unstable and provisional one derived from Moses.

f. This list is most closely related to 26:21seq.; it differs from the other Gershonite lists, 6:2,5; Ex 6:17; Nb 3:18.

Eliezer had no other sons, but the sons of Rehabiah were very numerous. ·Sons of 18
Izhar: Shelomith, the first. ·Sons of Hebron: Jeriah first, Amariah second, Jahaziel 19
third, Jekameam fourth. ·Sons of Uzziel: Micah first, Isshiah second. 20

Sons of Merari: Mahli and Mushi. Sons of Mahli: Eleazar and Kish. ·Eleazar 21, 22
died without sons, but he did have daughters, whom their cousins, the sons of Kish,
married. ·Sons of Mushi: Mahli, Eder, Jeremoth: three in all. 23

These were the sons of Levi by their families, the heads of families, and those 24
registered by name, individually; whoever was twenty years old or upwards had his
function in the service of the Temple of Yahweh.

For David said, 'Since Yahweh, God of Israel, has given rest to his people Israel 25
and has taken up residence in Jerusalem for ever, ·the Levites need no longer carry 26
the Dwelling or any of the objects required for its service.' ·For, according to the 27
23:3,24 last words of David, the Levites who had been registered were of twenty years and
upwards. ·Their duty now is to help the sons of Aaron in the service of the House 28
of Yahweh, in the care of the courts and rooms, the purification of all the holy
things, the work for the service of the House of God, ·the loaves of permanent 29
offering, the flour for the oblation, the wafers of unleavened bread, the pan-baked
materials, the unmixed materials and all measures of volume and length. [g] ·Fur- 30
Nb 28–29 thermore, they have to be present every morning to give thanks and praise to
Yahweh, and also in the evening, ·and at the bringing of every burnt offer- 31
ing to Yahweh on Sabbath, New Moon or solemn feast, appearing regularly
before Yahweh in accordance with the numbers required of them. ·In serving the 32
Temple of Yahweh they observe the ritual of the Tent of Meeting, the ritual of the
sanctuary and the ritual of their kinsmen, the sons of Aaron.'

The classification of the priests

‖Nb 3:2–4 24 Orders of the sons of Aaron: Sons of Aaron: Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, 1
Ithamar. ·Nadab and Abihu died in their father's lifetime leaving no child- 2
ren, so Eleazar and Ithamar filled the office of priest. ·With Zadok of the sons of 3
Eleazar, and Ahimelech of the sons of Ithamar, [a] David allocated them according
to the classification of their duties. ·Since the sons of Eleazar were found to have 4
more headmen than the sons of Ithamar, they allocated sixteen heads of families to
the sons of Eleazar and eight heads of families to the sons of Ithamar. ·They 5
allocated them by lot, both alike, there being religious officials and officials of God
among the sons of Eleazar, as among the sons of Ithamar. ·The levitical scribe 6
Shemaiah son of Nethanel, recorded them in the presence of the king, the leaders,
Zadok the priest, Ahimelech son of Abiathar and the heads of the priestly and
levitical families, so that two families were selected for Eleazar for each one
selected for Ithamar. [b]

The first lot fell to Jehoiarib, the second to Jedaiah, ·the third to Harim, the 7, 8
fourth to Seorim, ·the fifth to Malchijah, the sixth to Mijamin, ·the seventh to 9, 10
Hakkoz, the eighth to Abijah, [c] ·the ninth to Jeshua, the tenth to Shecaniah, ·the 11, 12
eleventh to Eliashib, the twelfth to Jakim, ·the thirteenth to Huppah, the four- 13
teenth to Ishbaal, ·the fifteenth to Bilgah, the sixteenth to Immer, ·the seventeenth 14, 15
to Hezir, the eighteenth to Happizzez, ·the nineteenth to Pethahiah, the twentieth 16
to Jehezkel, ·the twenty-first to Jachin, the twenty-second to Gamul, ·the twenty- 17, 18
third to Delaiah and the twenty-fourth to Maaziah. [d]

These were their classifications for their duties when they entered the House of 19
Yahweh in accordance with their prescriptions laid down by Aaron their ancestor
as Yahweh, God of Israel, had commanded him.

As regards the rest of the sons of Levi: 20
23:16seq. Of the sons of Amram: Shubael. Of the sons of Shubael: Jehdeiah. ·As regards 21
Rehabiah, of the sons of Rehabiah: Isshiah, the first one. ·Of the sons of Izhar: 22
Shelomoth; of the sons of Shelomoth: Jahath. ·Of the sons of Hebron: Jeriah the 23
first, Amariah the second, Jahaziel the third, Jekameam the fourth. ·The son of 24
Uzziel was Micah; of the sons of Micah: Shamir. ·The brother of Micah was 25

26 Isshiah; of the sons of Isshiah, Zechariah. ·The sons of Merari were Mahli and
27 Mushi; of his sons: Jaaziah his son. ·The sons of Merari by his son Jaaziah were
28, 29 Shoham, Zaccur and Ibri. ·Of Mahli, there was Eleazar who had no sons, ·and
30 Kish; and of the sons of Kish: Jerahmeel. ·The sons of Mushi were Mahli, Eder
and Jerimoth.
31 These were the Levites according to families. ·Like their kinsmen, the sons of Aaron, these heads of families, senior and junior alike, also drew lots in the presence of King David, Zadok, Ahimelech, and the heads of the priestly and levitical families.

The cantors

1 25 For the liturgy, David and the religious officials selected the sons of Asaph, 16:37–43
of Heman and of Jeduthun, who were to prophesy[a] to the accompaniment
of harps, lyres and cymbals. The list of ministrants for this service was as follows:
2 Of the sons of Asaph: Zaccur, Joseph, Nethaniah, Asharelah; the sons of Asaph were under the direction of Asaph who prophesied at the king's direction.
3 Of Jeduthun there were the sons of Jeduthun: Gedaliah, Zeri, Jeshaiah, Hashabiah and Mattithiah, six, under the direction of their father Jeduthun who, with the harp, prophesied when thanks and praise were to be given to Yahweh. 2 K 3:15
4 Of Heman there were the sons of Heman: Bukkiah, Mattaniah, Uzziel, Shebuel, Jerimoth, Hananiah, Hanani, Eliathah, Giddalti, Romamti-Ezer, Joshbekashah,
5 Mallothi, Hothir, Mahazioth.[b] ·All these were sons of Heman, the king's seer, at God's word they blew the horn.[c] God gave Heman fourteen sons and three
6 daughters. ·Under the king's direction all these had the duty of singing to the accompaniment of cymbal, lyre and harp for the liturgy of the house of God under the direction of their fathers.
7 Asaph, Jeduthun and Heman, ·trained in the songs of Yahweh, with their
8 brothers, numbered two hundred and eighty-eight, all expert. ·Junior and senior,
9 master and pupil alike, they drew lots for their term of duty. ·The first to whom the lot fell was the Asaphite, Joseph. The second was Gedaliah, who with his sons and
10 brothers made twelve. ·The third was Zaccur, who with his sons and brothers made
11, 12 twelve. ·The fourth was Izri, who with his sons and brothers made twelve. ·The
13 fifth was Nethaniah, who with his sons and brothers made twelve. ·The sixth was
14 Bukkiah, who with his sons and brothers made twelve. ·The seventh was Jesharelah, who with his sons and brothers made twelve. ·The eighth was Jeshaiah, who
16 with his sons and brothers made twelve. ·The ninth was Mattaniah, who with his
17 sons and brothers made twelve. ·The tenth was Shimei, who with
18 his sons and brothers made twelve. ·The eleventh was Azarel, who with his sons
19 and brothers made twelve. ·The twelfth was Hashabiah, who with his sons
20 and brothers made twelve. ·The thirteenth was Shubael, who with his sons and
21 brothers made twelve. ·The fourteenth was Mattithiah, who with his sons and
22 brothers made twelve. ·The fifteenth was Jeremoth, who with his sons and brothers

g. The Levites were not to be inspectors of weights and measures as such, but to check that the offerings were of the quantity specified by the ritual.

24 a. The passage bears witness to the dying down of antagonism in post-exilic times between the two rival priestly houses: that of the descendants of Zadok in charge of the Temple until the exile, and that of the descendants of Abiathar (and Eli) ejected from the sanctuary by Solomon, 1 K 2:27. They were attributed Aaron's two sons as ancestors, *see* v. 1–2; Zadok stemming from Eleazar, *see* 5:30–34, and Abiathar, of sound levitical origin, *see* 1 S 2:27, from Ithamar, though with no genealogical details given. Thus, all the priests were 'sons of Aaron'.

b. Text obscure, but *see* v. 4.

c. Zacharias, father of John the Baptist, was a member of this group, Lk 1:5.

d. Ne 12 contains two lists of priestly families, giving only 22 (or 21) names and probably older than Ch.

25 a. Chronicles alone accord the singers the title of 'prophet', *see* vv. 2,3, or 'seer', v. 5. The author considers the composing and singing of psalms as to some degree inspired, but he does not consider them to be cultic prophets.

b. Parallel with the 24 orders of priests, 1 Ch puts 24 orders of singers linked to the three famous names, Asaph, Heman and Jeduthun. The only names well attested elsewhere are Zaccur son of Asaph, *see* 9:15 (Zichri); Ne 12:35; Mattithiah 1 Ch 15:18,21; 16:5, and Mattaniah, 1 Ch 9:15; Ne 11:17. The last nine names, v. 4[b], making up the total of twenty-four, seem to have been obtained, not from a list but by cutting up the lines of a psalm. With slight changes in vocalisation and word division, the names give: 'Take pity on me, Yahweh, take pity on me', 'You are my God', 'I have magnified and will exalt (my) helper', 'Sitting (in) adversity I said . . . Give clear signs plentifully!'

c. lit. 'to raise the horn' but the implications of this are not clear. Some understand 'to enhance his prestige as God had promised'.

made twelve. ·The sixteenth was Hananiah, who with his sons and brothers 23
made twelve. ·The seventeenth was Joshbekashah, who with his sons and brothers 24
made twelve. ·The eighteenth was Hanani, who with his sons and brothers made 25
twelve. ·The nineteenth was Mallothi, who with his sons and brothers made twelve. 26
The twentieth was Eliathah, who with his sons and brothers made twelve. ·The 27, 28
twenty-first was Hothir, who with his sons and brothers made twelve. ·The 29
twenty-second was Giddalti, who with his sons and brothers made twelve.
The twenty-third was Mahazioth, who with his sons and brothers made twelve. 30
The twenty-fourth was Romamti-Ezer, who with his sons and brothers made twelve. 31

9:17–27 **The gatekeepers** [a]

26 As regards the orders of the gatekeepers: 1
Of the Korahites there was Meshelemiah son of Kore, one of the sons of
Ebiasaph, [b] ·and Meshelemiah's sons: Zechariah the first-born, Jediael the second, 2
Zebadiah the third, Jathniel the fourth, ·Elam the fifth, Jehohanan the sixth, 3
Elioenai the seventh.
15:21 Obed-Edom's sons were: Shemaiah the first-born, Jehozabad the second, Joah 4
2 S 6:10seq. the third, Sacar the fourth, Nethanel the fifth, ·Ammiel the sixth, Issachar the 5
seventh, Peullethai the eighth; God had indeed blessed him. ·His son Shemaiah 6
also had sons who wielded authority in their family, because they were men of
outstanding quality. ·The sons of Shemaiah were: Othni, Rephael, Obed and 7
Elzabad, whose brothers Elihu and Semachiah were outstanding men. ·All these 8
were sons of Obed-Edom, who with their sons and brothers were men of standing,
well fitted for their task.
Obed-Edom had sixty-two, ·Meshelemiah had eighteen outstanding sons and 9
Gn 48:13–20 brothers.
Hosah, one of the sons of Merari, had sons: Shimri was the first, for although he 10
was not the first-born his father had made him the chief. ·Hilkiah was the second, 11
Tebaliah the third, Zechariah the fourth: Hosah had thirteen sons and brothers
in all.
These orders of gatekeepers, allocated according to their headmen, had duties, 12
just like their brothers, of serving in the house of Yahweh. ·Similarly, they drew 13
9:24 lots for each gate, whether their families were large or small. ·For the eastern one, 14
the lot fell to Shelemiah; and when they drew lots for Zechariah his son, a shrewd
counsellor, his lot came out for the north. ·To Obed-Edom went the south, and to 15
his sons the storehouses. ·To Shuppim and Hosah went the west with the Gate of 16
the Felled Tree-trunk on the upper road. The corresponding guards were as
follows: ·for the east gate, six per day; [c] for the north gate, four per day; for the 17
south gate, four per day; for the storehouses, two each; ·for the Parbar [d] at the west 18
gate, four by the road and two for the Parbar. ·These were the orders of the 19
gatekeepers of the sons of Korah and the sons of Merari.

Other levitical duties

The Levites, their brothers, [e] who were responsible for the treasures of the house 20
of God and for the treasures of consecrated gifts, ·were the sons of Ladan and 21
belonged to the Gershonites—the heads of the families of Ladan were descended
from Ladan the Gershonite—that is to say, the Jehielites. ·The sons of the Jehie- 22
lites, Zetham and Joel [f] his brother, were responsible for the treasures of the house
of Yahweh.
Over the Amramites, Izharites, Hebronites, and Uzzielites ·was Shebuel son of 23, 24
Gershom, son of Moses, who was governor of the treasures; ·and his brothers of 25
the line of Eliezer were Rehabiah his son, Jeshaiah his son, Joram his son, Zichri
his son and Shelomoth his son. ·This Shelomoth and his kinsmen were responsible 26
18:11 for all the consecrated treasures dedicated by King David, by the heads of families,
Nb 31:48–54 by the commanders of the thousands and hundreds and by the commanders of the
army, ·who had dedicated a part of the spoils of war to the service of the house of 27

28 Yahweh, •and also for all that Samuel the seer, Saul son of Kish, Abner son of Ner
and Joab son of Zeruiah had dedicated. In fact, whatever was dedicated was the
responsibility of Shelomoth and his kinsmen.
29 Of the Izharites, Chananiah and his sons were assigned to secular duties[g] for 15:22
Israel as officials and judges.
30 Of the Hebronites, Hashabiah and his kinsmen, one thousand seven hundred 27:17
outstanding men were in charge of Israel west of Jordan in everything pertaining to
31 Yahweh and to the service of the king. •Of the Hebronites, Jerijah was the head.
In the fortieth year of David's reign research was done on the lineage and relation-
ships of the Hebronites, and men of outstanding quality from among them were
32 found at Jazer in Gilead. •there were twenty-seven hundred outstanding men,
heads of families, whom King David put in charge of the Reubenites,
the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh in all matters pertaining to God
and the king.

Military and civil organisation[a]

1 27 The Israelites listed according to heads of families, commanders of thou-
sands and hundreds, with their officials in the king's service who dealt with
all matters affecting the companies on monthly duty, month by month throughout
the year, each company consisting of twenty-four thousand men: 11:11
2 The commander of the first company detailed for the first month was Jasho-
beam son of Zabdiel, whose company consisted of twenty-four thousand men.
3 He belonged to the family of Perez and was the senior military officer of all those
detailed for the first month. 11:12
4 The commander of the company for the second month was Dodai the Ahohite,
whose company consisted of twenty-four thousand men.
5 The officer commanding the third body of men for the third month was Benaiah 12:28
son of Jehoiada, the chief priest, whose company consisted of twenty-four thou- 2 S 8:18*f*
6 sand men. •This was the Benaiah who was an important member of the Thirty and
his company. His son was Ammizabad. 2 S 8:18–23
7 The fourth for the fourth month was Asahel brother of Joab, and his son
Zebadiah after him, whose company consisted of twenty-four thousand men.
8 The fifth officer commanding for the fifth month was Shamhuth the Zerahite,
whose company consisted of twenty-four thousand men.
9 The sixth for the sixth month was Ira son of Ikkesh of Tekoa, whose company
consisted of twenty-four thousand men.
10 The seventh for the seventh month was Helez the Pelonite, one of the Ephraim-
ites, whose company consisted of twenty-four thousand men.
11 The eighth for the eighth month was Sibbecai of Hushah, a Zerahite, whose
company consisted of twenty-four thousand men.
12 The ninth for the ninth month was Abiezer of Anathoth, a Benjaminite, whose
company consisted of twenty-four thousand men.
13 The tenth for the tenth month was Maharai of Netophah, a Zerahite, whose
company consisted of twenty-four thousand men.
14 The eleventh for the eleventh month was Benaiah of Pirathon, an Ephraimite,
whose company consisted of twenty-four thousand men.

26 **a.** The most detailed of the three lists of gatekeepers, *see* 9:17–27; 16:37–42.
b. 'Ebiasaph' conj., *see* 9:19; 'Asaph' Hebr.
c. 'six per day' Gk; 'six Levites' Hebr.
d. Etymology and meaning uncertain.
e. 'their kinsmen' Gk; 'Ahijah' Hebr.
f. Zethan and Joel, with Shebuel and Shelomoth, formed a commission in charge of the public treasury, analogous to that which existed in Nehemiah's and Ezra's time, Ezr 8:33; Ne 13:3.
g. Duties not strictly concerned with the Temple and its services, delegated to the Levites by the king, *see* vv. 30,32; 2 Ch 19:4–11; Ne 11:16.

27 **a.** This chapter is made up of four different lists: **1** Officials for the monthly duty vv. 1–15. **2** Officials for the tribes of Israel, vv. 16–24. **3** Officials for the royal supplies, vv. 25–31. **4** The king's advisers, vv. 32–34. With regard to the first list, it is possible that David already thought of an administrative organisation, but the one here described seems to be inspired by the twelve prefectures of Solomon which provided food each month for the king and his household, *see* 1 K 5:7. From another point of view, the classification suggests a military organisation, and the names of the officials are taken from among David's warriors. Perhaps they are the companies of a conscript army which, at the end of the monarchy, did monthly garrison duty.

The twelfth for the twelfth month was Heldai of Netophah, of Othniel, whose 15
company consisted of twenty-four thousand men.

List of tribal chiefs

Responsible for the tribes of Israel[b] were chief Eliezer son of Zichri for the 16
Reubenites, Shephatiah son of Maacah for the Simeonites, ·Hashabiah son of 17
Kemuel for the Levites, Zadok for the Aaronites, ·Elihu, one of David's brothers, 18
for Judah, Omri son of Michael for Issachar, ·Ishmaiah son of Obadiah for 19
Zebulun, Jerimoth son of Azriel for Naphtali, ·Hoshea son of Azaziah for the 20
Ephraimites, Joel son of Pedaiah for the half-tribe of Manasseh, ·Iddo son of 21
Zechariah for the half-tribe of Manasseh in Gilead, Jaasiel son of Abner for
Benjamin, ·and Azarel son of Jeroham for Dan. 22

These were the tribal chiefs of Israel.

The uncompleted census

21 Now in the census David did not include those who were twenty years old and 23
under, since Yahweh had promised to make Israel as numerous as the stars of
heaven. ·Joab son of Zeruiah began the count but never finished. This is why 24
retribution came upon Israel, and the number did not come up to that recorded in
the annals of King David.[c]

Overseer of the king's supplies:[d] Azmaveth son of Adiel. Overseer of supplies 25
in the countryside, towns, villages and fortresses: Jonathan son of Uzziah.
Overseer of the farmers who tilled the land: Ezri son of Chelub. ·Overseer of 26, 27
vineyards: Shimei of Ramah. Overseer of those in the vineyards who looked after
the wine cellars: Zabdi of Shepham. ·Overseer of olive and sycamore trees in the 28
Shephelah: Baal-Hanan of Geder. Overseer of oil supplies: Joash. ·Overseer of 29
cattle at pasture in the plains of Sharon: Shitrai of Sharon. Overseer of cattle
in the valleys: Shaphat son of Adlai. ·Overseer of camels: Obil the Ishmaelite. 30
Overseer of donkeys: Jehdeiah of Meranoth. Overseer of flocks: Jaziz the 31
Hagrite.

All the above supervised the property belonging to King David.

The king's personal advisers

Jonathan, David's uncle, a councillor, wise man and scribe, and Jehiel son of 32
2 S 15:31seq.; 16:17 Hachmoni took care of the king's sons. ·Ahitophel was the king's counsellor and 33
Hushai, the Archite, was Friend of the King. ·Jehoiada son of Benaiah and 34
Abiathar succeeded Ahitophel—Joab was commander of the king's army.[e]

David's instructions for the Temple[a]

28 David then summoned to Jerusalem all the officials of Israel—the tribal 1
chiefs, the senior officials in the royal service, the commanders of the
thousands, the commanders of the hundreds and the overseers of all the property
and livestock belonging to the king and to his sons—including the court officials,
the champions and all the men of standing. ·King David then rose to his 2
feet and said:

'My brothers and my people, listen to me. I have set my heart on building a
Ps 132:7 settled home for the ark of the covenant of Yahweh, for the footstool for our God,
22:8 but when I was ready to build it, ·God said to me, "You must not build a house for 3
my name, for you have been a man of war and have shed blood."

'Even so, out of my entire family, it was I whom Yahweh, God of Israel, chose 4
to reign over Israel for ever. Having chosen Judah as leader, and my family out of
the House of Judah, it pleased him out of all my father's sons to make me king of
all Israel. ·Out of all my sons—for Yahweh has given me many—he has chosen my 5
son Solomon to sit on Yahweh's sovereign throne over Israel. ·Furthermore, he 6
17:12seq.; 22:10seq. has told me, "Solomon your son is the man to build my house and my courts, for I
2 S 7:1–16,1a have chosen him to be my son and I shall be his father. ·I shall make his sovereignty 7

secure for ever if he sturdily carries out my commandments and ordinances as he does now."

8 'So now in the sight of all Israel, the assembly of Yahweh, and in the hearing of our God, I charge you to observe and adhere strictly to all the commandments of Dt 4:5
Yahweh your God, so that you may retain possession of this fine country and leave it to your sons after you as a heritage for ever.

9 'And you, Solomon my son, know the God of your father and serve him with an undivided heart and willing mind; for Yahweh scrutinises all hearts and understands whatever plans they may devise. If you seek him, he will let you find him;
10 but forsake him and he will cast you off for ever. •So, since Yahweh has chosen you to build a house for his sanctuary, go resolutely to work!' [b]

11 David then gave his son Solomon the plans for the portico, [c] the plans for the buildings, its storehouses, its upper rooms, its inner rooms and the room for
12 the throne of mercy •as well as the plans for everything that he had in mind: [d] for the courts of the house of Yahweh, for all the surrounding rooms, for the treasuries Ezk 42
13 of the house of God and for the sacred treasuries, •for the orders of priests and 26:20
Levites, for all the duties to be carried out in the service of the house of Yahweh,
14 and for all the liturgical objects to be used in the house of Yahweh; •for the gold bullion, for all the golden liturgical objects of various uses; for the silver bullion,
15 for all the silver liturgical objects of various uses; •for the gold bullion for the golden lamp-stands [e] and for their lamps, and for the silver bullion for the silver
16 lamp-stands and their lights, depending on the function of each lamp-stand; •for the gold bullion for each of the tables for the loaves of permanent offering and the
17 silver for the silver tables; [f] •for the pure gold for the forks, the bowls and the jars, Ex 27:3
for the gold bullion for each of the golden basins and for the silver bullion for each Nb 4:14
18 of the silver basins; •and for the refined gold bullion for the altar of incense; also for the gold for the model of the chariot [g] and of the great winged creatures which
19 cover the ark of the covenant of Yahweh with wings outspread—•all this was in the document conveying Yahweh's instructions, by which he revealed the pattern of what was to be done.

20 David then said to his son Solomon, 'Be resolute and courageous in your work, do not be afraid or disheartened, because Yahweh God, my God, is with you. He will not fail you or forsake you before you have finished all the work to be done for
21 the house of Yahweh. •And besides, there are the orders of priests and Levites for whatever is needed in connection with the house of God, and you have at your disposal every kind of craftsman for whatever has to be done, as well as the officials and all the people entirely at your command.'

b. David probably maintained the tribal organisation of Israel, but this list is artificial: it follows the order of the sons of Jacob given in 2:1–2, retains Reuben, Simeon and Levi, who had ceased to be autonomous tribes by the reign of David, and, having divided Joseph into three (Ephraim and the two half-tribes of Manasseh), omits Gad and Asher to avoid exceeding the number of twelve.

c. These verses refer to ch. 21 and are apparently intended to explain why the figures there are lower than those in 2 S 24:9.

d. These are the overseers of the royal lands, already in existence under David, *see* 28:1. This list is no invention, as the non-Israelite names in it show, but we can check neither date nor detail of it.

e. Apart from Joab, the list is not the same as that of David's senior officials given in 18:14–17; 2 S 8:15–16; 20:23–26, being concerned with David's private, as opposed to public, advisers. It is probably derived from a good source dating from the end of David's reign. Abiathar is presumably the priest of that name, 1 S 22:20seq., but his priestly character has been passed over, owing perhaps to the more dominant position won by the rival family of Zadok.

28 **a.** This ch. resumes the narrative interrupted at 23:1. The Chronicler omits the account of Solomon's accession to the throne, 1 K 1–2, to concentrate on his own historical interests: God having chosen David from Judah to be king of Israel, has now chosen his son Solomon to succeed him and build the Temple.

b. This moral exhortation in the style of Dt, immediately preceding a catalogue of cultic furniture, is influenced by the teachings of the prophets on spiritual religion.

c. Moses had received the pattern of the tabernacle from God, Ex 25:9. David whom the Chronicler regards as the founder of these new institutions, himself announces the model of the Temple in greatest detail, even to the weight of precious metal to be used in the various furnishings. In so doing, David acts under divine inspiration, vv. 12,19.

d. Alternative translation 'had come into his mind through the Spirit'.

e. There are several, 1 K 7:49; the Tent only had one, Ex 25:31–40.

f. According to 2 Ch 4:8 there were ten of these. There was only one in the Tent, Ex 25:23seq., and one in Solomon's Temple, 1 K 7:48.

g. The ark of the covenant represented a throne, not a chariot, but the Chronicler is thinking of the chariot in Ezk 1 and 10.

The voluntary offerings [a]

29 David then addressed the whole assembly, 'Solomon my son, whom 1
Yahweh has specifically chosen, is young and immature, and the work is
great; this palace is not for any human being but for Yahweh God. ·With all the 2
resources I can command, for the house of my God I have provided gold for what
must be made of gold, silver for what must be made of silver, bronze for what must
be made of bronze, iron for what must be made of iron, wood for what must be
made of wood, as well as cornelian for inlay work, slabs of multi-coloured mosaic,
every kind of precious stone and quantities of alabaster. ·Furthermore, because 3
my affections are set on the house of my God, I have also given what gold and
silver I personally own for the house of my God, over and above everything which
I have already provided for the holy Temple—·that is to say, three thousand talents 4
of gold of Ophir, and seven thousand talents of refined silver for overlaying the
walls of the buildings, ·the gold being for what must be made of gold, and the silver 5
for what must be made of silver: and for whatever the craftsmen must make. Who,
then, is willing to devote himself to Yahweh's service today?'

At this, the heads of families, the tribal chiefs of Israel, the commanders of the 6
thousands and the hundreds and those who managed the king's affairs,
Nb 7 ·volunteered a gift of five thousand talents and ten thousand darics of gold, ten 7
thousand talents of silver, eighteen thousand talents of bronze and a hundred
thousand talents of iron, ·while those who owned precious stones presented them 8
to the treasury of the house of Yahweh in the custody of Jehiel the Gershonite.
·The people rejoiced at what these had given so readily, since they had presented 9
their freewill offerings wholeheartedly to Yahweh. King David too was filled with
joy.

David's thanksgiving [b]

Hence, in the presence of the whole assembly David blessed Yahweh. David said: 10
'May you be blessed, Yahweh, God of Israel our ancestor, for ever and for ever!
·Yours, Yahweh, is the greatness, the power, the splendour, length of days and 11
glory, everything in heaven and on earth is yours. Yours is the sovereignty,
Yahweh; you are exalted, supreme over all. ·Wealth and riches come from you, 12
you are ruler of all, in your hand lie strength and power, and you bestow greatness
and might on whomsoever you please. ·So now, our God, we give thanks to you 13
and praise your majestic name, ·for who am I and what is my people, for us to be 14
able to volunteer offerings like this?—since everything has come from you and we
have given you only what you bestowed in the first place, ·and we are guests before 15
Ps 39:12 Ws 2:5+ you, and passing visitors as were all our ancestors, our days on earth fleeting as a
shadow and without hope. ·Yahweh our God, all this wealth, which we have 16
provided to build a house for your holy name, has come from you and all belongs
to you.

'Knowing, my God, how you examine our motives and how you delight in 17
integrity, with integrity of motive I have willingly given all this and have been
overjoyed to see your people, now present here, willingly offering their gifts to
you. ·Yahweh, God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel our ancestors, watch over this 18
for ever, shape the purpose of your people's heart and direct their hearts to you,
and give an undivided heart to Solomon my son to keep your commandments, your 19
decrees and your statutes, to put them all into effect and to build the palace for
which I have made provision.'

David then addressed the whole assembly: 'Now bless Yahweh your God!' And 20
the whole assembly blessed Yahweh, God of their ancestors, bowing down in
homage to Yahweh, and to the king.

Accession of Solomon and the end of the reign of David

Ex 24:5 On the day following this, they slaughtered sacrifices and brought burnt offerings 21

to Yahweh on behalf of Israel—a thousand bulls, a thousand rams, a thousand
22 lambs with their libations, as well as many other sacrifices—•and they ate and Ex 24:11
drank [c] that day in Yahweh's presence with great joy. They then made Solomon
son of David king a second time, [d] anointing him as leader for Yahweh, and Zadok 1 K 1:39
23 as priest. [e] •Solomon took his seat on Yahweh's throne, to reign in succession to
24 David his father. He prospered, and all Israel obeyed him. •All the chiefs, all the
leading citizens and all King David's other sons pledged allegiance to King Solo-
25 mon. •Yahweh made Solomon exceedingly powerful, as all Israel could see, and
gave him a reign of such splendour as no previous king of Israel ever had.
26, 27 David son of Jesse was king of all Israel. •He was king of Israel for a period of 1 K 2:11
forty years; he reigned at Hebron for seven years, and in Jerusalem for thirty-
28 three. •He died at a good old age, full of days, riches and honour. Then his son
29 Solomon succeeded him. •The history of King David, from first to last, is all written
down in the records of Samuel the seer, the records of Nathan the prophet and the
30 records of Gad the seer, [f] •with his entire reign, his mighty deeds and the times
which he, Israel and all the kings of other countries, [g] had experienced.

THE SECOND BOOK OF CHRONICLES

III: SOLOMON AND THE BUILDING OF THE TEMPLE [a]

God confers wisdom on Solomon [b]

1 1 Solomon son of David then made himself secure over his kingdom. Yahweh
2 his God was with him, making him more and more powerful. • Solomon then
spoke to all Israel, to the commanders of thousands and of hundreds, to the judges
3 and to every leader in all Israel, the heads of families. •Solomon, and the whole ‖1 K 3:4–15
assembly with him, then went to the high place at Gibeon, where God's Tent of 1 Ch 16:39; 21:29
4 Meeting was, which Moses, servant of God, had made in the desert. •The ark of
the covenant, however, David had brought from Kiriath-Jearim to the place which 2 S 6:1–17, 1a+
5 he had prepared for it, having pitched a tent for it in Jerusalem. •The bronze altar Ex 27:1–2; 2:31:2
which Bezalel son of Uri, son of Hur, had made was there, in front of Yahweh's 1 Ch 2:20
6 Dwelling, where Solomon and the assembly consulted him. •There Solomon
presented a burnt offering before Yahweh on the bronze altar of the Tent of
Meeting, making on it one thousand burnt offerings. [c]
7 That night God appeared to Solomon and said, 'Ask what you would like me to

29 **a.** For the building of the Temple, David gives all the treasure he has collected for the purpose and all his personal wealth as well. The magnates added their contributions, too. The amazing figures given underline the importance which David accords to the project, as also the splendour of the Temple once it was built. In the Chronicler's eyes, David had prepared everything, and Solomon needed only to put it into action.

b. In this very fine prayer of offering, David acknowledges that God is the originator of all the gifts just made for his Temple. The gifts have been given back to God in the open-hearted spirit of which God approves, v. 17.

c. As after the first alliance, *see* Ex 24; 5,11.

d. 'a second time' Hebr., perhaps added to harmonise with 23:1; Gk. omits.

e. The Chronicler relates the anointing of the high priest to these remote times, though the custom probably began only after the Exile. According to 1 K 1:39, Zadok in fact anointed Solomon.

f. Evidently prophetic sources give the same picture, at least in this case, as the canonical books of Samuel and Kings, which in the Hebrew Bible belong to the 'Early Prophets'.

g. i.e. neighbouring countries.

1 **a.** Of the events in Solomon's reign, 2 Ch 1–9 concentrate almost exclusively on the building of the Temple and the completing of the task envisaged by David. The shadows of the reign are ignored and, at beginning and end (ch. 1 and 9), Solomon's wealth and glory are emphasised as being the fruits of divine favour.

b. Omitting the struggles following David's death, 1 K 2, the Chronicler begins his account of the reign with Solomon's dream at Gibeon. He justifies the consultation at Gibeon by the presence there of the Tent of Meeting *see* 1 Ch 16:39e, to which he now adds the desert altar, *see* v. 6. He thus emphasises the continuity with Mosaic institutions. The wisdom received at Gibeon will be the basis of Solomon's glory.

c. The Deuteronomic author of 1 K excused the offering of sacrifices elsewhere than in the Temple on the excellent grounds that the Temple had not yet been built, 1 K 3:2, hence the continued use of the high places. The Chronicler makes the high place and sacrifices lawful by supposing that the Tent and altar were at Gibeon, *see* v. 3 and marginal references.

give you.' ·Solomon replied to God, 'You showed most faithful love to David my 8
father, and you have made me king in succession to him. ·Yahweh God, the 9
promise you made to David my father has now been fulfilled, since you have made
me king over a people as numerous as the dust of the earth. ·Therefore give me 10
wisdom and knowledge to act as leader of this people, for how could one otherwise
govern such a great people as yours?'

'Since that is what you want,' God said to Solomon, 'since you have asked, not 11
for riches, treasure, honour, the lives of your enemies, or even for a long life, but
for wisdom and knowledge to govern my people of whom I have made you king,
Mt 6:33 therefore wisdom and knowledge are granted you. I give you riches too, 12
and treasure, and honour such as no king had before you and none will have
after you.'

So Solomon came away from the high place at Gibeon, from the Tent of 13
Meeting, to Jerusalem and reigned over Israel.

=9:25 ‖1 K 10:26–29 Solomon then built up a force of chariots and cavalry; he had one thousand four 14
hundred chariots and twelve thousand horses; these he kept in the chariot towns
and near the king at Jerusalem. ·In Jerusalem the king made silver and gold as 15
common as stones, and cedar wood as plentiful as sycamore in the lowlands.
Solomon's horses were imported from Muzur and Cilicia.[d] The king's dealers 16
acquired them in Cilicia at the prevailing price. ·A chariot was imported from 17
Egypt for six hundred silver shekels and a horse from Cilicia for a hundred
and fifty. They also supplied the Hittite and Aramaean kings, who all used them as
middlemen.

The final preparations. Huram of Tyre

Solomon then gave the order to build a house for the name of Yahweh and a palace 18 2:1
in which to reign.

=2:17 1 K 5:29–30 2 And Solomon allocated seventy thousand men to be porters and eighty thou- 1 2
sand to quarry in the hills and three thousand six hundred overseers for them.

‖1 K 5:15–20 1 Ch 14:1 ·And Solomon sent this message to Huram king of Tyre, 'Do as you did for my 2 3
father David when you sent him cedars for him to build himself a palace to live in.

Lv 24:6 Nb 17:5;20:12 You see, I am building a house for the name of Yahweh my God, to acknowledge 3 4
his holiness so that perfumed incense may be burnt before him, the loaves of
Nb 28–29 permanent offering be perpetually laid out and the burnt offerings be made
morning and evening, on the Sabbaths, New Moons and solemn festivals[e] of
Yahweh our God, as prescribed for Israel for ever; ·and the house which I am 4 5
building must be large, for our God is greater than all gods; ·even so, who would 5 6
6:18 not find it an impossible task to build a house for him, when the heavens and the
heavens of the heavens cannot contain him? And who am I to build a house for him
except to burn incense before him? ·So now send me a man skilled at working in 6 7
gold, silver, bronze, iron, scarlet, crimson and violet materials, and who knows the
art of engraving too; he is to work with my skilled men in Judah and Jerusalem,
whom my father David has provided.[b] ·Also send me cedar, juniper and *algum*[c] 7 8
trunks from the Lebanon, for I know that your servants know the art of felling
timber in the Lebanon. And my servants will work with your servants ·in preparing 8 9
a vast quantity of timber for me, since the house which I intend to build is to be of
a size to marvel at. ·Furthermore, for the upkeep of[d] the woodcutters whom you 9 10
employ to cut the timber, I shall provide twenty thousand *kor* of wheat, twenty
thousand *kor* of barley, twenty thousand *bat* of wine and twenty thousand *bat* of
oil.'

In a letter sent to King Solomon, Huram king of Tyre replied, 'Because Yahweh 10 11
loves his people he has made you their king!' ·Huram went on to say, 'Praised be 11 12
Yahweh, God of Israel, who made heaven and earth and has given King David a
wise son, endowed with discretion and discernment, to build a house for Yahweh
and a palace in which to reign!—·I am now sending you a skilled and intelligent 12 13
Ex 31:2seq. man, Huram-Abi ·the son of a Danite woman by a Tyrian father. He knows the 13 14

arts of working in gold, silver, bronze, iron, stone, wood, scarlet, violet, fine linen and crimson materials, and is competent to carry out any kind of engraving and to execute any design which may be entrusted to him, in collaboration with your skilled men and those of my lord David, your father. ▶‖1 K 7:14

15 14 'So now let my lord send his servants the wheat, barley, oil and wine as promised
16 15 and we will fell all the wood you need from Lebanon, and bring it you in rafts by ‖1 K 5:22–26
sea to Jaffa; and it will be your responsibility to transport it to Jerusalem.'

16 Solomon then took a census of all the aliens resident in Israel similar to the 1 Ch 22:2b
census which his father David had taken; it was found that there were a hundred
17 and fifty-three thousand six hundred. ·He impressed seventy thousand of them as =2:1
porters, eighty thousand as quarrymen in the hills and three thousand six hundred as overseers to make sure the people worked.

Solomon builds the Temple [a]

1 3 Solomon then began building the house of Yahweh in Jerusalem on Mount ‖1 K 6
Moriah where David his father had had a vision—on the site which David had Gn 22:2
2 prepared—on the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite. ·He began building it on 1 Ch 21:15seq.
3 the second day of the second month of the fourth year of his reign. ·These are the dimensions which Solomon fixed for the structure of the house of God: its length in cubits, according to the old standard, was sixty cubits and its width twenty cubits; Ex 40:5e
4 and the portico in front of the house was the full width of the house, that is, twenty cubits, and its height was a hundred and twenty cubits; on the inside he overlaid it
5 with pure gold. ·The Great Hall he lined with juniper, which he overlaid with fine
6 gold and ornamented with palm trees and festoons, ·and he decorated the hall
7 beautifully with precious stones and with gold from Parvaim, ·overlaying the hall, its beams and its thresholds, its walls and its doors, with gold and engraving the walls with great winged creatures.

8 He also made the Holy of Holies, [b] the length of which corresponded to the width of the Great Hall, being twenty cubits, with a width of twenty cubits, and this he
9 overlaid with fine gold weighing six hundred talents, ·while the weight of the gold
10 nails was fifty shekels. He also overlaid the upper rooms with gold. ·In the Holy of Holies he modelled two winged creatures of wrought metal work and overlaid
11 them with gold. ·The total span of their wings was twenty cubits; one wing, being five cubits long, touched the wall of the house and the other wing, being five cubits
12 long, touched the wing of the other winged creature; ·while one wing of the other, five cubits long, touched the other wall of the house and the other wing, five cubits
13 long, touched the wing of the other winged creature. ·The spread of these creatures' wings was twenty cubits. They stood in an upright position, with their faces towards the Hall.

14 He also made the Curtain [c] of violet, scarlet, crimson and fine linen, working a design of winged creatures on it.

15 In front of the Hall he made two pillars thirty-five cubits high, and on the top of ‖1 K 7:15–22
16 each a capital measuring five cubits. ·He made festoons, in the Debir, to go at the

d. As in the parallel passage in K, the text has 'Egypt' *mitzrayim* instead of 'Muzur', and in the following verse' *miqwe'*(assembly?) instead of '*miqqoweh* from Cilicia' (whose ancient name is 'Kue').

2 a. 'be offered' Gk; Hebr. omits. • In the 'Priestly' texts of the Pentateuch, these expressions describe the liturgy of the Tent.

b. The author combines the texts of 1 K 5:32 and 7:13–15 with reminiscences of the structure of the Tent, Ex 26:1; 31:2seq.

c. In 1 K 10:11, the wood is called *almug* but is said to have come from Ophir, not from the Lebanon.

d. 'upkeep' *ma'akolet* versions; Hebr. *makkot* 'blows'.

3 a. Despite the importance which the Chronicler attaches to the Temple he radically abridges the description in 1 K 6–7, modifying a number of details and figures. He is more interested in liturgy than in buildings, which, in the post-exilic Temple he knew, no longer had the splendour of Solomon's Temple. The old cubit referred to was probably 10 per cent longer than the ordinary cubit. Further information concerning ancient weights and measures will be found in the Tables of measures and money.

b. For the 'Debir' of 1 K, the Chronicler uses 'Holy of Holies' (*see* 4:22 etc.), already used by Ezekiel (Ezk 41:3–4) in his vision of the future Temple, and by Ex 26:34 in describing the desert Tent; henceforth this was to be the normal term.

c. This is the curtain of the Tent in Ex 26:31. Solomon's Temple had wooden doors carved with living creatures, 1 K 6:31–32, which the Chronicler converts into tapestry.

tops of the pillars, and made a hundred pomegranates to go on the festoons. ·He 17
erected the pillars in front of the Temple, one on the right, the other on the left;
the one on the right he called Jachin and the one on the left, Boaz.

4 He made a bronze altar, twenty cubits long, twenty cubits wide and ten cubits 1
‖1 K 7:23–26 high.[a] ·He made the Sea of cast metal, ten cubits from rim to rim, circular in 2
shape and five cubits high; a cord thirty cubits long gave the measurement of its
girth. ·Under it and completely encircling it were things like oxen, ten to the cubit 3
round the entire Sea; the oxen were in two rows, of one and the same casting with
the rest. ·It rested on twelve oxen, three facing north, three facing west, three 4
facing south, three facing east; on these, their hindquarters all turned inwards,
stood the Sea. ·It was a hand's breadth in thickness, and its rim was shaped like the 5
rim of a cup—lily-shaped. It could hold three thousand *bat*.

‖1 K 7:38–39 He made ten basins, putting five on the right and five on the left, for washing in; 6
the things to be offered as burnt offerings were to be rinsed in these, but the Sea
‖1 K 7:49 was for the priests to wash in. ·He made the ten golden lamp-stands according to 7
pattern and placed them in the Hekal, five on the right and five on the left. ·He 8
‖1 K 7:50 made ten tables which he set up in the Hekal, five on the right and five on the left.
1 Ch 28:16f He also made a hundred golden sprinkling bowls.

1 K 7:12 He made the court of the priests[b] and the great court with its gates and plated 9
the gates with bronze. ·The Sea he placed on the right-hand side of the Temple, to 10
the south-east.

1 K 7:40–51 Huram made the ash containers, the scoops and the sprinkling bowls. Thus 11
Huram completed all the work done for King Solomon for the Temple of God:
the two pillars; the mouldings of the capitals surmounting the two pillars; the 12
two sets of filigree to cover the two mouldings of the capitals surmounting the
pillars; ·the four hundred pomegranates for the two sets of filigree—two rows of 13
pomegranates for each set of filigree;[c] ·the ten[d] stands and the ten basins on the 14
stands; ·the one Sea and the twelve oxen beneath it; ·the ash containers, scoops 15, 16
and forks.

All these utensils made by Huram-Abi for King Solomon for the Temple of
Yahweh were of burnished bronze. ·the King made them by the process of sand 17
casting, in the plain of the Jordan between Succoth and Zeredah. ·There was such 18
an enormous quantity of them that the weight of the bronze could not be calculated.

Solomon made all the objects designed for the Temple of God, as well as the 19
golden altar and the tables for the loaves of permanent offering; ·the lamp-stands 20
with their lamps to burn, as prescribed, in front of the Debir, of pure gold; ·the 21
floral work, the lamps, the tongs, of gold (and it was pure gold); ·the snuffers, 22
the sprinkling bowls, incense ladles and the pans, of real gold; and the entrance to
the Temple, the inner doors (for the Holy of Holies) and the doors of the Temple
itself, that is of the Hekal, were also made of gold.

5 Thus all the work done by Solomon for the Temple of Yahweh was completed, 1
and Solomon brought in the gifts which his father David had consecrated;
and he had the silver, the gold and all the utensils put into the treasuries of the
Temple of God.

‖1 K 8:1–9 **The ark is brought to the Temple**

Solomon then assembled the elders of Israel in Jerusalem, all the tribal chiefs, the 2
princes of the families of Israel, to bring the ark of the covenant of Yahweh up
from the City of David, that is, Zion. ·All the men of Israel assembled round the 3
king at the time of the feast, that is, in the seventh month. ·When all the elders of 4
Israel had arrived, the Levites[e] took up the ark; ·they brought up the ark and the 5
Tent of Meeting and all the sacred utensils which were in the Tent; the levitical
priests brought them up.

King Solomon and the whole assembly of Israel present with him before the ark 6
sacrificed countless, innumerable sheep and oxen. ·The priests brought the ark of 7
the covenant of Yahweh to its place, in the Debir of the Temple, that is, in the

8 Holy of Holies, under the wings of the winged creatures; ·for they spread their
wings over the place where the ark stood, forming a canopy over the ark and its
9 shafts. ·The shafts were so long, however, that the ends of the shafts of the ark
could be seen in front of the Holy Place in front of the Debir, though they could
10 not be seen from outside. They are still there today. [b] ·There was nothing in the ark
except the two tablets which Moses had placed in it at Horeb, when Yahweh made
a covenant with the Israelites when they came out of Egypt.

The Lord takes possession of his Temple ‖1 K 8:10–13

11 Now when the priests came out of the Holy Place [c]—for all the priests present had
12 sanctified themselves regardless of the orders to which they belonged, ·and all the 1 Ch 24
levitical singers, Asaph, Heman and Jeduthun with their sons and brothers, dressed
in linen, were standing to the east of the altar with cymbals, lyres and harps and
13 with them one hundred and twenty priests blowing the trumpets, ·and the harmony
between trumpeters and singers was such that only one melody could be heard as
they praised and gave thanks to Yahweh—and the singing began, to the
accompaniment of trumpets, cymbals and musical instruments, and they praised
Yahweh 'for he is good, for his faithful love is everlasting'—then the Temple was
14 filled with the cloud of the glory of Yahweh, ·and because of the cloud the
priests could not stay and perform their duties. For the glory of Yahweh filled the
Temple of God.

1 6 Then Solomon said:

Yahweh has chosen to dwell in thick cloud,
2 and I have built you a princely dwelling,
a residence for you for ever.

Solomon addresses the people [a] ‖1 K 8:14–21

3 Then the king turned round and blessed the whole assembly of Israel, while the
4 whole assembly of Israel stood. ·He said, 'Blessed be Yahweh, God of Israel, who
has carried out by his hand what he promised verbally to my father David, when he
5 said, ·"From the day I brought my people out of Egypt I chose no city, in any of
the tribes of Israel, to have a temple built where my name should be, nor did I
6 choose anyone to be prince of my people Israel; ·but I did choose Jerusalem for my
7 name to be there, and I did choose David to rule my people Israel." ·My father
David had set his heart on building a temple for the name of Yahweh, God of
8 Israel, ·but Yahweh said to my father David, "You have set your heart on building
9 a temple for my name, and in this you have done well; ·and yet, you are not the
man to build the temple; but your son, yet to be born to you, will be the one to
10 build the temple for my name." ·Yahweh has kept the promise which he made: I
have succeeded my father David and am seated on the throne of Israel, as Yahweh
11 promised; I have built the temple for the name of Yahweh, God of Israel, ·and I
have placed in it the ark containing the covenant of Yahweh, which he made with
the Israelites.'

4 **a.** The parallel texts of 1 K 8:64 and 9:25 do not record the dimensions of the bronze altar in Solomon's Temple. The Chronicler is possibly giving the measurements of the stone altar of the post-exilic Temple.

b. In 1 K 6:36, this appears as 'the inner court'. The Chronicler makes the more specific distinction of his own day.

c. As in 1 K 7:42, Hebr. adds 'to cover the two mouldings . . .', doublet of previous v.

d. 'ten' (twice) *'aser* following 1 K 7:43; Hebr. *'asah* 'he made'.

5 **a.** 1 K reads 'the priests' here, but the Chronicler is thinking of Nb 1:50seq. *see* 1 Ch 15:2. The deuteronomic expression 'the levitical priests' at the end of v. 5 combines the two traditions; *see* 23:18; 30:27.

b. The Chronicler is quoting 1 K 8:8. By his own day the ark had long since disappeared.

c. Here the account taken from 1 K is interrupted by a long parenthesis, either by the Chronicler himself or by the editor who, in 1 Ch 25, emphasises the importance of the singers. The sentence is continued at v. 13[b].

6 **a.** This whole ch. follows 1 K 8 very closely, the Deuteronomic cast of and post-exilic additions to which anticipated the Chronicler's own preoccupations.

‖1 K 8:22–29 **Solomon's prayer for himself**

Then in the presence of the whole assembly of Israel, he stood facing the altar of 12
Yahweh and stretched out his hands—•for Solomon had made a bronze platform, 13
five cubits long, five cubits wide and five cubits high, which he had placed in the
middle of the court and on which he was standing; he knelt down in front of the
whole assembly of Israel, [b] stretched out his hands to heaven—•and said, 'Yahweh, 14
God of Israel, there is no god like you in heaven or on earth, you who are loyal to
the covenant and show faithful love to your servants as long as they walk whole-
heartedly in your way. •You have kept it with your servant, my father David, as 15
you promised him you would. What you promised verbally today you have carried
out by your hand. •And now, Yahweh, God of Israel, keep the promise which you 16
made to your servant David when you said, "You will never lack for a man to sit in
my presence before me on the throne of Israel, provided that your sons are careful
how they behave, following my law as you yourself have done." •So now, God of 17
Israel, let the words come true which you spoke to your servant, my father David.
Yet will God really live with people on earth? Why, the heavens and the heavens 18
of the heavens cannot contain you! How much less this temple built by me! •Even 19
so, listen favourably to the prayer and entreaty of your servant, Yahweh my God;
listen to the cry and to the prayer which your servant makes to you: •Day and 20
night, may your eyes watch over this temple, over this place in which you have
promised to put your name. Listen to the prayer which your servant offers in this
place.

‖1 K 8:30–51 **Solomon's prayer for the people**

'Listen to the entreaties of your servant and of your people Israel; whenever they 21
pray in this place, listen from the place where you reside in heaven; and when you
hear, forgive.

'If someone has wronged his neighbour and a curse is laid [c] on him to make him 22
swear here before your altar in this Temple, •then listen from heaven and do justice 23
between your servants, paying back the guilty one by making him suffer
for his conduct, and acquitting the upright by rewarding him as his upright-
ness deserves.

'If your people Israel are defeated by the enemy because they have sinned 24
against you, but then return to you and acknowledge your name, and pray and
seek your favour in this temple, •then listen from heaven; forgive the sin of 25
your people Israel, and bring them back to the country which you gave to them and
their ancestors.

'When the heavens are shut and there is no rain because they have sinned against 26
you, if they pray in this place and praise your name and, having been humbled by
you, desist from their sin, •then listen from heaven and forgive the sin of your 27
servant and of your people Israel—for you are constantly showing them the good
way which they must follow—and send rain on your country, which you have given
to your people as their heritage.

'Should there be famine in the country, or pestilence, wind-blast or mildew, 28
locust or caterpillar; should their enemy lay siege to their territory; should there be
any plague or any disease; •whatever be the prayer or entreaty of any individual, 29
or of all your people Israel, each being aware of his own affliction and pain; when
he stretches out his hands towards this Temple, •then listen from heaven where 30
you reside; forgive and, since you know what is in his heart, deal with each as his
conduct deserves—for you alone know what is in the human heart—•so that they 31
may revere you by following your directions, which you gave to our ancestors,
throughout their lives on earth.

'Even the foreigner, not belonging to your people Israel but coming from a 32
distant country, attracted by your great name, your mighty hand and outstretched
arm, if he comes and prays in this Temple, •then listen from heaven where you 33

reside, and grant all that the foreigner asks of you, so that all the peoples of the earth may acknowledge your name and, like your people Israel, revere you, and know that this Temple, which I have built, bears your name.

34 'If your people go out to war against their enemies, on whatever mission you send them, and they pray to you, turning towards this city which you have chosen
35 and towards the Temple which I have built for your name, ·then listen from heaven to their prayer and their entreaty, and uphold their cause.

36 'When they sin against you—for there is no one who does not sin—and you are angry with them and abandon them to the enemy, and their captors carry them off
37 to a country be it far away or near, ·if they come to their senses in the country to which they have been taken as captives and pray to you once again in the country of their captivity, saying, "We have sinned, we have acted wrongly and wickedly,"
38 and turn back to you with all their heart and soul in the country of their captivity to which they have been carried away as captives, and pray, turning towards the country which you gave to their ancestors, towards the city you have chosen, and
39 towards the Temple which I have built for your name, ·then listen from heaven where you reside, hear their prayer and entreaties, uphold their cause and forgive your people for having sinned against you.

Conclusion of the prayer [d] ‖1 K 8:52

40 'Now, O my God, may your eyes be open and your ears attentive to prayer offered
41 in this place. ·And now

‖Ps 132:8–10

Yahweh God, go up to your resting-place,
you and your fortress, the Ark!
Let your priests, Yahweh God, be robed in salvation,
let your faithful rejoice in what is good!
42 Yahweh God, do not rebuff your Anointed—
remember the faithful love of your servant David!'

The dedication [a]

1 7 When Solomon had finished his prayer, fire came down from heaven and 1 Ch 21:26+
consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of Yahweh filled
2 the Temple. ·The priests could not enter the Temple of Yahweh, because the glory =5:14 Ex 24:16f
3 of Yahweh filled the Temple of Yahweh. ·When all the Israelites saw the fire come down and the glory of Yahweh resting on the Temple, they bowed down on the pavement with their faces to the earth, worshipping and praising Yahweh with 'For 5:13 Ps 136:1
he is good, for his faithful love lasts for ever!'

4, 5 Then the king and all the people offered sacrifices before Yahweh. ·King ‖1 K 8:62–63
Solomon offered a sacrifice of twenty-two thousand oxen and a hundred and twenty thousand sheep; and thus the king and all the people dedicated the Temple
6 of God. ·The priests stood in their places, as did the Levites with Yahweh's musical instruments which King David had provided, to render 'Give thanks to Yahweh, Ps 136:1 Nb 10:1–10
for his faithful love lasts for ever!' whenever David offered praise to their accompaniment. Opposite them, the priests blew trumpets, while all Israel stood.

7 Solomon also consecrated the middle part of the court in front of the Temple of ‖1 K 8:64–68
Yahweh; for that was where he presented the burnt offerings and the fatty parts of the communion sacrifices, since the bronze altar which Solomon had made could

b. The v. is unique to the Chronicler but possibly preserves an authentic tradition; there was some kind of dais reserved for the king in the Temple, *see* 2 K 16:18; 23:3.

c. 'a curse is laid' *nasa'* following Gk; Hebr. *nasha'* 'he engages himself'.

d. The Chronicler omits the references to the exodus from Egypt, to Moses and to God's choice of Israel, 1 K 8:51–53, substituting a free quotation from Ps 132:8–10, which celebrates the arrival of the ark in Jerusalem, the Davidic covenant and the promises for the stability of the dynasty.

7 a. To the account in 1 K 8, the Chronicler adds: a second theophany, 2 Ch 7:2, parallel to that at the installation of the ark in the Holy of Holies, 2 Ch 5:14; fire from heaven consuming the sacrifices, 2 Ch 7:1, 3, as at the inauguration of David's altar, 1 Ch 21:26; 2 Ch 7:6 on the music of the liturgy; and the prolongation of the festivities, *see* 2 Ch 7:10b.

not hold the burnt offering, the oblation and the fatty parts. ·And then Solomon 8
and with him all Israel from the Pass of Hamath to the Torrent of Egypt—a very
great assembly—celebrated the feast for seven days. ·On the eighth day they held 9
the assembly, for they had devoted seven days to the dedication of the altar and
seven days to the feast. ·On the twenty-third day [b] of the seventh month Solomon 10
dismissed the people to their homes, rejoicing and happy of heart over the good-
ness which Yahweh had shown to David, to Solomon and to his people Israel.

‖1 K 9:1–9 **Yahweh appears and gives a warning** [c]

Thus Solomon finished the Temple of Yahweh and the royal palace, and he 11
successfully concluded everything that he was of a mind to do in the Temple of
Yahweh and in his own palace. ·Then Yahweh appeared to Solomon in the night 12
and said, 'I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for myself as a house
of sacrifice. ·If I shut the heavens so that there is no rain, or if I command the 13
locusts to devour the country, or if I send pestilence among my people, ·if my 14
people who bear my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my presence and
turn from their wicked ways, then I will listen from heaven and forgive their sins
and restore their country. ·Now and for the future my eyes are open and my ears 15
attentive to prayer offered in this place, ·for now I have chosen and consecrated 16
this Temple, for my name to be there for ever; my eyes and my heart will constantly
be there. ·And if, for your part, you walk before me as your father David did, and 17
do everything that I have commanded you to do, and keep my laws and my
ordinances, ·I shall make your royal throne secure, as I covenanted with your 18
father David when I said: You will never lack for a male to rule in Israel. ·But if 19
you turn away and forsake my laws and commandments which I have laid down for
you, and go and serve other gods and worship them, ·then I shall uproot them from 20
the country which I have given them, and shall disown this Temple which I have
consecrated for my name and make it a proverb and a byword among all the
peoples. ·And at this once-exalted Temple, everyone who passes by will be appal- 21
led, and will say, "Why has Yahweh treated this country and this Temple like
this?" ·And the answer will be, "Because they deserted Yahweh, the God of their 22
ancestors, who brought them out of Egypt, and adopted other gods and worshipped
and served them; that is why he has brought all these disasters on them." '

‖1 K 9:10–25 **Conclusion: The completion of the building programme**

8 At the end of the twenty years which it took Solomon to build the Temple of 1
Yahweh and his own palace, ·and to rebuild the towns which Huram had given 2
him and settle them with Israelites, [a] ·Solomon mounted an expedition against 3
Hamath-Zobah [b] and captured it. ·He also fortified Tadmor in the desert [c] and all 4
the storage towns which he had built in Hamath. ·He also built Upper Beth-Horon 5
and Lower Beth-Horon as fortified towns with walls and gates and bars, ·also 6
Baalath and all Solomon's storage towns, all the towns for his chariots and horses,
and everything which Solomon was pleased to build in Jerusalem, in the Lebanon
and throughout the territory under his rule. ·All those who survived of the Hittite, 7
Amorite, Perizzite, Hivite and Jebusite peoples, who did not belong to Israel—
those of their descendants still remaining in the country, whom the Israelites had 8
not exterminated, these Solomon levied for forced labour, as is still the case today.
Solomon did not, however, impose forced labour on the Israelites for his work— 9
for they were soldiers, his senior officers and his chariot and cavalry commanders.
There were two hundred and fifty of King Solomon's officials in charge of the 10
foremen who supervised the people.

Solomon moved Pharaoh's daughter up from the City of David to the palace 11
which he had built for her. 'I must not be responsible', he said, 'for a woman living
in the palace of David king of Israel, for these buildings to which the ark of
Yahweh has come are sacred.' [d]

Thereafter, Solomon made burnt offerings to Yahweh on the altar of Yahweh 12

13 which he had built in front of the portico, ·in accordance with the regular prescrip- Ex 23:14d
tions for burnt sacrifice as commanded by Moses, on the Sabbaths, New Moons Nb 28–29
and the three annual feasts; the feast of Unleavened Bread, the feast of Weeks and
14 the feast of Shelters. ·Following the prescriptions of his father David, he assigned
the orders of priests to their duties and the Levites to their tasks of praise and of 1 Ch 23–26
assisting the priests in accordance with day-to-day requirements; as also the gate-
keepers in their various orders to each gate—for such was the command of David,
15 man of God. ·Nor was there deviation on any point from the king's command as
regards the priests, the Levites or even the storehouses.
16 Thus, all the work was over which Solomon had put in hand when the Temple of
Yahweh was founded until it was finished. The Temple of Yahweh was complete in
every detail. [e]

Solomon in his glory

17 Solomon then mounted an expedition to Ezion-Geber and Elath on the sea-coast ‖1 K 9:26–28
18 of Edom. ·Huram sent him ships through his agents, as well as experienced sailors,
who went to Ophir with men in Solomon's service, where they took on four
hundred and fifty talents of gold, which they brought back to King Solomon.
1 9 The queen of Sheba heard of Solomon's fame and came to Jerusalem to test ‖1 K 10:1–13
Solomon with difficult questions, with a very large retinue with camels laden
with spices and an immense quantity of gold and precious stones. Having reached
2 Solomon, she discussed everything that she had in mind with him, ·and Solomon
had an answer for all her questions; not one of them was too obscure for Solomon
3 to answer for her. ·When the queen of Sheba saw how wise Solomon was, the
4 palace which he had built, ·the food at his table, the accommodation for his
officials, the organisation of his staff and the way they were dressed, his cupbearers
and the way they were dressed, and the burnt offerings, [a] which he made in the
5 Temple of Yahweh, it left her breathless, ·and she said to the king, 'The report I
heard in my own country about you and about your wisdom in handling your affairs
6 was true, then! ·Until I came and saw for myself, I did not believe the reports, but
clearly I was told less than half about the true extent of your wisdom. You surpass
7 what was reported to me. ·How fortunate your people are! [b] How fortunate your
8 courtiers, continually in attendance on you and listening to your wisdom! ·Blessed
be Yahweh your God. [c] Because your God loved Israel and meant to keep it secure
9 for ever, he has made you its king to administer law and justice.' ·And she
presented the king with a hundred and twenty talents of gold and great quantities
of spices and precious stones. There never were such spices as those which the

b. Whereas 1 K 8 merely made the dedication of the Temple coincide with the feast of Shelters, the Chronicler imagines the feast of Dedication to have been followed by the feast of Shelters. According to Dt 16:13 15, the feast of Shelters lasted for only seven days, and that was how it was celebrated in 1 K 8:65–66: on the eighth day Solomon sent the people home. According to the ritual of Lv 23:33–43; Nb 29:35–38, however, the feast ended with a solemn gathering on the eighth day, and this is what the Chronicler has in mind; thus, from the 8th to the 14th of the 7th month, feast of Dedication; from the 15th to the 21st, feast of Shelters; the 22nd, final assembly; and 23rd, dismissal of the people. The text of Ch has reacted on 1 K, where a gloss on 1 K 8:65 has added another seven days of festivities.

c. vv. 13–16 (unique to the Chronicler) are the answer to the king's great prayer in the previous ch.

8 **a.** Presumably the towns in Galilee which Solomon had given to the king of Tyre, 1 K 9:11–12, who did not find them satisfactory. He seems to have refused them, which the Chronicler interprets as his having given them back.

b. The books of Samuel and Kings make a distinction between Hamath and Zobah. This campaign is not mentioned elsewhere and it may be that the Chronicler has attributed David's victory, 2 S 8:3; 10:8 (*see* 1 Ch 18:3f; 19:16), to Solomon to enhance the latter's reputation.

c. The Chronicler has transformed the village of Tamar, south west of the Dead Sea, 1 K 9:18, into the major city of Tadmor, later known as Palmyra.

d. This explanation does not occur in 1 K 9. Circumstances of ritual impurity peculiar to women excluded them from certain consecrated places. Preoccupation with this grew stronger after the Exile, ending with the establishing of a women's court in Herod's Temple.

e. The Chronicler transforms 1 K 9:25 (v. 12) and adds vv. 13–16, in which he shows Solomon's work as the implementation of rules laid down by David in conformity with Mosaic regulations elaborated in the Priestly Code.

9 **a.** 'burnt offerings which he made', versions, 1 K 10:15; Hebr. 'upper rooms where he went'.

b. Gk text of 1 K 10:8 reads 'your wives', which is doubtless original. The Chronicler has changed this, not wishing to mention Solomon's harem, *see* 1 K 11:1–8.

c. By adding these words, the Chronicler emphasises that Yahweh is the real king of Israel, however magnificent the human monarch deputising for him.

queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon. ·Similarly, the men employed by Huram 10
and the men employed by Solomon, who brought the gold from Ophir, also
brought back *algum* wood and precious stones. ·Of the *algum* wood the king made 11
steps for the Temple of Yahweh and for the royal palace, and harps and lyres for
the musicians, the like of which had never before been seen in Judah. ·And King 12
Solomon, in his turn, presented the queen of Sheba with everything that she
expressed a wish for, besides what he gave her in exchange for what she
had brought to the king. [d] After which, she went home to her own country, she and
her servants.

‖1 K 10:14–15 The weight of the gold received annually by Solomon amounted to six hundred 13
and sixty-six talents of gold, ·besides what tolls and foreign trade brought in; all 14
the Arab kings and the provincial governors also brought gold and silver to
‖1 K 10:16–17 Solomon. ·King Solomon made two hundred great shields of beaten gold, six 15
hundred shekels of beaten gold going into one shield; ·also three hundred small 16
shields of beaten gold, three hundred shekels of gold going into one shield; and the
‖1 K 10:18–20 king put these into the House of the Forest of Lebanon. ·The king also made a 17
great ivory throne which he overlaid with refined gold. ·The throne had six steps 18
with a golden foot-rest attached to the throne, and arms on each side of the seat
and two lions standing beside the arms, ·and twelve lions stood on either side of 19
the six steps. Nothing like it had ever been made in any other kingdom.

‖1 K 10:21–25 All King Solomon's drinking vessels were of gold, and all the plate in the House 20
of the Forest of Lebanon was of pure gold; silver was little thought of in Solomon's
days, ·since the king's ships went to Tarshish with Huram's employees, and once 21
every three years the merchantmen would come back laden with gold and silver,
ivory, apes and baboons. ·For riches and for wisdom, King Solomon surpassed all 22
kings on earth, ·and all the kings in the world consulted Solomon to hear the 23
wisdom which God had implanted in his heart, ·and everyone would bring a 24
present with him: objects of silver and of gold, robes, armour, spices, horses and
mules; and this went on year after year.

=1:14 Solomon also had four thousand stalls for horses and chariots, and twelve 25
‖1 K 5:6;10:26 thousand cavalrymen; these he stationed in the chariot towns and near the king in
‖1 K 5:1 Jerusalem. ·He was overlord of all the kings from the River to the territory of the 26
=1:15 Philistines and the Egyptian border. ·In Jerusalem the king made silver as common 27
‖1 K 10:27–8 as stones, and cedar wood as plentiful as sycamore in the Lowlands. ·Horses were 28
imported for Solomon from Muzur [e] and all the other countries too.

‖1 K 11:41–43 **The death of Solomon**

The rest of the history of Solomon, from first to last, is this not all written down in 29
the records of Nathan the prophet, in the Prophecy of Ahijah of Shiloh, and in the
Vision of Iddo the seer [f] concerning Jeroboam son of Nebat? ·Solomon reigned in 30
Jerusalem over all Israel for forty years. ·When Solomon fell asleep with his 31
ancestors, he was buried in the City of his father David; Rehoboam his son
succeeded him.

IV: FIRST REFORMS OF THE MONARCHICAL PERIOD

A: REHOBOAM AND THE REGROUPING OF THE LEVITES

‖1 K 12:1–19 **The schism** [a]

10 Rehoboam then went to Shechem, all Israel having come to Shechem to 1
proclaim him king. ·As soon as Jeroboam son of Nebat heard the news—he 2
was in Egypt, where he had taken refuge from King Solomon —he returned from
Egypt. ·They now sent for him, so Jeroboam and all Israel came and spoke as 3
follows to Rehoboam, ·"Your father laid a cruel yoke on us; if you will lighten your 4

father's cruel slavery, that heavy yoke which he imposed on us, we are willing to
5 serve you.' •He said to them, 'Come back to me in three days' time.' And the people went away.
6 King Rehoboam then consulted the elders, who had been in attendance on his father Solomon while he was alive, and said, 'How do you advise me to answer this
7 people?' •They replied, 'If you are kind to these people, pleasant to them and give
8 them a fair reply, they will remain your servants for ever.' •But he rejected the advice given him by the elders and consulted the young men in attendance on him,
9 who had grown up with him. •He said, 'How do you advise us to answer these people who have been saying, "Lighten the yoke which your father imposed on
10 us"?' •The young men who had grown up with him replied, 'This is the way to answer the people who have been saying, "Your father made our yoke heavy, you must lighten it for us!" This is the right thing to say to them, "My little finger is
11 thicker than my father's loins! •Although my father laid a heavy yoke on you, I shall make it heavier still! My father controlled you with the whip, but I shall apply
12 a spiked lash!" ' •On the third day, Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam in obedience to the king's instructions, 'Come back to me in three days'
13 time.' •And the king gave them a harsh answer. King Rehoboam, rejecting the
14 advice of the elders, •spoke to them as the young men had recommended, 'My father made [b] your yoke heavy, but I shall add to it. My father controlled you with
15 the whip, but I shall apply a spiked lash.' •Thus the king refused to listen to the people, and this was brought about by God, so that Yahweh might fulfil the promise which he had made through Ahijah of Shiloh to Jeroboam son of Nebat.
16 When all Israel saw that the king refused to listen to them, the people answered the king thus:

What share have we in David?
—no heritage in the son of Jesse!
Each of you, to your tents, Israel!
Now look to your own house, David!

17 So Israel went home again. •Rehoboam, however, reigned over those Israelites
18 who lived in the towns of Judah. •When King Rehoboam sent Adoram who was in charge of forced labour, the Israelites stoned him to death, while King Rehoboam
19 managed to mount his chariot and escape to Jerusalem. •And Israel has remained in rebellion against the House of David from that day to this.

1 **11** When Rehoboam reached Jerusalem, he mustered a hundred and eighty ‖1 K 12:21–24
thousand picked warriors of the House of Judah and Benjamin to fight
2 Israel and win back the kingdom for Rehoboam. •But the word of Yahweh came to
3 Shemaiah, man of God, •'Say this to Rehoboam son of Solomon, king of Judah,
4 and to all Israel in Judah and Benjamin, •"Yahweh says this: Do not go and make war on your brothers; let everyone go home, for this is my doing." ' They obeyed Yahweh's command and went back instead of marching against Jeroboam.
5 Rehoboam, residing in Jerusalem, fortified a number of towns for the defence of
6, 7, 8 Judah. •He built Bethlehem, Etam, Tekoa, •Beth-Zur, Soco, Adullam, •Gath,
9, 10 Mareshah, Ziph, •Adoraim, Lachish, Azekah, •Zorah, Aijalon, Hebron, these
11 being the fortified towns in Judah and Benjamin. [a] •He equipped these fortresses,
12 stationing commanders in them, with supplies of food, oil and wine, •and shields

d. 'what he gave her in exchange for' supplied for clarity. The different text of 1 K 10:15 explains this.
e. 'Muzur' conj., 'Egypt' Hebr., *see* 1:16.
f. *see* 12:15: possibly the anonymous 'man of God' in 1 K 13. For Nathan, see 1 K 1. For Ahijah, *see* 1 K 11:26–39.

10 a. The ch. follows 1 K 12 almost word for word. The Chronicler can hardly avoid the fact of the schism, but he omits any reference to Jeroboam's earlier revolt, 1 K 11:26seq. and alludes only briefly, 11:14–15, to the religious schism recounted at length in 1 K 12:26–13:32.
b. 'My father made', 1 K 12:14; 'I shall make' Hebr.

11 a. Although the list of Rehoboam's fortified towns has no parallel in 1 K it comes from a sound historical source. Rehoboam's action may have followed Shishak's invasion, 12:9, which showed how vulnerable his territory was. The fortresses named did not lie along the frontier of Rehoboam's kingdom but would have presented strategic obstacles to attacks from Egypt, Philistia and Edom. They were garrisoned by regular troops, vv. 11–12.

and spears in each of these towns, making them extremely strong and thus retaining control of Judah and Benjamin.

The priests and Levites migrate to Judah [b]

The priests and the Levites from all over Israel left their districts to put themselves 13
Nb 35:2 at his disposal. ·The Levites, indeed, abandoned their pasture lands and their 14
holdings and came to Judah and Jerusalem because Jeroboam and his sons had
1 K 12:30 excluded them from the priesthood of Yahweh. ·Jeroboam had appointed his own 15
Lv 17:7c priests for the high places dedicated to the satyrs and calves which he had made.
And those members of all the tribes of Israel who were determined to seek 16
Yahweh, God of Israel, followed those priests and Levites to Jerusalem to sacrifice
to Yahweh, God of their ancestors. ·These added strength to the kingdom of Judah 17
and gave their support to Rehoboam son of Solomon for three years. For three
years they remained loyal to David and Solomon.

1 K 11:1–13 **Rehoboam's family** [c]

Rehoboam married Mahalath daughter of Jerimoth, son of David, and of Abihail [d] 18
daughter of Eliab son of Jesse, ·and she bore him sons; Jeush, Shemariah and 19
1 K 15:2 Zaham. ·After her, he married Maacah daughter of Absalom, who bore him 20
Abijah, Attai, Ziza and Shelomith. ·Rehoboam loved Maacah daughter of Absa- 21
lom, more than all his other wives and concubines. He had in fact a total of
eighteen wives and sixty concubines and fathered twenty-eight sons and sixty
daughters. ·Rehoboam named Abijah son of Maacah as head, hence leader, of his 22
brothers, with a view to making him king, [e] ·and acted wisely by distributing his 23
sons throughout the territories of Judah and Benjamin, some in each fortified
town, where he provided plenty of food for them and found them wives. [f]

Rehoboam's unfaithfulness [a]

12 When Rehoboam had consolidated the kingdom and become strong, he, 1
1 K 14:22 and all Israel with him, abandoned the Law of Yahweh; ·and thus it 2
‖1 K 14:25 happened that in the fifth year of King Rehoboam, Shishak king of Egypt marched
on Jerusalem, because they had been unfaithful to Yahweh—·with twelve hundred 3
chariots and sixty thousand cavalry and countless hordes of Libyans, Sukkiim and
Cushites who came from Egypt with him. ·They captured the fortified towns of 4
11:2 Judah and reached Jerusalem. ·The prophet Shemaiah then came to Rehoboam 5
and the generals of Judah, who had fallen back on Jerusalem before Shishak's
advance, and said to them, 'Yahweh says this, "You have abandoned me and so I
have abandoned you into Shishak's clutches." ' ·At this, the Israelite generals and 6
the king humbled themselves and said, 'Yahweh is just!' ·When Yahweh saw that 7
they had humbled themselves, the word of Yahweh came to Shemaiah as follows,
'They have humbled themselves. I shall not destroy them but shall grant them
some degree of deliverance. My retribution will not be poured out on
Jerusalem by means of Shishak; ·they are nonetheless to become his slaves, so that 8
they may learn the difference between serving me and serving kings of
other countries.'
‖1 K 14:26–28 So Shishak king of Egypt advanced on Jerusalem and carried off the treasures of 9
the Temple and the treasures of the royal palace. He took everything away,
including the golden shields which Solomon had made. ·To replace these, King 10
Rehoboam made bronze shields, entrusting them to the commanders of the guard
who guarded the king's palace gate. ·Whenever the king went to the Temple of 11
Yahweh, the guards would come out carrying them, returning them to the guard-
room afterwards.

Summary of the reign

Because King Rehoboam had humbled himself, the retribution of Yahweh turned 12
away from him so as not to destroy him completely; and there were also some good

13 features in Judah. ·Thus he was able to strengthen his position in Jerusalem and
continue as king; for Rehoboam was forty-one years old when he came to the ‖1 K 14:21
throne and remained king for seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city chosen by
Yahweh from all the tribes of Israel to put his name there. His mother's name
14 was Naamah the Ammonite. ·But he did wrong in not setting his heart on
seeking Yahweh.
15 The history of Rehoboam, from first to last, is this not all written down in the ‖1 K 14:29–31
records of Shemaiah the prophet and of Iddo the seer? [b] Warfare between Reho-
16 boam and Jeroboam went on throughout the period. ·When Rehoboam fell asleep
with his ancestors, he was buried in the City of David; his son Abijah succeeded
him.

B: ABIJAH AND LOYALTY TO THE LEGITIMATE PRIESTHOOD

War breaks out

1 **13** In the eighteenth year of King Jeroboam, Abijah [a] became king of Judah ‖1 K 15:1–2,7
2 ·and reigned for three years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Micaiah [b]
daughter of Uriel of Gibeah. When war broke out between Abijah and Jeroboam,
3 Abijah took the field with an army of four hundred thousand picked warriors,
while Jeroboam took the field against him with eight hundred thousand picked
warriors.

Abijah addresses the Israelites [c]

4 Abijah took position on Mount Zemaraim, in the highlands of Ephraim. 'Jero-
5 boam and all Israel,' he cried, 'listen to me! ·Do you not know that Yahweh, God
of Israel, has given eternal sovereignty of Israel to David and his sons by an
6 inviolable covenant? [d] ·Yet Jeroboam son of Nebat, the slave of Solomon son of
7 David, rose in revolt against his master. ·Worthless men, scoundrels, rallied to Dt 13:14b
him, proving too strong for Rehoboam son of Solomon, as Rehoboam was then
8 inexperienced and timid and unable to resist them. ·And now you propose to resist
Yahweh's sovereignty as exercised by the sons of David because there is a great
number of you and you have the golden calves that Jeroboam made you for gods!
9 Have you not driven out the priests of Yahweh, the sons of Aaron and the Levites,
to make priests of your own like the peoples of foreign countries? Anyone who
comes with a bull and seven rams to get himself consecrated can become priest of
10 these gods that are no gods. ·But for our part, our God is Yahweh, and we have
not abandoned him; our priests are sons of Aaron who minister to Yahweh, and
11 those who serve are Levites; ·morning after morning, evening after evening, they
present burnt offerings and perfumed incense to Yahweh, they put the bread of
permanent offering on the clean table and nightly light the lamps on the golden
lamp-stand; for we keep the decree of Yahweh our God, although you have

b. According to the Chronicler, Jeroboam's schism provoked a migration of priests, Levites and faithful laity to Jerusalem as the only legitimate sanctuary. An emigration of this sort did indeed occur after the fall of Samaria, two centuries later.

c. These details are unique to the Chronicler. Having passed over Solomon's many wives in silence, he makes a point of noting the harem of the apostate Rehoboam, *see* 11:21.

d. 'daughter (of Jerimoth)' Gk; 'son' Hebr. • 'and of Abihayil' Gk; 'Abihail' Hebr.

e. Rehoboam, like David, chose the son of his favourite wife to succeed him, regardless of seniority of birth, just as David had chosen Solomon.

f. 'found them wives' *wayyissah lahem nashim* conj.; Hebr. *wayyissheal hamon nashim* 'consulted many wives'.

12 a. To the account of Shishak's campaign in 1 K 14, the Chronicler adds vv. 2[b]-8 and 12 from an independent source, possibly the writings of the prophet Shemaiah, mentioned in v. 15.

b. Hebr. adds 'as also the official genealogy'.

13 a. The Abijam of 1 K 14:31; 15:1, 7, 8.

b. In 11:20; 1 K 15:2 and Gk she is called Maacah with descent from Absalom.

c. This composition, unique to the Chronicler, is a good example of levitical preaching of his own times, using past events to draw a lesson for a present situation. Through the Israelites of the times of Abijah, the Chronicler is addressing the people of Samaria, reminding them that Judah has the only true jurisdiction, the only true God, the only legitimate priesthood and the only liturgy conforming to the laws of the Pentateuch.

d. lit. 'covenant of salt', *see* Lv 2:13.

Nb 10:9 abandoned him. ·See how God is with us, at our head, and his priests with trumpets 12
2 M 7:19 Ac 5:39 to sound the alarm against you! Israelites, do not make war on Yahweh, God of your ancestors, for you will not succeed.'

The battle [e]

Now Jeroboam had sent a party round to ambush them from the rear; thus the 13
main force confronted Judah and the ambush lay to their rear. ·And when Judah 14
looked round, they found themselves being attacked from front and rear. They called on Yahweh, the priests sounded the trumpets, ·and the men of Judah raised 15
the war cry and, as they raised the cry, God routed Jeroboam and all Israel before Abijah and Judah. ·So the Israelites fled before Judah, because God had given 16
Judah the upper hand, ·and Abijah and his army inflicted a great slaughter on 17
them: five hundred thousand of Israel's picked men fell, killed. ·So the Israelites 18
were humbled on that occasion, while the Judaeans won, since they had relied on Yahweh, God of their ancestors.

The end of the reign of Abijah

Abijah pursued Jeroboam, taking from him the towns of Bethel with its depend- 19
encies, Jeshanah with its dependencies and Ephron with its dependencies,[f] ·nor 20
did Jeroboam regain strength during Abijah's lifetime. Eventually Yahweh struck him and he died, ·but Abijah grew stronger than ever; he married fourteen wives 21
‖1 K 15:7–8 and fathered twenty-two sons and sixteen daughters. ·The rest of the history of 22
Abijah, his conduct and his sayings, are recorded in the *midrash* of the prophet
12:15;14:1 Iddo. ·When Abijah fell asleep with his ancestors, he was buried in the City of 23 14:1
David; his son Asa succeeded him.

C: ASA AND HIS REFORM OF PUBLIC WORSHIP

Peace under Asa

In his time the country was at peace for ten years.

‖1 K 15:11–12 **14** Asa did what Yahweh his God regards as good and right. ·He abolished the 1, 2 2, 3
Ex 23:24k; 34:13e foreign altars and the high places, broke the pillars, cut down the sacred
1 S 9:12f poles, ·and urged Judah to seek Yahweh, God of their ancestors, and to observe 3 4
the law and commandment.[g] ·Because he abolished the high places and incense 4 5
altars through the towns of Judah, the kingdom under him was undisturbed. ·He 5 6
rebuilt the fortified towns of Judah, since the country was at peace and free of war during those years, because Yahweh had granted him peace.

'Let us rebuild these towns,' he told Judah, 'let us surround them with wall and 6 7
tower, with gate and bar while the country is still ours, for we have sought Yahweh our God and he has sought us and given us peace all around.' They built and prospered.

Asa had an army of three hundred thousand men of Judah armed with shields 7 8
and spears and two hundred and eighty thousand men of Benjamin armed with
1 Ch 8:40h shields and bows, all of them outstanding soldiers.

Invasion by Zerah [h]

Zerah the Cushite took the field against them with an army a million strong and 8 9
three hundred chariots, and penetrated to Mareshah. ·Asa took the field against 9 10
him and the battle-lines were drawn up in the Valley of Zephathah, at Mareshah.
Asa then called on Yahweh his God and said, 'Yahweh, numbers and strength 10 11
make no difference to you when you give your help. Help us, Yahweh our God, for, relying on you, we are confronting this horde in your name. Yahweh, you are our God. Human strength cannot prevail against you!'

Yahweh routed the Cushites before Asa and Judah. The Cushites fled, ·and Asa 11, 12 12, 13

pursued them with his army as far as Gerar. So many of the Cushites fell that they were unable to survive. They were cut to pieces by Yahweh and his army.

14 13 They carried off a great deal of booty, ·they destroyed all the towns round Gerar—for a panic from Yahweh had seized the towns—and plundered all the
15 14 towns since they were full of loot. ·They also routed the cattle-owners and carried off great numbers of sheep and camels; then they returned to Jerusalem.

Azariah's sermon and the reform

1. 2 15 The spirit of God then came on Azariah son of Oded; ·he went out to meet Asa and said, 'Listen to me, Asa, and all you in Judah and in Benjamin: Yahweh will be with you so long as you are with him. If you seek him, he will let Ws 1:1c+ Jr 29:13–14+
3 you find him; but if you desert him, he will desert you. ·For a long time Israel did Ho 3:4–5
4 not have the true God or a teacher-priest or a law. ·but when in their distress they
5 turned to Yahweh, God of Israel, and sought him, he let them find him. ·In those Dt 4:29–30,30h
times there was no security for people as they went about their business, but great
6 unrest affecting the inhabitants of all countries, ·nation being crushed by nation Is 19:2
and city by city, since God caused confusion among them by every kind of distress.
7 So be strong, do not be discouraged, for your deeds will be rewarded.' Is 7:4 Jr 31:16

Asa's religious reforms[a]

8 When Asa heard these words and the prophecy,[b] he took courage and removed the abominable idols throughout the land of Judah and Benjamin as well as from the towns which he had captured in the highlands of Ephraim, and repaired the
9 altar of Yahweh which stood in front of the portico of Yahweh. ·He summoned all Judah and Benjamin as well as those Ephraimites, Manassehites and Simeonites who had settled with them—for a great many people from Israel had gone over to
10 Asa when they saw that Yahweh his God was with him. ·They assembled in
11 Jerusalem in the third month of the fifteenth year of Asa's reign, ·that day sacrificing to Yahweh seven hundred oxen and seven thousand sheep from the
12 booty which they had brought back. ·They then made a covenant to seek Yahweh,
13 God of their ancestors, with all their heart and soul; ·anyone who would not seek Ne 10:30 Yahweh, God of Israel, was to be put to death, whether high or low, man or
14 woman. ·They pledged their oath to Yahweh in ringing tones, with shouts of joy,
15 to the sound of trumpet and horn; ·all Judah rejoiced over the oath, for they had sworn it wholeheartedly, and sought him so earnestly that he allowed them to find him; Yahweh gave them peace all round.

16 King Asa even deprived his mother Maacah of the dignity of Great Lady for 1 K 15:13–15 having made an obscenity for Asherah; Asa cut down her obscenity, smashed it
17 and burnt it in the ravine of the Kidron. ·Though the high places were not abolished
18 in Israel, Asa's heart was loyal throughout his life. ·He deposited his father's and his own dedicated gifts of silver, gold and sacred vessels, in the Temple of Yahweh.

19 Up to the thirty-fifth year of Asa's reign there was no war.

e. The battle is described in terms reminiscent of the capture of Ai, Jos 8, and Gibeah, Jg 20 (the ambush) and of the narratives of holy war (war cry, trumpets and ascription of the victory to God), *see* Jos. 6.

f. This territorial conquest is probable enough, but did not last. In the constant skirmishes between Judah and Israel, there was alternate gain and loss on each side, 15:8; 16:1–6; 17:2; 1 K 15:16–23.

14 a. The Chronicler improves on the eulogy of Asa in 1 K 15 by crediting him with religious reforms, about which he says more in ch. 15.

b. Although this incident is not mentioned in 1 K, the precision over place names and inconsistency with the general picture of Asa's peaceful reign, *see* vv. 5–6; 15:19, seem to vouch for its authenticity. Zerah, otherwise unknown, may have been the leader of a group of Ethiopian mercenaries, stationed in the Negeb by Shishak, *see* ch. 12, to garrison the area of Gerar. But Cush could indicate also the nomads of Negeb (*see* Moses' Cushite wife, Nb 12:1b) who had come to raid Judah, v. 14. The numbers involved are doubtless exaggerated.

15 a. The Chronicler amplifies the theme stated in 14:1–4. The reforms are inspired by a prophet, v. 1, *see* v. 8b, and comprise the suppression of idols throughout the country, repairs to the Temple, a solemn sacrifice and a renewal of the covenant. The narrative seems to be based on the reforms of Hezekiah, ch. 29–31, cf. Jr 26:18–19, and more particularly those of Josiah, 2 Ch 34–35, where the same features occur: suppression of idols and high places throughout the country, repairs to the Temple, prophetic preaching, renewal of the alliance and solemn sacrifices.

b. Hebr. adds 'of the prophet Oded', though in v. 1 the event is related to his father.

War with Israel [a]

‖1 K 15:16–22

16 In the thirty-sixth year of Asa's reign, Baasha king of Israel marched on 1
Judah and fortified Ramah to block the communications of Asa king of
Judah. ·Asa then took silver and gold from the treasuries of the Temple of Yahweh 2
and the royal palace and sent this with the following message to Ben-Hadad king of
Aram, who lived in Damascus, ·'Let us make an alliance between me and you, 3
between my father and your father! Look, I have sent you silver and gold. Come,
break off your alliance with Baasha king of Israel, which will make him withdraw
from me.' ·Ben-Hadad listened favourably to King Asa and sent the generals of his 4
armies to attack the towns of Israel; he ravaged Ijon, Dan, Abel-Maim and all the
storage towns of Naphtali. ·When Baasha heard this he gave up fortifying Ramah, 5
abandoning this work. ·King Asa then had all Judah carry away the stones and 6
timber with which Baasha had been fortifying Ramah, and used them to fortify
Geba and Mizpah.

Then it was that Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah and said, 'Because 7
you relied on the king of Aram and not on Yahweh your God, the king of Aram's
14:8–14 army will slip through your fingers. ·Did not the Cushites and Libyans form a vast 8
army with great numbers of chariots and cavalry? Even so, because you relied on
Ps 33:13–15 Yahweh, he gave you the upper hand; ·for Yahweh's eyes rove to and fro across 9
the whole world to support those whose hearts are loyal to him. You have acted
Jr 20:2 like a fool in this respect; hence, from now on you will have wars.' ·Enraged with 10
the seer, Asa had him put in the stocks in prison, being angry with him over this; at
the same time Asa ill-treated some of the people too.

‖1 K 15:23–24 **The end of the reign of Asa**

The history of Asa, from first to last, is recorded in the Book of the Kings of Judah 11
and Israel. ·In the thirty-ninth year of his reign, Asa contracted a disease in his 12
feet, which became very severe; in his illness, however, he consulted not Yahweh
but the doctors. [b] ·Asa then fell asleep with his ancestors, dying in the forty-first 13
year of his reign. ·He was buried in the tomb [c] which he had ordered to be cut for 14
him in the City of David. He was laid in the burial chamber which was filled
with perfume blended from all sorts of oils, and a very great funeral fire was
made for him. [d]

D: JEHOSHAPHAT AND HIS GOVERNMENT

Jehoshaphat's military policy [a]

17 When his son Jehoshaphat succeeded him, he made himself stronger against 1
Israel ·by stationing troops in all the fortified towns in Judah and by 2
garrisoning Judah and the towns of Ephraim which his father Asa had captured.

His devotion to religion

Yahweh was with Jehoshaphat because he followed the example of his father's 3
earlier days and did not have recourse to Baal, [b] ·but sought Yahweh, the God of 4
his father, following his commandments and not behaving as Israel did. ·Because 5
of this, Yahweh put him in secure control of the kingdom, while all Judah gave
Jehoshaphat presents until ample riches and honour were his. ·He was so enthu- 6
Ex 34:13e
1 S 9:12+ siastic about obeying Yahweh that once again he abolished the high places and
sacred poles in Judah.

In the third year of his reign he sent his leading men—Ben-Hail, Obadiah, 7
Zechariah, Nethanel and Micaiah, to give instruction in the towns of Judah. [c] ·With 8
19:8 them went the Levites: Shemaiah, Nethaniah, Zebadiah, Asahel, Shemiramoth,
Jehonathan, Adonijah and Tobijah, the Levites; Elishama and Jehoram the priests

9 went with them. •They gave instruction in Judah, having with them the book of the Law of Yahweh, and went round all the towns of Judah instructing the people. Ezr 7:25
10 A panic from Yahweh seized all the kings of the countries surrounding Judah, as
11 a result of which they did not make war on Jehoshaphat. •Some of the Philistines brought Jehoshaphat presents and a load of silver and the Arabs[d] brought him seven thousand seven hundred rams and seven thousand seven hundred he-goats. Is 16:1
12 Jehoshaphat became more and more powerful. He built fortresses and storage towns in Judah.

The army[e]

13 He accumulated ample supplies in the towns of Judah.
14 He also had warriors, outstanding men, in Jerusalem. •According to family, this is how they were classified:
Over the commanders of the thousands of Judah was General Adnah, who had three hundred thousand outstanding men;
15 Under him was General Jehohanan, who had two hundred and eighty thousand;
16 Under him was Amasiah son of Zichri, who had volunteered for Yahweh and who had two hundred thousand outstanding men;
17 That outstanding soldier, Eliada, represented Benjamin, and he had two hundred thousand men armed with bow and shield; 1 Ch 8:40h
18 And under him Jehozabad, who had one hundred and eighty thousand equipped for war.
19 These were in attendance on the king, apart from those whom the king had stationed in the fortified towns all over Judah.

His alliance with Ahab and the intervention of the prophets[a] ‖1 K 22:1–35

1 18 Although Jehoshaphat enjoyed great wealth and honour, he allied himself
2 by marriage to Ahab.[b] •After some years he paid a visit to Ahab in Samaria. Ahab slaughtered an immense number of sheep and oxen for him and his retinue,
3 to induce him to attack Ramoth-Gilead.[c] •Ahab king of Israel then said to Jehoshaphat king of Judah, 'Will you come with me to Ramoth-Gilead?' He replied, 'I will share in battle with you, my men with yours.'

The spurious prophets predict success

4 Jehoshaphat, however, said to the king of Israel, 'First, please consult the word of
5 Yahweh.' •So the king of Israel called the prophets together, four hundred of them. 'Should we go and attack Ramoth-Gilead,' he asked, 'or should I hold back?' 'March,' they replied, 'for God will deliver it into the king's power.
6 Jehoshaphat, however, said, 'Is there no other prophet of Yahweh here, for us to

16 a. To the parallel account in 1 K 15:16–24, the Chronicler adds the precise date, v. 1, probably from a good source, and the intervention of a prophet, vv. 7–10, who condemns the appeal for foreign help, compare Isaiah in the case of Egypt, Is 30:1–7; 31:1–3; also Ho 5:13, 7:11; 12:2.

b. In those times medicine was often mixed with magic, but the text means primarily that Asa sought a remedy from the doctors for an illness, which was a punishment from God, cf. v. 10.

c. Hebr. 'tombs'.

d. Not a cremation but the burning of spices, to celebrate the interment of kings who died at peace with God, Jr 34:5, and beloved by their subjects, as here; cf. Jehoram, of whom the Chronicler disapproves, refusing him this final accolade, 21:19–20.

17 a. As the Chronicler sees Asa as a type of the peaceful, so he sees Jehoshaphat as the type of the strong king. The King's name means 'Yahweh-is-judge'. With Hezekiah and Josiah he is one of the Chronicler's favourites.

b. 'his father' Gk, *see* 20:32; 'David his father' Hebr.

c. This mission of teaching the Law, entrusted to five laymen, eight Levites and two priests, can hardly belong to the reign of Jehoshaphat. Rather does it reflect the Chronicler's own period, by which time the teaching function of the Levites (preparing for the synagogue and teachers of the Law) was developing.

d. Not the inhabitants of distant Arabia but groups which had infiltrated into the Negeb, *see* 21:16.

e. Apart from the inflated numbers this note comes from a reliable source. Jehoshaphat had a conscript army, recruited by families, distributed by companies in which Judah and Benjamin are distinct. There was also garrison-duty.

18 a. The Chronicler, having no interest in the history of the Northern Kingdom, omits all material about Elijah, 1 K 17–18, and Elisha, 2 K 2–8, but includes this passage since it concerns his hero and the activities of a true prophet as opposed to Ahab's spurious ones.

b. His son Jehoram married Athaliah, daughter or sister of Ahab, *see* 2 K 8:18j.

c. An ill-omened sacrificial feast since not offered in Jerusalem (not mentioned in 1 K 22).

consult?' ·The king of Israel answered Jehoshaphat, 'There is one more man 7
through whom we can consult Yahweh, but I hate him because he never has a
favourable prophecy for me, always unfavourable ones; he is Micaiah son of
Imlah.' 'The king should not say such things,' said Jehoshaphat. ·The king of Israel 8
then summoned a court official and said, 'Bring Micaiah son of Imlah immediately.'

The king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah were sitting each on his throne, 9
wearing their robes; in an open space just outside the gate of Samaria, with all the
prophets prophesying before them, ·Zedekiah son of Chenaanah, who had made 10
himself some iron horns, said, 'Yahweh says, "With horns like these, you will gore
the Aramaeans till you make an end of them." ' ·And all the prophets prophesied 11
in the same vein, saying, 'March on Ramoth-Gilead! Success is sure, for Yahweh
has already given it to the king!'

The prophet Micaiah predicts defeat

The messenger who had gone to summon Micaiah said to him, 'Look! What the 12
prophets are saying is uniformly favourable to the king. So I hope you will say the
same as they do and speak favourably.' ·Micaiah said, 'As Yahweh lives, I shall 13
speak exactly as Yahweh tells me!' ·When he came to the king, the king said, 14
'Micaiah, should we march to attack Ramoth-Gilead, or should I hold back?' He
replied, 'Go and conquer, Yahweh will deliver them into your power!' ·The king 15
went on 'How often must I put you on oath to tell me nothing but the truth in the
name of Yahweh?' ·Then he spoke out. 16

I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains
like sheep without a shepherd.
And Yahweh said, 'These have no master,
let them all go peacefully home!'

At this the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, 'Did I not tell you that he never 17
gives me favourable prophecies, but only unfavourable ones?' ·Micaiah went on, 18
'Now listen to the word of Yahweh. I saw Yahweh seated on his throne with the
whole array of heaven standing on his right and on his left. ·Yahweh said, "Who 19
will entice Ahab king of Israel into marching to his death at Ramoth-Gilead?" At
which some answered one way, and some another. ·A spirit then came forward 20
and stood before Yahweh and said, "I will entice him." "How?" Yahweh asked.
He replied, "I shall go and be a deceptive spirit in the mouths of all his prophets." 21
Yahweh said, "You will succeed in enticing him. Go and do it." ·And now, you 22
see, Yahweh has put a deceptive spirit into the mouths of your prophets here, for
in fact Yahweh has pronounced disaster on you.'

Zedekiah son of Chenaanah then came up, struck Micaiah on the cheek and 23
said, 'Which way did Yahweh's spirit leave me, to speak to you?' ·'That is what 24
you will find out,' Micaiah retorted, 'the day you go from room to room, trying to
hide.' ·The king of Israel said, 'Seize Micaiah and hand him over to Amon governor 25
of the city, and Joash the king's son, ·and say, "These are the king's orders: Put 26
this man in prison and feed him on nothing but bread and water until I am safely
home.' ·Micaiah said, 'If you ever do get home safely, Yahweh has not spoken 27
through me.'[d]

The battle

The king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah marched on Ramoth-Gilead. 28
The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, 'I shall disguise myself to go[e] into battle, 29
but you put on your robes.' So the king of Israel disguised himself, and they went
into battle. ·Now, the king of Aram had given his chariot commanders the 30
following order, 'Do not attack anyone of whatever rank, except the king of Israel.'
So, when the chariot commanders saw Jehoshaphat, they thought, 'That is the king 31
of Israel,' and surrounded him to attack. But when Jehoshaphat shouted his war
cry, Yahweh came to his help, God drew them away from him, ·for 32

the chariot commanders, realising that he was not the king of Israel, broke off their pursuit.

33 Someone, however, drawing his bow without any special aim, shot the king of Israel between the joints of his armour. 'Turn about!' he said to his charioteer.
34 'Get me out of the fighting;[f] I am collapsing.' ·But the battle grew fiercer as the day went on, and the king of Israel had to be held upright in his chariot facing the Aramaeans until the evening, and at sunset he died.[g]

Jehoshaphat is rebuked by a prophet

1 19 Jehoshaphat king of Judah returned home safely, however, to Jerusalem.
2 Jehu[a] son of Hanani the seer went to meet him and said to King Jehoshaphat, 'Should a man give help to the wicked? Should you love those who hate
3 Yahweh and so bring his retribution on yourself? ·All the same, there are good things to your credit, since you have removed the sacred poles from the country and have set your heart on seeking God.'

His judicial reforms[b]

4 Jehoshaphat resided in Jerusalem but regularly went on progress among the people, from Beersheba to the highlands of Ephraim, to convert them to Yahweh,
5 God of their ancestors. ·He also appointed judges in the country in every one of
6 the fortified towns of Judah, ·saying to the judges, 'Be careful what you do, since Dt 1:16–17; 16:19
you are judging not by any human power but in the name of Yahweh, who will be
7 with you when you pronounce sentence. ·This being so, let fear of Yahweh govern
you; be careful what you do, for Yahweh our God will not tolerate malpractice, Dt 10:17f
partiality or the taking of bribes.'
8 Jehoshaphat also appointed some of the Levites, priests and heads of Israelite Dt 17:8–13
9 families in Jerusalem to settle disputes. They lived at Jerusalem[c] ·and Jehoshaphat gave them the following charge: 'In fear of Yahweh and with conscientious integ-
10 rity, this is how you are to act: ·whatever case your brothers living in other towns refer to you, whether involving blood feuds or law and commandment, statutes and judgements, you are to instruct them in such manner that they do not incur guilt before Yahweh and that you and your brothers do not incur his anger. If you
11 act thus, you will not incur guilt. ·Amariah the chief priest himself will be your president in all religious cases, and Zebadiah son of Ishmael, leader of the House of Judah, in all civil ones, while the Levites will act as officers of the court. Be firm, put this into practice and may Yahweh protect the right!'

A holy war[a]

1 20 Some time later, the Moabites and Ammonites, and with them the Meun-
2 ites,[b] advanced to war against Jehoshaphat. ·Jehoshaphat received the

d. Hebr. adds 'Listen, all you peoples,' the beginning of the canonical Book of Micah, a gloss added also at 1 K 22:8.

e. 'I shall disguise myself to go' Gk; 'Disguise yourself to go' Hebr., but *see* the sequel.

f. 'fighting' Gk; 'camp' Hebr.

g. The Chronicler, interested only in Jehoshaphat and Judah, leaves out the details of 1 K 22: 35[b]–38 on the death of Ahab.

19 a. The prophet Jehu does not feature in the Book of Kings, but appears here to express the Chronicler's opinion of the alliance with Ahab; it displeased God, but nevertheless Jehoshaphat's good deeds earned him pardon.

b. Although this reform is not mentioned in the Book of Kings it must be historical, even if the editing has been influenced by Dt and by the situation at the time of the Chronicler. Jehoshaphat instituted a central jurisdiction besides the district courts, and relieved the king of his office as supreme judge. This reform may have influenced the account of analogous measures attributed to Moses, *see* Ex 18:13g; and is the basis for the laws of Dt 16:18–20; 17:8–13, This measure was part of a religious reform, v. 4; the courts give judgment in the name of Yahweh, vv. 6, 8, and have authority over religious matters, vv. 10–11.

c. 'they lived at' *wayyeshebu* conj., Hebr. *wayyashubu* 'they returned to'; Gk 'to judge the inhabitants of'.

20 a. This episode, vv. 1–30, has no parallel in 1 K but seems, to judge from the exactness of the place names, to be based on a solid tradition, even though the style is influenced by the Deuteronomist and earliest accounts of holy warfare, *see* particularly vv. 15–18, 22–23, 29. Its historical nucleus could be an attack by elements coming from Transjordan and the Negeb in one of those periodical thrusts which ended in the settlement of the Edomites in the south of Palestine.

b. 'Meunites' Gk; Hebr. corrupt. Their name is generally connected with Maan in Transjordan, east of Petra, but the connection is not certain. In the sequel of the story they are replaced by the people of Mount Seir. 'Seir' is the equivalent of Edom, but is applied also to the central mountainous area of the northern Negeb.

following intelligence, 'A vast horde is advancing on you from the other side of the Sea, from Edom; [c] they are already at Hazazon-Tamar, that is, En-Gedi.'

1 K 21:9 Jr 36:6 Jl 1:14 Jehoshaphat was alarmed and resolved to have recourse to Yahweh; he pro- 3
claimed a fast throughout all Judah. ·So Judah assembled to seek help from 4
Yahweh; to seek Yahweh they came from every town in Judah.

Then, standing in the Temple of Yahweh in front of the new court among the 5
Dt 4:35j.39 assembled people of Judah and Jerusalem, Jehoshaphat ·said, [d] 'Yahweh, God of 6
our ancestors, are you not God in heaven, and do you not rule all the kingdoms of the nations? Your power and might are such that no one can resist you. ·Did not 7
you, our God, dispossess the inhabitants of this country for your people Israel and
Is 41:8 give it to the descendants of Abraham, your friend, for ever? ·They have lived in it 8
and built you a sanctuary there for your name, ·saying, "If disaster, war, flood, 9
pestilence or famine befall us, and we stand in front of this Temple, before you—for your name is in this Temple—and cry to you in our distress, then you will listen and rescue us."

'Now see, the Ammonites and Moabites and the people of Mount Seir, whom 10
Dt 2:4seq., 9seq.;18seq. you would not allow Israel to invade when they came out of Egypt—on the contrary, Israel avoided them, and did not destroy them—·see how they reward 11
us, by coming to drive us out of your possession which you allotted to us! ·Our 12
God, will you not pass sentence on them, since we are helpless against this vast horde about to attack us? Because we do not know what to do, we look to you.'

All Judah, including their families, wives and children, were standing before 13
Yahweh, ·when, in the middle of the assembly, the spirit of Yahweh came on 14
1 Ch 9:15 Ne 11:17,22 Jahaziel [e] son of Zechariah, son of Benaiah, son of Jeiel, son of Mattaniah the Levite, a member of the clan of Asaph, ·who then cried, 'Listen, all Judah and 15
you citizens of Jerusalem, and you, King Jehoshaphat! Yahweh says this to you, "Do not be afraid, do not be daunted by this vast horde, for the war is not your affair but God's. ·Go down against them tomorrow; they are coming up by the 16
Slope of Ziz and you will encounter them at the end of the ravine near the desert of Jeruel. ·You will not need to fight in this battle. Take up your position, stand firm, 17
and see what salvation Yahweh has in store for you. Judah and Jerusalem!
Is 8:10 Be fearless, be dauntless; march out against them tomorrow and Yahweh will be with you." '

Jehoshaphat bowed his head, his face to the ground, and all Judah and the 18
citizens of Jerusalem fell down before Yahweh to worship Yahweh. ·Then the 19
Levites—both the Kohathites and Korahites—stood up to praise Yahweh, God of Israel, at the top of their voices.

Early next morning they prepared to set out for the desert of Tekoa. As they 20
were setting out, Jehoshaphat stood up and said, 'Listen to me, Judah and you
Is 7:9 citizens of Jerusalem! Believe in Yahweh your God and you will be secure; believe in his prophets and you will be successful.' ·Then, having conferred with the 21
people, he appointed singers who were to praise Yahweh and go out ahead of the army in sacred vestments, singing

Ps 136:1
Praise Yahweh,
for his faithful love endures for ever!

The moment they began their shouts of praise, Yahweh sprang an ambush on 22
the Ammonites, Moabites and the people of Mount Seir who were invading Judah, and that was the end of them, ·for the Ammonites and Moabites turned on the 23
Jos 6:17c people of Mount Seir, and put them under the curse of destruction and then,
Ezk 38:21 having finished off the people of Seir, set to work slaughtering one another.

When Judah reached the point overlooking the desert and looked towards the 24
horde, there were nothing but corpses lying on the ground; no one escaped. When Jehoshaphat arrived to take the booty, they found quantities of cattle and 25
innumerable possessions, clothes and valuables, [f] which they seized for themselves; it was impossible to carry it, and it took them three days to collect it. ·On the 26

fourth day they assembled in the Valley of Beracah, where they blessed Yahweh—
hence the place was given the name Valley of Beracah, which it still has today.
27 Then all the men of Judah and Jerusalem returned joyfully to Jerusalem with
Jehoshaphat at their head as Yahweh had given them cause to rejoice over their
28 enemies. ·To the sound of lyre, harp and trumpet they came to Jerusalem, to the
29 Temple of Yahweh, ·and a panic from Yahweh seized all the neighbouring kings Dt 2:25
30 when they heard how Yahweh had fought against the enemies of Israel. ·And
henceforth Jehoshaphat's reign was undisturbed, for his God gave him peace all
around.

The end of the reign of Jehoshaphat ‖1 K 22:41–51

31 So Jehoshaphat reigned over Judah. He was thirty-five years old when he came to
the throne and he reigned for twenty-five years in Jerusalem. His mother's name
32 was Azubah daughter of Shilhi. ·He followed the example of his father Asa
33 undeviatingly, doing what Yahweh regards as right. ·The high places, however, 17:6
were not abolished; the people had still not set their hearts on the God of their
34 ancestors. ·The rest of the history of Jehoshaphat, from first to last, is written down
in the records of Jehu son of Hanani, which are quoted in the Book of the Kings of
Israel.
35 Afterwards, Jehoshaphat formed a partnership with Ahaziah king of Israel,
36 which was very wrong of him. ·He joined him in building some ships to go to
37 Tarshish; they built them at Ezion-Geber. ·Eliezer son of Dodavahu of Mareshah
then prophesied against Jehoshaphat as follows, 'Because you have become Aha-
ziah's partner, Yahweh has wrecked your efforts.' The ships were wrecked and
were never fit to sail for Tarshish. [g]
1 21 Then Jehoshaphat fell asleep with his ancestors and was buried with them in
the city of David; his son Jehoram succeeded him.

E: IMPIETY AND DISASTERS UNDER JEHORAM, AHAZIAH, ATHALIAH AND JOASH

Accession of Jehoram; he massacres his brothers

2 Jehoram's brothers, sons of Jehoshaphat, were Azariah, Jehiel, Zechariah, Aza-
riahu, Michael and Shephatiah—all of them sons of Jehoshaphat king of Israel. [c]
3 Their father had lavishly given them presents of silver, gold and other valuables as
well as fortified towns in Judah, but the throne he bequeathed to Jehoram since he
4 was the first-born. ·Jehoram, having taken control of his father's kingdom and
secured his own position, put all his brothers to the sword and some officials of
Israel too.
5 Jehoram was thirty-two years old when he came to the throne, and he reigned ‖2 K 8:17–19
6 for eight years in Jerusalem. ·He followed the example of the kings of Israel as the
House of Ahab were doing, he having married one of Ahab's daughters; and he
7 did what is displeasing to Yahweh. ·But Yahweh would not destroy the House of
David, [b] because of the covenant which he had made with David, promising to
provide him and his sons with a lamp for ever. 1 K 11:36i

c. 'Edom' with 1 MS; 'Aram' Hebr., the two names being frequently confused.

d. The opening of this prayer repeats the themes of Solomon's prayer, 6:1seq.

e. The Chronicler attributes a prophetic spirit to this singer, 1 Ch 25:1a, as he does to Zechariah, son of the priest Jehoiada, 2 Ch 24:20.

f. 'of cattle' *behemah* conj.; Hebr. *bahem* 'among them'. • 'clothes' *begadim* MSS; Hebr. *pegarim* 'corpses'.

g. The Chronicler modifies the story in 1 K 22:49–51 by attributing the disaster to Jehoshaphat's business partnership with the heterodox King Ahaziah of Israel, 1 K 22:52–2 K 1:18. On Tarshish see 1 K 10:22f.

21 a. The versions amend to 'Judah', but *see* 28:19 for same usage. In v. 4, therefore, it is not clear whether the officials were Judaeans or visitors from the friendly court of Samaria.

b. To 2 K 8:19 the Chronicler adds mention of the House of David and the Davidic Covenant, these being the principal theme of his book.

The disasters of his reign

‖2 K 8:20–22 In his time Edom threw off the domination of Judah and set up a king for itself. 8
Jehoram crossed the frontier, and with him his commanders and all his chariots. 9
Under cover of dark, he and his chariot commanders broke through the Edomites
surrounding him. ·Thus Edom threw off the domination of Judah and has re- 10
mained free to the present day. Libnah revolted against him at the same time,
because he had abandoned Yahweh, God of his ancestors. ·What is more, he set 11
up high places in the highlands of Judah, leading the citizens of Jerusalem and the
people of Judah into apostasy.

Something written by the prophet Elijah[c] then came into his hands. It said, 12
'Yahweh, God of your ancestor David, says this, "Since you have not followed the
example of your father Jehoshaphat or of Asa king of Judah, ·but have followed 13
the example of the kings of Israel and have led Judah and the citizens of Jerusalem
into apostasy, just as the House of Ahab has led Israel into apostasy, and have
even murdered your brothers, your own family, who were better men than you,
Yahweh is going to afflict your people, your sons, your wives and all your property 14
with a great calamity, ·and you yourself with a severe[d] disease affecting your 15
bowels, as a result of which disease, continuing day after day, you will suffer
protrusion of your bowels." '

Yahweh then roused the hostility of the Philistines and of the Arabs living near 16
14:8b the Cushites against Jehoram. ·They invaded Judah, forcing their way into it and 17
carrying off all the property to be found in the king's palace, as well as his sons and
his wives, so that he was left no sons at all except his youngest son Jehoahaz.[e]
And after all this, Yahweh afflicted him with an incurable disease of the bowels; 18
in due time, after about two years, his bowels protruded as a result of his disease 19
16:14 and he died in acute pain. His people did not make a funeral pyre for him, as they
had for his ancestors.

He was thirty-two years old when he came to the throne and he reigned for eight 20
2 K 8:24[a] years in Jerusalem. He passed away unlamented and was buried in the City of
David, though not in the tombs of the kings.

Reign of Ahaziah

2 K 8:24[b]–29 **22** The inhabitants of Jerusalem then made his youngest son Ahaziah king in 1
succession to him, since the marauders who had attacked the camp with the
Arabs had killed all the older ones. That was why Ahaziah son of Jehoram, king of
Judah became king. ·Ahaziah was forty-two[e] years old when he came to the throne 2
and he reigned for one year in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Athaliah,
descendant of Omri. ·He too followed the example of the House of Ahab, for his 3
mother being his adviser brought about his condemnation. ·He did what is displeas- 4
10:6seq. Qo 10:16 ing to Yahweh as the House of Ahab did, for they were his advisers after his
father's death, to his undoing. ·He followed their advice and went with Jehoram 5
son of Ahab, king of Israel, to make war on Hazael king of Aram at Ramoth-
Gilead. But the Aramaeans[b] wounded Jehoram, ·who returned to Jezreel to 6
recover from the wounds which he had received at Ramoth, fighting against Hazael
king of Aram. Ahaziah son of Jehoram, king of Judah, went down to Jezreel to
visit Jehoram son of Ahab because he was ailing. ·Through this visit to Jehoram 7
‖2 K 9:21 God brought ruin on Ahaziah. On his arrival he went out with Jehoram to meet
Jehu son of Nimshi whom Yahweh had anointed to make an end of the House of
‖2 K 10:12–14 Ahab. ·While Jehu was executing sentence on the House of Ahab and came across 8
the officers of Judah and Ahaziah's nephews who were in attendance on Ahaziah,
he killed them, ·and then went in search of Ahaziah. The latter was captured while 9
hiding in Samaria, and taken to Jehu who put him to death. But they gave him
‖2 K 9:28–29 burial because, they said, 'He was the grandson of Jehoshaphat who sought
Yahweh with all his heart.'

As a result, there was no member of Ahaziah's family left who was strong
enough to rule the kingdom.

Athaliah massacres the royal family of Judah ‖2 K 11:1–3

10 When Athaliah mother of Ahaziah learned that her son was dead, she promptly
11 did away with [c] all the royal stock of the House of Judah. •But Jehosheba the king's daughter, surreptitiously rescued Joash son of Ahaziah from among the chiefs who were to be murdered, and put him with his nurse in the sleeping quarters; in this way Jehosheba daughter of King Joram and wife of Jehoiada the priest—she was the sister of Ahaziah—hid him from Athaliah, and he was not put to death.
12 He stayed hidden with them in the Temple of God for six years while Athaliah governed the country.

Accession of Joash and death of Athaliah [a] ‖2 K 11:4–16

1 **23** In the seventh year Jehoiada decided to take action and made a pact with the regimental commanders, Azariah son of Jeroham, Ishmael son of Jehohanan, Azariah son of Obed, Maaseiah son of Adaiah and Elishaphat son of Zichri.
2 These went all over Judah, gathering the Levites from all the towns of Judah, and
3 the heads of the Israelite families, who then came to Jerusalem, •and the whole assembly made a pact with the king in the Temple of God. Jehoiada said to them, 'Look, the king's son is now to be king, as Yahweh has promised of the sons of
4 David! •This is what you must do: a third of you priests and Levites who come on
5 duty on the Sabbath must guard the gates, •a third the royal palace, a third the Foundation Gate, while the people must all stay in the courts of the Temple of
6 Yahweh. •No one must enter the Temple of Yahweh except the priests and the ministering Levites; they may come in because they are consecrated. But
7 the people must all observe Yahweh's regulations. •The Levites must surround the king, each man with his weapons in his hands; anyone who enters the Temple must be killed. And you will escort the king when he comes in and when he leaves.'
8 The Levites and all Judah did everything as Jehoiada the priest had ordered, and each one brought his men, those coming on duty on the Sabbath and those going off duty on the Sabbath, for Jehoiada the priest had not released any of the 1 Ch 24:19
9 divisions from duty. •Jehoiada the priest then issued the regimental commanders with King David's spears and large and small shields, which were kept in the
10 Temple of God. •He then positioned all the people, each man with his weapon in his hand, from the south side of the Temple to the north side of the Temple, close
11 to the altar and the Temple, to form a circle round the king. •Then they brought the king's son out, crowned him, gave him a copy of the covenant and made him king. When Jehoiada and his sons [b] had anointed him, they shouted, 'Long live the king!'
12 On hearing the people shouting as they ran to acclaim the king, Athaliah joined
13 the people in the Temple of Yahweh. •When she looked, there stood the king on his dais by the entrance, with the officers and trumpeters at the king's side, and all the people of the country rejoicing and blowing the trumpets, and the singers with their musical instruments leading the hymns of praise. [c] Then Athaliah tore her
14 clothes and shouted, 'Treason, treason!' •Jehoiada the priest then gave the order

c. The only mention of Elijah in the book; 1 and 2 K say nothing of any activity of Elijah in Judah. According to the chronology of 2 K, Elijah had disappeared before Jehoram of Israel came to the throne, 2 K 2 and 3:1, and so before Jehoram of Judah, *see* 2 K 8:16; cf., however, 2 K 1:17. The Chronicler seems to have made use of an apocryphal tradition.

d. 'severe' Gk; 'many' Hebr.

e. As also in 25:23; otherwise Ahaziah, ch. 22. The palace in question can hardly have been in Jerusalem; more probably it was a royal residence lying in the path of the marauders and serving as Jehoram's battle headquarters; *see* 21:1, where a distinction seems to be drawn between 'Jerusalem' and 'the camp'.

22 a. 'twenty-two' according to 2 K 8:26.

b. 'Aramaeans' *ha'arammim* conj.; Hebr. *harammim* 'archers'.

c. 'did away with' *te'abbed* as 2 K 11:1; *tedabber* 'said', Hebr.

23 a. The Chronicler's views are reflected in a number of changes and additions to the parallel 2 K 11: the foreign mercenaries in the royal service are replaced by Israelites; the people are kept outside in the precincts; the Levites form the Temple guard and carry out Jehoiada's plan; everything is done according to 'Yahweh's regulations', v. 6, that is to say according to the Priestly Code. The *coup d'état*, originally conducted with the help of the military, is represented here as a clerical, almost indeed as a liturgical, action. Again, v. 3, the Chronicler stresses the Davidic Covenant.

b. An elaboration on 2 K 11:12, which does not specify who anointed the king.

c. An elaboration on 2 K 11:14.

to the regimental commanders in charge of the troops, 'Take her out between the ranks and put to the sword anyone who follows her.' For the priest had already said, 'Do not kill her inside the Temple of Yahweh.' ·So they made way for her, 15
and when she reached the entrance to the Horses' Gate of the palace, they killed her there.

‖2 K 11:17–20 **Jehoiada's reform**

Jehoiada made a covenant between himself, all the people and the king to remain 16
Yahweh's people. ·All the people then went to the temple of Baal and demolished 17
it; they smashed its altars and its images and killed Mattan the priest of Baal in front of the altars.

Jehoiada entrusted the security of the Temple of Yahweh to the priests and 18
Levites, whom David had put in charge of the Temple of Yahweh to present the
1 Ch 25 burnt offerings of Yahweh as laid down in the Law of Moses, [d] with joy and song as
1 Ch 23:13 ordained by David. ·He also appointed gatekeepers for the gates of the Temple of 19
1 Ch 26 Yahweh, so that no one who was unclean might enter for any purpose at all. [e]

He then took the regimental commanders, the nobles, the government officials 20
and all the people of the land and he escorted the king down from the Temple of Yahweh. Entering the palace through the Upper Gate, they placed the king on the royal throne. ·All the people of the land were delighted, and the city made no 21
move after Athaliah had been put to death.

24 Joash was seven years old when he came to the throne and he reigned for 1
forty years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Zibiah of Beersheba.
Joash did what Yahweh regards as right throughout the lifetime of Jehoiada 2
the priest. ·Jehoiada found him two wives and he fathered several sons 3
and daughters.

‖2 K 12:1–17 **Joash repairs the Temple** [e]

Later, Joash made up his mind to repair the Temple of Yahweh. ·Calling the 4, 5
priests and the Levites together, he said, 'Go out to the towns of Judah and collect money from all Israel for annual repairs to the Temple of Yahweh. Do this quickly.' But the Levites were in no hurry, [b] ·so the king summoned Jehoiada the 6
Ex 25:1–9; 38:24–31 chief priest and said, 'Why have you not insisted on the Levites' bringing in the tax from Judah and Jerusalem for the Tent of Witness, as imposed by Moses servant of Yahweh and the community of Israel?'—·Athaliah and her sons, whom she 7
corrupted, despoiled the Temple of God and even assigned all the sacred revenues of the Temple of Yahweh to Baal. ·So, at the king's order, a chest was made and 8
put outside the gate of the Temple of Yahweh, ·and a proclamation was issued 9
throughout Judah and Jerusalem that the tax, which Moses servant of God had imposed on Israel in the desert, was to be brought to Yahweh. ·Then all the 10
officials and all the people gladly brought in their contributions, depositing them in the chest until the payment was complete.

Whenever the chest was brought by the Levites for royal inspection and 11
found to contain a large sum of money, the king's secretary and the chief priest's representative would come and empty the chest and then have it returned to its place. This was done day after day and a great deal of money was collected. ·The 12
king and Jehoiada handed it over to the foreman attached to the Temple of Yahweh, and the hired masons and carpenters set about repairing the Temple of Yahweh; and iron-workers and bronze-workers worked to repair the Temple of Yahweh. ·The workmen got on with the work—the repair work made good 13
progress at their hands—until they had restored the Temple of God to its former state and reconditioned it. ·When they had finished, they brought the balance of 14
the money to the king and Jehoiada, and with this vessels were made for the Temple of Yahweh, vessels for the liturgy and for the burnt offerings, bowls and other gold and silver vessels. And the perpetual burnt offering was offered in the Temple of Yahweh throughout Jehoiada's lifetime.

15 But Jehoiada, growing old, had his fill of days and died. He died at the age of a
16 hundred and thirty years, ·and was buried with the kings in the City of David
because he had served Israel and God and his Temple well.[c]

Joash's decline and death

17 After Jehoiada's death the officials of Judah came to pay court to the king, and
18 the king listened to their advice,[d] ·and they abandoned the Temple of Yahweh,
God of their ancestors, for the worship of sacred poles and idols. Judah and Ex 34:13e
19 Jerusalem incurred wrath because of this guilt of theirs. ·He sent their prophets to
lead them back to Yahweh; these put the case against them, but they would not Jr 25:4
20 listen. ·The spirit of God then invested Zechariah son of Jehoiada the priest. He
stood up before the people and said, 'God says this, "Why transgress Yahweh's
commands to your certain ruin? For if you abandon Yahweh, he will abandon
21 you." ' ·They then plotted against him and, at the king's order, stoned him in the ↗Mt 23:35o
22 court of the Temple of Yahweh. ·Thus King Joash, forgetful of the devotion which
Jehoiada father of Zechariah had displayed on his behalf, murdered his son, who
cried out as he died, 'Yahweh will see this and avenge it!'
23 At the turn of the year, the Aramaean army made war on Joash.[e] When they ‖2 K 12:18–22
reached Judah and Jerusalem, they massacred all the nation's government officials
24 and sent all their booty to the king of Damascus. ·Although the invading Aramaean
army was only a small body of men, Yahweh allowed them to defeat a very large Dt 32:30
army because they had abandoned Yahweh, God of their ancestors; thus they
executed judgement on Joash.
25 After they had retired—for they left him seriously wounded—·his own retainers
plotted against him to avenge the blood of the son[f] of Jehoiada the priest and
murdered him in his bed. When he died he was buried in the City of David, but not
26 in the tombs of the kings. ·These were the conspirators: Zabad son of Shimeath
27 the Ammonite and Jehozabad son of Shimrith the Moabite. ·As regards his sons,
the heavy tribute imposed on him, and the restoration of the Temple of God, this
is recorded in the Commentary on the Book of the Kings. His son Amaziah
succeeded him.

F: THE HALF-HEARTED PIETY AND PARTIAL SUCCESS OF AMAZIAH, UZZIAH AND JOTHAM

Accession of Amaziah ‖2 K 14:2–6

1 25 Amaziah was twenty-five years old when he came to the throne and he
reigned for twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jehoad-
2 dan of Jerusalem. ·He did what Yahweh regards as right, though not wholeheart-
3 edly. ·Once the kingdom was firmly under his control, he killed those of his

d. This and 30:16 are possibly the earliest examples of the term 'Law of Moses' being used to designate not only Deuteronomy, *see* Jos. 8:31; 23:6, but all five books known to us as the Pentateuch, *see* Introduction to Ecclesiasticus and Si 24:23. Recognition of the decisive role played by Moses is joined to consciousness of the link between Yahweh himself and the people of the alliance, *see* Dt 4:8.

e. In vv. 18–19, the Chronicler presents Jehoiada's reform as a restoration of Davidic institutions as he conceived them to be from his knowledge of the post-exilic Temple.

24 a. Basically the Chronicler's account follows 2 K 12. Where he diverges, he seems to be using a parallel account, possibly the 'Commentary on the Book of the Kings' mentioned in v. 27.

b. The Chronicler has replaced the offerings made to the Temple 2 K 12:5, by this collection inspired by prescriptions attributed to Moses, Ex 25:1–9; 30:12–16; 38:25–28, and repeated by Nehemiah, Ne 10:35, *also* Mt 17:24seq.

c. vv. 14–16 have no equivalent in the Book of Kings.

d. This change of policy is not mentioned in 2 K, but it seems likely that after Jehoiada's death Joash threw off clerical tutelage and adopted lay advisers. As in the case of other unsatisfactory kings, the Chronicler introduces prophets to admonish him, vv. 19–20.

e. 2 K mentions a war between Philistines and Aramaeans, who split off from Judah after paying a heavy tribute, and afterwards mentions the assassination of Joash. The Chronicler seems to have had another source which perhaps already represented the violent death of Joash as a punishment of his impiety.

f. 'son' LXX; 'sons', Hebr.

retainers who had murdered the king his father. ·But he did not put their sons to 4
death; this was in accordance with what is written in the Law, in the book of Moses,
Dt 24:16 where Yahweh had commanded, '*Parents may not be put to death for children, nor children for parents, but each must be put to death for his own crime.*'

His victorious campaign against Edom [a]

Amaziah summoned Judah and organised all Judah and Benjamin by families 5
under commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds. He also made a register of those who were twenty years old and upwards, and found there were three hundred thousand picked men, ready for service and capable of wielding spear and shield. ·Furthermore, he hired a hundred thousand tough fighting men 6
from Israel for a hundred talents of silver. ·A man of God then came to him and 7
said, 'My lord king, do not let the Israelite troops march with you, for Yahweh is not with Israel or with any of the Ephraimites. ·For however valiantly you act in 8
war, God will bring you down before the enemy, for God has the power to uphold or to throw down.' ·Amaziah said to the man of God, 'But what about the hundred 9
talents which I have paid for the Israelite troops?' 'Yahweh can give you far more than that,' said the man of God. ·At this, Amaziah dismissed the troops who had 10
come to him from Ephraim and sent them home again. They were furious with Judah and went home in a great rage.

Amaziah then, coming to a decision, led out his own troops and, having reached 11
‖2 K 14:7 the Valley of Salt, struck down ten thousand Seirites. ·The men of Judah captured 12
ten thousand more alive and, taking them to the summit of the Rock, threw them off the summit of the Rock so that they were all dashed to pieces. ·Meanwhile, the 13
troops whom Amaziah had dismissed and not allowed to go into battle with him rased the towns of Judah, from Samaria to Beth-Horon, killing three thousand of their inhabitants and capturing great quantities of plunder.

On returning from his slaughter of the Edomites, Amaziah brought the gods of 14
the Seirites with him; he set these up as his gods, bowing down before them and burning incense to them. ·Yahweh's anger was aroused by Amaziah and he sent 15
him a prophet, who said to him, 'Why do you consult those people's gods when they could not save their own people from your clutches?' ·He was still speaking 16
when Amaziah interrupted him. 'Have we appointed you a royal counsellor? Stop, as you value your life!' So the prophet stopped, and then said, 'I know that God has decided to destroy you for having done this and for not listening to my advice.'

‖2 K 14:8–14 **His disastrous campaign against Israel**

After consultation, Amaziah king of Judah then sent a message to Joash son of 17
Jehoahaz son of Jehu, king of Israel, saying, 'Come and make a trial of strength!'
Jg 9:7–15 Joash king of Israel sent back word to Amaziah king of Judah, 'The thistle of 18
Lebanon sent a message to the cedar of Lebanon, saying, "Give my son your daughter in marriage"; but a wild animal of the Lebanon ran over the thistle and squashed it. ·"Look at me, the conqueror of Edom," you say, and now aspire to 19
even greater glory. But stay where you belong! Why challenge disaster, to your own and Judah's ruin?'

But Amaziah would not listen, for this was an act of God to deliver them up for 20
having consulted the gods of Edom. ·So Joash king of Israel marched to the attack. 21
And at Beth-Shemesh, which belongs to Judah, he and Amaziah king of Judah made their trial of strength. ·Judah was defeated by Israel, and everyone fled to his 22
tent. ·The king of Judah, Amaziah son of Joash, son of Ahaziah, [b] was taken 23
prisoner at Beth-Shemesh by Joash king of Israel who led him off to Jerusalem, where he demolished four hundred cubits of the city wall between the Ephraim Gate and the Corner Gate; ·he then took back with him to Samaria all the gold and 24
1 Ch 26:15 silver, and all the vessels to be found in the Temple of God in the care of Obed-Edom, the treasures in the palace, and hostages besides.

His death

25 Amaziah son of Joash, king of Judah, lived for fifteen years after the death of Joash ‖2K 14:17–20
son of Jehoahaz, king of Israel.
26 The rest of the history of Amaziah, from first to last, is this not recorded in the
27 Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel? ·Some time after Amaziah had defected
from Yahweh, a plot having been hatched against him in Jerusalem, he fled to
28 Lachish where he was murdered. ·He was then transported by horse and buried
with his ancestors in the city of David. [c]

Accession of Uzziah

1 26 All the people then chose Uzziah, who was sixteen years old, and made him ‖2 K 14:21–22
2 king in succession to his father Amaziah. ·It was he who rebuilt Elath,
3 recovering it for Judah, after the king had fallen asleep with his ancestors. ·Uzziah ‖2 K 15:2–4
was sixteen years old when he came to the throne and he reigned for fifty-two years
4 in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jecoliah of Jerusalem. ·He did what is
5 pleasing to Yahweh, just as his father Amaziah [a] had done; ·he consulted God 24:2
throughout the lifetime of Zechariah, who instructed him in the fear of God. [b] And
as long as he consulted Yahweh, God gave him success.

His military strength [c]

6 He went on campaign against the Philistines, demolished the walls of Gath, the
walls of Jabneh and the walls of Ashdod, and built towns in the area of Ashdod and
7 elsewhere in Philistine territory. ·God helped him against the Philistines, the
8 Arabs living at Gur-Baal [d] and the Meunites. ·The Meunites paid tribute to Uzziah 20:1b
and his fame spread as far as the frontier of Egypt, since he kept growing stronger
and stronger.
9 Uzziah built towers in Jerusalem, at the Corner Gate, at the Valley Gate and at
10 the Angle, and fortified them. [e] ·He built towers in the desert too, and dug many
storage-wells, for he had large herds in the lowlands and on the
tableland, and farmers and vine dressers in the hills and fertile lands: for he loved 1 Ch 27:25–31
the land.
11 Uzziah had a trained army ready to go on campaign, organised in companies
manned as detailed by the scribe Jeiel and the staff-officer Maaseiah, and com-
12 manded by Hananiah one of the king's generals. ·The heads of families of the
13 military champions numbered in all two thousand six hundred. ·Under them was
an army of three hundred and seven thousand five hundred men ready for war, a
14 powerful force to support the king against the enemy. ·Uzziah provided shields,
15 spears, helmets, armour, bows and sling-stones for the entire army. ·He also
erected expertly contrived devices for the towers and angles of Jerusalem from
which to shoot arrows and drop large stones. [f] His fame spread far and wide, for he
was miraculously helped to become strong.

He is struck with a virulent skin-disease for his pride

16 But once he was strong, his arrogance was such that it led to his downfall; he was
unfaithful to Yahweh his God by entering the Temple of Yahweh to burn incense

25 **a.** The section vv. 5–16 corresponds to a single v. in 2 K (14:7). The Chronicler seems to have drawn on a more developed source. The Israelite mercenaries, deprived of the booty which they might have won in the Edomite campaign, sack the towns of Judah in revenge. Their action leads to a punitive war against Israel, v. 17seq. The only reason given for the war in 2 K 14 is Amaziah's pride at having conquered Edom. Note the further intervention by prophets, vv. 7 and 15.

b. 'Ahaziah' conj.; 'Jehoahaz' Hebr.

c. 'David' 2 K 14:20; 'Judah' Hebr.

26 **a.** The sentence, taken from 2 K 15:3, is hardly reconcilable with 2 Ch 25.

b. 'fear of God' Gk; 'vision of God' Hebr. • Zechariah, otherwise unknown, was to Uzziah what Jehoiada had been to Joash.

c. The Chronicler was evidently able to draw on a good independent source for the reign of Uzziah and one much more extensive than 2 K 15:1–8. Uzziah's building activity in the desert, v. 10, is known from archaeology.

d. 'dwelling-place of Baal.'; this name occurs only here, and the site of the place is unknown.

e. He repairs the damage caused in the late war, 25:23.

f. Defensive screens projecting from the stonework, not platforms for catapults which were still unknown at that epoch.

on the altar of incense.[g] •Azariah the priest with eight brave priests of Yahweh 17
Nb 17:5 followed him in; •confronting King Uzziah, they said to him, 'Uzziah, you are not 18
allowed to burn incense to Yahweh; only the Aaronite priests consecrated for the
purpose may burn incense. Leave the sanctuary, for you have been unfaithful and
will have no honour from Yahweh God.' •Uzziah, censer in hand to burn incense, 19
Nb 12:10 flew into a rage. But while he was raging at the priests, a virulent skin-disease[h]
broke out on his forehead in the presence of the priests, in the Temple of Yahweh,
there by the altar of incense. •When Azariah the chief priest and all the other 20
priests turned towards him, there was skin-disease on his forehead and they hurried
him outside, and he himself was equally anxious to get out, because Yahweh had
struck him.

‖2 K 15:5–7 King Uzziah was afflicted with skin-disease till his dying day. Because of this, he 21
Lv 13:46 Nb 19:20 lived confined to his room and was excluded from the Temple of Yahweh, while
Jotham his son, who was master of the palace, governed the people of the country.

The rest of the history of Uzziah, from first to last, has been written by the 22
prophet Isaiah son of Amoz.[i] •Then Uzziah fell asleep with his ancestors and was 23
buried with them in the field beside the burial ground of the kings[j] since, it
was reasoned, he was afflicted with virulent skin-disease. His son Jotham then
succeeded him.

‖2 K 15:32–38 **The reign of Jotham**

27 Jotham was twenty-five years old when he came to the throne and he 1
reigned for sixteen years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jerushah
daughter of Zadok. •He did what Yahweh regards as right, just as his father Uzziah 2
had done. Only he did not enter Yahweh's sanctuary.[a] But the people continued
to do wrong.

It was he who built the Upper Gate of the Temple of Yahweh and carried out 3
considerable work on the wall of the Ophel. •He also built towns in the highlands 4
of Judah and built forts and towers in the wooded areas.

He also went to war against the king of the Ammonites[b] and defeated them; and 5
the Ammonites had to give him a hundred talents of silver, ten thousand *kor* of
wheat and ten thousand of barley that year. And the Ammonites paid him the
same amount, the second and third years afterwards. •Jotham became powerful 6
because he kept an unswerving course before Yahweh his God.

The rest of the history of Jotham, all his wars and his policy, are recorded in the 7
Book of the Kings of Israel and Judah. •He was twenty-five years old when he came 8
to the throne and he reigned for sixteen years in Jerusalem. •Then Jotham fell 9
asleep with his ancestors, and was buried in the City of David; his son Ahaz
succeeded him.

V: THE GREAT REFORMS UNDER HEZEKIAH AND JOSIAH

A: THE SINS OF AHAZ, FATHER OF HEZEKIAH

‖2 K 16:2–4 **Accession of Ahaz: his idolatry**

28 Ahaz was twenty years old when he came to the throne and he reigned for 1
sixteen years in Jerusalem. He did not do what Yahweh regards as right, as
his ancestor David had done. •He followed the example of the kings of Israel, even 2
having images cast for the Baals; •he burned incense in the Valley of Ben-Hinnom,[a] 3
Lv 18:21h caused his sons to pass through the fire of sacrifice, copying the disgusting prac-
tices of the nations whom Yahweh had dispossessed for the Israelites. •He 4
offered sacrifices and incense on the high places, on the hills and under every
green tree.

The Syro-Ephraimite War [b] 2 K 16 Is 7–9

5 So Yahweh his God put him at the mercy of the king of Aram, who defeated him
and took large numbers of captives, carrying them off to Damascus. He also put
him at the mercy of the king of Israel, who inflicted heavy casualties on him.
6 In a single day, Pekah son of Remaliah killed a hundred and twenty thousand in
Judah, all of them prominent men, because they had abandoned Yahweh, God of
7 their ancestors. ·Zichri, an Ephraimite champion, killed Maaseiah the king's son,
Azrikam the controller of the household and Elkanah the king's second-in-com-
8 mand. ·Of their brothers, the Israelites took two hundred thousand captive includ-
ing wives, sons, daughters; they also took quantities of booty, carrying everything
off to Samaria.

The Israelites obey the prophet Oded [c]

9 Now there was a prophet of Yahweh there by the name of Oded, who went out to
meet the troops returning to Samaria and said, 'Look, because Yahweh, God of
your ancestors, was angry with Judah, he put them at your mercy, but you have
10 slaughtered them with such fury as reached to heaven, ·and now you propose to
reduce the children of Judah and Jerusalem to being your male and female slaves!
11 Have you not yourselves committed sins against Yahweh your God? ·Now listen to
me: release the captives you have taken from your brothers, for the fierce anger of
Yahweh hangs over you.'
12 Some of the Ephraimite chieftains—Azariah son of Jehohanan, Berechaiah son
of Meshillemoth, Jehizkiah son of Shallum and Amasa son of Hadlai—then pro-
13 tested to those returning from the war ·and said to them, 'You must not bring the
captives here, for we have already sinned against Yahweh and you propose to add
to our sin and guilt, although our guilt is already great, and fierce anger is hanging
14 over Israel.' ·So in the presence of the officials and whole assembly, the soldiers
15 gave up the captives and the booty. ·Men nominated for the purpose then took
charge of the captives. From the booty they clothed all those of them who were
naked; they gave them clothing and sandals, provided them with food and drink, 2 K 6:22
mounted on donkeys all those who were infirm and took them back to Jericho, the Lk 10:29–37
city of palm trees, to their brothers. Then they returned to Samaria.

Ahaz appeals to Assyria; his apostasy

16 This was when King Ahaz sent asking the king of Assyria to come to his assistance. [d] ‖2 K 16:7 Is 7–8
17, 18 The Edomites again invaded, defeated Judah, and carried off captives, ·while
the Philistines raided the towns in the lowlands and in the Negeb of Judah,
capturing Beth-Shemesh, Aijalon, Gederoth, Soco and its dependencies, Timnah
19 and its dependencies and Gimzo and its dependencies, and settled there. ·For
Yahweh brought Judah low because of Ahaz king of Israel, [e] since he behaved

g. 2 K 15:5 mentions the punishment but not the cause. The kings performed certain liturgical actions without arousing protest. But in post-exilic times the offering of incense became the exclusive privilege of the Aaronite priesthood, *see* Nb 17:5; 1 Ch 23:13.

h. Miriam was punished in the same way for laying claim to the privileges of Moses, Nb. 12:10. Anyone afflicted with skin-disease was impure and forbidden to enter the sanctuary, Lv 13:45,

i. A lost work, attributed to the great prophet. Uzziah is mentioned in Is in the titles only, Is 1:1; 6:1; 7:1.

j. That is in the field, not in the tomb itself.

27 a. Praiseworthy conduct apparently as contrasted with that of Uzziah, 26:16seq.

b. This war is not mentioned in 2 K. Judah had no common frontier with Ammon.

28 a. Gehenna, valley to the south of Jerusalem where there was a shrine of Molech, *see* Lv 18:21; 2 K 23:10; Jr 32:35.

b. This narrative of the Syro-Ephraimite war is told from a standpoint very different from that of the other Judaean sources, 2 K 16 and Is 7–9. The Chronicler seems to have used an Ephraimite source.

c. It is remarkable that, despite his hostility to the Northern Kingdom, the Chronicler should have accepted this tradition, not found in 2 K, about the intervention of a Samaritan prophet who is a true Yahwist, who calls the Judaeans his 'brothers' and who persuades the Israelite leaders to release their prisoners. Such breadth of mind is not found elsewhere in the book, and is a presage of the parable of the Good Samaritan.

d. According to the Chronicler's source, Ahaz was threatened not only by the Aramaeans and Israelites, *see* 2 K 16:7, but by the Edomites and Philistines as well. The Assyrian Annals mention a campaign of Tiglath-Pileser III against the Philistines. The price of his help was heavy tribute and reduction to vassalage. The Chronicler interprets these events as a punishment.

e. For this use of Israel, *see also* v. 27; 21:2. The Gk has 'Judah'.

without restraint in Judah and had been unfaithful to Yahweh. ·Tiglath-Pileser 20
king of Assyria attacked and besieged him; but he could not overpower him.[f]
2 K 16:8 Although Ahaz robbed the Temple of Yahweh and the palaces of the king and 21
princes and gave the proceeds to the king of Assyria, he received no help from
him.

During the time when he was under siege he disobeyed Yahweh even more 22
‖2 K 16:12–13 grossly, this King Ahaz. ·For he offered sacrifices to the gods of Damascus who 23
had defeated him. 'Since the gods of the kings of Aram', he thought, 'have
supported them, I shall sacrifice to them, and perhaps they will help me.' But they
proved to be his and all Israel's downfall.

‖2 K 16:17 Ahaz then collected the equipment of the Temple of God, broke up the equip- 24
ment of the Temple of God, sealed the doors of the Temple of Yahweh and put his
own altars in every corner of Jerusalem; ·he set up high places in every town of 25
Judah to burn incense to other gods, thus provoking the anger of Yahweh, God of
his ancestors.[g]

‖2 K 16:19–20 The rest of his history, his whole policy, from first to last, is recorded in the Book 26
of the Kings of Judah and Israel. ·Then Ahaz fell asleep with his ancestors and was 27
buried in the City, in Jerusalem, though he was not taken to the tombs of the kings
of Israel. His son Hezekiah succeeded him.

B: REFORM UNDER HEZEKIAH

‖2 K 18:1–3 **Accession of Hezekiah**

29 Hezekiah was twenty-five years old when he came to the throne and he 1
reigned for twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Abijah
daughter of Zechariah. ·He did what Yahweh regards as right, just as his ancestor 2
David had done.

The purification of the Temple[a]

28:24 In the first month of the first year of his reign, he opened the doors of the Temple 3
of Yahweh, having repaired them. ·He then brought in the priests and the Levites, 4
assembled them in the eastern square, ·and said to them, 5

'Listen to me, Levites! First sanctify yourselves, then sanctify the Temple of
Yahweh, God of your ancestors, and remove the filth from the sanctuary. ·Our 6
ancestors were unfaithful,[b] and did what is displeasing to Yahweh our God. They
abandoned him, turned their faces away from Yahweh's home and turned their
backs on him. ·They even closed the doors of the portico, put out the lamps and 7
2:3 stopped burning incense and making burnt offerings in the sanctuary of the God of
Israel. ·This was why Yahweh's anger fell on Judah and Jerusalem and he made 8
Lv 26:32 Dt 28:25 Jr 25:18 them an object of terror, astonishment and derision, as you can see for yourselves.
Yes, our ancestors were put to the sword, and our sons, our daughters and our 9
wives were taken captive because of this. ·I am now determined to make a covenant 10
with Yahweh, God of Israel, so that his fierce anger may turn away from us. ·Now, 11
my sons, do not be remiss, for Yahweh has chosen you to stand in his presence and
serve him by conducting his worship and offering him incense.'

The Levites[c] set about it—Mahath son of Amasai and Joel son of Azariah, from 12
the Kohathites; Kish son of Abdi and Azariah son of Jehallel, from the Merarites;
Joah son of Zimmah and Eden son of Joah, from the Gershonites; ·Shimri and 13
Jeuel, of the sons of Elizaphan; Zechariah and Mattaniah of the sons of Asaph;
Jehiel and Shimei of the sons of Heman; Shemaiah and Uzziel of the sons of 14
Jeduthun—·and gathered their brothers together; they sanctified themselves, and 15
in obedience to the king's order, in accordance with the words of Yahweh, they
came to purify the Temple of Yahweh.

The priests[d] went into the inner part of the Temple of Yahweh to purify it. They 16

brought all the unclean things which they found in Yahweh's sanctuary, out into 15:16
the court of the Temple of Yahweh, where the Levites collected them and took
17 them out to the Kidron Valley. •They began sanctifying on the first day of the first
month, and by the eighth day of the month had reached Yahweh's portico; thus
they took eight days to sanctify the Temple of Yahweh, and by the sixteenth day of
the first month everything was finished.

The sacrifice of expiation

18 They then waited on King Hezekiah and said, 'We have purified the whole Temple
of Yahweh, the altar of burnt offering with all its equipment and the table for the
19 loaves of permanent offering with all their equipment. •We have also got ready
and sanctified all the equipment which King Ahaz in his infidelity had removed
during his reign. It is all ready in front of Yahweh's altar.'
20 King Hezekiah lost no time but called the officials of the city together and went
21 up to the Temple of Yahweh. •They brought seven bulls, seven rams, seven lambs
and seven goats as a sin sacrifice for the royal house, for the sanctuary and for
22 Judah, and he ordered the Aaronite priests to offer them on Yahweh's altar. •So
they slaughtered the bulls and the priests took the blood and sprinkled it over the
altar. They then slaughtered the rams and sprinkled the blood over the altar; and
23 they slaughtered the lambs and sprinkled the blood over the altar. •Then they
brought the goats, the sacrifice for sin, before the king and the assembly who laid
24 their hands on them. •The priests slaughtered them and made a sacrifice for sin
with their blood at the altar to expiate for all Israel, ᵉ since the king had ordered the
burnt offering and the sacrifice for sin on behalf of all Israel.
25 He positioned the Levites in the Temple of Yahweh with cymbals, lyres and
harps, in accordance with the ordinance of David, of Gad the king's seer and of
Nathan the prophet, for such was Yahweh's order conveyed through his prophets.
26 When the Levites stood with David's musical instruments, and the priests with the
27 trumpets, •Hezekiah ordered the burnt offering to be presented on the altar. And
as the burnt offering began, the hymns of Yahweh began too, and the trumpets
28 sounded, to the accompaniment of the instruments of David king of Israel, •while
the whole congregation worshipped, the singers singing and the trumpeters sound-
ing the trumpets, continuously until the burnt offering was over.

The cult begins again ᶠ

29 When the burnt offering was finished, the king and all those present with him fell
30 to their knees and worshipped. •Then King Hezekiah and the officials told the
Levites to sing praise to Yahweh in the words of David and Asaph the seer; and
joyfully they sang their praises, then knelt in worship.
31 Hezekiah spoke again, 'Now that you have consecrated yourselves to Yahweh,
come forward and bring thankgiving sacrifices to the Temple of Yahweh.' Then
the congregation brought thanksgiving sacrifices and those who were generous Lv 7:11a
32 brought burnt offerings. •The number of burnt offerings brought by the congrega-
tion was seventy bulls, a hundred rams and two hundred lambs, all as burnt

f. This is confirmed neither by the Assyrian texts nor by 2 K. It seems that the Chronicler has set in Ahaz's reign events which really occurred under Hezekiah, 2 Ch 32.

g. From v. 22 onwards the Chronicler rehandles 2 K, emphasising only the fact which has a religious significance, Ahaz's subservience to victorious foreign deities.

29 a. The Chronicler devotes three chapters, 29–31, to Hezekiah's religious reforms, as opposed to the single verse in 2 K 18:4 which he repeats at 2 Ch 31:1. He regarded these centralising reforms as very important, describing them in terms inspired by the reforms of Josiah, 34:3–35:18.

b. What follows is a public confession as in Ezr 9:6–15; Ne 9; Ba 1:15–3:8; Dn 9:4–19, *see also* Jr 3:22–25; Lm 5.

c. Here Levites descended from Kohath, Merari and Gershon are grouped together with singers descended from Asaph, Heman and Jeduthun. This assimilation of singers to Levites reflects a post-exilic situation, *see also* 1 Ch 6:18–32.

d. On the part played by the priests in purification, *see* Lv 13–16.

e. The ritual is inspired by Lv 4:13–21, though on a much more lavish scale. The purification of the Temple in Maccabaean times seems to have been inspired by Hezekiah's procedure, 1 M 4:42–59.

f. After the purification of the Temple and the ceremony of expiation, the normal cult can begin again, and it is inaugurated by a solemn liturgy.

offerings for Yahweh. ·The consecrated gifts amounted to six hundred bulls and 33
three thousand sheep. ·The priests were too few, however, and were unable to 34
1 Ch 15:12 dismember all the burnt offerings, so their brothers, the Levites, helped them until the work was finished and the priests had sanctified themselves; for the Levites had been more conscientious about sanctifying themselves than the priests had.[g] ·In 35 addition to the abundance of burnt offerings, there were also the fatty pieces for communion sacrifices and the libations for the burnt offerings.

And so the liturgy of Yahweh's Temple was restored, ·and Hezekiah and all the 36 people rejoiced over what God had provided the the people, since everything had happened so suddenly.

Preparations for the Passover[a]

30 Hezekiah sent messengers to all Israel and Judah, and also wrote letters to 1 Ephraim and Manasseh, bidding them come to the Temple of Yahweh in
Ex 12:1a Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover in honour of Yahweh, God of Israel. ·For the 2 king and his officials and the whole congregation in Jerusalem had agreed to celebrate the Passover in the second month, ·having been unable to celebrate it at 3
Nb 9:6:13 the proper time,[b] since the priests had not purified themselves in sufficient number, and the people were not assembled in Jerusalem. ·And since this arrangement 4 seemed fitting to the king and the whole congregation, ·they resolved to send a 5 proclamation throughout Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, calling on the people to come to Jerusalem and celebrate a Passover in honour of Yahweh, God of Israel, since they had not celebrated it in a body as prescribed. ·So, by order of the king, 6 courtiers set out with letters from the king and his officials for every part of Israel and Judah, saying, 'Israelites, return to Yahweh, God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, and he will return to those of you who are left and have escaped the grasp of the kings of Assyria. ·Do not be like your fathers and brothers who were unfaithful 7 to Yahweh, God of their ancestors; he brought them to ruin, as you can see. ·Do 8 not be stubborn like your ancestors. Submit to[c] Yahweh, come to his sanctuary which he has consecrated for ever, and serve Yahweh your God, so that his fierce anger may turn away from you. ·For if you return to Yahweh, your brothers and 9
1 K 8:50 your sons will be treated mercifully by their captors and be allowed to return to this country; for Yahweh your God is gracious and merciful and will not turn his face away from you, if you return to him.'[d]

The courtiers went from town to town through the territory of Ephraim and 10 Manasseh and as far as Zebulon but the people laughed and scoffed at them; even so, some people from Asher and Manasseh and Zebulon were humble 11 enough to come to Jerusalem, ·while in Judah the hand of God was also at work 12 inspiring a unanimous desire to obey the order of the king and the officials in accordance with the word of Yahweh.

The Passover and feast of Unleavened Bread[e]

A huge crowd assembled in Jerusalem to celebrate the feast of Unleavened Bread 13
28:24–25 in the second month. An immense crowd ·set to work removing the altars then in 14 Jerusalem; they also removed all the incense altars and threw them into the Kidron Valley. ·They then slaughtered the Passover victims on the fourteenth day of the 15
Ezr 9:6 second month. Ashamed of themselves, the priests and Levites had in the meanwhile sanctified themselves and brought burnt offerings to the Temple of Yahweh, so they now stood in their positions prescribed in the Law of Moses man of God, 16 the priests sprinkling the blood handed to them by the Levites. ·Since many people 17 in the congregation had not sanctified themselves, the Levites took care of the slaughter of the Passover victims to consecrate them to Yahweh for all who were not clean.[f] ·For a great many people, especially from Ephraim, Manasseh, Issachar 18 and Zebulon, had not purified themselves, since they did not eat the Passover as prescribed. But Hezekiah prayed for them as follows, 'May Yahweh in his goodness pardon ·everyone whose heart is set on seeking God, Yahweh, God of his 19

20 ancestors, even if he has not been purified as holy things demand.' ·Yahweh
listened to Hezekiah and left the people unharmed. [g]
21 Amid great rejoicing, the Israelites present in Jerusalem celebrated the feast of
Unleavened Bread for seven days, while day after day the Levites and the priests
22 praised Yahweh with all their might. ·Hezekiah then encouraged all the Levites
who had such understanding of Yahweh.
Having finished the seven-day festival, during which they sacrificed communion
23 sacrifices and praised Yahweh, God of their ancestors, [h] ·the whole congregation
decided to celebrate for a further seven days. So they joyfully celebrated for
24 another seven days, ·Hezekiah king of Judah contributing a thousand bulls and
seven thousand sheep for the congregation, and the officials another thousand
bulls and ten thousand sheep. And a large number of priests sanctified themselves.
25 The whole congregation of Judah, the priests, the Levites, the whole congregation
coming from Israel and the foreigners coming from the territory of Israel as well as
26 those resident in Judah, rejoiced. ·There was great rejoicing in Jerusalem, for
since the days of Solomon son of David, king of Israel, nothing comparable had
27 ever occurred in Jerusalem. [i] ·The levitical priests then stood up and blessed the
people and their voice was heard, and their prayer reached his holy dwelling in
heaven.

The purification of the country

1 **31** When all this was complete, all Israel present went out to the towns of ‖2 K 18:4
Judah, broke the pillars, cut down the sacred poles, wrecked the high places
and the altars, and did away with them entirely throughout Judah, Benjamin,
Ephraim, and Manasseh. Then all the Israelites returned to their towns, everyone
to his property.

The reorganisation of the priests and Levites [a]

2 Hezekiah re-established the priestly and levitical orders, each man in his proper
order according to his duties, whether priest or Levite, to bring burnt offerings and
communion sacrifices, to serve and to give thanks and praise within the gates of 1 Ch 9:19
3 Yahweh's camp. ·He also established a king's portion from his possessions for the 1 Ch 29:3
Ezk 45:17
morning and evening burnt offerings, and the burnt offerings for the Sabbaths,
4 New Moons and festivals, as laid down in the Law of Yahweh. ·He furthermore Nb 28–29
requested the people living in Jerusalem to present the portion for the priests and
5 Levites so that they might devote themselves to the Law of Yahweh. ·As soon as
the order had been promulgated, the Israelites provided the first fruits of grain,
new wine, olive oil, honey and every other kind of agricultural produce in abun-
6 dance; they brought in an abundant tithe of everything. ·The Israelites and Nb 18:8–24
Dt 14:22d
Judaeans living in the towns of Judah also brought in the tithe of cattle and Ne 12:44–47;
13:10–13
sheep, and the tithe of sacred gifts consecrated to Yahweh their God, [b] laying them
7 in heaps. ·They began accumulating the heaps in the third month and had finished

g. The v. favours the Levites at the expense of the priests. By taking part in sacrificial activity, the Levites were encroaching on priestly privilege; ill-feeling may have arisen in consequence.

30 a. The Chronicler has Nb 9:1–14 in mind, where the same features occur: state of ritual impurity and a long journey to be made, reflecting conditions after the Exile when Jews from the Dispersion took part.

b. It was usually celebrated in the first month (Nisan), but the Temple had not been ready, *see* 29:17.

c. lit. 'Stretch out your hand to Yahweh', a covenantal gesture.

d. This appeal, resembling the exhortations of Dt, reveals a concern for brother Israelites after the fall of Samaria, v. 9. The Chronicler's contemporaries dreamed of the ingathering of all the Jews of the Dispersion.

e. Hezekiah's Passover has less in common with the regulations in Dt 16 than with those of the Priestly Code, where the feast of Unleavened Bread still forms part of the Passover, *see* Lv 23:5b.

f. It was the duty of the donor himself to sacrifice the victim, Lv 1:5; 3:2, 8, 13. When he was not in a state of ritual purity and at great public festivals, Ezk 44:11, the act was performed by the inferior clergy.

g. The passage reacts against too rigid an interpretation of the laws of purity, *see* Mt 15:1–20 and par.

h. The 'communion sacrifice with praise' of Lv 7:12seq.

i. The Chronicler draws a parallel between the restoration of the Temple under Hezekiah and its dedication under Solomon.

31 a. Hezekiah is represented as restoring the institutions inaugurated by Solomon, 8:12–14, who for his part had been carrying out orders given by David.

b. Here the tithe seems to extend to voluntary offerings.

them by the seventh.[c] ·When Hezekiah and the officials came to inspect the heaps 8
they praised Yahweh and his people Israel.

While Hezekiah was questioning the priests and Levites about the heaps, 9
Azariah, the chief priest, of the family of Zadok, replied as follows, 'Since they 10
began bringing the contributions to the Temple of Yahweh,' he said, 'we have had
Lv 25:19–22 enough to eat and quantities left over, for Yahweh has blessed his people; this mass
of stuff is left.'[d] ·Hezekiah then ordered them to have storerooms prepared in the 11
Temple of Yahweh and, when they had got them ready, ·they conscientiously 12
brought in the contributions, tithes and consecrated gifts, Conaniah the Levite was
put in charge of them, with Shimei his brother as his assistant, ·and with Jehiel, 13
Azaziah, Nahath, Asahel, Jeremith, Jozabad, Eliel, Ismachiah, Mahath, and
Benaiah as overseers under Conaniah and his brother Shimei, by order of King
Hezekiah and of Azariah, the chief of the Temple of God. ·Kore son of Jimnah the 14
Levite, keeper of the eastern gate, was made responsible for the voluntary offerings
to God and for providing the portion set aside for Yahweh and the most holy gifts.
Supporting him loyally in the priestly towns were Eden, Miniamin, Jeshua, She- 15
maiah, Amariah and Shechaniah, who made the distributions to their brothers in
1 Ch 23:3seq. their various orders, whether high or low, ·irrespective of their official gene- 16
alogy, to the males of thirty years[e] and upwards—to each one who attended the
Temple of Yahweh to fulfil his daily obligations—for the performance of their
1 Ch 23:7–23 duties appropriate to their orders: ·the priests being registered according to family 17
and the Levites of twenty years and upwards according to their duties within their
orders. ·And the official genealogy included all their household, their wives, their 18
sons and their daughters, throughout the community, since these men were obliged
to keep sanctifying themselves anew.[f] ·The Aaronite priests who lived on the 19
pasture lands belonging to their towns, had men named[g] in every town to distribute
portions to every male among the priests and to everyone included in the official
genealogy of the Levites.

Hezekiah did this throughout all Judah. He did what Yahweh his God regards as 20
good and right and loyal. ·Everything that he undertook, whether in the service of 21
the Temple of God or in connection with the law or the commandments, he did in
absolute devotion to his God, and so succeeded.

Sennacherib's invasion[a]

‖2 K 18:13 **32** After these loyal actions, Sennacherib king of Assyria advanced and in- 1
vaded Judah, and laid siege to the fortified towns, intending to demolish
them. ·Hezekiah, realising that Sennacherib's advance was the preliminary to an 2
attack on Jerusalem, ·consulted his officers and warriors about sealing off the 3
waters of the springs outside the city, and they supported him. ·So a large number 4
Is 22:9–11 of people were called out to block all the springs and cut off the watercourse
flowing through the country. 'Why', they said, 'should the kings of Assyria find
plenty of water when they arrive?'

Ne 2:17seq. Acting with determination, he also repaired all the damaged parts of the wall, 5
built towers on it, constructed a second wall on the outer side, strengthened the
Millo of the City of David and made quantities of missiles and shields. ·he then 6
appointed generals to command the people, summoned them to him in the square
by the city gate and spoke as follows to encourage them, ·'Be strong and brave; do 7
14:10;20:6–12 not be afraid or tremble when you face the king of Assyria and the whole horde he
Is 31:3 brings with him, for there are more on our side than on his. ·He has only human 8
strength, but we have Yahweh our God to help us and fight our battles.' The people
took heart at the words of Hezekiah king of Judah.

Sennacherib's blasphemous ultimatum and downfall

‖2 K 18:17–37 Next, Sennacherib king of Assyria, who was then besieging Lachish with all his 9
‖Is 36:1–22 forces, sent his representatives to Jerusalem, to Hezekiah king of Judah, and all

10 Judah at Jerusalem, with the following message, ·'Sennacherib king of Assyria
says this, "What gives you the confidence to remain in the fortress of Jerusalem?
11 Isn't Hezekiah deluding you, only to condemn you to die of famine and thirst,
when he says: Yahweh our God will save us from the King of Assyria's clutches?
12 Isn't Hezekiah the very man who has suppressed his high places and altars, and
given the order to Judah and to Jerusalem: You must worship before one altar and
13 on that alone offer incense? ·Don't you know what I and my ancestors have done
to all the peoples of the other countries? Have the national gods of those countries
14 had the slightest success in saving their countries from my clutches? ·Of all the gods
of those nations whom my ancestors devoted to destruction, which one has been
able to save his people from my clutches, for your god to be able to save you from
15 my clutches? ·Do not let Hezekiah mislead you. Do not let him delude you like
this. Do not believe him, for no god of any nation or kingdom has been able to save
his people from me or from my ancestors' clutches. No more will your god be able
16 to save you from my clutches." ' ·And his representatives said a great deal more,
maligning Yahweh God, and his servant Hezekiah.
17 He also wrote a letter to insult Yahweh, God of Israel, maligning him as follows, ‖2 K 19:9–13 ‖Is 37:9–13
'Just as the national gods of the other countries could not save their peoples from
18 my clutches, so Hezekiah's god cannot save his people from my clutches.' ·They
then shouted loudly in the Judaean language to the people of Jerusalem on the
19 ramparts to frighten and confuse them, in the hope of capturing the city, ·maligning
the God of Jerusalem as though he were one of the man-made gods of other
peoples in the world.
20 Then King Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz prayed and cried out ‖2 K 19:15 ‖Is 37:15
21 to Heaven about this, ·and Yahweh sent an angel who destroyed every warrior, ‖2 K 19:35–37 ‖Is 37:36–38
commander and officer in the king of Assyria's camp. So he had to retire shame-
facedly to his own country and when he went into the temple of his god, some of
22 his own sons there struck him down with the sword. ·So Yahweh saved Hezekiah
and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the clutches of Sennacherib king of Assyria
23 and of everyone else, and gave them peace[b] on every side. ·Many people then 14:6
brought gifts to Yahweh in Jerusalem and valuable presents to Hezekiah king of ‖2 K 20:12
Judah; from then on, all the other nations held him in high esteem.

The closing years of Hezekiah's reign

24 About then Hezekiah fell ill and was at the point of death. He prayed to Yahweh, ‖2 K 20:1seq. ‖Is 38:1seq.
25 who heard him[c] and granted him a sign. ·But Hezekiah made no return for the
benefit which he had received; he became proud and brought retribution on himself ‖2 K 20:12–19 ‖Is 39:1–8
26 and on Judah and Jerusalem. ·Then, however, Hezekiah did humble himself in his
pride, and so did the inhabitants of Jerusalem; as a result of which, Yahweh's
retribution did not overtake them during Hezekiah's lifetime.[d]
27 Hezekiah enjoyed immense riches and honour. He built himself treasuries for ‖2 K 20:13 ‖Is 39:2
gold, silver, precious stones, spices, jewels[e] and every kind of desirable object,
28 as well as storehouses for his returns of grain, new wine and olive oil, and stalls for
29 all kinds of cattle and pens for the flocks. ·He also provided himself with donkeys[f]

c. Hence between the feast of Pentecost and the feast of Shelters, marking the end of harvest.

d. Apparently Hezekiah fears that the people may have been coerced.

e. 'thirty' conj;. *see* 1 Ch 23:3; 'three' Hebr. These are the priests and Levites.

f. vv. 15[b]–18 seem over-burdened. The trans. of v. 18[b] is approximate.

g. Cf. the commission set up by Nehemiah, Ne 13:10–14.

32 a. Having much elaborated the brief mention of Hezekiah's religious reforms in 2 K 18:4–6, the Chronicler is very much briefer than his source for the other events of his reign; to which he does, however, add an account of Hezekiah's military preparations when threatened by Sennacherib's advance, v. 3seq. Sympathetic to Hezekiah, he depicts him as brave and determined, exhorting the people to put their trust in Yahweh's help, vv. 7–8, in words identical to those used by the prophet Elisha in 2 K 6:16.

b. 'gave peace' Gk; 'led' Hebr.

c. 'who heard him' Gk; 'who said to him' Hebr.

d. The previous three vv. briefly allude to the accounts given in the Chronicler's source: Hezekiah's illness and the favourable sign, 2 K 20:24; Merodach-Baladan's embassy, 2 K 20:25; and Hezekiah's selfish retort to Isaiah, 2 K 20:26 (here represented as a sign of resignation to the will of God).

e. 'jewels' *migdanim* conj.; Hebr. *maginim* 'shields'.

f. 'donkeys' *'ayarim* conj.; Hebr. *'arim* 'towns'.

in addition to his immense wealth of flocks and herds, since God had made him immensely wealthy. [g]

||2 K 20:20–21 2 K 20:20k It was Hezekiah who stopped the upper outlet of the waters of Gihon and 30
directed them straight down on the west side of the City of David. Hezekiah
succeeded in all that he undertook, ·although when the envoys were sent to him by 31
the rulers of Babylon to enquire about the extraordinary thing which had
taken place in the country, God left him alone to test him and discover what lay
in his heart. [h]

The rest of the history of Hezekiah, and his deeds of faithful love, are recorded 32
in the Vision of the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz, in the Book of the Kings of Judah
and Israel. ·Then Hezekiah fell asleep with his ancestors and was buried in the 33
upper section [i] of the tombs of the sons of David. All Judah and the inhabitants of
Jerusalem paid him honours at his death. His son Manasseh succeeded him.

C: THE SINS OF MANASSEH AND OF AMON

||2 K 21:1–18 **Manasseh undoes the work of Hezekiah**

33 Manasseh was twelve years old when he came to the throne, and he reigned 1
for fifty-five years in Jerusalem. ·He did what is displeasing to Yahweh, 2
copying the disgusting practices of the nations whom Yahweh had dispossessed for
the Israelites.

He rebuilt the high places which his father Hezekiah had demolished, he set up 3
altars to Baal and made sacred poles, he worshipped the whole array of heaven
and served it. ·He built altars in the Temple of Yahweh, of which Yahweh had 4
said, 'My name will be in Jerusalem for ever.' ·He built altars to the whole array of 5
heaven in the two courts of the Temple of Yahweh. ·He caused his sons to pass 6
through the fire of sacrifice in the Valley of Ben-Hinnom. He practised soothsaying, divination and sorcery, and had dealings with mediums and spirit-guides. He
did very many more things displeasing to Yahweh, thus provoking his anger. ·He 7
put a sculpted image, an idol which he had had made, inside the Temple of which
God had said to David and his son Solomon, 'In this Temple and in Jerusalem, the
city which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, I shall put my name for ever.
Nor shall I ever again remove Israel's foot from the soil on which I established your 8
ancestors on condition that they were careful to observe all I commanded
them as laid down in the whole Law, the statutes and the ordinances, given through
Moses.' ·But Manasseh misled Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem into doing 9
worse things than the nations which Yahweh had destroyed for the Israelites.
When Yahweh spoke to Manasseh and his people, they would not listen. 10

Manasseh's captivity and conversion [a]

Yahweh then brought down on them the generals of the king of Assyria's army 11
Ezk 19:9 who captured Manasseh with hooks, put him in chains and took him to Babylon.
While in his distress, he placated Yahweh his God by genuinely humbling himself 12
before the God of his ancestors. ·When he prayed to him, he was moved by his 13
entreaty, heard his supplication and brought him back to Jerusalem to his kingdom.
Manasseh realised then that Yahweh is God.

Afterwards, he rebuilt the outer wall of the City of David, to the west of Gihon, 14
in the valley, up to the Fish Gate and round the Ophel, and made it very much
higher. And he stationed military governors in all the fortified towns of Judah.

14:2 He also removed the foreign gods and the idol from the Temple of Yahweh, as 15
well as all the altars which he had built on the mountain of the Temple of Yahweh
and in Jerusalem, and threw them out of the city. [b] ·He repaired the altar of 16
Yahweh and offered communion sacrifices and thanksgiving offerings on it, and
commanded Judah to serve Yahweh, God of Israel. ·The people, however, went 17
on sacrificing at the high places, although only to Yahweh their God.

18 The rest of the history of Manasseh, his prayer to his God,[c] and the prophecies ‖2 K 21:17–18
of the seers who spoke to him in the name of Yahweh, God of Israel, can be found
19 in the Annals of the Kings of Israel. ·His prayer and how God was moved by his
entreaty, all his sins, his infidelity, the sites where he built high places and set up
sacred poles and idols before humbling himself, are set down in the records of
20 Hozai[d] ·Then Manasseh fell asleep with his ancestors and was buried in the garden
of his palace. His son Amon succeeded him.

The obduracy of Amon[e]

21 Amon was twenty-two years old when he came to the throne, and he reigned for ‖2 K 21:19–26
22 two years in Jerusalem. ·He did what is displeasing to Yahweh, as his father
Manasseh had done, for Amon sacrificed to all the images which his father Man-
23 asseh had made, and served them. ·He did not humble himself before Yahweh as
his father Manasseh had done; on the contrary, Amon wilfully added to his guilt.
24, 25 His retinue plotted against him and killed him in his own palace. ·The people of
the country, however, slaughtered all those who had plotted against King Amon
and proclaimed his son Josiah as his successor.

D: REFORM UNDER JOSIAH[a]

Accession of Josiah

1 **34** Josiah was eight years old when he came to the throne, and he reigned for ‖2 K 22:1–2
2 thirty-one years in Jerusalem. ·He did what is pleasing to Yahweh, and Jr 3:6–13,14f
followed the example of his ancestor David, not deviating from it to right or to left.

The first reforms ‖2 K 23:4–20

3 In the eighth year of his reign, when he was still a youth, he began to seek the God
of his ancestor David. In the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem 14:1–4;31:1
4 of the high places, the sacred poles and the sculpted and cast images. ·He superin-
tended the smashing of the altars of Baal, he broke up the incense altars standing
above them, he shattered the sacred poles and the sculpted and cast images and
reduced them to powder, scattering the powder on the graves of those who had
5 sacrificed to them. ·He burned the bones of their priests on their altars and
6 so purified Judah and Jerusalem. ·In the towns of Manasseh, Ephraim and
7 Simeon, as far as Naphtali, and round their open spaces, ·he smashed the altars
and sacred poles, reduced the sculpted images to powder and broke up all the
incense altars throughout the territory of Israel. Then he returned to Jerusalem.

g. The enumeration of Hezekiah's wealth, more elaborate than in 2 K, indicates that he enjoyed the blessing of God, like David, 1 Ch 29:2, *see* 27:25–31, and Solomon, 2 Ch 9:10–28.

h. A new interpretation (*see* v. 26) of the narrative in 2 K 20:12–19.

i. This could signify an important position in the royal necropolis.

33 a. Assyrian texts mention Manasseh of Judah as vassal of Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal, but neither Assyrian texts nor the Book of Kings mentions any captivity of Manasseh. It may be connected with the revolts against Assyria which were afoot in Palestine at this time, or else could represent an interpretation by the Chronicler of a gathering of all Esarhaddon's vassals mentioned in other Assyrian texts. The return of Manasseh, v. 13, is interpreted by the Chronicler as the fruit of his conversion.

b. The Chronicler credits Manasseh with reforms on the lines of those of Asa, Hezekiah and Josiah.

c. There is an apocryphal psalm called 'The Prayer of Manasseh', probably inspired by this passage.

d. An unknown prophet whose name means 'seer'.

e. To Amon the Chronicler applies the condemnation of Manasseh in 2 K 21:12. Amon's reign was remarkably short, just as Manasseh's was remarkably long; long life was considered a reward for uprightness, Ps 34:12; Pr 4:10.

34 a. 2 K 22–23 present the reform as a consequence of the discovery of the Book of the Law while work was being carried out on the Temple. The Chronicler represents this work itself as a purifying of the Temple, 34:8, and second phase in a general purifying of Jerusalem, Judah and Israel from idolatry, vv. 3–7. The reform would thus have begun in the twelfth year of the reign, when Josiah was twenty, and not in the eighteenth, 2 K 22:3. This chronology is probable, the repairs in the Temple may have been inspired by reforming zeal, and the opposition to foreign cults is the expression of a national renewal which seized the opportunity of the weakness of Assyria in the last years of Ashurbanipal. We may envisage that the reform occurred in stages. It is all joined together in 2 K after the discovery of the Law, and the Chronicler used this source to describe the earlier stages, keeping for the end only the renewal of the covenant and the solemn Passover.

‖2 K 22:3–7 **Work on the Temple**

In the eighteenth year of his reign, after purging the country and the Temple, he 8
commissioned Shaphan son of Azaliah, Maaseiah governor of the city and the
herald Joah son of Joahaz, to repair the Temple of Yahweh his God. ·When they 9
24:8seq. came to the high priest Hilkiah, they handed over the money contributed to the
Temple of God and collected by the levitical guardians of the threshold from
Manasseh and Ephraim, from all the rest of Israel, from all Judah and Benjamin,
and from the inhabitants of Jerusalem. [b] ·They handed it over to the masters of 10
works attached to the Temple of Yahweh, and these gave it to the men working on
the Temple of Yahweh to repair and restore the Temple; ·they gave it to the 11
craftsmen and builders for buying dressed stone and timber for beams, to underpin
the buildings which the kings of Judah had allowed to fall into decay.

The men were conscientious in doing their work; their foremen were Jahath and 12
Obadiah, Levites descended from Merari, and Zechariah and Meshullam, de-
scended from Kohath, who supervised. The Levites—all of whom were skilled
instrumentalists [c]—·were in charge of the carriers and supervised all the workmen 13
at their various jobs, while some of the Levites acted as secretaries, book-keepers
and gatekeepers.

‖2 K 22:8–13 **The Book of the Law discovered**

While bringing out the money contributed to the Temple of Yahweh, the priest 14
Hilkiah found the book of the Law of Yahweh given through Moses. ·Hilkiah then 15
said to Shaphan the secretary, 'I have found the Book of the Law in the Temple of
Yahweh.' And Hilkiah gave the book to Shaphan. ·Shaphan took the book to the 16
king, reporting furthermore to him as follows, 'Your servants have done everything
entrusted to them. ·They have melted down the silver which was in the Temple of 17
Yahweh and have handed it over to the supervisors and the masters of works.'
Shaphan the secretary also informed the king, 'The priest Hilkiah has given me a 18
book'; and Shaphan read extracts from it [d] in the king's presence.

On hearing the words of the Law, the king tore his clothes. ·Then the king gave 19, 20
the following order to Hilkiah, Ahikam son of Shaphan, Abdon son of Micah,
Shaphan the secretary and Asaiah the king's minister, ·'Go and consult Yahweh 21
on behalf of me and of those left in Israel and Judah about the words of the book
that has been discovered: for Yahweh's furious wrath has been pouring down on us
because our ancestors did not obey the word of Yahweh by doing what this book
says they ought to have done.'

Huldah the prophetess is consulted

2 K 22:14–20 Hilkiah and those whom the king had designated went to the prophetess Huldah 22
wife of Shallum, son of Tokhath, son of Hasrah, the keeper of the wardrobe; she
lived in Jerusalem in the new town. They spoke to her about this, ·and she replied, 23
'Yahweh, God of Israel, says this, "To the man who sent you to me reply:
Yahweh says this: I am going to bring disaster on this place and the people who 24
live in it—all the curses set down in the book read in the king of Judah's presence.
Because they have abandoned me and burnt incense to other gods, so as to 25
provoke my anger by their every action, my wrath is about to be poured down on
this place, and nothing can stop it. ·As for the king of Judah who sent you to 26
consult Yahweh, say this to him: Yahweh, God of Israel, says this: The words you
have heard . . . ·But since your heart has been touched and you have humbled 27
yourself before God on hearing what he has decreed against this place and the
people who live in it, have torn your clothes and wept before me, I too have
heard"—Yahweh says this. ·"Look, when I gather you to your ancestors, you will 28
be gathered into your grave in peace; you will not live to see the great disaster that
I am going to bring on this place and on the people who live in it." ' They took this
answer to the king.

The renewal of the covenant

‖2 K 23:1–3

29, 30 The king then had all the elders of Judah and of Jerusalem summoned, ·and the king went up to the temple of Yahweh, with all the men of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, priests, Levites and all the people, high and low. In their hearing he read out the entire contents of the Book of the Covenant discovered in
31 the Temple of Yahweh. ·The king then, standing on the dais [e] bound himself by the covenant before Yahweh, to follow Yahweh, to keep his commandments, decrees and laws with all his heart and soul and to carry out the terms of the covenant as
32 written in this book. ·He made all those present in Jerusalem and Benjamin pledge their allegiance to it.

The citizens of Jerusalem took action in keeping with the covenant of God, the
33 God of their ancestors, [f] ·while Josiah removed all the abominations throughout the territories belonging to the Israelites and required all inhabitants of Israel to serve Yahweh their God; throughout his lifetime they did not deviate from following Yahweh, God of their ancestors.

2 K 23:4seq.

Preparations for the Passover

1 35 Josiah then celebrated a Passover to Yahweh in Jerusalem. The Passover victims were slaughtered on the fourteenth day of the first month.

Ex 12:1a
‖2 K 23:21

2 He assigned the priests to their posts, encouraging them to do their duty in the
3 Temple of Yahweh. [a] ·Then he said to the Levites, who had understanding [b] for all Israel and were consecrated to Yahweh, 'Put the sacred ark in the Temple built by Solomon son of David, king of Israel. You need not carry it about on your
4 shoulders any more. Now serve Yahweh your God and Israel his people! ·Prepare yourselves by families according to your orders, as laid down in the decree of David
5 king of Israel and that of Solomon his son, ·and take up positions in the sanctuary corresponding to the family divisions of your brothers the laity, so that there are
6 Levites for each family division. ·Slaughter the Passover, sanctify yourselves and prepare it so that your brothers can observe it in the way the word of Yahweh through Moses requires.'

5:4
1 Ch 15:15
1 Ch 24–26
30:17f
Dt 12:18–19

7 For the laity Josiah provided small livestock, that is, lambs and young goats—everything for the Passover offerings for all who attended—to the number of thirty thousand, as well as three thousand bullocks; these were from the king's own
8 possessions. ·His officials also made voluntary contributions for the people, the priests and the Levites; and Hilkiah, Zechariah and Jehiel, the chiefs of the Temple of God, gave two thousand six hundred lambs and three hundred bullocks to the
9 priests for the Passover offerings; ·while Conaniah, Shemaiah, Nethanel his brother, Hashabiah, Jeiel and Jozabad, the head Levites, provided five thousand lambs and five hundred bullocks as Passover offerings for the Levites.

Ex 12:5
Nb 7
1 Ch 29:6–9

The celebration of the Passover [c]

10 So the service was arranged, the priests stood in their places and the Levites in
11 their orders as the king had commanded. ·Then they slaughtered the Passover victims and while the priests sprinkled the blood as they received it from the

b. Thus all the Israelites contributed to the repairs. The Chronicler invariably insists on the unity of Yahweh's people, *see* Ezk 37:15seq.

c. vv. 12[b]-13 are peculiar to the Chronicler, who attributes to the Levites and singers the management of the repairs.

d. 2 K 22:10 has 'read it', but the Chronicler takes it to be the Pentateuch—too long for a single reading.

e. 'on the daïs' conj., *see* 23:13; 2 K 11:14; 'in his place' Hebr.

f. The Chronicler briefly touches on the data of 2 K 23:4seq, which he has moved to the beginning of his account, 2 Ch 34:3seq.

35 a. As in the case of Hezekiah, the ceremony is preceded by a restoration of the clergy, *see* 31:2seq, according to the rules ascribed to David. Here again, the Chronicler's primary interest is in the Levites.

b. Understanding, in the sense which wisdom literature gives the term, discernment of the things of God.

c. Briefly mentioned in 2 K 23:21, the feast is described in detail here. The ritual is that of Dt 16, but with additions probably inspired by customs current in the Chronicler's own times. The Levites play a predominant role in the Chronicler's account of the ceremony. The Passover sacrifice is accompanied by burnt offerings and communion sacrifices.

Levites, the latter did the skinning.[d] ·Next they put the burnt offering aside for 12
presentation to the family divisions of the laity, so that they could offer it to
Yahweh in the way prescribed in the Book of Moses; they did the same with the
Ex 12:2–11 bullocks. ·They roasted the Passover victim[e] over an open fire in accordance with 13
the regulation and boiled the consecrated offerings in pots, kettles and pans, which
they then distributed to all the laity as quickly as they could.

Afterwards they provided for themselves and the priests, since the Aaronite 14
priests were kept busy till nightfall making the burnt offerings and offering the fat;
that was why the Levites prepared the Passover for themselves and for the Aaronite
priests. ·The Asaphite singers were at their places, in accordance with the com- 15
mand of David and Asaph, Heman and Jeduthun the king's seer; so were the
gatekeepers at each gate. Because they could not leave their duties, their brothers
the Levites prepared the Passover for them.

So the whole service of Yahweh was arranged that day to celebrate the Passover 16
and to bring burnt offerings on the altar of Yahweh, in accordance with King
Josiah's command. ·On that occasion the Israelites who were present celebrated 17
‖2 K 23:22 the Passover and the feast of Unleavened Bread for seven days. ·No Passover like 18
this one had ever been celebrated in Israel since the days of the prophet Samuel,
nor had any of the kings of Israel ever celebrated a Passover like the one celebrated
by Josiah, the priests, the Levites, all Judah and Israel who were present, and the
inhabitants of Jerusalem.[f]

Death of Josiah[g]

‖2 K 23:23, 29–30 This Passover was celebrated in the eighteenth year of Josiah's reign.[h] 19

After all this, when Josiah had provided for the Temple, Necho king of Egypt 20
advanced to give battle at Carchemish on the Euphrates and Josiah went to
intercept him. ·Necho however sent him messengers to say, 'Why be concerned 21
about me, king of Judah? I have not come today to attack you; my quarrel is with
another dynasty. God has commanded me to move quickly, so keep well clear of
the god who is with me!' ·But Josiah was not to be deflected from his determination[i] 22
to fight him, and would not listen to Necho's words, which came from the mouth of
18:33–34 God. He gave battle in the plain of Megiddo. ·The archers shot King Josiah. The 23
king them said to his retainers, 'Take me away; I am badly wounded.' ·So his 24
retainers lifted him out of his own chariot, transferred him to one which he had in
reserve and brought him to Jerusalem, where he died and was buried in the tombs
of his ancestors. All Judah and Jerusalem held mourning for Josiah. ·Jeremiah 25
composed a lament for Josiah and all the male and female singers to this day lament
Josiah in their dirges; they have made it a rule in Israel; they are recorded in the
Lamentations.[j]

The rest of the history of Josiah, his deeds of faithful love conforming to what is 26
prescribed in the Law of Yahweh, ·his history from first to last, are recorded in the 27
Book of the Kings of Israel and Judah.

E: ISRAEL IN THE CLOSING YEARS OF THE MONARCHY[a]

‖2 K 23:30–34 **Jehoahaz**

36 The people of the land then took Jehoahaz son of Josiah and proclaimed 1
him king of Jerusalem in succession to his father. ·Jehoahaz was twenty- 2
three years old when he came to the throne, and he reigned for three months in
Jerusalem.[b] ·The king of Egypt deposed him in Jerusalem and imposed a levy of a 3
hundred talents of silver and one talent of gold on the country. ·The king of 4
Egypt then made his brother Eliakim king of Judah and Jerusalem, and
changed his name to Jehoiakim. Carrying off his brother Jehoahaz, Necho took
him to Egypt.

Jehoiakim

Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he came to the throne, and he reigned ‖2 K 23:36–37
for eleven years in Jerusalem. He did what is displeasing to Yahweh his God.
Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon attacked him, loaded him with chains and took ‖2 K 24:1seq.
him to Babylon.[c] ·To Babylon Nebuchadnezzar also took some of the objects
belonging to the Temple of Yahweh and put them in his palace in Babylon. ·The
rest of the history of Jehoiakim, the shameful things that he did and what happened ‖2 K 24:5
to him in consequence, these are recorded in the Book of the Kings of Israel and
Judah. His son Jehoiachin succeeded him.

Jehoiachin

Jehoiachin was eighteen[d] years old when he came to the throne, and he reigned for ‖2 K 24:8–9
three months and ten days in Jerusalem. He did what is displeasing to Yahweh.
At the turn of the year, King Nebuchadnezzar sent for him and had him taken to ‖2 K 24:10–16
Babylon, with the valuables belonging to the Temple of Yahweh, and made his ‖2 K 24:17
brother[e] Zedekiah king of Judah and Jerusalem.

Zedekiah ‖2 K 24:18–20

Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he came to the throne, and he reigned ‖Jr 52:1–3
for eleven years in Jerusalem. ·He did what is displeasing to Yahweh his God. He
did not listen humbly to the prophet Jeremiah who spoke for Yahweh. Jr 37–39
Furthermore, he rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar who had made him swear Ezk 17:13–16
allegiance to him by God. He became stubborn, and obstinately refused to return
to Yahweh, God of Israel.

The nation[f]

Furthermore, all the leaders of Judah, the priests and the people too, added
infidelity to infidelity, copying all the shameful practices of the nations and defiling
the Temple of Yahweh which he himself had consecrated in Jerusalem. ·Yahweh,
God of their ancestors, continuously sent them word through his messengers Heb 1:1
because he felt sorry for his people and his dwelling, ·but they ridiculed the Mt 23:34–36par.
messengers of God, they despised his words, they laughed at his prophets, until
Yahweh's wrath with his people became so fierce that there was no further remedy.

Ruin

So against them he summoned the king of the Chaldaeans and he put their young Lm 1:15;5:11–14
men to the sword within the very building of their Temple, not sparing young
man or girl, or the old and infirm; he put them all at his mercy. ·All the things ‖2 K 25:14seq.
belonging to the Temple of God, whether large or small, the treasures of the
Temple of Yahweh, the treasures of the king and his officials, everything he took

d. According to Lv 1:6, this was a function for laymen.

e. Not the bitter herbs and unleavened bread but the communion sacrifices connected with the Passover.

f. The novelty of Josiah's Passover lay in its being celebrated by the entire nation in Jerusalem as a result of the centralisation of the cult decreed by Dt. The Chronicler masks this to some extent by his anachronistic account of Hezekiah's Passover, 30:13–27. The Passover had hitherto been celebrated as a family festival. The reference to the time of Samuel here, and to the period of the Judges in the parallel 2 K 23:22, if not merely rhetorical, seems to imply that in remoter times the Passover had been a communal festival held at a central shrine.

g. The Chronicler seems to have had available a more detailed source than 2 K. which he interpreted according to his theology of retribution, v. 22.

h. Gk here inserts the eulogy on Josiah from 2 K 23:24–27.

i. lit. 'he was determined' Gk; 'he disguised himself', Hebr., *see* 2 K 23:30.

j. Jr 22:10 alludes to the death of Josiah, but the Book of Lamentations, ascribed to the prophet, contains nothing specifically relating to this king. The text mentioned by the Chronicler is now lost.

36 **a.** Summary of events recorded in 2 K 23:31–25:30. The Chronicler has little to say about the dark period between Josiah's reforms and the national and religious restoration after the Exile, *see* his presentation of the post-exilic documents, Ezr and Ne.

b. Here Gk adds 2 K 23:31–33.

c. This captivity and spoliation are not reported elsewhere. It would appear that a later age credited the wicked Jehoiakim with some of his son Jehoiachin's misfortunes, but *see* Dn 1:1–2 which seems to draw on a different source, if it is not merely a literary device.

d. 'eighteen' versions, 2 K 24:8; 'eight' Hebr.

e. Actually his uncle, 2 K 24:17. But 1 Ch 3:15–16 lists two Zedekiahs, one an uncle, the other a son of Jehoiachin.

f. A general judgement on how continual apostasy led to the ruin of Judah. The Chronicler has the writings of Jeremiah and Ezekiel in mind.

‖2 K 25:9seq. to Babylon. ·He burned down the temple of God, demolished the walls of Jerusa- 19
lem, burned all its palaces to the ground and destroyed everything of value in it.
And those who had escaped the sword he deported to Babylon, where they were 20
enslaved by him and his descendants until the rise of the kingdom of Persia—·to 21
fulfil Yahweh's prophecy through Jeremiah: *Until the country has paid off its Sabbaths, it will lie fallow for all the days of its desolation—until the seventy years are complete.*

‖Ezr 1:1–3 **A new hope** [g]

In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia—to fulfil the word of Yahweh through 22
Jeremiah—Yahweh roused the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia to issue a proclamation
and to have it publicly displayed throughout his kingdom: ·'Cyrus king of Persia 23
says this, "Yahweh, the God of Heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the
earth and has appointed me to build him a Temple in Jerusalem, which is in
Judah. Whoever there is among you of all his people, may his God be with him!
Let him go up." '

g. The concluding vv. are the same as Ezr 1:1–3[a] but their positioning here alters their emphasis. Whereas in Ezr they introduce a story of painful endurance, here they herald the triumphal rebuilding of the Temple and hence the restoration of Davidic institutions, conceived as eternal by the Chronicler.

THE BOOK OF

EZRA

I: THE RETURN FROM EXILE

AND THE REBUILDING OF THE TEMPLE

The return of the exiles

1 **1** In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia [a]—to fulfil the word of Yahweh spoken through Jeremiah [b]—Yahweh roused the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia to issue a proclamation and to have it publicly displayed throughout his kingdom: ‖2 Ch 36:22–23 Jr 25:11–12; 29:10 Zc 1:12

2 'Cyrus king of Persia says this, "Yahweh, the God of heaven, [c] has given me Is 45:1
all the kingdoms of the earth and has appointed me to build him a Temple in
3 Jerusalem, in Judah. ·Whoever among you belongs to the full tally of his
people, [d] may his God be with him! Let him go up to Jerusalem, in Judah, and
4 build the Temple of Yahweh, God of Israel, who is the God in Jerusalem. ·And
let each survivor, [e] wherever he lives, be helped by the people of his locality with
silver, gold, equipment and riding beasts, as well as voluntary offerings for the
Temple of God which is in Jerusalem." '[f]

5 Then the heads of families of Judah and of Benjamin, the priests and the Levites,
in fact all whose spirit had been roused by God, prepared to go and rebuild the Hg 1:14
6 Temple of Yahweh in Jerusalem; ·and all their neighbours gave them every kind of Ex 3:22;11:2; 12:35
help: silver, gold, equipment, riding beasts and valuable presents, [g] in addition to
their voluntary offerings.
7 Furthermore, King Cyrus handed over the articles belonging to the Temple of
Yahweh which Nebuchadnezzar had carried away from Jerusalem and put in the
8 temple of his god. ·Cyrus king of Persia handed them over to Mithredath the
9 treasurer who checked them out to Sheshbazzar the prince of Judah. [h] ·The inven-
tory was as follows: thirty gold dishes; one thousand silver dishes, twenty-nine
10 repaired; ·thirty gold bowls; a thousand silver bowls, four hundred and ten

1 **a.** The conquest of Babylon by Cyrus dates from the autumn of 539; the first year of his reign (over the Babylonian empire) begins in Nisan (March–April) 538.

b. The 'seventy' years of captivity foretold by Jeremiah is a round number, though it could be understood literally by making the subjection of Judah begin with the reign of Jehoiakim (609), *see* 2 K 24:1. • For the part to be played by Cyrus, *see* Is 44:28; 45:1seq.

c. The Persian kings were as a whole extremely generous to the temples of conquered peoples, restoring and actively supporting them while keeping a measure of control. Their attitude towards the Jewish religion was no exception, the Jews perhaps enjoying a particular advantage since Yahweh, always called 'the God of heaven' in official Persian documents, seems to have been equated with the supreme god Ahura-Mazda, worshipped by the Persian kings.

d. The expression apparently includes no exiles from the Northern Kingdom. But *see* v. 5.

e. The 'survivors', 9:8, 13–15; Ne 1:2, constitute the remnant spared by God and identified, after Ezr 6:8–10, with the Babylonian exiles, *see* Is 4:3c.

f. The edict takes the form here of a proclamation in Hebr., by public heralds to the exiled Jews and no doubt drawn up by Jews employed in the Persian chancellery. 6:3–5, on the other hand, is a memorandum for the use of Persian officials.

g. 'every kind of help: silver' following 1 Esd 2:6; 'help with silver articles' Hebr. • By 1 Esd is meant that apocryphal book called Esdras A in the Gk Bible and Esdras III in MSS and certain editions of the Vulgate. It partly reproduces the canonical book, and its Gk text, translated from a Semitic original, sometimes provides better readings than MT.

h. Leader of the first party of returning exiles, *see* p. 509.

damaged; one thousand other articles. [i] ·In all, five thousand four hundred articles 11
of gold and silver. Sheshbazzar took all these with him when he led the exiles back
from Babylon to Jerusalem.

‖Ne 7:6–72 **List of the first exiles to return** [a]

2 These were the people of the province who returned from the captivity of the 1
Exile, those whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had deported to Babylon,
and who returned to Jerusalem and Judah, each to his own town. ·They were the 2
ones who arrived with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Naha-
mani, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispar, Bigvai, Rehum and Baanah. [b]

The number of the men of the people of the country of Israel: ·sons of Parosh, 3
two thousand one hundred and seventy-two; ·sons of Shephatiah, three hundred 4
and seventy-two; ·sons of Arah, seven hundred and seventy-five; ·sons of Pahath- 5, 6
Moab, that is to say the sons of Jeshua and Joab, two thousand eight hundred and
twelve; ·sons of Elam, one thousand two hundred and fifty-four; ·sons of Zattu, 7, 8
nine hundred and forty-five; ·sons of Zaccai, seven hundred and sixty; ·sons of 9, 10
Bani, six hundred and forty-two; ·sons of Bebai, six hundred and twenty-three; 11
sons of Azgad, one thousand two hundred and twenty-two; ·sons of Adonikam, six 12, 13
hundred and sixty-six; ·sons of Bigvai, two thousand and fifty-six; ·sons of Adin, 14, 15
four hundred and fifty-four; ·sons of Ater, that is to say of Hezekiah, ninety-eight; 16
sons of Bezai, three hundred and twenty-three; ·sons of Jorah, one hundred and 17, 18
twelve; ·sons of Hashum, two hundred and twenty-three; ·sons of Gibbar, ninety- 19, 20
five; ·sons of Bethlehem, one hundred and twenty-three; ·men of Netophah, fifty- 21, 22
six; ·men of Anathoth, one hundred and twenty-eight; ·sons of Azmaveth, forty- 23, 24
two; ·sons of Kiriath-Jearim, Chephirah and Beeroth, seven hundred and forty- 25
three; ·sons of Ramah and Geba, six hundred and twenty-one; ·men of 26, 27
Michmas, one hundred and twenty-two; ·men of Bethel and Ai, two hundred and 28
twenty-three; ·sons of Nebo, ·fifty-two; ·of Magbish, one hundred and fifty- 29, 30
six;·sons of the other Elam, one thousand two hundred and fifty-four; ·sons 31, 32
of Harim, three hundred and twenty; ·sons of Lod, Hadid and Ono, seven hundred 33
and twenty-five; ·sons of Jericho, three hundred and forty-five; ·sons of Senaah, 34, 35
three thousand six hundred and thirty.

The priests: sons of Jedaiah, of the House of Jeshua, nine hundred and seventy- 36
three; ·sons of Immer, one thousand and fifty-two; ·sons of Pashhur, one thousand 37, 38
two hundred and forty-seven; ·sons of Harim, one thousand and seventeen. 39

The Levites: sons of Jeshua and Kadmiel, of the line of Hodaviah, seventy-four. 40

The singers: [c] sons of Asaph, one hundred and twenty-eight. 41

The sons of the gatekeepers: sons of Shallum, sons of Ater, sons of Talmon, 42
sons of Akkub, sons of Hatita, sons of Shobai: in all, one hundred and thirty-nine.

The temple slaves: [d] sons of Ziha, sons of Hasupha, sons of Tabbaoth, ·sons of 43, 44
Keros, sons of Siaha, sons of Padon, ·sons of Lebanah, sons of Hagabah, sons of 45
Akkub, ·sons of Hagab, sons of Shamlai, sons of Hanan, ·sons of Giddel, sons 46, 47
of Gahar, sons of Reaiah, ·sons of Rezin, sons of Nekoda, sons of Gazzam, 48
sons of Uzza, sons of Paseah, sons of Besai, ·sons of Asnah, sons of the Meunites, 49, 50
sons of the Nephisites, ·sons of Bakbuk, sons of Hakupha, sons of Harhur, ·sons 51, 52
of Bazluth, sons of Mehida, sons of Harsha, ·sons of Barkos, sons of Sisera, 53
sons of Temah, ·sons of Neziah, sons of Hatipha. 54

The sons of Solomon's slaves: sons of Sotai, sons of Hassophereth, sons of 55
Peruda, ·sons of Jaalah, sons of Darkon, sons of Giddel, ·sons of Shephatiah, sons 56, 57
of Hattil, sons of Pochereth-ha-Zebaim, sons of Ami. ·The total of the temple 58
slaves and the sons of Solomon's slaves: three hundred and ninety-two.

The following, who came from Tel-Melah, Tel-Harsha, Cherub, Addan and 59
Immer, could not prove that their families and ancestry were of Israelite origin:
the sons of Delaiah, the sons of Tobiah, the sons of Nekoda: six hundred and 60
fifty-two. ·And among the sons of the priests: the sons of Habaiah, the sons of 61
2 S 17:27; Hakkoz, the sons of Barzillai—who had married one of the daughters of Barzillai

62 the Gileadite, whose name he adopted. •These had looked for their entries in the official genealogies but were not to be found there, and were hence disqualified
63 from the priesthood.[e] •Consequently, His Excellency[f] forbade them to eat any of the consecrated food[g] until a priest appeared who could consult *urim* and *thummim*.[h]

64 The whole assembly numbered forty-two thousand, three hundred and sixty
65 people, •not counting their male and female slaves to the number of seven thousand three hundred and thirty-seven. They also had two hundred male and female
66 singers. •Their horses numbered seven hundred and thirty-six, their mules two
67 hundred and forty-five, •their camels four hundred and thirty-five and their donkeys six thousand seven hundred and twenty.

68 When they arrived at the Temple of Yahweh in Jerusalem, a certain number of heads of families made voluntary offerings for the Temple of God, for its rebuilding
69 on its site. •In accordance with their means they gave sixty-one thousand gold drachmas, five thousand silver minas and one hundred priestly robes to the sacred treasury.

70 The priests, the Levites and some of the people settled in Jerusalem;[i] the singers, the gatekeepers and the temple slaves in their appropriate towns; and all the other Israelites in their own towns.

Resumption of the sacrificial liturgy

1 3 When the seventh month came after the Israelites had been resettled in their
2 towns, the people gathered as one person in Jerusalem.[a] •Then Jeshua son of Jozadak, with his brother priests, and Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, with his brothers,[b] set about rebuilding the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings on
3 it as prescribed in the Law of Moses man of God. •They erected the altar on its old site,[c] despite their fear of the people of the country,[d] and on it they presented
4 burnt offerings to Yahweh, burnt offerings morning and evening; •they celebrated the feast of Shelters as prescribed, offering daily the number of burnt offerings
5 required from day to day, •and in addition presented the continual burnt offerings prescribed for the Sabbaths,[e] for the New Moons and for all the festivals sacred to Yahweh, as well as those voluntary offerings made by individuals to Yahweh.[f]
6 From the first day of the seventh month they began presenting burnt offerings to

▶19:32seq. 1 K 2:7

‖Ne 7:72[b]–8:1

1 K 8:64s

Ex 23:14d Nb 28:3–8

i. vv. 8–11[a] reproduce a mutilated Aramaic document. The total number of articles does not tally with the figures of the items listed.

2 **a.** This list is also found in Ne 7 and 1 Esd 5 but with variants of names, figures and the alternation of 'sons of' and 'men of'. Of these three stages of the same text, the one in 1 Esd seems in certain respects to be the best preserved but it would be arbitrary to correct one by means of the other. The list is composite, classifying some of the people by family and some by locality, and gives a population survey of Judaea for the period immediately following the first wave of resettlement after the Exile. The Chronicler uses it here to illustrate the history of the return, and again in Ne 7 in connection with the resettlement of Jerusalem.

b. Twelve in all; the number of tribes of Israel.

c. Not reckoned among the Levites, unlike 3:10. One group only is mentioned, unlike 1 Ch 6:16seq.

d. The origin of the temple slaves (lit. 'dedicated ones') is described in Jos 9:27. The 'sons of Solomon's slaves' (vv. 55–58, *see* Ne 11:3, 21) were the descendants of prisoners of war or of foreigners subject to forced labour. These two groups did the menial work of the Temple, *see* Ezk 44:7–9; *see* 8:20.

e. The decision was later reversed, at least for the sons of Hakkoz, 8:33; Ne 3:4, 21.

f. i.e. the governor, referred to by his title of honour, *tirshata*, a Persian word apparently meaning 'His Reverence'; it recurs in Ne 7:65, 69; 8:9; 10:2. The governor does not interfere in religious affairs. Ezekiel's instructions have borne fruit, *see* Ezk 45:7–17; 46:1–10, 12, 16–18.

g. On this priestly privilege *see* Lv 10:14–15; 22:10seq.

h. To consult God by means of the sacred lots, *see* 1 S 14:41r. No high priest had as yet been appointed, *see* Hg 1:1; Zc 3.

i. 'in Jerusalem' Gk. 1 Esd 5:45; Hebr. omits.

3 **a.** The same expression (after correction) describes the gathering organised by Ezra, Ne 7:72[b]–8:1.

b. The mention of Zerubbabel and Jeshua as beginning the rebuilding (here and v. 8) is editorial. The work had been officially assigned to Sheshbazzar, 5:13–16; 6:3–5.

c. 'site' Gk, Syr., *see* 2:28; 'foundation' Hebr.

d. The expression 'people of the country' basically means all of the free population enjoying full civil rights in a given territory under their own rulers. In the OT, political changes modify its meaning. Thus, in 2 K 11:18, it seems to mean the conservative rural population as opposed to the citizens of Jerusalem. In post-exilic times, *see* 4:4; 9:1–2; 10:2, 11; Ne 10:29, the term is used (almost always in the plural) to designate the Samaritans, Ammonites, Moabites, etc., who had occupied the land vacated by the deported Jews and had in the interim acquired political rights of their own. A distinction is drawn between them and 'the people of Judah'. Later, in the rabbinical period, the term came to be applied to those who did not observe the religious law, *see* already Jn 7:49.

e. 'for the Sabbaths' 1 Esd 5:51, *see* 2 Ch 2:3. Hebr. omits.

f. 'Voluntary' sacrifices as opposed to those prescribed by the Law or obligatory as the result of a vow, *see* Lv 7:11a.

Yahweh, though the foundations of the Temple of Yahweh had not yet been laid.[g]

They also contributed money for the masons and carpenters, and food, drink 7
1 Ch 22:4 and oil for the Sidonians and Tyrians for bringing cedar wood from Lebanon by sea
2 Ch 2:9,14 to Jaffa, for which Cyrus king of Persia had given permission.[h] ·It was in the 8
second month of the second year[i] after their arrival at the Temple of God in
Jerusalem that Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and Jeshua son of Jozadak, with the
rest of their brothers, the priests, the Levites and all the people who had returned
to Jerusalem from captivity, began the work by appointing some of the Levites
who were twenty years old or more to superintend the work on the Temple of
Yahweh.[j] ·The Levites, Jeshua, his sons and his brothers, with Kadmiel, Binnui 9
and his sons, the sons of Hodaviah,[k] agreed to superintend the men working on
the Temple of God.[l] ·When the builders had laid the foundations of the Temple of 10
Yahweh, the priests in their robes stood forward with trumpets, and the Levites,
2:41 the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, to praise Yahweh according to the ordinances of
David king of Israel. ·They chanted praise and thanksgiving to Yahweh because 11
Ps 100:5b;136 for Israel, they said, 'he is good, and everlasting in his faithful love.' Then all the
Nb 10:5a people raised a mighty shout of praise to Yahweh, since the foundations of the
Temple of Yahweh had now been laid. ·Many of the older priests, Levites and 12
Hg 2:3 heads of families, who had seen the first temple, wept very loudly when the
Tb 14:5 foundations of this one were laid before their eyes, but many others shouted aloud
for joy, ·so that nobody could distinguish the noise of the joyful shout from the 13
noise of the people's weeping; for the people shouted so loudly that the noise could
be heard far away.

Opposition from the Samaritans: their tactics under Cyrus[a]

4 When the enemies of Judah and Benjamin heard that the exiles were building 1
the Temple of Yahweh, God of Israel, ·they came to Zerubbabel and Jeshua[b] 2
and the heads of families and said, 'Let us help you build, for we resort to your
God as you do and we have been sacrificing[c] to him since the time of Esarhaddon
king of Assyria, who brought us here.'[d] ·Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and the other heads 3
of Israelite families replied, 'It is out of the question that you should join us in
building a Temple for our God. We shall build for Yahweh, God of Israel, on our
own, as King Cyrus king of Persia has commanded us.' ·The people of the country 4
then set about demoralising the people of Judah and deterring them from building;
they also bribed counsellors[e] against them to frustrate their purpose throughout 5
the lifetime of Cyrus king of Persia right on into the reign of Darius king of Persia.

Samaritan tactics under Xerxes and Artaxerxes[f]

In the reign of Xerxes, at the beginning of his reign,[g] they[h] drew up an accusation 6
against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem.

In the days of Artaxerxes,[i] Mithredath, Tabeel and their other associates wrote 7
to Artaxerxes king of Persia against Jerusalem;[j] the text of the letter was written in
Aramaic writing and dialect.

Then Rehum the governor[k] and Shimshai the secretary wrote a letter to King 8
Artaxerxes, denouncing Jerusalem as follows:

'From Rehum the governor and Shimshai the secretary and their other associ- 9
ates, the judges, the legates, the Persian officials, the people of Uruk, Babylon
and Susa—that is, the Elamites—·and the other peoples whom the great and 10
illustrious Ashurbanipal deported and settled in the towns of Samaria and in the
rest of Transeuphrates.'[l]

This is the text of the letter which they sent him: 11

'To King Artaxerxes, from your servants the people of Transeuphrates:

'May the king now please be informed that the Jews, who have come up from 12
you to us, have arrived in Jerusalem and are rebuilding the rebellious and evil

13 city; they have begun rebuilding the walls and are laying the foundations; ·and
now the king should be informed that once this city is rebuilt and the walls are
restored, they will refuse to pay tribute, tax or toll, thus the king will incur a
14 loss; [m] ·and now, because we eat the palace salt, it is not proper for us to see this
15 affront offered to the king; we therefore send this information to the king ·so
that a search may be made in the archives of your ancestors: in which archives
you will find and learn that this city is a rebellious city, the bane of kings and
provinces, and that sedition has been stirred up there from ancient times; that is
16 why this city was destroyed. ·We inform the king that if this city is rebuilt and its
walls are restored, you will soon have no territories left in Transeuphrates.'

17 The king sent this reply:

'To Rehum the governor, to Shimshai the secretary, and to their other associates resident in Samaria and elsewhere in Transeuphrates: Greetings!

18 'And now, the document which you sent us has been accurately translated for
19 me, ·and by my orders search has been made, and it has been found that this city
has rebelled against the kings in the past and that revolt and sedition have been
20 contrived in it; ·and that powerful kings have reigned in Jerusalem, governing
21 the whole of Transeuphrates [n] and exacting tribute, tax and toll; ·now give orders
for these men to cease work; this city is not to be rebuilt until I give the order.
22 Beware of acting negligently in this matter. Why should the harm grow, to
endanger the king?'

23 As soon as the text of King Artaxerxes' document had been read to Rehum the
governor, [o] Shimshai the secretary and their associates, they hurried to the Jews in Ne 1:3d
Jerusalem and stopped their work by force of arms.

The rebuilding of the Temple (520–515 BC)

24 Work on the Temple of God in Jerusalem then ceased, and was discontinued until
the second year of the reign of Darius King of Persia. [p]

1 5 When the prophets Haggai and Zechariah son of Iddo prophesied to the Jews
who were in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel who was
2 over them, ·Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and Jeshua son of Jozadak began rebuild- Hg 1:14–2:9 Zc 4:9
ing the Temple of God in Jerusalem; with them were the prophets of God,
supporting them. [a]

3 It was then that Tattenai governor of Transeuphrates, Shethar-Bozenai and their

g. For the Chronicler this is a resumption of the whole system of worship as prescribed in the texts of 'Priestly' origin relating to the Law.

h. Preparations similar to those made for Solomon's Temple.

i. Hg 1:14; 2:10seq. and Zc 4:9 put the beginning of the work in the second year of Darius; it actually began under Cyrus, Ezr 5:16, but made little progress, *see* Ezr 4:24.

j. It is a characteristic of the Chronicler to give prominence to the Levites.

k. 'Hodaviah' conj., *see* 2:40; 'Judah' Hebr.

l. Hebr. adds 'the sons of Henadad, their sons and their brothers', gloss based on Ne 3:18, 24; 10:10.

4 **a.** Hg 1:2 blamed the delay in building the Temple (from 538 to 520) on the indifference of the Jews. The Chronicler emphasises the Samaritan opposition.

b. 'Jeshua' Gk; Hebr. omits.

c. 'have been sacrificing' *qere*, Gk, Syr.; 'have not been sacrificing' Hebr.

d. This deportation should perhaps be related to Esarhaddon's Egyptian campaign and to the capture of Tyre (671).

e. Royal officials resident in Samaria.

f. Here the 'Aramaic source' begins; it ends at 6:18. The Chronicler, however, summarises some of the facts in Hebr.; vv. 6–7.

g. End of 486 or beginning of 485.

h. Those mentioned in v. 4.

i. Artaxerxes I (464–423).

j. 'against Jerusalem' *beshalem* conj.; Hebr. *bishelam* 'with the agreement (of Mithridates)' (unless Bishlam is taken as a proper name, as in 1 Esd 2:12).

k. Governor of Samaria, *see* v. 17. Samaria was the capital of the province which still included Judah; its governor therefore had supervisory rights over Jerusalem.

l. 'towns' Gk; 'town' Aram. • The list of Samaritan plaintiffs includes the highest authorities in the province, the leading Persian officials and the heads of the various groups of settlers according to their countries of origin.

m. 'the King will incur a loss', conj.; Aram. 'you will harm the Kings'.

n. Deliberately exaggerated allusion to the empire of David and Solomon.

o. 'the governor' 1 Hebr. MS, Gk MSS, Syr.; Aram. omits.

p. Editorial verse linking what follows with 4:5.

5 **a.** vv. 1–2 combine information from Hg and Zc. The initial enthusiasm for building the Temple, stimulated by Sheshbazzar, 5:16, had petered out, and in the autumn of 520 there was still nothing to show but ruins, Hg 1:4. It may therefore be said that the work began only then. The leading part played by Zerubbabel is stressed by Hg and Zc, but here the 'elders' come to the fore, v. 5.

associates came to them and asked, 'Who gave you the order to rebuild this Temple and complete this structure? • [b]What are the names of the men putting up this 4
building?' •But the eyes of their God were watching over the elders of the Jews, so 5
they were not forced to stop until a report could reach Darius and an official reply about the matter could be received from him.

The governor's letter to King Darius

A copy of the letter which Tattenai, governor of Transeuphrates, Shethar-Bozenai 6
and his associates, the officials in Transeuphrates, sent to King Darius. •They sent 7
him a report which ran as follows:

'To King Darius, hearty greetings!

'The king should be informed that we went to the province of Judah, to the 8
Temple of the great God, which is being rebuilt with large stones; beams are being embedded in the walls; the work is being carried out energetically and is making good progress. •Questioning these elders, we asked them, "Who gave 9
you permission to rebuild this Temple and complete this structure?" •We also 10
asked them their names, to inform you, so that we could record the names of the men who were their leaders.

'They gave us the following answer, "We are the servants of the God of 11
heaven and earth; we are rebuilding the Temple built many years ago, which a great king of Israel had built and completed. •But because our ancestors angered 12
the God of heaven, he handed them over to Nebuchadnezzar the Chaldaean king of Babylon who destroyed this Temple and deported the people to Babylon. In the first year of Cyrus king of Babylon, however, King Cyrus issued an 13
official order that this Temple of God should be rebuilt; •furthermore, those 14
gold and silver articles belonging to the Temple of God, which Nebuchadnezzar had removed from the temple in Jerusalem and brought to the temple of Babylon, King Cyrus in turn removed from the temple of Babylon and handed back to a certain Sheshbazzar whom he had appointed governor. •He said to 15
him, 'Take these articles; go and return them to the Temple which is in Jerusalem and let the Temple of God be rebuilt on its original site;' •this Sheshbazzar then 16
came and laid the foundations of the Temple of God in Jerusalem, and it has been under construction ever since, [c] and is not yet finished."

'Hence, if it please the king, let search be made in the royal treasuries in 17
Babylon, to find out if it is true that an official order was issued by King Cyrus for this temple of God in Jerusalem to be rebuilt; and let the king's decision on this matter be sent to us.'

King Darius replies

6 Then, on the order of King Darius, search was made in the archives deposited 1
in the treasuries in Babylon [a] •and a scroll was found in the fortress of Ecbatana, 2
which ran as follows:

1:4f 'Memorandum.

'In the first year of King Cyrus, King Cyrus issued this order: 3

"Temple of God in Jerusalem.

"The Temple is to be rebuilt as a place of offering sacrifice and its foundations retained. Its height is to be sixty cubits, its width sixty cubits, [b] •with three layers 4
of large stones and one layer of timber. [c] The cost is to be met by the royal treasury. •Furthermore, the gold and silver articles belonging to the Temple of 5
God which Nebuchadnezzar took from the Temple in Jerusalem and brought to Babylon are to be given back and returned to the temple in Jerusalem, each to its proper place, and deposited in the Temple of God." [d]

'Hence, Tattenai governor of Transeuphrates, Shethar-Bozenai and your 6
associates, the officials of Transeuphrates, keep away from there! •Leave the 7
governor of the Jews [e] and the elders of the Jews alone, to get on with their work

on that Temple of God; they are permitted to rebuild that Temple of God on
8 that site. ·And herewith are my instructions as to how you will assist these elders
of the Jews in the rebuilding of that Temple of God: the cost is to be paid in full
to these men from the royal revenue, that is, from the taxes of Transeuphrates,
9 and without interruption. ·And whatever is required—young bulls, rams, lambs
for burnt offerings to the God of heaven, wheat, salt, wine, oil, as the priests in
10 Jerusalem request—is to be given them day by day without fail, ·so that they
may offer sacrifices acceptable to the God of heaven and pray for the life of the 1 Tm 2:2b
11 king and his sons.[f] ·Furthermore I have issued an instruction that if anyone
disobeys this order, a beam is to be torn from his house, he is to be impaled on it
12 and his house is to be reduced to a rubbish-heap for his offence; ·and may the
God who has caused his name to live there overthrow the king of any people
who dares to defy this and destroy that Temple of God in Jerusalem! I, Darius,
have issued this order. Let it be punctiliously obeyed!'

The Temple is completed

13 Tattenai governor of Transeuphrates, Shethar-Bozenai and their associates punc-
14 tiliously obeyed the instructions sent by King Darius; ·and the elders of the Jews
made good progress over their building, thanks to the prophetic activity of the
prophet Haggai and Zechariah son of Iddo, completing the reconstruction in
accordance with the command of the God of Israel and the order of Cyrus and of
15 Darius.[g] ·This Temple was completed on the twenty-third day of the month of
16 Adar, in the sixth year of the reign of King Darius.[h] ·The Israelites—the priests,
the Levites and the remainder of the exiles[i]—joyfully celebrated the dedication of
17 this Temple of God; ·for the dedication of this Temple of God they offered one
hundred bulls, two hundred rams, four hundred lambs and, as a sin offering for all
18 Israel, twelve he-goats, corresponding to the number of the tribes of Israel. ·Then
they installed the priests in their orders and the Levites in their positions for the
ministry of the Temple of God[j] in Jerusalem, as prescribed in the Book of Moses.[k]

The Passover of 515 BC

19, 20 The exiles celebrated the Passover on the fourteenth day of the first month. ·The Ex 12:1a
Levites, as one man, had purified themselves; all were pure, so they sacrificed the
21 Passover for all the exiles, for their brothers the priests and for themselves.[l] ·So
the Israelites who had returned from exile and all those who had renounced the
filthy practices of the people of the country to join them in resorting to Yahweh,
22 God of Israel, ate the Passover.[m] ·For seven days they joyfully celebrated the feast
of Unleavened Bread, for Yahweh had given them cause to rejoice, having moved
the heart of the king of Assyria in their favour to support them in their work on the
Temple of God, the God of Israel.

b. With 1 Esd 6:4 omitting introductory 'We then asked them'.

c. The elders deliberately improve on the truth, *see* 4:1–5, 23–24, to prevent the authorisation of 538 from lapsing.

6 **a.** Babylon seems to be used here to mean the Persian empire at large, compare 'Cyrus king of Babylon', 5:13. Depending on the time of year, the king resided at Babylon itself, at Susa, or at Ecbatana where the edict was rediscovered, v. 2.

b. Text defective: the length is missing and the other measurements are improbable.

c. *see* 5:8: same method of building as for Solomon's constructions, 1 K 7:9–12.

d. Following versions Aram. om.

e. 'the Jews' Aram.; 'of Judah' 1 Esd 6:27.

f. Prayer for a non-Yahwist sovereign is recommended, *see* 1 M 7:33; Jr 29:7; Ba 1:10–11; *see also* Rm 13:1–7; 1 P 2:13–17.

g. Aram. adds 'and of Artaxerxes king of Persia', referring forward to ch. 7.

h. 'the twenty-third day' 1 Esd 7:5; 'the third day' Aram. It was 1 April 515. This Temple, remodelled by Herod the Great, *see* Jn 2:20h, was in use for 585 years; it was destroyed by Titus in AD 70.

i. The Remnant spared by God and now back from exile, *see* 1:4e.

j. 'of the Temple of God' Syr., Gk-Luc.; 'of God' Aram. and Gk.

k. The Aramaic document ends here. vv. 19–22 are from the Chronicler's pen.

l. At the beginning of the v. Hebr. adds 'The priests and', but *see* end of v. • The Chronicler characteristically represents the Levites as slaughtering the paschal victims, *see* 2 Ch. 35:6, 11. But this was not laid down in the ritual prescriptions of Ex 12:6; Dt 16:2, and in NT times the faithful themselves slaughtered their victims.

m. 'the Passover' Gk; Hebr. omits.

II: THE ORGANISATION OF THE COMMUNITY BY EZRA AND NEHEMIAH

The mission and personality of Ezra [a]

7 After these events, in the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, Ezra son of 1
Seraiah, son of Azariah, son of Hilkiah, ·son of Shallum, son of Zadok, son 2
of Ahitub, ·son of Amariah, son of Azariah, son of Meraioth, ·son of Zerahiah, 3, 4
son of Uzzi, son of Bukki, ·son of Abishua, son of Phinehas, son of Eleazar, son of 5
the chief priest Aaron [b]—·this Ezra came up from Babylon. He was a scribe [c] 6
versed in the Law of Moses, which Yahweh, God of Israel, had given. The king
7:28;8:18 Ne 2:8,18 gave him everything that he asked for, since the hand of Yahweh his God was over
him. ·A number of Israelites, priests, Levites, singers, gatekeepers and temple 7
slaves went up to Jerusalem in the seventh year of the reign of King Artaxerxes.
Ezra arrived in Jerusalem in the fifth month, in the seventh year of the king's reign; 8
for he had ordered the departure from Babylon on the first day of the first month, 9
and he arrived in Jerusalem on the first day of the fifth month, since the kindly
hand of his God was over him. ·For Ezra had devoted himself to studying the Law 10
of Yahweh so as to put into practice and teach its statutes and rulings.

The order of Artaxerxes [d]

This is the text of the document which King Artaxerxes gave to Ezra, the priest- 11
scribe, a student of matters pertaining to Yahweh's commandments and statutes
relating to Israel:

·"Artaxerxes, king of kings, to the priest Ezra, Secretary of the Law of the 12
1:2c God of heaven: greetings![e]

'Now here are my orders. All members of the people of Israel in my kingdom, 13
including their priests and Levites, who freely choose to go to Jerusalem, may go
with you, ·for you are being sent by the king and his seven counsellors to 14
investigate how the Law of your God, in which you are expert, is being applied
in Judah and Jerusalem, ·and to transport the silver and gold which the king 15
and his counsellors have voluntarily offered to the God of Israel who resides in
Jerusalem, ·as well as all the silver and gold which you receive throughout the 16
province of Babylon and the voluntary offerings freely contributed by the people
and the priests for the Temple of their God in Jerusalem.

'This money you will punctiliously use for the purchase of bulls, rams, lambs 17
and the materials for the oblations and libations which go with them, offering
these on the altar of the Temple of your God in Jerusalem, ·and using the 18
remainder of the silver and gold in accordance with the will of your God [f] as you
and your brothers may think fit.

'You will deliver the articles which have been given you for the ministry of the 19
Temple of your God, to the God of Jerusalem, ·and whatever else is needed and 20
you are obliged to supply for the Temple of your God, you will supply from the
royal treasury.

'I, King Artaxerxes, have issued the following instruction to all the treasurers 21
of Transeuphrates: Whatever the priest Ezra, Secretary of the Law of the God of
heaven, may request of you is to be punctiliously complied with: ·up to one 22
hundred talents of silver, one hundred *kor* of wheat, one hundred *bat* of wine,
one hundred *bat* of oil, and unlimited salt. ·Whatever the God of heaven 23
demands for the Temple of the God of heaven must be diligently provided; why
should retribution come on the realm of the king and of his sons? ·You are 24
further informed that it is against the law to impose tribute, tax or toll on any of
the priests, Levites, singers, gatekeepers, temple slaves or other servants of this
temple of God.

25 'And you, Ezra, by virtue of the wisdom of your God, which you possess, [h] are
to appoint magistrates and scribes to administer justice for the whole people of
Transeuphrates, that is, for all who know the Law [i] of your God; and you are to
26 teach it to those who do not know it. ·And on anyone who will not comply with
the Law of your God and the Law of the king let sentence be swiftly executed,
whether it be death, banishment, fine or imprisonment.'

Ezra's journey from Babylonia to Palestine

27 Blessed be Yahweh, God of our ancestors, who moved the king's heart in this way
28 to restore the beauty of the Temple of Yahweh in Jerusalem, ·won for me the
faithful love of the king, his counsellors and all the most powerful of the king's
officials! Taking heart since the hand of Yahweh my God was over me, I assembled
those Israelite heads of families who were to go with me.

1 8 These, with their genealogies, were the heads of families who set out from
Babylon with me in the reign of King Artaxerxes: [a]

2 Of the sons of Phinehas: Gershom; of the sons of Ithamar: [b] Daniel; of the sons
3 of David: Hattush ·son of Shechaniah; of the sons of Parosh: Zechariah, and with
4 him a hundred and fifty males officially registered; ·of the sons of Pahath-Moab:
5 Elioenai son of Zerahiah, and with him two hundred males; ·of the sons of Zattu:
6 Shechaniah son of Jahaziel, and with him three hundred males; ·of the sons of
7 Adin: Ebed son of Jonathan, and with him fifty males; ·of the sons of Elam:
8 Jeshaiah son of Athaliah, and with him seventy males; ·of the sons of Shephatiah:
9 Zebadiah son of Michael, and with him eighty males; ·of the sons of Joab: Obadiah
10 son of Jehiel, and with him two hundred and eighteen males; ·of the sons of Bani:
11 Shelomith son of Josiphiah, and with him a hundred and sixty males; ·of the sons
12 of Bebai: Zechariah son of Bebai, and with him twenty-eight males; ·of the sons of
13 Azgad: Johanan son of Hakkatan, and with him a hundred and ten males; ·of the
sons of Adonikam: the younger sons, whose names are: Eliphelet, Jeiel and
14 Shemaiah, and with them sixty males; ·and of the sons of Bigvai: Uthai son of
Zabud, and with him seventy males.

15 I assembled them near the canal which runs to Ahava, [c] where we camped for
three days. I noticed laymen and priests, but I could not discover any Levites there.
16 I then sent for Eliezer, Ariel, Shemaiah, Elnathan, Jarib, Elnathan, Nathan,
17 Zechariah and Meshullam, judicious men, [d] ·and sent them to Iddo, the leading

7 **a.** vv. 1–11 are by the Chronicler; he uses Ezra's report, *see* Introduction.

b. Ezra's genealogy reflects the exiles' anxiety to see a duly accredited priesthood, 2:62; 8:2. But it has probably been constructed by the Chronicler on the basis of 1 Ch 5:28seq.

c. Skill in the art of writing made scribes indispensable officials in an oriental court. Hence the title 'scribe' (vv. 12 and 21) indicates that Ezra was a kind of minister for Jewish affairs at the Persian court. But the Chronicler, thinking of Ezra's activity in Jerusalem, Ne 8:8f, gives the official title a religious meaning; the scribe is the man who reads, translates, expounds the Law to God's people. Ezra is the father of these scribes who did much good work in the post-exilic period, which was continued by the scribes (*grammateis*) of the time of Christ.

d. Note three points about the order: **1** The permission for Jews living in Babylon to settle in Judah, v. 13. **2** The elevation of the Mosaic Law to the status of law of the state, vv. 25–26; not only the Palestinian community, v. 14, but also the Jewish communities west of the Euphrates, v. 25, are to be governed on the basis of this Law, which is to be obligatory for all, v. 26. **3** The financial arrangements, vv. 15–20. On the religious policy of the Persian kings, *see* 1:2c.

e. vv. 12–26 are in Aramaic.

f. 'greetings!' 1 Esd 8:9 and Syr.; 'done' Aram. If, however, the Aramaic reading is good, it presumably means 'irrevocable' or something of the sort.

g. i.e. the Law, as in v. 25.

h. In concrete terms, the Law, *see* v. 18.

i. Knowing the Law implies obeying it.

8 **a.** This list, interrupting Ezra's report from 7:28 to 8:15, consists of two priests descended from Phinehas and Ithamar, a descendant of the royal line of David and twelve families, the heads of which (with one exception) occur in ch. 2= Ne 7. It is the work either of the Chronicler or of an editor. The text is defective at various points and has been emended on the basis of 1 Esd 8 and the versions.

b. The descendant of Phinehas belongs to the Zadokite line, which is the only one to be represented in the list of ch. 2 = Ne 7. The descendant of Ithamar belongs to the line of Abiathar, which had been excluded from the Temple, 1 K 2:27. His presence in this list indicates the reconciliation of the two rival families which, in the Second Temple, were to share the priesthood of 'the sons of Aaron', the Zadokites, however, maintaining their preponderance with sixteen orders, as against the Ithamarites with their eight orders, 1 Ch 24:4.

c. Site unknown, *see* v. 21 where the canal takes its name from the place. (This waterway was an irrigation canal, not a natural river.)

d. 'judicious men' Gk and 1 Esd 8:43; 'heads, and Joharib and Elnathan, judicious ones' Hebr.

man of a place called Casiphia; I told them what they were to say to Iddo and his kinsmen,[e] living at the place called Casiphia, that is, to provide us with people to serve the Temple of our God. ·And because the hand of God was good to us, they 18
sent us a wise man of the sons of Mahli son of Levi, son of Israel, a certain Sherebiah with his sons and kinsmen: eighteen men; ·also Hashabiah and with him 19
his brother Jeshaiah[f] of the sons of Merari with his kinsmen and sons: twenty men;
2:43d and two hundred and twenty temple slaves—descendants of the temple slaves 20
whom David and the princes had assigned to serve the Levites—all of them designated by name.

There, beside the Ahava Canal, I then proclaimed a fast, to humble ourselves 21
before our God and to pray to him for a successful journey for us, our dependants and all our belongings. ·For I should have been ashamed to ask the king for a 22
Ne 2:9 company of cavalry to protect us from hostile people on our road, as we had already said to the king, 'The hand of our God is over all who seek him for their protection, but his mighty retribution befalls all those who forsake him.' ·So we 23
fasted and pleaded with our God about this, and he heard us.

I next chose twelve of the leading priests, and also Sherebiah and Hashabiah 24
with ten of their kinsmen. ·To them I weighed out the silver, the gold and the 25
utensils, the contributions which the king, his counsellors, his notables and all the Israelites there present had made for the Temple of our God. ·To them I weighed 26
out and handed over six hundred and fifty talents of silver, one hundred utensils of silver valued at two talents,[g] one hundred talents of gold, ·twenty golden bowls 27
valued at a thousand darics and two utensils of fine burnished copper as precious as gold. ·I said to them, 'You are consecrated to Yahweh; these utensils are conse- 28
crated too; the silver and gold are a voluntary offering to Yahweh, God of your ancestors. ·Guard them carefully until you weigh them out to the leading priests, 29
the Levites, and the heads of families of Israel in Jerusalem in the rooms of the Temple of Yahweh.' ·The priests and Levites then took charge of the silver, the 30
gold and the utensils thus weighed, to bring them to Jerusalem to the Temple of our God.

On the twelfth day of the first month we left the Ahava Canal to make our way 31
to Jerusalem; the hand of our God was over us and protected us from enemies and surprise attacks on our way. ·When we arrived in Jerusalem, we rested for three 32
days. ·On the fourth day the silver, the gold and the utensils were weighed in the 33
Temple of our God and handed over to the priest Meremoth son of Uriah and, with him, Eleazar son of Phinehas; with them were the Levites Jozabad son of Jeshua and Noadiah son of Binnui. ·By number and weight all was there. The total 34
weight was recorded at the same time.

When the exiles arrived from their captivity, they offered burnt offerings to the 35
God of Israel—twelve bulls on behalf of all Israel, ninety-six rams, seventy-two[h] lambs, and as a sin offering twelve he-goats: the whole of this as a burnt offering to Yahweh.

They also delivered the king's instructions to the king's satraps and the governors 36
of Transeuphrates, who then supported the people and the Temple of God.

Ml 2:10–22 **The marriages with foreigners dissolved**[a]

9 Once this was done, the officials approached me to say, 'The people of Israel, 1
the priests and the Levites, have not renounced the disgusting practices of the
Dt 7:1a people of the country—the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Moabites, the Egyptians and the Amorites—·since they and their sons have 2
Ne 9:2 married some of their women, as a result of which the holy race has been contaminated by the people of the country. The officials and leaders have been the worst offenders in this act of infidelity.' ·On hearing this, I tore my clothes and my cloak; 3
Is 66:2,5 I pulled hair from my head and beard and sat down in horror. ·All who trembled at 4
the words of the God of Israel gathered round me, when faced with the infidelity of the exiles,[b] while I went on sitting there in horror until the evening sacrifice. ·At 5

the evening sacrifice I came out of my stupor and, falling on my knees in my torn
6 clothes and cloak, stretched out my hands to Yahweh my God, ·and said: [c]
'My God, I am ashamed, I blush to lift my face to you, my God. For our iniquities have increased, until they are higher than our heads, and our guilt has
7 risen as high as heaven. ·From the days of our ancestors until now we have been deeply guilty and, because of our iniquities, we, our kings and our priests, have been handed over to the kings of other countries, to the sword, to captivity, to
8 pillage, to shame, as is the case today. ·And now, for a brief moment, the favour of Yahweh our God has allowed a remnant of us to escape and given us a stable home Is 4:3c
in his holy place, so that our God can raise our spirits and revive us a little in our
9 slavery. ·For we are slaves; but God has not forgotten us in our slavery; he has extended his faithful love to us even under the kings of Persia and revived us to rebuild the Temple of our God, restore its ruins and provide us with a refuge in
10 Judah and in Jerusalem. ·But now, our God, what can we say after this? For we
11 have abandoned your commandments, ·which you gave through your servants the prophets in these terms, "The country which you are about to possess is a polluted country, polluted by the people of the country and their disgusting practices, which Lv 18:24seq. Ezk 36:17
12 have filled it with their filth from end to end. [d] ·Hence you are not to give your Dt 7:3
daughters in marriage to their sons, or let their daughters marry your sons, or ever concern yourselves about peace or good relations with them, if you want to grow stronger, to live off the fat of the land and bequeath it to your sons for ever."
13 'After all that has befallen us because of our evil deeds and our deep guilt—
though you, our God, have punished us less than our iniquities deserved and have Ps 103:10
14 allowed us to escape like this—·are we to break your commandments again and intermarry with people with these disgusting practices? Would you not be enraged with us to the point of destroying us, leaving neither remnant nor survivor?
15 Yahweh, God of Israel, you are upright. [e] We survive only as the remnant we are
today. We come before you in our guilt; because of it we cannot stand in your Ps 130:3
presence.'

1 **10** While Ezra, weeping and prostrating himself in front of the Temple of God, was praying and making confession, a very large crowd of men, women and
2 children of Israel gathered round him, the people weeping bitterly. ·Then Shechaniah son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam, spoke up and said to Ezra, 'We have been unfaithful to our God by marrying foreign women from the people of the
3 country. But, in spite of this, there is still some hope for Israel. ·We will make a covenant with our God to send away all the foreign wives and their children in obedience to the advice of my lord [a] and of those who tremble at the commandment
4 of our God. Let us act in accordance with the Law. ·Go ahead, do your duty; we
5 support you. Be brave, take action!' ·Then Ezra stood up and put the leading priests and Levites and all Israel on oath to do what had been said. They took the
6 oath. ·Ezra then left his place in front of the Temple of God and went to the room of Jehohanan son of Eliashib, where he spent the night [b] without eating food or drinking water, because he was still mourning over the exiles' infidelity.
7 A proclamation was issued throughout Judah and Jerusalem that all the exiles

e. 'kinsmen', lit. 'brothers' 1 Esd 8:45 and versions; 'brother' Hebr. • Casiphia: unknown place. The text does not imply that there was a cult-centre at Casiphia; if there was a concentration of Levites there, it was because the exiles had been resettled according to their family groups and original communities.

f. 'his brother' 1 Esd 8:47; Hebr. omits.

g. 'two talents' *lekikkarayim* conj.; Hebr. *lekikkarim* 'talents'.

h. 'seventy-two' 1 Esd 8:63; 'seventy-seven' Hebr.

9 **a.** In ancient Israel such marriages were not forbidden. Gn 41:45; 48:5seq.; Nb 12:1seq.; Rt 1:4; 2 S 3:3, though later forbidden by Dt in order to combat idolatry, which gentile women tended to bring with them into the home, Dt 7:1–4, *see* Dt 23:4seq. The danger increased after the Exile probably because the majority of the returning exiles were men. The reason for the divorce is still religious, 9:1, 11, but a second reason now emerges: concern for racial purity, 9:2.

b. The Jewish community in general is called after its most distinguished part, the Golah (exiles), 4:1; 6:16; 10:6, 8, 16, identifying itself with the Remnant, *see* Is 4:3c.

c. Ezra's prayer, which is also a sermon, is inspired by Dt and the prophets, vv. 11seq.

d. Polluted it, in a word, by their idolatry.

e. God's justice is tempered with mercy, or else no one would survive. This is God's saving justice, *see* Is 56:1; Rm 1:17.

10 **a.** 'foreign' 1 MS and 1 Esd 8:90; Hebr. omits. • 'my lord' conj.; 'the Lord' Hebr.

b. 'spent the night' 1 Esd 9:2; 'went' Hebr.

were to assemble in Jerusalem, ·and that anyone who failed within three days to 8
answer the summons of the officials and elders was to forfeit all his possessions[c]
and himself be excluded from the community of the exiles. ·As a result, all the men 9
of Judah and Benjamin assembled in Jerusalem within the three days; it was the
twentieth day of the ninth month. All the people sat down in the square in front of
the Temple of God, trembling because of the matter in hand and because of the
heavy rain. ·The priest Ezra then stood up and said to them, 'You have been 10
unfaithful and have married foreign wives, thus adding to Israel's guilt. ·So now 11
give thanks to Yahweh, God of your ancestors, and do his will by holding aloof
from the people of the country and from foreign wives.' ·In ringing tones, the 12
whole assembly answered, 'Yes, our duty is to do as you say. ·But there are many 13
people here and it is the rainy season; we cannot stay out in the open; besides, this
is not something that can be dealt with in one or two days, since many of us have
been unfaithful over this. ·Let our officials deputise for the whole community,[d] 14
and all the people in our towns who have married foreign wives can come at stated
times, accompanied by elders and judges from each town, until our God's fierce
anger over this is turned away from us.' ·Only Jonathan son of Asahel and Jahzeiah 15
son of Tikvah, supported by Meshullam and Shabbethai the Levite, were opposed
to this.[e] ·The exiles did as had been proposed. And the priest Ezra selected[f] the 16
family heads of the various families, all of them by name, who began their sittings
on the first day of the tenth month to look into the matter. ·And by the first day of 17
the first month they had dealt with all the men who had married foreign women.

The list of the guilty[g]

Among the priests who were found to have married foreign wives were: 18
of the sons of Jeshua son of Jozadak and his brothers: Maaseiah, Eliezer, Jarib
and Gedaliah, ·who agreed to send their wives away; their guilt offering[h] was a 19
ram from the flock for their guilt;
of the sons of Immer: Hanani and Zebadiah; 20
of the sons of Harim: Maaseiah, Elijah, Shemaiah, Jehiel and Uzziah; 21
of the sons of Pashhur: Elioenai, Maaseiah, Ishmael, Nethanel, Jozabad and 22
Elasah;
Ne 8:7;10:11 of the Levites: Jozabad, Shimei, Kelaiah—that is, Kelita—Pethahiah, Judah, 23
and Eliezer;
of the singers: Eliashib and Zaccur;[i] 24
of the gatekeepers: Shallum, Telem and Uri;
and of the Israelites: 25
of the sons of Parosh: Ramiah, Izziah, Malchijah, Mijamin, Eleazar, Malchijah
and Benaiah;
of the sons of Elam: Mattaniah, Zechariah, Jehiel, Abdi, Jeremoth and Elijah; 26
of the sons of Zattu: Elioenai, Eliashib, Mattaniah, Jeremoth, Zabad and Aziza; 27
of the sons of Bebai: Jehohanan, Hananiah, Zabbai, Atlai; 28
of the sons of Bigvai: Meshullam, Malluch, Jedaiah, Jashub, Sheal, Jeremoth; 29
of the sons of Pahath-Moab: Adna, Chelal, Benaiah, Maaseiah, Mattaniah, 30
Bezalel, Binnui and Manasseh;
of the sons of Harim: Eliezer, Isshijah, Malchijah, Shemaiah, Shimeon, 31
Benjamin, Malluch, Shemariah; 32
of the sons of Hashum: Mattenai, Mattattah, Zabad, Eliphelet, Jeremai, Man- 33
asseh, Shimei;
of the sons of Bani: Maadai, Amram, Uel, ·Benaiah, Bediah, Jeluhi, ·Vaniah, 34-36
Meremoth, Eliashib, ·Mattaniah, Mattenai and Jaasau; 37
of the sons of Binnui: Shimei, ·Shelemiah, Nathan and Adaiah; 38, 39
of the sons of Zaccai: Shashai, Sharai, ·Azarel, Shelemiah, Shemariah, 40, 41
Shallum, Amariah, Joseph; 42
of the sons of Nebo: Jeiel, Mattithiah, Zabad, Zebina, Jaddai, Joel, Benaiah. 43
All these had married foreign wives but sent them away with their children.[j] 44

c. Earlier, *see* Lv 27:28e; Jos 6:17c.

d. Committee of enquiry consisting of the leading men.

e. The objection seems to have come from enthusiasts who thought the procedure too slow.

f. 'selected' 1 Esd 9:16; 'were chosen' Hebr.

g. Ezra's account of the dismissal of the foreign wives (9:1–10:17) concluded with vv. 19 and 44^{b}. The Chronicler has inserted a list of the culprits, vv. 18, 20–44^{a}, which he may have taken from the Temple archives but which he certainly modified on the basis of Ezr 2–Ne 7 and of Ezr 8. • The four priestly families are the same as those in 2:36–39 and seven of the lay families occur in 2:3–35 and 8:3–14. Some names have been emended on the basis of 1 Esd and the versions.

h. 'guilt offering' Gk and 1 Esd 9:20; 'guilty ones' Hebr.

i. 'and Zaccur' 1 Esd 9:24; Hebr. omits.

j. 'but sent them away with their children' 1 Esd 9:36; Hebr. makes no sense.

THE BOOK OF
NEHEMIAH

Nehemiah's call: his mission to Judah

1 The words of Nehemiah son of Hacaliah. [a]
It happened in the month of Chislev, in the twentieth year, [b] while I was in the
citadel of Susa, ·that Hanani, one of my brothers, arrived with some men from
Judah. I asked them about the Jews—those who had escaped and those who
survived from the captivity [c]—and about Jerusalem. ·They replied, 'The survivors
remaining there in the province since the captivity are in a very bad and demoral-
ised condition: the walls of Jerusalem are in ruins and its gates have been burnt
down.' [d] ·On hearing this I sat down and wept; for some days I mourned, fasting
and praying before the God of heaven.
Dt 7:9,12 I said, [e] 'Yahweh, God of heaven—the great and awe-inspiring God who keeps
a covenant of faithful love with those who love him and obey his commandments—
2 Ch 6:40 let your ear be attentive and your eyes open, to listen to your servant's prayer,
which I now offer to you day and night on behalf of your servants the Israelites. I
admit the sins of the Israelites, which we have committed against you. Both I and
my father's House have sinned; ·we have acted very wickedly towards you by not
keeping the commandments, laws and rulings which you enjoined on your servant
Dt 30:1–4 Moses. ·Remember, I beg you, the promise which you solemnly made to your
servant Moses, "If you are unfaithful, I shall scatter you among the peoples; ·but if
you come back to me and keep my commandments and practise them, even though
‖Dt 30:4 those who have been banished are at the very sky's end, I shall gather them from
there and bring them back to the place which I have chosen as a dwelling-place for
Dt 9:29 my name." ·Since they are your servants, your people, whom you have redeemed
with your mighty power and strong hand, ·O Lord, let your ear now be attentive to
your servant's prayer and to the prayer of your servants who want to revere your
name. I beg you let your servant be successful today and win this man's
compassion.'
At the time I was cupbearer to the king.
2 In the month of Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, [a] since I was in
charge of the wine, I took the wine and offered it to the king. Now, he had
never seen me looking depressed before. [b] ·So the king said to me, 'Why are you
looking depressed? You are not sick! This must be a sadness of the heart.'
Thoroughly alarmed by this, ·I said to the king, 'May the king live for ever! How
can I not look depressed when the city where the tombs of my ancestors are lies in
ruins and its gates have been burnt down?' ·The king then said to me, 'What would
you like me to do?' Praying to the God of heaven, ·I said to the king, 'If the king
approves and your servant enjoys your favour, send me to Judah, to the city of the
tombs of my ancestors, so that I can rebuild it.' ·The king—with the queen sitting
beside him—said, 'How long will your journey take, and when will you come
back?' Once I had given him a definite time, the king approved my mission.
I then said to the king, 'If the king approves, may I be given orders for the

8 governors of Transeuphrates to let me pass through on my way to Judah? •Also an
order for Asaph, keeper of the king's forest, to supply me with timber for the
beams of the gates of the citadel of the Temple, for the city walls and for the house
which I am to occupy?' These the king granted me because the kindly hand of my
God was over me.
9 When I reached the governors of Transeuphrates, I gave them the king's orders.
The king had sent an escort of army officers and cavalry along with me. Ezr 8:22
10 When Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the official of Ammon [c] heard about
this, they were exceedingly displeased that someone had come to promote the
welfare of the Israelites.

The decision to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem

11, 12 And so I reached Jerusalem. After I had been there three days, •I got up during
the night with a few other men—I had not told anyone what my God had inspired
me to do for Jerusalem—taking no animal with me other than my own mount.
13 Under cover of dark I went out through the Valley Gate towards the Dragon's
Fountain as far as the Dung Gate, and examined the wall of Jerusalem where it
14 was broken down [d] and its gates burnt out. •I then crossed to the Fountain Gate
15 and the King's Pool, but it was impassable to my mount. •So I went up the Valley [e]
in the dark, examining the wall; I then went in again through the Valley Gate,
16 coming back •without the officials knowing where I had gone or what I had been
doing. So far I had said nothing to the Jews: neither to the priests, the nobles, the
officials nor any other persons involved in the undertaking.
17 I then said to them, 'You see what a sorry state we are in: Jerusalem is in ruins
and its gates have been burnt down. Come on, we must rebuild the walls of
18 Jerusalem and put an end to our humiliating position!' •And I told them how the
kindly hand of my God had been over me, and the words which the king had said
to me. At this they said, 'Let us start building at once!' and they set their hands to
the good work.
19 When Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the official of Ammon, and Geshem [f] the
Arab heard about this, they laughed at us and jeered. They said, 'What is this you
20 are doing? Are you going to revolt against the king?' •But I gave them this answer,
'The God of heaven will grant us success and we, his servants, mean to start
building; as for you, you have neither share nor right nor memorial in Jerusalem.'

How the walls were rebuilt [a]

1 3 Eliashib the high priest with his brother priests then set to work and rebuilt the Is 58:12e
Sheep Gate; they made the framework, [b] hung its doors, fixed its bolts and bars
and proceeded as far as the Tower of the Hundred and the Tower of Hananel. Jr 31:38
2, 3 The men of Jericho built next to him; Zaccur son of Imri built next to them. •The

1 **a.** The *Memoirs of Nehemiah* begin here, *see* pp. 508–9.

b. Of King Artaxerxes I (464–423 BC), *see* 2:1, i.e. December 446.

c. Those faithful people back from exile now centred round Jerusalem; *see* Ezr 1:4e; 6:16; Is 4:3c.

d. The ambition to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem was born during the Exile, Is 54:11–12, and subsequently grew, Is 60:10–17; Zc 2:5seq. The first step was taken probably in the reign of Xerxes, Ezr 4:6, and we have clear evidence for the reign of Artaxerxes, Ezr 4:12–13,16. It was seen as a claim to independence and a threat to the more recently acquired rights of Samaria; hence the antagonism of the Samaritans who extorted permission from the Persian authorities to bring the work to a halt by force, Ezr 4:23. It is to this recent event that Hanani alludes.

e. The prayer of Nehemiah owes much to Dt.

2 **a.** March–April 445; some three months had gone by since Hanani's arrival.

b. 'before' *lephanim* conj.; Hebr. *lephanayw* 'in his presence'.

c. Sanballat is known as governor of Samaria. Tobiah, a Jew, was, under his orders, governor of Ammon.

d. 'wall' MSS, Gk; 'walls' Hebr. • 'where it was broken down' *hameporatzim* conj.; Hebr. *'asher hem perutzim* 'which was broken down'.

e. i.e. up the Kidron Valley, see plan at the back of the book.

f. Geshem (or Gashmu, 6:6), king of the Arab Federation of Kedar, whose territory extended as far as the south of Transjordan and Palestine.

3 **a.** Ch. 3 reproduces a document taken from the Temple archives and incorporated in the *Memoirs of Nehemiah*. It contains invaluable information on the topography of Jerusalem (see plan), *see* 2 S 5:9f; 2 K 14:13b, and on the political geography of the province, which had five chief towns: Jerusalem, Beth-ha-Cherem, Mizpah, Beth-Zur, Keilah (see map at end of book).

b. 'made the framework' conj. in line with vv. 3 and 6; 'consecrated it' Hebr. • 'and as far as the tower' conj.; 'consecrated it as far as the tower' Hebr.

Ezr 2:35 sons of Ha-Senaah rebuilt the Fish Gate; they made the framework, hung its doors
and fixed its bolts and bars. ·Meremoth son of Uriah, son of Hakkoz, carried out 4
repairs next to them; Meshullam son of Berechiah, son of Meshezabel, carried out
repairs next to him; and Zadok son of Baana carried out repairs next to him. ·The 5
men of Tekoa carried out repairs next to him, though their nobles would not
demean themselves to help their masters.[c] ·Joiada son of Paseah and Meshullam 6
son of Besodeiah repaired the gate of the New Quarter;[d] they made the framework, hung its doors and fixed its bolts and bars. ·Next to them repairs were carried 7
out by Melatiah of Gibeon, Jadon of Meronoth, and the men of Gibeon and
Mizpah, for the sake of the governor of Transeuphrates.[e] ·Next to them repairs 8
were carried out by Uzziel son of Harhaiah, a member of the metal-workers'
guild,[f] and next to him repairs were carried out by Hananiah of the perfumers'
guild. These renovated the wall of Jerusalem as far as the Broad Wall.

Next to them repairs were carried out by Rephaiah son of Hur, who was head of 9
one half of the district of Jerusalem. ·Next to them Jedaiah son of Harumaph 10
carried out repairs opposite his own house; next to him repairs were carried out by
Hattush son of Hashabneiah. ·Malchijah son of Harim and Hasshub son of 11
Pahath-Moab repaired another section as far as the Furnace Tower.[g] ·Next to 12
them repairs were carried out by Shallum son of Hallohesh, head of the other half
of the district of Jerusalem, by him and his sons. ·[h]Hanun and the inhabitants of 13
Zanoah repaired the Valley Gate: they rebuilt it, hung its doors and fixed its bolts
and bars; they also repaired a thousand cubits of wall up to the Dung Gate.[i]
Malchijah son of Rechab, head of the district of Beth-ha-Cherem, repaired the 14
Dung Gate; he rebuilt it, hung its doors and fixed its bolts and bars.

Shallum son of Col-Hozeh, head of the district of Mizpah, repaired the Fountain 15
Gate; he rebuilt it, roofed it, hung its doors and fixed its bolts and bars. He also
rebuilt the wall of the Pool of Siloah, adjoining the king's garden, as far as the steps
going down from the City of David.[j] ·After him, Nehemiah son of Azbuk, head of 16
half the district of Beth-Zur, carried out repairs from a point opposite the Davidic
Tombs to the artificial pool[k] and the House of the Champions.[l] ·After him, repairs 17
were carried out by the Levites: Rehum son of Bani; and next to him Hashabiah,
head of one half of the district of Keilah, carried out repairs for his own district.
After him, repairs were carried out by their brothers: Binnui son of Henadad, head 18
of the other half of the district of Keilah. ·Next to him, Ezer son of Jeshua, 19
headman of Mizpah, repaired another section in front of the ascent to the armoury
at the Angle.

After him, Baruch son of Zabbai repaired[m] another section from the Angle to 20
the door of the house of Eliashib the high priest. ·After him, Meremoth son of 21
Uriah, son of Hakkoz, repaired another section from the door of Eliashib's house
as far as the end of Eliashib's house. ·And after him repairs were carried out by the 22
priests who lived in the district. ·After them repairs were carried out by Benjamin 23
and Hasshub, opposite their own house. After them repairs were carried out by
Azariah son of Maaseiah, son of Ananiah, beside his own house. ·After him, 24
Binnui son of Henadad repaired another section from Azariah's house as far as the
Angle at the corner. ·After him, Palal son of Uzai carried out repairs[n] in front of 25
the Angle and the tower projecting from the king's Upper Palace by the Court of
the Guard; and after him, Pedaiah son of Parosh carried out the repairs[o] ·to a point 26
Ezk 40:6 by the Water Gate to the east and the projecting tower. ·After him, the men of 27
Tekoa repaired another section from in front of the great projecting tower as far as
the wall of Ophel.

From the Horse Gate onwards repairs were carried out by the priests, each in 28
front of his own house. ·After them repairs were carried out by Zadok son of 29
Immer in front of his house, and after him repairs were carried out by Shemaiah
son of Shechaniah, keeper of the East Gate. ·After him[p] Hananiah son of Shele- 30
miah and Hanun sixth son of Zalaph repaired another section, after whom repairs
were carried out by Meshullam son of Berechiah in front of his room. ·After him 31

Malchijah, of the metal-workers' guild, repaired as far as the Hall of the temple slaves and merchants, in front of the Muster Gate, as far as the upper room at the
31 32 corner. ·And between the upper room at the corner and the Sheep Gate repairs were carried out by the goldsmiths and the merchants.

The effect on the Jews' opponents

4:1 33 When Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became furiously angry.
2 34 He ridiculed the Jews and in front of his kinsmen and the aristocracy of Samaria he exclaimed, 'What are these pathetic Jews doing . . . ? Are they going to give up? Or offer sacrifices? [q] Or complete the work in a day? Can they put new life into
3 35 stones taken from rubbish heaps and even charred?' ·And beside him Tobiah of Ammon remarked, 'If a jackal were to jump on what they are building, it would
4 36 knock their stone wall down!' ·Listen, our God, for we are despised! Make their sneers fall back on their own heads! Send them as booty to a land of captivity!
5 37 Do not pardon their wickedness, may their sin never be erased before you, for they Is 58:12e Jr 18:23 have insulted the builders to their face!
6 38 Meanwhile we were rebuilding the wall, which was soon joined up all the way round to mid-height; the people put their hearts into the work.

7 1 **4** When Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites and the Ashdodites heard that repairs to the walls of Jerusalem were going forward—that the gaps were
8 2 beginning to fill up—they became very angry, ·and they all plotted to come and attack Jerusalem and upset my plans. [a]
9 3 We, however, prayed to our God and organised a guard day and night to protect
10 4 the city from them. [b] ·But in Judah the saying went, 'The strength of the carrier falters, the rubbish heap is so vast that by ourselves we cannot rebuild the wall!'
11 5 And our opponents said, 'They will never know or see a thing, until we are in there among them, and then we shall massacre them and put a stop to the work.'
12 6 Now when the Jews who lived near them had warned us ten times over, 'They
13 7 are coming up against us from every place they live in,' [c] ·men took up position [d] in the space behind the wall at those points where it was lowest, and I organised the
14 8 people by families with their swords, spears and bows. ·Aware of their anxiety, [e] I then addressed the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, 'Do not be afraid of them. Remember the great and awe-inspiring Lord and fight for your kinsmen,
15 9 your sons, your daughters, your wives and your homes.' ·Once our enemies heard that we were forewarned and that God had thwarted their plan, they withdrew [f] and we all went back to the wall, each one to his work.
16 10 From then on, half my own retainers went on working, while the other half stood by, armed with spears, shields, bows and armour to protect [g] the whole House of

c. Nehemiah and his colleagues.

d. 'of the New Quarter' Syr.; 'Old (Gate)' Hebr. The New Quarter was the most recent addition to the town on the north, *see* Zp 1:10–11. In Ne 12:39 this gate is called 'the Gate of Ephraim'.

e. meaning uncertain.

f. 'member of the metal-workers' guild' conj., following Syr.; 'Sons of Harhaiah, metal-workers' Hebr.

g. Or the Angle-Tower, 2 Ch 26:9. • 'as far as the tower' Gk; 'and with the tower', Hebr.

h. 'sons' conj.; 'daughters' Hebr.

i. 'Dung Gate' *qere* and Gk; 'Cheese Gate' *ketib*. Later known as the Gate of the Essenes.

j. The City of David, the primitive site of Jerusalem, was on the hill of Ophel, to the south of Solomon's temple-palace complex, *see* 2 S 5:9f. The steps in question have been discovered, cut in the rock.

k. An old reservoir which once drew off the waters of Gihon at their source. King Hezekiah had it filled in when he excavated the tunnel conveying this water to the Pool of Siloam, *see* 2 K 20:20k.

l. Once the barracks of the king's bodyguard, 2 S 16:6; 23:8.

m. After 'repaired', Hebr. adds 'inflamed', dittography omitted by Gk.

n. 'After him carried out repairs' supplied (Hebr. gives only the proper name); similarly 'carried out repairs' at the end of the verse.

o. At beginning of v., Hebr. reads 'now the temple slaves lived on Ophel', gloss from 11:21 and possibly intended for v. 27.

p. 'him' *qere*, versions; 'me' Hebr.; similarly in v. 31.

q. These last words are uncertain.

4 **a.** At this point the governors of Samaria, Ammon and Arabia gain a new recruit in the provincial governor of Philistia (capital: Ashdod). Their combined territories completely encircled the infant province of Judah on the north, east, south and west respectively; hence the lowering of morale in Jerusalem, the lugubrious work-song, v. 4, and the general apprehension, v. 8.

b. lit. 'for it' *'aleah* conj.; Hebr. *'alehem* 'against them'.

c. 'They are coming up', GK, omitted by Hebr. • 'they live in' *yeshebu* conj.; Hebr. *tashubu* 'you will come'.

d. 'Men took up position' Gk; 'I posted men' Hebr.

e. 'anxiety' supplied, *see* end of v.; Hebr. omits.

f. 'they withdrew' added.

g. Before 'to protect' Hebr. adds 'with their officers'.

Judah as they rebuilt the wall. •The carriers were armed,[h] working with one hand 11 17
and holding a spear in the other. •Each builder had his sword strapped to his side 12 18
as he built. Beside me stood a trumpeter. •I then said to the nobles, the officials 13 19
and the rest of the people, 'The work is great and widely spread out, and we are
deployed along the wall some way from one another. •Rally to us wherever you 14 20
hear the trumpet sounding; our God will fight for us.' •And so we went on with the 15 21
work[i] from break of day until the stars came out. •At the same time I also told the 16 22
people, 'Let every man, with his attendant, spend the night inside Jerusalem; we
shall spend the night on guard and the day at work.'[j] •Neither I, nor my brothers, 17 23
nor my attendants, nor my bodyguards, ever took off our clothes; each one kept
his spear in his right hand.[k]

The social problems of Nehemiah. He vindicates his administration

Jr 34:8–22 5 There was a great outcry from the people, and from their wives, against their 1
brother Jews. •Some said, 'We are having to pledge[a] our sons and daughters 2
to get enough grain to eat and keep us alive.' •Others said, 'We are having to 3
mortgage our fields, our vineyards and our houses to get grain because of the
shortage.' •Still others said, 'We have had to borrow money on our fields and our 4
vineyards to pay the royal tax; •and though we belong to the same race as our 5
Ex 21:7 Lv 25:39 brothers, and our children are as good as theirs, we shall have to sell our sons and
our daughters into slavery; some of our daughters have been sold into slavery
already. We can do nothing about it, since our fields and our vineyards now belong
to others.'[b]

When I heard their complaints and these words I was very angry. •Having turned 6, 7
the matter over in my mind, I reprimanded the nobles and the officials as follows,
'Each of you is imposing a burden[c] on his brother.' Summoning a great assembly
to deal with them, •I said to them, 'To the best of our power, we have redeemed 8
our brother Jews who were forced to sell themselves to foreigners, and now you in
turn are selling your brothers, for them to be bought back by us!'[d] They were silent
and could find nothing to say. •'What you are doing', I went on, 'is wrong. Do you 9
not want to walk in the fear of our God and escape the sneers of the nations, our
enemies? •I too, with my brothers and retainers, have lent them money and grain. 10
Let us cancel these pledges. •This very day return them their fields, their vineyards, 11
their olive groves and their houses, and cancel the claim[e] on the money, grain, new
wine and olive oil, which you have lent them.' •'We shall make restitution,' they 12
replied, 'we shall claim nothing more from them; we shall do as you say.' Sum-
moning the priests, I then made them swear to do as they had promised. •Then, 13
Jr 18:1a shaking out the fold of my garment, I said, 'May God thus shake out of house and
possessions anyone who does not make good this promise; may he be shaken out
thus and left empty!' And the whole assembly answered, 'Amen' and praised
Yahweh. And the people kept this promise.

What is more,[f] from the time when the king[g] appointed me to be their governor 14
in Judah, from the twentieth to the thirty-second year of King Artaxerxes, for
twelve years, neither I nor my brothers ever levied[h] the governor's subsistence
allowance, •whereas the former governors, my predecessors,[i] had been a burden 15
on the people, from whom they took forty silver shekels a day[j] for food and wine,
while their attendants oppressed the people too. But I, fearing God, never did this.
Also, not acquiring any land, I concentrated on the work of this wall and all my 16
attendants joined in the work together, too.

Furthermore, magistrates[k] and officials to the number of a hundred and fifty ate 17
at my table, not to mention those who came to us from the surrounding nations.
Every day, one ox, six fine sheep, as well as poultry, were prepared for me; every 18
ten days, skins of wine[l] were brought in bulk. But even so, I never claimed the
governor's subsistence allowance, since the people already had burden enough to
bear.

To my credit, my God, remember all I have done for this people. 19

The intrigues of Nehemiah's enemies. The wall is finished [a]

1 6 When Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem the Arab and our other enemies heard that
I had rebuilt the wall and that not a single gap was left—though at that time I
2 had not fixed the doors to the gates—•Sanballat and Geshem sent me this message,
'Come and meet us at Ha-Chephirim in the Vale of Ono.' But they had evil designs
3 on me. •So I sent messengers to them to say, 'I am engaged in a great undertaking,
so I cannot come down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and come down
4 to you?' •Four times they sent me the same invitation and I made them the same
5 reply. •The fifth time, with the same purpose in mind, Sanballat sent me his servant
6 bearing an open letter. •It ran, 'There is a rumour among the nations—and
Gashmu [b] confirms it—that you and the Jews are thinking of rebelling, which is why
7 you are rebuilding the wall, and you intend to become their king; [c] •and that you
have even briefed prophets [d] to acclaim you in Jerusalem with the cry, "There is a
king in Judah!" Now, these rumours are going to reach the king; so you had better
8 come and discuss them with us.' •To this I sent him the following reply, 'As regards
what you say, nothing of the sort has occurred; it is a figment of your own
9 imagination.' •For they were all trying to terrorise us, thinking, 'They will become
demoralised over the work and it will not get finished.' But my morale rose even
higher. [e]

10 Then, when I went to visit Shemaiah son of Delaiah, son of Mehetabel, since he
was prevented from coming to me, [f] he said:

We must gather at the Temple of God,
inside the sanctuary itself;
we must shut the sanctuary doors,
for they are coming to kill you,
they are coming to kill you tonight!

11 But I retorted, 'Should a man like me run away? Would a man like me go into
12 the Temple to save his life? [g] I shall not go in!' •I realised that God had not sent him
to say this, but that he had produced this prophecy for me because Tobiah [h] was
13 paying him •to terrorise [i] me into doing as he said and committing a sin, so that they
would have grounds for blackening my reputation and blaming me.

14 Remember Tobiah, my God, for what he did; and Noadiah the prophetess, and
the other prophets who tried to terrorise me.

Jr 23:9–40
Zc 13:2seq.

h. 'were armed' Gk; 'did their loading' Hebr.

i. Hebr. adds 'half of them armed with spears', possibly a gloss from v. 10.

j. As well as ensuring their safety and protecting the city, it prevented those who would normally have gone home to their villages from deserting. It also cut off one of Sanballat's sources of intelligence.

k. 'in his right' *bimino* conj.; Hebr. *hammayim* 'the water'.

5 **a.** 'We . . . pledge' *'orpebim* conj.; Hebr. *rabbim* 'We are numerous'.

b. The crisis cannot have had the work on the wall as its sole cause; this particular social evil was endemic, *see* 2 K 4:1; Is 50:1; Am 2:6; 8:6.

c. 'burden' *massa'* conj.; Hebr. *mashsha'* debt.

d. 'for them to be brought back to us' Vulg.; 'for them to sell themselves to us' Hebr.

e. 'claim' *mashsha't* conj.; Hebr. *me'at* 'hundredth part'. Here Nehemiah, like Jr 34:8–22, reflects the spirit of Dt 15, though his action is dictated by compassion and practical politics and has nothing to do with the sabbatical year, Lv 25:1a.

f. This passage is connected with v. 10 and offers further proof of Nehemiah's selflessness.

g. 'The king' Vulg.; 'he' Hebr.

h. The subsistence allowance was a charge on the populace.

i. Probably the governors of Samaria, capital of the province that included Judah, rather than Sheshbazzar, Ezr 5:14, and Zerubbabel, Hg 1:1, the Jewish governors.

j. 'a day' Vulg.; 'and wine besides' Hebr.

k. 'magistrates' Syr.; 'Jews' Hebr.

l. 'skins of wine' 2 MSS; 'with all the wine', Hebr.

6 **a.** Ch. 6 continues the action of ch. 4.

b. Or Geshem, v. 1, *see* 2:19f.

c. Such hopes may indeed have been entertained as regards Nehemiah, as they had been of Zerubbabel, Zc 6:9–14.

d. Haggai and Zechariah had supported Zerubbabel by similar means.

e. lit. 'And now I strengthened my hands' versions; 'And now strengthen my hands!' Hebr.

f. lit. 'confined', but what this means is not clear. Perhaps it is simply that the prophet was prevented from coming and invited the governor in order to communicate a prophecy to him.

g. The whole episode is obscure and probably owes much to the editor. Shemaiah seems to advise Nehemiah to claim sanctuary, a privilege attached first to the altar, 1 K 1:50seq.; 2:28seq., and extended later to the whole Temple, 1 M 10:43; Ps 27:5 (?). But by specifying 'inside the sanctuary itself', where a layman might not enter, he would involve Nehemiah in a grave fault, v. 11, 13; *see* Nb 18:7.

h. Hebr. adds 'and Sanballat' as also Gk here and at v. 14.

i. Omitting 'for he was being paid' (a gloss) at the beginning of the verse.

The wall was finished within fifty-two days, on the twenty-fifth of Elul. [k] 15, 16
When all our enemies heard about it and all the surrounding nations saw it, they thought
Ps 118:22–23; 127:1 it a wonderful thing, [l] because they realised that this work had been accomplished by the power of our God.

During this same period, the nobles of Judah kept sending letter after letter to 17
Tobiah, and letters from Tobiah kept arriving for them; for he had many sworn to 18
his interest in Judah, since he was son-in-law to Shecaniah son of Arah, and his son Jehohanan had married the daughter of Meshullam son of Berechiah. They even 19
cried up his good deeds in my presence, and they reported what I said back to him. And Tobiah kept sending letters to terrorise me.

7 Now, when the wall had been rebuilt and I had hung the doors, the gatekeepers 1
(the singers and the Levites) [a] were then appointed. I entrusted the administra- 2
tion of Jerusalem to my brother Hanani, and to Hananiah the commander of the citadel, for he was a more trustworthy, God-fearing man than many others. I said 3
to them, 'The gates of Jerusalem must not be opened until the sun gets hot; and the doors must be shut and barred before it begins to go down. [b] Detail guards from the residents of Jerusalem, each to his post, in front of his own house.'

The repopulation of Jerusalem [c]

The city was large and spacious but the population was small, and the houses had 4
not been rebuilt. [d] My God then inspired me to assemble the nobles, the officials 5
and the people for the purpose of taking a census by families. I discovered the genealogical register of those who had returned in the first group, and there I found entered:

‖Ezr 2:1–70 **List of the first exiles to return** [e]

These are the people of the province who returned from the captivity of the Exile, 6
those whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had deported, and who returned to Jerusalem and Judah, each to his own town. They were the ones who arrived with 7
Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Azariah, Raamiah, Nahamani, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispereth, Bigvai, Nehum, Baanah.

The number of the men of the people of Israel: sons of Parosh, two thousand 8
one hundred and seventy-two; sons of Shephatiah, three hundred and seventy- 9
two; sons of Arah, six hundred and fifty-two; sons of Pahath-Moab, that is to say 10, 11
sons of Jeshua and Joab, two thousand eight hundred and eighteen; sons of Elam, 12
one thousand two hundred and fifty-four; sons of Zattu, eight hundred and forty- 13
five; sons of Zaccai, seven hundred and sixty; sons of Binnui, six hundred and 14, 15
forty-eight; sons of Bebai, six hundred and twenty-eight; sons of Azgad, two 16, 17
thousand three hundred and twenty-two; sons of Adonikam, six hundred and 18
sixty-seven; sons of Bigvai, two thousand and sixty-seven; sons of Adin, six 19, 20
hundred and fifty-five; sons of Ater, that is to say of Hezekiah, ninety-eight; 21
sons of Hashum, three hundred and twenty-eight; sons of Bezai, three hundred 22, 23
and twenty-four; sons of Hariph, one hundred and twelve; sons of Gibeon, 24, 25
ninety-five; men of Bethlehem and Netophah, one hundred and eighty-eight; 26
men of Anathoth, one hundred and twenty-eight; men of Beth-Azmaveth, 27, 28
forty-two; men of Kiriath-Jearim, Chephirah and Beeroth, seven hundred and 29
forty-three; men of Ramah and Geba, six hundred and twenty-one; men of 30, 31
Michmas, one hundred and twenty-two; men of Bethel and Ai, one hundred and 32
twenty-three; men of the other Nebo, fifty-two; sons of the other Elam, one 33, 34
thousand two hundred and fifty-four; sons of Harim, three hundred and twenty; 35
sons of Jericho, three hundred and forty-five; sons of Lod, Hadid and Ono, seven 36, 37
hundred and twenty-one; sons of Senaah, three thousand nine hundred and thirty. 38

The priests: sons of Jedaiah, of the House of Jeshua, nine hundred and seventy- 39
three; sons of Immer, one thousand and fifty-two; sons of Pashhur, one thousand 40, 41
two hundred and forty-seven; sons of Harim, one thousand and seventeen. 42

The Levites: sons of Jeshua, of Kadmiel, of the sons of Hodiah, seventy-four. 43

44 The singers: sons of Asaph, one hundred and forty-eight.
45 The gatekeepers: sons of Shallum, sons of Ater, sons of Talmon, sons of Akkub, sons of Hatita, sons of Shobai, one hundred and thirty-eight.
46, 47 The temple slaves: sons of Ziha, sons of Hasupha, sons of Tabbaoth, ·sons of
48 Keros, sons of Sia, sons of Padon, ·sons of Lebana, sons of Hagaba, sons of
49, 50 Shalmai, ·sons of Hanan, sons of Giddel, sons of Gahar, ·sons of Reaiah, sons
51 of Rezin, sons of Nekoda, ·sons of Gazzam, sons of Uzza, sons of Paseah,
52, 53 sons of Besai, sons of the Meunites, sons of the Nephusites, ·sons of Bakbuk,
54 sons of Hakupha, sons of Harhur, ·sons of Bazlith, sons of Mehida, sons of Harsha,
55, 56 sons of Barkos, sons of Sisera, sons of Temah, ·sons of Nezaiah, sons of Hatipha.
57 The sons of Solomon's slaves: sons of Sotai, sons of Sophereth, sons of Perida,
58, 59 sons of Jaala, sons of Darkon, sons of Giddel, ·sons of Shephatiah, sons of Hattil,
60 sons of Pochereth-ha-Zebaim, sons of Amon. ·The total of the temple slaves and the sons of Solomon's slaves: three hundred and ninety-two.
61 The following, who came from Tel-Melah, Tel-Harsha, Cherub, Addon and Immer, could not prove that their families and ancestry were of Israelite origin:
62 the sons of Delaiah, the sons of Tobiah, the sons of Nekoda: six hundred and
63 forty-two. ·And among the priests: the sons of Hobaiah, the sons of Hakkoz, the sons of Barzillai—who had married one of the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite,
64 whose name he adopted. ·These had looked for their entries in the official genealogies but were not to be found there, and were hence disqualified from the
65 priesthood. ·Consequently, His Excellency forbade them to eat any of the consecrated food until a priest appeared who could consult *urim* and *thummim*.
66 The whole assembly numbered forty-two thousand three hundred and sixty
67 people, ·not counting their slaves and maidservants to the number of seven thousand three hundred and thirty-seven. They also had two hundred and forty-five
68 male and female singers. ·They had four hundred and thirty-five camels and six thousand seven hundred and twenty donkeys.
69 A certain number of heads of families contributed to the work. His Excellency contributed one thousand gold drachmas, fifty bowls, and thirty priestly robes to
70 the fund. ·And heads of families gave twenty thousand gold drachmas and two
71 thousand two hundred silver minas to the work fund. [f] ·The gifts made by the rest of the people amounted to twenty thousand gold drachmas, two thousand silver minas, and sixty-seven priestly robes.
72 The priests, the Levites and some of the people lived in Jerusalem and thereabouts; the singers, the gatekeepers, and the temple slaves in their appropriate towns; and all the other Israelites, in their own towns. [g]

Judaism is born. Ezra reads the Law. The feast of Shelters [h]

Now when the seventh month came round—the Israelites being in their towns— | Ezr 3:1
1 8 all the people gathered as one man in the square in front of the Water Gate, [a]
and asked the scribe Ezra to bring the Book of the Law of Moses which
2 Yahweh had prescribed for Israel. [b] ·Accordingly, on the first day of the seventh

j. Possibly the positions of vv. 15–16 and 17–19 should be reversed.

k. Beginning of October 445.

l. 'saw it' several MSS; 'were afraid' Hebr. • 'they thought it a wonderful thing', *wayyippale'* conj.; Hebr. *wayyippelu* 'they fell'.

7 **a.** An addition, an editor having seemingly confused the city guards with the gatekeepers of the Temple, with whom Levites and singers are regularly joined, *see* vv. 43–45.

b. 'it begins to go down' Aquila, Syr.; 'the guard stands down' Hebr.

c. The repopulation of Jerusalem by Nehemiah, 7:4–72[a]; 11:1–2,20,25[a], may be compared with the Greek *synoikismos*, i.e. either the unification of several previously scattered groups, or the centralisation in one city of the civil and religious administration of a whole region.

d. But *see* Dt 25:9 for the figurative sense, 'the families were not reconstituted'.

e. The list is parallel to Ezr 2, *see* Ezr 2:1a.

f. 'thirty robes' Gk; 'five hundred and thirty robes (lit. 'robes: thirty and five hundred')' Hebr. According to the lists of vv. 70–71 perhaps the reading should be 'thirty tunics and five hundred minas of silver', adding 'minas of silver' by conj.

g. 7:72–8:1 restored in line with parallel Ezr 2:70–3:1.

h. Logically and chronologically, Ne 8 should follow Ezr 8:36, Ezra having arrived from Babylon to promulgate the Law, Ezr 7:25–26. The Chronicler uses Ezra's report at this point.

8 **a.** South-east of the Temple, not on sacred ground.

b. The Pentateuch in the state in which it existed then.

month,[c] the priest Ezra brought the Law before the assembly, consisting of men, women and all those old enough to understand. ·In the square in front of the Water 3
Gate, in the presence of the men and women, and of those old enough to understand, he read from the book from dawn till noon; all the people listened attentively to the Book of the Law.

The scribe Ezra stood on a wooden dais erected for the purpose; beside him 4
stood, on his right, Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiah and Maaseiah; on his left, Pedaiah, Mishael, Malchijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah, and Meshullam.[d] ·In full view of all the people—since he stood higher than them all— 5
Ezra opened the book; and when he opened it, all the people stood up. ·Then Ezra 6
blessed Yahweh, the great God, and all the people raised their hands and answered, 'Amen! Amen!'; then they bowed down and, face to the ground, prostrated themselves before Yahweh. ·And Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, 7
Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabab, Hanan, Pelaiah, who were Levites,[e] explained the Law to the people, while the people all kept their
Ezr 7:6c places. ·Ezra[f] read from the book of the Law of God, translating and giving the 8
sense; so the reading was understood.

Then His Excellency[g] Nehemiah and the priest-scribe Ezra and the Levites who 9
were instructing the people said to all the people, 'Today is sacred to Yahweh your God. Do not be mournful, do not weep.' For the people were all in tears as they listened to the words of the Law.

He then said, 'You may go; eat what is rich, drink what is sweet and send a 10
helping to the man who has nothing prepared. For today is sacred to our Lord. Do not be sad: the joy of Yahweh is your stronghold.' ·And the Levites calmed all the 11
people down, saying, 'Keep quiet; this is a sacred day. Do not be sad.' ·Then all 12
the people went off to eat and drink and give helpings away and enjoy themselves to the full, since they had understood the meaning of what had been proclaimed to them.

On the second day, the heads of families of the whole people, and the priests 13
and Levites, gathered round the scribe Ezra to study the words of the Law. ·And 14
Ex 23:14d written in the Law that Yahweh had prescribed through Moses they found that the
Lv 23:33–36, 39–43 Israelites were to live in shelters during the feast of the seventh month.[h] ·So they 15
issued a proclamation and had it circulated in all their towns and in Jerusalem: 'Go into the hills and bring branches of olive, pine, myrtle, palm and other leafy trees to make shelters, as it says in the book.' ·The people went out; they brought 16
branches and made shelters for themselves, each man on his roof, in their courtyards, in the precincts of the Temple of God, in the square of the Water Gate and in the square of the Ephraim Gate. ·The whole assembly, all who had returned 17
from the captivity, put up shelters and lived in them; this the Israelites had not done from the days of Joshua son of Nun till that day[i], and there was very great merrymaking.

Each day, from the first day to the last one, Ezra read from the Book of the Law 18
of God. They celebrated the feast for seven days; on the eighth day, as prescribed, they held a solemn assembly.

The ceremony of expiation[a]

9 On the twenty-fourth day of this month the Israelites, in sackcloth and with 1
dust on their heads, assembled for a fast.[b] ·Then those of Israelite stock who 2
Ezr 9:1–2,1a; 10:11 had severed relations with all foreigners stood up and confessed their sins and the
iniquities of their ancestors. ·Standing, each man in his place, they read from the 3
Book of the Law of Yahweh their God for one quarter of the day; for another quarter they confessed their sins and worshipped Yahweh their God.[c] ·On the 4
Levites' platform stood Jeshua, Binnui,[d] Kadmiel, Shebaniah, Bunni, Sherebiah, Bani and Chenani, calling to Yahweh their God in ringing tones. ·The Levites, 5
Jeshua, Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabneiah, Sherebiah, Hodiah, Shebaniah and Pethahiah said, 'Stand up and bless Yahweh your God!

'Blessed are you, Yahweh our God
from everlasting to everlasting,
and blessed be your glorious name,
surpassing all blessing and praise!' Ps 78 and notes; Dn 3:52

6 'You, Yahweh, are the one, only Yahweh, Dt 6:4
you have created the heavens,
the heaven of heavens and all their array,
the earth and all it bears,
the seas and all they hold.
To all of them you give life,
and the array of heaven worships you.

7 'You are Yahweh God,
who chose Abram, Gn 12:1
brought him out of Ur in Chaldaea
and changed his name to Abraham. Gn 17:5
8 Finding his heart was faithful to you,
you made a covenant with him, Gn 15:18seq.
to give the country of the Canaanites,
the Hittites, the Amorites,
the Perizzites, the Jebusites and the Girgashites
to him and his descendants.
And you have made good your promises,
for you are upright.

9 'You saw the distress of our ancestors in Egypt, Ex 2:23–24
you heard their cry by the Sea of Reeds.
10 You displayed signs and wonders against Pharaoh, Ex 7–12
against all his servants and all the people of his land;
for you knew how arrogantly they treated them.
You won a reputation which you keep to this day.
11 You opened up the sea in front of them: Ex 14
they walked on dry ground right through the sea.
Into the depths you hurled their pursuers Ex 15:5,10
like a stone into the raging waters.
12 With a pillar of cloud you led them by day, Ex 13:21seq.
with a pillar of fire by night:
to light the way ahead of them
by which they were to go.
13 You came down on Mount Sinai Ex 19
and spoke with them from heaven;

c. In pre-exilic times the feast of the seventh month (September–October) began the new year, Ex 23:16; 34:22; Lv 23:24seq.; Nb 29:1.

d. Those supporting him were prominent laymen.

e. 'who were' 1 Esd 9:48; 'and the' Hebr. The v. has been added by the Chronicler who credits the Levites with a function which they acquired at a later date.

f. 'Ezra' Gk; 'They' Hebr.

g. 1 Esd. omits 'Nehemiah'; Gk omits 'His Excellency'; these are additions.

h. Lv 23:33–36,39–43 also puts the feast of Shelters in the 7th month; the feast lasts 8 days. But in Lv 23:40 the branches are used in the procession, whereas in Ne 8:15 they are for building shelters. According to Lv 23:34,39; Nb 29:12–38, the feast begins on the 15th of the 7th month, but Lv 23:27 states that it starts on the 10th day of Expiation, Lv 16, which must have been celebrated (being on the 10th of the 7th month Lv 23:27) between the reading of the Law by Ezra and the feast of Shelters.

i. *see* 2 K 23:22; 2 Ch 35:18, where somewhat similar claims are made for a particularly well-attended festival. The shelters themselves were no innovation, *see* Dt 16:13 and it is not clear what distinction the writer is trying to make.

9 a. For the sin of mixed marriage. The narrative follows on Ezr 10:44. But only vv. 1–2 are part of the *Memoirs of Ezra*.

b. The penitential liturgy, Jl 1–2, included a sung lament, *see* Ps 74,79,83, here vv. 5b–37, and was probably used on similar occasions.

c. The v. is an addition inspired by 8:3–6, where the assembly has been made to conform to the penitential gatherings of the Chronicler's own day.

d. 'Binnui' conj., *see* 10:10; 12:8, 24; 'Bani' Hebr.

e. The Chronicler represents the Levites as addressing a liturgical invitation to the people and reciting the psalm given here, probably taken from the liturgy of his own times. The psalm is full of biblical reminiscences, *see also* Si 36:1–17. The first line has been reconstructed by conjecture.

Dt 4:5–8 you gave them right rules, reliable laws,
good statutes and commandments;
Ex 20:8f you revealed your holy Sabbath to them; 14
you laid down commandments, statutes[f] and law for them
through your servant Moses.
Ex 16:1a For their hunger you gave them bread from heaven, 15
Ex 17:1a for their thirst you brought them water out of a rock,
and you told them to go in and take possession of the country
which you had sworn to give them.

'But they and our ancestors acted arrogantly, 16
Nb 14:1–4 grew obstinate and flouted your commands.
They refused to obey, 17
forgetful of the wonders which you had worked for them;
they grew obstinate
and made up their minds to return
to their slavery in Egypt.[g]
Ex 34:6+ But because you are a forgiving God,
gracious and compassionate,
patient and rich in faithful love,
you did not abandon them!

'Even when they cast themselves a calf out of molten metal 18
Ex 32:4 and said, "This is your God
who brought you up from Egypt!"
and committed monstrous impieties,
you, in your great compassion, 19
Dt 2:7 did not abandon them in the desert:
the pillar of cloud did not leave them,
leading them on their path by day,
nor the pillar of fire by night,
lighting the way ahead of them
by which they were to go.
You gave them your good spirit to instruct them, 20
you did not withhold your manna from their mouths,
you gave them water for their thirst.
For forty years you cared for them in the desert, 21
so that they went short of nothing,
Dt 8:4 their clothes did not wear out,
nor were their feet swollen.

Nb 21:21–35 Dt 1:4; 2:26–3:11 'You gave them kingdoms and peoples, 22
allotting them these as frontier lands;
they occupied the country of Sihon king of Heshbon,[h]
and the country of Og king of Bashan.
Dt 1:10 You gave them as many children 23
as there are stars in the sky,
and brought them into the country
which you had promised their ancestors
that they would enter and possess.
The children entered 24
and took possession of the country
and before them you subdued
the country's inhabitants, the Canaanites,
whom you put at their mercy,
with their kings and the peoples of the country,
for them to treat as they pleased:

25 they captured fortified towns — Dt 3:5; 6:10–11
and a fertile countryside,
they took possession of houses
stocked with all kinds of goods,
of storage-wells ready-hewn, of vineyards, olive groves
and fruit trees in profusion;
so they ate, were full, grew fat — Dt 32:15
and revelled in your great goodness.

26 'But they grew disobedient, rebelled against you
and thrust your law behind their backs;
they slaughtered your prophets
who had reproved them
to bring them back to you,
and committed monstrous impieties. — Ws 2:10–20
27 So you put them at the mercy of their enemies
who oppressed them.
But when they were being oppressed and called to you,
you heard them from heaven
and because of your great compassion
you gave them deliverers
who rescued them from their oppressors' clutches.
28 But once at peace again,
again they did what was wrong before you;
so you put them at the mercy of their enemies
who then became their rulers.
When they called to you again,
you heard them from heaven
and, because of your compassion, rescued them many times.
29 You warned them, to bring them back to your law,
but they became arrogant,
did not obey your commandments
and sinned against your rules,
in whose observance is life;
they turned a stubborn shoulder,
were obstinate, and disobeyed.
30 You were patient with them for many years
and warned them by your spirit
through your prophets,
but they would not listen; — Ac 7:51p
so you put them at the mercy of the people of the country.
31 But, because of your great compassion,
you did not destroy them completely
nor abandon them,
for you are a gracious, compassionate God.
32 Now, our God—the great God,
the Mighty and Awe-inspiring One, — Lm 5; Si 36:1–9
maintaining the covenant and your faithful love—
count as no small thing this misery
which has befallen us, our kings, our princes,
our priests, our prophets, [i] and all your people
from the times of the Assyrian kings
to the present day.

f. One or other of these words has been added on the basis of v. 13; the line is hypermetrical.
g. 'in Egypt' Gk, some Hebr. MSS; 'in their rebellion' Hebr.
h. Before 'king of Heshbon', Hebr. repeats 'the country of', dittography.
i. Hebr. adds 'our ancestors'.

You have been upright 33
in all that has happened to us,
for you acted faithfully,
while we did wrong.
Our kings, our princes, our priests 34
and our ancestors did not keep your law
or pay attention to your commandments and obligations
which you imposed upon them.
Even in their own kingdom, 35
despite your great goodness
which you bestowed on them,
despite the wide and fertile country
which you had lavished on them,
they did not serve you
or renounce their evil deeds.
See, we are slaves today, 36
slaves in the country which you gave to our ancestors
for them to eat the good things it produces.
Its abundant produce goes to the kings 37
whom, for our sins, you have set over us,
who rule over our persons
and over our cattle as they please.
We are in great distress.'

A record of the promises made by the community [a]

10 In view of all this we make a firm agreement, in writing. Our princes, our 1 38
Levites, our priests and the rest of the people have put their names to the
document under seal. [b]

On the sealed document were the names of: Nehemiah, son of Hacaliah, and 2 10:1
12:12–26 Zedekiah; [c] ·Seraiah, Azariah, Jeremiah, ·Pashhur, Amariah, Malchijah, 3 2, 4 3
Hattush, Shebaniah, Malluch, ·Harim, Meremoth, Obadiah, ·Daniel, Ginnethon, 5 4, 6 5, 7 6
Baruch, ·Meshullam, Abijah, Mijamin, ·Maaziah, Bilgai, Shemaiah: these were [l] 8 7, 9 8
the priests.

The Levites were: Jeshua son of Azaniah, Binnui of the sons of Henadad, 10 9
Kadmiel, ·and their kinsmen Shebaniah, Hodaviah, Kelita, Pelaiah, Hanan, ·Mica, 11 10, 12 11
Rehob, Hashabiah, ·Zaccur, Sherebiah, Shebaniah, ·Hodiah, Bani, Chenani. 13 12, 14 13

The leaders of the people were: Parosh, Pahath-Moab, Elam, Zattu, Bani, 15 14
Bunni, Azgad, Bebai, ·Adonijah, Bigvai, Adin, ·Ater, Hezekiah, Azzur, 16 15, 17 16, 18 17
Hodiah, Hashum, Bezai, ·Hariph, Anathoth, Nebai, ·Magpiash, Meshullam, 19 18, 20 19, 21 20
Hezir, ·Meshezabel, Zadok, Jaddua, ·Pelatiah, Hanan, Anaiah, ·Hoshea, Han- 22 21, 23 22, 24 23
aniah, Hasshub, ·Hallohesh, Pilha, Shobek, ·Rehum, Hashabnah, Maaseiah, 25 24, 26 25
Ahijah, Hanan, Anan, ·Malluch, Harim, Baanah. 27 26, 28 27

And the rest of the people, the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, 29 28
the temple slaves and all those who had severed relations with the people of the
country to adhere to the law of God, as also their wives, their sons, their daughters,
that is, all those who had reached the age of discretion, ·have joined their esteemed 30 29
brothers in a solemn oath to follow the law of God given through Moses, servant of
God, and to observe and practise all the commandments of Yahweh our Lord, with
his rules and his statutes.

13:23–27 We will not give our daughters in marriage to the peoples of the country, nor 31 30
allow their daughters to marry our sons. [d]

If the people of the country bring goods or foodstuff of any kind to sell on the 32 31
13:15–22 Ex 20:8f Sabbath day, we will buy nothing from them on Sabbath or holy day.
5:1–13,11e Lv 25:1a In the seventh year, we will forgo the produce of the soil [e] and the exaction of all
debts.

We recognise the following obligations: 33 32

to give one-third of a shekel yearly for the service of the Temple of our God: Ex 30:11seq. 2 Ch 24:6,9
33 34 for the loaves of permanent offering, for the perpetual oblation, for the perpetual Lv 24:5–9
burnt offering, for the sacrifices on Sabbaths, on New Moons and on festivals, for Nb 28:3–8
the consecrated gifts, the sin offerings to expiate for Israel, in short, for the whole
work of the Temple of our God;[f]

35 36 [g]and further, to bring yearly to the Temple of our God the first-fruits of our soil 13:31
36 37 and the first-fruits of all our orchards, ·also the first-born of our sons and of our Gn 22:1a
cattle, as the law prescribes, the first-born of our herds and flocks should be taken Dt 26:1a
to the Temple of our God for the priests officiating in the Temple of our God. Ex 13:11b

37 38 Furthermore, we shall bring the best of our dough,[h] of every kind of fruit, of the 13:10–14
new wine and of the oil to the priests, to the storerooms of the Temple of our God,
and the tithe on our soil to the Levites—the Levites will themselves collect Nb
38 39 the tithes from all the towns of our religion. ·An Aaronite priest will accompany 18:21,24 seq.
the Levites when they collect the tithes, and the Levites will bring a tenth part Dt 14:22d
40a. b 39a. b of the tithes to the Temple of our God, into the treasury storerooms; ·for these Nb 18:26
rooms are where the Israelites and the Levites are to bring the contributions of
corn, wine and oil, and where the vessels of the sanctuary are, and the officiating
priests, the gatekeepers and the singers.

34 35 Furthermore, as regards deliveries of wood for burning on the altar of our God 13:31
as the law prescribes, we have arranged, by drawing lots, how these deliveries are
to be made at the Temple of our God by the priests, the Levites and the people by
families, at stated times every year.

40c 39c We will no longer neglect the Temple of our God.

Nehemiah's method of repopulating Jerusalem[a] 7:4c

1 11 Now the leaders of the people took up residence in Jerusalem; so the rest
of the people drew lots: one man in ten was to come and live in Jerusalem,
2 the holy city,[b] while the other nine were to stay in the towns outside. ·The people
praised all those who volunteered to live in Jerusalem.

3 In the towns of Judah each man lived on his own property, but these are the
provincial leaders, the Israelites, the priests, the Levites, the temple slaves and the ‖1 Ch 9:2
descendants of Solomon's slaves, who made their homes in Jerusalem:

The Jewish population at Jerusalem[c] ‖1 Ch 9:4–17

4 Of the sons of Judah and the sons of Benjamin who made their homes in Jerusalem
there were:

Of the sons of Judah: Athaiah son of Uzziah, son of Zechariah, son of Amariah,
5 son of Shephatiah, son of Mehalalel, of the descendants of Perez; ·and Maaseiah
son of Baruch, son of Col-Hozeh, son of Hazaiah, son of Adaiah, son of Joiarib,

10 a. After the reading of the Law and the penitential ceremony, ch. 8–9, the author gives a document which comes neither from Ezra's report nor from Nehemiah's *Memoir*, but which must have been taken from the Temple archives and modified; vv. 31–39 have close links with 13:10–31. The list of vv. 2–28 is a later insertion, *see* note c.

b. The document continues in v. 29.

c. This supposed list of signatories, vv. 2–28, is an artificial composition: in vv. 3–9 the lists of 12:1–6,12–18 are used, and family names given where one would expect individual names; vv.10–14 are a selection of levitical names almost all of which occur elsewhere; the names of laymen, vv. 15–21, come from the list of Ezr 2 = Ne 7. The new names in vv. 12–14 and 22–28 must be those of contemporaries of the author of the list, who is later than Nehemiah. Some names have been corrected in accordance with the versions.

d. A commitment for the future; it is no longer a question, as in Ezr 9–10, of breaking off existing marriages. Was this matter already settled? *See* Ezr 10:44.

e. 'the produce of the soil' conj. following Ex 23:10; Hebr. omits.

f. v. 35 is to be read after v. 40[ab].

g. vv. 36–40 have been retouched, in v. 37 and especially 38[b]–39 which harmonise the practice of the levitical tithe with the more recent text of Nb 18:21,24seq. Adjustments of this kind are usual in texts with the force of law.

h. Hebr. adds 'and our contributions'; Gk omits.

11 a. Ch. 11 has two different literary layers: vv. 1–2,20,25[a], 36 are a composition of the Chronicler on the basis of 7:1–5[a] (*Memoirs of Nehemiah*); an editor has inserted the lists of vv. 4–19 and 25[b]–35, which he found among the documents of the archives. He has introduced them by a heading, v. 4, and added (either himself or someone else) the notes of vv. 21–24.

b. The name is given to Jerusalem in Is 48:2; 52:1; *see* Ne 11:18; Tb 13:9; Dn 9:24; Mt 4:5; 27:53; Rv 11:2. But the notion itself is older, *see* 2 S 5:9f.

c. This list on which 1 Ch 9:1–18 depends, appears to give the state of the population of Jerusalem a generation or more after Nehemiah.

son of Zechariah, descendant of Shelah. [d] •The total number of the descendants of 6
Perez living in Jerusalem was four hundred and sixty-eight outstanding people.
These are the sons of Benjamin: Sallu son of Meshullam, son of Joed, son of 7
Pedaiah, son of Kolaiah, son of Maaseiah, son of Ithiel, son of Jeshaiah, •and his 8
brothers [e] Gabbai and Sallai; nine hundred and twenty-eight.
Joel son of Zichri was their chief, and Judah son of Hassenuah was second in 9
command of the city.
Of the priests there were Jedaiah son of [f] Joiakim, son of •Seraiah, son of 10, 11
Hilkiah, son of Meshullam, son of Zadok, son of Meraioth, son of Ahitub, the
chief of the Temple of God, [g] •and their kinsmen who performed the Temple 12
liturgy: eight hundred and twenty-two; Adaiah son of Jeroham, son of Pelaliah,
son of Amzi, son of Zechariah, son of Pashhur, son of Malchijah, •and his kinsfolk, 13
heads of families: two hundred and forty-two; and Amashai son of Azarel, son of
Ahzai, son of Meshillemoth, son of Immer, •and his kinsfolk, outstanding people: 14
one hundred and twenty-eight.
Their chief was Zabdiel son of Haggadol.
Of the Levites there were Shemaiah son of Hasshub, son of Azrikam, son of 15
Hashabiah, son of Bunni; •Shabbethai and Jozabad, the levitical leaders respon- 16
sible for work outside the Temple of God; •Mattaniah son of Mica, son of Zabdi, 17
son of Asaph, [h] who led the praises [i] and intoned the thanksgiving associated with
the prayer, Bakbukiah being his junior colleague; and Obadiah son of Shammua,
son of Galal, son of Jeduthun. •The total number of Levites in the holy city was 18
two hundred and eighty-four.

Supplementary notes

The gatekeepers: Akkub, Talmon and their kinsmen, who kept watch at the gates: 19
one hundred and seventy-two. [j]
The temple slaves [k] lived on Ophel; Ziha and Gishpa were in charge of the 21
temple slaves. •The official in charge of the Levites in Jerusalem was Uzzi son of 22
Bani, son of Hashabiah, son of Mattaniah, son of Mica, of the sons of Asaph, who
led the singing in the liturgy of the Temple of God; •for the singers were under 23
royal orders, with regulations laying down what was required of them day by day.
Petahiah son of Meshezabel, of the sons of Zerah son of Judah, was the king's 24
sinister for all matters connected with the people.

The Jewish population outside Jerusalem [l]

The rest of Israel, including the priests and Levites, made their homes throughout 20
the towns of Judah, each man on his own inheritance, •and in the villages near 25
their lands. Some of the sons of Judah made their homes in Kiriath-Arba and its
dependencies, Dibon and its dependencies, Jekabzeel and its dependencies,
Jeshua, Moladah, Beth-Pelet, •Hazar-Shual, Beersheba and its dependencies, 26, 27
Ziklag, Meconah and its dependencies, •En-Rimmon, Zorah, Jarmuth, 28, 29
Zanoah, Adullam and their villages, Lachish and its lands, and Azekah and its 30
dependencies; thus, they settled from Beersheba as far as the Valley of Hinnom.
And some Benjaminites made their homes in Geba, [m] Michmash, Aija, Bethel 31
and its dependencies, •Anathoth, Nob, Ananiah, •Hazor, Ramah, Gittaim, 32, 33
Hadid, Zeboim, Neballat, •Lod, Ono and the Valley of Craftsmen. 34, 35
Some levitical groups lived in Judah, some in Benjamin. [n] 36

Priests and Levites who returned under Zerubbabel and Jeshua

12 These are the priests and the Levites who came back with Zerubbabel son 1
of Shealtiel, and Jeshua: [a]
Seraiah, Jeremiah, Ezra, •Amariah, Malluch, Hattush, Shecaniah, Rehum, 2, 3
Meremoth, •Iddo, Ginnethoi, Abijah, •Mijamin, Maadiah, Bilgah, •Shemaiah, 4, 5, 6
and Joiarib, Jedaiah, •Sallu, Amok, Hilkiah, Jedaiah—these were the heads of the 7
priests and their kinsmen in the days of Jeshua.

8 The Levites were Jeshua, Binnui, Kadmiel, Sherebiah, Judah, Mattaniah—this
9 last, with his brothers, was in charge of the songs of praise, ·while Bakbukiah and Unno, their colleagues, formed the alternate choir to theirs.

Genealogical list of high priests [b]

10 Jeshua fathered Joiakim, Joiakim fathered Eliashib, Eliashib fathered Joiada,
11 Joiada fathered Johanan, and Johanan fathered Jaddua.

Priests and Levites in the time of the High Priest Joiakim [c] 10:3–14;12:1a

12 In the days of Joiakim the heads of the priestly families were: family of Seraiah,
13 Meraiah; of Jeremiah, Hananiah; ·of Ezra, Meshullam; of Amariah, Jehohanan;
14, 15 of Malluch, Jonathan; of Shebaniah, Joseph; ·of Harim, Adna; of Meremoth,
16, 17 Helkai; ·of Iddo, Zechariah; of Ginnethon, Meshullam; ·of Abijah, Zichri; of
18 Minjamin, . . .; of Moadiah, Piltai; ·of Bilgah, Shammua; of Shemaiah, Jehona-
19, 20 than; ·and of Jojarib, Mattenai; of Jedaiah, Uzzi; ·of Sallai, Kallai; of Amok,
21 Eber; ·of Hilkiah, Hashabiah; of Jedaiah, Nethanel.
22 In the time of Eliashib, Joiada, Johanan and Jaddua, the heads of the families of priests [d] were registered in the Book of Chronicles, [e] up to the reign of Darius the Persian. [f]
23 The Levites who were heads of families were registered in the Book of the Chronicles up to the time of Johanan, grandson of Eliashib.
24 The heads of the Levites were Hashabiah, Sherebiah, Jeshua, Binnui, [g] Kadmiel, Ezr 2:40
while their brothers who formed an alternate choir for the hymns of praise and thanksgiving, as David, man of God, had prescribed, section corresponding to
25 section, ·were Mattaniah, Bakbukiah and Obadiah. Meshullam, Talmon and 11:17
Akkub were the gatekeepers guarding the stores at the gates. [h]
26 These lived in the days of Joiakim son of Jeshua, son of Jozadak, and in the days of Nehemiah the governor and of Ezra the priest-scribe. [i]

The dedication of the wall of Jerusalem [j]

27 At the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem the Levites were sent for, wherever they lived, to come to Jerusalem and joyfully perform the dedication with hymns of thanksgiving and songs to the accompaniment of cymbals, lyres and harps.
28 Accordingly, the levitical singers [k] assembled from the district round Jerusalem,
29 from the villages of the Netophathites, ·from Beth-Gilgal and from their farms at

d. lit. 'sons of the Shelanite' conj., *see* Nb 26:20; 'sons of the Silonite' (of the man of Shiloh) Hebr.
e. 'and his brothers' Gk MSS; 'and after him' Hebr.
f. 'Joiakim, son of' conj. 'Joiarib, Jachin' Hebr.
g. A title of the high priest, 2 Ch 31:13.
h. The singers have already become merged with the Levites, v. 22, though the gatekeepers have not, v. 19. Of the singers, only the Asaphites returned from exile, Ezr 2:41 = Ne 7:44. Possibly the two other guilds, Heman and Jeduthun, descended from singers of the First Temple, were not deported to Babylon, *see* 1 Ch 16:37,41.
i. 'the praises' Gk MSS; 'the beginning' Hebr.
j. v. 20 is transposed to follow v. 24.
k. The note on the temple slaves, v. 21, is perhaps contemporary with the preceding list. The note on Uzzi, vv. 22–23, is later and is inconsistent with v. 17. Petahiah, v. 24, held at some period unknown an appointment similar to that of Nehemiah.
l. This list, attesting Jewish expansion as far as the Negeb, dates from a later period unless it should be pushed back into pre-exilic times (under Josiah).
m. 'Some Benjaminites' two MSS, *see* v. 25; 'the Benjaminites' Hebr. • 'in Geba' conj.; 'from Geba' Hebr.
n. Following Gk MS; 'Groups from Judah (joined) Benjamin' Hebr.

12 a. These names, absent from Ezr 2:36–39, are those of priestly families of the line of Joiakim, successor to Jeshua, *see* vv. 12–21. By this method of presentation involving an appeal to antiquity, their rights were given a juridical basis.
b. From 520 to 405 (Darius II).
c. Therefore after 500. The names listed are found in the later ch. 10, with three additional families. The list is followed by a note claiming a reliable source.
d. At the beginning of the v. Hebr. adds 'the Levites'. • 'the heads of the families of priests' one MS; 'the heads of the families and the priests', Hebr.
e. The official Chronicle of the Temple—'the Book of Chronicles, up to' added by conj.
f. Darius II, died 405.
g. 'Binnui' conj., *see* v. 8; 10:10; Hebr. *ben* 'son of'.
h. Here the singers and gatekeepers are merged with the Levites, *see* 11:17i.
i. The Chronicler represents these three as contemporaries.
j. Historically, the ceremony took place after 6:16, but the Chronicler makes it match Ezr 6:15–18 (dedication of the Temple). Thus two dedications conclude two epochs, one dominated by the figure of Zerubbabel, the other—as the Chronicler sees it—by Ezra and Nehemiah. One may reconstruct the ceremony thus: after the customary purifications two processions make their way along the top of the wall from the Valley Gate, one going south, the other north. They meet at the Temple for the closing ceremony of the feast. Each half of the procession is headed by a choir of priests who are followed by distinguished laymen. The Chronicler has interrupted the narrative with a list of priests of the first (vv. 33–36) and of the second (vv. 40–42) choirs. He has also made Ezra figure in the procession.
k. 'levitical' Gk MS; 'priestly' Hebr.

Geba and Azmaveth—for the singers had built themselves villages all round Jerusalem. ·When the priests and Levites had purified themselves, they then 30
purified the people, the gates and the wall.

I then made the leaders of Judah come on to the top of the wall and appointed 31
two large choirs. One made its way [f] along the top of the wall, to the right, towards
the Dung Gate; ·bringing up the rear were Hoshaiah and half the leaders of 32
Judah, ·and also Azariah, Ezra, Meshullam, ·Judah, Benjamin, Shemaiah and 33, 34
Jeremiah, ·of the priests, with trumpets; then Zechariah son of Jonathan, son of 35
Shemaiah, son of Mattaniah, son of Micaiah, son of Zaccur, son of Asaph, ·with 36
his kinsmen, Shemaiah, Azarel, Milalai, Gilalai, Maai, Nethanel, Juda, Hanani,
1 Ch 23:5 Am 6:5 with the musical instruments of David, man of God. The scribe Ezra walked at
their head. ·At the Fountain Gate they went straight on up the steps of the City of 37
David, along the top of the rampart by the stairway of the wall, above the Palace [m]
of David as far as the Water Gate, on the east.

The other choir made its way to the left; I and half the leaders of [n] the people 38
followed them along the top of the wall from the Tower of the Furnaces to the
Broad Wall, ·from the Ephraim [o] Gate, the Fish Gate, the Tower of Hananel and 39
the Tower of the Hundred as far as the Sheep Gate, and they came to a halt at the
Prison Gate.

The two choirs then took their places in the Temple of God. But I had half the 40
magistrates with me ·as well as the priests, Eliakim, Maaseiah, Miniamin, Micaiah, 41
Elioenai, Zechariah, Hananiah with the trumpets, ·and Maaseiah, Shemaiah, 42
Eleazar, Uzzi, Jehohanan, Malchijah, Elam and Ezer. The singers sang loudly
under the direction of Jezrahiah. ·There were great sacrifices offered that day and 43
the people rejoiced, God having given them good cause for rejoicing;
the women and children rejoiced too, and the joy of Jerusalem could be heard
from far away.

A golden age [p]

For the rooms intended for the treasures, contributions, first-fruits and tithes, 44
13:10seq. supervisors were then appointed whose business it was to collect in them those
portions from the town lands [q] awarded by the Law to the priests and Levites. For
Judah rejoiced in the officiating priests and Levites, ·since they—with the singers 45
1 Ch 23–25 2 Ch 8:14 and gatekeepers—performed the liturgy of their God and the rites of purification
as ordained by David and his son Solomon. ·For from ancient times, from the days 46
2 Ch 29:30; 35:15 of David and Asaph, they had been the leaders in rendering hymns of praise and
thanksgiving to God. ·In the days of Zerubbabel and Nehemiah, all Israel supplied 47
13:10seq. 10:39 Nb 18:26 regular daily portions for the singers and gatekeepers, and gave the dedicated
contributions to the Levites; and the Levites gave the dedicated contributions to
the Aaronites.

13 At that time they were reading to the people from the Book of Moses, when 1
Dt 23:4–6 they found this written in it, '*No Ammonite or Moabite is to be admitted* to
the assembly of God, *and this is for all time,* ·*since they did not come to meet* the 2
Israelites *with bread and water, and even hired Balaam to oppose* them *by cursing*
them [r]; *but* our *God turned the curse into a blessing.*' ·Having heard the Law, they 3
13:4–9, 23–27.28 excluded all foreigners from Israel. [b]

10 ### The second mission of Nehemiah

Earlier, [c] Eliashib the priest, [d] who was in charge of the rooms [e] of the Temple of 4
12:44 our God, and who was close to Tobiah, ·had provided him with a large room where 5
they previously used to store the meal offerings, incense, utensils, tithes of corn,
wine and oil, that is, the part [f] of the Levites, singers and gatekeepers, and the
contributions for the priests. ·While all this was going on I was away from Jerusa- 6
lem, for in the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes king of Babylon [g] I had gone to see
the king. But after some time I asked the king for permission to leave, ·and 7
returned to Jerusalem, where I learned about the crime which Eliashib had com-

mitted for Tobiah's benefit, by providing him with a room in the courts of the Mt 21:12–13 par.
8 Temple of God. 9 I was extremely displeased and threw all Tobiah's household Jn 2:13–17
goods out of the room and into the street. 9 I then gave orders for the room to be purified, and had the utensils of the Temple of God, the meal offerings and the incense, all replaced.

10 I also learned that the Levites had not been receiving their allocations, as a result 12:44,47
of which the Levites and singers who performed the liturgy had all withdrawn to
11 their farms. 11 I then reprimanded the officials. 'Why is the Temple of God de-
serted?' I asked. And I collected them [h] together again and brought them back to
12 their posts; 12 and all Judah then delivered the tithe of corn, wine and oil to the
13 storehouses. 13 As supervisors of the storehouses I appointed [i] Shelemiah the priest, 10:38seq.
Zadok the scribe, Pedaiah one of the Levites and, as their assistant, Hanan son of
Zaccur, son of Mattaniah, since they were considered reliable people; their duty
was to make the distributions to their kinsmen.

14 Remember me for this, my God, and do not blot out the good deeds which I
have done for the Temple of my God and its observances!

15 At the same time I saw people in Judah treading the winepress, bringing in sacks
of grain and loading donkeys on the Sabbath; they were also bringing wine, grapes, 10:32 Ex 20:8f
figs and every kind of merchandise into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day. So I forbade Jr 17:21
16 them to sell the food. [j] 16 Tyrians living there were bringing in fish and every kind of
merchandise which they were selling to the Judaeans on the Sabbath in Jerusalem
17 itself. 17 So I also reprimanded the leading men of Judah, saying to them, 'What a
18 wicked way to behave, profaning the Sabbath day! 18 Was this not exactly what your
ancestors did, with the result that our God brought all this misery down on us and
on this city? And now you are adding to the wrath hanging over Israel by profaning
19 the Sabbath yourselves!' 19 So when the gates of Jerusalem were getting dark at the
approach of the Sabbath, [k] I gave orders for the doors to be shut and directed that
they were not to be opened again until the Sabbath was over. I stationed some of
my attendants at the gates to make sure that no merchandise was brought in on the
20 Sabbath day. 20 So the traders and dealers in goods of all kinds spent the night
21 outside Jerusalem once or twice, 21 until I reprimanded them. I said to them, 'Why
are you spending the night in front of the wall? Do it again, and I shall use force on
22 you.' After this, they did not come on the Sabbath. 22 I then ordered the Levites to
purify themselves and act as guards at the gates, so that the Sabbath day might be
kept holy.

Remember this also to my credit, have pity on me in the greatness of your
faithful love.

23 At that time too, I saw Jews who had married wives from Ashdod, Ammon and 10:31; 13:1–3,3b
24 Moab; 24 as regards their children, half of them spoke the language of Ashdod [l] or
the language of one of the other peoples, but could no longer speak the language

l. 'one made its way' conj.; 'and the processions' Hebr.

m. 'along the top of the rampart by the stairway of the Palace' conj.; 'up the stairway of the wall above the Palace' Hebr.

n. 'to the left' conj.; *see* v. 31; 'opposite' (?) Hebr. 'the leaders of' conj., *see* v. 32, Hebr. omits.

o. Hebr. adds 'and the Old Gate'.

p. This idealised picture of the community under the governorships of Zerubbabel and Nehemiah is perhaps intended to reduce the impact of the abuses related in 13:4seq.

q. 'from the (town) lands' conj.; 'according to the (town) lands' Hebr.

13 a. 'they' . . . 'them' . . . 'them' versions; Hebr. has singular, as Dt 23:7.

b. This severity goes beyond the requirements of the Law, *see* Dt 23:7–9.

c. By this phrase the Chronicler leads into the final section of Nehemiah's *Memoirs*. Nehemiah lists the measures he has taken over disorders which have arisen in the community during his absence at the Persian court: action against Tobiah, *see* 2:10, who had a *pied-à-terre* in the Temple (4–9), regular payment of dues to the Levites (10–14), observance of the Sabbath (15–22), action against mixed marriages (23–29), liturgical regulations (30–31). *See* 10:1a.

d. Not the high priest of that name, 3:1seq., 20seq.; 12:10,22; 13:28.

e. 'rooms' conj., *see* 12:44; 'room' Hebr.

f. 'part of' Vulg.; 'prescribed for' Hebr.

g. Nehemiah's first governorship had lasted from 445 to 433 BC.

h. The Levites.

i. 'I appointed as supervisors' Gk MS, Syr.; 'I made treasurer' Hebr.

j. 'forbade them . . .' conj., following Syr.; 'I admonished them on the day when they sold the food' Hebr.

k. The Sabbath began on Friday at sunset.

l. Probably an Aramaic dialect. Aramaic was the accepted language, 8:8, but Nehemiah did not wish Hebr. to be forgotten.

of Judah. ·I reprimanded them, I cursed them, I struck several of them and tore 25
out their hair and adjured them by God, 'You are not to give your daughters in
marriage to their sons or let their daughters marry your sons, or marry them
yourselves! ·Was it not because of women like these that Solomon king of Israel 26
1 K 11:1–13 sinned? Although among many nations there was no king like him and he was
2 S 12:25h loved by his God, and God made him king of all Israel, even then foreign women
led him into sinning! ·Were you obedient when you committed this very grave 27
crime: breaking faith with our God by marrying foreign wives?'

One of the sons of Jehoiada, son of Eliashib the high priest, was a son-in-law of 28
2:10c Sanballat the Horonite; I drove him from my presence.

Remember them, my God, for having defiled the priesthood and the covenant 29
of the priests [m] and Levites!

And so I purged them of everything foreign; I drew up regulations for the priests 30
and Levites, defining each man's duty, ·as well as for the deliveries of wood at the 31
proper times, and for the first-fruits.

Remember this, my God, to my credit!

m. 'of the priests' Syr. MS; Hebr. repeats 'priesthood'

INTRODUCTION TO
TOBIT, JUDITH AND ESTHER

§1 In the Vulgate, the three Books of Tobit, Judith and Esther are placed after the historical books. Some important manuscripts of the Greek version put them after the wisdom writings. Together they constitute a small literary group with several distinctive characteristics of its own.

1 Their text is difficult to determine. Behind Tobit is a semitic original which is no longer extant. Fragments of one Hebrew manuscript and four Aramaic manuscripts of Tobit have been discovered in a cave at Qumran. The Greek, Syriac and Latin versions between them represent four different recensions of the text, of which the two most important are, first, that of the Vaticanus (B) and Alexandrinus (A) codices and, second, that of Codex Sinaiticus (S) and the Old Latin (*Vet. Lat.*). This last recension, now supported by the Qumran fragments, seems to be the most ancient, and forms the basis for the present translation, due attention being paid to the other witnesses.

The Hebrew original of Judith is also lost. It is unlikely that it was represented in any of the Hebrew texts in circulation during the Middle Ages. The Greek texts take three widely divergent forms. The Vulgate presents yet another, very different, text; apparently Jerome merely revised an existing Latin translation with the help of an Aramaic paraphrase.

The Book of Esther has two forms: one short, in Hebrew; one long, in Greek. Of the Greek text there are two principal types; that of the current Greek Bible and that of the widely variant recension of Lucian of Antioch. The Greek version contains the following passages not found in the Hebrew: the dream of Mordecai, 1:1[a-r] and its explanation, 10:3[a-k]; two edicts of Ahasuerus, 3:13[a-g] and 8:12[a-v], the prayer of Mordecai, 4:17[a-i] the prayer of Esther, 4:17[k-z] a second account of Esther's appeal to Ahasuerus, 5:1[a-f] and 5:2[a-b]; an appendix explaining the origin of the Greek version, 10:3[l]. Jerome placed his translation of these passages after the translated Hebrew text (Vulg. 10:4–16:24); in our own translation they have been left where the Greek text has them, but in italics and with their own system of references.

2 All three books were admitted to the Canon at a late date. Tobit and Judith were not accepted by the Hebrew Bible, and in the Protestant Churches are numbered among the Apocrypha. They are 'deuterocanonical', that is to say, recognised by the Church only after a certain hesitancy in the patristic period. But they have been read and quoted from early days and appear in the official canonical lists in the West from the time of the Roman Synod of 382 and, in the East, from 692 (the 'in Trullo' Council of

Constantinople). The Greek passages of Esther also are deuterocanonical, their history being the same as that of Tobit and Judith. The status of the Hebrew Esther was still being discussed by the rabbis in the first century AD, but the book has subsequently become very popular with Jews.

3 The books all belong to the same type of literature. These stories treat history and geography with a good deal of freedom. According to the Book of Tobit, Tobit was a young man when the kingdom was divided at the death of Solomon (931), Tb 1:4; he was deported with the tribe of Naphtali (734), Tb 1:5, 10; his son did not die until after the fall of Nineveh (612), Tb 14:5. The same book makes Sennacherib the immediate successor of Shalmaneser, Tb 1:15, saying nothing of the reign of Sargon. Similarly, Rhages is said to be in the hill country, only two days' journey from Ecbatana in the plain, Tb 5:6; in fact the altitude of Ecbatana (over 6000 feet) was much greater than that of Rhages which, moreover, was nearly two hundred miles away. The Book of Esther is somewhat closer to history: the city of Susa is correctly described and certain Persian customs are accurately observed; Ahasuerus (Hebrew transcription of Xerxes) is a well-known historical figure and the delineation of his character agrees with what Herodotus says of him. On the other hand, it is strange that one of the tolerant Achmenid dynasty should agree to sign the order for a Jewish pogrom, and still stranger that he should authorise a massacre of his own subjects and that those 75,000 Persians should offer no resistance. Moreover, at the time indicated by the narrative, the queen of Persia and consort of Xerxes was Amestris; history leaves no room for either Vashti or Esther. And if Mordecai was indeed deported under Nebuchadnezzar, Est 2:6, he would have been one hundred and fifty years old by the reign of Xerxes.

§2 The Book of Judith in particular shows a bland indifference to history and geography. The scene is set in the time of 'Nebuchadnezzar who reigned over the Assyrians in the great city of Nineveh', Jdt 1:1, but Nebuchadnezzar was king of Babylonia and Nineveh had been destroyed by Nabopolassar, his father. Despite this, the return from exile under Cyrus is regarded as having taken place already, Jdt 4:3; 5:19. And whereas Holofernes and Bagoas have Persian names, there are also obvious allusions to Greek customs, 3:7–8; 15:13. We may add that the itinerary of the army of Holofernes, 2:21–28, is a geographical impossibility. Even when Holofernes reaches Samaria where we are on more familiar ground, the place-names, though increasing in number, are largely unknown and have an unusual ring. Bethulia itself, the town round which the drama revolves, defies identification despite the apparent concern for details that should help us to locate it.

The only explanation of this surprising indifference is that the authors are not trying to write history. No doubt they build on actual events but we have no means of knowing what these were, since the superstructure conceals them. But it is precisely this superstructure that is the real work of the author and conveys his message. The important thing is to discover the exact purpose of each book and to extract the teaching contained in it.

§3 The Book of Tobit is a domestic story. At Nineveh there lives a man named Tobit, exiled with his tribe of Naphtali, devout, law-abiding, chari-

table, and now blind. In Ecbatana lives his kinsman Raguel; this man's daughter Sarah has lost seven bridegrooms in succession, killed on the wedding night by the demon Asmodeus. Both Tobit and Sarah beg God to let them die, but God answers their prayers in his own way. He sends his angel Raphael who brings Tobit's son, Tobias, safely to Raguel, marries him to Sarah and gives him a cure for his father's blindness. It is an edifying story, in which the emphasis falls on almsgiving and duties towards the dead; true family life is shown at its best; the ideal of marriage anticipates Christian teaching. The divine benevolence is at once revealed and hidden in the angel Raphael, the agent of God. That this providence is with us, day by day, is the lesson of the book.

Tobias is modelled on biblical narratives, especially on those of the patriarchs in Genesis; as a work of literature its place is between Job and Esther, between Zechariah and Daniel. There are points of contact with the *Wisdom of Ahikar* (*see* Tb 1:22; 2:10; 11:18; 14:10), an apocryphal work which, basically, goes back at least to the fifth century BC. The Book of Tobit seems to have been written about 200 BC, possibly in Palestine and probably in Aramaic.

§4 The Book of Judith is the story of a victory won by the chosen people over its enemies, thanks to the intervention of a woman. The tiny Jewish nation faces the mighty army of Holofernes whose ambition is to lay the whole world at the feet of Nebuchadnezzar and to destroy all other religions but that of the deified Nebuchadnezzar. The Jews are besieged in Bethulia; the water supply has failed and they are on the point of surrender. At this stage Judith appears, a beautiful young widow, intelligent, devout, resolute; she overcomes first the cowardice of her own people and finally the Assyrian army itself. She rebukes the leading men of the city for their lack of faith in God; she then falls to prayer and, having duly adorned herself, leaves Bethulia and is led into the presence of Holofernes, on whom she exercises all her charm and wit. Once left alone with this drunken braggart, she cuts off his head. The Assyrians, panic-stricken, take to their heels and the Jews sack their camp. The people sing the praises of Judith and go to Jerusalem for a solemn thanksgiving.

The author seems deliberately to have defied history to distract the reader's attention from the historical context and focus it exclusively on the religious conflict and outcome. The narrative is neatly put together and has a close affinity with apocalyptic writings. Holofernes, the henchman of Nebuchadnezzar, is the incarnation of the powers of evil. Judith (her name means 'the Jewess') represents the cause of God, that is to say, of Jewry. This cause is apparently forlorn, but God makes use of the weak hands of a woman to procure his triumph, and his chosen people go in triumph to Jerusalem. This book has clear points of contact with Daniel, Ezekiel and Joel; the action takes place on the plain of Esdraelon near the plain of Armageddon, where the great eschatological battle of Revelation, Rv 16:16, also takes place. Judith's triumph is the reward of prayer and exact observance of the rules of legal purity; yet the horizon of the book is not narrowly nationalistic: the safety of Jerusalem is assured at Bethulia, in that very Samaria so hated by all 'rightminded' Jews, and the religious significance of the struggle is

expressed by Achior, who is an Ammonite, Jdt 5:5–21, and is later converted to the true God, Jdt 14:5–10. The Book was written in Palestine towards the middle of the second century BC, in the atmosphere of nationalistic and religious fervour generated by the Maccabaean Revolt.

§5 The Book of Esther, like that of Judith, tells of the deliverance of the nation by the actions of a woman. The Jews settled in Persia are threatened with extermination by Haman, a hostile and all-powerful vizir, and are saved by Esther, a young Jewess who has become queen, and who acts on the advice of her cousin, Mordecai. There is a complete reversal of situation: Haman is hanged, Mordecai assumes his position, the Jews massacre their enemies. To commemorate this triumph the feast of Purim is instituted and the Jews are instructed to celebrate it every year.

This story illustrates the hatred which the Jews experienced in ancient times, as a result of their unique way of life which brought them into conflict with their autocratic rulers (compare the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes). Their exaggerated nationalism was no more than a defensive reaction. The blood-thirstiness of the book shocks us, but we should remember that it pre-dates the Christian revelation. We must also remember literary conventions: the harem intrigues and the massacres serve to dramatise a thesis; the thesis is a religious one. The promotion of Mordecai and Esther and the rescue resulting from it recall the story of Daniel, and more particularly that of Joseph, first oppressed and later elevated for the saving of his people. In the Genesis story of Joseph, God makes no outward manifestation of his power, yet directs events. In the Hebrew book of Esther, similarly, though God's name is not mentioned, his providence governs every factor in the drama. The actors know it, and trust implictly in God to work out his saving plan even if his chosen human instruments falter, *see* Est 4:13–17, which gives the key to the book. The Greek additions are more religious in tone (they provide all the passages from Esther found in the liturgy) but they only state explicitly what the Hebrew author left to his reader's intelligence.

The Greek version was in existence in 114 (or 78) BC when it was sent to Egypt to authenticate the feast of Purim, Est 10:3[l] and note. The Hebrew text is earlier; in 160 BC according to 2 M 15:36, the Palestinian Jews were celebrating a 'Day of Mordecai', which presupposes that the story, and probably the book, of Esther were well known. The book was probably composed in the second quarter of the second century BC. That it was connected with the feast of Purim originally is doubtful: Est 9:20–32 is written in a different style and reads like an addition. The origin of the feast itself is obscure, and it is possible that the book came to be connected with it later (2 M 15:36 does not use the term 'Purim' but 'Day of Mordecai') to give it an historical basis.

TOBIT[a]

1 1 The tale of Tobit[b] son of Tobiel, son of Ananiel, son of Aduel, son of
2 Gabael, of the lineage of Asiel and tribe of Naphtali. ·In the days of Shalmaneser[c] king of Assyria, he was exiled from Thisbe, which is south of Kedesh-Naphtali in Upper Galilee, above Hazor, some distance to the west, north of Shephat.

I: TOBIT THE EXILE

3 I, Tobit, have walked in paths of truth and in good works all the days of my life.[d] I
4 have given much in alms to my brothers and fellow country-folk, exiled like me to Nineveh in the country of Assyria. ·In my young days, when I was still at home in the land of Israel, the whole tribe of Naphtali my ancestor broke away from the House of David and from Jerusalem, though this was the city chosen out of all the tribes of Israel for their sacrifices; here, the Temple—God's dwelling-place—had
5 been built and hallowed for all generations to come. ·All my brothers and the House of Naphtali sacrificed on every hill-top in Galilee to the calf that Jeroboam king of Israel had made at Dan. 1 K 12:26–32

6 Often I was quite alone in making the pilgrimage to Jerusalem, fulfilling the Law that binds all Israel perpetually. I would hurry to Jerusalem with the first yield of Dt 16:16
7 fruits and beasts, the tithe of cattle and the sheep's first shearings. ·I would give these to the priests, the sons of Aaron, for the altar. To the Levites ministering at Jerusalem I would give my tithe of wine and corn, olives, pomegranates and other fruits. Six years in succession I took the second tithe in money and went and paid it
8 annually at Jerusalem. ·I gave the third[e] to orphans and widows and to the strangers who live among the Israelites; I brought it them as a gift every three years. When we ate, we obeyed both the ordinances of the law of Moses and the exhortations of Deborah the mother of our ancestor Ananiel; for my father had
9 died and left me an orphan. ·When I came to man's estate, I married a woman from our kinsfolk whose name was Anna;[f] she bore me a son whom I called Tobias. Dt 14:22d Nb 18:12seq. Dt 18:3–5 Dt 14:22–27 Dt 14:28–29

11 10 When the banishment into Assyria came, I was taken away and went to Nineveh.
12 11 All my brothers and the people of my race ate the food of the heathen, ·but for my
13 12 part I was careful not to eat the food of the heathen.[g] ·And because I had kept
13 faith with my God with my whole heart, ·the Most High granted me the favour of
16 14 Shalmaneser, and I became the king's purveyor. ·Until his death I used to travel to Dn 2:48.49

1 **a.** In many places the Vulg. text differs considerably from Gk, which is followed by our translation (*see* Introduction). The verse numbering is therefore often different. The verse numbering of the Vulg. will be found in the margin whenever it differs from the Gk and when the Vulg. text is in agreement (at least in substance) with the Gk text.

b. The father's name is Tobeit, written Tobit in English; the son's Tobeias or Tobias. The other proper names in the book vary considerably, depending on the witnesses. ·Sinaiticus (S) extends this genealogy by adding after 'Gabael': 'son of Raphael, son of Raguel', omitted by Alexandrinus (Al), and Vaticanus (Vat.).

c. A stylised summary of the historical setting. *See* Introduction, p. 622.

d. Tobit's piety lies not so much in the thoughtful study of the Law, *see* Ps 119; etc., as in practising the good works the Law inculcates: almsgiving, burial of the dead, pilgrimage, tithe-paying, etc.

e. 'the third' Syr.; 'that of the third year' *Vet. Lat.*; omitted by S.

f. 'whose name was Anna' Al., Vat., *Vet. Lat.*; omitted by S.

g. Prepared without regard for the prohibitions of the Law, *see* Lv 11; Dt 14.

Media, where I transacted business on his behalf, and I deposited sacks of silver worth ten talents[h] with Gabael the brother of Gabrias at Rhages in Media.

On the death of Shalmaneser his son Sennacherib succeeded; the roads into 15 18
Media were barred, and I could no longer go there. •In the days of Shalmaneser I 16
Jb 31:16–20 had often given alms to the people of my race; •I gave my bread to the hungry and 17
clothes to those who lacked them; and I buried, when I saw them, the bodies of my country-folk thrown over the walls of Nineveh.

I also buried those who were killed by Sennacherib. When Sennacherib was 18 21
beating a disorderly retreat from Judaea after the King of heaven had punished his blasphemies, he killed a great number of Israelites in his rage. So I stole their bodies to bury them; Sennacherib looked for them and could not find them. •A 19 22
Ninevite went and told the king it was I who had buried them secretly. When I knew that the king had been told about me and saw myself being hunted by men who would put me to death, I was afraid and fled. •All my goods were seized; they 20
were all confiscated by the treasury; nothing was left me but my wife Anna and my son Tobias.

Less than forty days after this, the king was murdered by his two sons, who then 21 24
fled to the mountains of Ararat. His son Esarhaddon succeeded. Ahikar[i] the son of my brother Anael, was appointed chancellor of the exchequer for the kingdom and given the main ordering of affairs. •Ahikar then interceded for me and I was 22
allowed to return to Nineveh, since Ahikar had been chief cupbearer, keeper of the signet, administrator and treasurer under Sennacherib king of Assyria, and Esarhaddon had kept him in office. He was a relation of mine; he was my nephew.

II: TOBIT BLINDED

2 In the reign of Esarhaddon, therefore, I returned home, and my wife Anna 1
Ex 23:14d was restored to me with my son Tobias. At our feast of Pentecost (the feast of
Weeks) there was a good dinner. I took my place for the meal; •the table was 2
brought to me and various dishes were brought. I then said to my son Tobias, 'Go, my child, and seek out some poor, loyal-hearted man among our brothers exiled in Nineveh, and bring him to share my meal. I will wait until you come back, my child.' •So Tobias went out to look for some poor man among our brothers, but he 3
came back again and said, 'Father!' I replied, 'What is it, my child?' He went on, 'Father, one of our nation has just been murdered; he has been strangled and then thrown down in the market place; he is there still.' •I sprang up at once, left my 4
meal untouched, took the man from the market place and laid him in one of my rooms, waiting until sunset to bury him. •I came in again and washed myself and 5
ate my bread in sorrow, •remembering the words of the prophet Amos concerning 6
Bethel:

Am 8:10 *I shall turn your festivals into mourning*
and all your singing into lamentation.

And I wept. When the sun was down, I went and dug a grave and buried him. 7
My neighbours laughed and said, 'See! He is not afraid any more.' (You must 8
remember that a price had been set on my head earlier for this very thing.) 'Once before he had to flee, yet here he is, beginning to bury the dead again.'

That night I took a bath; then I went into the courtyard and lay down by the 9 10
courtyard wall. Since it was hot I left my face uncovered. •I did not know that there 10 11
were sparrows in the wall above my head; their hot droppings fell into my eyes. This caused white spots to form, which I went to have treated by the doctors. But
Mk 5:26 the more ointments they tried me with, the more the spots blinded me, and in the end, I became completely blind. I remained without sight four years; all my brothers were distressed on my behalf; and Ahikar provided for my upkeep for two years, until he left for Elymais.

19 11 My wife Anna then undertook woman's work; she would spin wool and take
12 cloth to weave; [a] •she used to deliver whatever had been ordered from her and
then receive payment. Now on the seventh day of the month of Dystros, [b] she
20 finished a piece of work and delivered it to her customers. They paid her all that
21 13 was due, and into the bargain presented her with a kid for a meal. •When the kid
came into my house, it began to bleat. I called to my wife and said, 'Where does
this creature come from? Suppose it has been stolen! Let the owners have it back;
14 we have no right to eat stolen goods'. •She said, 'No, it was a present given me over
and above my wages.' I did not believe her, and told her to give it back to the
22 owners (I felt deeply ashamed of her). To which she replied, 'What about your Jb 2:9
own alms? What about your own good works? Everyone knows what return you
have had for them.'

1 3 Then, sad at heart, I sighed and wept, and began this prayer of lamentation:

2 You are just, O Lord, Ps 119:137
and just are all your works. Dn 3:27–32
All your ways are grace and truth, Ps 25:10
and you are the Judge of the world.

3 Therefore, Lord,
remember me, look on me.
Do not punish me for my sins
or for my needless faults
or those of my ancestors. Ex 34:7
Ba 1:17–18
Dn 9:5–6

4 For we have sinned against you
and broken your commandments; Ba 2:4seq.;3:8
and you have given us over to be plundered,
to captivity and death,
to be the talk, the laughing-stock and scorn
of all the nations among whom you have dispersed us.

5 And now all your decrees are true
when you deal with me as my faults deserve,
and those of my ancestors. [a]
For we have neither kept your commandments
nor walked in truth before you.

6 So now, do with me as you will; Nb 11:15
be pleased to take my life from me; 1 K 19:4
so that I may be delivered from earth
and become earth again.
Better death than life for me, Jb 7:15
for I have endured groundless insult Jon 4:3,8
and am in deepest sorrow.

Lord, be pleased
to deliver me from this affliction.

h. A talent of silver, or 60 minas, was the equivalent of approximately 97lb (44 kg.).

i. The reference to Ahikar, 1:22; 2:10; 11:18; 14:10, *see* Jdt 5:5b, connects the story of Tobit with the *Book* (or *Wisdom*) *of Ahikar*, an ancient work known to us in various forms and languages. The story it tells provides a setting for two collections of wisdom sayings which are echoed in Tb and Si. Ahikar the sage, chancellor to Sennacherib and Esarhaddon, kings of Assyria, had educated his nephew Adab; this situation introduces the first series of maxims. The ungrateful Nadab, now chancellor, has his benefactor condemned to death. Ahikar escapes death by a subterfuge and goes into hiding. Esarhaddon, commanded by Pharaoh to produce a sage capable of solving his challenges, regrets the loss of Ahikar. The old chancellor emerges from his hiding place, successfully takes up Pharaoh's challenge, is restored to office and punishes his nephew; his rebuke of Nadab constitutes the second series of maxims.

2 **a.** 'she would spin . . . weave' added with *Vet. Lat.*
b. The Macedonian month of Dystros corresponded to the Jewish month of Adar (February–March).

3 **a.** 'and those of my ancestors' added with Vat., *Vet. Lat.*, Syr.

Let me go away to my everlasting home;
do not turn your face from me, O Lord.
Better death for me than life prolonged
in the face of unrelenting misery:
I can no longer bear to listen to insults.

III: SARAH

It chanced on the same day that Sarah the daughter of Raguel, who lived in Media 7
at Ecbatana, also heard insults from one of her father's maids. ·For she had 8
been given in marriage seven times, and Asmodeus,[b] the worst of demons, had
killed her bridegrooms one after another before ever they had slept with her as
man with wife. The servant-girl said, 'Yes, you kill your bridegrooms yourself.
That makes seven already to whom you have been given, and you have not once
been in luck yet.[c] ·Just because your bridegrooms have died, that is no reason for 9
punishing us. Go and join them, and may we be spared the sight of any child of
yours!' ·That day, she grieved, she sobbed, and she went up to her father's room 10
intending to hang herself. But then she thought, 'Suppose they were to blame my
father! They would say, "You had an only daughter whom you loved, and now she
6:15 has hanged herself for grief." I cannot cause my father a sorrow which would bring
Gn 37:35;42:38; 44:29,31 down his old age to the dwelling of the dead.[d] I should do better not to hang
myself, but to beg the Lord to let me die and not live to hear any more insults.'
1 K 8:44,48 Ps 5:7;28:2; 134:2;138:2 Dn 6:11 And at this, by the window, with outstretched arms she said this prayer: 11

You are blessed, O God of mercy!
May your name be blessed for ever,
and may all things you have made
bless you everlastingly.

And now I turn my face 12 14
and I raise my eyes to you.
3:6+ Let your word deliver me from earth; 13 15
I can hear myself insulted no longer.

O Lord, you know 14 16
that I have remained pure;
no man has touched me;
I have not dishonoured your name 15 17
or my father's name
in this land of exile.

I am my father's only daughter,
he has no other child as heir;
he has no brother at his side,
nor has he any kinsman left
for whom I ought to keep myself.

I have lost seven husbands already;
why should I live any longer?
If it does not please you to take my life,
then look on me with pity;
I can no longer bear to hear myself defamed.[e]

12:12 This time the prayer of each of them found favour before the glory of God, 16 24
and Raphael[f] was sent to bring remedy to them both. He was to take the white 17 25
spots from the eyes of Tobit, so that he might see God's light with his own eyes;
and he was to give Sarah the daughter of Raguel as bride to Tobias son of Tobit,

and to rid her of Asmodeus, that worst of demons. For it was to Tobias before all other suitors that she belonged by right. Tobit was coming back from the courtyard into the house at the same moment as Sarah the daughter of Raguel was coming down from the upper room. 4:12–13;6:12a

IV: TOBIAS

4 The same day Tobit remembered the silver that he had left with Gabael at Rhages in Media •and thought, 'I have come to the point of praying for death; I should do well to call my son Tobias and tell him about the money before I die.' He summoned his son Tobias and told him, 'When I die,[a] give me an honourable burial. Honour your mother, and never abandon her all the days of your life. Do all that she wants, and give her no reason for sorrow. •Remember, my child, all the risks she ran for your sake when you were in her womb. And when she dies, bury her at my side in the same grave.

Ex 20:12
Pr 23:22
Si 7:27

'My child, be faithful to the Lord all your days. Never entertain the will to sin or to transgress his laws. Do good works all the days of your life, never follow ways that are not upright; •for if you act in truthfulness,[b] you will be successful in all your actions, as everyone is who practises what is upright.

13:6
Jn 3:21
Ep 4:15

'Set aside part of your goods for almsgiving. Never turn your face from the poor and God will never turn his from you. •Measure your alms by what you have; if you have much, give more; if you have little, do not be afraid to give less in alms. •So doing, you will lay up for yourself a great treasure for the day of necessity. •For almsgiving delivers from death and saves people from passing down to darkness. Almsgiving is a most effective offering for all those who do it in the presence of the Most High.

12:8–10
Dt 15:7–8,11
Pr 19:17
Si 4:1–6
1 Jn 3:17
Mt 6:20par.
Si 3:30;29:12

'My child, avoid all loose conduct. Choose a wife of your father's stock. Do not take a foreign wife outside your father's tribe, because we are the children of the prophets. Remember Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, our ancestors from the beginning. All of them took wives from their own kindred, and they were blessed in their children, and their race will inherit the earth. •You, too, my child, must love your own brothers; never presume to despise your brothers, the sons and daughters of your people; choose your wife from among them. For pride brings ruin and much worry; idleness causes need and poverty, for the mother of famine is idleness.

Gn 24:3–4; 28:1–2
Jg 14:3
•6:12a
Gn 11:31;25: 20;29:15–30

'Do not keep back until next day the wages of those who work for you; pay them at once. If you serve God you will be rewarded. Be careful, my child, in all you do, well-disciplined in all your behaviour. •Do to no one what you would not want done to you. Do not drink wine to the point of drunkenness; do not let excess be your travelling companion.

Lv 19:13
Dt 24:15
Mt 7:12
Lk 6:31

'Give your bread to those who are hungry, and your clothes to those who lack clothing. Of whatever you own in plenty, devote a proportion to almsgiving; and when you give alms, do it ungrudgingly. •Be generous with bread and wine on the graves of upright people, but not for the sinner.[c]

Is 58:7
Mt 25:35–36
Dt 15:10
2 Co 9:7
•Dt 26:14
Si 12:4b

b. 'Asmodeus' probably means 'the destroyer', cf. the destroying angel of 2 S 24:16; Ws 18:25; Rv 9:11. Asmodeus recurs in the *Testament of Solomon* (where again he is the enemy of the marriage act) and in post-biblical Judaism; some think Asmodeus is related to Aesma, a demon of the Parsees.

c. 'you have not been in luck' Al., Vat., *Vet. Lat.*, Syr.; 'nor have you been named' S. Sarah is under an evil spell which brings death on her husbands.

d. A recurring formula in the story of Joseph.

e. 'I can no longer bear to hear myself defamed' Vat., *Vet. Lat.*, Syr.; 'hear how I am defamed' S.

f. Raphael, the protecting angel sent to Tobit and Sarah, has come from God's presence where he has offered their prayers, 12:12.15; *see* 5:4b.

4 a. 'When I die' Vat., *Vet. Lat.*, Syr.: omitted by S.

b. lit. 'if you do the truth' Vat., *Vet. Lat.*, Syr.; 'those who do the truth' S. • vv. 7–19 are missing in S and have been restored following *Vet. Lat.*, with attention to Vat. and Syr.

c. This injunction is taken from *Ahikar*, *see* 1:21i. But Tobit, apparently, advises his son not to make offerings to the dead (a practice condemned by the Law) but to give alms in memory of them.

Ps 119:10,12, 26seq.,33seq. 'Ask advice of every wise person; never scorn any profitable advice. ·Bless the 18 19. 19 20
Lord God in everything; beg him to guide your ways and bring your paths and
Dt 4:6 1 S 2:7 purposes to their end. For wisdom is not the property of every nation; their desire
for what is good is conferred by the Lord. At his will he lifts up [d] or he casts down to
the depths of the dwelling of the dead. So now, my child, remember these precepts
and never let them fade from your heart.
'Now, my child, I must tell you I have left ten talents of silver with Gabael son of 20 21
Gabrias, at Rhages in Media. ·Do not be afraid, my child, if we have grown poor. 21 23
1 Tm 6:6–8 You have great wealth if you fear God, if you shun every kind of sin and if you do
what is pleasing to the Lord your God.'

V: RAPHAEL

5 Tobias then replied to his father Tobit, 'Father, I shall do everything you have 1
told me. ·But how am I to recover the silver from him? He does not know me, 2
nor I him. What token am I to give him for him to believe me and hand the silver
over to me? And besides, I do not know what roads to take for this journey into
Media.' ·Then Tobit answered his son Tobias, 'Each of us set his signature to a 3
note which I cut in two, so that each could keep half of it. I took one piece, [e] and
put the other with the silver. To think it was twenty years ago I left this silver in his
keeping! And now, my child, find a trustworthy travelling companion—we shall 4
pay him for his time until you arrive back—and then go and collect the silver from
Gabael.'
Tobias went out to look for a man who knew the way to go with him to Media. 4 5
3:17f Outside he found Raphael the angel [f] standing facing him, though he did not guess
he was an angel of God. ·He said, 'Where do you come from, friend?' The angel 5 7
replied, 'I am one of your brother Israelites; I have come to these parts to look for
work.' Tobias asked, 'Do you know the road to Media?' ·The other replied, 6 8
'Certainly I do, I have been there many times; I have knowledge and experience of
all the ways. I have often been to Media and stayed with Gabael one of our
kinsmen who lives at Rhages in Media. [g] It usually takes two full days to get from
Ecbatana to Rhages; Rhages lies in the mountains, and Ecbatana is in the middle
of the plain.' [d] ·Tobias said, 'Wait for me, friend, while I go and tell my father; I 7 9
need you to come with me; I shall pay you for your time.' ·The other replied, 8
'Good, I shall wait; but do not be long.'
Tobias went in and told his father that he had found one of their brother 9 10
Israelites. And the father said, 'Fetch him in; I want to find out about his family
and tribe. I must see if he is going to be a reliable companion for you, my child.' So
Tobias went out and called him, 'Friend,' he said, 'my father wants you.'
The angel came into the house; Tobit greeted him, and the other answered, 10 11
wishing him happiness in plenty. Tobit replied, 'Can I ever he happy again? I am a 12
blind man; I no longer see the light of heaven; I am sunk in darkness like the dead
who see the light no more. I am a man buried alive; I hear people speak but cannot
see them.' The angel said, 'Take comfort; before long God will heal you. Take 13
comfort.' Tobit said, 'My son Tobias wishes to go to Media. Will you join him as 14
his guide? Brother, I will pay you.' He replied, 'I am willing to go with him; I know
all the ways; I have often been to Media, I have crossed all its plains and mountains,
and I know all its roads.' ·Tobit said, 'Brother, what family and what tribe do you 11 16
belong to? Will you tell me, brother?' ·'What does my tribe matter to you?' the 12 17
angel said. Tobit said, 'I want to be quite sure whose son you are and what your
name is.' ·The angel said, 'I am Azarias, son of the great Ananias, one of your 13 18
kinsmen.' ·'Welcome and greetings, brother! Do not be offended at my wanting to 14 19
know the name of your family; I find you are my kinsman of a good and honourable
line. I know Ananias and Nathan, the two sons of the great Shemaiah. They used
to go to Jerusalem with me; we have worshipped together there and they have

never strayed from the right path. Your brothers are worthy men; you come of good stock; welcome.'

15 He went on, 'I engage you at a drachma a day, with the same expenses as my
16 own son's. Complete the journey with my son •and I shall go beyond the agreed
20 wage.' The angel replied, 'I shall complete the journey with him. Do not be afraid. Gn 24:7,40 Ex 23:20i
On the journey outward all will be well; on the journey back all will be well; the
17 road is safe.' •Tobit said, 'Blessings on you, brother!' Then he turned to his son.
'My child', he said 'prepare what you need for the journey, and set off with your
21 brother. May God in heaven protect you abroad and bring you both back to me
safe and sound! May his angel go with you and protect you, my child!'

22 Tobias left the house to set out and kissed his father and mother. Tobit said, 'A
23 18 happy journey!' •His mother burst into tears and said to Tobit, 'Why must you
send my child away? Is he not the staff of our hands, as he goes about before us?
24 19 Surely money is not the only thing that matters? Surely it is not as precious as
25 20 our child?[e] •The way of life God had already given us was good enough.'
26 21 He said, 'Do not think such thoughts. Going away and coming back, all will be well
with our child. You will see for yourself when he comes back safe and sound! Do
27 22 not think such thoughts; do not worry on their account, my sister.[f] •A good angel
will go with him; he will have a good journey and come back to us well and happy.'
28 1 6 And she dried her tears.

VI: THE FISH

6:1 2 The boy left with the angel, and the dog followed behind. The two walked on, and
2 3 when the first evening came they camped beside the Tigris. •The boy had gone
down to the river to wash his feet, when a great fish leapt out of the water and tried
3,4 4 to swallow his foot. The boy gave a shout •and the angel said, 'Catch the fish; do
5 not let it go.' The boy mastered the fish and pulled it onto the bank. •The angel
said, 'Cut it open; take out gall, heart and liver; set these aside and throw the
6 entrails away, for gall and heart and liver have curative properties.' •The boy cut
the fish open and took out gall and heart and liver. He fried part of the fish for his
meal and kept some for salting. Then they walked on again together until they
were nearly in Media.

7 Then the boy asked the angel this question, 'Brother Azarias, what can the fish's
8 heart, liver and gall cure?' •He replied, 'You burn the fish's heart and liver, and
their smoke is used in the case of a man or woman plagued by a demon or evil
9 spirit; any such affliction disappears for good, leaving no trace. •As regards the
gall, this is used as an eye ointment for anyone having white spots on his eyes; after
using it, you have only to blow on the spots to cure them.'

10, 11 They entered Media and had nearly reached Ecbatana •when Raphael said to
the boy, 'Brother Tobias.' 'Yes?' he replied. The angel went on, 'Tonight we are
12 to stay with Raguel, who is a kinsman of yours. He has a daughter called Sarah, •but

d. 'he lifts up' Vet. Lat.; omitted by S.

5 **a.** 'I took one piece' added from *Vet. Lat.*

b. With the exception of 'the angel of Yahweh' or 'the angel of God', which in the earliest texts are phrases used to express the visible manifestation of God, *see* Gn 16:7c, the angels are creatures distinct from God and inferior to him, the members of his heavenly court, called 'sons of God', Jb 1:6; *see* Ps 29:1b, 'holy ones', Jb 5:1, 'host of heaven', 1 K 22:19; Ne 9:6; Ps 103:21; 148:2. The prologue of Job evokes the angelic gathering, Jb 1:6; 2:1, from which God sends his messengers (the meaning of the word 'angel') down to earth. Some are destroying angels *see* Ex 12: 23j; 2 K 19:35; Ps 78:49; Ezk 9:1, others guardian angels, either of nations or of individuals, *see* Ex 23:20b; Dn 10:13. Raphael is sent as guide to Tobias 3:17; *see* Gn 24:7. On the mediatory function of angels in prophecy, *see* Ezk 40:3d. The doctrine is further developed in Judaism and the NT.

c. 'Rhages (in Media)' *Vet. Lat., see* 1:14; 4:1; 'Ecbatana (in Media)' S.

d. **The geography is inexact; Ecbatana, now Hamadan,** is a considerable distance from Rhages, now Rai, near Teheran, *see* p. 622. **The author, however, is not concerned** with detail; **he merely wishes to set his story in a distant** land.

e. 'money' conj.; 'money to money' Gk. •Other possible translations of this difficult verse; 'Let the money (at Rhages) not be added to the money (here at Nineveh) but be the ransom for our child'; or, by emendation; 'Let not the money take primacy over the son, but let it be valueless as against our child.' The idea that the money should not take primacy over the child seems most suitable to the context.

f. The same term is used of wife or bride in 8:4, 7, 21 and in Sg 4:9seq; 5:1, 2; *see* 8:1.

apart from Sarah he has no other son or daughter. Now you are her next of kin;[a]
she belongs to you before anyone else and you may claim her father's inheritance.
She is a thoughtful, courageous and very lovely girl, and her father loves her
dearly.[b] •You have the right to marry her. Listen, brother; this very evening I shall 13
speak about the girl to her father and arrange for her to be betrothed to you, and
when we come back from Rhages we can celebrate the marriage. I assure you,
Raguel has no right whatever to refuse you or to betroth her to anyone else. That
would be asking for death, as prescribed in the Book of Moses, once he is aware
that kinship gives you the pre-eminent right to marry his daughter. So listen,
brother. This very evening we shall speak about the girl and ask for her hand in
marriage. When we come back from Rhages we shall fetch her and take her home
with us.'

Tobias replied to Raphael, 'Brother Azarias, I have been told that she has 14
already been given in marriage seven times and that each time her bridegroom has
died in the bridal room. He died the same night as he entered her room; and I have
heard people say it was a demon that killed them, •and this makes me afraid. To 15
her the demon does no harm because he loves her,[c] but as soon as a man tries to
approach her, he kills him. I am my father's only son, and I have no wish to die. I
3:10+ do not want my father and mother to grieve over me for the rest of their lives; they
have no other son to bury them.' •The angel said, 'Have you forgotten your father's 16
4:12–13 advice? After all, he urged you to choose a wife from your father's family. Listen
then, brother. Do not worry about the demon; take her. This very evening, I
promise, she will be given you as your wife. •Then once you are in the bridal room, 17
take the heart and liver of the fish and lay a little of it on the burning incense. The
reek will rise, •the demon will smell it and flee, and there is no danger that he will 18
ever be found near the girl again. Then, before you sleep together, first stand up,
both of you, and pray. Ask the Lord of heaven to grant you his grace and
Gn 24:44 protection. Do not be afraid; she was destined for you from the beginning, and you
are the one to save her. She will follow you, and I pledge my word she will give you
children who will be like brothers to you. Do not worry.' And when Tobias heard
Raphael say this, when he understood that Sarah was his sister, a kinswoman of his
father's family, he fell so deeply in love with her that he could no longer call his
heart his own.

VII: RAGUEL

7 As they entered Ecbatana, Tobias said, 'Brother Azarias, take me at once to 1
our brother Raguel's.' And he showed him the way to the house of Raguel,
whom they found sitting beside his courtyard door. They greeted him first, and he
replied, 'Welcome and greetings, brothers.' And he took them into his house.
He said to his wife Edna, 'How like my brother Tobit this young man is!' •Edna 2, 3
asked them where they came from; they said 'We are sons of Naphtali exiled in
Gn 29:4–6; 43:27–30 Nineveh.' •'Do you know our brother Tobit?' 'Yes.' 'How is he?' •'He is alive 4, 5
and well.' And Tobias added, 'He is my father.' •Raguel leapt to his feet and 6
Gn 33:4; 45:14 Lk 15:20 kissed him and wept. •Then, finding words, he said, 'Blessings on you, child! You 7
are the son of a noble father. How sad it is that someone so bright and full of good
deeds should have gone blind!' He fell on the neck of his kinsman Tobias and wept.
And his wife Edna wept for him, and so did his daughter Sarah. •Raguel killed a 8, 9
ram from the flock, and they gave them a warm welcome.

They washed and bathed and sat down to table. Then Tobias said to Raphael,
'Brother Azarias, will you ask Raguel to give me my sister Sarah?' •Raguel 10
overheard the words, and said to the young man, 'Eat and drink, and make the
most of your evening; no one else has the right to take my daughter Sarah— no one
but you, my brother. In any case even I am not at liberty to give her to anyone else,
since you are her next of kin. However, my boy, I must be frank with you: •I have 11

tried to find a husband for her seven times among our kinsmen, and all of them have died the first evening, on going to her room. But for the present, my boy, eat and drink; the Lord will grant you his grace and peace.' [a] Tobias spoke out, 'I will not hear of eating and drinking till you have come to a decision about me.' Raguel answered, 'Very well. Since, by the prescription of the Book of Moses she is given to you, Heaven itself decrees she shall be yours. I therefore entrust your sister to you. From now on you are her brother and she is your sister. She is given to you from today for ever. The Lord of heaven favour you tonight, my child, and grant
12 you his grace and peace.' ·Raguel called for his daughter Sarah, took her by the hand and gave her to Tobias with these words, 'I entrust her to you; the law and the ruling recorded in the Book of Moses assign her to you as your wife. Take her; bring her home safe and sound to your father's house. The God of heaven grant
13 you a good journey in peace.' ·Then he turned to her mother and asked her to fetch him writing paper. He drew up the marriage contract, and so he gave his daughter as bride to Tobias according to the ordinance of the Law of Moses.
14, 18 15 After this they began to eat and drink. ·Raguel called his wife Edna and said,
19 16 'My sister, prepare the second room and take her there.' ·She went and made the
20 bed in this room as he had ordered, and took her daughter to it. She wept over her, then wiped away her tears and said, 'Courage, daughter! May the Lord of heaven turn your grief to joy! Courage, daughter!' And she went out.

Gn 24:33
Gn 24:50–31
6:12a
Gn 24:54

VIII: THE GRAVE

1 8 When they had finished eating and drinking and it seemed time to go to bed,
2 the young man was taken from the dining room to the bedroom. ·Tobias remembered Raphael's advice; he went to his bag, took the fish's heart and liver
3 out of it and put some on the burning incense. ·The reek of the fish distressed the demon, who fled through the air to Egypt. [a] Raphael pursued him there, shackled him and strangled him forthwith.

Mt 12:22–30, 43–45par.

4 The parents meanwhile had gone out and shut the door behind them. Tobias rose from the bed, and said to Sarah, 'Get up, my sister! You and I must pray and
6 5 petition our Lord to win his grace and his protection.' ·She stood up, and they
7 began praying for protection, and this was how he began:

You are blessed, O God of our fathers; Dn 3:26
blessed too is your name
for ever and ever.
Let the heavens bless you
and all things you have made
for evermore.

8 6 You it was who created Adam,
you who created Eve his wife
to be his help and support;
and from these two the human race was born.
You it was who said,
'It is not right that the man should be alone; Gn 2:18
let us make him a helper like him.'

6 **a.** In conformity with the patriarchal custom of marriage within the clan *see* 4:12–13 and the story of the marriage of Isaac in Gn 24. (The levirate law, Dt 25:5a, possibly derives from this custom.) For the tribes settled in Palestine this practice preserved the tribal boundaries established after the conquest of Canaan, see Nb 36, In the Dispersion, this survived in the notion of keeping the family goods within the family and the determination to remain true to the ancestral law of Israel.

b. 'loves her dearly' *Vet. Lat.;* 'is handsome' S.

c. 'because he loves her' added following Vat., *Vet. Lat.,* Syr.

7 **a.** 'his grace and peace' restored to match the end of the v.

8 **a.** 'through the air to Egypt'; var. 'to the upper parts of Egypt'.

And so I take my sister 7 9
not for any lustful motive,
but I do it in singleness of heart.
Be kind enough to have pity on her and on me
and bring us to old age together.

And together they said, 'Amen, Amen,' ·and lay down for the night. 8, 9
But Raguel rose and called his servants, who came and helped him dig a grave. 11
He had thought, 'Heaven grant he does not die! We should be overwhelmed with 10 12
ridicule and shame.' ·When the grave was ready, Raguel went back to the house, 11 13
called his wife ·and said, 'Will you send a maid to the room to see if Tobias is still 12 14
alive? For if he is dead, we may be able to bury him without anyone else knowing.'
They sent the maid, lit the lamp, opened the door and the maid went in. She found 13 15
the two fast asleep together; ·she came out again and whispered, 'He is not dead; 14 16
all is well.' ·Then Raguel blessed [b] the God of heaven with these words: 15 17

You are blessed, my God,
with every blessing that is pure;
may you be blessed for evermore!

You are blessed for having made me glad. 16
What I feared has not happened,
instead you have shown us
your boundless mercy.

You are blessed for taking pity 17 19
on this only son, this only daughter.
Grant them, Master, your mercy and your protection;
let them live out their lives
in happiness and in mercy.

And he made his servants fill the grave in before dawn broke. 18 20
He told his wife to make an ovenful of bread; he went to his flock, brought back 19
two oxen and four sheep and gave orders for them to be cooked; and preparations
Gn 24:54–55 Jg 14:10–18 began. ·He called Tobias and said, 'I will not hear of your leaving here for a 20 23
fortnight. You are to stay where you are, eating and drinking, with me. You will
make my daughter happy again after all her troubles. ·After that, take away a half 21 24
of all I have, and take her safe and sound back to your father. [c] When my wife and
I are dead you shall have the other half. Courage, my boy! I am your father, and
Edna is your mother. We are your parents in future, as we are your sister's.
Courage, my son!'

IX: THE WEDDING FEAST

9 Then Tobias turned to Raphael. ·'Brother Azarias,' he said, 'take four servants 1, 2
and two camels and leave for Rhages. ·Go to Gabael's house, give him the 3
receipt and see about the money; then invite him to come with you to my wedding
feast. ·You know that my father must be counting the days and that I cannot lose a 4
single one without worrying him. ·You see what Raguel has pledged himself to do; 5
I am bound by his oath.' So Raphael left for Rhages in Media with the four servants 6
and two camels. They stayed with Gabael, and Raphael showed him the receipt.
He told him about the marriage of Tobias son of Tobit and gave him his invitation 7
to the wedding feast. Gabael started counting out the sacks to him—the seals were
intact—and they loaded them on to the camels. [a] ·Early in the morning they set off 6
together for the feast, and reached Raguel's house where they found Tobias dining.
He rose to greet Gabael, who burst into tears and blessed him with the words, 8
'Excellent son of a father beyond reproach, just and generous in his dealings! The 9

Lord give heaven's blessing to you, to your wife, to your wife's father and mother![b]
Blessed be God for granting me the sight of this living image of my cousin Tobit![c]

1 **10** Every day, meanwhile, Tobit kept reckoning the days required for the journey there and the journey back. The full number went by, and still his
2 son had not come. •Then he thought, 'I hope he has not been delayed there! I hope
3 Gabael is not dead, so that no one will give him the silver.' •And he began to
4 worry. •His wife Anna kept saying, 'My son is dead! He is no longer among the
5 living!' And she began to weep and mourn over her son. She kept saying, •'Alas! I
6 should never have let you leave me, my child, you, the light of my eyes.' •And
Tobit would reply, 'Hush, my sister! Do not worry. All is well with him. Something has happened there to delay them. His companion is someone we can trust, one of
7 our kinsmen at that. Do not lose heart, my sister. •He will soon be here.' But all
she would say was, 'Leave me alone; do not try to deceive me. My child is dead.'
And every day she would go abruptly out to watch the road by which her son had
left. She trusted no eyes but her own. Once the sun had set she would come home
again, only to weep and moan all night, unable to sleep.

Gn 44:18–34
Lk 15:20
Gn 45:26

After the fourteen days of feasting that Raguel had sworn to keep for his
daughter's marriage, Tobias came to him and said, 'Let me go now; my father and
mother must have lost all hope of seeing me again. So I beg you, father, to let me
return to my father's house; I have told you the plight he was in when I left him.'
8 Raguel said to Tobias, 'Stay, my son, stay with me. I shall send messengers to
9 your father Tobit to give him news of you.' •But Tobias pressed him, 'No, I beg
10 you to let me go back to my father's house.' •Without more ado, Raguel commit-
ted Sarah his bride into his keeping. He gave Tobias half his wealth, slaves, men
and women, oxen and sheep, donkeys and camels, clothes and money and house-
11 hold things. •And so he let them leave happily. To Tobias he said these parting
words, 'Good health, my son, and a happy journey! May the Lord of heaven be
gracious to you and to your wife Sarah! I hope to see your children before I die.'
13 12 To his daughter Sarah he said, 'Go now to your father-in-law's house, since
henceforward they are as much your parents as those who gave you life. Go in
peace, my daughter, I hope to hear nothing but good of you, as long as I live.' He
said goodbye to them and let them go.

Gn 24:54–61
Gn 24:35;30:43
Gn 45:28

Edna in her turn said to Tobias, 'Dear son and brother, may it please the Lord to
bring you back again! I hope to live long enough to see the children of you and my
daughter Sarah before I die. In the sight of the Lord I give my daughter into your
keeping. Never make her unhappy as long as you live. Go in peace, my son.
Henceforward I am your mother and Sarah is your sister. May we all live happily
12 for the rest of our lives!' And she kissed them both and saw them set out happily.
13 Tobias left Raguel's house with his mind at ease. In his gladness he blessed the
Lord of heaven and earth, the King of all that is, for the happy issue of his travels.
He gave this blessing to Raguel and his wife Edna, 'May it be my happiness to
honour you for the rest of my life![a]

Gn 24:21,40, 42,56

X: TOBIT'S SIGHT RESTORED

1, 2 **11** They were nearly at Kaserin, opposite Nineveh, •when Raphael said, 'You
3 know the plight in which we left your father; •let us go on ahead of your
wife and prepare the house ourselves while she travels behind with the others.'

Gn 46:28

b. 'Raguel blessed' *Vet. Lat.;* 'they blessed' Gk.

c. The account of the marriage of Sarah has many details in common with the stories of Rebekah, Gn 24; Rachel, Gn 29; Dinah, Gn 34; the wife of Samson, Jg 14; Michal, 1 S 18. Here, however, there is no *mohar* (the sum paid by the groom to the bride's father, Gn 34:12; 1 S 18:25); it is the father who dowers the bride.

9 **a.** 'on to the camels' *Vet. Lat.*, Syr.; omitted by S.

b. 'to (your wife's) father and mother' *Vet. Lat.;* 'to your father' Gk.

c. Some textual witnesses omit Gabael's blessing.

10 **a.** Text amended following Vat. and *Vet. Lat.*

They went on together (Raphael warned Tobias to take the gall with him) and the dog followed them. [a] 4

Anna was sitting, watching the road by which her son would come. ·She was sure at once it must be he and said to the father, 'Here comes your son, with his companion.' 5, 6

Raphael said to Tobias before he reached his father, 'I give you my word that your father's eyes will open. ·You must put the fish's gall to his eyes; the medicine will smart and will draw a filmy white skin off his eyes. And your father will no more be blind but will be able to see the light.' 7 8

Gn 33:4;45:14; 46:29–30 Lk 15:20 The mother ran forward and threw her arms round her son's neck. 'Now I can die,' she said, 'I have seen you again.' And she wept. ·Tobit rose to his feet and stumbled across the courtyard through the door. Tobias came on towards him (he had the fish's gall in his hand). He blew into his eyes and said, steadying him, 'Take courage, father!' With this he applied the medicine, left it there a while, then with both hands peeled away a filmy skin from the corners of his eyes. Then his father fell on his neck ·and wept. He exclaimed, 'I can see you, my son, the light of my eyes!' And he said: 9 10 11 13 12 13, 14

Blessed be God!
Blessed be his great name!
Blessed be all his holy angels!
Blessed be his great name
for evermore! [b]

13:2 Dt 32:39 For, having afflicted me, 15
he has had pity on me
and now I see my son Tobias!

Tobias went indoors, joyfully blessing God at the top of his voice. [c] Then he told his father everything; how his journey had been successful and he had brought the silver back; how he had married Sarah the daughter of Raguel; how she was following him now, close behind, and could not be far from the gates of Nineveh.

Tobit set off to the gates of Nineveh to meet his daughter-in-law, giving joyful praise to God as he went. When the people of Nineveh saw him walking without a guide and stepping forward as briskly as of old, they were astonished. ·Tobit described to them how God had taken pity on him and had opened his eyes. Then Tobit met Sarah the bride of his son Tobias, and blessed her in these words. 'Welcome, daughter! Blessed be your God for sending you to us, my daughter. Blessings on your father, blessings on my son Tobias, blessings on yourself, my daughter. Welcome now to your own house in joyfulness and in blessedness. Come in, my daughter.' That day brought joy to the Jews of Nineveh, ·and his cousins Ahikar and Nadab came to share in Tobit's happiness. [d] 16 17 18 20

XI: THE REVELATION

Gn 30:25–31 12 When the wedding feast was over, Tobit called his son Tobias and said, 'My son, you ought to think about paying the amount due to your fellow traveller; give him more than the figure agreed on.' ·'Father,' he replied, 'how much am I to give him for his help? Even if I give him half the goods he brought back with me, I shall not be the loser. ·He has brought me back safe and sound, he has cured my wife, he has brought the money back too, and now he has cured you as well. How much am I to give him for all this?' ·Tobit said, 'He has richly earned half what he brought back'. ·So Tobias called his companion and said, 'Take half of what you brought back, in payment for all you have done, and go in peace.' 1 2 3 4 5

Then Raphael took them both aside and said, 'Bless God, utter his praise before all the living for the favour he has shown you. Bless and extol his name. 6

Proclaim before all people the deeds of God as they deserve, and never tire of
7 giving him thanks. •It is right to keep the secret of a king, yet right to reveal and
publish the works of God as they deserve. Do what is good, and no evil can befall
you.

8 'Prayer with fasting[a] and alms with uprightness are better than riches with 4:7–11+
9 iniquity. Better to practise almsgiving than to hoard up gold. •Almsgiving saves Pr 11:4;16:8
from death and purges every kind of sin. Those who give alms have their fill of Si 29:8–13
10 days; •those who commit sin and do evil bring harm on themselves. Mt 6:1–18
Si 3:30
Dn 4:24

11 'I am going to tell you the whole truth, hiding nothing from you. I have already
told you that it is right to keep the secret of a king, yet right too to reveal in a
12 worthy way the words of God. •So you must know that when you and Sarah were
at prayer, it was I who offered your supplications before the glory of the Lord and Jb 33:23–24
13 who read them;[b] so too when you were burying the dead. •When you did not Zc 1:12
Ac 10:4
hesitate to get up and leave the table to go and bury a dead man, I was sent to test Rv 8:3–4
14 your faith,[c] •and at the same time God sent me to heal you and your daughter-in- •Jb 1–2
3:17
15 law Sarah. •I am Raphael, one of the seven[d] angels who stand ever ready to enter Zc 4:10
Lk 1:19
the presence of the glory of the Lord.' Rv 8:2

16, 17 They were both overwhelmed with awe; they fell on their faces in terror. •But the Jg 13:20–22
18 angel said, 'Do not be afraid; peace be with you. Bless God for ever. •As far as I
was concerned, when I was with you, my presence was not by any decision of mine,
but by the will of God; he is the one whom you must bless as long as you live, he the
19 one that you must praise. •You thought you saw me eating, but that was appearance Jg 13:16,20
20 and no more.[e] •Now bless the Lord on earth and give thanks to God. I am about to Lk 24:41–43
return to him who sent me from above. Write down all that has happened.' And he Jn 16:5;20:17
21,22 21 rose in the air. •When they stood up again, he was no longer visible. They praised
God with hymns; they thanked him for having performed such wonders; had not
an angel of God appeared to them?

XII: ZION

1 **13** And he said:[a]

Blessed be God who lives for ever, 3:11;8:5,15
for his reign endures throughout all ages! 1 Ch 29:10
Ps 144:1
2 For he both punishes and pardons; Dn 3:26
he sends people down to the depths of the underworld Lk 1:68
and draws them up from utter Destruction; Ep 1:3
•1 S 2:6
no one can escape his hand. Dt 32:39
Ws 16:13,15
3 Declare his praise before the nations,
you who are the children of Israel!
For if he has scattered you among them,

11 a. 'the dog' Vat., *Vet. Lat.*; 'the Lord' S (in a corrupt edition). •'followed them'; 'ran ahead of them' var. In Syr., Anna sees the dog coming along the road before she warns Tobit.

b. v. 14 follows *Vet. Lat.*; Gk expands the blessings by dittography.

c. 'at the top of his voice' *Vet. Lat.*, *see* 13:6; 'with his whole body' S.

d. Vat., *Vet. Lat.* and Syr. add: 'and the celebrations went on for seven days, and many presents were given to him.'

12 a. 'fasting' Vat., *Vet. Lat.*; 'truth' Sin.

b. 'and who read them' restored following *Vet. Lat.* •The angel, *see* 5:4b, now becomes the intercessor. Raphael presents a 'memoir' of Tobit's prayers and good works to God. The term suggests an official abstract; it also has sacrificial overtones, the portion of the victim burnt on the altar as a 'pleasing smell' is called the 'memorial' of the sacrifice, Lv 2: 1a, 2. The angel of the centurion Cornelius, Ac 10:4, similarly tells him that his prayers and almsgiving have ascended as a 'memorial' before God.

c. Like Satan to Job (Jb 1–2) though with a difference.

d. Only three angels' names appear in the Bible; Gabriel, Dn 8:16; 9 21; Lk 1:19; Michael, Dn 10;13, 21; 21:1; Jude 9; and Raphael, here and 3:17. Apocryphal writers complete the list of the Seven in a very imaginative way. There is an echo of Tb in the seven angels of the Apocalypse Rv 8:2.

e. Following *Vet. Lat.*; 'You see that I have eaten nothing and that you have had a vision.'

13 a. Tobit's concluding song (*see* Ex 15; Jdt 16) forms two parts. The first, vv. 1–8, is a song of thanksgiving, borrowing themes from hymns and psalms of the kingdom. The second, vv. 9–17, apostrophises Jerusalem in the style of the prophets; it expresses the exiles' hopes of an ideal Jerusalem. There are considerable divergencies among the textual authorities, and some lacunae; the restoration is at times conjectural.

there too he has shown you his greatness. 4
Extol him before all the living;
he is our Lord
and he is our God;
Ws 14:3 he is our Father,
Si 23:1,4
Is 63:16;64:7 and he is God for ever and ever.
Jr 3:4
Mt 6:9

Though he punishes you for your iniquities, 5
Dt 30:3 he will take pity on you all;
he will gather you [b] from every nation
wherever you have been scattered.
Dt 30:2 If you return to him 6
with all your heart and all your soul,
behaving honestly towards him,
then he will return to you
and hide his face from you no longer.
Consider how well he has treated you;
loudly give him thanks.
Bless the Lord of justice
1 Tm 1:17 and extol the King of the ages. [c]

I for my part sing his praise 7
in the country of my exile;
I make his power and greatness known
to a nation that has sinned.
Sinners, return to him; 8
let your conduct be upright before him;
perhaps he will be gracious to you
and take pity on you.
I for my part extol God 7 9
and my soul rejoices
in the King of heaven.
Let his greatness ·be on every tongue, 8
his praises be sung in Jerusalem.

Is 60 Jerusalem, Holy City, 9
↗Rv 21 God has scourged you for what you have done
Mi 7:19 but will still take pity on the children of the upright.
Thank the Lord as he deserves 10 12
and bless the King of the ages,
Is 44:26,28 that your Temple may be rebuilt with joy within you;
Am 9:11
Zc 1:16 within you he may comfort every exile,
and within you he may love all those who are distressed,
for all generations to come.

Is 9:1; A bright light will shine 11
49:6;60:1 over all the regions of the earth;
Ps 22:27 many nations will come from far away,
Is 2:3
Mi 4:2 from all the ends of the earth,
Zc 8:20–22 to dwell close to the holy name of the Lord God, [d]
with gifts in their hands for the King of heaven.
Within you, generation after generation
will proclaim their joy,
and the name of her who is Elect will endure
through the generations to come.

Ba 4:31seq. Cursed be any who affront you, 12
cursed be any who destroy you,

who throw down your walls,
who rase your towers,
who burn your houses!
Eternally blessed be he who rebuilds you![e]
17 13 Then you will exult, and rejoice
over the children of the upright,
for they will all have been gathered in
and will bless the Lord of the ages.

14 Blessed are those who love you, Is 66:10
blessed those who rejoice over your peace, Ps 122:6
blessed those who have mourned
over all your punishment!
For they will soon rejoice within you,
witness all your blessedness in days to come.
19 15 My soul blesses the Lord, the great King
16 because Jerusalem will be built anew[f]
and his house for ever and ever.

20 What bliss, if one of my family be left
to see your glory and praise the King of heaven!
The gates of Jerusalem will be built Is 54:11–12; 60:17; 62:1–2
of sapphire and of emerald, Ba 5:1
and all your walls of precious stone, Hg 2:9
the towers of Jerusalem will be built of gold Qrv 21:10–21
and their battlements of pure gold.
22 17 The streets of Jerusalem will be paved
with ruby and with stones from Ophir;
the gates of Jerusalem will resound
with songs of exultation;
and all her houses will say,
23 'Alleluia! Blessed be the God of Israel.'
Within you they will bless the holy name
for ever and ever.

1 **14** The end of the hymns of Tobit.

XIII: NINEVEH

2 Tobit died when he was a hundred and twelve years old and received an
3 2 honourable burial in Nineveh. ·He had been sixty-two when he went blind; and
4 after his cure, he lived in comfort, practising almsgiving and continually praising
3 God and extolling his greatness. ·When he was at the point of death he summoned 4:2–3 Gn 47:29
5 4 his son Tobias and gave him these instructions, ·'My son, take your children and
hurry away to Media, since I believe the word of God pronounced over Nineveh by Na 1–3
Nahum.[a] Everything will come true, ·everything happen that the emissaries of
God, the prophets of Israel, have predicted against Assyria and Nineveh; not one
of their words will prove empty. It will all take place in due time.[b] You will be safer
in Media than in Assyria or in Babylonia. Since I for my part know and believe that

b. 'he will gather you' *Vet. Lat.*; omitted by Gk.
c. From this point to v. 10[e], there is a lacuna in S.; we restore the text on the basis of Vat., *Vet. Lat.*, and Syr., and emend vv. 7–8 in line with Ps 145:6, 11.
d. Following *Vet. Lat.*; 'near your holy Name' S.
e. 'who rebuilds you' *Vet. Lat.*; 'who fears you' S.
f. After 'built anew', we omit 'as a city' with Vat, *Vet. Lat.*

14 a. Instead of 'Nahum', Vat. has 'Jonah.'
b. The author knows that these events have already taken place, but makes Tobit foretell them as one living at the apogee of the Assyrian empire; this is a characteristic device of apocalyptic literature. When we come to the author's own day, however, apocalypse becomes prophecy and he speaks of the future messianic age (when 'the time has fully come' v. 5).

everything God has said will come true; so it will be, and not a word of the prophecies will fail.

'A census will be taken of our brothers living in the land of Israel and they will be
Is 5:13 Jr 9:15 Ezk 12:15;23 •Is 64:10 exiled far from their own fair country. The entire territory of Israel will become a desert, and Samaria and Jerusalem will become a desert, and the house of God, for a time, will be laid waste and burnt. •Then once again God will take pity on them 5
Ezr 3:12 Is 35:8–10 Jr 31 and notes Ezk 36:24seq. Hg 2:3 •Jr 31:38seq. •Ezk 40–42 Hg 2:9 •Is 18:7;19:22 Jr 16:19 and bring them back to the land of Israel. They will rebuild his house, although it will be less beautiful than the first, until the time is fulfilled. But after this, all will return from captivity and rebuild Jerusalem in all her glory, and the house of God will be rebuilt within her as the prophets of Israel have foretold. •And all the 6 people of the whole earth will be converted and will reverence God with all sincerity. All will renounce their false gods who have led them astray into error, and will bless the God of ages in uprightness. All the Israelites spared in those 7 days will remember God in sincerity of heart. They will come and gather in
Is 60:4,21 Jr 32:37 Ezk 34:28; 36:12;37: 25;39:26 Jerusalem and thereafter dwell securely in the land of Abraham, which will be theirs. And those who sincerely love God will rejoice. And those who commit sin and wickedness will vanish from the earth.

'And now, my children, I lay this duty on you; serve God sincerely, and do what 8 10. 11 is pleasing to him. And lay on your children the obligation to behave uprightly, to give alms, to keep God in mind and to bless his name always, sincerely and with all their might.

'So then, my son, leave Nineveh, do not stay here. •As soon as you have buried 9 12 10 your mother next to me, go the same day, whenever it may be, and do not linger in 13 this country where I see wickedness and perfidy unashamedly triumphant. Consider, my child, all the things done by Nadab to his foster-father Ahikar. Was not Ahikar forced to go underground, though still a living man? But God made the
1:21i criminal pay for his outrage before his victim's eyes, since Ahikar came back to the light of day, while Nadab went down to everlasting darkness in punishment for plotting against Ahikar's life. Because of his good works[c] Ahikar escaped the deadly snare Nadab had laid for him, and Nadab fell into it to his own ruin. •So, 11 my children, you see what comes of almsgiving, and what wickedness leads to, I mean to death. But now breath fails me.'

4:4 Gn 49:31 They laid him back on his bed; he died[d] and was buried with honour.

When his mother died, Tobias buried her beside his father. Then he left for 12 Media with his wife and children.[e] He lived in Ecbatana with Raguel, his father-in-law. •He treated the ageing parents of his wife with every care and respect, and 13 15 later buried them in Ecbatana in Media. Tobias inherited the patrimony of Raguel besides that of his father Tobit. •Much honoured, he lived to the age of a hundred 14 16 and seventeen years.[f] •Before he died he witnessed the ruin of Nineveh. He saw 15 the Ninevites taken prisoner and deported to Media by Cyaxares[g] king of Media. He blessed God for everything he inflicted on the Ninevites and Assyrians. Before
Ps 137:8 Na 1–3 his death he had the opportunity of rejoicing over the fate of Nineveh, and he blessed the Lord God for ever and ever. Amen.

c. 'his good works' conj.; 'my good works' S.
d. Vat. adds 'aged one hundred and fifty-eight years'.
e. 'and his children' Vat., *Vet. Lat.*; omitted by S.
f. var.: 'one hundred and twenty-seven' Vat.; one hundred and seven' Syr. 'ninety-nine' Vulg.
g. 'Cyaxares' conj.; 'Ahikar' S. and *Vet. Lat.*; 'Nebuchadnezzar and Ahasuerus' Vat.

JUDITH[a]

I: THE CAMPAIGN OF HOLOFERNES

Nebuchadnezzar and Arphaxad

1 It was the twelfth year of Nebuchadnezzar[b] who reigned over the Assyrians in
the great city of Nineveh. Arphaxad[c] was then reigning over the Medes in Gn 10:22
2 Ecbatana. •He surrounded this city with walls of dressed stones three cubits thick
and six cubits long, making the rampart seventy cubits high and fifty cubits wide.
3 At the gates he placed towers one hundred cubits high and, at the foundations,
4 sixty cubits wide, •the gates themselves being seventy cubits high and forty wide to
allow his forces to march out in a body and his infantry to parade freely.
5 About this time King Nebuchadnezzar gave battle to King Arphaxad in the
6 great plain lying in the territory of Ragae. •Supporting him were all the peoples
from the highlands,[d] all from the Euphrates and Tigris and Hydaspes, and those
from the plains who were subject to Arioch, king of the Elymaeans.[e] Thus many
nations had mustered to take part in the battle of the Cheleoudites.[f]
7 Nebuchadnezzar king of the Assyrians sent a message to all the inhabitants of
Persia, to all the inhabitants of the western countries, Cilicia, Damascus, Lebanon,
8 Anti-Lebanon, to all those along the coast, •to the peoples of Carmel, Gilead,
9 Upper Galilee, the great plain of Esdraelon, •to the people of Samaria and its
outlying towns, to those beyond Jordan, as far away as Jerusalem, Bethany,
Chelous, Kadesh, the river of Egypt, Tahpanhes, Rameses and the whole territory
10 of Goshen, •beyond Tanis too and Memphis, and to all the inhabitants of Egypt as
11 far as the frontiers of Ethiopia.[g] •But the inhabitants of these countries ignored the
summons of Nebuchadnezzar king of the Assyrians and did not rally to him to
make war. They were not afraid of him, since in their view he appeared isolated.[h]
Hence they sent his ambassadors back with nothing achieved and in disgrace.
12 Nebuchadnezzar was furious with all these countries.[i] He swore by his throne and
kingdom to take revenge on all the territories of Cilicia, Damascus and Syria, of
the Moabites and of the Ammonites, of Judaea and Egypt as far as the limits of the
two seas,[j] and to ravage them with the sword.

The campaign against Arphaxad

13 In the seventeenth year, he gave battle with his whole army to King Arphaxad and

1 **a.** The Vulg. text differs considerably from the Gk. Its most important additions will be found in the footnotes, and where its verse numbering is different from Gk this will be noted.

b. Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon (605–562 BC) was never styled 'king of Assyria' and never had his capital at Nineveh, which had been destroyed in 612 by his father Nabopolassar. • On the liberties the author takes with history, *see* p. 622. Here, Nebuchadnezzar typifies any mighty and irreligious monarch, hostile to the People of God.

c. Arphaxad is unknown to historians. His name perhaps suggests Phraortes founder of the kingdom of Media, of which Ecbatana (modern Hamadan) was the capital.

d. The high plateaux of west Iran.

e. The author is presumably referring to Elymais, the eastern province of the Persian Empire *see* 1 M 6:1. • The 'Hydaspes' must be the River Choaspes, which flows through Susa.

f. Probably the Chaldaeans.

g. The list mentions all the vassals or allies of Nebuchadnezzar.

h. lit. 'one man only', i.e. left dependent on any help he can find; though possibly 'a man of straw'.

i. lit. 'the whole earth'. The phrase, common in Jdt either means the district referred to in the context (the whole country) or is a hyperbolic expression.

j. To the list in vv. 7–11, are now added Moab, Ammon and Judaea. The expression 'the limits of the two seas', i.e. extending from the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean, is a figure of speech for universal domination, *see* Ps 72:8; Mi 7:12; Zc 9:10.

in this battle defeated him. He routed Arphaxad's entire army and all his cavalry and chariots; ·he occupied his towns and advanced on Ecbatana; he seized its 14
towers and plundered its market places, reducing its former magnificence to a mockery. ·He later captured Arphaxad in the mountains of Ragae and, thrusting 15
him through with his spears, destroyed him once and for all.

He then retired with his troops and all who had joined forces with him: a vast 16
Est 1:3–4 horde of armed men. Then he and his army gave themselves up to carefree feasting for a hundred and twenty days.

The campaign in the west

2 In the eighteenth year,[a] on the twenty-second day of the first month, a rumour 1
ran through the palace that Nebuchadnezzar king of the Assyrians was to have his revenge on all the countries, as he had threatened. ·Summoning his general 2
staff and senior officers, he held a secret conference with them, and with his own lips pronounced utter destruction on the entire area. ·It was then decreed that 3
everyone should be put to death who had not answered the king's appeal.

When the council was over, Nebuchadnezzar king of the Assyrians sent for 4
Holofernes,[b] general-in-chief of his armies and subordinate only to himself. He said to him, ·"Thus speaks the Great King, lord of the whole world,[c] "Go; take 5
men of proven valour, about a hundred and twenty thousand foot soldiers and a strong company of horse with twelve thousand cavalrymen; ·then advance against 6
all the western lands, since these people have disregarded my call. ·Bid them have 7
earth and water ready,[d] because in my rage I am about to march on them; the feet of my soldiers will cover the whole face of the earth, and I shall plunder it. ·Their 8
wounded will fill the valleys and the torrents, and rivers, blocked with their dead, will overflow. ·I shall lead them captive to the ends of the earth. ·Now go! Begin by 9, 10
conquering this whole region for me. If they surrender to you, hold them for me until the time comes to punish them. ·But if they resist, look on no one with 11
clemency, hand them over to slaughter and plunder throughout the territory entrusted to you. ·For by my life and by the living power of my kingdom I have 12
spoken. All this I shall do by my power. ·And you, neglect none of your master's 13
commands, act strictly according to my orders without further delay." '

Leaving the presence of his sovereign, Holofernes immediately summoned all 14
the marshals, generals and officers of the Assyrian army ·and detailed the picked 15
troops as his master had ordered, about a hundred and twenty thousand men and a further twelve thousand mounted archers. ·He organised these in the normal 16
battle formation. ·He then secured vast numbers of camels, donkeys and mules to 17 8
carry the baggage, and innumerable sheep, oxen and goats for food supplies. Every man received full rations and a generous sum of gold and silver from the 18 10
king's purse.

He then set out for the campaign with his whole army, in advance of King 19 11
Nebuchadnezzar, to overwhelm the whole western region with his chariots, his horsemen and his picked body of foot. ·A motley gathering followed in his rear, as 20
Jg 7:12 numerous as locusts or the grains of sand on the ground; there was no counting
Jl 2:2–7,11 their multitude.

The stages of Holofernes' advance[e]

Thus they set out from Nineveh and marched for three days towards the Plain of 21 12
Bectileth. From Bectileth they went on to pitch camp near the mountains that lie to the north of Upper Cilicia. ·From there Holofernes advanced into the highlands 22
Gn 10:6,13,22 with his whole army, infantry, horsemen, chariots. ·He cut his way through Put 23 13
and Lud, carried away captive all the sons of Rassis and sons of Ishmael living on the verge of the desert south of Cheleon, ·marched along the Euphrates, crossed 24 14
Mesopotamia, rased all the fortified towns controlling the Wadi Abron and reached the sea. ·Next he attacked the territories of Cilicia, butchering all who offered him 25 15
resistance, advanced on the southern frontiers of Japheth, facing Arabia, ·com- 26 16

pletely encircled the Midianites, burned their tents and plundered their sheep-
17 27 folds, •made his way down to the Damascus plain at the time of the wheat
harvest,[f] set fire to the fields, destroyed the flocks and herds, sacked the towns,
18 28 laid the countryside waste and put all the young men to the sword. •Fear and
trembling seized all the coastal peoples; those of Sidon and Tyre, those of Sur, Ex 15:15–16
Ocina and Jamnia. The populations of Azotos and Ascalon were panic-stricken.
1, 2 3 They therefore sent envoys to him to sue for peace, to say, •"We are servants of
the great King Nebuchadnezzar; we lie prostrate before you. Treat us as you
3 think fit. •Our cattle-farms, all our land, all our wheat fields, our flocks and herds,
all the sheep-folds in our encampments are at your disposal. Do with them as you
4 please. •Our towns and their inhabitants too are at your service; go and treat them
5 as you think fit." •These men came to Holofernes and delivered the message as
above.
7, 8 6 He then made his way down to the coast with his army and stationed garrisons in
9 7 all the fortified towns, levying outstanding men there as auxiliaries. •The people of
10 these cities and of all the other towns in the neighbourhood welcomed him, wearing
8 garlands and dancing to the sound of tambourines. •But he demolished their Ex 34:13*o*
shrines[a] and cut down their sacred trees, carrying out his commission to destroy all 2 Ch 17:6
local gods so that the nations should worship Nebuchadnezzar alone and people of
every language and nationality should hail him as a god.[b]
9 Thus he reached the edge of Esdraelon, in the neighbourhood of Dothan, a
10 village facing the great ridge of Judaea. •He pitched camp between Geba and
Scythopolis and stayed there a full month to re-provision his forces.

Judaea on the alert

1 4 When the Israelites living in Judaea heard how Holofernes, general-in-chief of
Nebuchadnezzar king of the Assyrians, had treated the various nations, plun-
2 dering their temples and destroying them, •they were thoroughly alarmed at his
approach and trembled for Jerusalem and the Temple of the Lord their God.
3 They had returned from captivity only a short time before, and the resettlement
of the people in Judaea and the reconsecration of the sacred furnishings, of the
altar, and of the Temple, which had been profaned, were of recent date.[a]
3 4 They therefore alerted the whole of Samaria, Kona, Beth-Horon, Belmain,
5 Jericho, Choba, Aesora and the Salem valley. •They occupied the summits of the
4 highest mountains and fortified the villages on them; they laid in supplies for the
5 6 coming war, as the fields had just been harvested. •Joakim the high priest, resident
in Jerusalem at the time, wrote to the inhabitants of Bethulia and of Betomes-
6 7 thaim,[b] two towns facing Esdraelon, towards the plain of Dothan. •He ordered
them to occupy the mountain passes, the only means of access to Judaea, for there
it would be easy for them to halt an attacking force, the narrowness of the approach
7 8 not allowing men to advance more than two abreast. •The Israelites carried out the

2 **a.** Of his reign, i.e. 587, the year he captured Jerusalem. The author presumably intends to contrast that disaster with the victory won by Judith. The narrative is modelled on the great military campaigns of the kings of Assyria and Babylon against their insurgent vassals of the West.

b. Holofernes and Bagoas, 12:11, are Persian names, and two officers of Artaxerxes III Ochos were so named. The author may have wished to include the campaigns of this king too under the (comprehensive) name of Nebuchadnezzar.

c. Official title of the Persian kings.

d. Persian formula for all the facilities required by a conqueror for transit and occupation.

e. The itinerary contains a number of names which are either unknown or hard to identify; and those names which are known seem oddly arranged. The line of advance, as described, is impossible. Either the author knew nothing of local geography, or he was not interested in factual accuracy.

f. The Hebrews distinguish the barley harvest in April *see* 2 S 21:9, from the wheat harvest, at the end of May, *see* Gn 30:14.

3 **a.** 'shrines' Syr.; 'territory' Gk, but *see* the rest of the v.

b. Neither the Assyrian nor the Babylonian kings ever insisted on this. The Seleucids, following Alexander's lead, were the first to claim divine honours.

4 **a.** The author ignores time (*see* p. 622) to place the return from exile and the repopulation of Jerusalem (539–400), even perhaps the purification of the Temple, after the persecution of Antiochus IV (165), all in the lifetime of Nebuchadnezzar.

b. The two towns are not mentioned elsewhere, Bethulia is represented here as a key position dominating the approaches to Judah, vv. 6–8 and 8:21.

orders of Joakim the high priest and of the people's Council of Elders in session at Jerusalem. [c]

A nation at prayer

All the men of Israel cried most fervently to God and humbled themselves before 9 8
Jon 3:7–8 him, [d] ·They, their wives. their children, their cattle, all their resident aliens, hired 10
or slave, wrapped sackcloth round their loins. ·All the Israelites in Jerusalem, 11 9
including women and children, lay prostrate in front of the Temple, and with ashes
Est 4:1seq. on their heads stretched out their hands [e] before the Lord. ·They draped the altar 12
itself in sackcloth [f] and fervently joined together in begging the God of Israel not to
let their children be carried off, their wives distributed as booty, the towns of their
heritage destroyed, the Temple profaned and desecrated for the heathen to gloat
over. ·The Lord heard them and looked kindly on their distress. 13

Est 4:16 The people fasted for many days throughout Judaea as well as in Jerusalem
before the sanctuary of the Lord Almighty. ·Joakim the high priest and all who 14
Jl 2:17 stood before the Lord, the Lord's priests and ministers, wore sackcloth round their
loins as they offered the perpetual burnt offering and the votive and voluntary
offerings of the people. ·With ashes on their turbans they earnestly called on the 15
Lord to look kindly on the House of Israel.

A council of war in Holofernes' camp

5 Holofernes, general-in-chief of the Assyrian army, received the intelligence 1
that the Israelites were preparing for war, that they had closed the mountain
passes, fortified all the high peaks and laid obstructions in the plains. ·Holofernes 2
Nb 21:21 Dt 2:19e was furious. He summoned all the princes of Moab, all the generals of Ammon and
all the satraps of the coastal regions. ·'Men of Canaan,' he said, 'tell me: what 3
people is this that occupies the hill-country? What towns does it inhabit? How
large is its army? What are the sources of its power and strength? Who is the king
who rules it and commands its army? ·Why have they disdained to wait on me, as 4
all the western peoples have?' [a]

11:9–19 Achior, [b] leader of all the Ammonites, replied, 'May my lord be pleased to listen 5
to what your servant is going to say. I shall give you the facts about these mountain
folk whose home lies close to you. You will hear no lie from the mouth of your
Gn 11:31g servant. ·These people are descended from the Chaldaeans. ·They once came to 6, 7
live in Mesopotamia, because they did not want to follow the gods of their ancestors
who lived in Chaldaea. ·They abandoned the way of their ancestors to worship the 8
God of heaven, [c] the God they learnt to acknowledge. Banished from the presence
of their own gods, they fled to Mesopotamia where they lived for a long time.
Gn 11:31–12:5 When God told them to leave their home and set out for Canaan, they 9
settled there and accumulated gold and silver and great herds of cattle. ·Next, 10
Gn 42:1–5; 46:1–7 Ex 1:7 famine having overwhelmed the land of Canaan, they went down to Egypt where
they stayed till they were well nourished. There they became a great multitude, a
Ex 1:8–14 race beyond counting. ·But the king of Egypt turned against them and exploited 11
them by forcing them to make bricks; he degraded them, reducing them to slavery.
They cried to their God, who struck the entire land of Egypt with incurable 12
Ex 7–12; 14; 21–22 plagues, and the Egyptians expelled them. ·God dried up the Red Sea [d] before 13 11
them ·and led them forward by way of Sinai and Kadesh-Barnea. Having driven 14 12
off all the inhabitants of the desert, ·they settled in the land of the Amorites and in 15
Nb 21:21–32 their strength exterminated the entire population of Heshbon. Then, having
Jos 3 crossed the Jordan, they took possession of all the hill-country, ·driving out the 16 20
Dt 7:1a Canaanites before them and the Perizzites, Jebusites, Shechemites and all the
Dt 28–30 Ps 106:40–46 Girgashites, and lived there for many years. ·All the while they did not sin before 17
Is 59:2 their God, prosperity was theirs, for they have a God who hates wickedness. ·But 18 22
when they turned from the path he had marked out for them some were exterminated
2 K 25 in a series of battles, others were taken captive to a foreign land. The Temple
of their God was rased to the ground and their towns were seized by their enemies.

23 19 Then having turned once again to their God, they came back from the places to
which they had been dispersed and scattered, regained possession of Jerusalem,
where they have their Temple, and reoccupied the hill-country which had been left
24 20 deserted. ·So, now, master and lord, if this people has committed any fault, if they
have sinned against their God, let us first be sure that they really have this reason
25 21 to fail, then advance and attack them. ·But if their nation is guiltless, my lord 11:10
would do better to abstain, for fear that their Lord and God should protect them.
We should then become the laughing-stock of the whole world.'
26 22 When Achior had ended this speech, all the people crowding round the tent
began protesting. Holofernes' own senior officers, as well as all the coastal peoples
27 23 and the Moabites, threatened to tear him limb from limb. ·Why should we be
28 afraid of the Israelites? They are a weak and powerless people, quite unable to
24 stand a stiff attack. ·Forward! Advance! Your army, Holofernes our master, will
swallow them in one mouthful!' [c]

Achior handed over to the Israelites

1 6 When the uproar of those crowding round the council had subsided, Holo-
fernes, general-in-chief of the Assyrian army, reprimanded Achior in front of
2 the whole crowd of foreigners and Ammonites. [a] ·'Achior, who do you think you
are, you and the Ephraimite mercenaries, playing the prophet like this with us
today, and trying to dissuade us from making war on the people of Israel? You 2 K 18:32–35
claim their God will protect them. And who is God if not Nebuchadnezzar? He 3:8
himself will display his power and wipe them off the face of the earth, and their Dn 3:14–18
3 God will certainly not save them. ·But we, his servants, shall destroy them as easily Is 36:18–20;
4 as a single individual. They can never resist the strength of our cavalry. ·We shall 37:4,16–20
burn them all. Their mountains will be drunk with their blood and their plains filled
with their corpses. Far from being able to resist us, every one of them will die; thus
says King Nebuchadnezzar, lord of the whole world. For he has spoken, and his
5 words will not prove empty. ·As for you, Achior, you Ammonite mercenary, who
in a rash moment said these words, you will not see my face again until the day
6 when I have taken my revenge on this brood from Egypt. ·And then the swords of 5:12;16:12
my soldiers and the spears [b] of my officers will pierce your sides. You will fall
7 among their wounded, the moment I turn on Israel. ·My servants will now take
8 you into the hill-country and leave you near one of the towns in the passes; ·you
9 will not die, until you share their ruin. ·No need to look so sad if you cherish the
secret hope that they will not be captured! I have spoken; none of my words will
prove idle.'
10 Holofernes having commanded his tent-orderlies to seize Achior, to take him to
8 11 Bethulia and to hand him over to the Israelites, ·the orderlies took him, escorted
him out of the camp and across the plain, and then, making for the hill-country,
12 reached the springs below Bethulia. ·As soon as the men of the town sighted them,
they snatched up their weapons, left the town and made for the mountain tops,
while all the slingers pelted them with stones to prevent them from coming up.

c. A 'Council of Elders' associated with the high priest is not found in pre-exilic times but appears as an established institution in the Gk period.

d. After 'humbled themselves', we omit: 'with sustained ardour', a dittography.

e. 'their hands' conj.; 'their sackcloth' Gk.

f. Sacking was commonly used as penitential dress, but this is a surprising development.

5 **a.** On Jewish refusal to conform, *see* Est 3:8b.

b. The figure of Achior the Ammonite seems to be modelled on Ahikar the virtuous non-Yahwist sage, *see* Tb 1:21i. Into his mouth the author puts a summary of the history of Israel, conceived of in terms of the acts of God, a favourite OT theme, *see* especially Ps 78; 105; 106; *see* Ws 10seq; Ezk 16,20 and in NT Ac 7; cf. the episode of Balaam the non-Yahwist soothsayer, Nb 22–24. This prepares the way for the discourse of Judith 11:5–19.

c. Persian expression, *see* Ezr 5:11seq; 6:9seq. and the Elephantine papyri, which, in the Bible, is often put into the mouth of a non-Jew to designate the God of Israel, *see* Dn 2:18d.

d. The site of the miraculous exodus from Egypt is not called 'the Red Sea' in any ancient text; normally it is called 'the Sea of Reeds', or merely 'the Sea', *see* Ex 13:18g.

e. Against Achior's religious interpretation of history they urge the human argument, brute force. The entire book demonstrates Achior's contention, which Judith develops in 11:10b.

6 **a.** 'Ammonites' Gk-Luc.; 'Moabites' *Text. rec.* • In the following verse read 'Ammonite' with *Vet. Lat.* and Syr.; 'Ephraim' *Text. rec.*

b. 'spears' *Vet. Lat.* and Syr.; 'crowd' Gk.

However, they managed to take cover at the foot of the slope, where they bound 13 9
Achior and left him lying at the bottom of the mountain and returned to their
master.

The Israelites then came down from their town, stopped by him, unbound him 14 10
and took him to Bethulia, where they brought him before the chief men of the
town, ·who at that time were Uzziah son of Micah of the tribe of Simeon, [c] Chabris 15 11
son of Gothoniel and Charmis son of Melchiel. ·These summoned all the elders of 16
the town. The young men and the women also hurried to the assembly. Achior was
made to stand with all the people surrounding him, and Uzziah questioned him
about what had happened. ·He answered by telling them what had been said at 17 12
Holofernes' council, and what he himself had said in the presence of the Assyrian
leaders, and how Holofernes had bragged of what he would do to the House of
Israel. ·At this the people fell to the ground and worshipped God. ·'Lord God of 18, 19
14, 15
heaven,' they cried, 'take notice of their arrogance and have pity on the humiliation
of our race. Look kindly today on those who are consecrated to you.' [d] ·They then 20 16
spoke reassuringly to Achior and praised him warmly. ·After the assembly Uzziah 21 19
took him home and gave a banquet for the elders; all that night they called on the
God of Israel for help.

II: THE SIEGE OF BETHULIA

The campaign against Israel

7 The following day Holofernes issued orders to his whole army and to the whole 1
host of auxiliaries who had joined him, to break camp and march on Bethulia,
to occupy the mountain passes and so open the campaign against the Israelites.
The troops broke camp that same day. The actual fighting force numbered one 2
hundred and twenty thousand [a] infantry and twelve thousand cavalry, not to
mention the baggage train with the vast number of men on foot concerned with
that. ·They penetrated the valley in the neighbourhood of Bethulia, near the 3
spring, and deployed on a wide front from Dothan to Balbaim and, in depth, from
Bethulia to Cyamon, which faces Esdraelon. ·When the Israelites saw this horde, 4
they were all appalled and said to each other, 'Now they will lick the whole country
clean. Not even the loftiest peaks, the gorges or the hills will be able to stand the
1 M 12:28–29 weight of them.' ·Each man snatched up his arms; they lit beacons on their towers 5
and spent the whole night on watch.

On the second day Holofernes deployed his entire cavalry in sight of the Israel- 6
ites in Bethulia. ·He reconnoitred the slopes leading up to the town, located the 7 6
water-points, seized them and posted pickets over them and returned to the main
body. ·The chieftains of the sons of Esau, all the leaders of the Moabites [b] and the 8 8
generals of the coastal district then came to him and said, ·'If our master will be 9
pleased to listen to us, his forces will not sustain a single wound. ·These Israelites 10
1 K 20:23,28 Ps 68:14,16 do not rely so much on their spears as on the height of the mountains where they
live. And admittedly it is not at all easy to scale these heights of theirs.

'This being the case, master, avoid engaging them in a pitched battle and then 11
you will not lose a single man. ·Stay in camp, keep all your troops there too, while 12 9
your servants seize the spring which rises at the foot of the mountain, ·since that is 13
what provides the population of Bethulia with their water supply. Thirst will then
force them to surrender their town. Meanwhile, we and our men will climb the
nearest mountain tops and form advance posts there to prevent anyone from
leaving the town. ·Hunger will waste them, with their wives and children, and 14
before the sword can reach them they will already be lying in the streets outside
their houses. ·And you will make them pay dearly for their defiance and their 15
refusal to meet you peaceably.'

Their words pleased Holofernes as well as all his officers, and he decided to do 16 10
as they suggested. ·Accordingly, a troop of Moabites [c] moved forward with a 17

further five thousand Assyrians. They penetrated the valley and seized the Israel-
18 ites' waterpoints and springs. ·Meanwhile the Edomites and Ammonites went and took up positions in the highlands opposite Dothan, sending some of their men to the south-east opposite Egrebel near Chous on the Wadi Mochmur. The rest of the Assyrian army took up positions in the plain, covering every inch of the ground; their tents and equipment made an immense encampment, so vast were their numbers.

19 The Israelites called on the Lord their God, dispirited because the enemy had
11 20 surrounded them and cut all line of retreat. ·For thirty-four days the Assyrian army, infantry, chariots, cavalrymen, had them surrounded. Every water-jar the
21 inhabitants of Bethulia had was empty, ·their storage-wells were drying up; on no
22 day could a man drink his fill, since their water was rationed. ·Their little children pined away, the women and young men grew weak with thirst; they collapsed in the streets and gateways of the town; they had no strength left.

12 23 Young men, women, children, the whole people thronged clamouring round Uzziah and the chief men of the town, shouting in the presence of the assembled
13 24 elders, ·'May God be judge between you and us! For you have done us great harm,
25 by not suing for peace with the Assyrians. ·And now there is no one to help us.
14 God has delivered us into their hands to be prostrated before them in thirst and
15 26 utter helplessness. ·Call them in at once; hand the whole town over to be sacked by
16 27 Holofernes' men and all his army. ·After all, we should be much better off as their booty than we are now; no doubt we shall be enslaved, but at least we shall be alive and not see our little ones dying before our eyes or our wives and children
17 28 perishing. ·By heaven and earth and by our God, the Lord of our fathers, who is punishing us for our sins and the sins of our ancestors, we implore you to take this
18 29 course[d] now, today.' ·Bitter lamentations rose from the whole assembly, and they all cried loudly to the Lord God.

23 30 Then Uzziah spoke to them, 'Take heart, brothers! Let us hold out five days
24 more. By then the Lord our God will take pity on us, for he will not desert us
25 31 altogether. ·At the end of this time, if no help is forthcoming, I shall do as you
32 have said.' ·With that he dismissed the people to their various quarters. The men went to man the walls and towers of the town, sending the women and children home. The town was full of despondency.

III: JUDITH

Description of Judith

1 8 Judith[a] was informed at the time of what had happened. She was the daughter of Merari son of Ox, son of Joseph, son of Oziel, son of Elkiah, son of Ananias, son of Gideon, son of Raphaim, son of Ahitub, son of Elijah, son of Hilkiah, son
2 of Eliab, son of Nathanael, son of Salamiel, son of Sarasadai, son of Israel.[b] ·Her husband Manasseh, of her own tribe and family, had died at the time of the barley
3 harvest. ·He was supervising the men as they bound up the sheaves in the field when he caught sunstroke and had to take to his bed. He died in Bethulia, his home

c. The author of the book seems to be particularly interested in the tribe of Simeon which plays so inconspicuous a part in Israelite history. The name of Uzziah recalls that of Uzziel, 1 Ch 4:42. In 9:2–4 Judith rehabilitates the patriarch censured in Gn 34:30 and 49:5–7.

d. i.e. the whole nation of Israel, by virtue of the covenant.

7 a. '120 000' with Vulg., cf. 2:15; '170 000' Gk.

b. The Edomites ('sons of Esau') and Moabites are traditional enemies of Israel.

c. 'Moabites' *Vet. Lat.* and Syr.; 'Ammonites' *Text. rec.*

d. Following *Vet. Lat.* and Syr.; Gk adds a negative, but this is no more than a literal translation of the Hebrew formula for oaths, the sense of which, however, is positive. • Punishment for individual faults here involves collective punishment for the nation, in accordance with Israel's ancient conviction that the guilt and punishment of one meant the guilt and punishment of all.

8 a. The name of Judith (*see* Gn 26:34) seems to have been chosen by the author for its meaning 'the Jewess', Judith, whose action rivals that of Jael, Jg 4:–17–22, is the model of a true daughter of Israel. In her song of triumph. 16:2,4, etc., the voice is that of the whole nation personified in her.

b. This genealogy omits the name of Simeon (found in certain MSS and versions), *see* 9:2. But v. 2 presupposes some tribal name.

town, and was buried with his ancestors in the field that lies between Dothan and Balamon. ·As a widow, Judith stayed inside her home for three years and four 4
Jg 3:20 months. ·She had had an upper room built for herself on the roof. She wore 5
2 K 4:10 sackcloth next to the skin and dressed in widow's weeds. ·She fasted every day of 6
her widowhood except for the Sabbath eve, the Sabbath itself, the eve of New Moon, the feast of New Moon and the joyful festivals of the House of Israel. ·Now 7
she was very beautiful, charming to see. Her husband Manasseh had left her gold and silver, menservants and maidservants, herds and land; and she lived among all her possessions ·without anyone finding a word to say against her, so devoutly did 8
she fear God.

Judith and the elders

Hearing how the water shortage had demoralised the people and how they had 9
complained bitterly to the headman of the town, and being also told what Uzziah had said to them and how he had given them his oath to surrender the town to the Assyrians in five days' time, ·Judith immediately sent the serving-woman who 10
ran her household to summon Chabris and Charmis, two elders of the town. When these came in she said: 11

'Listen to me, leaders of the people of Bethulia. You were wrong to speak to the people as you did today and to bind yourself by oath, in defiance of God, to surrender the town to our enemies if the Lord did not come to your help within a
Jb 38:2;40: 2seq.;7seq.;42:3 set number of days. ·Who are you, to put God to the test today, you, of all people, 12
to set yourselves above him? ·You put the Lord Almighty to the test! You do not 13
Pr 14:10 1 Co 2:11 ·Ps 139:16–17 Rm 11:33–34 understand anything, and never will. ·If you cannot sound the depths of the human 14
heart or unravel the arguments of the human mind, how can you fathom the God who made all things, or sound his mind or unravel his purposes? No, brothers, do not provoke the anger of the Lord our God. ·Although it may not be his will to 15
help us within the next five days, he has the power to protect us for as many days as he pleases, just as he has the power to destroy us before our enemies. ·But you 16
have no right to demand guarantees where the designs of the Lord our God are concerned. For God is not to be threatened as a human being is, nor is he, like a 15
mere human, to be cajoled. ·Rather, as we wait patiently for him to save, let us 17
plead with him to help us. He will hear our voice if such is his good pleasure. [c]

5:20–21;11:10 'And indeed of recent times and still today there is not one tribe of ours, or 18
family, or village, or town that has worshipped gods made by human hand, as once
Ps 78:56seq.; 106:13seq. was done, ·which was the reason why our ancestors were delivered over to sword 19
Jr 7:17–20; 14:7–15:9 and notes Ezk 16:15–58 and sack, and perished in misery at the hands of our enemies. ·We for our part 20
acknowledge no other God but him; and so we may hope he will not look on us disdainfully or desert our nation. [d]

'If indeed they capture us, as you expect, then all Judaea will be captured too, 21
and our holy places plundered, and we shall answer with our blood for their profanation. ·The slaughter of our brothers, the captivity of our country, the 22
unpeopling of our heritage, will recoil on our own heads among the nations whose slaves we shall become, and our new masters will look down on us as an outrage and a disgrace; ·for our surrender will not reinstate us in their favour; no, the Lord 23
our God will make it a thing to be ashamed of. ·So now, brothers, let us set an 24
example to our brothers, since their lives depend on us, and the sanctuary—Temple and altar—rests on us.

'All this being so, let us rather give thanks to the Lord our God who, as he tested 25 21
Gn 22:1–19;28; 5:29:22–30;31 our ancestors, is now testing us.' [e] ·Remember how he treated Abraham, all the 26 22
ordeals of Isaac, all that happened to Jacob in Syrian Mesopotamia while he kept the sheep of Laban, his mother's brother. ·For as these ordeals were intended by 27
him to search their hearts, so now this is not vengeance that God is exacting on us,
Dt 4:7 but a warning inflicted by the Lord on those who are near his heart.'

Uzziah replied, 'Everything you have just said comes from an honest heart and 28
no one will contradict a word of it. ·Not that today is the first time your wisdom has 29

been displayed; from your earliest years all the people have known how shrewd
28 30 you are and of how sound a heart. ·But, parched with thirst, the people forced us
29 31 to act as we had promised them and to bind ourselves by an inviolable oath. ·You
are a devout woman; pray to the Lord, then, to send us a downpour to fill our
storage-wells, so that our faintness may pass.'
30 32 Judith replied, 'Listen to me, I intend to do something, the memory of which
32 33 will be handed down to the children of our race from age to age. ·Tonight you must
be at the gate of the town. I shall make my way out with my attendant. Before the
time fixed by you for surrendering the town to our enemies, the Lord will make use
33 34 of me to rescue Israel. ·You must not ask what I intend to do; I shall not tell you
34 35 until I have done it.' ·Uzziah and the chief men said, 'Go in peace. May the Lord
36 show you a way to take revenge on our enemies.' ·And leaving the upper room
they went back to their posts.

Judith's prayer

1 9 Judith threw herself face to the ground, scattered ashes on her head, undressed as far as the sackcloth she was wearing and cried loudly to the Lord. At the same time in Jerusalem the evening incense was being offered in the Temple of God. [a] Judith said: Ex 30:7,8 Ps 141:2

2 Lord, God of my ancestor Simeon, 6:15c Gn 34
you armed him with a sword to take vengeance on the foreigners
who had undone a virgin's belt [b] to her shame,
laid bare her thigh to her confusion,
violated her womb to her dishonour,
since, though you said, 'This must not be,' they did it.
3 For this you handed their leaders over to slaughter,
and their bed, defiled by their treachery,
was itself betrayed in blood.
You struck the slaves with the chieftains
and the chieftains with their retainers. [c]
4 You left their wives to be carried off,
their daughters to be taken captive,
and their spoils to be shared out
among the sons you loved,
who had been so zealous for you,
had loathed the stain put on their blood
and called on you for help.

O God, my God,
now hear this widow too;
5 for you have made the past,
and what is happening now, and what will follow. Is 44:7
What is, what will be, you have planned;
what has been, you designed. Ps 115:3;135:6
6 Your purposes stood forward;
'See, here we are!' they said. Jb 38:35 Is 46:9–13 Ba 3:35

c. Like Job, the elders of Bethulia were wrong to question God's intentions, Jb 38:2 etc; like him they should submit in silence. But the author of Jdt teaches a more filial trust than Jb, and his conception of the power of prayer is impressive.

d. This conviction, already stated by Achior, will be repeated by Judith in the presence of Holofernes. Judith joins her compatriots in a national examination of conscience, which acquits them of the idolatry long since denounced by the prophets but not rooted out until the period of the second Temple.

e. The lesson of patriarchal history (which the author of Jb had not detected); the suffering of the virtuous is not punishment but trial.

9 a. The author frequently refers to Jerusalem, the Temple, the liturgy, the high priest 4:2,3, 6–8; 5:19; 8:21–24; 9:8,13; 15:8; 16:18.

b. 'belt' conj.; 'womb' Gk; The expression 'undo the belt' means 'get married', here: 'have sexual relations'.

c. Line corrected in accordance with 9:10; *see* Ws 18:11; 'and the princes on their thrones' Gk.

For all your ways are prepared
and your judgements delivered with foreknowledge.
5:23;6:2 See the Assyrians, with their army abounding 7
Ps 33:16–17 glorying in their horses and their riders,
exulting in the strength of their infantry.
2 M 8:18 Trust as they may in shield and spear,
in bow and sling,
16:2 in you they have not recognised the Lord, 10
Ps 46:9;76:3 the breaker of battle-lines;[d]
yours alone is the title of Lord. 8

Break their violence with your might, 11
in your anger bring down their strength.
For they plan to profane your holy places,
to defile the tabernacle, the resting place of your glorious name,
and to hack down the horn of your altar.
Observe their arrogance, 9 12
send your fury on their heads,
give the strength I have in mind
to this widow's hand.
By guile of my lips 10
strike down slave with master,
and master with retainer.
Break their pride
by a woman's hand.

Jg 7:4–7 Your strength does not lie in numbers, 11
1 S 14:6 nor your might in strong men;
since you are the God of the humble,
the help of the oppressed,
the support of the weak,
the refuge of the forsaken,
the Saviour of the despairing.[e]
Please, please, God of my father, 12
God of the heritage of Israel,
Master of heaven and earth, 17
Creator of the waters,
King of your whole creation,
hear my prayer.
10:4;11:20,23; Give me a beguiling tongue 13
16:6,9 to wound and kill
Est 4:17[r-s] those who have formed such cruel designs
against your covenant,
against your holy dwelling-place,
against Mount Zion,
against the house belonging to your sons.
And demonstrate to every nation, every tribe, 14 19
that you are the Lord, God[f] of all power, all might,
and that the race of Israel has no protector but you.

IV: JUDITH AND HOLOFERNES

Judith goes to the camp of Holofernes

10 Thus Judith called on the God of Israel. When she had finished praying, •she 1, 2
got up from the floor, summoned her maid and went down into the rooms
8:6 which she used on Sabbath days and festivals. •There she removed the sackcloth 3

she was wearing and taking off her widow's dress, she washed all over, anointed herself plentifully with perfumes, dressed her hair, wrapped a turban round it and put on the robe of joy she used to wear when her husband Manasseh was alive.
4 She put sandals on her feet, put on her necklaces, bracelets, rings, earrings and all her jewellery, and made herself beautiful enough to beguile the eye of any man 9:13+
5 who saw her. ·Then she handed her maid a skin of wine and a flask of oil, filled a bag with barley girdle-cakes, cakes of dried fruit and pure loaves,[a] and wrapping Lv 17:10–14 Est 4:17ᵏ
6 all these provisions up gave them to her as well. ·They then went out, making for the town gate of Bethulia. There they found Uzziah waiting with the two elders of
7 the town, Chabris and Charmis. ·When they saw Judith, her face so changed and her clothes so different, they were lost in admiration of her beauty. They said to her:

8 May the God of our ancestors keep you in his favour!
May he crown your designs with success
to the glory of the children of Israel,
to the greater glory of Jerusalem!

9 Judith worshipped God, and then she said, 'Have the town gate opened for me so that I can go out and fulfil all the wishes you expressed to me.' They did as she
10 asked and gave orders to the young men to open the gate for her. ·This done, Judith went out accompanied by her maid, while the men of the town watched her all the way down the mountain and across the valley, until they lost sight of her.
11 As the women were making straight through the valley, an advance unit of
12 Assyrians intercepted them, ·and, seizing Judith, began to question her. 'Which side are you on? Where do you come from? Where are you going?' 'I am a daughter of the Hebrews,' she replied, 'and I am fleeing from them since they will soon be
13 your prey. ·I am on my way to see Holofernes, the general of your army, to give him trustworthy information.[b] I shall show him the road to take if he wants to
14 capture all the hill-country without losing one man or one life.' ·As the men listened to what she was saying, they stared in astonishment at the sight of such a
15 beautiful woman. ·'It will prove the saving of you,' they said to her, 'coming down to see our master of your own accord. You had better go to his tent; some of our
16 men will escort you and hand you over to him. ·Once you are in his presence do not be afraid. Tell him what you have just told us and you will be well treated.'
17 They then detailed a hundred of their men as escort for herself and her attendant, and these led them to the tent of Holofernes.
18 News of her coming had already spread through the tents, and there was a general stir in the camp. She was still outside the tent of Holofernes waiting to be
19 announced, when a crowd began forming round her. ·They were immediately
18 impressed by her beauty and impressed with the Israelites because of her. 'Who could despise a people who have women like this?' they kept saying. 'Better not leave one of them alive; let any go and they could twist the whole world round their fingers!'
20 The bodyguard and adjutants of Holofernes then came out and led Judith into
19 21 the tent. ·Holofernes was resting on his bed under a canopy of purple and gold
22 studded with emeralds and precious stones. ·The men announced her and he came out to the entrance to the tent, with silver torches[c] carried before him.

d. The presumption of the non-Yahwists vaunting their military superiority was always a matter of outrage for Israel, and a reason for relying on the help of God, *see* Is 30:15; 31 1–3; Hab 1:12–17.

e. Expressions characteristic of the religion of 'the afflicted', and of much OT piety, *see* Zp 2:3d.

f. Here and in 13:11 the Gk reads 'God, God', the phraseology of the Psalms edited by the Elohist, *see* Ps 45:7; 50:7.

10 a. Judith seems more scrupulous about legal purity than Esther, more exacting even than the Law itself, *see* 11:17; 12:6–9.

b. The protestations of truthfulness *see* 11:5, 10, ascribed to Judith, who is determined to deceive Holofernes, 11:12–19, are to be taken in the moral context of the patriarchal age *see* Gn 27:1–25; 34:13–29; 37:32–34, or of the wars of Yahweh in the days of the Judges (Jos 2:1–7; Jg 4:17–22), when the story is supposed to take place.

c. Holofernes' tent, *see also* 12:1; 13:1–3; 14:14–15, is apparently a richly decorated and spacious pavilion. The author allows his descriptive faculties free rein in depicting the camp of an army on campaign, though it is true they are the general-in-chief's headquarters.

When Judith confronted the general and his adjutant, the beauty of her face 23
astonished them all. She fell on her face and did homage to him, but his servants
raised her from the ground.

The first meeting of Judith with Holofernes

11 'Courage, woman,' Holofernes said, 'do not be afraid. I have never hurt 1
anyone who chose to serve Nebuchadnezzar, king of the whole world.
Even now, if your nation of mountain dwellers had not insulted me, I would not 2
have raised a spear against them. This was their fault, not mine. ·But tell me, why 3
have you fled from them and come to us? . . . Anyhow, this will prove the saving of
you. Courage! You will live through this night, and many after. ·No one will hurt 4
you. On the contrary, you will be treated as well as any who serve my lord King
Nebuchadnezzar.'

Judith said, 'Please listen favourably to what your slave has to say. Permit your 5 4
10:13b servant to speak in your presence, I shall speak no word of a lie to my lord tonight.[a]
You have only to follow your servant's advice and God will bring your work to a 6
successful conclusion; in what my lord undertakes he will not fail. ·Long life to 7 5
Nebuchadnezzar, king of the whole world, who has sent you to set every living soul
to rights; may his power endure! Since, thanks to you, he is served not only by
Jr 27:6 Ba 3:16–17 Dn 2:38 human beings, but through your compulsion the wild animals themselves, the
cattle, and the birds of the air are to live in the service of Nebuchadnezzar and his
whole House.

'We have indeed heard of your genius and adroitness of mind. It is known 8 6
everywhere in the world that throughout the empire you have no rival for ability,
wealth of experience and brilliance in waging war. ·We have also heard what 9 7
Achior said in his speech to your council. The men of Bethulia having spared him,
he has told them everything that he said to you. ·Now, master and lord, do not 10
disregard what he said; keep it in your mind, since it is true;[b] our nation will not be 8
punished, the sword will indeed have no power over them, unless they sin against
their God. ·But as it is, my lord need expect no repulse or setback, since death is 11 9
about to fall on their heads, for sin has gained a hold over them, provoking the
anger of their God each time that they commit it. ·As they are short of food and 12 10
their water is giving out, they have resolved to fall back on their cattle and decided 11
to make use of all the things that God has, by his laws, forbidden them to eat. ·Not 13 12
Dt 14:22 only have they made up their minds to eat the first-fruits of corn and the tithes of
wine and oil, though these have been consecrated by them and set apart for the
priests who serve in Jerusalem in the presence of our God, and may not lawfully
even be handled by ordinary people,[c] ·but they have sent men to Jerusalem— 14
where the inhabitants are doing much the same—to bring them back authorisation
from the Council of Elders. ·Now this will be the outcome: when the permission 15
arrives and they act on it, that very day they will be delivered over to you for
destruction.

'When I, your servant, came to know all this, I fled from them. God has sent me 16 13
11:5a to do things with you at which the world will be astonished when it hears. ·Your 17 14
servant is a devout woman; she honours the God of heaven day and night. I
therefore propose, my lord, to stay with you. I, your servant, shall go out every 15
night into the valley and pray to God to let me know when they have committed
their sin. ·I shall then come and tell you, so that you can march out with your whole 18
army; and none of them will be able to resist you. ·I shall be your guide right across 19
Judaea until you reach Jerusalem; there I shall enthrone you in the very middle of
the city. And then you can round them up like shepherd-less sheep, with never a
dog daring to bark at you. Foreknowledge tells me this; this has been foretold to 16
me and I have been sent to reveal it to you.' 17

Her words pleased Holofernes, and all his adjutants. Full of admiration at her 20 18
wisdom they exclaimed, ·'There is no woman like her from one end of the earth to 21 19
the other, so lovely of face and so wise of speech!' ·Holofernes said, 'God has done 22 20

well to send you ahead of the others. Strength will be ours, and ruin theirs who
21 23 have insulted my lord. ·As for you, you are as beautiful as you are eloquent; if you
do as you have promised, your God shall be my God, and you yourself shall make
your home in the palace of King Nebuchadnezzar and be famous throughout the
world.'

1 **12** With that he had her brought in to where his silver dinner service was
already laid, and had his own food served to her and his own wine poured
2 out for her. ·But Judith said, 'I would rather not eat this, in case I incur some fault. 10:5a
3 What I have brought will be enough for me.' ·Suppose your provisions run out,' Est 4:17ˣ Dn 1:8
Holofernes asked, 'how could we get more of the same sort? We have no one
4 belonging to your race here.' ·May your soul live, my lord,' Judith answered, 'the
Lord will have used me to accomplish his plan, before your servant has finished
5 these provisions.' ·Holofernes' adjutants then took her to a tent where she slept
6 until midnight. A little before the morning watch, she got up. ·She had already
sent this request to Holofernes, 'Let my lord kindly give orders for your servant to
7 be allowed to go out and pray,' ·and Holofernes had ordered his guards not to
7 prevent her. She stayed in the camp for three days; she went out each night to the
8 8 valley of Bethulia and washed at the spring where the picket had been posted. ·As
she went she prayed to the Lord God of Israel to guide her in her plan to relieve the
9 children of her people. ·Having purified herself, she would return and stay in her
tent until her meal was brought her in the evening.

Judith at the banquet of Holofernes

10 On the fourth day Holofernes gave a banquet, inviting only his own staff and none
11 of the other officers. ·He said to Bagoas, the eunuch in charge of his personal
affairs, 'Go and persuade that Hebrew woman you are looking after to come and
11 12 join us and eat and drink in our company. ·We shall be disgraced if we let a woman
like this go without seducing her. [a] If we do not seduce her, everyone will laugh at
12 13 us!' ·Bagoas then left Holofernes and went to see Judith. 'Would this young and
lovely woman condescend to come to my lord?' he asked. 'She will occupy the seat
of honour opposite him, drink the joyful wine with us and be treated today like one
13, 14 14 of the Assyrian ladies who stand in the palace of Nebuchadnezzar.' ·'Who am I',
Judith replied, 'to resist my lord? I shall not hesitate to do whatever he wishes, and
doing this will be my joy to my dying day.'

15 15 So she got up and put on her dress and all her feminine adornments. Her maid
preceded her, and on the floor in front of Holofernes spread the fleece which
Bagoas had given Judith for her daily use to lie on as she ate. [b]

16 16 Judith came in and took her place. The heart of Holofernes was ravished at the
sight; his very soul was stirred. He was seized with a violent desire to sleep with
her; and indeed since the first day he saw her, he had been waiting for an
17 17 opportunity to seduce her. ·'Drink then!' Holofernes said, 'Enjoy yourself,with
18 us!' ·'I am delighted to do so, my lord, for since my birth I have never felt my life
19 more worthwhile than today.' ·She took what her maid had prepared, and ate and
20 drank facing him. ·Holofernes was so enchanted with her that he drank far more
wine than he had drunk on any other day in his life.

1 **13** It grew late and his staff hurried away. Bagoas closed the tent from the
outside, having shown out those who still lingered in his lord's presence.
2. 3. 4 2 They went to their beds wearied with too much drinking, ·and Judith was left alone
in the tent with Holofernes who had collapsed wine-sodden on his bed.
5 3 Judith then told her maid to stay just outside the bedroom and wait for her to come

11 a. Judith's speech is ingeniously ambiguous. The 'work' and the 'lord' mentioned in v. 6 mean one thing for her, another for Holofernes. Same ambiguity in v. 16. In v. 8 Judith praises Holofernes' perspicacity at the very moment she hoodwinks him.

b. Another ambiguity; Achior's words had been true, but Judith's prophecy of what the Jews will do is not.

c. Here again the author exaggerates the demands of the Law, possibly following a Pharisaic tradition.

12 a. lit. 'without enjoying her company', euphemism, *see* Dn 13:54,58.

b. As in Esther, the fate of Israel is to be settled in the course of a banquet.

out, as she did every morning. She had let it be understood she would be going out to her prayers and had also spoken of her intention to Bagoas.

By now everyone had left Holofernes, and no one, either important or unimportant, was left in the bedroom. Standing beside the bed, Judith murmured to herself:

Lord God, to whom all strength belongs,
prosper what my hands are now to do
for the greater glory of Jerusalem;
now is the time to recover your heritage
and to further my plans
to crush the enemies arrayed against us.

With that she went up to the bedpost by Holofernes' head and took down his scimitar; coming closer to the bed she caught him by the hair and said, 'Make me
Jg 4:21 strong today, Lord God of Israel!' Twice she struck at his neck with all her might, and cut off his head. She then rolled his body off the bed and pulled down the canopy from the bedposts. After which, she went out and gave the head of Holofernes to her maid who put it in her food bag. The two then left the camp together, as they always did when they went to pray. Once they were out of the camp, they skirted the ravine, climbed the slope to Bethulia and made for the gates.

Judith brings the head of Holofernes to Bethulia

From a distance, Judith shouted to the guards on the gates, 'Open the gate! Open!
Ex 15:1–2 Ps 48:7–11; 68;98:1–3 For the Lord our God is with us still, displaying his strength in Israel and his might against our enemies, as he has done today!' Hearing her voice, the townsmen hurried down to the town gate and summoned the elders. Everyone, great and small, came running down, since her arrival was unexpected. They threw the gate open, welcomed the women, lit a fire to see by and crowded round them. Then Judith raised her voice and said, 'Praise God! Praise him! Praise the God who has not withdrawn his mercy from the House of Israel, but has shattered our enemies by my hand tonight!' She pulled the head out of the bag and held it for them to see. 'This is the head of Holofernes, general-in-chief of the Assyrian army; here is the canopy under which he lay drunk! The Lord has struck him down by the hand of a woman! Glory to the Lord who has protected me in the course I took! My face seduced him, only to his own undoing; he committed no sin with me to shame me or disgrace me.' [a]

Overcome with emotion, the people all prostrated themselves and worshipped God, exclaiming with one voice, 'Blessings on you, our God, for confounding your people's enemies today!' Uzziah then said to Judith:

May you be blessed, my daughter, by God Most High,
beyond all women on earth;
Jg 5:24 ↗Lk 1:28,42 and blessed be the Lord God,
Creator of heaven and earth,
who guided you to cut off the head
of the leader of our enemies!
The trust which you have shown
will not pass from human hearts,
as they commemorate
the power of God for evermore.
God grant you may be always held in honour
and rewarded with blessings,
since you did not consider your own life
when our nation was brought to its knees,
but warded off our ruin,
walking in the right path before our God.

26 And the people all said, 'Amen! Amen!'

V: VICTORY

The Jews attack the Assyrian camp

1 14 Judith said, 'Listen to me, brothers. Take this head and hang it on your
2 battlements. •When morning comes and the sun is up, let every man take
his arms and every able-bodied man leave the town. Appoint a leader for them, as
if you meant to march down to the plain against the Assyrian advanced post. But
3 you must not do this. •The Assyrians will gather up their equipment, make for their
4 camp and wake up their commanders; they in turn will rush to the tent of Holo-
fernes and not be able to find him. They will then be seized with panic and flee at
5 4 your advance. •All you and the others who live in the territory of Israel will have to
do is to give chase and slaughter them as they retreat.
5 'But before you do this, call me Achior the Ammonite, for him to see and
identify the man who held the House of Israel in contempt, the man who sent him
13:27,28 6 to us as someone already doomed to die.' •So they had Achior brought from
29 Uzziah's house. No sooner had he arrived and seen the head of Holofernes held by
30 7 a member of the people's assembly than he fell on his face in a faint. •They lifted
him up. He then threw himself at Judith's feet and, prostrate before her, exclaimed:

31 May you be blessed in all the tents of Judah
and in every nation;
those who hear your name
will be seized with dread!

8 'Now tell me everything that you have done in these past few days.' And
surrounded by the people, Judith told him everything she had done from the day
9 she left Bethulia to the moment when she was speaking. •When she came to the
10 end, the people cheered at the top of their voices until the town echoed. •Achior,
recognising all that the God of Israel had done, believed ardently in him and,
accepting circumcision, was permanently[a] incorporated into the House of Israel. Dt 23:4–5
14:7 11 At daybreak they hung the head of Holofernes on the ramparts. Every man took
8 12 his arms and they all went out in groups to the slopes of the mountain. •Seeing this,
the Assyrians sent word to their leaders, who in turn reported to the generals, the
9,11 13 captains of thousands and all the other officers; •and these in their turn reported to
12 the tent of Holofernes. 'Rouse our master,' they said to his major-domo, 'these
slaves have dared to march down on us to attack—and to be wiped out to a man!'
13 14 Bagoas went inside and struck the curtain dividing the tent, thinking that Holo-
14 15 fernes was sleeping with Judith. •But as no one seemed to hear, he drew the curtain
and went into the bedroom, to find him thrown down dead on the threshold, with
16 his head cut off. •He gave a great shout, wept, sobbed, shrieked and rent his
15 17 clothes. •He then went into the tent which Judith had occupied and could not find
16 18 her either. Then, rushing out to the men, he shouted, •'The slaves have rebelled!
A single Hebrew woman has brought shame on the House of Nebuchadnezzar. 13:15;16:5–9
Holofernes is lying dead on the ground, without his head!' Jg 9:54
17, 18 19 When they heard this, the leaders of the Assyrian army tore their tunics in
consternation, and the camp rang with their wild cries and their shouting.
1 15 When the men who were still in their tents heard the news they were
2 appalled. •Panic-stricken and trembling, no two of them could keep

13 **a.** Corresponding to v. 16 of the Vulg. vv. 20–21. [20] 'Long live the Lord! for his angel has guarded me on my way to Holofernes, during my stay and on my return. The Lord has not allowed his handmaid to be defiled, but has brought me back to you unstained by sin, rejoicing at his victory, at my escape, and at your deliverance. [21] Glorify him, all of you, since he is good, since his mercy is everlasting.' *see* Ps 136:1.

14 **a.** lit. 'until today'. Achior's adoption into the House of Israel symbolises the rehabilitation of the Ammonites, *see* Dt 23:4–5.

together, the rout was complete, with one accord they fled along every track across the plain or through the mountains. •The men who had been bivouacking in the 3
mountains round Bethulia were fleeing too. Then all the Israelite warriors charged down on them. •Uzziah sent messengers to Betomasthaim, Bebai, Choba, Kola, 4
throughout the whole territory of Israel, to inform them of what had happened and to urge them all to hurl themselves on the enemy and annihilate them. •As soon as 5
the Israelites heard the news, they fell on them as one man and massacred them all the way to Choba. The men of Jerusalem and the entire mountain country[a] also rallied to them, once they had been informed of the events in the enemy camp. Then the men of Gilead and Galilee attacked them on the flank and struck at them fiercely till they neared Damascus and its territory. •All the other inhabitants of 6 7
Est 9:5,16 Bethulia fell on the Assyrian camp and looted it to their great profit. •The Israelites 7
returning from the slaughter seized what was left. The hamlets and villages of the mountain country and the plain also captured a great deal of booty, since there were vast stores of it.

Thanksgiving

Joakim the high priest and the entire Council of Elders of Israel, who were in 8 9
Jerusalem, came to gaze on the benefits that the Lord had lavished on Israel and to see Judith and congratulate her. •On coming to her house, they blessed her with 9 10
one accord, saying:

You are the glory of Jerusalem!
You are the great pride of Israel!
You are the highest honour of our race!

By doing all this with your own hand 10 11
you have deserved well of Israel,
and God has approved what you have done.
May you be blessed by the Lord Almighty
in all the days to come!

And the people all said, 'Amen!' 12

The people looted the camp for thirty days. They gave Judith the tent of 11 13, 14
Holofernes, all his silver plate, his divans, his drinking bowls and all his furniture. She took this, loaded her mule, harnessed her carts and heaped the things into
Ex 15:20 Jg 11:34 1 S:18:6 Jr 31:4,13 them. •All the women of Israel, hurrying to see her, formed choirs of dancers in 12
her honour. Judith took wands of vine-leaves in her hand and distributed them to the women who accompanied her;[b] •she and her companions put on wreaths of 13
olive. Then she took her place at the head of the procession and led the women as they danced. All the men of Israel, armed and garlanded, followed them, singing hymns. •With all Israel round her, Judith broke into this song of thanksgiving and 14 16:1
the whole people sang this hymn:[c]

Ps 81:1–3; 135: 1–3; 149:1–3 **16** Break into song for my God, to the tambourine, 1
sing in honour of the Lord, to the cymbal,
let psalm and canticle mingle for him,
extol his name, invoke it!
9:7 Ex 15:3 Ps 46:9; 68:30;76:3 For the Lord is a God who breaks battle-lines; 2
he has pitched[a] his camp in the middle of his people
to deliver me from the hands of my oppressors.

Assyria came down from the mountains of the north, 3
came with tens of thousands of his army.
Their multitude blocked the ravines,
their horses covered the hills.
He threatened to burn up my country, 4 6
destroy my young men with the sword,

dash my sucklings to the ground,
make prey of my little ones,
carry off my maidens;
7 5 but the Lord Almighty has thwarted them
by a woman's hand.

8 6 For their hero did not fall at the young men's hands,
it was not the sons of Titans struck him down,
no proud giants made that attack,
but Judith, the daughter of Merari,
who disarmed him with the beauty of her face.
9 7 She laid aside her widow's dress
to raise up those who were oppressed in Israel;
10 she anointed her face with perfume,
8 bound her hair under a turban,
put on a linen gown to seduce him.
11 9 Her sandal ravished his eye,
her beauty took his soul prisoner
and the scimitar cut through his neck!

12 10 The Persians trembled at her boldness,
the Medes were daunted by her daring.
11 These were struck with fear when my lowly ones raised the war cry,
these were seized with terror when my weak ones shouted,
and when they raised their voices these gave ground.
12 The children of mere girls ran them through, 5:23
pierced them like the offspring of deserters. 6:5
They perished in the battle of my Lord!

13 I shall sing a new song to my God. Ps 144:9
Lord, you are great, you are glorious, Ps 86:10; 147:5
wonderfully strong, unconquerable.
17 14 May your whole creation serve you!
For you spoke and things came into being, Ps 33:9;148:5; Ps 104:30
you sent your breath and they were put together,
and no one can resist your voice. Est 4:17[b]

15 Should mountains be tossed from their foundations Jg 5:5 Ps 97:5
to mingle with the waves,
should rocks melt
like wax before your face,
to those who fear you, Ps 25:14;103:13
you would still be merciful.

16 A little thing indeed Pr 51:16–17
is a sweetly smelling sacrifice,
still less the fat
burned for you in burnt offering;
but whoever fears the Lord Si 34:13–17
is great for ever.

15 **a.** The hill country of Judah.

b. Processions of this sort are well enough known (*see* marginal references), but the wearing of olive chaplets, v. 13, is a Greek custom. Similarly, such wands—branches or sticks decorated with greenery—occur only once elsewhere in the Bible, 2 M 10:7. The Jews were, however, in the habit of waving branches in times of rejoicing, Lv 23:40, *see* Jn 12:13, Rv 7:9.

c. The poem is in the form of a hymn and in vv. 13–16 uses phrases found frequently in Ps.

16 **a.** 'he has pitched' versions; 'in his fields' Gk.

Jg 5:31
Jl 4:1–4

Woe to the nations 17
who rise against my race!
The Lord Almighty
will punish them on judgement day.
Is 66:24m
Si 7:17
He will send fire and worms in their flesh
and they will weep with pain for evermore.

When they reached Jerusalem they fell on their faces before God and, once the 18
people had been purified, they presented their burnt offerings, voluntary offerings
and gifts. ·All Holofernes' property given her by the people, and the canopy she 19
Lv 27:28–29
Nb 31:48–54
Dt 13:13–19
Jos 6:17c
herself had stripped from his bed, Judith vowed to God as a dedicated offering.
For three months the people gave themselves up to rejoicings in front of the 20
Temple in Jerusalem, where Judith stayed with them.

Judith lives to old age. Her death

When this was over, everyone returned home. Judith went back to Bethulia and 21 25
lived on her property; as long as she lived, she enjoyed a great reputation through-
out the country. ·She had many suitors, but all her days, from the time her 22 26
husband Manasseh died and was gathered to his people, she never gave herself to
another man. ·Her fame spread more and more, the older she grew in her 23
husband's house; she lived to the age of one hundred and five. [b] She emancipated
Gn 23:19
49:29–32
her maid, then died in Bethulia and was buried in the cave where Manasseh her 28
1 S 31:13i
Si 22:12i
husband lay. ·The House of Israel mourned her for seven days. Before her 24 29
death she had distributed her property among her own relations and those of
her husband Manasseh.

Jg 3:11+
Never again during the lifetime of Judith, nor indeed for a long time after her 25
death, did anyone trouble the Israelites. [c]

b. This great age finally assimilates Judith to the heroes of the patriarchal age, *see* Gn 23:1; 35:28; 50:26.

c. This ending recalls similar formulae in Jg.

ESTHER

PRELIMINARIES

Mordecai's dream [a]

11:2 1[a] **1** *In the second year of the reign of the Great King, Ahasuerus, [b] on the first day of*
Nisan, a dream [c] came to Mordecai son of Jair, son of Shimei, son of Kish, of the
3 1[b] *tribe of Benjamin, ·a Jew living at Susa [d] and holding high office at the royal court.*
4 1[c] *He was one of the captives whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had deported*
from Jerusalem with Jeconiah king of Judah. [e] 2 K 24:8,15
5 1[d] *This was his dream. There were cries and noise, thunder and earthquakes, and*
6 1[e] *disorder over the whole earth. ·Then two great dragons came forward, each ready*
7 1[f] *for the fray, and set up a great roar. ·At the sound of them every nation made ready*
8 1[g] *to wage war against the nation of the just. ·A day of darkness and gloom, of affliction*
9 1[h] *and distress, oppression and great disturbance on earth! ·The entire upright nation*
was thrown into consternation at the fear of the evils awaiting it and prepared for
10 1[i] *death, crying out to God. ·Then from its cry, as from a little spring, there grew a*
11 1[k] *great river, a flood of water. ·Light came as the sun rose, and the humble were raised* 8:16 Zp 2:3d
up and devoured the mighty.
12 1[l] *On awakening from this dream and vision of God's designs, Mordecai thought*
deeply about the matter, trying his best all day to discover what its meaning might be.

A plot against the king

2:21seq.; 6:2seq.

12:1 1[m] *Mordecai was lodging at court with Bigthan and Teresh, [f] two of the king's eunuchs*
2 1[n] *who guarded the palace. · Having got wind of their plotting and gained knowledge*
of their designs, he discovered that they were preparing to assassinate King Ahasu-
3 1[o] *erus, and he warned the king against them. ·The king gave orders for the two*
4 1[p] *eunuchs to be tortured; they confessed and were executed. ·He then had these events*
entered in his Record Book, while Mordecai himself also wrote an account of them. 6:1;10:2
1[q] *The king then appointed Mordecai to an office at court and rewarded him with* 6:3
1[r] *presents. ·But Haman son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, who enjoyed high favour* 3:1seq.
with the king, determined to injure Mordecai in revenge for the affair of the king's 3:5–6
two eunuchs.

1 **a.** The Church has accepted those passages in the Gk version not contained in the Hebr. text; they are printed here in italics with the LXX verse numbering. The corresponding v. numbers in Vulg. are given in small type.

b. Ahasuerus (Hebr. Ahashwerosh) is a Latin-English transcription of the Hebrew form of the Persian name Kshajarsha, in Gk Xerxes, *see* Ezr 4:6. Here the Gk has Artaxerxes, confusing Ahasuerus with his successors.

c. The Gk text, alone in recording this dream, outlines the story in advance in enigmatic and apocalyptic terms (the key to it is found in 10:3[a-k]), thus emphasising the part played by God in subsequent events.

d. A city lying to the east of Babylon, formerly the capital of Elam, winter residence of the Persian kings.

e. The author makes free with chronology: Mordecai's genealogy, 2:5, consists of three names to cover five or six centuries. He himself is represented as being a courtier of Ahasuerus (about 480) though exiled in the reign of Jeconiah (= Jehoiakim, about 598).

f. Although the proper names vary according to the texts, they have been regularised for this translation.

I: AHASUERUS AND VASHTI

Ahasuerus' banquet

1 It was in the days of Ahasuerus, the Ahasuerus whose empire stretched from 1
India to Ethiopia and comprised one hundred and twenty-seven provinces.
In those days, when King Ahasuerus was sitting on his royal throne in the citadel 2
of Susa, ·in the third year of his reign, he gave a banquet at his court for all his 3
officers-of-state and ministers, Persian and Median army-commanders,[g] nobles
and provincial governors. ·Thus he displayed the riches and splendour of his 4
empire and the pomp and glory of his majesty; the festivities went on for a long
time, a hundred and eighty days.

When this period was over, for seven days the king gave a banquet for all the 5
people living in the citadel of Susa, to high and low alike, on the esplanade in the
gardens of the royal palace. ·There were white and violet hangings fastened with 6
cords of fine linen and purple thread to silver rings on marble columns, couches of
gold and silver on a pavement of porphyry, marble, mother-of-pearl and precious
stones. ·For drinking there were golden cups of various design and plenty of wine 7
provided by the king with royal liberality. ·The royal edict did not, however, make 8
drinking obligatory, the king having instructed the officials of his household to
treat each guest according to the guest's own wishes.

Disgrace of Queen Vashti

Queen Vashti,[h] for her part, gave a banquet for the women in the royal palace of 9
Dn 5:1–4 King Ahasuerus. ·On the seventh day, when the king was merry with wine, he 10
commanded Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, Abagtha, Zethar and Carkas,
the seven eunuchs in attendance on the person of King Ahasuerus, ·to bring Queen 11
Vashti before the king, crowned with her royal diadem, in order to display her
beauty to the people and the officers-of-state, since she was very beautiful. ·But 12
Queen Vashti refused to come at the king's command delivered by the eunuchs.
The king was very angry at this and his rage grew hot. ·Addressing himself to the 13
wise men who were versed in the law[i]—it being the practice to refer matters
affecting the king to expert lawyers and jurists—·he summoned Carshena, Shethar, 14
Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena and Memucan, seven Persian and Median
officers-of-state who had privileged access to the royal presence[j] and occupied the
leading positions in the kingdom. ·'According to law,' he said, 'what is to be done 15
to Queen Vashti for not obeying the command of King Ahasuerus delivered by the
eunuchs?' ·In the presence of the king and the officers-of-state, Memucan replied, 16
'Queen Vashti has wronged not only the king but also all the officers-of-state and
all the peoples inhabiting the provinces of King Ahasuerus. ·The queen's conduct 17
will soon become known to all the women, who will adopt a contemptuous attitude
towards their own husbands. They will say, "King Ahasuerus himself commanded
Queen Vashti to appear before him and she did not come." ·Before the day is out, 18
the wives of the Persian and Median officers-of-state will be telling every one of the
king's officers-of-state what they have heard about the queen's behaviour; and that
will mean contempt and anger all round. · If it is the king's pleasure, let him issue 19
a royal edict, to be irrevocably incorporated into the laws of the Persians and
Medes,[k] to the effect that Vashti is never to appear again before King Ahasuerus,
3:12;8:5,8 and let the king confer her royal dignity on a worthier woman. ·Let this edict issued 20
Dn 6:8,10, 13,16 by the king be proclaimed throughout his empire—which is great—and all the
women will henceforth bow to the authority of their husbands, both high and low
alike.'

This speech pleased the king and the officers-of-state, and the king did as 21
Memucan advised. ·He sent letters to all the provinces of the kingdom, to each 22
Dn 3:4;6:26 province in its own script and to each nation in its own language, ensuring that
every husband should be master in his own house.[l]

II: MORDECAI AND ESTHER

Esther becomes queen

2 Some time after this, when the king's wrath had subsided, Ahasuerus remembered Vashti, how she had behaved, and the measures taken against her. [a] ·The king's gentlemen-in-waiting said, 'A search should be made on the king's behalf for beautiful young virgins, ·and the king appoint commissioners throughout the provinces of his realm to bring all these beautiful young virgins to the citadel of Susa, to the harem under the authority of Hegai the king's eunuch, custodian of the women. Here he will give them whatever they need for enhancing their beauty, ·and the girl who pleases the king can take Vashti's place as queen.' This advice pleased the king and he acted on it.

Now in the citadel of Susa there lived a Jew called Mordecai son of Jair, son of 1:1[a-c]
Shimei, son of Kish, of the tribe of Benjamin, ·who had been deported from Jerusalem among the captives taken away with Jeconiah king of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, ·and was now bringing up a certain Hadassah, otherwise called Esther, [b] his uncle's daughter, who had lost both father and mother; the girl had a good figure and a beautiful face, and on the death of her parents Mordecai had adopted her as his daughter. [c]

On the promulgation of the royal command and edict a great number of girls Dn 1:3–20
were brought to the citadel of Susa where they were entrusted to Hegai. Esther, too, was taken to the king's palace and entrusted to Hegai, the custodian of the women. ·The girl pleased him and won his favour. Not only did he quickly provide her with all she needed for her dressing room and her meals, but he gave her seven special maids from the king's household and transferred her and her maids to the best part of the harem. ·Esther had not divulged her race or parentage, since Mordecai had forbidden her to do so. [d] ·Mordecai walked up and down in front of the courtyard of the harem all day and every day, to learn how Esther was and how she was being treated.

Each girl had to appear in turn before King Ahasuerus after a delay of twelve 4:11
months fixed by the regulations for the women; this preparatory period was occupied as follows: six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with spices and lotions commonly used for feminine beauty treatment. ·When each girl went to the king, she was given whatever she wanted to take with her, since she then moved from the harem into the royal household. ·She went there in the evening, and the following morning returned to another harem entrusted to the care of Shaashgaz, the king's eunuch, custodian of the concubines. She did not go to the king any more, unless he was particularly pleased with her and had her summoned by name.

But when it was the turn of Esther the daughter of Abihail, whose nephew Mordecai had adopted her as his own daughter, to go into the king's presence, she did not ask for anything beyond what had been assigned her by Hegai, the king's eunuch, custodian of the women. Esther won the approval of all who saw her. She was brought to King Ahasuerus in his royal apartments in the tenth month,

g. 'army-commanders' conj.: 'the army' Hebr. • Banquets of this sort were given quite often, *see* Gn 40:20; 1 K 3:15; Dn 5:1; Mk 6:21.

h. Vashti, like Esther, is unknown to history.

i. 'law' conj.: 'times' Hebr.

j. i.e. in the king's confidence, *see* 2 K 25:19. • The practice of consulting the sages is also attested in Dn 2:2seq.; 5:7–12.

k. The theme of an irrevocable decree which is promptly revoked is common in the books of the Bible showing Persian influence; Jewish irony here, no doubt.

l. Hebr. adds: 'and speak the language of his own people', omitted by Gk.

2 a. The Hebr. implies that the king regrets his treatment of Vashti. The Gk and Rec. Luc. suggest that he has forgotten her.

b. The name Esther is probably of Babylonian origin (Ishtar) like Mordecai (Marduk), though compare Persian, *stareh*, 'star'. Hadassah is a Hebr. name ('myrtle').

c. Gk has at the end 'he had brought her up to be his wife'. Post-Christian Jewish tradition accepts this reading, and makes Esther the wife of Mordecai.

d. A situation reminiscent of Daniel and his three companions, Dn 1. But in Dn, the king knows the origin of the Hebrew youths and his favour is directly linked to their loyalty to the law.

which is called Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign; ·and the king liked Esther 17
better than any of the other women; none of the other girls found so much favour
4:17 u-y and approval with him. So he set the royal diadem on her head and proclaimed her
queen instead of Vashti.

The king then gave a great banquet, Esther's banquet, for all his officers-of-state 18
and ministers, decreed a holiday for all the provinces and distributed largesse with
royal prodigality.

Mordecai and Haman

2:14 When Esther, like the other girls, had been transferred to the second harem,[e] 19
she did not divulge her parentage or race, in obedience to the orders of Mordecai, 20
whose instructions she continued to follow as when she had been under his care.[f]
At this time Mordecai was attached to the Chancellery[g] and two malcontents, 21
Bigthan and Teresh, eunuchs in the king's service as Guards of the Threshold,
plotted to assassinate King Ahasuerus. ·Mordecai came to hear of this and 22
informed Queen Esther, who in turn, on Mordecai's authority, told the king.
The matter was investigated and proved to be true. The two conspirators were 23
sent to the gallows, and the incident was recorded in the Annals, in the royal
presence.

3 Shortly afterwards, King Ahasuerus singled out Haman son of Hammedatha, 1
a native of Agag,[a] for promotion. He raised him in rank, granting him pre-
cedence over all his colleagues, the other officers-of-state, ·and all the royal 2
officials employed at the Chancellery used to bow low and prostrate themselves
4:17 d-e whenever Haman appeared—such was the king's command. Mordecai refused
either to bow or to prostrate himself.[b] ·'Why do you flout the royal command?' the 3
officials of the Chancellery asked Mordecai. ·Day after day they asked him this, 4
but he took no notice of them. In the end they reported the matter to Haman, to
see whether Mordecai would persist in his attitude, since he had told them that he
was a Jew. ·Haman could see for himself that Mordecai did not bow or prostrate 5
himself in his presence; he became furiously angry. ·And, on being told what race 6
Mordecai belonged to, he thought it beneath him merely to get rid of Mordecai,
but made up his mind to wipe out all the members of Mordecai's race, the Jews,
living in Ahasuerus' entire empire.

III: THE JEWS IN PERIL

The decree of extermination against the Jews

In the first month, that is the month of Nisan, of the twelfth year of King Ahasu- 7
9:24–26 erus, the *pur*[c] (that is, the lot) was cast in Haman's presence, to determine the day
and the month. The lot falling on the twelfth month, which is Adar, ·[d] Haman said 8
3:13 d-e to King Ahasuerus, 'There is a certain unassimilated nation scattered among the
Ws 2:14–15
Dn 3:8–12 other nations throughout the provinces of your realm; their laws are different from
those of all the other nations, and the royal laws they ignore;[e] hence it is not in the
king's interests to tolerate them. ·If their destruction be signed, so please the king, 9
I am ready to pay ten thousand talents of silver to the king's receivers, to be
7:4 credited to the royal treasury.'
Gn 41:42 The king then took his signet ring off his hand and gave it to Haman son of 10
Hammedatha, the persecutor of the Jews. ·'Keep the money,' he said, 'and you 11
can have the people too; do what you like with them.'

The royal scribes were therefore summoned for the thirteenth day of the first 12
month, when they wrote out the orders addressed by Haman to the king's satraps,
Dn 3:4–7 to the governors ruling each province and to the principal officials of each people,
to each province in its own script and to each people in its own language. The edict

13 was signed in the name of King Ahasuerus and sealed with his ring, ·and letters
were sent by runners to every province of the realm, ordering the destruction,
slaughter and annihilation of all Jews, young and old, including women and
children, on the same day—the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is
Adar—and the seizing of their possessions.

13[a] *The text of the letter was as follows:*

13:1 *'The Great King, Ahasuerus, to the governors of the hundred and twenty-seven provinces stretching from India to Ethiopia, and to their subordinate district commissioners:*

2 13[b] *'Being placed in authority over many nations and ruling the whole world, I have resolved never to be carried away by the insolence of power, but always to rule with moderation and clemency, so as to assure for my subjects a life ever free from storms and, offering my kingdom the benefits of civilisation and free transit* Jdt 2:5 Dn 3:31

3 13[c] *from end to end, to restore that peace which all men desire. ·In consultation with our advisers as to how this aim is to be effected, we have been informed by one of them, eminent among us for prudence and well proved for his unfailing devotion and unshakeable trustworthiness, and in rank second only to our majesty, Haman*

4 13[d] *by name, ·that there is, mingled among all the tribes of the earth, a certain ill-disposed people, opposed by its laws to every other nation and continually defying the royal ordinances, in such a way as to obstruct that form of government assured by us to the general good.* 3:8d

5 13[e] *'Considering therefore that this people, unique of its kind, is in complete opposition to all humanity from which it differs by its outlandish laws, that it is hostile to our interests and that it commits the most heinous crimes, to the point of endangering the stability of the realm:*

6 13[f] *'We command that those persons designated to you in the letters written by Haman, who was appointed to watch over our interests and is a second father to us, be all destroyed, root and branch, including women and children, by the swords of their enemies, without any pity or mercy, on the fourteenth day of the* 8:12[l] Gn 45:8

7 13[g] *twelfth month, Adar, of the present year, ·so that, these past and present malcontents being in one day forcibly thrown down to Hades, our government may henceforward enjoy perpetual stability and peace.'*

14 Copies of this decree, to be promulgated as law in each province, were published
to the various peoples, so that each might be ready for the day aforementioned.
15 At the king's command, the runners set out with all speed; the decree was first
promulgated in the citadel of Susa.

e. Text emended. Hebr. 'When the girls were reassembled the second time, Mordecai was sitting at the Gate'; Gk 'Mordecai was on duty at the palace.' The mention of Mordecai and his job here seems wrong and is probably a dittography of v. 21.

f. The Gk, more religious in tone than the Hebr., reads 'Esther had not disclosed what country she came from. Mordecai had bidden her fear God and keep the commandments just as she did when she was with him, and Esther had not changed her way of life.'

g. The expression (lit. 'the king's gate') sometimes means the business of administration, sometimes the buildings in which this work was carried.

3 **a.** Country not known; the name is that of an Amalekite king conquered by Saul, 1 S 15:7–9, and may have been chosen to emphasise the antagonism of Haman and Mordecai who, like Saul, is a Benjaminite and a descendant of Kish.

b. The gesture in itself could not be objectionable for a Jew; it was the act of respect customary in the oriental court and also practised in Israel, *see* 1 K 1:23;2 K 4:37; etc. Mordecai's refusal is not therefore a protest of fidelity to God and his Law, as in Dn 1:8; 3:12; 6:14, but a reaction of racial pride; the prayer in the Gk text gives it a religious significance, 4:17[d-e].

c. A Babylonian word. Haman has already decided on the pogrom; he consults the lots only to learn the most propitious day. The Gk, complementing the Hebr., adds that Haman issued a decree in the 12th year of the king, that he cast lots to extirpate the race of Mordecai and that the lot fell on the 14th of the month called Adar. • The v. is perhaps an addition, inserted at the same time as the section about the feast of Purim, 9:23–27.

d. Rec. Luc. paraphrases 'Haman in his jealousy and shaken to the core blushed, and averted his eyes from him. Then with base heart he spoke evil to the king about Israel. "There is a race", he said, "scattered throughout every kingdom, a bellicose and truculent people with its own laws. But of your laws, O king, they take no account, for they are, as every nation knows, an obstinate race. They defy your orders to the ruin of your honour." '

e. Complaints of this kind against the Jews are found in several documents of the hellenistic period, *see* 3:13[a-e]; Ezr 4:12seq.; Jdt 12:2; Ws 2:14seq. and the apocryphal 3 Maccabees.

While the king and Haman gave themselves up to feasting and drinking, consternation reigned in the city of Susa.[f]

Mordecai and Esther try to avert the danger

4 When Mordecai learned what had happened, he tore his garments and put on sackcloth and ashes. Then he walked into the centre of the city, wailing loudly 1
and bitterly, ·until he arrived in front of the Chancellery, which no one clothed in 2
sackcloth was allowed to enter. ·And in every province, no sooner had the royal 3
command and edict arrived, than among the Jews there was great mourning,
fasting, weeping and wailing, and many lay on sackcloth and ashes.[a]

When Queen Esther's maids and eunuchs came and told her, she was overcome 4
with grief. She sent clothes for Mordecai to put on instead of his sackcloth,[b] but he
refused them. ·Esther then summoned Hathach, a eunuch whom the king had 5
appointed to wait on her, and ordered him to go to Mordecai and enquire what the
matter was and why he was acting in this way.

Hathach went out to Mordecai in the city square in front of the Chancellery, 6
and Mordecai told him what had happened to him personally, and also about the 7
sum of money which Haman had offered to pay into the royal treasury to procure
the destruction of the Jews. ·He also gave him a copy of the edict of extermination 8
published in Susa for him to show Esther for her information, with the message
that she was to go to the king and implore his favour and plead with him for the
race to which she belonged. · *'Remember your humbler circumstances,' he said,* 8a
'when you were fed by my hand. Since Haman, the second person in the realm, has
petitioned the king for our deaths, ·invoke the Lord, speak to the king for us and 8b
save us from death!'[c]

Hathach came back and told Esther what Mordecai had said;[d] ·and she replied 9, 10
with the following message for Mordecai, ·'Royal officials and people living in the 11
provinces alike all know that for anyone, man or woman, who approaches the king
in the private apartments without having been summoned there, there is only one
law: he must die, unless the king, by pointing his golden sceptre towards him,
grants him his life. And I have not been summoned to the king for the last thirty
days.'

These words of Esther were reported to Mordecai, ·who sent back the following 12, 13
reply, 'Do not suppose that, because you are in the king's palace, you are going to
be the one Jew to escape. ·No; if you persist in remaining silent at such a time, 14
Gn 45:7 relief and deliverance will come to the Jews from another quarter,[e] but both you
and your father's whole family will perish. Who knows? Perhaps you have come to
the throne for just such a time as this.'

Whereupon Esther sent this reply to Mordecai, ·'Go and assemble all the Jews 15, 16
now in Susa and fast for me. Do not eat or drink day or night for three days. For
my part, I and my waiting-women shall keep the same fast, after which I shall go to
the king in spite of the law; and if I perish, I perish.' ·Mordecai went away and 17
carried out Esther's instructions.

Mordecai's prayer[f]

Then calling to mind all the wonderful works of the Lord, he offered this prayer: 17[a] 13:8

Ex 19:5
2 Ch 20:6–7
Jdt 16:14
Is 41:10–16

Lord, Lord, Almighty King, 17[b] 9
everything is subject to your power,
and there is no one who can withstand you
in your determination to save Israel.

2 K 19:15
Is 40:21–26

You have made heaven and earth, 17[c] 10
and all the marvels that are under heaven.
You are the Master of the universe 11
and no one can resist you, Lord.

12 17d *You know all things,*
you, Lord, know
that neither pride, self-esteem nor vainglory
prompted me to do what I have done:
to refuse to prostrate myself 3:2
before proud Haman.
13 *Gladly would I have kissed the soles of his feet,*
had this assured the safety of Israel.

14 17e *But what I have done, I have done,*
rather than place the glory of a man
above the glory of God;
and I shall not prostrate myself to anyone
except, Lord, to you,
and, in so doing, I shall not be acting in pride.

15 17f *And now, Lord God,*
King, God of Abraham Ex 3:6
Ps 47:9
spare your people!
For our ruin is being plotted,
there are plans to destroy your ancient heritage.
16 17g *Do not overlook your inheritance,* Dt 9:26;32:9
1 K 8:51
which you redeemed from Egypt to be yours. Jr 10:16
17 17h *Hear my supplication,* Ps 33:12
Jl 4:2
have mercy on your heritage,
and turn our grief into rejoicing,
so that we may live, Lord, to hymn your name.
Do not suffer the mouths Ps 6:5;
115:17seq.
of those who praise you to perish. Is 38:18–20

18 17i *And all Israel cried out with all their might, since death was staring them in the face.*

Esther's prayer

14:1 17k *Queen Esther also took refuge with the Lord in the mortal peril which had overtaken*
2 *her. She took off her sumptuous robes and put on sorrowful mourning. Instead of*
3 *expensive perfumes, she covered her head with ashes and dung. She mortified her body severely, and the former scenes of her happiness and elegance were now littered with tresses torn from her hair. She besought the Lord God of Israel in these words:*

17l *My Lord, our King, the Only One,*
come to my help, for I am alone
and have no helper but you
and am about to take my life in my hands. 4:11,16

5 17m *I have been taught from infancy* Dt 6:20–25
in the bosom of my family[g]

f. In *Vet. Lat.* the Jews now pray, expressing sorrow for the sins of the nation and appealing to the faithfulness of God.

4 **a.** Signs of mourning and repentance, *see* Jdt 4:10; 1 M 3:47; Is 37:1; etc.

b. So that he could enter the palace and talk to her.

c. *Vet. Lat.* here has in addition to the Gk 'Rise! Why do you sit in silence? Since you are set free, you and your House and your father's House, all your people and all your descendants. Rise! Let us see if we can fight and suffer for our own people that God may show mercy on them.'

d. *Vet. Lat.* thus describes Esther's distress 'As Esther read her brother's letter she tore her garments and lamented loudly. She shed many tears, her body trembled and her flesh became weak.'

e. The author of the Hebr. text avoids using the name of God.

f. The prayers of Mordecai and Esther are rich in OT piety, but they betray an introspective interest and a concern with self-justification that is not found in the older texts.

g. The family was the primary means of transmitting the tradition of the marvels worked by God on behalf of his people, Israel, *see* Dt 6:20–25.

Dt 7:6b *that you, Lord, have chosen*
Israel out of all the nations
and our ancestors out of all before them,
to be your heritage for ever;
and that you have treated them as you promised.

But we have sinned against you 17n 6
Jg 2:6f *and you have handed us over to our enemies*
for paying honour to their gods. 7
Lord, you are upright.

But they are not satisfied 17o 8
with the bitterness of our slavery:
they have pledged themselves to their idols h
to abolish the decree that your own lips have uttered, 9
to blot out your heritage,
4:17f *to stop the mouths of those who praise you,*
to quench your altar and the glory of your House,
and instead to open the mouths of the heathen, 17p 10
to sing the praise of worthless idols
and forever to idolise a king of flesh.

Do not yield your sceptre, Lord, 17q
to what does not exist.
Never let our ruin be matter for laughter.
Turn these plots against their authors,
and make an example
of the man who leads the attack on us.
Remember, Lord; reveal yourself 17r 12
in the time of our distress.

As for me, give me courage,
Dt 10:17 *King of gods and Master of all powers!*
Ps 95:3;136:2
Dn 2:47;11:26 *Put persuasive words into my mouth* 17s 13
when I face the lion;
change his feeling into hatred for our enemy,
so that he may meet his end,
and all those like him!

As for ourselves, save us by your hand, 17t 14
and come to my help, for I am alone
and have no one but you, Lord.
You have knowledge of all things, 17u 15
and you know that I hate honours from the godless,
that I loathe the bed of the uncircumcised,
of any foreigner whatever.
You know I am under constraint, 17w 16
that I loathe the symbol of my high position
bound round my brow when I appear at court;
Lv 15:19–30 *I loathe it as if it were a filthy rag*
Is 64:5 *and do not wear it on my days of leisure.*
Your servant has not eaten at Haman's table, 17x 17
nor taken pleasure in the royal banquets,
nor drunk the wine of libations.
Nor has your servant found pleasure 17y 18
from the day of her promotion until now
except in you, Lord, God of Abraham.

19 17z *O God, whose strength prevails over all,*
listen to the voice of the desperate,
save us from the hand of the wicked,
and free me from my fear!

Esther intrudes on the royal presence

15:4 1a 5 *On the third day,* [a] *when she had finished praying, she took off her suppliant's*
5 *mourning attire and dressed herself in her full splendour. Radiant as she then*
appeared, she invoked God who watches over all people and saves them. With her,
6 *she took two ladies-in-waiting. With a delicate air she leaned on one, while the other*
8 1b *accompanied her carrying her train.* •*Rosy with the full flush of her beauty, her face*
9 1c *radiated joy and love: but her heart shrank with fear.* •*Having passed through door*
after door, she found herself in the presence of the king. He was sitting on his royal
throne, dressed in all his robes of state, glittering with gold and precious stones—a
10 1d *formidable sight.* •*He looked up, afire with majesty and, blazing with anger, saw*
her. The queen sank to the floor. As she fainted, the colour drained from her
11 1e *face and her head fell against the lady-in-waiting beside her.* •*But*
God changed the king's heart, inducing a milder spirit. He sprang from his
throne in alarm and took her in his arms until she recovered, comforting her with
12, 13 1f *soothing words.* •*'What is the matter, Esther?' he said. 'I am your brother. Take*
heart, you are not going to die; our order applies only to ordinary people. Come to
14, 15 2 *me.'* •*And raising his golden sceptre he laid it on Esther's neck, embraced her and*
16 2a *said, 'Speak to me.'* •*'Sire,' she said, 'to me you looked like one of God's angels, and*
17 *my heart was moved with fear of your majesty. For you are a figure of wonder, my*
18, 19 2b *lord, and your face is full of graciousness.'* •*But as she spoke she fell down in a faint.*
The king grew more agitated, and his courtiers all set about reviving her.
3 'What is the matter, Queen Esther?' the king said. 'Tell me what you want; even if 5:6;7:2; 9:12 Mk 6:23
4 it is half my kingdom, I grant it you.' •'Would it please the king,' Esther replied, 'to
5 come with Haman today to the banquet I have prepared for him?' •The king said,
'Tell Haman to come at once, so that Esther may have her wish.'
6 So the king and Haman came to the banquet that Esther had prepared and,
during the banquet, the king again said to Esther, 'Tell me your request; I grant
it to you. Tell me what you want; even if it is half my kingdom, it is yours for the
7, 8 asking.' •'What do I want, what is my request?' Esther replied. •'If I have found
favour in the king's eyes, and if it is his pleasure to grant what I ask and to agree to
my request, let the king and Haman come to the banquet I intend to give them
tomorrow, and then I shall do as the king says.'
9 Haman left full of joy and high spirits that day; but when he saw Mordecai at the
Chancellery, neither standing up nor stirring at his approach, he felt a gust of
10 anger. •He restrained himself, however. Returning home, he sent for his friends
11 and Zeresh his wife •and held forth to them about his dazzling wealth, his many
children, how the king had raised him to a position of honour and promoted him
12 over the heads of the king's officers-of-state and ministers. •'What is more,' he
added, 'Queen Esther has just invited me and the king—no one else except me—
to a banquet she was giving, and better still she has invited me and the king again
13 tomorrow. •But what do I care about all this when all the while I see Mordecai the
14 Jew sitting there at the Chancellery?' •'Have a fifty-cubit gallows run up,' said
Zeresh his wife and all his friends, 'and in the morning ask the king to have
Mordecai hanged on it. Then you can go with the king to the banquet, without a
care in the world!' Delighted with this advice, Haman had the gallows erected.

h. lit. 'put their hands in the hands of their idols'.

5 **a.** The Hebr. text of vv. 1–2 is much shorter. v.1: 'Three days later Esther put on her royal apparel and presented herself in the inner court of the palace, which was in front of the king's apartments. He was seated on the royal throne in the Royal Hall, facing the door. v.2: No sooner had he seen Queen Esther standing in the court than she won his favour and he held out to her the golden sceptre he had in his hand. Esther approached and touched the end of it.' • v.3 is the same in the Gk and Hebr.

IV: THE JEWS' REVENGE

The discomfiture of Haman [a]

6 That night the king could not sleep; he called for the Record Book, or Annals, 1
2:21–23 to be brought and read to him. ·They contained an account of how Mordecai 2
had denounced Bigthan and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs serving as Guards
of the Threshold, who had plotted to assassinate King Ahasuerus. ·'And what 3
1:19 honour and dignity', the king asked, 'was conferred on Mordecai for this?' 'Nothing
Qo 9:13–16 has been done for him,' the gentlemen-in-waiting replied. [b] ·The king then said, 4
'Who is outside in the antechamber?' Haman had, that very moment, entered the
outer antechamber of the private apartments, to ask the king to have Mordecai
hanged on the gallows which he had just put up for the purpose. ·So the king's 5
gentlemen-in-waiting replied, 'It is Haman out in the antechamber.' 'Bring him in,'
the king said, ·and, as soon as Haman came in, went on to ask, 'What is the right 6
way to treat a man whom the king wishes to honour?' 'Whom', thought Haman,
'would the king wish to honour, if not me?' ·So he replied, 'If the king wishes to 7
Gn 41:42seq. honour someone, ·royal robes should be brought from the king's wardrobe, and a 8
1 K 1:33
Dn 5:29 horse from the king's stable, sporting a royal diadem on its head. ·The robes and 9
horse should be entrusted to one of the noblest of the king's officers-of-state, who
should then array the man whom the king wishes to honour and lead him on
horseback through the city square, proclaiming before him: "This is the way a man
shall be treated whom the king wishes to honour." ' ·'Hurry,' the king said to 10
Haman, 'take the robes and the horse, and do everything you have just said to
Mordecai the Jew, who works at the Chancellery. On no account leave anything
out that you have mentioned.'

So taking the robes and the horse, Haman arrayed Mordecai and led him on 11
horseback through the city square, proclaiming before him: 'This is the way a man
shall be treated whom the king wishes to honour.' ·After this Mordecai returned to 12
2 S 15:30k the Chancellery, while Haman went hurrying home in dejection and covering his
face. ·He told his wife Zeresh and all his friends what had just happened. His wife 13
Zeresh and his friends [c] said, 'You are beginning to fall, and Mordecai to rise; if he
is Jewish, you will never get the better of him. With him against you, your fall is
certain.' [d]

Haman at Esther's banquet

While they were still talking, the king's eunuchs arrived in a hurry to escort Haman 14
to the banquet that Esther was giving.

7 The king and Haman went to Queen Esther's banquet, ·and this second day, 1, 2
during the banquet, the king again said to Esther, 'Tell me your request,
Queen Esther. I grant it to you. Whatever you want; even if it is half my kingdom,
it is yours for the asking.' ·'If I have found favour in your eyes, O king,' Queen 3
Esther replied, 'and if it please your majesty, grant me my life—that is my request;
and the lives of my people—that is what I want. ·For we have been handed over, 4
my people and I, to destruction, slaughter and annihilation; had we merely been
sold as slaves and servant-girls, I should not have said anything; but in the present
3:8–9 case, it will be beyond the persecutor's means to make good the loss that the king
is about to sustain.' [a] ·King Ahasuerus interrupted Queen Esther, 'Who is this 5
man?' he exclaimed. 'Where is the man who has thought of doing such a thing?'
Esther replied, 'The persecutor, the enemy? Why, this wretch Haman!' Haman 6
quaked with terror in the presence of the king and queen. ·In a rage the king got up 7
from the banquet and went into the palace garden; while Haman, realising that the
king was determined on his ruin, stayed behind to beg Queen Esther for
his life.

When the king came back from the palace garden into the banqueting hall, he 8

found Haman sprawled across the couch where Esther was reclining. 'What!' the king exclaimed. 'Is he going to rape the queen in my own palace?' The words were
9 scarcely out of his mouth than a veil was thrown over Haman's face. [b] ·In the royal presence, Harbona, one of the eunuchs, said, 'There is that fifty-cubit gallows, too, which Haman ran up for Mordecai, who spoke up to the king's great advantage. It
10 is all ready at his house.' [c] 'Hang him on it,' said the king. ·So Haman was hanged on the gallows which he had erected for Mordecai, and the king's wrath subsided.

The royal favour passes to the Jews

1 8 That same day King Ahasuerus gave Queen Esther the house of Haman, the persecutor of the Jews. Mordecai was presented to the king, Esther having
2 revealed their mutual relationship. ·The king, who had recovered his signet ring from Haman, took it off and gave it to Mordecai, while Esther gave Mordecai charge of Haman's house.

Pr 11:8; 26:27
Mt 7:2
Pr 13:22
Dn 2:48–49

3 Esther again went to speak to the king. She fell at his feet, weeping and imploring his favour, to frustrate the malice that Haman the Agagite had been plotting against
4 the Jews ·The king held out the golden sceptre to her, whereupon Esther stood up
5 and faced him. ·'If such is the king's good pleasure,' she said, 'and if I have found favour before him, if my petition seems proper to him and if I myself am pleasing to his eyes, may he be pleased to issue a written revocation of the letters which Haman son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, has had written, ordering the destruc-
6 tion of the Jews throughout the royal provinces. ·For how can I look on, while my people suffer what is proposed for them? How can I bear to witness the extermination of my relatives?'

7 King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther and to Mordecai the Jew, 'I for my part have given Esther Haman's house, and have had him hanged on the gallows for
8 planning to destroy the Jews. ·You, for your part, write what you please as regards the Jews, in the king's name, and seal it with the king's signet; for any edict written 1:19;3:12
9 in the king's name and sealed with his signet is irrevocable.' [a] ·The royal scribes were summoned at once—it was the third month, the month of Sivan, on the twenty-third day [b]—and at Mordecai's dictation an order was written to the Jews, the satraps, governors and principal officials of the provinces stretching from India to Ethiopia, a hundred and twenty-seven provinces, to each province in its own script, and to each people in its own language, and to the Jews in their own script
10 and language. ·These letters, written in the name of King Ahasuerus and sealed with the king's signet, were carried by couriers mounted on horses from the king's
11 own stud-farms. ·In them the king granted the Jews, in whatever city they lived, the right to assemble in self-defence, with permission to destroy, slaughter and annihilate any armed force of any people or province that might attack them,
12 together with their women and children, and to plunder their possessions, ·with effect from the same day throughout the provinces of King Ahasuerus—the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is Adar.

6 **a.** In ch. 6 and 7. Rec. Luc. generously paraphrases all the passages that flatter Mordecai or belittle Haman.

b. The author of the Hebr. text is unaware of the tradition preserved by the Gk text, *see* 1:1q.

c. 'friends' Gk; 'advisers' Hebr.

d. The Hebr. text hints at the outcome without explicitly mentioning God's help, which the Gk makes clear by adding 'for the living God is with him'.

7 **a.** Just as Haman had invoked reasons of state for destroying the Jews, 3:8, so Esther now does the same to save them.

b. The action was equivalent to a death sentence; people who were going to be hanged had their heads covered.

c. Compare the sayings about people who fall into the pit that they themselves have dug, Ps 7:16; 9:16; 35:7–8; 57:6; Pr 26:27; 28:10; Qo 10:8; Si 27:26.

8 **a.** In 8:12[c-o], the Gk text explains, by Mordecai's writing in the king's name, how the king's trust had been abused when the 'irrevocable' decree was issued. Rec. Luc. dwells on Esther's part in the massacre.

b. Gk 'the third month of that year, that of Nisan, on the twenty-third day'.

The decree of rehabilitation

The text of the letter was as follows: 12a 16:1

'The great King, Ahasuerus, to the satraps of the hundred and twenty-seven provinces which stretch from India to Ethiopia, to the provincial governors and to all our loyal subjects, greeting: 12b

'Many people, repeatedly honoured by the extreme bounty of their benefactors, only grow the more arrogant. It is not enough for them to seek our subjects' injury, but unable as they are to support the weight of their own surfeit they turn to scheming against their benefactors themselves. •Not content with banishing gratitude from the human heart, but elated by the plaudits of people unacquainted with goodness, notwithstanding that all is for ever under the eye of God, they expect to escape his justice, so hostile to the wicked. •Thus it has often happened to those placed in authority that, having entrusted friends with the conduct of affairs and allowed themselves to be influenced by them, they find themselves sharing with these the guilt of innocent blood and involved in irremediable misfortunes, •the right intentions of rulers having been misled by false arguments of the evilly disposed. •This may be seen without recourse to the history of earlier times to which we have referred; you have only to look at what is before you, at the crimes perpetrated by a plague of unworthy officials. •For the future, we shall exert our efforts to assure the tranquillity and peace of the realm for all, •by adopting new policies and by always judging matters that are brought to our notice in the most equitable spirit. 12c 2 3 12d 4 12e 5 12f 6 12g 7 12h 8 12i 9

'Thus Haman son of Hammedatha, a Macedonian, [c] without a drop of Persian blood and far removed from our goodness, enjoyed our hospitality •and was treated by us with the benevolence which we show to every nation, even to the extent of being proclaimed our 'father' and being accorded universally the prostration of respect as second in dignity to the royal throne. •But he, unable to keep within his own high rank, schemed to deprive us of our realm and of our life. Furthermore, by tortuous wiles and arguments, he would have had us destroy Mordecai, our saviour and constant benefactor, with Esther the blameless partner of our majesty, and their whole nation besides. •He thought by these means to leave us without support and so to transfer the Persian empire to the Macedonians. 12k 10 12l 11 12m 12 12n 13 12o 14

'But we find that the Jews, marked out for annihilation by this arch-scoundrel, are not criminals: they are in fact governed by the most just of laws. •They are children of the Most High, the great and living God to whom we and our ancestors owe the continuing prosperity of our realm. •You will therefore do well not to act on the letters sent by Haman son of Hammedatha, since their author has been hanged at the gates of Susa with his whole household: a fitting punishment, which God, Master of the Universe, has speedily inflicted on him. •Put up copies of this letter everywhere, allow the Jews to observe their own customs without fear, and come to their help against anyone who attacks them on the day originally chosen for their maltreatment, that is, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is Adar. For the all-powerful God has made this day a day of joy and not of ruin for the chosen people. •You, for your part, among your solemn festivals celebrate this as a special day with every kind of feasting, so that now and in the future, for you and for Persians of good will, it may commemorate your rescue, and for your enemies may stand as a reminder of their ruin. 12p 15 12q 16 12r 17, 18 12s 19 20 12t 21 12u 22 23

Ezr 7:25–26

Dn 3:29

'Every city and, more generally, every country, which does not follow these instructions, will be mercilessly devastated with fire and sword, and made not only inaccessible to human beings but hateful to wild animals and even birds for ever.' 12v 24

Copies of this edict, to be promulgated as law in each province, were published to the various peoples, so that the Jews could be ready on the day stated to avenge themselves on their enemies. •The couriers, mounted on the king's horses, set out 13 14

in great haste and urgency at the king's command. The edict was also published in
15 the citadel of Susa. ·Mordecai left the royal presence in a princely gown of violet
and white, with a great golden crown and a cloak of fine linen and purple. The city
16 of Susa shouted for joy. ·For the Jews there was light and gladness, joy and honour.
17 In every province and in every city, wherever the king's command and
decree arrived, there was joy and gladness among the Jews, with feasting
and holiday-making. Of the country's population many became Jews, since now 9:27e
the Jews were feared.

The great Day of Purim

1 9 The king's command and decree came into force on the thirteenth day of the
twelfth month, Adar, and the day on which the enemies of the Jews had hoped
to crush them produced the very opposite effect: the Jews it was who crushed their 4:17[g];8:1+ Gn 22:17
2 enemies. ·In their towns throughout the provinces of King Ahasuerus, the Jews
assembled to strike at those who had planned to injure them. No one resisted
3 them, since the various peoples were now all afraid of them. ·Provincial officers-
of-state, satraps, governors and royal officials, all supported the Jews for fear of
4 Mordecai. ·And indeed Mordecai was a power in the palace and his fame was
spreading through all the provinces; Mordecai was steadily growing more
powerful.
5 So the Jews struck down all their enemies with the sword, with resulting slaughter
6 and destruction, and worked their will on their opponents. [a] ·In the citadel of Susa
7 alone, the Jews put to death and slaughtered five hundred men, ·notably Parshan-
8, 9 datha, Dalphon, Aspatha, ·Poratha, Adalia, Aridatha, ·Parmashtha, Arisai, Ari-
10 dai and Jezatha, ·the ten sons of Haman son of Hammedatha, the persecutor of 3:13;9:15 Jdt 15:6–7,11
the Jews. But they took no plunder.
11 The number of those killed in the citadel of Susa was reported to the king that
12 same day. ·The king said to Queen Esther, 'In the citadel of Susa the Jews have
killed five hundred men and also the ten sons of Haman. What must they have
done in the other provinces of the realm? Tell me your request; I grant it to you.
13 Tell me what else you would like; it is yours for the asking.' ·'If such is the king's
pleasure,' Esther replied, 'let the Jews of Susa be allowed to enforce today's decree
tomorrow as well. And as for the ten sons of Haman, let their bodies be hanged on
14 the gallows.' ·Whereupon, the king having given the order, the edict was promul-
15 gated in Susa and the ten sons of Haman were hanged. ·Thus the Jews of Susa
reassembled on the fourteenth day of the month of Adar and killed three hundred
men in the city. But they took no plunder.
16 The other Jews who lived in the king's provinces also assembled to defend their
lives and rid themselves of their enemies. They slaughtered seventy-five thousand [b]
17 of their opponents. But they took no plunder. ·This was on the thirteenth day of
the month of Adar. On the fourteenth day they rested and made it a day of feasting
18 and gladness. ·But for the Jews of Susa, who had assembled on the thirteenth and
fourteenth days, the fifteenth was the day they rested, making that a day of feasting
19 and gladness. [c] ·This is why Jewish country people, those who live in undefended
villages, keep the fourteenth day of the month of Adar as a day of gladness,
feasting and holiday-making, and the exchanging of presents with one another, Ne 8:10–12 Rv 11:10
19a *whereas for those who live in cities the day of rejoicing and exchanging presents with*
their neighbours is the fifteenth day of Adar.

c. The word 'Macedonian', attested here and at v. 12[k], is surprising. 'Mede' would have seemed more likely, since the historical context seems to allude to power-struggles between Medes and Persians within Xerxes' empire.

9 **a.** The account of these massacres is unhistorical (*see* Introduction), nor must it be taken for a eulogy of, or recommendation to, revenge. The very extravagance of the situations, the wildly exaggerated numbers and the rhetoric of the account betray the author's purpose. His dominant intention is to illustrate a very familiar biblical theme, the reversal of a situation to the advantage of the oppressed; to do this he assumes the outlook of those who recorded the wars of Israel, the 'eye for eye' mentality.

b. Gk 'fifteen thousand'.

c. Banquets, which feature largely in Est, later become features of the Day of Purim, a feast more popular than religious.

V: THE FEAST OF PURIM

The official institution of the feast of Purim

Mordecai committed these events to writing. Then he sent letters to all the Jews 20
living in the provinces of King Ahasuerus, both near and far, ·enjoining them to 21
celebrate the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month of Adar every year, ·as 22
the days on which the Jews had rid themselves of their enemies, and the month in
which their sorrow had been turned into gladness, and mourning into a holiday.
He therefore told them to keep these as days of festivity and gladness when they
were to exchange presents and make gifts to the poor.

Once having begun, the Jews continued observing these practices, Mordecai 23
having written them an account ·of how Haman son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, 24
the persecutor of all the Jews, had plotted their destruction and had cast the *pur*,
3:7 that is, the lot, for their overthrow and ruin; ·but how, when he went back to the 25
king[d] to ask him to order the hanging of Mordecai, the wicked scheme which he
6:5–13 had devised against the Jews recoiled on his own head, and both he and his sons
were hanged on the gallows; ·and that, hence, these days were called Purim, from 26
the word *pur*. And so, because of what was written in this letter, and because of
what they had seen for themselves and of what had happened to them, ·the Jews 27
willingly bound themselves, their descendants and all who should join them,[e] to
celebrate these two days without fail, in the manner prescribed and at the time
8:12[u],17 Is 56:3,6 Zc 2:15 appointed, year after year. ·Thus commemorated and celebrated from generation 28
to generation, in every family, in every province, in every city, these days of Purim
will never be abrogated among the Jews, nor will their memory perish from
their race.

Queen Esther, the daughter of Abihail,[f] wrote with full authority to ratify this 29
second letter, ·and sent letters to all the Jews of the hundred and twenty-seven 30
9:23–26 provinces of the realm of Ahasuerus, in terms of peace and loyalty ·enjoining them 31
to observe these days of Purim at the appointed time, as Mordecai the Jew had
recommended, and in the manner prescribed for themselves and their descendants,
with additional ordinances for fasts and lamentations.[g] ·The ordinance of Esther 32
fixed the law of Purim, which was then recorded in a book.

Praise of Mordecai

10 King Ahasuerus put not only the mainland under tribute but the Mediter- 1
ranean islands as well. ·All his feats of power and valour, and the account of 2
the high honour to which he raised Mordecai: all this is recorded in the Book of the
Annals of the Kings of Media and Persia.[a]

And Mordecai the Jew was next in rank to King Ahasuerus. He was a man held 3
in respect among the Jews, esteemed by thousands of his brothers, a man who
2 M 15:14 sought the good of his people and cared for the welfare of his entire race.[b]

And Mordecai said, 'All this is God's doing. ·I remember the dream I had about 3[a], 3[b] 10:4, 5
these matters, nothing of which has failed to come true: ·the little spring that became 3[c] 6
a river, the light that shone, the sun, the flood of water. Esther is the river—she whom
the king married and made queen. ·The two dragons are Haman and 3[d] 7
myself. ·The nations are those that banded together to blot out the name of Jew. 3[e] 8
·The single nation, mine, is Israel, those who cried out to God and were saved. Yes, 3[f] 9
the Lord has saved his people, the Lord has delivered us from all these evils, God
has worked such signs and great wonders as have never occurred among the nations.

'Two destinies he appointed, one for his own people, one for the nations at large. 3[g] 10
And these two destinies were worked out at the hour and time and day laid down by 3[h] 11
God, involving all the nations. ·In this way God has remembered his people and 3[i] 12
vindicated his heritage;[c] ·and for them these days, the fourteenth and fifteenth of the 3[k] 13
month of Adar, are to be days of assembly, of joy and of gladness before God,
through all generations and for ever among his people Israel.'

Note to the Greek translation of the book [d]

3[l] *In the fourth year of the reign of Ptolemy and Cleopatra, Dositheus, who affirmed that he was a priest and Levite, and Ptolemy his son brought the foregoing letter concerning Purim. They vouched for its authenticity, the translation having been made by Lysimachus son of Ptolemy, a member of the Jerusalem community.*

d. Following Gk. Hebr. 'But when she (Esther) went in to the king, he said . . .' (following word unintelligible).

e. The nationalistic character of the book does not exclude a wider outlook; proselytes share in the celebrations.

f. Conjectural translation. Hebr. reads: 'Esther, daughter of Abihail, and Mordecai the Jew', but *see* v. 31, and Esther figures alone in v. 32.

g. These two unexpected injunctions doubtless have reference to 4:16; fasting has earned deliverance. From 9:20 onwards, the text appears to be a compound of documents of varying origin.

10 **a.** The Gk ascribes this entry to the king.

b. The last verse in the Hebr. and the concluding passage of the Gk tend to make this book more than ever 'the Book of Mordecai' rather than 'the Book of Esther', *see* 9:4. He, the man enlightened by God, has managed the whole affair. He is typically 'the Jew', just as Judith will become 'the Jewess'. This commemorative festival was first known as 'the Day of Mordecai', 2 M 15:36.

c. At this point, Rec. Luc. gives a brief thanksgiving: 'And all the people shouted and uttered loud cries: Blessed be you, O Lord, who remember the covenants made with our ancestors! Amen.'

d. From this appendix to the Gk text, we learn that the Jewish community in Egypt received the Book of Esther from the community in Palestine, *see* 2 M 2:14–15. But there is no mention of the authorities in Jerusalem, and a certain suspicion of Dositheus 'who affirmed that he was a priest and Levite'. The King Ptolemy in question must be Ptolemy VIII, whose wife was called Cleopatra; the date would therefore be 114 BC.

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOKS OF MACCABEES

§1 The two books of Maccabees were not in the Jewish Canon of scripture, but their inspiration has been recognised by the Church (they are 'deutero-canonical' books). They treat of the Jewish struggle for religious and political independence against the Seleucid kings. The title of the books is derived from the name Maccabaeus, conferred on the central figure of the story, 1 M 2:4, and later passed on to his brothers.

§2 The First Book of Maccabees places before us at the outset (Introduction, ch. 1–2) two irreconcilable enemies: a triumphant Hellenism with some admiring Jewish supporters; and, opposed to it, the main body of the Jewish nation, faithful to the Law and the Temple. On the one hand, Antiochus Epiphanes, desecrator of the Temple and persecutor; on the other, Mattathias, initiator of the crusade for religious freedom. The body of the book is divided into three parts, one for each of Mattathias' three sons who succeeded one another as leaders of the resistance movement. Judas Maccabaeus (166–160 BC) 3:1–9:22, wins a series of victories over Antiochus' generals, reconsecrates the Temple and secures religious freedom for his people. Under Demetrius I he is hampered at home by the intrigue of Alcimus the high priest, but he is still successful in the field and Nicanor, whose objective is to destroy the Temple, is defeated and killed. To consolidate his position Judas seeks alliance with Rome. He dies in battle. Jonathan, his brother, succeeds him (160–142), 9:23–12:53. Military gives way to political activity and Jonathan cleverly plays off one competitor for the Syrian throne against the other: his appointment as high priest by Alexander Balas is recognised by Demetrius II and confirmed by Antiochus VI. He seeks alliance with the Romans and Spartans. More and more territory comes under his control and peace at home seems assured, when Jonathan falls into the hands of Trypho, who murders both him and the young king, Antiochus VI. Simon, Jonathan's brother (142–134), 13:1–16:24, lends his support to Demetrius II, who wins back the throne and (like his successor, Antiochus VII) recognises Simon as high priest, military governor and ethnarch of the Jews. Political independence is thus achieved, and the nation decrees that Simon's titles be approved. The treaty with Rome is then renewed; it is an era of prosperity and peace. But Antiochus VII turns against the Jews, and his son-in-law, currying favour, assassinates Simon and his two sons.

The narrative covers forty years, from the accession of Antiochus Epi-

phanes in 175 BC to the death of Simon and the accession of John Hyrcanus in 134 BC. The book was written in Hebrew but has come down to us only in a Greek translation. Its author is a Palestinian Jew writing after 134 but before the capture of Jerusalem by Pompey in 63 BC. The last lines of the book, 16:23–24, show that it was written, at the earliest, around the end of the reign of John Hyrcanus, most probably shortly after his death, in about 100 BC. The book is invaluable as a history of the times, though allowances must always be made in such types of literature for the influence of the ancient chronicles of Israel on which they are modelled, and also for the intentions of the author.

For despite the space he devotes to battle and political intrigue, the author means to write a religious history. For him the nation's distress is a punishment for sin, and the successes of his leading figures are won by the help of God. He is a Jew, jealous for the faith which he perceives to be at stake in the struggle between gentile infiltration and ancestral custom. He is therefore an uncompromising foe of hellenisation and an ardent admirer of the heroes who fought for Law and Temple, winning, first, religious liberty and, next, national independence. His story tells how Judaism, the trustee of revelation, was preserved for the world.

§3 The Second Book of Maccabees is not the continuation of the first. It is in part parallel to it: its starting-point is a little earlier (end of the reign of Seleucus IV, father of Antiochus Epiphanes), but it ends with the defeat of Nicanor by Judas Maccabaeus. It therefore covers only about fifteen years, corresponding to the first seven chapters of First Maccabees.

Its literary form is very different. Originally written in Greek, it claims to be a summary of the work of one Jason of Cyrene, 2:19–32, and is preceded by two letters from the Jews of Jerusalem, 1:1–2:18. The style is that of hellenistic writers, though not of the best: at times it is turgid, frequently pompous; more a sermon than a history, although the author shows a far more accurate knowledge of Greek institutions and the personalities of the period than does the author of 1 M.

The author's aim is to entertain and to edify, 2:25; 15:39. Judas Maccabaeus' campaign of liberation is supported by apparitions from heaven and triumphantly concluded by divine intervention, 2:19–22; the persecution itself is a manifestation of God's faithful love, bringing his people to their senses before the accumulation of sin works final ruin, 6:12–17. The author is writing for the Jews of Alexandria, to awaken their feeling of solidarity with their Palestinian brothers. He is particularly anxious to stir their interest in the fortunes of the Temple, round which the life of law-abiding Jewry must revolve and against which the fury of the gentiles is unleashed. This preoccupation shows itself in the way the book is arranged.

After the Heliodorus episode, 3:1–40, bringing out the inviolable sanctity of the Temple, the first part, 4:1–10:8, ends with the death of Antiochus Epiphanes, the persecutor who had defiled the Temple, and with the institution of the feast of Dedication. The second part, 10:9–15:36, also ends with the death of a persecutor (Nicanor) who had threatened the Temple, and with the institution of a commemorative feast. The two letters with which the book opens spring from the same theme, 1:1–2:18, being invitations from

the Jews in Jerusalem to their co-religionists in Egypt to celebrate the feast of the purification of the Temple, the feast of Dedication.

Since the last event to be reported is the death of Nicanor, Jason of Cyrene's work must have been composed soon after 160 BC. If the abbreviator himself added the two introductory letters of 1–2—although this is disputed—the date of the work in its present, reduced form can be fixed from a hint in 1:10a as being 124 BC. The historical value of the book should not be underestimated. Admittedly, the abbreviator (or an editor, perhaps) has accepted the apocryphal stories contained in the letter of 1:10b–2:18, and has reproduced the moving stories of Heliodorus, ch. 3, of the martyrdom of Eleazar, 6:18–31, and of the seven brothers, ch. 7, which he found in Jason and which conveniently illustrated his own religious theses. This notwithstanding, the general agreement with 1 M guarantees the historicity of the events reported by these two independent sources. On one important point, where the two sources are in conflict, 2 M is the more accurate: 1 M 6:1–13 puts the purification of the Temple before the death of Antiochus Epiphanes, 2 M 9:1–29 puts it afterwards; a recently published Babylonian chronological tablet proves 2 M right: Antiochus died in October–November 164, before the re-dedication of the Temple at the end of December in the same year. In the sections peculiar to 2 M, there is no reason for doubting the information given in ch. 4 about the years preceding the spoliation of the Temple by Antiochus. Nonetheless, the abbreviator, rather than Jason, is responsible for one serious error: to a letter of Antiochus V, 2 M 11:22–26, he has, in 11–12:9, added other letters and an account of events belonging to the latter part of the reign of Antiochus IV which ought to have been inserted between ch. 8 and 9.

The book is important for its affirmation of the resurrection of the dead, *see* 7:9c; 14:46; sanctions in the afterlife, 6:26; prayer for the dead, 12:38j, 41–46seq.; the spiritual fruits of martyrdom, 6:18–7:41; the intercession of the saints, 15:12–16, 14, 14e. Other Old Testament writings had left these teachings vague: but these teachings justify the authority accorded to Second Maccabees by the Church.

The chronological system followed in each of the books can now be better understood, thanks to the discovery of a cuneiform tablet which is a fragmentary date-list of the Seleucid kings, and which allows us to fix the date of death of Antiochus Epiphanes. The Macedonian calendar is followed by 1 M, beginning in October, 312 BC, while 2 M follows the Jewish computation, in line with the Babylonian method, beginning in Nisan (3 April) 311. There are, however, two exceptions: in 1 M, events pertaining to the Temple and to Jewish history are dated by the Jewish-Babylonian calendar (1:54; 2:70; 4:52; 9:3,54; 10:21; 13:41,51; 14:27; 16:14), whereas the letters quoted in 2 M 11 are dated by the Macedonian reckoning, as might be expected.

The text has come down to us in three uncial manuscripts, Sinaiticus, Alexandrinus and Venetus, and in thirty or so minuscules, but in Sinaiticus (the best witness) the part corresponding to 2 M is unfortunately missing. The minuscules, deriving from the recension made by the priest Lucian (AD 300), occasionally preserve a more ancient text than that of other Greek manuscripts, and one used by the historian Flavius Josephus in his *Antiquities of the Jews*, who generally follows 1 M, to the exclusion of 2 M. The *Vetus*

Latina also follows a lost Greek text which is frequently better than that of the manuscripts known to us.

THE FIRST BOOK OF MACCABEES

I: INTRODUCTION

Alexander and his successors

1 Alexander of Macedon son of Philip had come from the land of Kittim[a] and defeated Darius king of the Persians and Medes, whom he succeeded as ruler, at first of Hellas.[b] ·He undertook many campaigns, gained possession of many fortresses, and put the local kings to death. ·So he advanced to the ends of the earth, plundering nation after nation; the earth grew silent before him, and his ambitious heart swelled with pride. ·He assembled very powerful forces and subdued provinces, nations and princes, and they became his tributaries. ·But the time came when Alexander took to his bed, in the knowledge that he was dying. He summoned his officers[c], noblemen who had been brought up with him from his youth, and divided his kingdom among them while he was still alive. ·Alexander had reigned twelve years when he died. ·Each of his officers established himself in his own region. ·All assumed crowns after his death, they and their heirs after them for many years, bringing increasing evils on the world.

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Antiochus Epiphanes:[d] Israel infected with Hellenism

2 M 4:7 From these there grew a wicked offshoot, Antiochus Epiphanes son of King Antiochus; once a hostage in Rome,[e] he became king in the 107th year of the
‖2 M 4:9–17 kingdom of the Greeks.[f] ·It was then that there emerged from Israel a set of renegades[g] who led many people astray. 'Come,' they said, 'let us ally ourselves with the gentiles surrounding us, for since we separated ourselves from them many misfortunes have overtaken us.' ·This proposal proved acceptable, ·and a number of the people eagerly approached the king, who authorised them to practise the gentiles' observances.[h] ·So they built a gymnasium in Jerusalem, such as the
1 Co 7:18 gentiles have, ·disguised their circumcision, and abandoned the holy covenant, submitting to gentile rule as willing slaves of impiety.[i]

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First Egyptian campaign and pillage of the Temple[j]

Once Antiochus had seen his authority established, he determined to make himself
2 M 5:1 Dn 11:25–28 king of Egypt and the ruler of both kingdoms. ·He invaded Egypt in massive strength, with chariots and elephants[k] (and cavalry) and a large fleet. ·He engaged Ptolemy king of Egypt in battle, and Ptolemy turned back and fled before his advance, leaving many casualties. ·The fortified cities of Egypt were captured, and Antiochus plundered the country. ·After his conquest of Egypt, in the year 143,
‖2 M 5:11–16 Antiochus turned about and advanced on Israel and Jerusalem in massive strength. Insolently breaking into the sanctuary, he removed the golden altar and the lamp-stand for the light with all its fittings, ·together with the table for the loaves of permanent offering, the libation vessels, the cups, the golden censers, the veil, the crowns, and the golden decoration on the front of the Temple, which he stripped

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of everything. ·He made off with the silver and gold and precious vessels; he 2 M 5:21
discovered the secret treasures and seized them ·and, removing all these, he went back to his own country, having shed much blood and uttered words of extreme arrogance. [l]

There was deep mourning for Israel throughout the country:

Rulers and elders groaned;
girls and young men wasted away;
the women's beauty suffered a change;
every bridegroom took up a dirge,
the bride sat grief-stricken on her marriage-bed.
The earth quaked because of its inhabitants
and the whole House of Jacob was clothed with shame. [m]

Intervention of the Mysarch and construction of the Acra

Two years later the king sent the Mysarch [n] through the cities of Judah. He came to 2 M 5:24–26
Jerusalem with an impressive force, ·and addressing them with what appeared to be peaceful words, he gained their confidence; then suddenly he fell on the city, dealing it a terrible blow, and destroying many of the people of Israel. ·He pillaged the city and set it on fire, tore down its houses and encircling wall, ·took the women and children captive and commandeered the cattle. ·They then rebuilt the City of David with a great strong wall and strong towers and made this their Citadel. [o]
There they installed a brood of sinners, of renegades, who fortified themselves inside it, ·storing arms and provisions, and depositing there the loot they had collected from Jerusalem; they were to prove a great trouble.

It became an ambush for the sanctuary,
an evil adversary for Israel at all times.
They shed innocent blood all round the sanctuary Ps 79:1–3
and defiled the sanctuary itself.
The citizens of Jerusalem fled because of them,

1 **a.** The Kittim were the inhabitants of Kition in Cyprus, and so by extension Cypriots in general, Gn 10:4; 1 Ch 1:7; Is 23:1. Later, the term was further extended to the Mediterranean islands, Jr 2:10; Ezk 27:6, and to regions further west, such as Macedonia, 1 M 8:5, and finally, to the whole Roman world.

b. Not restricted to Greece proper. The Hebr. *javan*, Is 66:19; Ezk 27:13, which corresponds to it, primarily means Ionia in Asia Minor.

c. In June 323 BC. This summoning of the generals gave rise to the legend of the partitioning of the empire at Alexander's death; in fact, however, the attempts to divide the empire succeeded only after the battle of Ipsus, in 301. Dn 8:8,22 also alludes to the splitting of the empire.

d. 175–64. Younger brother of Seleucus IV and son of Antiochus III. The royal epithet *epiphanes* ('who reveals himself in splendour') indicates the king's claim to be the earthly manifestation of Zeus.

e. Antiochus IV had been among the hostages handed over to the Romans by his father in 189, after his defeat at Magnesia in Sipyle.

f. i.e. of the Seleucid era, beginning in Syria in the autumn of 312 (theoretical date of the founding of Antioch), and in Babylonia in the spring of 311.

g. lit. 'breakers of the Law', an expression which in LXX usually translates Hebr. 'sons of Belial', Dt 13:14.

h. lit. 'observances of the nations', that is, of the Hebr. *goyim*, often applied to the gentile nations as opposed to 'the people (of Israel)', though with some exceptions, 3:59; 8:23seq.; 9:29; *see* Gn 12:2; Ex 32:10.

i. Religion, the Law and ancestral custom isolated the Jews as a foreign community inside the oriental world which had been unified and hellenised since Alexander's conquest. Assimilation by the new culture offered material benefits, but could not be achieved without breaking down the barriers which safeguarded the integrity of the Jewish faith. At this point, the innovations were not yet identified with the idolatrous practices which the king was to impose seven years later, but they increased the opportunities for taking part in such rites; and here lies the underlying theme of the two books of Maccabees. This movement among the hellenising Jews was sure of support from Antiochus Epiphanes, a devotee of Greek culture *see* vv. 41–51.

j. This was the first campaign against Ptolemy Philometor, in 169. The author of 2 M omits it, mentioning only the 'second attack', 2 M 5:1, which is omitted here. The sequence of events is easier to follow in the Book of Daniel, 11:25–27: first campaign; v. 28: pillage of the Temple; v. 29: second campaign and intervention of the Romans; v. 30: repression in Jerusalem; vv. 31–39: suppression of public worship.

k. They came from India; the training centre for these beasts of combat, *see* ch. 6, was Apamaea.

l. The pride of Epiphanes, who considered himself the equal of Zeus, amazed his contemporaries, who, punning on his name, used to call him *epimanes*, 'the mad man'; *see* 2 M 5:17,21; 9:4–11; Dn 7:8,25; 11:36.

m. First of the poetical compositions in the book; others occur at vv. 36–42; 2:8–13,51–64; 3:3–9,45; 14:4–15.

n. 'the Mysarch' conj. following 2 M 5:24 (which gives his name: Apollonius); Gk 'tribute collector'; the two words are much alike in Hebr. He was in command of the mercenaries from Mysia and went to Jerusalem in 167. He reappears in 3:10.

o. The name City of David had grown to cover the large western hill of Jerusalem. When converted into the Citadel, the *Acra* in Greek, this quarter housed the Syro-Macedonian garrison and the hellenising Jews. It was to prove a threat to the Temple which stood lower down to the east, on what was called Mount Zion. Place-names of this period differ from those of the time of David, *see* 2 S 5:9f.

she became a dwelling-place of strangers;
estranged from her own offspring,
her children forsook her.
Her sanctuary became as forsaken as a desert, 39 41
her feasts were turned into mourning,
her Sabbaths into a mockery,
her honour into reproach.
Her dishonour now fully matched her former glory, 40 42
her greatness was turned into grief.

Installation of gentile cults

The king then issued a proclamation to his whole kingdom that all were to become 41 43
a single people, each nation renouncing its particular customs. ·All the gentiles 42 44
conformed to the king's decree, ·and many Israelites chose to accept his religion, 43 45
sacrificing to idols and profaning the Sabbath. ·The king also sent edicts[p] by 44 46
messenger to Jerusalem and the towns of Judah, directing them to adopt customs
foreign to the country, ·banning burnt offerings, sacrifices and libations from the 45 47, 48
sanctuary, profaning Sabbaths and feasts, ·defiling the sanctuary and everything 46 49
holy, ·building altars, shrines and temples for idols, sacrificing pigs and unclean 47 50
beasts, ·leaving their sons uncircumcised, and prostituting themselves to all kinds 48 51
of impurity and abomination, ·so that they should forget the Law and revoke all 49
observance of it. ·Anyone not obeying the king's command was to be put to death. 50 52
Writing in such terms to every part of his kingdom, the king appointed inspectors 51 53, 54
for the whole people and directed all the towns of Judah to offer sacrifice city by
city. ·Many of the people—that is, every apostate from the Law—rallied to them 52 55
and so committed evil in the country, ·forcing Israel into hiding in any possible 53 56
place of refuge.

On the fifteenth day of Chislev in the year 145[q] the king built the appalling 54 57
6:7 abomination on top of the altar of burnt offering;[r] and altars were built in the
Dn 9:27;11:31 Mt 24:15h surrounding towns of Judah ·and incense offered at the doors of houses and in the 55 58
streets. ·Any books of the Law[s] that came to light were torn up and burned. 56 59
Whenever anyone was discovered possessing a copy of the covenant or practising 57 60
the Law, the king's decree sentenced him to death. ·Month after month they took 58 61
harsh action against any offenders they discovered in the towns of Israel. ·On the 59 62
twenty-fifth day of each month,[t] sacrifice was offered on the altar erected on top of
||2 M 6:10 the altar of burnt offering. ·Women who had had their children circumcised were 60 63
put to death according to the edict ·with their babies hung round their necks, and 61 64
the members of their household and those who had performed the circumcision
were executed with them.

Yet there were many in Israel who stood firm and found the courage to refuse 62 65
unclean food. ·They chose death rather than contamination by such fare or profan- 63 66
ation of the holy covenant, and they were executed. ·It was a truly dreadful 64 67
retribution that visited Israel.

II: MATTATHIAS UNLEASHES THE HOLY WAR[a]

Mattathias and his sons

2 About then, Mattathias son of John, son of Simeon, a priest of the line of 1
1 Ch 24:7 Joarib,[b] left Jerusalem and settled in Modein. ·He had five sons, John known 2
as Gaddi, ·Simon called Thassi, ·Judas called Maccabaeus, ·Eleazar, called 3, 4, 5
Avaran, and Jonathan called Apphus.[c] ·When he saw the blasphemies being 6
committed in Judah and Jerusalem, ·he said, 'Alas that I should have been born to 7
Ne 11:1b witness the ruin of my people and the ruin of the Holy City, and to sit by while she
is delivered over to her enemies, and the sanctuary into the hand of foreigners.

8 'Her Temple has become like someone of no repute,[d]
9 the vessels that were her glory have been carried off as booty,
her babies have been slaughtered in her streets,
her young men by the enemy's sword.
10 Is there a nation that has not claimed
a share of her royal prerogatives,
that has not taken some of her spoils?
11 All her ornaments have been snatched from her,
her former freedom has become slavery.
12 See how the Holy Place, our beauty, our glory,
is now laid waste,
see how the gentiles have profaned it!
13 What have we left to live for?'

14 Mattathias and his sons tore their garments, put on sackcloth, and observed deep mourning.

The ordeal of the sacrifice at Modein

15 The king's commissioners who were enforcing the apostasy came to the town of
16 Modein for the sacrifices. ·Many Israelites gathered round them, but Mattathias
17 and his sons drew apart. ·The king's commissioners then addressed Mattathias as follows, 'You are a respected leader, a great man in this town; you have sons and
18 brothers to support you. ·Be the first to step forward and conform to the king's decree, as all the nations have done, and the leaders of Judah and the survivors in Jerusalem; you and your sons shall be reckoned among the Friends of the King,[e] you and your sons will be honoured with gold and silver and many presents.'
19 Raising his voice, Mattathias retorted, 'Even if every nation living in the king's dominions obeys him, each forsaking its ancestral religion to conform to his
20 decrees, ·I, my sons and my brothers will still follow the covenant of our ances-
21, 22 tors. ·May Heaven[f] preserve us from forsaking the Law and its observances. ·As for the king's orders, we will not follow them: we shall not swerve from our own
23 religion either to right or to left.' ·As he finished speaking, a Jew came forward in the sight of all to offer sacrifice on the altar in Modein as the royal edict required.
24 When Mattathias saw this, he was fired with zeal; stirred to the depth of his being, he gave vent to his legitimate anger,[g] threw himself on the man and slaughtered

p. Antiochus Epiphanes, in his efforts to unify his empire, imposed gentile practices on the Jews, thus abrogating the charter granted them by Antiochus III in 198, by which the Mosaic Law was recognised as Jewish civil law (also recognised as such by the Persian kings when the Jews returned from exile). Loyalty to the Law thus became political rebellion; hence the persecution. Religious freedom returned with the edict of Antiochus V, 6:57–61; 2 M 11:22–26.

q. Of the Seleucid era, reckoning from spring: hence, December 167.

r. 'The appalling abomination', Dn 9:27; 11:31, was the altar of Baal Shamem or Olympian Zeus erected on the Jewish altar of burnt offering.

s. Book of the 'Covenant' or books of the 'Law': here, meaning the Pentateuch.

t. Monthly commemoration of the king's birthday, *see* 2 M 6:7, which also happened to be the anniversary of the inauguration of the altar. Three years later, to the day, Judas was to celebrate the dedication of the new altar, 4:52seq.

2 **a.** Persecution produces a revival of religious awareness. Jewish opposition to Hellenism takes the form of physical violence, 2:15–28, passive resistance, 2:29–38, and ultimately a war of religion under the leadership of Mattathias, 2:39–48, but particularly under Judas Maccabaeus, ch. 3–5. Judas had realised that religious and political independence were interconnected; for this reason the struggle continued even after religious freedom had been won, 6:57–62. But the shift from the religious to a political ground led to the compromises and party squabbles occupying the last part of the book. These in the end were to oust religious zeal and discredit the Maccabees' successors, the Hasmonaeans, in the estimation of their devout contemporaries.

b. Head of the first of the twenty-four priestly orders; that of Jedaiah who, according to Josephus, was the ancestor of the Oniad high priests, being only the second in seniority, *see* 1 Ch 24:7. But this pre-eminence may be due to an adjustment of the text after the Maccabees had succeeded to the high-priestly office, 10:20.

c. The nicknames: Gaddi, Avaran, Apphus can mean 'Fortunate', 'Alert', 'Favoured'; Maccabaeus may mean 'hammer-headed', or is perhaps a shortened form of *maqqabyahu*, 'Yahweh's Designate', *see* Is 62:2. The meaning of Thassi is uncertain.

d. 'no repute' Gk MSS and Lat.; 'high repute' Gk. The original text presumably read 'not of high repute' (a Hebraism) and the negative later was lost, either by accident or because of scruples.

e. Title of honour, a survival from the court of Persia; there were various grades. The 'Friends of the King' had free access to the sovereign who from time to time assigned them certain responsibilities, *see* 3:38; 7:8; 10:16,20,60,65; 11:27,57; 14:39; 15:28; 2 M 8:9.

f. A common biblical expression, here, as elsewhere in the book, standing for 'God'.

g. lit. '(anger) appropriate to the Law', *see* Dt 13:7–12. Zeal for the Law characterises the piety of the times. In the following century, piety takes a more political flavour with the party of the Zealots.

him on the altar. ·At the same time he killed the king's commissioner who was 25
there to enforce the sacrifice, and tore down the altar. ·In his zeal for the Law he 26
Nb 25:6–15 acted as Phinehas had against Zimri son of Salu. ·Then Mattathias went through 27
the town, shouting at the top of his voice, 'Let everyone who has any zeal for the
Law and takes his stand on the covenant come out and follow me.' ·Then he fled 28
2 M 5:27 with his sons into the hills, leaving all their possessions behind in the town.

The ordeal of the Sabbath in the desert

Many people who were concerned for virtue and justice went down to the desert 29
and stayed there, ·taking with them their sons, their wives and their cattle, so 30
oppressive had their sufferings become. ·Word was brought to the royal officials 31
and forces stationed in Jerusalem, in the City of David, that those who had
repudiated the king's edict had gone down to the hiding places in the desert. ·A 32
‖2 M 6:11 strong detachment went after them, and when it came up with them ranged itself
against them in battle formation, preparing to attack them on the Sabbath day,
and said, 'Enough of this! Come out and do as the king orders and you will be 33
spared.' ·The others, however, replied, 'We refuse to come out, and we will not 34
obey the king's orders and profane the Sabbath day.'[h] ·The royal forces at once 35
went into action, ·but the others offered no opposition; not a stone was thrown, 36
there was no barricading of the hiding places. ·They only said, 'Let us all die 37
innocent; let heaven and earth bear witness that you are massacring us with no
pretence of justice.' ·The attack was pressed home on the Sabbath itself, and they 38
were slaughtered, with their wives and children and cattle, to the number of one
thousand persons.

The activity of Mattathias and his associates

When the news reached Mattathias and his friends, they mourned them bitterly 39
and said to one another, 'If we all do as our brothers have done, and refuse to fight 40
the gentiles for our lives and institutions, they will only destroy us the sooner from
the earth.' ·So then and there they came to this decision, 'If anyone attacks 41
us on the Sabbath day, whoever he may be, we shall resist him; we must not all be
killed, as our brothers were in the hiding places.'

Soon they were joined by the Hasidaean[i] party, stout fighting men of Israel, 42
each one a volunteer on the side of the Law. ·All the refugees from the persecution 43
rallied to them, giving them added support. ·They organised themselves into an 44
armed force, striking down the sinners in their anger, and the renegades in their
fury, and those who escaped them fled to the gentiles for safety. ·Mattathias and 45
his friends made a tour, overthrowing the altars ·and forcibly circumcising all the 46
boys they found uncircumcised in the territories of Israel. ·They hunted down the 47
upstarts and managed their campaign to good effect. ·They wrested the Law out of 48
the control of the gentiles and the kings and reduced the sinners to impotence.[j]

The testament and death of Mattathias[k]

As the days of Mattathias were drawing to a close, he said to his sons, 'Arrogance 49
and outrage are now in the ascendant; it is a period of turmoil and bitter hatred.
This is the time, my children, for you to have a burning zeal for the Law and to give 50
your lives for the covenant of our ancestors.

Remember the deeds performed by our ancestors, each in his generation, 51
and you will win great honour and everlasting renown.
Was not Abraham tested and found faithful, 52
Gn 15:6c was that not considered as justifying him?
Gn 37:39–41 Joseph in the time of his distress maintained the Law, 53
and so became lord of Egypt.
Nb 25:6–13 Phinehas, our father,[l] in return for his burning zeal, 54

received the covenant of everlasting priesthood.
55 Joshua, for carrying out his task, — Jos *passim*
became judge of Israel.
56 Caleb, for his testimony before the assembled people, — Nb 13:30; 14:24
received an inheritance in the land.
57 David for his generous heart — 2 S 7
inherited the throne of an everlasting kingdom.
58 Elijah for his consuming fervour for the Law — 1 K 19:10,14; 2 K 2:11–12
was caught up to heaven itself.
59 Hananiah, Azariah and Mishael, for their fidelity, — Dn 3
were saved from the flame.
60 Daniel for his singleness of heart — Dn 6
was rescued from the lion's jaws.
61 Know then that, generation after generation,
no one who hopes in him will be overcome.
62 Do not fear the threats of the sinner, [m]
all his brave show must come to the dunghill and the worms.
63 Exalted today, tomorrow he is nowhere to be found,
for he has returned to the dust he came from
and his scheming is brought to nothing.
64 My children, be resolute and courageous for the Law,
for it will bring you glory.

65 'Here is your brother Simeon, [n] I know he is a man of sound judgement. Listen
66 to him all your lives; let him take your father's place. ·Judas Maccabaeus, strong
and brave from his youth, let him be your general and conduct the war against the
67 gentiles. ·The rest of you are to enrol in your ranks all those who keep the Law,
68 and to assure the vengeance of your people. ·Pay back the gentiles to the full, and
69 hold fast to the ordinance of the Law.' ·Then he blessed them and was joined to his
70 ancestors. ·He died in the year 146 and was buried in his ancestral tomb at Modein,
and all Israel mourned him deeply.

III: JUDAS MACCABAEUS, LEADER OF THE JEWS (166–160 BC)

The eulogy of Judas Maccabaeus

1. 2 3 His son, Judas, known as Maccabaeus, then took his place. ·All his brothers,
and all who had attached themselves to his father, supported him, and they
fought for Israel with a will.

3 He extended the fame of his people.
Like a giant, he put on the breastplate
and buckled on his war harness;

h. Ex 16:29 forbids anyone to leave home on the Sabbath day, cf. Ex 20:8f; the Damascus Document, one of the Qumran texts, following Nb 35:4seq., limits a Sabbath day's journey out of town to 1000 cubits (583 yd, 533m), and to 2000 cubits (1166 yd, 1066 m), to pasture flocks, thus precluding virtually all activity, *see* Ne 13:15seq. The insurgents were soon to learn that they had to defend themselves, even on the Sabbath day, v. 40seq.

i. Gk form of the Hebr. *hasidim*, the 'Devout'; the Jewish party devoted to the Law; resisting gentile influence even before the Maccabaean period, they became Judas' shock-troops, *see* 2 M 14:6, without, however, embracing Hasmonaean policies, *see* 1 M 7:13. Josephus says (*see Ant.* XIII, 17seq.), that under the principate of Jonathan, in about 150, they split into the two groups known as Pharisees (Mt 3:7f; Ac 4:1a) and Essenes, the latter better known since the discoveries at Qumran.

j. lit. 'did not give a horn to the sinner': for this biblical symbol of strength, *see* Ps 18:2d; *see also* Dn 7–8.

k. The testament of Mattathias is reminiscent of the Eulogy of the Ancestors in Si 44–50.

l. The author derives the descent of the contemporary high priest, Simon II, from Eleazar, son of Aaron and father of Phinehas, the ancestor of Zadok and the Oniads: he casts no doubt, therefore, on the legitimacy of the Hasmonaean priesthood.

m. Presumably Antiochus Epiphanes, *see* 1:10 (and 2:48 ?); 2 M 9:9.

n. Simeon is the Semitic name of Mattathias' second son, *see* 2:2, while Simon is a Gk name, chosen because it sounds much the same. Despite his age and qualities, he was only third in assuming leadership of the nation, *see* ch. 13.

he engaged in battle after battle,
protecting the ranks with his sword.
He was like a lion in his exploits, 4
like a young lion roaring over its prey.
He pursued and tracked down the renegades, 5
he consigned those who troubled his people to the flames.
The renegades quailed with the terror he inspired, 6
all evil-doers were utterly confounded,
and deliverance went forward under his leadership.
He brought bitterness to many a king 7
and rejoicing to Jacob by his deeds,
his memory is blessed for ever and ever.
He went through the towns of Judah 8
eliminating the irreligious from them,
and diverted the Retribution from Israel.
His name resounded to the ends of the earth, 9
he rallied those who were on the point of perishing.

‖2 M 8:1–7 **Initial successes of Judas** [a]

Next, Apollonius [b] mustered the gentiles and a large force from Samaria to make 10
war on Israel. ·When Judas learned of it, he went out to meet him and routed and 11
killed him. Many fell wounded, and the survivors took to flight. ·Their spoils were 12
seized and the sword of Apollonius was taken by Judas, who used it to fight with
throughout his life. ·On hearing that Judas had raised a mixed force of believers 13
and seasoned fighters, ·Seron, commander of the Syrian troops, said, 'I shall make 14
a name for myself and gain honour in the kingdom if I fight Judas and those
supporters of his who are so contemptuous of the king's orders.' ·He therefore 15
launched another expedition, with a strong army of unbelievers to support him in
taking revenge on the Israelites. ·He had nearly reached the descent of Beth- 16
Horon when Judas went out to confront him with a handful of men. ·But as soon as 17
these saw the force advancing to meet them, they said to Judas, 'How can we, few
as we are, engage such overwhelming numbers? We are exhausted as it is, not
having had anything to eat today.' ·'It is easy', Judas answered, 'for a great number 18
2:21f to be defeated by a few; indeed, in the sight of Heaven, [c] deliverance, whether by
1 S 14:6 many or by few, is all one; ·for victory in war does not depend on the size of the 19
fighting force: Heaven accords the strength. ·They are coming against us in full- 20
blown insolence and lawlessness to destroy us, our wives and our children, and to
plunder us; ·but we are fighting for our lives and our laws, ·and he will crush them 21, 22
before our eyes; do not be afraid of them.' [d] ·When he had finished speaking, he 23
made a sudden sally against Seron and his force and overwhelmed them. ·Judas 24
Jos 10:10 pursued them down from Beth-Horon as far as the plain. About eight hundred of
their men fell, and the rest took refuge in the country of the Philistines. [e] ·Judas 25
and his brothers began to be feared, and alarm seized the surrounding peoples.
His name even reached the king's ears, and among the nations there was talk of 26
Judas and his battles.

Antiochus prepares to invade Persia and Judaea. [f] **Regency of Lysias**

The news of these events infuriated Antiochus, and he ordered mobilisation of all 27
the forces in his kingdom, a very powerful army. ·Opening his treasury, he 28
distributed a year's pay to his troops, telling them to be prepared for any eventu-
ality. ·He then found that the money in his coffers had run short and that the 29
tribute of the province had decreased, as a result of the dissension and disaster
brought on the country by his own abrogation of laws that had been in force from
antiquity. ·He began to fear that, as had happened more than once, he would not 30
have enough to cover the expenses and the lavish bounties he had previously been
accustomed to make on a larger scale than his predecessors on the throne. ·In this 31

grave quandary he resolved to invade Persia, there to levy tribute on the provinces
32 and so accumulate substantial funds. ·He therefore left Lysias, a nobleman and
member of the royal family, to manage the royal affairs between the River Eu-
33 phrates and the Egyptian frontier,[g] ·making him responsible for the education of
34 his son Antiochus,[h] until he should come back. ·To him Antiochus made over
half his forces, with the elephants, giving him instructions about what he wanted
35 done, particularly with regard to the inhabitants of Judaea and Jerusalem, ·against
whom he was to send a force, to crush and destroy the power of Israel and the
36 remnant of Jerusalem, to wipe out their very memory from the place, ·to settle
37 foreigners in all parts of their territory and to distribute their land into lots.[i] ·The
king took the remaining half of his troops with him and set out from Antioch, the
capital of his kingdom, in the year 147; he crossed the River Euphrates and made
his way through the Upper Provinces.[j]

Gorgias and Nicanor lead the Syrian army into Judaea ‖2 M 8:8–15

38 Lysias chose Ptolemy son of Dorymenes, with Nicanor and Gorgias, influential 2 M 4:45;
39 men from among the Friends of the King,[k] ·and, under their command, despatched 8:8seq.;10:14
forty thousand foot and seven thousand horse to invade the land of Judah and ·2:18e
40 devastate it, as the king had ordered. ·The entire force set out and reached the
41 neighbourhood of Emmaus in the lowlands, where they pitched camp. ·The local
merchants, hearing the news of this, arrived at the camp, bringing with them a
large amount of gold and silver, and fetters[l] as well, proposing to buy the Israelites
as slaves; they were accompanied by people from Idumaea and the Philistine
42 country.[m] ·Judas and his brothers saw that the situation was going from bad to
worse and that armies were camping in their territory; they were also well aware
43 that the king had ordered the people's total destruction. ·So they said to each
other, 'Let us restore the ruins of our people and fight for our people and our
44 sanctuary.' ·The Assembly was summoned, to prepare for war, to offer prayer and
to implore compassion and mercy.

45 Jerusalem was as empty as a desert,
none of her children to go in and out.
The sanctuary was trodden underfoot,
men of an alien race held the Citadel,
which had become a lodging for gentiles.
There was no more rejoicing for Jacob,
the flute and lyre were mute.

3 **a.** These first two engagements are not mentioned in 2 M.

b. According to Josephus, Apollonius, *see* 1:29n, was governor of Samaria.

c. 'of Heaven' Gk MSS, *Vet. Lat.*; 'of the God of heaven' remaining Gk, but from motives of respect 1 M systematically avoids the word 'God'.

d. Exhortation in the style of Deuteronomy, *see* Dt 1:29seq.; 3:18–22; 9:1seq. Jewish literature of the period is frequently modelled on the stories of the Patriarchs and of the Conquest. v. 21 admirably sums up the basic reason for the early Maccabaean resistance.

e. Deliberately archaic expression to denote the coastal region, *see* 15:38.

f. The author's natural bias makes the Jewish problem central to Antiochus IV's preoccupations. In reality, the Asiatic campaign was not intended merely to replenish the royal exchequer, but also to reconquer Armenia.

g. That is to say, the Transeuphratene province of the Persian period. Lysias (known also to the historian Polybius) was evidently general officer commanding Coele-Syria and Phoenicia, *see* 2 M 10:11, as well as Upper Syria. • The expression 'member of the royal family' corresponds to 'King's Cousin', 2 M 11:1, the highest title of honour in the Seleucid court, *see* 1 M 10:89.

h. The future Antiochus V Eupator, 6:17, whose upbringing was two years later entrusted to Philip, the king's intimate friend, 6:14; 2 M 9:29.

i. The rebellious Jews were intended to be wiped out or sold into slavery, 2 M 8:9–11, and their lands to be confiscated and then partly redistributed to foreigners, *see* Dn 11:39. Judaea would thus have become crown land, rented to settlers in individual lots. The rent exacted was a more severe imposition than the older form of tribute.

j. Other name for the Iranian plateau, *see* 6:1; 2 M 9:25. • The date is now spring 165.

k. Ptolemy was general of Coele-Syria and Phoenicia, 2 M 8:8. Gorgias was a general in the limited, military sense and it was he who directed operations, although Nicanor took precedence over him as 'First Friend' of the king, 2 M 8:9. The latter reappears directing a campaign five years later, 7:26.

l. 'fetters' *pedas* conj. following Syr. and Josephus; 'children' *paidas* Gk, Lat.

m. 'Idumaea' conj.; Gk and versions have 'Syria', which presumably translates Hebr. *'aram*, read instead of *'edom*, a common mistake, *see* Jg 3:8; 1 K 11:25; 2 K 16:6; etc. • 'Philistine country', lit. 'land of the foreigners', in Gk *allophyles*, which in LXX designates the Philistines, *see* 5:68.

||2 M 8:16–23

The Jews muster at Mizpah

Jg 20:1–3
1 S 7:5–6,5c

After mustering, they made their way to Mizpah,[n] opposite Jerusalem, since 46
Mizpah was traditionally a place of prayer for Israel. ·That day they fasted and put 47
on sackcloth, covering their heads with ashes and tearing their garments. ·For the 48
guidance that the gentiles would have sought from the images of their false gods,[o]
2 M 8:23 they opened the Book of the Law. ·They also brought out the priestly vestments, 49
Nb 6:1a with first-fruits and tithes, and marshalled the Nazirites who had completed the
2:21f period of their vow.[p] ·Then, raising their voices to Heaven, they cried, 'What shall 50
we do with these people, and where are we to take them? ·Your holy place has 51
been trampled underfoot and defiled, your priests mourn in their humiliation, ·and 52
now the gentiles are in alliance to destroy us: you know what they have in mind for
us. ·How can we stand up and face them if you do not come to our aid?' ·Then they 53, 54
sounded the trumpets and raised a great shout.

Ex 18:21seq. Next, Judas appointed leaders for the people, to command a thousand, a 55
hundred, fifty or ten men.[q] ·Those who were in the middle of building a house, or 56
Jg 7:3c were about to be married, or were planting a vineyard, or were afraid, he told to go
Dt 20:5–9 home again, as the Law allowed. ·The column then marched off and took up a 57
position south of Emmaus. ·'Stand to your arms,' Judas told them, 'acquit your- 58
selves bravely, in the morning be ready to fight these gentiles massed against us to
destroy us and our sanctuary. ·Better for us to die in battle than to watch 59
2:21f the ruin of our nation and our Holy Place. ·Whatever be the will of Heaven, he will 60
perform it.'

||2M 8:23–29

The battle of Emmaus

4 Gorgias took with him five thousand foot and a thousand picked cavalry, and 1
the force moved off by night ·with the object of attacking the Jewish position 2
1:33 and dealing them an unexpected blow; the men from the Citadel were there to
guide him. ·Judas got wind of it and himself moved off with his fighters to strike at 3
the royal army at Emmaus, ·while its fighting troops were still dispersed outside 4
the camp. ·Hence, when Georgias reached Judas' camp, he found no one and 5
began looking for the Jews in the mountains. 'For', he said, 'we have got them on
the run.' ·First light found Judas in the plain with three thousand men, although 6
these lacked the armour and swords they would have wished. ·They could now see 7
the gentile encampment with its strong fortifications and cavalry surrounding it,
clearly people who understood warfare.

Judas said to his men,[a] 'Do not be afraid of their numbers, and do not flinch at 8
2:21f their attack. ·Remember how our ancestors were delivered at the Red Sea when 9
Pharaoh was pursuing them in force. ·And now let us call on Heaven: if he cares 10
for us, he will remember his covenant with our ancestors and will destroy this army
confronting us today; ·then all the nations will know for certain that there is One 11
who ransoms and saves Israel.'

The foreigners looked up and, seeing the Jews advancing against them, ·came 12, 13
out of the camp to join battle. Judas' men sounded the trumpet ·and engaged 14
them. The gentiles were defeated and fled towards the plain ·and all the stragglers 15
fell by the sword. The pursuit continued as far as Gezer[b] and the plains of Idumaea,
Azotus and Jamnia, and the enemy lost about three thousand men.

Breaking off the pursuit, Judas returned with his men ·and said to the people, 16, 17
'Never mind the booty, for we have another battle ahead of us. ·Gorgias and his 18
troops are still near us in the mountains. First stand up to our enemies and fight
them, and then you can safely collect the booty.' ·The words were hardly out of 19
Judas' mouth, when a detachment came into view, peering down from the moun-
tain. ·Observing that their own troops had been routed and that the camp had been 20
fired—since the smoke, which they could see, attested the fact—·they were panic- 21
stricken at the sight; and when, furthermore, they saw Judas' troops drawn up for
battle on the plain, ·they all fled into Philistine territory. ·Judas then turned back 22, 23
to plunder the camp, and a large sum in gold and silver, with violet and sea-purple[c]

stuffs, and many other valuables were carried off. •On their return, the Jews chanted praises to Heaven, singing, 'He is kind and his love is everlasting!' [d] •That day had seen a remarkable deliverance in Israel. •Those of the foreigners who had escaped came and gave Lysias an account of all that had happened. [e] •The news shocked and dismayed him, for affairs in Israel had not gone as he intended, and the result was quite the opposite to what the king had ordered. Ps 118:1–3,1a

First campaign of Lysias ‖2 M 11:1–12

The next year he mobilised sixty thousand picked troops and five thousand cavalry with the intention of finishing off the Jews. •They advanced into Idumaea and made their base at Beth-Zur,[f] where Judas met them with ten thousand men. When he saw their military strength he offered this prayer, 'Blessed are you, Saviour of Israel, who shattered the mighty warrior's attack at the hand of your servant David, and delivered the Philistine camp into the hands of Jonathan son of Saul, and his armour-bearer. •Crush this expedition in the same way at the hands of your people Israel; let their troops and cavalry bring them nothing but shame. Sow panic in their ranks, confound the confidence they put in their numbers and send them reeling in defeat. •Overthrow them by the sword of those who love you, and all who acknowledge your name will sing your praises.' •The two forces engaged, and five thousand men of Lysias' troops fell in hand-to-hand fighting. Seeing the rout of his army and the courage of Judas' troops and their readiness to live or die nobly, Lysias withdrew to Antioch,[g] where he recruited mercenaries for a further invasion of Judaea in even greater strength. 1 S 17 1 S 14 1–23

Purification and dedication of the Temple [h] ‖2 M 10:1–8

Judas and his brothers then said, 'Now that our enemies have been defeated, let us go up to purify the sanctuary and dedicate it.' •So they marshalled the whole army, and went up to Mount Zion. •There they found the sanctuary deserted, the altar desecrated, the gates burnt down, and vegetation growing in the courts as it might in a wood or on some mountain, while the storerooms were in ruins. •They tore their garments and mourned bitterly, putting dust on their heads. •They prostrated themselves on the ground, and when the trumpets gave the signal they cried aloud to Heaven. Ps 74:2–7 2:21f

Judas then ordered his men to keep the Citadel garrison engaged until he had purified the sanctuary. •Next, he selected priests who were blameless and zealous for the Law •to purify the sanctuary and remove the stones of the 'Pollution' [i] to some unclean place.

n. Traditional rallying-place for Israel, Jg 20:1; 1 S 7:5; 10:17; *see* Jr 40:6, about 8 miles (13 km) north of Jerusalem.

o. 2 M 8:23 throws light on this passage. Since there were no more prophets, the Book of the Law was opened at random to ask divine guidance on the advisability of joining battle and the probable result.

p. On expiry of their vow, Nazirites had to offer a sacrifice in the Temple, Nb 6:13. But the Temple was now desecrated and inaccessible.

q. These units have little place in the Hellenistic armies of the day; the Jews were still using their ancient type of judicial and military organisation, Ex 18:21 (cf. Ex 18:13g); Nb 31:48; Dt 1:15; 2 S 18:1; 2 K 1:9–14. The Essenes of later times preserved the same organisation.

4 **a.** *see* 3:22d. Exhortation before battle, ordered by Dt 20:2, seems to have been universal in antiquity as now; *see also* 2 M 16–20.

b. Gezer, though attacked by Judas, 2 M 10:32, was first taken by Simon, who made it into a residence for his son (John Hyrcanus), 1 M 13:43seq.; 14:7.34; 16:1.21. *See also* Jos 10:33.

c. 'Sea-purple' or Tyrian purple is a deep red, and the same as the 'scarlet-purple' of Ex 25–29.

d. lit. 'his faithful love'. They evidently sang Ps 118, *see* 2 Ch 20:21.

e. *see* 3:37 and 2 M 11:21. We are now at the beginning of the year 164.

f. The army had marched down the Judaean flank through the flat lands. The Seleucid citadel of Beth-Zur, *see* 6:7, lay at the southernmost limit of Judaea, about 18 miles (29 km) from Jerusalem, on the Hebron road.

g. The author seems not to know about the elaborate bargaining that followed this decisive clash between Judas and Lysias' superior forces, 2 M 11:13seq.

h. The Temple is one of the principal objectives of the rebels, *see* 2:7; 3:43; 2 M 13:11, as the centre of Jewish religious life, without which the Law could not be observed in its fullness. The gentiles had sacked and profaned it, 1:21seq.; 1:54; now, as soon as the first victories are won, it is purified and reconsecrated. The death of Antiochus Epiphanes, which our author mistakenly places after the expeditions against the Idumaeans and Ammonites, ch. 5, doubtless had something to do with it too. The concept of the holiness of the Temple will be a dominant theme in the second book, 2 M 3:12; 5:15; 13:11; 15:18; 15:37m.

i. The Gk word probably renders Hebr. *shiqqutz*, often used to mean idols (the 'horrors', *see* Dt 29:16; Jr 4:1; 7:30; etc.; Ezk 5:11; 7:20; 11:18; etc.), and here means the idolatrous altar, *see* 1 M 1:54.

1 K 8:64s They discussed what should be done about the altar of burnt offering which had 44
been profaned, ·and very properly decided to pull it down, rather than later be 45
embarrassed about it since it had been defiled by the gentiles. They therefore
demolished it ·and deposited the stones in a suitable place on the hill of the 46
Dwelling to await the appearance of a prophet[j] who should give a ruling about
Ex 20:25 them. ·They took unhewn stones, as the Law prescribed, and built a new altar on 47
the lines of the old one. ·They restored the Holy Place and the interior of the 48
Ex 25:23–30, 31–39;30:1–10 Dwelling, and purified the courts. ·They made new sacred vessels, and brought the 49
lamp-stand, the altar of incense, and the table into the Temple. ·They burned 50
incense on the altar and lit the lamps on the lamp-stand, and these shone inside the
Temple. ·They placed the loaves on the table and hung the curtains and completed 51
all the tasks they had undertaken.

On the twenty-fifth of the ninth month, Chislev, in the year 148[k] they rose at 52
dawn ·and offered a lawful sacrifice on the new altar of burnt offering which they 53
had made. ·The altar was dedicated, to the sound of hymns, zithers, lyres and 54
cymbals, at the same time of year and on the same day on which the gentiles had
originally profaned it. ·The whole people fell prostrate in adoration and then 55
praised Heaven who had granted them success. ·For eight days they celebrated the 56
dedication of the altar, joyfully offering burnt offerings, communion and thanks-
giving sacrifices. ·They ornamented the front of the Temple with crowns and bosses 57
of gold, renovated the gates and storerooms, providing the latter with doors. ·There 58
was no end to the rejoicing among the people, since the disgrace inflicted by the
gentiles had been effaced. ·Judas, with his brothers and the whole assembly of 59
Israel, made it a law that the days of the dedication of the altar should be celebrated
yearly at the proper season, for eight days beginning on the twenty-fifth of the
month Chislev, with rejoicing and gladness.[l]

They then proceeded to build high walls with strong towers round Mount Zion, 60
to prevent the gentiles from coming and riding roughshod over it as in the past.
Judas stationed a garrison there to guard it; he also fortified Beth-Zur,[m] so that the 61
people would have a fortress confronting Idumaea.

The expedition against the Idumaeans and Ammonites[a]

5 When the surrounding nations heard that the altar had been rebuilt and the 1
sanctuary restored to what it had been before, they became very angry ·and 2
decided to destroy the descendants of Jacob living among them; they began to
murder and evict our people.

‖2 M 10:15–23 Judas made war on the sons of Esau in Idumaea, in the region of Acrabattene[b] 3
where they were besieging the Israelites. He dealt them a serious blow, drove them
off and despoiled them. ·He also remembered the wickedness of the sons of 4
Baean,[c] who were a menace and a trap for the people with their ambushes on the
roads. ·Having blockaded them in their town and besieged them, he put them 5
Jos 6:17c under the curse of destruction; he then set fire to their towers and burned them
Dt 2:5c down with everyone inside. ·Next, he crossed over to the Ammonites where he 6
found a strong fighting force and a numerous people, commanded by Timotheus.
He fought many battles with them, defeated them and cut them to pieces. 7
Having captured Jazer and its dependent villages, he retired to Judaea. 8

Preliminaries to campaigns in Galilee and Gilead

Next, the gentiles of Gilead[d] banded together to destroy the Israelites living in 9
their territory. The latter, however, took refuge in the fortress of Dathema, ·and 10
sent the following letter to Judas and his brothers:

'The gentiles round us have banded themselves together against us to destroy
us, ·and they are preparing to storm the fortress in which we have taken refuge; 11
Timotheus is in command of their forces. ·Come at once and rescue us from their 12
clutches, for we have already suffered great losses. ·All our countrymen living in 13

Tobias' country[e] have been killed, their women and children have been taken into captivity, their property has been seized, and about a thousand men have been destroyed there.'

14 While the letter was being read, other messengers arrived from Galilee with
15 their garments torn, bearing similar news, •'The people of Ptolemais,[f] Tyre and Sidon have joined forces with the whole of gentile Galilee to destroy us!' Is 8:23
16 When Judas and the people heard this, they held a great assembly to decide what should be done for their oppressed countrymen who were under attack from their
17 enemies. •Judas said to his brother Simon, 'Pick your men and go and relieve your countrymen in Galilee, while my brother Jonathan and I make our way into
18 Gilead.' •He left Joseph son of Zechariah and the people's leader Azariah with the
19 remainder of the army in Judaea to keep guard, and gave them these orders, •'You are to be responsible for our people. Do not engage the gentiles until we return.'
20 Simon was allotted three thousand men for the expedition into Galilee, Judas eight thousand for Gilead.

The expeditions in Galilee and Gilead

21 Simon advanced into Galilee, engaged the gentiles in several battles and swept all
22 before him; •he pursued them to the gate of Ptolemais, and they lost about three
23 thousand men, whose spoils he collected. •With him, he took away the Jews of Galilee and Arbatta,[g] with their wives and children and all their possessions, and brought them into Judaea with great rejoicing.
24 Meanwhile Judas Maccabaeus and his brother Jonathan crossed the Jordan and ‖2 M 12:10–31
25 made a three-days' march through the desert, •where they encountered the Nabataeans,[h] who gave them a friendly reception and told them everything that had
26 been happening to their brothers in Gilead, •many of whom, they said, were shut up in Bozrah and Bosor, Alema, Chaspho, Maked and Carnaim,[i] all large fortified
27 towns. •Others were blockaded in the other towns of Gilead, and the enemy planned to attack and capture these strongholds the very next day, and destroy all the people inside them on one day.
28 Judas and his army at once turned off by the desert road to Bozrah. He took the town and, having put all the males to the sword and collected the booty, burned it
29 down. •When night came, he left the place, and they continued their march until
30 they reached the fortress.[j] •In the light of dawn they looked, and there was an

j. The book returns several times to the (temporary) cessation of prophecy, 9:27; 14:40; *see* earlier Ps 74:9; 77:9–10; Lm 2:9; Ezk 7:26.

k. December 164, third anniversary of the first sacrifice offered to Zeus, 1:59.

l. The feast of Dedication, Hanukkah in Hebr., is one of the most recent in the Jewish calendar, *see* Ex 23:14d. The Hallel was sung (Ps 113–118), leafy branches and palms were carried. These similarities to the feast of Shelters are stressed in 2 M 1:9d; 10:6; the feast of Shelters itself commemorated the inauguration of the Temple of Solomon, 1 K 8:2.62–66. The lamps lit at Dedication soon gave it its other name, 'feast of Lights'. The fact that these lamps, symbolising the Law, were placed not only in the Temple but also in private houses, assured the survival and popularity of the feast after the desecration of the Temple. It is given great prominence in 2 M, *see* the two introductory letters and 2 M 10:1–8. It is mentioned in Jn 10:22.

m. Gk adds 'to guard it', dittography.

5 **a.** The campaigns against the peoples on the frontiers of Judaea, reported in ch. 5, cover a period from the beginning to the autumn of 163, and hence take place after the death of Antiochus Epiphanes. The raids launched against Joppa and Jamnia, 2 M 12:1–9, the previous year, were the prelude to these more sustained efforts.

b. 'Idumaea' Gk form of the name Edom, country of the 'Sons of Esau'. • 'Acrabattene': district of Acrabatta, modern Aqrabah, south-east of Shechem.

c. Semi-nomadic tribe, who probably held travellers to ransom on the Jerusalem–Jericho road.

d. Gilead, primitively speaking, was the country south of the River Jabbok, but soon came to include the region between the Rivers Jabbok and Jarmuk, and in the Hellenistic period the Syrian plateau north of the Jarmuk, where the Jews had numerous colonies.

e. The region between Amman and the River Jordan, ruled by the Jewish family of that name, *see* Ne 2:10seq.; 6:17seq.; 13:8. This savage episode perhaps accounts for the reprisals ordered by Judas, 2 M 12:17seq.

f. Ptolemais was the name given by Ptolemy II in 261 BC to Acco (*see* Jos 19:30; Jg 1:31), modern Acre.

g. The region of Arbatta (name perhaps corrupt in the text) is apparently the Narbatene of Josephus, between Galilee and Samaria. The author of 2 M, who is exclusively interested in Judas, does not mention this campaign in Galilee.

h. These are the 'Arabs' of 2 M 5:8; 12:10, and Jonathan later retains their friendship, 1 M 9:35, after a violent engagement, *see* 2 M 5:11seq. Their centre was Petra, but in the following century they came to dominate a great part of the Transjordanian plateau and even for some time Damascus. Here, they are evidently bringing a caravan from Bozrah (v. 28, modern Basra, in southern Syria) where the desert routes converge, and from the Hauran, where they had witnessed the events which they reported to Judas.

i. The names of most of these townships persist, almost unaltered, in the area of the Hauran and Golan Heights.

j. Dathema, v. 9, unidentified place to the west of Basra.

innumerable horde, setting up ladders and engines to capture the fortress; the assault was just beginning. 31 ·When Judas saw that the attack had begun and that the war cry was rising to heaven from the city, mingled with trumpet calls and a great clamour, 32 ·he said to the men of his army, 'Into battle today for your brothers!' Dividing them into three commands, he advanced on the enemy's rear, with 33 trumpets sounding and prayers shouted aloud. 34 ·The troops of Timotheus, recognising that this was Maccabaeus, fled before his advance; Maccabaeus dealt them a crushing defeat; about eight thousand of their men fell that day. 35 ·Then, wheeling on Alema,[k] he attacked and captured it and, having killed all the males and collected the booty, burned the place down. 36 ·From there he moved on and took Chaspho, Maked, Bosor and the remaining towns of Gilead. 37 ·After these events, Timotheus mustered another force and pitched camp opposite Raphon, on the far side of the stream-bed. 38 ·Judas sent men to reconnoitre the camp, and these reported back as follows, 'With him are massed all the gentiles surrounding us, making a very numerous army, 39 ·with Arab mercenaries as auxiliaries; they are encamped on the far side of the stream-bed, and ready to launch an attack on you.' Judas then advanced to engage them, 40 ·and was approaching the watercourse with his troops when Timotheus told the commanders of his army, 'If he crosses first we shall not be able to resist him, because he will have a great advantage over us; 41 ·but if he is afraid and camps on the other side of the stream, we shall cross over to him and the advantage will then be ours.'

1 S 14:9–10

As soon as Judas reached the watercourse, he posted people's scribes[l] along it, 42 giving them this order: 'Do not let anyone pitch his tent; all are to go into battle!' He was himself the first across to the enemy side, with all the people following. He 43 defeated all the opposing gentiles, who threw down their arms and ran for refuge in the sanctuary of Carnaim.[m] 44 ·The Jews first captured the town and then burned down the temple with everyone inside. And so Carnaim was overthrown, and the enemy could offer no further resistance to Judas.

Next, Judas assembled all the Israelites living in Gilead, from the least to the 45 greatest, with their wives, children and belongings, an enormous muster, to take them to Judaea. 46 ·They reached Ephron, a large town straddling the road and strongly fortified. As it was impossible to by-pass it either to right or to left, there was nothing for it but to march straight through. 47 ·But the people of the town denied them passage and barricaded the gates with stones. 48 ·Judas sent them a conciliatory message in these terms, 'We want to pass through your territory to reach our own; no one will do you any harm, we only want to go through on foot.' But they would not open up for him. 49 ·So Judas sent an order down the column for everyone to halt where he stood. 50 ·The fighting men took up their positions; Judas attacked the town all day and night, and the town fell to him. 51 ·He put all the males to the sword, rased the town to the ground, plundered it and marched through the town square over the bodies of the dead. 52 ·They then crossed the Jordan into the Great Plain, opposite Beth-Shean, 53 ·Judas all the time rallying the stragglers and encouraging the people the whole way until they reached Judaea. 54 ·They climbed Mount Zion in joy and gladness and presented burnt offerings[n] because they had returned safe and sound without having lost a single man.

Nb 20:14seq.; 21:21seq.

Jos 6:17c

Reversal at Jamnia

While Judas and Jonathan were in Gilead and Simon his brother in Galilee outside 55 Ptolemais, 56 ·Joseph son of Zechariah, and Azariah, who were in command of the army, heard of their valiant deeds and of the battles they had been fighting, 57 ·and said, 'Let us make a name for ourselves too and go and fight the nations around us.' 58 ·So they issued orders to the men under their command and marched on Jamnia.[o] 59, 60 ·Gorgias[p] and his men came out of the town and gave battle. ·Joseph and Azariah were routed and pursued as far as the frontiers of Judaea. That day about two thousand Israelites lost their lives. 61 ·Our people thus met with a great reverse, because they had not listened to Judas and his brothers, thinking that they would

62 do something equally valiant. •They were not, however, of the same breed of men as those to whom the deliverance of Israel was entrusted.

Successes in Idumaea and Philistia

63 The noble Judas and his brothers, however, were held in high honour throughout
64 Israel and among all the nations wherever their name was heard, •and people
65 thronged round to acclaim them. •Judas marched out with his brothers to fight the Edomites in the country towards the south; he stormed Hebron and its dependent villages, threw down its fortifications and burned down its encircling towers.
66 Leaving there, he made for the country of the Philistines and passed through
67 Marisa.[q] •Among the fallen in that day's fighting were some priests who sought to
68 prove their courage there by joining in the battle, a foolhardy venture. •Judas next turned on Azotus,[r] which belonged to the Philistines; he overthrew their altars, burned the statues of their gods and, having pillaged their towns, withdrew to Judaea.

The last days of Antiochus Epiphanes[a]

‖2 M 1:11–17
‖2 M 9

1 6 King Antiochus, meanwhile, was making his way through the Upper Provinces;
he had heard that in Persia there was a city called Elymais,[b] renowned for its
2 riches, its silver and gold, •and its very wealthy temple[c] containing golden armour, breastplates and weapons, left there by Alexander son of Philip, the king of
3 Macedon, the first to reign over the Greeks. •He therefore went and attempted to take the city and pillage it, but without success, the citizens having been fore-
4 warned. •They resisted him by force of arms. He was routed, and began retreating,
5 very gloomily, towards Babylon. •But, while he was still in Persia, news reached
6 him that the armies which had invaded Judaea had been routed, •and that Lysias in particular had advanced in massive strength, only to be forced to turn and flee before the Jews; that the latter were now stronger than ever, thanks to the arms,
7 supplies and abundant spoils acquired from the armies they had cut to pieces, •and that they had pulled down the abomination which he had erected on the altar in 1:54;4:45 Jerusalem, had encircled the sanctuary with high walls as in the past, and had
8 fortified Beth-Zur, one of his cities. •When the king heard this news he was amazed and profoundly shaken; he threw himself on his bed and fell sick with grief, since
9 things had not turned out for him as he had planned.[d] •And there he remained for many days, subject to deep and recurrent fits of melancholy, until he realised that
10 he was dying. •Then, summoning all his Friends, he said to them, 'Sleep evades my
11 eyes, and my heart is cowed by anxiety. •I have been wondering how I could have come to such a pitch of distress, so great a flood as that which now engulfs me—I
12 who was so generous and well-loved in my heyday. •But now I recall how wrongly I acted in Jerusalem when I seized all the vessels of silver and gold there and
13 ordered the extermination of the inhabitants of Judah for no reason at all. •This, I

k. 'Alema' 1 Gk MS; the MS tradition is uncertain.

l. Administrative officers of the army, *see* Ex 5:6; Dt 20:5,8seq.; Jos 1:10; 3:2.

m. lit. 'the Two Horns', attribute of the local Astarte, from which the temple, the Carnion of 2 M 12:26, derived its name. The capital of Og, king of Bashan (Hauran) was Ashtaroth-Carnaim, Gn 14:5; Jos 9:10, the name of which is still preserved at modern Tell Ashtarah.

n. At the feast of Weeks (mid-June 163), *see* 2 M 12:31.

o. Gk form of Jabneel or Jabneh, Jos 15:11; 2 Ch 26:6, south of Joppa, capital of the coastal region, 1 M 10:69; 15:38,40.

p. *see* 3:38k. He is now general, that is to say, prefect of the coastal region and Idumaea, *see* 2 M 12:32.

q. 'Marisa' *Vet. Lat.*, Josephus, and 2 M 12:35; 'Samaria' Gk and Vulg. Marisa, the ancient Mareshah, Jos 15:44, and very much hellenised capital of Idumaea, is on the road from Hebron to Philistia.

r. The Philistine town of Ashdod, Jos 11:22, famous for its temple of Dagon, 1 M 10:83seq.; but here the name is extended to the whole of ancient Philistia. • The objects consecrated to 'the idols of Jamnia', 2 M 12:40, came from the sack described here.

6 a. Chronologically, the right place for this episode is before the Dedication of the Temple, 4:36. The account of the king's end, given in similar terms by Polybius, is much more sober than that of 2 M 9.

b. In point of fact, there is no known town of this name, Elymais being the Gk form of 'Elam', Gn 10:22, and meaning the country round Susa, the old capital of Persia, Ne 1:1, and, in its narrowest sense, the mountainous region to the north of that city.

c. The temple of Nanaea-Artemis, 2 M 1:13.

d. Actually, Antiochus must have died before this, but the author of 1 M has to adapt his story to fit the chronology that he has adopted.

am convinced, is why these misfortunes have overtaken me, and why I am dying of melancholy in a foreign land.' [e]

The accession of Antiochus V

He summoned Philip, [f] one of his Friends, and made him regent of the whole 14
kingdom. ·He entrusted him with his diadem, his robe and his signet, on the 15
understanding that he was to educate his son Antiochus and train him for
the throne. ·King Antiochus then died, in the year 149. [g] ·Lysias, learning that the 16, 17
king was dead, established on the throne in succession to him his son Antiochus,
whom he had brought up from childhood—and styled him Eupator.

The siege of the Citadel of Jerusalem by Judas Maccabaeus

1:33–35 The people in the Citadel at the time were blockading Israel round the sanctuary 18
and were taking every opportunity to harm them and to support the gentiles.
Judas decided that they must be destroyed, and he mobilised the whole people 19
to besiege them. ·They assembled and laid siege to the Citadel in the year 150, [h] 20
building batteries and siege-engines. ·But some of the besieged broke through 21
the blockade, and to these a number of renegades from Israel attached themselves.
They made their way to the king and said, 'How much longer are you going to 22
wait before you see justice done and avenge our fellows? ·We were content to 23
serve your father, to comply with his orders, and to obey his edicts. · [i] As a result 24
our own people will have nothing to do with us; what is more, they have killed all
those of us they could catch, and looted our family property. ·Nor is it on us alone 25
that their blows have fallen, but on all your territories. [j] ·At this moment, they are 26
laying siege to the Citadel of Jerusalem, to capture it, and they have fortified the
sanctuary and Beth-Zur. ·Unless you forestall them at once, they will go on to even 27
bigger things, and then you will never be able to control them.'

Campaign of Antiochus V and Lysias. The battle of Beth-Zechariah

The king was furious when he heard this and summoned all his Friends, the 28
generals of his forces and the marshals of horse. [k] ·He recruited mercenaries from 29
other kingdoms and the Mediterranean islands. ·His forces numbered a hundred 30
thousand foot soldiers, twenty thousand cavalry and thirty-two elephants with
experience of battle conditions. ·They advanced through Idumaea [l] and besieged 31
Beth-Zur, pressing the attack for days on end; they also constructed siege-engines,
but the defenders made a sortie and set these on fire, putting up a brave resistance.

At this, Judas left the Citadel and pitched camp at Beth-Zechariah [m] opposite 32
the royal encampment. ·The king rose at daybreak and marched his army at top 33
speed down the road to Beth-Zechariah, where his forces took up their battle
formations and sounded the trumpets. ·The elephants were given a syrup of grapes 34
and mulberries to prepare them for the battle. ·These animals were distributed 35
among the phalanxes, to each elephant being allocated a thousand men dressed in
coats of mail with bronze helmets on their heads; five hundred picked horsemen
were also assigned to each beast. ·The horsemen anticipated every move their 36
elephant made; wherever it went they went with it, never quitting it. ·On each 37
elephant, to protect it, was a stout wooden tower, kept in position by girths, each
with its three combatants, [n] as well as its mahout. ·The remainder of the cavalry 38
was stationed on one or other of the two flanks of the army, to harass the enemy
and cover the phalanxes. [o]

When the sun glinted on the bronze and golden shields, [p] the mountains caught 39
the glint and gleamed like fiery torches. ·One part of the royal army was deployed 40
on the upper slopes of the mountain and the other in the valley below; they
advanced in solid, well-disciplined formation. ·Everyone trembled at the noise 41
made by this vast multitude, the thunder of the troops on the march and the
clanking of their armour, for it was an immense and mighty army. ·Judas and his 42
army advanced to give battle, and six hundred of the king's army were killed.

43 Eleazar, called Avaran, noticing that one of the elephants was royally caparisoned and was also taller than all the others, and supposing that the king was
44 mounted on it, ·sacrificed[q] himself to save his people and win an imperishable
45 name. ·Boldly charging towards the creature through the thick of the phalanx, dealing death to right and left, so that the enemy scattered on either side at his
46 onslaught, ·he darted in under the elephant, thrust at it from underneath, and
47 killed it. The beast collapsed on top of him, and he died on the spot. ·The Jews however realising how strong the king was and how ferocious his army, retreated ahead of them.

The capture of Beth-Zur and siege of Mount Zion by the Syrians

48 The royal army moved up to encounter them outside Jerusalem, and the king
49 began to blockade Judaea and Mount Zion. ·He granted peace terms to the people of Beth-Zur, who evacuated the town; it lacked store of provisions to withstand a
50 siege, since the land was enjoying a sabbatical year.[r] ·Having occupied Beth-Zur, Lv 25:1a
51 the king stationed a garrison there to hold it. ·He besieged the sanctuary for a long time, erecting batteries and siege-engines, flame-throwers and ballistas, scorpions[s]
52 to discharge arrows, and catapults. ·The defenders countered these by constructing
53 their own engines and were thus able to prolong their resistance. ·But they had no food in their stores[t] since it was the seventh year, and because those who had taken
54 refuge in Judaea from the gentiles had eaten up the last of their reserves. ·Only a few men were left in the Holy Place, owing to the severity of the famine; the rest had dispersed and gone home.

The king grants the Jews religious freedom

55 Meanwhile Philip, whom King Antiochus before his death had appointed to train
56 his son Antiochus for the throne, ·had returned from Persia and Media with the forces that had accompanied the king, and was planning to seize control of affairs.
57 On hearing this, Lysias at once decided to leave, and said to the king, the generals ‖2 M 11:13–33 of the army and the men, 'We are growing weaker every day, we are short of food, and the place we are besieging is well fortified; moreover the affairs of the kingdom
58 demand our attention. ·Let us offer the hand of friendship to these men and make
59 peace with them and with their whole nation. ·Let us grant them permission to follow their own customs as before, since it is our abolition of these customs that
60 has provoked them into acting like this.'[u] ·The king and his commanders approved
61 this argument, and he offered the Jews peace terms, which they accepted. ·The king and the generals ratified the treaty by oath, and the besieged accordingly left

e. Persia did in fact still belong to the Seleucid Empire. The king's death is a punishment, according to the author of 1 M, for pillaging the Temple in Jerusalem, and according to the author of 2 M, for pillaging the temple of Artemis; both authors, however, give him similar sentiments of repentance.

f. This Philip, who reappears in 6:55 and 2 M 9:29, is not the Philip of 2 M 5:22; 8:8. Appointed regent and tutor to Antiochus the younger, he receives custody of the regalia destined for the heir to the throne.

g. In September or October 164.

h. That is to say, in 163–162. The seige of the Citadel follows the expedition in Idumaea, which took place after the feast of Weeks, 163, 2 M 12:31. 2 M does not mention the siege.

i. At the beginning of the v., the text (a few MSS excepted) adds 'they besieged them and', dittography from v. 20.

j. 'your territories' *Vet. Lat.*; 'their territories' Gk.

k. It was Lysias, in fact, who did all this, Antiochus being only nine years old. • 'marshals of horse', lit. 'masters of the reins', a title not found elsewhere.

l. Presumably down the Valley of the Terebinth, 1 S 17:2, by way of Adullam, 2 M 12:38. The first action took place at Modein, 2 M 13:14.

m. About 5 miles (8 km) north of Beth-Zur. A village there still bears the name.

n. 'three' conj.; 'thirty (or thirty-two)' Gk and Lat. The original Hebr. presumably read *shalishim*, 'the three (men who manned a chariot)', *see* Ex 14:7; 15:4; the translator mistakenly reading *sheloshim*, 'thirty'. • 'mahout', lit. 'Hindu': an expression ultimately designating the occupation.

o. lit. 'to harass (the enemy) and cover (or squash together) in the phalanxes'. Alternative reading: *pharanxin*, 'to squash them together in the gorges', which seems tactically congruent with v. 40.

p. Possibly a reminiscence of 1 K 10:16.

q. lit. 'gave his own self', *see* Ga 1:4; Tm 2:6; Tt 2:14. • This must have been in the course of the action sited by 2 M 13:15 'near Modein'.

r. According to Lv 25:1seq., the sabbatical year excluded both sowing and harvesting. It had begun in the autumn of 164, the famine consequently occurring in the autumn of 163.

s. The 'scorpions' were an early form of mechanical bow, or crossbow. This description of Seleucid siege artillery is the most complete known.

t. 'stores' *angeiois* conj. following Lat.; 'sanctuary' *hagiois* Gk.

u. The change of policy is explained by the death of the hellenising tyrant, Antiochus Epiphanes, by the exhaustion of both sides through lack of food, v. 57, and by the intrigues of Philip, v. 56.

the fortress. ·The king then entered Mount Zion, but on seeing how impregnable 62
the place was, he broke the oath he had sworn and gave orders for the encircling
wall to be demolished.[v] ·He then hurriedly withdrew, making off for Antioch, 63
where he found Philip already master of the city. Antiochus gave battle and
captured the city by force of arms.

‖2 M 14:1–10 **Demetrius I becomes king, and sends Bacchides and Alcimus to Judaea**

7 In the year 151, Demetrius son of Seleucus left Rome and arrived with a few 1
men at a town on the coast, where he inaugurated his reign.[a] ·It so happened 2
that, as he was entering the royal residence of his ancestors, the army captured
Antiochus and Lysias, and intended to bring them to him. ·On hearing this, he 3
said, 'Keep them out of my sight.' ·The army put them to death, and Demetrius 4
ascended his throne. ·Next, all those Israelites without law or piety, led by Alci- 5
mus, whose ambition was to become high priest, ·approached the king and de- 6
nounced our people to him. 'Judas and his brothers', they said, 'have killed all your
friends, and he has driven us out of our country. ·Send someone now whom you 7
can trust; let him go and see the wholesale ruin Judas has brought on us and on the
king's dominions, and let him punish the wretches and all who assist them.'

2:18e The king chose Bacchides, one of the Friends of the King, governor of Transeu- 8
phrates,[b] an important personage in the kingdom and loyal to the king. ·He sent 9
him with the godless Alcimus,[c] whom he confirmed in the high priesthood, with
orders to exact retribution from the Israelites. ·So they set out with a large force 10
and, on reaching Judaea, sent emissaries to Judas and his brothers with proposals
peaceable yet treacherous. ·The latter, however, did not put any faith in their 11
words, aware that they had come with a large force. ·Nevertheless, a commission 12
of scribes[d] presented themselves before Alcimus and Bacchides, to sue for just
terms. ·The first among the Israelites to ask them for peace terms[e] were the 13
2:42i Hasidaeans, ·who reasoned thus, 'This is a priest of Aaron's line who has come 14
with the armed forces; he will not wrong us.' ·He did in fact discuss peace terms 15
with them and gave them his oath, 'We shall not attempt to injure you or your
friends.' ·They believed him, but he arrested sixty of them and put them to death 16
Ps 79:2–3 on one day, fulfilling the words of scripture:[f] ·*They have scattered the bodies of* 17
your faithful, and shed their blood all round Jerusalem, leaving no one to bury them!
·At this, fear and dread gripped the whole people. 'There is no truth or virtue in 18
them,' they said, 'they have broken their agreement and their sworn oath.'

Bacchides then left Jerusalem and encamped at Beth-Zeth, and from there sent 19
and arrested many of the men who had deserted him and a few of our people too;
he had them killed and thrown down the great well.[g] ·He then put Alcimus in 20
charge of the province, leaving an army with him to support him; Bacchides himself
returned to the king. ·Alcimus continued his struggle to become high priest, ·and 21, 22
all who were disturbing the peace of their own people rallied to him, and, having
won control of Judaea, did much harm in Israel. ·Seeing that all the wrongs done 23
to the Israelites by Alcimus and his supporters exceeded what the gentiles had
done, ·Judas went right round the whole territory of Judaea to take vengeance on 24
those who had deserted him and to prevent their free movement about the country.

Nicanor in Judaea and battle of Caphar-Salama

When Alcimus saw how strong Judas and his supporters had grown and realised 25
that he was powerless to resist them, he went back to the king, to whom he made
3:38 malicious accusations against them. ·The king sent Nicanor, one of his generals 26
2 M 8:9, 34–36; 14:12–14;15:3 ranking as Illustrious and a bitter enemy of Israel, with orders to exterminate the
people. ·Reaching Jerusalem with a large force, Nicanor sent a friendly, yet 27
treacherous, message to Judas and his brothers, as follows: ·'Let us have no 28
fighting between you and me; I shall come with a small escort for a peaceful
meeting with you.' ·He met Judas and they exchanged friendly greetings; the 29
‖2 M 14:15–24 enemy, however, had made preparations to abduct Judas. ·When Judas became 30

aware of Nicanor's treacherous purpose in coming to see him, he took fright and
31 refused any further meeting. ·Nicanor then realised that his plan had been discov-
32 ered, and took the field against Judas, to give battle near Caphar-Salama. [h] ·About five hundred of Nicanor's men fell; the rest took refuge in the City of David.

Threats against the Temple ‖2 M 14:30

33 After these events Nicanor went up to Mount Zion. Some of the priests came out of the Holy Place with some elders, to give him a friendly welcome and show him
34 the burnt offering being presented for the king. ·But he ridiculed them, laughed at
35 them, defiled them [i] and used insolent language, swearing in his rage, ·'Unless Judas is handed over to me this time with his army, as soon as I am safely back, I
36 promise you, I shall burn this building down!' ·Then he went off in a fury. At this, the priests went in again, and stood weeping in front of the altar and the Temple,
37 saying, ·'You [j] have chosen this house to be called by your name, to be a house of
38 prayer and petition for your people. ·Take vengeance on this man and on his army, and let them fall by the sword; remember their blasphemies and give them no respite.'

The 'Day of Nicanor' at Adasa

39 Nicanor left Jerusalem and encamped at Beth-Horon, where he was joined by an
40 army from Syria. ·Judas, meanwhile, camped at Adasa [k] with three thousand men,
41 and offered this prayer, ·'When the king's [l] envoys blasphemed, your angel went 2 K 18:17–19:37
42 out and struck down one hundred and eighty-five thousand of his men. ·In the 2 M 14:31–36;15:22–24
same way let us see you crush this army today, so that everyone else may know that Is 36–37;56:7
this man has spoken blasphemously against your sanctuary: pass judgement on him as his wickedness deserves!'

43 The armies met in battle on the thirteenth of the month Adar, and Nicanor's ‖2 M 15:25–36
44 army was crushed, he himself being the first to fall in the battle. ·When Nicanor's
45 soldiers saw him fall, they threw down their arms and fled. ·The Jews pursued them a day's journey, from Adasa to the approaches of Gezer; they sounded their
46 trumpets in warning as they followed them, ·and people came out of all the surrounding Judaean villages to encircle the fugitives, who then turned back on
47 their own men. All fell by the sword, not one being left alive. ·Having collected the spoils and booty, they cut off Nicanor's head and the right hand he had stretched out in a display of insolence; these were taken and displayed within sight of
48 Jerusalem. ·The people were overjoyed and kept that day as a great holiday:

v. The king's rescript, 2 M 11:25, gave the Jews back their Temple but said nothing about the city walls; the author of 1 M regards Temple and fortifications as inseparable and hence accuses the king of having broken his promise.

7 **a.** Demetrius I, who had taken Antiochus Epiphanes' place as a hostage in Rome, 176, had escaped in 161, with the complicity of Polybius, who describes what happened. Demetrius first landed at Tripoli, proceeding thence to Antioch (v. 2). Rome recognised him as king in 160.

b. The western half of the Seleucid Empire, lying between the River Euphrates and Egypt, which had been entrusted to Lysias by Antiochus Epiphanes, 3:32. Bacchides is given the job of pacifying the area, while the new king goes off to repress a revolt in Media.

c. Alcimus ('valiant', a Gk name chosen for its resemblance to the Jewish name Jacim) is described as godless because he flirted with the Greeks and was an obstacle to Hasmonaean ambitions; but his membership of the House of Aaron made his nomination legitimate, besides winning him the support of the Hasidaeans, *see* vv. 12seq.

d. Either Levites or priests versed in the Law, 2 Ch 34:13; Ezr 7:6seq.

e. The 'Devout', who had initially rallied to Judas, 2:42, now begin to take a more independent line, no doubt supposing that religious freedom was sufficiently guaranteed by the king's concessions, 6:59. Judas, less easily convinced, takes no direct part in these negotiations, although at this point the king has not yet proscribed him, *see* 2 M 14:12.

f. lit. 'the words he wrote', i.e. David (MS 56), Asaph (Eusebius), or the Prophet (Gk-Luc.).

g. 'Beth-Zeth' ('olive-grove') is the best-attested reading, but the MSS differ. The name is still borne by the village of Beit-Zaita, 4 miles (6 km) to the north of Beth-Zur, where a well with a spiral staircase has been found. • Bacchides has no hesitation in suppressing all those whom he considers to have been involved in the revolt, even if they have since gone over to his side.

h. The 'village of peace', perhaps modern Khirbet-Selma, near Gibeon and about 2.5 miles (4 km) from Adasa (7:40), *see* 2 M 14:16d.

i. By spitting towards the Temple, according to Jewish tradition.

j. After 'You', Gk-Luc. and versions add 'Lord', but the words 'God' and 'Lord' are avoided by 1 M.

k. This is the Hadashah ('new town') of Jos 15:37, transcribed 'Dessau' in 2 M 14:16, between Beth-Horon and Jerusalem.

l. Sennacherib, as Vulg. specifies. Some MSS read 'the king of the Assyrians'. • After 'your angel', MSS, Gk-Luc. and Vet. Syr. add 'Lord'; *see* v. 37j.

indeed they decided to celebrate it annually on the thirteenth of Adar.[m] ·For a 49, 50
short while Judaea enjoyed peace.[n]

A eulogy of the Romans[a]

8 Now Judas had heard of the reputation of the Romans: how strong they were, 1
and how well disposed towards any who made common cause with them,
making a treaty of friendship with anyone who approached them. ·(And, indeed, 2
they were extremely powerful.) He had been told of their wars and of their prowess
among the Gauls,[b] whom they had conquered and put under tribute; ·and of all 3
they had done in the province of Spain to gain possession of the silver and gold
mines there, ·making themselves masters of the whole country by their determi- 4
nation and perseverance, despite its great distance from their own; of the kings
who came from the ends of the earth to attack them, only to be crushed by them
and overwhelmed with disaster, and of others who paid them annual tribute;
Philip, Perseus king of the Kittim, and others who had dared to make war on 5
them, had been defeated and reduced to subjection,[c] ·while Antiochus the Great, 6
king of Asia, who had advanced to attack them with a hundred and twenty
elephants, cavalry, chariots and a very large army, had also suffered defeat at their
hands; ·they had taken him alive[d] and imposed on him and his successors, on 7
agreed terms, the payment of an enormous tribute, the surrender of hostages, and
the cession ·of the Indian territory, with Media, Lydia, and some of their best 8
provinces, which they took from him and gave to King Eumenes. ·Judas had also 9
heard how, when the Greeks planned an expedition to destroy the Romans, ·the 10
latter had got wind of it and, sending a single general against them, had fought a
campaign in which they inflicted heavy casualties, carried their women and children
away into captivity, pillaged their goods, subdued their country, tore down their
fortresses and reduced them to a slavery lasting to the present day;[e] ·and how they 11
had destroyed and subjugated all the other kingdoms and islands that
resisted them.

But where their friends and those who relied on them were concerned, they had 12
always stood by their friendship. They had subdued kings far and near, and all who
heard their name went in terror of them. ·One man, if they determined to help him 13
and advance him to a throne, would certainly occupy it, while another, if they so
determined, would find himself deposed; their influence was paramount. ·In spite 14
of all this, no single one of them had assumed a crown or put on the purple for his
own aggrandisement. ·They had set up a senate, where three hundred and twenty 15
councillors deliberated daily, constantly debating how best to regulate public
affairs. ·They entrusted their government to one man[f] for a year at a time, with 16
absolute power over their whole empire, and this man was obeyed by all without
envy or jealousy.

The alliance between the Jews and Romans

2 M 4:11 Having chosen Eupolemus son of John, of the family of Accos, and Jason son of 17
Eleazar, Judas sent them to Rome to make a treaty of friendship and alliance[g] with
these people, ·in the hope of being rid of the yoke, for they could see that Greek 18
rule was reducing Israel to slavery. ·The envoys made the lengthy journey to Rome 19
and presented themselves before the Senate with their formal proposal: ·'Judas 20
Maccabaeus and his brothers, with the Jewish people, have sent us to you to
conclude a treaty of alliance and peace with you, and to enrol ourselves as your
allies and friends.'

The proposal met with the approval of the senators. ·Here is a copy of the 21, 22
14:18 rescript which they engraved on bronze tablets and sent to Jerusalem to be kept
there by the Jews as a record of peace and alliance:

'Good fortune attend the Romans and the Jewish nation by sea and land for 23
ever; may sword or enemy be far from them!

24 'If war comes first to Rome or any of her allies throughout her dominions,
25 the Jewish nation will take action as her ally, as occasion may require, and do it
26 wholeheartedly. ·They will not give or supply to the enemy any grain, arms,
money or ships: thus has Rome decided, and they are to honour their obligations
27 without guarantees. ·In the same way, if war comes first to the Jewish nation,
28 the Romans will support them energetically as occasion may offer, ·and the
aggressor will not be furnished with grain, arms, money or ships: such is the
Roman decision, and they will honour these obligations without treachery.
29 Such are the articles under which the Romans have concluded their treaty with
30 the Jewish people. ·If, later, either party should decide to make any addition or
deletion, they will be free to do so, and any such addition or deletion will be
binding. [h]
31 'As regards the wrongs done to them by King Demetrius, we have written to
him in these terms: Why have you made your yoke lie heavy on our friends and
32 allies the Jews? ·If they appeal against you again, we shall uphold their rights
and make war on you by sea and land.'

Battle of Beer-Zaith and death of Judas Maccabaeus [a]

1 9 Demetrius, hearing that Nicanor and his army had fallen in battle, sent Bac-
chides and Alcimus a second time into Judaea, and with them the right wing of
2 his army. ·They took the road to Galilee and besieged Mesaloth [b] in Arbela, and
3 captured it, putting many people to death. ·In the first month of the year 152, [c] they
4 encamped outside Jerusalem; ·they then moved on, making their way to Beer-
5 Zaith [d] with twenty thousand foot and two thousand horse. ·Judas lay in camp at
6 Elasa, [e] with three thousand picked men. ·When they saw the huge size of the
enemy forces they were terrified, and many slipped out of the camp, until no more
7 than eight hundred of the force were left. ·With battle now inevitable, Judas
realised that his army had melted away; he was aghast, for he had no time to rally
8 them. ·Yet, dismayed as he was, he said to those who were left, 'Up! Let us face
9 the enemy; we may yet have the strength to fight them.' ·His men tried to dissuade
him, declaring, 'We have no strength for anything but to escape with our lives this
time; then we can come back with our brothers to fight them; by ourselves we are
10 too few.' ·Judas retorted, 'That I should do such a thing as run away from them! If
our time has come, at least let us die like men for our countrymen, and leave
nothing to tarnish our reputation.'
11 The army marched out of camp and drew up, facing the enemy. The cavalry was
drawn up in two squadrons; the slingers and archers marched in the van of the
12 army, and all the best fighters were put in the front rank; ·Bacchides was on the
right wing. The phalanx advanced from between the two squadrons, sounding
13 the trumpets; the men on Judas' side also blew their trumpets, ·and the earth

m. 13 Adar, 151, of the Seleucid era falls on about 28 March 160 BC. 13 Adar became, in the festal calendar, the 'Day of Nicanor', *see* 2 M 15:36. The Jews observed it for only a short period.

n. 2 M's narrative ends here.

8 **a.** The eulogy of the Romans introduces the treaty made between Judas and Rome, vv. 17seq. It was Roman policy to support rebels, with a view to weakening those monarchies not yet entirely subject to Roman rule.

b. lit. 'Galatians'. The reference is presumably to the reduction of the Cisalpine Gauls in 222.

c. Philip, king of Macedonia, was beaten at Cynoscephalae in 197, and his son Perseus at Pydna in 168.

d. Defeat of Antiochus the Great at Magnesia in Sipyle in 189, followed by the very harsh Treaty of Apamaea, *see* 2 M 3:1a.

e. These vv. apparently refer to the defeat of the Achaean League, the destruction of Corinth and the reduction of Greece into a Roman province, in 146. If so, the author has gone well beyond the times of Judas.

f. There were in fact two consuls, but the author may have heard only of the one responsible for eastern affairs.

g. This embassy must have taken place before the death of Nicanor (which itself happened only two months before that of Judas): it should therefore perhaps be identified with the one mentioned by Josephus for the year 161.

h. This is the end of the treaty-text, stylistically similar to others extant. The following paragraph is a summary of the verbal answer given to the envoys.

9 **a.** The narrative is resumed from 7:50.

b. 'Galilee' conj. following Josephus; 'Galgala' Gk and Lat. 'Mesaloth', Hebr. place-name meaning 'paths': they presumably led to the caves of Arbela, which on many occasions served as places of refuge.

c. April–May, 160.

d. 'Beer Zaith' Gk-Luc., Vet. Syr. and Josephus: the present-day Bir-Zait, about 12 miles (20 km) north of Jerusalem. If Gk and Lat. reading 'Berean' or 'Beret' is retained, the camp would have been sited at Al-Bir, biblical Beeroth, Jos 9:17,about 8 miles (13 km) south of Bir-Zait.

e. 'Eleasa' MSS; 'Elasa' or 'Alasa' Gk. If this is Khirbet Il'asa, near Beth-Horon, Judas' camp must have been a long way from Bacchides', which hardly tallies with the text, unless his rear headquarters is meant.

shook with the noise of the armies. The engagement lasted from morning until evening.

Judas saw that Bacchides and the main strength of his army lay on the right; all 14
the stout-hearted rallied to him, ·and they crushed the right wing, pursuing them 15
as far as the Azara Hills.[f] ·But when the Syrians on the left wing saw that the right 16
had been broken, they turned and followed hot on the heels of Judas and his men
to take them in the rear. ·The fight became desperate, and there were many 17
casualties on both sides. ·Judas himself fell, and the remnant fled. 18

The funeral of Judas Maccabaeus

Jonathan and Simon took up their brother Judas and buried him in his ancestral 19
tomb at Modein. ·All Israel wept and mourned him deeply and for many days they 20
2 S 1:27 repeated this dirge. ·'What a downfall for the strong man, the man who kept Israel 21
safe!' ·The other deeds of Judas, the battles he fought, the exploits he performed, 22
and all his titles to greatness have not been recorded; but they were very many.

IV: JONATHAN, LEADER OF THE JEWS AND HIGH PRIEST (160–143 BC)

The triumph of the Greek party. Jonathan leads the resistance

After the death of Judas, the renegades came out of hiding throughout Israel and 23
all the evil-doers reappeared. ·At that time there was a severe famine, and the 24
country went over to their side. ·Bacchides deliberately chose the enemies of 25
religion to administer the country. ·These traced and searched out the friends of 26
Judas and brought them before Bacchides, who ill-treated and mocked them. ·A 27
terrible oppression began in Israel; there had been nothing like it since the disap-
4:46j pearance of prophecy among them.

The friends of Judas then all united in saying to Jonathan, ·'Since your brother 28, 29
Judas died, there has been no one like him to head the resistance against our
enemies, people like Bacchides and others who hate our nation. ·Accordingly, we 30
have today chosen you to take his place as our ruler and leader and to fight our
campaigns.' ·Whereupon, Jonathan took command, in succession to his brother 31
Judas.

Jonathan in the desert of Tekoa. Bloody encounters round Medeba

Bacchides, when he heard the news, made plans to kill Jonathan. ·But this became 32, 33
known to Jonathan, his brother Simon and all his supporters, and they took refuge
in the desert of Tekoa, camping by the water-supply at Asphar[g] storage-well.
(Bacchides came to know of this on the Sabbath day, and he too crossed the 34
Jordan[h] with his entire army.)

Jonathan sent his brother, who was one of his commanders, to ask his friends the 35
5:25h Nabataeans to store their considerable baggage for them. ·The sons of Amrai,[i] 36
however, those of Medeba, intercepted them, captured John and everything he
had and made off with their prize. ·Later, Jonathan and his brother Simon were 37
told that the sons of Amrai were celebrating an important wedding, and were
escorting the bride, a daughter of one of the great notables of Canaan, from
Nabata[j] with a large retinue. ·Remembering the bloody end of their brother 38
John, they went up and hid under cover of the mountain. ·As they were keeping 39
watch, a noisy procession came into sight with a great deal of baggage, and the
bridegroom, with his groomsmen and his family, came out to meet it with tam-
bourines and a band, and rich, warlike display. ·The Jews rushed down on them 40
from their ambush and killed them, inflicting heavy casualties; the survivors
escaped to the mountain, leaving their entire baggage train to be captured. ·Thus, 41
Am 8:10 *the wedding was turned into mourning and the music of their band into lamentation.*

42 Having in this way avenged in full the blood of their brother, they returned to the marshes of the Jordan.

Crossing the Jordan

43 As soon as Bacchides heard this, he came on the Sabbath day with a considerable
44 force to the steep banks of the Jordan. •Jonathan said to his men, 'Up! Let us fight
45 for our lives, for today it is not as in the old days. •You can see, we shall have to fight on our front and to our rear; we have the waters of the Jordan on one side, the
46 marsh and scrub on the other, and we have no line of withdrawal. •This is the moment to call on Heaven, to deliver you from the clutches of your enemies.'
47 The engagement was begun by Jonathan, who aimed a blow at Bacchides, but
48 the Syrian disengaged himself and withdrew, •whereupon Jonathan and his men leapt into the Jordan and swam to the other bank; the enemy did not, however,
49 cross the Jordan in pursuit.[k] •That day, Bacchides lost about a thousand men.

Bacchides builds fortifications. The death of Alcimus

50 Bacchides went back to Jerusalem and began fortifying some of the Judaean towns: the fortresses of Jericho, Emmaus, Beth-Horon, Bethel, Timnath, Pharathon and
51 Tephon,[l] with high walls and barred gates, •and stationed a garrison in each of
52 them to harass Israel. •He also fortified the town of Beth-Zur, Gezer and the
53 Citadel, and placed troops in them with supplies of provisions. •He took the sons of the leading men of the country as hostages, and had them placed under guard in the Citadel of Jerusalem.

54 In the year 153, in the second month,[m] Alcimus ordered the demolition of the wall of the inner court of the sanctuary, destroying the work of the prophets.[n]
55 Alcimus had just begun the demolition •when he suffered a stroke, and his work was interrupted. His mouth became obstructed, and his paralysis made him incap-
56 able of speaking at all or giving directions to his household; •it was not long before
57 he died in great agony. •On the death of Alcimus, Bacchides went back to the king, and Judaea was left in peace for two years.

The siege of Beth-Bassi

58 The renegades then all agreed on a plan. 'Now is the time,' they said, 'while Jonathan and his supporters are living in peace and are full of confidence, for us to
59 bring back Bacchides, and he will arrest the lot of them in one night.' •So they went
60 to him and reached an understanding. •Bacchides at once set out with a large force, and sent secret instructions to all his allies in Judaea to seize Jonathan and his supporters. But they were unable to do this because their plan became known,
61 and Jonathan and his men arrested some fifty of the men of the country who were ringleaders in the plot, and put them to death.

62 Jonathan and Simon then retired with their partisans to Beth-Bassi[o] in the

f. 'Azara' following Josephus; 'Azotus' Gk and Lat., but there is no hilly country near Azotus (ancient Ashdod).

g. 'Tekoa', home of the prophet Amos, south-east of Bethlehem, dominates an arid area, 2 Ch 20:20, and its ravines, leading down to the Dead Sea, had served as refuge for David's guerillas, 1 S 24–26, as they were later to serve for Simon Bar Kokba's partisans in the Second Jewish Revolt (AD 132–5). • The place-name 'Asphar' has not been identified.

h. Doublet of v. 43.

i. 'Amrai' following Josephus and Syr.; 'Ambrei' or 'Iambri' Gk, Lat. The Beni Amrai are an Arab tribe, not the same people as the Nabataeans.

j. 'Nabata' following Josephus; 'Gabadan' or 'Nabadath' Gk, Lat. Probably an Aramaean strongpoint in Nebo, Nb 32:3, on the edge of the Plains of Moab, here called 'Canaan', a name covering all the indigenous gentiles.

k. With Josephus, we site the battle on the west bank of the Jordan, where Jonathan had pitched camp, intending to retire into the area west of the Dead Sea. Bacchides forces him to retreat to the east bank of the river without, however, following him.

l. 'Timnath, Pharathon' Lat., Syr., Josephus; Gk and Lat. MSS make these into one name. Timnath is the Timnah of Jos 15:10; Pharathon is Pirathon, Jg 12:15; and Tephon is probably Tappuah, Jos 12:17. Archaeological excavations at Gezer, Beth-Zur, Bethel and Jericho confirm the Seleucid occupation.

m. April–May 159.

n. Presumably the post-exilic prophets, Haggai and Zechariah. The wall may have corresponded to the balustrade that was later to separate the Court of the Gentiles from the Court of the Jews in the Temple of Herod, *see* Ezk 44:9, but the two courts suggested by the text may perhaps have been those already in existence in the days of Manasseh, 2 K 21:5.

o. The list of repatriates from Babylon mentions the Sons of Bezai, Ezr 2:17, who later gave their name to this place, modern Beth-Bassa, between Bethlehem and Tekoa.

desert; they rebuilt the ruinous parts of the place and fortified it. ·When Bac- 63
chides heard this, he mustered his whole force and notified his adherents in Judaea.
He then proceeded to lay siege to Beth-Bassi, the fighting was protracted, and 64
he constructed siege-engines. ·Jonathan, however, leaving his brother Simon in 65
the town, broke out into the countryside with a handful of men. ·He launched a 66
blow at Odomera and his brothers, and at the sons of Phasiron in their encamp-
ment;[p] whereupon, these too came into the struggle, joining forces with him.
Simon and his people, meanwhile, made a sortie from the town and set fire to 67
the siege-engines. ·Taking the offensive against Bacchides, they defeated him. 68
He was greatly disconcerted to find that his plan and his assault had come to
nothing, ·and vented his anger on those renegades who had induced him to enter 69
the country, putting many of them to death; he then decided to take his own troops
home. ·Discovering this, Jonathan sent envoys to negotiate peace terms and the 70
release of prisoners with him. ·Bacchides agreed to this, accepting his proposals 71
and swearing never to seek occasion to harm him for the rest of his life. ·Having 72
surrendered to Jonathan those prisoners he had earlier taken in Judaea, he turned
about and withdrew to his own country, and never again came near their frontiers.
The sword no longer hung over Israel, and Jonathan settled in Michmash, where 73
Dt 19:19; 22:22 he began to judge the people[q] and to rid Israel of the godless.

Alexander Balas competes for Jonathan's support and appoints him high priest

10 In the year 160, Alexander, son of Antiochus Epiphanes,[a] raised an army 1
and occupied Ptolemais. He was well received, and there inaugurated his
reign.[b] ·On hearing this, King Demetrius assembled a very large army and marched 2
off to do battle with him. ·Demetrius furthermore sent Jonathan a most concili- 3
atory letter, promising to promote him in rank, ·for, as he said, 'We had better 4
move first to come to terms with these people before he makes common cause with
Alexander against us; ·he will not have forgotten all the wrongs we inflicted on him 5
and his brothers, and on his nation.' ·He even authorised him to raise an army, to 6
manufacture arms, and to describe himself as his ally, and ordered the hostages in
the Citadel to be surrendered to him.

Jonathan went straight to Jerusalem and read the letter in the hearing of the 7
whole people and of the men in the Citadel. ·They were terrified when they heard 8
that the king had given him authority to raise an army. ·The men in the Citadel 9
surrendered the hostages to Jonathan, who handed them back to their parents.
Jonathan then took up residence in Jerusalem and began the rebuilding and 10
restoration of the city. ·He ordered those responsible for the work to build the 11
walls and the defences round Mount Zion of squared stone blocks[c] to make them
stronger, and this was done. ·The foreigners in the fortresses built by Bacchides 12
abandoned them, ·one after another leaving his post to go back to his own country. 13
Only at Beth-Zur were a few left of those who had forsaken the Law and the 14
precepts, since this was their refuge.

King Alexander heard of all the promises Demetrius had sent to Jonathan, and 15
he was also given an account of the battles and exploits of this man and his brothers
and of the hardships they had endured. ·'Shall we ever find another man like him?' 16
he exclaimed. 'We must make him our friend and ally!' ·He therefore wrote him a 17
letter, addressing him in these terms:

'King Alexander to his brother Jonathan, greetings. 18
'You have been brought to our notice as a strong man of action and as 19
someone who deserves to be our friend. ·Accordingly, we have today appointed 20
2:18e you high priest of your nation,[d] with the title of "Friend of the King" '—he also
sent him a purple robe and a golden crown—'and you are to study our interests
and maintain friendly relations with us.'

Jonathan put on the sacred vestments in the seventh month of the year 160,[e] on 21

the feast of Shelters; he then set about raising troops and manufacturing arms in quantity.

A letter from Demetrius I to Jonathan

22, 23 Demetrius was displeased when he heard what had happened. •'What have we been doing,' he said, 'for Alexander to forestall us in winning the friendship of the
24 Jews and so improving his own position? •I too shall address an appeal to them,
25 offering them advancement and riches as an inducement to support me.' •And he wrote to them as follows:

'King Demetrius to the Jewish nation, greetings.

26 'We have heard how you have kept your agreement with us and have maintained friendly relations with us and have not gone over to our enemies, and it
27 has given us great satisfaction. •If you now continue to keep faith with us, we
28 shall make you a handsome return for what you do on our behalf. •We shall accord you many exemptions and grant you privileges.

29 'Henceforth I release you and exempt all the Jews from the tribute, the salt
30 dues and the crown levies, •and whereas I am entitled to one-third of the grain and one-half of the fruit of the trees,[f] I release from this levy, from today and for the future, Judaea and the three districts annexed to it from Samaria-Galilee,[g] 11:34
31 from this day henceforth in perpetuity. •Jerusalem will be sacred and exempt,
32 with its territory, from tithes and dues. •I relinquish control of the Citadel in Jerusalem and make it over to the high priest, so that he may man it with a
33 garrison of his own choosing. •Every Jewish person taken from Judaea into captivity in any part of my kingdom I set free without ransom, and decree that
34 all will be exempt from taxes, even on their livestock. •All festivals, Sabbaths, New Moons and days of special observance, and the three days before and three days after a festival, will be days of exemption and quittance[h] for all the Jews in
35 my kingdom, •and no one will have the right to exact payment from, or to molest, any of them for any matter whatsoever.

36 'Jews will be enrolled in the king's forces to the number of thirty thousand men and receive maintenance on the same scale as the rest of the king's forces.
37 Some of them will be stationed in the king's major fortresses, and from among others appointments will be made to positions of trust in the kingdom. Their officers and commanders will be appointed from their own number and will live under their own laws, as the king has prescribed for Judaea.

38 'As regards the three districts annexed to Judaea from the province of Samaria, these will be integrated into Judaea and considered as coming under
39 one governor, obeying the high priest's authority and no other. •Ptolemais

p. Arab tribes who were supposed to co-operate with Bacchides.

q. Like Judas, Jonathan too is assimilated to the ancient Judges of Israel, *see* 3:11; 4:3; etc. Michmash, southeast of Bethel, was famous for the exploit of Jonathan son of Saul, 1 S 14.

10 a. The title Epiphanes appears on his coinage but history knows him under the name of Alexander Balas. He claimed to be the son of Antiochus Epiphanes.

b. The defection of Ptolemais to Alexander Balas took place in 152. At the beginning of the same year, he had received recognition from the Senate.

c. lit. 'four-faced', Gk-Luc., Lat.; 'four-foot' Gk.

d. Jonathan was descended from Joarib, head of one of the priestly classes, *see* 2:1.54, and Alexander, as recognised sovereign, had the right to nominate him, *see* 7:9; 2 M 4:24. The Oniad family, who traditionally filled the high-priestly office, were thus evicted. And it was doubtless then that the son of Onias III took refuge in Egypt, where he founded the Temple of Leontopolis, 2 M 1:1, and another priest, the 'Teacher of Righteousness', mentioned in the Essene composition known as the *Damascus Document*, took refuge in Qumran. Jonathan inaugurates a dynasty of prince-priests, such as existed elsewhere at the same period. With his successors (the Hasmonaeans), political interests were later to become more important than religious ones.

e. October 152.

f. 'one third' *Vet. Lat.*, Vet. Syr.; 'in exchange for the third' Gk. • The 'salt dues' (lit. 'the price of salt') are those levied on salt from the Dead Sea, payable to the king, *see* 11:35. The 'crowns' ('palms' or 'olive branches') are gifts presented to the sovereign, though these in fact took the form of hard cash. These heavy taxes, which, since 165, had replaced tribute, *see* 3:36i, are explicable on the grounds that the Seleucids, like the Ptolemies of Egypt, claimed to be universal landlords, their native subjects being only lessees. The tribute seems, however, to have been re-imposed: 'in exchange for 300 talents' (just over 10 tons, 10 160 kg) should probably be supplied to the text, 11:28.

g. The districts conquered by Judas, which the Jews considered as belonging to them, and which Bacchides had in any case included in Judaea, 9:50.

h. Generalisation of the tradition whereby debts and customs duty were suspended during the pilgrimage festivals.

and the land thereto pertaining I present to the sanctuary in Jerusalem, to meet the necessary expenses of public worship.[i] ·And I make a personal grant of 40
fifteen thousand silver shekels annually chargeable to the royal revenue from appropriate places. ·And the entire surplus, which has not been paid in by the 41
officials as in previous years, will henceforth be paid over by them for work on the Temple. ·In addition, the sum of five thousand silver shekels, levied annually 42
on the profits of the sanctuary, as shown in the annual accounts, is also relinquished as the perquisite of the priests who perform the liturgy. ·Anyone who 43
takes refuge in the Temple in Jerusalem or any of its precincts, when in debt to the royal exchequer or otherwise, will be discharged in full possession of all the goods he owns in my kingdom. ·As regards the building and restoration of the 44
sanctuary, the expense of the work will be met from the royal exchequer. The reconstruction of the walls of Jerusalem and the fortification of the 45
perimeter will also be a charge on the royal exchequer, as also the reconstruction of other city walls in Judaea.'

Jonathan rejects Demetrius' offers; death of Demetrius

When Jonathan and the people heard these proposals, they put no faith in them 46
and refused to accept them, remembering what great wrongs Demetrius had done to Israel and how cruelly he had oppressed them. ·They decided in favour of 47
Alexander, since he seemed to offer the better inducements of the two,[j] and they became his constant allies. ·King Alexander now mustered large forces and 48
advanced against Demetrius. ·The two kings met in battle. Demetrius' army was 49
defeated, and Alexander pursued him energetically. ·He continued the battle with 50
vigour until sunset. And that day Demetrius was killed.

Alexander's marriage with Cleopatra. Jonathan as commander-in-chief and governor-general

Alexander sent ambassadors to Ptolemy king of Egypt, with this message: 51

'Since I have returned to my kingdom, have ascended the throne of my 52
ancestors, have gained control by crushing Demetrius, and so recovered our country— ·for I fought him and we crushed both him and his army, and I now 53
occupy his royal throne—·let us now make a treaty of friendship. Give me 54
your daughter in marriage: as your son-in-law, I shall give you, and her, presents which are worthy of you.'

King Ptolemy replied as follows: 55

'Happy the day when you returned to the land of your ancestors and ascended their royal throne! ·I shall at once do for you what your letter proposes; but 56
meet me at Ptolemais, so that we can see one another, and I shall become your father-in-law, as you have asked.'

Ptolemy left Egypt with his daughter Cleopatra and reached Ptolemais in the 57
year 162.[k] ·King Alexander went to meet him, and Ptolemy gave him the hand of 58
his daughter Cleopatra and celebrated her wedding in Ptolemais with great magnificence, as kings do. ·King Alexander then wrote to Jonathan to come and meet 59
him. ·Jonathan made his way in state to Ptolemais and met the two kings; he gave 60
them and their friends silver and gold, and many gifts, and made a favourable impression on them. ·A number of scoundrels, the pest of Israel, combined to 61
denounce him, but the king paid no attention to them.[l] ·In fact, the king com- 62
manded that Jonathan should be divested of his own garments and clothed in the purple, which was done. ·The king then seated him by his side and said to his 63
officers, 'Escort him into the centre of the city and proclaim that no one is to bring

64 charges against him on any count; no one is to molest him for any reason.' ·And so,
when his accusers saw the honour done him by this proclamation, and Jonathan
65 himself invested in the purple, they all fled. ·The king did him the honour of
enrolling him among the First Friends, and appointed him commander-in-chief 2:18e;11:27
66 and governor-general.[m] ·Jonathan then returned to Jerusalem in peace and
gladness.

Demetrius II. Apollonius, governor of Coele-Syria, defeated by Jonathan

67 In the year 165, Demetrius son of Demetrius came from Crete to the land of his
68 ancestors.[n] ·When King Alexander heard of it he was plunged into gloom, and
69 retired to Antioch. ·Demetrius confirmed Apollonius as governor of Coele-Syria;[o]
the latter assembled a large force, encamped at Jamnia and sent the following
message to Jonathan the high priest:

70 'You are entirely alone in rising against us, and now I find myself ridiculed
and reproached on your account. Why do you use your authority to our disad-
71 vantage in the mountains? ·If you are so confident in your forces, come down
now to meet us on the plain and let us take each other's measure there; on my
72 side I have the strength of the towns. ·Ask and learn who I am and who the
others supporting us are. You will hear that you cannot stand up to us, since
73 your ancestors were twice routed on their own ground,[p] ·nor will you now be
able to withstand the cavalry or so great an army on the plain, where there is
neither rock, nor stone, nor refuge of any kind.'

74 On hearing Apollonius' words, Jonathan's spirit was roused; he picked ten
thousand men and left Jerusalem, and his brother Simon joined him with reinforce-
75 ments. ·He drew up his forces outside Joppa, the citizens having shut him out,
76 since Apollonius had a garrison in Joppa. When they began the attack, ·the citizens
77 took fright and opened the gates, and Jonathan occupied Joppa. ·Hearing this,
Apollonius marshalled three thousand cavalry and a large army and made his way
to Azotus as though intending to march through, while in fact pressing on into the
78 plain, since he had a great number of cavalry on which he was relying. ·Jonathan
79 pursued him as far as Azotus, where the armies joined battle. ·Now, Apollonius
80 had left a thousand horsemen in concealment behind them. ·Jonathan knew of this
enemy position behind him; the horsemen surrounded his army, firing their arrows
81 into his men from morning till evening. ·But the troops stood firm, as Jonathan
82 had ordered. Once the cavalry was exhausted, ·Simon sent his own troops into
83 attack against the phalanx, which he cut to pieces and routed. ·The cavalry
scattered over the plain and fled to Azotus, where they took sanctuary in Beth-
84 Dagon, the temple of their idol. ·Jonathan, however, set fire to Azotus and the 11:4
surrounding towns, plundered them, and burned down the temple of Dagon, with 1 S 5:1seq.
85 all the fugitives who had crowded into it. ·The enemy losses, counting those who
fell by the sword and those burnt to death, totalled about eight thousand men.
86 Jonathan then left and pitched camp outside Ascalon, where the citizens came out
87 to meet him with great ceremony. ·Jonathan then returned to Jerusalem with his

i. This was equivalent to inviting the Jews to attack Balas' operational base, 10:1: they had old scores to settle with the people of Ptolemais, 5:15,22; 2 M 6:8.

j. 'seemed to them the more generous of the two' conj.: 'became their prince of peaceable words' Gk, which makes little sense. The translator has probably confused *shillum* 'inducement' with *shalom* 'peace'.

k. In the autumn of 150 BC. • Cleopatra Thea, daughter of Ptolemy VI Philometor, was successively to marry Alexander Balas (by whom she had Antiochus VI), Demetrius II (11:12), and the latter's brother, Antiochus VII.

l. The hellenising Jews not unreasonably considered that their loyalty to the hellenist cause had been ill-rewarded.

m. Superior to a mere governor, in that he ruled not only Judaea but the three annexed districts as well, v. 30, *see* the analogous case of Apollonius the Mysarch, 3:10; 2 M 5:24. For the title 'First Friend', *see* 2:18; 2 M 8:9.

n. In 147 BC, but he did not in fact begin his reign until 145, after the death of Alexander, 11:17. He went on reigning until 125, with an interruption between 138 and 129 when, having been taken prisoner by the Parthians, he was replaced by his brother Antiochus VII, *see* 14:3; 15:1seq.

o. Probably the same Apollonius who had helped Demetrius I to escape from Rome, *see* 7:1. His father, also called Apollonius, had also been governor of Coele-Syria and Phoenicia, 2 M 3:5.

p. The allusion to the history of the ancestors, *see* 1 S 4:2,10, is probably an editorial addition; as also the allusion to the poor military performance of the Hebrews on flat ground, 1 K 20:23,28.

followers, laden with booty. ·In the event, when King Alexander heard what had happened, he awarded Jonathan further honours: ·he sent him the golden brooch, of the kind customarily presented to the King's Cousins,[q] and gave him proprietary rights over Ekron and the land adjoining it. 88 89

Ptolemy VI supports Demetrius II but dies, as does Alexander Balas

11 The king of Egypt then assembled an army as numerous as the sands of the seashore, with many ships, and set out to take possession of Alexander's kingdom by a ruse and add it to his own kingdom. ·He set off for Syria with protestations of peace, and the people of the towns opened their gates to him and came out to meet him, since King Alexander's orders were to welcome him, Ptolemy being his father-in-law. ·On entering the towns, however, Ptolemy[a] quartered troops as a garrison in each one. ·When he reached Azotus he was 10:84 shown the burnt-out temple of Dagon, with Azotus and its suburbs in ruins, corpses scattered here and there, and the charred remains of those whom Jonathan had burnt to death in the battle, piled into heaps along his route. ·They explained to the king what Jonathan had done, hoping for his disapproval; but the king said nothing. ·Jonathan went in state to meet the king at Joppa, where they greeted each other and spent the night. ·Jonathan accompanied the king as far as the river called Eleutherus,[b] and then returned to Jerusalem. ·King Ptolemy for his part occupied the coastal towns as far as Seleucia on the coast,[c] all the while maturing his wicked designs against Alexander. ·He sent envoys to King Demetrius to say, 'Come and let us make a treaty; I shall give you my daughter, whom Alexander now has,[d] and you shall rule your father's kingdom. ·I regret having given my daughter to that man, since he has tried to kill me.' ·He made this accusation because he coveted his kingdom.[e] ·Having carried off his daughter and bestowed her on Demetrius, he broke with Alexander, and their enmity became open. Ptolemy next entered Antioch and assumed the crown of Asia;[f] he now wore on his head the two crowns of Egypt and Asia. ·King Alexander was in Cilicia at the time, since the people of those parts had risen in revolt, ·but when he heard the news, he advanced on his rival to give battle, while Ptolemy for his part also took the field, met him with a strong force and routed him.[g] ·Alexander fled to Arabia for refuge, and King Ptolemy reigned supreme. ·Zabdiel the Arab[h] cut off Alexander's head and sent it to Ptolemy. ·Three days later King Ptolemy died, and the Egyptian garrisons in the strongholds were killed by the local inhabitants. So Demetrius became king in the year 167. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19

Early relations between Demetrius and Jonathan

At the same time, Jonathan mustered the men of Judaea for an assault on the Citadel of Jerusalem, and they set up numerous siege-engines against it.[i] ·But some renegades who hated their nation made their way to the king and told him that Jonathan was besieging the Citadel. ·The king was angered by the news. No sooner had he been informed than he set out and came to Ptolemais. He wrote to Jonathan, telling him to raise the siege and to meet him for a conference in Ptolemais as soon as possible. ·When Jonathan heard this, he gave orders for the siege to continue; he then selected a deputation from the elders of Israel and the priests, and took the deliberate risk ·of himself taking silver and gold, clothing and numerous other presents, and going to Ptolemais to face the king, whose favour he succeeded in winning; ·and although one or two renegades of his nation brought charges against him, ·the king treated him as his predecessors had treated him, and promoted him in the presence of all his friends. ·He confirmed him in the high-priesthood and whatever other distinctions he already held, and had him ranked 2:18e;10:65m among the First Friends. ·Jonathan asked the king to exempt Judaea and the three 10:30;11:34 Samaritan districts from taxation, promising him three hundred talents in return.[j] The king consented, and wrote Jonathan a rescript covering the whole matter, in these terms: 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29

A new charter favouring the Jews [k] 10:26–45

30 'King Demetrius to Jonathan his brother, and to the Jewish nation, greetings.
31 'We have written to Lasthenes our cousin concerning you, and now send you this copy of our rescript for your own information:
32 "King Demetrius to his father Lasthenes, greetings.
33 "The nation of the Jews is our ally; they fulfil their obligations to us, and in
34 view of their goodwill towards us we have decided to show them our bounty. •We confirm them in their possession of the territory of Judaea and the three districts 10:30
of Aphairema, Lydda and Ramathaim;[l] these were annexed to Judaea from Samaritan territory, with all their dependencies, in favour of all who offer sacrifice in Jerusalem, instead of the royal dues which the king formerly received
35 from them every year, from the yield of the soil and the fruit crops. •As regards 10:29
our other rights over the tithes and taxes due to us, over the salt marshes, and
36 the crown taxes due to us, as from today we release them from them all.[m] •None
37 of these grants will be revoked henceforth or anywhere. •You will make yourself responsible for having a copy of this made, to be given to Jonathan and displayed on the holy mountain in a conspicuous place." '

Demetrius II rescued by Jonathan's troops at Antioch

38 When King Demetrius saw that the country was at peace under his rule and that no resistance was offered him, he dismissed his forces, and sent all the men home, except for the foreign troops that he had recruited in the foreign island,[n] thus
39 incurring the enmity of the veterans who had served his ancestors. •Now Trypho, one of Alexander's former supporters, noting that all the troops were muttering against Demetrius, went to see Iamleku,[o] the Arab who was bringing up Anti-
40 ochus, Alexander's young son, •and repeatedly urged him to let him have the boy, so that he might succeed his father as king; he told him of Demetrius' decision and of the resentment it had aroused among his troops. He spent a long time there.
41 Jonathan, meanwhile, sent to ask King Demetrius to withdraw the garrisons from the Citadel in Jerusalem and from the other fortresses, since they were
42 constantly fighting Israel. •Demetrius sent word back to Jonathan, 'Not only will I do this for you and for your nation, but I shall heap honours on you and your
43 nation if I find a favourable opportunity. •For the present, you would do well to

q. Alexander, for good measure, raises Jonathan to the rank of 'King's Cousin', *see* 3:32. The golden brooch, which fastened the purple cloak, was the insignia of this rank, which was higher even than that of 'First Friend', v. 65.

11 **a.** 'Ptolemy' MSS, Gk-Luc., Lat.; 'of Ptolemais' Gk.
b. As much to pay his court to Ptolemy as to show the Jews and gentiles how much he enjoyed Ptolemy's favour. • The River Eleutherus is north of Tripoli.
c. The port of Antioch.
d. Some MSS read 'used to have'. It is not known whether, as Josephus supposes, Ptolemy had already taken his daughter away from Alexander.
e. Alexander's attempt to assassinate Ptolemy is recorded by Josephus but, like the historian Diodorus, the author of 1 M, familiar with the story, does not credit it.
f. According to Diodorus, Trypho, who had gone over to Alexander Balas and was holding Antioch in his name, offered the crown to Ptolemy. The latter would have kept only Coele-Syria, which he regarded as the patrimony of his mother, Cleopatra I, and would have left Asia for Demetrius II.
g. Battle of the Oenoparos (river flowing through the Plain of Antioch), late August or September 145. Ptolemy VI was wounded there, dying of the effects four days later.
h. Diodorus calls him Diocles, which was his Greek name, and explains that Alexander had entrusted him with his son Antiochus, *see* v. 39.
i. The article in 10:32 had evidently remained a dead letter.
j. The traditional amount of tribute annually payable by the high priest, *see* 2 M 4:8. Jonathan is asking the king to replace the land-tax by direct tribute, as had already been granted by the king's father, Demetrius I, *see* 10:30f. Demetrius II apparently consents, but excludes the three annexed districts from the concession, vv. 34seq.
k. This charter in part repeats that of Demetrius I, which had been rejected by Jonathan. The title of 'brother' applied in it to Jonathan, v. 30, suggests that he has been nominated 'King's Cousin' and not merely 'First Friend', v. 27, a title he had already received from Alexander Balas, 10:89. • The original of the letter is addressed to Lasthenes, Demetrius' Cretan minister.
l. The three districts, *see* 10:30.38; 11:28, are the territories of: Ephraim (or Ophra), Jos 18:23; 2 S 13:23 about 12 miles (20 km) north-east of Jerusalem; Lud, 1 Ch 8:11; and Ramah, 1 S 1:1.19 (Arimathaea of Mt 27:57).
m. The tribute of 300 talents is certainly not included in the remission, v. 28. The charter of Demetrius II is less favourable than his father's: there is no further mention, for instance, of handing over the Citadel or of providing for public worship.
n. An economy measure, probably dictated by Lasthenes, who retained only the mercenaries, the majority of whom were Cretans.
o. 'Iamleku' following Syr. and Diodorus; 'Imalkuah' or 'Simalkuah' Gk. Perhaps he was Zabdiel's son, v. 17. This Arab prince probably resided at Chalcis, south of Aleppo, where Antiochus VI was later crowned, v. 54.

send me reinforcements, since all my troops have deserted.' ·Jonathan sent three 44
thousand experienced soldiers to him in Antioch; when they reached the king, he
was delighted at their arrival. ·The citizens crowded together in the centre of the 45
city, to the number of some hundred and twenty thousand, intending to kill
the king. ·The king took refuge in the palace, while the citizens occupied 46
the thoroughfares of the city and began to attack. ·The king then called on the 47
Jews for help; and these all rallied round him, then fanned out through the city,
and that day killed about a hundred thousand of its inhabitants. ·They fired the 48
city, seizing a great deal of plunder at the same time, and secured the king's safety.
When the citizens saw that the Jews had the city at their mercy, their courage 49
failed them, and they made an abject appeal to the king, ·'Give us the right hand of 50
peace, and let the Jews stop their fight against us and the city.' ·They threw down 51
their arms and made peace. The Jews were covered in glory, in the eyes of the king
and of everyone else in his kingdom. Having won renown in his kingdom, they
returned to Jerusalem laden with booty. ·Thus, King Demetrius sat all the more 52
securely on his royal throne, and the country was quiet under his government. ·But 53
he gave the lie to all the promises he had made, and changed his attitude to
Jonathan, giving nothing in return for the services Jonathan had rendered him, but
thwarting him at every turn. [p]

Jonathan opposes Demetrius II. Simon retakes Beth-Zur. The Hazor incident

After this, Trypho came back with the little boy Antiochus, [q] who became king and 54
was crowned. ·All the troops that Demetrius had summarily dismissed rallied to 55
Antiochus, and made war on Demetrius, who turned tail and fled. ·Trypho cap- 56
tured the elephants and seized Antioch.

Young Antiochus then wrote as follows to Jonathan: 'I confirm you in the high- 57
2:18e priesthood and set you over the four districts [r] and appoint you one of the Friends
of the King.' ·He sent him a service of gold plate, and granted him the right to 58
drink from gold vessels, and to wear the purple and the golden brooch. [s] ·He 59
appointed his brother Simon commander-in-chief of the region from the Ladder of
Tyre to the frontiers of Egypt. ·Jonathan then set out and made a progress through 60
Transeuphrates and its towns, and the entire Syrian army rallied to his support. He
came to Ascalon and was received in state by the inhabitants. ·From there he 61
proceeded to Gaza, [t] but the people of Gaza shut him out, so he laid siege to it,
burning down its suburbs and plundering them. ·The people of Gaza then pleaded 62
with Jonathan, and he made peace with them; but he took the sons of their chief
men as hostages and sent them away to Jerusalem. He then travelled through the
country as far as Damascus.

Jonathan now learned that Demetrius' generals had arrived at Kadesh in Gali- 63
lee [u] with a large army, intending to remove him from office, ·and went to engage 64
them, leaving his brother Simon inside the country. ·Simon laid siege to Beth-Zur, 65
attacking it day after day, and blockading the inhabitants ·till they sued for peace, 66
which he granted them, though he expelled them from the town and occupied it,
stationing a garrison there. [v] ·Jonathan and his army, meanwhile, having pitched 67
camp by the Lake of Gennesar, rose early, and by morning were already in the
plain of Hazor. [w] ·The foreigners' army advanced to fight them on the plain, having 68
first positioned an ambush for him in the mountains. While the main body was
advancing directly towards the Jews, ·the troops in ambush broke cover and 69
attacked first. ·All the men with Jonathan fled; no one was left, except Mattathias 70
son of Absalom and Judas son of Chalphi, the generals of his army. ·At this, 71
Jonathan tore his garments, put dust on his head, and prayed. ·Then he returned 72
to the fight and routed the enemy, who fled. ·When the fugitives from his own 73
forces saw this, they came back to him and joined in the pursuit as far as Kadesh
where the enemy encampment was, and there they themselves pitched camp.
About three thousand of the foreign troops fell that day. Jonathan then returned 74
to Jerusalem.

Jonathan's relations with Rome and Sparta

12 When Jonathan saw that circumstances were working in his favour, he sent a select mission to Rome to confirm and renew his treaty of friendship with 8:17–32
the Romans.[a] ·He also sent letters to the same effect to the Spartans and to other
places. ·The envoys made their way to Rome, entered the Senate and said,
'Jonathan the high priest and the Jewish nation have sent us to renew your treaty
of friendship and alliance with them as before.' ·The Senate gave them letters to
the authorities of each place, to procure their safe conduct to Judaea.
The following is the copy of the letter Jonathan wrote to the Spartans:

'Jonathan the high priest, the senate of the nation, the priests and the rest of
the Jewish people to the Spartans their brothers, greetings.
'In the past, a letter was sent to Onias, the high priest, from Areios,[b] one of 12:20–23
your kings, stating that you are indeed our brothers, as the copy subjoined 2 M 5:9
attests. ·Onias received the envoy with honour, and accepted the letter, in which
a clear declaration was made of friendship and alliance. ·For our part, though
we have no need of these, having the consolation of the holy books[c] in our Rm 15:4
possession, ·we venture to send to renew our fraternal friendship with you, so
that we may not become strangers to you, a long time having elapsed since you
last wrote to us. ·We, for our part, on every occasion, at our festivals and on other
appointed days, unfailingly remember you in the sacrifices we offer and in our
prayers, as it is right and fitting to remember brothers. ·We rejoice in your
renown.
'We ourselves, however, have had many trials and many wars, the neighbouring kings making war on us. ·We were unwilling to trouble you or our other
allies and friends during these wars, ·since we have the support of Heaven to
help us, thanks to which we have been delivered from our enemies, and they are 14:22;15:15
the ones who have been brought low. ·We have therefore chosen Numenius son
of Antiochus, and Antipater son of Jason, and sent them to the Romans to
renew our former treaty of friendship and alliance, ·and we have ordered them
also to visit you, to greet you and deliver you this letter of ours concerning the
renewal of our brotherhood; ·we shall be grateful for an answer to it.'

The following is the copy of the letter sent to Onias:

'Areios[d] king of the Spartans, to Onias the high priest, greetings.
'It has been discovered in records regarding the Spartans and Jews that they
are brothers, and of the race of Abraham.[e] ·Now that this has come to our

p. According to Josephus, Demetrius II insisted on the payment of the traditional tribute, but, this being in accordance with the charter, vv. 28,35, there must have been some other reason, now unknown.

q. Antiochus VI Dionysos (144–142).

r. The fourth district was presumably Acrabatta, *see* 5:3.

s. Antiochus renews the privileges granted by his father, Alexander Balas, *see* 10:89 (and by his rival Demetrius II). He also nominates Jonathan commander-in-chief of Coele-Syria, v. 60, and his brother Simon commander-in-chief of the Coastal region, v. 59. These honours from the Syrian kings show that the Hasmonaean principality wielded real influence.

t. The southernmost of the cities of the ancient Philistine Pentapolis, 1 S 6:17. Gaza was a hellenistic centre and peculiarly hostile to the Jews. Alexander Jannaeus captured it in about BC 100 after besieging it for a year, sacked the town and massacred its inhabitants.

u. The Kadesh of Jos 12:22, about 22 miles (35 km) from Tyre where the generals had been able to land their troops.

v. Jonathan, as commander-in-chief of Coele-Syria, was entitled to control this royal strongpoint. (Simon's victory was to be added to the list of lucky days in the calendar.)

w. The ancient Canaanite metropolis of Hazor, Jos 11:10, by now no more than a fortress, situated about 6 miles (10 km) north of Lake Tiberias.

12 a. Such renewals of alliance are characteristic of the period. *see* 14:18,22. For the text of the original treaty, *see* 8:22seq.

b. 'Areios' conj. following Josephus; 'Darius' Gk. Areios II having died at the age of eight, this can only be Areios I (309–265) and therefore Onias I, who was a contemporary of Alexander the Great. The answer to the letter has thus taken one and a half centuries to arrive (*see* v. 10). Josephus, who did not realise that this first document was no more than a diplomatic fiction, dates the episode to the reign of Onias III (died in 174).

c. The 'holy books' represent a larger grouping than 'the book of the Law', 3:48, or 'the holy book', 2 M 8:23; they are all the books recognised as possessing divine authority. The OT canon is in process of formation: one of the Psalms is quoted as 'scripture', 7:17, and soon afterwards the prologue of Ecclesiasticus (132 BC) speaks of the division into Law, prophets, and 'other books' (*see* 2 M 2:13), which was to remain the classification of the Hebr. Bible, *see* Rm 1:2; 2 Tm 3:15d.

d. 'Areios, to Onias' conj. following Josephus; 'to Oniares' Gk.

e. This legend, typical of the diplomatic fictions of the age, was already current in Sparta when Jason took refuge there, 2 M 5:9.

knowledge, we shall be obliged if you will send us news of your welfare. ·Our 23
own message to you is this: your flocks and your possessions are ours, and
ours are yours,[f] and we are instructing our envoys to give you a message to this
effect.'

Jonathan in Coele-Syria. Simon in Philistia

Jonathan learned that Demetrius' generals had returned with a larger army than 24
before to make war on him. ·He therefore left Jerusalem and went to engage 25
them in the area of Hamath, not giving them the time to invade his own territory.
He sent spies into their camp, who told him on their return that the enemy were 26
taking up positions for a night attack on the Jews. ·At sunset, Jonathan ordered 27
his men to keep watch with their weapons at hand, in readiness to fight at any time
during the night, and posted advance guards all round the camp. ·On learning 28
that Jonathan and his men were ready to fight, the enemy took fright and, with
quaking hearts, lit fires in their bivouac and decamped.[g] ·Jonathan and his men, 29
watching the glow of the fires, were unaware of their withdrawal until morning,
and although Jonathan pursued them, he failed to overtake them, for they had 30
already crossed the river Eleutherus.[h] ·So Jonathan wheeled round on the Arabs 31
called Zabadaeans,[i] beat them and plundered them; ·then, breaking camp, he 32
went to Damascus, thus crossing the whole province. ·Simon, meanwhile, had also 33
set out and had penetrated as far as Ascalon and the neighbouring towns. He then
turned on Joppa and moved quickly to occupy it, ·for he had heard of their 34
intention to hand over this strong point to the supporters of Demetrius; he sta-
tioned a garrison there to hold it.[j]

Building work in Jerusalem

Jonathan, on his return, called a meeting of the elders of the people and decided 35
with them to build fortresses in Judaea ·and to heighten the walls of Jerusalem 36
and erect a high barrier between the Citadel[k] and the city, to cut the former off
from the city and isolate it, to prevent the occupants from buying or selling.
Rebuilding the city was a co-operative effort: part of the wall over the eastern 37
ravine had fallen down; he restored the quarter called Chaphenatha.[l] ·Simon, 38
meanwhile, rebuilt Adida[m] in the lowlands, fortifying it, and erecting gates with
bolts.

Jonathan falls into the hands of his enemies

11:39seq.; 54seq. Trypho's ambition was to become king of Asia, assume the crown, and overpower 39
King Antiochus. ·He was apprehensive that Jonathan might not allow him to do 40
this, and might even make war on him, so he set out and came to Beth-Shean, in
the hopes of finding some pretext for having him arrested and put to death.

Jonathan went out to intercept him, with forty thousand picked men in battle 41
order, and arrived at Beth-Shean. ·When Trypho saw him there with a large force, 42
he hesitated to make any move against him. ·He even received him with honour, 43
commended him to all his friends, gave him presents and ordered his friends and
his troops to obey him as they would himself. ·He said to Jonathan, 'Why have you 44
given all these people so much trouble, when there is no threat of war between us?
Send them back home; pick yourself a few men as your bodyguard, and come with 45
me to Ptolemais, which I am going to hand over to you, with the other fortresses
and the remaining troops and all the officials;[n] after which, I shall take the road for
home. This was my purpose in coming here.' ·Jonathan trusted him and did as he 46
said; he dismissed his forces, who went back to Judaea. ·With him he retained 47
three thousand men, of whom he left two thousand in Galilee, while a thousand
accompanied him. ·But as soon as Jonathan had entered Ptolemais, the people of 48
Ptolemais closed the gates, seized him, and put all those who had entered with him
to the sword. ·Trypho sent troops and cavalry into Galilee and the Great Plain to 49
destroy all Jonathan's supporters. ·These, concluding that he had been taken and 50

had perished with his companions, encouraged one another, marching with closed
51 ranks and ready to give battle, ·and when their pursuers saw that they would fight
52 for their lives, they turned back. ·All reached Judaea safe and sound, and there
they lamented Jonathan and his companions, being very frightened indeed; all
53 Israel was plunged into mourning. ·The surrounding nations were all now looking
for ways of destroying them: 'They have no leader,' they said, 'no ally; we have
only to attack them now, and we shall blot out their very memory from mankind.'

V: SIMON, HIGH PRIEST AND ETHNARCH OF THE JEWS (143–134 BC)

Simon takes command

1 **13** Simon heard that Trypho had collected a large army to invade and devastate
2 Judaea, ·and when he saw how the people were quaking with fear, he went
3 up to Jerusalem, called the people together, ·and exhorted them thus, 'You know
yourselves how much I and my brothers and my father's family have done for the
laws and the sanctuary; you know what wars and hardships we have experienced.
4 That is why my brothers are all dead,[a] for Israel's sake, and I am the only one
5 left. ·Far be it from me, then, to be sparing of my own life in any time of oppression,
6 for I am not worth more than my brothers. ·Rather will I avenge my nation and the
sanctuary and your wives and children, now that the foreigners are all united in
7 malice to destroy us.' ·The people's spirit rekindled as they listened to his words, 5:2,12:53
8 and they shouted back at him, 'You are our leader in place of Judas and your
9 brother Jonathan. ·Fight our battles for us, and we will do whatever you tell us.'[b]
10 So he assembled all the fighting men and hurried on with completing the walls of
11 Jerusalem, fortifying the whole perimeter. ·He sent a considerable force to Joppa
under Jonathan son of Absalom who drove out the inhabitants and remained there
in occupation.[c]

Simon repels Trypho from Judaea

12 Trypho now left Ptolemais with a large army to invade Judaea, taking Jonathan
13, 14 with him under guard. ·Simon pitched camp in Adida, facing the plain. ·When
Trypho learned that Simon had taken the place of his brother Jonathan and that he
15 intended to join battle with him, he sent envoys to him with this message, ·'Your
brother Jonathan was in debt to the royal exchequer for the offices he held; that is
16 why we are detaining him. ·If you send a hundred talents of silver and two of his
sons as hostages, to make sure that on his release he does not revolt against us, we
17 shall release him.' ·Although Simon was aware that the message was a ruse, he
sent for the money and the boys for fear of incurring great hostility from the
18 people, ·who would have said that Jonathan had died because Simon would not
19 send Trypho the money and the children. ·He therefore sent both the boys and the

f. These idyllic sentiments betray the true authorship of the 'message': some Jew who takes the tales of the Patriarchs as his literary model.

g. 'and decamped' 2 MSS, Gk-Luc., Syr., Josephus; omitted by Gk and Lat.

h. The present-day Nahr el-Kebir, separating Lebanon from Syria. Presumably the northern frontier of the province of Coele-Syria, for which Jonathan was militarily responsible.

i. The name is still to be found among the place-names of Anti-Lebanon, e.g. Zebdani.

j. Simon acts thus by virtue of his appointment by Antiochus VI, 11:59, but the author, in eulogising Simon, emphasises the importance that the capture of this much disputed port had for the Jews, 14:5.

k. Still in the hands of Demetrius' mercenaries, 11:20, whom nothing prevented from going out into the city.

l. cf. Aramaean *kaphelta* 'the double one': trans. of Hebr. *ha-mishnah*, meaning the new quarter to the north-west of the Temple, *see* 2 K 22:14. • The 'ravine' is the bed of the River Kedron.

m. The Hadid of Ezr 2:33, 4 miles (6 km) north-east of Lydda, where Simon apparently had his base, 1 M 13:13.

n. Trypho recognises, or rather, feigns to recognise, Jonathan's position as commander-in-chief of Coele-Syria and Phoenicia.

13 a. Like everyone else, Simon thought that Jonathan was dead. He was still only a prisoner, v. 12.

b. Simon is nominated by acclamation, as Jonathan was, 9:30, whereas Judas had been designated by his father, 2:66; the latter had asked his sons to regard Simon as their second father, but up to this moment he had played a self-effacing role as regards his younger brothers.

c. Simon's Jewish policy is more radical than Jonathan's. He had already expelled the entire gentile population from Beth-Zur, 11:66.

hundred talents, but Trypho broke his word and did not release Jonathan. ·Next, 20
Trypho set about the invasion and devastation of the country; he made a detour
along the Adora[d] road, but Simon and his army confronted him wherever he
attempted to go. ·The men in the Citadel kept sending messengers to Trypho, 21
urging him to get through to them by way of the desert and send them supplies.
Trypho organised his entire cavalry to go, but that night it snowed so heavily 22
that he could not get through for the snow, so he left there and moved off into
Gilead. ·As he approached Baskama[e] he killed Jonathan, who was buried there. 23
Trypho turned back and regained his own country. 24

Jonathan is buried in the mausoleum built by Simon at Modein

Simon sent and recovered the bones of his brother Jonathan, and buried him in 25
Modein, the town of his ancestors. ·All Israel kept solemn mourning for him and 26
long bewailed him. ·Over the tomb of his father and brothers, Simon raised a 27
monument high enough to catch the eye, using dressed stone back and front. ·He 28
erected seven pyramids facing each other, for his father and mother and his four
brothers,[f] ·surrounding them with a structure consisting of tall columns sur- 29
mounted by trophies of arms to their everlasting memory and, beside the trophies
of arms, ships sculpted on a scale to be seen by all who sail the sea. ·Such was the 30
monument he constructed at Modein, and it is still there today.

The favours of Demetrius II to Simon

Now Trypho, betraying the trust of young King Antiochus, put him to death.[g] 31
He usurped his throne, assuming the crown of Asia, and brought great havoc on 32
the country. ·Simon built up the fortresses of Judaea, surrounding them with high 33
towers, great walls and gates with bolts, and stocked these fortresses with food.
He also sent a delegation to King Demetrius, to get him to grant the province a 34
remission, since all Trypho did was to despoil.[h] ·King Demetrius replied to his 35
request in a letter framed as follows:

'King Demetrius to Simon, high priest and Friend of Kings, and to the elders 36
and nation of the Jews, greetings.

'It has pleased us to accept the golden crown and the palm you have sent us, 37
and we are disposed to make a general peace with you, and to write to the
officials to grant you remissions. ·Everything that we have decreed concerning 38
you remains in force, and the fortresses you have built may remain in your
hands. ·We pardon all offences, unwitting or intentional, hitherto committed, 39
and remit the crown tax you now owe us;[i] and whatever other taxes were levied
in Jerusalem are no longer to be levied. ·If any of you are suitable for enrolment 40
in our bodyguard, let them be enrolled, and let there be peace between us.'

The gentile yoke was thus lifted from Israel[j] in the year 170, ·when our people 41, 42
began engrossing their documents and contracts: 'In the first year of Simon,
eminent high priest, commander-in-chief and ethnarch[k] of the Jews'.

‖2M10:32–38 **The capture of Gezer by Simon**

About that time Simon laid siege to Gezer,[l] surrounding it with his troops. He 43
constructed a mobile tower, brought it up to the city, opened a breach in one of the
bastions and took it. ·The men in the mobile tower sprang out into the city, where 44
great confusion ensued. ·The citizens, accompanied by their wives and children, 45
mounted the ramparts with their garments torn and loudly implored Simon to
make peace with them: ·'Treat us', they said, 'not as our wickedness deserves, but 46
as your mercy prompts you.' ·Simon came to terms with them and stopped the 47
fighting; but he expelled them from the city, purified the houses which contained
idols, and then made his entry with songs of praise. ·He banished all impurity from 48
it, settled in it people who observed the Law, and having fortified it, built a
residence there for himself.

Simon occupies the Citadel in Jerusalem

49 The occupants of the Citadel in Jerusalem, prevented as they were from coming
out and going into the countryside to buy and sell,[m] were in desperate need of
50 food, and numbers of them were being carried off by starvation. ·They begged
Simon to make peace with them, and he granted this, though he expelled them and
51 purified the Citadel from its pollutions. ·The Jews made their entry on the twenty- 2 M 10:7 Jn 12:13
third day of the second month in the year 171,[n] with acclamations and carrying
palms, to the sound of lyres, cymbals and harps, chanting hymns and canticles,
since a great enemy had been crushed and thrown out of Israel. Simon made it a
52 day of annual rejoicing. ·He fortified the Temple hill on the Citadel side, and took
53 up residence there with his men. ·Since his son John had come to manhood, Simon
appointed him general-in-chief, with his residence in Gezer.

Eulogy of Simon

1 **14** In the year 172,[a] King Demetrius assembled his forces and marched into
2 Media to raise help for the fight against Trypho. ·When Arsaces king of
Persia and Media[b] heard that Demetrius had entered his territory, he sent one of
3 his generals to capture him alive. ·The general defeated the army of Demetrius,
4 seized him and brought him to Arsaces, who imprisoned him. ·The country was at
peace throughout the days of Simon.[c]

He sought the good of his nation 3:3–9
and they were well pleased with his authority,
as with his magnificence, throughout his life.
5 To crown his titles to glory,
he took Joppa and made it a harbour,
gaining access to the Mediterranean Isles.
6 He enlarged the frontiers of his nation, Ex 34:24
keeping his mastery over the homeland,
7 resettling a host of captives.
He conquered Gezer, Beth-Zur and the Citadel,[d]
ridding them of every impurity,
and no one could resist him.
8 The people farmed their land in peace;
the land gave its produce, Zc 8:12
the trees of the plain their fruit.
9 The elders sat at ease in the squares, Zc 8:4–5
all their talk was of their prosperity;

d. Adoraim of 2 Ch 11:9, now Dura, 5 miles (8 km) west of Hebron. Trypho adopts the same flanking movement as Lysias, *see* 4:29; 6:31.

e. On the western tip of the Carmel promontory: otherwise known as Sycaminos, where Ptolemy IX was to land in about 100 BC. • 'Gilead' seems out of place here and is perhaps a mistake for 'Galilee'. • Trypho seems to have executed Jonathan before re-embarking.

f. Pyramidal monuments are characteristic of the funerary art of the day.

g. Here, as in Diodorus, the murder precedes the accession of Trypho (dating 142/141), but according to Livy and Josephus, it followed the capture of Demetrius (in 139, *see* 14:2).

h. There is probably a Hebr. pun here on the name Trypho and *tereph*, 'spoliation'. The remission in question was tax-relief.

i. Presumably the annual tribute (though in v. 37, the same expression means an occasional present). As regards the other taxes, Jerusalem alone (that is, Judaea) seems to have been exempted, not the three districts as well, *see* 11:34h; 15:31.

j. In 142 BC. • The 'yoke' is the symbol of slavery, 8:18; 1 K 12:4, made effective by the payment of tribute.

k. Or 'prince' corresponding to Hebr. *rosh*, 'head', i.e. of an ethnic and religious group virtually autonomous within a larger empire. • Simon dates his years in office like an independent ruler, from his own accession and not in terms of the Seleucid era.

l. 'Gezer' conj. following Josephus, and *see* 14:7; 15:28; 16:21; 2 M 10:32seq.; 'Gaza' Gk and Lat. Gezer is about 20 miles (32 km) north-west of Jerusalem.

m. A situation which had lasted for two years, *see* 12:36.

n. Beginning of June 141. This expulsion marks the end of the Seleucid occupation of Jerusalem, which had gone on since 167, *see* 1:33–40.

14 **a.** October 141 to September 140.

b. Mithridates I, Arsaces VI (171–138), founder of the Parthian Empire, had already seized Persia and Media from Demetrius. Summoned to the aid of his former subjects, Demetrius had some initial success but was taken prisoner in 139, *see* 10:67, and kept in custody in Hyrcania (south of the Caspian), where however he received treatment worthy of his rank.

c. The rhythmical eulogy that follows, *see* 1:28m, is a tissue of biblical phrases.

d. The capture of the port of Joppa, v. 5, *see* 12:33; 13:11; 14:34, and of the three most important Seleucid fortresses, had 'secured the freedom of Israel' on a solid basis, v. 26.

the young men wore splendid armour.
He kept the towns supplied with provisions 10
and furnished with fortifications,
until his fame resounded to the ends of the earth.
He established peace in the land, 11
and Israel knew great joy.
1 K 5:5 Mi 4:4 Zc 3:10 Each man sat under his own vine and his own fig tree, 12
and there was no one to make them afraid.
No enemy was left in the land to fight them, 13
the very kings of those times had been crushed.
He encouraged the afflicted members of his people, 14
suppressing every wicked man and renegade.[e]
He strove to observe the Law,
and gave new splendour to the Temple, 15
enriching it with many sacred vessels.

Renewal of the alliances with Sparta and with Rome

When it became known in Rome and as far as Sparta that Jonathan was dead, 16
people were deeply grieved. ·But as soon as they heard that his brother Simon 17
had succeeded him as high priest and was master of the country and the cities in it,
8:17seq., 22; 12:3 they wrote to him on bronze tablets to renew the treaty of friendship and alliance 18
which they had made with his brothers,[f] Judas and Jonathan, ·and the document 19
was read out before the assembly in Jerusalem.
This is the copy of the letter sent by the Spartans: 20

'The rulers and the city of Sparta, to Simon the high priest and to the elders and priests and the rest of the people of the Jews, greetings.
'The ambassadors whom you sent to our people have informed us of your 21
glory and prosperity, and we are delighted with their visit. ·We have recorded 22
12:16 their declarations in the minutes of our public assemblies, as follows, "Numenius son of Antiochus, and Antipater son of Jason, ambassadors of the Jews, came to us to renew their friendship with us. ·And it was the people's pleasure to 23
receive these personages with honour and to deposit a copy of their statements in the public archives, so that the people of Sparta might preserve a record of them. A copy was also made for Simon the high priest." '

After this, Simon sent Numenius to Rome as the bearer of a large golden shield 24
weighing a thousand *mina*, to confirm the alliance with them.

Official honours decreed for Simon

When these events were reported to our people, they said, 'What mark of appreci- 25
ation shall we give to Simon and his sons? ·He stood firm,[g] he and his brothers and 26
his father's house: he fought off the enemies of Israel and secured its freedom.' So
they recorded an inscription on bronze tablets and set it up on pillars on Mount
Zion. ·This is a copy of the text: 27

'The eighteenth of Elul, in the year 172, being the third year of Simon, eminent high priest:
'In Asaramel,[h] in the Grand Assembly of priests and people, of princes of 28
the nation and of elders of the country:
'We are acquainted with the matters following:
'When there was almost incessant fighting in the country Simon, son of 29
Mattathias, a priest of the line of Joarib, and his brothers courted danger and withstood their nation's enemies to safeguard the integrity of their sanctuary and of the Law, and so brought their nation great glory;
'For when, Jonathan having rallied his nation and become its high priest and 30
having then been gathered to his ancestors, ·the enemy planned to invade the 31

country, intending to devastate their territory and to lay hands on their sanctu-
32 ary, ·Simon next came forward to fight for his nation: spending much of his
personal wealth [i] on arming his nation's fighting men and on providing their pay;
33 ·fortifying the towns of Judaea, as well as Beth-Zur on the Judaean frontier
where the enemy arsenal had formerly been, and stationing in it a garrison of
34 Jewish soldiers; ·fortifying Joppa on the coast, and Gezer on the borders of
Azotus, a place formerly inhabited by the enemy, founding a Jewish colony
there, and providing the settlers with everything they needed to set them on
their feet;

35 'In consequence of which, the people, aware of Simon's loyalty and of the
glory which he was determined to win for his nation, have made him their
ethnarch and high priest, for all his services and for the integrity and loyalty
which he has shown towards his nation, and for having by every means sought to
enhance his people's power;

36 'It has fallen to him in his time to expel the foreigners from his country,[j]
including those in the City of David in Jerusalem, who had converted it into a
citadel for their own use, from which they would sally out to defile the surround-
37 ings of the sanctuary and to violate its sacred character; ·to station Jewish
soldiers there instead for the security of the country and the city; and to heighten
the walls of Jerusalem;

38 'And since King Demetrius has heard that the Romans call the Jews their
39 friends, allies and brothers, [k] ·and that they have given an honourable reception
40 to Simon's ambassadors, and, furthermore, ·that the Jews and priests are happy
that Simon should, pending the advent of a genuine prophet, be their ethnarch
41 and high priest for life ·therefore he has confirmed him in the high-priestly 4:46j
office, has raised him to the rank of Friend and has showered great honours [l] on
42 him, also confirming him as their commander-in-chief, ·with the right to appoint 2:18e
officials to oversee the fabric of the sanctuary and to administer the country,
43 munitions and fortresses; ·he is to have personal charge of the sanctuary, [m] and
to be obeyed by all; all official documents in the country must be drawn up in his
name; and he may assume the purple and may wear golden ornaments;

44 'Furthermore, it is against the law for any member of the public or of the
priesthood to contravene any of these enactments or to contest his decisions, or
to convene a meeting anywhere in the country without his permission, or to
45 assume the purple or wear the golden brooch; ·and anyone acting contrary to, or
rejecting any article of, these enactments is liable to punishment;

46 'And since the people have unanimously agreed to grant Simon the right to
47 act as aforesaid, and ·since Simon, for his part, has given his assent, and has
consented to assume the high-priestly office and to be commander-in-chief and
ethnarch of the Jews and their priests, [n] and to preside over all:

48 'So, be it now enacted: that this record be inscribed on bronze tablets and be
49 erected at some conspicuous place within the precincts of the Temple, ·and that
copies be deposited in the Treasury for Simon and his descendants.'

e. The tone of the v. is almost messianic. The order of the lines has been adjusted, following Gk-Luc. and Syr. MSS, and the requirements of logic. Respect for the Law was characteristic of the age, and peculiarly so of Simon, 13:3; 14:29; *see* 2 M 13:10–11,14.

f. *see* 8:22. In point of fact, the renewal of alliance must have been requested by Simon soon after his accession in 142, since the reply from Rome bears the date of that same year (consulate of Lucius, 15:16). Such must have been the objective of Numenius' mission. It was clumsy of the author to try to weave these documents into the narrative, instead of keeping them all together.

g. 'He stood firm' conj. trans. of a verb which is normally transitive.

h. In September 140. • 'Asamarel' (and not the corrupt form 'Samaral' found in some MSS) is the transcription of an expression meaning 'The Court of the People of God'—probably the outer courtyard of the Temple, *see* v. 48; 9:54.

i. A point often made in honorific decrees. The volunteers of the Revolt have gradually been replaced by a standing army.

j. 'his country' 1 Lat. MS; 'their country' Gk and Lat.

k. The formula 'friends and allies' is well attested; 'brothers', however, must be an editorial interpolation, for such a title would imply an (at least fictitious) common origin, as with the Jews and the Spartans, 12:21.

l. *see* 13:36. There is still a firm link with Antioch.

m. Perhaps a dittography, *see* v. 42.

n. The explicit mention of the priests, here and at v. 41, is perhaps because of opposition from that part of the clergy still loyal to the evicted Oniads. Simon's powers are to be traditional (high priest), respectful of his Seleucid suzerain (commander-in-chief), but above all national (ethnarch, head of a virtually autonomous group within the empire).

Letter of Antiochus VII and siege of Dora

15 Antiochus son of King Demetrius addressed a letter from the Mediterranean Isles[a] to Simon, priest and ethnarch of the Jews, and to the whole nation; ·this was how it read:

'King Antiochus to Simon, high priest and ethnarch, and to the Jewish nation, greetings.

'Whereas certain scoundrels have seized control of the kingdom of our fathers, and I propose to claim back the kingdom so that I may re-establish it as it was before, and whereas I have accordingly recruited very large forces and fitted out warships, ·intending to make a landing in the country and to hunt down the men who have ruined it and laid waste many towns in my kingdom;

'I now, therefore, confirm in your favour all remissions of taxes granted to you by the kings my predecessors, as well as the waiving of whatever presents they may have conceded.[b] ·I hereby authorise you to mint your own coinage as legal tender for your own country.[c] ·I declare Jerusalem and the sanctuary to be free; all the arms you have manufactured and the fortresses you have built and now occupy may remain yours. ·All debts to the royal treasury, present or future, are cancelled henceforth in perpetuity. ·Furthermore, when we have won back our kingdom, we shall bestow such great honour on yourself, your nation and the sanctuary as will make your glory known throughout the world.'

Antiochus invaded the land of his ancestors in the year 174[d] and, since the troops all rallied to him, Trypho was left with few supporters. ·Antiochus pursued the usurper, who took refuge in Dora[e] on the coast, ·knowing that misfortunes were piling up on him and that his troops had deserted him. ·Antiochus pitched camp outside Dora with a hundred and twenty thousand fighting men and eight thousand cavalry. ·He laid siege to the city while the ships closed in from the sea, so that he had the city under attack from land and sea, and allowed no one to go in or come out.

The ambassadors return from Rome to Judaea. The alliance with Rome proclaimed

Numenius and his companions, meanwhile, arrived from Rome, bringing letters addressed to various kings and states, in the following terms:

8:17;12:16; 14:22,24

'Lucius,[f] consul of the Romans, to King Ptolemy, greetings.

'The Jewish ambassadors have come to us as our friends and allies to renew our original friendship and alliance in the name of the high priest Simon and the Jewish people. ·They have brought a golden shield worth a thousand *mina*.[g] Accordingly, we have seen fit to write to various kings and states, warning them neither to molest the Jewish people nor to attack either them or their towns or their country, nor to ally themselves with any such aggressors. ·We have seen fit to accept the shield from them. ·If, therefore, any scoundrels have fled their country to take refuge with you, hand them over to Simon the high priest, to be punished by him according to their law.'

The consul sent the same letter to King Demetrius, to Attalus, Ariarathes and Arsaces,[h] ·and to all states, including Sampsames, the Spartans, Delos, Myndos, Sicyon, Caria, Samos, Pamphylia, Lycia, Halicarnassus, Rhodes, Phaselis, Cos, Side, Arados, Gortyn, Cyprus and Cyrene.[i] ·They also drew up a copy for Simon the high priest.

Antiochus VII, besieging Dora, becomes hostile to Simon and sends him a reprimand

Antiochus, meanwhile, from his positions on the outskirts of Dora, was continually throwing detachments against the town. He constructed siege-engines, and blockaded Trypho, preventing movement in or out. ·Simon sent him two thousand

picked men to support him in the fight, with silver and gold and plenty of equip-
27 ment. ·But Antiochus would not accept them; instead, he repudiated all his
previous agreements with Simon and completely changed his attitude to him.
28 He sent him Athenobius, one of his Friends, to confer with him and say, 'You 2:18e
are now occupying Joppa and Gezer and the Citadel in Jerusalem, which are towns
29 in my kingdom.[j] ·You have laid waste their territory and done immense harm to
the country; and you have seized control of many places[k] properly in my kingdom.
30 Either now surrender the towns you have taken and the taxes from the places
31 you have seized outside the frontiers of Judaea, ·or else pay me five hundred
talents of silver in compensation for them and for the destruction you have done,
and another five hundred talents for the taxes from the towns; otherwise we shall
32 come and make war on you.' ·When the King's Friend, Athenobius, reached
Jerusalem and saw Simon's magnificence, his cabinet of gold and silver plate and
33 the state he kept, he was dumbfounded. He delivered the king's message, ·but
Simon gave him this answer, 'We have not taken foreign territory or any alien
property but have occupied our ancestral heritage, for some time unjustly wrested
34 from us by our enemies; ·now that we have a favourable opportunity, we are
35 merely recovering our ancestral heritage. ·As regards Joppa and Gezer, which you
claim, these were towns that did great harm to our people and laid waste our
country;[l] we are prepared to give a hundred talents for them.' Without so much as
36 a word in answer, ·the envoy went back to the king in a rage and reported on
Simon's answer and his magnificence, and on everything he had seen, at which the
king fell into a fury.

Cendebaeus, governor of the coastal region, harasses Judaea

37, 38 Trypho now boarded a ship and escaped to Orthosia.[m] ·The king appointed
Cendebaeus military governor of the coastal region and allotted him a force of
39 infantry and cavalry. ·He ordered him to deploy his men facing Judaea, and
instructed him to rebuild Kedron and fortify its gates, and to make war on our
40 people, while the king himself went in pursuit of Trypho. ·Cendebaeus arrived at
Jamnia and began to provoke our people forthwith, invading Judaea, taking
41 prisoners, and massacring. ·Having rebuilt Kedron,[n] he stationed cavalry and
troops there to make sorties and patrol the roads of Judaea, as the king had
ordered.

15 a. While in Rhodes, Antiochus VII learned of his brother Demetrius II's captivity. Brought up at Cnidus and Side, he was nicknamed Sidetes, but on his coinage took the regal title Euergetes ('benefactor').

b. 13:39. Antiochus includes, at least by implication, the taxes due from the three districts, 15:30seq., *see* 11:34*l*.

c. The privilege was soon revoked (v. 27), and no Jewish coin hitherto discovered can be attributed to Simon. There are, however, a large number of small bronze coins issued in the name of 'John and the community of the Jews', probably struck by John Hyrcanus, Simon's son.

d. 139/138—the earliest coins of Antiochus date from 138; his landing took place in autumn, 139, at the instance of his sister-in-law Cleopatra Thea.

e. South of Carmel. This ancient district-capital, 1 K 4:11, was still a prosperous port.

f. Lucius Caecilius Metellus Calvus, consul in 142; his circular letter is hence misplaced, *see* 14:18.

g. About 96 lb (44 kg) of gold, therefore; such decorative shields are attested elsewhere. The author's statement in 14:24 'weighing a thousand *mina*' should be accepted with caution, for that would have weighed nearly half a ton (508 kg).

h. Attalus II (159–138) king of Pergamum. Ariarathes V (162–131) king of Cappadocia. • For Arsaces, *see* 14:2.

i. The list gives a good idea of the political situation in the Eastern Mediterranean in the middle of the second century BC. Besides a few large kingdoms, there were numerous city-states (Side in Pamphylia, Sicyon in the Peloponnese etc.), islands (Delos, Samos, Rhodes, Arados, present-day Ruad, north of Tripoli), and more or less independent territories (Caria, Lycia etc.), with Jewish settlements scattered among them. Cyprus and Cyrene still belonged to Egypt, but the Romans did not hesitate to give orders to other rulers' vassal-states.

j. The Citadel in Jerusalem was so large as to count as a town in its own right, *see* 1:33. Naturally, Simon refused to give it up or to pay a tax on it, though in the case of the other two strongpoints, forming no part either of Judaea or of the Four Districts, he was prepared to agree, v. 29.

k. In Gk *topos*, a vague expression, here probably meaning the Four Districts, *see* 11:57.

l. 'and laid waste our country' 1 MS; 'and our country' or 'and to our country' Gk.

m. Between Tripolis and the River Eleutherus. Thirty-three tetradrachmas of Trypho have been found there, and the rarity of these coins suggests some connection with the events related here. Trypho fled to Apamaea where he was put to death (unless he committed suicide, if Strabo, rather than Josephus, is to be believed).

n. Present-day Qatra, about 3 miles (5 km) south-east of Jamnia.

The victory of Simon's sons over Cendebaeus

16 John then went up from Gezer and reported to his father Simon what 1
Cendebaeus was busy doing. ·At this, Simon summoned his two elder sons, 2
Judas and John, and said to them, 'My brothers and I, and my father's House, have
fought the enemies of Israel[a] from our youth until today, and many a time we have
been successful in rescuing Israel. ·But now I am an old man, while you, by the 3
mercy of Heaven,[b] are the right age; take the place of my brother and myself, go
out and fight for our nation, and may Heaven's aid be with you.' ·He then selected 4
twenty thousand of the country's fighting men and cavalry, and these marched
against Cendebaeus, spending the night at Modein. ·Making an early start, they 5
marched into the plain, to find a large army opposing them, both infantry and
cavalry; there was, however, a stream-bed[c] in between. ·John[d] drew up facing 6
them, he and his army and, seeing that the men were afraid to cross the stream-
bed, crossed over first himself. When his men saw this, they too crossed after him.
He divided his army into two, with the cavalry in the centre and the infantry[e] on 7
either flank, as the opposing cavalry was very numerous. ·The trumpets rang out; 8
Cendebaeus and his army were put to flight, many of them falling mortally
wounded and the rest of them fleeing to the fortress. ·Then it was that Judas, 9
John's brother, was wounded, but John pursued them until Cendebaeus reached
Kedron, which he had rebuilt. ·Their flight took them as far as the towers in the 10
countryside of Azotus, and John burnt these down. The enemy losses amounted to
ten thousand men; John returned safely to Judaea.

Simon's tragic death at Dok. His son John succeeds him

Ptolemy son of Abubos had been appointed general in command of the Plain of 11
Jericho;[f] he owned a great deal of silver and gold, ·and was the high priest's son- 12
in-law. ·His ambition was fired; he hoped to make himself master of the whole 13
country and therefore treacherously began to plot the destruction of Simon and
his sons. ·Simon, who was inspecting the towns up and down the country and 14
attending to their administration, had come down to Jericho with his sons Matta-
thias and Judas, in the year 172, in the eleventh month, the month of Shebat.[g]
The son of Abubos lured them into a small fortress called Dok,[h] which he had 15
built, where he offered them a great banquet, having previously hidden men in the
place. ·When Simon and his sons were drunk, Ptolemy and his men reached for 16
their weapons, rushed on Simon in the banqueting hall and killed him with his two
sons[i] and some of his servants. ·He thus committed a great act of treachery and 17
rendered evil for good.

Ptolemy wrote a report of the affair and sent it to the king, in the expectation of 18
being sent reinforcements and of having the cities and the province made over to
him. ·He also sent people to Gezer to murder John, and sent written orders to the 19
military commanders[j] to come to him so that he could give them silver, gold and
presents; ·and he also sent others to seize control of Jerusalem and the Temple 20
mount. ·But someone had been too quick for him and had already informed John 21
in Gezer that his father and brothers had perished, adding, 'He is sending someone
to kill you too!' ·Overcome as John was by the news, he arrested the men who had 22
come to kill him and put them to death, being forewarned of their murderous
design.[k] ·The rest of John's acts, the battles he fought and the exploits he per- 23
formed, the city walls he built, and all his other achievements, ·from the day he 24
succeeded his father as high priest, are recorded in the annals of his pontificate.[l]

16 **a.** 'the enemies' 1 Gk MS and Lat.; 'the wars' Gk. • John is John Hyrcanus, who succeeded his father in 134. Simon's words recall the testament of Mattathias, 2:49seq. *see also* 2:66; 12:15; 14:26,36.

b. lit. 'by the mercy'; but the implication is clear, *see* 2:21.

c. Perhaps the Wadi Qatra, running about half a mile (1 km) north of Qatra, between Modein (about 15 miles–about 24 km–away) and Azotus (v. 10, about 8 miles–13 km).

d. The subject is not expressed, but it cannot be Simon, *see* v. 3.

e. These tactics were practised by the ancients and made it easier to withstand a superior number of horse. This is the first mention of Hasmonaean cavalry.

f. Ptolemy had perhaps been stationed at Jericho by Simon, like John at Gezer. In any case, this military command included Judaea, 9:50, later becoming one of the Herodian administrative districts.

g. January–February 134.

h. On the top of Jebel Qaruntul, dominating Jericho.

i. Simon's two sons were not in fact put to death until later. Ptolemy kept them hostage, as well as their mother. To save their lives, John Hyrcanus was unable to press home the siege of Dok. Josephus relates that Ptolemy, taking advantage of a relaxation of the siege, killed them and fled to Philadelphia (Amman).

j. lit. 'commanders of a thousand men' *see* 3:55; Jdt 14:12.

k. According to Josephus, John Hyrcanus took refuge in Jerusalem, where the people welcomed him and repelled Ptolemy. Ptolemy appealed for help to Antiochus, the latter besieged the city but finally came to an agreement with Hyrcanus. After Antiochus' death in 129, he became independent. The author omits all this, his subject being limited to the exploits of Mattathias and his sons.

l. Extracts from these annals appear in the work of Josephus. The closing formula intentionally echoes those of the Books of Kings, *see* for instance, 2 K 10:34, and seems to make best sense if written after John Hyrcanus' death, i.e. after 104 BC.

THE SECOND BOOK OF
MACCABEES

I: LETTERS TO THE JEWS OF EGYPT[a]

FIRST LETTER

1 'To their brothers, the Jews living in Egypt,[b] from their brothers, the Jews in 1
Jerusalem and Judaea, greetings and untroubled peace.

'May God prosper you, remembering his covenant with Abraham, Isaac and 2
Jacob, his faithful servants. ·May he give you all a heart to worship him and to 3
1 Ch 28:9 do his will with a generous mind and a willing spirit. ·May he open your hearts to 4
his Law and his precepts, and give you peace. ·May he hear your prayers and be 5
reconciled with you, and not abandon you in time of evil. ·Such is our prayer for 6
you.

'During the reign of Demetrius, in the year 169, we Jews wrote to you as 7
4:7seq. follows,[c] "In the extremity of trouble that befell us in the years after Jason and
his associates had betrayed the Holy Land and the kingdom, ·burning down 8
the Temple gateway and shedding innocent blood, we prayed to the Lord and
were then heard. And we then offered a sacrifice, with wheat-flour, we lit the
lamps and we set out the loaves."

'And we now recommend you too to keep the feast of Shelters in the month 9
of Chislev, in the year one hundred and eighty-eight.'[d]

SECOND LETTER[e]

Address

'The people of Jerusalem and of Judaea, the senate and Judas,[f] to 10
Aristobulus,[g] tutor to King Ptolemy and one of the family of the anointed
priests, and to the Jews in Egypt, greetings and good health.

Thanksgiving for the punishment of Antiochus

'Since we have been rescued by God from great danger, we give him great 11
thanks for championing our cause against the king, ·for he it was who carried off 12
those who had taken up arms against the Holy City. ·For when their leader 13
9:1–29 reached Persia with his seemingly irresistible army, he was cut to pieces in the
1 M 6:1–13 temple of Nanaea,[h] as the result of a ruse employed by the priests who served
that goddess. ·On the pretext of marrying Nanaea, Antiochus came to the 14
place with his friends, intending to take its many treasures as a dowry. ·The 15
priests of Nanaea had put these on display, and he for his part had entered the
temple precincts with only a small retinue. As soon as Antiochus had gone inside
the temple, the priests shut him in, ·opened a trap-door hidden in the ceiling and 16
struck the leader down by hurling stones like thunderbolts. They then cut him

17 into pieces and threw his head[i] to those who were waiting outside. •Blessed in
all things be our God, who has delivered the sacrilegious over to death!

The miraculous preservation of the sacred fire[j]

18 'As we shall be celebrating the purification of the Temple on the twenty-fifth of
Chislev, we consider it proper to notify you, so that you too may celebrate it, as
you do the feast of Shelters and the fire that appeared when Nehemiah,[k] the
19 builder of the Temple and the altar, offered sacrifice. •For when our ancestors
were being deported to Persia, the devout priests of the time took some of the
fire from the altar and hid it secretly in a hole like a dry well, where they
20 concealed it in such a way that the place was unknown to anyone. •When some
years had elapsed, in God's good time, Nehemiah, commissioned by the king of
Persia,[l] sent the descendants of the priests who had hidden the fire to look for it.
When they reported that in fact[m] they had found not fire but a thick liquid,
21 Nehemiah ordered them to draw some out and bring it back. •When they had
done this, Nehemiah ordered the priests to pour this liquid over the sacrificial
22 materials, that is, the wood and what lay on it. •When this had been done, and
when in due course the sun, which had previously been clouded over, shone out,
23 a great fire flared up, to the astonishment of all. •While the sacrifice was being
burned, the priests offered prayer, Jonathan intoning with all the priests,[n] and
24 the rest responding with Nehemiah. •The prayer took this form, "Lord, Lord
God, Creator of all things, awesome, strong, just, merciful, the only king and
25 benefactor, •the only provider, who alone are just, almighty and everlasting, the
deliverer of Israel from every evil, who made our fathers your chosen ones and
26 sanctified them, •accept this sacrifice on behalf of all your people Israel, and
27 protect your heritage and consecrate it. •Bring together those of us who are Dt 30:3–5
dispersed,[o] set free those in slavery among the heathen, look favourably on
those held in contempt or abhorrence, and let the heathen know that you are
28 our God. •Punish those who oppress us and affront us by their insolence,
29 and plant your people firmly in your Holy Place, as Moses promised."
30, 31 'The priests then chanted hymns accompanied by the harp. •When the sacri-
fice had been burnt, Nehemiah ordered the remaining liquid to be poured over
32 large stones, •and when this was done a flame flared up, to be absorbed in a
33 corresponding blaze of light from the altar. •When the matter became known

1 a. These two letters are invitations to celebrate the feast of Dedication, *see* 1 M 4:59*l*. The first part of 2 M, up to 10:8, provides the historical justification for this feast.

b. There had long been Jewish colonies in Egypt. The best known of these is the one at Elephantine, dating back to the early sixth century. About the year 150 BC, the priest Onias IV son of the Onias III killed at Daphne, 4:33seq. founded a temple in Leontopolis, a smaller model of the Temple in Jerusalem, *see* 1 M 10:20d. The Jews of Jerusalem wished to maintain community of worship with their brothers in Egypt, then persecuted by Ptolemy VIII.

c. Reference to an earlier letter, written by the Egyptian Jews in 169 of the Seleucid era (142 BC, *see* 1 M 1:10f), about the misfortunes of the Judaean Jews as a result of Jason's defection, *see* 2 M 4:7seq. When the Temple and its loyal supporters were re-dedicated to the Lord these misfortunes ceased. Hence the instruction to celebrate this new dedication of the Temple of Jerusalem.

d. 124 BC. This 'feast of Shelters' (see also v. 18) of the month Chislev (December) is the feast of Dedication, *see* 1 M 4:59*l*; it resembles the feast of Shelters of the month Tishri (October), *see* 2 M 10:6; Lv 23:34seq., hence this alternative name.

e. The second letter purports to be a document 40 years older than the preceding one, being an invitation, v. 18, to the actual dedication of the Temple, which occurred on 25 Chislev 148 of the Seleucid era (15 December 164 BC). The content combines rumours about the death of Antiochus Epiphanes with popular traditions about Nehemiah and Jeremiah. The author, while inserting it at the beginning of his book, does not guarantee its historical accuracy.

f. Judas Maccabaeus.

g. An Alexandrian Jew known for his allegorical expositions of the Pentateuch. He dedicated his work to Ptolemy VI Philometor (180–145).

h. A Mesopotamian goddess assimilated to the Ephesian Artemis. The temple which Antiochus IV proposed to plunder was that of Artemis in Elymais.

i. 'head' 1 Syr. MS; 'heads' Gk and Lat. (scribal error induced by plural 'pieces'). This popular account of the death of Antiochus corresponds neither to that of 9:1seq., nor to that of 1 M 6:1seq. The true circumstances of his death were as yet unknown. Popular imagination seems to have been influenced by the death of Antiochus III, who perished in an ambush with his entire army, after pillaging a temple of Bel, also in Elymais.

j. The object of this anecdote is to show that the sanctuary at Jerusalem has lost none of its privileges, since it has even preserved the original sacred fire, *see* Lv 6:5–6.

k. To Nehemiah, who with Ezra founded the new Jewish community in about 445–425, apocryphal memoirs (2:13) attribute the restoration of the altar and the Temple, although the altar had been dedicated in 538 and the Temple in 515, Ezr 3:1seq.; 6:14seq. Note that the inauguration of the altar by Zerubbabel is also associated with the feast of Shelters, Ezr 3:4.

l. Probably Artaxerxes I (464–423).

m. 'in fact' *e men* conj.; 'to us' *hemin* Gk and Lat.

n. 'all the priests' Vulg.; 'the priests and everyone' Gk and *Vet. Lat.* This is an anachronism: the high priests in the time of Nehemiah were Eliashib and Jehoiada, Ne 3:1; 13:28, but *see* Ne 12:11.

o. lit. 'our dispersion' (Diaspora), *see* Dt 30:11; Ne 1:8seq.; Ps 147:2; Is 49:6.

and the king of the Persians heard that, in the place where the exiled priests had hidden the fire, a liquid had appeared, with which Nehemiah and his people had purified the sacrificial offerings,[p] ·the king, after verifying the 34
facts, had the place enclosed and pronounced sacred. ·To the people on whom 35
the king bestowed it, he granted a part of the considerable revenue he derived from it. ·Nehemiah and his people termed this stuff "nephtar", which means 36
"purification", but it is commonly called "naphta".[q]

Jeremiah conceals the tent, ark and altar

2 'It is on record that the prophet Jeremiah[a] ordered the deportees to take 1
the fire, as we have described, ·and how, having given them the Law, the 2
Ba 6. Vulg. prophet warned the deportees never to forget the Lord's precepts, nor to let their thoughts be tempted by the sight of gold and silver statues or the finery adorning them. ·Among other similar admonitions, he urged them not to let the 3
Law depart from their hearts.

'The same document also describes how the prophet, warned by an oracle, 4
gave orders for the tent and the ark to go with him, when he set out for the mountain which Moses had climbed to survey God's heritage. ·On his arrival, 5
Jeremiah found a cave-dwelling, into which he put the tent, the ark and the altar of incense, afterwards blocking up the entrance. ·Some of his companions went 6
back later to mark out the path but were unable to find it. ·When Jeremiah 7
learned this, he reproached them, "The place is to remain unknown", he said, "until God gathers his people together again and shows them his mercy. ·Then 8
the Lord will bring these things once more to light, and the glory of the Lord will
Ex 24:16 1 K 8 10–11 be seen, and so will the cloud, as it was revealed in the time of Moses and when Solomon prayed that the holy place[b] might be gloriously hallowed."

'It was also recorded how Solomon in his wisdom offered the sacrifice of the 9
dedication and completion of the sanctuary. ·As Moses had prayed to the Lord 10
Lv 9:24 2 Ch 7:1 and fire had come down from heaven and burned up the sacrifice, so Solomon also prayed, and the fire from above consumed the burnt offerings. ·Moses had 11
Lv 10:16–17 said, "Because the sacrifice for sin had not been eaten, it was burnt instead."
1 K 8:65–66 Solomon similarly observed the eight-day festival. 12

Nehemiah's library

'In addition to the above, it was also recorded, both in these writings and in the 13
Memoirs of Nehemiah,[c] how Nehemiah founded a library and made a collection of the books dealing with the kings and the prophets, the writings of David and
1 M 1:56–57 the letters of the kings on the subject of offerings.[d] ·Similarly, Judas made a 14
complete collection of the books dispersed in the late war, and these we still have. ·If you need any of them, send someone to fetch them. 15

An invitation to the dedication

1 M 4:59k 'Since we are about to celebrate the purification, we now write, requesting you 16
to observe the same days. ·God, who has saved his whole people, conferring 17
heritage, kingdom, priesthood and sanctification on all of us, ·as he has promised 18
Dt 30:3–5 in the Law, will surely, as our hope is in him, be swift to show us mercy and gather us together from everywhere under heaven to the holy place, since he has rescued us from great evils and has purified it.'

II: COMPILER'S PREFACE

The story of Judas Maccabaeus and his brothers, the purification of the great 19
Temple, the dedication of the altar, ·together with the wars against Antiochus 20
Epiphanes and his son Eupator, ·and the celestial manifestations that came to 21
hearten the brave champions of Judaism, so that, few though they were, they

22 pillaged the whole country, routed the barbarian hordes, •recovered the sanctuary
renowned the whole world over, liberated the city and re-established the laws by
then all but abolished, the Lord showing his favour by all his gracious help to
23 them—•all this, already related in five books by Jason of Cyrene, we shall attempt
24 to condense into a single work.[c] ••Considering the spate of figures and the difficulty
encountered, because of the mass of material, by those who wish to immerse
25 themselves in historical records, •we have aimed at providing diversion for those
who merely want something to read, a saving of labour for those who enjoy
26 committing things to memory, and profit for each and all. •For us who have
undertaken the drudgery of this abridgement, it has been no easy task but a matter
27 of sweat and midnight oil, •comparable to the exacting task of someone organising
a banquet, whose aim is to satisfy a variety of tastes. Nevertheless, for the sake of
28 rendering a general service, we remain glad to endure this drudgery, •leaving
accuracy of detail to the historian, and concentrating our effort on tracing the
29 outlines in this condensed version. •Just as the architect of a new house is respon-
sible for the construction as a whole, while the man undertaking the ceramic
painting has to take into consideration only the decorative requirements, so, I
30 think, it is with us. •To make the subject his own, to explore its by-ways, to be
31 meticulous about details, is the business of the original historian, •but the person
making the adaptation must be allowed to aim at conciseness of expression and to
forgo any exhaustive treatment of his subject.
32 So now let us begin our narrative, without adding any more to what has been
said above; there would be no sense in expanding the preface to the history and
curtailing the history itself.

III: THE STORY OF HELIODORUS[a]

The arrival of Heliodorus in Jerusalem

1 3 While the holy city was inhabited in all peace and the laws were observed as Ne 11:1b
perfectly as possible, owing to the piety of Onias[b] the high priest and his hatred 15:12
2 of wickedness, •it came about that the kings themselves honoured the holy place
3 and enhanced the glory of the Temple with the most splendid offerings, •even to
the extent that Seleucus king of Asia defrayed from his own revenues all the
4 expenses arising out of the sacrificial liturgy.[c] ••But a certain Simon, of the tribe of

p. This was what the king was told; the preceding account is different.

q. Obscure popular etymology of the Persian word *naft*. The story combines recollections of Persian fire worship, v. 34, with some knowledge of the properties of naphta—crude petroleum—which so impressed the Greek and Roman geographers and naturalists.

2 a. Jeremiah is one of the great figures revered in Judaism, *see* 15:13–15. Lm was attributed to him, as also the 'Letter against the Idols' of Ba 6 (Vulg.), and several apocrypha. One of these apocrypha, now lost, recounted the events described in this passage. This description is not historical: the Tent of Meeting did not exist after the building of Solomon's Temple, the ark disappeared when the Temple was destroyed, and the historical Jeremiah did not regret it, Jr 3:16. The purpose of the narrative, however, is to assert the continuity of orthodox worship, *see* 1:18j, and to associate this ceremony of dedication with the dedication of the first Temple by Solomon and of the Tent of Meeting by Moses, *see* vv. 8–12.

b. lit. 'the place', as in 2:18; 3:2,18,30,38; 5:16–20; 10:7; 13:23; 15:34, occurring more often than 'the holy place', 1:29; 2:18; 8:17, but meaning the same.

c. Uncanonical book otherwise unknown.

d. A collection of writings considered not as canonical but as useful to the Jewish community. This project is paralleled by that of Judas Maccabaeus, v. 14.

e. The two reigns, v. 20, cover the years 175–162. In fact, however, Jason—a man of letters belonging to the important Jewish community of Cyrenaica—had worked to a larger time-scale: the victory over Nicanor occurred in March 160, under Demetrius I; while the episode of Heliodorus, with which the author begins his story, is set in the reign of Seleucus IV, elder brother of Antiochus Epiphanes and father of Demetrius I.

3 a. The author has retained this colourful episode from Jason's book as illustrative of his thesis, set out in v. 39. The event occurs in the reign of Seleucus IV Philopator (187–175). It is not surprising that this monarch wanted to acquire the wealth of the Temple: he was particularly short of money, owing to the heavy debt to Rome incurred by his father Antiochus III after his defeat at Magnesia (189), *see* 1 M 8:7.

b. Onias III, son of Simon II whose praises are sung in Si 50:1seq.; Onias also has his eulogy, in 2 M 4:5–6; 15:12. The Oniad family perpetuates the high-priestly line of the Persian period, being descended from Jeshua, *see* Ne 12:10seq., himself descended from Zadok, *see* 2 S 8:17; 1 Ch 5:27seq.

c. Ptolemy II and Ptolemy III of Egypt, as well as Antiochus III of Syria, had also in the previous century honoured the Temple by their presents. *See* 1 M 10:39seq. (for the liberalities of Demetrius I).

Bilgah, on being appointed administrator of the Temple,[d] came into conflict with the high priest over the regulation of the city markets. ·Unable to get the better of 5
Onias, he went off to Apollonius, son of Thraseos, who was at that time commander-in-chief of Coele-Syria and Phoenicia, ·and made out to him that the 6
Treasury in Jerusalem was groaning with untold wealth, that the amount contributed was incalculable and out of all proportion to expenditure on the sacrifice, but that it could all be brought under the control of the king. ·Apollonius met the king 7
and told him about the wealth that had been disclosed to him; whereupon the king selected Heliodorus, his chancellor, and sent him with instructions to effect the removal of the reported wealth. ·Heliodorus lost no time in setting out, ostensibly 8
to inspect the towns of Coele-Syria and Phoenicia, but in fact to accomplish the king's purpose. ·On his arrival in Jerusalem, and after a hospitable reception from 9
the high priest and the city, he announced what had been disclosed, thus revealing the reason for his presence, and asked if this was indeed the true situation. ·The 10
high priest explained that there were funds set aside for widows and orphans, ·with 11
some belonging to Hyrcanus son of Tobias, a man occupying a very exalted position,[e] and that the whole sum, in contrast to what the evil Simon had alleged, amounted to four hundred talents of silver and two hundred of gold.[f] ·He also 12
added that it was entirely out of the question that an injustice should be done to those who had put their trust in the sanctity of the place and in the inviolable majesty of a Temple venerated throughout the entire world.

Consternation in Jerusalem

But Heliodorus, because of his instructions from the king, peremptorily insisted 13
that the funds must be confiscated for the royal exchequer. ·Fixing a day for the 14
purpose, he went in to draw up an inventory of the funds. There was no little consternation throughout the city; ·the priests in their sacred vestments prostrated 15
themselves before the altar and prayed to Heaven, to the Author of the law governing deposits, to preserve these funds intact for the depositors. ·The appear- 16
ance of the high priest was enough to pierce the heart of the beholder, his expression and his altered colour betraying the anguish of his soul; ·the man was so 17
overwhelmed by fear and bodily trembling that those who saw him could not possibly mistake the distress he was suffering. ·People rushed headlong from the 18
houses, intent on making public supplication because of the indignity threatening the holy place. ·Women thronged the streets swathed in sackcloth below their 19
breasts; girls secluded indoors came running, some to the doorways, some to the city walls, while others leaned out of the windows, ·all stretching out their hands to 20
Heaven in entreaty. ·It was pitiful to see the people crowding together to prostrate 21
themselves, and the foreboding of the high priest in his deep anguish. ·While they 22
were calling on the all-powerful Lord to preserve the deposits intact for the depositors, in full security, ·Heliodorus set about his appointed task. 23

The punishment of Heliodorus

He had already arrived with his bodyguard near the Treasury, when the Sovereign 24
of spirits and of every power caused so great an apparition that all who had dared to accompany Heliodorus were dumbfounded at the power of God and reduced to
5:4b abject terror. ·Before their eyes appeared a horse richly caparisoned and carrying 25
a fearsome rider. Rearing violently, it struck at Heliodorus with its forefeet. The rider was seen to be accoutred entirely in gold. ·Two other young men of outstand- 26
ing strength and radiant beauty, magnificently apparelled, appeared to him at the same time and, taking their stand on each side of him, flogged him unremittingly, inflicting stroke after stroke. ·Suddenly Heliodorus fell to the ground, enveloped 27
in thick darkness. His men came to his rescue and placed him in a litter, ·this man 28
who but a moment before had made his way into the Treasury, as we said above, with a great retinue and his whole bodyguard; and as they carried him away, powerless to help himself, they openly acknowledged the sovereign power of God.

29 While Heliodorus lay prostrate under the divine visitation, speechless and bereft
30 of all hope of deliverance, ·the Jews blessed the Lord who had miraculously glorified[g] his own holy place. And the Temple, which a little while before had been filled with terror and commotion, now overflowed with joy and gladness at the
31 manifestation of the almighty Lord. ·Some of Heliodorus' companions quickly begged Onias to entreat the Most High to grant the man his life, lying as he did at the very point of death.
32 The high priest, afraid that the king might suspect the Jews of some foul play
33 concerning Heliodorus, did indeed offer a sacrifice for the man's recovery. ·And while the high priest was performing the rite of expiation, the same young men again appeared to Heliodorus, wearing the same apparel and, standing beside him, said, 'Be very grateful to Onias the high priest, since it is for his sake that the Lord
34 has granted you your life. ·As for you, who have been scourged by Heaven, you must proclaim to all men the grandeur of God's power.' So saying, they vanished.

The conversion of Heliodorus

35 Heliodorus offered sacrifice to the Lord and made most solemn vows to the preserver of his life, and then took courteous leave of Onias and marched his forces
36 back to the king. ·He openly testified to all men about the works of the supreme
37 God which he had seen with his own eyes. ·When the king asked Heliodorus what sort of man would be the right person to send to Jerusalem on a second occasion,
38 he replied, ·'If you have some enemy or anyone disloyal to the state, send him there, and you will get him back well flogged, if he survives at all, since some
39 peculiarly divine power attaches to the holy place. ·He who has his dwelling in heaven watches over the place and defends it, and he strikes down and destroys
40 those who come to harm it.' ·This was the outcome of the affair of Heliodorus and the preservation of the Treasury.

IV: HELLENISTIC PROPAGANDA AND PERSECUTION UNDER ANTIOCHUS EPIPHANES

The misdeeds of Simon, administrator of the Temple

1 4 The Simon mentioned above as the informer against the funds and against his country began slandering Onias, insinuating that the latter had been responsible for the assault on Heliodorus and himself had contrived this misfortune.[a]
2 Simon now had the effrontery to name this benefactor of the city, this protector of
3 his compatriots, this zealot for the laws, as an enemy of the public good. ·This hostility reached such proportions that murders were actually committed by some
4 of Simon's agents, ·and at this point Onias, recognising how mischievous this rivalry was, and aware that Apollonius son of Menestheus, the general command-
5 ing Coele-Syria and Phoenicia, was encouraging Simon in his malice, ·went to see the king, not to play the accuser of his fellow-citizens, but having the public and
6 private welfare of the entire people at heart. ·He saw that, without some intervention by the king, an orderly administration would no longer be possible, nor would Simon put a stop to his folly.

Jason, the high priest, introduces Hellenism

7 When Seleucus had departed this life and Antiochus styled Epiphanes[b] had 1 M 1:10

d. 'Bilgah' *Vet. Lat.* and Arm.; 'Benjamin' Gk. This was a priestly line, *see* Ne 12:5,18. • The administrator was responsible for the Temple finances.

e. Governor of Ammanitis, *see* 1 M 5:13e.

f. The equivalent of 13.5 tons (13 717kg) of silver and 6.7 tons (6808 kg) of gold: an unlikely figure.

g. In Greek *epiphainesthai*, *see* 2:21. Jewish and gentile literature of the Graeco-Roman period is full of these 'epiphanies' and 'theophanies', illustrative of divine omnipotence. In 2 M, the interventions take the form either of apparitions or of victories against overwhelming odds.

4 **a.** i.e. by some trick to frighten Heliodorus.

b. Antiochus IV (175–164), brother of Seleucus IV.

succeeded to the kingdom, Jason, brother of Onias,[c] usurped the high priesthood: he approached the king with a promise of three hundred and sixty talents of silver, 8
with eighty talents to come from some other source of revenue. ·He further 9
1 M 1:11–15 committed himself to paying another hundred and fifty, if the king would empower him to set up a gymnasium and youth centre, and to register the Antiochists of Jerusalem.[d] ·When the king gave his assent, Jason, as soon as he had seized power, 10
imposed the Greek way of life on his fellow-countrymen. ·He suppressed the 11
liberties which the kings had graciously granted to the Jews at the instance of John,
1 M 8:17 father of that Eupolemus who was later to be sent on an embassy to negotiate a treaty of friendship and alliance with the Romans and, overthrowing the lawful institutions, introduced new usages contrary to the Law. ·He went so far as to 12
found a gymnasium at the very foot of the Citadel,[e] and to fit out the noblest of his young men in the petasos.[f] ·Godless wretch that he was and no true high priest, 13
Jason set no bounds to his impiety; indeed the hellenising process reached such a pitch ·that the priests ceased to show any interest in serving the altar; but, scorning 14
the Temple and neglecting the sacrifices. they would hurry, on the stroke of the gong, to take part in the distribution, forbidden by the Law, of the oil on the exercise ground;[g] ·setting no store by the honours of their fatherland, they es- 15
teemed hellenic glories best of all. ·But all this brought its own retribution; the 16
very people whose way of life they envied, whom they sought to resemble in everything, proved to be their enemies and executioners. ·It is no small thing to 17
violate the divine laws, as the period that followed will demonstrate.

On the occasion of the quadrennial games at Tyre in the presence of the king, 18
4:9 the vile Jason sent an embassy of Antiochists from Jerusalem, taking with them 19
three hundred silver drachmas for the sacrifice to Hercules. But even those who brought the money did not think it would be right to spend it on the sacrifice and decided to reserve it for some other item of expenditure; ·and so what the sender 20
had intended for the sacrifice to Hercules was in fact applied, at the suggestion of those who brought it, to the construction of triremes.

Antiochus Epiphanes is acclaimed in Jerusalem

Apollonius son of Menestheus had been sent to Egypt to attend the wedding of 21
King Philometor.[h] Antiochus, having learnt that the latter had become hostile to his affairs, began thinking about his own safety: that was why he had come to Joppa. He then moved to Jerusalem, ·where he was given a magnificent welcome 22
by Jason and the city, and escorted in by torchlight with acclamation. After which, he marched his army into Phoenicia.[i]

Menelaus becomes high priest

When three years had passed, Jason sent Menelaus, brother of the Simon men- 23
3:4 tioned above, to convey the money[j] to the king and to complete negotiations on various essential matters. ·But Menelaus, on being presented to the king, flattered 24
him by his own appearance of authority, and so secured the high priesthood for himself, outbidding Jason by three hundred talents of silver. ·He returned with the 25
royal mandate, bringing nothing worthy of the high priesthood and supported only by the fury of a cruel tyrant and the rage of a savage beast. ·Thus Jason, who had 26
supplanted his own brother, was in turn supplanted by a third, and obliged to take refuge in Ammanitis. ·As for Menelaus, he secured the office, but defaulted 27
altogether on the sums promised to the king, ·although Sostratus, the commandant 28
of the Citadel, whose business it was to collect the revenue, kept demanding payment. The pair of them in consequence were summoned before the king, Menelaus leaving his brother Lysimachus as deputy high priest, while Sostratus left 29
Crates, the commander of the Cypriots,[k] to act for him.

The murder of Onias

While all this was going on, it happened that the people of Tarsus and Mallus 30

revolted, because their towns had been given as a present to Antiochis, the king's
31 concubine. ·The king therefore hurried off to settle the affair, leaving Andronic-
32 cus, one of his dignitaries, to act as his deputy. ·Thinking he had found a favourable opportunity, Menelaus abstracted a number of golden vessels from the Temple and presented them to Andronicus, and managed to sell others to Tyre
33 and the surrounding cities. ·On receiving clear evidence to this effect, Onias retired to a place of sanctuary at Daphne near Antioch and then taxed him with it.
34 Menelaus then had a quiet word with Andronicus, urging him to get rid of Onias. Andronicus sought out Onias and, resorting to the trick of offering him his right hand on oath, succeeded in persuading him, despite the latter's lingering suspicions, to leave sanctuary; whereupon, in defiance of all justice, he immediately put Dn 9:26
35 him to death. ·The result was that not only Jews but many people of other nationalities were appalled and outraged by the unjust murder of this man.
36 On the king's return from the region of Cilicia, the Jews of the capital, and those Greeks who shared their hatred of the crime, appealed to him about the unjustified
37 murder of Onias. ·Antiochus was profoundly grieved and filled with pity, and he
38 wept for the prudence and moderation of the dead man. ·Burning with indignation, he immediately stripped Andronicus of the purple, tore his garments off him and, parading him through the length of the city, rid the world of the assassin on the very spot where he had laid impious hands on Onias, the Lord dealing out to him the punishment he deserved. *l*

Lysimachus killed in an insurrection

39 Now Lysimachus with the connivance of Menelaus had committed many sacrilegious thefts in the city, and when the facts became widely known, the populace rose against Lysimachus, who had already disposed of many pieces of gold plate.
40 The infuriated mob was becoming menacing, and Lysimachus armed nearly three thousand men and took aggressive action; the troops were led by a certain Au-
41 ranus, a man advanced in years and no less in folly. ·Recognising this act of aggression as the work of Lysimachus, some snatched up stones, others cudgels, while others scooped up handfuls of ashes lying at hand, *m* and all hurled everything
42 indiscriminately at Lysimachus' men, ·to such effect that they wounded many of them, even killing a few, and routed them all; the sacrilegious thief himself they killed near the Treasury.

Menelaus buys his acquittal

43, 44 As a result of this, legal proceedings were taken against Menelaus. ·When the king came down to Tyre, three men deputed by the Senate pleaded their case before
45 him. ·Menelaus, seeing the case had gone against him, promised a substantial sum

c. The death of Seleucus, engineered by Heliodorus in 175, defeated the aspirations of Onias. Joshua, brother of Onias, showed his approval of the hellenising policy by changing his name to Jason.

d. 'youth centre', lit. *ephebia*: an organisation of youths between 18 and 20 years of age for military, physical and, to some extent, cultural training. • The formula 'Antiochists of Jerusalem' (as also 'Antiochists of Ptolemais' appearing on coins) testifies to a transformation of the holy city into a hellenistic city where the citizens were registered by census.

e. Where the Syrian garrison was stationed. The acropolis, or citadel, of the period overlooked the north-west corner of the Temple court, *see* Ne 7:2 (later becoming the Antonia of Herod the Great). The sports ground was therefore adjacent to the sanctuary.

f. lit. 'brought . . . under the petasos': to introduce to gymnastic training; the athletes wore a broad-brimmed hat (*petasos*), the conventional head-dress of Hermes, patron of athletes.

g. The oil with which the athletes rubbed themselves. It was distributed by their instructors.

h. 'wedding', lit. 'presidency (over the wedding banquet)' *protoklisia*, some Gk and Lat. MSS, Mt 23:6; 'proclamation' (? unattested word) *protoklesia*, Gk. It was the marriage of Ptolemy VI Philometor with his sister Cleopatra II.

i. Phoenicia, administratively speaking, included the coast of Palestine. Joppa (Jaffa) may have been the king's headquarters.

j. The annual tribute, *see* 4:8; 1 M 11:28, and possibly other sums promised as well, *see* 4:9.

k. Mercenary soldiers.

l. Onias is the Anointed Prince of Dn 9:25seq. and the Prince of the Covenant of Dn 11:22. His death opens the 70th and final week of years, the mid-point of which is marked by the cessation of lawful sacrifice and the installation of the 'appalling abomination', Dn 9:27; *see* 2 M 1:9; 6:2; 10:5; 1 M 1:54; 4:52; Dn 7:25; 8:11–14; 11:31; 12:11seq. This period of three and a half years (half a 'week of years') presumably corresponds to fact, since it gave the author of Dn his reason for transposing the prophecy of Jeremiah (Jr 25:11–12; 29:10). The date given in 1 M 1:54 (December 167) therefore indicates that the murder of Onias occurred in the summer of 170.

m. The ashes of sacrifice; the riot took place in the Temple court.

8:8;10:12 1 M 3:38 to Ptolemy son of Dorymenes if he would influence the king in his favour. ·Ptolemy 46
then took the king aside into a colonnade, as though for a breath of fresh air, and
persuaded him to change his mind; ·the king then dismissed the charges against 47
Menelaus, the cause of all this evil, while he condemned to death the other poor
wretches who, had they pleaded even before Scythians, would have been let off
scot-free. ·No time was lost in carrying out this unjust punishment on those who 48
had championed the cause of the city, the townships and the sacred vessels. ·Some 49
Tyrians even were so outraged by the crime that they provided sumptuously for
their funeral, ·while, as a result of the greed of the powerful, Menelaus remained 50
in power, growing more wicked than ever and establishing himself as the chief
enemy of his fellow-citizens.

Second Egyptian campaign

5 At about this time, Antiochus was preparing for his second attack on Egypt.[a] 1
It then happened that all over the city for nearly forty days there were appari- 2
tions of horsemen galloping through the air in cloth of gold, troops of lancers fully
armed, ·squadrons of cavalry in order of battle, attacks and charges this way and 3
that, a flourish of shields, a forest of pikes, a brandishing of swords, a hurling of
missiles, a glittering of golden accoutrements and armour of all kinds. ·So everyone 4
prayed that this manifestation might prove a good omen.[b]

Jason's insurrection; counteraction by Antiochus Epiphanes

Then, on the strength of a false report that Antiochus was dead, Jason took at least 5
a thousand men and launched an unexpected attack on the city. When the walls
had been breached and the city was finally on the point of being taken, Menelaus
took refuge in the Citadel. ·Jason, however, made a pitiless slaughter of his 6
fellow-citizens, oblivious of the fact that success against his own countrymen was
the greatest of disasters, but rather picturing himself as winning trophies from
some enemy, and not from his fellow-countrymen. ·Even so, he did not manage to 7
seize power; and, in the end, his machinations brought him nothing but shame,
and he took refuge once more in Ammanitis. ·His career of wickedness was thus 8
brought to a halt: imprisoned by Aretas, the Arab despot, escaping from his town,[c]
hunted by everyone, detested for having overthrown the laws, abhorred as the
butcher of his country and his countrymen, he drifted to Egypt. ·He who had 9
exiled so many from their fatherland, himself perished on foreign soil, having
1 M 12:7 travelled to Sparta, hoping that, for kinship's sake, he might find harbour there.
Jr 22:18–19 So many carcases he had thrust out to lie unburied; now he himself had none to 10
mourn him, no funeral rites, no place in the tomb of his ancestors.

When the king came to hear of what had happened, he concluded that Judaea 11
was in revolt. He therefore marched from Egypt, raging like a wild beast, and
began by storming the city. ·He then ordered his soldiers to cut down without 12
mercy everyone they encountered, and to butcher all who took refuge in their
houses. ·It was a massacre of young and old, a slaughter of women and children, a 13
butchery of young girls and infants. ·There were eighty thousand victims in the 14
course of those three days, forty thousand dying by violence and as many again
being sold into slavery.

‖1 M 1:20–24 **Pillage of the Temple**

Not content with this, he had the audacity to enter the holiest Temple in the entire 15
world, with Menelaus, that traitor to the laws and to his country, as his guide;
with impure hands he seized the sacred vessels; with impious hands he seized the 16
offerings presented by other kings for the aggrandisement, glory and dignity of the
holy place.

Holding so high an opinion of himself, Antiochus did not realise that the Lord 17
6:12–16; 7:16–19, 32–38 was temporarily angry at the sins of the inhabitants of the city, hence his unconcern
for the holy place. ·Had they not been entangled in many sins, Antiochus too, like 18

Heliodorus when King Seleucus sent him to inspect the Treasury, would have been
19 flogged the moment he arrived and checked in his presumption. ·The Lord, 3:1
however, had not chosen the people for the sake of the holy place, but the holy 1 Ch 17:9
20 place for the sake of the people;[d] ·and so the holy place itself, having shared the Mk 2:27
disasters that befell the people, in due course also shared their good fortune;
having been abandoned by the Almighty in his anger, once the great Sovereign
was placated it was reinstated in all its glory.
21 Antiochus, having extracted eighteen hundred talents from the Temple, hurried
back to Antioch; in his pride he would have undertaken to make the dry land
22 navigable and the sea passable on foot, so high his arrogance soared. ·But he left
officials behind to plague the nation: in Jerusalem, Philip, a Phrygian by race,[e] and
23 by nature more barbarous than the man who appointed him; ·on Mount Gerizim,
Andronicus;[f] and, besides these, Menelaus, who lorded it over his countrymen
worse than all the others.

Activities of Apollonius the Mysarch

24 In his rooted hostility to the Jews, ·the king also sent the Mysarch Apollonius at 1 M 1:29–37
the head of an army twenty-two thousand strong, with orders to put to death all
25 men in their prime and to sell the women and children. ·Arriving in Jerusalem and
posing as a man of peace, this man waited until the holy day of the Sabbath and
then, taking advantage of the Jews as they rested from work, ordered his men to
26 parade fully armed; ·all those who came out to watch he put to the sword; then,
rushing into the city with his armed troops, he cut down an immense number of
people.
27 Judas, also known as Maccabaeus, however, with about nine others, withdrew 1 M 2:28
into the desert. He lived like the wild animals in the hills with his companions,
eating nothing but wild plants to avoid contracting defilement.[g]

Gentile cults imposed

‖1 M 1:45–51

1 6 Shortly afterwards, the king sent Gerontes the Athenian to force the Jews to
2 violate their ancestral customs and live no longer by the laws of God; ·and to
profane the Temple in Jerusalem and dedicate it to Olympian Zeus, and the one
on Mount Gerizim to Zeus, Patron of Strangers, as the inhabitants of the latter
3 place had requested.[a] ·The advent of these evils was painfully hard for all the
4 people to bear. ·The Temple was filled with revelling and debauchery by the
gentiles, who took their pleasure with prostitutes and had intercourse with women
5 in the sacred precincts,[b] introducing other indecencies besides. ·The altar of
6 sacrifice was loaded with victims proscribed by the law as profane. ·No one might
either keep the Sabbath or observe the traditional feasts, or so much as admit to
7 being a Jew. ·People were driven by harsh compulsion to take part in the monthly
ritual meal commemorating the king's birthday; and when a feast of Dionysus
occurred, they were forced to wear ivy wreaths and walk in the Dionysiac

5 **a.** According to the author of 2 M, the violent intervention of Antiochus IV, *see* 5:11seq., was provoked by sedition in Jerusalem, vv. 5seq., and he dates the event to 168, during the second Egyptian expedition. The order of 1 M is preferable: sack of the Temple after the first expedition in 169, 1 M 1:16–24; sedition in the summer of 168, put down in 167 by Apollonius the Mysarch, 1 M 1:29–35; *see also* 2 M5:24–26.

b. Heavenly apparitions are a favourite literary device of the author, 3:25; 10:29; 30; 11:8; he promises them in his preface, 2:21; compare an analogous apparition before the ruin of the Temple in 70, reported by Josephus in his *Jewish War*.

c. 'from his town', lit. 'from the town' (i.e. from Petra, the capital) *Vet. Lat.*; 'from town to town' Gk. • The despot was Aretas I, king of the Nabataeans, *see* 1 M 5:25h.

d. The choice of God falls first on his people, only second on religious institutions: a remarkable anticipation of the gospel, Jr 7:14; Mk 2:27.

e. Philip the Phrygian, who appears in 6:11 and 8:8, is not the same man as Philip, the King's Friend, of 9:29; 1 M 6:14.

f. Andronicus, not the one of 4:31seq., was, like Philip, an *epistates*, representative of the royal authority in a town. He presumably lived at the foot of Mount Gerizim, at Shechem.

g. The author rearranges the events related in 1 M 1:53; 2:28.

6 **a.** 'as (the inhabitants) had requested' *enetynchanon* conj. following Josephus (*Ant. Jud.*); 'as (the inhabitants) found themselves to be' *etynchanon* Gk, Lat.; which would mean that, being themselves hospitable, the Samaritans chose this epithet. But the Gk construction would be very awkward. The Samaritans, not wishing to receive the same treatment as the Jews, go beyond the royal wishes.

b. In the Graeco-Roman period, temple precincts comprised porticoes and banqueting rooms for ritual meals, which often degenerated into orgies. Sacred prostitution was still being practised in the temples of Syria.

procession. •A decree was issued at the instance of the people of Ptolemais [c] for the 8
neighbouring Greek cities, enforcing the same conduct on the Jews there, obliging
them to share in the sacrificial meals, •and ordering the execution of those who 9
would not voluntarily conform to Greek customs. So it became clear that disaster
was imminent.

‖1 M 1:60–61 For example, two women were charged with having circumcised their children. 10
They were paraded publicly round the town, with their babies hung at their breasts,
‖1 M 2:32–38 and then hurled over the city wall. •Other people, who had assembled in some 11
near-by caves to keep the seventh day without attracting attention, were de-
nounced to Philip, and were then all burnt to death together, since their con-
sciences would not allow them to defend themselves, out of respect for the holiness
of the day.

5:17–20; 7:16–19, 32–38 **Providential significance of the persecution**

Now, I urge anyone who may read this book not to be dismayed at these calamities, 12
but to reflect that such visitations are intended not to destroy our race but to
discipline it. •Indeed, when evil-doers are not left for long to their own devices but 13
incur swift retribution, it is a sign of great benevolence. •In the case of other 14
Ws 11:9–10; 12:2,22 nations, the Master waits patiently for them to attain the full measure of their sins
1 Th 2:16 before he punishes them, but with us he has decided to deal differently, •rather 15
than have to punish us later, when our sins come to full measure. [d] •And so he 16
never entirely withdraws his mercy from us; he may discipline us by some disaster,
but he does not desert his own people. •Let this be said simply by way of reminder; 17
we must return to our story without more ado.

The martyrdom of Eleazar

Eleazar, one of the foremost teachers of the Law, a man already advanced in years 18
Lv 11:7–8 and of most noble appearance, had his mouth forced open, to make him eat a piece
Heb 11:35 of pork. •But he, resolving to die with honour rather than to live disgraced, 19
walked of his own accord to the torture of the wheel, •having spat the stuff out, as 20
befits those with the courage to reject what is not lawful to taste, rather than live.
The people supervising the ritual meal, forbidden by the Law, because of the 21
length of time for which they had known him, took him aside and privately urged
him to have meat brought of a kind he could properly use, prepared by himself,
and only pretend to eat the portions of sacrificial meat as prescribed by the king;
this action would enable him to escape death, by availing himself of an act of 22
kindness prompted by their long friendship. •But having taken a noble decision 23
worthy of his years and the dignity of his great age and the well-earned distinction
of his grey hairs, worthy too of his impeccable conduct from boyhood, and above
all of the holy legislation established by God himself, he answered accordingly,
telling them to send him at once to Hades. •'Pretence', he said, 'does not befit our 24
time of life; many young people would suppose that Eleazar at the age of ninety
had conformed to the foreigners' way of life •and, because I had played this part 25
for the sake of a paltry brief spell of life, might themselves be led astray on my
account; I should only bring defilement and disgrace on my old age. •Even though 26
for the moment I avoid execution by man, I can never, living or dead, elude the
grasp of the Almighty. •Therefore if I am man enough to quit this life here and 27
now, I shall prove myself worthy of my old age, •and I shall have left the young a 28
noble example of how to make a good death, eagerly and generously, for the
venerable and holy laws.' [e]

So saying, he walked straight to the wheel, •while those who were escorting him, 29
recently so well disposed towards him, turned against him after this declaration,
which they regarded as sheer madness. •He for his part, just before he died under 30
the blows, gave a sigh and said, 'The Lord whose knowledge is holy sees clearly
that, though I might have escaped death, from awe of him I gladly endure these
agonies of body under the lash, and that in my soul I am glad to suffer.'

31 This was how he died, leaving his death as an example of nobility and a record of virtue not only for the young but for the greater part of the nation.

The martyrdom of the seven brothers [a] ↗Heb 11:35

1 7 It also happened that seven brothers were arrested with their mother. The king Jr 15:9
tried to force them to taste some pork, which the Law forbids, by torturing
2 them with whips and scourges. •One of them, acting as spokesman for the others,
said, 'What are you trying to find out from us? We are prepared to die rather than
3 break the laws of our ancestors.' •The king, in a fury, ordered pans and cauldrons
4 to be heated over a fire. •As soon as these were red-hot, he commanded that their
spokesman should have his tongue cut out, his head scalped and his extremities cut
5 off, while the other brothers and his mother looked on. •When he had been
rendered completely helpless, the king gave orders for him to be brought, still
breathing, to the fire and fried alive in a pan. As the smoke from the pan drifted
about, his mother and the rest encouraged one another to die nobly, with such
6 words as these, •'The Lord God is watching and certainly feels sorry for us, as
Moses declared in his song, which clearly states that "he will take pity on his Dt 32:36
servants." '
7 When the first had left the world in this way, they brought the second forward to
be tortured. After stripping the skin from his head, hair and all, they asked him,
8 'Will you eat some pork, before your body is tortured limb by limb?' •Replying in
his ancestral tongue, [b] he said, 'No!' So he too was put to the torture in his turn.
9 With his last breath he exclaimed, 'Cruel brute, you may discharge us from this
present life, but the King of the world will raise us up, since we die for his laws, to 12:38–46,38f
live again for ever.' [c]
10 After him, they tortured the third, who on being asked for his tongue promptly
11 thrust it out and boldly held out his hands, •courageously saying, 'Heaven gave me
these limbs; for the sake of his laws I have no concern for them; from him I hope to
12 receive them again.' [d] •The king and his attendants were astounded at the young
man's courage and his utter indifference to suffering.
13 When this one was dead they subjected the fourth to the same torments and
14 tortures. •When he neared his end he cried, 'Ours is the better choice, to meet
death at men's hands, yet relying on God's promise that we shall be raised up by
him; whereas for you there can be no resurrection to new life.'
15, 16 Next they brought forward the fifth and began torturing him. •But he looked at
the king and said, 'You have power over human beings, mortal as you are, and can
17 act as you please. But do not think that our race has been deserted by God. •Only
wait, and you will see in your turn how his mighty power will torment you and your
descendants.'

c. 'people of Ptolemais' conj.; 'of the Ptolemies' or 'of Ptolemy' Gk and Lat. The Greek city of Ptolemais, ancient Acco (Acre), was hostile to the Jews, *see* 13:25; 1 M 5:15; 12:48.

d. The author of Ws will later develop this dual aspect of divine justice, while showing that, even for gentile nations, God will be indulgent, Ws 11:10; 12:20–22. For the full measure of sins, *see* Dn 8:23; 9:24; 1 Th 2:16. The expression is an ancient one, *see* Gn 15:16.

e. The expression belongs to Greek jurisprudence, but for the author 'the laws' are essentially the Law, 7:30; 10:26; 12:40; 15:9, identical to the covenant, *see* 1 M 2:20, and pledge of the divine favour, *see* 2 M 7:36; 8:15.

7 a. Having given the example of a venerable teacher of the Law, the author now gives that of a mother and her sons. The persecution, in which exceptionally savage methods were adopted, did indeed extend to women and children, *see* 1 M 1:60seq. The story, therefore, has a historical basis, behind the literary elements, such as the speeches ascribed to the characters. The cult of 'the seven Maccabaean brothers' spread into Europe, where several churches were dedicated in their honour. The composition known as the 'Passion of the Holy Maccabees' became widely diffused and served as model for several Martyrs' Lives.

b. This expression recurs in vv. 21 and 27, and the author apparently understands it as meaning Hebrew, *see* 12:37; 15:29. More probably, however, the woman spoke Aramaic.

c. lit. 'for an eternal requickening of life'. Belief in the resurrection of the body, not clearly expressed in Jb 19:26–27 and Is 26:19 (see notes) is here asserted for the first time, vv. 11,14,23,29,36, and in Dn 12:2–3 (again in the context of Antiochus Epiphanes' persecution, Dn 11), *see also* 2 M 12:38–45; 14:46. By the power of the Creator, the martyrs will rise again, v. 23, to a life, v. 14, *see* Jn 5:29, which is eternal, 2 M 7: 9,36. At this point we encounter the doctrine of immortality which will be developed, in the atmosphere of Gk thought and without reference to the resurrection of the body, by Ws 3:1–5:16. For Hebr. thought, however, which makes no distinction between soul and body, the notion of survival implied a physical resurrection, as we see here. The text does not explicitly teach universal resurrection, and is concerned only with the case of the upright, *see* v. 14. Dn 12:2–3 is clearer.

d. This verse is omitted by several Lat. MSS.

5:17–20; 6:12–16 After him, they led out the sixth, and his dying words were these, 'Do not delude 18
yourself: we are suffering like this through our own fault, having sinned against
2 Ch 13:12 Ac 5:39 our own God; hence, appalling things have befallen us—•but do not think you 19
yourself will go unpunished for attempting to make war on God.'

But the mother was especially admirable and worthy of honourable remem- 20
brance, for she watched the death of seven sons in the course of a single day, and
bravely endured it because of her hopes in the Lord. •Indeed she encouraged each 21
of them in their ancestral tongue; filled with noble conviction, she reinforced her
Jb 10:8–12 Ps 139:13–15 Qo 11:5 womanly argument with manly courage, saying to them, •'I do not know how you 22
appeared in my womb; it was not I who endowed you with breath and life, I had
not the shaping of your every part. •And hence, the Creator of the world, who 23
made everyone and ordained the origin of all things, will in his mercy give you back
breath and life, since for the sake of his laws you have no concern for yourselves.'

Antiochus thought he was being ridiculed, suspecting insult in the tone of her 24
voice; and as the youngest was still alive he appealed to him not with mere words
but with promises on oath to make him both rich and happy if he would abandon
the traditions of his ancestors; he would make him his Friend and entrust him with
public office. •The young man took no notice at all, and so the king then appealed 25
to the mother, urging her to advise the youth to save his life. •After a great deal of 26
urging on his part she agreed to try persuasion on her son. •Bending over him, she 27
fooled the cruel tyrant with these words, uttered in their ancestral tongue, 'My son,
have pity on me; I carried you nine months in my womb and suckled you three
years, fed you and reared you to the age you are now, and provided for you. •I 28
implore you, my child, look at the earth and sky and everything in them, and
consider how God made them out of what did not exist,[e] and that human beings
come into being in the same way. •Do not fear this executioner, but prove yourself 29
worthy of your brothers and accept death, so that I may receive you back with them
in the day of mercy.'

She had hardly[f] finished, when the young man said, 'What are you all waiting 30
for? I will not comply with the king's ordinance; I obey the ordinance of the Law
given to our ancestors through Moses. •As for you, who have contrived every 31
kind of evil against the Hebrews,[g] you will certainly not escape the hands of God.
5:17–20; 6:12–16 We are suffering for our own sins; •and if, to punish and discipline us, our 32, 33
living Lord is briefly angry with us, he will be reconciled with us in due course.
But you, unholy wretch and wickedest of villains, what cause have you for pride, 34
nourishing vain hopes and raising your hand against his servants?[h]—•for you have 35
not yet escaped the judgement of God the almighty, the all-seeing. •Our brothers, 36
2 Co 4:17 having endured brief pain, for the sake of ever-flowing life have died for the
covenant of God,[i] while you, by God's judgement, will have to pay the just penalty
for your arrogance. •I too, like my brothers, surrender my body and life for the 37
laws of my ancestors, begging God quickly to take pity on our nation, and by trials
and afflictions to bring you to confess that he alone is God,[j] •so that with my 38
brothers and myself there may be an end to the wrath of the Almighty, rightly let
loose on our whole nation.'

The king fell into a rage and treated this one more cruelly than the others, for he 39
was himself smarting from the young man's scorn. •And so the last brother met his 40
end undefiled and with perfect trust in the Lord. •The mother was the last to die, 41
after her sons.

But let this be sufficient account of the ritual meals and monstrous tortures. 42

V: THE VICTORY OF JUDAISM

THE DEATH OF THE PERSECUTOR AND PURIFICATION OF THE TEMPLE

Judas Maccabaeus and the resistance [a]

8 1 Judas, otherwise known as Maccabaeus, and his companions made their way secretly among the villages, rallying their fellow-countrymen; they recruited 2 those who remained loyal to Judaism and assembled about six thousand. ·They called on the Lord to have regard for the people oppressed on all sides, to take pity 3 on the Temple profaned by the godless, ·to have mercy on the city now being destroyed and levelled to the ground, to hear the blood of the victims that cried 4 aloud to him, ·to remember too the criminal slaughter of innocent babies and to 5 avenge the blasphemies perpetrated against his name. ·As soon as Maccabaeus had an organised force, he at once proved invincible to the foreigners, the Lord's 6 anger having turned into compassion. ·Making surprise attacks on towns and villages, he fired them; he captured favourable positions and inflicted very heavy 7 losses on the enemy, [b] ·generally availing himself of the cover of night for such enterprises. The fame of his valour spread far and wide.

5:27

Gn 4:10

1 M 3:3–9

Campaign of Nicanor and Gorgias

‖1 M 3:38–4:25

8 When Philip [c] saw Judas was making steady progress and winning more and more frequent successes, he wrote to Ptolemy, the general officer commanding Coele- 9 Syria and Phoenicia, asking for reinforcements in the royal interest. ·Ptolemy chose Nicanor son of Patroclus, one of the king's First Friends, and sent him without delay at the head of an international force of at least twenty thousand men to exterminate the entire Jewish race. As his associate he appointed Gorgias, a 10 professional general of wide military experience. ·Nicanor for his part proposed, by the sale of Jewish prisoners of war, to raise the two thousand talents of tribute 11 money owed by the king to the Romans. ·He lost no time in sending the seaboard towns an invitation to come and buy Jewish manpower, promising delivery of ninety head for one talent; but he did not reckon on the judgement from the Almighty that was soon to overtake him.

4:45;10:12

1 M 2:18e

1 M 3:38

12 When news reached Judas of Nicanor's advance, he warned his men of the 13 enemy's approach, ·whereupon the cowardly ones and those who lacked confi- 14 dence in the justice of God took to their heels and ran away. ·The rest sold all their remaining possessions, at the same time praying the Lord to deliver them from the godless Nicanor, who had sold them even in advance of any encounter— 15 if not for their own sakes, then at least out of consideration for the covenants made with their ancestors, and because they themselves bore his sacred and majestic name. [d]

e. First explicit allusion to the creation *ex nihilo*, but *see* earlier, Is 44:24; *see* also Jn 1:3; Col 1:15seq. Some MSS and Syr. read 'from things which are not', an expression by which the Jewish philosopher Philo designates inchoate matter; *see* Ws 11:17.

f. 'hardly' *arti* conj.; 'still' *eti* Gk.

g. Intentionally archaic term, here and at 11:13; 15:37; *see* Jdt 10:12; 12:11; 14:18. LXX rarely uses the word except in the Pentateuch.

h. 'his servants' some MSS and versions; 'the heavenly servants' Gk.

i. 'for the sake of ever-flowing life' Lat. MSS; 'died for' conj., *see* 6:28; Gk unintelligible.

j. Antiochus IV claimed to be the equal of the gods, *see* 9:12d. For the notion of a God who is absolutely universal and without possible rival, *see* 1 Ch 17:20; Si 36:4, and earlier Is 45:14.

8 **a.** These vv. follow on from 5:27. The author amalgamates deeds attributed to Mattathias in 1 M 2 with the activities of Judas before the intervention of Antiochus, *see* 1 M 3:1–16.

b. 'very heavy losses', lit. 'many corpses', following Lat.; 'many enemies (put to flight)' Gk; some MSS read both 'enemies' and 'corpses'.

c. Philip is the *epistates* (*see* 5:22,23f) of Jerusalem, subordinate to Ptolemy, Military Governor of Coele-Syria and Phoenicia.

d. lit. 'because of the invocation of his name on them', *see* 1 M 7:37, a hebraism, *see* Dt 28:10; 2 S 12:28; 1 K 8:43; Is 4:1.

Maccabaeus marshalled his men, who numbered about six thousand, and ex- 16
horted them not to be dismayed at the enemy or discouraged at the vast horde of
gentiles wickedly advancing against them, but to fight bravely, ·keeping before 17
their eyes the outrage committed by them against the holy place and the infamous
and scornful treatment inflicted on the city, not to mention the destruction of their
Ps 20:7 traditional way of life. ·'They may put their trust in their weapons and their 18
exploits,' he said, 'but our confidence is in almighty God, who is able with a single
nod to overthrow both those marching on us and the whole world with them.' ·He 19
reminded them of the occasions on which their ancestors had received help: that
2 K 19:35 Is 37:36 time when, under Sennacherib, a hundred and eighty-five thousand men had
perished; ·that time in Babylonia when in the battle with the Galatians the Jewish 20
combatants numbered only eight thousand, [e] with four thousand Macedonians, yet
when the Macedonians were hard pressed, the eight thousand had destroyed a
hundred and twenty thousand, thanks to the help they had received from Heaven,
and had taken great booty as a result.

Having so roused their courage by these words that they were ready to die for 21
the laws and their country, he then divided his army into four, ·putting his brothers, 22
Simon, Joseph and Jonathan in command of one division each, and assigning them
1 M 3:48o fifteen hundred men apiece. ·Next, he ordered Esdrias [f] to read the Holy Book 23
aloud and gave them their watchword 'Help from God'. [g] Then, putting himself at
the head of the first division, he attacked Nicanor. ·With the Almighty for their 24
ally they slaughtered over nine thousand of the enemy, wounded and crippled the
greater part of Nicanor's army and put them all to flight. ·The money of their 25
prospective purchasers fell into their hands. After pursuing them for a good while,
they turned back, since time was pressing: ·it was the eve of the Sabbath, and for 26
that reason they did not prolong their pursuit. ·They collected the enemy's 27
weapons and stripped them of their spoils, and because of the Sabbath even more
heartily blessed and praised the Lord, who had saved them and who had chosen
that day for the first manifestation of his compassion. ·When the Sabbath was over, 28
they distributed some of the booty among the victims of the persecution and the
widows and orphans; the rest they divided among themselves and their children.
They then joined in public supplication, imploring the merciful Lord to be fully 29
reconciled with his servants.

The defeat of Timotheus and Bacchides [h]

They also challenged the forces of Timotheus and Bacchides and destroyed over 30
twenty thousand of them, gaining possession of several high fortresses. They
divided their enormous booty into two equal shares, one for themselves, the other
for the victims of the persecution and the orphans and widows, not forgetting the
aged. ·They carefully collected the enemy's weapons and stored them in suitable 31
places. The rest of the spoils they took to Jerusalem. ·They killed the tribal 32
chieftain [i] on Timotheus' staff, an extremely wicked man who had done great harm
to the Jews. ·In the course of their victory celebrations in Jerusalem, they burned 33
1:8 the men who had fired the Holy Gates [j]; with Callisthenes they had taken refuge in
one small house; so these received a fitting reward for their sacrilege.

The flight and testimony of Nicanor

The triple-dyed scoundrel Nicanor, who had brought the thousand merchants to 34
8:23–24 buy the Jews, ·finding himself with the Lord's help humbled by men he had 35
himself reckoned as of very little account, stripped off his robes of state, and made
his way across country unaccompanied, like a runaway slave, reaching Antioch by
a singular stroke of fortune, since his army had been destroyed. ·Thus the man 36
who had promised the Romans to make good their tribute money by selling the
prisoners from Jerusalem, bore witness that the Jews had a defender and that they
were in consequence invulnerable, since they followed the laws which that
defender had ordained.

The last days of Antiochus Epiphanes

1:11–17
‖1 M 6:1–16

1 9 At about the same time, Antiochus was beating a disorderly retreat from
2 Persia. ·He had entered the city called Persepolis, planning to rob the temple[a]
and occupy the city; but the population at once sprang to arms to defend themselves, with the result that Antiochus was routed by the inhabitants and forced to
3 beat a humiliating retreat. ·On his arrival in Ecbatana[b] he learned what had
4 happened to Nicanor and to Timotheus' forces. ·Flying into a passion, he resolved to make the Jews pay for the disgrace inflicted by those who had routed him, and with this in mind he ordered his charioteer to drive without stopping and get the journey over. But the sentence of Heaven was already hanging over him. In his pride, he had said, 'When I reach Jerusalem, I shall turn it into a mass grave for the
5 Jews.' ·But the all-seeing Lord, the God of Israel, struck him with an incurable and unseen complaint. The words were hardly out of his mouth when he was seized
6 with an incurable pain in his bowels and with excruciating internal torture; ·and this was only right, since he had inflicted many barbaric tortures on the bowels of
7 others. ·Even so, he in no way diminished his arrogance; still bursting with pride, breathing fire in his wrath against the Jews, he was in the act of ordering an even keener pace when the chariot gave a sudden lurch and out he fell and, in this
8 serious fall, was dragged along, every joint of his body wrenched out of place. ·He who only a little while before had thought in his superhuman boastfulness he could command the waves of the sea, he who had imagined he could weigh mountain Jb 38:8–11 Ps 65:6–7
peaks in a balance, found himself flat on the ground and then being carried in a Is 40:12; 51:15
9 litter, a visible demonstration to all of the power of God, ·in that the very eyes of this godless man teemed with worms and his flesh rotted away while he lingered on Si 7:17 Ac 12:23
10 in agonising pain,[c] and the stench of his decay sickened the whole army. ·A short while before, he had thought to grasp the stars of heaven; now no one could bring Is 14:13+
himself to act as his bearer, for the stench was intolerable.

11 Then and there, as a consequence, in his shattered state, he began to shed his excessive pride and come to his senses under the divine lash, spasms of pain
12 overtaking him. ·His stench being unbearable even to himself, he exclaimed, 'It is right to submit to God; no mortal should aspire to equality with the Godhead.'[d]
13 The wretch began to pray to the Master, who would never take pity on him now,
14 declaring ·that the holy city, towards which he had been speeding to rase it to the
15 ground and turn it into a mass grave, should be declared free; ·as for the Jews, whom he had considered as not even worth burying, so much carrion to be thrown out with their children for birds and beasts to prey on, he would give them all equal
16 rights with the Athenians; ·the holy Temple which he had once plundered he would now adorn with the finest offerings; he would restore all the sacred vessels many times over; he would defray from his personal revenue the expenses incurred for
17 the sacrifices; ·and, to crown all, he would himself turn Jew and visit every inhabited place, proclaiming the power of God.

e. Possibly Jews who had fought against Gaulish mercenaries in the pay of Molon, the rebellious satrap of Media.

f. 'Esdrias' (or 'Esdras' following Lat. and Arm.) cf. 12:36; 'Eleazar' Gk; identical with Azariah of 1 M 5:18,56.

g. Similar formulae were used in the hellenistic and Roman armies, and are also mentioned in the Qumran *War Rule*.

h. This fragment has been placed here by the summarist as a further illustration of the punishment meted out to persecutors. The narrative continues at v. 34.

i. Presumably the chieftain of the Arabs defeated at the beginning of the campaign against Timotheus, 12:10seq.

j. The Mysarch had probably been responsible for the fire, 1 M 1:31. The Holy Gates are those of the Temple, rather than those of the outer court.

9 a. The temple in question was actually in Elymais, to the north of Persepolis, 1 M 6:1seq., but Jason or the summarist may have preferred to site this event in a city well known to everyone.

b. Present-day Hamadan, 450 miles (724 km) north-east of Persepolis. In point of fact, Antiochus Epiphanes died at Tabae, half-way between these two places.

c. 'eyes' *Vet. Lat.*, Arm.; 'body' Gk (except 1 MS: 'eyes of the body'). Antiochus' fatal illness does not correspond to any medical diagnosis. The description belongs to a literary genre appropriate to the death of tyrants, cf. Jdt 16:17; Is 14:11; Ac 12:23; compare also the death of Herod the Great as described by Josephus (*Ant. Jud.*). The parallel account in 1 M 6:9 is much more restrained.

d. 'not aspire to equality with the Godhead', MSS and versions; 'not entertain proud thoughts' some Gk; Gk-Luc. combines the two. The Gk term refers to the divine honours accorded to kings and the illustrious. Cf. the similar expression in Ph 2:6 applied to Christ.

Antiochus writes to the Jews

Finding no respite at all from his suffering, God's just sentence having overtaken him, he abandoned all hope for himself and wrote the Jews the letter transcribed below, which takes the form of an appeal in these terms: 18

'To the excellent Jews, to the citizens, Antiochus, king and commander-in-chief, [e] sends hearty greetings, wishing them all health and prosperity. 19

'If you and your children are well and your affairs as you would wish, we are profoundly thankful. [f] 20

·For my part, I cherish affectionate memories of you. [g] 21

'On my return from the country of Persia I fell seriously ill, and thought it necessary to make provision for the common security of all. ·Not that I despair of my condition, for I have great hope of shaking off the malady, ·but considering how my father, whenever he was making an expedition [h] into the uplands, would designate his successor ·so that, in case of any unforeseen event or disquieting rumour, the people of the provinces might know to whom he had left the conduct of affairs, and thus remain undisturbed; ·furthermore, being well aware that the sovereigns on our frontiers and the neighbours of our realm are watching for opportunities and waiting to see what will happen, I have designated as king my son Antiochus, whom I have more than once entrusted and commended to most of you when I was setting out for the upland satrapies; a transcript of my letter to him is appended hereto. [i] ·I therefore urge and require you, being mindful of the benefits both public and personal received from me, that you each persist in those sentiments of goodwill that you harbour towards me. ·I am confident that he will pursue my own policy with benevolence and humanity, and will prove accommodating to your interests.' 22 23 24 25 26 27

And so this murderer and blasphemer, having endured sufferings as terrible as those which he had made others endure, met his pitiable fate, and ended his life in the mountains far from his home. [j] ·His comrade Philip brought back his body, and then, fearing Antiochus' son, withdrew to Egypt, to the court of Ptolemy Philometor. [k] 28 29

‖1 M 4:36–61 **The purification of the Temple**

10 Maccabaeus and his companions, under the Lord's guidance, restored the Temple and the city, ·and pulled down the altars erected by the foreigners in the market place, as well as the shrines. ·They purified the sanctuary and built another altar; then, striking fire from flints and using this fire, they offered the first sacrifice for two years, burning incense, lighting the lamps and setting out the loaves. ·When they had done this, prostrating themselves on the ground, they implored the Lord never again to let them fall into such adversity, but if they should ever sin, to correct them with moderation and not to deliver them over to blasphemous and barbarous nations. ·This day of the purification of the Temple fell on the very day on which the Temple had been profaned by the foreigners, the twenty-fifth of the same month, Chislev. [a] ·They kept eight festal days with rejoicing, in the manner of the feast of Shelters, remembering how, not long before at the time of the feast of Shelters, they had been living in the mountains and caverns like wild beasts. ·Then, carrying thyrsuses, leafy boughs and palms, they offered hymns to him who had brought the cleansing of his own holy place to a happy outcome. ·They also decreed by public edict, ratified by vote, that the whole Jewish nation should celebrate those same days every year. [b] 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

1 M 13:65 Jn 12:13

VI: THE STRUGGLE OF JUDAS AGAINST THE NEIGHBOURING PEOPLES AND AGAINST LYSIAS, MINISTER OF ANTIOCHUS V

Reign of Antiochus V: early years

9 Such were the circumstances attending the death of Antiochus styled Epiphanes.
10 Our task now is to unfold the history of Antiochus Eupator, son of that godless 1 M 6:17
11 man, and briefly to relate the evil effects of the wars.[c] ·On coming to the throne, this prince put at the head of affairs a certain Lysias, the general officer command-
12 ing Coele-Syria and Phoenicia, ·whereas Ptolemy, known as Macron, and the first 8:8 person to govern the Jews justly, had done his best to govern them peacefully to
13 make up for the wrongs inflicted on them in the past. ·Denounced, in consequence, to Eupator by the Friends of the King, he heard himself called traitor at every turn: for having abandoned Cyprus,[d] which had been entrusted to him by Philometer, for having gone over to Antiochus Epiphanes, and for having shed no lustre on his illustrious office: he committed suicide by poisoning himself.

Gorgias and the Idumaean fortresses

14 Gorgias now became general of the area; he maintained a force of mercenaries and
15 a continual state of war with the Jews. ·At the same time, the Idumaeans, who ‖1 M 5:1–8
controlled important fortresses, were harassing the Jews, welcoming outlaws from
16 Jerusalem and endeavouring to maintain a state of war. ·Maccabaeus and his men, after making public supplication to God, entreating him to support them, 8:23–24
17 began operations against the Idumaean fortresses. ·Vigorously pressing home their attack, they seized possession of these vantage points, beating off all who fought on the ramparts; they slaughtered all who fell into their hands, accounting
18 for no fewer than twenty thousand. ·Nine thousand at least took refuge in two exceptionally strong towers with everything they needed to withstand a siege,
19 whereupon, Maccabaeus left Simon and Joseph, with Zacchaeus and his forces, in sufficient numbers to besiege them, and himself went off to other places requiring
20 his attention. ·But Simon's men were greedy for money and allowed themselves to be bribed by some of the men in the towers; accepting seventy thousand drachmas,
21 they let a number of them escape. ·When Maccabaeus was told what had happened, he summoned the people's commanders and accused the offenders of having sold their brothers for money by releasing their enemies to fight them.
22 Having executed them as traitors, he at once proceeded to capture both towers.
23 Successful in all that he undertook by force of arms, in these two fortresses he slaughtered more than twenty thousand men.[e]

Judas defeats Timotheus and captures Gezer[f]

24 Timotheus, who had been beaten by the Jews once before, now assembled an

e. The title designates the chief magistrate of a city, here Antioch, the capital, of which Antiochus had already had himself nominated aedile and tribune. The letter seems originally to have been addressed to the 'excellent citizens' of Antioch, the Jews having been inserted as a gloss by Jason of Cyrene.

f. At the end of the v., Gk adds 'confiding in heaven'.

g. 'of you' 1 Gk MS, Lat., Arm.; 'of your marks of respect and good-will' Gk.

h. 'making an expedition', lit. 'bore arms' *estrateusen* conj. following the Lat.; 'camped' *estratopedeusen* Gk.

i. The author does not reproduce this second letter, of which he evidently had no copy.

j. The violent language of the summarist is in marked contrast to that of the letter, which is a good example of hellenistic style in matters of protocol.

k. A detail hard to reconcile with 1 M 6:55 and 63. Philip probably stayed in Egypt until the end of 163, *see* 13:23.

10 a. 15 December 164, *see* 1:10e a few weeks after the death of Antiochus Epiphanes.

b. For this feast, Hanukkah, *see* 1 M 4:59. This is the end of the first section of the book, of which one of the principal aims is to make this feast obligatory for all Jews, see the two preliminary letters, 1–2. The second section ends similarly, with an invitation to celebrate the Day of Nicanor, 15:36.

c. 'wars' *polemon* Lat. MSS, Syr.; 'towns' *poleon* Lat. MSS, Gk (except 3 MSS, which read 'enemy' *polemion*).

d. Where his presence is attested by inscriptions and by the historian Polybius.

e. Exaggerated figure, *see* v. 18.

f. This episode seems to be chronologically misplaced, since Timotheus, who dies here, is alive and well in the summer of the same year 163, during the Gilead campaign, 12:10–31. The capture of Gezer causes problems too, *see* v. 32.

enormous force of mercenaries, mustering cavalry from Asia in considerable numbers, and soon appeared in Judaea, expecting to conquer it by force of arms. At his approach, Maccabaeus and his men made their supplications to God, 25
sprinkling earth on their heads and putting sackcloth round their waists. Prostrating themselves on the terrace before the altar, they begged him to support 26
Ex 23:22 them and to show himself the enemy of their enemies, the adversary of their adversaries, as the Law clearly states.

After these prayers, they armed themselves and advanced a fair distance from 27
the city, halting when they were close to the enemy. ·As the first light of dawn 28
began to spread, the two sides joined battle, the one having as their pledge of success and victory not only their own valour but their recourse to the Lord, the other making their own ardour their mainstay in the fight. ·When the battle was at 29
5:4b its height, the enemy saw five magnificent men appear from heaven on horses with golden bridles and put themselves at the head of the Jews; ·surrounding Macca- 30
baeus and screening him with their own armour, they kept him unscathed, while they rained arrows and thunderbolts on the enemy until, blinded and confused, they scattered [g] in complete disorder. ·Twenty thousand five hundred infantry and 31
six hundred cavalry were slaughtered. ·Timotheus himself fled to a strongly 32
‖1 M 13:43–48 guarded citadel called Gezer, where Chaereas was in command. [h] ·For four days [i] 33
Maccabaeus and his men eagerly besieged the fortress, ·while the defenders, 34
confident in the security of the place, hurled fearful blasphemies and godless insults at them. ·At daybreak on the fifth day, twenty young men of Maccabaeus' forces, 35
fired with indignation at the blasphemies, manfully assaulted the wall, with wild courage cutting down everyone they encountered. ·Others, in a similar scaling 36
operation, took the defenders in the rear, and set fire to the towers, lighting pyres on which they burned the blasphemers alive. The first, meanwhile, breaking open the gates, let the rest of the army in and, at their head, captured the town. Timotheus had hidden in a storage-well, but they killed him, with his brother 37
Chaereas, and Apollophanes. ·When all this was over, with hymns and thanksgiv- 38
ing they blessed the Lord, who had shown such great kindness to Israel and given them the victory.

‖1 M 4:26–35 The first campaign of Lysias [a]

11 Almost immediately afterwards, Lysias, the king's tutor and cousin, chief 1
minister of the realm, much disturbed at the turn of events, ·mustered about 2
eighty thousand foot soldiers and his entire cavalry and advanced against the Jews, intending to make the city a place for Greeks to live in, ·to levy a tax on the Temple 3
as on other national shrines, and to put the office of high priest up for sale every year; ·he took no account at all of the power of God, being sublimely confident in 4
his tens of thousands of infantrymen, his thousands of cavalry, and his eighty elephants.

Invading Judaea, he approached Beth-Zur, a fortified position about twenty 5
miles from Jerusalem, and began to subject it to strong pressure. ·When Macca- 6
baeus and his men learned that Lysias was besieging the fortresses, they and the
Ex 23:20i populace with them begged the Lord with lamentation and tears to send a good angel to save Israel. ·Maccabaeus himself was the first to take up his weapons, and 7
he urged the rest to risk their lives with him in support of their brothers; so they sallied out resolutely, as one man. ·They were still near Jerusalem when a rider 8
5:4b attired in white appeared at their head, brandishing golden weapons. ·With one 9
accord they all blessed the God of mercy, and found themselves filled with such courage that they were ready to lay low not men only but the fiercest beasts and walls of iron. ·They advanced in battle order with the aid of their celestial ally, the 10
Lord having had mercy on them. ·Charging like lions on the enemy, they laid low 11
eleven thousand of the infantry and sixteen hundred horsemen, and routed all the rest. ·Of those, the majority got away, wounded and weaponless. Lysias himself 12
escaped only by ignominious flight.

Lysias makes peace with the Jews. Four letters concerning the treaty

↗1 M 6:57–61

13 Now Lysias was not lacking in intelligence and, as he reflected on the reverse he had just suffered, he realised that the Hebrews were invincible because the mighty
14 God fought for them. He therefore sent them a delegation ·to persuade them to accept reasonable terms all round, and promised to compel the king to become
15 their friend.[b] ·Maccabaeus, thinking only of the common good, agreed to all that Lysias proposed, and whatever Maccabaeus submitted to Lysias in writing concerning the Jews was granted by the king.[c]

16 Here is the text of the letter Lysias wrote to the Jews:

'Lysias to the Jewish people, greetings.

17 'John and Absalom,[d] your envoys, have delivered to me the communication
18 transcribed below, requesting me to approve its provisions. ·Anything requiring the king's attention I have put before him;[e] whatever was possible, I have
19 granted. ·Provided you maintain your goodwill towards the interests of the
20 State, I shall do my best in the future to promote your well-being. ·As regards the details, I have given orders for your envoys and my own officials to discuss
21 these with you. ·May you prosper.

'The twenty-fourth day of Dioscorus,[f] in the year one hundred and forty-eight.'

22 The king's letter ran as follows:

'King Antiochus[g] to his brother Lysias, greetings.

23 'Now that our father has taken his place among the gods,[h] our will is that the
24 subjects of the realm be left undisturbed to attend to their own affairs. ·We understand that the Jews do not approve our father's policy, the adoption of Greek customs, but prefer their own way of life and ask to be allowed to observe
25 their own laws. ·Accordingly, since we intend this people to be free from vexation like any other, our ruling is that the Temple be restored to them and that they conduct their affairs according to the customs of their ancestors.

26 'It will therefore be your concern to send them a mission of friendship, so that on learning our policy they may have confidence and happily go about their business.'

27 The king's letter to the Jewish nation was in these terms:

'King Antiochus to the Jewish Senate and the rest of the Jews, greetings.

28 'If you are well, that is as we would wish; we ourselves are in good health.

29 'Menelaus informs us that you wish to return home and attend to your own
30 affairs. ·Accordingly, all those who return before the thirtieth day of Xanthicus
31 may rest assured that they have nothing to fear. ·The Jews may make use of their own kind of food and their own laws as formerly, and none of them is to be

g. 'scattered' several Gk MSS; 'were massacred' Gk and Lat.

h. Concentrating exclusively on the exploits of Judas, 2 M credits him with the famous capture of Gezer, the fame of which lingered in popular tradition. 1 M 13:43, *see* 1 M 14:34, rightly attributes its capture to Judas' brother, Simon.

i. 'four days' Lat.; 'forty' or 'twenty-four' Gk.

11 a. The events related in 11:1–21 and 11:27–12:9 belong to the year 164, while Antiochus Epiphanes was still alive, and in the work of Jason of Cyrene must have followed 8:36 (hence, and correctly, the 'almost immediately afterwards' of v. 1). The summarist has transferred the action to the reign of Antiochus V, *see*. vv. 22seq.

b. 'to compel' *Vet. Lat.*, Vulg.; 'to persuade' Lat. MSS; 'to persuade to compel' Gk. The original word probably seemed too forceful to a copyist, who must have written 'persuade' against it in the margin, which was later incorporated into the text of some MSS. • For the summarist, the king in question is Antiochus V, who, being a child, could hardly exert such pressure.

c. This explains why Judas had no further trouble during the year 164.

d. John here is possibly the eldest of the sons of Mattathias, 1 M 2:2; Absalom was evidently someone of importance, since two of his sons are later given military commands, *see* 1 M 11:70; 13:11.

e. i.e. Antiochus IV. Had it been the young Antiochus V, as the summarist supposes, the actions of the all-powerful minister, Lysias, would not make sense.

f. 'Dioscorus' Lat.; 'of Corinthian Jupiter' (*dioscorinthios*) Gk. The name of a Cretan month, equivalent to 'Xanthicus', *see* v. 30, i.e. spring 164.

g. This really is Antiochus V, *see* following v., and concerns the rescript granted to the Jews after the second campaign of Lysias, *see* 13:23; 1 M 6:59.

h. Deification and worship of the sovereign were practised in Syria under the Seleucids as in Egypt under the Lagids.

molested in any way for any unwitting offences. ·I am in fact sending Menelaus 32
to set your minds at rest. [i] ·Farewell. 33

'The fifteenth day of Xanthicus in the year one hundred and forty-eight.'

The Romans also sent the Jews a letter, which read as follows: 34

'Quintus Memmius, Titus Manilius, Manius Sergius, [j] legates of the Romans, to the people of the Jews, greetings.

'Whatever Lysias, the king's Cousin, has granted you we also approve. ·As 35, 36
for the matters he decided to refer to the king, consider them carefully and send someone without delay, if we are to interpret them to your advantage, because we are leaving for Antioch. ·Lose no time, therefore, in sending us those who 37
can tell us what your intentions are. ·Farewell. 38

'The fifteenth day of Dioscorus [k] in the year one hundred and forty-eight.'

Incidents at Joppa and Jamnia

12 These agreements once concluded, Lysias returned to the king [a] and the 1
Jews went back to their farming. ·Among the local generals, Timotheus and 2
Apollonius son of Gennaeus, as also Hieronymus and Demophon, and Nicanor the Cypriarch as well, would not allow the Jews to live in peace and quiet.

The people of Joppa committed a particularly wicked crime: they invited the 3
Jews living among them to go aboard some boats they had lying ready, taking their wives and children. There was no hint of any intention to harm them; ·there had 4
been a public vote by the citizens, and the Jews accepted, as well they might, being peaceable people with no reason to suspect anything. But once out in the open sea they were all sent to the bottom, a company of at least two hundred.

When Judas heard of the cruel fate of his countrymen, he issued his orders to his 5
men ·and after invoking God, the just judge, he attacked his brothers' murderers. 6
Under cover of dark he set fire to the port, burned the boats and put to the sword everyone who had taken refuge there. ·As the town gates were closed, he with- 7
drew, intending to come back and wipe out the whole community of Joppa. ·But 8
hearing that the people of Jamnia were planning to treat their resident Jews in the same way, ·he made a night attack on the Jamnites and fired the port with its fleet; 9
the glow of the flames was seen as far off as Jerusalem, thirty miles away.

||1 M 5:24–54 **The expedition in Gilead**

When they had left the town barely a mile [b] behind them in their advance on 10
Timotheus, Judas was attacked by an Arab force of at least five thousand foot soldiers, with five hundred cavalry. ·A fierce engagement followed, and with God's 11
help Judas' men won the day; the defeated nomads begged Judas to offer them the right hand of friendship, and promised to surrender their herds and make themselves generally useful to him. ·Realising that they might indeed prove valuable in 12
many ways, Judas consented to make peace with them and after an exchange of pledges the Arabs withdrew to their tents.

Judas also attacked a certain fortified town, closed by ramparts and inhabited by 13
a medley of races; its name was Caspin. ·Confident in the strength of their 14
walls and their stock of provisions, the besieged adopted an insolent attitude to Judas and his men, reinforcing their insults with blasphemies and profanity.
But Judas and his men invoked the great Sovereign of the world who without 15
Jos 6 battering-ram or siege-engine had overthrown Jericho in the days of Joshua; they then made a fierce assault on the wall. ·By God's will, having captured the town, 16
they made such indescribable slaughter that the nearby lake, a quarter of a mile across, seemed filled to overflowing with blood.

||1 M 5:37–44 **The battle of the Carnaim**

Ninety-five miles further on from there, they reached the Charax, in the country of 17
1 M 5:13 Jews known as Tubians. [c] ·They did not find Timotheus himself in that neighbour- 18

hood; he had already left the district, having achieved nothing apart from leaving
19 a very strong garrison at one point. ·Dositheus and Sosipater, two of the Macca-
baean generals, marched out and destroyed the force Timotheus had left behind in
20 the fortress, amounting to more than ten thousand men. ·Maccabaeus himself
divided his army into cohorts to which he assigned commanders, and then hurried
in pursuit of Timotheus, whose troops numbered one hundred and twenty thou-
21 sand infantry and two thousand five hundred cavalry. ·Timotheus' first move on
learning of Judas' advance was to send away the women and children and the rest
of the baggage train to the place called the Carnaim,[d] since it was an impregnable 1 M 5:43m
22 position, difficult of access owing to the narrowness of all the approaches. ·Judas'
cohort came into sight first. The enemy, seized with fright and panic-stricken by
the manifestation of the All-seeing, began to flee, one running this way, one
running that, often wounding one another in consequence and running on the
23 points of one another's swords. ·Judas pursued them with a will, cutting the sinners
24 to pieces and killing something like thirty thousand men. ·Timotheus himself,
having fallen into the hands of Dositheus and Sosipater and their men, very craftily
pleaded with them to let him go with his life, on the grounds that he had the
relatives and even the brothers of many of them in his power, and that these could
25 otherwise expect short shrift. ·When at long last he convinced them that he would
honour his promise and return these people safe and sound, they let him go for the
sake of saving their brothers.

26 Reaching the Carnaim and the Atargateion,[e] Judas slaughtered twenty-five
thousand men.

The return by way of Ephron and Scythopolis

27 Having defeated and destroyed them, he led his army against Ephron, a fortified
town, where Lysanias[f] was living. Stalwart young men drawn up outside the walls
offered vigorous resistance, while inside there were quantities of war-engines and
28 missiles in reserve. ·But the Jews, having invoked the Sovereign who by his power
shatters enemies' defences, gained control of the town and cut down nearly
29 twenty-five thousand of the people inside. ·Moving off from there, they pressed on
30 to Scythopolis,[g] ·seventy-five miles from Jerusalem. But as the Jews who had
settled there assured Judas that the people of Scythopolis had always treated them
31 well and had been particularly kind to them when times were at their worst, ·he
and his men thanked them and urged them to extend the same friendship to his
race in the future.

They reached Jerusalem shortly before the feast of Weeks.

i. The importance conferred on the high priest expelled by the rebels shows that the king had no intention of recognising their leader, Judas. But the religious objectives of the revolt, that is to say the repeal of the decree abolishing the Jewish religion, had been achieved.

j. 'Manilius' and 'Sergius' are restored, following 2 Gk MSS; the remaining Gk read only 'Titus Manius', but this name, made up of two *praenomina*, is impossible. Titus Manilius and Manius Sergius are both known to history. Quintus Memmius is not, though a Titus Memmius had been legate in 170.

k. 'Dioscorus' *Vet. Lat.*; 'Xanthicus' Gk.

12 a. The summarist supposes the king to be at Antioch, thinking of him as Antiochus V. The two raids on the coastal towns, however, must have taken place after the first campaign of Lysias, when Antiochus IV was in Persia, *see* 9:1, and fit easily into the year 164.

b. The mile (1.5 km) cannot be reckoned to start at Jamnia but at some point situated in Gilead, *see* v. 13. The summarist has made an awkward start in the material taken from Jason. For details of this expedition in the summer of 163, *see* 1 M 5:9seq. The 'Arabs' are Nabataeans, *see* 1 M 5:25, whose leader was presumably the chieftain mentioned in 2 M 8:32.

c. Ammanitis, ruled by the Tobiad family, *see* 1 M 5:13, and noted for its horse-breeding. A contingent of Tubian horsemen distinguished itself in Idumaea, v. 35. • The Charax is probably the fortress or Birta of Ammanitis (present-day Araq el-Emir), the residence of the governor.

d. Site of the temple of Horned Astarte, *see* 1 M 5:43. The 'narrow approaches' probably mean the bed of the torrent mentioned in 1 M 5:37 (the Nahr el-Ehreir, a tributary of the River Jarmuk); the country gets difficult only further to the south, but the summarist wants to emphasise the military prowess of Judas' contingent and the resultant terror that it provoked.

e. The temple of Atargatis, the Great Goddess of the Syrians, identified with the local Astarte.

f. 'where Lysanias was living' Lat. MSS (other MSS read 'Lysias'); 'where troops of all nationalities lived' Gk; 'where Lysias and troops of all nationalities lived' Gk-Luc., Lat. and Syr. MSS. Even if the reading 'Lysias' is preferred, it cannot be the military government of Coele-Syria, who presumably resided at Tyre, but merely some local ruler. The name was common at the time.

g. Gk name for the town of Beth-Shean, 1 M 5:52.

The campaign against Gorgias

Ex 23:14d After Pentecost, as it is called, they marched against Gorgias, the general com- 32
manding Idumaea. ·He came out at the head of three thousand infantry and four 33
hundred cavalry; ·in the course of the ensuing battle a few Jews lost their lives. 34

A man called Dositheus, a horseman of the Tubian contingent, a valiant man, 35
overpowered Gorgias and, gripping him by the cloak, [h] was forcibly dragging him
along, intending to take the accursed man alive, but one of the Thracian cavalry,
hurling himself on Dositheus, slashed his shoulder, and Gorgias escaped to Marisa.
Meanwhile, since Esdrias and his men had been fighting for a long time and were 36
exhausted, Judas called on the Lord to show himself their ally and leader in battle.

Then, chanting the battle cry and hymns [i] at the top of his voice in his ancestral 37
tongue, by a surprise attack he routed Gorgias' troops.

The sacrifice for the fallen [j]

Judas then rallied his army and moved on to the town of Adullam [k] where, as it was 38
the seventh day of the week, they purified themselves according to custom and
kept the Sabbath. ·Next day, they came to find Judas [l] (since the necessity was by 39
now urgent) to have the bodies of the fallen taken up and laid to rest among their
relatives in their ancestral tombs. ·But when they found on each of the dead men, 40
Dt 7:25 under their tunics, objects dedicated to the idols of Jamnia, [m] which the Law
prohibits to Jews, it became clear to everyone that this was why these men had lost
their lives. ·All then blessed the ways of the Lord, the upright judge who brings 41
1 Co 4:5 hidden things to light, ·and gave themselves to prayer, begging that the sin com- 42
mitted might be completely forgiven. Next, the valiant Judas urged the soldiers to
keep themselves free from all sin, having seen with their own eyes the effects of the
sin of those who had fallen; ·after this he took a collection from them individually, 43
amounting to nearly two thousand drachmas, and sent it to Jerusalem to have a
sacrifice for sin offered, an action altogether fine and noble, prompted by his belief
7:9c in the resurrection. ·For had he not expected the fallen to rise again, it would have 44
been superfluous and foolish to pray for the dead, ·whereas if he had in view the 45
splendid recompense reserved for those who make a pious end, the thought was
holy and devout. [n] Hence, he had this expiatory sacrifice offered for the dead, so
that they might be released from their sin.

The campaign of Antiochus V and Lysias. Horrible death of Menelaus

13 In the year one hundred and forty-nine, [a] Judas and his men discovered that 1
Antiochus Eupator was advancing in force against Judaea, ·and with him 2
1 M 6:30 Lysias his tutor and chief minister; he had moreover a Greek force of one hundred
and ten thousand infantry, five thousand three hundred cavalry, twenty-two ele-
phants, and three hundred chariots fitted with scythes.

Menelaus, too, joined them and very craftily kept urging Antiochus on, not for 3
the welfare of his own country but in the hope of being restored to office. ·But the 4
King of kings stirred up the anger of Antiochus against the guilty wretch, and when
Lysias made it clear to the king that Menelaus was the cause of all the troubles,
Antiochus gave orders for him to be taken to Beroea and there put to death by the
local method of execution. [b] ·In that place there is a tower fifty cubits high, full of 5
ash, with an internal lip all round overhanging the ashes. ·If anyone is convicted of 6
sacrilegious theft or of some other heinous crime, he is taken up to the top and
pushed over to perish. [c] ·In such a manner was the renegade fated to die; Menelaus 7
had not even the privilege of burial. ·Deserved justice, this; since he had committed 8
many sins against the altar, the fire and ashes of which were holy, it was in ashes
that he met his death.

The prayers and success of the Jews near Modein

The king, then, was advancing, his mind filled with barbarous designs, to give the 9

Jews a demonstration of far worse things than anything that had happened under
10 his father. ·When Judas heard of this, he ordered the people day and night to call
on the Lord as never before, to come to the help of those who were in peril of being
11 deprived of the Law, their fatherland and the holy Temple, ·and not to allow the 1 M 4:36h
people, just when they were beginning to breathe again, to fall into the power of
12 ill-famed foreigners. ·When they had all, with one voice, obeyed his instructions
and had made their petitions to the merciful Lord, weeping, fasting and prostrating
themselves for three days continuously, Judas spoke words of encouragement and
13 told them to keep close to him. ·After separate consultation with the elders, he
resolved not to wait for the king's army to invade Judaea and take possession of
the city, but to march out and settle the whole matter with the Lord's help.
14 Having thus committed the outcome to the Creator of the world, and having
exhorted his soldiers to fight bravely to the death for the laws, the Temple, the
city, their country and their way of life, he encamped his army near Modein.
15 Giving his men the password 'Victory from God', he made a night attack on the 8:23
king's pavilion with a picked band of the bravest young men. Inside the camp he
destroyed about two thousand, and his men cut down the largest of the elephants 1 M 6:43seq.
16 with its mahout; ·having eventually filled the camp with terror and confusion, they
17 successfully withdrew, ·just as dawn was breaking. This was achieved, thanks to
the protection which the Lord granted Judas.

Antiochus V negotiates with the Jews

‖1 M 6:48–63

18 The king, having had a taste of Jewish daring, now tried to capture their positions
19 by trickery. ·He advanced on Beth-Zur, a strong fortress of the Jews, but was
checked, overcome and so repulsed.
20, 21 Judas supplied the garrison with what they needed, ·but Rhodocus, of the Jewish
army, supplied the enemy with secret information; the man was identified,
22 arrested, and dealt with. ·A second time, the king parleyed with the garrison of
Beth-Zur; he offered and accepted pledges of friendship, retired, then attacked
23 Judas and his men, but lost the battle. ·He was then told that Philip, left in charge
of affairs, had rebelled in Antioch. He was stunned by this, opened negotiations
with the Jews, came to an agreement, and swore to abide by all reasonable
conditions. Agreement reached, he offered a sacrifice, honoured the Temple, and
made generous gifts to the holy place. [d]
24 He received Maccabaeus kindly and, leaving Hegemonides to exercise command
25 from Ptolemais to the territory of the Gerrenians, [e] ·went to Ptolemais. The

h. The short cloak worn by cavalrymen. • 'of the Tubian contingent' Lat. MSS, Syr.; 'of Bacenor's men' Gk, but no such proper name is known.

i. The hymns, even battle-hymns, had a liturgical character and were presumably in Hebrew.

j. Even purged of its glosses, *see* v. 45n, this text expresses the conviction that prayer and expiatory sacrifice are efficacious for the remission of sins for the dead. This is the first evidence in the OT of this belief. The sacrifice ordered by Judas, however, can have had the aim only of purifying the community, collectively defiled by the sins of a few, cf. Jos 7, and it may be that the author, writing forty years after the event, has attributed his own convictions to his hero. Be that as it may, this marks a new and important stage in Jewish theology.

k. Famous town in the low country, Jos 12:15, *see* 1 S 22:1; 2 Ch 11:6.

l. 'they came to find Judas' Gk-Luc., *Vet. Lat.*, Syr.; 'Judas' men came' Gk.

m. Amulets, or things offered to the gentile gods, which ought to have been burnt, *see* Dt 7:25seq.

n. The text as it has been transmitted by the Gk and majority of versions, represents a harmonisation of the original text with two glosses over-burdening it (one Sadducaean, cf. Mt 22:23, and the other Pharisaic). The latter is preserved in the principal MS of *Vet. Lat.*: 'because he hoped that those who had fallen would rise again (it is superfluous and a waste of time to pray for the dead), thinking that a very fine reward is in store for those who have fallen asleep devoutly (a holy and edifying thought).'

13 **a.** Of the Seleucid era, but starting from the spring of 311. This is autumn 163.

b. The high priest Menelaus, having returned to Jerusalem, *see* 11:32, had evidently not been able to maintain his position there, but his execution should rather be dated after the capture of Jerusalem by Antiochus, as Josephus relates (*Ant. Jud.*). Beroea is the name of the Macedonian town, Ac 17:10, given to Aleppo by Seleucus I.

c. 'is taken up', lit. *arantes* conj.; 'all' *apantes* Gk, versions. • 'pushed over' *proothousin* conj. following Lat.; 'pushed towards' (?) *prosothousin* Gk. • Execution by ashes is attested among the Persians; here it is given the force of retributive justice, v. 8; *see* 4:26; 9:5–6.

d. 1 M 6:55–62 is not so enthusiastic, though insisting that religious freedom was restored to the Jews, 6:59, which is not stated here: the author of 2 M does not seem to have grasped the relationship between the rescript of Antiochus V, 11:22seq., and this second campaign of Lysias.

e. This then marks the beginning (though still unofficial) of Hasmonaean power, since Judas is recognised as the *de facto* authority, while the new governor's writ is only for the coastal regions.

inhabitants of the place disapproved of the treaty; they complained furiously and wanted to annul its provisions.[f] ·Lysias mounted the rostrum and made a convinc- 26
ing defence of the provisions which convinced and calmed them and won their goodwill. He then withdrew to Antioch.

So much for the episode of the king's offensive and retreat.

VII: THE CONFLICT WITH NICANOR, GENERAL OF DEMETRIUS I. THE DAY OF NICANOR

‖1 M 7:1-21 **Alcimus the high priest intervenes**

14 Three years after this,[a] Judas and his men learned that Demetrius son of 1
Seleucus had landed at the port of Tripolis with a strong army and a fleet, and that he had occupied the country and had killed Antiochus and his tutor 2
Lysias. ·A certain Alcimus, a former high priest, had wilfully incurred defilement[b] 3
at the time of the insurrection; realising that whichever way he turned there was no security for him, nor any further access to the holy altar, ·he went to King 4
Demetrius in about the year one hundred and fifty-one and presented him with a
1 M 10:30f golden crown and a palm, together with the traditional olive branches from the Temple; there, for that day, he let the matter rest.

Presently he found an opportunity to further his mad plan. When Demetrius 5
called him into his council and questioned him about the dispositions and intentions of the Jews, he replied, ·'Those Jews called Hasidaeans, who are led by Judas 6
Maccabaeus, are war-mongers and rebels who are preventing the kingdom from finding stability. ·That is why, after being deprived of my hereditary dignity—I 7
mean the high priesthood—I have come here now, ·first out of genuine concern for 8
the king's interests, and secondly, out of a regard for our own fellow-citizens, because the irresponsible behaviour of those I have mentioned has brought no slight misery on our entire race. ·When your majesty has taken note of all these 9
points, may it please you to make provision for the welfare of our country and our oppressed nation, as befits the gracious benevolence you extend to all; ·for, as long 10
as Judas remains alive, the State will never enjoy peace.'

1 M 2:18e No sooner had he spoken thus than the rest of the King's Friends, who were 11
‖1 M 7:26 hostile to Judas' activities, stoked Demetrius' anger. ·The latter at once selected 12
Nicanor, then commander of the elephants, promoted him to the command of Judaea[c] and despatched him ·with instructions to dispose of Judas, disperse his 13
followers and instal Alcimus as high priest of the greatest of temples. ·The for- 14
eigners in Judaea, who had fled before Judas, flocked to join Nicanor, thinking that the misfortunes and troubles of the Jews would be to their own advantage.

‖1 M 7:27-28 **Nicanor makes friends with Judas**

When the Jews heard that Nicanor was coming and that the foreigners were about 15
to attack, they sprinkled dust over themselves and made supplication to him who had established his people for ever and who never failed to support his own heritage by direct manifestations. ·On their leader's orders, they at once left the 16
1 M 7:31 place where they were and confronted the enemy at the village of Dessau.[d] Simon, brother of Judas, engaged Nicanor but, owing to the sudden arrival of the 17
enemy, suffered a slight reverse.[e] ·Nicanor, however, had heard how brave Judas 18
and his men were and how resolutely they always fought for their country, and he did not dare allow bloodshed to decide the issue. ·And so he sent Posidonius, 19
Theodotus and Mattathias to offer the Jews pledges of friendship and to accept theirs.

After careful consideration of his terms, the leader communicated them to his 20

troops, and since they were all clearly of one mind they agreed to the treaty. ·A day was fixed on which the respective leaders were to meet as individuals. A litter came out from either side and seats were set up. ·Judas had posted armed men in strategic positions, in case of a sudden treacherous move by the enemy. The leaders held their conference and reached agreement. ·Nicanor took up residence in Jerusalem and did nothing out of place there; indeed, he sent away the crowds that had flocked to join him. ·He kept Judas constantly with him, becoming deeply attached to him ·and encouraged him to marry and have children. Judas married, settled down and led a normal life.[f]

Alcimus rekindles hostilities, and Nicanor threatens the Temple

When Alcimus saw how friendly the two men had become, he went to Demetrius with a copy of the treaty they had signed and told him that Nicanor was harbouring thoughts against the interests of the State, and was planning that Judas, an enemy of the realm, should fill the next vacancy among the Friends of the King.

The king flew into a rage; roused by the slanders of this villain, he wrote to Nicanor, telling him of his strong displeasure at these agreements and ordering him immediately to send Maccabaeus to Antioch in chains.

When the letter reached Nicanor, he was very much upset, for he disliked the prospect of breaking an agreement with a man who had done nothing wrong. Since, however, there was no way of opposing the king, he waited for an opportunity[g] to carry out the order by a stratagem. ·Maccabaeus began to notice ‖1 M 7:29–30
that Nicanor was treating him more sharply and that his manner of speaking to him was more abrupt than it had been, and he concluded that such sharpness could have no very good motive. He therefore collected a considerable number of his followers and got away from Nicanor. ·The latter, realising that the man had well ‖1 M 7:33–38
and truly outmanoeuvred him, went to the greatest and holiest of Temples when the priests were offering the customary sacrifices, and ordered them to surrender Judas. ·When they protested on oath that they did not know where the wanted man could be, ·he stretched out his right hand towards the Temple and swore this oath, 'If you do not hand Judas over to me as prisoner, I shall rase this dwelling of God to the ground, I shall demolish the altar, and on this very spot I shall erect a splendid temple to Dionysus.' ·With these words he left them. The priests stretched out their hands to heaven, calling on him who has at all times done battle for our nation; this was their prayer: ·'O Lord in need of nothing, it has pleased you that the Temple where you dwell should be here with us. ·Now, therefore, holy Lord of all holiness, preserve for ever from all profanation this House, so newly purified.'

The death of Razis[h]

Now, a man called Razis, one of the elders of Jerusalem, was denounced to Nicanor. He was a man who loved his countrymen and stood high in their esteem, and he was known as the father of the Jews because of his kindness. ·In the earlier days of the insurrection he had been convicted of Judaism, and he had risked both life and limb for Judaism with the utmost zeal. ·Nicanor, by way of demonstrating the enmity he had for the Jews, sent over five hundred soldiers to arrest him,

f. 'complained furiously and wanted' *Vet. Lat.*; Gk corrupt.

14 **a.** Counting from 149 Seleucid; spring of 161.

b. i.e. that he had accepted Hellenism.

c. In other words, appointed him governor, so that Alcimus would have no political power.

d. The incident at Dessau (Adasa, *see* 1 M 7:40) is presumably the same as the one at Caphar-Salama, situated nearby, 1 M 7:31.

e. v. poorly transmitted. It could also be understood as meaning: 'but, late at night, he had been upset by an unexpected movement from the enemy' or 'but, at the critical moment, he had panicked at the sudden appearance of the enemy'.

f. This subtle study in character of Judas and Nicanor is not to be found in 1 M, where the author prefers a black-and-white contrast between the wicked gentile and the heroic Jew, *see* 1 M 7:42.

g. lit. '(to oppose the king) it was not easy, for a favourable chance (he spied)' *ouk en eucheros, kairon* conj.; 'it was not, a good occasion' (?) *ouk en, eukairon* Gk, but the word is not attested.

h. Stylistically, this episode (not found in 1 M) recalls those of Eleazar and of the Seven Brothers, and with these must have been borrowed without much alteration from Jason of Cyrene.

reckoning that if he eliminated this man he would be dealing them a severe blow. 40
When the troops were on the point of capturing the tower and were forcing the 41
outer door and calling for fire to set the doors alight, Razis, finding himself
1 S 31:4c completely surrounded, fell on his own sword, ·nobly resolving to die rather than 42
fall into the clutches of these villains and suffer outrages unworthy of his noble
birth. ·But in the heat of conflict he missed his thrust, and while the troops swarmed 43
in through the doorways, he ran nimbly upstairs to the parapet and manfully threw
himself down among the troops. ·But, as they immediately drew back, he fell into 44
the middle of the empty space. ·Still breathing, and blazing with anger, he struggled 45
to his feet, blood spurting in all directions, and despite his terrible wounds ran right
through the crowd; then, taking his stand on a steep rock, ·although he had now 46
lost every drop of blood, he tore out his entrails and taking them in both hands
7:9c flung them down on the crowd, calling on the Master of his life and spirit to give
them back to him one day. Thus he died. [i]

Nicanor's blasphemies

15 Nicanor heard that Judas and his men were in the neighbourhood of Sa- 1
maria, so he decided to attack them, at no risk to himself, on the day of rest.
Those Jews who had been compelled to follow him, said, 'Do not massacre them 2
in such a savage, barbarous way. Respect the day on which the All-seeing has
conferred a special holiness.' ·At this the triple-dyed scoundrel asked if there 3
were in heaven a sovereign who had ordered the keeping of the Sabbath day.
When they answered, 'The living Lord himself, the Heavenly Sovereign, has 4
ordered the observance of the seventh day,' ·he retorted, 'And I, as sovereign on 5
earth, order you to take up arms and do the king's business.' For all that, he did
not manage to carry out his wicked plan.

Judas harangues his men. His dream

While Nicanor, in his unlimited boastfulness and pride, was planning to erect a 6
general trophy [a] with the spoils taken from Judas and his men, ·Maccabaeus 7
remained firm in his confident conviction that the Lord would stand by him. ·He 8
urged his men not to be dismayed by the foreigners' attacks but, keeping in mind
the help that had come to them from Heaven in the past, to be confident that this
time too victory would be theirs with the help of the Almighty. ·He put fresh heart 9
into them by citing the Law and the Prophets [b] and, by stirring up memories of the
battles they had already won, he filled them with new enthusiasm. ·Having thus 10
aroused their courage, he ended his exhortation by demonstrating the treachery of
the foreigners and how they had violated their oaths.

Having armed each one of them not so much with the safety given by shield and 11
lance as with that confidence which springs from noble language, he encouraged
them all by describing to them a convincing dream—a vision, as it were. [c] ·What he 12
3:1b had seen was this: Onias, the former high priest, that paragon of men, modest of
bearing and gentle of manners, suitably eloquent and trained from boyhood in the
practice of every virtue—Onias was stretching out his hands and praying for the
whole Jewish community. [d] ·Next, there appeared a man equally remarkable for 13
his great age and dignity and invested with a marvellous and impressive air of
majesty. ·Onias began to speak: 'This is a man', he said, 'who loves his brothers 14
and prays much for the people and the holy city—Jeremiah, the prophet of God.' [e]
Jeremiah then stretched out his right hand and presented Judas with a golden 15
sword, saying as he gave it, ·'Take this holy sword as a gift from God; with it you 16
will shatter the enemy.'

The disposition of the combatants

Encouraged by the noble words of Judas, which had the power to inspire valour 17
and give the young the spirit of mature men, they decided not to entrench them-
selves in a camp, but bravely to take the offensive and, in hand-to-hand fighting, to

commit the result to the fortune of war,[f] since the city, their holy religion and the
18 Temple were in danger. ·Their concern for their wives and children, their brothers
and relatives, had shrunk to minute importance; their chief and greatest fear was
19 for the consecrated Temple. ·Those left behind in the city felt a similar anxiety, 1 M 4:36h
alarmed as they were about the forthcoming encounter in the open country.
20 Everyone now awaited the coming issue. The enemy had already concentrated
their forces and stood formed up in order of battle, with the elephants drawn up in
21 a strategic position and the cavalry disposed on the wings.[g] ·Maccabaeus took note
of these masses confronting him, the glittering array of armour and the fierce
aspect of the elephants; then, raising his hands to heaven, he called on the Lord
who works miracles, in the knowledge that it is not by force of arms but as he sees
22 fit to decide, that victory is granted by him to such as deserve it. ·His prayer was 8:19 ‖1 M 7:40–42
worded thus: 'You, Master, sent your angel in the days of Hezekiah king of Judaea, 2 K 19:35
and he destroyed no less than one hundred and eighty-five thousand of Sennach- Is 37:36
23 erib's army; ·now, once again, Sovereign of heaven, send a good angel before us to
24 spread terror and dismay. ·May these men be struck down by the might of your
arm, since they have come with blasphemy on their lips to attack your holy people.'
And on these words he finished.

The defeat and death of Nicanor ‖1 M 7:43–50

25, 26 Nicanor and his men advanced to the sound of trumpets and war songs, ·but the
27 men of Judas closed with the enemy uttering invocations and prayers. ·Fighting
with their hands and praying to God in their hearts, they cut down at least thirty-
28 five thousand men and were greatly cheered by this manifestation of God. ·When
the engagement was over and they were withdrawing in triumph, they recognised
Nicanor, lying dead in full armour.

29 With shouting and confusion all around, they blessed the sovereign Master in
30 their ancestral tongue. ·He who, as protagonist,[h] had devoted himself, body and
soul, to his fellow-citizens, and had preserved the love he felt even in youth for
those of his own race, gave orders for Nicanor's head to be cut off, with his arm up
31 to the shoulder, and taken to Jerusalem. ·When he arrived there himself, he called
his countrymen together, stationed the priests in front of the altar and then sent for
32 the people from the Citadel. ·He showed them the head of the abominable
Nicanor, and the hand which this infamous man had stretched out so insolently
33 against the holy House of the Almighty. ·Then, cutting out godless Nicanor's
tongue, he gave orders for it to be fed piecemeal to the birds, and for the salary of
34 his folly[i] to be hung up in front of the Temple. ·At this, everyone sent blessings
heavenwards to the glorious Lord, saying, 'Blessed be he who has preserved his
holy place from pollution!'

35 He hung Nicanor's head from the Citadel,[j] a clear and evident sign to all of the 1 S 31:9–10
36 help of the Lord. ·They all decreed by public vote never to let that day go by

i. Suicide is rare in the Bible, hardly ever occurring except in the gravest moral predicaments, *see* 2 S 17:23e. It is not, however, expressly forbidden.

15 **a.** 'general trophy': a cairn stacked round with the arms of enemies fallen in battle.

b. To these two basic groups, (*see* Lk 24:27), the translator of Si will shortly be adding 'the other books' of the ancestors, of which some, no doubt, were already regarded as 'holy books' by the time of the Maccabees, *see* 1 M 12:9.

c. 'a vision, as it were' Gk-Luc.

d. Onias continues the role of intercessor which he had already played during his lifetime, 3:10seq.; 4:5.

e. Jeremiah, having suffered so much for his people, Jr 11:19,21; 18:18seq.; 20:1–2; 26, is most appropriately their intercessor. This function ascribed to Onias and Jeremiah is the first evidence of the belief in the prayers of the holy dead on behalf of the living. It is related to belief in the resurrection, *see* Ps 16:10; 49:16; Jr 6–7.

f. 'not to entrench themselves in a camp' Gk-Luc.; 'not to fight' Gk. • 'to the fortunes of war', lit. 'to good luck' 1 Gk MS, *Vet. Lat.*; 'with all their courage' Gk (except Gk-Luc. which has both).

g. *see* 1 M 6:35, and for cavalry on the flanks, 6:38. The parallel account in 1 M does not mention the elephants, but does name the battlefield: Adasa, 1 M 7:40,45.

h. *see* 1 M 9:11 (the word does not occur elsewhere in the Bible): the actor who plays the leading role in a drama.

i. 'the salary', *ta epicheira*, also means 'the arm', and makes a play on words with 'the hand' *cheir*, v. 32.

j. This is hardly likely, since the Acra was not cleared of the Syrians until nine years later, 1 M 13:51. The anachronism has been compared with that in 1 S 17:54. Here, too, it may be a later addition, since the author described how Nicanor's remains were put on display, v. 33.

1 M 7:49m unobserved, but to celebrate the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, called Adar in Aramaic,[k] the eve of what is called the Day of Mordecai.[l]

Compiler's epilogue

So ends the episode of Nicanor, and as, since then, the city has remained in the 37
possession of the Hebrews,[m] I shall bring my own work to an end here too. ·If it is 38
well composed and to the point, that is just what I wanted. If it is worthless and
mediocre, that is all I could manage. ·Just as it is injurious to drink wine by itself, 39
or again water alone, whereas wine mixed with water is pleasant and produces a
delightful sense of well-being, so skill in presenting the incidents is what delights
the understanding of those who read the book. And here I close.

k. lit. 'in Syriac', a word which in LXX renders 'Aramaic' in 2 K 18:26; Ezr 4:7; Dn 2:4.

l. The Day of Mordecai eventually becomes the feast of Purim, *see* Est 9. But at the time of the summarist, *c.* 124 BC, the feasts still seem to have been distinct. The 'Scroll of Fasting' (first century AD) names Nicanor's day as one of those when people should not fast.

m. He means the religious city (Mount Zion in 1 M), since the Citadel, remaining in Syrian hands, does not concern the author. Judas' victory over Nicanor has saved the sanctuary, the threats to which have now been removed. And the author, having attained the aim which he intended, brings his work to a close.

THE WISDOM BOOKS

INTRODUCTION TO THE WISDOM BOOKS

§1 Five books of the Old Testament are called 'wisdom' books: Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes or Qoheleth, Ecclesiasticus or Ben Sira, Wisdom. With these are grouped, somewhat ineptly, the Psalms and the Song of Songs. They represent a current of thought also to be found in parts of the books of Tobit and Baruch.

Wisdom literature flourished throughout the ancient East. Egypt produced wisdom writings in every period of its history. In Mesopotamia, from the Sumerian period onwards, proverbs and fables were being composed, as well as poems on human suffering showing affinities with Job. Mesopotamian wisdom made its influence felt in Canaan: wisdom texts, written in Accadian, have been discovered at Ras Shamra. From Aramaic-speaking areas we have the *Wisdom of Ahikar*, Assyrian in origin and translated into several ancient languages. This 'wisdom' ignores national boundaries. It is not primarily religious in character, being concerned rather with human solutions. It treats of the meaning of life, not philosophically in the Greek manner but by appeal to experience. It offers the recipe for a successful way of life and is furthermore the sign of a good education. It teaches people how to conform to the order of the universe and should, in theory at least, confer the secret of happiness and success. The experience, however, that this does not in fact always occur lies at the root of the pessimism characterising some wisdom compositions, in Egypt as in Mesopotamia.

The Israelites were acquainted with this wisdom. The highest praise the Bible can give to Solomon is that his wisdom excelled the wisdom of the sons of the East and the wisdom of Egypt, 1 K 5:10. Arab and Edomite sages were well known, Jr 49:7; Ba 3:22–23; Ob 8. Job and the three sages who were his friends lived in Edom. The author of Tobit knew the *Wisdom of Ahikar*, and Pr 22:17–23:11 very faithfully follows the Egyptian maxims of Amenemophis. Several Psalms are attributed to Heman and Ethan, Canaanite sages according to 1 K 5:11. Proverbs includes the Words of Agur, Pr 30:1–14, and the Words of Lemuel, Pr 31:1–9, both from Massa, a tribe in northern Arabia, Gn 25:14.

It is not surprising that the earliest wisdom works of Israel closely resemble those of neighbouring races; they are plants of the same soil. In the older sections of Proverbs we find little else than maxims born of human wisdom. With the exception of the latest books, Ecclesiasticus and Wisdom, this group of biblical literature does not touch on the great themes of the Old Testament: Law, Covenant, Election, Salvation. The sages of Israel show no concern for

the past and future fortunes of their nation: like their gentile counterparts they are absorbed in the individual and his destiny. This, however, they view in a more exalted light, that of the religion of Yahweh. Though the wisdom of Israel springs from the same root as, and thus resembles, the common wisdom of the East, it is essentially distinctive, and the effects of this become more marked as revelation progresses. The contrast once drawn between wisdom and folly now becomes an opposition between uprightness and vice, between true religion and false. Real wisdom is found in the fear of God which is the very foundation of true religion. The wisdom of the East may be called a kind of humanism; the wisdom of Israel is a religious humanism.

§2 The religious aspect of wisdom was slow to develop. The Hebrew term has a wide range of meaning, embracing manual and professional skill, political sense, discernment, astuteness, knowing how to get on, and magic arts. Human wisdom can be used for good or evil ends: hence the hostile attitude of the prophets to the sages, *see* Is 5:21; 29:14; Jr 8:9. And this perhaps explains why the sages began talking about divine wisdom only at a relatively late date, although the divine is the source of human wisdom and although, in Ugaritic texts, which are early, wisdom is held to be an attribute of the great god El. Not, however, until the post-exilic period do we read that God alone is wise, with a transcendental wisdom that human beings can observe at work in the creation, but which is beyond their powers to understand, Jb 28; 38–39; Si 1:1–10; 16:24seq.; 39:12seq.; 42:15–43:33. In the impressive prologue to Proverbs, Pr 1–9, divine Wisdom speaks as a person, at once present in God from eternity, and acting with him in the work of creation, *see* especially Pr 8:22–31. In Jb 28, Wisdom is presented as distinct from God who alone knows where she lies hidden. In Si 24 Wisdom says of herself that she has come from the mouth of the Most High, that her home is in heaven whence God sends her to Israel. In Ws 7:22–8:1, she is an outpouring of the glory of the Almighty, an image of his perfection. Thus Wisdom as a divine attribute is distinguished from him and assumes a personality of her own. Striking though these expressions may be within the context of the Old Testament faith, it does not seem that they amount to more than a literary convention. Nevertheless they remain mysterious and prepare the way for the revelation of a plurality of Persons in God. John's Logos, the Word, is at once in God and outside him, like divine Wisdom, and all these impressive texts justify the title 'Wisdom of God' accorded to Christ by Paul, 1 Co 1:24.

§3 Since the question of the individual and personal destiny was the chief preoccupation of the sages, the problem of retribution was of primary importance for them. It was in their circles and by dint of their hard thinking that this doctrine developed. In the older sections of Proverbs, wisdom (which is to say, uprightness) is sure to bring happiness, and folly (or vice) ruin. Thus God rewards the good and punishes the wicked. And such is still the position in the prologue of Proverbs, 3:33–35; 9:6 and 18. This is the doctrine, therefore, on which the teaching of wisdom is based, maintaining, as it does, that the world is ruled by a God who is just and wise. In its support it claims experience, despite the fact that experience often contradicts it. This contradiction is dramatically demonstrated in the Book of Job where the three friends defend

the traditional thesis. But to the problems of the virtuous in affliction there is no intellectually satisfactory answer as long as we hold the theory of adequate retribution on earth; unquestioning faith in God is the only recourse. The Book of Ecclesiastes, however different in its approach, reaches the same conclusion; it too rejects the traditional thesis, maintaining that no human being has a right to call God to account or demand happiness as a due. Ben Sira is of the same mind; true, he writes enthusiastically of the happiness of the wise, 14:20–15:10, but he is haunted by the thought of death and he knows that everything depends on that final hour: 'Yet it is a trifle for the Lord on the day someone dies to repay him as his conduct deserves,' 11:26, *see* 1:13; 7:36; 28:6; 41:9. He has a presentiment of 'the four last things' but does not express it clearly. Shortly after him, Dn 12:2 makes a clear act of faith in retribution after death, which is here coupled with faith in the resurrection of the body, since the Hebrew mentality could not conceive the survival of a spirit separated from the flesh. Among the Jews of Alexandria greater progress was to be achieved by another, parallel course; once Platonic philosophy, with its doctrine of an immortal soul, has freed Hebrew thought of its limitations, the Book of Wisdom can declare that 'God made human beings to be imperishable', 2:23, and that after death the faithful soul will enjoy unending happiness with God while the wicked will receive their punishment, 3:1–12. The sages of Israel at last have the answer to their great problem.

The oldest and simplest form of wisdom literature is the *mashal*. And this is (in the plural) the title of the book we call 'Proverbs', though, strictly speaking, the *mashal* is a striking sentence that catches the imagination, a popular saying, or a maxim. The older collections in Proverbs consist only of short sentences. Later, the *mashal* develops into more elaborate forms, becoming parable, allegory, discourse, argument. This development, already perceptible in the short appended sections of Proverbs and still more so in the prologue, Pr 1–9, crystallises in the subsequent books; with Job or Wisdom the *mashal* becomes a great literary composition.

The origin of even the simplest of these literary forms is to be sought in the life of family and clan. Observations of nature and of people, accumulated over many generations, have crystallised into maxims, peasant sayings, short poems, with a moral application and inculcating rules of behaviour. And similarly with the earliest formulations of customary Law, which often have the same content and form as wisdom maxims. While the great collections of wisdom were being compiled, popular wisdom flowed on unabated; from it derive the proverbs in 1 S 24:14; 1 K 20:11, and the fables in Jg 9:8–15; 2 K 14:9, the prophets themselves too making use of popular material, Is 28:24–28; Jr 17:5–11.

These short, easily memorised sentences were intended for oral instruction. Parents taught them to their children, Pr 1:8; 4:1; 31:1; Si 3:1, and the name 'son' is retained when master teaches pupil, since the sages ran schools, Si 51:23,26; *see also* Pr 7:1seq.; 9:1seq. 'Wisdom' became a privilege of the educated and therefore lettered classes; sages and scribes appear side by side in Jr 8:8–9 and Si 38:24–39:11 puts the scribe above the manual worker because his profession enables him to acquire wisdom. Scribes were needed for secretarial duties at court and it was at court that the doctrines of wisdom first began to develop. All these characteristics find their precise parallel in the

other centres of oriental wisdom, whether in Egypt or in Mesopotamia. One of the Solomonic collections in Proverbs was made by 'the men of Hezekiah king of Judah', Pr 25:1. But the sages were not merely collectors of old sayings, they were also authors. Two literary works, probably composed at the court of Solomon, the story of Joseph and the account of David's accession to the throne, may also be regarded as wisdom compositions.

The school of sages is therefore very different from the circles that produced the Priestly and the prophetic writings, and Jr 18:18 carefully distinguishes three classes: priests, sages, prophets. The sages had their own preoccupations: they were not particularly interested in the liturgy, nor do they seem to have been stirred by the misfortunes of their people or stimulated by the great hope that held the nation together. But from the Exile onwards, these three separate streams begin to merge. The prologue of Proverbs assumes the manner of a preaching prophet; Ben Sira, ch. 44–49, and Wisdom, ch. 10–19, dwell at some length on the history of salvation; Ben Sira shows his veneration for the priesthood, he is a devout worshipper, and finally he identifies wisdom with the Law, Si 24:23–24: here we have the alliance of scribe (or sage) with teacher of the Law that we find in gospel times.

At the beginning of this long search for wisdom stands the figure of Solomon. Here again we find oriental parallels: two Egyptian wisdom writings were thought to be the teachings given by a pharaoh to his son. From 1 K 5:9–14, *see also* 3:9–12, 28; 10:1–9, to Si 47:12–17, Solomon is held up to admiration as the greatest sage of Israel, and the two oldest and most important collections in Proverbs, ch. 10–22 and ch. 25–28, are attributed to him (hence the title of the book, Pr 1:1). Ecclesiastes, Wisdom and the Song were similarly attributed to him. All this teaching, gradually dispensed to the chosen people, was preparing the revelation of Wisdom incarnate: 'there is something greater than Solomon here,' Mt 12:42.

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF JOB

§1 The Book of Job is the literary masterpiece of the wisdom movement. It opens with a prose narrative. There was once a faithful servant of God whose name was Job, a rich and happy man. God allows Satan to test him to see if he will remain faithful despite misfortune. Job loses his possessions and his children, but is resigned to God's taking back what he had given. Next, his own person is attacked, his sickness is revolting and painful, but still he is resigned; his wife advises him to curse God but he rebukes her. At this point, three of his friends, Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, come to offer sympathy, ch. 1–2. After this introduction the long dialogue poem begins which constitutes the body of the book. It opens with a four-cornered conversation. In three series of speeches, ch. 3–14; 15–21; 22–27, Job and his friends oppose their different conceptions of divine justice; there is no very steady development of ideas, but rather an elaboration of principles laid down at the beginning. Eliphaz speaks with the moderation of advanced age but also with the severity learned of long human experience; Zophar has the excitability of youth; Bildad is a prosy person of measured discourse. All three, however, defend the traditional thesis of retribution on earth: if Job suffers, it is because he has sinned; his own opinion may acquit him, but not God's. When Job protests his innocence they grow still more obstinate. Job confronts this theorising with his own sad experience and with the universal experience of injustice. He comes back to this repeatedly, and as repeatedly is brought up against the mystery of a God of justice who makes the virtuous suffer. Thus groping in the dark he makes no progress towards a solution. His tortured soul matches his suffering body: the body has its paroxysms and its times of ease, the soul its revolts and its surrenders. This alternating motion has two climaxes: its first in the act of faith of ch. 19, its second in the final protestation of innocence in ch. 31. A new character, Elihu, now appears: both Job and his friends are mistaken, he says, and then in a spate of words attempts to vindicate God's ways, ch. 32–37. Yahweh himself cuts him short and 'from the heart of the tempest' (the traditional setting of theophanies) gives Job his answer. Or rather there is no answer, since no human being can put in the dock a God whose wisdom and power are infinite. Thereupon Job realises the folly of his words, 38:1–42:6. The book ends with an epilogue in prose: Yahweh rebukes the three friends, rewards Job with sons and daughters and doubles his possessions, 42:7–17.

§2 The main character, Job, is a figure famous in ancient history, Ezk 14:14,20, believed to have lived in the patriarchal age on the borders of Arabia and Edom, a region which is well known for its wise men, Jr 49:7; Ba 3:22–23; Ob 8, and from which his three friends also come. Job was traditionally regarded as a model of virtue, *see* Ezk 14, whose loyalty to God remained unshaken despite grievous trials. Our author has used this old story as the framework of his book and, though the dialogue poem is in style and tone so different from the prose prologue and epilogue, it can at no time have existed without them.

§3 The authenticity of certain passages in the dialogue has been questioned. The poem on Wisdom, ch. 28, should not be delivered by Job, containing as it does a concept of wisdom quite different from that held either by Job or by his friends, and indeed having more affinity with Yahweh's discourse, ch. 38–39. Nevertheless, it is a product, if not of the same author, at least of the author's school of thought, and is closely associated with the theme of the book; but why it has been inserted just here, where it is alien to the context, is difficult to say. It has been argued too that the speeches of Yahweh, ch. 38–41, did not belong to the original poem. The argument is, however, based on a misunderstanding of the book's meaning. It is true that ch. 38–41 ignore all the preceding debate as well as Job's own plight, by transferring the discussion from the human plane to the divine; but it is for this very reason that these speeches of Yahweh provide what, in the author's eyes, is the only solution to the problem, namely the mysterious nature of the ways of God. Other scholars believe that two passages of this section at least are not authentic: the description of the ostrich, 39:13–18, and the long descriptions of Behemoth and Leviathan, 40:15–41:26. If the descriptions of the two exotic animals are removed, there is almost nothing of Yahweh's second discourse left: originally, perhaps there was only one discourse, later made longer and then cut in two by a first, short answer from Job, 40:3–5. Attractive as this theory is, it is impossible to prove, nor is the matter of great importance. Finally, the arrangement of ch. 24–27 is not entirely satisfactory; the carelessness of copyists, or editorial readjustments, may be the explanation here.

The arguments against the authenticity of the speeches of Elihu, ch. 32–37, are weightier. Elihu appears abruptly and unannounced and Yahweh, who speaks next, ignores him completely. This is all the more strange in that Elihu anticipates the words of Yahweh, even giving the impression that his purpose is to supplement them. Moreover, he repeats to no purpose what the three friends have already said. Lastly, the vocabulary and style are different and the Aramaisms much more numerous than elsewhere. It seems, therefore, that these chapters have been added to the book by another author, making a further contribution to the poem's religious message.

§4 The author of Job is known to us only from his work: the book shows that he was without doubt an Israelite, brought up on the works of the prophets and the teachings of the sages. His home was most probably in Palestine but he must have visited other countries, particularly Egypt, or lived in them for a time. His date is conjectural. The prose narrative smacks

of patriarchal times and made early writers think that the book was, like Genesis, the work of Moses. But this argument applies only to the prose framework of the book and, even here, traditional sources or literary imitation may explain the style. The book is later than Jeremiah and Ezekiel (with which it has certain expressions and ideas in common) and its language has a strong Aramaic flavour. We are therefore in post-exilic times, when absorption in the destiny of the nation as a whole was giving way to an interest in the individual. The likeliest, though still uncertain, date is the beginning of the fifth century BC.

The writer puts the case of the good person who suffers. This is a paradox for the conservative view then prevalent that actions are rewarded or punished here on earth. This iron rule is plainly enunciated, so far as a nation as a whole is concerned, by the classic texts of Dt 28 and Lv 26; its working-out in history is demonstrated by the Books of Judges and Kings, and the same idea underlies the preaching of the prophets. With Ezekiel (ch. 18) the conception of individual responsibility finds clear expression, though it was already latent and occasionally expressed, Dt 24:16; 2 K 14:6; Jr 31:29–30. But even Ezekiel has only earthly retribution in mind and is therefore brought sharply up against harsh reality. Where a community is concerned, it may well be that the faults of the society as a society prevail, and that the good are therefore punished with the wicked. But if it is the rule that individuals are to be recompensed for their own actions, how is it that the good suffer? Yet this is the fact, and Job is an example. The reader is indeed informed in the prologue that Job's distress is not God's doing but Satan's and that it is a test of his fidelity. But Job does not know this, nor do his friends. These offer the old solutions: the happiness of the wicked is short-lived, *see* Ps 37 and 73; the sufferings of the good test their fortitude, *see* Gn 22:12, or possibly punish faults committed unwittingly or out of weakness, *see* Ps 19:12; 25:7. The three friends propose these explanations while they still think Job more or less innocent. But the cries that pain wrings from him and his impatience with God persuade them that his guilt goes deep: only grave sin can explain distress like this. The speeches of Elihu take up and develop these solutions: the suffering of those who are commonly judged upright is an expiation for sins of omission or of thoughtlessness, or possibly (the most original contribution of this section) a safeguard against still more serious faults and a cure for pride. But like the three friends, though not as harshly, Elihu holds that sin and suffering are connected, one with the other.

Job protests against this rigorous theory of cause and effect with the vigour of conscious innocence. He does not deny the principle of earthly recompense, indeed he lives in hope of it, and God gives it in the end (*see* the epilogue). But the recompense is, here and now, withheld; this is Job's problem and he seeks in vain for the meaning of it all. In his anguish he reaches out for God; God eludes him, but Job still trusts to his goodness. When God does appear it is to tell how inscrutable are his person and his designs, and Job falls to silence. This is the book's lesson: faith must remain even when understanding fails. At this stage of divine revelation, the author could go no further. More light cannot be thrown on the mystery of suffering innocence until God opens up the prospect of a future life in which

recompense is made and reveals the worth of suffering when it is united with the sufferings of Christ. Two texts of Paul give Job his answer: 'All that we suffer in this life is nothing in comparison with the glory which is destined to be disclosed for us,' Rm 8:18, and: 'It makes me happy to be suffering for you now, and in my own body to do what I can to make up all that has still to be undergone by Christ for the sake of his Body, the Church,' Col 1:24.

THE BOOK OF

JOB

I: PROLOGUE [a]

Satan tests Job

1 There was once a man in the land of Uz [b] called Job: a sound and honest man who feared God and shunned evil. Ezk 14:14e
2 •Seven sons and three daughters were born
3 to him. •And he owned seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen and five hundred she-donkeys, and many servants besides. This man Gn 12:16; 13:2;26:14
4 was the most prosperous of all the Sons of the East. [c] •It was the custom of his sons to hold banquets in one another's houses in turn, and to invite their three sisters to
5 eat and drink with them. •Once each series of banquets was over, Job would send for them to come and be purified, [d] and at dawn on the following day he would 1 S 16:5
make a burnt offering for each of them. 'Perhaps', Job would say, 'my sons have sinned and in their heart blasphemed [e].' So that was what Job used to do each time.
6 One day when the sons of God [f] came to attend on Yahweh, among them came Gn 6:1a
7 Satan. [g] •So Yahweh said to Satan, 'Where have you been?' 'Prowling about on 1 K 22:19–23
8 earth,' he answered, 'roaming around there.' •So Yahweh asked him, 'Did you pay Gn 3:1
any attention to my servant Job? There is no one like him on the earth: a sound Zc 3:1–2
9 and honest man who fears God and shuns evil.' •'Yes,' Satan said, 'but Job is not Lk 22:31
10 God-fearing for nothing, is he? •Have you not put a wall round him and his house and all his domain? You have blessed all he undertakes, and his flocks throng the
11 countryside. •But stretch out your hand and lay a finger on his possessions: then, I
12 warrant you, he will curse you to your face.' •'Very well,' Yahweh said to Satan, 'all he has is in your power. But keep your hands off his person.' So Satan left the presence of Yahweh.
13 On the day when Job's sons and daughters were eating and drinking in their
14 eldest brother's house, •a messenger came to Job. 'Your oxen', he said, 'were at

1 a. In this prose narrative the author has preserved the flavour of a folk tale.

b. Probably in the south of Edom, *see* Gn 36:28; Lm 4:21.

c. The phrase is used of all who lived east of Palestine, more particularly in Edomite or Arab territory, *see* Nb 24:21k.

d. lit. 'sanctified'; i.e. conducted purificatory rites to remove pollution, which would have made them unfit to take part in religious activities, *see* Lv 11:1a.

e. Hebr. 'blessed'. So also in 1:11 and 2:5,9. The original word 'curse, blaspheme' has been replaced in Hebr. by a euphemism that avoids a pejorative term applied to a divine name.

f. As kings do, God also holds receptions and audiences on certain days. • On the 'sons of God', *see* 38:7; Gn 6:1–4; Ps 29:1; 82:6; 89:6. These are superhuman creatures who make up God's court and council. They are identified with the angels (LXX translates 'the angels of God', *see* Tb 5:4b).

g. lit. 'the Satan'. When preceded by the article, as in Zc 3:1–2, the term is still not a proper name, it becomes so only in 1 Ch 21:1. According to Hebrew etymology, it means 'the adversary', *see* 2 S 19:23; 1 K 5:18; 11:14,23,25, or 'the accuser', Ps 109:6, but here a kind of supernatural spy. The Satan is an equivocal figure, distinct from the sons of God, sceptical as regards human beings, anxious to find fault in them, capable of unleashing all sorts of disaster on them and even of impelling them into sin, *see also* 1 Ch 21:1. If he is not deliberately hostile to God, he is nonetheless sceptical about God's success in creating humanity. Behind the cynicism and cold, malicious sarcasm, lurks a pessimistic being, whose hostility to human beings is based on envy. The text, however, does not elaborate on the reasons for his attitude. The foregoing characteristics relate the Satan to other sketches or portraits of the spirit of evil, particularly to that of the serpent, Gn 3, from which he will ultimately become indistinguishable, *see* Ws 2:24; Rv 12:9; 20:2, as the incarnation of diabolic power, *see* Lk 10:18.

1 K 10:1a the plough, with the donkeys grazing at their side, ·when the Sabaeans[h] swept 15
down on them and carried them off, and put the servants to the sword: I alone have
escaped to tell you.' ·He had not finished speaking when another messenger 16
20:26h arrived. 'The fire of God',[i] he said, 'has fallen from heaven and burnt the sheep
and shepherds to ashes: I alone have escaped to tell you.' ·He had not finished 17
speaking when another messenger arrived. 'The Chaldaeans,' he said, 'three bands
of them, have raided the camels and made off with them, and put the servants to
the sword: I alone have escaped to tell you.' ·He had not finished speaking when 18
another messenger arrived. 'Your sons and daughters', he said, 'were eating and
drinking at their eldest brother's house, ·when suddenly from the desert a gale 19
sprang up, and it battered all four corners of the house which fell in on the young
people. They are dead: I alone have escaped to tell you.'

Then Job stood up, tore his robe and shaved his head.[j] Then, falling to the 20
ground, he prostrated himself ·and said: 21

Gn 2:7;3:19
Ps 139:15
Qo 5:14,18
Si 11:14;40:1
1 Tm 6:7

Naked I came from my mother's womb,
naked I shall return again.[k]
Yahweh gave, Yahweh has taken back.
Blessed be the name of Yahweh!

In all this misfortune Job committed no sin, and he did not reproach God. 22

1:6g **2** Another day, the sons of God came to attend on Yahweh and Satan came with 1
them too.[a] ·So Yahweh said to Satan, 'Where have you been?' 'Prowling about 2
on earth,' he answered, 'roaming around there.' ·So Yahweh asked him, 'Did you 3
pay any attention to my servant Job? There is no one like him on the earth: a sound
and honest man who fears God and shuns evil. He persists in his integrity still; you
achieved nothing by provoking me to ruin him.' ·'Skin after skin![b] Satan replied. 4
'Someone will give away all he has to save his life. ·But stretch out your hand and 5
lay a finger on his bone and flesh; I warrant you, he will curse you to your face.'
'Very well,' Yahweh said to Satan, 'he is in your power. But spare his life.' 6
So Satan left the presence of Yahweh. 7

He struck Job down with malignant ulcers[c] from the sole of his foot to the top of
his head. ·Job took a piece of pot to scrape himself, and went and sat among the 8
2 K 6:33 ashes. ·Then his wife said to him, 'Why persist in this integrity of yours? Curse 9
Tb 2:14+ God and die.' ·'That is how a fool of a woman talks,' Job replied. 'If we take 10
happiness from God's hand, must we not take sorrow too?' And in all this misfortune Job uttered no sinful word.

The news of all the disasters that had fallen on Job came to the ears of three of 11
his friends. Each of them set out from home—Eliphaz of Teman, Bildad of Shuah
and Zophar of Naamath[d]—and by common consent they decided to go and offer
him sympathy and consolation. ·Looking at him from a distance, they could not 12
Is 52:14 recognise him; they wept aloud and tore their robes and threw dust over their
heads.[e] ·They sat there on the ground beside him for seven days and seven nights. 13
To Job they spoke never a word, for they saw how much he was suffering.

II: THE DIALOGUE

A: FIRST CYCLE OF DISCOURSES

Job curses the day of his birth

Jr 20:14–18 **3** In the end it was Job who broke the silence and cursed the day of his birth. 1
This is what he said: 2

Si 23:14
Mt 26:24

Perish the day on which I was born 3
and the night that told of a boy conceived.[a]

May that day be darkness,
may God on high have no thought for it,
may no light shine on it.
May murk and shadow dark as death claim it for their own,
clouds hang over it,
eclipse swoop down on it. [b]
See! Let obscurity seize on it,
from the days of the year let it be excluded, [c]
into the reckoning of the months not find its way.
And may that night be sterile,
devoid of any cries of joy!
Let it be cursed by those who curse certain days [d]
and are ready to rouse Leviathan. [e]
Dark be the stars of its morning, 10:21–22, 22i Is 9:1
let it wait in vain for light
and never see the opening eyes of dawn.
Since it would not shut the doors of the womb on me
to hide sorrow from my eyes.

Why was I not still-born, 10:18–19 Qo 6:3
or why did I not perish as I left the womb?
Why were there knees to receive me,
breasts for me to suck?
Now I should be lying in peace,
wrapped in a restful slumber,
with the kings and high viziers of earth Is 14:9–11 Ezk 32:18–32
who have built their dwellings in desolate places, [f]
or with princes who have quantities of gold
and silver cramming their tombs; [g]
or, put away like an abortive child, I should not have existed, Qo 6:3
like little ones that never see the light.

h. Sabaeans and Chaldaeans (v. 17) here mean predatory nomads.

i. The thunderbolt, *see* 2 K 1:10,12,14.

j. This double gesture, expressive of sorrow or mourning, is often mentioned in the Bible, *see*, in the first case, Gn 37:34; Jos 7:6; 2 S 1:11; 3:31; etc.; in the second, Ezr 9:3; Jr 7:29; 48:37; Ezk 7:18.

k. Apparently likening mother earth to the womb.

2 **a.** Hebr. adds 'to attend on Yahweh', not found in 1:6 and omitted by Gk.

b. A proverbial expression, doubtless in popular use, the meaning of which can be deduced from the sentence following. Playing on the word 'skin', which can either mean clothes made of skins (Gn 3:21; 27:16) or leather, it seems to mean that someone will let himself be progressively stripped of everything he wears or possesses, rather than lose his own skin. Once his personal, physical being is affected, he then shows the real person he is. Other explanations have also been suggested, on the basis of the translation 'skin for skin'.

c. The word, properly meaning 'inflammation', is used elsewhere to designate the sixth plague of Egypt, Ex 9:9–11, an endemic disease in Egypt, Dt 28:27, the illness of Hezekiah, 2 K 20:7, or possibly refers to some virulent skin-disease, Lv 13:18–20,23. Here it means a pernicious condition affecting the whole body, as in Dt 28:35, but it is not susceptible of precise diagnosis.

d. The three towns are situated in Idumaean and Arab territory. Edom and 'the East', *see* 1:3c, were regarded by the Israelites as the homeland of the sages 1 K 5:10–11; 10:1–3; Pr 30:1; 31:1; Jr 49:7; Ba 3:22–23; Ob 8–9; Mt 2:1.

e. Penitential gesture and common sign of mourning, *see* Jos 7:6; 2 S 13:19; Ezk 27:30. The three friends consider Job as good as dead. The text adds 'towards heaven', a gloss omitted by the Gk, possibly inspired by Ex 9:8,10, which would turn the action into a gesture of indignation calling heaven to witness, either to invoke its vengeance or to avert such vengeance from themselves, *see* Ac 22:23.

3 **a.** Two parallel curses: one of the day of birth, the other of the night of conception.

b. 'deep shadow' *tzalmut* conj.; Hebr. *tzalmawet* 'shadow of death'. • 'eclipse' *kamrir yom* conj.; Hebr. *kimerire yom* 'like bitternesses of the day'.

c. 'Yes' taken from v. 7, and suppress 'that night' due to contamination by same v. • 'be excluded' Syr.; 'not rejoice' Hebr.

d. Either the enemies of light, those who work in the dark, *see* 24:13seq.; 38:15; or those who, like Job, curse the day they were born; or, more probably, sorcerers or magicians whose curses and spells were believed capable of making lucky days unlucky or even of producing eclipses, when 'Leviathan' temporarily swallowed the sun.

e. Leviathan (also called the Dragon or Fleeing Serpent), *see* 40:25j; Ps 74:14; 104:26; Is 27:1; 51:9; Am 9:3, was a monster of primeval chaos, *see* 7:12f; there was a common superstitious fear that a powerful curse against the present order might stir him to action. The Dragon of Rv 12:3, who embodies Evil's hostility to God, has certain characteristics in common with this serpent of chaos.

f. lit. 'who build ruins for themselves'. In the light of Is 58:12 and 61:4, the expression could mean 'rebuild ruins': the Babylonian and Assyrian kings often used to boast of having done so. But the pronoun 'for themselves' rather suggests funerary dwellings, built in advance in waste or lonely places, as was customary in Egypt. It may be that the Hebrew word for 'ruins' was commonly used for the Egyptian mastabas and pyramids.

g. lit. 'their houses', i.e. their 'houses of eternity', *see* Qo 12:5, or funerary dwellings, *see* also Ps 49:11. Archaeological excavation, notably at Ur and in Egypt, has revealed immense wealth stored away in the tombs of royal and princely families.

Down there,[h] the wicked bustle no more, 17
there the weary rest.
Prisoners, all left in peace, 18
hear no more the shouts of the oppressor.
High and low are there together, 19
and the slave is free of his master.
Why give light to a man of grief? 20
Why give life to those bitter of heart,
↗Rv 9:6 who long for a death that never comes, 21
and hunt for it more than for buried treasure?
They would be glad to see the grave-mound[i] 22
and shout with joy if they reached the tomb.
19:8 Why give light to one who does not see his way, 23
Pr 4:18–19
Is 26:7 whom God shuts in all alone?

Ps 42:3 My only food is sighs, 24
and my groans pour out like water.
Pr 10:24 Whatever I fear comes true, 25
whatever I dread befalls me.
For me, there is no calm, no peace; 26
my torments banish rest.

Confidence in God[a]

4 Eliphaz of Teman spoke next. He said: 1

If we say something to you,[b] will you bear with us? 2
Who in any case could refrain from speaking now?
You have schooled many others, 3
giving strength to feeble hands;
your words supported any who wavered 4
and strengthened every failing knee.
Pr 24:10 And now your turn has come, and you lose patience, 5
at the first touch on yourself you are overwhelmed!
Does not your piety give you confidence, 6
and your integrity of life give you hope?
Ps 37:25 Can you recall anyone guiltless that perished? 7
Pr 12:21;22:8
Si 2:10; 7:3 Where then have the honest been wiped out?
2 P 2:9
Ho 10:13 I speak from experience: those who plough iniquity 8
Ga 6:7,8 and sow disaster, reap just that.
Under the breath of God, they perish: 9
Ps 18:15 a blast of his anger, and they are destroyed;
2 Th 2:8
Ps 17:12; the lion's roars, his savage growls, 10
22:14;22
Pr 28:15 like the fangs of a lion cub, are broken off.
The lion dies for lack of prey 11
and the lioness's whelps are dispersed.
I have received a secret revelation,[c] 12
a whisper has come to my ears;
by night when dreams confuse the mind 13
and slumber lies heavy on everyone,
a shiver of horror ran through me 14
and filled all my bones with fright.
A breath slid over my face, 15
the hairs of my body bristled.
Someone stood there—I did not know his face, 16
but the form stayed there before my eyes.
1 K 19:12–13 Silence—then I heard a voice,

17 'Can a mortal seem upright to God,
would anybody seem pure in the presence of his Maker? 14:4c; 15:14; 25:4–6 Ps 143:2
18 God cannot rely even on his own servants, 15:15–16
even with his angels [d] he finds fault.
19 What then of those who live in houses of clay, 2 Co 4:7;5:1
who are founded on dust?
20 They are crushed as easily as a moth,
between morning and evening they are ground to powder.
They vanish for ever, with no one to bring them back. [e]
21 Their tent-peg is snatched from them,
and they die devoid of wisdom.' [f]

1 5 Make your appeal then. Will you find an answer?
To which of the holy ones [a] will you turn?
2 Resentment kills the senseless,
and anger brings death to the fool.
3 I have seen the senseless taking root,
when a curse fell suddenly on his house. [b]
4 His children are deprived of prop and stay,
ruined at the gate, [c] and no one to defend them; Ps 127:5 Pr 22:22e
5 their harvest goes to feed the hungry,
God snatches it from their mouths, [d]
and covetous people thirst for their possessions.
6 No, misery does not grow out of the soil,
nor sorrow spring from the ground.
7 It is people who breed trouble for themselves 15:35 Gn 3:17–19
as surely as eagles fly to the height. [e]
8 If I were you, I should appeal to God
and lay my case before him. [f]
9 His works are great, past all reckoning, =9:10 Si 43:32
marvels beyond all counting.
10 He sends down rain to the earth, Ps 65:9,10
pours down water on the fields.

h. In Sheol, *see* Nb 16:33f.

i. 'to see the grave-mound' *gal* or *golel* conj.; Hebr. *gil* '(to the point) of jubilation'.

4 a. Eliphaz replies with a fairly harsh exposition of the traditional doctrine of retribution, basically speaking, an affirmation of faith in the providential justice of the God of the covenant. Though dubious of its universal efficacy, the poet restates it with great vigour.

b. 'If we say something to you', Aq. Sym. Theod.; 'Has anyone tried' Hebr.

c. lit. 'A word came stealthily to me', i.e. a word from heaven, spoken by a mysterious person, *see* v. 16, and heard during heavy sleep (the same word in Gn 2:21; 15:12), provoking a shudder of awe. This mode of supernatural knowledge contrasts with the rational nature of the teaching of the sages and indicates further development of this, at least in certain circles. But the revelation claimed by Eliphaz is not of quite the same type as the usual experiences of the prophets, who commonly received the Word when awake, nor of Ben Sira in later times, 39:1–15, but is more closely related to dreams and nocturnal visions, *see* Zc 1:8, of terrifying content, deliberately emphasised by the apocalyptic style of writing, *see* Dn 4:2; 5:5–6.

d. 'Servants of God' and angels are the same thing. If these beings, who are near God, still have a radical weakness, how much the more so, carnal and perishable human beings.

e. 'no one to bring them back' *meshib* conj.; Hebr. *meshim* 'no one to bother' (?).

f. 'tent-peg' *yetedam* conj.; Hebr. *yitram* 'cord'. • 'devoid of wisdom', lit. 'and not with wisdom'; or possibly 'for lack of wisdom' or 'and it is not Wisdom's fault'. But the immediate context, insisting on human frailty in general and the brevity of life, suggests that human beings have not found, or cannot find, time (*see* Ps 90:12) to acquire wisdom, or that what little they have acquired is powerless against death.

5 a. The angels, *see* 15:15 (in the light of 4:18); Dn 4:10,14,20; 8:13; Zc 14:5. Their intercession is mentioned again in 33:23–24, *see* Tb 12:12; Zc 1:12. Eliphaz's question is ironical: if the angels themselves are judged by God, it is useless to count on them for help against God. But the question presupposes the custom of having recourse to this sort of intercession, a custom perhaps with its roots far back in polytheism: the god of an individual intervened in the assembly of the gods to defend his client.

b. 'a curse fell' following Gk and Syr.; 'I cursed' Hebr. The text of vv. 3–4 is uncertain and the translation conj.

c. The main gate of the town, common meeting place where justice was dispensed.

d. 'from their mouths' (lit. 'from their teeth') *mish-shinim* conj.; Hebr. *mitztzinim* ('out of the thorns').

e. 'who breeds' *yolid* conj.; Hebr. *yullad* 'who is born'. • 'eagles' according to the versions, which read *nesher*; Hebr. reads 'sons of Resheph' which perhaps means the same thing. Resheph, the god of thunder and lightning, may have had the eagle as his symbol.

f. After Eliphaz's ironical question in v. 1 (see explanatory note **a** above), the Temanite now apparently draws a distinction between those who have recourse to angels, and those who, like himself, are not afraid to address God directly. On this score, he invites Job to correct his attitude towards God and to behave with greater loyalty to his Creator.

1 S 2:7–8
Ps 75:7–8
If his will is to raise up the downcast, 11
or exalt the afflicted to the heights of prosperity,
12:23–25
he frustrates the plans of the artful 12
so that they cannot succeed in their intrigues.
↗1 Co 3:19
He traps the crafty in the snare of their own trickery, 13
throws the plans of the cunning into disarray.
Dt 28:29
Jn 12:35
In daylight they come up against darkness, 14
and grope their way as if noon were night.
He rescues the bankrupt[g] from their jaws, 15
and the needy from the grasp of the mighty.
Hope springs afresh for the weak, 16
Ps 107:41–42
and wickedness must shut its mouth.

Gn 17:1b
Pr 3:11–12+
Blessed are those whom God corrects! 17
Do not then scorn the lesson[h] of Shaddai![i]
For he who wounds is he who soothes the sore, 18
Dt 32:39
Ho 6:1
and the hand that hurts is the hand that heals.
Six times he will deliver you from sorrow, 19
and the seventh time,[j] evil will not touch you.
Ps 33:19
Jr 39:18
In time of famine, he will save you from death, 20
and in wartime from the stroke of the sword.
Ps 12:2–4;
31:20;91
You will be safe from the lash of the tongue, 21
unafraid at the approach of the despoiler.[k]
You will laugh at drought and frost,[l] 22
and have no fear of the beasts of the earth.
2 K 3:19,25
Is 5:2; 11:6–8
Ho 2:20
You will have a pact with the stones of the field,[m] 23
and live in amity with wild beasts.
You will know that your tent is secure, 24
and your sheepfold unharmed when you inspect it.
Dt 28:4,11
You will see your descendants multiply, 25
your offspring grow like the grass in the fields.
At a ripe age you will go to the grave, 26
like a wheatsheaf stacked in due season.
All this we have observed and it is so! 27
Heed it, you will be the wiser for it!

Only the sufferer knows his own grief

6 Job spoke next. He said: 1

If only my misery could be weighed, 2
and all my ills be put together on the scales!
But they outweigh the sands of the seas: 3
what wonder then if my words are wild?
7:20; 16:13
Ps 38:2
The arrows of Shaddai stick fast in me, 4
Ps 88:16
my spirit absorbs their poison,
God's terrors stand paraded against me.
Does a wild donkey bray when it has grass, 5
or an ox low when its fodder is within reach?
Is not food insipid, eaten without salt, 6
is there any taste in egg-white?[a]
But the very things my appetite revolts at 7
are now my diet in sickness.[b]
Will no one hear my prayer, 8
will not God himself grant my hope?
7:15
Nb 11:15
1 K 19:4
May it please God to crush me, 9
to give his hand free play and do away with me!

10 This thought, at least, would give me comfort
(a thrill of joy in unrelenting pain),
that I never rebelled against the Holy One's decrees. [c] Lv 17:1a Is 6:3g
11 But have I the strength to go on waiting?
And why be patient, when doomed to such an end?
12 Is mine the strength of stone,
is my flesh made of bronze?
13 Can I support myself on nothing?
Has not all help [d] deserted me?
14 Refuse [e] faithful love to your neighbour 29:12–13; 31:16–20
and you forsake the fear of Shaddai. [f] 1 Jn 3:17

15 Like the torrent, my brothers have proved deceptive, Jr 15:18
as fleeting torrents they flow:
16 the ice makes their waters turgid
when, above them, the snow melts, [g]
17 but, come the burning summer, they run dry,
they vanish in the heat of the sun.
18 Caravans leave the trail to find them,
go deep into wastelands, and are lost.
19 The caravans of Tema look to them, Is 21:14+ 1 K 10:1a
and on them Sheba's convoys build their hopes.
20 Their trust brings only embarrassment,
they reach them only to be thwarted. [h]

21 And this is how you now treat me, [i]
terrified at the sight of me, you take fright.
22 Have I said to you, 'Give me something, Jr 15:10
make some present for me at your own cost,
23 snatch me from the grasp of an oppressor,
ransom me from the grip of a violent man'?
24 Put me right, and I shall say no more;
show me where I have been at fault. [j]
25 Fair comment can be borne without resentment,
but what are your strictures aimed at?
26 Do you think mere words deserve censure,
desperate speech that the wind blows away?
27 Soon you will be haggling over the price of an orphan,
and selling your friend at bargain price!
28 Come, I beg you, look at me:
man to man, I shall not lie.
29 Relent then, no harm is done;
relent then, since I am upright.

g. 'bankrupt', lit. 'despoiled' *moharab* conj.; Hebr. *mehereb* 'from the sword'.

h. Job's misfortunes are therefore disciplinary, a painful but salutary lesson. Elihu says the same, 33:19seq.

i. Name for God in the patriarchal period, *see* Gn 17:1b; a deliberate archaism in Jb.

J. Eliphaz uses the style of the 'numerical proverbs', *see* Pr 6:16–19; 30:15seq.

k. 'despoiler' conj.; 'spoliation' Hebr.

l. 'drought and frost' *lesharab ulekephor* conj.; Hebr. *leshod ulekaphan* 'pillage and famine', but these two scourges have been mentioned already.

m. In Palestine the soil must be cleared of these, *see* 2 K 3:19,25; Is 5:2.

6 **a.** 'egg-white' following Targ.; others conjecture a plant: purslain- or mallow-juice.

b. This very difficult v. is translated according to the Vulg. (which joins the two lines into a single sentence). • 'in sickness', lit. 'in my illness' conj.; 'like an illness' Hebr. Job's repugnance for his wretched food (both real and symbolic) signifies his disgust with life itself. To his well-nourished friends this is incomprehensible.

c. By rebellion against Providence. 'The Holy One' here means Yahweh, *see* Is 6:3g; Hab 3:3.

d. 'help' Gk, Syr.; 'sagacity' Hebr.

e. 'refuse' Hebr. MSS; 'dissolve' MT.

f. Kindness to others is a sign of true religion.

g. Difficult text: lit. 'blackened (or: troubled) because of the ice, on them the snow disappears'.

h. 'Their trust', lit. 'They have hoped', Syr. Targ.; 'He has hoped' Hebr. • 'them' conj.; 'her' Hebr.

i. 'This is how' *ken* conj.; Hebr. *ki* 'For'. • 'me' *li* conj.; Hebr. *lo'* 'not'.

j. Sinning either inadvertently or through ignorance, *see* Lv 4; Nb 15:22–29; Ps 19:11.

Is evil to be found on my lips?
Can I not recognise misfortune when I taste it?

14:14 Si 40:1seq. 7 Is not human life on earth just conscript service? [a] 1
Do we not live a hireling's life? [b]
Like a slave, sighing for the shade, 2
or a hireling with no thought but for his wages,
Qo 2:25 Si 30:17 I have months of futility assigned to me, 3
nights of suffering to be my lot.
Dt 28:67 Lying in bed I wonder, 'When will it be day?' 4
No sooner up than, 'When will evening come?' [c]
And crazy thoughts obsess me till twilight falls.
Vermin and loathsome scabs cover my body; 5
my skin is cracked and oozes pus.
Is 38:12 Swifter than a weaver's shuttle my days have passed, 6
and vanished, leaving no hope behind.
Ps 78:39; 89:47 Remember that my life is but a breath, 7
and that my eyes will never again see joy. [d]
The eye that once saw me will look on me no more, 8
your eyes will turn my way, and I shall not be there.
Ws 2:1,4 A cloud dissolves and is gone, 9
so no one who goes down to Sheol ever comes up again, [e]
ever comes home again, 10
and his house knows that person no more.
That is why I cannot keep quiet: 11
in my anguish of spirit I shall speak,
in my bitterness of soul I shall complain.
3:8e; 9:13; 26:12 Am I the Sea, or some sea monster, [f] 12
that you should keep me under guard?
If I say, 'My bed will comfort me, 13
my couch will lighten my complaints,'
you then frighten me with dreams 14
and terrify me with visions,
6:9 so that strangling [g] would seem welcome in comparison, 15
yes, death preferable to what I suffer. [h]
I am wasting away, my life is not unending; 16
Ps 144:4 leave me then, for my days are but a breath.
Ps 8:4;144:3 What are human beings that you should take them so seriously, 17
subjecting them to your scrutiny, [i]
Ps 139 that morning after morning you should examine them 18
and at every instant test them?
Will you never take your eyes off me 19
long enough for me to swallow my spittle?
Suppose I have sinned, what have I done to you, [j] 20
you tireless watcher of humanity?
Why do you choose me as your target?
Why should I be a burden to you? [k]
Can you not tolerate my sin, 21
not overlook my fault?
For soon I shall be lying in the dust,
you will look for me and I shall be no more. [l]

The unswerving course of God's justice

8 Bildad of Shuah spoke next. He said: 1

How much longer are you going to talk like this 2
and go blustering on in this way?

3 Can God deflect the course of right — 34:10–12
or Shaddai falsify justice? [a] — Dt 32:4
4 If your sons sinned against him, — 1:19
he has punished them for their wrong-doing.
6a You for your part, if you are pure and honest,
5 must now seek God, plead with Shaddai. [b]
6b Forthwith his light will shine on you [c] and he will restore
an upright man's house to prosperity.
7 Your former state will seem as nothing to you,
so great will your future be.

8 Question the generation that has passed, — Dt 4:32; 32:7
meditate [d] on the experience of its ancestors— — Si 8:9
9 for we children of yesterday, we know nothing,
our life on earth passes like a shadow— — 14:2
Ws 2:5
10 but they will teach you, they will tell you,
and their thought is expressed in these sayings, [e]
11 'Can papyrus flourish except in marshes?
Without water can the rushes grow?
12 Even when green and before being cut,
fastest of all plants they wither.
13 Such is the fate [f] of all who forget God; — Ps 37:1–2
so perishes the hope of the godless. — Pr 10:28
14 His hope is nothing but gossamer,
his confidence a spider's web. — 27:18
15 Let him lean on his house; it will not stand firm;
cling to it, it will not hold. — Mt 7:26–27
16 Like some lush plant in the sunlight,
he sent his young shoots sprouting over the garden;
17 but his roots were twined in a heap of stones,
he drew his life among the rocks. [g]
18 Snatch him from his bed,
and it denies it ever saw him.
19 Now he rots [h] on the roadside,
and others are springing up in the soil.
20 Believe me, God neither spurns anyone of integrity,
nor lends his aid to the evil.

7 **a.** In the sense of military service, *see* 14:14, which involves both fighting and forced labour. Greek translates 'trial'; Vulg. *militia*, warfare or war service.

b. The hired labourer, paid by the day, Dt 24:15; Mt 20:8, works for another from morning to night, as the slave does, Lv 25:39–40.

c. 'day' Gk; omitted by Hebr. • 'when will evening come?' *mi yitten 'ereb* conj.; Hebr. *middad* unintelligible.

d. Accepting the human lot of suffering and death, Job breaks momentarily into prayer asking God for a few moments of peace before he dies.

e. The author expresses the current view here and in 10:21; 14:7–22; 16:22; *see* 2 S 12:23; Ps 88:10; etc., that return from Sheol is impossible, *see* Nb 16:33f.

f. In the Babylonian cosmogonies Tiamath (the Sea) co-operated in the birth of the gods and was then conquered and subdued by one of their number. The imagination of the people, or of poets, seized on this story: Yahweh became the conqueror who then set Chaos in order and ever after held the Sea and its monsters in control, *see* 3:8e; 9:13; 26:12; 40:25seq.; Ps 65:7; 74:13–14; 77:16; 89:9–10; 93:3–4; 104:7,26; 107:29; 148:7; Is 27:1; 51:9.

g. Unlike the figure in an ancient Egyptian text who is 'tired of life', Job does not contemplate suicide. Suicide occurs very rarely in the OT, *see* 2 S 17:23e.

h. 'what I suffer' *'atztzebotay*, conj.; Hebr. *'atzemotay* 'my bones'.

i. Bitterly ironical, the author seems to echo phrases from Ps 8. God's 'care' for human beings here becomes relentless scrutiny. The author of Ps 139 finds in this a cause for trust, but Job sees hostility in it. Reacting against a legalistic view of religion and of sin, he is groping his way towards a God of mercy, v. 21.

j. Sin cannot harm God.

k. 'to you' Gk; 'to myself' Hebr.

l. These last unexpected words re-introduce the idea of God mysteriously interested in human beings.

8 **a.** 'falsify' Gk; Hebr. repeats 'deflect'.

b. Verse corrected; Hebr. 'If you seek God and plead with Shaddai'.

c. 'his light will shine' *yair* conj.; Hebr. *ya'ir* 'he will wake up'.

d. 'meditate' *bonen* conj.; Hebr. *konen* 'made firm by'.

e. Ancestral tradition is the foundation of the wisdom teaching, and maintains that the punishment of the wicked is as certain and observable as the laws of nature, vv. 11seq.

f. 'fate' Gk; 'paths' Hebr.

g. 'he drew his life' Gk; 'he saw' Hebr. • 'among' *ben* conj.; Hebr. *bet* 'house'.

h. Translation conj.

Once again [i] laughter may fill your mouth 21
and cries of joy break from your lips.
Ps 6:10 Pr 14:11 Your enemies will be covered with shame 22
and the tent of the wicked will vanish!'

God's justice is above all law

9 Job spoke next. He said: 1

Indeed, I know it is as you say: 2
38–42 Ps 143:2 how could anyone claim to be upright before God?
Anyone trying to argue matters with him, 3
could not give him one answer in a thousand.
Among the wisest and the hardiest, 4
who then can successfully defy him?
Is 13:10,13 Jl 2:10;4: 15–16 He moves the mountains, though they do not know it; 5
he throws them down when he is angry.
He shakes the earth, and moves it from its place, 6
Heb 12:26 making all its pillars tremble. [a]
Ps 19:4–6 The sun, at his command, forbears to rise, 7
Ba 3:34–35 and on the stars he sets a seal. [b]
Ps 104:2 Is 40:22;42:5 He and no other has stretched out the heavens 8
and trampled on the back of the Sea. [c]
38:31–32 Am 5:8 He has made the Bear and Orion, 9
the Pleiades and the Mansions of the South. [d]
=5:9 The works he does are great and unfathomable, 10
and his marvels cannot be counted.
23:8–9 If he passes me, I do not see him; 11
he slips by, imperceptible to me.
Ws 12:12 If he snatches his prey, who is going to stop him 12
or dare to ask, 'What are you doing?'
God does not renounce his anger: 13
Ps 89:10 beneath him, Rahab's minions still lie prostrate. [e]

9:32;13:13seq., 18seq.;23:1–7 And here am I, proposing to defend myself [f] 14
and select my arguments against him! [g]
Even if I am upright, what point is there in answering him? 15
I can only plead for mercy with my judge!
Rm 9:20–21 And if he deigned to answer my citation, 16
I cannot believe he would listen to what I said,
he who crushes me for one hair, [h] 17
7:19 who, for no reason, wounds and wounds again,
not even letting me regain my breath, 18
with so much bitterness he fills me!
Shall I try force? Look how strong he is! 19
Or go to court? But who will summon him? [i]
If I prove myself upright, his mouth [j] may condemn me, 20
even if I am innocent, he may pronounce me perverse.
But am I innocent? I am no longer sure, 21
and life itself I despise!
It is all one, and hence I boldly say: 22
Qo 9:2–3 he destroys innocent and guilty alike.
When a sudden deadly scourge descends, 23
he laughs at the plight of the innocent.
When a country falls into the power of the wicked, 24
he veils the faces of its judges.
12:9 Or if not he, who else? [k]

My days pass: more swiftly than a runner
they flee away with never a glimpse of happiness,
they skim past like a reed canoe,
like an eagle swooping on its prey.
If I decide to stifle my complaining,
change countenance, and wear a smiling face,
fear seizes me at the thought of all my woes,
for I know you do not regard me as innocent. [l]
And if I have done wrong,
why should I put myself to useless trouble?
If I wash myself in melted snow, Is 1:18 Ps 51:7 Jr 2:22
clean my hands with soda, [m]
you will only plunge me into the dung, [n]
till my clothes themselves recoil from me!
For he is not human like me: impossible for me to answer him
or appear alongside him in court. Qo 6:10
There is no arbiter between us,
to lay his hand on both,
to stay his rod from me,
or keep away his daunting terrors. 13:21
Nonetheless, unafraid of him, I shall speak:
since I do not see myself like that at all! [o]

10 Since I have lost all taste for life, 7:11,15
I shall give free rein to my complaining;
I shall let my embittered soul speak out.
I shall say to God, 'Do not condemn me,
tell me what your case is against me.
Is it right for you to attack me,
in contempt for what you yourself have made,
thus abetting the schemes of the wicked?
Are your eyes mere human eyes, 1 S 16:7 Jr 11:20+
do you see as human beings see?
Are you mortal like human beings?
do your years pass as human days pass? [a]

i. 'Once again' *'od* conj.; Hebr. *'ad* 'until'.

9 **a.** The earth rests on 'pillars' which God 'shakes' in time of earthquake, 38:6; 1 S 2:8; Ps 75:3; 104:5. vv. 5–7 recall current eschatological imagery, *see* Am 8:9h.

b. To prevent them from appearing and shining. Ba 3:34 speaks of the opposite process.

c. From actual physical phenomena, the author reverts to the origins of creation, when God 'trampled on the Sea's back', i.e. imposed his authority on it, mastering it at the beginning of the world; the same expression is used in Dt 33:29. On the personification of the sea, *see* 7:12f.

d. Gk 'the Pleiades, Venus, Arcturus and the Mansions of the South'. That these are the constellations referred to is not certain.

e. Rahab, a monster of Chaos, doubling with Leviathan or Tannin, is the mythical personification of the primal waters, the Sea (Tiamath). To emphasise the creative mastery of Yahweh, the popular and the poetic imagination alike celebrated him as the conqueror or splitter of Rahab, *see* 7:12f; 26:12+; Ps 89:10; Is 51:9. In a historical context, Rahab personifies the Red Sea, and then Egypt, *see* Ps 87:4; Is 30:7.

f. lit. 'answer him'. The verb frequently has a forensic sense: to speak as a witness, or to plead one's own cause.

g. God being at once judge and interested party, Job cannot conduct the case by human rules of procedure. (The longing for self-justification by form of law recurs in other passages of the dialogue.) Job ends by doubting his own innocence, vv. 20–21. He fastens on the apparent caprice, v. 24, rather than the infinite wisdom (defended by Zophar, ch. 11) of the judgements of God.

h. 'for one hair' Syr., Targ.; 'in a tempest' Hebr.

i. 'Look how strong he is.' lit. 'He is the strong one', Targ.; 'The strong one, behold' Hebr. • 'will summon him' Gk, Syr.; 'will summon me' Hebr.

j. 'his mouth' conj.; 'my mouth' Hebr.

k. With implicit faith in an all-embracing Providence, Job does not hesitate to credit God with responsibility for all these outrages.

l. Eliphaz and Bildad have counselled meekness, 5:17; 8:5–6, but Job knows that such an assumed attitude can change neither his real one nor God's attitude to him.

m. Only God can wash sin away; the sinner himself, though powerless, finds relief in an appeal to God's mercy, as in Ps 51. Job, with no sin on his conscience, feels powerless too but cannot share the relief.

n. 'into the dung' Gk; 'into the pit' Hebr.

o. Job will not acknowledge guilt which he does not feel.

10 **a.** God knows the heart and does not need to sound Job's innocence by torture, v. 4, *see* vv. 6–7[a]. God, the master of time, has no need of immediate vengeance and can afford to be patient, v. 5, *see* v. 7[b].

You, who enquire into my faults 6
and investigate my sins,
you know very well that I am innocent, 7
Dt 32:39 Ws 16:15 and that no one can rescue me from your grasp.
Gn 2:7 Your hands having shaped and created me, 8
now you change your mind [b] and mean to destroy me!
33:6 Having made me, remember, as though of clay, 9
now you mean to turn me back into dust!
Ps 139:13,15 Ws 7:2 Did you not pour me out like milk, 10
and then let me thicken like curds, [c]
clothe me with skin and flesh, 11
and weave me of bone and sinew?
Gn 2:7 In your love you gave me life, 12
and in your care watched over my every breath.
Yet, all the while, you had a secret plan: [d] 13
I know that you were biding your time
to see if I should sin 14
and then not acquit me of my faults.
Woe to me, if I am guilty; 15
even if I am upright, I dare not lift my head,
so overwhelmed with shame and drunk with pain [e] am I!
Proud [f] as a lion, you hunt me down, 16
multiplying your exploits at my expense,
attacking me again and again, 17
your fury against me ever increasing,
your troops assailing me, wave after wave. [g]

3:11–16 Why did you bring me out of the womb? 18
I should have perished then, unseen by any eye,
a being that had never been, 19
to be carried from womb to grave.
7:7;14:1 The days of my life are few enough: 20
turn your eyes away, leave me a little joy, [h]
Ps 39:13 before I go to the place of no return, 21
to the land of darkness and shadow dark as death,
Nb 16:33f where dimness and disorder hold sway, 22
and light itself is like dead of night. [i]

Job must acknowledge God's wisdom

11 Zophar of Naamath spoke next. He said: 1

Is babbling to go without an answer? 2
Is wordiness a proof of uprightness?
Do you think your talking strikes people dumb, 3
will you jeer with no one to refute you?
These were your words, 'My conduct [a] is pure, 4
in your eyes I am free of blame!'
Will no one let God speak, 5
open his lips and give you answer,
Rm 11:33 show you the secrets of wisdom 6
which put all cleverness to shame?
Then you would realise that God is calling you to account for your sin. [b]
Can you claim to fathom the depth of God, 7
can you reach the limit of Shaddai?
Ps 139:8 ↗Ep 3:18 It is higher than the heavens: [c] what can you do? 8
It is deeper than Sheol: what can you know?

It would be longer to measure than the earth
and broader than the sea.
If he intervenes to close or convoke the assembly,
who is to prevent him?
He knows how deceptive human beings are,
and he sees their misdeeds too, and marks them well. [d]
Hence empty-headed people would do well to study sense
and people who behave like wild donkeys to let themselves be tamed. [e] 39:5–8 Gn 16:12
Come, reconsider your attitude,
stretch out your hands towards him! [f]
If you repudiate the sin which you have doubtless committed
and do not allow wickedness to live on in your tents,
you will be able to raise an unsullied face,
unwavering and free from fear,
for you will forget about your misery,
thinking of it only as a flood that passed long ago.
Then begins an existence more radiant than noon,
and the very darkness will be bright as morning. Jn 8:12b
Confident because there is hope;
after your troubles, you will sleep secure. [g]
When you lie down to rest, no one will trouble you,
and many will seek your favour.
But as for the wicked, their eyes are weary,
there is no refuge for them;
their only hope is to breathe their last. [h]

God's wisdom is best seen in the awesome works of his omnipotence

12 Job spoke next. He said:

Doubtless, you are the voice of the people, [a]
and when you die, wisdom will die with you!
But I have a brain, as well as you, 13:2
I am in no way inferior to you,
and who, in any case, does not know all that?
Anyone becomes [b] a laughing-stock to his friends
if he cries to God and expects an answer.
People laugh at anyone who has integrity and is upright.
'Add insult to injury,' think the prosperous,
'strike the fellow now that he is staggering!'
And yet the tents of brigands are left in peace:
those who provoke God dwell secure

b. 'and now you change your mind' Gk; 'together round' Hebr.

c. Primitive medicine imagined the formation of the embryo as a congealing of the mother's blood under the influence of the seminal element.

d. God's solicitude conceals awesome demands.

e. 'drunk with pain' *ureweh 'oni* conj.; Hebr. *ure' eh 'onyi* 'and seeing (?) my pain'.

f. 'Proud' conj.; 'He is proud' Hebr.

g. 'attacking again and again' (lit. 'your hostility') *'edyeka* conj.; Hebr. *'edeka* 'your witnesses'. • Last line following Gk; Hebr. 'relays and armed against me'.

h. 'The days of my life' *yemey heldi* conj.; Hebr. *yamay yahadal* 'My days, that he cease'. • 'Turn your eyes away' (lit. 'look far from me') *she 'eh mimmenni* conj.; Hebr. *weshit mimmenni* 'and place far from me'.

i. Sheol, *see* Nb 16:33f. Hebr. adds 'like dark night, deep shadow'.

11 a. 'My conduct' Gk; 'My teaching' Hebr.

b. 'is calling you to account' *yishe 'alka* conj.; Hebr. *yashsheh leka* 'makes you forget'.

c. 'higher than the heavens' Vulg.; 'the heights of the heavens' Hebr.

d. 'marks them well' *(lo)* conj.; Hebr. 'does not (*lo'*) pay attention'.

e. 'let themselves be tamed', lit. 'learn to become (a donkey)' *yillamed* conj.; Hebr. *yiwwaled* 'is born (a donkey)'.

f. Attitude of supplicatory prayer, *see* Ex 9:29,33; 1 K 8:38; Is 1:15.

g. 'after your troubles', lit. '(even if) you have been confused' *wehupparta* conj.; Hebr. *wehapharta* 'you will spy'.

h. As with Job whose only hope is death, 3:21; 6:9; 10:21.

12 a. Text obscure: lit. 'Truly, you are the people'.

b. 'becomes', lit. 'is', Gk, Syr.; 'I am' Hebr.

and so does anyone who makes a god of his fist!
You have only to ask the cattle, for them to instruct you, 7
and the birds of the sky, for them to inform you.
The creeping things of earth [c] will give you lessons, 8
and the fish of the sea provide you an explanation:
9:24 there is not one such creature but will know 9
that the hand of God has arranged things like this! [d]
Nb 16:22 Ws 7:16 Dn 5:23 In his hand is the soul of every living thing 10
and the breath of every human being! [e]
=34:3 Can the ear not distinguish the value of what is said, 11
just as the palate can tell one food from another?
32:7–9 Wisdom is found in the old, 12
and discretion comes with great age.
Pr 8:14 Is 11:2 But in him there is wisdom, and power too, 13
and good counsel no less than discretion. [f]
Ps 127:1 What he destroys, no one can rebuild; 14
Is 22:22 whom he imprisons, no one can release.
Is there a drought? He has withheld the waters. 15
Do they play havoc on earth? He has let them loose.
In him is strength, in him resourcefulness, 16
beguiler and beguiled alike are his.
He robs a country's counsellors of their wits, [g] 17
turns judges into fools.
He undoes the belts of kings 18
and knots a rope round their waists. [h]
He makes priests walk barefoot, 19
Lk 1:52 and overthrows the powers that are established.
He strikes the most assured of speakers dumb 20
Ps 107:40 and robs old people of their discretion.
He pours contempt on the nobly born, 21
and unbuckles the belt of the strong.
He unveils the depths of darkness, 22
Ps 139:12c brings shadow dark as death to the light.
Ac 17:26 He builds nations up, then ruins them, 23
he makes peoples expand, then suppresses them. [i]
He strips a country's leaders of their judgement, [j] 24
Ps 107:40 and leaves them to wander in a trackless waste,
to grope about in unlit darkness, 25
lurching to and fro as though drunk.

13 I have seen all this with my own eyes, 1
heard with my own ears and understood.
12:3 Whatever you know, I know too; 2
I am in no way inferior to you.
9:14g But my words are intended for Shaddai; 3
I mean to remonstrate with God.
As for you, you are only charlatans, 4
all worthless as doctors!
Pr 17:28 Will no one teach you to be quiet 5
—the only wisdom that becomes you!
Kindly listen to my accusation 6
and give your attention to the way I shall plead. [a]
Do you mean to defend God by prevarication 7
and by dishonest argument,
and, taking his side like this, 8
appoint yourselves as his advocates?

9 How would you fare, if he were to scrutinise you?
Can he be duped as mortals are duped? Ga 6:7
10 He would inflict a harsh rebuke on you
for your covert partiality.
11 Does his majesty not affright you? Is 6:1–5
Does his terror not overcome you?
12 Your received ideas are maxims of ash,
your retorts, retorts of clay.
13 Be quiet! Kindly let me do the talking, 10:1
happen to me what may.
14 I am putting my flesh between my teeth,
I am taking my life in my hands; [b]
15 let him kill me if he will; I have no other hope
than to justify my conduct in his eyes. [c]
16 And this is what will save me,
for the wicked would not dare to appear before him. Gn 3:8

17 Listen carefully to my words,
and pay attention to what I am going to say.
18 You see, I shall proceed by form of law, [d] 9:14g
knowing that I am upright.
19 Who wants to contest my case? [e]
In advance, I agree to be silenced and to die!
20 Only grant me two concessions, [f]
and then I shall not hide away from your face:
21 remove your hand, which lies so heavy on me, 9:34;23:6
no longer make me cower from your terror.
22 Then call me forward and I shall answer,
or rather, I shall speak and you will answer.
23 How many faults and crimes have I committed?
Tell me what my misdeed has been, what my sin?
24 Why do you hide your face [g] Ps 4:6d;44:24; 88:14
and look on me as your enemy?
25 Do you want to intimidate a wind-blown leaf, Ps 83:13
do you want to pursue a dry straw?
26 You who lay bitter allegations against me
and tax me with the faults of my youth Ps 25:7
27 and have put my feet in the stocks; 33:11

c. 'The creeping things' *zohale* conj.; Hebr. *siah la* 'speak to (the earth)'.

d. 'God' seven Hebr. MSS; 'Yahweh' MT, but the poet avoids using the divine name since he is putting words into the mouths of foreigners.

e. If, as all creation witnesses, God is the cause of all things, vv. 7–10, his is the ultimate responsibility for the prevalence of injustice, vv. 4–6.

f. Human wisdom, cut and dried with reassuring maxims, cannot compare with God's wisdom which is demonstrated by mighty works, vv. 14–16, and baffles the wisest of people, vv. 16–25.

g. Suppressing 'he makes walk' from the beginning of the v., *see* v. 19. • 'He robs of their wits' *yesakkel* conj.; Hebr. *solel* 'barefoot'. • 'a country's' Gk; omitted by Hebr.

h. Text obscure: read 'rope' (*moser*) instead of 'discipline' (*musar*) (with Targ.) and transpose with 'belt' (*'ezor*). The reference is apparently to the stripping and roping together of captives.

i. 'suppresses' *wayyimehem* conj.; Hebr. *wayyanehem* 'leads'.

j. 'a country's' Gk; 'he leads them astray' Hebr.

13 a. Job returns to legal procedure, *see* v. 18 and 9:14g. He himself elects to cross-examine God, spurning the so-called sages who presume to plead his cause.

b. Omitting the first two words, as a dittography from v. 13. • These expressions, with their proverbial ring, mean to gamble for life, to stake all, *see* Jg 12:3; 1 S 19:5; 28:21.

c. Job is out not to win back his happiness but to vindicate his innocence before man and, in particular, before God.

d. Job imagines a legal action between himself and God. On this occasion he forgets that there is no independent judge, 9:32–33; he no longer sees God as a judge but only as an opponent.

e. Job turns against God the legal accusation which Yahweh, Is 1:18; Ho 2:4; Mi 6:1–2, and his servant, Is 50:8, have already hurled at his people. The second line, lit. 'for now I shall be silent and die' may be another legal formula. He who challenges his opponents is already prepared to be proved wrong and take the consequences. Sure of his case, Job accepts this.

f. The first: to face God as an equal and to recover his liberty; the second: to speak first in the debate.

g. God 'hides his face' when he withholds signs of his benevolent presence.

you examine my every step
and measure my footprints one by one!

For his part, he [h] crumbles away like rotten wood, 28
or like a moth-eaten garment,
Ps 39:11;102:26
Is 50:9;51:8

14

[a] a human being, born of woman, 1
whose life is short but full of trouble.
Ws 2:1
Si 40:1–10;
41:1–4
Like a flower, such a one blossoms and withers, 2
Is 40:6–8+
fleeting as a shadow, transient.
Ps 37:2+
•Ps 8:4;144:3
Qo 6:12
And this is the creature on whom you fix your gaze, 3
and bring to judgement before you! [b]
4:17;9:30;
15:14;25:4
Ps 51:5
But will anyone produce the pure from what is impure? 4
No one can! [c]
Since his days are measured out, 5
since his tale of months depends on you,
since you assign him bounds he cannot pass,
Ps 39:13
turn your eyes from him, leave him alone, 6
like a hired labourer, to finish his day in peace.
There is always hope for a tree: 7
when felled, it can start its life again;
Is 6:13
its shoots continue to sprout.
Its roots may have grown old in the earth, 8
its stump rotting in the ground,
but let it scent the water, and it buds, 9
and puts out branches like a plant newly set.
But a human being? He dies, and dead he remains, 10
Qo 3:21
breathes his last, and then where is he?
Ps 102:26
Is 19:5;51:6
The waters of the sea will vanish, 11
the rivers stop flowing and run dry:
a human being, once laid to rest, will never rise again, 12
the heavens will wear out [d] before he wakes up,
or before he is roused from his sleep. [e]

Is 26:20
Am 9:2
Will no one hide me in Sheol, 13
and shelter me there till your anger is past, [f]
fixing a certain day for calling me to mind—
can the dead come back to life?— 14
7:1
day after day of my service, I should be waiting
for my relief to come.
Then you would call, and I should answer, 15
you would want to see once more what you have made.
Whereas now you count every step I take, 16
10:6
you would then stop spying on my sin;
you would seal up my crime in a bag, 17
and put a cover over my fault.

Alas! Just as, eventually, the mountain falls down, [g] 18
the rock moves from its place,
water wears away the stones, 19
the cloudburst [h] erodes the soil;
so you destroy whatever hope a person has.
21:21
You crush him once for all, and he is gone; 20
first you disfigure him, then you dismiss him.
His children may rise to honours—he does not know it; 21
they may come down in the world—he does not care.
He feels no pangs, except for his own body, 22
makes no lament, except for his own self. [i]

B: SECOND CYCLE OF DISCOURSES

Job's own words condemn him

15 Eliphaz of Teman spoke next. He said:

Does anyone wise respond with windy arguments,
or feed on an east wind?
Or make a defence with ineffectual words
and speeches good for nothing?
You do worse: you suppress reverence,
you discredit discussion before God. [a]
Your very fault incites you to speak like this,
hence you adopt this language of cunning.
Your own mouth condemns you, and not I;
your own lips bear witness against you. [b]

Are you the first-born of the human race, Pr 8:25
brought into the world before the hills? [c] Si 49:16
Have you been a listener at God's council, Jr 23:18
or established a monopoly of wisdom? Rm 11:34
What knowledge do you have that we have not,
what understanding that is not ours too?
One of us is an old, grey-headed man
loaded with more years than your father!
Can you ignore these divine consolations
and the moderate tone of our words?
How passion carries you away!
And how you roll your eyes,
when you vent your anger on God
and speeches come tripping off your tongue!
How can anyone be pure, 4:17–18;14:4c
anyone born of woman be upright? [d]
God cannot rely even on his holy ones,
to him, even the heavens seem impure.

h. i.e. a human being, see the following verse. Some critics suggest reading v. 28 after 14:2 or 14:6.

14 a. Elegy on human misery. Job, *see* 7:1, sees his own suffering as the state of every human being and thence draws his argument: why God should use his strength against such a mean creature is incomprehensible.

b. 'you bring (him)' versions; 'you bring me' Hebr.

c. Job acknowledges human vileness but pleads it as an excuse. The emphasis is laid on the physical (and therefore ritual) uncleanness which a human being contracts from the moment of conception, *see* Lv 15:19seq. and birth, *see* Lv 12:2seq., being born of woman, Jb 14:1, *see* Ps 51:5. This ritual uncleanness involves a corresponding moral weakness, a tendency to sin.

d. 'will wear out' Syr.; Hebr. corrupt.

e. The eschatological imagery, by indefinitely postponing the possibility of awakening, is here used to stress the fact that human beings disappear without hope of return. The expectation of a resurrection at the end of time is apparently not yet within the scope of the author, *see* 19:25g.

f. The text does not say that death would be followed by a period in Sheol, after which Job would return to life. The situation as imagined, does, however, bring this possibility to mind. Job in his desperation longs for refuge in the only place that he can think of, other than the earth: heaven being reserved to God, *see* Ps 115:16. If Job could hide somewhere until God's fury is exhausted, he might once more look on a God of mercy. The idea is developed in vv. 14–17: we see Job awaiting his 'relief' while God, no longer angry, longs to see Job again; every possible fault has been forgiven and therefore all question of sin is forgotten.

g. 'eventually falls down' Syr.; Hebr. corrupt.

h. 'cloudburst' *sehipah* conj.; Hebr. *sepiheha* must be corrupt.

i. lit. 'his soul laments over him', *see* Ps 6:5c. In Sheol, therefore, there is a certain consciousness of the self; *see* Nb 16:33f. The author means either that the shade has no thought and no concern except for itself, or else that it looks back with longing to the days of its earthly life.

15 a. The term translated thus means the application of the mind to religious truths, coupled with the idea of speech: meditation and study of the Law often took the form of real utterance.

b. Job's tongue betrays him: his protestations of innocence reveal anxiety to conceal guilt.

c. The first question contrasts Job with the first member of the human race, a being who could have claimed great wisdom. The second goes so far as to contrast him with Wisdom herself, brought forth before the hills were made, Pr 8:25, and ever afterwards a member of God's council, Pr 8:22–31; but *see* Jb 28:12–28; Ws 8:3–4.

d. Eliphaz resumes his earlier theme, 4:17, and that of Job, 14:4, but gives it another direction. Human intrinsic impurity is not now considered as the reason for frailty, 4:17–19, or as an excuse for unavoidable transgression, 14:1–4, but as the root from which great sins grow, 'iniquity' in the vocabulary of Eliphaz.

How much more, this hateful, corrupt thing, 16
34:7 humanity, which soaks up wickedness like water!
Listen to me, I have a lesson for you: 17
I am going to impart my own experience
and the tradition of the sages 18
8:8–10 Dt 32:7–8 who have remained faithful to their ancestors,
to whom alone the land was given— 19
Ws 17:3seq. no foreigner included among them.
The life of the wicked is unceasing torment, 20
18:11 the years allotted to the tyrant are numbered.
A cry of panic echoes in his ear; 21
when all is peace, his destroyer swoops down on him.
No more can he count on escaping from the dark, 22
but knows that he is destined for the sword, [e]
marked down as meat for the vulture. 23
He knows that his ruin is at hand. [f]
The hour of darkness terrifies him, 24
distress and anguish assail him
as when a king is poised for the assault.
He raised his hand against God, 25
boldly he defied Shaddai!
Head lowered, he charged him, 26
with his massively bossed shield.
His face had grown full and fat, 27
and his thighs too heavy with flesh.
He had occupied the towns he had destroyed, 28
with their uninhabited houses
about to fall into ruins;
but no great profit to him, his luck will not hold, 29
he will cast his shadow over the country no longer, [g]
(he will not escape the dark). 30
A flame will scorch his young shoots,
the wind will carry off his blossom. [h]
20:6–7 Let him not trust in his great height [i] 31
or delusion will be his.
His palm trees will wither before their time [j] 32
and his branches never again be green.
Like the vine, he will shake off his unripe fruit, 33
like the olive tree, shed his blossom.
Yes, sterile is the spawn of the sinner, 34
and fire consumes the tents of the venal.
5:6–7 Ps 7:14 Pr 22:8 Ga 6:8 Whoever conceives malice, breeds disaster, 35
bears as offspring only a false hope. [k]

Human injustice and divine justice

16 Job spoke next. He said: 1

How often have I heard all this before! 2
What sorry comforters you are!
'When will these windy arguments be over?' 3
or again, 'What sickness drives you to defend yourself?'
Oh yes! I too could talk as you do, 4
if you were in my place;
I could overwhelm [a] you with speeches,
Mt 27:39 shaking my head [b] over you,

and speak words of encouragement,
and then have no more to say.
6 When I speak, my suffering does not stop;
if I say nothing, is it in any way reduced? [c]
7 And now it is driving me to distraction;
you have struck my whole acquaintanceship with horror, 30:12e
8 now it rounds on me, my slanderer has now turned witness,
he appears against me, accusing me face to face; [d]
9 his anger tears and hounds me
with gnashing teeth.
My enemies look daggers at me,
10 and open gaping jaws.
Their sneers strike like slaps in the face;
and they all set on me at once.
11 Yes, God has handed me over to the godless, [e]
and cast me into the hands of the wicked.

12 I was living at peace, until he made me totter,
taking me by the neck to shatter me.
He has set me up as his target:
13 he shoots his arrows at me from all sides,
pitilessly pierces my loins,
and pours my gall out on the ground.
14 Breach after breach he drives through me,
charging on me like a warrior.
15 I have sewn sackcloth over my skin,
thrown my forehead in the dust.
16 My face is red with tears,
and shadow dark as death covers my eyelids.
17 Nonetheless, my hands are free of violence,
and my prayer is pure. 33:9d
18 Cover not my blood, O earth, [f]
and let my cry mount without cease! Rv 8:3–4
19 Henceforth I have a witness in heaven,
my defender is there on high. 19:25g
20 Interpreter of my thoughts there with God,
before whom flow my tears, [g]
21 let my anguish plead the cause of a man at grips with God,
just as a man might defend his fellow.

e. 'destined' *tzapun* conj.; *tzapu* Hebr. 'lain in wait for' (?).

f. 'marked down' *mo'ad* conj.; Hebr. *noded* 'he wanders', 'vulture' Gk; Hebr. arrangement of vowels faulty. 'his ruin' Gk; 'his hand' Hebr.

g. 'his shadow' Gk; Hebr. has an unknown word.

h. The first line, being a partial repetition of v. 22[a], is probably either a gloss or the corruption of another text. • 'his blossom' Gk; 'his mouth' Hebr. 'will carry off' *wiso 'ar* conj.; Hebr. *weyasur* 'he will remove himself'.

i. 'his height' *si'o* conj., *see* 20:6; Hebr. *shaw* 'futility', and remove *nite'ah* 'he has gone astray'.

j. 'will wither' version; 'will be filled' Hebr. • 'his palm trees', reading as *timorato* the redundant word *temurato* in the previous v.

k. lit. 'carries within himself' Gk, Syr.; 'prepares' Hebr. The same notion is presented in identical form in Is 59:4, in almost identical form in Ps 7:14, and with a different image in Jb 4:8; 5:6–7; Pr 22:8; *see also* with eschatological elaboration, Ga 6:8.

16 **a.** 'overwhelm' *'akbidah* conj.; Hebr. *'ahbirah* 'dispose'.

b. The gesture can mean sympathy or else contempt or mockery.

c. Job, unlike his comforters, whose interest in his case is confined to words, continues to suffer whether he speaks or is silent. This is how he justifies the tone of his words, *see* 6:26, in rebuttal of Eliphaz, *see* 15:5–6.

d. 'my slanderer', (lit. 'my liar') *kehashi* conj.; Hebr. *kehasi* 'my thinner'. • vv. 7–8 are obscure: the translation follows MT (except for the emendation above) but MT is possibly corrupt.

e. 'the godless', lit. 'a godless man' (collective) versions; 'a lad' Hebr.

f. Blood, if not covered with earth, cries to heaven for vengeance. Gn 4:10; 37:26; Is 26:21; Ezk 24:8. Job, mortally wounded (v. 12seq.) wishes to leave behind a lasting appeal for vindication: on earth, his blood; with God, the cry of his prayer. His cry is personified and hence can be the 'witness' and Job's 'defender' in the presence of God, v. 19. But these same terms might be applied to God himself, the God of faithfulness and kindness, to whom Job may be appealing in a sudden access of hope. Or again, there may be a reference to a mediator on Job's behalf. In the context, however, the first interpretation seems the most satisfactory.

g. 'Interpreter' *melitz* conj.; Hebr. *melitzay* 'My interpreters' or 'My mockers' Hebr. • 'before whom' Gk; omitted in Hebr.

For the years of my life are numbered, 22
10:21 and I am leaving by the road of no return. [h]

17 My breathing is growing weaker 1
Qo 12:1–7 and the gravediggers are gathering for me. [a]
Scoffers are my only companions, 2
their harshness haunts my nights.
So you must go bail for me to yourself, 3
for which of them cares to clap his hand on mine? [b]
For you have shut their hearts to reason, 4
hence not a hand is lifted. [c]
Just so is a man who invites his friends to share his property 5
while the eyes of his own children languish.

30:9 I have become a byword [d] among foreigners, 6
and a creature on whose face to spit,
since I am nearly blind with grief 7
and my limbs are reduced [e] to a shadow.
Is 52:15 Any honest person is appalled at the sight, [f] 8
the innocent is indignant at the sinner.
Anyone upright grows stronger step by step: 9
and anyone whose hands are clean grows ever in vigour!

Come on then, all of you, back to the attack! 10
I shall not find one wise man among you!

My days are over, so are my plans, [g] 11
my heart-strings are broken;
yet they would have me believe that night is day, 12
5:17–26; 8:6–7;11:17 that light to dispel the darkness is at hand, [h]
Jn 8:12b when all I want, in fact, is to dwell in Sheol 13
and in that darkness there to make my bed!
To the tomb, I cry, 'You are my father!'— 14
to the worm, 'You are my mother—you, my sister!'
Where then is my hope? 15
Who can see any happiness for me? [i]
unless they come down to Sheol with me, 16
all of us sinking into the dust together? [j]

The inevitable fate of the wicked

18 Bildad of Shuah spoke next. He said: 1

What prevents you others from saying something? [a] 2
Think—for it is our turn to speak!
12:7–8 Why do you regard us as animals, 3
considering us no more than brutes? [b]
16:9–10 Tear yourself to pieces if you will, 4
but the world, for all your rage, will not turn to desert,
the rocks will not shift from their places.
Jr 25:10 The light of the wicked must certainly be put out, 5
Jn 8:12b the lamp that gives him light cease to shine.
In his tent the light is dimmed, 6
the lamp that shone on him is snuffed.
Ps 18:36 His vigorous stride loses its power, 7
Pr 4:12 his own designs falter.
Ps 35:7–8; 140:5 For into the net his own feet carry him, 8
he walks into the snares.

A spring grips him by the heel,
a trap snaps shut, and he is caught.
Hidden in the ground is a snare to catch him,
pitfalls lie across his path.
Terrors threaten him from all sides — 15:21 Ws 17:10–14
following him step by step.
Hunger becomes his companion, [c]
by his side Disaster stands.
Disease devours his skin, [d]
Death's First-Born [e] gnaws his limbs.
He will be torn from the shelter of his tent,
and you will drag him to the King of Terrors. [f]
You can live in the tent, since it is no longer his,
and brimstone will be scattered on his sheepfold. [g] — Dt 29:22 Ps 11:6 Is 34:9
Below, his roots dry out
and his branches are blasted above.
His memory fades from the land, — Ps 9:5;34:16 Pr 10:7
his name is forgotten in the countryside.
Driven from the light into the darkness,
he is banished from the world,
without issue or posterity among his own people — Ps 37:28
or a single survivor where he used to live.
His end appals the west
and fills the east with terror.
Such indeed is the fate of the places where wickedness dwells—
the home of everyone who knows not God.

Faith at its height in total desertion

19 Job spoke next. He said:

How much longer are you going to torment me
and crush me by your speeches?
You have insulted me ten times already:
have you no shame at maltreating me?
Even if I had gone astray,
my error would still be my own affair. [a]

h. Possibly Job hopes for vindication before his death and wants God to hear him because time is running out. Or possibly he gives up hope of this and simply awaits death.

17 a. 'My' *'immi* conj.; Hebr. *'yamay* 'my days'. • 'grave-diggers' *qoberim* conj.; Hebr. *qebarim* 'graves'. • 'are gathering' *nize'aqu* conj.; Hebr. *nize'aku* are being extinguished'. Literal translation of the Hebr. would give 'my breath is growing weaker, my days are being extinguished, for me—the tombs.'

b. Gesture of legal procedure, *see* Pr 6:1; 17:18; 22:26; Si 29:14–20, by which the guarantor went surety for the debtor to defer distraint and offered bail. His friends being unhelpful, Job, apparently, asks God himself to be his guarantor.

c. 'not a hand is lifted' *lo' tarum yadam* conj.; Hebr. *lo' teromem* 'you will not stand up'.

d. 'a byword' versions; 'to rule over' Hebr. (wrong vowel arrangement).

e. 'are reduced' *kalim* conj.; Hebr. *kullam* 'all'.

f. 'appalled' Biblical expression for the emotion of those who witness divine punishment inflicted on the guilty. So it is with Job's friends: seeing his sufferings they expatiate in conventional terms on the justice of God. Job derides this ready-made wisdom and formal piety.

g. 'so are my plans' conj.; Hebr. makes 'plans' the subject of the following verb.

h. 'to dispel' *mepanneh* conj.; Hebr. *mippene* 'in face of (the darkness)' or 'more than (the darkness)'.

i. 'happiness' Gk; Hebr. repeats 'hope'.

j. 'with me' Gk; 'to the locks (of Sheol)' Hebr. • 'sinking' Gk; 'rest' Hebr. (straightforward vowel emendation).

18 a. This v. is presumably addressed to Zophar and Eliphaz.

b. 'considering us no more than brutes' *nidminu kabba'ar* conj.; Hebr. *nitminu* 'are we impure?'.

c. 'Hunger' conj.; 'hungers' Hebr. • 'his companion' *'itto* conj.; Hebr. *'ono* 'his strength' or 'his misfortune'.

d. 'Disease devours' *ye'akel bidway* conj.; Hebr. *yo'kal badde* 'He devours scraps (of skin)'.

e. i.e. the worst disease of all, probably the plague.

f. A figure from oriental and Greek mythology (Nergal, Pluto, etc.), seems here to have infernal spirits (Furies) at command to plague criminals even during their lifetime.

g. Literal translation, but the text is perhaps corrupt. Some critics suggest 'his tent will be set on fire' (reading *toshkan mabbel* instead of *tishkan mibbeli lo*) to complete the parallelism with brimstone, symbolic of sterility, *see* Dt 29:22; Ps 11:6; Is 34:9, and perhaps here a disinfectant.

19 a. A fault excused by suffering, *see* 6:24j. Greek adds 'by speaking words that are unbefitting, words erroneous and untimely'.

But, whereas you take this superior attitude 5
and claim that my disgrace is my own fault,
I tell you that God has wronged me 6
and enveloped me in his net. [b]
Lm 3:7–9 If I protest against such violence, I am not heard, 7
if I appeal against it, judgement is never given.
He has built an impassable wall across my path 8
and covered my way with darkness.
29:14 He has deprived me of my glory 9
and taken the crown from my head.
14:7seq.; 17:15 He assails me from all directions to make me vanish; 10
he uproots my hope as he might a tree.
Inflamed with anger against me, 11
33:10 he regards me as his foe.
His troops have come in force, 12
directing their line of advance towards me,
they are now encamped round my tent.

Ps 38:11;69:8; 88:8,18 He has alienated my brothers from me, 13
my relatives take care to avoid me,
my intimate friends have gone away 14
and the guests in my house [c] have forgotten me.
My slave-girls regard me as an intruder, 15
a stranger as far as they are concerned.
My servant does not answer when I call him, 16
I am obliged to beg favours from him!
My breath is unbearable to my wife, 17
my stench to my own brothers. [d]
Even the children look down on me, 18
whenever I stand up, they start jeering at me.
All my dearest friends recoil from me in horror: 19
Ps 41:9 Si 6:8 those I loved best have turned against me.
Jn 13:18 My flesh is rotting under my skin, 20
my bones are sticking out like teeth. [e]
Pity me, pity me, my friends, 21
since I have been struck by the hand of God.
Must you persecute me just as God does, 22
Ps 27:2 and give my body no peace?

16:18–21,18f Is 30:8 Will no one let my words be recorded, 23
inscribed on some monument
with iron chisel and engraving tool, [f] 24
cut into the rock for ever?
I know that I have a living Defender [g] 25
and that he will rise up last, on the dust of the earth. [h]
After my awakening, he will set me close to him, [i] 26
and from my flesh I shall look on God.
Ps 17:15d He whom I shall see will take my part: 27
my eyes will be gazing on no stranger.
My heart sinks within me.
When you say, 'How can we confound him? 28
What pretext can we discover against him?'
You yourselves had best beware the sword, 29
since the wrath bursts into flame [j] at wicked deeds
and then you will learn that there is indeed a judgement!

The course of justice admits of no exception 27:13–23

20 Zophar of Naamath spoke next. He said:

My thoughts urge me to reply to this,
and hence the impatience that grips me.
I have put up with prating that outrages me
and now my mind inspires me with an answer.
Do you not know, that since time began Ps 37;73
and human beings were set on the earth,
the triumph of the wicked has always been brief,
and the sinner's gladness has never lasted long?
Towering to the sky he may have been, Ps 37:35
his head touching the clouds; [a]
but he vanishes, like a phantom, once for all,
while those who used to see him, ask, 'Where is he?'
Like a dream that leaves no trace he takes his flight, Ps 73:20
like a vision in the night he flies away. Ws 5:14 Is 29:8
The eye accustomed to see him sees him no more,
his home will never set eyes on him again.
His sons will have to reimburse the poor 27:16–17
and his children [b] pay back his riches.
His bones used to be full of youthful vigour:
and there it lies, in the dust with him, now!
Evil was sweet to his mouth, Pr 20:17
he would shelter it under his tongue;
cultivating it carefully,
he would let it linger on his palate.
Such food goes bad in his belly,
working inside him like the poison of a viper.
Now he has to vomit up the wealth that he has swallowed,
God makes him disgorge it.
He used to suck vipers' venom, Dt 32:32–33
and the tongue of the adder kills him.
No more will he know the streams of oil [c] 29:6
or the torrents of honey and cream.

b. God, not Job's sins, casts the net, cf. 18:8.

c. The phrase 'the guests in my house' taken from the beginning of v. 15.

d. lit. 'the sons of my womb'. The formula is unusual for meaning the children of a father, though the expression 'fruit of the womb' may occasionally mean this (*see* Dt 28:53; Ps 132:11; Mi 6:7). As the poet in any case tells us that Job's sons are all dead (*see* 8:4; 29:5), he presumably means sons of the same mother, i.e. Job's brothers, which seems to be confirmed by 3:10 (*see also* Ps 69:8: 'the sons of my mother').

e. v. corrected following the Gk. Hebr.: 'my bones cling to my skin and to my flesh, and I escape by the skin of my teeth'.

f. 'engraving tool' *wetzipporen* following Jr 17:1; Hebr. *we'oparet* 'lead'.

g. The word *go'el*, approximately translated 'defender', is a technical term of Israelite law, *see* Nb 35:19c. It is often used of God, the Saviour of his people and avenger of the oppressed. The early Jewish rabbis applied the term to the Messiah, and this probably induced St Jerome to translate here 'my Redeemer'. Job, slandered and condemned by his friends, awaits a Defender who this time (cf. 16:18–21g) is God himself, unless a celestial mediator is meant, who would undertake to defend Job and reconcile him with God, cf. 16:19. But Job still believes his happiness to be lost for ever and his death to be at hand: when God undertakes to avenge his cause, it will be after his death. Nonetheless Job hopes to witness this and to 'see' his vindication. In 14:10–14 he envisaged the possibility of a temporary shelter in Sheol, and here it would seem that he is counting on a brief return to earthly life to see his vindication accomplished; in this he is prompted by his faith in a God who can bring people back from Sheol, *see* 1 S 2:6; 1 K 17:17–24; Ezk 37. Job's faith thus momentarily defies horizons of mortality in his desperate need for justice; it prepares us for the explicit revelation of bodily resurrection, *see* 2 M 7:9c.

h. 'will rise up to stand', legal expression, used often of witness or of judge, 31:14; Dt 19:16; Ps 12:5; Is 2:19,21, 'last' recalls Is 44:6; 48:12.

i. 'my awakening' *'uri* conj.; Hebr. *'ori* 'my skin'. • 'he will set me close to him' *zeqapani 'itto* conj.; Hebr. *niqqepu zo't* 'they have destroyed that'.

j. 'bursts into flame' Gk; Hebr. unintelligible.

20 a. The OT often alludes to the monstrous pride of the first human beings, *see* Gn 11:4; Is 14:13–14; Ezk 28:2,17. This tradition, which has a mythological colouring, is in line with the Gn 3 tradition which makes pride the cause of the fall.

b. 'his children' *wiladayw* conj.; Hebr. *weyadayw* 'his hands'.

c. 'of oil' *yitzehar* conj.; Hebr. *nahare* 'the rivers' (joined to what follows).

When he gives back his winnings, his cheerfulness will fade, [d] 18
and the satisfied air he had when business was thriving.
Since he once destroyed the huts [e] of the poor, 19
plundering houses instead of building them up,
since his avarice could never be satisfied, 20
now all his hoarding will not save him; [f]
since nothing could escape his greed, 21
his prosperity will not last.
When he has everything he needs, want will seize him, 22
and misery will light on him with all its force.
On him God looses all his burning wrath, 23
hurling against his flesh a hail of arrows. [g]
Dt 32:41–42 Ws 5:17–23 If he escapes the weapons of iron, 24
the bow of bronze will transfix him.
Out of his back sticks an arrow, [h] 25
from his gall a shining point.
15:21;18:14 Ps 88:15–16 The terrors advance on him,
all the hidden darknesses are waiting to carry him off. [i] 26
1:16;15:34 A fire [j] unlit by human hand devours him,
and consumes what is left in his tent.
The heavens lay bare his iniquity, 27
and the earth rises up against him.
The income of his house pours away, 28
Is 24:18 like the torrents, on the day of retribution.
=27:13 Rv 21:8 Such is the fate God reserves for the wicked, 29
the inheritance he assigns to the accursed! [k]

Facts give the lie

21 Job spoke next. He said: 1

Listen carefully to my words; 2
let this be the consolation you allow me.
Permit me to speak in my turn; 3
you may jeer when I have spoken.
Is my complaint just about a fellow-mortal? 4
6:3,26; 16:4–6 I have good grounds to be perturbed!
29:9;40:4 Give your attention to me; you will be dumbfounded 5
and will place your hand over your mouth. [a]
I myself am appalled at the very thought, 6
and my flesh creeps.
Ps 73:3–12 Jr 12:1–2 Ml 3:15,18–19 Why do the wicked still live on, 7
their power increasing with their age?
They see their posterity assured, 8
and their offspring secure [b] before their eyes.
The peace of their houses has nothing to fear, 9
the rod that God wields is not for them.
No mishap with their bull at breeding-time, 10
nor miscarriage with their cow at calving.
They let their infants frisk like lambs, 11
their children dance like deer. [c]
Is 5:12 Am 6:5 They sing to the tambourine and harp, 12
and rejoice to the sound of the pipe.
They end their lives in happiness 13
and go down [d] in peace to Sheol.

22:17 Jr 2:31 Ml 3:14–15 Yet these are the ones who say to God, [e] 'Go away! 14
We do not want to learn your ways.

What is the point of our serving Shaddai?
What should we gain from praying to him?'
Surely they have won their own prosperity,
since God is kept so far from their plans?

Do we often see the light of the wicked put out, 18:5;20:22, 26–28
or disaster overtake him,
or the retribution of God destroy his possessions,[f]
or the wind blow him away like a straw, Ps 1:4
or a whirlwind carry him off like chaff? Ps 75:8+
So God is storing up punishment for his children?[g]
But the wicked himself should be punished, and should know it!
He himself should witness his own ruin,[h]
and himself drink the anger of Shaddai.
Once he is gone, what joy can he gain from his family, 14:21–22
once the number of his months has been cut off? 2 K 20:19 Qo 9:5–6
But who can teach wisdom to God,
to him who is judge of those on high?
And again: one person dies in the fullness of strength,
in all possible happiness and ease,[i]
thighs padded with fat[j]
and the marrow in the bones good and moist.
Another dies in bitterness of heart,
never having tasted happiness.
They lie together down in the dust
and the worms soon cover them both. Qo 9:2–3

Oh, I know what is in your minds,
what you so spitefully think about me!
'What has become of the great lord's house,' you say,
'where is the tent where the wicked used to live?'
Have you never questioned people who travel,
do you not understand the testimony they give:
on the day of disaster, the wicked is spared, Pr 11:4 Am 5:18m Rm 2:3–6
on the day of retribution, he is kept safe?
And who is there then to reproach him for his deeds
and to pay him back for the things he has done?
He is carried away to the cemetery,
and a watch is kept at his tomb.
The clods of the ravine lie easy on him,
and the whole population walk behind.[k]

d. 'cheerfulness' *yablig* conj.; Hebr. *yibla'* 'he swallows'. • 'his winnings' *yegi'o* conj.; Hebr. *yaga* '(fruit of his) effort'.

e. 'huts' *'ezeb* Targ.; Hebr. *'azab* 'he has abandoned'.

f. 'his hoarding will not save him' conj.; 'by his hoarding, he will not save' Hebr.

g. The Hebr. has at the beginning 'While he filled his belly', omitted by Gk. • 'arrows' *'olmayw* conj.; Hebr. *'alemo* 'on him'. The same metaphors are used to describe the collective punishment of Israel or of the gentiles. God the Warrior deploys his arms, *see* Dt 32:41; Ws 5:18–20, sends illnesses and other disasters, and the earth, shaken by his fury, co-operates in the work of destruction, as later at the last judgement *see* Is 24:18.

h. 'an arrow' following the Gk; 'he has shot' Hebr.

i. 'to carry him off' *lisepoto* conj.; Hebr. *litzeponayw* 'for his hidden things'. • The dark powers of Sheol, prefigured in one of the plagues of Egypt, Ex 10:21.

j. A thunderbolt.

k. 'accursed' *mur'ar* conj.; Hebr. *'imro* 'of his word'.

21 **a.** Since to speak would be useless or unwise.

b. 'secure' *'omedim* conj.; Hebr. *'immam* 'with them' (linked to the first line).

c. 'like deer' conj., an addition by analogy with Ps 114:4–6.

d. 'go down' Syr.; 'they are terrified' Hebr.

e. 'God', lit. 'him' conj.; Hebr. has first person.

f. '(the wrath) destroy his possessions' *yehubbal helqo'* conj.; Hebr. *habalim yehalleq* 'does he destroy the wicked' or 'does he allocate portions'.

g. An old and respectable theory, Ex 34:7; Dt 5:9, later qualified, Dt 24:16; Jr 31:29; Ezk 18; *see also* Jn 9:1–3. Job demonstrates its inadequacy: the sinner will neither know nor feel the punishment, *see* 14:21–22.

h. 'his ruin' versions; Hebr. corrupt.

i. Another shocking consideration: death strikes indiscriminately.

j. 'thighs', lit. 'sides' Syr.; Hebr. obscure. • 'fat' versions; 'milk' Hebr.

k. The text adds 'and in front of him countless numbers', probably a gloss.

So what sense is there in your empty consolation? 34
your answers are the left-overs of infidelity!

C: THIRD CYCLE OF DISCOURSES

Admission of guilt leads to reconciliation with God

22 Eliphaz of Teman spoke next. He said: 1

Can a human being contribute anything to God, 2
when even someone intelligent can benefit only himself?
35:7 Lk 17:7–10 Does Shaddai derive any benefit from your uprightness, 3
or profit from your blameless conduct?
Do you think he is punishing you for your piety 4
and bringing you to justice for that?
29:11–17;31 No, for your great wickedness, more likely, 5
for your unlimited sins!
Ex 22:25–26 Is 58:7 Ezk 18:7 Mt 25:42seq. You have exacted unearned pledges from your brothers, 6
stripped people naked of their clothes,
failed to give water to the thirsty 7
and refused bread to the hungry;
handed the land over to a strong man, 8
for some favoured person to move in,
31:16–20 Ex 22:21 sent widows away empty-handed 9
and crushed the arms of orphans. [a]
18:8–11;19:6 No wonder, then, if snares are all around you, 10
and sudden terrors make you afraid;
Is 58:10–11 if light has turned to darkness, [b] so that you cannot see, 11
Ps 69:1–2 and you have been submerged in the flood.

Is 40:26–27 Does not God live high in the heavens, 12
does he not see [c] the zenith of the stars?
And because he is up there, you have said, 'What does God know? [d] 13
Ps 73:11 Is 29:15 Can he judge through the dark cloud?
Jr 23:23–24 The clouds, to him, are an impenetrable veil, 14
as he goes his way on the rim of the heavens.'
And will you still follow the ancient trail 15
trodden by the wicked,
those who were borne off before their time, 16
whose foundations were swamped by a flood,
21:14 for having said to God, 'Go away! 17
What can Shaddai do to us?' [e]
Yet he himself had filled their houses with good things, 18
although excluded from the plans of the wicked!
Ps 58:10 At such a spectacle, the upright rejoice, 19
and the innocent deride them:
'See how our enemies have been destroyed! 20
See how their wealth has perished in the flames!'

5:17seq. Well then! Make peace with him, be reconciled, 21
and all your happiness will be restored to you.
Welcome the teaching from his lips, 22
and keep his words close to your heart.
If you return, humbled, [f] to Shaddai 23
and drive wickedness far from your tent,
if you lay your gold down on the dust, 24
28:16 Ophir down among the pebbles of the torrent,

25 Shaddai will be bars of gold to you
and silver piled in heaps. Ps 4:7;16:5–6; 63:3–5; 84:10 Is 58:14 •27:10
26 Then Shaddai will be all your delight,
and you will lift your face to God.
27 You will pray, and he will hear;
and you will be able to fulfil your vows.
28 Whatever you undertake will go well,
and light will shine on your path;
29 for he casts down the pride of the arrogant, [g] Ps 18:27 Is 2:11–17 Lk 1:52–53
but he saves those of downcast eyes.
30 He rescues anyone who is innocent;
have your hands clean, and you will be saved.

God is far off, and evil triumphant

1 **23** Job spoke next. He said:
2 My lament is still rebellious;
despite my groans, his hand [a] is just as heavy.
3 Will no one help me to know
how to travel to his dwelling?
4 I should set out my case to him, 9:14g
advancing any number of grievances.
5 Then I could learn his defence, every word of it,
taking note of everything he said to me.
6 Would he put all his strength into this debate with me?
No, he would only have to give his attention to me,
7 to recognise his opponent as upright
and so I should win my case for ever. [b]
8 If I go to the east, he is not there; Ps 139:7–10
or to the west, I still cannot see him.
9 If I seek him in the north, he is not to be found,
invisible as ever, if I turn to the south. [c]
10 And yet he knows every step I take! [d] Ps 139:1–6 Jr 11:20+
Let him test me in the crucible: I shall come out pure gold.
11 My footsteps have followed close in his, Ps 17:5
I have walked in his way without swerving;
12 I have not neglected the commandment of his lips,
in my heart [e] I have cherished the words of his mouth.
13 But once he has made up his mind, [f] who can change it?
Whatever he plans, that he carries out. Is 55:10–11
14 No doubt, then, but he will carry out my sentence,
like so many other decrees that he has made.
15 That is why I am full of fear before him, Ps 119:120
and the more I think, the greater grows my dread of him.

22 a. The list of faults with which Eliphaz unfairly taxes Job is notable for its insistence on sins against justice and charity towards others, even by omission. This recalls the teaching of the prophets, cf. Job's apologia, 29:11–17; 31.

b. 'light has turned to darkness' Gk; 'or the darkness' Hebr.

c. 'does he not see' conj.; 'and see!' Hebr.

d. 'because he is up there': linking the last two words of v. 12 to v. 13 and reading them *ki ram hu'*; Hebr. *ki ramu*. Job has not said this, but Eliphaz is drawing conclusions from his words, among them this blasphemous conclusion: if God is not concerned, it is because he does not know.

e. 'do to us' versions; 'do to them' Hebr.

f. 'humbled', lit. 'and humble yourself' *wete'anah* following Gk; Hebr. *tibbaneh* 'you will be built'.

g. Line emended; Hebr. unintelligible (lit. 'for they cast down, and you have said, "Pride!" ').

23 a. 'his hand' versions; 'my hand' Hebr.

b. 'my case' versions; 'over my judge' Hebr.

c. 'if I seek him' conj.; 'if he acts' Hebr. • 'if I turn' conj.; 'if he turns' Hebr.

d. 'every step I take', lit. 'my walking and my stopping' Syr.; 'the way with me' Hebr.

e. 'in my heart' Gk; Hebr. unintelligible. Job is referring to the Law.

f. 'made up his mind' *bahar* conj.; Hebr. *be'ehad* 'in one'.

God has undermined my courage, 16
Shaddai has filled me with fear.
The darkness having failed to destroy me, 17
I am plunged back into obscurity by him! [g]

24 Why does Shaddai make known the times he has fixed; 1
why do his faithful never see his Days? [a]
Dt 27:17 The wicked move boundary-marks away, 2
they carry off flock and shepherd. [b]
They drive away the orphan's donkey, 3
Dt 24:17 as security, they seize the widow's ox.
30:2–8 Dt 15:11 The needy have to keep out of the way, 4
poor country people have to keep out of sight.
Like wild desert donkeys, they go out to work, 5
searching from dawn for food,
and at evening for something on which to feed their children. [c]
They go harvesting in the field of some scoundrel, [d] 6
they go pilfering in the vineyards of the wicked.
They go about naked, lacking clothes, 10
and starving while they carry the sheaves.
Two little walls, [e] their shelter at high noon; 11
parched with thirst, they have to tread the winepress.
Dt 24:12–13 They spend the night naked, lacking clothes, 7
with no covering against the cold.
Mountain rainstorms cut them through, 8
unsheltered, they hug the rocks.
The orphan child is torn from the breast, 9
the child of the poor is exacted as security. [f]
From the towns come the groans of the dying [g] 12
and the gasp of the wounded crying for help.
Rv 6:10–11 Yet God remains deaf to prayer! [h]

In contrast, there are those who reject the light: [i] 13
Jn 3:20 Ep 5:8–14 1 Th 5:4–8 who know nothing of its ways
and who do not frequent its paths.
When all is dark the murderer leaves his bed 14
Ps 10:8–9; 37:32 to kill the poor and needy.
During the night the thief goes on the prowl, [j]
breaking into houses while the darkness lasts. 16a
Pr 7:9–10 The eye of the adulterer watches for twilight, 15
'No one will see me,' he mutters
as he masks his face.
In the daytime they keep out of sight, 16b
these people who do not want to know the light.
For all of them, morning is a time of shadow dark as death, 17
since that is when they know what fear is. [k]

Is this not so? Who can prove me a liar 25
or show that my words have no substance?'

A hymn to God's omnipotence [a]

25 Bildad of Shuah spoke next. He said: 1

What sovereignty, what awe, is his 2
who creates peace on his heights! [b]
Who can count his armies? 3
Against whom does his lightning not surge forth?

Could anyone think God regards him as virtuous, 4:17+;15:14d
the child of woman as pure!
Why, the very moon lacks lustre, [c]
the very stars seem impure to him!
How much less a human, this maggot,
the child of man, this worm!

26 [a]

The Shadows [b] tremble underneath the earth,
the waters [c] and their denizens are afraid.
Before his eyes, Sheol is bare, Ps 139:8, 11–12
Perdition [d] itself is uncovered. Pr 15:11 Am 9:2
He it was who spread the North [e] above the void
and poised the earth on nothingness. [f] 38:6
He fastens up the waters in his clouds,
without the clouds giving way under their weight.
He covers the face of the full moon,
spreading his cloud across it. [g]
He has traced a ring [h] on the surface of the waters, 22:14 Gn 1:7,14
at the boundary between light and dark.
The pillars of the heavens tremble, [i]
awe-struck at his threats.
By his power, he has whipped up the Sea, 7:12f Ps 65:7+ 9:13e
by his skill, he has crushed Rahab. Is 51:9–10
His breath has made the heavens luminous,
his hand transfixed the Fleeing Serpent. [j] 3:8e Is 27:1
This is only a fraction of what he has done
and all we catch of it is the feeblest echo.
But who can conceive the thunder of his power?

g. 'I' *panay* conj.; Hebr. *mippanay* 'before me'. A very obscure verse, taken to mean that Job regrets not having been set free by death before the dread hour of darkness. But the negative can also be understood as referring to both halves of the verse and translate, 'I am not yet plunged back into obscurity by him.'

24 a. 'make known the times he has fixed' lit. 'not have times in reserve'. A store of 'times' from which to lengthen a human life and so provide opportunity for punishment: 'Days' i.e. for the punishment of wicked individuals, analogous to the 'Day of Yahweh' which is the day of universal retribution, *see* Am 5:18*m*.

b. 'The wicked' Gk; omitted by Hebr. • 'and shepherd' Gk; 'and make him feed' Hebr. • With wicked tyrants, vv. 2–4, Job contrasts the oppressed poor, vv. 5–12, whose wretchedness cries to heaven.

c. 'from dawn (*mishshahar*) looking for food', lit. 'from dawn, for food' conj.; Hebr. 'looking (*meshahare*) for food' • 'to dusk for something, etc.' *'ereb lallehem* conj.; Hebr. *'arabah lo lehem* 'on the upland, for him, bread'.

d. 'of some scoundrel' *beliyya'al* conj.; Hebr. *belilo* 'his fodder'.

e. 'Two little walls' *ben shurotayim* conj.; Hebr. *ben shurotam* 'between their walls'.

f. 'breast' Gk; 'devastation' Hebr. (different vowel arrangement). 'child' *'ul* conj.; Hebr. *'al* 'on'.

g. 'the dying' Syr.; 'men' Hebr.

h. Following the Syr.; 'God does not apply (his attention) to folly' Hebr.

i. This attack on the enemies of light (possibly an independent poem inserted here by the author) brings us back to the oppressors: God allows them to work in the dark. But here 'light' also has a moral sense, *see* Jn 8:12b.

j. 'When all is dark' *belo'or* conj.; Hebr. *la 'or* 'in the light'. • 'goes on the prowl' *yehallek* conj.; Hebr. *yehi ka* 'he is like'.

k. Line corrupt. Hebr. 'because he is familiar with the terrors of deep darkness'. vv. 18–24 are placed after 27:23.

25 a. This discourse (possibly mutilated) seems to anticipate the Discourse of Yahweh. It may, however, be integral to the Dialogue, if regarded as Bildad's reply to Job's insinuation that God is unable to intervene on the side of justice in human affairs.

b. Peace among the angels, *see* Is 24:21; Rv 12:7–12, and the stars, *see* Is 40:26; Si 43:10.

c. 'lacks lustre' versions; Hebr. corrupt.

26 a. For 26:1–4 *see* after 26:14. Apparently vv. 5–14 (rather than the continuance of Job's speech beginning at 26:1) complete the fragmentary speech of Bildad.

b. lit. 'the Rephaim', either the dead, *see* Ps 88:10, or the weak and powerless.

c. The waters of the abyss, peopled in popular imagination by the monsters subdued at the creation, *see* 7:12f. • 'are afraid', by restoring *yehattu*, which had disappeared through haplography after *mittahat* 'under the earth' (which Hebr. joins to next line).

d. In Hebr. 'Abaddon', *see* Rv 9:11, synonym for 'Sheol'; originally the word perhaps indicated a deity of the underworld.

e. The northern quarter of the firmament, on which the firmament was thought to revolve.

f. The earth rests on pillars, 9:6, but what these stand on is beyond human knowledge, 38:6. The only verse in the Bible that hints at infinite space.

g. At times of eclipse. 'the full moon' *keseh* conj.; Hebr. *kisseh* 'throne'. • 'spreading', *parosh* in preference to the Hebr. *parshez*, a hybrid form combining the roots *parash* and *paraz*.

h. 'traced a ring' *haq hug* conj.; Hebr. *hoq hag* 'circumscribed a limit'.

i. The high mountains, which support the vault of heaven, are rocked by thunder, the voice of God, Ps 29, or by earthquake, Ps 18:7.

j. Leviathan, *see* 3:8e and 7:12f.

Bildad's rhetoric is beside the point

26 Job spoke next. He said:

To one so weak, what a help you are,
for the arm that is powerless, what a rescuer!
What excellent advice you give the unlearned,
you are never at a loss for a helpful suggestion!
For whom are these words of yours intended
1 K 22:24 and whence comes that wit you are now displaying? [k]

Job reaffirms his innocence while acknowledging God's power

27 And Job continued his solemn discourse. He said:

34:5 I swear by the living God who denies me justice,
by Shaddai who has filled me with bitterness,
that as long as a shred of life is left in me,
33:4 Gn 2:7 and the breath of God breathes in my nostrils,
my lips will never speak evil
nor my tongue utter any lie.
Far from admitting you to be in the right,
I shall maintain my integrity to my dying day.
I take my stand on my uprightness, I shall not stir:
in my heart I need not be ashamed of my days. [a]
Let my enemy meet the fate of the wicked,
my adversary, the lot of the evil-doer!
For what hope does the godless have when he prays
and raises his soul to God? [b]
Is God likely to hear his cries
when disaster descends on him?
22:26 Did he make Shaddai all his delight,
calling on him at every turn? [c]
But I am showing you the way that God works,
making no secret of Shaddai's designs. [d]
And if you had all understood them for yourselves,
you would not have wasted your breath in empty words.

Discourse of Zophar [e]
The fate of the wicked

=20:29 This is the fate that God assigns [f] to the wicked,
the inheritance that the violent receive from Shaddai.
Though he have many children, it is but for the sword;
his descendants will never have enough to eat.
Plague [g] will bury those he leaves behind him,
and their widows will have no chance to mourn them.
Though he amass silver like dust
20:10,15 Qo 2:26g and gather fine clothes like clay,
let him gather!—some good man will wear them,
while his silver is shared among the upright.
8:14 All he has built himself is a spider's web,
made himself a watchman's shack. [h]
He goes to bed rich, but never again: [i]
he wakes to find it has all gone.
20:25 Terror assails him in broad daylight, [j]
and at night a whirlwind sweeps him off.
An east wind picks him up and drags him away,
snatching him up from his homestead.

22 Pitilessly he is turned into a target,
and forced to flee from the hands that menace him.
23 His downfall is greeted with applause,
he is hissed wherever he goes.
18acb 24 [k] He is no more than a straw floating on the water,
his estate is accursed throughout the land,
nobody goes near his vineyard.
19 As drought and heat make snow disappear,
so does Sheol anyone who has sinned. [l]
20 The womb that shaped him forgets him
and his name is recalled no longer. [m]
Thus wickedness is blasted as a tree is struck.
21 He used to ill-treat [n] the childless woman
and show no kindness to the widow.
22 But he who lays mighty hold on tyrants
rises up to take away a life that seemed secure.
23 He let him build his hopes on false security,
but kept his eyes on every step he took.
24 He had his time of glory, now he vanishes,
wilting like the saltwort once it is picked, [o]
and withering like an ear of corn.

D: A HYMN IN PRAISE OF WISDOM

Wisdom is beyond human reach [a]

Si 24 and notes

1 28 Silver has its mines,
and gold a place for refining.
2 Iron is extracted from the earth,
the smelted rocks yield copper.
3 Man makes an end of darkness,
to the utmost limit he digs
the black rock in shadow dark as death.

k. Job's ironical rejoinder to Bildad, who seems to have lost sight of the precise point under discussion.

27 a. 'be ashamed of for my days' *yehephar* conj.; Hebr. *yeheraph* 'not insult'.

b. 'prays' *yipga'* conj.; Hebr. *yibtza* 'cuts off' or 'draws out his profits'. • 'raises to God' Gk, Syr.; 'God takes back' Hebr.

c. Job repeats what Eliphaz has said about the punishment of the wicked but refuses to apply it to himself.

d. Job is apparently saying that he has given a true and factual account of God's disconcerting and mysterious attitude. His friends have shut their eyes to the plain facts.

e. The fragmentary speech in 27:13–23 can hardly belong to Job; it repeats the argument of one of his friends, most probably that of Zophar.

f. 'that God assigns'. lit. 'on the part of God' *me'el* conj.; Hebr. *'im'el* 'with God'.

g. lit. 'Death', but this word sometimes means the worst of diseases; here it is personified. *See* 18:13; Jr 15:2; 43:11; Rv 6:8.

h. 'spider's' Gk, Syr.; 'moth's' Hebr. Two images of instability.

i. lit. 'he will not begin again' Gk, Syr.; 'he is not put together again' Hebr.

j. 'in broad daylight' *yomam* conj.; Hebr. *kammayim* 'like waters'.

k. This section, 24:18–24, is placed here only conjecturally. The text is in a bad state and requires many corrections.

l. 'snow', lit. 'the snow-waters'. • 'anyone who has sinned' conj.; 'they have sinned' Hebr.

m. 'that shaped him' *petaqo* conj.; Hebr. *metaqo* 'gave him pleasure'. • 'his name' *shemoh* conj.; Hebr. *rimmah* 'maggot'.

n. 'ill-treat' *hera'* Targ.; Hebr. *ro'eh* 'pasturing'.

o. v. corrected in accordance with Gk; 'they faint, they run utterly to waste'. Saltwort is a green, edible plant found on the shores of the Dead Sea. v. 25 is after 24:17.

28 a. The original position and significance of this poem in the Dialogue are far from clear (*see* Introduction, p. 754). The poem offers certain analogies with Pr 8:22seq., where, however, Wisdom, envisaged as the inspirer of the works of God at the beginning of the world, later becomes the inspirer of humanity. Here, however, the poet is speaking of a Wisdom inaccessible to human beings. Ba 3:9–4:4 will later adopt the same theme, though speaking of a Wisdom revealed by special favour to Israel in the Law. Here, then, the description is of a completely transcendental Wisdom, incarnating the mystery of the ways of God and hard to distinguish from Wisdom as divine attribute, though in this case personified in an unusual way. The notion of a mysterious Wisdom, having her own dwelling-place, where she is finally discovered by God, is perhaps the echo of some ancient myth. The idea may be stated thus: Wisdom, having inspired God's plan, having the key to all his works and incarnating his Providence, is beyond the intellectual reach of human beings; despite all efforts and discoveries, they can never penetrate the final mystery of a Wisdom far surpassing their scope.

Foreigners bore into ravines [b] 4
in unfrequented places,
swinging suspended far from human beings.
That earth from which bread comes 5
is ravaged underground by fire. [c]
There, the rocks have veins of sapphire 6
and their dust contains gold.
That is a path unknown to birds of prey, 7
unseen by the eye of any vulture;
a path not trodden by the lordly beasts, [d] 8
where no lion ever walked.
Man attacks the flint, 9
upturning mountains by their roots.
He cuts canals [e] through the rock, 10
on the watch for anything precious.
He explores the sources of rivers, [f] 11
bringing hidden things to light.
Qo 7:24 Si 1:6 Ba 3:15 But where does Wisdom come from? [g] 12
Where is Intelligence to be found?

Ba 3:29–31 No human being knows the way to her, [h] 13
she is not to be found on earth where they live.
'She is not in me,' says the Abyss; 14
'Nor here,' replies the Sea.
She cannot be bought with solid gold, 15
nor paid for with any weight of silver,
nor valued against gold of Ophir, 16
precious agate or sapphire.
Ws 7:9 Neither gold nor glass compares with her, 17
for her, a vase of fine gold would be no exchange,
let alone coral or crystal: 18
better go fishing for Wisdom than for pearls!
Topaz from Cush is worthless in comparison, 19
and gold, even refined, is valueless.
But where does Wisdom come from? 20
Where is Intelligence to be found?

She cannot be seen by any living creature, 21
she is hidden from the birds of the sky.
26:6d Perdition and Death both say, 22
'We have heard only rumours of her.'
Pr 2:6;8:27–30 Ba 3:37 God alone understands her path 23
and knows where she is to be found.
(For he sees to the remotest parts of the earth, 24
and observes all that lies under heaven.)
When he willed to give weight to the wind 25
36:27–33 Is 40:12–14 and measured out the waters with a gauge,
when he imposed a law on the rain 26
and mapped a route for thunderclaps to follow,
Si 1:8–9,19 then he saw and evaluated her, 27
looked her through and through, assessing her. [i]
Then he said to human beings, 28
111:10 Pr 1:7a;8:13 'Wisdom?—that is fear of the Lord;
Intelligence?—avoidance of evil.'

E: CONCLUSION OF THE DIALOGUE

Job's complaints and apologia [a]

a. His former happiness

29 And Job continued his solemn discourse. He said:

Will no one bring back to me the months that have gone,
and the days when God was my guardian,
when his lamp shone over my head,
and his light was my guide in the darkness? (Ps 18:28+)
Shall I ever see my days of harvest again
when God protected my tent; [b] (1:10)
when Shaddai still dwelt with me,
and my children were around me; (Ps 127:3–5; 128:3)
when my feet were bathed in milk, (20:17)
and streams of oil poured from the rocks? [c] (Dt 32:13–14)
When I went out to the gate of the city, (5:4c)
when I took my seat in the square,
as soon as I appeared, the young men stepped aside, (Lv 19:32)
and the old men rose to their feet.
Men of note broke off their speeches, (Ws 8:10–12)
and put their hands over their mouths;
the voices of rulers were silenced,
and their tongues stayed still in their mouths.
[d]They waited anxiously to hear me,
and listened in silence to what I had to say.
When I had finished, no one contradicted,
my words dropping on them, one by one.
They waited for me as though for rain, (Dt 32:2)
open-mouthed as though for a late shower.
If I smiled at them, it was too good to be true, (Pr 16:15)
they watched my face for the least sign of favour.
As their chief, I told them which course to take,
like a king living among his troops,
and I led them wherever I chose. [e]

On hearing me, people congratulated me, (22:6–9)
on seeing me, people deferred to me,
because I freed the poor in distress (Ps 72:12; Is 11:4–5)
and the orphan who had no helper.
The dying man's blessing rested on me
and I gave the widow's heart cause to rejoice.

b. 'Foreigners (bore into) ravines' *nehalim 'am ger* conj.; Hebr. *nehal me'im gar* unintelligible. Mining was left to foreign slaves and prisoners of war. It usually took place in deserted parts of the country, notably in the desert of Sinai.

c. 'by fire' Vulg.; 'as if by fire' Hebr.

d. lit. 'the sons of pride', cf. 41:26.

e. lit. 'Niles'.

f. Which rise from the subterranean abyss. • 'explores' *hippes* conj.; Hebr. *hibbesh* 'binds'. • 'sources' *mabbeka* conj.; Hebr. *mibbeki* 'of weeping' (?).

g. 'where does (Wisdom) come from' following one Hebr. MS, cf. v. 20; 'where is she found' MT.

h. 'road' Gk; 'price' Hebr.

i. 'looked her through and through' *hebinah* following five MSS; MT reads *hekinah* 'established her', 'founded her'. Should the latter translation be adopted, the second verb should be rendered 'putting her to the test'.

29 a. Conceivably part of this discourse (30–31) may originally have belonged to Bildad's reply in the third cycle of discourses. The note: 'Job continued his solemn discourse' perhaps indicates that originally the passage belonged in another context. Attempts at subdividing the speech do not, however, give satisfactory results, and it has an internal unity which it is preferable not to disturb. It opens with a picture of happy life, which is of historic value in understanding the ideals of the Israelites.

b. 'protected' Gk, Syr.; 'in intimacy' Hebr.

c. Hebr. adds 'with me'.

d. vv. 21–25 are placed before v. 11: they follow on from v. 10 and apparently lead up to v. 11. Their displacement is probably due to a copyist's error.

e. 'I led them wherever I chose' *ba'asher 'obilam yannahu* conj.; Hebr. *ka'asher 'abelim yenahem* 'like someone who consoles the afflicted'.

19:9 Uprightness I wore as a garment, 14
Ps 132:9 fair judgement was my cloak and my turban.
Is 59:17
Ep 6:14
I was eyes for the blind, 15
and feet for the lame.
Who but me was father of the poor? 16
Pr 29:7 The stranger's case had a hearing from me.
Pr 30:14 I used to break the fangs of the wicked, 17
and snatch their prey from their jaws.

And I used to say, 'I shall die in honour,[f] 18
after days as numerous as the sand.
Ps 1:1–3 My roots can reach the water, 19
the dews of night settle on my leaves.
My glory will be for ever new 20
and the bow[g] in my hand forever strong.'

b. His present misery

30 And now I am the laughing-stock 1
of people who are younger than I am
and whose parents I would have disdained
to put with the dogs guarding my flock.[a]
24:4seq. And what use to me was the strength of their hands?— 2
enfeebled as they were,[b]
worn out by want and hunger, 3
for they used to gnaw the roots[c] of the thirsty ground—
that place of gloom, ruin and desolation—
24:24o they used to pick saltwort among the scrub, 4
making their meals off roots of broom.
Outlawed from human company, 5
which raised hue and cry against them, as against thieves,
they made their homes in the sides of ravines, 6
in holes in the earth or in clefts of rock.
You could hear them braying from the bushes 7
as they huddled together in the thistles.
Children of scoundrels, worse, nameless people, 8
the very outcasts of society![d]
16:7–11 And these are the ones who now make up songs about me 9
Ps 69:11–12 and use me as a byword!
Lm 3:14
Filled with disgust, they keep their distance, 10
on seeing me, they spit without restraint.
29:20g And since God has loosened my bow-string and afflicted me, 11
they too throw off the bridle in my presence.
Ps 109:5 Their brats surge forward on my right, 12
Zc 3:1 to see when I am having a little peace,
and advance on me with threatening strides.[e]
They cut off all means of escape 13
seizing the chance to destroy me, and no one stops them.[f]
They move in, as if through a wide breach, 14
and I go tumbling[g] beneath the rubble.
Terror rounds on me, 15
my confidence is dispersed[h] as though by the wind,
my hope of safety vanishes like a cloud.

16:12–17 And now the life in me trickles away, 16
days of grief have gripped me.
At night-time sickness[i] saps my bones 17
I am gnawed by wounds that never sleep.

18 Violently, he has caught me[j] by my clothes,
has gripped me by the collar of my coat.
19 He has thrown me into the mud;
I am no more than dust and ashes.

20 I cry to you, and you give me no answer;
I stand before you, but you take no notice.[k]
21 You have grown cruel to me,
and your strong hand torments me unmercifully.
22 You carry me away astride the wind
and blow me to pieces in a tempest.
23 Yes, I know that you are taking me towards death,
to the common meeting-place of all the living.

24 Yet have I ever laid a hand on the poor
when they cried out for justice in calamity?[l]
25 Have I not wept for those whose life is hard,
felt pity for the penniless?
26 I hoped for happiness, but sorrow came;
I looked for light, but there was darkness.
27 My stomach seethes, is never still,
days of suffering have struck me.
28 Sombre I go, yet no one comforts[m] me,
and if I rise in the council, I rise to weep.
29 I have become brother to the jackal
and companion to the ostrich.
30 My skin has turned black on me,
my bones are burnt with fever.
31 My harp is tuned to dirges,
my pipe to the voice of mourners.

Job's apologia[a]

1 **31** I had made an agreement with my eyes
not to linger on any virgin.[b]
2 Now what portion does God allot from above,
what fate does Shaddai apportion from his heaven—
3 if not the disasters appropriate to the wicked
and the calamities fit for evil-doers?
4 But surely he sees how I behave,
does he not count all my steps?
5 Have I been a fellow-traveller with falsehood,
or hastened my steps towards deceit?[c]

Ex 20:14,17
Dt 5:18,21
Ps 26 and notes
Si 9:5
Mt 5:27–29

Pr 5:21

f. 'in honour' *qarni* conj.; Hebr. *qinni* 'with my nest'.
g. The bow symbolises strength, *see* Gn 49:24.

30 a. Paupers, social outcasts, cf. 24:4seq. Job has sunk below their level.
b. 'enfeebled' *kol leah* conj.; Hebr. *kalah* 'mature' (?).
c. 'roots' is restored, having apparently fallen out after 'to gnaw' by haplography.
d. 'outcasts' *nikretu* conj.; Hebr. *nike'u* 'struck'.
e. There are various possible translations for this difficult v., depending on the emendations adopted. • 'see when I am having a little peace' *waveraggelu shalwi* instead of Hebr. *weraglay shillehu* 'they have thrown my feet'.
f. 'no one stops them' *'otzer* conj.; Hebr. *'ozer* 'no one helps them'.
g. 'I go tumbling' conj.; 'they are crushed' Hebr.
h. 'is dispersed' Gk; 'disperses' Hebr.
i. 'sickness' *mahaleh* conj.; Hebr. *me'alay* 'from on me'.
j. 'has caught' Gk; 'has disguised himself' Hebr.
k. Negative added following one Hebr. MS.
l. 'have I laid' Gk; 'he would not lay' Hebr. • 'on the poor' *be'ani* conj.; Hebr. *be'i* on the ruins'. • 'cried out for justice' *ledin shiwwe'a* conj.; Hebr. *lahen shu'a* unintelligible.
m. lit. 'no consolation' *belo' nehamah* conj.; Hebr. *belo' hammah* 'no sunshine'.

31 a. In this protestation of innocence, OT morality reaches its highest stage of development, directly prefiguring the morality taught in the gospel. The form of this protestation of innocence is that of a conditional imprecation against oneself, required of the accused by law, Ex 22:9–10; Nb 5:20–22; 1 K 8:31–32.
b. Job begins with secret sins, mediated through the eyes, cf. v. 7.
c. Probably fraud in barter or in the market. Job, appealing to the law of retaliation, asks that he himself be justly weighed, v. 6.

Pr 11:1;20:10
Let him weigh me on accurate scales: 6
then he, God, will recognise my integrity!
If my feet have wandered from the rightful path, 7
or if my eyes have led my heart astray,
or if my hands are smirched with any stain, [d]
let someone else eat what I have sown 8
and let my young shoots all be rooted out.
Pr 7
If my heart has been seduced by a woman, 9
or if I have lurked at my neighbour's door, [e]
let my wife go and grind for someone else, 10
let others have intercourse with her!
Dt 22:22–24
Pr 6:32–35
Jn 8:4–5
For I would have committed a sin of lust, 11
a crime punishable by the law, [f]
a fire, indeed, burning all to Perdition, 12
26:6d
which would have devoured [g] my whole revenue.
Ex 21:2seq.
Lv 25:39seq.
Dt 5:14–15
Jr 34:8seq.
If I have ever infringed the rights of slave 13
or slave-girl in legal actions against me [h]—
what shall I do, when God stands up? 14
What shall I say, when he holds his assize?
Pr 17:5;22:2
Ep 6:9
Col 4:1
Did he not create them in the womb like me, 15
the same God forming us in the womb?
If my land cries for vengeance against me 38
and its furrows weep in concert,
if I have eaten its produce without paying, 39
and caused the death of its owners, [i]
let brambles grow instead of wheat, 40a
rank weeds instead of barley! [j]

Tb 4:7–11,16
Is 58:7
Mt 25:35–36
Have I been insensible to the needs of the poor, [k] 16
or let a widow's eyes grow dim?
Have I eaten my bit of bread on my own 17
without sharing it with the orphan?
I, whom God has fostered father-like from childhood, 18
and guided [l] since I left my mother's womb,
have I ever seen a wretch in need of clothing, 19
or the poor with nothing to wear,
without his having cause to bless me from his heart, 20
as he felt the warmth of the fleece from my lambs?
Have I raised my hand against an orphan, [m] 21
presuming on my credit at the gate?
If so, let my shoulder fall from its socket, 22
let my arm break off at the elbow!
For the terror of God would fall on me [n] 23
and I could not then stand my ground before his majesty.

Ps 49:6;52:7
Pr 11:28
Si 31:5–10
Mt 6:24
Have I put my faith in gold, 24
saying to fine gold, 'Ah, my security'? [o]
Have I ever gloated over my great wealth, 25
or the riches that my hands have won?
Dt 4:19
Jr 8:2
Ezk 8:16
Or has the sight of the sun in its glory, 26
or the glow of the moon as it walked the sky,
secretly stolen my heart, 27
so that I blew them a kiss? [p]
That too would be a criminal offence, 28
to have denied the supreme God.
Pr 24:17–18
Mt 5:43–48par.
Have I rejoiced at my enemy's misfortune, 29
or exulted when disaster overtook him? [q]—

30 I, who would not allow my tongue to sin
or to lay his life under a curse.
31 The people of my tent, did they not say,
'Will anyone name a person whom he has not filled with meat?'
32 No stranger ever had to sleep outside,
my door was always open to the traveller.[r]
33 Have I ever concealed my transgression from others[s]
or kept my fault a secret in my breast?
34 Have I ever stood in fear of common gossip,
or dreaded any family's contempt,
and so kept quiet, not venturing out of doors?[t]
35 Will no one give me a hearing?
I have said my last word;[u] now let Shaddai reply!
When my adversary has drafted his writ against me
36 I shall wear it on my shoulder,
and bind it round my head like a royal turban.[v]
37 I shall give him an account of my every step
and go as boldly as a prince to meet him.

40b End of the words of Job.[w]

III: THE DISCOURSES OF ELIHU[a]

Elihu joins the discussion

1 32 These three men stopped arguing with Job, because he was convinced of his
2 uprightness.[b] ·But Elihu son of Barachel the Buzite, of the clan of Ram, Gn 22:21 Jr 25:23
became very angry. He fumed with rage against Job for thinking that he was right
3 and God was wrong; ·and he was equally angry with the three friends for giving
4 up the argument and thus putting God in the wrong.[c] ·While they and Job were
5 talking,[d] Elihu had waited, because they were older than he was; ·but when he
saw that the three men had not another word to say in answer, his anger burst out.
6 And Elihu son of Barachel the Buzite began to speak. He said:

d. Other sins against the neighbour: Job has not coveted or stolen the possessions of others.

e. The sin of adultery.

f. This v. is probably a gloss.

g. 'devoured' *tiseroph* conj.; Hebr. *tesharesh* 'uprooted'.

h. Relations between master and servant had always been humanely regulated by the Law. v. 15 bases the rights of slaves on the fact that all human beings are God's creatures. Paul observes that slaves and master have the one Lord.

i. Another sin against society: the dishonest acquisition of land. • vv. 38–40[a] are repositioned here; the text mistakenly puts them at the end of Job's apologia.

j. Translation approximate: some plant the name of which has the root-meaning 'bad smell'.

k. After the sins against justice, next the sins against active love and kindliness—a duty required out of gratitude to God.

l. 'guided (me)' conj.; 'I guided her' (my mother) Hebr.

m. To show hostility or to intimidate, *see* Is 11:15; 19:16; Zc 2:13, and so defeat him at law.

n. 'of God would fall on me' *'el ye'eta'li* conj.; Hebr. *'elay 'ed 'el* 'for me, disaster from God'.

o. Greed and arrogance of the rich who think they can do without God.

p. After the cult of Mammon, next the cult of the celestial bodies. Kissing the hand was a gesture of adoration.

q. Job does not mean an appropriate revenge, regarded as perfectly normal practice (*see*, however, Ex 23:4–5; Lv 19:18; Pr 20:22; 25:21–22), but goes even further, not allowing himself to rejoice over the misfortunes of an enemy, or to curse him.

r. 'to the traveller' versions; 'on the road' Hebr. In the ancient East, hospitality was regarded as a major virtue.

s. 'from others', lit. 'from men' conj.; 'like a man' Hebr., with alternative readings 'like most people' or 'like Adam'.

t. vv. 33–34 do not refer to any specific sin but to an attitude that presupposes guilt. Job has never had to hide from human beings; he is even prepared to appear before God.

u. lit. 'Here is my *taw*' (last letter of the alphabet).

v. The scroll with the accusation written on it. Job, confident of refuting the charge, would wear it as a badge of honour.

w. An editorial note. • vv. 38–40[a] will be found before v. 16.

32 a. There is nothing leading up to Elihu's intervention in the Dialogue and no reference to him in the Epilogue. Argument, vocabulary and style are all very different from those of the previous speakers; some passages duplicate the discourses of Yahweh. It may be, therefore, that the discourses of Elihu have been added to the book by another hand.

b. Nothing being able to shake Job's conviction of his own innocence, they abandon the discussion as useless.

c. Hebr. reads 'thus leaving Job in the wrong': scribal correction.

d. 'While they were talking' conj.; 'in words' Hebr.

Prologue

I am still young,
and you are old,
so I was shy and hesitant
to tell you what I know.
12:12;15:10 Si 25:4–6 I thought, 'Age ought to speak, 7
advancing years will convey wisdom.'
There is, you see, a spirit residing in humanity, 8
1 K 3:12 Jm 1:5 the breath of God conferring intelligence. [e]
Ws 4:8 Great age does not give wisdom, 9
nor seniority fair judgement.
And so I ask you for a hearing; [f] 10
now it is my turn to tell what I know.
Up to now, I was hanging on your words, 11
I paid attention to your arguments
as each of you chose his words.
I paid very close attention; 12
and I see that none of you has confounded Job,
not one of you has refuted what he says.
4:12seq.;11:6 So do not say, 'We have found wisdom; 13
our teaching is divine and not human.' [g]
I am not going to follow the same line of argument; [h] 14
my reply to Job will be couched in different terms.

They are nonplussed for an answer, 15
words have failed them.
I have been waiting. Since they do not speak, 16
since they have given up the argument,
now I shall have my say, 17
my turn has come to say what I know.
For I am full of words 18
and forced to speak by a spirit within me;
Jr 20:9 within me, it feels like new wine seeking a vent, 19
Mt 9:17par. bursting out of new wine-skins. [i]
To gain relief, I must speak, 20
I must open my lips and reply.
I shall not take anyone's side, 21
I shall not flatter anyone.
I do not know how to flatter— 22
or my Creator would make short work of me.

Job's presumption

33 So, Job, please listen to my words 1
and attend to all I have to say.
Now as I open my mouth, 2
and my tongue shapes words against my palate,
I shall utter words of wisdom from the heart, [a] 3
my lips will speak in all sincerity.
Refute me, if you can. 5
Prepare yourself, take up your position!
Look, I am your equal, not some god, [b] 6
10:8–12 Gn 2:7 like you I was moulded out of clay.
God's was the spirit that made me, 4
Shaddai's the breath that gave me life.
13:21 No fear of me, therefore, need affright you, 7
my hand will not lie heavy over you. [c]

How could you say in my hearing—
for the sound of your words did not escape me—
'I am clean, and sinless, 10:7;16:17; 23:10;27:5
I am pure, without fault. [d]
But he keeps inventing excuses against me [e]
and regards me as his enemy. 13:24;19:11
He puts me in the stocks, 13:27
he watches my every path'?
In saying so, I tell you, you are wrong:
for God is greater than any human being.
Why then quarrel with him
for not replying to you, word for word?
God speaks first in one way,
and then in another, although we do not realise it.
In dreams and in night-visions, 4:12–16
when slumber has settled on humanity Gn 20:3; 41:1seq.
and people are asleep in bed, Dn 4:2seq.
he speaks in someone's ear,
frightens him with apparitions [f]
to turn him from what he is doing
and to put an end to his pride. [g]
And thus he preserves his soul from the abyss,
his life from passing down the Canal.
Or again, he corrects by the sufferings of the sick-bed, [h] Dt 8:5+ Pr 3:12
when someone's bones tremble continuously
and the thought of food revolts him, Ps 107:18
however tasty it is,
and his flesh rots away while you watch it 19:20
and the bones beneath begin to show,
and his soul is drawing nearer to the abyss
and his life to the dwelling of the dead. [i]
Then, if there is an Angel near him,
a Mediator, [j] one in a thousand,
to remind him where his duty lies,
to take pity on him and to say,
'Spare him from going down to the abyss:
I have found the ransom for his life,' [k]

e. Elihu contrasts 'charismatic' wisdom, revealed by the spirit, with the wisdom of experience. The traditional wisdom of the East, brought into Israel by the sages, insisted on the primacy of divine wisdom, *see* Pr 21:30, the connection between wisdom and uprightness, *see* Ps 119:99–100; Pr 1:7; 10:31; 15:33, and the conviction that God is the giver of wisdom, Pr 2:6; 15:33. Inspired wisdom was also known outside the schools of the sages, *see* Gn 41:38–39; Is 11:2. In Dn 5:11,12,14, Wisdom is the sphere of operation of the spirit. This is developed in Ws (1:5–7; 7:22–23; 9:17) in preparation for the new revelation of the Spirit in the NT *see* 1 Co 2:6–16.

f. lit. 'hear me' (plural) versions; 'hear me' (singular) Hebr.

g. 'our teaching', lit. '(God) teaches us' *yallephenu* conj.; Hebr. *yiddephennu* '(God) chases him'. Elihu exaggerates the claims of those whom he criticises.

h. 'the same line of argument' lit. 'thus', following Gk; 'an argument directed to me' Hebr.

i. Line emended; 'it bursts like new bottles' Hebr.

33 a. 'shall utter' *yishereh* conj.; Hebr. *yosher* 'right'. 'wisdom' is taken from the second line.

b. 'not some god' *lo' 'el* conj.; Hebr. *la'el* 'for God'.

c. 'my hand' *kappi* following Gk; Hebr. *'akeppi* not clear.

d. Summary of several of Job's protestations.

e. Summarising Job's many claims to have been baselessly persecuted by God. • 'excuses' Syr.; 'enmities' Hebr.

f. Following the Gk; 'and he seals by their correction (or: their bond)' Hebr.

g. 'what he is doing', lit. 'his works' Targ.; 'the work' Hebr. • 'put an end' *yekasseah* conj.; Hebr. *yekasseh* 'hide, cover'.

h. After the method of revelation, vv. 15–18, a second method (cf. v. 14) by which God speaks to humanity: by ordeal, such as Job is experiencing.

i. 'dwelling of the dead' Gk; 'those who cause death' Hebr.

j. lit. 'an interpreter'. The angel 'interprets' the meaning of suffering to the sick, makes him realise his sinfulness, v. 27, and intercedes for him with God, v. 24, *see* 5:1a. The idea is found elsewhere in the OT: the just person's intercession, *see* 42:8e, and his expiation for others, Is 53:10; the angels are intermediaries of prophetic revelation (Ezekiel, Daniel and Zechariah) and as protectors of human beings, Ps 91:11–13, conveying their prayers to God, Tb 12:12; but *see* Rv 8:3seq. Later Jewish apocryphal literature gives specific illustrations of this doctrine. There is an easy transition from this to the 'guardian angel', or mediating angel, of Christian doctrine, *see* Tb 5:4b; Mt 18:10; Ac 12:15.

k. 'spare him' Syr.; Hebr. unintelligible. 'for his life' is restored.

Ps 103:5 his flesh will recover its childhood freshness, [l] 25
he will return to the days of his youth.
He will pray to God who has restored him to favour, 26
and will come into his presence with joy.
He will tell others [m] how he has received saving justice
and sing this hymn before his companions, 27
'I sinned and left the path of right,
but God has not punished me as my sin deserved. [n]
He has spared my soul from going down to the abyss 28
and is making my life see the light.'
All this is what God keeps doing 29
again and yet again for human beings,
Ps 56:13 to snatch souls back from the abyss 30
and to make the light of the living still shine.

Pay attention, Job, listen to me: 31
keep quiet, I have more to say.
If you have anything to say, refute me, 32
speak out, for I would gladly accept that you are upright.
If not, then listen to me: 33
keep quiet, and I will teach you wisdom.

The three sages have failed to justify God

34 Elihu continued his speech. He said: 1

And now, you sages, listen to what I say, 2
lend me your ears, you learned men.
=12:11 The ear distinguishes the value of what is said, 3
just as the palate can tell one food from another.
Let us consider together God's ruling 4
and decide what we all mean by good.
Job has been saying, 'I am upright 5
27:2 and God denies me fair judgement.
9:15;30:21 My judge is treating me cruelly, 6
my wound is incurable, for no fault of mine.' [a]
Can anyone else exist like Job, 7
15:16 who laps up mockery like water, [b]
who consorts with evil-doers 8
and marches in step with the wicked?
Did he not say, 'No one derives any benefit 9
from enjoying the society of God'?

Listen to me then, like intelligent people. 10
8:3–7 Far be evil from God
Ps 92:15 or injustice from Shaddai!
Ps 62:12 For he pays people back for what they do, 11
Pr 24:12 treating each as his own conduct deserves. [c]
Si 16:14
↗Mt 16:27
↗Rm 2:6 Be sure of it: God never does wrong, 12
Shaddai does not pervert what is just.
Did someone else entrust the world to his care 13
was he given charge of the universe by someone else? [d]
Ps 104:29–30 If he were to recall his spirit, [e] 14
to concentrate his breath back in himself,
Gn 6:3 all flesh would instantly perish 15
Gn 3:19 and all people would return to dust.
If you have any intelligence, listen to this, 16
lend your ear to the sound of my words.

17 Could an enemy of fair judgement ever govern?
Would you dare condemn the Upright One, the Almighty,
18 who says to a king, 'You are a scoundrel!' Is 40:23–24
and to nobles, 'You are wicked!',
19 who is unimpressed by princes
and makes no distinction between rich and poor, Dt 10:17f
since all alike have been made by him?
20 They die suddenly, at dead of night, Ex 12:29
they perish—these great ones—and disappear:[f] Ws 18:14–16
it costs him no effort to remove a tyrant.
21 For his eyes keep watch on human ways, Ps 33:14–15
and he observes every step. Jr 32:19
22 No darkness, no shadow dark as death
where wrong-doers can hide!
23 He serves no writ[g] on anyone,
no summons to appear before God's court:
24 he breaks the powerful without enquiry Dn 2:21
and sets up others in their places.
25 He knows the sort of things they do!
He overthrows them at night, to be trampled on.
26 He beats them like criminals
chained up for all to see,[h]
27 since they have turned their backs on him,
having understood so little of his ways
28 as to make the cries of the weak rise to him
and let him hear the appeal of the afflicted.

29 But if he is still silent and no one can move him,
if he veils his face, so that no one can see him,
he is taking pity on nations and individuals,[i] Ws 11:23; 12:2
30 is setting some wrong-doer free from the meshes of affliction.[j]
31 When such a one says to God,
'I was misled,[k] I shall not do wrong any more;
32 although I have sinned,[l] instruct me;
although I did wrong, I will not do it again,'
33 in your opinion, should he punish such a one—
you who have rejected his decisions?[m]
This is for you to decide—not for me!—
so kindly enlighten us!

l. 'recover freshness' *yirtah* conj.; the unknown Hebr. word (*rutapash*) possibly comes from a related root.

m. 'tell' *yebasser* conj.; Hebr. *yasheb* 'give back'. • 'others', lit. 'to man'.

n. Line emended following the Gk; 'and he has not had equality for me' Hebr.

34 a. 'my judge . . . cruelly' *'alay meshopti 'akzar* conj.; Hebr. *'al mishpati 'akazzeb* 'I lie about being in the right'. • 'my wound' *mahatzi* conj.; Hebr. *hitztzi* 'my arrow'.

b. Misreading Job's attitude, Elihu classifies him as one of the 'scornful' attacked in wisdom literature, cf. Pr 21:24.

c. Classic formulation of the doctrine of retribution. In the NT, this is usually deferred to the Last Day.

d. The argument seems to be this: God is not the vice-regent of the universe; he does not administer the laws of someone else; they are the creation of his own omnipotence. Neither self-interest, therefore, nor force, can make him violate justice, *see* Ws 11:20–26; 12:11–18.

e. 'recall' Gk, Syr.; 'apply' Hebr. • 'his breath' is attached to the first line and 'his heart' omitted as superfluous.

f. 'great ones perish' *yigwa'u sho'im* conj.; Hebr. *yego 'ashu 'am* 'they are shaken, the people'.

g. 'writ' *mo'ed* conj.; Hebr. *'od* unintelligible.

h. The text of vv. 26–33 is very corrupt and the translation is uncertain. Gk omits vv. 28–33. • 'chained up' *'asaram* is restored on analogy with 36:13 and the first word of v. 27 *'asher*.

i. 'can move' *yare'ish* conj.; Hebr. *yareshi'a* 'condemned'. • 'is taking pity' *yahon* conj.; Hebr. *yahad* 'together'. To the classic objection that punishment sometimes seems to spare the wicked, Elihu replies that on these occasions justice is being tempered with mercy; *see* Ws 11:23; 12:2.

j. v. emended; Hebr. corrupt, lit. 'so that no wicked man may reign, snares for the people'.

k. 'I was misled' *nishshe'iti* conj.; Hebr. *nasa'ti* 'I have carried'.

l. 'although I have sinned' Vulg.; 'that I may see' Hebr.

m. 'his decisions' added for the sense; the verb is never used without an object. Job's criticism of God's methods is based on too rigid an idea of distributive justice which, if it were accurate, would admit of no exception and would forbid God ever to pardon. It would follow that Job should not apply this rigid idea to his own case; he should rather believe that God is testing him from a different motive. Elihu's own conclusion, however, is that Job adds contumacy to sin, v. 37.

Ordinary sensible people, however, will say to me, 34
and so will any sage who has been listening to me,
'Job's words are spoken without any knowledge, 35
what he says shows no intelligence.
Kindly examine him thoroughly, 36
since his answers imply that he is a criminal. [n]
For to his sin he now adds rebellion, 37
bringing law to an end among us [o]
and heaping abuse on God.'

God's transcendence

35 Elihu continued his speech. He said: 1

Do you think you can prove yourself upright 2
and establish your uprightness before God
7:20 by daring to say to him, 'What does it matter to you, 3
or how does it benefit me, whether I have sinned or not?' [a]
Very well, I shall tell you 4
and your friends as well. [b]

Take a look at the skies and see, 5
observe how high the clouds are above you. [c]
If you sin, how can you affect him? 6
If you heap up crimes, what effect has it on him?
22:3 If you are upright, what do you give him, 7
what benefit does he receive at your hands?
Your wickedness affects only your fellows, 8
your uprightness, other human beings.
They too groan under the weight of oppression, 9
they cry for help under the tyranny of the mighty, [d]
but none of them thinks of saying, 'Where is God, my Maker, 10
who makes glad songs ring out at night,
who has made us more intelligent than wild animals 11
wiser than birds in the sky?'
Cry they may, but get no answer, 12
to be spared from the arrogance of the wicked.
Of course God does not listen to trivialities, 13
Shaddai pays no attention to them.
And how much less when you say, 'I cannot see him, 14
my case is open and I am waiting for him.' [e]
21 Or, 'His anger never punishes, 15
he does not seem aware of human rebellion.' [f]
Hence, when Job speaks, he talks nonsense, 16
ignorantly babbling on and on.

5:17; 22:23–30 **The real meaning of Job's sufferings** [a]

36 Elihu went on speaking. He said: 1

Be patient a little longer while I explain, 2
for I have more to say on God's behalf.
I shall range far afield for my arguments 3
to prove my Maker just.
I guarantee, nothing I shall say will be untrue: 4
you have a man of sound learning here.
God does not reject anyone whose heart is pure [b] 5
or let the sinner live on in all his power. [c] 6

He does accord fair judgement to the afflicted;
7 he does uphold what the upright deserve.
When he raises kings to thrones, 2 Ch 33: 11–13
if they grow proud of their unending rule, [d]
8 then he fetters them with chains,
they are caught in the bonds of affliction.
9 He shows them the import of their deeds,
of the sins of pride they have committed.
10 In their ears he sounds a warning, 33:23
ordering them to turn back from doing wrong.
11 If they take notice and obey him,
the rest of their days are prosperous
and the years pass pleasantly.
12 If not, they go down the Canal
and perish in their stupidity.
13 The stubborn, who cherish [e] their anger
and do not cry for help when he chains them,
14 die in the bloom of youth
or live among the male prostitutes of the temple. [f]
15 But God saves the afflicted by his affliction,
warning him [g] in his misery.
16 You, too, he would like to snatch from torment.
While you were enjoying boundless abundance,
with rich food piled high on your table, [h]
17 you did not bring the wicked to trial
and did not give fair judgement to the orphan. [i]
18 Beware [j] of being led astray by abundance,
of being corrupted by expensive presents.
19 Take the powerful to law, not merely the penniless,
those whose arm is strong, not merely the weak.
20 Do not crush people you do not know
to install your relations in their place. [k]
21 Avoid any tendency to wrong-doing,
for this is why affliction is testing you now.

n. 'Kindly' conjectural translation; the Hebr. word (*'abi*) apparently expresses a wish or plea. • 'imply that he is a' *ke* conj.; Hebr. *be* 'among'.

o. 'bringing law to an end' *yasiph hoq* conj.; Hebr. *yispoq* 'clapping his hands'.

35 **a.** Alternative translation: 'what good is it to me (to be) without sin?' Gk; 'how do I affect you if I sin?' Hebr.

b. Elihu takes up other sayings of Job (3:13, 15) to refute them, particularly those in which he reproaches God for unjustly rewarding human actions and for acting as though he took no interest in human activities, whether good or bad; *see* especially 7:20; 9:22.

c. Implying that God is still further beyond human reach.

d. Elihu seems to be thinking of those who are victims of the malice of others, v. 8. If God does not help them, it is because they do not have faith in him and rely on self-sufficiency instead of asking him to save them.

e. Elihu is referring especially to 23:3–9; *see also* 13:18–22.

f. 'human rebellion' following versions; Hebr. corrupt.

36 **a.** Eliphaz has already stated, 5:17, and elaborated, 22:23–30, the theme of this speech. The text is obscure, and it is hard to identify Elihu's fresh contribution at this point.

b. Line emended; 'God is powerful and does not reject, powerful by force of heart (?)' Hebr.

c. 'in all his power' taken from previous line (lit. 'powerful in strength').

d. 'rights' conj.; 'eyes' Hebr. • 'When he raises' *bise'et* conj.; Hebr. *'et* (accusative particle). • 'of their rule', lit. 'who hold unending rule' conj.; 'and he gives them unending rule' Hebr.

e. 'cherish' *yishmeru* conj.; Hebr. *yasimu* 'place'.

f. lit. 'their life, among the male temple prostitutes'.

g. lit. 'opening his ear': making him understand, *see* Ps 40:6; Is 40:5.

h. Before 'with rich food' omit *nahat*, diplography of the previous word.

i. This verse, evidently corrupt, is variously translated. The conjectural translation here divides and arranges the vowels of the text in a different way from Hebr. Others suggest 'you will judge the judgement of the wicked and (your hands) will grasp justice' or, without making any emendation, 'if you incur a verdict of guilty, verdict and sentence will carry the day.'

j. 'Beware' *hameh* conj.; Hebr. *ki hemah* 'for anger'.

k. The text of vv. 19–20 seems irremediably corrupt and the translation is therefore uncertain. The emendations produce a likely meaning in the context, but the verses may in any case be misplaced. lit. the Hebr. reads 'will he cite your cry, not in anguish and all efforts of force? Do not sigh for the night, so that people can climb into their place'.

Si 42:15–43:33 **Hymn to God's omnipotence** [l]

See, God is sublime in his strength 22
and who can teach lessons as he does?
Is 40:13 Rm 11:33–34 Who has ever told him which course to take, 23
or dared to say to him, 'You have done wrong'?
Consider, rather, how you may praise his work, 24
a theme that many have sung.
This is something that everyone can see, 25
gazing, as we do, from afar.
Yes, the greatness of God exceeds our knowledge, 26
the number of his years is past counting.
It is he who makes the raindrops small 27
and pulverises the rain into mist.
And the clouds then pour this out, 28
sending it streaming down on the human race.
Ps 104:13seq. By these means, he sustains the peoples, [m] 31
giving them plenty to eat.
Ps 18:9–14 And who can fathom how he spreads the clouds, 29
or why such crashes thunder from his tent? [n]
He spreads a mist before him 30
and covers the tops of the mountains. [o]
He gathers up [p] the lightning in his hands, 32
assigning it the mark where to strike.
His crashing gives warning of its coming, 33
anger flashes out against iniquity. [q]

37 At this, my very heart quakes 1
and leaps out of its place.
Ps 18:13–14; 29 Listen, oh listen, to the blast of his voice 2
and the sound that issues from his mouth.
His lightning is hurled across the heaven, 3
it strikes to the extremities of earth.
After it comes a roaring sound, 4
God thunders with majestic voice.
He does not check his thunderbolts [a]
until his voice resounds no more.
5:9 Yes, certainly God shows us marvels [b] 5
and does great deeds that we cannot understand.
Ps 104:19–23 When hé says to the snow, 'Fall on the earth!' 6
to the showers, 'Now rain hard!' [c]
he brings all human activity to a standstill, 7
for everyone to acknowledge his work.
The animals go back to their dens 8
and take shelter in their lairs.
9:9 The storm wind comes from the Mansion of the South, 9
and the north winds usher in the cold. [d]
Ps 147:17 At the breath of God, ice comes next, 10
the surface of the waters hardens over.
He weighs the clouds down with moisture, 11
and the storm clouds radiate his lightning.
He himself guides their wheeling motion 12
presiding over their seasonal changes. [e]
They carry out his orders to the letter
all over this earthly world.
Whether to punish earth's peoples 13
or as a work of faithful love, he despatches them. [f]

14 Listen to this, Job, without flinching
and reflect on the marvellous works of God.
15 Do you know how God controls them
or how his clouds make the lightning flash?
16 Do you know how he balances the clouds— Pr 8:28
a miracle of consummate skill?
17 When your clothes are hot to your body
and the earth lies still under the south wind,
18 can you, like him, stretch out the sky, Gn 1:6
tempered like a mirror of cast metal? [g]
19 Teach me what we should say to him:
but better discuss no further, since we are in the dark.
20 Does he take note when I speak?
When human beings give orders, does he take it in?
21 There are times when the light vanishes,
behind darkening clouds;
then comes the wind, sweeping them away.
22 and brightness [h] spreads from the north.
God is clothed in fearful splendour: Ex 24:16f
23 he, Shaddai, is far beyond our reach.
Supreme in power, in equity,
excelling in saving justice, yet no oppressor—
24 no wonder then that people fear him:
everyone thoughtful holds him in awe! [i]

IV: THE DISCOURSES OF YAHWEH

FIRST DISCOURSE

Job must bow to the Creator's wisdom

1 **38** Then from the heart of the tempest [a] Yahweh gave Job his answer. He said:

2 Who is this, obscuring my intentions 42:3
with his ignorant words?
3 Brace yourself like a fighter;
I am going to ask the questions, and you are to inform me! [b]
4 Where were you when I laid the earth's foundations?
Tell me, since you are so well-informed!

l. After interpreting the ways of God, Elihu proceeds to a eulogy of God's power and wisdom. Same procedure in Rm 11:33.

m. v. 31 is repositioned after v. 28 on the strength of its introductory words, referring to the clouds. • 'sustains' *yazun* conj.; Hebr. *yadin* 'judges'.

n. 'who' Syr.; 'if (he understands)' Hebr. • The cloud, 'tent of Yahweh', is the stormcloud spreading across the sky to the growling of the thunder, his 'voice'. As the cloud lowers, God shoots his lightning like an arrow. *See* Ex 13:22h; 19:16g; Ps 18:9–14; 29.

o. 'mist', lit. 'his vapour', Targ.; 'his light' Hebr. • 'tops of the mountains' *ra'she harim* conj.; Hebr. *shoreshe hayyam* Hebr.

p. 'gathers up' *nissah* conj.; Hebr. *kissah* 'covers'.

q. 'flashes out' *meqanneh* conj.; Hebr. *miqneh* 'flock'. • 'against iniquity' *'al 'awlah* conj.; Hebr. *'al 'oleh* 'against the one who rises'.

37 a. 'does not check his thunderbolts' conj.; 'does not check them' Hebr.

b. Line emended. 'God thunders wonderfully with his voice' Hebr.

c. After 'to the showers' we omit dittography 'and to the showers of rain'. • 'Now rain hard!', lit. 'be strong!' conj.; 'its strength' Hebr.

d. The 'Mansion of the South', *see* 9:9: lit. the 'mansion', or storehouse (*see* 38:22; Ps 135:7) of the hurricane, which is a southerly wind. The 'north winds': lit. 'the scatterers'.

e. Text emended: a literal translation of the Hebr. would give, 'and it (the lightning) in whirling circles according to his orders'.

f. 'earth's peoples' *le'amme ha'aretz* conj.; Hebr. *'im le'artzo* 'if (it is) for his earth'. • 'he despatches them' *yotzi'am* conj.; Hebr. *yametzi'ehu* 'he causes it to find'.

g. The firmament, the brazen summer sky.

h. 'brightness' *zohar* conj.; Hebr. *zahab* 'gold'.

i. 'hold him in awe' *lo yire'at* conj.; *see* Gk; Hebr. *lo' yire'eh* 'he does not see (all thoughtful people)'.

38 a. The familiar imagery for a theophany, evoking the overwhelming power of God, *see* Ps 18:7–15; 50:3; Ezk 1:4; Na 1:3, *see* Ex 13:22h; 19:16g.

b. 'like a fighter' one Hebr. MS, Syr., Targ.; 'like a man' MT (emendation of vowels), as also in 40:7. • The situation is reversed: Yahweh now attacks, asking Job to present his defence.

Who decided its dimensions, do you know? 5
Zc 1:16 Or who stretched the measuring line across it?
26:7f What supports its pillars at their bases? 6
Ps 118:22 Who laid its cornerstone
Ba 3:34 to the joyful concert of the morning stars 7
Ps 148:2–3 Zc 4:7 and unanimous acclaim of the sons of God?
Who pent up [c] the sea behind closed doors 8
when it leapt tumultuous from the womb,
when I wrapped it in a robe of mist 9
and made black clouds its swaddling bands;
when I cut out the place I had decreed for it 10
and imposed gates and a bolt?
7:12f Ps 104:6–9 Pr 8:29 'Come so far,' I said, 'and no further; 11
here your proud waves must break!' [d]

Have you ever in your life given orders to the morning 12
or sent the dawn to its post,
to grasp the earth by its edges 13
and shake the wicked out of it?
She turns it as red as a clay seal, 14
she tints it [e] as though it were a dress,
24:13–17 stealing the light from evil-doers [f] 15
and breaking the arm raised to strike.
Have you been right down to the sources of the sea [g] 16
and walked about at the bottom of the Abyss?
Have you been shown the gates of Death, 17
10:21–22 have you seen the janitors of the Shadow dark as death? [h]
Have you an inkling of the extent of the earth? 18
Tell me all about it if you have!
Which is the way to the home of the Light, [i] 19
and where does darkness live?—
You could then show them the way to their proper places, 20
you could put them on the path [j] home again!
If you do know, you must have been born when they were, 21
you must be very old by now!

Have you visited the place where the snow is stored? 22
Ex 9:18–26 Jos 10:11 Is 28:17; 30:30 Have you seen the stores of hail,
which I keep for times of distress, 23
for days of battle and war?
From which direction does the lightning fork, 24
where in the world does the east wind blow itself out?
Who bores a channel for the downpour 25
or clears the way for the rolling thunder
so that rain may fall on lands where no one lives, 26
and the deserts void of human dwelling,
to meet the needs of the lonely wastes 27
and make grass sprout on the thirsty ground? [k]
Has the rain a father? 28
Who begets the dewdrops?
What womb brings forth the ice, 29
who gives birth to the frost of heaven,
when the waters grow hard [l] as stone 30
and the surface of the deep congeals?

9:9d Am 5:8 Can you fasten the harness of the Pleiades, 31
or untie Orion's bands?

32 Can you guide the Crown season by season
and show the Bear and its cubs which way to go? [m]
33 Have you grasped the celestial laws?
Could you make their writ run on the earth?
34 Can your voice carry as far as the clouds
and make the pent-up waters do your bidding? [n]
35 Will lightning flashes come at your command
and answer, 'Here we are'? Ba 3:35
36 Who endowed the ibis with wisdom
and gave the cock his intelligence? [o]
37 Whose skill details every cloud
and tilts the water-skins of heaven
38 until the dust solidifies
and the cracks in the ground close up?

39 Do you go hunting prey for the lioness; [p] Ps 104:20–22
do you satisfy the hunger of young lions
40 where they crouch in their den,
waiting eagerly in the bushes?
41 Who makes provision for the raven Ps 147:9
when his little ones cry out to God
craning their necks in search of food? [q]

1 **39** Do you know when mountain goats give birth? [a]
Have you ever watched deer in labour?
2 Have you ever counted the months that they carry their young?
Do you know when they give birth?
3 They crouch to drop [b] their young,
they get rid of their burdens
4 and the calves, having grown big and strong,
go off into the desert and never come back to them.
5 Who has given the wild donkey his freedom,
who has undone the harness of the brayer?
6 I have given him the wastelands as his home, Lk 12:24
the salt plain as his habitat.
7 He scorns the turmoil of the town,
obeys no donkey-man's shouts.
8 The mountains are the pastures that he ranges
in quest of anything green.

c. 'Who pent up' Vulg.; 'he has pent up' Hebr.

d. 'must break' *yishtabber* following Gk; Hebr. *yashit bi* 'he will put to (pride)'.

e. 'tints it', lit. 'is tinted' *titztzabu'* conj.; Hebr. *yiteyatztzebu* 'they keep upright'.

f. Not the light of day: night is their 'light', cf. 24:13seq.

g. The springs from which, it was thought, the seas were supplied.

h. 'janitors' Gk; 'gates' Hebr. • 'Shadow dark as death' is Sheol, Nb 16:33f. On 'the gates of Death', *see* Is 38:10; Ps 9:13; 107:18; Ws 16:13.

i. Light is personified as an entity distinct from the sun. She goes home every evening, when Darkness replaces her.

j. 'put them on the path', lit. 'lead them (by the paths) . . . again' *tebi'ennu* conj.; Hebr. *tabin* 'for you to understand (the paths)'.

k. 'on the thirsty ground' *mitztzivyah* conj.; Hebr. *motza'* 'place of origin'. • vv. 26–27 emphasise the generosity of God, or possibly his care for creatures other than human beings.

l. 'grow hard' *yitehamma'u* conj.; Hebr. *yithabba'u* 'hide'.

m. 'the Crown', i.e. the northern Crown, according to one of the possible derivations of the word. Alternatives: 'the shepherd's star' (compare Vulg. 'Lucifer') or 'the Hyades' since Aldebaran marked the rainy season and time for ploughing. The Bear's 'cubs' are perhaps the constellation of the Little Bear.

n. 'make do your bidding' Gk; 'make cover you' Hebr.

o. 'ibis' and 'cock': translation uncertain. The word translated 'cock' occurs only here, but is rendered thus by a Targum. *tuhot*, 'ibis', seems to be a transcription of Thoth, the Egyptian ibis-god of wisdom. The word occurs once elsewhere, Ps 51:6, but with a totally different meaning. Both these birds were credited with having the faculty of foreknowledge: the ibis announcing the flooding of the Nile, the cock announcing the coming of day and, according to certain popular beliefs, rain.

p. From inanimate nature to the animal kingdom. The fiercest and wildest species, and also the most bizarre, are selected. God provides for them all.

q. 'craning their necks', lit. 'standing up' *yite 'alu* conj.; Hebr. *yite'u* 'wandering'.

39 a. The wild goats and the hinds are selected because their breeding goes unobserved and uncared for except by God; so too the ostrich.

b. 'to drop' *tephalletnah* conj.; Hebr. *tephallahenah* 'to cleave' (?).

Is the wild ox willing to serve you 9
or spend a night beside your manger?
If you tie a rope round his neck 10
will he harrow the furrows for you? [c]
Can you rely on his massive strength 11
and leave him to do your heavy work?
Can you depend on him to come home 12
and pile your grain on your threshing-floor?

Can the wing of the ostrich be compared [d] 13
with the plumage of stork or falcon? [e]
She leaves her eggs on the ground 14
with only earth to warm them;
forgetting that a foot may tread on them 15
or a wild animal crush them.
Lm 4:3 Cruel to her chicks as if they were not hers, 16
little she cares if her labour goes for nothing.
God, you see, has deprived her of wisdom 17
and given her no share of intelligence.
Yet, if she bestirs herself to use her height, 18
she can make fools of horse and rider too.

Are you the one who makes the horse [f] so brave 19
and covers his neck with flowing mane?
Do you make him leap like a grasshopper? 20
His haughty neighing inspires terror.
Exultantly he paws the soil of the valley, 21
and charges the battle-line in all his strength.
He laughs at fear; he is afraid of nothing, 22
he recoils before no sword.
On his back the quiver rattles, 23
the flashing spear and javelin.
Trembling with impatience, he eats up the miles; 24
when the trumpet sounds, there is no holding him.
At each trumpet blast he neighs exultantly. 25
He scents the battle from afar,
the thundering of the commanders and the war cry.

Jr 8:7 Is it your wisdom that sets the hawk flying 26
when he spreads his wings to travel south? [g]
Does the eagle soar at your command 27
to make her eyrie in the heights?
She spends her nights among the crags 28
with a needle of rock as her fortress,
from which she watches for prey, 29
fixing it with her far-ranging eye.
Even her young drink blood; 30
Mt 24:28par. where anyone has been killed, she is there.

40 Still speaking to Job, Yahweh said: [a] 1 31

Is Yahweh's opponent going to give way? [b] 2 32
Has God's critic thought up an answer?

Job replied to Yahweh: 3 33

My words have been frivolous: what can I reply? 4 34
I had better lay my hand over my mouth.

35 5 I have spoken once, I shall not speak again; [c]
I have spoken twice, I have nothing more to say. Ps 62:11d

SECOND DISCOURSE

God is master of the forces of evil

40:1 6 Yahweh gave Job his answer from the heart of the tempest. He said:

2 7 Brace yourself like a fighter,
I am going to ask the questions, and you are to inform me!
3 8 Do you really want to reverse my judgement,
put me in the wrong and yourself in the right?
4 9 Has your arm the strength of God's,
can your voice thunder as loud?
5 10 Come on, display your majesty and grandeur,
robe yourself in splendour and glory.
6 11 Let the fury of your anger burst forth,
humble the haughty at a glance!
7 12 At a glance, bring down all the proud, [d]
strike down the wicked where they stand.
8 13 Bury the lot of them in the ground, Nb 16:31–34
shut them, every one, in the Dungeon. [e]
9 14 And I shall be the first to pay you homage,
since your own right hand is strong enough to save you.

Behemoth [f]

10 15 But look at Behemoth, my creature, just as you are!
He feeds on greenstuff like the ox,
11 16 but what strength he has in his loins,
what power in his stomach muscles!
12 17 His tail is as stiff as a cedar,
the sinews of his thighs are tightly knit.
13 18 His bones are bronze tubes,
his frame, like forged iron.
14 19 He is the first of the works of God.
His Maker threatened him with the sword, Gn 3:24
15 20 forbidding him the mountain regions [g]
and all the wild animals that play there.
16 21 Under the lotus he lies,
he hides among the reeds in the swamps.
17 22 The leaves of the lotus give him shade,
the willows by the stream shelter him.

c. Conjectural emendation; Hebr., if translated literally, would give, 'If you tie a wild ox to a furrow his rope, will he harrow the valleys behind you?'

d. The whole section on the ostrich, vv. 13–18, is absent from the Gk and is thought by some scholars to be an addition.

e. 'Can the wing be compared with' *hakenaph . . . ne'erkah* conj.; Hebr. *kenaph . . . ne'elasah* 'the wing is bright'. The rest of the v. follows Targ.; Hebr. corrupt.

f. Here the war horse.

g. Migration, proof of the instinctive wisdom infused by the Creator, Jr 8:7.

40 a. This introductory verse is absent from Gk. Job had wanted debate with God. God confronts him with the mystery of his wisdom, manifest in his works.

b. 'opponent', lit. 'he who disputes' *harab* conj.; Hebr. *harob* 'the multitude'. • 'give way' *yasur* conj.; Hebr. *yissor* 'the critic'.

c. 'speak again' *'eshneh* conj.; Hebr. *'e'eneh* 'answer'.

d. 'proud' Gk; Hebr. repeats 'haughty'.

e. The 'Dungeon' is Sheol, Nb 16:33f, where the Shades are dumb.

f. This is the plural form of a word meaning 'beast', 'cattle'. The plural may perhaps indicate the typical 'beast' or 'brute', hence any sort of monster. Behemoth has often been identified with the elephant, or with a mythical buffalo mentioned in Ugaritic texts. Here, however, Behemoth is the hippopotamus, as symbol of brute force, controlled by God but beyond human power to tame.

g. Line emended *gebul harim yissa' lo*. Hebr. *ki bul harim yise'u* reads 'for the mountains yield him their produce', which seems inappropriate in the context.

If the river overflows, [h] he does not worry: 23 18
Jordan might come up to his mouth, but he would not care.
Who is going to catch him by the eyes 24 19
or put poles through his nose? [i]

3:8e **Leviathan** [j]

Leviathan, too! Can you catch him with a fish-hook 25 20
or hold his tongue down with a rope?
Can you put a cane through his nostrils 26 21
or pierce his jaw with a hook?
Ezk 19:4,9; 29:4;38:4
Will he plead lengthily with you, 27 22
addressing you in diffident tones?
Will he strike a bargain with you 28 23
to become your slave for life?
Will you make a pet of him, like a bird, 29 24
keep him on a lead to amuse your little girls?
Is he to be sold by the fishing guild 30 25
and then retailed by merchants? [k]
Riddle his hide with darts? 31 26
Or his head with fishing spears?
You have only to lay a finger on him 32 27
never to forget the struggle or risk it again!

41 Any hope you might have would be futile, 1 28
the mere sight of him would overwhelm you. [a]
When roused, he grows ferocious, 2 41:1
who could ever stand up to him? [b]
Who has ever attacked him with impunity? 3 2
No one beneath all heaven! [c]
Next I will talk of his limbs 4 3
and describe his matchless strength [d]—
who can undo the front of his tunic 5 4
or pierce the double armour of his breastplate? [e]
Who dare open the gates of his mouth? 6 5
Terror reigns round his teeth!
His back is like rows of shields, 7 6
sealed with a stone seal, [f]
touching each other so close 8 7
that no breath could pass between,
sticking to one another 9 8
making an impervious whole.
His sneezes radiate light, [g] 10 9
his eyes are like the eyelashes of the dawn.
Rv 9:17
From his mouth come fiery torches, 11 10
sparks of fire fly out of it.
His nostrils belch smoke 12 11
like a cauldron boiling on the fire. [h]
His breath could kindle coals, 13 12
flame issues from his mouth.
His strength resides in his neck, 14 13
violence leaps before him as he goes. [i]
When he stands up, the waves take fright 17 16
and the billows of the sea retreat. [j]
The strips of his flesh are jointed together, 15 14
firmly set in and immovable.
His heart is as hard as rock 16 15
unyielding as the lower millstone.

17 18 Sword may strike but will not stick in him,
no more will spear, javelin or lance.
18 19 Iron means no more to him than straw,
nor bronze than rotten wood.
19 20 No arrow can make him flee,
a sling-stone tickles him like hay.
20 21 Club seems to him like straw,
he laughs at the whirring javelin.
21 22 He has sharp potsherds underneath,
and moves across the slime like a harrow.
22 23 He makes the depths seethe like a cauldron,
he makes the sea fume like a scent burner.
23 24 Behind him he leaves a glittering wake—
a white fleece seems to float on the deeps. [k]
24 25 He has no equal on earth,
being created without fear.
25 26 He looks the haughtiest in the eye;
of all the lordly beasts [l] he is king.

Job's final answer

1 **42** This was the answer Job gave to Yahweh:

2 I know that you are all-powerful:
what you conceive, you can perform.
3 I was the man who misrepresented your intentions 38:2
with my ignorant words. [a]
You have told me about great works that I cannot understand,
about marvels which are beyond me, of which I know nothing.
4 (Listen, please, and let me speak:
I am going to ask the questions, and you are to inform me.) [b]
5 Before, I knew you only by hearsay
but now, having seen you with my own eyes, [c]
6 I retract what I have said,
and repent in dust and ashes. [d]

h. 'overflows' Gk; 'oppresses' Hebr.
i. Restoring 'Who' (*mi hu'*) which has fallen out after the last word (*pihu*) of v. 23. • 'poles' to lead him about like a bull? 'traps' Hebr.
j. The name, in its strict sense, indicates a monster of primeval Chaos, 3:8e, believed still to be living in the ocean. Here it is used of the crocodile, though the description still bears traces of the primeval monster which Yahweh subdued, *see* 7:12f, and which symbolised all powers hostile to God.
k. Teams of fishermen; 'merchants', lit. 'Canaanites', the merchants of the East.

41 **a.** 'Any hope you' Syr.; 'any hope he' Hebr. In the second line, the interrogative pronoun has been suppressed. In some modern versions in English, 41:1 is numbered 41:9 and subsequent verses accordingly.
b. 'he grows', lit. 'isn't he' conj.; 'he is not' Hebr. • 'to him', lit. 'in front of him' conj.; 'in front of me' Hebr., is a theological emendation. God being the only person who is irresistible.
c. 'attacked him with impunity' *miqedimo wayyishelam* conj.; Hebr. *mieqeddimani wa'ashallem* 'attacked me to make me give back'. Hebr. • 'No one' *lo'hu'* conj.; Hebr. *li hu'* 'to me, him'.
d. 'talk of his limbs' conj.; 'the word of strengths' Hebr. • 'incomparable' *'en 'erek* conj.; Hebr. *hen 'ereko* corrupt.
e. 'breastplate' Gk; 'bridle' Hebr.
f. 'His back' Gk; 'pride' Hebr. • 'sealed with a stone seal' Gk.; 'shut, a tight seal' Hebr.
g. A shower of water drops, shining in the sun.
h. 'boiling' (*'ogem*) Syr.; Hebr. *'agmon* 'a reed' (?).
i. 'violence' *deba'ah* conj.; Hebr. *de'abah* 'terror' (?).
j. v. repositioned for the sake of the context. • 'waves' *gallim* conj.; Hebr. *'elim* 'gods'. • 'the billows of the sea' *mishbere yam* conj.; Hebr. *mishshebarim* 'because of the ruptures'.
k. When he dives the air bubbles rise; as he swims he leaves a gleaming furrow.
l. The 'lordly beasts' are the wild animals, *see* 28:8, type of the powerful things of the earth which God alone can control, 40:7–14.

42 **a.** 'I was the man', lit. 'Who is he', as in 38:2. • 'with words' added, with Gk, Syr., and on analogy with 38:2.
b. Probably a gloss, *see* 33:31; 38:3.
c. Not, strictly speaking, a vision, *see* Ex 33:20i, but a fresh appreciation of the true nature of God. Previously Job's conception of God had been conventional and secondhand, but now he experiences the mystery for himself and bows down before the Almighty. His questions have not been answered but he has come to understand that God cannot be called to account, and that his wisdom may give an unsuspected meaning to such realities as suffering and death.
d. The common gesture of sorrow and repentance, *see* 2:8.

V: EPILOGUE

Yahweh rebukes the three sages

When Yahweh had finished saying this to Job, he said to Eliphaz of Teman, 'I burn 7
with anger against you and your two friends, for not having spoken correctly about
me as my servant Job has done. ·So now find seven bullocks and seven rams, and 8
take them back with you to my servant Job and make a burnt offering for your-
selves, while Job, my servant, offers prayers for you. I shall show him favour [e] and
shall not inflict my displeasure on you for not having spoken about me correctly, as
my servant Job has done.' ·Eliphaz of Teman, Bildad of Shuah and Zophar of 9
Naamath went away to do as Yahweh had ordered, and Yahweh listened to Job
with favour.

Yahweh restores Job's fortunes

Jm 5:11 And Yahweh restored Job's condition, while Job was interceding for his friends. 10
More than that, Yahweh gave him double what he had before. ·And all his 11
brothers and all his sisters and all his friends of former times came to see him. Over
dinner in his house, they showed their sympathy and comforted him for all the evils
Yahweh had inflicted on him. Each of them gave him a silver coin, [f] and each a gold
ring. ·Yahweh blessed Job's latter condition even more than his former one. He 12
came to own fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, a thousand yoke of
oxen and a thousand she-donkeys. ·He had seven sons [g] and three daughters; 13
his first daughter he called 'Turtledove', the second 'Cassia' and the third 'Mas- 14
cara'. ·Throughout the land there were no women as beautiful as the daughters of 15
Job. And their father gave them inheritance rights like their brothers. [h]

After this, Job lived for another one hundred and forty years, and saw his 16
Gn 25:8;35:29 children and his children's children to the fourth generation. ·Then, old and full of 17
days, Job died. [i]

e. 'I shall show him favour' reading *ki* (or *ki'et*) instead of *ki'im* conj. Job acts as intercessor like Abraham, Gn 18:22–32; 20:7; Moses, Ex 32:11e; Samuel, 1 S 7:5; 12:19; 2 M 15:14; Jeremiah, Jr 11:14; *see* Ezk 14:14,20. His painful ordeal has apparently given power to his prayers. In the background, we descry the servant, *see* Is 53:12, whose suffering is unequivocally an expiation for the sins of others.

f. Hebr. *qesitah*, ancient monetary unit of unknown value. The versions render 'sheep'.

g. Targ. reads 'fourteen sons'.

h. Normally daughters inherited only if there were no sons, *see* Nb 27:1–11; Job must have been exceptionally rich.

i. The Gk has two additions. The first shows that the doctrine of the resurrection was thought in the second century BC to be implicit in the book: 'It is written that he will rise again with those whom the Lord will raise up.' The second tells us that Job lived in the land of Ausitis on the borders of Idumaea and Arabia; it identifies Ausitis with Jobab, Gn 36:33.

INTRODUCTION TO
THE PSALMS

§1 Lyric poetry in all its forms was popular in Israel from the earliest times, as it was among her neighbours in Egypt, Mesopotamia and Canaan. Some samples are to be found in the historical books: the Song of Moses, Ex 15, the Song of the Well, Nb 21:17–18, the victory song of Deborah, Jg 5, David's elegy on Saul and Jonathan, 2 S 1, etc., and many years later the panegyric of Judas Maccabaeus, 1 M 3:3–9, and of his brother Simon, 1 M 14:4–15; in the New Testament, the Magnificat, Benedictus and Nunc Dimittis. In the prophetic books many passages belong to the same type of literature. Ancient collections once existed of which only the name or a few scraps survive: the Book of the Wars of Yahweh, Nb 21:14, and the Book of the Just, Jos 10:13; 2 S 1:18. But the bulk of the religious poetry of Israel is preserved in the Psalter.

§2 Designation

The psalter (Greek, *psalterion*, the stringed instrument used for the accompaniment of such songs or psalms) is a collection of one hundred and fifty psalms. From Ps 10 to Ps 148 the numbering of the Hebrew Bible (adopted here) is one figure ahead of the Greek and the Vulgate, which join 9 and 10 and also 114 and 115, but divide both 116 and 147 into two.

The Hebrew name for the Psalter is *tehillim*, 'hymns', but this designation fits only a certain number of psalms. Among the 'inscriptions' at the head of most of the psalms the word 'hymn of praise' is in fact used only once (Ps 145). The usual inscription is *mizmor*, which implies musical accompaniment. Some of these 'psalms' are also entitled 'songs', and this term, standing alone, is found in the inscription of every psalm in the collection known as the 'Songs of Ascents', 120–134. Other designations are less frequent and sometimes difficult to explain.

§3 Literary forms

A more satisfying classification is obtained by study of the various literary types of which there are, broadly speaking, three: hymn, entreaty, thanksgiving. The classification is not exhaustive since there are secondary forms which are exceptional or composite; nor does it always correspond to a grouping of the psalms by subject-matter or purpose.

1 Hymns (Ps 8, 19, 29, 33, 46–48, 76, 84, 87, 93, 96–100, 103–106, 113, 114, 117, 122, 135, 136, 145–150) Their structure is fairly uniform. Each opens with an invitation to praise God. The body of the hymn indicates motives for praise, the wonders of God as shown in nature, particularly in his work of creation, and as shown in human history, particularly in his saving work for his people. The conclusion either repeats the introductory formula or expresses a prayer.

Within this group two subdivisions may be identified according to subject-matter. The 'Songs of Zion', 46, 48, 76, 87, in markedly eschatological terms, hymn the glories of the Holy City, which is both dwelling-place of the Most High and goal of pilgrimage, *see* 84 and 122. The 'Psalms of the Kingship of God', particularly 47, 93, 96–98, in a style reminiscent of the prophets, celebrate the universal sovereignty of Yahweh. Since they make use of the vocabulary and metaphors of human coronation ceremonies, the theory has been advanced that these were associated with a feast of the Enthroning of Yahweh possibly celebrated annually in Israel, as the Enthroning of Marduk was in Babylon. But there is little evidence of the existence of such a feast in Israel.

2 Entreaties These supplicatory psalms (or psalms of suffering, laments), unlike the hymns, do not describe the glories of God but are addressed directly to him. They usually begin by invoking God, adding either an appeal for help, a prayer, or an expression of confidence. In the body of the psalm an effort is made to win God's sympathy by a description of the psalmist's misfortunes. Here conventional images are used, so that it is rarely possible to define the historical or personal background of the prayer: waters of the abyss, snares of death or of Sheol, savage beasts (lions, bulls, dogs) symbolising the psalmist's enemies, bones that grow dry or break, heart wildly beating and overcome with fear; all these conventional images recur. In these psalms there are protestations of innocence, 7, 12, 26, and acknowledgment of God's former kindnesses or reproaches for his seeming absence or forgetfulness, 9–10,22,44. But expressions of persistent confidence are also common, 3, 5, 42–43, 55–57, 63, 130, etc. and at times the psalm of entreaty is one long confident appeal, 4, 11, 16, 23, 62, 121, 125, 131. Not infrequently the entreaty ends, abruptly on occasion, with a sense of assurance that the prayer is heard, and with an act of thanksgiving, 6, 22, 69, 140.

These entreaties may be collective or individual.

a *Collective entreaties* (Ps 12, 44, 60, 74, 79, 80, 83, 85, 106, 123, 129, 137) Some national catastrophe is the occasion: defeat, the destruction of Jerusalem, a national emergency; on these occasions God is entreated to save and restore his people. Two psalms at least, 74 and 137, as also the collection of Lamentations attributed to Jeremiah, reflect the situation after the destruction of Jerusalem in 587, and 85 expresses the emotions of those who came back from exile. Ps 106 is a general confession of the sins of the nation.

b *Individual entreaties* (Ps 3, 5–7, 13, 17, 22, 25, 26, 28, 31, 35, 38, 42–43, 51, 54–57, 59, 63, 64, 69–71, 77, 86, 102, 120, 130, 140–143) This type is especially common and the content widely varied: besides the perils of death, persecution, exile and old age, these individual prayers beg for deliverance in particular from sickness, slander, and sin. The enemies

complained of, or denounced, 'those who do evil', are barely defined; but whoever they may be, they are certainly not sorcerers, as some have thought, whose spells these psalms are intended to repel. It was at one time thought that the 'I' of these psalms was collective; this is not the case. Nor is it always the king speaking in the name of the people, as has been suggested. The accent is too individual and the absence of allusion to the king's person or office too marked to make these theories tenable. It is doubtless true that several of these psalms have been adapted to serve as national laments, thus 22, 28, 59, 69, 71, 102; it is also true that some, which we shall discuss later, are 'royal' psalms; and lastly, it is true that all these psalms did ultimately come into collective use (which is why they are found in the Psalter). Nonetheless, these prayers were composed for, or by, individuals to meet individual needs; the faith they express is entirely personal, and their entreaty comes straight from the heart.

3 Thanksgiving The psalms of entreaty may end, as we have seen, with gratitude to God for granting the request. In the thanksgiving psalms this gratitude becomes the main theme. These are relatively few in number: 18, 21, 30, 33, 34, 40, 65–68, 92, 116, 118, 124, 129, 138, 144. Some are collective, others individual. The people as a whole thanks God for danger averted, a successful harvest, divine favour shown to the king. The individual, having recalled past distress and God's answer to his prayer, expresses his gratitude and exhorts all the devout to join him in praising God. This last is often the occasion for a doctrinal development. The literary structure of the thanksgiving psalms resembles that of the hymns.

4 Exceptional and composite forms The three forms we have just described are not in watertight compartments: there is very often a mutual infiltration. Lamentation may be preceded by confident prayer, 27, 31, or followed by thanksgiving, 28, 57. Ps 89 begins as a hymn, passes into a long prophetic poem and ends with a lament. Ps 119 throughout is a hymn to the Law but it is also an individual lament and it develops a theme of the wisdom literature. This last characteristic, already noticed in certain thanksgiving psalms, shows that not a few topics are found in the Psalter which in themselves are unnatural to lyric poetry. Wisdom themes may take such a prominent place that we speak, somewhat inaccurately, of 'Didactic Psalms'. Ps 1, 112, 127 are wisdom literature pure and simple. Other psalms, however, preserve something of their lyrical quality: 25 is akin to the lamentations, 32, 37, 73 to the thanksgiving psalms, etc.

Certain other psalms incorporate prophetic sayings, or are simply expanded prophecies, 2, 50, 75, 81, 82, 85, 95, 110. These have recently been explained as actual prophecies delivered in the course of Temple ceremonies by priest or prophet. But it is still often maintained that they had no direct connection with the Temple worship and merely adopted the prophetic style. It is an open question; but there is no doubt that on the one hand the relationship between Psalms and prophetic literature extends beyond the sayings themselves to many other themes (theophanies, metaphors of fire, chalice, crucible, etc.) and, on the other hand, that some connection must be recognised between Psalms and Temple worship. We shall return to this point.

§4 Royal psalms and messianic psalms

We have already drawn attention to the prophetic element in the Psalter by mentioning the eschatological character of the Songs of Zion and of the Psalms of the Kingship of God. The universal renewal foretold by these poems is the messianic age; other psalms, more specifically, speak of the Messiah in person.

Scattered throughout the Psalter, and of varying literary form, is a group of royal psalms. These are divine pronouncements addressed to the king, 2, 110, prayers for the king, 20, 61, 72, a thanksgiving for the king, 21, prayers of the king himself, 18, 28, 63, 101, a royal processional song, 132, a hymn of the king, 144, even a bridal ode for a royal marriage, 45. They are ancient poems dating from the time of the monarchy and reflecting the idiom and ceremonial of the court. They concerned a king of their own period, and Ps 2, 72, 110 could have been enthronement psalms. The king is said to be son of God, his reign to be endless and stretching to the ends of the earth; he is to make peace and justice triumph and to be the saviour of his people. These expressions may seem extravagant, but they do not go beyond what other neighbouring people said of their sovereign and what Israel hoped of hers.

But in Israel the king is anointed, which makes him the vassal of Yahweh and his lieutenant on earth. He is the Anointed of Yahweh, in Hebrew the 'Messiah' and the religious relationship established with God makes the conception specifically Israelite, different from those of Egypt and Mesopotamia, in spite of the use of a common terminology. 'Royal Messianism', which begins with the prophecy of Nathan, 2 S 7, is expressed in the commentaries on that passage given by Ps 89 and 132, and especially in Ps 2, 72, 110. They kept alive among the people the hope of the promises made to David's dynasty. If messianism is defined as the expectation of a future king who will definitely bring salvation and inaugurate the kingship of God on earth, none of these Psalms is properly messianic. But a number of these ancient royal chants, still in use after the fall of the monarchy, and incorporated into the Psalter, perhaps with alterations and additions, fostered the expectation on the eve of our era, and Christians saw the realisation of this hope in Christ (a title which signifies Anointed in Greek, as Messiah does in Hebrew).

The messianic character of 2, 72, 110 is plain. Psalm 110 is more frequently quoted in the New Testament than any other. Even the wedding song of 45, interpreted in the light of the marriage allegory beloved of the prophets, came to express the union of the Messiah with his new Israel, and Heb 1:8 applies it to Christ. Following the same trend, the New Testament and early Christian tradition apply other psalms to Christ which, although not royal psalms, anticipated the situation and mind of the Messiah, the essentially Good Man, thus 16 and 22 and selected passages from many psalms, particularly 8, 35, 40, 41, 68, 69, 97, 102, 118, 119. Similarly, the Kingship Psalms have been applied to the kingship of Christ. Even if these applications go beyond the immediate literal sense of the text applied, they are legitimate in that the hopes inspiring the Psalter could not be fully realised until the coming of Christ to earth.

§5 The psalms and public worship

The Psalter is Israel's hymn-book. The Temple seems to have had its cantors from the beginning, though they are not mentioned until after the Exile. The festivals of Yahweh were celebrated with song and dance, Jg 21:19–21; 2 S 6:5,16. According to Am 5:23, sacrifice was offered to the accompaniment of song, and since the court had its cantors in David's day, 2 S 19:36, and (according to the Annals of Sennacherib) in the time of Hezekiah, the Temple of Solomon, like all the great sanctuaries of the East, must have had its cantors also. Psalms are in fact attributed to Asaph, to the sons of Korah, to Heman and to Ethan (or Jeduthun) who, according to Chronicles, were all cantors in the pre-exilic Temple. Tradition attributes many psalms to David and also credits him with organising public worship, including the cantors, 1 Ch 25; and this harmonises with those ancient texts representing him as dancing and singing in the presence of Yahweh, 2 S 6:5,16.

Many of the psalms carry musical or liturgical directions. The text of some refers to a public liturgy, 20, 26, 27, 66, 81, 107, 116, 134, 135. These last, and others, 48, 65, 95, 96, 118, were evidently recited in the Temple court. The Songs of Ascents, 120–134, like 84, were songs used on the Temple pilgrimage. These are some of the clearest examples, and suffice to show that many psalms, even individual psalms, were composed for Temple worship. Others, if not composed primarily for this purpose, have at least been adapted for it by the addition of blessings, 125, 128, 129.

It is therefore certain that the psalms were related to public worship and that the Psalter, taken as a whole, is liturgical in character. But there is rarely enough evidence to identify the ceremony or feast for which any given psalm was used. The Hebrew title of 92 assigns it to the Sabbath day, and the Greek titles of 24, 48, 93, 94 apportion them severally to other days of the week. Ps 30 was used, according to the Hebrew, for the feast of Dedication, and 29, according to the Greek, for the feast of Shelters. These instructions are perhaps later additions, but, like the detailed allocations made in post-exilic Judaism, prove that the Psalter was the hymn-book of Temple and synagogue before it was adopted by the Christian Church.

§6 Authors and dates

The inscriptions relate seventy-three psalms to David, twelve to Asaph, eleven to the sons of Korah, one each to Heman, Ethan (or Jeduthun), Moses and Solomon. The inscriptions in the Greek version do not always correspond with the Hebrew text and credit David with eighty-two psalms. The Syriac version shows still greater divergence.

It is possible that the original purpose of these inscriptions was not to name the actual author. The Hebrew formula used merely establishes some kind of relationship between the psalm and the person named, either because of an aptness of theme or because the psalm belonged to a collection named after him. The psalms 'for (or 'of') the sons of Korah' were part of the repertoire of this family of cantors, just as the numerous psalms 'for the choirmaster', 4, 5, 6, 8, etc., were pieces performed under his direction. Similarly there was Asaph's collection and a Davidic collection. But it was not long before these

notices of origin were taken to be indications of authorship, and to the inscription 'of David' at the head of some psalms were added details of the exact circumstances in the life of the king at the time when these psalms were composed, 3, 7, 18, 34, 51, 52, 54, etc. Finally tradition made David the author not only of the psalms that bear his name but of the whole Psalter.

Notwithstanding mistaken deductions of this kind, it would be wrong to neglect the ancient and valuable information embodied in the inscriptions. It is reasonable to admit that the collections of Asaph and the sons of Korah were composed by poets attached to the Temple. It is equally reasonable to hold that there must be some connection between the Davidic collection and David himself. Taking into account what the historical books have to say of his musical talent, 1 S 16:16–18; cf. Am 6:5, his poetic gifts, 2 S 1:19–27; 3:33–34, and his love of the liturgy, 2 S 6:5,15–16, it would seem inevitable that these qualities should be expressed in the Psalter. Indeed, Ps 18 is simply a different edition of a poem attributed to David in 2 S 22. Not all the psalms of the Davidic collection are by him, no doubt, but the collection may have had a few of these for nucleus. It is difficult, however, to be more definite than this. The Hebrew inscriptions are not decisive, as we have seen, and when the New Testament writers quote a psalm as being by David, they are speaking as their contemporaries spoke. Even so, the traditional connection of David with the psalms should not be wholly rejected, and David, who 'sang the songs of Israel', 2 S 23:1, must be conceded an essential part in the formation of the religious poetry of the chosen people.

The original impulse given by David continued to have effects, and the Psalter covers several centuries of poetic activity. After an erroneous assessment, assigning a very late date to the majority of the psalms, less extreme views now prevail. Apart from those psalms which may have been composed by David, many go back to the monarchical period, in particular all the royal psalms, but their content is too general for more than conjectural dating. The Psalms of the Kingship of God, on the other hand, with their many echoes of earlier psalms and of the second part of Isaiah, must have been written during the Exile, as also those, such as 137, which speak of the destruction of Jerusalem and the deportation. Ps 126 celebrates the return from exile. The period that followed seems to have been fertile in psalmody. The restored Temple saw a reflorescence of public worship, the status of the cantors was so raised that they became assimilated with the Levites, while sages like Ben Sira adopted psalm form to popularise their teaching. Are any psalms of later date than the end of the Persian period? Are there any Maccabaean psalms? The question arises in particular connection with 44, 74, 79, 83, but the arguments advanced are not strong enough to prove so late a date of composition.

§7 Formation of the Psalter

The Psalter as we have it is the result of lengthy activity. At first there were partial collections. Ps 72 (though its title assigns it to Solomon) is followed by the note: 'End of the prayers of David', although there are non-Davidic psalms before it and Davidic psalms after it. In fact there are two Davidic groups, 3–41 and 51–72, in which every psalm (except 72 and four anonymous psalms) is attributed to David. Originally there must have been other separate collections

of the same sort: the psalters of Asaph, 50 and 73–83, of the sons of Korah, 42–49 and 84, 85, 87, 88, of Ascents, 120–134, of the Hallel, 105–107, 111–118, 135, 136, 146–150. That there were several collections existing side by side is proved by the way certain psalms duplicate each other almost word for word, thus 14 and 53; 40:13–17 and 70; 108 with 57:7–11 and 60:5–12.

Furthermore, the activities of the collectors can be detected in the use of the divine names: 'Yahweh' is almost exclusively used in 1–41 (first Davidic group), 'Elohim' in 42–83 (covering the second Davidic group; part of the psalter of the sons of Korah; psalter of Asaph), all the remainder are 'Yahwistic' with the exception of 108 (combination of the two 'Elohistic' psalms 57 and 60). This second 'Yahwistic' group, in which many of the psalms are anonymous and in which there is considerable quotation of, or borrowing from, earlier literature, must be the most recent group of all; though this does not prejudice the dating of individual psalms within the group.

The Psalter was ultimately divided into five books, perhaps on the model of the Pentateuch; the books were divided from each other by short doxologies: 41:13; 72:18–20; 89:51; 106:48. Ps 150 is a protracted final doxology while 1 serves as an introduction to the whole Psalter.

This canonical shape of the Psalter became definitive only very late and after some competition. The Greek psalter counts 151 psalms, the ancient Syriac version 155. The discoveries at the Dead Sea have restored to us the Hebrew of the Greek Ps 151, in fact two psalms combined, and the last two Syriac psalms; they have also given us three new poetical compositions, inserted in the MSS of the Psalter in which, in any case, the Psalms do not always follow the canonical order. The Psalter therefore remained an open collection right up to the beginning of our era, at least in some circles.

§8 Spiritual value

The spiritual riches of the Psalter need no commendation. The psalms were the prayers of the Old Testament in which God inspired the feeling that his children ought to have towards him and the words they ought to use when speaking to him. They were recited by Jesus himself, by the Virgin Mary, the apostles and the early martyrs. The Christian Church has adopted them unchanged for her official prayer. Unchanged: the cries of praise, entreaty and thanksgiving, wrung from the psalmists by events of their own times and by their personal experiences, have a universal note, expressing as they do the attitude that every human being should have towards God. Unchanged as regards the words, but with a great enrichment of the sense: in the New Covenant, the faithful singer praises and thanks God for unveiling the secret of His inmost nature, for redemption by the blood of his Son, for the indwelling of his Spirit; hence each psalm ends with the trinitarian doxology: *Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.* The ancient entreaties have become more ardent since the last supper, the cross and the resurrection have taught the infinite quality of the love of God, the universality and gravity of sin, the glory promised to the faithful. The hopes sung by the psalmists have been fulfilled, the Messiah has come, he reigns and all nations are summoned to praise him.

THE PSALMS

PSALM 1[a]

The two paths

Dt 30:15–20
Pr 4:18–19
Jr 21:8
↗Mt 7:13–14

How blessed is anyone who rejects the advice of the wicked 1
and does not take a stand in the path that sinners tread,
Jr 15:17i
nor a seat in company with cynics,
but who delights in the law of Yahweh 2
119
Jos 1:8
and murmurs[b] his law day and night.

Jr 17:8
Ezk 42:12

Such a one is like a tree planted near streams; 3
it bears fruit in season
and its leaves never wither,
and every project succeeds.
How different the wicked, how different![c] 4

35:5
Jb 21:18

Just like chaff blown around by the wind
the wicked will not stand firm at the Judgement[d] 5
nor sinners in the gathering of the upright.
For Yahweh watches over the path of the upright, 6
112:10
but the path of the wicked is doomed.

110

PSALM 2

The messianic drama[a]

↗Ac 4:25–28

Why this uproar among the nations, 1
this impotent muttering of the peoples?
83:5
↗Rv 19:19
Kings of the earth take up position, 2
princes plot together
against Yahweh and his anointed,
149:8
'Now let us break their fetters! 3
Now let us throw off their bonds!'

59:8
Is 40:15:17.
20–24

He who is enthroned in the heavens laughs, 4
Yahweh makes a mockery of them,
then in his anger rebukes them, 5
in his rage he strikes them with terror.
'I myself have anointed my king 6
on Zion my holy mountain.'[b]

I will proclaim the decree of Yahweh:[c] 7
89:26+
Lk 3:22
He said to me, 'You are my son,
↗Ac 13:33u
today have I fathered you.
↗Heb 1:5;5:5
Gn 12:7c
Ask of me, and I shall give you the nations as your birthright, 8
the whole wide world as your possession.

9 With an iron sceptre you will break them,
shatter them like so many pots.' [d]

10 So now, you kings, come to your senses,
you earthly rulers, learn your lesson!
11 In fear be submissive to Yahweh;
12 with trembling kiss his feet, [e]
lest he be angry and your way come to nothing,
for his fury flares up in a moment.

How blessed are all who take refuge in him!

89:26+;110:5–6
Jb 34:24
Is 49:6
Dn 7:14
↗Rv 2:26–27;
↗ 19:15
•Ws 6:1

=34:8
Pr 16:20

PSALM 3

Morning prayer of the upright in persecution

Psalm Of David When he was fleeing from his son Absalom

2 S 15:13seq.

1 Yahweh, how countless are my enemies,
how countless those who rise up against me,
2 how countless those who say of me,
'No salvation for him from his God!' *Pause*

3 But you, Yahweh, the shield at my side,
my glory, you hold my head high.
4 I cry out to Yahweh;
he answers from his holy mountain. *Pause*

5 As for me, if I lie down and sleep,
I shall awake, for Yahweh sustains me. [a]
6 I have no fear of people in their thousands upon thousands,
who range themselves against me wherever I turn.

7 Arise, Yahweh, rescue me, my God!
You strike all my foes across the face,
you break the teeth of the wicked.
8 In Yahweh is salvation,
on your people, your blessing! *Pause*

18:2;27:6;
62:7;110:7
Dt 33:29
Si 11:13

4:8;10:12e
Pr 3:24

58:6

‖Jon 2:10

1 **a.** Ps 1 and 2 serve as preface to the Psalter; they summarise its moral teaching and its messianic ideas. Ps 1, contrasting the 'two ways', hymns the Law, the true way to happiness. *See* 19:7–14 and 119.

b. Reading in an undertone, a meditative prayer (63:6; 77:12; 143:5) as opposed to the loud cry of the prayer under trial (3:4; 5:2).

c. The second 'how different' is given by the Gk, omitted by the Hebr.

d. The great Judgement to come, according to MT; any divine judgement in this life, according to the Gk.

2 **a.** Jewish and Christian tradition regard this Psalm as messianic in the same way as 110, on which it possibly depends. Its horizon is the future messianic age.

b. The 'mountain of God' was in the first place Sinai, Ex 3:1; 18:5, where Moses had encountered God and received the Law from him, Ex 24:12–18; Dt 33:2; *see* 1 K 19:8. Once Solomon had built the Temple on the hill of Zion, 2 S 5:7–9, this hill became the unique mountain where God resided, to which his people 'went up' to listen to him and to adore him, *see* Dt 12:2–3b, and it gave its name to the whole city of Jerusalem, the messianic city where all peoples would gather together, 48:1a; Is 2:1–3; 11:9; 24:23; 56:7; Jl 3:5; Zc 14:16–19; *see also* Heb 12:22; Rv 14:1; 21:1a.

c. The rebels speak, v. 3, then Yahweh himself, v. 6, finally the Messiah, v. 7seq. By consecrating him king of Israel, v. 6, God pronounces him 'his son'; the phrase in this context is familiar in the ancient East, but in conjunction with the messianic promise of 2 S 7 it will be given a deeper meaning; Heb 1:5 applies v. 7 to the eternal generation of the Word.

d. The messianic King is here represented as a warrior, a traditional portrayal.

e. 'kiss his feet', *nashshequ beraglayw* conj.; 'shake with trembling; . . . kiss the son' or '. . . kiss what is pure' (the Scroll of the Law), *wegilu . . . nashshequ* Hebr., also Gk and Targ., *see* 19:8. Hebr. no doubt wanted to remove the anthropomorphism.

3 **a.** The Fathers apply this passage to the death and resurrection of Christ.

PSALM 4

Evening prayer [a]

For the choirmaster For strings Psalm Of David

When I call, answer me, God, upholder of my right. 1
In my distress you have set me at large;
take pity on me and hear my prayer!

Children of men, how long will you be heavy of heart, [b] 2
why love what is vain and chase after illusions? *Pause*

Realise that Yahweh performs wonders for his faithful, 3
Yahweh listens when I call to him.

↗Ep 4:26 Be careful not to sin, 4
speak in your hearts, and on your beds keep silence. [c] *Pause*

51:19 Loyally offer sacrifices, and trust in Yahweh. 5

Many keep saying, 'Who will put happiness before our eyes?' 6
Nb 6:25 Let the light of your face shine on us. [d]
Pr 16:15
Dn 9:17 Yahweh, ·to my heart you are a richer joy 7
than all their corn and new wine.

3:5 In peace I lie down and at once fall asleep, 8
for it is you and none other, Yahweh, who make me rest secure.

PSALM 5

Morning prayer

For the choirmaster For flutes Psalm Of David

86:6 Give ear to my words, Yahweh, 1
spare a thought for my sighing.
Listen to my cry for help, 2
84:3 my King and my God!

To you I pray, ·Yahweh. 3
Ws 16:28q At daybreak [a] you hear my voice;
at daybreak I lay my case before you [b]
and fix my eyes on you.

You are not a God who takes pleasure in evil, 4
no sinner can be your guest.
Boasters cannot stand their ground 5
under your gaze.

Pr 6:17–19 You hate evil-doers,
Mt 7:23 liars you destroy; 6
Rv 21:8 the violent and deceitful
Yahweh detests.

But, so great is your faithful love, 7
I may come into your house,
=138:2 and before your holy temple
1 K 8:44.48 bow down in reverence of you.
Dn 6:11

8 In your saving justice, Yahweh, lead me, 23:3
because of those who lie in wait for me;
make your way plain before me. Is 26:7

9 Not a word from their lips can be trusted,
through and through they are destruction,
their throats are wide-open graves, ↗Rm 3:13
their tongues seductive.

10 Lay the guilt on them, God, [c]
make their intrigues their own downfall;
for their countless offences, thrust them from you,
since they have rebelled against you.

11 But joy for all who take refuge in you, Rv 7:15–16
endless songs of gladness!
You shelter them, they rejoice in you,
those who love your name. 69:36; 119:132

12 It is you who bless the upright, Yahweh,
you surround them with favour as with a shield.

PSALM 6

Supplication in time of trial [a]

For the choirmaster For strings For the octachord Psalm Of David

1 Yahweh, let your rebuke to me not be in anger, =38:1
your punishment not in the heat of wrath. ‖Jr 10:24
2 Have pity on me, Yahweh, for I am fading away.
Heal me, Yahweh, my bones are shaken, Jr 17:14–15
3 my spirit is shaken to its very depths.
But you, Yahweh . . . how long?

4 Yahweh, relent and save my life [b]
rescue me because of your faithful love,

4 **a.** Trust and thanks; God is the one source of happiness. vv. 4 and 8 show that it is an evening prayer.

b. 'will you be heavy of heart' Gk: 'will my glory be dishonoured' Hebr. with faulty division of words.

c. An obscure and no doubt corrupt text, which has not been satisfactorily emended. The general sense is that we should shrink from offending God and pray to him in the calm silence of adoration.

d. Biblical phrase, common in the Psalter, for royal or divine favour. The 'face' is the visible aspect of something, 104:30; Gn 2:6 ('surface'), or of a person, whose thoughts and emotions it makes visible, Gn 4:5; 31:2. Hence it can stand for the personality ('of my face' = my, 42:6,11; 43:5) and presence, especially in the case of human beings meeting God. As it is impossible for human beings to see God, Ex 33:20i; 34:29–35, God can 'let his face shine' on them, *see* Ps 31:16; 44:3; 80:3, only in a restricted sense. In the same way must passages be understood in which a human being seeks God, 24:6; 27:8b; Jb 33:26; Am 5:4c, or beholds him, Ps 11:7e; 42:2.

5 **a.** Dawn is the moment of divine favours, 17:15d.

b. Translations vary: I present my request; I offer my prayer; I prepare my sacrifice; etc.

c. Such appeals for vengeance on the enemies of God by the psalmist are very frequent in the Psalter, for example 10:15; 31:17; 54:5; 58:6seq.; 59:11seq.; 69:22–28; 79:12; 83:9–18; 104:35; 109:6–20; 125:5; 137:7–9; 139:19–22; 140:9–11. Under the old covenant, retribution in this life was still the rule, and against this background these appeals betray simply a hunger for justice. Personal experience and growing revelation will show the inadequacy of this outlook: the way to God's justice must remain a mystery (but *see* Job). The NT refines the outlook still further: justice must give way to love, Mt 5:43–48. Thus purged of personal resentment, the psalms of revenge remain, for the Church and the individual Christian, an expression of the same hunger for justice in the face of forces which are always present in the world.

6 **a.** First of the seven 'Penitential Psalms' (32,38,51,102,130,143). A sick person appeals to God.

b. The Hebr. word *nephesh*, *see* Gn 2:7, means the life-giving breath (and by extension 'throat') which is the source of life and which disappears at death. The word is often used to denote person or animal as a living individual, Gn 12:1; 14:21; Ex 1:5; 12:4, or in the different aspects of bodily and affective life, always linked to one another, *see* Gn 2:21m. The expression 'my *nephesh*' is often equivalent to the reflexive pronoun 'myself', *see* 3:2; 44:25; 124:7; Gn 12:13; Ex 4:19; 1 S 1:26; 18:1–3, as are also 'my life', 'my face', 'my glory'. These different meanings of 'soul' are to be found also in the NT (*psyche*), *see* Mt 2:20; 10:28; 16:25–26; 1 Co 12:15e; 15:44w.

88:10–12
Is 38:18+ for in death there is no remembrance of you; 5
who could sing your praises in Sheol? [c]

I am worn out with groaning, 6
every night I drench my pillow
and soak my bed with tears.
My eyes waste away with vexation. 7
Arrogance from all my foes! [d]
119:115
↗Mt 7:23 Away from me, all evil-doers! 8

For Yahweh has heard the sound of my weeping,
Yahweh has heard my pleading. 9
Yahweh will accept my prayer.
Let all my enemies be put to confusion, shaken to their depths, 10
let them retreat in sudden confusion.

PSALM 7

Prayer of the upright in persecution [a]

Lament Of David Which he sang to Yahweh about Cush [b] the Benjaminite

Yahweh my God, I take refuge in you, 1
save me from all my pursuers and rescue me,
or he will savage me like a lion, 2
carry me off with no one to rescue me.

Yahweh my God, if I have done this: 3
if injustice has stained my hands,
if I have repaid my ally with treachery 4
or spared one who attacked me unprovoked, [c]
6:4b may an enemy hunt me down and catch me, 5
may he trample my life into the ground
and crush my vital parts [d] into the dust. *Pause*

Arise, Yahweh, in your anger, 6
rise up against the arrogance of my foes.
Awake, my God, [e]
you demand judgement.
Let the assembly of nations gather round you; 7
return above it on high!
(Yahweh judges the nations.) 8

Judge me, Yahweh, as my uprightness
and my integrity deserve. [f]
Put an end to the malice of the wicked, 9
make the upright stand firm,
Ws 1:6h
Jr 11:20 you who discern hearts and minds,
God the upright.

3:3 God is a shield that protects me, 10
saving the honest of heart.
God is an upright judge, 11
Ex 34:6–7,6c slow to anger, [g]
but a God at all times threatening
for those who will not repent. 12

Let the enemy [h] whet his sword,
draw his bow and make ready;

13 but he is making ready instruments of death for himself
and tipping his arrows with fire; Is 50:11
14 look at him: pregnant with malice, Jb 15:35
conceiving spite, he gives birth to treachery. Is 59:4

15 He digs a trap, scoops it out, 9:15;35:8
but he falls into the snare he made himself. Pr 26:27
16 His spite recoils on his own head, Jb 4:8
his brutality falls back on his own skull. Si 27:25–27

17 I thank Yahweh for his saving justice.
I sing to the name of the Most High. [i]

PSALM 8

The power of God's name

19:1–6;104

For the choirmaster On the . . . of Gath [a] *Psalm Of David*

1 Yahweh our Lord,
how majestic is your name [b] throughout the world!

Whoever keeps singing of [c] your majesty higher than the heavens,
2 even through the mouths of children, or of babes in arms, Ws 10:20–21
you make him a fortress, [d] firm against your foes, Mt 11:25par.;
to subdue the enemy and the rebel. ↗21:16

3 I look up at your heavens, shaped by your fingers,
at the moon and the stars you set firm—
4 what are human beings that you spare a thought for them, =144:3
or the child of Adam that you care for him? Jb 7:17–18
↗Heb 2:6–9

5 Yet you have made him little less than a god, [e] Gn 1:26
you have crowned him with glory and beauty, Ws 2:23
6 made him lord of the works of your hands, Si 17:1–4
put all things under his feet, 1 Co 15:27
Ep 1:22

7 sheep and cattle, all of them,
and even the wild beasts,

c. In Sheol, *see* Nb 16:33f, the dead are silent shadows of their former selves and can have no relationship with God. Ps 30:9; 88:5, 10–12; Is 38:18.

d. 'Arrogance' *'ateqah* conj.; Hebr. *'atqah* 'he has grown old'. The psalmist's 'foes' regard the misfortune of the sick as a punishment for some hidden sin (cf. Job's friends). The theme is elaborated elsewhere (31; 35; 38; 69).

7 **a.** Two protestations of innocence have been combined in this Psalm. The first, vv. 1–5,12[b]–16, in the wisdom style, demands strict retaliation; the second, vv. 6–12[a], modelled on Jeremiah, appeals for the intervention of God the Judge. V. 17 is a liturgical conclusion.

b. The versions read 'Cushite', *see* 2 S 18:21, the messenger who informed David of the death of Absalom. But 'the Benjaminite' suggests rather one of David's enemies.

c. The law of *talio*, *see* Ex 21:25f, required that good be rendered for good, evil for evil. The text must not be watered down as in the versions 'if I requited with evil the man who wronged me', or (following the Aram.) 'robbed (my persecutor)'; the morality of the Gospel is yet to come, Mt 5:38seq.

d. lit. 'my glory', but the word also means 'liver', for the Semites the seat of thought and emotion. 'Glory' also means 'soul'. The 'dust' is that of the tomb.

e. 'my God' (*'eli*) Gk; Hebr. *'elay* 'towards me'.

f. The text adds a word that means literally 'on me', and might be translated 'that is in me'.

g. 'slow to anger' Gk, absent from Hebr.

h. 'the enemy' added to make sense, this verse being the continuation of v. 5.

i. 'Most High' conj.; 'Yahweh, Most High' Hebr. • The Hebr. verb *zamar*, Gk *psallein*, strictly means to play on a stringed instrument, or to sing with musical accompaniment.

8 **a.** Perhaps a harp of Gath, or a melody of Gath (of Philistine origin).

b. As soon as he can pronounce it, the divine name enables the believer to share in the glory of Yahweh, *see* v. 5. Made in the image of God, *see* v. 5, a human being is in this way associated with God's sovereignty, *see* 20:2; 54:1,6; Is 63:17. It is probably this theme that is responsible for the juxtaposition of this Psalm with the preceding one.

c. 'keeps singing of' *tinnah* conj.; Hebr. *tenah* 'may give'.

d. As in Pr 18:10, the divine name confounds all idolatry by revealing the one true God, Yahweh, *see* Ex 3:14.

e. The author is thinking of human beings in comparison with the mysterious beings that constitute the court of Yahweh, 45:6d; Tb 5:4b.

birds in the sky, fish in the sea,
when he makes his way across the ocean. 8

Yahweh our Lord,
how majestic your name throughout the world! 9

PSALM 9–10

God strikes the wicked and saves the humble [a]

For the choirmaster On oboe and harp [b] Psalm Of David

=138:1 *Aleph* I thank you, Yahweh, with my whole heart, 1
I recount all your wonders,

I rejoice and delight in you, 2
I sing to your name, Most High.

Bet My enemies are in retreat, 3
they stumble and perish at your presence,
7:8,11; 89:14 for you have given fair judgement in my favour, 4
seated on your throne as upright judge. [c]

Gimel You have rebuked the nations, destroyed the wicked, 5
blotted out their name for ever and ever;
the enemy is wiped out—mere ruins for ever— 6
Gn 19:23–25 you have annihilated their cities, their memory has perished.

He See, [d] Yahweh is enthroned for ever, 7
keeping his throne firm for judgement;
96:13;98:9 he will himself judge the world in uprightness, 8
will give a true verdict on the nations.

=37:39 Is 25:4 *Waw* May Yahweh be a stronghold for the oppressed, 9
a stronghold in times of trouble!
36:10;87:4 Those who revere your name can rely on you, 10
you never desert those who seek you, Yahweh.

7:17i *Zain* Sing to Yahweh who dwells in Zion, 11
tell the nations his mighty deeds,
Jb 16:18f for the avenger of blood does not forget them, 12
he does not ignore the cry of the afflicted.

Het Have pity on me, Yahweh, see my affliction, [e] 13
Ws 16:13 pull me back from the gates of death,
that I may recount all your praises at the gates of the daughter of Zion 14
and rejoice in your salvation.

7:15 *Tet* The nations have fallen into the trap they made, 15
their feet caught in the snare they laid.
Yahweh has made himself known, given judgement, 16
he has ensnared the wicked in the work of their own hands. *Muted music*
Pause

Yod May the wicked turn away to Sheol, 17
50:22 all the nations forgetful of God.

Kaph For the needy is not forgotten for ever, 18
Pr 23:18 not for ever does the hope of the poor come to nothing.

7:6 Arise, Yahweh; human strength shall not prevail. 19
The nations shall stand trial before you.

20 Strike them with terror, Yahweh;
the nations shall know that they are no more than human! *Pause* 10:18

10

1 *Lamed* Why, Yahweh, do you keep so distant, 22;74:1
stay hidden in times of trouble?
2 In his pride the wicked hunts down the weak,
who is caught in the schemes he devises.
3 *(Mem)* The wicked is proud of his inmost desires,
by his blasphemies the grasping spurns Yahweh, [a] 10:13;14:1; 36:1
4 *(Nun)* the wicked in his arrogance does not look very far; Jb 22:13
'There is no God,' is his only thought. [b] Zp 1:12

5 In all circumstances his step is assured;
your judgements are above his head.
His rivals? He scoffs at them all.

6 He says in his heart, 'I shall never be shaken,'
7 free of trouble himself, •he wishes it on others.
(Samek)
Pe His speech is full of lies and browbeating, ↗Rm 3:14
under his tongue lurk spite and wickedness.
8 In the undergrowth he lies in ambush, 17:12
in his hiding-place he murders the innocent. Jr 5:26
Ho 6:9
Hab 3:14

Ain He watches intently for the downtrodden, [c]
9 lurking unseen like a lion in his lair, 17:12
lurking to pounce on the poor;
he pounces on him and drags him off in his net.
(Zade)
10 He keeps watch, crouching down low, [d]
the poor wretch falls into his clutches;
11 he says in his heart, 'God forgets, 44:25;73:11; 74:19;94:7
he has turned away his face to avoid seeing the end.' Jb 22:13
Ezk 9:9

12 *Qoph* Rise, Yahweh! God, raise your hand, [e]
do not forget the afflicted!
13 Why should the wicked spurn God,
assuring himself you will never follow it up? 10:4

14 *Resh* You have seen for yourself the trouble and vexation, 31:7;56:8
you watch so as to take it in hand.
The oppressed relies on you;
you are the only recourse of the orphan. [f] Ex 22:21–22

15 *Shin* Break the arm of the wicked and evil,
seek out wickedness till there is none left to be found.
16 Yahweh is king for ever and ever, 145:13
the heathen has vanished from his country. Jr 10:10
Na 2:1

9 **a.** Ps 9 and 10 were originally one poem (as they are in Gk and Vulg.). The spokesman of the 'poor', *see* Zp 2:3d, describes in a hymn and invokes in a prayer the execution of God's judgement on the wicked. The Psalm is 'alphabetical' (*see* Pr 31:10f) but in our present text, which is in a poor state, several letters have no corresponding strophe.

b. Translation uncertain. The Hebr. can also be translated literally 'to (the tune of) dying for a son'.

c. The divine judgement is regarded as already given; the 'Day of Yahweh' will reveal its content. This eschatological theme is common in the Ps.

d. 'see' *hinneh* conj.; Hebr. *hemmah we* 'they and'.

e. Hebr. adds 'because of those who hate me'.

10 **a.** The text of vv. 3–4 is uncertain and probably altered for theological reasons (the lit. Hebr. for 'blaspheming' is 'blessing', a euphemism, as in 1 K 21:10, 13 and Jb 1:5,11; 2:5,9). There are variations in the versions.

b. Denying the action of Providence, he speaks and acts as if there were no God at all.

c. 'undergrowth' *hatzirim* conj., *see* Is 35:7; Hebr. *hatzerim* 'settlements'.•'he watches intently', lit. 'his eyes watch'. versions: 'hide' Hebr.

d. 'he watches out', conj. to restore the letter *Zade*, omitted by Hebr. 'crouching down low', lit. 'crushes himself' *qere*, Gk; 'crushes' *ketib*.

e. To save, 138:7, and to strike, Is 11:15; Ezk 36:7; Mi 5:8.

f. Text uncertain.

Taw Yahweh, you listen to the laments of the poor, 17
you give them courage, you grant them a hearing,
Dt 10:18 to give judgement for the orphaned and exploited, 18
so that earthborn humans may strike terror no more.

PSALM 11

V 10

The confidence of the upright

For the choirmaster Of David

In Yahweh I have found refuge. 1
How can you say to me,
55:6;91:3 'Bird, flee to your mountain? [a]

7:12;10:8; 37:14;57:4; 64:3 'For look, the wicked are drawing their bows, 2
fitting their arrows to the string
to shoot honest men from the shadows.
If the foundations fall to ruin, what can the upright do?' 3

102:19 Dt 26:15 Is 66:1 ‖Hab 2:20 Mt 5:34 Yahweh in his holy temple! 4
Yahweh, his throne is in heaven;
his eyes watch over the world, [b]
his gaze scrutinises the children of Adam.

Yahweh examines the upright and the wicked, 5
the lover of violence he detests.
Gn 19:24 Ezk 10:2; 38:22 Rv 8:5;20:10 He will rain down red-hot coals, [c] 6
fire and sulphur on the wicked,
a scorching wind will be their lot. [d]

For Yahweh is upright and loves uprightness, 7
the honest will ever see his face. [e]

PSALM 12

V 11

Against a treacherous world [a]

For the choirmaster On the octachord Psalm Of David

Help, Yahweh! No one loyal is left, 1
the faithful have vanished [b] from among the children of Adam.
55:21 Is 59:15 Mi 7:2 Is 59:3–4 Jr 9:7 Friend tells lies to friend, 2
and, smooth-tongued, speaks from an insincere heart.

May Yahweh cut away every smooth lip, 3
every boastful tongue,
31:18 those who say, 'In our tongue lies our strength, 4
our lips are our allies; who can master us?'
'For the poor who are plundered, the needy who groan, 5
Is 33:10 now will I act,' says Yahweh,
'I will grant salvation to those who sigh for it.'

18:30;19:7 Pr 30:5 Yahweh's promises are promises unalloyed, 6
natural silver [c] which comes from the earth seven times refined.

You, Yahweh, will watch over them, 7
you will protect them from that brood for ever.

8 The wicked will scatter in every direction,
as the pinnacle of worthlessness [d] among the children of Adam.

PSALM 13

V 12

A confident appeal

For the choirmaster Psalm Of David

1 How long, Yahweh, will you forget me? For ever? 6:3;77:7seq.; 89:46;94:3
How long will you turn away your face from me? Lm 5:20
2 How long must I nurse rebellion in my soul,
sorrow in my heart day and night? [a]
How long is the enemy to domineer over me?
3 Look down, answer me, Yahweh my God!
Give light to my eyes or I shall fall into the sleep of death.

4 Or my foe will boast, 'I have overpowered him,' 38:16
and my enemy have the joy of seeing me stumble.
5 As for me, I trust in your faithful love, Yahweh.
Let my heart delight in your saving help,
let me sing to Yahweh for his generosity to me,
let me sing to the name of Yahweh the Most High! [b]

PSALM 14

V 13 =53

The fate of the godless [a]

For the choirmaster Of David

1 The fool has said in his heart, 10:4;36:1
'There is no God.' Zp 1:12
Their deeds are corrupt and vile,
not one of them does right. Mi 7:2

2 Yahweh looks down from heaven 11:4
at the children of Adam.
To see if a single one is wise,
a single one seeks God.

3 All have turned away, ↗Rm 3:11–12
all alike turned sour,
not one of them does right, 12:1
not a single one. [b]

11 **a.** The faithful is hunted like a bird. 55:6; 91:3; 124:7. The hill country was a frequent place of refuge. 121:1; Gn 19:17; Ezk 7:16; Mt 24:16.
b. 'the world', versions; omitted by Hebr.
c. 'red-hot coals' Symm.; 'snares' Hebr.
d. lit. 'part of the cup'. This is a metaphor for destiny (the cup may have been used to contain lots), either happy (16:5; 23:5) or more frequently unhappy (75:8; Mt 20:22; Rv 14:10; 16:19). The cup of divine anger is one of the themes of the prophets. Is 51:17h; Jr 25:15; Lm 4:21; Ezk 23:31seq.; Hab 2:16.
e. conj.; the Hebr. reading 'his face will look on the honest' is perhaps the result of a theological scruple, since human beings cannot see God, *see* Ex 33:20i. Nevertheless, the expression 'to contemplate God's face' is common in the Ps in the sense of standing in the presence of God like servants before a kindly master (15:1), *see* 16:11; 17:15; 24:6; 27:8b; 105:4; Gn 33:10; Jb 33:26; Is 38:11.

12 **a.** Prayer in the manner of the prophets. Human deceit is contrasted with God's reliability in word and promise.
b. 'vanished' *sapu* conj.; Hebr. *passu* unintelligible.
c. lit. 'smelted at the going into the earth', i.e. already refined when found. God's word is pure of any deceit.
d. Translation uncertain; lit. 'like a mound of throwing away'. The Targ. paraphrases: 'like vermin which suck the blood of men'.

13 **a.** 'and night' Gk MSS, omitted by Hebr.
b. Gk, cf. 7:18; Hebr. omits this line.

14 **a.** The 'godless' person, cf. 10:4b, is a fool. His hour will come, *see* Jr 5:12seq.
b. Certain Gk MSS insert 3 verses here, quoted in Rm 3:10–18; they are to be found in Ps 5:9; 36:2; 140:3; 10:7; Pr 1:16; Is 59:7–8.

Are they not aware, all these evil-doers? 4
They are devouring my people, [c]
Is 9:11+ this is the bread they eat,
and they never call to Yahweh.

Dt 28:67 They will be gripped with fear, 5
where [d] there is no need for fear, [e]
for God takes the side of the upright;
you may mock the plans of the poor, 6
but Yahweh is their refuge.

Who will bring from Zion salvation for Israel? 7
When Yahweh brings his people home, [f]
85:1:126:1 what joy for Jacob, what happiness for Israel!

PSALM 15 V 14

24:3–6
Is 33:15–16
Mi 6:6–8

The guest of Yahweh [a]

Psalm Of David

Yahweh, who can find a home in your tent, [b] 1
who can dwell on your holy mountain?

119:1 Whoever lives blamelessly, 2
who acts uprightly,
who speaks the truth from the heart,
who keeps the tongue under control, 3

who does not wrong a comrade,
who casts no discredit on a neighbour,
who looks with scorn on the vile, 4
but honours those who fear Yahweh, [c]

who stands by an oath at any cost,
Ex 22:24+; 23:8+ who asks no interest on loans, 5
who takes no bribe to harm the innocent.
No one who so acts can ever be shaken.

PSALM 16 V 15

Yahweh my heritage

In a quiet voice [a] *Of David*

Protect me, O God, in you is my refuge. 1

To Yahweh I say, 'You are my Lord, 2
my happiness is in none •of the sacred spirits of the earth.' 3

They only take advantage of all who love them. [b]
People flock to their teeming idols. [c] 4
Never shall I pour libations to them!
Never take their names on my lips.

Nb 18:20
Dt 10:9
Si 45:20–22
Lm 3:24

My birthright, my cup is Yahweh; 5
you, you alone, hold my lot secure.
The measuring-line marks out for me a delightful place, 6
my birthright is indeed lovely. [d]

7 I bless Yahweh who is my counsellor,
even at night my heart ᶜ instructs me.
8 I keep Yahweh before me always,
for with him at my right hand, nothing can shake me. 121:5

9 So my heart rejoices, my soul ᶠ delights,
my body too will rest secure,
10 for you will not abandon me to Sheol, ↗Ac 2:25–28; ↗13:35• 49:15;73:24
you cannot allow your faithful servant to see the abyss. ᵍ
11 You will teach me the path of life, Nb 16:33f •36:9–10
unbounded joy in your presence,
at your right hand delight for ever.

PSALM 17 V 16

The plea of the innocent

Prayer *Of David*

1 Listen, Yahweh, to an upright cause,
pay attention to my cry,
lend an ear to my prayer,
my lips free from deceit.
2 From your presence will issue my vindication,
your eyes fixed on what is right.

3 You probe my heart, examine me at night, 26:2;139:23 Jb 7:18;23:10
you test me by fire and find no evil.
4 I have not sinned with my mouth •as most people do.

I have treasured the word from your lips, Jb 23:11–12
5 my steps never stray from the paths you lay down,
from your tracks; so my feet never stumble. 18:36
6 I call upon you, God, for you answer me;
turn your ear to me, hear what I say.
7 Show the evidence of your faithful love,
saviour of those who hope in your strength against attack.

c. Figure of speech frequent in the prophets.

d. i.e. in Zion, v. 7; *see also* 48:2; 76:2; 87:5–7; Ezk 48:35.

e. 'where there is no need for fear' Gk and Ps 53, omitted by Hebr. Mysterious fear without apparent cause, *see* Lv 26:36; Dt 28:67; 1 S 14:15; 2 Ch 14:13; Jb 3:25. There may be an allusion to the annihilation of the Assyrians in 701, suddenly struck down when they had no apparent reason to fear, *see* 2 K 19:35; Is 37:36.

f. The Hebr. verb (85:1; 126:1; Dt 30:3; Jb 42:10; Jr 29:14; Ezk 16:53; Ho 6:11; Am 9:14) means primarily the return from exile, but frequently has the wider sense of re-establishing, restoring, making a change of fortune.

15 a. Summary of moral conduct, compare with this the moral precepts of the Decalogue, Ex 20:1a.

b. The sanctuary at Jerusalem is sometimes called a 'tent', retaining the image of the ancient sanctuary in the desert, commemorated each year by the feast of Shelters, Ex 23:14d.

c. God's loyal subjects. The expression, common in Ps, is synonymous with 'faithful', 'pious', 'devout'. Later it is used for all in sympathy with Judaism, *see* Ac 2:11g; 10:2b.

16 a. Meaning uncertain. This rubric occurs before Psalms whose public recitation could arouse the anger of the non-Jewish political masters of Jerusalem.

b. The very obscure text of vv. 2–3 is translated conjecturally with some vowel changes. The Hebr. reads literally: 'My Lord, you are my happiness, none above you. To the holy ones, those who are in the earth, these and those who take advantage(?), all my pleasure is in them.' These vv. could be addressed to those who claimed to combine the worship of God with that of local deities; this syncretism was Israel's great and persistent temptation, *see* Is 57:6; 65:5; 66:3seq.

c. 'people run after them' versions; Hebr. corrupt. 'idols', lit. 'weaknesses' (euphemism).

d. Alluding to the levitical state. Their portion (the traditional 'cup', *see* 11:6d, or 'measuring line', Mi 2:4–5) is Yahweh. The name Hilkiah, 'Yahweh-is-my-portion', is common.

e. lit. 'loins', like the heart, the seat of intimate thought and sentiment, *see* 7:9; Pr 23:16; Jr 12:2.

f. lit. 'my glory', *see* 7:5d.

g. The psalmist has set his heart on Yahweh. His lively faith and total commitment to God call for a union that defies dissolution, hence he must pray to escape death which would break that union, 6:5; *see also* 49:15g. The hope, though vague as yet, is leading towards a belief in resurrection, 2 M 7:9c; Dn 12:2.

36:7;61:4; 63:7;91:4 Guard me as the pupil of an eye, 8
Dt 32:10–11 shelter me in the shadow of your wings
Rt 2:12 from the presence of the wicked who would maltreat me; 9
Zc 2:12 deadly enemies are closing in on me.
Mt 23:37 Engrossed in themselves 10
they are mouthing arrogant words.
They are advancing against me,[a] now they are closing in, 11
watching for the chance to hurl me to the ground,
10:9;22:13; 35:17;57:4 like a lion preparing to pounce, 12
like a young lion crouching in ambush.

Jr 15:15–16 Arise, Yahweh, confront him and bring him down, 13
with your sword save my life from the wicked,
Yahweh, from mortals, by your hand, 14
from mortals whose part in life is in this world.[b]

73:12 You fill their bellies from your store,[c]
their children will have all they desire,
and leave their surplus to their children.
4:6;73:25–26 But I in my uprightness will see your face, 15
Nb 12:8+ ↗Rv 22:4 and when I awake I shall be filled with the vision of you.[d]

‖2 S 22

PSALM 18

V 17

A king's thanksgiving[a]

For the choirmaster Of David, the servant of Yahweh, who addressed the words of this song to Yahweh when Yahweh had delivered him from all his enemies and from the clutches of Saul. He said:

I love you, Yahweh, my strength 1
(my Saviour, you have saved me from violence).[b]

Gn 49:24 Yahweh is my rock and my fortress, 2
Dt 32:4,15, 18,37 my deliverer is my God.
I take refuge in him, my rock,[c]
75:5 my shield, my saving strength,[d]
Dt 33:17 my stronghold, my place of refuge.
Lk 1:69hh

I call to Yahweh who is worthy of praise, 3
and I am saved from my foes.

With Death's breakers[e] closing in on me, 4
Dt 13:14b Belial's torrents ready to swallow me,
Nb 16:33f Sheol's snares every side of me, 5
Death's traps lying ahead of me,

I called to Yahweh in my anguish, 6
I cried for help to my God;[f]
from his Temple he heard my voice,
my cry came to his ears.

Ex 19:16,18 Then the earth quaked and rocked,[g] 7
Jg 5:4–5 the mountains' foundations shuddered,
Hab 3:3–6; 8–13 they quaked at his blazing anger.
Smoke rose from his nostrils, 8
from his mouth devouring fire
(coals were kindled at it).

9 He parted the heavens and came down,
a storm-cloud underneath his feet;
10 riding one of the winged creatures,[h] he flew, 68:4+
soaring on the wings of the wind. Dt 33:26

11 His covering he made the darkness, Ex 13:21+;
his pavilion dark waters and dense cloud. 19:16
12 A brightness lit up before him,[i] Dt 4:11
hail and blazing fire.

13 Yahweh thundered from the heavens, 29;77:17–18
the Most High made his voice heard.[j] Ex 19:19
14 He shot his arrows and scattered them, Jb 36:29–30
he hurled his lightning and routed them.

15 The very springs of ocean[k] were exposed, 77:16
the world's foundations were laid bare,
at your roaring, Yahweh,
at the blast of breath from your nostrils! Ex 15:8

16 He reached down from on high, snatched me up,
pulled me from the watery depths,
17 rescued me from my mighty foe, 1 S 17:37
from my enemies who were stronger than I.

18 They assailed me on my day of disaster
but Yahweh was there to support me;
19 he freed me, set me at large,
he rescued me because he loves me.

20 Yahweh rewards me for my uprightness,
as my hands are pure, so he repays me,
21 since I have kept the ways of Yahweh,
and not fallen away from my God.

22 His judgements are all before me,
his statutes I have not put away from me.
23 I am blameless before him, Dt 18:13
I keep myself clear of evil.

24 So Yahweh repaid me for acting uprightly
because he could see I was pure.[l]

17 a. 'They are advancing against me' Vulg.; Hebr. 'our steps'.

b. Text uncertain. It can also be understood 'from mortals whose part in life is transitory'. The ambiguity is perhaps intentional.

c. lit. 'from that which you hide'. Scarcely a question of punishment here, as many think, but of passing pleasures to which the psalmist prefers God's friendship.

d. The morning awakening is God's chosen hour for granting favours, 5:3; 30:5; 46:5; 49:14; 57:8; 73:20; 90:14; 130:6; 143:8. It is also the time when justice is done, 101:8d. Dawn and light are symbols of deliverance, Is 8:20; 9:1; 33:2; 58:10; Lm 3:23; Zp 3:5; cf. Jn 1:4–5d; 8:12b. Evening and darkness symbolise trial and sorrow, v. 3; 30:5; 59:6; 88:18; 107:10; Is 17:14; 50:10. The word 'awakening' has sometimes been taken as a subtle reference to the resurrection, *see* 16:10g; 2 K 4:31; Is 26:19; Dn 12:2.

18 a. A triumphal ode combining a thanksgiving prayer, vv. 4–27, with a royal victory song, vv. 31–50, ending on a messianic note. Several textual corrections have been made in accordance with the parallel version in 2 S 22.

b. Line absent from Hebr.; 2 S 22 places it after v. 3; but it should be connected with v. 1, which alone addresses God in the second person.

c. In Ps God is often called the Rock of Israel, i.e. the bulwark of his people and especially of the Davidic dynasty; cf. Mt 16:18.

d. lit. 'my horn', symbol of power and vigour, 75:5; 89:17; 92:10, cf. Dt 33:17; 1 K 22:11; Zc 2:4, often with messianic overtones, Ps 132:17; Ezk 29:11.

e. 'breakers' 2 S; cf. v. 5; 'nets' Hebr. The waters symbolise deadly perils, *see* 32:6; 40:2; 42:7; 66:12; 69:1seq., 14seq.; 88:17; 130:1; Jb 22:11; 27:20; Is 8:7; 30:28; Jon 2:6.

f. Hebr. adds 'before his face', omitted by 2 S.

g. Here begins a description of the triumphant intervention of God on behalf of the psalmist, vv. 7–17, Ex 13:22h; 19:16g.

h. The winged creatures above the ark, Ex 25:18i, inspiring Ezekiel's vision of the chariot of God, Ezk 1:5seq, 10d; they form a throne for Yahweh, 1 S 4:4; 2 S 6:2; 2 K 19:15. From the destruction of the Temple onwards they symbolise heavenly beings.

i. 'a brightness lit up' 2 S; Hebr. corrupt.

j. Hebr. repeats here v. 12^b, omitted by Gk and 2 S.

k. 'of ocean' 2 S; 'of the waters' Hebr.

l. 'I was pure' 2 S; 'my hands were pure' Hebr. harmonising with v. 20^b.

You are faithful to the faithful, 25
blameless with the blameless,

sincere to the sincere, 26
but cunning to the crafty,
Jb 22:29 Pr 3:34 you save a people that is humble 27
and humiliate those with haughty looks.

Jb 29:3 Yahweh, you yourself are my lamp, [m] 28
my God lights up my darkness;
with you I storm the rampart, [n] 29
with my God I can scale any wall.

12:6 Dt 32:4 ||Pr 30:5 This God, his way is blameless; 30
the word of Yahweh is refined in the furnace,
for he alone is the shield
of all who take refuge in him.

Is 44:8;45:21 For who is God but Yahweh, 31
who is a rock but our God?
This God who girds me with strength, 32
who makes my way free from blame,

Hab 3:19 who makes me as swift as a deer 33
Dt 32:13 Is 58:14 and sets me firmly on the heights,
who trains my hands for battle, 34
my arms to bend a bow of bronze.

You give me your invincible shield 35
(your right hand upholds me)
you never cease to listen to me, [o]
you give me the strides of a giant, 36
give me ankles that never weaken.

I pursue my enemies and overtake them, 37
not turning back till they are annihilated;
I strike them down and they cannot rise, 38
they fall, they are under my feet.

You have girded me with strength for the fight, 39
bent down my assailants beneath me,
21:12 made my enemies retreat before me; 40
and those who hate me I destroy.

They cry out, there is no one to save; 41
to Yahweh, but no answer comes.
I crumble them like dust before the wind, 42
trample them like the mud of the streets.

You free me from the quarrels of my people, [p] 43
2:8–9 Rv 2:26–28 you place me at the head of the nations,
a people I did not know are now my servants;

foreigners come wooing my favour, 44
no sooner do they hear than they obey me;
foreigners grow faint of heart, 45
Mi 7:17 they come trembling out of their fastnesses.

Life to Yahweh! Blessed be my rock! 46
Exalted be the God of my salvation,

47 the God who gives me vengeance,
and subjects whole peoples to me, 2:1a;20:6b; 89:19–37; 144:10c

48 who rescues me from my raging enemies.
You lift me high above those who attack me,
you deliver me from the man of violence.

49 For this I will praise you, Yahweh, among the nations, 7:17i
and sing praise to your name. ↗Rm 15:9

50 He saves his king time after time,
displays his faithful love for his anointed,
for David and his heirs for ever. [q]

PSALM 19 V 18

Yahweh, sun of saving justice [a]

For the choirmaster Psalm Of David

1 The heavens declare the glory of God, 93;104;147: 4–5,15–20
the vault of heaven proclaims his handiwork, Gn 1:1–8, 14–19
2 day discourses of it to day, Jb 38:7,31–33
night to night hands on the knowledge. Pr 8:22–31 Si 43:1seq. Rm 1:20+

3 No utterance at all, no speech,
not a sound to be heard, [b]
4 but from the entire earth the design stands out,
this message reaches the whole world. ↗Rm 10:18

High above, he pitched a tent for the sun,
5 who comes forth from his pavilion like a bridegroom,
delights like a champion in the course to be run. [c]

6 Rising on the one horizon 65:8
he runs his circuit to the other,
and nothing can escape his heat.

7 The Law of Yahweh is perfect, 119
refreshment to the soul;
the decree of Yahweh is trustworthy,
wisdom for the simple.

8 The precepts of Yahweh are honest,
joy for the heart;
the commandment of Yahweh is pure,
light for the eyes.

m. 'are my lamp': Hebr. 'you light my lamp', a gloss omitted in 2 S, and intended to soften the materialism of the image.

n. 'I storm the rampart' *'arotz geder* 2 S; Hebr. *'arutz gedud* 'I hasten to raid'.

o. 'you never cease to listen to me', lit. 'you multiply answers to me' *'anoteka* following Gk and 2 S. cf. Ps 20:6; Hebr. *'anewateka* 'your humility makes me increase'.

p. 'my people' 2 S; 'a people' Hebr.; 'peoples' Gk (both Ps and 2 S). The reading of 2 S must be the original one; it was generalised afterwards because of the rest of the v., and perhaps also to remove the criticism of Israel.

q. Liturgical conclusion recalling the promises of victory and salvation made to the Davidic dynasty, cf. 89:1seq., 28seq; 1 S 2:10.

19 a. This hymn celebrates Yahweh as Creator of the heavens, and particularly of the sun (vv. 4[b]–6) and the author of the Law; nature and Law both manifest the perfection of God. In the ancient East the sun symbolised justice, *see* Ws 5:6; Ml 3:20; hence the conjunction of the Psalm's two sections. v. 4 is applied to the apostles, *see also* Rm 10:18.

b. The versions interpret 'whose sound cannot be heard'; but in what follows there is allusion to the Assyro-Babylonian idea that the stars are the silent 'writing of the heavens'.

c. The psalmist, speaking of the sun as a creature of God, uses expressions found also in Babylonian mythology.

The fear of Yahweh is pure, 9
lasting for ever;
the judgements of Yahweh are true,
upright, every one,

119:127 more desirable than gold, 10
even than the finest gold;
119:103 his words [d] are sweeter than honey,
that drips from the comb.

Thus your servant is formed by them; 11
observing them brings great reward.
But who can detect his own failings? 12
Wash away my hidden faults.

And from pride [e] preserve your servant, 13
never let it be my master.
So shall I be above reproach,
free from grave sin.

May the words of my mouth always [f] find favour, 14
and the whispering of my heart,
in your presence, Yahweh,
my rock, my redeemer. [g]

PSALM 20 V 19

Prayer for the king [a]

For the choirmaster Psalm Of David

May Yahweh answer you in time of trouble, 1
18:49;44:5 may the name of the God of Jacob protect you!
1 K 8:30
Pr 18:10 May he send you help from the sanctuary, 2
give you support from Zion!

May he remember all your sacrifices 3
and delight in your burnt offerings! *Pause*
May he grant you your heart's desire 4
and crown all your plans with success!

So that with joy we can hail your victory 5
and draw up our ranks in the name of our God.

May Yahweh grant all your petitions.

Ps 18:50 Now I know that Yahweh 6
gives victory to his anointed. [b]
He will respond from his holy heavens
with great deeds of victory from his right hand.

33:16–17; Some call on chariots, some on horses, 7
147:10–11
2 Ch 14:10 but we on the name of Yahweh our God.
Is 40:30–31
Ho 1:7i They will crumple and fall, 8
while we stand upright and firm.

21 Yahweh, save the king, 9
answer us [c] when we call.

PSALM 21

v 20 20; 61:5–7

For a coronation ceremony [a]

For the choirmaster Psalm Of David

1 Yahweh, the king rejoices in your power;
How your saving help fills him with joy!
2 You have granted him his heart's desire,
not denied him the prayer of his lips. *Pause*

3 For you come to meet him with blessings of prosperity,
put a crown of pure gold on his head.
4 He has asked for life, you have given it him, 1 K 3:14 2 K 20:1–7 Is 38:1–20
length of days for ever and ever.

5 Great his glory through your saving help;
you invest him with splendour and majesty.
6 You confer on him everlasting blessings, 16:11; 45:3 72:17
you gladden him with the joy of your presence. Gn 12:2; 48:20n
7 For the king puts his trust in Yahweh; 1 Ch 17:27
the faithful love of the Most High will keep him from falling.

8 Your hand will reach all your enemies,
your right hand all who hate you. 18:37
9 You will hurl them into a blazing furnace Ml 3:19h
on the day when you appear; [b]
Yahweh will engulf them in his anger,
and fire will devour them.
10 You will purge the earth of their descendants, 109:13 Jb 18:19
the human race of their posterity.

11 They have devised evil against you
but, plot as they may, they will not succeed,
12 since you will make them turn tail, 18:40
by shooting your arrows in their faces.

13 Rise, Yahweh, in your power!
We will sing and make music in honour of your strength.

d. 'his words' *debarayw* conj., *see* 119:103, 127: Hebr. *rab* 'plentiful' (at the end of the verse).

e. 'pride', lit. 'the proud'; Gk 'alien (gods)'. Ps 119 persistently opposes pride to obedience to the Law.

f. 'always' Gk, omitted by Hebr.

g. In Hebr. *go'el*. This word, which denotes the avenger of blood, Nb 35:19, and the redeemer, Lv 25:25, 47–49, is applied by Jb 19:25; Ps 19:14; 78:35; Jr 50:34, and often in the second part of Isaiah, Is 41:14; 43:14; 44:6, 24; 49:7; 59:20 to Yahweh as avenger, Saviour and rescuer from death of his people and his servants.

20 a. Prayer for the king as he sets out for war, cf. 1 K 8:44; 2 Ch 20:18seq. Each of the two sections is followed by a choral antiphon.

b. Or his 'Christ', his 'Messiah' (*see* Ex 30:22d; 1 S 9:26n), the king of Israel.

c. 'answer us' versions; 'he answers us' Hebr.

21 a. This Psalm of two sections followed by choral antiphons, vv. 7 and 13, strikes a messianic and christological note.

b. i.e., when you come to judge, vv. 8–12 are addressed to the king, but the expression 'on the day of your face' and the mention of fire suggest an eschatological perspective. It is possible that in the original text (*see* Gk MSS) this passage was addressed to Yahweh.

PSALM 22

V 21

The sufferings and hopes of the upright [a]

For the choirmaster To 'the Doe of the Dawn' [b] Psalm Of David

Is 49:14;54:7 ↗Mt 27:46par.
My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? 1
The words of my groaning do nothing to save me.
My God, I call by day but you do not answer, 2
at night, but I find no respite.

Lv 17:1a Is 6:3g
Yet you, the Holy One, 3
who make your home in the praises of Israel, [c]
in you our ancestors put their trust, 4
they trusted and you set them free.
Jg 2:11h
To you they called for help and were delivered; 5
in you they trusted and were not put to shame.

But I am a worm, not a man, 6
scorn of mankind, contempt of the people;
all who see me jeer at me, 7
Mt 27:39par.
they sneer and wag their heads,
Ws 2:18–20 ↗Mt 27:43
'He trusted himself [d] to Yahweh, let Yahweh set him free! 8
Let him deliver him, as he took such delight in him.'

Is 44:2,24
It was you who drew me from the womb 9
and soothed me on my mother's breast.
Gn 50:23 Is 46:3
On you was I cast from my birth, 10
from the womb I have belonged to you.
35:22;38:21; 40:13;71:12
Do not hold aloof, for trouble is upon me, 11
and no one to help me!

Many bulls are encircling me, 12
wild bulls of Bashan closing in on me.
17:12
Lions ravening and roaring 13
open their jaws at me.

My strength is trickling away, 14
my bones are all disjointed,
my heart has turned to wax,
melting inside me.
My mouth [e] is dry as earthenware, 15
Jn 19:28
my tongue sticks to my jaw.
You lay me down in the dust of death.

A pack of dogs surrounds me, 16
a gang of villains closing in on me
as if to hack off [f] my hands and my feet.
I can count every one of my bones, 17
while they look on and gloat;
↗Mt 27:35par. ↗Jn 19:24
they divide my garments among them 18
and cast lots for my clothing.

Yahweh, do not hold aloof! 19
My strength, come quickly to my help,
Jn 12:27
rescue my soul from the sword, 20
the one life I have from the grasp of the dog!
7:2;17:12; 57:5 2 Tm 4:17
Save me from the lion's mouth, 21
my poor life [g] from the wild bulls' horns!

22 I shall proclaim your name to my brothers, 40:9 ↗Heb 2:12
praise you in full assembly:
23 'You who fear Yahweh, praise him!
All the race of Jacob, honour him!
Revere him, all the race of Israel!'

24 For he has not despised
nor disregarded the poverty of the poor,
has not turned away his face,
but has listened to the cry for help.

25 Of you is my praise in the thronged assembly,
I will perform my vows before all who fear him.
26 The poor will eat and be filled, [h]
those who seek Yahweh will praise him,
'May your heart live for ever.'

27 The whole wide world will remember and return to Yahweh, Tb 13:11 Is 45:22; 52:10
all the families of nations bow down before him. [i]
28 For to Yahweh, ruler of the nations, belongs kingly power! Ob 21
29 All who prosper on earth will bow before him, [j] Zc 14:9 Is 53:10
all who go down to the dust will do reverence before him.
30 And those who are dead, ·their descendants will serve him, [k]
31 will proclaim his name to generations ·still to come; [l] 48:13;71:18; 78:6;102:18 Ep 2:7
and these will tell of his saving justice to a people yet unborn:
he has fulfilled it.

PSALM 23 V 22

The good Shepherd [a]

Psalm *Of David*

1 Yahweh is my shepherd, I lack nothing. Ezk 34:1a Jn 10:1–16
2 In grassy meadows he lets me lie.

By tranquil streams he leads me Is 40:31 Jr 31:25
3 to restore my spirit. Jn 4:1a
He guides me in paths of saving justice Pr 4:11
as befits his name. 115:1

4 Even were I to walk in a ravine as dark as death Jb 10:21–22 Is 50:10
I should fear no danger, for you are at my side. [b]
Your staff and your crook are there to soothe me.

22 a. This lament and entreaty of the innocent under persecution ends in thanksgiving for his rescue, vv. 22–26, and earns its place in the national liturgy by virtue of v. 23 and the universalist conclusion, vv. 27–31, where the coming of the kingdom of God throughout the world seems to result from the ordeal of the faithful servant.

b. Possibly the first words of a familiar song. Versions: 'For morning solace'.

c. Or 'You who dwell in the sanctuary, the praise of Israel', *see* Gk.

d. 'He trusted himself' versions; 'Trust yourself' Hebr.

e. 'My mouth' *hikki* conj.; Hebr. *kohi* 'my strength'.

f. 'as if to hack off' *ke'ero* (from the verb *'arah*) conj.; Hebr. *ka'ari* 'as a lion', unintelligible; Gk 'they have dug into'; Syr. 'they have wounded'. • The passage recalls Is 53:5 but the evangelists did not make use of it in the Passion narratives.

g. 'my poor life (lit. 'soul')' *'anniyati* conj.; Hebr. *'anitani* 'you have answered me'.

h. Allusion to the messianic banquet, Is 55:1seq., rather than to the ritual meal following the communion sacrifice, Lv 3:1a.

i. 'him' versions; 'you' Hebr.

j. 'him' *'ak lo* conj.; Hebr. *'aklu* 'they have eaten'.

k. A difficult passage; it can also be interpreted 'He (the wicked) will not live, but generations will serve him.' Some MSS and the Gk have 'my soul shall live for him', an adjustment relating to belief in the resurrection.

l. 'still to come' Gk; 'they will come' Hebr.

23 a. The care of God for the upright, illustrated by two images: the shepherd, vv. 1–4, and the host of the messianic banquet, vv. 5–6.

b. 'for you are' a later addition to the text, probably to harmonise with 1 S 22:23, and to stress the allusion to David. The original text was probably: 'at my side are your crook and your staff . . .

22:26h Ex 16:1a
You prepare a table for me 5
under the eyes of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil; [c]
16:5+;63:5 my cup brims over.

Kindness and faithful love pursue me 6
every day of my life.
27:4 I make my home [d] in the house of Yahweh
for all time to come.

PSALM 24

V 23

For a solemn entry into the sanctuary [a]

Psalm *Of David*

89:11 Dt 10:14 Is 66:1–2 ↗1 Co 10:26
To Yahweh belong the earth and all it contains, 1
the world and all who live there;
it is he who laid its foundations on the seas, 2
75:3 Is 42:5 on the flowing waters fixed it firm. [b]

15
Who shall go up to the mountain of Yahweh? 3
Who shall take a stand in his holy place?

Mt 5:8
The clean of hands and pure of heart, 4
whose heart is not set on vanities,
who does not swear an oath in order to deceive.

Such a one will receive blessing from Yahweh, 5
saving justice from the God of his salvation.
Such is the people that seeks him, 6
27:8–9 that seeks your presence, God of Jacob. [c] *Pause*

118:19–20 2 S 6:12–16 Ezk 44:2 Ml 3:1
Gates, lift high your heads, 7
raise high the ancient gateways,
and the king of glory shall enter!

1 Co 2:8
Who is he, this king of glory? 8
It is Yahweh, strong and valiant,
Yahweh valiant in battle.

Gates, lift high your heads, 9
raise high the ancient gateways,
and the king of glory shall enter!

Who is he, this king of glory? 10
1 S 1:3c Yahweh Sabaoth,
Ex 24:16f he is the king of glory. *Pause*

PSALM 25

V 24

Prayer in danger

Of David

=86:4 *Aleph* ADORATION I offer, Yahweh, 1
to you, my God. 2

22:5;40:14seq. Is 49:23;50:7 *Bet* BUT in my trust in you do not put me to shame,
let not my enemies gloat over me.

3 *Gimel* CALLING to you, none shall ever be put to shame,
but shame is theirs who groundlessly break faith.

4 *Dalet* DIRECT me in your ways, Yahweh, 27:11;86:11; 119:35;143:8
and teach me your paths. Ex 33:13 Jn 14:6;16:13

5 *He* ENCOURAGE me to walk in your truth and teach me
since you are the God who saves me.

(Waw) FOR my hope is in you all day long—
7c such is your generosity, Yahweh.

6 *Zain* GOODNESS and faithful love have been yours for ever,
Yahweh, do not forget them.

7 *Het* HOLD not my youthful sins [a] against me, 106:4+ Jb 13:26 Is 64:8
but remember me as your faithful love dictates.

8 *Tet* INTEGRITY and generosity are marks of Yahweh
for he brings sinners back to the path.

9 *Yod* JUDICIOUSLY he guides the humble,
instructing the poor [b] in his way.

10 *Kaph* KINDNESS unfailing and constancy mark all Yahweh's paths, 85:9–10 Tb 3:2
for those who keep his covenant and his decrees.

11 *Lamed* LET my sin, great though it is, be forgiven,
Yahweh, for the sake of your name.

12 *Mem* MEN who respect Yahweh, what of them? Pr 19:23
He teaches them the way they must choose.

13 *Nun* NEIGHBOURS to happiness will they live,
and their children inherit the land. [c] 37:9,29 Is 57:13

14 *Samek* ONLY those who fear Yahweh
possess his secret [d] and his covenant, for their understanding.

15 *Ain* PERMANENTLY my eyes are on Yahweh, 123:1;141:8–9
for he will free my feet from the snare.

16 *Pe* QUICK, turn to me, pity me, 86:16;119:132
alone and wretched as I am!

17 *Zade* RELIEVE [e] the distress of my heart,
bring me out of my constraint.

18 *(Qoph)* SPARE a glance for my misery and pain,
take all my sins away.

19 *Resh* TAKE note how countless are my enemies,
how violent their hatred for me.

20 *Shin* UNLESS you guard me and rescue me 16:1
I shall be put to shame, for you are my refuge.

c. Gesture of hospitality in the East, 92:10; 133:2; Qo 9:8; Am 6:6; Lk 7:46.

d. 'my home' versions; 'I shall return to' Hebr. (a simple correction of vowels).

24 a. Possibly vv. 7–10 refer to the transfer of the ark in the days of David, 2 S 6:12–16, cf. Ps 68:24seq.; 132. The first part, vv. 1–6, seems to be of later date, cf. Ps 15: the Creator of the universe is also the befriender of the upright.

b. The earth is represented as resting on the waters of the nether ocean, *see* Ex 20:4.

c. 'your presence, God of Jacob' 2 Hebr MSS, Syr; 'your presence, Jacob' Hebr.; 'the presence of the God of Jacob' Gk.

25 a. Hebr. here adds 'and my faults', a doublet omitted by Syr.

b. 'poor' Syr.; Hebr. repeats 'humble'.

c. The sages of Israel had taught that the upright would receive a reward on earth; to this is now added the hope, nursed by those back from exile, of the unconditional enjoyment of the land of their ancestors.

d. Not so much the mystery of God himself, Ws 2:22, as an intimacy with God, Ps 73:28; Ex 33:20; Jb 29:5; Pr 3:32, together with an understanding of the ways of God, Jr 16:21; 31:34; Ho 6:6.

e. 'relieve' conj.; 'they have relieved' Hebr.

Taw VIRTUE and integrity be my protection, 21
for my hope, Yahweh,[f] is in you.

130:8 Ransom Israel, O God, 22
from all its troubles.[g]

PSALM 26

V 25

Prayer of the blameless[a]

7;17;18:20–27;59:3 Jb 31 *Of David*

Yahweh, be my judge! 1
I go on my way in innocence,
my trust in Yahweh never wavers.

7:9;17:3; 139:23 Probe me, Yahweh, examine me, 2
Test my heart and my mind in the fire.
For your faithful love is before my eyes, 3
119:30 and I live my life by your truth.

No sitting with wastrels for me, 4
no associating with hypocrites;
1:1 I hate the company of sinners, 5
I refuse to sit down with the wicked.

=73:13 Dt 21:6–7 Mt 27:4 I will wash my hands in innocence 6
and join the procession round your altar, Yahweh,
to make heard the sound of thanksgiving, 7
to proclaim all your wonders.
29:9;63:2 Ex 24:16f; 25:8d Yahweh, I love the beauty[b] of your house 8
and the place where your glory dwells.

28:3 Do not couple me with sinners, 9
nor my life with men of violence,
whose hands are stained with guilt, 10
Ex 23:8+ Dt 16:19 their right hands heavy with bribes.

In innocence I will go on my way; 11
25:16 ransom me, take pity on me.
I take my stand on the right path; 12
22:22;40:10; 52:9 I will bless you,[c] Yahweh, in the assemblies.

PSALM 27

V 26

In God's company there is no fear

Of David

18:28;36:9; 43:3 Is 10:17; 60:20 Mi 7:8 Yahweh is my light and my salvation, 1
whom should I fear?
Yahweh is the fortress of my life,
whom should I dread?

When the wicked advance against me 2
14:4 Jb 19:22 to eat me up,
they, my opponents, my enemies,
are the ones who stumble and fall.

3 Though an army pitch camp against me,
my heart will not fear,
though war break out against me,
my trust will never be shaken.

4 One thing I ask of Yahweh,
one thing I seek:
to dwell in Yahweh's house =23:6;42:2
all the days of my life,
to enjoy the sweetness of Yahweh,
to seek out his temple.

5 For he hides me away under his roof Rv 7:15–16
on the day of evil,
he folds me in the recesses of his tent,[a] 18:2;31:20
sets me high on a rock.

6 Now my head is held high
above the enemies who surround me;
in his tent I will offer
sacrifices of acclaim.

I will sing, I will make music for Yahweh.

7 Yahweh, hear my voice as I cry,
pity me, answer me!
8 Of you my heart has said,
'Seek his face!'[b]
Your face, Yahweh, I seek;
9 do not turn away from me. 24:6;105:4 Ho 5:15

Do not thrust aside your servant in anger,
without you I am helpless.
Never leave me, never forsake me,
God, my Saviour.
10 Though my father and mother forsake me,
Yahweh will gather me up. Is 49:15 Jr 31:20 Ho 11:8
11 Yahweh, teach me your way, 25:4;=86:11
lead me on the path of integrity
because of my enemies;
12 do not abandon me to the will of my foes—
false witnesses have risen against me,
and are breathing out violence.

13 This I believe: I shall see[c] the goodness of Yahweh,
in the land of the living. 116:9;142:5
14 Put your hope in Yahweh, be strong, let your heart be bold,
put your hope in Yahweh.

f. 'Yahweh' Gk, omitted by Hebr.

g. This v., which is outside the alphabetical series, could be a post-exilic liturgical antiphon. Similarly 34:22.

26 a. As in Ps 7 and 17 the believer protests his innocence.
b. 'beauty' Gk; 'house' Hebr. (mere change of vowels).
c. 'you' Gk, omitted by Hebr.

27 a. 'his roof' and 'his tent' denote the sanctuary in Jerusalem.

b. 'seek his face' conj.; 'seek (plur) my face' Hebr. This expression, *see* Am 5:4c, originally signifying 'to consult Yahweh' in his sanctuary, 2 S 21:1, took on a wider sense: to seek to know God, to live in his presence. To 'seek God', 40:16; 69:6; 105:3; Dt 4:29, *see* Am 5:4c, is to serve him faithfully.

c. Or 'If only I were sure of seeing!' In Maccabaean times this passage was understood in function of a future life.

PSALM 28

V 27

Petition and thanksgiving

Of David

To you, Yahweh, I cry, 1
18:2c;143:7 my rock, do not be deaf to me!
If you stay silent
I shall be like those who sink into oblivion.

Hear the sound of my prayer 2
when I call upon you,
5:7;134:2 when I raise my hands, Yahweh, [a]
1 K 8:48 towards your Holy of Holies.

26:9 Do not drag me away with the wicked, 3
with evil-doers,
12:2;55:21; 62:4 who talk to their partners of peace
Pr 26:24–28 with treachery in their hearts.

Repay them as their deeds deserve, 4
as befits their treacherous actions;
Jr 50:29 as befits their handiwork repay them,
let their deserts fall back on themselves.

Is 5:12 They do not comprehend the deeds of Yahweh, 5
52:5 the work of his hands.
May he pull them down and not rebuild them!

Blessed be Yahweh 6
for he hears the sound of my prayer.

Yahweh is my strength and my shield, 7
in him my heart trusts.
I have been helped; my body has recovered its vigour,
with all my heart [b] I thank him.

Yahweh is the strength of his people, 8
a safe refuge for his anointed. [c]
3:8;29:11 Save your people, bless your heritage, 9
Ex 19:4 shepherd them and carry them for ever!

PSALM 29

V 28

Hymn to the Lord of the storm [a]

18:13;68:8; 77:16–18; 97:2–6; 144:5–6 *Psalm* *Of David*
Ex 19:16g
Hab 3

Give Yahweh his due, sons of God, [b] 1
=97:7–9 give Yahweh his due of glory and strength,
give Yahweh the glory due to his name, 2
adore Yahweh in the splendour of holiness. [c]

77:18;104:7 Yahweh's voice over the waters, the God of glory thunders; 3
Jb 37:4–5
Is 30:30 Yahweh over countless waters,
Ezk 10:5 Yahweh's voice in power, Yahweh's voice in splendour; 4

104:16 Yahweh's voice shatters cedars, 5
Yahweh shatters cedars of Lebanon,

6 he makes Lebanon skip like a calf, 114:4
Sirion [d] like a young wild ox.

7 Yahweh's voice carves out lightning-shafts, [e] Hab 3:11
8 Yahweh's voice convulses the desert,
Yahweh convulses the desert of Kadesh,
9 Yahweh's voice convulses terebinths, [f]
strips forests bare.

In his palace [g] all cry, 'Glory!'
10 Yahweh was enthroned for the flood, [h] Gn 6–9
Yahweh is enthroned as king for ever. Is 54:9
11 Yahweh will give strength to his people, Dn 7:27
Yahweh blesses his people with peace.

PSALM 30 V 29

Thanksgiving after mortal danger

Psalm *Canticle for the Dedication of the House* *Of David* Ezr 6:16
1 M 4:36seq.

1 I praise you to the heights, Yahweh, for you have raised me up,
you have not let my foes make merry over me.
2 Yahweh, my God, I cried to you for help and you healed me.
3 Yahweh, you have lifted me out of Sheol, Nb 16:33f
from among those who sink into oblivion you have given me life. 1 S 2:6

4 Make music for Yahweh, all you who are faithful to him, 7:17i
praise his unforgettable holiness. 17:15d;=97:12
5 His anger lasts but a moment, his favour through life; Jb 14:13
In the evening come tears, [a] but with dawn cries of joy. Is 54:7–8

6 Carefree, I used to think,
'Nothing can ever shake me!'
7 Your favour, Yahweh, set me on unassailable heights, [b]
but you turned away your face and I was terrified. 104:29

8 To you, Yahweh, I call,
to my God [c] I cry for mercy.
9 What point is there in my death, [d] my going down to the abyss? 6:5;88:10–12
Can the dust praise you or proclaim your faithfulness? Is 38:18+

10 Listen, Yahweh, take pity on me,
Yahweh, be my help!

28 **a.** 'Yahweh' here and in v. 4 is absent from the Hebr.
b. 'my body has recovered its vigour, with all my heart' Gk; 'my heart rejoices; with my song'. Hebr.
c. The parallelism suggests that the 'anointed' is here the people of God consecrated to his service, *see* 105:15; Ex 19:3b; Hab 3:13, and not the king, Ps 20:6, or the high priest, Ps 84:9.

29 **a.** The tempest, *see* Ex 13:22h; 19:16f evokes the power and glory of God, subduing the enemies of Israel and assuring peace to the chosen people.
b. *lit.* 'sons of the gods', cf. 82:1; 89:6; Jb 1:6f, i.e. the angels who constitute the heavenly court. The passage is sometimes applied to Israel, the 'son of God', Ex 4:22; Dt 14:1; Ho 11:1. Gk adds 'Bring sons of rams to Yahweh'.
c. Or 'in the courts of his holiness' (Gk, Syr.); this would be heaven, the invisible counterpart of the temple of Jerusalem, 11:4; 78:69.
d. Sidonian-name for Lebanon, Dt 3:9.
e. God hews out arrows to transfix his enemies, cf. 18:14; Dt 32:23, 42; Hab 3:11; Zc 9:14.
f. 'the terebinths' *'elot* conj.; Hebr. *'ayyalot* '(makes) the hinds (calve)'. • The great trees, here and in v. 5, perhaps symbolise the proud enemies of God and of his people, cf. Is 2:13; 10:18,33; 32:19; Jr 21:14; 46:23; Ezk 21:2; Zc 11:2.
g. Either in heaven, v. 2, or in the Temple where the liturgy echoes the praise of the heavenly court, or else in the Holy Land, consecrated to Yahweh, 114:2, and his dwelling-place, Jr 12:7; Zc 9:8.
h. The first manifestation of divine justice.

30 **a.** lit. 'in the evening, tears pass the night'.
b. Text conjectural; Hebr. reads 'by your favour you have set up a force on my mountain.'
c. 'my God' Gk; 'Lord' Hebr.
d. lit. 'in my blood', for blood contains life, 72:14; 116:15; Gn 9:6b; Lv 1:5e.

126 Est 9:22 Is 61:3 Jr 31:13

You have turned my mourning into dancing, 11
you have stripped off my sackcloth and clothed me with joy.
So my heart [e] will sing to you unceasingly, 12
Yahweh, my God, I shall praise you for ever.

PSALM 31

V 30

Prayer in time of ordeal [a]

For the choirmaster Psalm Of David

=71:1–2

In you, Yahweh, I have taken refuge, 1
let me never be put to shame,
in your saving justice deliver me, rescue me, [b]
turn your ear to me, make haste. 2

18:2;71:3

Be for me a rock-fastness,
a fortified citadel to save me.
You are my rock, my rampart; 3
true to your name, lead me and guide me!

Draw me out of the net they have spread for me, 4
for you are my refuge;
↗Lk 23:46 ↗Ac 7:59 to your hands I commit my spirit, 5
by you have I been redeemed.

God of truth, ·you hate [c] 6
worshippers of ineffectual idols;
but my trust is in Yahweh:
I will delight and rejoice in your faithful love! 7

You, who have seen my misery,
and witnessed the miseries of my soul,
have not handed me over to the enemy, 8
but have given me freedom to roam at large.

35;38;69;71

Take pity on me, Yahweh, 9
for I am in trouble.
Vexation is gnawing away my eyes,
my soul deep within me.

For my life is worn out with sorrow, 10
and my years with sighs.
My strength gives way under my misery, [d]
6:2 and my bones are all wasted away.

The sheer number of my enemies 11
makes me contemptible,
38:11 Jb 19:13–19 loathsome [e] to my neighbours,
and my friends shrink from me in horror.

When people see me in the street
they take to their heels.
I have no more place in their hearts than a corpse, 12
or something lost.

41:5 ‖Jr 20:10

All I hear is slander 13
—terror wherever I turn—
as they plot together against me,
scheming to take my life.

But my trust is in you, Yahweh;
I say, 'You are my God,'
every moment of my life is in your hands, rescue me
from the clutches of my foes who pursue me;
let your face shine on your servant, 4:6d
save me in your faithful love.

I call on you, Yahweh, so let disgrace fall not on me,
but on the wicked.
Let them go down to Sheol in silence,
muzzles on their lying mouths,
which speak arrogantly against the upright
in pride and contempt.

Yahweh,[f] what quantities of good things
you have in store for those who fear you,
and bestow on those who make you their refuge,
for all humanity to see.

Safe in your presence you hide them, 27:5;109:3 Rv 7:15–16 Jb 5:21
far from human plotting,
shielding them in your tent,
far from contentious tongues.[g]

Blessed be Yahweh who works for me
miracles of his faithful love
(in a fortified city)! 60:9 Is 26:1
In a state of terror I cried,
'I have been cut off[h] from your sight!'
Yet you heard my plea for help
when I cried out to you.

Love Yahweh, all his faithful: 37:34seq.
Yahweh protects his loyal servants,
but he repays the arrogant
with interest.
Be brave, take heart,
all who put your hope in Yahweh.

PSALM 32 V 31

Candid admission of sin[a]

Pr 28:13 Is 1:18 Ho 14:3 Jm 5:16 1 Jn 1:9

Of David Poem

How blessed are those whose offence is forgiven, ↗Rm 4:7–8
whose sin blotted out.[b]
How blessed are those to whom Yahweh imputes no guilt,
whose spirit harbours no deceit.

e. 'my heart', lit. 'my liver' or 'my glory', following Gk, *see* 7:5; 'glory' Hebr.

31 a. Prayer inspired by the Confessions of Jeremiah; Jon 2 is also quite close.
b. 'rescue' Gk; it is put after 'make haste' in Hebr.
c. 'you hate' versions; 'I hate' Hebr.
d. 'misery' versions; 'iniquity' Hebr.
e. 'loathsome' *ma'os* conj.; Hebr. *me'od* 'exceedingly'
f. 'Yahweh' 3 Hebr. MSS, versions, omitted by MT.
g. Scorn, slander, perjury, cf. 55:9; 109:3; 120:2seq.; 1 K 21:10,13; Jb 5:21; Is 54:17, Jr 18:18.
h. 'cut off' by restoring the original text; in the Hebr. two letters have been changed over to soften the unduly pessimistic expression.

32 a. A didactic poem; its two parts, vv. 1–7 and 8–11, balance each other, but the rhythm is different. One of the pentitential psalms.
b. lit. 'his sin is covered', *see* 65:3c; 85:2; Jb 31:33.

31:10 I said not a word, but my bones wasted away 3
from groaning all the day;
day and night 4
your hand lay heavy upon me;
my heart grew parched as stubble [c]
in summer drought. *Pause*

51:3 Jb 31:33 I made my sin known to you, 5
did not conceal my guilt.
2 S 12:13 I said, 'I shall confess
my offence to Yahweh.'
And you, for your part, took away my guilt,
51:12–13 forgave [d] my sin. *Pause*

That is why each of your faithful ones prays to you 6
in time of distress. [e]
18:4c Even if great floods overflow,
they will never reach your faithful.
You are a refuge for me, 7
you guard me in trouble,
with songs [f] of deliverance you surround me. *Pause*

I shall instruct you and teach you the way to go; 8
33:18 I shall not take my eyes off you.

Do not be like horse or mule; 9
they do not understand bridle or bit;
if you advance [g] to master them,
there is no means of getting them to come near.

Countless troubles are in store for the wicked, 10
but one who trusts in Yahweh is enfolded in his faithful love.

33:1 Rejoice in Yahweh, 11
exult all you upright,
shout for joy, you honest of heart.

PSALM 33

V 32

Hymn to Providence

32:11; 92:1;147:1 Shout for joy, you upright; 1
praise comes well from the honest.
Give thanks to Yahweh on the lyre, 2
92:3;144:9 play for him on the ten-stringed lyre.
Sing to him a new song, 3
make sweet music for your cry of victory. [a]

89:14 Dt 32:4 The word of Yahweh is straightforward, 4
all he does springs from his constancy.
He loves uprightness and justice; 5
=119:64 the faithful love of Yahweh fills the earth.

Gn 2:1 Jn 1:1a By the word of Yahweh the heavens were made, 6
by the breath of his mouth all their array.
78:13 Gn 1:9–10 Ex 15:8 Jb 38:8–11,22 He collects the waters of the sea like a dam, 7
[b]he stores away the abyss in his treasure-house.

Let the whole earth fear Yahweh, 8

let all who dwell in the world revere him;
9 for, the moment he spoke, it was so, 148:5 Gn 1:3seq.
no sooner had he commanded, than there it stood! Is 48:13 Jn 1:3

10 Yahweh thwarts the plans of nations,
frustrates the counsels of peoples;
11 but Yahweh's own plan stands firm for ever, Pr 19:21 Is 40:8; 46:10
his heart's counsel from age to age.
12 How blessed the nation whose God is Yahweh, =144:15 Ex 19:3c
the people he has chosen as his heritage. Dt 7:6b

13 From heaven Yahweh looks down, Jb 34:21 Jr 16:17
he sees all the children of Adam,
14 from the place where he sits he watches
all who dwell on the earth;
15 he alone moulds their hearts, 94:9–11; 139:1–16
he understands all they do. Zc 12:1

16 A large army will not keep a king safe, 1 S 14:6; 17:47 Jdt 9:7
nor his strength save a warrior's life;
17 it is delusion to rely on a horse for safety, Ho 1:7+
for all its power it cannot save.

18 But see how Yahweh watches over those who fear him, 32:8;34:15
those who rely on his faithful love,
19 to rescue them from death
and keep them alive in famine.

20 We are waiting for Yahweh;
he is our help and our shield, 115:9seq.
21 for in him our heart rejoices,
in his holy name we trust.
22 Yahweh, let your faithful love rest on us, 90:17
as our hope has rested in you.

PSALM 34 V 33

In praise of God's justice [a]

Of David, when he had feigned insanity before Abimelech, and Abimelech sent him away 1 S 21:11–16

1 *Aleph* I will bless Yahweh at all times,
his praise continually on my lips.
2 *Bet* I will praise Yahweh from my heart;
let the humble hear and rejoice.

c. 'my heart' one MS. lacking in MT. 'stubble', lit 'a field' *lesaday* conj.; Hebr. *leshaddi* 'my sap'.

d. 'forgave' *salahta* conj., lacking in Hebr., perhaps through haplography before *selah* 'pause'.

e. 'distress' *matzor* or *matzoq* conj.; Hebr. *metzo' raq* 'to find only'; *raq* ('only') could come from the juxtaposition of the final consonants of the two versions.

f. 'with songs' a dubious word, probably dittography with the end of previous verse.

g. 'if you advance' *'aduy* conj.; Hebr. *'edyo* 'his advance'.

33 a. This word originally indicated the war cry that preceded attack, Ex 32:17; Jos 6:5; Jg 7:20–21; 1 S 17:20, 52; Jr 4:19; 49:2; Ho 5:8; Am 1:14; it hailed Yahweh as king and leader, Nb 23:21; Zp 1:14; cf. 1 S 10:24, and his palladium, the ark, 1 S 4:5; 2 S 6:15. After the Exile this ritual war cry assumes a ceremonial and liturgical character; it acclaims Yahweh as king of Israel and of the nations, 47:1,5; 89:15; 95:1; 98:4,6, Saviour, Is 44:23, and judge, Jl 2:1; it hails his Messiah also, Zc 9:9. It is shouted on feast days, Ezr 3:11, cf. Jb 38:7, at thanksgiving sacrifices, Ps 27:6; 65:13; 100:1; Jb 33:26, and in religious processions, Ps 95:1,2; 100:1seq.; *see* Nb 10:5a.

b. The versions correct the arrangement of the vowels to read 'like a wineskin', but there is an allusion to the miracle of the Sea in Ex 15:8; *see also* Ps 18:13.

34 a. An alphabetical Wisdom Psalm, cf. Pr 31:10 (though the sequence of strophes is upset); a thanksgiving, vv. 1–10, and an instruction in the style of Pr on the fates of the upright and the wicked, vv. 11–22.

Gimel Proclaim with me the greatness of Yahweh, 3
let us acclaim his name together.
Dalet I seek Yahweh and he answers me, 4
frees me from all my fears.

He Fix your gaze on Yahweh and your face will grow bright, 5
you will never hang your head in shame.
Zain A pauper calls out and Yahweh hears, 6
Ne 9:17 Jon 4:2 saves him from all his troubles.

Gn 16:7c *Het* The angel of Yahweh encamps 7
around those who fear him, and rescues them.
↗1 P 2:3 *Tet* Taste and see that Yahweh is good. 8
=2:12 How blessed are those who take refuge in him.

Yod Fear Yahweh, you his holy ones; 9
those who fear him lack for nothing.
Kaph Young lions [b] may go needy and hungry, 10
but those who seek Yahweh lack nothing good.

Pr 1:8;4:1 *Lamed* Come, my children, listen to me, 11
I will teach you the fear of Yahweh.
↗1 P 3:10–12 *Mem* Who among you delights in life, 12
longs for time to enjoy prosperity?

Nun Guard your tongue from evil, 13
your lips from any breath of deceit.
=37:27 *Samek* Turn away from evil and do good, 14
Mt 5:9 Heb 12:14 seek peace and pursue it.

Ain The eyes of Yahweh are on the upright, 15
his ear turned to their cry.
Jr 44:11 *Pe* But Yahweh's face is set against those who do evil, 16
to cut off the memory of them from the earth.

Zade They cry in anguish and Yahweh hears, 17
and rescues them from all their troubles.
51:17 Mt 11:29–30 *Qoph* Yahweh is near to the broken-hearted, 18
he helps those whose spirit is crushed.

Resh Though hardships without number beset the upright, 19
Yahweh brings rescue from them all.
Shin Yahweh takes care of all their bones, 20
↗Jn 19:36 not one of them will be broken.

Taw But to the wicked evil brings death, 21
those who hate the upright will pay the penalty.
Yahweh ransoms the lives of those who serve him, 22
and there will be no penalty for those who take refuge in him.

PSALM 35 V 34

Prayer of the virtuous in persecution [a]

Of David

Accuse my accusers, Yahweh, 1
attack my attackers.
Grasp your buckler and shield, 2
up, and help me.

3 Brandish spear and pike [b]
to confront my pursuers,
give me the assurance, 'I am your Saviour.' 27:1

4 Shame and humiliation on those 40:15;=71:13
who are out to kill me!
Defeat and repulse in dismay Jn 18:6
on those who plot my downfall.

5 May they be like chaff before the wind, 1:4;83:13
with the angel of Yahweh to chase them. 34:7
6 May their way be dark and slippery, Jr 23:12
with the angel of Yahweh to hound them.

7 Unprovoked they laid their snare for me,
unprovoked dug a trap to kill me. [c]
8 Ruin comes upon them unawares; 7:15+
the snare they have laid will catch them, Is 47:11
and into their own trap [d] they will fall. 1 Th 5:3

9 Then I shall delight in Yahweh,
rejoice that he has saved me.
10 My very bones will all exclaim,
Yahweh, who can compare with you 51:8;86:8+
in rescuing the poor from the oppressor;
the needy from the exploiter? [e]

11 False witnesses come forward against me 27:12
asking me questions I cannot answer, Mt 26:59seq.
12 they cross-examine me, ·repay my kindness with cruelty, 38:20;109:5
make my life barren.

13 But I, when they were ill, had worn sackcloth,
and mortified myself with fasting,
praying ever anew in my heart,
14 as if for a friend or brother; I had wandered restless,
as if mourning a mother,
so bowed had I been in sorrow.

15 When I stumble they gather in glee,
gather around me;
strangers [f] I never even knew
tear me apart incessantly.
16 If I fall they surround me, [g]
grinding their teeth at me.

17 How much longer, Lord, will you look on?
Rescue me from their onslaughts, [h]
from young lions rescue the one life that I have. 17:12;22:20seq. 22:22

18 I will give you thanks in the great assembly
praise you where the people gather.

b. Wild animals often denote the wicked, 3:7; 22:21; Jb 4:9–10; Ezk 38:13; Zc 11:3. Gk interprets by translating 'the rich'.

35 **a.** A long lament and imprecation, similar to 22; 55; 59; 69; 70; 109.

b. 'pike' *wesagar* conj. following a Qumran text; Hebr. *usegor* 'halt'.

c. Text corrected, following Syr.; Hebr. corrupt.

d. 'in their own trap' Syr.; 'in the ruin' Hebr., with dittography.

e. Before 'the needy' Hebr. repeats 'the poor'.

f. 'Strangers' *nokrim* conj.; Hebr. *nekim* 'smitten ones'.

g. 'if I fall they surround me' correcting the arrangement of the vowels and division of words; Gk 'riddling me with gibe after gibe'.

h. Meaning unclear.

38:16 Let not my lying enemies 19
gloat over me;
69:4 those who hate me unprovoked
↗Jn 15:25 look askance at me.

120:6–7 They have no greeting of peace 20
to the peace-loving people of the land;
they think up deceptive speeches.
Their mouths wide open to accuse me, 21
Lm 2:16 they say, 'Come on now, we saw you.' [i]

You saw it, Yahweh, do not stay silent; 22
=38:21 Lord, do not stand aloof from me.
Up, awake, to my defence, 23
my God and my Lord, to my cause.
In your saving justice give judgement for me, Yahweh my God, 24
and do not let them gloat over me.

40:15 Do not let them think, 'Just as we hoped,' 25
Ezk 25:3;26:2 nor, 'Now we have swallowed him up.'
Shame and dismay on them all 26
who gloat over my misfortunes.
Let all who profit at my expense
be covered with shame and disgrace.

But let all who delight in my uprightness 27
shout for joy and gladness;
let them constantly say,
40:16 'Great is Yahweh,
who delights to see his servant in peace.'

And my tongue shall recount your saving justice, 28
all day long sing your praise.

PSALM 36 V 35

The perversity of sinners and the benevolence of God [a]

For the choirmaster Of the servant of Yahweh Of David

Sin is the oracle of the wicked 1
in the depths of his heart; [b]
↗Rm 3:18 there is no fear of God
before his eyes.

He sees himself with too flattering an eye 2
Mt 7:3–5 to detect and detest his guilt; [c]
all he says is malicious and deceitful, 3
he has turned his back on wisdom.

Mi 2:1 To get his way •he hatches malicious plots 4
even in his bed;
once set on his evil course
no wickedness is too much for him.

57:10;71:19 Yahweh, your faithful love is in the heavens, 5
your constancy reaches to the clouds,
your saving justice is like towering mountains, [d] 6
your judgements like the mighty deep.

Yahweh, you support both man and beast;
7 how precious, God, is your faithful love.
So the children of Adam
take refuge in the shadow of your wings. 17:8+

8 They feast on the bounty of your house, 63:5
you let them drink from your delicious streams;
9 in you is the source of life,[e] 16:11;46:4 Is 55:1 Jr 2:13+ Jn 4:14
by your light we see the light.[f]

10 Maintain your faithful love to those who acknowledge you,
and your saving justice to the honest of heart.
11 Do not let the foot of the arrogant overtake me
or wicked hands drive me away.

12 There they have fallen, the evil-doers,
flung down, never to rise again.

PSALM 37

V 36 73 Jb 21:7–26

The fate of the upright and the wicked[a]

Of David

1 *Aleph* Do not get heated about the wicked Pr 23:17; 24:1.19 Ml 2:17; 3:14
or envy those who do wrong.
2 Quick as the grass they wither, 90:6;103:15 Is 40:7
fading like the green of the fields.

3 *Bet* Put your trust in Yahweh and do right,
make your home in the land[b] and live secure.
4 Make Yahweh your joy
and he will give you your heart's desires.

5 *Gimel* Commit your destiny to Yahweh, Pr 3:5
be confident in him, and he will act,
6 making your uprightness clear as daylight, Ws 5:6 Is 58:10
and the justice of your cause as the noon.

7 *Dalet* Stay quiet before Yahweh, wait longingly for him,
do not get heated over someone who is making a fortune,
succeeding by devious means.

8 *He* Refrain from anger, leave rage aside,
do not get heated—it can do no good;
9 for evil-doers will be annihilated,
while those who hope in Yahweh shall have the land for their own. 25:13

i. They falsely accuse the psalmist of some crime.

36 **a.** The two parts of the Psalm, vv. 1–4 and 5–12, may have existed separately.

b. The voice of sin, here personified, takes the place of the word of God.

c. Text uncertain.

d. lit. 'the mountains of God', cf. 68:15; 80:10.

e. 'life' means prosperity, peace, happiness, cf. 133:3. The 'fountain of life' in Pr is wisdom, Pr 13:14; 16:22; 18:4; and the fear of God 14:27. This passage is applied to Christ, the life and light of all people, *see* Jn *passim*.

f. The 'light of the face' of God is his benevolence, 27:1; 89:15; Jb 29:3, *see also* Ps 4:6d; in it human beings find the 'light' of happiness.

37 **a.** This alphabetical Psalm, 'a mirror of Providence' (Tertullian) counters the indignation of those outraged by the prosperity of the ungodly with the teachings of the sages on earthly rewards and punishments for the upright and the wicked respectively. The debate is continued in Qo (8:11–14) and Jb.

b. The Holy Land, *see* 25:13; Dt 16:20. • 'live secure', lit. 'feed securely', *see* Is 14:30. These promises are taken up in a spiritual sense by the Beatitudes, Mt 5:3–4, cf. Rm 4:13.

Waw
A little while and the wicked will be no more, 10
however well you search for the place, the wicked will not be there;
Mt 5:4 but the poor will have the land for their own, 11
to enjoy untroubled peace.

Zain
The wicked plots against the upright 12
and gnashes his teeth at him,
but Yahweh only laughs at his efforts, 13
knowing that his end is in sight.

Het
Though the wicked draw his sword 14
and bend his bow to slaughter the honest
and bring down the poor and the needy,
his sword will pierce his own heart, 15
and his bow will be shattered.

Pr 15:16;16:8 *Tet*
What little the upright possesses 16
outweighs all the wealth of the wicked;[c]
for the weapons of the wicked shall be shattered, 17
while Yahweh supports the upright.

Yod
The lives of the just are in Yahweh's care, 18
their birthright will endure for ever;
they will not be put to shame when bad times come, 19
in time of famine they will have plenty.

Kaph
The wicked, enemies of Yahweh, will be destroyed, 20
they will vanish like the green of the pasture,
they will vanish in smoke.

Lamed
The wicked borrows and will not repay, 21
but the upright is generous in giving;
those he blesses will have the land for their own, 22
and those he curses be annihilated.[d]

‖Pr 20:24 *Mem*
Yahweh guides a strong man's steps and keeps them firm; 23
and takes pleasure in him.
When he trips he is not thrown sprawling, 24
since Yahweh supports him by the hand.

Nun
Now I am old, but ever since my youth 25
I never saw an upright person abandoned,
or the descendants of the upright forced to beg their bread.
The upright is always compassionate, always lending, 26
so his descendants reap a blessing.

=34:15 *Samek*
Turn your back on evil and do good, 27
you will have a home for ever,
for Yahweh loves justice 28
and will not forsake his faithful.

Ain
Evil-doers will perish eternally,[e]
the descendants of the wicked be annihilated,
but the upright shall have the land for their own, 29
there they shall live for ever.

Pe
Wisdom comes from the lips of the upright, 30
and his tongue speaks what is right;
Dt 6:3,6 Jr 31:33 the law of his God is in his heart, 31
his foot will never slip.

32 *Zade* The wicked keeps a close eye on the upright,
looking out for a chance to kill him;
33 Yahweh will never abandon him to the clutches of the wicked,
nor let him be condemned if he is tried.

34 *Qoph* Put your hope in Yahweh, keep to his path,
he will raise you up to make the land your own;
you will look on while the wicked are annihilated.

35 *Resh* I have seen the wicked exultant, Jb 20:6–7 Is 2:13;14:13 Ezk 31:10
towering like a cedar of Lebanon.[f]
36 When next I[g] passed he was gone,
I searched for him and he was nowhere to be found.

37 *Shin* Observe the innocent, consider the honest,
for the man of peace will not lack children. Pr 23:18; 24:14
38 But the wicked will all be destroyed together,
and their children annihilated.

39 *Taw* The upright have Yahweh for their Saviour,
their refuge in times of trouble; =9:9
40 Yahweh helps them and rescues them,
he will rescue them from the wicked,
and save them because they take refuge in him.

PSALM 38 V 37

Prayer in distress[a]

Psalm Of David In commemoration

1 Yahweh, do not correct me in anger, =6:1
do not discipline me in wrath.
2 For your arrows have pierced deep into me, Jb 6:4 Lm 3:12
your hand has pressed down upon me.[b]
3 Your indignation has left no part of me unscathed, Is 1:5–6
my sin has left no health in my bones.

4 My sins stand higher than my head, Gn 4:13 Ezr 9:6
they weigh on me as an unbearable weight.
5 I have stinking, festering wounds,
thanks to my folly.
6 I am twisted and bent double,
I spend my days in gloom.

7 My loins burn with fever,
no part of me is unscathed.
8 Numbed and utterly crushed 102:3–5
I groan in distress of heart.

9 Lord, all my longing is known to you,

c. With the versions; Hebr. 'the wealth of many wicked'.
d. Gk 'those who bless him . . . those who cure him'.
e. Following the Gk, which makes possible the restoration of the missing letter *Ain*, in the Hebr., and the continuance of the same poetic structure. • 'perish' Gk; 'be preserved' Hebr.
f. Corr. according to the Gk.
g. 'I' versions; 'he' Hebr.

38 a. Complaint of a devout person who is sick and assumed to be sinful, *see* vv. 3–4,5[b],18. Penitential Psalm. Some passages are reminiscent of Jb and the poem of the suffering servant, Is 53.
b. 'pressed down' Syr., Targ; 'fallen' Hebr.

my sighing no secret from you,
6:7;31:10; 88:6 my heart is throbbing, my strength has failed, 10
the light has gone out of my eyes.

31:11;41:5–9; 88:8 Friends and companions shun my disease, 11
Jb 12:4–5; 19:13–19 even the dearest of them keep their distance.
Those with designs on my life lay snares, 12
those who wish me ill speak of violence
35:20 and hatch treachery all day long.

But I hear nothing, as though I were deaf, 13
Is 53:7 as though dumb, saying not a word.
I am like the one who, hearing nothing, 14
has no sharp answer to make.

For in you, Yahweh, I put my hope, 15
you, Lord my God, will give answer.
13:4;35:19 I said, 'Never let them gloat over me, 16
do not let them take advantage of me if my foot slips.'

There is no escape for me from falling, 17
51:3 no relief from my misery.
32:5 But I make no secret of my guilt, 18
I am anxious at the thought of my sin.

There is no numbering those who oppose me without cause, [c] 19
no counting those who hate me unprovoked,
35:12;109:3–5 repaying me evil for good, 20
slandering me for trying to do them good. [d]

22:11;=35:22 Yahweh, do not desert me, 21
my God, do not stand aloof from me.
40:13.17 Come quickly to my help, 22
Lord, my Saviour!

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PSALM 39

V 38

Insignificance of human beings before God [a]

For the choirmaster For Jeduthun Psalm Of David

I said, 'I will watch how I behave 1
so that I do not sin by my tongue.
I will keep a muzzle on my mouth
as long as any sinner is near.'
I stayed dumb, silent, speechless, 2
37:1a but the sinner's prosperity [b] redoubled my torment.

My heart had been smouldering within me, 3
but at the thought of this it flared up
and the words came bursting out,
'Yahweh, let me know my fate, 4
how much longer I have to live.
89:47 Show me just how frail I am.

62:9;73:20; 90:9–10;94:11 'Look, you have given me but a hand's breadth or two of life, 5
Jb 7:6,16; 14:1,5 the length of my life is as nothing to you.
Is 40:7 Every human being that stands on earth is a mere puff of wind,
Qo 2:21seq.;6:2 every human being that walks only a shadow; 6

a mere puff of wind is the wealth [c] stored away—
no knowing who will profit from it.'

7 So now, Lord, what am I to hope for?
My hope is in you.
8 Save me from all my sins,
do not make me the butt of fools.
9 I keep silence, I speak no more
since you yourself have been at work.

10 Take your scourge away from me.
I am worn out by the blows you deal me.
11 You correct human beings by punishing sin,
like a moth you eat away all their desires—
a human being is a mere puff of wind.

12 Yahweh, hear my prayer,
listen to my cry for help,
do not remain deaf to my weeping.
For I am a stranger in your house, 119:19
a nomad like all my ancestors. Ex 12:48*o*
Lv 25:23
13 Turn away your gaze that I may breathe freely [d] 1 Ch 29:15
before I depart and am no more! Jb 7:19;14:6

PSALM 40 V 39

Song of praise and prayer for help [a]

For the choirmaster Of David Psalm

1 I waited, I waited for Yahweh,
then he stooped to me
and heard my cry for help.

2 He pulled me up from the seething chasm, 18:4;69:1–2, 14–15
from the mud of the mire. Jr 38:6
He set my feet on rock,
and made my footsteps firm.

3 He put a fresh song in my mouth,
praise of our God.
Many will be awestruck at the sight, =52:6
and will put their trust in Yahweh. Is 41:5

4 How blessed are those 1:1
who put their trust in Yahweh, ‖Jr 17:7
who have not sided with rebels
and those who have gone astray in falsehood.

c. 'without cause' *hinnam* conj.; Hebr. *hayyim* 'living'.
d. Some Gk MSS and versions add 'They have rejected me, the loved one, like a hideous corpse' (cf. Is 14:19), an allusion to the crucified Christ. The Coptic version, still more explicitly, 'They have nailed my flesh.'

39 **a.** cf. Ps 88. The psalmist expresses his dismay at the prosperity of the godless and the shortness of life, vv. 1–6; he commends himself to God and begs for his favour.
b. lit. 'because of his prosperity' *mittobo* conj.; Hebr. wrongly divided, *mittob u* 'without prosperity and'.
c. 'wealth' *hamon* conj.; Hebr. *yehemayun* 'they are in turmoil'.
d. lit. 'that I may look cheerful', *see* Jb 9:27; 10:20.

40 **a.** The hymn of thanksgiving, vv. 1–11, is followed by a cry of distress, vv. 13–17, identical with Ps 70. In the present arrangement the first part seems to be a review of past happiness as contrasted with present misery, leading up to the appeal to Yahweh.

139:17–18
Dt 4:34
How much you have done, 5
Yahweh, my God—
your wonders, your plans for us—
35:10
you have no equal.
I will proclaim and speak of them;
they are beyond number.

↗Heb 10:5–7
Is 50:5
•50:7–15;
51:16–17;
69:30–31
Am 5:21n
You wanted no sacrifice or cereal offering, 6
but you gave me an open [b] ear,
you did not ask for burnt offering or sacrifice for sin;
then I said, 'Here I am, I am coming.' 7

In the scroll of the book it is written of me, 8
my delight is to do your will; [c]
your law, my God,
37:31
Jn 4:34;8:29
is deep in my heart.

22:22;35:18;
149:1
I proclaimed the saving justice of Yahweh [d] 9
in the great assembly.
See, I will not hold my tongue,
as you well know.

I have not kept your saving justice locked in the depths of my heart, 10
but have spoken of your constancy and saving help.
I have made no secret of your faithful and steadfast love,
in the great assembly.

You, Yahweh, have not withheld 11
your tenderness from me;
89:33
your faithful and steadfast love
will always guard me.

For troubles surround me, 12
until they are beyond number;
38:4
my sins have overtaken me;
6:7;68:10;69:4
I cannot see my way.
They outnumber the hairs of my head,
and my heart fails me.

=70:1seq.
Be pleased, Yahweh, to rescue me, 13
Yahweh, come quickly and help me!
=71:13
Shame and dismay to all 14
who seek to take my life.

Back with them, let them be humiliated
who delight in my misfortunes.
Let them be aghast with shame, 15
35:21, 25
those who say to me, 'Aha, aha!'

But joy and happiness in you 16
69:6,32
to all who seek you!
35:27;104:1
Let them ceaselessly cry, 'Great is Yahweh'
who love your saving power.

Poor and needy as I am, 17
the Lord has me in mind.
You, my helper, my Saviour,
my God, do not delay.

PSALM 41

V 40

Prayer of a sufferer deserted

For the choirmaster Psalm Of David

1 Blessed is anyone who cares for the poor [a] and the weak; Pr 14:21 Tb 4:7–11
in time of trouble Yahweh rescues him.
2 Yahweh protects him, gives him life and happiness on earth.
Do not abandon him to his enemies' pleasure!
3 Yahweh sustains him on his bed of sickness;
you transform altogether the bed where he lies sick. [b]

4 For my part I said, 'Yahweh, take pity on me!
Cure me for I have sinned against you.'
5 My enemies speak to me only of disaster, 31:11–13; 38:11–12; 88:8
'When will he die and his name disappear?'
6 When people come to see me their talk is hollow, Jr 20:10 Jb 19:13–19
when they get out they spread the news with spite in their hearts.

7 All who hate me whisper together about me
and reckon I deserve the misery I suffer. [c]
8 'A fatal sickness [d] has a grip on him;
now that he is down, he will never get up again.'
9 Even my trusted friend on whom I relied, 55:13 ↗Jn 13:18
who shared my table, takes advantage of me. [e]

10 But you, Yahweh, take pity on me!
Put me on my feet and I will give them their due.
11 This will convince me that you delight in me,
if my enemy no longer exults over me.
12 Then you will keep me unscathed,
and set me in your presence for ever.

13 Blessed be Yahweh, the God of Israel, Ne 9:5 Dn 2:20
from eternity to eternity.
Amen, Amen. [f]

PSALM 42–43

V 41–42

Lament of a Levite in exile [a]

For the choirmaster Poem Of the sons of Korah

1 As a deer yearns
for running streams, Jn 4:1a 63:1;84:2 Is 26:9

b. lit 'dug out'. God sees to it that his servant knows his will, cf. Is 50:5. A Gk variant, 'you have fashioned a body for me' was interpreted messianically and applied to Christ, Heb 10:5seq.

c. Obedience is better than sacrifice, 1 S 15:22. The prophets often put Israel on their guard against practices which involved no interior commitment, Am 5:21n, *see* Gn 8:21c, or against a presumptuous confidence in the presence of God in his Temple, *see* Jr 7:3–4. In post-exilic Judaism, whatever the continued importance of the Temple as a sign of salvation, Zc 1:16, interior cult becomes more and more important and the dispositions of the heart, prayer, obedience and love, themselves take on the value of cult, Ps 50; 51:17; 69:30–31; 141:2; Pr 21:3; *see also* Tb. 4:11; Si 34:18–35:10. This development prepares for the survival of Judaism after the destruction of the Temple, and continues also in the NT, Rm 1:9f; 12:1a.

d. 'Yahweh' is transposed from the end of the last stanza to maintain the rhythm of the rest of the Psalm.

41 a. 'the poor' Gk, Targ.; lacking in Hebr.

b. Text uncertain.

c. Sickness is regarded as a punishment for sin, *see* Jb; Ps 38:3; 107:17.

d. lit. 'a thing of Belial', *see* Dt 13:14b.

e. lit. 'lifts his heel against me'. • The 'trusted friend' has sometimes been identified with Ahitophel, David's counsellor, 2 S 15:12; 17:23, cf. 2 S 12:19.

f. This doxology closes the first book of the Psalter, cf. 72:18; 106:48.

42 a. Exile, a symbol of the troubles of the devout, 'exiled far from the Lord', 2 Co 5:6–8, here means absence from the Temple which is God's dwelling-place, and from the festivals uniting his people there.

so I yearn
for you, my God.

I thirst for God, 2
Jn 7:37 36:9 the living God;
when shall I [b] go to see
27:4 the face of God?

I have no food but tears 3
day and night,
79:10 Mi 7:10 Ml 2:17 as all day long I am taunted,
'Where is your God?'

Lm 3:20 This I remember 4
as I pour out my heart,
how I used to pass under the roof of the Most High [c]
27:4–5 used to go to the house of God,
among cries of joy and praise,
the sound of the feast.

Why be so downcast, 5
why all these sighs?
Hope in God! I will praise him still,
6:4b my Saviour, [d] my God. 6

When I am downcast
I think of you:
from the land of Jordan and Hermon,
43:3;68:16 I think of you, humble mountain. [e]

Deep is calling to deep 7
by the roar of your cataracts,
32:6;69:2;88:7 ‖Jon 2:4 all your waves and breakers
have rolled over me.

In the daytime God sends his faithful love, 8
and even at night;
the song it inspires in me
is a prayer to my living God.

18:2c I shall say to God, my rock, 9
'Why have you forgotten me?
Why must I go around in mourning,
harrassed by the enemy?'

With death in my bones, 10
my enemies taunt me,
all day long they ask me,
'Where is your God?'

Why so downcast, 11
why all these sighs?
Hope in God! I will praise him still,
my Saviour, my God.

43

Judge me, God, defend my cause 1
against a people who have no faithful love;
from those who are treacherous and unjust,
rescue me.

2 For you are the God of my strength;
why abandon me?
Why must I go around in mourning,
harrassed by the enemy?

3 Send out your light and your truth; 57:3
they shall be my guide,
to lead me to your holy mountain
to the place where you dwell.

4 Then I shall go to the altar of God,
to the God of my joy. [a]
I will rejoice and praise you on the harp, 63:5;81:2; 108:2
O God, my God.

5 Why so downcast,
why all these sighs?
Hope in God! I will praise him still,
my Saviour, my God.

PSALM 44

V 43 74;79;80 Is 63:7f;64:11

National lament [a]

For the choirmaster Of the sons of Korah Poem

1 God, we have heard for ourselves, 2 S 7:22–23
our ancestors have told us, 78:3
of the deeds you did in their days,
2 in days of old, ·by your hand.

To establish them in the land you drove out nations, 78:55
to make room for them you harried peoples.
3 It was not their own sword that won the land, Dt 8:17–18+ Jos 24:12 Ho 1:7+
nor their own arms which made them victorious,
but your hand it was and your arm,
and the light of your presence, for you loved them. 4:6d

4 You are my king, my God,
who decreed [b] Jacob's victories;
5 through you we conquered our opponents,
in your name we trampled down those who rose up against us. 60:12

6 For my trust was not in my bow,
my victory was not won by my sword;
7 it was you who saved us from our opponents,
you who put to shame those who hate us.

b. 'to see' versions. 'To see the face of God' (contrast Hebr. 'appear before') here means to visit his sanctuary, the Temple in Jerusalem, *see* 27:8b; Dt 31:11. The Hebr. comes from a scribe shocked by the immediacy of the phrase, *see* Ex 33:20i.

c. 'Most High', lit. 'admirable' (with a plural of majesty) Gk, Syr.; Hebr. unintelligible. • 'roof', lit. 'hut' is the Temple where God resides, and which every pious Israelite visited each year, Ex 23:14–17.

d. 'Saviour', lit. 'saviour of my face' Hebr. MSS, Gk MS, Syr., cf. v. 11; 'his face' Hebr.

e. 'from you, humble mountain' conj. Hebr. has 'from the humble mountain' or 'from the hill of Mizar', alluding to Zaorah not far from the sources of the Jordan, which could be a stage on the route of the Exile. The earlier 'of you' would refer to God.

43 a. 'my joy' one Hebr. MS; 'the joy of my delight' MT. Gk interprets 'God who makes joyful my youth'.

44 a. This Psalm, contrasting past victories with present humiliations may, like 74; 79; 80, refer to the destruction of Jerusalem in 587. • vv. 17–22 have perhaps been added later to adapt the Psalm to the persecutions of the Maccabaean period.

b. 'my God, who decreed' versions; 'God, decree' Hebr.

Our boast was always of God, 8
we praised your name without ceasing. *Pause*

68:7 =60:10 Lv 26:17 Dt 28:25 Jg 5:4 Yet now you have abandoned and humiliated us, 9
you no longer take the field with our armies,
you leave us to fall back before the enemy, 10
those who hate us plunder us at will.

You hand us over like sheep for slaughter, 11
Lv 26:33 Dt 28:64 you scatter us among the nations,
Dt 32:30 Is 52:3 you sell your people for a trifle 12
and make no profit on the sale.

79:4 You make us the butt of our neighbours, 13
the mockery and scorn of those around us,
you make us a by-word among nations, 14
other peoples shake their heads over us.

All day long I brood on my disgrace, 15
the shame written clear on my face,
from the sound of insult and abuse, 16
from the sight of hatred and vengefulness.

All this has befallen us though we had not forgotten you, 17
nor been disloyal to your covenant,
our hearts never turning away, 18
our feet never straying from your path.
Is 34:13 Jr 9:10 Yet you have crushed us in the place where jackals live,[c] 19
and thrown over us shadow dark as death.

Had we forgotten the name of our God 20
and stretched out our hands[d] to a foreign god,
would not God have found this out, 21
139:1-3 for he knows the secrets of the heart?
↗Rm 8:36 For your sake we are being massacred all day long, 22
treated as sheep to be slaughtered.[e]

74:1;79:5;89:46 Wake, Lord! Why are you asleep? 23
Awake! Do not abandon us for good.
Why do you turn your face away, 24
forgetting that we are poor and harrassed?

7:5;=119:25 For we are bowed down to the dust, 25
and lie prone on the ground.
Arise! Come to our help! 26
Ransom us, as your faithful love demands.

PSALM 45 V 44

Royal wedding song[a]

60:inscr.; 69:inscr.; 80:inscr. *For the choirmaster Tune: 'Lilies . . .'[b] Of the sons of Korah Poem Love song*

My heart is stirred by a noble theme, 1
I address my poem to the king,
my tongue the pen of an expert scribe.

Sg 5:10-16 Of all men you are the most handsome, 2

gracefulness is a dew upon your lips,
for God has blessed you for ever.

3 Warrior, strap your sword at your side,
4 in your majesty and splendour advance, ·ride on 21:5
in the cause of truth, gentleness and uprightness.

Stretch the bowstring tight, [c] lending terror to your right hand.
5 Your arrows are sharp, nations lie at your mercy,
the king's enemies lose heart.

6 Your throne is from God, [d] for ever and ever, Heb 1:8–9
the sceptre of your kingship a sceptre of justice,
7 you love uprightness and detest evil.

This is why God, your God, has anointed you
with oil of gladness, as none of your rivals,
8 your robes all myrrh and aloes.

From palaces of ivory, harps bring you joy,
9 in your retinue [e] are daughters of kings,
the consort at your right hand in gold of Ophir.

10 Listen, my daughter, attend to my words and hear;
forget your own nation and your ancestral home, [f] Gn 21:1
Jos 24:2
11 then the king will fall in love with your beauty; Ezk 16:3
he is your lord, bow down before him.
12 The daughter of Tyre will court your favour with gifts, 72:10–11
13 and the richest of peoples ·with jewels set in gold. [g] Is 60:5seq.

14 Clothed ·in brocade, the king's daughter is led within [h] Ezk 16:10–13
to the king with the maidens of her retinue;
her companions are brought to her, [i]
15 they enter the king's palace with joy and rejoicing.
16 Instead of your ancestors you will have sons;
you will make them rulers over the whole world. Gn 17:6;35:11

17 I will make your name endure from generation to generation, Is 60:15;
so nations will sing your praise for ever and ever. 61:9;62:2,7

c. Either the devastated country, Is 34:13; Jr 9:10, or the desert, a refuge for persecuted Jews, 1 M 2:29; 9:33.

d. Attitude of prayer, 28:2; 141:2; Is 1:15.

e. Probably an allusion to the persecutions of Antiochus Epiphanes.

45 **a.** According to some scholars, this Psalm may be a secular song to celebrate the marriage of an Israelite king, Solomon, Jeroboam II, or Ahab (whose bride was a Tyrian princess, 1 K 16:31). But the Jewish and Christian tradition understand it as celebrating the marriage of the messianic king with Israel (prefiguring the Church), *see* Sg 3:11; Is 62:5; Ezk 16:8–13. The poet addresses first the messianic King, vv. 2–9, crediting him with the attributes of Yahweh (145:4–7,12–13) and of Emmanuel (Is 9:5–6), then the queen, vv. 10–16.

b. 'Lilies' must be a Maccabaean alteration linking up with Sg. The original reference lying behind the title can be traced from the Gk 'Those who alter (the Charter = the Law)', *see* headings Ps 60;69;80; an allusion to apostate Jews.

c. 'stretch tight the bowstring' *wehadrek yitreka* conj; Hebr. *wehadareka* (from beginning of v.) *wetoreka*. 'and your majesty . . . and teach you'.

d. Gk translates 'Your throne, God', seeing in the word *'elohim* a vocative addressing the king; in fact this title is applied to the Messiah, Is 9:5, to leaders and to judges, Ps 82:6; Ex 22:6, to Moses, Ex 4:16; 7:1, and to the House of David, Zc 12:8.

e. The non-Jewish nations, converted to the true God, Sg 1:3; 6:8; Is 60:3seq.; 61:5, and following Israel into his service, vv. 14–15.

f. Like the ancestral figure Abraham, Israel must sever all links with the surrounding non-Jewish world, and will receive 'sons' in return for the 'fathers' thus left.

g. The homage of the non-Jewish peoples, promised for the messianic times.

h. Hebr. lit. 'the king's daughter inside' before 'in brocade'

i. 'her' 2 MSS, cf. Syr; 'you' MT.

Is 33:20–21; 66:12

PSALM 46

V 45

God is with us [a]

For the choirmaster Of the sons of Korah For oboe Song

God is both refuge and strength for us, 1
a help always ready in trouble;
Jb 9:5–6 so we shall not be afraid though the earth be in turmoil, 2
Is 24:18–23; 54:10 though mountains tumble into the depths of the sea,
and its waters roar and seethe, 3
and the mountains totter as it heaves. [b]

(Yahweh Sabaoth is with us,
our citadel, the God of Jacob.) [c] *Pause*

36:8 Gn 2:10 There is a river whose streams bring joy to God's city, 4
it sanctifies [d] the dwelling of the Most High.
God is in the city, it cannot fall; 5
2 K 19:35 Is 17:14 at break of day [e] God comes to its rescue.
Nations are in uproar, kingdoms are tumbling, 6
29 when he raises his voice the earth crumbles away.

Is 7:14;8:10 Yahweh Sabaoth is with us, 7
our citadel, the God of Jacob. *Pause*

Come, consider the wonders of Yahweh, 8
the astounding deeds he has done on the earth;
76:3 Is 2:4 he puts an end to wars over the whole wide world, 9
Ezk 39:9–10 he breaks the bow, he snaps the spear,
shields he burns in the fire.
Dt 32:39 Ezk 12:16 'Be still and acknowledge that I am God, 10
supreme over nations, supreme over the world.'

Yahweh Sabaoth is with us, 11
our citadel, the God of Jacob. *Pause*

93;96;97;98;99

PSALM 47

V 46

Yahweh king of Israel, king of the world [a]

For the choirmaster Of the sons of Korah Psalm

Clap your hands, all peoples, 1
Zp 3:14–15 acclaim God with shouts of joy.

For Yahweh, the Most High, is glorious, 2
Ex 15:18 Is 52:7 the great king over all the earth.
He brings peoples under our yoke 3
and nations under our feet.

2:8 Is 58:14 He chooses for us our birthright, 4
the pride of Jacob whom he loves. *Pause*

24:7–10; 68:18;89:15; 98:6 Nb 23:21 God goes up to shouts of acclaim, 5
Yahweh to a fanfare on the ram's horn.

Let the music sound for our God, [b] let it sound, 6
let the music sound for our king, let it sound.

7 For he is king of the whole world;
learn the music, let it sound for God!
8 God reigns over the nations, 72:11;93 Jr 10:7
seated on his holy throne.

9 The leaders of the nations rally Ex 3:6 Ezr 6:21 Is 2:2–4+
to the people of the God of Abraham. [c]
The shields of the earth belong to God,
who is exalted on high.

PSALM 48 V 47

Zion, the mountain of God [a]

Song *Psalm* *Of the sons of Korah*

1 Great is Yahweh and most worthy of praise =96:4
in the city of our God,
2 the holy mountain, ·towering in beauty, 50:2 Lm 2:15
the joy of the whole world:

Mount Zion in the heart of the north, [b]
the settlement of the great king; Mt 5:35
3 God himself among its palaces
has proved himself its bulwark.

4 For look, kings made alliance,
together they advanced;
5 without a second glance, when they saw,
they panicked and fled away.

6 Trembling seized them on the spot, Ex 15:14
pains like those of a woman in labour; Jr 4:31+
7 it was the east wind,
that wrecker of ships from Tarshish. [c]

8 What we had heard we saw for ourselves
in the city of our God,
in the city of Yahweh Sabaoth,
which God has established for ever. *Pause*

9 We reflect on your faithful love, God,
in your temple!
10 Both your name and your praise, God, 113:3 Ml 1:11
are over the whole wide world.

46 **a.** Canticle of Zion. God's presence in the Temple safeguards the holy city, while symbolic waters purify it and fertilise it, making it a second Eden.

b. Images of a return of chaos. The earth rests on the waters of the nether ocean, 24:2, supported by pillars, *see* 75:3; 104:5; Jb 9:6; Pr 8:27. These columns totter and the waters are released and dash against the mountains.

c. The refrain, lacking in Hebr., is restored from vv. 7 and 11.

d. 'sanctifies' Gk; 'the (most) holy (or dwellings)' Hebr.

e. Hour of God's favour, 17:15d. Probable allusion to the withdrawal of Sennacherib's forces in 701, 2 K 19:35; Is 17:14.

47 **a.** Eschatological hymn: first of the 'Psalms of Kingship', *see* 93seq.; it elaborates the acclamation, 'Yahweh is King!' The King of Israel goes up to the Temple in triumphal procession to the sound of ritual acclamation, 33:3a. His empire extends to all nations who will one day join the chosen people.

b. 'our' Greek.

c. 'to' versions, absent from Hebr. The covenant with Abraham is extended to the whole human race. • The 'shields' are the kings, defenders of their peoples.

48 **a.** A hymn extolling Mount Zion, the nucleus of ancient Jerusalem, site of the royal palace and the Temple, *see* 2 S 5:9f. It may contain an allusion, vv. 4 and 5, to the defeat of the Syro-Ephraimite alliance against Ahaz in 735 and the hasty retreat of Sennacherib in 701.

b. In Canaanite poetry 'the mountain of the north' is the home of the gods; the psalmist adopts the expression, applying it to Mount Zion.

c. Sea-going vessels capable of sailing to 'Tarshish', *but see* Is 23:1b.

Your right hand is full of saving justice,
=97:8 Mount Zion rejoices, 11
the daughters of Judah [d] delight
because of your saving justice.

Is 26:1; 33:20seq. Go round Zion, walk right through her, 12
count her bastions,
admire her walls, [e] 13
examine her palaces,

71:18 to tell future generations
that such is God; 14
23:3+;90:2; 102:27 our God for ever and ever,
he is our guide! [f]

PSALM 49 V 48

The futility of wealth [a]

For the choirmaster Of the sons of Korah Psalm

Pr 8:4seq. Hear this, all nations, 1
listen, all who dwell on earth,
people high and low, 2
rich and poor alike!

My lips have wisdom to utter, 3
my heart good sense to whisper.
78:2 I listen carefully to a proverb, 4
I set my riddle to the music of the harp.

Why should I be afraid in times of trouble? 5
Malice dogs me [b] and hems me in.
Pr 10:15 Jr 9:22 They trust in their wealth, 6
and boast of the profusion of their riches.

Jb 33:24 Pr 11:4 But no one can ever redeem himself 7
or pay his own ransom to God,
Mt 16:26 Rm 3:24i the price for himself is too high; 8
it can never be ·that he will live on for ever 9
and avoid the sight of the abyss.

39:6 Qo 2:16 Si 11:18–19+ For he will see the wise also die 10
no less than the fool and the brute,
and leave their wealth behind for others.

Qo 12:5 For ever no home but their tombs, [c] 11
their dwelling-place age after age,
though they gave their name to whole territories.

In prosperity people lose their good sense, [d] 12
Qo 3:18–21 they become no better than dumb animals.
So they go on in their self-assurance, 13
right up to the end they are content with their lot. [e] *Pause*

They are penned in Sheol like sheep, 14
Death [f] will lead them to pasture,
and those who are honest will rule over them.

73:20 In the morning all trace of them will be gone,

Sheol will be their home. [g]
But my soul God will ransom
from the clutches of Sheol, and will snatch me up. [h] *Pause* 16:10g;73:24

Do not be overawed when someone gets rich,
and lives in ever greater splendour;
when he dies he will take nothing with him, ↗1 Tm 6:7
his wealth will not go down with him. [i]

Though he pampered himself while he lived
—and people praise you for looking after yourself—
he will go to join the ranks of his ancestors, Gn 15:15
who will never again see the light. Jb 10:21–22

In prosperity people lose their good sense,
they become no better than dumb animals.

PSALM 50 V 49

Worship in spirit and truth [a]

Psalm *Of Asaph*

The God of gods, Yahweh, is speaking, Dt 10:17 Jos 22:22
from east to west he summons the earth.
From Zion, perfection of beauty, he shines forth;
he is coming, our God, and will not be silent. Is 63:19

Devouring fire ahead of him,
raging tempest around him,
he summons the heavens from on high, Dt 32:1
and the earth to judge his people.

'Gather to me my faithful,
who sealed my covenant by sacrifice.' Ex 24:4–8
The heavens proclaim his saving justice, 19:1
'God himself is judge.' *Pause*

'Listen, my people, I am speaking,
Israel, I am giving evidence against you,
I, God, your God.

'It is not with your sacrifices that I find fault, Am 5:21n
those burnt offerings constantly before me;

d. The neighbouring towns.
e. The Psalm may date from the rebuilding of the walls by Nehemiah. Ne 6:15; 12:27.
f. Hebr. adds 'to death', a corrupt rubric belonging to the following Psalm.

49 **a.** Like 37 and 73, this Psalm deals with the problem of retribution and the apparent prosperity of the godless, resolving it in the traditional fashion of the sages. An ironical dictum provides the theme, vv. 12 and 20.
b. 'dogs me' conj., following Hexapla; 'of my heels' Hebr.
c. 'tombs' versions; 'inside' Hebr.
d. 'lose their good sense', versions, cf. v. 20; 'spend the night' Hebr.
e. Translation uncertain.
f. Here personified, *see* Jb 18:13; 28:22; Jr 9:20; Ho 13:14.
g. 'their home' *zebul lamo* conj.; Hebr. *mizebul lo* 'without a home from him'. • Morning is the time of eschatological judgement and the triumph of the upright, *see* 17:15d.
h. The psalmist trusts God to keep him beyond the reach of Sheol. It cannot be asserted that here he glimpses the possibility of being 'taken up' to heaven like Enoch and Elijah, *see* 16:10g; 73:24; but he does think that the ultimate fate of the upright must differ from that of the godless and that the friendship of God can have no end. This implicit faith in a retribution to come prepares for the later revelation of the resurrection of the dead, and eternal life, 2 M 7:9c.
i. By contrast, God will glorify the upright, 73:24; 91:15.

50 **a.** God comes to judge Israel, vv. 1–7; he arraigns the formalism of sacrifice, vv. 8–15, accompanied by contempt for the commandments, vv. 16–23.

I will not accept any bull from your homes, 9
nor a single goat from your folds.

'For all forest creatures are mine already, 10
the animals on the mountains in their thousands.
I know every bird in the air, [b] 11
whatever moves in the fields is mine.

'If I am hungry I shall not tell you, 12
24:1 since the world and all it holds is mine.
Am I to eat the flesh of bulls 13
or drink the blood of goats?

Ho 14:3 'Let thanksgiving be your sacrifice to God, 14
fulfil the vows you make to the Most High;
then if you call to me in time of trouble 15
I will rescue you and you will honour me.'

But to the wicked, God says: [c] 16

Rm 2:17–24 'What right have you to recite my statutes,
to take my covenant on your lips,
when you detest my teaching, 17
and thrust my words behind you?

'You make friends with a thief as soon as you see one, 18
you feel at home with adulterers,
your conversation is devoted to wickedness, 19
and your tongue to inventing lies.

'You sit there, slandering your own brother, 20
you malign your own mother's son.
You do this, and am I to say nothing? 21
Do you think that I am really like you?
I charge you, indict you to your face.

Dt 32:39
Is 42:8e 'Think it out, you who forget God, 22
or I will tear you apart without hope of a rescuer.
Honour to me is a sacrifice of thanksgiving; 23
=91:16 to the upright [d] I will show God's salvation.'

PSALM 51 V 50

A prayer of contrition [e]

2 S 11–12 *For the choirmaster Of David When the prophet Nathan had come to him because he had gone to Bathsheba*

Ezk 18:23+ Have mercy on me, O God, in your faithful love, 1
in your great tenderness wipe away my offences;
wash me thoroughly from my guilt, 2
purify me from my sin.

Is 59:12
Ezk 6:9 For I am well aware of my offences, 3
my sin is constantly in mind.
Is 59:12 Against you, you alone, I have sinned, 4
I have done what you see to be wrong,

↗Rm 3:4 that you may show your saving justice when you pass sentence,
and your victory may appear when you give judgement, [b]

remember, I was born guilty,
a sinner from the moment of conception. [c]

But you delight in sincerity of heart,
and in secret you teach me wisdom. [d]
Purify me with hyssop [e] till I am clean,
wash me till I am whiter than snow.

Let me hear the sound of joy and gladness,
and the bones you have crushed will dance.
Turn away your face from my sins,
and wipe away all my guilt.

God, create [f] in me a clean heart,
renew within me a resolute spirit,
do not thrust me away from your presence,
do not take away from me your spirit of holiness. [g]

Give me back the joy of your salvation,
sustain in me a generous spirit.
I shall teach the wicked your paths,
and sinners will return to you.

Deliver me from bloodshed, [h] God, God of my salvation,
and my tongue will acclaim your saving justice.
Lord, open my lips,
and my mouth will speak out your praise.

Sacrifice gives you no pleasure,
burnt offering you do not desire.
Sacrifice to God is a broken spirit,
a broken, contrite heart you never scorn.

In your graciousness do good to Zion,
rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. [i]
Then you will delight in upright sacrifices,
—burnt offerings and whole oblations [j]—
and young bulls will be offered on your altar.

Jb 14:4c

Ex 12:22j
Jb 9:30
Is 1:18
Ezk 36:25
Heb 9:13–14

6:2;35:10

Is 43:25;44:22

Ezk 11:19f
Ep 4:23–24,24k

Ws 1:5;9:17
Is 57:15seq.
Rm 8:9,14–16

30:9

50:8+
Am 5:21–25

Is 57:15;66:2
34:18

Jr 30:18;31:4
Is 58:12
Ezk 36:33

4:5
Lv 1:3

b. 'air' versions; 'mountains' Hebr.

c. So far God has addressed all Israel indiscriminately; this line could have been added to exclude the upright from what follows.

d. 'the upright', lit. 'the man of perfect way' *wetam derek* conj.; Hebr. *wesam derek* 'he has placed his way'.

51 **a.** Penitential Psalm, *see* 6:1a, with close affinity to prophetic literature, especially Is and Ezk.

b. God is wholly pure and upright, and by pardoning demonstrates his power over evil and his victory over sin.

c. Human beings are born in a state of impurity, Jb 14:4c. *See* Pr 20:9, which is an implicit recognition of their tendency to evil, Gn 8:21. This basic impurity is here pleaded as a mitigating circumstance, cf. 1 K 8:46, which God should take into account.

d. The vocabulary of this v. ('of heart', lit. 'that which is covered', and 'secret', lit. 'that which is closed') should be compared with 7:9; 16:7; 33:15. God penetrates human nature and can transform it. A symbolic sense may also be discerned if the v. is connected with Ezk 13:10seq., on the lying prophets who 'plaster over' cracked walls instead of rebuilding them (*see also* Lv 14:43 on infection of walls). Here, on the contrary, even what is hidden and plastered over will be purified and renewed by divine wisdom.

e. Plant used for sprinkling in purifications, Lv 14:4; Nb 19:18.

f. This verb always has God for its subject; it designates the act by which he brings something new and wonderful into being, Gn 1:1; Ex 34:10 ('worked'); Is 48:7; 65:17; Jr 31:21–22. The justification of the sinner is the most wonderful of all the works of God, and is analogous to the act of creation, *see* Ezk 36:25seq., *see also* Jr 31:33; 32:39–40.

g. Here considered as the principle (a human quality but given by God) of moral and religious activity, whether of the individual, 143:10; Ws 1:5; 9:17, or of the nation as a whole, Ne 9:20; Is 63:11; Hg 2:5.

h. The prophet Ezekiel, *see* Ezk 7:23; 9:9; 22:2; 24:6, calls Jerusalem 'city of blood'. This has sometimes been considered to be an allusion to the murder of Uriah by David, 2 S 12:9. It has also been understood as the expression of the sudden death of the wicked, traditionally the punishment for sin.

i. After the return from exile the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem was eagerly looked forward to as a sign of divine forgiveness, Is 60–62; Jr 30:15–18; Ezk 36:33.

j. Liturgical annotation; inserted later. • In the restored Jerusalem sacrifice will recover its value because it will be offered with devotion (lit. 'upright sacrifice').

PSALM 52

V 51

The fate of cynics

1 S 21:8; 22:6seq. *For the choirmaster Poem Of David When Doeg the Edomite went and warned Saul, 'David has gone to Abimelech's house'*

Why take pride in being wicked, 1
you champion in villainy, [a]
all day long plotting crime? 2
Your tongue is razor-sharp,
you artist in perfidy.

Jr 4:22;9:4 Jn 3:19–20 You prefer evil to good, 3
lying to uprightness. *Pause*
You revel in destructive talk, 4
treacherous tongue!

That is why God will crush you, 5
28:5 destroy you once and for all,
Jb 18:14 Pr 2:22 snatch you from your tent,
uproot you from the land of the living. *Pause*

=40:3 The upright will be awestruck as they see it, 6
they will mock him,
'So much for someone who would not place 7
his reliance in God,
but relied on his own great wealth,
and made himself strong by crime.'

1:3;92:12–14 Jr 11:16 Zc 4:14 But I, like a flourishing olive tree 8
in the house of God,
put my trust in God's faithful love,
for ever and ever.

I shall praise you for ever 9
for what you have done,
and shall trust in your name, so full of goodness,
in the presence of your faithful.

PSALM 53

=14 V 52

The fate of the godless [a]

For the choirmaster In sickness Poem Of David

The fool has said in his heart, 1
'There is no God!'
They are corrupt, vile and unjust,
not one of them does right.

God looks down from heaven 2
at the children of Adam,
to see if a single one is wise,
a single one seeks God.

All have proved faithless, 3
all alike turned sour,

not one of them does right,
not a single one.

4 Are they not aware, these evil-doers?
They are devouring my people;
this is the bread they eat,
and they never call upon God.

5 They will be gripped with fear,
just where there is no need for fear,
for God scatters the bones of him who besieges you; [b]
they are mocked because God rejects them.

6 Who will bring from Zion salvation for Israel?
When God brings his people home,
what joy for Jacob, what happiness for Israel!

PSALM 54

V 53

Appeal to God, the just judge

For the choirmaster On stringed instruments Poem Of David When the Ziphites went to Saul and said, 'Is not David hiding with us?' 1 S 23:19

1 God, save me by your name, [a]
in your power vindicate me.
2 God, hear my prayer,
listen to the words I speak.

3 Arrogant [b] men are attacking me, =86:14
bullies hounding me to death,
no room in their thoughts for God. *Pause*

4 But now God is coming to my help, 118:7
the Lord, among those who sustain me.
5 May their wickedness recoil on those who lie in wait for me.
Yahweh, in your constancy destroy them.

6 How gladly will I offer you sacrifice,
and praise your name, for it is good, 52:9
7 for it has rescued me from all my troubles,
and my eye has feasted on my enemies. 58:10;91:8

PSALM 55

V 54 Jr 9:1–8

Prayer when slandered [a]

For the choirmaster For strings Poem Of David

1 God, hear my prayer,
do not hide away from my plea,

52 a. The translation follows the Greek. Hebr. 'Tyrant, the kindness of God (lasts) the whole day long'.

53 a. 'Elohistic' edition of Ps 14, where *see* notes.
b. Allusion to Sennacherib, and through him to all the enemies of Jerusalem. The text of this v. seems less corrupt than in Ps 14.

54 a. The name as substitute for the person, *see* Ex 3:13–14.13g.
b. 'arrogant' Hebr. MSS. Targ.: 'strangers' Hebr., which could be a xenophobic alteration from the Maccabaean era.

55 a. An individual lamentation inspired by Jeremiah, cf. Jr 4:19; 9:1seq.; 18:19; 23:9. The text is in poor condition.

give me a hearing, answer me,
my troubles give me no peace.

I shudder ·at the enemy's shouts, 3
at the outcry [b] of the wicked;
they heap up charges against me,
in their anger bring hostile accusations against me.

My heart writhes within me, 4
the terrors of death come upon me,
fear and trembling overwhelm me, 5
and shuddering grips me.

And I say, 6
11:1 'Who will give me wings like a dove,
to fly away and find rest?'
Jr 9:1 How far I would escape, 7
↗Rv 12:6 and make a nest in the desert! *Pause*

I would soon find a refuge 8
from the storm of abuse,
from the ·destructive tempest, Lord, 9
from the flood of their tongues. [c]

Jr 5:1;6:7 Ezk 22:2 Zp 3:1 For I see violence
and strife in the city,
day and night they make their rounds 10
along the city walls,

Inside live malice and mischief,
inside lives destruction, 11
tyranny and treachery never absent
from its central square.

Were it [d] an enemy who insulted me, 12
that I could bear;
if an opponent pitted himself against me,
I could turn away from him.

41:9 Jr 9:3,7 Mt 26:21–24par. But you, a person of my own rank, 13
a comrade and dear friend,
to whom I was bound by intimate friendship 14
in the house of God!

May they recoil [e] in disorder,
49:14 may death descend on them, [f] 15
Nb 16:33f Pr 1:12 Is 5:14 may they go down alive to Sheol,
since evil shares their home with them.

For my part, I appeal to God, 16
and Yahweh saves me;
evening, morning, noon, [g] 17
I complain and I groan.

He hears my cry,
he ransoms me and gives me peace 18
from the feud against me,
for they are taking me to law. [h]

But God will listen and will humble them, 19
29:10;93:2 he who has been enthroned from the beginning;

no change of heart for them,
for they do not fear God.

20 They attack those at peace with them,
going back on their oaths;
21 though their mouth is smoother than butter, 28:3+
enmity is in their hearts;
their words more soothing than oil,
yet sharpened like swords. 57:4 Pr 12:18

22 Unload your burden onto Yahweh 37:5 ↗1 P 5:7
and he will sustain you;
never will he allow
the upright to stumble. [i]

23 You, God, will thrust them down
to the abyss of destruction,
men bloodthirsty and deceptive,
before half their days are spent.

For my part, I put my trust in you. 25:2;56:4

PSALM 56 V 55

Trust in God

For the choirmaster Tune: 'The oppression of distant princes' [a] *Of David*
In a quiet voice When the Philistines seized him in Gath 1 S 21:11seq.

1 Take pity on me, God, as they harry me,
pressing their attacks home all day.
2 Those who harry me lie in wait for me all day,
countless are those who attack me from the heights. [b]

3 When I am afraid, I put my trust in you,
4 in God, whose word I praise, [c]
in God I put my trust and have no fear, 84:12
what can mortal man do to me? 52:9;58:10; 91:8

5 All day long they carp at my words, Jr 9:1–8
their only thought is to harm me,
6 they gather together, [d] lie in wait and spy on my movements,
as though determined to take my life.

7 Because of this crime reject them,
in your anger, God, strike down the nations.

b. 'outcry' *za'aqat* or *za'aqah* conj.; Hebr. *'aqat* unintelligible.
c. Text corrected. 'destructive' *bela'* conj.; Hebr. *balla'* 'is destructive'. • 'the flood of *'peleg* Syr.; Hebr. *pallag* 'divisive'.
d. 'Were it' Gk; 'It is not' Hebr.
e. 'May they recoil' conj.; 'We went' Hebr.
f. Sudden, premature death is the punishment of the wicked, 73:19; 102:24; Jb 15:32; Is 38:10; Jr 17:11.
g. The hours of prayer, Dn 6:11.
h. 'taking me to law' *beribim* conj.; Hebr. *berabbim* 'numerous'.
i. This v. may be understood as the ironical remarks of the false friend, v. 21, or as self-encouragement uttered by the sufferer. The word translated by 'burden' occurs only here, and is translated following the context and the versions.

56 a. On the 'princes' or 'gods', *see* 45:6; 58:1. • The word 'oppression' is the same in Hebr. as 'dove', and is sometimes so translated; but the Psalm speaks of oppression.
b. On the heights around Jerusalem *see* 2 K 19:22. There must be an allusion to the siege of 701, as in Ps 76 (*see also* vv. 11–12) with which there are close connections. But the phrase can also be understood 'with haughtiness'.
c. Here, as in v. 10, the 'word' of God is his promise on which his servant relies, *see* 106:12; 119:42,65; 130:5.
d. 'gather together' Targ., Jerome; 'attack' Hebr.

You yourself have counted up my sorrows, 8
2 K 20:5 Is 25:8 Rv 7:17 collect my tears in your wineskin. [e]
Then my enemies will turn back 9
on the day when I call.

118:6seq;124:1seq. This I know, that God is on my side.
In God whose word I praise, 10
in Yahweh whose word I praise,
in God I put my trust and have no fear; 11
=118:6 ↗Heb 13:6 what can mortal man do to me?

I am bound by the vows I have made, God, 12
Lv 7:11seq. I will pay you the debt of thanks,
for you have saved my life from death [f] 13
27:13;116:9 Jb 33:30 Qo 11:7 to walk in the presence of God,
in the light of the living.

PSALM 57

V 56

Among ferocious enemies

1 S 23:4seq. *For the choirmaster Tune: 'Do not destroy' Of David In a quiet voice When he escaped from Saul in the cave*

Take pity on me, God, take pity on me, 1
for in you I take refuge,
17:8+ in the shadow of your wings I take refuge,
until the destruction is past.

I call to God the Most High, 2
to God who has done everything for me;
may he send from heaven and save me, 3
and check those who harry me; *Pause*
43:5 may God send his faithful love and his constancy.

17:12 I lie surrounded by lions, 4
greedy for human prey,
their teeth are spears and arrows,
64:3 their tongue a sharp sword.

Be exalted above the heavens, God! 5
72:19;102:15 Nb 14:21+ Your glory over all the earth! [a]
They laid a snare in my path 6
—I was bowed with care—
7:15+ they dug a pit ahead of me,
but fell in it themselves. *Pause*

=108:1–5 My heart is ready, God, 7
my heart is ready;
I will sing, and make music for you.
6:4b Awake, my glory, 8
awake, lyre and harp,
Jb 38:12 that I may awake the Dawn. [b]

9:11;18:49 I will praise you among the peoples, Lord, 9
I will make music for you among nations,
=36:5 for your faithful love towers to heaven, 10
your constancy to the clouds.

11 Be exalted above the heavens, God!
Your glory over all the earth!

PSALM 58

V 57 82

The judge of earthly judges [a]

For the choirmaster Tune: 'Do not destroy' Of David In a quiet voice

1 Divine [b] as you are, do you truly give upright verdicts?
do you judge fairly the children of Adam? 82:2 Dt 16:19
2 No! You devise injustice in your hearts, Mi 2:1
and with your hands you administer tyranny on the earth.

3 Since the womb they have gone astray, the wicked,
on the wrong path since their birth, with their unjust verdicts.
4 They are poisonous as any snake, 140:3 Dt 32:33
deaf as an adder that blocks its ears
5 so as not to hear the magician's music,
however skilful his spells.

6 God, break the teeth in their mouths, 3:7;35:17; 57:4
snap off the fangs of these young lions, Yahweh.
7 May they drain away like water running to waste, Jb 11:16
may they wither like trampled [c] grass, 37:2+
8 like the slug that melts as it moves
or a still-born child that never sees the sun. Jb 3:16 Qo 6:3seq.

9 Before they sprout thorns [d] like the bramble, 52:6;68:23 Jb 19:29;21:18; 27:21
green or burnt up, may retribution whirl them away.
10 The upright will rejoice to see vengeance done, Ho 13:3 Na 1:10 Ml 2:17;3:18
and will bathe his feet in the blood of the wicked.
11 'So', people will say, 'the upright does have a reward;
there is a God to dispense justice on earth.'

PSALM 59

V 58

Against the wicked [a]

For the choirmaster Tune: 'Do not destroy' Of David In a quiet voice 1 S 19:11seq.
When Saul sent men to watch David's house in order to have him killed

1 Rescue me from my enemies, my God,
be my stronghold from my assailants,
2 rescue me from evil-doers,
from men of violence save me.

e. There is perhaps an allusion here to the tears of Hezekiah, 2 K 20:5; Is 38:3–5. Each tear of the just will have its eschatological compensation, Is 25:8, cf. Rv 7:17. • The text adds a gloss on this theme 'Is it not "in your ledger"?', cf. 139:16; Jb 19:23; Ml 3:16.

f. Hebr. adds 'Should this not be "my feet from falling"?', and certain Gk MSS add 'my eyes from tears', borrowed from 116:8 and suggested by v. 8.

57 a. The psalmist wants God to manifest his sovereignty by rescuing the oppressed and destroying the godless.

b. Personified as in Jb 3:9; 38:12; 41:10. Dawn is the hour of rescue, 17:15d.

58 a. Like the prophets of old the poet apostrophises unjust judges, and calls divine judgement down on them.

b. Gods *'elim* conj.; Hebr. *'elem* 'in silence'. The expression here embraces judges and rulers. *See* 45:6,7; 82; Ex 21:6; 22:7; Dt 19:17; 2 S 14:17.

c. 'like trampled grass' *hatzir* conj.; Hebr. *hitztzayw* 'he tramples his arrows as'.

d. corr., 'before they sprout thorns', corr. of the Hebr. text, following Symmachus and Jerome. Hebr. has 'your pots feel the thorn'.

59 a. This Psalm with its mixture of praise and imprecation has two refrains: vv. 6 and 14; 9 and 17. The author may have been a Jew of the Dispersion, surrounded by hostile pagans, or a devout man living in a half-paganised Jerusalem.

Look at them, lurking to ambush me, 3
violent men are attacking me,
for no fault, no sin of mine, Yahweh, ·for no guilt, 4
they come running to take up position.

Wake up, stand by me and keep watch,
Yahweh, God of Sabaoth, God of Israel, 5
rise up, to punish all the nations, [b]
Is 26:10 show no mercy to all these malicious traitors. *Pause*

Back they come at nightfall, 6
snarling like curs,
55:10 prowling through the town. [c]

Look how they rant in speech 7
52:2;55:21; 57:4;64:3 with swords on their lips,
'Who is there to hear us?' [d]

2:4;37:13 For your part, Yahweh, you laugh at them, 8
you make mockery of all nations.
My strength, I keep my eyes fixed on you. 9

For my stronghold is God,
the God who loves me faithfully [e] is coming to meet me, 10
54:7 God will let me feast my eyes on those who lie in wait for me.

Do not annihilate them, or my people may forget; 11
shake them in your power, bring them low, [f]
Lord, our shield.

Pr 12:13;18:7 Sin is in their mouths, sin on their lips, 12
so let them be trapped in their pride
for the curses and lies that they utter.

Ezk 5:13; 6:12;13:13; 46:9–10;83:18 Destroy them in your anger, destroy them till they are no more, 13
and let it be known that God is Master
in Jacob and the whole wide world. *Pause*

Back they come at nightfall, 14
snarling like curs,
prowling through the town,
scavenging for something to eat, 15
growling [g] unless they have their fill.

17:15d And so I will sing of your strength, 16
in the morning acclaim your faithful love;
you have been a stronghold for me,
a refuge when I was in trouble.

My strength, I will make music for you, 17
for my stronghold is God,
the God who loves me faithfully. [h]

PSALM 60

V 59

National prayer after defeat [a]

For the choirmaster To the tune 'The decree is a lily' In a quiet voice Of David To be learnt When he was at war with Aram-Naharaim and Aram-Zobah, and Joab marched back to destroy twelve thousand Edomites in the Valley of Salt — 2 S 8:2,3,13; 1 Ch 18:2,3,12

1 God, you have rejected us, broken us,
you were angry, come back to us!
2 You made the earth tremble, split it open; — Is 24:20
now mend the rifts, it is tottering still. [b]

3 You have forced your people to drink a bitter draught, — 75:8; Is 51:17,21–22; Jr 25:15seq.
forced us to drink a wine that made us reel.
4 You gave a signal [c] to those who fear you — Is 5:26;11:12; 13:2
to let them escape out of range of the bow. *Pause*

5 To rescue those you love, — =108:6–13
save with your right hand and answer us.

6 God has spoken from his sanctuary, [d]
'In triumph I will divide up Shechem, [e] — Si 50:26; Is 42:13
and share out the Valley of Succoth.

7 'Mine is Gilead, mine Manasseh, — Gn 49:10; Is 11:13; Ob 19–20
Ephraim the helmet on my head,
Judah my commander's baton,

8 'Moab a bowl for me to wash in, — Dt 2:5c
on Edom I plant my sandal. [f] — 137:7
Now try shouting "Victory!" over me, Philistia!' [g] — Is 11:14

9 Who will lead me against a fortified city,
who will guide me into Edom,
10 if not you, the God who has rejected us? — 44:9;68:7
God, you no longer march with our armies. [h]

11 Bring us help in our time of crisis, — 33:16–17; 2 Ch 14:10
any human help is worthless.
12 With God we shall do deeds of valour, — Ho 1:7+; 44:5
he will trample down our enemies.

b. Eschatological style, cf. Is 26:21.

c. The image suggests, *see* vv. 14–15, the packs of stray dogs found in the villages of the east.

d. A form of blasphemy, cf. 10:4; 14:1; 64:5; 94:7.

e. 'my strength'; MSS and versions, *see* v. 17; 'his strength'; 'who loves me', lit. 'of my love': MSS and versions, 'his love': *Text rec.*

f. Like Cain, Gn 4:14–15, non-Jewish nations must survive to witness the divine justice.

g. 'growling' versions; 'spending the night' Hebr.

h. The last antiphon seems incomplete, cf. v. 10.

60 **a.** This Psalm implies the same historical situation as 44 and 80. V. 7 introduces a prophecy of hope, repeated in 108:7–14, foretelling the restoration of an enlarged and unified kingdom, as in the early days of the monarchy, with control over Edom, Ephraim, Gilead, *see* Is 11:13–14; Ob.

b. The defeat is described in apocalyptic terms.

c. The banner, or rallying signal, is a common feature (Ex 17:15; Is 5:26; 11:10; 49:22; 62:10; Sg 2:4); here, however, it is the signal for retreat, *see* v. 10.

d. Or 'by his holiness', i.e. guaranteeing his promises.

e. An anti-Samaritan sally, cf. Ne 3:33seq. The mention together of Shechem and Succoth, *see* Gn 33:17–18, is no doubt an allusion to the conquest of the Promised Land, recalled with regret but also with hope.

f. An ancient custom, Dt 25:9, in Rt 4:7, it signifies appropriation.

g. Ironical, softened in Ps 108:9: 'Over Philistia I cry victory.'

h. An expression of the psalmist's nostalgia, who, in a country divided and plundered by its neighbours, thinks back to the golden age of the holy war, the conquest and the Davidic kingdom.

PSALM 61

V 60

Prayer of an exile [a]

For the choirmaster For strings Of David

God, hear my cry, 1
listen to my prayer.
27:4–5 From the end of the earth I call to you 2
43:3 with fainting heart.
Lead me to the high rock that stands far out of my reach. [b]

For you are my refuge, 3
46:1 a strong tower against the enemy.
Pr 18:9 Let me stay in your tent for ever, 4
17:8+ taking refuge in the shelter of your wings!
For you, God, accept my vows, 5
you grant me the heritage of those who fear your name.

21:4+ Let the king live on and on, 6
let his years continue age after age.
40:11,72:5; 89:4,29,33,36 85:10seq.; 89:14,24 Pr 20:28 May his throne be always in God's presence, 7
your faithful love and constancy watch over him. [c]

Then I shall always sing to your name, 8
day after day fulfilling my vows.

PSALM 62

V 61

Hope in God alone [a]

For the choirmaster . . . Jeduthun Psalm Of David

In God alone there is rest for my soul, 1
from him comes my safety;
he alone is my rock, my safety, 2
my stronghold so that I stand unshaken.

How much longer will you set on a victim, 3
all together, intent on murder,
like a rampart already leaning over,
a wall already damaged?
4:2 Trickery [b] is their only plan, 4
deception their only pleasure,
28:3+;55:21 with lies on their lips they pronounce a blessing,
with a curse in their hearts. *Pause*

42:5,11;43:5; 118:8 Mi 7:7 Rest in God alone, my soul! 5
He is the source of my hope.
He alone is my rock, my safety, 6
my stronghold, so that I stand unwavering.
Is 45:17;60:19 Jr 3:23 In God is my safety and my glory, 7
the rock of my strength.

Is 26:4 In God is my refuge; ·trust in him. 8
you people, at all times.
Pour out your hearts to him,
God is a refuge for us. *Pause*

9 Ordinary people are a mere puff of wind, 39:5–6;116:11
important people a delusion; [c]
set both on the scales together, Is 40:15
and they are lighter than a puff of wind.

10 Put no trust in extortion, Is 30:12
Ezk 22:29
no empty hopes in robbery;
however much wealth may multiply, Jb 27:13seq.;
31:25
do not set your heart on it. Qo 5:9seq.
Jr 17:11
Mt 6:19seq.,24
11 Once God has spoken,
twice have I heard this: [d] Jb 40:5
Strength belongs to God,
12 to you, Lord, faithful love;
and you repay everyone as their deeds deserve. [e] 28:4;31:23
Jb 34:11
Jr 17:10
↗Rm 2:6
↗2 Tm 4:14
Rv 22:12

PSALM 63

V 62

Yearning for God

Psalm Of David When he was in the desert of Judah [a] 1 S 22–24

1 God, you are my God, I pine for you; [b] 36:7–9
my heart thirsts for you, 42:1
my body longs for you,
as a land parched, dreary and waterless. 143:6
2 Thus I have gazed on you in the sanctuary,
seeing your power and your glory.

3 Better your faithful love than life itself;
my lips will praise you.
4 Thus I will bless you all my life,
in your name lift up my hands.
5 All my longings fulfilled as with fat and rich foods, 36:8
a song of joy on my lips and praise in my mouth.

6 On my bed when I think of you,
I muse on you in the watches of the night,
7 for you have always been my help;
in the shadow of your wings I rejoice; 17:8+
8 my heart clings to you,
your right hand supports me.

9 May those who are hounding me to death 5:10c
go down to the depths of the earth,

61 **a.** Lament of a Levite in exile from Mt Zion, vv. 1–5, followed by a prayer for the king, vv. 6–7.

b. i.e. the Rock of the Temple for which the psalmist longs. This Psalm could date from the first deportation (598), cf. 2 K 24:14seq., when the Temple had not yet been destroyed.

c. These personified divine attributes will accompany the messianic king, 85:10seq.; 89:14,24, as they protect the king, Pr 20:28, or the faithful Levite, Ps 40:11. Vv. 6–7 may be an ancient prayer for the king, but their emphasis on a reign indefinitely prolonged recalls the prophecy of Nathan, 2 S 7:16; 1 Ch 17:14, and their close resemblance to the messianic passages of Ps 72 and 89 makes them applicable to the royal Messiah.

62 **a.** Didactic Psalm: human malice, hollowness of things created, vanity of riches, impartiality of the divine judge. The theme of the refrain, vv. 1–2,5–6, is that of the following Psalm.

b. 'Trickery' *mashshu'ot* conj.; Hebr. *misse'eto* 'from his eminence'.

c. lit. 'sons of men', 'people of value', ordinary people and people of rank respectively, as in 49:2.

d. The literary device of numerical proverbs is found in Jb 40:5; Pr 6:16; 30:15; Am 1:3seq.

e. Doctrine of individual retribution taught by the prophets (especially Ezekiel, 14:12d), the wisdom writers and the psalmists Ps 37:1a, and by the NT, Mt 16:27; Rv 2:23.

63 **a.** This Psalm was applied to David wandering in the desert, and was perhaps slightly altered accordingly.

b. Versions: 'from early morning I am with you.

given over to the blade of the sword, 10
and left as food for jackals.
21:1;64:10 Then the king shall rejoice in God, 11
all who swear by him [c] shall gain recognition,
for the mouths of liars shall be silenced.

PSALM 64

V 63

Punishment for slanderers [a]

For the choirmaster Psalm Of David

Listen, God, to my voice as I plead, 1
protect my life from fear of the enemy;
hide me from the league of the wicked, 2
from the gang of evil-doers.

11:2;55:21; 57:4; 59:7;140:3 Jr 9:2 They sharpen their tongues like a sword, 3
aim their arrows of poisonous abuse,
shoot at the innocent from cover, 4
shoot suddenly, with nothing to fear.

Pr 1:11seq.; 6:14 They support each other in their evil designs, 5
they discuss how to lay their snares.
10:11;94:7 'Who will see us?' they say,
'or will penetrate our secrets?' 6
Qo 7:24 Jr 11:20+ He will do that, he who penetrates human nature to its depths,
the depths of the heart. [b]

7:12seq.;38:2 Dt 32:42 God has shot them with his arrow, 7
sudden were their wounds.
22:7;44:14 He brings them down [c] because of their tongue, 8
and all who see them shake their heads.

40:3;52:6 Everyone will be awestruck, 9
proclaim what God has done,
and understand why he has done it.

5:11;58:10; 63:11 The upright will rejoice in Yahweh, 10
will take refuge in him,
and all the honest will praise him.

PSALM 65

V 64

Thanksgiving hymn [a]

For the choirmaster Psalm Of David Song

Praise is rightfully yours, [b] 1
God, in Zion.
Vows to you shall be fulfilled,
for you answer prayer. 2

Is 66:23 All humanity must come to you
with its sinful deeds. 3
Our faults overwhelm us,
32:1 but you blot them out. [c]

4 How blessed those whom you choose
and invite to dwell in your courts.
We shall be filled with the good things of your house,
of your holy temple.

5 You respond to us with the marvels of your saving justice,
God our Saviour,
hope of the whole wide world, Is 66:19
even the distant islands.[d]

6 By your strength you hold the mountains steady, Jb 38:6seq.
being clothed in power,
7 you calm the turmoil of the seas,
the turmoil of their waves. 89:9;107:29 Jb 26:12 Mt 8:26
The nations are in uproar,[e] Is 17:12
in panic those who live at the ends of the earth;
8 your miracles bring shouts of joy
to the gateways[f] of morning and evening.

9 You visit the earth and make it fruitful, Lv 26:3seq. Is 30:23,25 Jl 2:22seq.
you fill it with riches;
the river of God brims over with water[g],
you provide the grain.

To that end
10 you water its furrows abundantly, level its ridges,
soften it with showers and bless its shoots.

11 You crown the year with your generosity,
richness seeps from your tracks,[h] Am 9:13
12 the pastures of the desert grow moist,
the hillsides are wrapped in joy, Ps 96:12
13 the meadows are covered with flocks,
the valleys clothed with wheat;
they shout and sing for joy.[i] 66:1 Is 44:23

PSALM 66 V 65

Corporate prayer of thanksgiving[a]

For the choirmaster Song Psalm

1 Acclaim God, all the earth,

c. By Yahweh, cf. Dt 6:13; Jr 12:16; or by the king; the text is ambiguous.

64 a. By the law of retaliation, the arrow of God, v. 7, avenges the arrow of the wicked word, v. 3.

b. The text has been here corrected by changing two consonants and redividing the words; the Hebr., corrupt, lit. 'they reason out (contrive) wicked deeds; we are ready (MSS: 'they hide'), a plot they hatch; and the depths.'

c. 'he brings them down because of . . .' conj.; 'he makes him stumble against them (is their tongue)' Hebr., with letters transposed.

65 a. After a good year with plentiful rain the people thank the Creator. The first part, vv. 1–8, with its world-wide outlook, is reminiscent of Is. The second, vv. 9–13, with a change of rhythm in v. 10, is an enthusiastic description of spring in Judah.

b. lit. 'is due to you' versions; 'silence (is praise)' Hebr.

c. 'blot out' lit. 'cover the sin': expression in the 'Priestly' vocabulary for divine pardon, granted especially on the Day of Expiation, Lv 1:4c; 16:1a; *see* Ps 78:38; 79:9.

d. 'islands' Targ., 'seas' Hebr., perhaps an anti-universalist alteration, since 'the islands' represent non-Jewish nations.

e. 'are in uproar' Gk; 'and the uproar (of the nations)' Hebr.

f. These gates through which the sun was thought to pass each day represent the most distant countries.

g. The poet is thinking about the storehouses above the vault of the sky where the waters are kept, 104:3; Gn 1:7; 7:11; Jb 38:25, rather than the symbolic river of Zion, Ps 46:4d.

h. The chariot of God, 68:4, 17; Is 66:15, traverses the earth dispensing fertility.

i. lit. 'they acclaim, yes they sing'.

66 a. This liturgical thanksgiving on behalf of the community, the leader of which speaks from v. 13 onwards, recalls in style and worldwide outlook the second half of Is.

sing psalms to the glory of his name, 2
Ep 1:12,14 glorify him with your praises,
say to God, 'How awesome you are! 3

'Your achievements are the measure of your power,
18:44;81:15 your enemies woo your favour,
all the earth bows down before you, 4
sings psalms to you, sings psalms to your name.' *Pause*

Come and see the marvels of God, 5
his awesome deeds for the children of Adam:
114:3 he changed the sea into dry land, 6
Is 44:27;50:2 they crossed the river on foot. [b]

So let us rejoice in him,
who rules for ever by his power; 7
his eyes keep watch on the nations
to forestall rebellion against him. *Pause*

Nations, bless our God, 8
let the sound of his praise be heard;
he brings us to life [c] 9
and keeps our feet from stumbling.

God, you have put us to the test, 10
Is 48:10 refined us like silver,
let us fall into the net; 11
you have put a heavy strain on our backs,
let men ride over our heads; 12
32:6;81:7 but now the ordeal by fire and water is over,
Is 43:2 you have led us out to breathe again. [d]

I bring burnt offerings to your house, 13
I fulfil to you my vows,
the vows that rose to my lips, 14
that I pronounced when I was in trouble.

I will offer you rich burnt offerings, 15
with the smoke of burning rams.
I will sacrifice to you bullocks and goats. *Pause*

Come and listen, all who fear God, 16
while I tell what he has done for me.

To him I cried aloud, 17
high praise was on my tongue.
Jn 9:31 Had I been aware of guilt in my heart, 18
the Lord would not have listened,
but in fact God did listen, 19
attentive to the sound of my prayer.

Blessed be God 20
who has not turned away my prayer,
nor his own faithful love from me.

PSALM 67

V 66

Harvest song [a]

For the choirmaster For strings Psalm Song

1 May God show kindness and bless us, Nb 6:24–25
and make his face shine on us. *Pause* 4:6d;31:16
2 Then the earth will acknowledge your ways,
and all nations your power to save. Jr 33:9

3 Let the nations praise you, God,
let all the nations praise you. [b]

4 Let the nations rejoice and sing for joy,
for you judge the world with justice, 82:8;=98:9
you judge [c] the peoples with fairness,
you guide the nations on earth. *Pause*

5 Let the nations praise you, God,
let all the nations praise you.

6 The earth has yielded its produce; =85:12
God, our God has blessed us. Lv 26:4
7 May God continue to bless us, Ezk 34:27
and be revered by the whole wide world. Ho 2:23–24

PSALM 68

V 67

An epic of Israel's glory [a]

For the choirmaster Of David Psalm Song

1 Let God arise, let his enemies scatter, Nb 10:35
let his opponents flee before him. Is 33:3
2 You disperse them like smoke;
as wax melts in the presence of a fire,
so the wicked melt at the presence of God.

3 The upright rejoice in the presence of God,
delighted and crying out for joy.
4 Sing to God, play music to his name,
build a road for the Rider of the Clouds, 18:9–10
rejoice [b] in Yahweh, dance before him. Dt 33:26
Is 19:1;
57:14; 66:15
5 Father of orphans, defender of widows, 146:9
such is God in his holy dwelling. Ex 22:21–22+
Ba 6:37

b. The crossing of the Sea of Reeds, Ex 14–15, and of the Jordan, Jos 3: two great 'typical' events of Israel's history, also found together in 74:13–15; 114.

c. Hence the title 'Resurrection Psalm' given to this Psalm by some Gk MSS. The Easter liturgy uses this verse.

d. 'to breathe again', versions; Hebr. 'to saturation'.

67 a. Probably recited at the harvest festival, *see* Ex 23:14d

b. This refrain is in the spirit of the second part of Is: by the example of the chosen people and the lessons of its history the non-Jewish nations also are summoned to serve the one God.

c. 'the world with justice, you judge' Sin., cf. 9:8; 96:13; 98:9, omitted by Hebr.

68 a. This hymn of thanksgiving covers the chief stages in the history of the people of God, like those of a triumphal progress by Yahweh: the Exodus from Egypt, the journey through the desert, the victories of the period of the Judges (Deborah, Gideon), the installation of the ark on Zion, the story of Elijah and Elisha, the tragic fate of the family of Ahab, the solemn Passover of Hezekiah, and finally the worldwide perspectives of the closing chapters of Is. Between Prelude (vv. 1–6) and Conclusion (vv. 32–35) are six groups of two strophes, the strophes being paired off on the basis of subject-matter. A copyist's error has upset the order of strophes 6 and 7.

b. 'rejoice' *simhu* conj.; Hebr. *shemo* 'his name'.

Ex 13:21;‖19:18
Dt 33:2
‖Jg 5:4–5
Hab 3:3 seq.

God gives the lonely a home to live in, 6
leads prisoners out into prosperity,
but rebels must live in the bare wastelands.

God, when you set out at the head of your people, 7
when you strode over the desert, ·the earth rocked, *Pause* 8
the heavens pelted down rain at the presence of God, [c]
at the presence of God, the God of Israel.

78:24seq.
Ex 16:10,13

God, you rained down a shower of blessings, 9
when your heritage was weary you gave it strength.
Your family found a home, which you 10
in your generosity provided for the humble. [d]

The Lord gave a command, 11
the good news [e] of a countless army.
Jg 5:19,22 The chieftains of the army are in flight, in flight, 12
and the fair one at home is sharing out the spoils. [f]

Jg 5:16

While you are at ease in the sheepfolds, [g] 13
the wings of the Dove are being covered with silver, [h]
and her feathers with a sheen of green gold;
Gn 17:1b when Shaddai scatters the chieftains, 14
through her it snows on the Dark Mountain. [i]

A mountain of God, the mountain of Bashan! 15
a haughty mountain, the mountain of Bashan!
Why be envious, haughty mountains, 16
of the mountain God has chosen for his dwelling?
Ezk 43:7 There God will dwell for ever.

2 K 6:17;7:6

The chariots of God [j] are thousand upon thousand; 17
God has come from Sinai to the sanctuary. [k]
47:5
↗Ep 4:8–10 You have climbed the heights, [l] taken captives, 18
you have taken men as tribute, even rebels
that Yahweh God might have a dwelling-place.

Blessed be the Lord day after day, 19
Dt 32:11
Is 46:3–4;
63:8 he carries us along, God our Saviour. *Pause*

This God of ours is a God who saves; 20
from Lord Yahweh comes escape from death;
but God smashes the head of his enemies, 21
the long-haired skull of the prowling criminal.

The Lord has said, 'I will bring them back from Bashan, 22
I will bring them back from the depths of the sea,
1 K 21:19;
22:38 so that you may bathe your feet in blood, 23
2 K 9:36 and the tongues of your dogs feast on your enemies.' [m]

Your processions, God, are for all to see, 24
the processions of my God, of my king, to the sanctuary;
singers ahead, musicians behind, 25
in the middle come girls, beating their drums.

In choirs they bless God, 26
80:1–2 Yahweh, since the foundation of Israel. [n]
Dt 33:28
Jr 2:13;17:13

Benjamin was there, the youngest in front, 27
the princes of Judah in bright-coloured robes,
Is 8:23 the princes of Zebulun, the princes of Naphtali. [o]

28 Take command, my God, as befits your power,[p]
the power, God, which you have wielded for us,
29 from your temple high above Jerusalem.
Kings will come to you bearing tribute.

30 Rebuke the Beast of the Reeds,
that herd of bulls, that people of calves,[q] Ezk 29:2seq.
who bow down with ingots of silver.
Scatter the people who delight in war.
31 From Egypt nobles will come, Is 18:7;45:14
Ethiopia will stretch out its hands to God.[r]

32 Kingdoms of the earth, sing to God,
33 play for[s] the Rider of the Heavens, the primeval heavens. *Pause* 68:4+
There he speaks, with a voice of power!
34 Acknowledge the power of God.

Over Israel his splendour, in the clouds his power.
35 Awesome is God in his sanctuary.[t]
He, the God of Israel,
gives strength and power to his people. 28:8;29:11

Blessed be God.

PSALM 69 V 68

Lament[a]

For the choirmaster Tune: 'Lilies . . .' Of David 45:inscr.

1 Save me, God, for the waters 18:4e;124:4–5
have closed in on my very being.[b] Jon 2:6

2 I am sinking in the deepest swamp
and there is no firm ground.

c. A Hebr. gloss adds 'that is, Sinai' cf. Jg 5:5, 'him of Sinai'. This strophe shows Yahweh taking the field; his departure from Egypt in the cloud, Ex 13:21; Nb 14:14, and the theophany of Sinai, Ex 19:16g.

d. The miracles of the Exodus: the manna, the quails and the entry into the Promised Land.

e. 'a command', 'the good news' conj.; 'his couriers the news' Hebr.

f. The victories of the conquest. The fair one means possibly Jael, Jg 5:24, or perhaps the wives of the conquerors, *see* Jg 5:30; 11:34; 1 S 18:6.

g. The little walls enclosing a sheepfold.

h. The Dove is the symbol of Israel, *see* 74:19; Ho 7:11, decking itself out with the finery won in battle, *see* Jos 22:8; Jg 8:24seq.

i. The 'Dark Mountain' is probably a wooded hill near Shechem, Jg 9:48–49. Abimelech sowed salt (white as snow, *see* Si 43:18–19) on the ruins of this town, Jg 9:45. The passage is highly obscure, but one imagines the poet, imitating Jg 5, questioning the isolationist clans who were not present at the battle, and vaunting to them the precious booty which the women of Israel are sharing out, and which shines on their brown skin like the plumage of a dove.

j. Not the chariots of Solomon, 1 K 10:26, but the heavenly chariots seen by Elisha, 2 K 6:17, cf. 2 K 7:6; Is 66:15. What follows refers to the victories of the monarchical period.

k. At the time of the Second Temple the Hebr. text of this v. was altered by changing the division of words; literally it translates: 'The Lord is in them, Sinai is in the sanctuary'. Sinai is thus identified with Zion, from where the Law issues, Is 2:3. This is the first sign of an adaptation of this Psalm in function of the liturgical feast of Pentecost, which commemorated the gift of the Law on Sinai, *see* the gloss of v. 8.

l. Zion.

m. Allusion to the death of Ahab, 1 K 21:19; 22:38, of Jehoram, 2 K 9:24, and of Jezebel, 2 K 9:36.

n. Liturgical antiphon.

o. 'bright-coloured robes' *riqmatam* conj.; Hebr. *rigmatam* 'heaped up'. • vv. 24–27 evoke the Pasch of Hezekiah, 2 Ch 30, in which the tribes of the North took part.

p. Line corrected, following versions: 'your God has commanded your strength' Hebr. The text and rhythm of the two following strophes are rather uncertain.

q. An insulting allusion to Egypt, its chieftains and people. It must be at the time of the great Jewish deportation to Egypt in the reign of Ptolemy Soter, c. 320.

r. 'nobles' (lit. 'fat [people]') *hashshemenim* or *mishmannim* conj.; following Gk; Hebr. *hashmannim* 'bronze objects' (?). • 'will stretch out' *yitrotz* conj.; Hebr. *taritz* 'will send'.

s. Hebr. adds 'the Lord. *Pause*'.

t. 'his sanctuary' Vulg; 'his sanctuaries' Hebr.

69 a. This messianic Psalm is composed of two laments of differing rhythms, each containing a lamentation followed by a prayer. The first, vv. 1–6 and 13–15, elaborates the themes of the nether waters, Ps 18:4e and enemies, Ps 35 etc. The second, vv. 7–12 and 16seq., is a cry of distress of one who suffers for his zeal, *see* Ps 22; Is 53:10; Jr 15:15. The Psalm ends as a hymn of national application, vv. 32 seq., cf. 22:27seq., and 102:13seq.

b. Or 'up to my neck'.

I have stepped into deep water
and the waves are washing over me.

I am exhausted with calling out, my throat is hoarse, 3
my eyes are worn out with searching for my God.

40:12 More numerous than the hairs of my head 4
are those who hate me without reason.
Those who seek to get rid of me are powerful,
35:19 my treacherous enemies.
↗Jn 15:25 (Must I give back what I have never stolen?)

God, you know how foolish I am. 5
my offences are not hidden from you.

Those who hope in you must not be made fools of, 6
Yahweh Sabaoth, because of me![c]

Those who seek you must not be disgraced,
God of Israel, because of me!

Jr 15:15 It is for you I bear insults, 7
my face is covered with shame,
Jb 19:13–15 I am estranged from my brothers, 8
alienated from my own mother's sons;
=119:139 for I am eaten up with zeal for your house, 9
↗Jn 2:17
↗Rm 15:3 and insults directed against you fall on me.

I mortify[d] myself with fasting, 10
and find myself insulted for it,
I dress myself in sackcloth 11
and become their laughing-stock,
the gossip of people sitting at the gate, 12
and the theme of drunkards' songs.

32:6;102:13 And so, I pray to you, Yahweh, 13
Is 49:8 at the time of your favour;
in your faithful love answer me,
in the constancy of your saving power.

Rescue me from the mire before I sink in; 14
so I shall be saved from those who hate me,
from the watery depths.
Let not the waves wash over me, 15
nor the deep swallow me up,
nor the pit close its mouth on me.

Answer me, Yahweh, for your faithful love is generous; 16
in your tenderness turn towards me;
do not turn away from your servant, 17
=102:2 be quick to answer me, for I am in trouble.
Come to my side, redeem me, 18
ransom me because of my enemies.

You know well the insults, 19
the shame and disgrace I endure.
Every one of my oppressors is known to you.
Insult has broken my heart past cure.[e] 20
Jb 6 I hoped for sympathy, but in vain,
14seq.,14f
Lm 1:2 for consolers—not one to be found.

21 To eat they gave me poison,
to drink, vinegar when I was thirsty. ▶Mt 26:40par. ▶Jn 16:32 ↗Mt 27:34,48 ↗Rm 11:9–10
22 May their own table prove a trap for them,
and their abundance a snare;
23 may their eyes grow so dim that they cannot see,
all their muscles lose their strength.

24 Vent your fury on them,
let your burning anger overtake them.
25 Reduce their encampment to ruin, ↗Ac 1:20
and leave their tents untenanted,
26 for hounding someone you had already stricken, 71:11 Is 53:4
for redoubling the pain of one you had wounded.[f]

27 Charge them with crime after crime,
exclude them from your saving justice,
28 erase them from the book of life, Ex 32:32 Is 4:3 Dn 12:1 Rv 3:5;20:12j
do not enrol them among the upright.

29 For myself, wounded wretch that I am,
by your saving power raise me up!
30 I will praise God's name in song, 22:25seq.
I will extol him by thanksgiving,
31 for this will please Yahweh more than an ox, 50:8+;51:16
than a bullock horned and hoofed.

32 The humble have seen and are glad. 22:26;70:4; 119:144
Let your courage revive, you who seek God.
33 For God listens to the poor,
he has never scorned his captive people.
34 Let heaven and earth and seas,
and all that stirs in them, acclaim him!

35 For God will save Zion, 5:11;102:21–22,28 Is 44:26;65:9 Ezk 36:10
and rebuild the cities of Judah,
and people will live there on their own land;
36 the descendants of his servants will inherit it,
and those who love his name will dwell there.

PSALM 70 V 69

A cry of distress[a]

For the choirmaster Of David In commemoration 38 inscr.

1 Be pleased, God, to rescue me,
Yahweh, come quickly and help me!
2 Shame and dismay to those
who seek my life!

Back with them! Let them be humiliated
who delight in my misfortunes.
3 Let them shrink away covered with shame, 3
those who say to me, 'Aha, aha!'

c. Hebr. inserts 'Lord' before 'Yahweh'.
d. 'mortify myself' Gk, Syr.; 'weep' Hebr.
e. Conjectural translation; the order of lines and words in vv. 19–20 has been upset, but no reconstruction is satisfactory.
f. 'redoubling' Gk, Syr.; 'recounting' Hebr. • In v. 26 the object is in the plural, an adaptation to the national liturgy.

70 **a.** Doublet of 40:13–17.

But joy and happiness in you 4
to all who seek you.
Let them ceaselessly cry, 'God is great',
who love your saving power.

Poor and needy as I am, 5
God, come quickly to me!
Yahweh, my helper, my Saviour,
do not delay!

PSALM 71 V 70

A prayer in old age

=31:1-3 In you, Yahweh, I take refuge, 1
25:2 I shall never be put to shame.
In your saving justice rescue me, deliver me, 2
listen to me and save me.

Be a sheltering rock [a] for me, 3
always accessible;
you have determined to save me,
for you are my rock, my fortress.
140:1 My God, rescue me from the clutches of the wicked, 4
from the grasp of the rogue and the ruthless.

For you are my hope, Lord, 5
my trust, Yahweh, since boyhood.
On you I have relied since my birth, 6
since my mother's womb you have been my portion, [b]
22:3;109:1 Jr 17:14 the constant theme of my praise.

Many were bewildered at me, [c] 7
31:11 Is 52:14 but you are my sure refuge.
My mouth is full of your praises, 8
filled with your splendour all day long.

22:11,19 Do not reject me in my old age, 9
nor desert me when my strength is failing,
for my enemies are discussing me, 10
those with designs on my life are plotting together.

3:2;22:8; 69:26 'Hound him down, for God has deserted him! 11
Seize him, there is no one to rescue him.'
22:11+ God, do not stand aloof, 12
my God, come quickly to help me.

=40:14;=35:4 Shame and ruin 13
on those who slander me,
may those intent on harming me
be covered with insult and infamy.

As for me, my hope will never fade, 14
I will praise you more and more.
35:28;109:30 My lips shall proclaim your saving justice, 15
your saving power all day long. [d]

I will come in the power of Yahweh [e] 16
to tell of your justice, yours alone.

17 God, you have taught me from boyhood,
and I am still proclaiming your marvels. 129:1–2 Is 46:3–4 Jr 2:1 Ho 2:17

18 Now that I am old and grey-haired,
God, do not desert me,[f]
till I have proclaimed your strength[g] 22:30+
to generations still to come,
19 your power ·and justice to the skies. 36:6

You have done great things, 72:18; 86:8+
God, who is like you?
20 You have shown me much misery and hardship,
but you will give me life again,
You will raise me up again from the depths of the earth, 9:13;40:2
21 prolong my old age, and comfort me again.

22 For my part, I will thank you on the lyre
for your constancy, my God.
I will play the harp in your honour,
Holy One of Israel. Is 6:3g

23 My lips sing for joy as I play to you, 7:17i
because you have redeemed me,
24 and all day long my tongue
muses on your saving justice.
Shame and disgrace
on those intent to harm me!

PSALM 72

V 71 Is 11:1–5 Zc 9:9seq.

The promised king[a]

Of Solomon

1 God, endow the king with your own fair judgement, Jr 23:5
the son of the king with your own saving justice,
2 that he may rule your people with justice,
and your poor with fair judgement.

3 Mountains and hills, Is 45:8;52:7; 55:12
bring peace to the people!
4 With justice[b] ·he will judge the poor of the people, Zp 2:3d
he will save the children of the needy
and crush their oppressors.

5 In the sight of the sun and the moon he will endure,[c] 61:7
age after age.

71 **a.** 'sheltering' ('of security') MSS, versions. 'a walled fortress' Gk and 31:2.
b. Meaning uncertain (versions 'my strength'?).
c. Because of his sufferings: they are surprised to see a good person suffer, cf. Jb.
d. Hebr. adds 'I have not known how to read the letters' doubtless the gloss of a scribe puzzled by the following word.
e. Meaning uncertain, lit. 'I shall come in the powers of the Lord Yahweh.' Possibly the first letter should be changed to read 'I shall proclaim the powerful deeds of Yahweh.'
f. This passage could be applied to Israel, whose 'youth' and 'old age' were often referred to by the prophets.
g. lit. 'your arm', a figure of speech found in the prophets, Is 51:9; 53:1, referring to the miracles of the Exodus.

72 **a.** This Psalm, dedicated to Solomon, whose wealth, glory and just and peaceful reign it celebrates (1 K 3:9,12, 28; 4:20; 10:1–29; 1 Ch 22:9), evokes the image of the future ideal king. Jewish and Christian tradition see it as a portrait of the messianic King foretold by Isaiah, 9:5; 11:1–5; and Zechariah, 9:9seq.
b. Division of verse according to Gk. Text uncertain.
c. 'he will endure' Gk; 'they will fear you' Hebr.

Dt 32:2
Is 45:8
Ho 6:3

He will come down like rain on mown grass, [d] 6
like showers moistening the land.

In his days uprightness [e] shall flourish, 7
and peace in plenty till the moon is no more. [f]
89:37
2 S 7:13seq.
Si 44:21
Is 27:1;49:23
Jr 31:35;33:20
Mi 7:17
Zc 9:10

His empire shall stretch from sea to sea, 8
from the river to the limits of the earth. [g]

The Beast [h] will cower before him, 9
his enemies lick the dust;
the kings of Tarshish and the islands 10
will pay him tribute.

1 K 10:1a

The kings of Sheba and Saba
will offer gifts;
all kings will do him homage, 11
all nations become his servants.

‖Jb 29:12

For he rescues anyone needy who calls to him, 12
and the poor who has no one to help.
He has pity on the weak and the needy, 13
and saves the needy from death.

From oppression and violence he redeems their lives, 14
116:15
their blood is precious in his sight.
61:6–7
(Long may he live; may the gold of Sheba be given him!) [i] 15
Prayer will be offered for him constantly,
and blessings invoked on him all day. [j]

Is 27:6
Ho 14:6–9
Am 9:13

May wheat abound in the land, 16
waving on the heights of the hills,
like Lebanon with its fruits and flowers at their best, [k]
like the grasses of the earth.

May his name be blessed for ever, 17
and endure in the sight of the sun.
Gn 12:3b
In him shall be blessed every race in the world, [l]
and all nations call him blessed.

Blessed be Yahweh, the God of Israel, 18
who alone works wonders;
blessed for ever his glorious name. 19
Hab 3:3
May the whole world be filled with his glory!
Amen! Amen!

End of the prayers of David, son of Jesse. [m] 20

PSALM 73

V 72

The triumph of justice [a]

Psalm *Of Asaph*

Indeed God is good to Israel, 1
the Lord [b] to those who are pure of heart.

My feet were on the point of stumbling, 2
a little more and I had slipped,
37:1a
Jb 21:13–26
envying the arrogant as I did, 3
and seeing the prosperity of the wicked.

4 For them no such thing as pain,
untroubled, their comfortable portliness;[c]
5 exempt from the cares which are the human lot,
they have no part in Adam's afflictions.

6 So pride is a necklace to them,
violence the garment they wear.
7 From their fat oozes out malice,[d] 17:10; 119:70
their hearts drip with cunning. Jb 15:27
Jr 5:28

8 Cynically they advocate evil,
loftily they advocate force.
9 Their mouth claims heaven for themselves,
and their tongue is never still on earth.

10 That is why my people turn to them,
and enjoy the waters of plenty,[e]
11 saying, 'How can God know? 10:11+
What knowledge can the Most High have?'
12 That is what the wicked are like,
piling up wealth without any worries.

13 Was it useless, then, to have kept my own heart clean, Ml 3:14
to have washed my hands in innocence? =26:6

14 When I was under a hail of blows all day long,
and punished every morning, Jb 7:18
15 had I said, 'I shall talk like them,'
I should have betrayed your children's race.

16 So I set myself to understand this:
how difficult I found it!
17 Until I went into the sanctuaries of the gods[f]
and understood what was destined to become of them.
18 You place them on a slippery slope
and drive them down into chaos.

19 How sudden their hideous destruction!
They are swept away, annihilated by terror!
20 Like a dream upon waking, Lord,
when you awake,[g] you dismiss their image. 49:14

d. The versions translate 'fleece'. *see* Jg 6:37seq.
e. 'uprightness' MSS, versions: 'the upright' (Hebr.), a messianic adaptation, cf. Jr 23:5; Zc 9:9.
f. The messianic age will last till the end of time.
g. The boundaries of an ideal Palestine. *see* Jg 20:1a.
h. The word used of animals or demons of the desert. Is 13:21; 34:14; Jr 50:39; Ezk 34:28, here refers to subjugated heathen states, cf. Is 27:1; Dn 7:3; Rv 13:1.
i. 'be given him' versions; 'he give' Hebr.
j. An obscure passage; the subject of the verb is not explicit. Israel is praying for the success of the Messiah's saving mission. But it could also be understood: 'He (the Messiah) will pray for him (the poor man) and will bless him.'
k. 'and flowers' conj.; 'let them flower' Hebr.
l. 'blessed' and 'every race in the world' Gk, lacking in Hebr. • 'endure' *yikkon* versions; Hebr. *yinnon* 'multiply'. In the present state of the text it could be translated: 'Let his name be ever before the sun. "He-shall-flower" is his name', this would be an adaptation alluding to the stock of Jesse, Is 11:1, and to the messianic name of Branch, Is 4:2; Jr 23:5; 33:15; Zc 6:12.
m. The colophon and preceding doxology close the second book of the Psalter.

73 **a.** The poet-sage is troubled by the prosperity of the godless and the sufferings of the upright, cf. Jb 21:1seq.; Qo 7:15; Jr 12:1; Ml 3:15, but goes on to contrast the passing pleasures of the sinner with the enduring peace of God's friendship.
b. 'the Lord' conj.; 'and I' Hebr. (after 'hearts').
c. 'For them . . . untroubled' *lamo tam* conj.; Hebr. (wrongly divided) *lamotam* 'at their death'.
d. 'malice' versions; 'eye' Hebr.
e. Following the versions; Hebr. corrupt, lit. 'That is why his people come back this side (or: 'He makes his people come back this side'), the waters of plenty are empty.'
f. Those of the non-Jewish gods, support of the impious and responsible for evil in the world, Ps 82. It has been understood also of the Temple, Jr 51:51, or of divine mysteries, Ps 119:130; Ws 2:22, but the context suggests rather the ruin of non-Jewish sanctuaries.
g. On God's awakening *see* 35:23; 44:23; 59:5; 78:65; Is 51:9. • On the 'image' *see* 49:14; 90:5; Jb 20:8; Is 29:7–8.

My heart grew embittered, 21
my affections dried up,
I was stupid and uncomprehending, 22
a clumsy animal [h] in your presence.

Even so, I stayed in your presence, 23
you grasped me by the right hand;
you will guide me with advice, 24
16:10+ and will draw me in the wake of your glory. [i]

Who else is there for me in heaven? 25
And, with you, I lack nothing on earth.
My heart and my flesh are pining away [j]: 26
16:5g my heart's rock, my portion, God for ever!

Truly, those who abandon you will perish; 27
you destroy those who adulterously desert you, [k]
whereas my happiness is to be near God. 28
I have made the Lord Yahweh my refuge,
to tell of all your works. [l]

PSALM 74 V 73

Lament on the sack of the Temple [a]

Poem *Of Asaph*

God, why have you finally rejected us, 1
your anger blazing against the flock you used to pasture?
Remember the people you took to yourself long ago, 2
Ex 15:17 your own tribe which you redeemed,
Dt 7:6b
Is 51:19;63:17 and this Mount Zion where you came to live.
Jr 10:16

Come up to these endless ruins! 3
The enemy have sacked everything in the sanctuary;
your opponents made uproar in the place of assemblies, 4
they fixed their emblems over the entrance,
emblems ·never known before. [b] 5

Their axes deep in the wood, ·hacking at the panels, [c] 6
they battered them down with axe and pick;
Is 64:10 they set fire to your sanctuary, 7
profanely rased to the ground the dwelling-place of your name.

They said to themselves, 'Let us crush them at one stroke!' [d] 8
They burned down every sacred shrine in the land.
77:8 We see no signs, no prophet any more, 9
Lm 2:9
Ezk 7:26 and none of us knows how long it will last. [e]

6:3;89:46 How much longer, God, will the enemy blaspheme? 10
Is the enemy to insult your name for ever?
Why hold back your hand, 11
Is 52:10 keep your right hand hidden [f] in the folds of your robe?

Yet, God, my king from the first, 12
author of saving acts throughout the earth,
89:9–10 by your power you split the sea in two, 13
Jb 7:12f
Is 51:9–10 and smashed the heads of the monsters on the waters.

14 You crushed Leviathan's heads,[g] Jb 3:8e;40:25j
gave him as food to the wild animals.[h]
15 You released the springs and brooks,
and turned primordial rivers into dry land.[i]

16 Yours is the day and yours the night, Gn 1
you caused sun and light to exist,
17 you fixed all the boundaries of the earth,
you created summer and winter.

18 Remember, Yahweh, the enemy's blasphemy,
a foolish people insults your name.
19 Do not surrender your turtledove[j] to the beast;
do not forget for ever the life of your oppressed people.

20 Look to the covenant!
All the hiding-places of the land are full,
haunts of violence.
21 Do not let the downtrodden retreat in confusion,
give the poor and needy cause to praise your name.

22 Arise, God, champion your own cause,
remember how fools blaspheme you all day long!
23 Do not forget the shouting of your enemies,
the ever-mounting uproar of your adversaries.

PSALM 75 V 74

The universal judge[a]

For the choirmaster Tune: 'Do not destroy' Psalm Of Asaph Song

1 We give thanks to you, God, we give thanks to you,
as we call upon your name, as we recount your wonders.[b]

2 'At the appointed time
I myself shall dispense justice.

h. lit. 'Behemoth', crassness personified, *see* Jb 40:15f.

i. Glory here seems to be the divine attribute personified, recalling the Cloud of Exodus. The versions translate 'with glory', giving the word its usual sense when used of human beings; this interpretation suggests that God preserves the just from an early and shameful death and will vindicate them, even though the upright dies while the wicked survive. Moreover, as in 16:9seq., the psalmist yearns for unbreakable union with God: this is a milestone on the road to an explicit belief in resurrection and eternal life, *see* 16:10g.

j. With desire, cf. 84:2; Jb 19:27, not with weakness, cf. Ps 143:7.

k. In prophetic literature the expression means infidelity to God, *see* Ho 1:2b.

l. Gk adds: 'at the gates of the daughter of Zion!' cf. 9:14.

74 a. According to Targ., the madman (v. 22) is Antiochus Epiphanes, the 'mad king' who burned the Temple gates, 1 M 4:38; 2 M 1:8, and profaned the sanctuary, 1 M 1:21seq., 39; 2 M 6:5. But the Psalm can also apply to the sack of the Temple by the army of Nebuchadnezzar, 2 K 25:9; Is 64:10, from which epoch the voice of prophecy ceased, v. 9, *see* Ps 77:8; Lm 2:9; Ezk 7:26 and 1 M 4:46; 9:27; 14:41.

b. 'over the entrance', lit. 'as at the entrance, on high' versions; 'as one who grants entry' Hebr. • 'emblems unfamiliar' Gk; 'emblems, he is known' Hebr.—probably gloss of v. 4[b].

c. 'hacking at the panels' Gk; 'and now its carvings' Hebr.

d. 'let us crush them', *ninem, see* Syr.; Hebr. *ninam* 'their offspring'.

e. Jeremiah had spoken of 70 years of exile, Jr 25:11; 29:10, a figure symbolising long duration.

f. 'keep . . . hidden' *keluyah* conj.; Hebr. *kalleh* 'destroy'.

g. Allusion to the crossing of the Sea of Reeds, Ex 14:30, and the defeat of the Egyptians, Ezk 29:3; 32:4.

h. 'wild animals', lit. 'to people, to animals'.

i. Allusion to the miracles of the Exodus, Ex 17:1–7; Nb 20:2–13, and to the crossing of the Jordan, Jos 3, as manifestations of the power of the Creator. This recapitulation of divine favours in the past, vv. 12–17, preludes the closing entreaty, vv. 18–23.

j. Hosea compared Israel to a dove, Ho 7:11; 11:11, cf. Sg 5:2. Gk and Syr. 'the soul that gives you thanks'.

75 a. An antiphon, v. 1, introduces a divine pronouncement addressed to the wicked, and foretelling judgement on them vv. 2–5. Vv. 6–8 describe the universal judgement at which the psalmist rejoices, vv. 9–10.

b. 'as we call upon your name, as we recount', versions, 'your name is near; it is recounted', Hebr.

46:2;60:2;93: 1seq.;96:10 1 S 2:8 The earth quakes and all its inhabitants; 3
it is I who hold its pillars firm. *Pause*

1 S 2:3 'I said to the boastful, "Do not boast!" 4
Zc 2:1–4 to the wicked, "Do not flaunt your strength! [c]
Do not flaunt your strength so proudly, 5
94:4 Jb 15:25 do not talk with that arrogant stance.' "

Mt 24:23–28 No longer from east to west, 6
no longer in the mountainous desert,
is God judging in uprightness, 7
1 S 2:7 Dn 2:21 bringing some down, raising others. [d]
60:3 Jb 21:20 Is 51:17h Yahweh is holding a cup 8
filled with a heady blend of wine;
he will pour it, they will drink it to the dregs,
all the wicked on earth will drink it.

But I shall speak out for ever, 9
shall make music for the God of Jacob.
I shall break down all the strength of the wicked, 10
92:10 and the strength of the upright will rise high.

PSALM 76 V 75

Hymn to God the awe-inspiring [a]

For the choirmaster For strings Psalm Of Asaph Song

God is acknowledged in Judah, 1
his name is great in Israel,
122:6seq. his tent is pitched in Salem, [b] 2
his dwelling is in Zion;
46:9;48:3–7 there he has broken the lightning-flashes of the bow, [c] 3
shield and sword and war. [d] *Pause*

Radiant you are, and renowned 4
for the mountains of booty taken from them. 5
2 K 19:35 Jr 51:39,57 Heroes are now sleeping their last sleep,
Na 3:18 the warriors' arms have failed them;
at your reproof, God of Jacob, 6
chariot and horse stand stunned.

Dt 7:21;10:17 Na 1:6 Ml 3:2 You, you alone, strike terror! Who can hold his ground 7
in your presence when your anger strikes?
From heaven your verdicts thunder, 8
the earth is silent with dread
when God takes his stand to give judgement, 9
to save all the humble of the earth. *Pause*

Human anger serves only to praise you, 10
Jr 13:11 the survivors of your anger will huddle round you. [e]
Make and fulfil your vows to Yahweh your God, 11
let those who surround him [f] make offerings to the Awesome One.
He cuts short the breath of princes, 12
strikes terror in earthly kings.

PSALM 77

V 76

Meditation on Israel's past [a]

For the choirmaster . . . Jeduthun Of Asaph Psalm

1 I cry to God in distress,
I cry to God and he hears me.

2 In the day of my distress I sought the Lord; 50:15;88:1 Is 26:16
all night I tirelessly stretched out my hands,
my heart refused to be consoled.
3 I sigh as I think of God, Jon 2:8
my spirit faints away as I ponder on him. *Pause*

4 You kept me from closing my eyes,
I was too distraught to speak;
5 I thought of former times, =143:5
6 years long past ·I recalled; Dt 32:7
through the night I ponder [b] in my heart,
as I reflect, my spirit asks this question:

7 Is the Lord's rejection final? 74:1;89:46seq. Lm 3:21–23
Will he never show favour again?
8 Is his faithful love gone for ever?
Has his Word come to an end for all time?
9 Does God forget to show mercy? 74:9
In anger does he shut off his tenderness? *Pause* Is 49:14seq.; 63:15

10 And I said, 'This is what wounds me,
the right hand of the Most High has lost its strength.' Ml 3:6
11 Remembering [c] Yahweh's great deeds,
remembering your wonders in the past,
12 I reflect on all that you did,
I ponder all your great deeds. 143:5

13 God, your ways are holy! 18:30–31; 89:6
What god is as great as our God? Ex 15:1–18
14 You are the God who does marvellous deeds, Dt 32:4
brought nations to acknowledge your power,
15 with your own arm redeeming your people, Ne 1:10
the children of Jacob and Joseph. *Pause* Gn 46:26–27

16 When the waters saw you, God, Jb 8:12f
when the waters saw you they writhed in anguish, Na 1:4
the very depths shook with fear. Hab 3:10–11

c. lit. 'your horn', cf. 18:2d.

d. The 'mountainous desert' must be the plateau of Edom. The divine judgement is exercised no longer against Moab, Edom or Philistia, but in all places and against all the wicked, *see* Zc 2:1. • The image of the cup, v. 8, *see* 11:6d, comes from Jeremiah, Jr 25:15; 48:26; 49:12; 51:7; *see also* Is 51:17h; Ezk 23:31; Rv 14:10.

76 a. Eschatological hymn. Like 46 and 48:6, it apparently refers to the defeat of Sennacherib in 701 at the gates of Jerusalem, 2 K 19:35, which defeat is now symbolic of the rescue which the 'humble' may hope for, v. 10. The Greek title includes 'Concerning the Assyrian'.

b. Abridged name of Jerusalem, *see* Gn 14:18; Jdt 4:4, the city of peace (*shalom*).

c. Arrows.

d. Others translate 'the weapons of war'.

e. lit. 'you will gird them on', an image taken from Jeremiah, cf. Ps 109:19, symbolising close union. The divine anger seems to be personified here, cf. 58:9, whereas impotent human anger only witnesses to the power and justice of God.

f. As his belt, v. 10; cf. Is 49:18.

77 a. In the hard times after the return from exile the psalmist recalls Yahweh's past favours to Israel, the miracles attending the Exodus from Egypt, as an earnest of Yahweh's future interventions on behalf of his people.

b. 'I ponder' Gk, Syr.; '(I remember) my music' Hebr. Division of vv. 5–6 as in versions.

c. 'Remembering' *qere*, versions; 'I will make known' *ketib*.

The clouds pelted down water, 17
the sky thundered,
18:14;144:6 your arrows shot back and forth. [d]

29 The rolling of your thunder was heard, 18
Ex 19:16g your lightning-flashes lit up the world,
=97:4 the earth shuddered and shook.
Ne 9:11 Your way led over the sea, 19
Ws 14:3
Is 43:16;51:10 your path over the countless waters,
and none could trace your footsteps.

78:52 You guided your people like a flock 20
Is 63:11–14
Mi 6:4 by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

PSALM 78

V 77

105;106;136;144 **The lessons of Israelite history** [a]

Ne 9:9–37
Ws 16–19 *Psalm* *Of Asaph*
Is 63:7seq.
Dt 32:1 My people, listen to my teaching, 1
pay attention to what I say.
49:4 I will speak to you in poetry, [b] 2
↗Mt 13:35 unfold the mysteries of the past.

44:1;145:4 What we have heard and know, 3
Ex 10:2;13:14
Dt 4:9+
Jb 8:8;15:18 what our ancestors have told us
we shall not conceal from their descendants, 4
but will tell to a generation still to come:

the praises of Yahweh, his power,
the wonderful deeds he has done.
He instituted a witness in Jacob, 5
147:19 he established a law in Israel,
Dt 33:4

Dt 4:9;6:7 he commanded our ancestors
to hand it down to their descendants,
22:30+ that a generation still to come might know it, 6
children yet to be born.

They should be sure to tell their own children,
and should put their trust in God, 7
never forgetting God's great deeds,
always keeping his commands,

and not, like their ancestors, 8
Dt 31:27; be a stubborn and rebellious generation,
32:5,20 a generation weak of purpose,
their spirit fickle towards God.

Ho 7:13–16 The archer sons of Ephraim 9
turned tail when the time came for fighting; [c]
they failed to keep God's covenant, 10
they refused to follow his Law;

they had forgotten his great deeds, 11
the marvels he had shown them; [d]
he did marvels in the sight of their ancestors 12
in Egypt, in the plains of Tanis.

He split the sea and brought them through,
made the waters stand up like a dam;
he led them with a cloud by day,
and all the night with the light of a fire;

he split rocks in the desert,
let them drink as though from the limitless depths;
he brought forth streams from a rock,
made waters flow down in torrents.

But they only sinned against him more than ever,
defying the Most High in barren country;
they deliberately challenged God
by demanding food to their hearts' content.

They insulted God by saying,
'Can God make a banquet in the desert?
True, when he struck the rock,
waters gushed out and flowed in torrents;
but what of bread? Can he give that,
can he provide meat for his people?'

When he heard them Yahweh vented his anger,
fire blazed against Jacob,
his anger mounted against Israel,
because they had no faith in God,
no trust in his power to save.

Even so he gave orders to the skies above,
he opened the sluice-gates of heaven;
he rained down manna to feed them,
he gave them the wheat of heaven;
mere mortals ate the bread of the Mighty,[e]
he sent them as much food as they could want.

He roused an east wind in the heavens,
despatched a south wind by his strength;
he rained down meat on them like dust,
birds thick as sand on the seashore,
tumbling into the middle of his camp,
all around his dwelling-place.

They ate as much food as they wanted,
he satisfied all their cravings;
but their cravings were still upon them,
the food was still in their mouths,
when the wrath of God attacked them,
slaughtering their strongest men,
laying low the flower of Israel.

Despite all this, they went on sinning,[f]
they put no faith in his marvels.

d. The miracle of the Sea of Reeds is presented in a cosmic perspective, *see* Jb 7:12f. V. 18 evokes the theophany of Sinai, Ex 19:16g.

78 a. A didactic meditation, in the manner of Dt, on the history of Israel, the sins of the nation and their punishment. The Psalm stresses the responsibility of Ephraim, the ancestor of the Samaritans, the choice of Judah and the call of David.

b. lit *'mashal'*: rhythmical maxim expressed in poetic parallelism.

c. The psalmist blames the sins of the nation on Ephraim, thus anticipating the future history of the Northern Kingdom (or possibly alluding to the Samaritan schism, *see* Zc 11:14); *see also* v. 67.

d. The miracles of the Exodus, vv. 12–31.

e. 'The Mighty' are the angels, cf. Ps 103:20.

f. A general review, vv. 32–39, of the inconstancy of Israel and the patience of God.

He made their days vanish in mist,
their years in sudden ruin. 33

Dt 32:15,18 Nb 21:7 Is 26:16 Ho 5:15
Whenever he slaughtered them, they began to seek him, 34
they turned back and looked eagerly for him, [g]
recalling that God was their rock, 35
God the Most High, their redeemer.

Ho 6:4
They tried to hoodwink him with their mouths, 36
their tongues were deceitful towards him;
Is 29:13 Ho 8:1
their hearts were not loyal to him, 37
they were not faithful to his covenant.

65:3;85:3 Ex 32:14 Nb 14:20 Is 48:9 Ezk 20:22 Ho 11:8–9
But in his compassion he forgave their guilt 38
instead of killing them,
time and again repressing his anger
instead of rousing his full wrath,
remembering they were creatures of flesh, 39
a breath of wind that passes, never to return.

Dt 9:22
How often they defied him in the desert! 40
How often they grieved him in the wastelands!
Repeatedly they challenged God, 41
Is 6:3g
provoking the Holy One of Israel,
not remembering his hand, 42
the time when he saved them from the oppressor,

Ex 7:14–11:10; 12:29–36 Ws 16–18
he who did his signs in Egypt, [h] 43
his miracles in the Plains of Tanis,
turning their rivers to blood, 44
their streams so that they had nothing to drink.

He sent horseflies to eat them up, 45
and frogs to devastate them,
consigning their crops to the caterpillar, 46
the fruit of their hard work to the locust;

he killed their vines with hail, 47
their sycamore trees with frost,
delivering up their cattle to hail, 48
and their flocks to thunderbolts.

He loosed against them the full heat of his anger, 49
fury, rage and destruction,
a detachment of destroying angels;
he gave free course to his anger. 50

He did not exempt their own selves from death,
delivering up their lives to the plague.
=105:36
He struck all the first-born in Egypt, 51
the flower of the youth in the tents of Ham.

77:20
He brought out his people like sheep, [i] 52
guiding them like a flock in the desert,
Ex 14:26–28
leading them safe and unafraid, 53
while the sea engulfed their enemies.

He brought them to his holy land, 54
the hill-country won by his right hand;
44:2 Jos 24:8–13
he dispossessed nations before them, 55

measured out a heritage for each of them,
and settled the tribes of Israel in their tents.

56 But still they challenged the Most High God and defied him,
refusing to keep his decrees;[j]
57 as perverse and treacherous as their ancestors,
they gave way like a faulty bow, Ho 7:16
58 provoking him with their high places,
rousing his jealousy with their idols. Dt 32:16,21

59 God listened and vented his wrath,
he totally rejected Israel;
60 he forsook his dwelling in Shiloh, Jos 18:1
1 S 1:3d
the tent where he used to dwell on the earth. Jr 7:12;26:6

61 He abandoned his power to captivity,
his splendour[k] to the enemy's clutches; 1 S 4:11,22
62 he gave up his people to the sword, Jr 12:7
he vented his wrath on his own heritage.

63 Fire devoured their young men,
their young girls had no wedding-song;
64 their priests fell by the sword Dt 32:22–25
Jr 7:34
and their widows sang no dirge. Jb 27:15

65 The Lord arose as though he had been asleep,
like a strong man fighting-mad with wine,
66 he struck his enemies on the rump,[l] 1 S 5:6seq.
and put them to everlasting shame.

67 Rejecting the tents of Joseph,[m]
passing over the tribe of Ephraim,
68 he chose the tribe of Judah,
his well-loved mountain of Zion;
69 he built his sanctuary like high hills,[n] 48:2;87:2
2 S 5:9f
like the earth set it firm for ever.

70 He chose David to be his servant, 89:20
1 S 13:14;
took him from the sheepfold, 16:11–13
71 took him from tending ewes 2 S 7:8
Ezk 34:23;
to pasture his servant Jacob, 37:24
and Israel his heritage.
72 He pastured them with unblemished heart, 77:20
with a sensitive hand he led them.

g. 'him' *'elaw* Syr.; Hebr. *'el* God.
h. The 'plagues' of Egypt, Ex 7:8a, summarised in vv. 43–51.
i. The Exodus from Egypt and invasion of Canaan, vv. 52–55.
j. The sins of Israel in the time of Samuel and Saul, vv. 56–64.
k. The ark of the covenant 132:8; 2 Ch 6:41.
l. Reference to the haemorrhoids inflicted on the Philistines when they had detained the ark.
m. Rejection of Ephraim, v. 67, choice of Zion, dwelling-place of Yahweh and model of the heavenly sanctuary, vv. 68–69, and call of David, Yahweh's anointed, shepherd of his people and type of the awaited Messiah, vv. 70–72.
n. 'high hills' conj.; 'high (beings)' Hebr.

PSALM 79

V 78

National lament [a]

Psalm Of Asaph

2 K 25:9–10
Jr 26:18d
Lm 1:10
God, the pagans have invaded your heritage, 1
they have defiled your holy temple,
they have laid Jerusalem in ruins,

80:12–13
Jr 7:33
they have left the corpses of your servants 2
as food for the birds of the air,

↗1 M 7:17
the bodies of your faithful for the wild beasts.

Zp 1:17
Jr 14:16
Around Jerusalem they have shed blood like water, 3
leaving no one to bury them.

=44:13;80:6
Zp 2:8
We are the scorn of our neighbours, 4
the butt and laughing-stock of those around us.

44:23;=89:46
Dt 4:24g
How long will you be angry, Yahweh? For ever? 5
Is your jealousy to go on smouldering like a fire?

Si 36:1–5
‖Jr 10:25
Pour out your anger on the nations 6
who do not acknowledge you,
and on the kingdoms

14:4
that do not call on your name;

Jr 50:7
for they have devoured Jacob 7
and devastated his home.

Do not count against us the guilt of former generations, 8
in your tenderness come quickly to meet us,

142:6
for we are utterly weakened;
help us, God our Saviour, 9

Ex 32:12+
Ezk 20:44;36:22
for the glory of your name;
Yahweh, [b] wipe away our sins,
rescue us for the sake of your name.

42:3;=115:2;
102:20;126:2
Dt 32:43
Jb 16:18f
‖Jl 2:17;4:21
Why should the nations ask, 10
'Where is their God?'
Let us see the nations suffer vengeance
for shedding your servants' blood. [c]
May the groans of the captive reach you, 11
by your great strength save those who are condemned to death!

Repay our neighbours sevenfold 12

89:50
for the insults they have levelled at you, Lord.

Ezk 34:1a
And we, your people, the flock that you pasture, 13
will thank you for ever,
will recite your praises from age to age.

Is 63:15–64:11

PSALM 80

V 79

Prayer for the restoration of Israel [a]

45 inscr. *For the choirmaster Tune: 'The decrees are lilies' Of Asaph Psalm*

Ezk 34:1a
Shepherd of Israel, listen, 1
you who lead Joseph like a flock.

Ezk 25:18d
enthroned on the winged creatures, shine forth

2 over Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh; [b]
rouse your valour
and come to our help.

3 God, bring us back, Jr 31:18
let your face shine on us and we shall be safe. 4:6d

4 Yahweh, God Sabaoth, how long 44:23+
will you flare up at your people's prayer?
5 You have made tears their food, 74:1
threefold tears their drink. 42:3
6 You let our neighbours quarrel over us,
our enemies mock us. 79:4+

7 God Sabaoth, bring us back,
let your face shine on us and we shall be safe.

8 You brought a vine [c] out of Egypt, Is 5:1a
to plant it you drove out nations;
9 you cleared a space for it,
it took root and filled the whole country.

10 The mountains were covered with its shade,
and the cedars of God with its branches, [d]
11 its boughs stretched as far as the sea, Jg 20:1a
its shoots as far as the River. [e]

12 Why have you broken down its fences? Jr 12:7–13
Every passer-by plucks its grapes,
13 boars from the forest tear at it,
wild beasts feed on it.

14 God Sabaoth, come back, we pray,
look down from heaven and see,
visit this vine;
15 protect what your own hand has planted. [f]
16 They have thrown it on the fire [g] like dung,
the frown of your rebuke will destroy them.

17 May your hand protect those at your side,
the child of Adam you have strengthened for yourself! [h]
18 Never again will we turn away from you,
give us life and we will call upon your name.

19 God Sabaoth, bring us back,
let your face shine on us and we shall be safe.

79 **a.** This Psalm could apply to the capture of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 587, or to the ravaging of the city by Israel's neighbours, Edom, Moab, etc, cf. 2 K 24:2.

b. 'Yahweh' Gk; lacking in Hebr.

c. God is the 'avenger of blood' for Israel, *see* Nb 35:19c.

80 **a.** This Psalm could apply equally well either to northern Israel (*see* vv. 1–2) laid waste by the Assyrians (mentioned in the Greek title), *see* Jr 31:15seq., or to Judah after the sack of Jerusalem in 587, *see* Jr 12:7–13. The psalmist looks forward to the re-uniting of the kingdom, *see* Is 49:5; Ezk 37:16; Zc 9:13; 10:6, within its ideal frontiers, v. 11. *See* Jg 20:1a.

b. Ephraim and Manasseh, sons of Joseph, with whom Benjamin is sometimes reckoned, are the two principal tribes of the north.

c. Allegory frequent in the prophets, *see* Is 5:1a.

d. Or 'the branches were cedars of God', i.e. the highest cedars, cf. Ps 36:6; 68:15.

e. The Euphrates.

f. Hebr. adds 'and on the son you authorised' (lit. 'strengthened') anticipation of 17[b].

g. 'They have thrown it on the fire' *seraphuha* conj.; Hebr. *seruphah* 'thrown on the fire'.

h. Probable allusion to Zerubbabel, Ezr 3:2; Hg 1:1, rather than to Benjamin ('son of the right hand'), cf. Amaziah ('Yahweh is trusty') cf. 2 Ch 25:5, or Israel (cf. Ex 4:22).

PSALM 81

V 80

For the feast of Shelters [a]

8 inscr. *For the choirmaster On the . . . of Gath Of Asaph*

Sing for joy to God our strength, 1
shout in triumph to the God of Jacob.

Strike up the music, beat the tambourine, 2
play the melodious harp and the lyre;
Lv 23:34 Nb 29:12 blow the trumpet for the new month, 3
for the full moon, for our feast day! [b]

Ex 23:14d For Israel has this statute, 4
a decision of the God of Jacob,
a decree he imposed on Joseph, 5
when he went to war against Egypt.

I heard [c] a voice unknown to me,
Ex 1:14;6:6 'I freed his shoulder from the burden, 6
his hands were able to lay aside the labourer's basket. [d]
You cried out in your distress, so I rescued you. 7

Ex 19:19 'Hidden in the storm, I answered you, [e]
95:8 Ex 17:1–7 I tested you at the waters of Meribah. *Pause*
Listen, my people, while I give you warning; 8
Ex 15:26 Is 55:2–3 Israel, if only you would listen to me!

Ex 20:2–3par. 'You shall have no strange gods, 9
shall worship no alien god.
I, Yahweh, am your God, 10
who brought you here from Egypt,
you have only to open your mouth for me to fill it.

Dt 9:7 'My people would not listen to me, 11
Israel would have none of me.
Jr 3:17;7:24 So I left them to their stubborn selves, 12
to follow their own devices.

Is 48:18 'If only my people would listen to me, 13
if only Israel would walk in my ways,
Lv 26:7–8 at one stroke I would subdue their enemies, 14
turn my hand against their opponents.

'Those who hate Yahweh would woo his favour, 15
though their doom was sealed for ever,
while I would feed [f] him on pure wheat, 16
would give you your fill of honey from the rock.'

PSALM 82

V 81

Against the judges of the nations [a]

Psalm Of Asaph

Is 3:13–14 God takes his stand in the divine assembly, 1
surrounded by the gods he gives judgement.

2 'How much longer will you give unjust judgements [b]
and uphold the prestige of the wicked?
3 Let the weak and the orphan have justice, Ex 23:6+
be fair to the wretched and the destitute. *Pause*

4 'Rescue the weak and the needy,
save them from the clutches of the wicked.

5 'Ignorant and uncomprehending, they wander in darkness,
while the foundations of the world are tottering.
6 I had thought, "Are you gods, 58:1b
are all of you sons of the Most High?" [c] ↗Jn 10:34
7 No! you will die as human beings do,
as one man, princes, you will fall.'

8 Arise, God, judge the world,
for all nations belong to you.

PSALM 83 V 82

Against the enemies of Israel [a]

Song Psalm Of Asaph

1 God, do not remain silent, 44:23;50:3;
do not stay quiet or unmoved, God! 109:1
2 See how your enemies are in uproar,
how those who hate you are rearing their heads.

3 They are laying plans against your people,
conspiring against those you cherish;
4 they say, 'Come, let us annihilate them as a nation, Jr 11:19
the name of Israel shall be remembered no more!'

5 They conspire with a single mind, [b]
they conclude an alliance against you,
6 the tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites, Nb 20:22f
Moab and the Hagrites, [c] Dt 2:5e
1 Ch 5:10,19
7 Gebal, [d] Ammon, Amalek, Ex 17:8d
Philistia and the Tyrians; Jos 13:2b
8 even Assyria [e] has joined them
to reinforce the children of Lot. *Pause*

81 a. A prelude, vv. 1–5, introduces a divine prophecy, cf. Ps 50; 95, in the style of Dt. The feast of Shelters, Ex 23:14d, commemorated the period in the desert and the Law given at Sinai. It was the greatest feast of the year.

b. The first day of the lunar month was a feast day, 2 K 4:23; Is 1:13; Ho 2:13; Am 8:5. The 1st day of the 7th month was long reckoned as the 1st day of the new year, Lv 23:24; Nb 29:1; at the full moon next following, the feast of Shelters was celebrated, Lv 23:34; Nb 29:12.

c. The first person represents the assembly of Israel, who must listen to God, *see* vv. 8,11,13.

d. Allusion to the forced labour imposed on Israel in Egypt.

e. At the theophany of Sinai.

f. 'I would feed him' conj. 'he would feed him' Hebr.

82 a. A warning to wicked rulers and judges in an eschatological setting, vv. 1,5,8.

b. Indictment frequent in the prophets: Is 1:17seq.; Jr 5:28; 21:12; 22:3; Ezk 22:27,29; Mi 3:1–11; Zc 7:9–10; *see* Jb 29:12; Pr 18:5; 24:11–12.

c. The rulers and judges are reckoned with the 'sons of the Most High', the members of the heavenly court, *see* Jb 1:6f.

83 a. Without naming any particular hostile coalition, the Psalm enumerates ten traditional enemies of Israel whose hostility was maintained to a late date, *see* 2 Ch 20:1seq.; Ne 2:19; 1 M 5:3seq.

b. lit. 'with one heart' *'ehad* conj.; Hebr. *yahdaw* 'united'.

c. Sons of Hagar, nomads of Transjordan.

d. Gebal: here Gabalene, district of Idumaea north of Petra, and not Byblos as in Ezk 27:9.

e. Either Assyria (here perhaps standing for Seleucid Syria, cf. Jdt 16:3) or the Asshurite tribe, Gn 25:3; 2 S 2:9h; cf. Nb 24:22*l*.

Ex 2:15, 11c
Jg 4–5;7
Is 9:3;10:26
Treat them like Midian and Sisera, 9
like Jabin at the river Kishon;
wiped out at En-Dor, 10
Jr 8:2 they served to manure the ground.
Jg 7:25 Treat their leaders like Oreb and Zeeb, 11
Jg 8:10–21 all their commanders like Zebah and Zalmunna,
for they said, 'Let us take for ourselves 12
God's settlements.'

58:9
Jb 27:21
Is 5:24;10:17;
17:13;29:5
Ezk 21:3
My God, treat them like thistledown, 13
like chaff at the mercy of the wind.
As fire devours a forest, 14
as a flame sets mountains ablaze,
so drive them away with your tempest, 15
Jr 25:32 by your whirlwind fill them with terror.
Shame written all over their faces, 16
let them seek your name, Yahweh!
Dishonour and terror be always theirs, 17
death also and destruction.
46:10;=97:9
Is 42:8
Dn 3:45
Let them know that you alone bear the name of Yahweh, 18
Most High over all the earth.

PSALM 84 V 83

Pilgrimage song [a]

8 inscr. *For the choirmaster On the . . . of Gath Of the sons of Korah Psalm*

How lovely are your dwelling-places, 1
Yahweh Sabaoth.
42:1–2;122:1 My whole being yearns and pines 2
for Yahweh's courts,
My heart and my body cry out for joy
to the living God.

Even the sparrow has found a home, 3
the swallow a nest to place its young:
your altars, Yahweh Sabaoth,
=5:2 my King and my God.

How blessed are those who live in your house; 4
they shall praise you continually. *Pause*
Blessed those who find their strength in you, 5
whose hearts are set on pilgrimage. [b]

As they pass through the Valley of the Balsam, [c] 6
they make there a water-hole,
Ezk 34:26
Jl 2:23
and—a further blessing—early rain fills it. [d]
They make their way from height to height, 7
God shows himself to them in Zion. [e]

Yahweh, God Sabaoth, hear my prayer, 8
listen, God of Jacob.
God, our shield, look, 9
and see the face of your anointed. [f]

Better one day in your courts 10
than a thousand at my own devices, [g]

to stand on the threshold of God's house
than to live in the tents of the wicked.

11 For Yahweh God is a rampart and shield,
he gives grace and glory;
Yahweh refuses nothing good
to those whose life is blameless.

12 Yahweh Sabaoth,
blessed is he who trusts in you.

PSALM 85

V 84

Prayer for peace and justice [a]

For the choirmaster Of the sons of Korah Psalm

1 Yahweh, you are gracious to your land, 14:7f; 126
you bring back the captives of Jacob,
2 you take away the guilt of your people,
you blot out all their sin. *Pause*

3 You retract all your anger, 78:38+
you renounce the heat of your fury.

4 Bring us back, God our Saviour, 80:3
appease your indignation against us!
5 Will you be angry with us for ever? 79:5+
Will you prolong your wrath age after age?

6 Will you not give us life again,
for your people to rejoice in you? Is 43:3;49:14seq.;54:7seq.
7 Show us, Lord, your faithful love,
grant us your saving help.

8 I am listening. What is God's message?
Yahweh's message is peace
for his people, for his faithful,
if only they renounce their folly.
9 His saving help is near for those who fear him,
his glory will dwell in our land. [b] Ex 24:16f Ezk 11:23; 43:2

10 Faithful Love and Loyalty join together, Zc 2:9f Jn 1:14
Saving Justice and Peace embrace. [c]
11 Loyalty will spring up from the earth, 61:7c;89:14; 97:2
and Justice will lean down from heaven. Is 45:8d

84 **a.** Song of Zion praising Yahweh as host in his Temple, dispensing happiness and forgiveness to pilgrims, vv. 5–7, and to all who serve in his sanctuary, vv. 4–10.

b. 'pilgrimage' lit. 'ascents' Gk; 'pathways' Hebr. The Psalms entitled 'Songs of Ascent', 120seq., were sung by pilgrims on their way.

c. In seven MSS and in the versions, 'the Valley of Tears' (the two words are identical when spoken), *see* Jg 2:5. The Balsam (or 'the weeper tree') must here be the 'nettle-tree,' *see* 2 S 5:23–24. The 'Valley of the Nettle Tree', to the north of the Hinnom valley, was the last stage of the pilgrimage, the junction of roads coming from north, west and south, cf. 2 S 5:17–25.

d. Text uncertain. Gk 'the lawgiver will bestow blessings'. A possible correction 'the leader will call out the blessings'. We follow the Hebr. text. • The allusion to the first rains of autumn make it feasible to connect the Psalm with the feast of Shelters, Ex 23:14d.

e. 'from height to height'; others translate 'from strength to strength' or (Targ.) 'from battlement to battlement'. • 'God . . . to them' *'alehem* conj.; Hebr. *'elohim* 'God of gods'.

f. Here the 'anointed' ('messiah') is probably the high priest, chief authority in the post-exilic community.

g. 'at my own devices', lit. 'in my liberty,' *beheruti* conj.; Hebr. *baharti* 'I have chosen'.

85 **a.** The Psalm promises the returned exiles the peace of the messianic age foretold by Isaiah and Zechariah.

b. The glory of Yahweh, Ex 24:16f, which had deserted the Temple and the holy city, is to return to the restored Temple, Ezk 43:2; Hg 2:9.

c. Personified attributes of God; these will inaugurate the kingdom of God on earth and in human hearts.

Yahweh will himself give prosperity, 12
=67:6+ and our soil will yield its harvest.
Zc 8:12
Is 58:8 Justice will walk before him, 13
treading out a path. [d]

PSALM 86 V 85

Prayer in time of trial [a]

Prayer *Of David*

Listen to me, Yahweh, answer me, 1
for I am poor and needy.
Guard me, for I am faithful, 2
save your servant who relies on you.

You are my God, [b] ·take pity on me, Lord, 3
for to you I cry all the day.
Fill your servant's heart with joy, Lord, 4
=25:1 for to you I raise up my heart.

Lord, you are kind and forgiving, 5
Ex 34:6 rich in faithful love for all who call upon you.
5:1–2 Yahweh, hear my prayer, 6
listen to the sound of my pleading.

In my day of distress I call upon you, 7
because you answer me, Lord;
35:10;89:8 among the gods there is none to compare with you, 8
Ex 15:11
Jr 10:6 no great deeds to compare with yours.

22:27 All nations [c] will come and adore you, Lord, 9
↗Rv 15:9 and give glory to your name.
For you are great and do marvellous deeds, 10
you, God, and none other.

=27:11 Teach me, Yahweh, your ways, 11
26:3 that I may not stray from your loyalty;
let my heart's one aim be to fear your name.

I thank you with all my heart, Lord my God, 12
I will glorify your name for ever,
for your faithful love for me is so great 13
88:6 that you have rescued me from the depths of Sheol.

=54:3 Arrogant men, God, are rising up against me, 14
a brutal gang is after my life,
in their scheme of things you have no place.

=Ex 34:6c But you, Lord, God of tenderness and mercy, 15
103:8;145:8 slow to anger, rich in faithful love and loyalty,
=25:16 turn to me and pity me. 16

Give to your servant your strength,
116:16 to the child of your servant your saving help,
give me a sign of your kindness. 17

My enemies will see to their shame 18
that you, Yahweh, help and console me.

PSALM 87

V 86

Zion, mother of nations [a]

Of the sons of Korah Psalm Song

With its foundations on the holy mountains,
Yahweh loves his city,
he prefers the gates of Zion
to any dwelling-place in Jacob.

He speaks [b] of glory for you,
city of God, *Pause*

'I number Rahab and Babylon
among those that acknowledge me;
look at Tyre, Philistia, Ethiopia,
so and so was born there.'

But of Zion it will be said,
'Every one was born there,' [c]
her guarantee is the Most High.

Yahweh in his register of peoples [d]
will note against each, 'Born there', *Pause*
princes no less than native-born;
all make their home in you. [e]

46:4;48
2 S 5:9f
Is 2:2–3
76:2
78:68
Zc 2:14
Is 62:4–5
↗Ga 4:26
↗Ep 5:22–23
48:8
Is 4:3
Ezk 13:9

PSALM 88

V 87

Prayer in great distress [a]

Song Psalm Of the sons of Korah In sickness In suffering Poem For Heman the native-born

Yahweh, God of my salvation,
when I cry out to you in the night,
may my prayer reach your presence,
hear my cry for help.

For I am filled with misery,
my life is on the brink of Sheol;
already numbered among those who sink into oblivion,
I am as one bereft of strength,

Jb 10:15;17:1
Nb 16:33f
143:7

d. God's saving justice blazes the trail; it is the condition of peace and happiness.

86 **a.** A hellenistic composition without much literary unity, reflecting the state of mind of pious Jews, precursors of the Hasidaeans at the time of the Maccabees.

b. 'who relies on you. You are my God' conj.; 'You are my God who trusts in you' Hebr.

c. Hebr. here adds 'you have made', words misplaced from the preceding line.

87 **a.** Holy Zion, the city of God, 2 S 5:9f, is to become the sacred metropolis and mother of all peoples. All the non-Jewish neighbours of Israel: Egypt ('Rahab'), Ethiopia, Syro-Palestine, Mesopotamia, are summoned to acknowledge the true God and to provide him with converts. Such is the will of Yahweh as expressed in the pronouncement of vv. 4–5. The Psalm draws on Isaiah and Zechariah. Isaiah had already spoken of Zion as mother, fruitful spouse of Yahweh and, as such, a foreshadowing of the Church.

b. 'He speaks' conj., 'it is said', Hebr.

c. The non-Jews, wherever born, are adopted by Zion, which becomes their true country.

d. Reference to the roll of citizenship, Is 4:3; Ezk 13:9, not to the apocalyptic book of dooms, Ps 69:28. The non-Jews are listed as citizens of Zion.

e. 'princes' MSS and versions; 'singers' MT (confusion of two letters almost identical). • 'all make their home' Gk; 'all my sources (are in you)' Hebr., with wrong vowels. • God writes down foreign princes as children of Zion.

88 **a.** With this anguished prayer, compare the complaints of Job.

left alone [b] among the dead, 5
like the slaughtered lying in the grave,
whom you remember no more,
cut off as they are from your protection.

You have plunged me to the bottom of the grave, 6
in the darkness, in the depths;
weighted down by your anger, 7
18:4e;42:7 kept low by your waves. *Pause*

38:11+ You have deprived me of my friends, 8
made me repulsive to them,
142:7 Lm 3:7 imprisoned, with no escape;
my eyes are worn out with suffering. 9
I call to you, Yahweh, all day,
I stretch out my hands to you.

Do you work wonders for the dead, 10
6:5c Is 38:18+ can shadows rise up to praise you? *Pause*
Do they speak in the grave of your faithful love, 11
of your constancy in the place of perdition? [c]
Are your wonders known in the darkness, 12
your saving justice in the land of oblivion?

But, for my part, I cry to you, Yahweh, 13
every morning my prayer comes before you;
why, Yahweh, do you rebuff me, 14
turn your face away from me?

Wretched and close to death since childhood, 15
I have borne your terrors—I am finished! [d]
Your anger has overwhelmed me, 16
your terrors annihilated me. [e]

They flood around me all day long, 17
close in on me all at once.
You have deprived me of friends and companions, 18
Jb 17:13–14 and all that I know is the dark.

PSALM 89

V 88

Hymn and prayer to God the faithful [a]

88 inscr. *Poem* *For Ethan the native-born*

I shall sing the faithful love of Yahweh for ever, 1
from age to age my lips shall declare your constancy,
for you have said: [b] love is built to last for ever, 2
you have fixed your constancy firm in the heavens.

2 S 7:1a, 8–16 'I have made a covenant with my Chosen One, 3
sworn an oath to my servant David:
I have made your dynasty firm for ever, 4
built your throne stable age after age.' *Pause*

The heavens praise your wonders, Yahweh, 5
Jb 5:1a your constancy in the gathering of your faithful.
Who in the skies can compare with Yahweh? 6
29:1;82:1 Jb 1:6f Who among the sons of god can rival him?

7 God, awesome in the assembly of holy ones,[c]
great[d] and dreaded among all who surround him,
8 Yahweh, God Sabaoth, who is like you? 86:8+
Mighty Yahweh, your constancy is all round you!

9 You control the pride of the ocean, Jb 7:12f
when its waves ride high you calm them. 65:7+
10 You split Rahab[e] in two like a corpse,
scattered your enemies with your mighty arm.

11 Yours are the heavens and yours the earth, 24:1–2
the world and all it holds, you founded them; 1 Ch 29:11
12 you created the north and the south,
Tabor and Hermon hail your name with joy.

13 Yours is a strong arm,
mighty your hand, your right hand raised high;
14 Saving Justice and Fair Judgement the foundations of your throne, 85:10;97:2
Faithful Love and Constancy march before you. Ex 34:6–7

15 How blessed the nation that learns to acclaim you! 47:1a;61:7c
They will live, Yahweh, in the light of your presence.
16 In your name they rejoice all day long,
by your saving justice they are raised up.

17 You are the flower of their strength,
by your favour our strength is triumphant;
18 for to Yahweh belongs our shield,
to the Holy One of Israel our king. 47:9
Is 6:3g

19 Once you spoke in a vision, 132:11–12
to your faithful[f] you said, 2 S 7:1a, 8–16+
'I have given strength to a warrior,
I have raised up a man chosen from my people.

20 'I have found David my servant, 78:70+
and anointed him with my holy oil.
21 My hand will always be with him, Is 42:1
my arm will make him strong.

22 'No enemy will be able to outwit him,
no wicked man overcome him;
23 I shall crush his enemies before him,
strike his opponents dead.

24 'My constancy and faithful love will be with him,
in my name his strength will be triumphant.
25 I shall establish his power over the sea,
his dominion over the rivers.

b. Or 'freed' (Gk); in the tomb the servant is free of his master, cf. Jb 3:19. It is the same with the poor in distress: there is no more link with God.

c. In Hebr., 'Abaddon', Jb 26:6; 28:22; Pr 15:11; Rv 9:11.

d. 'I am finished' *'aphugah* conj., cf. 77:3; Hebr. *'aphunah* unintelligible.

e. 'have annihilated me' *tzimmetuni* conj.; Hebr. *tzimmetutuni* unintelligible. Corrections were probably made in order to soften a text shocking by its pessimism.

89 a. The prelude, vv. 1–2, followed by the rehearsal of the Davidic covenant, vv. 3–4, and a hymn to the Creator, vv. 5–18, introduces a messianic oracle, vv. 19–37, and, in contrast, an account of the humiliations of the nation, vv. 38–45, concluded by a prayer, vv. 46–51. • The pairing of 'love' with 'faithfulness' is a central feature of this Psalm.

b. 'you have said' Gk; 'I have said' Hebr.

c. lit. 'sons of the gods', i.e. the angels; so also the 'holy ones' in v. 7.

d. 'great' Gk; Hebr. joins 'great' with 'assembly'.

e. A mythical monster personifying the watery chaos, *see* Jb 7:12f; it also sometimes means Egypt, Ps 87:4.

f. Samuel and Nathan.

2:7 2 S 7:14e Jr 3:19 Jn 20:17 Col 1:15,48 • ↗Rv 1:5
'He will cry to me, "You are my father, 26
my God, the rock of my salvation!"
So I shall make him my first-born, 27
the highest of earthly kings.

'I shall maintain my faithful love for him always, 28
Is 55:3 my covenant with him will stay firm.
I have established his dynasty for ever, 29
his throne to be as lasting as the heavens.

'Should his descendants desert my law, 30
and not keep to my rulings,
should they violate my statutes, 31
and not observe my commandments,

'then I shall punish their offences with the rod, 32
their guilt with the whip,
but I shall never withdraw [g] from him my faithful love, 33
I shall not belie my constancy.

Jr 33:20–21 'I shall not violate my covenant, 34
I shall not withdraw the word once spoken.
110:4 I have sworn by my holiness, once and for all, 35
never will I break faith with David.

'His dynasty shall endure for ever, 36
his throne like the sun before me,
72:5,7 as the moon is established for ever, 37
↗Rv 1:5i a faithful witness in the skies.' *Pause*

Yet you yourself—you have spurned and rejected, 38
and have vented your wrath on your anointed, [h]
you have repudiated the covenant with your servant, 39
dishonoured his crown in the dust.

80:12–13 You have pierced all his defences, 40
and laid his strongholds in ruins,
everyone passing by plunders him, 41
he has become the butt of his neighbours.

You have raised high the right hand of his opponents, 42
have made all his enemies happy;
you have snapped off his sword on a rock, [i] 43
and failed to support him in battle.

You have stripped him of his splendid sceptre, [j] 44
and toppled his throne to the ground.
You have aged him before his time, 45
enveloped him in shame. *Pause*

=79:5 How long, Yahweh, will you remain hidden? For ever? 46
Is your anger to go on smouldering like a fire?
39:4 Remember me; how long have I left? 47
For what pointless end did you create all the children of Adam?
90:3seq. Who can live and never see death? 48
Who can save himself from the clutches of Sheol? *Pause*

Lord, what of those pledges of your faithful love? 49
You made an oath to David by your constancy.
Do not forget the insults to your servant; 50

I take to heart the taunts of the nations,
51 which your enemies have levelled, Yahweh,
have levelled at the footsteps of your anointed!

52 Blessed be Yahweh for ever. =106:48
Amen, Amen. [k]

PSALM 90 V 89

On human frailty [a]

Prayer *Of Moses, man of God* [b]

1 Lord, you have been our refuge [c]
from age to age.

2 Before the mountains were born, Gn 1:1 Pr 8:25
before the earth and the world came to birth,
from eternity to eternity you are God. 93:2 Hab 1:12

3 You bring human beings to the dust, Gn 3:19+
by saying, 'Return, children of Adam.'
4 A thousand years are to you ↗2 P 3:8
like a yesterday which has passed,
like a watch of the night.

5 You flood them with sleep 37:2;103:15–16 Jb 14:1–2;20:8 Is 40:7+
—in the morning they will be like growing grass:
6 in the morning it is blossoming and growing,
by evening it is withered and dry.

7 For we have been destroyed by your wrath,
dismayed by your anger.
8 You have taken note of our guilty deeds,
our secrets in the full light of your presence.

9 All our days pass under your wrath,
our lives are over like a sigh. [d]
10 The span of our life is seventy years— Gn 6:3 Pr 10:27 Si 18:8–9
eighty for those who are strong—
but their whole extent is anxiety and trouble, Qo 12:1–7
they are over in a moment and we are gone.

11 Who feels the power of your anger,
or who that fears you, your wrath?

12 Teach us to count up the days that are ours,
and we shall come to the heart of wisdom. [e]
13 Come back, Yahweh! How long must we wait?
Take pity on your servants. [f]

g. 'withdraw' 13 MSS, Syr.; 'break' Hebr.
h. The term here denotes the whole Davidic dynasty.
i. 'you have snapped off . . . on a rock' *sha'aphta batz-tzur* conj.; Hebr. *'aph tashib tzur* 'you have even made his blade retire'.
j. 'his splendid sceptre' *matteh hodo* conj.; Hebr. *mit-teharo* 'his lustre(?)'.
k. Doxology terminating the third book of the Psalter.

90 **a.** Prayer of a sage well versed in the Scriptures (allusions to Gn, Jb, Dt), who is meditating on human weakness and the shortness of human life, made shorter still by sin.
b. This Psalm is unique in being attributed to Moses, perhaps because of its contacts with Gn and Dt 32.
c. 'refuge' Gk; 'dwelling-place' Hebr.
d. The Syr. paraphrases 'like a spider', which is added by Gk.
e. Awareness of human weakness leads to wisdom, which is fear of God, Pr 1:7a.
f. In vv. 14–17, the meditation and prayer, concerned initially with the fate of the individual, are extended to the whole of Israel.

17:15d Each morning fill us with your faithful love, 14
we shall sing and be happy all our days;
Nb 14:34 let our joy be as long as the time that you afflicted us, 15
the years when we experienced disaster.

Show your servants the deeds you do, 16
let their children enjoy your splendour!
May the sweetness of the Lord be upon us, 17
to confirm the work we have done![g]

Jb 5:19–22

PSALM 91

V 90

Under God's protection[a]

You who live in the secret place of Elyon, 1
spend your nights in the shelter of Shaddai,[b]
18:2 saying[c] to Yahweh, 'My refuge, my fortress, 2
my God in whom I trust!'

He rescues you from the snare 3
of the fowler set on[d] destruction;
17:8+ Dt 32:11 Rt 2:12 Mt 23:37 he covers you with his pinions, 4
you find shelter under his wings.
His constancy is shield and protection.

Pr 3:25 Sg 3:8 You need not fear the terrors of night, 5
the arrow that flies in the daytime,
Dt 32:24 Si 34:16 Jr 15:8 Ho 13:14 the plague that stalks in the darkness, 6
the scourge that wreaks havoc at high noon.[e]

Though a thousand fall at your side, 7
ten thousand at your right hand,
you yourself will remain unscathed.
You have only to keep your eyes open 8
to see how the wicked are repaid,
you who say, 'Yahweh my refuge!' 9
and make Elyon your fortress.[f]

Pr 12:21 Dt 7:15 No disaster can overtake you, 10
no plague come near your tent;
↗Mt 4:6 Heb 1:14 he has given his angels orders about you 11
to guard you wherever you go.

They will carry you in their arms 12
Pr 3:23 in case you trip over a stone.
Jb 5:22 Is 11:8 ↗Lk 10:19 You will walk upon wild beast[g] and adder, 13
you will trample young lions and snakes.

'Since he clings to me I rescue him, 14
9:10 I raise him high, since he acknowledges my name.
Jr 33:3 He calls to me and I answer him: 15
Is 43:2 in distress I am at his side,
I rescue him and bring him honour.
Jb 5:26 Pr 3:1+;10:27 •=50:23 I shall satisfy him with long life, 16
and grant him to see my salvation.'

PSALM 92

V 91

The song of the upright [a]

Psalm Song For the Sabbath

1 It is good to give thanks to Yahweh, 33:1–3
to make music for your name, Most High,
2 to proclaim your faithful love at daybreak,
and your constancy all through the night,
3 on the lyre, the ten-stringed lyre,
to the murmur of the harp.

4 You have brought me joy, Yahweh, by your deeds,
at the work of your hands I cry out,
5 'How great are your works, Yahweh, 8;111:2; 139:6,17–18 ↗Rv 15:3
immensely deep your thoughts!'
6 Stupid people cannot realise this, Ws 13:1
fools do not grasp it.

7 The wicked may sprout like weeds, 37:35–36
and every evil-doer flourish,
but only to be eternally destroyed;
8 whereas you are supreme for ever, Yahweh.

9 Look [b] how your enemies perish, 68:1–2
how all evil-doers are scattered!
10 You give me the strength of the wild ox, 23:5;75:10 Dt 33:17
you anoint [c] me with fresh oil;
11 I caught sight of the ambush against me, [d]
overheard the plans of the wicked.

12 The upright will flourish like the palm tree, 1:3
will grow like a cedar of Lebanon.
13 Planted in the house of Yahweh, 52:9
they will flourish in the courts of our God.

14 In old age they will still bear fruit,
will remain fresh and green,
15 to proclaim Yahweh's integrity;
my rock, in whom no fault can be found. Dt 32:4

g. Hebr. adds 'our God' after 'Lord', and, in conclusion, 'over us, and make the work of our hands succeed'.

91 **a.** This Psalm elaborates the traditional teaching of the Sages, *see* Jb 5:19seq., on God's protection of the upright person. The concluding divine utterance, vv. 14–16, assumes that the upright will be tested, but that God will deliver them.

b. Four divine names in this one strophe: Elyon (the Most High'), Shaddai (Gn 17:1b; here translated 'the God of heaven' by Gk, elsewhere 'the Almighty'). Yahweh (Ex 3:13,14, 13g), Elohim (God).

c. 'saying' versions; 'I say' Hebr.

d. 'set on' *medabber* versions; Hebr. *middeber* 'from the plague'.

e. The versions translate: 'from the noonday devil'.

f. 'you who say' *'amarta* conj.; Hebr. *'atta* 'you'. • 'refuge' Gk; 'dwelling-place' Hebr.

g. Translation uncertain; Gk and Syr. 'asp'.

92 **a.** Didactic hymn which develops the traditional doctrine of the Sages: happiness of the just and ruin of the impious, *see* Ps 37; 49.

b. At the beginning of the v. Hebr. adds: 'For look how your enemies perish', a doublet.

c. 'you anoint' Syr., Targ: 'I anoint' Hebr.

d. 'the ambush against me' *beshoreray* versions; Hebr. (*beshuray*) is faulty, and has been glossed 'my adversaries'.

PSALM 93

v 92

The majesty of God [a]

47:7;96:10; 97:1;99:1 Is 52:7
Yahweh is king, robed in majesty, 1
robed is Yahweh and girded with power.

=96:10;104:5
The world is indeed set firm, it can never be shaken; 2
your throne is set firm from of old, [b]
90:2
from all eternity you exist.

18:4e Jb 7:12f
The rivers lift up, Yahweh, 3
the rivers lift up their voices,
the rivers lift up their thunder.

Greater than the voice of many waters, 4
more majestic than the breakers [c] of the sea,
Yahweh is majestic in the heights.

Your decrees [d] stand firm, unshakeable, 5
1 K 9:3
holiness is the beauty of your house, [e]
Yahweh, for all time to come.

PSALM 94

v 93

The God of justice [a]

Dt 32:35 Na 1:2
God of vengeance, Yahweh, 1
God of vengeance, shine forth!
Arise, judge of the world, 2
Jr 51:56 Lm 3:64
give back the proud what they deserve!

73 Jr 12:1 Ml 2:17;3:14
How long are the wicked, Yahweh, 3
how long are the wicked to triumph?
They bluster and boast, 4
they flaunt themselves, all the evil-doers.

They crush your people, Yahweh, 5
they oppress your heritage,
Ex 22:21–22 Dt 24:17–22
they murder the widow and the stranger, 6
bring the orphan to a violent death.

10:11+ Ezk 9:9
They say, 'Yahweh is not looking, 7
the God of Jacob is taking no notice.'
Pr 1:22;8:5
Take notice yourselves, you coarsest of people! 8
Fools, when will you learn some sense?

Ex 4:11 Pr 20:12
Shall he who implanted the ear not hear, 9
he who fashioned the eye not see?
Shall he who instructs nations not punish? 10
Yahweh, the teacher of all people,
Qo 1:2d ↗1 Co 3:20
knows human plans and how insipid they are. [b] 11

119:71 ‖Jb 5:17
How blessed are those you instruct, Yahweh, 12
whom you teach by means of your law, [c]
to give them respite in evil times, 13
till a pit is dug for the wicked.

1 S 12:22 Si 47:22
Yahweh will not abandon his people, 14

he will not desert his heritage;
15 for judgement will again become saving justice,
and in its wake all upright hearts will follow.

16 Who rises up on my side against the wicked?
Who stands firm on my side against all evil-doers?
17 If Yahweh did not come to my help,
I should soon find myself dwelling in the silence. [d] 115:17

18 I need only say, 'I am slipping,'
for your faithful love, Yahweh, to support me;
19 however great the anxiety of my heart,
your consolations soothe me.

20 Are you partner to a destructive court,
that gives disorder the status of law?
21 They make an attack on the life of the upright,
and condemn innocent blood.

22 No! Yahweh is a stronghold to me,
my God is my rock of refuge.
23 He turns back their guilt on themselves, 7:16;63:11; 107:42
annihilates them for their wickedness, Pr 5:22;12:14
he annihilates them, Yahweh our God.

PSALM 95 V 94

Invitation to praise [a]

1 Come, let us cry out with joy to Yahweh,
acclaim the rock [b] of our salvation. Dt 32:15
2 Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving,
acclaim him with music.

3 For Yahweh is a great God, 47:2;96:4
a king greater than all the gods. Jb 36:22 Dn 2:47
4 In his power are the depths of the earth,
the peaks of the mountains are his;
5 the sea belongs to him, for he made it,
and the dry land, moulded by his hands. 24:1–2

6 Come, let us bow low and do reverence;
kneel before Yahweh who made us!
7 For he is our God, =100:3
and we the people of his sheepfold, 23:1–4;80:1
the flock of his hand. Ezk 34:1a

93 **a.** The sovereignty of God, displayed by the laws he imposes on the physical world, and the Law which he gives. According to the title in Greek and Talmud, this Psalm was recited 'on the eve of the Sabbath, when the earth was inhabited' (cf. Gn 1:24–31).

b. The heavens are the palace of God, 8:2. The waters, vv. 3–4, probably represent powers hostile to God and his people, *see* 18:4c; Jb 7:12f; Is 8:7; 17:12; Dn 7:2; Rv 17:15.

c. 'more majestic than the breakers' conj.; 'majestic, the breakers' Hebr.

d. These 'decrees' are the revealed Law, as immutable as the physical universe, and the basis of Yahweh's absolute sovereignty over Israel, as over the creation.

e. i.e., the Temple, consecrated for ever, 1 K 8:13; 9:3, and consecrating all who approach the holy God there, Ex 19:6; Lv 10:3; 19:2; Ezk 42:14.

94 **a.** This Psalm expresses the traditional teaching of the sages, in the manner of Pr.

b. lit. 'breath', a favourite word of Qoheleth. Perhaps this was added to comment on the previous stanza.

c. In the broadest sense of revelation and moral teaching.

d. i.e. Sheol.

95 **a.** Processional hymn, perhaps recited at the feast of Shelters, cf. Dt 31:11.

b. Allusion, repeated in v. 8, to the rock that yielded water in the desert, Ex 17:1seq., or to the rock on which the Temple was built, 2 S 24:18.

81:8
Ex 19:5
↗Heb 3:7–11
•78:8,37
Ex 17:1–7
Nb 14:22; 20:2–13
Dt 6:16;33:8

If only you would listen to him today!
Do not harden your hearts as at Meribah, 8
as at the time of Massah in the desert, [c]
when your ancestors challenged me, 9
put me to the test, and saw what I could do!

Dt 32:5,20

For forty years that generation sickened me, 10
and I said, 'Always fickle hearts; [d]
Jb 21:14
they cannot grasp my ways.'
138:8,14
Nb 14:30,34
Dt 12:9
Then in my anger I swore 11
they would never enter my place of rest. [e]

‖1 Ch 16:23–33

PSALM 96

V 95

Yahweh, king and judge [a]

=98:1

Sing a new song to Yahweh! 1
Sing to Yahweh, all the earth!
Sing to Yahweh, bless his name! 2

98:2
105:1

Proclaim his salvation day after day,
declare his glory among the nations, 3
his marvels to every people!

=48:1; 145:3

Great is Yahweh, worthy of all praise, 4
more awesome than any of the gods.
97:7
Is 40:17–20; 1 Co 8:4–6
All the gods of the nations are idols! [b] 5

It was Yahweh who made the heavens;
in his presence are splendour and majesty, 6
in his sanctuary power and beauty.

=29:1–2

Give to Yahweh, families of nations, 7
give to Yahweh glory and power,
give to Yahweh the glory due to his name! [c] 8

Bring an offering and enter his courts,
29:2
adore Yahweh in the splendour of his holiness. 9
Tremble before him, all the earth.

93:1+
=93:1

Say among the nations, 'Yahweh is king.' 10
The world is set firm, it cannot be moved.
He will judge the nations with justice.

Let the heavens rejoice and earth be glad! 11
=98:7
Let the sea thunder, and all it holds!
Is 55:12
Let the countryside exult, and all that is in it, 12
and all the trees of the forest cry out for joy,

=98:9

at Yahweh's approach, for he is coming, 13
coming to judge the earth;
Is 11:1–9,3d
he will judge the world with saving justice,
and the nations with constancy.

PSALM 97

V 96

The triumph of Yahweh [a]

1 Yahweh is king! Let earth rejoice, 93:1a
the many isles be glad!
2 Cloud, black cloud enfolds him,
saving justice and judgement the foundations of his throne. 85:10c

3 Fire goes before him, =18:8;50:3
sets ablaze his enemies all around;
4 his lightning-flashes light up the world, =77:18
the earth sees it and quakes.

5 The mountains melt like wax, [b] 68:2
before the Lord of all the earth.
6 The heavens proclaim his saving justice, =50:6
all nations see his glory.

7 Shame on all who serve images,
who pride themselves on their idols; 96:5
bow down to him, all you gods!

8 Zion hears and is glad, =48:11
the daughters of Judah [c] exult,
because of your judgements, Yahweh.

9 For you are Yahweh, =83:18
Most High over all the earth,
far transcending all gods.

10 Yahweh loves those who hate [d] evil, Pr 8:13
he keeps safe his faithful,
rescues them from the clutches of the wicked.

11 Light dawns [e] for the upright, 4:6;36:9;112:4
and joy for honest hearts.
12 Rejoice in Yahweh, you who are upright,
praise his unforgettable holiness. =30:4

PSALM 98

V 97

The judge of the world [a]

Psalm

1 Sing a new song to Yahweh, =96:1
for he has performed wonders,

c. '*meribah*' means 'dispute', '*massah*' means 'temptation'.

d. 'that generation' versions; 'a generation' Hebr. • 'always' '*ad* one MS and Gk; Hebr. '*am* 'a people of'. The Gk has preserved the original readings, corrected in the Hebr. to soften the accusations against the Israel of the Exodus, an era which later tradition transformed into a golden age.

e. The Promised Land, and the Temple where God dwells.

96 a. A hymn, possibly combining two poems, in honour of the sovereignty of God and of his coming as judge of the world, composed of material from Psalms and from Is. The order is different in the version of 1 Ch 16:23–33.

b. Greek here translates 'the demons'. This theme appears frequently in the second part of Is (40:18seq.), cf. 1 Co 8:4.

c. The poet adapts 29:1–2 and stresses the universalist aspect, cf. 47:9; 14:17.

97 a. Eschatological hymn with numerous reminiscences of other Psalms.

b. Hebr. adds 'before Yahweh'.

c. i.e. the other towns of Judah.

d. lit. 'loves those who hate' conj.; 'those who love (Yahweh) hate' Hebr.

e. 'dawns' versions; 'is sown' Hebr.

98 a. Eschatological hymn, inspired by the closing chapters of Is, and very similar to Ps 96.

his saving power is in his right hand
Is 52:10; 59:16;63:5 and his holy arm.

96:2 Yahweh has made known his saving power, 2
revealed his saving justice for the nations to see,
mindful of his faithful love and his constancy 3
to the House of Israel.

The whole wide world has seen
the saving power of our God.
96:1 Acclaim Yahweh, all the earth, 4
Is 52:9 burst into shouts of joy! [b]

Play to Yahweh on the harp, [c] 5
to the sound of instruments;
47:5 to the sound of trumpet and horn, [d] 6
Ex 19:16 acclaim the presence of the King.

=96:11 Let the sea thunder, and all that it holds, 7
the world and all who live in it.
Let the rivers clap their hands, 8
Is 55:12 and the mountains shout for joy together,

96:13 at Yahweh's approach, for he is coming 9
to judge the earth;
he will judge the world with saving justice
67:4 and the nations with fairness.

PSALM 99 V 98

God, the upright and holy king [a]

Yahweh is king, the peoples tremble; 1
18:7,10;48:1; 80:1 he is enthroned on the winged creatures, the earth shivers;
Yahweh is great in Zion. 2

He is supreme over all nations;
let them praise your name, great and awesome; 3
Is 6:3g holy is he ·and mighty! [b] 4

72:1seq. You are a king who loves justice,
you established honesty, justice and uprightness;
in Jacob it is you who are active.

Exalt Yahweh our God, 5
bow down at his footstool;
holy is he!

Moses and Aaron are among his priests, and Samuel, [c] 6
calling on his name; they called on Yahweh
and he answered them.

Ex 19:18–19; 33:9 He spoke with them in the pillar of fire, 7
Nb 12:5 they obeyed his decrees, the Law he gave them.

Ex 32:11e Yahweh our God, you answered them, 8
Nb 20:12c you were a God of forgiveness to them,
but punished them for their sins. [d]

Exalt Yahweh our God, 9

bow down at his holy mountain;
holy is Yahweh our God!

PSALM 100 V 99

Invitation to praise [a]

Psalm For thanksgiving

1 Acclaim Yahweh, all the earth,
2 serve Yahweh with gladness,
come into his presence with songs of joy!

3 Be sure that Yahweh is God,
he made us, we belong to him, =95:7
his people, the flock of his sheepfold. Dt 32:39
Is 43:10–13; 64:7

4 Come within his gates giving thanks,
to his courts singing praise,
give thanks to him and bless his name!

5 For Yahweh is good, =106:1;107:1; 118:1seq.; 136:1seq.
his faithful love is everlasting, [b] ‖Jr 33:11
his constancy from age to age.

PSALM 101 V 100

The ideal ruler [a]

Of David Psalm

1 I will sing of faithful love and judgement;
to you, Yahweh, will I make music.
2 I will go forward in the path of the blameless; 26:11–12
when will you come to me? [b] 50:3

I will live in purity of heart, 1 K 9:4
in my house, Is 33:15
3 I will not set before my eyes
anything sordid. [c]

I hate those who act crookedly; Pr 11:20
this has no attraction for me.
4 Let the perverse of heart keep away from me;
the wicked I disregard.

b. Hebr. adds 'and sing'.
c. Hebr. repeats 'on the harp'.
d. These fanfares, reserved in Israel for the accession of a new king, 2 S 15:10; 1 K 1:34, accompany the enthronement of Yahweh, Ps 47:5, for whom they had rung out on Sinai, Ex 19:16.

99 a. Eschatological hymn, the two parts of which, vv. 1–4,6–8, end with a refrain, vv. 5 and 9, celebrating the holiness of the King of Israel.
b. 'mighty' *we'az* conj.; Hebr. *we'oz* 'the might'.
c. The great intercessors, cf. 106:23; Ex 32:11e; Nb 17:11–13.
d. Some alter the vowels to read 'forgiving them their sins', but Moses and Aaron were punished by being excluded from the Promised Land, *see* Nb 27:14; Dt 3:26.

100a. This hymn of praise concludes the series of Psalms of the kingship of Yahweh (Ps 93 seq.) It was perhaps recited on entering the sanctuary to offer communion sacrifices, *see* Lv 7:11–12.
b. An ancient refrain, Jr 33:11, often repeated in Ps as antiphon or prelude, and quoted in 2 Ch 5:13; 7:3;20:21; Ezr 3:11; Jdt 13:21 (Vulg.); 1 M 4:24; cf. Mi 7:20.

101a. Portrait of the upright ruler; reminiscent of several passages in Pr.
b. Perhaps an allusion to the expected coming of the Messiah, 'he who comes', Mt 11:3; Jn 4:25.
c. lit. 'matters of Belial', i.e. idolatrous practices.

Pr 17:20; 30:10 One who secretly slanders a comrade, 5
I reduce to silence;
Pr 21:4 haughty looks, proud heart,
these I cannot tolerate.

I look to the faithful of the land 6
to be my companions,
26:11;14:35; 20:6 only he who walks in the path of the blameless
shall be my servant.

There is no room in my house 7
Pr 25:5 for anyone who practises deceit;
no liar will stand his ground
5:5 where I can see him.

Morning after morning [d] I reduce to silence 8
all the wicked in the land,
banishing from the city of Yahweh
all evil-doers.

PSALM 102

V 101

Prayer in misfortune [a]

Prayer of someone afflicted, who in misfortune pours out sorrows before Yahweh

Yahweh, hear my prayer, 1
let my cry for help reach you.
=69:17;143:7 Do not turn away your face from me 2
when I am in trouble;
bend down and listen to me,
when I call, be quick to answer me!

For my days are vanishing like smoke, 3
my bones burning like an oven;
like grass struck by blight, my heart is withering, 4
I forget to eat my meals.
From the effort of voicing my groans 5
my bones stick out through my skin.

I am like a desert-owl in the wastes, 6
a screech-owl among ruins,
I keep vigil and moan [b] 7
like a lone bird on a roof.
All day long my enemies taunt me, 8
those who once praised me now use me as a curse. [c]

Ashes are the food that I eat, 9
42:3 my drink is mingled with tears,
because of your fury and anger, 10
since you have raised me up only to cast me away;
my days are like a fading shadow, 11
90:6 I am withering up like grass.

Lm 5:19 But you, Yahweh, are enthroned for ever, 12
each generation in turn remembers you.
Rise up, take pity on Zion! 13

the time has come to have mercy on her,
the moment has come;
14 for your servants love her very stones,
are moved to pity by her dust. Is 52:2

15 Then will the nations revere the name of Yahweh, Is 59:19; 66:18
and all the kings of the earth your glory;
16 when Yahweh builds Zion anew,
he will be seen in his glory; Is 60:1
17 he will turn to hear the prayer of the destitute,
and will not treat their prayer with scorn.

18 This shall be put on record for a future generation, 22:30–31+
and a people yet to be born shall praise God: [d]
19 Yahweh has leaned down from the heights of his sanctuary,
has looked down from heaven to earth,
20 to listen to the sighing of the captive, 79:11
and set free those condemned to death,
21 to proclaim the name of Yahweh in Zion,
his praise in Jerusalem;
22 nations will gather together, Is 60:3seq.
and kingdoms to worship Yahweh.

23 In my journeying my strength has failed on the way; [e]
let me know ·the short time I have left. [f] 39:4;90:10
24 Do not take me away before half my days are done,
for your years run on from age to age.

25 Long ago you laid earth's foundations, ‖Is 51:6–8;65:17;66:22 Lm 5:19
the heavens are the work of your hands.
26 They pass away but you remain; ↗Heb 1:10–12;13:8 Rv 20:11;21:1
they all wear out like a garment,
like outworn clothes you change them;
27 but you never alter, and your years never end.

28 The children of those who serve you will dwell secure, 69:35–36
and their descendants live on in your presence.

PSALM 103

V 102

God is love

Of David

1 Bless Yahweh, my soul,
from the depths of my being, his holy name;
2 bless Yahweh, my soul,
never forget all his acts of kindness.

3 He forgives all your offences,
cures all your diseases, 41 Ex 15:26;34:7 Is 33:24 Jb 42:10

d. lit. 'each morning'. Morning is the hour of divine favours, 17:15d, as also of human and divine justice, 46:6; 73:14; 2 S 15:2; Jb 7:18; Is 33:2; Jr 21:12; Zp 3:5.

102a. The Psalm of repentance combines two poems of differing rhythm: a personal complaint, vv. 1–11 and 23–27, cf. Ps 69, and a prayer for the restoring of Zion, vv. 12–22 and 28.

b. 'I moan' *wa'ehemayah* conj.; Hebr. *wa'ehyeh* 'I am'.

c. 'Giving me as an example of the fate they want for their enemies', cf. Jr 29:22. • 'those who used to praise me' Gk MSS, Syr.; 'those who are angry with me' Hebr., with different arrangement of vowels.

d. 'God' conj.; 'Yah' Hebr.

e. 'has failed' conj.; 'He has made to fail' Hebr.

f. Line translated following Gk and Syr.; Hebr. has 'He has shortened my days. I say: my God' (incorrect vowels).

he redeems your life from the abyss, 4
crowns you with faithful love and tenderness;
he contents you with good things all your life, [a] 5
Is 40:31 renews your youth like an eagle's.

Yahweh acts with uprightness, 6
with justice to all who are oppressed;
he revealed to Moses his ways, 7
his great deeds to the children of Israel.

=86:15;145:8 Yahweh is tenderness and pity, 8
Ex 34:6-7,6c slow to anger and rich in faithful love; [b]
Jl 2:13
Jm 5:11 his indignation does not last for ever, 9
Is 57:16 nor his resentment remain for all time;
Jr 3:12
Jon 4:2 he does not treat us as our sins deserve, 10
nor repay us as befits our offences.

As the height of heaven above earth, 11
so strong is his faithful love for those who fear him.
As the distance of east from west, 12
so far from us does he put our faults.

As tenderly as a father treats his children, 13
145:9 so Yahweh treats those who fear him;
Ml 3:17
he knows of what we are made, 14
90:3+ he remembers that we are dust.

90:5-6+ As for a human person—his days are like grass, 15
Is 40:7+ he blooms like the wild flowers;
as soon as the wind blows he is gone, 16
Jb 7:10 never to be seen there again.

Ex 20:6 But Yahweh's faithful love for those who fear him 17
is from eternity and for ever;
and his saving justice to their children's children;
as long as they keep his covenant, 18
and carefully obey his precepts.

22:28 Yahweh has fixed his throne in heaven, 19
his sovereign power rules over all.
Bless Yahweh, all his angels, 20
mighty warriors who fulfil his commands,
attentive to the sound of his words.

Bless Yahweh, all his armies, 21
servants who fulfil his wishes.
Bless Yahweh, all his works, 22
in every place where he rules.

Bless Yahweh, my soul.

PSALM 104

V 103

The glories of creation [a]

Gn 1
Ac 17:28 Bless Yahweh, my soul, 1
Yahweh, my God, how great you are!
Clothed in majesty and splendour,
Gn 1:3 wearing the light as a robe! 2

You stretch out the heavens like a tent, 19:1seq.;68:4b
3 build your palace on the waters above, Gn 1:6–7
making the clouds your chariot, Am 9:6
gliding on the wings of the wind,
4 appointing the winds your messengers, ↗Heb 1:7
flames of fire your servants.

5 You fixed the earth on its foundations,
for ever and ever it shall not be shaken;
6 you covered it with the deep like a garment,
the waters overtopping the mountains.

7 At your reproof the waters fled, Jb 7:12f
at the voice of your thunder they sped away,
8 flowing over mountains, down valleys,
to the place you had fixed for them; Gn 1:9;9:
11–15
9 you made a limit they were not to cross, Jb 38:8–11
they were not to return and cover the earth.

10 In the ravines you opened up springs,
running down between the mountains,
11 supplying water for all the wild beasts;
the wild asses quench their thirst,
12 on their banks the birds of the air make their nests, Ezek 31:6,13
they sing among the leaves.

13 From your high halls you water the mountains,
satisfying the earth with the fruit of your works:
14 for cattle you make the grass grow, Gn 1:11–12,
29–30; 2:16
and for people the plants they need, Gn 2:15;3:17–19;
5:29;9:20
to bring forth food from the earth, Jg 9:13;19:5,8
15 and wine to cheer people's hearts, Si 31:27
oil to make their faces glow, Zc 10:7
food to make them sturdy of heart.

16 The trees of Yahweh drink their fill,
the cedars of Lebanon which he sowed;
17 there the birds build their nests,
on the highest branches [b] the stork makes its home;
18 for the wild goats there are the mountains,
in the crags the coneys [c] find refuge.

19 He made the moon to mark the seasons,
the sun knows when to set.
20 You bring on darkness, and night falls,
when all the forest beasts roam around;
21 young lions roar for their prey, Jb 38:39
asking God for their food.

22 The sun rises and away they steal, Jb 37:8
back to their lairs to lie down,
23 and man goes out to work,
to labour till evening falls.

103a. 'your life' *'odeki* conj.; Hebr. *'edyek* 'your coiffure'.
b. These are the attributes of Yahweh revealed to Moses, Ex 34:6c, which the whole Psalm develops, putting the accent on tenderness and pity, *see* vv. 17–18 and Ex 20:6, thus preparing for 1 Jn 4:8.

104a. This hymn follows the sequence of the creation narrative in Gn 1.
b. 'on the highest branches' *bero'sham* following Gk; Hebr. *beroshim* 'on the juniper trees'.
c. Little mammals like marmots and living in groups.

8:1
Pr 8:22–31,22e

How countless are your works, Yahweh, 24
all of them made so wisely!
The earth is full of your creatures.

Then there is the sea, with its vast expanses 25
teeming with countless creatures,
creatures both great and small;
there ships pass to and fro, 26
Jb 3:8e;40:25j and Leviathan whom you made to sport with.

They all depend upon you, 27
to feed them when they need it.
You provide the food they gather, 28
your open hand gives them their fill.

Turn away your face and they panic; 29
90:3 take back their breath and they die
Gn 3:19
Jb 34:14–15 and revert to dust.
Qo 12:7
•Gn 1:2;2:7 Send out your breath and life begins; [d] 30
Ac 2:2seq. you renew the face of the earth.

Gn 1:31 Glory to Yahweh for ever! 31
Hab 3:6 May Yahweh find joy in his creatures!
At his glance the earth trembles, 32
=144:5 at his touch the mountains pour forth smoke.

146:2 I shall sing to Yahweh all my life, 33
7:17i make music for my God as long as I live.
May my musings be pleasing to him, 34
for Yahweh gives me joy.
May sinners vanish from the earth, 35
and the wicked exist no more!

Bless Yahweh, my soul. [e]

PSALM 105

V 104

78

The wonderful history of Israel [a]

Alleluia!

18:49;96:3;145:5 Give thanks to Yahweh, call on his name, 1
‖1 Ch 16:8–22 proclaim his deeds to the peoples!
Is 12:4–5 Sing to him, make music for him, 2
recount all his wonders!
Glory in his holy name, 3
let the hearts that seek Yahweh rejoice!

Dt 4:29–31;27:8 Seek Yahweh and his strength, 4
tirelessly seek his presence!
Remember the marvels he has done, 5
his wonders, the judgements he has spoken.

Is 45:4;51:2 Stock of Abraham, his servant, 6
children of Jacob whom he chose!
He is Yahweh our God, 7
his judgements touch the whole world.

He remembers his covenant for ever, 8

the promise he laid down for a thousand generations, Gn 15:1a;26:3
9 which he concluded with Abraham,
the oath he swore to Isaac.

10 He established it as a statute for Jacob, Gn 28:13–14
an everlasting covenant with Israel,
11 saying, 'To you I give a land, Gn 15:18
Canaan, your allotted birthright.'

12 When they were insignificant in numbers,
a handful of strangers in the land, Dt 26:5
13 wandering from country to country,
from one kingdom and nation to another,

14 he allowed no one to oppress them;
for their sake he instructed kings, Gn 12:10–20; 20;26:1–11
15 'Do not touch my anointed ones, [b]
to my prophets you may do no harm.'

16 He called down famine on the land, Gn 41:54
he took away their food supply; Lv 26:26
17 he sent a man ahead of them, Gn 37:28;45:5
Joseph, sold as a slave.

18 So his feet were weighed down with shackles, Gn 39:20
his neck was put in irons.
19 In due time his prophecy was fulfilled, Gn 40;41:9–13
the word of Yahweh proved him true.

20 The king sent orders to release him, Gn 41:14
the ruler of nations set him free;
21 he put him in charge of his household, Gn 41:39–44
the ruler of all he possessed,

22 to instruct [c] his princes as he saw fit,
to teach his counsellors wisdom.
23 Then Israel migrated to Egypt, Gn 46:1–47:12
Jacob settled in the country of Ham.

24 He made his people increase in numbers, Ex 1:7
he gave them more strength than their enemies,
25 whose heart he turned to hate his own people, Ex 1:8seq.
to double-cross his servants.

26 He sent his servant Moses, Ex 3:10
and Aaron, the man of his choice. Ex 4:27
27 They worked there the wonders he commanded,
marvels in the country of Ham.

28 Darkness he sent, and darkness fell, Ex 10:21–29
but that nation defied [d] his orders.
29 He turned their rivers to blood, Ex 7:14–25
and killed all the fish in them.

d. The spirit of God is the source of all being and life.
e. Hebr. places here the 'Alleluia' which Gk has at the beginning of 105.

105a. The Psalm successively recalls the story of the patriarchs, vv. 8–15, the story of Joseph, vv. 16–23, the mission of Moses, vv. 24–27, the plagues of Egypt, vv. 28–36, the Exodus and journey through the desert, vv. 37–43, and finally the entry into Canaan, the land promised to Abraham, vv. 44–45.

b. Israel is a kingdom of priests, Ex 19:6; Is 61:6; *see also* Ps 28:8; Hab 3:13.
c. 'to instruct' versions; 'to bind' Hebr.
d. 'defied' versions; 'did not defy' Hebr. By reading *shameru* instead of *maru* it is possible to translate 'disregarded'.

Ex 7:26–8:11 Their country was overrun with frogs, 30
even in the royal apartments;
Ex 8:12–15 at his word came flies, 31
and mosquitoes throughout the country.

Ex 9:13–35 He gave them hail as their rain, 32
flames of fire in their land;
he blasted their vine and their fig tree, 33
and shattered the trees of the country.

Ex 10:1–20 At his word came locusts, 34
hoppers beyond all counting;
they devoured every green thing in the land, 35
devoured all the produce of the soil.

=78:51 He struck all the first-born in their land, 36
Ex 12:29–36 the flower of all their manhood;
he led Israel out with silver and gold; 37
in their tribes there was none who stumbled.

Ex 12:33 Egypt was glad at their leaving, 38
for terror of Israel had seized them.
=78:14 He spread out a cloud to cover them, 39
Ex 13:21–22 and fire to light up the night.

=78:24 They asked [e] and he brought them quails, 40
Ex 16:1a, 2–36 food from heaven to their hearts' content;
=78:15 he opened a rock, the waters gushed out, 41
Ex 17:1–7a and flowed in dry ground as a river.

Faithful to his sacred promise, 42
given to his servant Abraham,
Ex 15 he led out his people with rejoicing, 43
his chosen ones with shouts of joy.

Dt 4:37–40; He gave them the territories of nations, 44
6:20–25; they reaped the fruit of other people's labours,
7:8–11 on condition that they kept his statutes, 45
and remained obedient to his laws. [f]

78

PSALM 106 V 105

National confession of guilt [a]

Alleluia! 1

=107:1;=100 Give thanks to Yahweh, for he is good,
:5b his faithful love is everlasting!
‖1 Ch 16:34 Who can recount all Yahweh's triumphs, 2
who can fully voice his praise?

Is 56:1–2 How blessed are those who keep to what is just, 3
whose conduct is always upright!
25:7 Remember me, Yahweh, 4
Ne 5:19;13:14, 22,31 in your love for your people.

Come near to me with your saving power,
let me share the happiness of your chosen ones, 5
let me share the joy of your people,
the pride of your heritage.

6 Like our ancestors, we have sinned, 78:11–17
we have acted wickedly, guiltily; Lv 26:40
7 our ancestors in Egypt never grasped 1 K 8:47
the meaning of your wonders. Dn 9:5

They did not bear in mind your countless acts of love,
at the Sea of Reeds they defied the Most High; [b] 78:17
8 but for the sake of his name he saved them, Ezk 28:8–9, 14;36:20–22; 39:25
to make known his mighty power.

9 At his rebuke the Sea of Reeds dried up, 89:9+
he let them pass through the deep as though it were desert, Ex 14
10 so he saved them from their opponents' clutches, Is 63:11–14
rescued them from the clutches of their enemies. Na 1:4

11 The waters enveloped their enemies,
not one of whom was left.
12 Then they believed what he had said, Ex 14:31
and sang his praises. Ex 15:1–21

13 But they soon forgot his achievements,
they did not even wait for his plans;
14 they were overwhelmed with greed in the wastelands, 78:18
in the solitary wastes they challenged God. Ex 15:24;16:3 Nb 11:4–6 Lm 3:26

15 He gave them all they asked for,
but struck them with a deep wasting sickness; [c] Nb 11:33
16 in the camp they grew jealous of Moses, Nb 16
and of Aaron, Yahweh's holy one. Dt 11:6

17 The earth opened and swallowed up Dathan,
closed in on Abiram's faction;
18 fire flamed out against their faction, Is 26:11
the renegades were engulfed in flames.

19 At Horeb they made a calf, Ex 32
bowed low before cast metal; Dt 9:8–21; 25:29
20 they exchanged their glory [d] ‖Jr 2:11
for the image of a grass-eating bull. Rm 1:23

21 They forgot the God who was saving them, 78:42
who had done great deeds in Egypt, Dt 32:18
22 such wonders in the land of Ham, Jr 2:32
such awesome deeds at the Sea of Reeds.

23 He thought of putting an end to them, Dt 9:25
had not Moses, his chosen one, Ex 32:11e
taken a stand in the breach and confronted him, Ezk 22:30
to turn his anger away from destroying them.

24 They counted a desirable land for nothing, Nb 13:25–14:37
they put no trust in his promise; Dt 1:25–26
25 they stayed in their tents and grumbled,
they would not listen to Yahweh's voice.

e. 'they asked' versions; 'he asked' Hebr.
f. Hebr. here adds 'Alleluia' omitted by the versions.

106a. vv. 1–5 and 48 provide a liturgical setting for a historical Psalm, inspired by Dt and Nb, forming a national confession, in which the repentant nation rehearses its collective sins committed in the past and confesses them to God. Cf. 1 K 8:33–34; Ne 9:5–37; Is 63:7–64:11; Ba 1:15–3:8.

b. 'the Most High' *'elyon* conj.; Hebr. *'al yam* 'at the sea'.

c. Word of uncertain meaning. Greek translates 'a glut'.

d. The original reading must have been 'his glory' (i.e. God's), but the text was changed to eliminate an expression which seemed disrespectful or nearly blasphemous.

Lv 26:33
Nb 14:29seq.
Ezk 20:15,23

So he lifted his hand against them, 26
to strike them down in the desert,
to strike down their descendants among the nations, 27
to scatter them all over the world.

Nb 25
Dt 26:14c
Tb 4:17

They committed themselves to serve Baal-Peor, 28
and ate sacrifices made to lifeless gods.
They so provoked him by their actions 29
that a plague broke out among them.

Nb 25:7seq.
Si 45:23–24.

Then up stood Phinehas to intervene, 30
and the plague was checked;

Nb 25:11–13

for this he is the example of uprightness, 31
from age to age for ever.

95:8–9
Ex 17:1–7
Nb 20:2–13

At the waters of Meribah they so angered Yahweh, 32
that Moses suffered on their account,
for they had embittered [e] his spirit, 33

Nb 20:12c

and he spoke without due thought.

Dt 7:1
Jg 1:21seq.
Ezr 9:1a, 2

They did not destroy the nations, 34
as Yahweh had told them to do,

Lv 18:3
Jg 2:1–5

but intermarried with them, 35
and adopted their ways.

Jg 2:11–13

They worshipped those nations' false gods, 36
till they found themselves entrapped,

Lv 18:21h
Dt 32:17
Ba 4:7
1 Co 10:20

and sacrificed their own sons 37
and their daughters to demons.

Innocent blood they shed, 38
the blood of their sons and daughters;
offering them to the idols of Canaan,

Nb 35:33

they polluted the country with blood.

They defiled themselves by such actions, 39
their behaviour was that of a harlot. [f]
Yahweh's anger blazed out at his people, 40
his own heritage filled him with disgust.

Jg 2:14–23

He handed them over to the nations, 41
and their opponents became their masters;
their enemies tyrannised over them, 42
crushing them under their rule.

Is 63:7–9

Time and again he rescued them, 43
but they still defied him deliberately,
and sank ever deeper in their guilt;
even so he took pity on their distress, 44
as soon as he heard them cry out.

Lv 26:42
Jr 42:10

Bearing his covenant with them in mind, 45
he relented in his boundless and faithful love;

Ezr 9:9

he ensured that they received compassion, 46
in their treatment by all their captors.

1 Ch 16:35–36

Save us, Yahweh our God, 47
gather us from among the nations,
that we may give thanks to your holy name,
and may glory in praising you.

48 Blessed be Yahweh, the God of Israel, =89:52
from all eternity and for ever!
Let all the people say, 'Amen'. [g]

PSALM 107 V 106

God, a refuge in every danger [a]

Alleluia!

1 Give thanks to Yahweh for he is good, =106:1
his faithful love lasts for ever. =100:5b

2 So let them say whom Yahweh redeemed, Is 62:12
whom he redeemed from the power of their enemies,
3 bringing them back from foreign lands, Is 43:5–6; 49:12
from east and west, north and south. [b] Zc 8:7–8

4 They were wandering in the desert, in the wastelands, Dt 8:15;32:10
could find no way to an inhabited city;
5 they were hungry and thirsty, Is 49:10
their life was ebbing away.

6 They cried out to Yahweh in their distress, Is 63:9 Ho 5:15
he rescued them from their plight,
7 he set them on the road, Dt 6:10 Is 35:8;40:3; 43:19
straight to an inhabited city. [c]

8 Let them thank Yahweh for his faithful love,
for his wonders for the children of Adam!
9 He has fed the hungry to their hearts' content, Is 49:10;55:1 ↗Lk 1:53
filled the starving with good things.

10 Sojourners in gloom and shadow dark as death,
fettered in misery and chains, Jb 36:8seq. Is 42:7,22
11 for defying the orders of Yahweh,
for scorning the plan of the Most High— 106:43 Lv 26:40–41
12 he subdued their spirit by hard labour;
if they fell there was no one to help.

13 They cried out to Yahweh in their distress,
he rescued them from their plight,
14 he brought them out from gloom and shadow dark as death, Is 42:7,16; 49:9;51:14; 52:2;61:1
and shattered their chains.

15 Let them thank Yahweh for his faithful love,
for his wonders for the children of Adam!
16 He broke open gates of bronze Is 45:2;61:1
and smashed iron bars.

17 Fools for their rebellious ways,

e. 'embittered' *hemeru* conj.; Hebr. *himeru* 'defied'.

f. Adultery, 73:27, and prostitution denote, in the prophets, unfaithfulness to God and idolatry, *see* Ho 1:2b.

g. Doxology marking the end of the fourth book of the Psalter and followed by a liturgical rubric. • Hebr. adds 'Alleluia', placed by Gk at the beginning of the next Psalm.

107a. Hymn of thanksgiving, inspired by the second part of Is, for the mercies of Providence: the Exodus, vv. 4–9, the return from exile, vv. 10–16, the help given to those who suffer, vv. 17–22, and to those on the high seas, vv. 23–32. The epilogue, vv. 33–43, elaborates the wisdom theme of the reversal of situations. There is a two-part refrain; vv. 6 and 8,13 and 15,19 and 21,28 and 31.

b. 'south' *yamin* conj., Hebr. *yam* 'sea'. This prelude calls on the returned exiles to praise God.

c. Probable reference to Canaan. The Exodus and the installation in the Promised Land had already, in Is 40seq., served as prototype of the return from exile.

wretched because of their sins,
Jb 6:6–7 finding all food repugnant, 18
brought close to the gates of death—

they cried out to Yahweh in their distress; 19
he rescued them from their plight,
147:15 Ws 16:12 Is 55:11 Mt 8:8 he sent out his word and cured them, 20
and rescued their life from the abyss. [d]

Let them thank Yahweh for his faithful love, 21
for his wonders for the children of Adam!
Let them offer thanksgiving sacrifices, 22
and recount with shouts of joy what he has done!

Voyagers on the sea in ships, 23
plying their trade on the great ocean,
have seen the works of Yahweh, 24
his wonders in the deep.

Jon 1:4seq. By his word he raised a storm-wind, 25
lashing up towering waves.
Up to the sky then down to the depths! 26
Their stomachs were turned to water;
Is 29:9 they staggered and reeled like drunkards, 27
and all their skill went under.

Jon 1:14–15 They cried out to Yahweh in their distress, 28
he rescued them from their plight,
65:7+;89:9 s 43:2;54:11; 57:20 Mt 8:26par. he reduced the storm to a calm, 29
and all the waters subsided,
and he brought them, overjoyed at the stillness, 30
to the port where they were bound.

Let them thank Yahweh for his faithful love, 31
for his wonders for the children of Adam!
Let them extol him in the assembly of the people, 32
and praise him in the council of elders.

Is 42:15 He has turned rivers into desert, 33
bubbling springs into arid ground,
Gn 13:10; 19:23–28 Dt 29:22 Si 39:23 fertile country into salt-flats, 34
because the people living there were evil.

But he has turned desert into stretches of water, 35
=114:8 Is 41:18+ arid ground into bubbling springs,
and has given the hungry a home, 36
107:4,7 Ezk 36:35 where they have built themselves a city.

Is 65:21 Jr 31:5 There they sow fields and plant vines, 37
and reap a harvest of their produce.
Dt 7:13seq. Is 49:21 He blesses them and their numbers increase, 38
he keeps their cattle at full strength.

Their numbers had fallen, they had grown weak, 39
under pressure of disaster and hardship;
he covered princes in contempt, 40
‖Jb 12:21,24 left them to wander in trackless wastes.

58:10;63:11; 113:7–9 ‖Jb 5:16; But the needy he raises from their misery, 41
makes their families as numerous as sheep.

42 At the sight the honest rejoice,
and the wicked have nothing to say. ▶ 22:19 Is 65:12seq. Jr 31:27

43 Who is wise? Such a one should take this to heart,
and come to understand Yahweh's faithful love. ‖Ho 14:10

PSALM 108 V 107

Morning hymn and national prayer[a]

Song Psalm Of David

1 My heart is ready, God, =57:7–11
I will sing and make music;
come, my glory!
2 Awake, lyre and harp,
I will awake the Dawn!

3 I will praise you among the peoples, Yahweh,
I will play to you among nations,
4 for your faithful love towers to heaven,
and your constancy to the clouds.

5 Be exalted above the heavens, God.
Your glory over the whole earth!

6 To rescue those you love, =60:5–12
save with your right hand and answer us.

7 God has spoken from his sanctuary,
'In triumph I will divide up Shechem,
and share out the Valley of Succoth.

8 'Mine is Gilead, mine Manasseh,
Ephraim the helmet on my head,
Judah my commander's baton,

9 'Moab a bowl for me to wash in,
on Edom I plant my sandal, Rt 4:7–8,8b
over Philistia I cry victory.'

10 Who will lead me against a fortified city,
who will guide me into Edom,
11 if not you, the God who has rejected us?
God, you no longer march with our armies.

12 Bring us help in our time of crisis,
any human assistance is worthless.
13 With God we shall do deeds of valour,
he will trample down our enemies.

d. 'their life from the abyss' *mishshahat hayyatam* conj.; Hebr. *mishshehitotam* 'from their abysses'.

108a. A late composition, subsequent to the Elohistic collection, *see* p. 815. An editor has here joined together, with a few variants, 57:7–11 and 60:5–12, *see* notes on those Psalms.

PSALM 109

V 108

An imprecation [a]

For the choirmaster Of David Psalm

35:22 God whom I praise, do not be silent! 1
Wicked and deceiving words 2
are being said about me,
false accusations are cast in my teeth.
Words of hate fly all around me, 3
though I give no cause for hostility.

Jr 18:20 In return for my friendship they denounce me, 4
35:13 and all I can do is pray! [b]
35:12;38:20 They repay my kindness with evil, 5
and friendship with hatred.

'Set up a wicked man against him 6
as accuser to stand on his right. [c]
At his trial may he emerge as guilty, 7
even his prayer construed as a crime!

'May his life be cut short, 8
↗Ac 1:20 someone else take over his office,
Ex 22:23 Jr 18:21 his children be orphaned, 9
his wife be widowed.

'May his children wander perpetually, 10
Jb 5:4–5 beggars, driven from [d] the ruins of their house,
Jb 20:18 a creditor seize all his goods, 11
and strangers make off with his earnings.

Is 14:21 'May there be none left faithful enough to show him love, 12
no one take pity on his orphans,
Jb 18:19 Pr 10:7 the line of his descendants cut off, 13
his name wiped out in one generation.

Ex 20:5 Jr 18:23 'May Yahweh never forget the crimes of his ancestors, 14
and his mother's sins not be wiped out;
=34:16;90:8; 139:16 may Yahweh keep these constantly in mind, 15
to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.'

Jb 20:19 He had no thought of being loyal, 16
but hounded the poor and the needy
and the broken-hearted to their death.
He had a taste for cursing; let it recoil on him! 17
No taste for blessing; let it never come his way! [e]

Cursing has been the uniform he wore; 18
Nb 5:24 let it soak into him like water, [f]
like oil right into his bones.
73:6 Let it be as a robe which envelops him completely, 19
76:10e a sash which he always wears.

Let this be the salary Yahweh pays 20
the accusers who blacken my name.
Yahweh, treat them as your name demands; 21
103:8b as your faithful love is generous, deliver me.

22 Poor and needy as I am,
my wounds go right to the heart;
23 I am passing away like a fading shadow, 102:11
they have shaken me off like a locust. Jb 30:22

24 My knees are weak from lack of food, 69:10
my body lean for lack of fat.
25 I have become the butt of their taunts, 22:6seq.
they shake their heads at the sight of me. Mt 27:39par.

26 Help me, Yahweh my God,
save me as your faithful love demands.
27 Let them know that yours is the saving hand,
that this, Yahweh, is your work. 22:31;64:9

28 Let them curse, provided that you bless; Nb 22:2seq.
let their attacks bring shame to them and joy to your servant! 2 S 16:12
29 Let my accusers be clothed in disgrace, Is 65:13–15
enveloped in a cloak of shame. Jr 20:11

30 With generous thanks to Yahweh on my lips, 22:25seq.;
I shall praise him before all the people, 71:22seq.
31 for he stands at the side of the poor,
to save their lives from those who sit in judgement on them.

PSALM 110

V 109 2

The Priest Messiah [a]

Of David Psalm

1 Yahweh declared to my Lord, 'Take your seat at my right hand, ↗Mt 22:44p; 26:64u
till I have made your enemies your footstool.' [b] ↗Ac 2:34–35,33t
↗Heb 1:13; 10:12–13
2 Yahweh will stretch out the sceptre of your power; ↗1 P 3:22
from Zion you will rule your foes all around you.

3 Royal dignity has been yours from the day of your birth,
sacred honour from the womb, from the dawn of your youth. [c]

4 Yahweh has sworn an oath he will never retract, Gn 14:18g
you are a priest for ever of the order of Melchizedek. ↗Heb 5:6; 7:11–26,11c

5 At your right hand, Lord,
he shatters kings when his anger breaks out. 2:9
6 He judges nations, heaping up corpses, Is 2:4
he breaks heads over the whole wide world.

109a. Slandered and falsely accused, the psalmist invokes divine vengeance, *see* 5:10c; Jr 11:20; 18:19seq. In the oriental manner, the litany of imprecations, vv. 6–20, piles up highly coloured curses. Perhaps vv. 6–15 (within quotation marks here) express the accuser's enmity, cf. vv. 2–3, and what follows is the psalmist's retort, invoking the law of retaliation, vv. 16–20, *see* Ex 21:25f.

b. lit. 'and I a prayer'.

c. lit. 'let the accuser stand at his right hand'. The Accuser (Hebr. *satan*) was a name later given to the devil, *see* Jb 1:6g. He, like the advocate, v. 31, stands on the right of the accused, Jb 30:12; Zc 3:1.

d. Gk, Hebr. 'seeking'.

e. Cursing and blessing are here personified.

f. Probable allusion to the old ritual of 'the water of bitterness' described in Nb 5:11–31.

110a. The prerogatives of the Messiah, worldwide sovereignty and perpetual priesthood, 2 S 7:1a; Zc 6:12–13, are no more conferred by earthly investiture than were those of the mysterious Melchizedek, Gn 14:18g.

b. Cf. Jos 10:24; Dn 7:14.

c. Verse corr.; Hebr. 'Your people is generosity on the day of your strength, in sacred splendours, from (or: from the time of) the womb of the dawn (meaning uncertain), to you the dew of your youth.' Gk 'With you is the royal dignity . . . , from the womb before the dawn I begot you' (cf. 2:7). In place of 'sacred splendours', 83 Hebr. MSS, Symm. and Jerome have 'on the holy mountains'.

He drinks from a stream as he goes,[d] 7
and therefore he holds his head high.

PSALM 111

V 110

In praise of Yahweh's deeds[a]

Alleluia! 1

Aleph I give thanks to Yahweh with all my heart,
Bet in the meeting-place of honest people, in the assembly.
Gimel Great are the deeds of Yahweh, 2
Dalet to be pondered by all who delight in them.

He Full of splendour and majesty his work, 3
=112:3 *Waw* his saving justice stands firm for ever.
Zain He gives us a memorial[b] of his great deeds; 4
103:8b; 112:4 *Het* Yahweh is mercy and tenderness.

Tet He gives food to those who fear him,[c] 5
Yod he keeps his covenant ever in mind.
Kaph His works show his people his power 6
Lamed in giving them the birthright of the nations.

Mem The works of his hands are fidelity and justice, 7
Nun all his precepts are trustworthy,
Samek established for ever and ever, 8
Ain accomplished in fidelity and honesty.

Pe Deliverance he sends to his people, 9
Zade his covenant he imposes for ever:
Qoph holy and awesome his name.
Pr 1:7a *Resh* The root of wisdom is fear of Yahweh; 10
Shin those who attain it are wise.
Taw His praise will continue for ever.

PSALM 112

V 111

Praise of the upright[a]

Alleluia! 1

1:1-2 *Aleph* How blessed is anyone who fears Yahweh,
Bet who delights in his commandments!
Gimel His descendants shall be powerful on earth, 2
Dalet the race of the honest shall receive blessings:

He Riches and wealth for his family: 3
=111:3 *Waw* his uprightness[b] stands firm for ever.
37:6;97:11; 111:6 *Zain* For the honest he shines as a lamp in the dark, 4
Pr 13:9 Is 58:10 *Het* generous, tender-hearted, and upright.[c]

Tet All goes well for one who lends generously, 5
Yod who is honest in all his dealing;
Kaph for all time to come he will not stumble, 6
Lamed for all time to come the upright will be remembered.

Mem Bad news holds no fears for him, 7
Nun firm is his heart, trusting in Yahweh.

8 *Samek* His heart held steady, he has no fears,
Ain till he can gloat over his enemies.

9 *Pe* To the needy he gives without stint, 2 Co 9:9
Zade his uprightness stands firm for ever;
Qoph his reputation is founded on strength. [d] 89:17

10 *Resh* The wicked are vexed at the sight,
Shin they grind their teeth and waste away. 1:6
Taw The desires of the wicked will be frustrated. Jb 16:9 Mt 8:12e

PSALM 113 V 112

To the God of glory and mercy [a]

1 Alleluia!

Praise, servants of Yahweh,
praise the name of Yahweh.
2 Blessed be the name of Yahweh,
henceforth and for ever.
3 From the rising of the sun to its setting,
praised be the name of Yahweh!

4 Supreme over all nations is Yahweh,
supreme over the heavens his glory.
5 Who is like Yahweh our God? 89:6,8
His throne is set on high,
6 but he stoops to look down on heaven and earth.

7 He raises the poor from the dust, 107:41
he lifts the needy from the dunghill, ‖1 S 2:8
8 to give them a place among princes,
among princes of his people.
9 He lets the barren woman be seated at home, 1 S 2:5
the happy mother of sons. [b]

PSALM 114 V 113A

Passover hymn [a]

Alleluia! [b]

1 When Israel came out of Egypt,
the House of Jacob from a people of foreign speech,

d. The Messiah drinks of the torrent of ordeal 18:4e; 32:6; 66:12, or of the torrent of divine favours, 36:8; 46:4. Or possibly he is compared to the warrior pursuing his enemies, pausing only a moment to quench his thirst, Jg 7:5; 15:18; 1 S 30:9.

111a. 'Alphabetical' Psalm, like the following which is akin to it in doctrine, style, and poetic structure.

b. By instituting the yearly feasts, *see* Ex 23:14d.

c. Allusion to the miracles of manna and quails, Ex 16:1a.

112a. Expressions used of God in the preceding Psalm are here applied to the virtuous individual.

b. The word indicates both the virtue and the happiness that rewards it.

c. lit. 'he rises'. What has been said of God, 18:28; 27:1, is here applied to the upright. Others translate 'For the honest in darkness a light arises; the upright is kind and compassionate.'

d. Or 'To his glory his strength increases.'

113a. Opening hymn of the Hallel (Ps 113–118) which the Jews recited at the great feasts, including the Passover supper, *see* Mt 26:30 and par.

b. Like Sarah, Gn 16:1; 17:15–21; 18:9–15; 21:1–7, and Anne, 1 S 1–2. The stress is on the honour done to her, for a woman normally remained standing to serve.

114a. This hymn, which the versions wrongly unite with the following, treats in parallel, cf. 66:6b, of the crossing of the Sea of Reeds and the crossing of the Jordan, Ex 14 and Jos 3.

b. Gk, Hebr. puts the 'Alleluia' at the end of the preceding Psalm.

78:54
Ex 19:2c, 6+
Jr 2:3
Judah became his sanctuary, 2
and Israel his domain.

66:6;74:14–15;77:16
29:6;68:8
Jg 5:4
Ws 19:9
The sea fled at the sight, 3
the Jordan turned back,
the mountains skipped like rams, 4
the hills like sheep.

Sea, what makes you flee? 5
Jordan, why turn back?
Why skip like rams, you mountains? 6
Why like sheep, you hills?

68:8
Jg 5:4
Tremble, earth, at the coming of the Lord, 7
at the coming of the God of Jacob,

107:35
Ex 17:1–7,1a
1 Co 10:4
who turns rock into pool, 8
flint into fountain.

PSALM 115

V 113B

The one true God [a]

Ezk 36:22–23
23:3
Not to us, Yahweh, not to us, 1
but to your name give the glory,
for your faithful love and your constancy!
=79:10
Why should the nations ask, 'Where is their God?' 2

Our God is in heaven, 3
=135:6
Jdt 9:5
he creates whatever he chooses.
Is 44:9seq.
Jr 10:1seq.
Ba 6:3,7seq.
They have idols of silver and gold, 4
made by human hands.

These have mouths but say nothing, 5
have eyes but see nothing,
have ears but hear nothing, 6
have noses but smell nothing.

They have hands but cannot feel, 7
have feet but cannot walk,
no sound comes from their throats.
Their makers will end up like them, 8
everyone who relies on them.

135:19–20
118:2–4
House of Israel, rely on Yahweh; 9
he is their help and their shield.
House of Aaron, rely on Yahweh; 10
=33:20
he is their help and their shield.
Qo 8:12
Ml 3:16
You who fear Yahweh, rely on Yahweh; 11
he is their help and their shield. [b]

Yahweh will keep us in mind, he will bless, 12
he will bless the House of Israel,
he will bless the House of Aaron,
he will bless those who fear Yahweh, 13
small and great alike.

127:3
Dt 1:10–11
May Yahweh add to your numbers, 14
yours and your children's too!

15 May you be blessed by Yahweh,
who made heaven and earth.

16 Heaven belongs to Yahweh,
but earth he has given to the children of Adam. Gn 1:28

17 The dead cannot praise Yahweh, 6:5;94:17
those who sink into silence, Is 38:18–19+
18 but we, the living,[c] shall bless Yahweh,
henceforth and for ever.

PSALM 116 V 114–115

Thanksgiving

Alleluia![a]

1 I am filled with love when Yahweh listens
to the sound of my prayer,
2 when he bends down to hear me,
as[b] I call.

3 The bonds of death were all round me, 18:4–6
the snares[c] of Sheol held me fast; Jon 2:3
distress and anguish held me in their grip,
4 I called on the name of Yahweh.

Deliver me, Yahweh, I beg you.

5 Yahweh is merciful and upright, Ex 34:6+
our God is tenderness.
6 Yahweh looks after the simple,
when I was brought low he gave me strength.

7 My heart, be at peace once again, 13:5
for Yahweh has treated you generously.
8 He has rescued me from death,[d] my eyes from tears, 27:13;52;6;
and my feet from stumbling. =56:13;142:6
Is 25:8;38:11
9 I shall pass my life in the presence of Yahweh, Rv 21:4
in the land of the living.

10[e] My trust does not fail even when I say, 1 Co 4:13
'I am completely wretched.'
11 In my terror I said,
'No human being can be relied on.' 12:2;62:9
12 What return can I make to Yahweh
for his generosity to me?
13 I shall take up the cup of salvation[f] 1 Co 10:16
and call on the name of Yahweh.

14 I shall fulfil my vows to Yahweh,
witnessed by all his people.

115a. An exhortation to confidence by commemorating the power of Yahweh and the impotence of idols: once returned from exile, the people have no right to lose heart.
b. These three groups appear again in 118:2–4; those 'who fear Yahweh' are the proselytes, *see* 15:4c.
c. 'the living' Gk, lacking in Hebr.

116a. 'Alleluia' Gk; Hebr. puts it at the end of the preceding Psalm.
b. lit. 'on the day' Syr.; 'in my days' Hebr.
c. 'snares' Jerome; 'sorrow' Hebr., which adds 'I find' at the end of the v.
d. 'He' versions; 'You' Hebr. • 'me from death' is probably an addition.
e. Here begins Ps 115 in Gk and Vulg.
f. Thanksgiving ritual preserved in Jewish and Christian liturgy. *See* 1 Co 10:16.

72:14
Is 43:4

Costly in Yahweh's sight
is the death of his faithful. [g]

I beg you, Yahweh! I am your servant,
86:16 I am your servant and my mother was your servant;
you have undone my fetters.
Lv 7:11a I shall offer you a sacrifice of thanksgiving
and call on the name of Yahweh.

Jon 2:10 I shall fulfil my vows to Yahweh,
witnessed by all his people,
in the courts of the house of Yahweh,
in your very heart, Jerusalem.

PSALM 117

V 116

Summons to praise

Alleluia!

↗Rm 15:11 Praise Yahweh, all nations,
extol him, all peoples,
for his faithful love is strong
and his constancy never-ending.

PSALM 118

V 117

Processional hymn for the feast of Shelters [a]

Alleluia!

100:5b;
136:1seq. Give thanks to Yahweh for he is good,
for his faithful love endures for ever.

115:9–11+;
135:19–20 Let the House of [b] Israel say,
'His faithful love endures for ever.'
Let the House of Aaron say,
'His faithful love endures for ever.'
Let those who fear Yahweh say,
'His faithful love endures for ever.'

4:2 In my distress I called to Yahweh,
he heard me and brought me relief.
27:1;54:4,7
56:11
↗Heb 13:6
54:4,7 With Yahweh on my side I fear nothing;
what can human beings do to me?
With Yahweh on my side as my help,
I gloat over my enemies.

It is better to take refuge in Yahweh
than to rely on human beings;
better to take refuge in Yahweh
than to rely on princes.

Nations were swarming around me,
in the name of Yahweh I cut them down; [c]
they swarmed around me, pressing upon me,
in the name of Yahweh I cut them down.
Dt 1:44 They swarmed around me like bees,

they flared up[d] like a brushwood fire,
in the name of Yahweh I cut them down.

13 I was pushed hard,[e] to make me fall,
but Yahweh came to my help.
14 Yahweh is my strength and my song, Ex 15:2 Is 12:2
he has been my Saviour.

15 Shouts of joy and salvation,
in the tents of the upright,
'Yahweh's right hand is triumphant,
16 Yahweh's right hand is victorious,
Yahweh's right hand is triumphant!'

17 I shall not die, I shall live 11:17–18 Is 38:19
to recount the great deeds of Yahweh.
18 Though Yahweh punished me sternly,
he has not abandoned me to death.

19 Open for me the gates of saving justice, 24:7–10
I shall go in and thank Yahweh.
20 This is the gate of Yahweh,
where the upright go in. Is 1:26; 26:2
21 I thank you for hearing me,
and making yourself my Saviour.

22 The stone which the builders rejected Is 28:16 Zc 3:9;4:7 ↗Mt 21:42par. ↗Ac 4:11 1 Co 3:11 Ep 2:20 1 P 2:7–8
has become the cornerstone;
23 This is Yahweh's doing,
and we marvel at it.[f]
24 This is the day which Yahweh has made,
a day for us to rejoice and be glad.

25 We beg you, Yahweh, save us,
we beg you, Yahweh, give us victory! Ne 1:11
26 Blessed in the name of Yahweh is he who is coming![g] ↗Mt 21:9par. ↗23:39par.
We bless you from the house of Yahweh.
27 Yahweh is God,
he gives us light.

Link your processions, branches in hand, Lv 23:40 Ne 8:15 2 M 10:7
up to the horns of the altar.[h]
28 You are my God, I thank you,
all praise to you, my God.
I thank you for hearing me,
and making yourself my Saviour.

g. Because it breaks all relationship between them and himself. *see* 6:5c. The versions interpret this text according to the dogma of the resurrection: 'The death of his faithful is precious in Yahweh's view.'

118a. This Psalm ends the Hallel. *see* 113:1a. An invitatory, vv. 1–4, precedes the hymn of thanksgiving put into the mouth of the personified community, and is followed by a number of versicles and responses, vv. 19 seq., 25seq., chanted by various groups as the procession entered the Temple. The Psalm may have been used for the feast described in Ne 8:13–18. *see* Ezr 3:4; Zc 14:16 and Ex 23:14d; *see also* Ezr 3:11.

b. 'the house' Gk, cf. v. 3, lacking in Hebr.

c. Some translate 'I cause them to be circumcised' (John Hyrcanus forced circumcision on Idumaeans and Greeks).

d. 'flared up' Gk; 'were extinguished' Hebr. The last line must be a doublet.

e. 'I was pushed hard' versions; 'You pushed me hard' Hebr.

f. The Temple is rebuilt, cf. Hg 1:9; Zc 1:16. The 'keystone' (or 'crowning stone'), cf. Jr 51:26, that may become 'a stone of stumbling', is a messianic theme, Is 8:14; 28:16; Zc 3:9; 4:7.

g. Ritual cry (*hosanna:* 'Grant salvation!') to which the priests answer with a blessing.

h. lit. 'Inaugurate the ceremony with branches up to the horns of the altar!' Ritual of the *lulab*, branch of myrtle or palm, waved as the procession circled the altar.

Give thanks to Yahweh for he is good, 29
for his faithful love endures for ever.

1;19:7–14

PSALM 119

V 118

In praise of the divine Law [a]

1:1;112:1 Mt 5:3seq. *Aleph* How blessed are those whose way is blameless, 1
who walk in the Law of Yahweh!
Blessed are those who observe his instructions, 2
Dt 4:29 2 Ch 31:21 who seek him with all their hearts,
and, doing no evil, 3
who walk in his ways.
You lay down your precepts 4
to be carefully kept.
May my ways be steady 5
in doing your will.
Then I shall not be shamed, 6
if my gaze is fixed on your commandments.
I thank you with a sincere heart 7
for teaching me your upright judgements.
I shall do your will; 8
do not ever abandon me wholly.

Bet How can a young man keep his way spotless? 9
By keeping your words.
With all my heart I seek you, 10
do not let me stray from your commandments.
In my heart I treasure your promises, 11
to avoid sinning against you.
Blessed are you, Yahweh, 12
25:4;143:10 teach me your will!
With my lips I have repeated 13
all the judgements you have given.
In the way of your instructions lies my joy, 14
a joy beyond all wealth.
I will ponder your precepts 15
and fix my gaze on your paths.
I find my delight in your will, 16
I do not forget your words.

Gimel Be generous to your servant and I shall live, [b] 17
and shall keep your words.
Open my eyes and I shall fix my gaze 18
on the wonders of your Law.
39:12+ Wayfarer though I am on the earth, 19
do not hide your commandments from me.
My heart is pining away with longing 20
at all times for your judgements.
You have rebuked the arrogant, [c] the accursed, 21
who stray from your commandments.
Set me free from taunts and contempt 22
since I observe your instructions.
Though princes sit plotting against me, 23
your servant keeps pondering your will.

24 Your instructions are my delight,
your wishes [d] my counsellors.

25 *Dalet* Down in the dust I lie prostrate; =44:25
true to your word, revive me.
26 I tell you my ways and you answer me;
teach me your wishes.
27 Show me the way of your precepts,
that I may reflect on your wonders.
28 I am melting away for grief;
true to your word, raise me up.
29 Keep me far from the way of deceit,
grant me the grace of your Law.
30 I have chosen the way of constancy,
I have moulded myself to your judgements.
31 I cling to your instructions,
Yahweh, do not disappoint me.
32 I run the way of your commandments,
for you have given me freedom of heart.

33 *He* Teach me, Yahweh, the way of your will,
and I will observe it. [e] 19:11
34 Give me understanding [f] and I will observe your Law,
and keep it wholeheartedly.
35 Guide me in the way of your commandments,
for my delight is there.
36 Bend my heart to your instructions,
not to selfish gain.
37 Avert my eyes from pointless images,
by your word give me life. [g]
38 Keep your promise to your servant
so that all may hold you in awe.
39 Avert the taunts that I dread,
for your judgements are generous.
40 See how I yearn for your precepts;
in your saving justice give me life.

41 *Waw* Let your faithful love come to me, Yahweh,
true to your promise, save me!
42 Give me an answer to the taunts against me,
since I rely on your word.
43 Do not deprive me of that faithful word, [h]
since my hope lies in your judgements.
44 I shall keep your Law without fail
for ever and ever.
45 I shall live in all freedom
because I have sought your precepts. [i] Ezr 7:10

119a. 'Alphabetical' Psalm. The 8 verses of each strophe begin with one of the 22 letters of the Hebr. alphabet and each verse (excepting only v. 122) contains one of the terms for the Law; decree, precept, statute, commandment, promise, word, judgement, way. The word 'Law' and its synonyms are here to be understood in the widest sense of revealed teaching, as handed on by the prophets. The Psalm is one of the most remarkable monuments of Israelite devotion to the divine revelation.

b. 'Life' in this Psalm is to be understood in its fullest sense: happiness, security, liberation; a theme recurrent in Ezk 3:21; 18:33; but *see* Dt 4:1 and Ps 133:3, etc.

c. The greatest of God's enemies, vv. 51,69,78,85,122; 19:13; 86:14; Is 13:11; Mt 3:19.

d. 'Your wishes' Gk; lacking in Hebr.

e. Faithfulness to the commandments is the joy and immediate reward of the upright.

f. A wish often repeated in this Psalm and reiterated by the sages.

g. 'by your word' MSS, Targ; 'in your way' MT.

h. Hebr adds 'much', cf. v. 47 and Gk, Syr.

i. The faithful wish both to understand the Law and to make it a rule of life. This study is at the origin of 'midrashic' literature (the term derives from *darash* 'search').

Mt 10:18

I shall speak of your instructions before kings 46
and will not be shamed.
Your commandments fill me with delight, 47
I love them dearly.
I stretch out my hands to your commandments that I love, 48
and I ponder your judgements.

Zain

Keep in mind your promise to your servant 49
on which I have built my hope.
It is my comfort in distress, 50
that your promise gives me life.
Endlessly the arrogant have jeered at me, 51
but I have not swerved from your Law.
I have kept your age-old judgements in mind, 52
Yahweh, and I am comforted.
Fury grips me when I see the wicked 53
who abandon your Law.
Your judgements are my song 54
where I live in exile.
All night, Yahweh, I hold your name in mind, 55
I keep your Law.
This is what it means to me, 56
observing your precepts.

Het

My task, I have said, Yahweh, 57
is to keep your word.
Wholeheartedly I entreat your favour; 58
true to your promise, take pity on me!
I have reflected on my ways, 59
and I turn my steps to your instructions.
I hurry without delay 60
to keep your commandments.
Though caught in the snares of the wicked, 61
I do not forget your Law.
At midnight I rise to praise you 62
for your upright judgements.
I am a friend to all who fear you 63
and keep your precepts.
=33:5 Your faithful love fills the earth, 64
Yahweh, teach me your judgements.

Tet

You have been generous to your servant, Yahweh, 65
true to your promise.
Teach me judgement and knowledge, 66
for I rely on your commandments.
Before I was punished I used to go astray, 67
but now I keep to your promise.
You are generous and act generously, 68
teach me your will.
The arrogant blacken me with lies 69
though I wholeheartedly observe your precepts.
17:10;73:7 Their hearts are gross like rich fat, 70
but my delight is in your Law.
It was good for me that I had to suffer, 71
the better to learn your judgements.
The Law you have uttered is more precious to me 72
than all the wealth in the world.

73 *Yod* Your hands have made me and held me firm, Dt 32:6 Jb 10:8
give me understanding and I shall learn your commandments.
74 Those who fear you rejoice at the sight of me
since I put my hope in your word. 130:5
75 I know, Yahweh, that your judgements are upright,
and in punishing me you show your constancy.
76 Your faithful love must be my consolation,
as you have promised your servant.
77 Treat me with tenderness and I shall live,
for your Law is my delight.
78 Let the arrogant who tell lies against me be shamed,
while I ponder your precepts.
79 Let those who fear you rally to me,
those who understand your instructions.
80 My heart shall be faultless towards your will;
than I shall not be ashamed.

81 *Kaph* I shall wear myself out for your salvation,
for your word is my hope.
82 My eyes, too, are worn out waiting for your promise,[j]
when will you have pity on me?
83 For I am like a smoked wineskin, 35:14 Jb 30:30
but I do not forget your will.
84 How long has your servant to live?
When will you bring my persecutors to judgement?
85 The arrogant have dug pitfalls for me
in defiance of your Law.
86 All your commandments show constancy.
Help me when they pursue me dishonestly.
87 They have almost annihilated me on earth,
but I have not deserted your precepts.
88 True to your faithful love, give me life,
and I shall keep the instructions you have laid down.

89 *Lamed* For ever, Yahweh, your word 19:9 Pr 8:22seq. Is 40:8 Mt 24:35
is planted firm in heaven.
90 Your constancy endures from age to age;
you established the earth and it stands firm.
91 Through your judgements all stands firm to this day,
for all creation is your servant.
92 Had your Law not been my delight,
I would have perished in my misery.
93 I shall never forget your precepts,
for by them you have given me life.
94 I am yours, save me,
for I seek your precepts.
95 The wicked may hope to destroy me,
but all my thought is of your instructions.
96 I have seen that all perfection is finite,
but your commandment has no limit.

97 *Mem* How I love your Law!
I ponder it all day long.
98 You make me wiser than my enemies
by your commandment which is mine for ever.

j. Hebr. adds 'saying' (dittography of beginning of previous word), 'I have worn myself out,' lit. 'my soul is coming to its end' . . 'my eyes are coming to their end.'

I am wiser than all my teachers 99
because I ponder your instructions.
Jb 32:6seq. Ws 4:8–9 I have more understanding than the aged 100
because I keep your precepts.
I restrain my foot from evil paths 101
to keep your word.
I do not turn aside from your judgements, 102
because you yourself have instructed me.
19:10 Jr 15:16 How pleasant your promise to my palate, 103
sweeter than honey in my mouth!
From your precepts I learn wisdom, 104
so I hate all deceptive ways.

18:28 Pr 6:23 *Nun* Your word is a lamp for my feet, 105
a light on my path.
I have sworn—and shall maintain it— 106
to keep your upright judgements.
I am utterly wretched, Yahweh; 107
true to your promise, give me life.
50:14,23 Heb 13:15 Accept, Yahweh, the tribute from my mouth, 108
and teach me your judgements.
My life is in your hands perpetually, [k] 109
I do not forget your Law.
The wicked have laid out a snare for me, 110
but I have not strayed from your precepts.
Your instructions are my eternal heritage, 111
they are the joy of my heart.
I devote myself to obeying your statutes, 112
their recompense is eternal.

Samek I hate a divided heart, 113
I love your Law.
You are my refuge and shield, 114
I put my hope in your word.
=6:8 Leave me alone, you wicked, 115
I shall observe the commandments of my God.
True to your word, support me and I shall live; 116
do not disappoint me of my hope.
Uphold me and I shall be saved, 117
my gaze fixed on your will.
You shake off all who stray from your will; 118
deceit fills their horizon.
In your sight [l] all the wicked of the earth are like rust, 119
Ezk 22:18–22 so I love your instructions.
My whole body trembles before you, 120
88:16 Jb 4:14–15 your judgements fill me with fear.

Ain All my conduct has been just and upright, 121
do not hand me over to my oppressors.
Guarantee the well-being of your servant, 122
do not let the proud oppress me.
My eyes are languishing for your salvation 123
and for the saving justice you have promised.
Show your faithful love to your servant, 124
teach me your judgements.
Your servant am I; give me understanding 125
and I shall know your instructions.

126 It is time to take action, Yahweh,[m]
your Law is being broken.
127 So I love your commandments
more than gold, purest gold.
128 So I rule my life by your precepts,[n]
I hate all deceptive paths.

129 *Pe* Wonderful are your instructions,
so I observe them.
130 As your word unfolds it gives light, 73:17
and even the simple understand.
131 I open wide my mouth,
panting eagerly for your commandments.
132 Turn to me, pity me; 5:11;=25:16; 91:14
those who love your name deserve it.
133 Keep my steps firm in your promise;
that no evil may triumph over me.
134 Rescue me from human oppression,
and I will observe your precepts.
135 Let your face shine on your servant, 4:6d
teach me your will.
136 My eyes stream with tears Ezr 9:3seq. Ezk 9:4
because your Law is disregarded.

137 *Zade* You are upright, Yahweh,
and your judgements are honest.
138 You impose uprightness as a witness to yourself,
it is constancy itself.
139 My zeal[o] is burning me up 69:9
because my oppressors forget your word.
140 Your promise is well tested,
your servant holds it dear.
141 Puny and despised as I am,
I do not forget your precepts.
142 Your saving justice is for ever just,
and your Law is trustworthy.
143 Though anguish and distress grip me
your commandments are my delight.
144 Your instructions are upright for ever,
give me understanding and I shall live.

145 *Qoph* I call with all my heart; answer me, Yahweh,
and I will observe your judgements.
146 I call to you; save me,
and I will keep your instructions.
147 I am awake before dawn to cry for help,
I put my hope in your word.
148 My eyes are awake before each watch of the night, 63:6;77:4
to ponder your promise.

k. i.e. I am prepared to sacrifice my life at any moment.

l. 'In your sight' 3 MSS, Aquila, Symm.; 'You stop' Hebr.

m. 'Yahweh' one MS and Jerome: 'for Yahweh' *Text rec.*

n. With Gk and Jerome.

o. Gk reads 'Your zeal' or 'Zeal for your house', cf. 69:9.

In your faithful love, Yahweh, listen to my voice, 149
let your judgements give me life.
My pursuers[p] are coming closer to their wicked designs, 150
and further from your Law.
You are close to me, Yahweh, 151
and all your commandments are true.
Long have I known that your instructions 152
were laid down to last for ever.

Resh

Look at my suffering and rescue me, 153
for I do not forget your Law.
43:1 Plead my cause and defend me; 154
as you promised, give me life.
Salvation is far from the wicked, 155
for they do not seek your will.
Your kindnesses to me are countless, Yahweh; 156
true to your judgements, give me life.
Though my enemies and oppressors are countless, 157
I do not turn aside from your instructions.
The sight of these renegades appals me; 158
they do not observe your promise.
See how I love your precepts; 159
true to your faithful love, give me life.
Faithfulness is the essence of your word, 160
your upright judgements hold good for ever.

Shin

Though princes hound me unprovoked, 161
what fills me with awe is your word.
I rejoice in your promise 162
like one who finds a vast treasure.
Falsehood I hate and detest, 163
my love is for your Law.
Seven times a day I praise you 164
for your upright judgements.
37:11;72:7 Great peace for those who love your Law; 165
no stumbling-blocks for them!
I am waiting for your salvation, Yahweh, 166
I fulfil your commandments.
I observe your instructions, 167
I love them dearly.
Pr 5:21 I observe your precepts, your judgements, 168
for all my ways are before you.

Taw

May my cry approach your presence, Yahweh; 169
by your word give me understanding.
79:11;88:2 May my prayer come into your presence, 170
rescue me as you have promised.
May my lips proclaim your praise, 171
for you teach me your will.
May my tongue recite your promise, 172
for all your commandments are upright.
May your hand be there to help me, 173
since I have chosen your precepts.
I long for your salvation, Yahweh, 174
your Law is my delight.
22:26;69:32 Is 38:19; 55:3 May I live only to praise you, 175
may your judgements be my help.

176 I am wandering like a lost sheep, [q]
come and look for your servant,
for I have not forgotten your commandments.

Is 53:6
Jr 50:6
Ezk 34:1
Lk 15:4–7

PSALM 120

V 119

The enemies of peace [a]

Song of Ascents

1 To Yahweh when I am in trouble
I call and he answers me.
2 Yahweh, save me from lying lips
and a treacherous tongue!

12:2–4;52:2–4

3 What will he repay you, what more, [b]
treacherous tongue?
4 War-arrows made sharp
over red-hot charcoal.

5 How wretched I am, living in Meshech, [c]
dwelling in the tents of Kedar!

6 Too long have I lived
among people who hate peace.
7 When I speak of peace
they are all for war!

140:2

PSALM 121

V 120

The guardian of Israel [a]

Song of Ascents

1 I lift up my eyes to the mountains;
where is my help to come from?

Jr 3:23

2 My help comes from Yahweh
who made heaven and earth.

=124:8
Ho 13:9

3 May he save your foot from stumbling;
may he, your guardian, not fall asleep!
4 You see—he neither sleeps nor slumbers,
the guardian of Israel.

66:9;91:12
1 S 2:9
Dt 32:10
Pr 3:24,26

5 Yahweh is your guardian, your shade,
Yahweh, at your right hand.
6 By day the sun will not strike you,
nor the moon by night.

16:8;73:23
Is 25:4;49:10

p. With 12 MSS and versions; 'those who pursue (wickedness)' MT.

q. The 'lost sheep' theme of the prophets, Ezk 34:1a, is here applied to the individual.

b. This question and the similar exclamation 'may he bring unnameable ills on you and worse ills too' was a customary form of imprecation; *see* Rt 1:17f; 1 S 3:17; 14:44; 20:13; 25:22.

c. The country of a Caucasian people, Gn 10:2; Ezk 27:13, where Gog is later to be king, Ezk 38:2. The Arabs of Kedar lived in the Syrian desert. The psalmist makes 'Meshech' and 'Kedar' synonymous with 'barbarian'.

120a. The 'Songs of Ascents' (Ps 120–134) were probably sung by pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem, *see* 84:6c; Is 30:29. With the exception of 132 their verses are 'elegiac' (unequal lines: 3 + 2 accents) and the 'step' device is often used (a verse takes up a word or expression from its predecessor, *see* 120:2–3,5,6 and 7).

121a. This Psalm is equally appropriate for pilgrims on the hard road to Jerusalem, and for those on their pilgrimage to the heavenly Jerusalem.

Yahweh guards you from all harm 7
97:10 Yahweh guards your life,
Gn 28:15 Dt 28:6 Tb 5:17 Yahweh guards your comings and goings, 8
henceforth and for ever.

PSALM 122 V 121

Hail, Jerusalem [a]

Song of Ascents Of David

42:4,6;43:3; 84:2–5 I rejoiced that they said to me, 1
'Let us go to the house of Yahweh.'
At last our feet are standing 2
at your gates, Jerusalem!

48:12–13 ↗Ep 2:19–22 Jerusalem, built as a city, 3
in one united whole, [b]
there the tribes go up, 4
Dt 16:16 the tribes of Yahweh,
a sign for Israel to give thanks [c]
to the name of Yahweh.
Dt 17:8 1 K 7:7 2 Ch 19:8 For there are set the thrones of judgement, 5
the thrones of the house of David.

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem, 6
prosperity for your homes! [d]
48:12 Sg 4:4 Peace within your walls, 7
prosperity in your palaces!

For love of my brothers and my friends 8
I will say, 'Peace upon you!'
26:8 Tb 13:14 For love of the house of Yahweh our God 9
I will pray for your well-being.

PSALM 123 V 122

Prayer in distress [a]

Song of Ascents

I lift up my eyes to you 1
who are enthroned in heaven.
Just as the eyes of slaves 2
are on their masters' hand,

or the eyes of a slave-girl
on the hand of her mistress,
25:15;69:3; 119:82;141:8 so our eyes are on Yahweh our God,
for him to take pity on us.

Have pity on us, Yahweh, have pity, 3
44:13seq. Ne 3:36 for we have had our full share of scorn,
more than our share 4
Jb 12:5 Zc 1:15 of jeers from the complacent.

(Scorn is for the proud. [b])

PSALM 124

V 123

The Saviour of Israel [a]

Song of Ascents Of David

If Yahweh had not been on our side
—let Israel repeat it [b]—
if Yahweh had not been on our side
when people attacked us,
they would have swallowed us alive
in the heat of their anger.

Then water was washing us away,
a torrent running right over us;
running right over us then
were turbulent waters.

Blessed be Yahweh for not letting us fall
a prey to their teeth!
We escaped like a bird
from the fowlers' net.

The net was broken
and we escaped;
our help is in the name of Yahweh,
who made heaven and earth.

118:25seq.; =129:1
Pr 1:12
18:4e
Pr 6:5
=122:2

PSALM 125

V 124

God protects his faithful

Song of Ascents

Whoever trusts in Yahweh is like Mount Zion:
unshakeable, it stands for ever.
Jerusalem! The mountains encircle her:
so Yahweh encircles his people,
henceforth and for ever.

The sceptre of the wicked will not come to rest
over the heritage of the upright;
or the upright might set
their own hands to evil.

Pr 10:25
Dt 32:10
Mt 28:20
119:134

122a. The pilgrims halt at the gates and salute the holy city with '*shalom*!' ('Peace!'), alluding to the popular etymology of 'Jerusalem', 'city of peace', *see* 76:1. This 'peace' plays a prominent part in the messianic hope, *see* Is 11:6e; Ho 2:20s. Affection for holy Zion, 2 S 5:9e, is a characteristic of Jewish piety, *see* Ps 48; 84; 87; 133; 137.

b. Jerusalem solidly restored, Ne 2:17seq., is a symbol of the unity of the chosen people (versions 'that is one in fellowship').

c. The holy city is the visible sign of divine favours, the pledge of messianic promises.

d. lit. 'tents' *'ohalayk* 1 MS; Hebr. *'ohabayk* 'those who love you'.

123a. Probably composed shortly after the return from exile or in the time of Nehemiah; the restored community was exposed to the contempt and hostility of surrounding Gentiles, *see* Ne 2:19; 3:36.

b. An addition from the Maccabaean era, possibly under the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes. The text is obscure: *qere*: 'scorn is for the proud Greeks'; but in the consonantal text and the versions the word for 'Greeks' has been attached to the preceding word (giving a possible form of 'proud') in order to camouflage the xenophobic allusion.

124a. Thanksgiving for dangers overcome, described in conventional metaphors.

b. The congregation is invited to repeat the first phrase as an antiphon.

18:25seq. Ex 21:25f
Do good, Yahweh, to those who are good, 4
to the sincere at heart.
92:9 Pr 3:32
But the crooked, the twisted, turn them away, 5
Yahweh, with evil-doers.

=128:6 Ga 6:16
Peace to Israel!

PSALM 126 V 125

Song of the returning exiles [a]

Song of Ascents

14:7f
When Yahweh brought back Zion's captives 1
we lived in a dream;
||Jb 8:21
then our mouths filled with laughter, 2
and our lips with song.

Ezk 36:36
Then the nations kept saying, 'What great deeds
Yahweh has done for them!'
Is 9:2;35:10 Lk 1:49
Yes, Yahweh did great deeds for us, 3
and we were overjoyed.

Bring back, Yahweh, our people from captivity 4
like torrents in the Negeb! [b]
Is 25:8–9 Ba 4:23 Rv 21:4
Those who sow in tears 5
sing as they reap.

Jr 31:9 Is 65:19 Jn 12:24;16:20
He went off, went off weeping, 6
carrying the seed.
He comes back, comes back singing,
bringing in his sheaves.

PSALM 127 V 126

Trust in Providence [a]

Song of Ascents Of Solomon

Dt 8:11–18 Pr 3:5–6;10:22 Mt 6:25–34 Jn 15:5
If Yahweh does not build a house 1
in vain do its builders toil.
If Yahweh does not guard a city
in vain does its guard keep watch.

In vain you get up earlier, 2
and put off going to bed,
Mt 6:11par.
sweating to make a living,
since it is he who provides for his beloved as they sleep. [b]

128:3 Dt 28:11 Pr 3:24–26; 17:6 Qo 2:24e
Sons are a birthright from Yahweh, 3
children are a reward from him.
Like arrows in a warrior's hand 4
are the sons you father when young.

How blessed is the man 5
who has filled his quiver with them;
Jb 29:5,7seq. Pr 31:23
in dispute with his enemies at the city gate [c]
he will not be worsted.

PSALM 128

V 127

Blessing on the faithful [a]

Song of Ascents

1 How blessed are all who fear Yahweh, 37:3–5;112:1
who walk in his ways!

2 Your own labours will yield you a living, 112:3
happy and prosperous will you be.

3 Your wife a fruitful vine Pr 31
in the inner places of your house.
Your children round your table
like shoots of an olive tree. 144:12 Jb 29:5

4 Such are the blessings that fall
on those who fear Yahweh.

5 May Yahweh bless you from Zion! 20:2;122:9; =134:3
May you see Jerusalem prosper
all the days of your life,

6 and live to see your children's children! Gn 50:23 Jb 42:16 Pr 17:6

Peace to Israel! =125:5 Ga 1:16

PSALM 129

V 128

Against Zion's enemies

Song of Ascents

1 Often as men have attacked me since I was young [a]
—let Israel repeat it— =124:1

2 often as men have attacked me since I was young, 118:13
they have never overcome me. Jn 16:33

3 On my back ploughmen have set to work, Is 51:23
making long furrows,

4 but Yahweh the upright has shattered
the yoke of the wicked.

5 Let all who hate Zion
be thrown back in confusion,

6 let them be like grass on a roof, Is 37:27
dried up before it is cut, [b]

7 never to fill the reaper's arm
nor the binder's lap.

126a. For the returned exiles, faced with the difficulties of reconstruction (*see* Ne 5), the return from Babylon portends the coming of the messianic age.

b. Which, nearly always dry, *see* Jb 6:15, fill swiftly in winter and make the soil fruitful.

127a. Without God, human toil is useless; daily bread and children are gifts from God.

b. lit. 'he gives to his loved one in sleep', or 'he gives sleep'; versions 'while he gives sleep to those he loves'. The Hebr. title of the Psalm identifies the 'loved one' with Solomon, cf. 2 S 12:25, and possibly the 'sleep' with Solomon's dream at Gibeon, 1 K 3:5.

c. lit. 'when he speaks with his enemies in the gate', i.e. the gate of the city, where business is transacted.

128a. This Psalm celebrates the domestic happiness granted by God to the upright, in accordance with the teaching of the sages on earthly retribution.

129a. The early days of Israel's history, the years in Egypt and the entry into Canaan.

b. Translation uncertain. The word translated 'before' occurs nowhere else. It has been proposed to correct, following the Targ., Syr. and Is 37:27 (1QIs[a]), to 'which the east wind scorches'.

And no passer-by will say, 8
Rt 2:4 'The blessing of Yahweh be on you!
=118:26 'We bless you in the name of Yahweh.'

PSALM 130 V 129

Out of the depths [a]

Song of Ascents

5:1–2;18:4; 55:1–2;69:2 From the depths I call to you, Yahweh: 1
2 Ch 6:40;7:15 Lord, hear my cry. 2
Ne 1:6seq. Lm 3:55 Listen attentively
to the sound of my pleading!

If you kept a record of our sins, 3
Jb 9:2 Na 1:6 Lord, who could stand their ground?
Ex 34:7 But with you is forgiveness, 4
1 K 8:39–40 Mi 7:18 that you may be revered. [b]

40:1;56:4; 119:81 I rely, my whole being relies, 5
Yahweh, on your promise.
Is 21:11;26:9 My whole being hopes in the Lord, 6
more than watchmen for daybreak;
more than watchmen for daybreak
let Israel hope in Yahweh. [c] 7

25:22;68:20; 86:15;100:5b 103:8b For with Yahweh is faithful love,
with him generous ransom;
Is 30:18 Mt 1:21 ↗Tt 2:14 and he will ransom Israel 8
from all its sins.

PSALM 131 V 130

Childlike trust [a]

Song of Ascents

Mi 6:8 Yahweh, my heart is not haughty, 1
I do not set my sights too high.
139:6 I have taken no part in great affairs,
in wonders beyond my scope.
Is 30:15 No, I hold myself in quiet and silence, 2
Is 66:12–13 Ho 11:4 like a little child in its mother's arms,
↗Mt 18:3par. like a little child, so I keep myself.
Let Israel hope in Yahweh 3
henceforth and for ever.

PSALM 132 V 131

For the anniversary of the transfer of the ark [a]

Song of Ascents

Yahweh, remember David 1
and all the hardships he endured,

2 the oath he swore to Yahweh,
his vow to the Mighty One of Jacob: Gn 49:24

3 'I will not enter tent or house, 2 S 7:1–2
will not climb into bed, 1 Ch 28:2
4 will not allow myself to sleep,
not even to close my eyes,
5 till I have found a place for Yahweh,
a dwelling for the Mighty One of Jacob!'

6 Listen, we heard of it [b] in Ephrathah,
we found it at Forest-Fields. [c] 1 S 7:1
2 S 6:2
7 Let us go into his [d] dwelling-place,
and worship at his footstool. =99:5

8 Go up, Yahweh, to your resting-place, 68:1
you and the ark of your strength. Nb 10:35
‖2 Ch 6:41–42
9 Your priests are robed in saving justice, Si 24:7
your faithful are shouting for joy.
10 For the sake of your servant David,
do not reject your anointed. [e] 2:2
Ex 30:22d
1 S 9:26n

11 Yahweh has sworn to David, 110:4
and will always remain true to his word,
'I promise that I will set 89:19seq.
a son of yours upon your throne. 2 S 7:1a
12 If your sons observe my covenant
and the instructions I have taught them,
their sons too for evermore
will occupy your throne.'

13 For Yahweh has chosen Zion, 68:16
he has desired it as a home. 2 S 5:9f
14 'Here shall I rest for evermore,
here shall I make my home as I have wished.

15 'I shall generously bless her produce,
give her needy their fill of food,
16 I shall clothe her priests with salvation, ‖2 Ch 6:41
and her faithful will sing aloud for joy. Is 61:10
Jr 31:14

17 'There I shall raise up a line of descendants [f] for David, Is 11:1
light a lamp [g] for my anointed; Jr 33:15
Ezk 29:21
18 I shall clothe his enemies with shame, Zc 3:8
while his own crown shall flourish.' [h] ↗Lk 1:69
Jb 8:22

130a. Penitential Psalm, cf. 6:inscr. but still more a Psalm of hope.

b. 'that you may be revered'; Gk translates 'because of your Law', a legalist adaptation.

c. Translated following Gk. The corrupt Hebr. would translate literally: 'I rely on Yahweh, my whole being relies, and in his promise have I hoped. My whole being for the Lord more than watchmen for daybreak, watchmen for daybreak. Let Israel hope in Yahweh.'

131a. The soul at peace abandons itself to God, laying aside anxiety and ambition. The same childlike trust is demanded, v. 3, of the people of God, *see* Is 30:15.

132a. Messianic Psalm, *see* especially vv. 17–18. The divine promises, 2 S 7:1a, here take the form of the divine answer to an oath pronounced by David. A processional hymn, vv. 6seq., recalls the finding and translation of the ark, 1 S 6:13seq.; 2 S 6.

b. The ark.

c. Place-name akin to Kiriath-Jearim ('town of the woodlands') which, like Bethlehem, was in the district of Ephrathah.

d. Yahweh.

e. The anointed of Yahweh, the descendant of David awaited by Israel. He will share power with the priests, Ps 110:3; Zc 4:14; 6:13.

f. lit. 'I shall make a horn grow,' *see* 18:2d.

g. Cf. 1 K 11:36; 15:4; 2 K 8:19; 2 Ch 21:7. On the extinguished lamp, *see* Jb 18:5; Jr 25:10. The Messiah will be the light of the nations. Is 42:6; 49:6; Lk 2:32.

h. The sign of royalty, *see* 89:39; 2 S 1:10; 2 K 11:12, but also of priesthood, Ex 28:36; 39:30; the Davidic Messiah is both priest and king, *see* Ps 110:4.

PSALM 133

V 132

Brotherly love [a]

Song of Ascents

87 How good, how delightful it is 1
to live [b] as brothers all together!

Ex 30:25,30 It is like a fine oil on the head, 2
running down the beard,
running down Aaron's beard, [c]
onto the collar of his robes.

Ho 14:6 It is like the dew of Hermon 3
falling on the heights of Zion;
36:9 Dt 28:8;30:20 for there Yahweh bestows his blessing,
everlasting life.

PSALM 134

V 133

For the evening liturgy [a]

Song of Ascents

=135:1–2; 141:2 Come, bless Yahweh, 1
all you who serve Yahweh,
serving in the house of Yahweh,
28:2;63:4; 141:2 in the courts of the house of our God. [b]
1 Ch 9:33; 23:30 Through the night watches
stretch out your hands towards the sanctuary 2
and bless Yahweh.

118:26;128:5 Nb 6:24 May Yahweh bless you from Zion, 3
he who made heaven and earth! [c]

PSALM 135

V 134

Hymn of praise [a]

Alleluia! 1

=134:1 Praise the name of Yahweh,
=113:1 you who serve Yahweh, praise him,
serving in the house of Yahweh, 2
in the courts of the house of our God.

Praise Yahweh, for Yahweh is good, 3
7:17i make music for his name—it brings joy—
33:12 Ex 19:5 Dt 7:6b for Yahweh has chosen Jacob for himself, 4
Israel as his own possession.

=95:3 ‖Ex 18:11 For I know that Yahweh is great, 5
our Lord is above all gods.
=115:3 Yahweh does whatever he pleases 6
in heaven, on earth,
in the waters and all the depths.

7 He summons up clouds from the borders of earth,
sends rain with lightning-flashes,
and brings the wind out of his storehouse. ‖Jr 10:13;‖51:16 148:8 Jb 28:26;37:9 Ex 12:29= 136:10

8 He struck the first-born in Egypt,
man and beast alike,
9 he sent signs and wonders into the heart of Egypt,
against Pharaoh and all his officials. 78:43

10 He struck down many nations, =136:17–22
he slaughtered mighty kings,
11 Sihon king of the Amorites,
and Og king of Bashan,
and all the kingdoms of Canaan.
12 He gave their land as a birthright,
a birthright to his people Israel.

13 Yahweh, your name endures for ever, 102:12 Ex 3:15
Yahweh, your memory is fresh from age to age. ‖Dt 32:36 Is 63:12
14 For Yahweh vindicates his people,
feels compassion for his servants.

15 The idols of the nations are silver and gold, 115:4–6
made by human hands.
16 These have mouths but say nothing,
have eyes but see nothing,

17 have ears but hear nothing,
and they have no breath in their mouths.
18 Their makers will end up like them, =115:8
everyone who relies on them.

19 House of Israel, bless Yahweh, =115:9–11
House of Aaron, bless Yahweh,
20 House of Levi, bless Yahweh,
you who fear Yahweh, bless Yahweh.

21 Blessed be Yahweh from Zion,
he who dwells in Jerusalem! [b]

PSALM 136 V 135

Litany of thanksgiving [a]

Alleluia! [b]

1 Give thanks to Yahweh for he is good,
for his faithful love endures for ever.
2 Give thanks to the God of gods, Dt 10:17
for his faithful love endures for ever.

133a. The brotherly relationships binding priests and Levites in the Temple and holy city.
b. or 'to sit down', perhaps for a communion meal to end the pilgrimage of the feast of Shelters.
c. 'running down the beard' conj.; 'the beard which goes down' Hebr.

134a. Call to prayer, or liturgical dialogue between pilgrims and Temple ministers, perhaps used at a nocturnal ceremony inaugurating the feast of Shelters, *see* Ex 23:14d.
b. With Gk; line omitted by Hebr.
c. With this liturgical blessing, cf. Nb 6:23seq., the series of 'Songs of Ascents' comes to an end, Ps 120:1a.

135a. Song of praise, composed entirely of reminiscences of, or borrowings from, the Psalms or other texts.
b. Liturgical antiphon to conclude the hymn.

136a. This litany, cf. Dn 3:52–90, is called by the Jews 'the Great Hallel'; at the Passover meal it was recited after the 'Lesser Hallel', Ps 113–118.
b. 'Alleluia' Gk; Hebr. joins it with preceding Psalm.

Give thanks to the Lord of lords, 3
for his faithful love endures for ever.

=72:18 Ex 15:11 He alone works wonders, [c] 4
for his faithful love endures for ever.

Pr 3:19;8:27–9 In wisdom he made the heavens, 5
for his faithful love endures for ever.

24:2 He set the earth firm on the waters, 6
for his faithful love endures for ever.

Gn 1:16 He made the great lights, 7
for his faithful love endures for ever.
The sun to rule the day, 8
for his faithful love endures for ever.
Moon and stars to rule the night, 9
for his faithful love endures for ever.

=78:51; 135:8 He struck down the first-born of Egypt, 10
for his faithful love endures for ever.
He brought Israel out from among them, 11
for his faithful love endures for ever.

Dt 4:34 With mighty hand and outstretched arm, 12
for his faithful love endures for ever.

Ex 14:21seq. He split the Sea of Reeds in two, 13
for his faithful love endures for ever.
Let Israel pass through the middle, 14
for his faithful love endures for ever.
And drowned Pharaoh and all his army, [d] 15
for his faithful love endures for ever.

Dt 8:2,15 He led his people through the desert, 16
for his faithful love endures for ever.
He struck down mighty kings, 17
for his faithful love endures for ever.
Slaughtered famous kings, 18
for his faithful love endures for ever.

Dt 2:30seq. Sihon king of the Amorites, 19
for his faithful love endures for ever.

Dt 3:1seq. And Og king of Bashan, 20
for his faithful love endures for ever.

44:2 He gave their land as a birthright, 21
for his faithful love endures for ever.

Is 41:8;44:21 A birthright to his servant Israel, 22
for his faithful love endures for ever.

↗Lk 1:48 He kept us in mind when we were humbled, 23
for his faithful love endures for ever.

106:43seq. ↗Lk 1:71 And rescued us from our enemies, 24
for his faithful love endures for ever.

104:27; 145:15–16 He provides food for all living creatures, 25
for his faithful love endures for ever.

Dn 2:18 Give thanks to the God of heaven, 26
for his faithful love endures for ever.

PSALM 137

V 136

Song of the exiles [a]

1 By the rivers of Babylon
we sat and wept — Ezk 3:15; Lm 3:48
at the memory of Zion.
2 On the poplars there
we had hung up our harps. — Is 24:8; Jr 25:10; Lm 5:14
3 For there our gaolers had asked us
to sing them a song,
our captors [b] to make merry,
'Sing us one of the songs of Zion.'
4 How could we sing a song of Yahweh
on alien soil?
5 If I forget you, Jerusalem, — Jr 51:50
may my right hand wither! [c]
6 May my tongue remain stuck to my palate
if I do not keep you in mind,
if I do not count Jerusalem — 122:1a
the greatest of my joys.
7 Remember, Yahweh, to the Edomites' cost, — Lm 4:21–22; Ezk 25:12–14+;35; Ob 10–14
the day of Jerusalem, [d]
how they said, 'Down with it! Rase it to the ground!'
8 Daughter of Babel, doomed to destruction, — Is 47:10; Is 14:22; Jr 50–51; ↗Rv 18:6
a blessing on anyone
who treats you as you treated us,
9 a blessing on anyone who seizes your babies — Ho 14:1
and shatters them against a rock!

PSALM 138

V 137

Hymn of thanksgiving

Of David

1 I thank you, Yahweh, with all my heart, — =9:1
for you have listened to the cry I uttered. [a]
In the presence of angels [b] I sing to you,
2 I bow down before your holy Temple. — =5:7; Dn 6:11b

I praise your name for your faithful love and your constancy;
your promises surpass even your fame. [c]

c. Hebr. adds 'great', which is redundant.
d. Hebr. repeats 'in the Sea of Reeds', a doublet drawn from v. 13.

137a. This Psalm recalls the fall of Jerusalem in 587 and the Babylonian exile.
b. 'captors' *sholelenu* Targ.; Hebr. *tolalenu* unintelligible.
c. 'wither' *tikhash* conj.; Hebr. (which seems to have wanted to soften the curse). *tishkah* 'forget'.
d. The 9th day of the 4th month (June–July, 587), when the Chaldaeans breached the walls of Jerusalem, Jr 39:2; 52:7; or else the 10th day of the 5th month when the Temple was burnt down, Jr 52:13, cf. Zc 7:5; 8:19. The Edomites, Nb 20:20–23, then joined forces with the besieging army; a number of prophetic pronouncements invokes the vengeance of Yahweh on them Is 34:5seq.; Jr 49:17; Jl 4:19; Ml 1:3seq.

138a. Gk. Line omitted by Hebr.
b. With Gk. Some versions interpret 'gods' (idols), 'kings', 'judges'.
c. lit. 'you have made your promise great above all your name'. Text uncertain.

You heard me on the day when I called, 3
Is 40:29 and you gave new strength to [d] my heart.

68:32 All the kings of the earth give thanks to you, Yahweh, 4
Ml 1:11 when they hear the promises you make;
they sing of Yahweh's ways, 5
'Great is the glory of Yahweh!'
Is 57:15 Sublime as he is, Yahweh looks on the humble, 6
Lk 1:51–52 the proud he picks out from afar.

Though I live surrounded by trouble 7
23:5 you give me life—to my enemies' fury!
You stretch out your right hand and save me,
57:2 Yahweh will do all things for me. 8
100:5b Yahweh, your faithful love endures for ever,
do not abandon what you have made.

PSALM 139 V 138

In praise of God's omniscience [a]

For the choirmaster Of David Psalm

Jr 12:3 Yahweh, you examine me and know me, 1
44:21 you know when I sit, when I rise, 2
2 K 19:27 you understand my thoughts from afar.
Jb 31:4
Heb 4:13 You watch when I walk or lie down, 3
you know every detail of my conduct.

A word is not yet on my tongue 4
before you, Yahweh, know all about it.
You fence me in, behind and in front, 5
you have laid your hand upon me.
Such amazing knowledge is beyond me, 6
a height to which I cannot attain.

Jb 11:8–9; 23:8–9 Where shall I go to escape your spirit? 7
Jr 23:23–24 Where shall I flee from your presence?
Pr 15:11
Am 9:2–3 If I scale the heavens you are there, 8
if I lie flat in Sheol, there you are.

If I speed away on the wings of the dawn, 9
if I dwell beyond the ocean,
even there your hand will be guiding me, 10
your right hand holding me fast.

I will say, 'Let the darkness cover me, 11
and the night wrap itself around me,' [b]
Jb 12:22;34:22 Dn 2:22 even darkness to you is not dark, 12
and night is as clear as the day. [c]

Jb 10:8seq. Ws 7:1 You created my inmost self, 13
knit me together in my mother's womb.
For so many marvels I thank you; 14
a wonder am I, and all your works are wonders.

You knew me through and through, [d]
my being held no secrets from you, 15

when I was being formed in secret,
textured in the depths of the earth.

16 Your eyes could see my embryo.
In your book all my days were inscribed,
every one that was fixed is there. [e]

17 How hard for me to grasp your thoughts,
how many, God, there are!

18 If I count them, they are more than the grains of sand;
if I come to an end, [f] I am still with you.

19 If only, God, you would kill the wicked!—
Men of violence, keep away from me!—

20 those who speak blasphemously about you,
and take no account of your thoughts. [g]

21 Yahweh, do I not hate those who hate you,
and loathe those who defy you?

22 My hate for them has no limits,
I regard them as my own enemies.

23 God, examine me and know my heart,
test me and know my concerns.

24 Make sure that I am not on my way to ruin,
and guide me on the road of eternity.

69:28
Dn 7:10
Ml 3:16
•31:15
Jb 14:5
•40:5
Jb 11:7
Si 18:5–7
Rm 11:33
119:115
Jb 21:14
119:158
5:10c
17:3;26:2
5:8;143:10

PSALM 140

V 139

Against the wicked

For the choirmaster Psalm Of David

1 Rescue me, Yahweh, from evil men,
protect me from violent men,

2 whose heart is bent on malice,
day after day they harbour strife;

3 their tongues as barbed as a serpent's,
viper's venom behind their lips. *Pause* ↗Rm 3:13

4 Keep me, Yahweh, from the clutches of the wicked,
protect me from violent men,
who are bent on making me stumble, 56:6;57:6
Si 12:16
5b laying out snares where I walk, [a] Jr 18:22
5a in their arrogance hiding pitfall and noose
5c to trap me as I pass. *Pause*

6 I said to Yahweh, 'You are my God.' 31:14
Listen, Yahweh, to the sound of my prayer.

d. 'gave new strength to' Syr; Hebr. 'troubled the strength of'.

139a. Compare this meditation on God's omniscience with the reflections of Job on the awesome fear of human beings under the eye of God. Jb 7:17–20i.

b. 'wrap itself around' *'ezor* 11QPs[a]; MT *'or* 'be a light for'.

c. The text adds an Aramaic gloss 'As the darkness so the light'.

d. 'You knew me' conj.; 'knowing' Hebr.

e. 'is there' *qere* of some MSS; 'is not there' MT. a difficult text. The Psalmist is meditating on the divine omniscience; God knows a person's destiny even before he is born, 22:10; 71:16, while for that person the mystery is impenetrable.

f. 'if I come to an end' *haqitztzoti* 3 MSS; MT *heqitzoti* 'I wake up'.

g. 'your thoughts' *re'eka* conj.; *see* vv. 2,17; Hebr. *'areka* 'your cities'. • All this v. is uncertain.

140a. lit. 'for my feet' Gk; omitted by Hebr.

Yahweh my Lord, my saving strength, 7
you shield my head when battle comes.
Yahweh, do not grant the wicked their wishes, 8
do not let their plots succeed. *Pause*

Do not let my attackers ·prevail, [b] 9
but let them be overwhelmed by their own malice.
11:6;55:23 Gn 19:24 Nb 16:31seq. May red-hot embers rain down [c] on them, 10
may they be flung into the mire once and for all.
May the slanderer [d] find no rest anywhere, 11
may evil hunt down violent men implacably.

I know that Yahweh will give judgement for the wretched, 12
justice for the needy.
The upright shall praise your name, 13
11:7;16:11; 17:15 the honest dwell in your presence.

PSALM 141

V 140

Against the attractions of evil

Psalm Of David

Yahweh, I am calling, hurry to me, 1
listen to my voice when I call to you.
Ex 30:8 Lv 2:2 Nb 28:4 May my prayer be like incense in your presence, 2
my uplifted hands like the evening sacrifice. [a]

Yahweh, mount a guard over my mouth, 3
a guard at the door of my lips.
Check any impulse to speak evil, 4
to share the foul deeds of evil-doers.

I shall not sample their delights!
Pr 9:8;25:12; 27:6,9 May the upright correct me with a friend's rebuke; 5
but the wicked shall never anoint my head with oil,
for that would make me party to their crimes. [b]

They are delivered into the power of the rock, their judge, [c] 6
those who took pleasure in hearing me say,
'Like a shattered millstone [d] on the ground 7
our bones are scattered at the mouth of Sheol.'

To you, Yahweh, I turn my eyes, 8
in you I take refuge, do not leave me unprotected.
Save me from the traps that are set for me, 9
the snares of evil-doers.

Let the wicked fall each into his own net, 10
while I pass on my way.

PSALM 142

V 141

Prayer in persecution [a]

57 inscr. *Psalm Of David When he was in the cave Prayer*

To Yahweh I cry out with my plea. 1
To Yahweh I cry out with entreaty.

2 I pour out my worry in his presence,
in his presence I unfold my troubles.
3 However faint my spirit;
you are watching over my path. 139:24

On the road I have to travel
they have hidden a trap for me. 141:9
4 Look on my right [b] and see— 121:5
there is no one who recognises me.
All refuge is denied me,
no one cares whether I live or die.

5 I cry out to you, Yahweh,
I affirm, 'You are my refuge, 91:2,9;16:5
my share in the land of the living!' [c]
6 Listen to my calling,
for I am miserably weak. 79:8

Rescue me from my persecutors,
for they are too strong for me.
7 Lead me out of prison 88:8
that I may praise your name. Lm 3:7
The upright gather round me [d]
because of your generosity to me.

PSALM 143 V 142

A humble entreaty

Psalm *Of David* [a]

1 Yahweh, hear my prayer,
listen to my pleading;
in your constancy answer me,
in your saving justice;
2 do not put your servant on trial,
for no one living can be found guiltless at your tribunal. [b] Jb 9:2;14:3–4 Qo 7:20 ↗Rm 3:20
3 An enemy is in deadly pursuit, 7:5
crushing me into the ground,
forcing me to live in darkness, ‖Lm 3:6
like those long dead.
4 My spirit is faint, 142:3
and within me my heart is numb with fear. Jb 17:1

b. We follow the Gk for 9[b] and 10. The Hebr. is very uncertain.

c. 'rain down' *yamter* conj.; *qere* and versions *yimmotu* 'be shaken'; *ketib yamitu* 'shake'. • 'red-hot' Gk; 'in the fire' Hebr.

d. lit. 'the man of tongue'.

141a. A prescribed daily offering, Jewish piety thus associates prayer with sacrifice. *see* 51:16; cf. Rv 5:8; 8:4.

b. 'the wicked' *rasha'* Gk, Syr; Hebr. *ro'sh* 'excellent'. • 'that would make me party' *hitlaphatti* following 11QPs[a]; Hebr. *tephilati* 'my prayer'. • The text is very obscure. It seems that the Psalmist fears the advances of the wicked which could seduce him.

c. Yahweh, 'Rock of Israel': 18:2; 19:14; 42:9. • 'their judge' is in the plural in Hebr., a plural of majesty as in 58:11.

d. 'a shattered millstone' *pelah yebuqqa'* Gk and Syr.; Hebr. *poleh uboqe'a* 'shattering and splitting'.

142a. This Psalm has been applied to Christ in his sufferings.

b. The right hand is where a defender stands, *see* 109:31; Is 63:12.

c. In this life, *see* 27:13; 52:5; cf. 16:5; 46:1; 91:2.

d. Gk and Syr. translate 'the upright hope'. • All God's friends form one body, they join in the thanksgiving for the faithful saved by God, *see* 64:10; 107:42.

143a. Gk details 'when his son (Absalom) was pursuing him', cf. 3:heading; 2 S 15:13seq.

b. Cf. 51:5; 130:3 Paul uses this passage somewhat freely, Rm 3:20; Gn 2:16.

=77:5;77:11–12 I recall the days of old, 5
reflecting on all your deeds,
I ponder the works of your hands.
I stretch out my hands to you, 6
63:1 my heart like a land thirsty for you. *Pause*

Answer me quickly, Yahweh, 7
my spirit is worn out;
10:1;28:1;69:17;88:4;102:2 do not turn away your face from me,
or I shall be like those who sink into oblivion.

17:15d Let dawn bring news of your faithful love, 8
for I place my trust in you;
show me the road I must travel
25:1–2;86:4 for you to relieve my heart.

Rescue me from my enemies, Yahweh, 9
since in you I find protection. [c]
25:4–5 Teach me to do your will, 10
for you are my God.
May your generous spirit lead me
on even ground.

Yahweh, for the sake of your name, 11
in your saving justice give me life,
rescue me from distress.
54:5 In your faithful love annihilate my enemies, 12
destroy all those who oppress me,
116:16 for I am your servant.

PSALM 144 V 143

Hymn for war and victory [a]

Of David

=18:46 Blessed be Yahweh, my rock, 1
=18:34 who trains my hands for war
and my fingers for battle,
my faithful love, my bastion, 2
=18:2 my citadel, my Saviour;
I shelter behind him, my shield,
=18:47 he makes the peoples submit to me. [b]

=8:4 Yahweh, what is a human being for you to notice, 3
a child of Adam for you to think about?
=39:5–6;Jb 14:2 Human life, a mere puff of wind, 4
days as fleeting as a shadow.

=18:9 Yahweh, part the heavens and come down, 5
=104:32Is 63:19 touch the mountains, make them smoke.
=18:14 Scatter them with continuous lightning-flashes, 6
rout them with a volley of your arrows.

=18:16 Stretch down your hand from above, 7
save me, rescue me from deep waters,
from the clutches of foreigners,
whose every word is worthless, 8
whose right hand is raised in perjury.

9 God, I sing to you a new song, =33:2-3
I play to you on the ten-stringed lyre,
10 for you give kings their victories, =18:50
you rescue your servant David. [c]

11 From the sword of evil ·save me,
rescue me from the clutches of foreigners
whose every word is worthless,
whose right hand testifies to falsehood.

12 May our sons be like plants 128:3
growing tall from their earliest days,
our daughters like pillars [d] Jb 42:14-15
Si 26:18
carved fit for a palace,

13 our barns filled to overflowing Lv 26:4-5
Dt 7:13
with every kind of crop,
the sheep in our pastures be numbered
in thousands and tens of thousands,

14 our cattle well fed,
free of raids and pillage, Lv 26:6
Is 65:19
free of outcry in our streets.

15 How blessed the nation of whom this is true, 29:11;=33:12
blessed the nation whose God is Yahweh!

PSALM 145 V 144

Praise to Yahweh the King [a]

Hymn of Praise Of David

1 *Aleph* I shall praise you to the heights, God my King, 44:4
I shall bless your name for ever and ever. 34:1;68:19
2 *Bet* Day after day I shall bless you,
I shall praise your name for ever and ever.
3 *Gimel* Great is Yahweh and worthy of all praise, 48:1;95:3
Jb 36:26
his greatness beyond all reckoning.

4 *Dalet* Each age will praise your deeds to the next, 71:18;78:4
proclaiming your mighty works.
5 *He* Your renown is the splendour of your glory,
I will ponder the story of your wonders.

6 *Waw* They will speak of your awesome power,
and I shall recount your greatness.
7 *Zain* They will bring out the memory of your great generosity,
and joyfully acclaim your saving justice.

8 *Het* Yahweh is tenderness and pity, 103:8b
slow to anger, full of faithful love.

c. 'I find protection' Vulg.; 'I am protected' Hebr.; 'I have fled' Gk.

144a. The first part, vv. 1–11, a summary of liturgical prayer for the king, is inspired by Ps 18 and others. The second, vv. 12–15, is original and describes the prosperity of the messianic age.

b. 'the peoples' MSS, versions; 'my people' Hebr and Gk; the correction is intended to allude to David.
c. 'David my servant' has become a messianic title, Jr 33:21; Ezk 34:23–24; 37:24.
d. Rare word suggesting caryatids.

145a. An 'alphabetical' Psalm which borrows elements from several other Psalms.

103:13 Ws 1:13–14 *Tet* Yahweh is generous to all, 9
his tenderness embraces all his creatures.

Yod All your creatures shall thank you, Yahweh, 10
and your faithful shall bless you.

93:1 1 Ch 29:11 *Kaph* They shall speak of the glory of your kingship 11
and tell of your might,

Lamed making known your mighty deeds to the children of Adam, 12
the glory and majesty of your kingship. [b]

‖Dn 3:33(100) 102:12 1 Tm 1:17 Rv 11:15 *Mem* Your kingship is a kingship for ever, 13
your reign lasts from age to age.

(Nun) Yahweh is trustworthy in all his words,
and upright in all his deeds. [c]

=94:18 =146:8 *Samek* Yahweh supports all who stumble, 14
lifts up those who are bowed down.

=104:27–28 Mt 6:25seq. *Ain* All look to you in hope 15
and you feed them with the food of the season.

Pe And, with generous hand, 16
you satisfy the desires of every living creature.

Dt 32:4 *Zade* Upright in all that he does, 17
Yahweh acts only in faithful love.

Dt 4:7 Is 58:9 Jr 29:13 *Qoph* He is close to all who call upon him, 18
all who call on him from the heart.

Resh He fulfils the desires of all who fear him, 19
34:17 he hears their cry and he saves them.

Jg 5:31 *Shin* Yahweh guards all who love him, 20
but all the wicked he destroys.

Taw My mouth shall always praise Yahweh, 21
let every creature bless his holy name
for ever and ever.

PSALM 146 V 145

Hymn to the God of help [a]

Alleluia! 1
Praise Yahweh, my soul!

=104:33 I will praise Yahweh all my life, 2
7:17i I will make music to my God as long as I live.

90:3;104:29 Is 2:22 Qo 12:7 Do not put your trust in princes, 3
in any child of Adam, who has no power to save.

↗1 M 2:63 When his spirit goes forth he returns to the earth, 4
on that very day all his plans come to nothing.

2:12 Jr 17:7 How blessed is he who has Jacob's God to help him, 5
his hope is in Yahweh his God,

121:2;124:8 who made heaven and earth, 6
the sea and all that is in them.

He keeps faith for ever,

103:6 gives justice to the oppressed, 7
gives food to the hungry;

68:6 Is 49:9;61:1 Yahweh sets prisoners free.

8 Yahweh gives sight to the blind,
lifts up those who are bowed down. 145:14
9 Yahweh protects the stranger,
he sustains the orphan and the widow. 68:5
Ex 22:20seq.

8c Yahweh loves the upright, 11:7
9c but he frustrates the wicked.
10 Yahweh reigns for ever, 145:13+
your God, Zion, from age to age. Ex 15:18

PSALM 147 V 146–147

Hymn to the All-Powerful [a]

Alleluia! [b]

1 Praise Yahweh—it is good to sing psalms 92:1
to our God—how pleasant to praise him. [c]
2 Yahweh, Builder of Jerusalem!
He gathers together the exiles of Israel, Jb 5:18
3 healing the broken-hearted Is 11:12;56:8; 61:1
and binding up their wounds; Jr 31:10;33:6
4 he counts out the number of the stars, Is 40:26*o*
and gives each one of them a name.

5 Our Lord is great, all-powerful,
his wisdom beyond all telling. Is 40:28
6 Yahweh sustains the poor, 1 S 2:7–8
and humbles the wicked to the ground.

7 Sing to Yahweh in thanksgiving,
play the harp for our God.

8 He veils the sky with clouds, 104:10–14, 27–28
and provides the earth with rain, Jb 5:9–10
makes grass grow on the hills Jr 14:22
and plants for people to use, [d] Jl 2:23
9 gives fodder to cattle
and to young ravens when they cry. Jb 38:41
Mt 6:26

10 He takes no delight in the power of horses, 20:7–8; 33:16–18
no pleasure in human sturdiness;
11 his pleasure is in those who fear him,
in those who hope in his faithful love.

12 Praise Yahweh, Jerusalem,
Zion, praise your God. [e]

13 For he gives strength to the bars of your gates, 48:13–14;81–16
he blesses your children within you, Lv 26:6
14 he maintains the peace of your frontiers, Is 65:18seq.
gives you your fill of finest wheat. Jr 33:10seq.

b. 'your mighty deeds', 'your kingship' versions, 'his . . .' Hebr.
c. The *Nun* verse is omitted in Hebr. but preserved in the versions.

146a. This is the first Psalm of a third Hallel, Ps 146–150, recited by Jews in the morning; cf. 113–118 and 136.

147a. Though divided into two (after v. 11) in several versions, including Vulg., the Psalm forms one poem. The poet celebrates God as the liberator of Israel, the Creator, and friend of the lowly.
b. 'Alleluia' Gk; Hebr. joins it to the preceding Psalm.
c. Hebr. adds '(praise) is befitting', omitted by Gk.
d. Gk; cf. 104:14; this line is absent from Hebr.
e. The Fathers apply this second part of the Psalm to the new Jerusalem, militant or triumphant.

29:3seq.;33:9; 107:20 Is 55:10–11
He sends his word to the earth, 15
his command[f] runs quickly,
he spreads the snow like flax, 16
strews hoarfrost like ashes,

Jb 6:16;37:10; 38:22
he sends ice-crystals like breadcrumbs, 17
and who can withstand that cold?
When he sends his word it thaws them, 18
when he makes his wind blow, the waters are unstopped.

Dt 33:3–4
He reveals his word to Jacob, 19
his statutes and judgements to Israel.
Dt 4:7–8 Ac 14:16
For no other nation has he done this, 20
no other has known his judgements.[g]

PSALM 148

Cosmic hymn of praise[a]

Alleluia! 1

Praise Yahweh from the heavens,
praise him in the heights.
103:20–21 Jb 38:7
Praise him, all his angels, 2
praise him, all his host!

Praise him, sun and moon, 3
praise him, all shining stars,
1 K 8:27
praise him, highest heavens, 4
Gn 1:7
praise him, waters above the heavens.

Let them praise the name of Yahweh[b] 5
33:9 Jn 1:3,10
at whose command they were made;
he established them for ever and ever 6
Jr 31:35–36
by an unchanging decree.

Praise Yahweh from the earth, 7
sea-monsters and all the depths,
fire and hail, snow and mist, 8
storm-winds that obey his word,

Is 44:23
mountains and every hill, 9
orchards and every cedar,
Is 43:20
wild animals and all cattle, 10
reptiles and winged birds,

kings of the earth and all nations, 11
princes and all judges on earth,
Jr 31:13
young men and girls, 12
old people and children together.

Let them praise the name of Yahweh, 13
for his name alone is sublime,
108:5;113:4 89:17
his splendour transcends earth and heaven.
For he heightens the strength of his people, 14
to the praise of all his faithful,
Dt 7:6b Ep 2:13
the children of Israel,[c] the people close to him.

PSALM 149

Song of triumph [a]

1 Alleluia!

Sing a new song to Yahweh: 40:9
his praise in the assembly of the faithful!
2 Israel shall rejoice in its Maker,
the children of Zion delight in their king;
3 they shall dance in praise of his name, 68:25;81:2; 87:7;150:4
play to him on tambourines and harp! 62:4–5 1 S 2:8 Is 61:9

4 For Yahweh loves his people,
he will crown the humble with salvation.
5 The faithful exult in glory,
shout for joy as they worship him, [b]
6 praising God to the heights with their voices,
a two-edged sword in their hands, Ne 4:10–12 2 M 15:27

7 to wreak vengeance on the nations, Zc 9:13–16
punishment on the peoples,
8 to load their kings with chains
and their nobles with iron fetters,
9 to execute on them the judgement passed [c]—
to the honour of all his faithful.

PSALM 150

Final chorus of praise [a]

1 Alleluia!

Praise God in his holy place,
praise him in the heavenly vault of his power,
2 praise him for his mighty deeds,
praise him for all his greatness.

3 Praise him with fanfare of trumpet,
praise him with harp and lyre,
4 praise him with tambourines and dancing,
praise him with strings and pipes,
5 praise him with the clamour of cymbals,
praise him with triumphant cymbals, [b]
6 Let everything that breathes praise Yahweh. Rv 5:13

Alleluia!

f. The word of God is represented here as a messenger, almost as a person, cf. 107:20; Is 55:11; Jn 1:14m,n.

g. Hebr. adds 'Alleluia', lacking in Gk. Similarly in the next two Psalms.

148a. Heaven, earth and all creation are here called together to hymn Yahweh, restorer of the chosen people. This Psalm is recited each morning by the Jews.

b. Gk here adds 33:9[a].

c. One of only two cases, with 103:7, where the Psalms use the expression 'child of Israel', which becomes very frequent after the Exile, in the deutero-canonical and Priestly writings.

149a. This national hymn of the hellenistic period (compare 1 M 4:24 and 2 M 15:25–27) looks to the eschatological future, *see* Is 61:2seq., and makes Israel the instrument of divine justice, *see* Zc 9:13–16.

b. lit. 'on their couches', i.e. from the place where they lie prostrate in worship, cf. 95:6; Jdt 6:18, or it may mean praise that does not cease, even at night. Cf. 4:4; 63:6; Ho 7:14.

c. Allusion to the declarations against the nations in the prophetic books.

150a. A more elaborate doxology than those concluding the first four books of the Psalter, 41:13; 72:18–20; 89:51; 106:48; this one invites every musical instrument and every living being to praise Yahweh.

b. lit. 'cymbals of acclamation', cf. 33:3a; Nb 10:5.

INTRODUCTION TO
THE PROVERBS

§1 The Book of Proverbs is the most representative work of Israelite wisdom literature, *see also* Introduction to the Wisdom Books. The body of the book is made up of two collections: 10–22:16, called 'The proverbs of Solomon' (375 aphorisms) and ch. 25–29, introduced by 'Some more of Solomon's proverbs, transcribed at the court of Hezekiah' (128 aphorisms). Appendices have been added to each of these two collections: to the first, 'Sayings of the sages' (22:17–24:22) and 'The following are also taken from the sages' (24:23–34); to the second, 'The sayings of Agur' (30:1–14), followed by numerical proverbs (30:15–33) and 'The sayings of Lemuel' (31:1–9). The whole is preceded by a long introduction, ch. 1–9, in which a father commends wisdom to his child and in which Wisdom herself intervenes. The book closes with an alphabetical poem in praise of the ideal wife, 31:10–31.

The order in which the central sections are arranged is of little importance: it differs in the Greek Bible, and the maxims inside the various sections are juxtaposed without concern for logical sequence. The book is therefore a collection of collections within the framework of a prologue and epilogue. It reflects a literary development outlined in the general Introduction to the Wisdom Books. The two main collections show the *mashal* in its most primitive form and consist exclusively of brief aphorisms, usually of a single couplet. In the appendices, however, the form is more elaborate; the short numerical poems of 30:15–33, cf. 6:16–19, add the charm of a presentation that joins riddles to their edifying matter, a device already practised in earlier times, *see* Am 1. The prologue, ch. 1–9, consists of a long discourse interrupted by two exhortations from Wisdom personified; the epilogue, 31:10–31, is a 'learned' composition.

This evolution of form corresponds to successive periods of literary activity. The earliest sections consist of two great collections, ch. 10–22 and 25–29. These are attributed to Solomon who, according to 1 K 5:12, was the author of 'three thousand proverbs' and who was always considered to have been the greatest sage of Israel. The impersonal tone of the proverbs makes it impossible for us to assign any particular maxim to the king, but there is no reason to doubt that this collection as a whole dates from his time; the maxims of the second collection were already ancient when they were transcribed at the court of Hezekiah in about 700 BC. These two collections form the core of the book and give it its full name, 'The proverbs of Solomon', 1:1. The sub-titles of the smaller sections, however, show that this title is not to be taken too literally, embracing as it does the aphorisms of anonymous sages, 22:17–24:34, and the

sayings of Agur and Lemuel, 30:1–31:9. Even if the names of these two Arabian sages are fictitious and did not belong to real people, they testify to a respect for the wisdom of other lands, *see* Introduction to the Wisdom Books §1. Clear proof of this respect is to be found in some of the 'sayings of the sages', 22:17–23:11, which are based on the Egyptian maxims of Amenemophis, committed to writing at the beginning of the first millennium BC.

§2 The discourses of Pr 1–9 are modelled on 'Instructions', a classic form of Egyptian wisdom literature, but also on the 'Counsels of a Father to his Son', recently discovered in an Accadian text from Ugarit. Even the personification of Wisdom had literary antecedents in Egypt, where Justice-Truth was personified as Maath. The imitation, however, is not slavish; it both preserves the originality of the Israelite thinker, and is transformed by his Yahwistic faith. The nucleus of the book, ch. 10–29, may therefore safely be dated in the pre-exilic period; the date of ch. 30–31 is uncertain. The prologue, ch. 1–9, is certainly later; it has literary affinities with post-exilic writings which suggest the fifth century as the date of its composition. This is also presumably when the whole book was given its definitive form.

Since, then, the book represents several centuries of thought on the part of the sages, developments of doctrine are discernible in it. In the two primitive collections the dominant tone is that of human, worldly wisdom, disconcerting to the Christian reader, though even here one proverb in every seven is religious in theme. This religious teaching is not speculative but practical: God rewards truth, charity, purity of heart, humility, and punishes their contrary vices. The source and the sum of all these virtues is wisdom, that is to say the fear of Yahweh, 15:16,33; 16:6; 22:4, who alone is worthy of trust, 20:22, 29:25. The opening chapters offer the same principles of human and sacred wisdom; they emphasise vices of which the earlier sages do not speak, such as adultery, 2:16seq.; 5:2seq.,15seq. The epilogue, too, bears witness to a greater respect for women. More important still, the prologue offers the first example of a logically ordered doctrine of wisdom, its worth and its function as guide and controller of behaviour. The speaker is Wisdom herself; she sings her own praise and explains her relationship with God, in whom she has been from all eternity and whom she assisted when he made the world, 8:22–31. This is the earliest of all the texts (listed on p. 750, *see also* 8:22e) to deal with Wisdom personified.

§3 The teaching of the Book of Proverbs has undoubtedly been far transcended by that of Christ, the Wisdom of God; even so, several maxims anticipate the moral teaching of the gospel. It should also be remembered that true religion can develop only on the foundations of human decency; while the frequent use of the book (fourteen quotations and about twenty allusions) made by the New Testament, commands the respect of Christians for these thoughts of the ancient sages of Israel.

THE PROVERBS

Title and purpose of the book

1 The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel: 1

for learning what wisdom and discipline are, 2
for understanding words of deep meaning,
for acquiring a disciplined insight, 3
uprightness, justice and fair dealing;
for teaching sound judgement to the simple, 4
and knowledge and reflection to the young;
for perceiving the meaning of proverbs and obscure sayings, 6
the sayings of the sages and their riddles.
22:17 Qo 9:17 Let the wise listen and learn yet more, 5
and a person of discernment will acquire the art of guidance.

9:10;15:33 Jb 28:28 ‖Ps 111:10 Si 1:14 The fear of Yahweh is the beginning of knowledge; [a] 7
fools spurn wisdom and discipline.

I: PROLOGUE

COMMENDATION OF WISDOM

The sage speaks: avoid bad company

=6:20 Listen, my child, to your father's instruction, 8
do not reject your mother's teaching:
4:9 they will be a crown of grace for your head, 9
3:22 Si 6:24.29 a circlet for your neck.
My child, if sinners try to seduce you, 10
Ps 1:1 do not go with them.
If they say, 'Come with us: 11
let us lie in ambush to shed blood;
Ps 10:8 Si 11:32 if we plan an ambush for the innocent without provocation,
Nb 16:33f we can swallow them alive, like Sheol, 12
and whole, like those who sink into oblivion.
We shall find treasures of every sort, 13
we shall fill our houses with plunder;
throw in your lot with us: 14
one purse between us all.'
My child, do not follow them in their way, 15
keep your steps out of their path
6:18 =Is 59:7 *for their feet hasten to evil,* 16
they are quick to shed blood; [b]
for the net is spread in vain 17
if any winged creature can see it. [c]

18 It is for their own blood such people lie in wait,
their ambush is against their own selves!
19 Such are the paths of all who seek dishonest gain: 15:27
which robs of their lives all who take it for their own.

Wisdom speaks: a warning to the heedless

20 Wisdom calls aloud in the streets, [d] 8:1–3;9:3 Si 24
she raises her voice [e] in the public squares; Jn 7:37
21 she calls out at the street corners, [f]
she delivers her message at the city gates.
22 'You simple people, how much longer will you cling Ps 94:8
to your simple ways?
How much longer will mockers revel in their mocking
and fools go on hating knowledge?
23 Pay attention to my warning.
To you I will pour out my heart
and tell you what I have to say.
24 Since I have called and you have refused me, Ps 107:11 Is 65:2,12; 66:4
since I have beckoned and no one has taken notice,
25 since you have ignored all my advice Jr 7:13
and rejected all my warnings,
26 I, for my part, shall laugh at your distress, Dt 28:63
I shall jeer when terror befalls you,
27 when terror befalls you, like a storm, Jr 23:19
when your distress arrives, like a whirlwind,
when ordeal and anguish bear down on you.
28 Then they will call me, but I shall not answer, Jr 11:11+
they will look eagerly for me and will not find me. Ho 5:6+ Jn 7:34
29 They have hated knowledge,
they have not chosen the fear of Yahweh,
30 they have taken no notice of my advice,
they have spurned all my warnings: Jr 6:19
31 so they will have to eat the fruits of their own ways of life,
and choke themselves with their own scheming.
32 For the errors of the simple lead to their death, 8:36
the complacency of fools works their own ruin; Jr 5:12–13 Am 6:1
33 but whoever listens to me may live secure,
will have quiet, fearing no mischance.'

Wisdom, a safeguard against bad company

1 2 My child, if you take my words to heart, [a]
if you set store by my commandments,
2 tuning your ear to wisdom,
tuning your heart to understanding,

1 **a.** The biblical expression 'the fear of Yahweh', *see* Ex 20:20i; Dt 6:2a, means approximately what we call religion or devotion to God. It is at once the basis, 9:10; 15:33; Jb 28:28; Ps 111:10; Si 1:14,20, and the crown, Si 1:18; 19:20; 25:10–11; 40:26–27, of an essentially religious type of wisdom, encouraging a personal relationship with the God of the covenant, in which fear and love, submission and confidence, coincide. *see* Ps 25:12–14; 112:1; 128:1; Qo 12:13; Si 1:27–28; 2:7–9,15–18; etc.

b. This v. is missing from the best Gk MSS and is generally thought to be a gloss borrowed from Is 59:7.

c. The meaning is, apparently, that as the bird avoids the net if it has seen the hunter spread it, so the youth duly admonished will know how to avoid the pitfalls of life.

d. 'through the streets' Gk; 'outside' Hebr.

e. Like the prophets, *see* Jr 5:1; 7:2, Wisdom personified, *see* 8:22f, goes walking through the city streets, waylaying the inhabitants to press her teaching on them, denouncing their heedlessness and false sense of security, *see* Am 6:1; 9:10; Zp 1:12.

f. lit. 'at the top of the noisy (street)'; but the text is uncertain. Gk 'on top of the walls'.

2 **a.** All wisdom comes from God, v. 6, but the dispositions needed for receiving it are an enquiring mind, vv. 3–4, and a willingness to learn from the teaching of one's elders, vv. 1–2; etc.

yes, if your plea is for clear perception, 3
if you cry out for understanding,
3:14;8:19; 16:16 Mt 13:44–46 if you look for it as though for silver, 4
search for it as though for buried treasure,
then you will understand what the fear of Yahweh is, 5
and discover the knowledge of God.
Jb 32:8 Ws 9:10 Si 1:1 For Yahweh himself is giver of wisdom, 6
from his mouth issue knowledge and understanding.
He reserves his advice for the honest, 7
a shield to those whose ways are sound;
he stands guard over the paths of equity, 8
he keeps watch over the way of those faithful to him.
Then you will understand uprightness, equity and fair dealing, 9
the paths that lead to happiness.
When wisdom comes into your heart 10
and knowledge fills your soul with delight,
then prudence will be there to watch over you, 11
and understanding will be your guardian
to keep you from the way that is evil, 12
from those whose speech is deceitful,
from those who leave the paths of honesty 13
to walk the roads of darkness:
10:23 those who find their joy in doing wrong, 14
and their delight in deceitfulness,
whose tracks are twisted, 15
and the paths that they tread crooked.
5:2–20; 6:24–7:27 Si 9:9 To keep you, too, from the woman who belongs to another,[b] 16
from the stranger, with her wheedling words;
she has left the partner of her younger days, 17
Ex 20:14 she has forgotten the covenant of her God;
her house is tilting towards Death, 18
down to the Shades go her paths.
Of those who go to her not one returns, 19
they never regain the paths of life.

Thus you will tread the way of good people, 20
persisting in the paths of the upright.
Ps 37:9,29 Mt 5:4 For the land will be for the honest to live in, 21
the innocent will have it for their home;
10:30 while the wicked will be cut off from the land, 22
and the faithless rooted out of it.

How to acquire wisdom

Dt 8:1;30:16 3 My child, do not forget my teaching, 1
let your heart keep my principles,
4:10;9:11 Dt 4:40;8:3 Ne 9:29 Si 1:20 since they will increase your length of days, 2
your years of life and your well-being.

Let faithful love and constancy never leave you: 3
=6:21; =7:3 Dt 6:6–9 tie them round your neck,
write them on the tablet of your heart.
Thus you will find favour and success 4
Ps 37:5 Lk 2:52 in the sight of God and of people.
↗Rm 12:17 Trust wholeheartedly in Yahweh, 5
28:26 put no faith in your own perception;
acknowledge him in every course you take, 6

and he will see that your paths are smooth. 16:3 Si 2:6

7 Do not congratulate yourself on your own wisdom,
fear Yahweh and turn your back on evil: Ps 34:9, 14 ↗Rm 12:16

8 health-giving, this, to your body, [a]
relief to your bones.

9 Honour Yahweh with what goods you have Ex 23:19 Si 7:31 Ml 3:10–12
and with the first-fruits of all your produce; •Dt 26:1a

10 then your barns will be filled with corn, [b] •Dt 28:8 Ps 4:7
your vats overflowing with new wine.

11 My child, do not scorn correction from Yahweh, Jb 5:17 ↗Heb 12:5–6
do not resent his reproof; Dt 8:5

12 for Yahweh reproves those he loves, Rv 3:19
as a father the child whom he loves.

The joys of wisdom

13 Blessed are those who have discovered wisdom,
those who have acquired understanding!

14 Gaining her is more rewarding than silver, 2:4+
her yield is more valuable than gold.

15 She is beyond the price of pearls, 8:11
nothing you could covet is her equal.

16 In her right hand is length of days; Si 4:12
in her left hand, riches and honour. 8:18

17 Her ways are filled with delight,
her paths all lead to contentment.

18 She is a tree of life for those who hold her fast, 11:30 Gn 2:9;3:22
those who cling to her live happy lives. Rv 2:7

19 In wisdom, Yahweh laid the earth's foundations, 8:22–31
in understanding, he spread out the heavens.

20 Through his knowledge the depths were cleft open,
and the clouds distil the dew.

21 My child, hold to sound advice and prudence,
never let them out of sight; 4:21

22 they will give life to your soul
and beauty to your neck. 1:9

23 You will go on your way in safety, 4:12;6:22 Ps 91:12
your feet will not stumble.

24 When you go to bed, you will not be afraid;
once in bed, your sleep will be sweet. Ps 3:6

25 Have no fear either of sudden terror Ps 91:5
or of attack mounted by wicked men,

26 since Yahweh will be your guarantor, Jb 5:19–27
he will keep your steps from the snare.

27 Refuse no kindness to those who have a right to it, Si 4:3 Mt 7:12
if it is in your power to perform it.

b. i.e. another man's wife. This first section of Pr, the last to be added to the collection, often warns against adultery, 2:16–19; 5:2–23; 6:24–7:27. Adultery is identified, 2:17, with apostasy from the covenant of God, *see also* 5:15b; it leads to Sheol, 2:18; 5:5,6; 7:26–27. In these passages there is only one allusion to prostitution, 6:26, which the older proverbs identify with adultery, *see* 23:27; 31:3, cf. 29:3, since both corrupt kings and rob warriors of their vigour.

3 **a.** 'to your body' versions, cf. 4:22; 'to your stomach' Hebr.

b. 'with corn', Gk; 'to repletion', Hebr. The offering of the first-fruits, Dt 26:1a, is the sole cultic observance explicitly commanded by the Proverbs, but there is frequent mention of prayer.

Mt 5:43–48
Lk 10:25–37

Do not say to your neighbour, ‘Go away! Come another time! 28
I will give it you tomorrow,’ if you can do it now.
Do not plot harm against your neighbour 29
who is living unsuspecting beside you.
Do not pick a groundless quarrel with anyone 30
who has done you no harm.

23:17
Ps 37:1
Si 11:21

Do not envy the man of violence,[d] 31
never model your conduct on his;
for the wilful wrong-doer is abhorrent to Yahweh, 32
who confides only in the honest.
Yahweh's curse lies on the house of the wicked, 33
but he blesses the home of the upright.

Si 3:18.20
↗Jm 4:6
↗1 P 5:5

He mocks those who mock, 34
but accords his favour to the humble.
Glory is the portion of the wise, 35
all that fools inherit[e] is contempt.

On choosing wisdom

4 Listen, my children, to a father's instruction; 1
pay attention, and learn what understanding is.
What I am offering you is sound doctrine: 2
do not forsake my teaching.
I too was once a child with a father, 3
in my mother's eyes a tender child, unique.
This was what he used to teach me, 4

=7:2;8:35

‘Let your heart treasure what I have to say,
keep my principles and you will live;
acquire wisdom, acquire understanding, 5
never forget her, never deviate from my words.
Do not desert her, she will keep you safe; 6
love her, she will watch over you.
The first principle of wisdom is: acquire wisdom;[a] 7

Mt 13:44–46

at the cost of all you have, acquire understanding!
Hold her close,[b] and she will make you great; 8
embrace her, and she will be your pride;

1:9
Ws 5:16

she will provide a graceful garland for your head, 9
bestow a crown of honour on you.’

3:1–2

Listen, my child, take my words to heart, 10
and the years of your life will be multiplied.
I have educated you in the ways of wisdom, 11

Ps 23:3

I have guided you along the path of honesty.

3:23+

When you walk, your going will be unhindered, 12
if you run, you will not stumble.
Hold fast to discipline, never let her go, 13
keep your eyes on her, she is your life.
Do not follow the path of the wicked, 14
do not walk the way that the evil go.
Avoid it, do not take it, 15
turn your back on it, pass it by.
For they cannot sleep unless they have first done wrong, 16
they miss their sleep if they have not made someone stumble;
for the bread of wickedness is what they eat, 17
and the wine of violence is what they drink.

Ps 1:1a
Jn 8:12b

The path of the upright is like the light of dawn, 18
its brightness growing to the fullness of day;

19 the way of the wicked is as dark as night,
they cannot tell the obstacles they stumble over.

20 My child, pay attention to what I am telling you, 3:21
listen carefully to my words;
21 do not let them out of your sight,
keep them deep in your heart.
22 For they are life to those who find them
and health to all humanity.
23 More than all else, keep watch over your heart,
since here are the wellsprings of life.
24 Turn your back on the mouth that misleads,
keep your distance from lips that deceive.
25 Let your eyes be fixed ahead,
your gaze be straight before you.
26 Let the path you tread be level
and all your ways be firm.
27 Turn neither to right nor to left, Dt 5:32;28:14
keep your foot clear of evil.

Against adultery. Where the wise man's love should be

1 5 My son, pay attention to my wisdom,
listen carefully to what I know;
2 so that you may preserve discretion
and your lips may guard knowledge.
Take no notice of a loose-living woman,[a] 2:16b
3 for the lips of the adulteress drip with honey,
her palate is more unctuous than oil,
4 but in the end she is bitter as wormwood, Qo 7:26
sharp as a two-edged sword.
5 Her feet go down to death, 7:27
Sheol the goal of her steps; Nb 16:33f
6 far from following the path of life,
her course is uncertain and she does not know it.

7 And now, son, listen to me,
never deviate from what I say:
8 set your course as far from her as possible,
go nowhere near the door of her house,
9 or she will hand over your honour to others,
the years of your life to a man without pity,
10 and strangers will batten on your property,
and your produce go to the house of a stranger, 29:3
11 and, at your ending,
your body and flesh having been consumed,
12 you will groan and exclaim,
'Alas, I hated discipline,
my heart spurned all correction;

c. 'Neighbour' originally meant companion, friend, associate, i.e. one with whom someone had a specific relationship. But in Pr the word has a wider sense of 'fellow-human being', *see* 6:1,3,29; 25:9; 27:17. This is the first step towards the broadening of the precept of charity, Lv 19:18, which will reach its final form in the command of Jesus 'love your enemies', Mt 5:43seq.

d. The seeming prosperity of the godless ('the violent', 'the perverse', 'wicked', 'mockers', 'fools', various terms for the enemies of Yahweh) had always been a threat to the constancy of the Israelites, *see* 24:1,19; Ps 73, and later became a serious theological problem, Jb 21:7; Jr 12:1; etc.

e. 'inherit' *morishim* conj.; Hebr. *merim* 'raising' (singular).

4 **a.** i.e. to win wisdom one must first realise how essential it is and that it demands self-sacrifice.

b. Meaning uncertain; it could also mean 'exalt her'; Gk: 'surround her with a palisade' (to protect her).

5 **a.** Following Gk; line omitted in Hebr.

I would not attend to the voice of my masters, 13
I would not listen to those who tried to teach me.
Now I have come to nearly every kind of misery, 14
Si 1:30 in the assembly and in the community.'

31:10seq. Drink the water from your own storage-well, 15
fresh water from your own spring. [b]
Even if your fountains overflow outside, 16
your streams of water in the public squares:
let them be for you alone, 17
and not for strangers with you.
May your fountain-head be blessed! 18

Qo 9:9 Find joy with the wife you married in your youth,
fair as a hind, graceful as a fawn: 19
hers the breasts that ever fill you with delight,
hers the love that ever holds you captive.
Why be seduced, my son, by someone else's wife, 20
and fondle the breast of a woman who belongs to another?
For the eyes of Yahweh observe human ways, 21
and survey all human paths.
The wicked is snared in his own misdeeds, 22
is caught in the meshes of his own sin.
For want of discipline, he dies, 23
led astray by his own excessive folly. [c]

11:15;17:18; 20:16;22: 26–27;=27:13 Si 29:14–20 **On surety rashly offered** [a]

6 My child, if you have gone surety for your neighbour, 1
if you have guaranteed the bond of a stranger,
if you have committed yourself with your lips, 2
if through words of yours you have been entrapped,
do this, my child, to extricate yourself— 3
since you have put yourself in the power of your neighbour:
go, humble yourself, plead with your neighbour,
give your eyes no sleep, 4
your eyelids no rest,
break free like a gazelle from the trap, [b] 5
like a bird from the fowler's clutches.

20:4,13;22:13; 24:30–34; 30:24–25 **The idler and the ant**

Idler, go to the ant; 6
ponder her ways and grow wise: [c]
no one gives her orders, 7
no overseer, no master,
yet all through the summer she gets her food ready, 8
and gathers her supplies at harvest time. [d]
How long do you intend to lie there, idler? 9
When are you going to rise from your sleep?
=24:33–34 A little sleep, a little drowsiness, 10
a little folding of the arms to lie back,
and poverty comes like a vagrant 11
and, like a beggar, [e] dearth.

Ps 36:1–4 **Portrait of a scoundrel**

A scoundrel, a vicious man, 12
he goes with a leer on his lips,

13 winking his eye, shuffling his foot, 10:10 Si 27:22
beckoning with his finger.
14 Trickery in his heart, always scheming evil,
he sows dissension.
15 Disaster will overtake him sharply for this,
suddenly, irretrievably, he will be broken.

Seven things abhorrent to God[f]

16 There are six things that Yahweh hates,
seven that he abhors:
17 a haughty look, a lying tongue,
hands that shed innocent blood,
18 a heart that weaves wicked plots,
feet that hurry to do evil, 1:16
19 a false witness who lies with every breath,
and one who sows dissension among brothers.

More fatherly advice

20 Keep your father's precept, my child, =1:8
do not spurn your mother's teaching.
21 Bind them ever to your heart, =3:3
tie them round your neck.
22 While you are active, they will guide you, 3:23–24
when you fall asleep, they will watch over you,
when you wake up, they will converse with you.

23 For the precept is a lamp, Ps 119:105
the teaching is a light;
correction and discipline are the way to life, 10:17 2:16–19; 5:2–20 •Mt 5:28
24 preserving you from the woman of bad character,
from the wheedling talk of a woman who belongs to another.
25 Do not covet her beauty in your heart
or let her captivate you with the play of her eyes;
26 a prostitute can be bought for a hunk of bread,
but a married woman aims to snare a precious life.[g]
27 Can a man carry fire inside his shirt
without setting his clothes alight?
28 Can you walk on red-hot coals
without burning your feet?
29 Just so, the man who makes love to his neighbour's wife:
no one who touches her will get off unpunished.
30 People attach but little blame to a thief
who steals only to satisfy his hunger;

b. Metaphors for the lawful wife. The condemnation of adultery, 2:16b, is now complemented by this eulogy of marital fidelity and of the lawful wife, vv. 15–18[a] and vv. 18[b]–19. For further passages in praise of the ideal wife, a gift from God and the consolation of her husband, *see* 18:22; 19:14 (*see* by contrast, 11:22; 19:13; 21:9,19; 25:24; 27:15; 31:3) and particularly the enthusiastic commendation of the perfect wife with which the book ends, 31:10–31. Perhaps here too, as in 31:10seq., behind the characteristics of the lawful wife we should see a symbolic portrait of Wisdom personified. In the context of ch. 1–9, adultery and married fidelity would, according to the prophetic tradition, *see* Ho 1:2b, stand respectively for religious apostasy and faithfulness to God and his Law as the source of wisdom.

c. The four recommendations that follow, 6:1–5,6–11,12–15,16–19, interrupt the sage's discourse, which resumes at 6:20.

6 **a.** Surety was practised in Israel from ancient times. The earliest proverbs contain warnings against its abuse, though the later Si commends it as a charitable work.

b. 'from the trap' Gk; 'from the hand' Hebr.

c. A knowledge of nature is part of the sage's intellectual equipment, *see* 30:24–31; 1 K 5:13; etc.

d. Gk adds 'or go to the bee and see how diligent she is and how considerable the work she does. Kings and commoners take what she yields for their health; she is sought after and revered by all; her strength may be feeble, but because she does homage to wisdom she wins respect.'

e. 'beggar', lit. 'man hoping for a tip' *'ish maggan* conj.; Hebr. *'ish magen* 'armed man'.

f. Numerical proverb, *see* 30:15e.

g. The adulterous woman is more dangerous than the prostitute: the latter is content with a cash payment, the former demands a man's whole life.

Ex 22:1–8 yet even he, if caught, will have to repay sevenfold 31
and hand over all his family resources. [h]
But the adulterer has no sense; 32
he works his own destruction.
All he will get is blows and contempt, 33
and dishonour never to be blotted out.
27:4 For jealousy inflames the husband 34
who will show no mercy when the day comes for revenge;
he will not consider any compensation; 35
lavish what gifts you may, he will not be placated.

7 My child, keep my words, 1
and treasure my precepts,
4:4;8:35 keep my precepts and you will live, 2
keep my teaching as the apple of your eye.
Dt 6:8 Bind these to your fingers, 3
=3:3 write them on the tablet of your heart.
6:20 Say to Wisdom, 'You are my sister!' 4
Call Understanding your relation,
=2:16b to save yourself from the woman that belongs to another, 5
from the stranger, with her seductive words.

While I was at the window of my house, 6
I was looking out through the lattice
and I saw, among the callow youths, 7
I noticed among the lads,
one boy who had no sense.
Going along the lane, near the corner where she lives, 8
he reaches the path to her house,
at twilight when day is declining, 9
at dead of night and in the dark.
Gn 38:19 And look, a woman is coming to meet him, 10
dressed like a prostitute, false of heart.
She is loud and brazen; 11
5:6 her feet cannot rest at home.
Once in the street, once in the square, 12
23:27–28 she lurks at every corner.
She catches hold of him, she kisses him, 13
5:3 the bold-faced creature says to him,
'I had to offer a communion sacrifice, 14
I have discharged my vows today;
that is why I came out to meet you, 15
Sg 3:2seq. to look for you, and now I have found you.
I have spread coverlets over my divan, 16
embroidered stuff, Egyptian material,
I have sprinkled my bed with myrrh, 17
with aloes and cinnamon.
Come on, we'll make love as much as we like, till morning. 18
Let us enjoy the delights of love!
For my husband is not at home, 19
he has gone on a very long journey,
taking his moneybags with him; 20
he will not be back till the moon is full.'
With her persistent coaxing she overcomes him, 21
lures him on with her wheedling patter.
Forthwith he follows her, 22
like an ox on its way to the slaughterhouse,

like a madman on his way to the stocks, [a]
23 until an arrow pierces him to the liver,
like the bird that dashes into the net Qo 7:26;9:12
without realising that its life is at stake.
24 And now, son, listen to me,
pay attention to the words I have to say:
25 do not let your heart stray into her ways,
or wander into her paths;
26 she has done so many to death,
and the strongest have all been her victims.
27 Her house is the way to Sheol,
the descent to the courts of death.

Wisdom speaks again [a] 1:20–33

1 8 Is not Wisdom calling?
Is not Understanding raising her voice?
2 On the heights overlooking the road,
at the crossways, she takes her stand;
3 by the gates, at the entrance to the city,
on the access-roads, she cries out, [b] Jn 7:37
4 'I am calling to you, all people,
my words are addressed to all humanity.
5 Simpletons, learn how to behave,
fools, come to your senses. [c]
6 Listen, I have something important to tell you,
when I speak, my words are right.
7 My mouth proclaims the truth,
for evil is abhorrent to my lips.
8 All the words from my mouth are upright,
nothing false there, nothing crooked,
9 everything plain, if you can understand,
straight, if you have acquired knowledge.
10 Accept my discipline rather than silver, 3:14;16:16
and knowledge of me in preference to finest gold.
11 For Wisdom is more precious than jewels, 3:15
and nothing else is so worthy of desire. Jb 28:15–19

Wisdom sings her own praises. Wisdom, the guide of kings Si 24

12 'I, Wisdom, share house with Discretion,
I am mistress of the art of thought.
13 (Fear of Yahweh means hatred of evil.) Jb 28:28
I hate pride and arrogance, Si 15:8
wicked behaviour and a lying mouth.
14 To me belong good advice and prudence,
I am perception: power is mine!
15 By me monarchs rule 1 K 3:4–15
and princes decree what is right; Is 11:2–5 Jr 23:5
16 by me rulers govern, Si 10:4
so do nobles, the lawful authorities. [d]

h. Though excused by hunger, the thief must restore with interest. Ex 22:1–8 prescribes double restitution. Here sevenfold is an arbitrary figure to emphasise how costly restitution can be.

7 **a.** Uncertain line. Gk reads: (22c) 'like a dog caught in a noose, (23a) like a stag with an arrow stuck in its liver'.

8 **a.** Ch 8–9 mark the height of the teaching of Proverbs on wisdom, *see* 8:22e. The same theme is developed in later books: Si 1:1–20; 24; Ws 6–9 (*see also* Jb 28).

b. Perhaps like a travelling salesman, who attracts custom by boasting of the quality of his wares.

c. lit. 'understand the heart', i.e. 'intellect'; 'has no sense', lit. 'has no heart'.

d. v. 17 is sometimes read before v. 15 to improve the logic of the argument.

Ws 6:12
↗Mt 7:7–11
Jn 14:21
I love those who love me; 17
whoever searches eagerly for me finds me.
3:16
With me are riches and honour, 18
lasting wealth and saving justice.
Si 1:16seq.
The fruit I give is better than gold, even the finest, 19
the return I make is better than pure silver.
I walk in the way of uprightness 20
in the path of justice,
to endow my friends with my wealth 21
and to fill their treasuries.

Jn 1:1–3;1a
Wisdom as Creator [e]

Ws 9:9
Si 1:4,9;
24:8–9
'Yahweh created me, first-fruits of his fashioning, [f] 22
before the oldest of his works.
From everlasting, I was firmly set, [g] 23
Jn 1:1
from the beginning, before the earth came into being.
The deep [h] was not, when I was born, 24
nor were the springs with their abounding waters.
Before the mountains were settled, 25
before the hills, I came to birth;
before he had made the earth, the countryside, 26
and the first elements of the world.
Gn 1:6
Jb 28:23–27
Ws 9:9
Si 24:5
When he fixed the heavens firm, I was there, 27
when he drew a circle on the surface of the deep,
when he thickened the clouds above, 28
when the sources of the deep began to swell,
Jb 38:8–11
Ps 104:7–9
when he assigned the sea its boundaries 29
—and the waters will not encroach on the shore—
when he traced the foundations of the earth,
I was beside the master craftsman, [i] 30
delighting him day after day,
ever at play in his presence,
at play everywhere on his earth, 31
Ws 1:6
delighting to be with the children of men.

The supreme invitation

'And now, my children, listen to me. 32
Si 14:20–27
Happy are those who keep my ways.
Listen to instruction and become wise, 33
do not reject it.
Blessed, whoever listens to me, 34
Ws 6:14
Rv 3:20
who day after day keeps watch at my gates
to guard my portals.
3:1–2
1 Jn 5–12
For whoever finds me finds life, 35
and obtains the favour of Yahweh;
but whoever misses me harms himself, 36
Ws 1:12–16
all who hate me are in love with death.'

Mt 22:1–
14par.
Wisdom as hostess

9 Wisdom has built herself a house, 1
she has hewn her seven pillars, [a]
she has slaughtered her beasts, drawn her wine, 2
she has laid her table.
She has despatched her maidservants 3
and proclaimed from the heights above the city,
'Who is simple? Let him come this way.' 4

To the fool she says,
'Come and eat my bread,
drink the wine which I have drawn!
Leave foolishness behind and you will live,
go forwards in the ways of perception.'

Si 24:19–21
Is 55:1–3
Jn 6:35k

Against cynics [b]

Reprove a mocker and you attract contempt,
rebuke the wicked and you attract dishonour.
Do not rebuke the mocker, he will hate you,
rebuke the wise and he will love you for it.
Be open with the wise, he grows wiser still,
teach the upright, he will gain yet more.
The first principle of wisdom is the fear of Yahweh,
What God's holy ones know—this is understanding.
For by me your days will be multiplied,
and your years of life increased.
Are you wise? You are wise to your own good.
A mocker? The burden is yours alone.

15:12
19:25
1:7a
3:1–2

A silly woman apes Wisdom [c]

9:1–6

A silly woman acts on impulse,
is foolish and knows nothing.
She sits at the door of her house,
on a throne high up in the city,
calling to the passers-by,
who are walking straight past on their way,
'Who is simple? Turn aside, come over here.'
To the fool she says,
'Stolen waters are sweet,
and bread tastes better when eaten in secret.'

e. The concept of a personified wisdom, a mere literary device in Pr 14:1, was further developed in the post-exilic period, when polytheism was no longer a threat to true religion. In Jb 28 and Ba 3:9–4:4 wisdom is represented as a thing distinct from God or human beings, desirable in itself; in Pr 1:20–23; 3:16–19 and 8–9 it is represented as a person. Here Wisdom herself reveals her origin (created before all other creatures, vv. 22–26), her active part in the creation, vv. 27–30, and the function she discharges among human beings in leading them to God, vv. 35–36. This doctrine will be further developed in Si; Si 1:1–10 recalls Jb 28, but Si 4:11–19; 14:20–15:10 and especially 24:1–29 (*see* Si 24:1a) are in line with Pr 8. Wisdom is personified in all these texts but, as in the case of the Word and the Spirit, it is hard to discern how much is poetic device, how much the expression of older forms of religious thought, how much the appreciation of newly revealed truths. Finally, Ws 7:22–8:1 gives the impression that wisdom, an 'outpouring of God's glory', has a share in the divine nature, although the abstract terms used may apply equally well to a divine attribute as to a distinct personality. The doctrine of wisdom, thus outlined in the OT, will be resumed in the NT which will give it new and decisive completion by applying it to the person of Christ. Jesus is referred to as Wisdom itself, the Wisdom of God, Mt 11:19 par.; Lk 11:49, cf. Mt 23:34–36; 1 Co 1:24–30; like Wisdom, he participates in the creation and preservation of the world, Col 1:16–17, and the protection of Israel, 1 Co 10:4, cf. Ws 10:17seq. Finally, John in his prologue attributes the characteristics of creative Wisdom to the Word, and his Gospel throughout represents Christ as the Wisdom of God. *See* Jn 6:35t. Hence, Christian tradition from St Justin onwards sees in the Wisdom of the OT the person of Christ himself.

f. The Hebr. verb (*qanani*) is translated 'has created me' by Gk, Syr., Targ., cf. Si 1:4,9; 24:8,9. The translation 'acquired me' or 'possessed me' (Aquila, Symm., Theod.) was adopted by Jerome (Vulg.), probably with an eye to the heretic Arius who maintained that the Word (= Wisdom) was a created being. The expression 'first-fruits of his fashioning' (lit. 'first-fruits of his way' or 'of his ways', according to the versions) is linked to the title 'first born of every creature' given to Christ by Paul, Col 1:15, and to the title 'principle of God's creation', Rv 3:14.

g. 'anointed' according to one possible sense of *nasak*. Some prefer the usual meaning 'pour', 'found' (as of metal). Others correct it, to derive the word from the root *sakak* and understand 'I was hidden' or 'held in reserve'.

h. The watery abyss on which rest both the earth's disc and the canopy of heaven, *see* Gn 1; Jb 38; Ps 104.

i. A rare Hebr. word. The meaning 'artisan, artist' (whence 'master craftsman') is attested by Jr 52:15; Sg 7:2, and confirmed by the Gk. Wisdom collaborates with the Creator, cf. Ws 7:22. Another translation, based on a slight correction, makes Wisdom the 'beloved child' or 'faithful disciple' of the Creator.

9 **a.** Indications of a wealthy household with interior courtyard. The number seven here is symbolic of perfection.

b. Aphorisms subsequently inserted as a commentary on v. 6.

c. Folly is now personified in her turn, and her activities contrasted with those of wisdom, 9:1–6. The meaning of the parable is plain; there are two ways open to human beings, of virtue or of vice (4:18–19; Dt 30:15–20; Ps 1; *see also Didache*, Pseudo-Barnabas, and Qumran MSS); there are two invitations offered to human beings, two banquets they may attend. They must choose for themselves, cf. Rm 12:21; 2 Co 6:14seq.; Tt 1:15.

But the fool does not know that this is where the Shades are 18
Nb 16:33f and that her guests are already in the vales of Sheol.

II: THE MAJOR COLLECTION ATTRIBUTED TO SOLOMON[a]

10 The proverbs of Solomon. 1

=15:20; 17:25;19:13 A wise child is a father's joy,
a foolish child a mother's grief.

=11:4;12:28 Si 5:8 Treasures wickedly come by give no benefit, 2
but uprightness brings delivery from death.

Ps 34:9 Yahweh does not let the upright go hungry, 3
but he thwarts the greed of the wicked.

15:19;19:15 A slack hand brings poverty, 4
but the hand of the diligent brings wealth.

20:4 Reaping at harvest-time is the mark of the prudent, 5
6:9–11 sleeping at harvest-time is the sign of the worthless.

10:16–24 11:18 Blessings are on the head of the upright, 6
but the mouth of the godless is a cover for violence.[b]

10:27;12:7; 14:11 Ps 112:6 The upright is remembered with blessings, 7
the name of the wicked rots away.

Mt 7:24 The wise of heart takes orders, 8
but a gabbling fool heads for ruin.

23:18 Anyone whose ways are honourable walks secure, 9
but whoever follows crooked ways is soon unmasked.

6:13 Si 27:22 A wink of the eye brings trouble, 10
a bold rebuke brings peace.[c]

The mouth of the upright is a life-giving fountain, 11
but the mouth of the godless is a cover for violence.

17:9 Hatred provokes disputes, 12
↗1 Co 13:7 Jm 5:20 ↗1 P 4:8 but love excuses all offences.

On the lips of the discerning is found wisdom, 13
19:29;26:3 on the back of a fool, the stick.

18:7 Mt 12:34–35 Wise people store up knowledge, 14
but the mouth of a fool makes ruin imminent.

=18:11 Ps 49:6 Si 8:2 The wealth of the rich is their stronghold, 15
poverty is the undoing of the weak.

12:28 Rm 6:21–22 The wage of the upright affords life, 16
but sin is all the wicked earns.

6:23;15:32 Whoever abides by discipline, walks[d] towards life, 17
whoever ignores correction goes astray.

Liars' lips are a cover for hatred, 18
whoever utters slander is a fool.

19 A flood of words is never without fault; 13:3;17:27
whoever controls the lips is wise. Qo 5:2
Jm 3:8

20 The tongue of the upright is purest silver,
the heart of the wicked is of trumpery value.

21 The lips of the upright nourish many peoples,
but fools die for want of sense.

22 The blessing of Yahweh is what brings riches, Ps 127:1
to this, hard toil has nothing to add.

23 A fool takes pleasure in doing wrong, 2:14;15:21
the intelligent in cultivating wisdom.

24 What the wicked fears overtakes him, Jb 3:25
what the upright desires comes to him as a present. Ps 37:4

25 When the storm is over, the wicked is no more, 12:3
but the upright stands firm for ever. Mt 7:24–27
1 Jn 2:16–17

26 As vinegar to the teeth, smoke to the eyes,
so the sluggard[c] to the one who sends him. 13:17;25:13;
26:6

27 The fear of Yahweh adds length to life, 4:10
the years of the wicked will be cut short.

28 The hope of the upright is joy,
the expectations of the wicked come to nothing. Jb 8:13
Ps 112:10

29 The way of Yahweh is a rampart for the honest,
for evil-doers nothing but ruin.

30 The upright will never have to give way, 2:21–22
but the land will offer no home for the wicked.

31 The mouth of the upright utters wisdom, ‖Ps 37:30
the tongue that deceives will be cut off.

32 The lips of the upright know about kindness, Qo 10:12
the mouth of the wicked about deceit.

1 **11** A false balance is abhorrent to Yahweh, 16:11;20:10,23
a just weight is pleasing to him. Dt 25:13–16
Ho 12:8
Am 8:5–6
Mi 6:10–11
2 Pride comes first; disgrace soon follows; =13:10
with the humble is wisdom found.

3 The honest have their own honesty for guidance,
the treacherous are ruined by their own perfidy.

4 In the day of retribution riches will be useless, =10:2
but uprightness delivers from death. Jb 21:30
Ps 49:6–8

5 The uprightness of the good makes their way straight,
the wicked fall by their own wickedness.

6 Their uprightness sets the honest free,
the treacherous are imprisoned by their own desires. 11:3

10 **a.** Probably the oldest section of the book. There is no order apparent in this collection other than occasional superficial relationships between neighbouring maxims.

b. Line identical to 11[b]. Gk reads 'premature mourning shuts the mouth of the godless.'

c. Following the Gk, Hebr. has 'the talkative fool runs to his ruin', cf. 8[b].

d. 'walks' *'oreah* conj.; Hebr. *'orah* 'path'.

e. That is, a dawdling messenger.

10:28 Ps 112:10
The hope of the wicked perishes with death, 7
hope placed in riches comes to nothing.

The upright escapes affliction, 8
the wicked incurs it instead.

29:5
Through his mouth the godless is the ruin of his neighbour, 9
but by knowledge the upright are safeguarded.

28:12
When the upright prosper the city rejoices, 10
when the wicked are ruined there is a shout of joy.

14:1
A city is raised on the blessing of the honest, 11
and demolished by the mouth of the wicked.

14:21
Whoever looks down on a neighbour lacks good sense; 12
the intelligent keeps a check on the tongue.

10:19;17: 27seq.;20:19
A tittle-tattler lets secrets out, 13
the trustworthy keeps things hidden.

15:22;=24:6 Ws 6:24
For want of leadership a people perishes, 14
safety lies in many advisers.

6:1a
Whoever goes bail for a stranger does himself harm, 15
anyone who shuns going surety is safe.

5:15b; 31:10seq.
A gracious woman acquires honour,[a] 16
violent people acquire wealth.

Faithful love brings its own reward, 17
Si 14:6 the inflexible injure their own selves.

Disappointment crowns the labours of the wicked, 18
2 Co 9:6 Ga 6:8 whoever sows uprightness reaps a solid reward.

Whoever establishes[b] uprightness is on the way to life, 19
whoever pursues evil, on the way to death.

12:22;15:9
Tortuous hearts are abhorrent to Yahweh, 20
dear to him, those whose ways are blameless.

12:21;16:5
Be sure of it,[c] the wicked will not go unpunished, 21
but the race of the upright will come to no harm.

A golden ring in the snout of a pig 22
is a lovely woman who lacks discretion.

The hope of the upright is nothing but good, 23
the expectation of the wicked is retribution.

One scatters money around, yet only adds to his wealth, 24
another is excessively mean, but only grows the poorer.

The souls who blesses will prosper, 25
Is 58:7–11 Mt 7:2;10:42 whoever satisfies others will also be satisfied.

The people's curse is on those who hoard the wheat, 26
their blessing on the head of those who sell it.

12:2
Whoever strives for good obtains favour,[d] 27
5:22 whoever looks for evil will get an evil return.

Ps 1:3;52:7–8 Mk 10:23
Whoever trusts in riches will have a fall, 28
the upright will flourish like the leaves.

29 Whoever misgoverns a house inherits the wind,
and the fool becomes slave to the wise.

30 The fruit of the upright is a tree of life: Ps 1
the sage captivates souls. [a]

31 If here on earth the upright gets what is due, 1 P 4:18
how much more the wicked and the sinner!

1 **12** Whoever loves discipline, loves knowledge, 13:18;15:5
stupid are those who hate correction. Si 21:6

2 The honest obtains Yahweh's favour, 11:27
the schemer incurs his condemnation.

3 No one is made secure by wickedness, 10:25
but nothing shakes the roots of the upright.

4 A capable wife, her husband's crown, 31:10seq.
a shameless wife, a cancer in his bones.

5 The plans of the upright are honest,
the intrigues of the wicked are full of deceit.

6 The words of the wicked are snares to shed blood,
what the honest say keeps them safe. 14:3

7 Once thrown down, the wicked are no more, Mt 7:24–27
but the house of the upright stands firm.

8 A person is praised for prudence,
anyone of tortuous heart incurs contempt.

9 Better a common fellow who has a slave
than someone who gives himself airs and has nothing to eat. Si 10:27

10 The upright has compassion on his animals, 27:23
but the heart of the wicked is ruthless.

11 Whoever works his land shall have bread and to spare, =28:19
but anyone who chases fantasies has no sense.

12 The godless delights in the snare of the wicked,
but the root of the upright bears fruit.

13 In the sin of the lips lies a disastrous trap, 10:19;18:7
but the upright finds a way out of misfortune. 24:16

14 Abundance of good things is the fruit of the lips; 13:2;18:20
labour brings its own return. Lk 6:37–38

15 Fools think the way they go is straight,
the wise listens to advice.

16 The fool shows anger straightaway,
the discreet conceals dislike. 2 S 13:20seq., 32

17 To tell the truth is to further justice, 14:25
a false witness is nothing but deceit.

11 **a.** Gk reads 'A gracious woman does honour to her husband, she who scorns virtue is a throne of dishonour. Indolent people lack resources, violent people acquire riches.'

b. 'he who establishes' *kan* conj.; Hebr. *ken* 'thus'.

c. 'Be sure of it', lit. 'hand for hand': perhaps an allusion to shaking hands on a bargain.

d. The favour of Yahweh who rewards the upright, cf. 12:2.

e. Gk, possibly embarrassed by an alternative meaning: 'the wise take life away', reads 'the wicked will be prematurely carried off'.

15:4 Thoughtless words can pierce like a sword, 18
but the tongue of the wise brings healing.

Sincere lips endure for ever, 19
the lying tongue lasts only a moment.

Deceit is in the heart of the schemer, 20
Mt 5:9 joy with those who give counsels of peace.

11:21 Ps 91:10 No harm can come to the upright, 21
but the wicked are swamped by misfortunes.

11:20 Lying lips are abhorrent to Yahweh; 22
dear to him those who make truth their way of life.

10:19;13:16 The discreet keeps knowledge hidden, 23
the heart of fools proclaims their folly.

For the diligent hand, authority; 24
for the slack hand, forced labour.

15:13 Worry makes a heart heavy, 25
a kindly word makes it glad.

The upright shows the way to a friend; [a] 26
the way of the wicked leads them astray.

The idle has no game to roast; [b] 27
diligence is anyone's most precious possession.

10:16 Rm 6:21–23 In the way of uprightness is life, 28
the ways of the vengeful lead to death.

13 A wise child listens [a] to a father's discipline, 1
a cynic will not listen to reproof.

12:14;18:20 The fruit of the mouth provides a good meal, 2
but the soul of the treacherous feeds on violence.

21:23 Si 28:25–26 Jm 3:2–12 A guard on the mouth makes life secure, [b] 3
whoever talks too much is lost.

6:6–11 The idler hungers but has no food; 4
hard workers get their fill.

The upright hates a lying word, 5
but the wicked slanders and defames.

Uprightness stands guard over one whose way is honest, 6
sin causes the ruin of the wicked. [c]

Rv 3:17 Lk 12:21,33 There are some who, on nothing, pretend to be rich, 7
some, with great wealth, pretend to be poor.

15:16 The ransom for life is a person's wealth; 8
but the poor will not hear the reproof.

Ps 97:11 The light of the upright is joyful, 9
the lamp of the wicked goes out.

Insolence breeds only disputes, 10
=11:2 wisdom lies with those who take advice.

20:21 A sudden [d] fortune will dwindle away, 11
accumulation little by little is the way to riches.

12 Hope deferred makes the heart sick,
desire fulfilled is a tree of life. 3:28 13:19

13 Contempt for the word is self-destructive,
respect for the commandment wins salvation.

14 The teaching of the wise is a life-giving fountain
for eluding the snares of death. =14:27

15 Good sense wins favour,
but the way of the treacherous is hard.

16 Anyone of discretion acts by the light of knowledge,
the fool parades his folly. 12:23 Qo 10:3

17 A bad messenger falls[e] into misfortune,
a trusty messenger brings healing. 25:13

18 Whoever rejects discipline wins poverty and scorn; 12:1
for anyone who accepts correction: honour.

19 Desire fulfilled is sweet to the soul; 13:12
fools are loth to turn—from evil.[f] 29:27

20 Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, Si 6:33–34
whoever mixes with fools will be ruined. 14:7

21 Evil will pursue the sinner,
but good will reward the upright.

22 The good bequeaths a heritage to children's children,
the wealth of the sinner is stored away for the upright. 28:8 Jb 27:16–17

23 Though the farms of the poor yield much food, Qo 2:26h
some perish for lack of justice.[g]

24 Whoever fails to use the stick hates his child; 3:12+;22:15; 23:13–14; 29:15–17
whoever is free with correction loves him. Ep 6:4

25 The upright eats to the full,
the belly of the wicked goes empty.

1 **14** Wisdom builds herself a house;[a] 8:22e;9:1;24:3
with her own hands Folly pulls it down.

2 Whoever keeps to an honest course fears Yahweh,
whoever deserts his paths shows contempt for him.

Pride sprouts in the mouth of the fool,
the lips of the wise keep them safe.[b]

4 No oxen, empty manger;
strong bull, much cash.

12 **a.** 'shows the way': meaning uncertain. The particular verb-form occurs only once, but it is generally thought to be derived from the verb 'to explore'.
b. Since he has not caught anything.

13 **a.** 'listens' restored to harmonise with the second line.
b. Possibly a play on words: the term translated here as 'life' can also mean 'throat' and 'soul'.
c. 'the wicked' conj.; 'wickedness' Hebr.
d. 'sudden' Gk; '(product) of futility' Hebr.
e. Unless we should emend to mean 'causes to fall', as the following line might imply. The Gk, however, favours the MT: 'A headstrong king will come to grief.'
f. There is no very obvious connection between the two parts of the v. Text perhaps corrupt, or incomplete.
g. Here too the text seems to be corrupt. Gk: 'the upright live to enjoy their wealth for many a year, the wicked come to a sudden end.'

14 **a.** lit. 'Wisdom' conj.; 'The wisest people', Hebr., though the verb is in the singular.
b. Text uncertain.

The truthful witness tells no lies, 5
the false witness lies with every breath. [c]

In vain the mocker looks for wisdom, 6
knowledge comes easy to the intelligent.

13:20 Keep well clear of the fool, 7
you will not find wise lips there.

With people of discretion, wisdom keeps a watch over their conduct, 8
but the folly of fools leads them astray.

Fools mock at the sacrifice for sin, 9
but favour resides among the honest.

The heart knows its own grief best, 10
nor can a stranger share its joy.

Jb 8:22 The house of the wicked will be destroyed, 11
the tent of the honest will prosper.

=16:25 There are ways that some think straight, 12
but they lead in the end to death.

Qo 2:1–2; 7:2–6 Lk 6:25 Even in laughter the heart finds sadness, 13
and joy makes way for sorrow.

The miscreant will reap the reward of his conduct, 14
and the good the reward of his deeds. [d]

The simpleton believes any message, 15
a person of discretion treads a careful path.

The wise fears evil and avoids it, 16
the fool is insolent and conceited.

14:29;29:22 A quick-tempered person commits rash acts, 17
but a schemer is detestable.

Simpletons have folly for their portion, 18
14:24 people of discretion knowledge for their crown.

The evil bow down before the good, 19
the wicked, at the gates of the upright.

19:4–7 Si 6:8–12 The poor is detestable even to a friend, 20
but many are they who love someone rich.

11:12 One who despises the needy is at fault, 21
Ps 41:1 one who takes pity on the poor is blessed.

Plan evil—isn't this to go astray? 22
Those who plan for good can earn faithful love and constancy.

Hard work always yields its profit, 23
idle talk brings only want.

14:18 The crown of the wise is their riches; 24
the folly of fools is folly.

12:17 A truthful witness saves lives, 25
whoever utters lies is a deceiver. [e]

19:23 In the fear of Yahweh is powerful security; 26
for his children he is a refuge.

27 The fear of Yahweh is a life-giving spring
for eluding the snares of death. =13:14

28 Large population, monarch's glory;
dwindling population, ruler's ruin.

29 Mastery of temper is high proof of intelligence, 14:17;15:18; 19:11
a quick temper makes folly worse than ever.

30 The life of the body is a tranquil heart, 17:22
but envy is a cancer in the bones.

31 To oppress the weak insults the Creator, 17:5
kindness to the needy honours the Creator.

32 For evil-doing, the wicked will be flung headlong,
but in integrity[f] the upright will find refuge.

33 Wisdom resides in an understanding heart;
she is not to be found in the hearts of fools.[g]

34 Uprightness makes a nation great,
by sin whole races are disgraced.

35 A king shows favour to a wise minister, Gn 41:37–44 Si 8:8 Mt 24:45
but anger to one who shames him.

1 **15** A mild answer turns away wrath, 1 S 25:32–33 1 K 12:12–19
sharp words stir up anger.

2 The tongue of the wise makes knowledge welcome, Qo 10:12
the mouth of a fool spews folly.

3 The eyes of Yahweh are everywhere: 5:21;15:11;16:2 Ps 7:9;139:1seq. Zc 4:10 12:18
observing the wicked and the good.

4 The tongue that soothes is a tree of life;
the perverse tongue, a breaker of hearts.[a]

5 Whoever spurns a father's discipline is a fool, 12:1;13:8
whoever accepts correction is discreet.

6 In the house of the upright there is no lack of treasure,
the earnings of the wicked are fraught with anxiety.

7 The lips of the wise spread knowledge,
not so the hearts of fools.

8 The sacrifice of the wicked is abhorrent to Yahweh, =21:27 1 S 15:22d
dear to him is the prayer of the honest.

9 The conduct of the wicked is abhorrent to Yahweh, 11:20;12:22
but he loves the person whose goal is uprightness.

10 Correction is severe for one who leaves the way;
whoever hates being reprimanded will die. 12:1;15:32

11 Sheol and Perdition lie open to Yahweh;
how much more the human heart! 11:20+ Jn 2:25

c. On false witness. *see* 6:19; 12:17; 14:25; 19:5,9; 21:28; 24:28; 25:18, possibly also 10:11; 11:9; 12:6, *see also* Ex 20:16; 23:1; Dt 19:15–21.

d. 'of his deeds' *mimma 'alalayw* conj.; Hebr. *me 'alayw* 'above him'?

e. 'a deceiver' *merammeh* conj.; Hebr. *mirmah* 'astuteness'.

f. 'in his integrity' Gk, Syr; Hebr.; 'at his death'.

g. 'she is not to be found' Gk; Hebr. omits 'not'.

15 a. lit. 'perversity in her is breaking of spirit'.

9:8 The mocker does not care to be reprimanded, 12
and will not choose the wise as companions.

12:25 Glad heart means happy face, 13
Si 13:25 where the heart is sad the spirit is broken.

18:15 The heart of the wise seeks knowledge, 14
a fool's mouth feeds on folly.

For the poor every day is evil, 15
Si 30:25 for the joyous heart it is always festival time.

13:8;16:8;17:1 Better to have little and with it fear of Yahweh 16
Ps 37:16 than immense wealth and with it anxiety.

17:1 Better a dish of herbs when love is there 17
than a fattened ox and hatred to go with it.

14:29;28:25; The hot-headed provokes disputes, 18
Mt 5:9 the equable allays dissension.

The way of the lazy is like a thorny hedge, 19
the path of the honest is a broad highway.

=10:1;17:25; A wise child is a father's joy; 20
23:22 only a brute despises his mother.

Folly appeals to someone without sense, 21
a person of understanding goes straight forward.

11:14 Without deliberation plans come to nothing. 22
Plans succeed where counsellors are many.

Anyone who has a ready answer has joy too: 23
how satisfying is the apt reply!

Qo 3:21 For the prudent, the path of life leads upwards 24
Nb 16:33f thus avoiding Sheol below. [b]

Yahweh pulls down the house of the proud, 25
22:28; but he keeps the widow's boundaries intact.
23:10–11
Dt 19:14
Ho 5:10 Wicked scheming is abhorrent to Yahweh, 26
but words that are kind are pure.

1:19;17:23f Craving for dishonest gain brings trouble on a house, 27
hatred of bribery earns life.

The heart of the upright reflects before answering, 28
=19:28 the mouth of the wicked spews out wickedness.

Is 59:2 Yahweh keeps his distance from the wicked, 29
Jn 9:31 but he listens to the prayers of the upright.

A kindly glance gives joy to the heart, 30
good news lends strength to the bones.

25:12 The ear attentive to wholesome correction 31
finds itself at home in the company of the wise.

10:17;15:10; Whoever rejects correction lacks self-respect, 32
19:20 whoever accepts reproof grows in understanding.

1:7 The fear of Yahweh is a school of wisdom, 33
=18:12 before there can be glory, there must be humility.

16 A human heart makes the plans,
Yahweh gives the answer. [a] — 16:9;19:21

A person's own acts seem right to the doer,
but Yahweh is the weigher of souls. — =21:2

Commend what you do to Yahweh,
and what you plan will be achieved. — 3:6 Ps 37:5

Yahweh made everything for its own purpose,
yes, even the wicked for the day of disaster. [b] — Rm 9:22

Every arrogant heart is abhorrent to Yahweh:
be sure this will not go unpunished. — 11:21

By faithful love and constancy sin is expiated;
by fear of Yahweh evil is avoided. — Tb 12:9

Let Yahweh be pleased with someone's way of life
and he makes that person's very enemies into friends. — Gn 26:26seq.; 31:1seq.

Better have little and with it uprightness
than great revenues with injustice. — 15:16+ Tb 12:8

The human heart may plan a course,
but it is Yahweh who makes the steps secure. — 19:21

The lips of the king utter prophecies, [c]
he keeps faith when he speaks in judgement.

The balances and scales belong to Yahweh,
all the weights in the bag are of his making. — 11:1+

Evil-doing is abhorrent to kings,
since uprightness is a throne's foundation. — 25:5;29:14

Upright lips are welcome to a king,
he loves someone of honest words. — 14:35;22:11

The king's wrath is the herald of death,
but the wise will appease it. — 19:12;20:2

When the king's face brightens it spells life,
his favour is like the rain in spring. — Ps 4:6d 19:12

Better gain wisdom than gold,
choose understanding in preference to silver. — 3:14;8:19

To turn from evil is the way of the honest;
whoever watches the path keeps life safe.

Pride goes before destruction,
a haughty spirit before a fall. — 11:2;15:33

Better be humble with the poor
than share the booty with the proud. — Is 57:15

Whoever listens closely to the word finds happiness;
whoever trusts Yahweh is blessed. — 13:13 Ps 2:12;40:4

b. The expressions 'upwards' and 'below', omitted by Gk, could be late glosses. The 'path of life' seems to mean prolongation of earthly life as opposed to death or descent to Sheol. Later it was understood as 'the path which leads to heavenly blessedness', but such a notion did not enter into the theology of that period.

16 a. Man proposes, God disposes.

b. The wicked has been created to be an object-lesson in the working of divine justice.

c. Since the king pronounces judgement in the name of God, *see* 2 S 14:18–20; 1 K 3:4–28; vv. 10–15 (except v. 11) are royal proverbs.

16:23 The wise of heart is acclaimed as intelligent, 21
sweetness of speech increases knowledge.

Shrewdness is a fountain of life for its possessor, 22
the folly of fools is their own punishment.

16:21 Qo 10:12 The heart of the wise lends shrewdness to speech 23
and makes words more persuasive.

Kindly words are a honeycomb, 24
sweet to the taste, wholesome to the body.

=14:12 There is a way that some think straight, 25
but it leads in the end to death.

A worker's appetite works on his behalf, 26
for his hunger urges him on.

A worthless person[d] concocts evil, 27
Jm 3:6 such a one's talk is like a scorching fire.

17:9 Si 28:13seq. A troublemaker sows strife, 28
a slanderer divides friend from friend.

The violent lures his neighbour astray 29
and leads him by a way that is not good.

Whoever narrows the eyes to think up tricks 30
and purses the lips has already done wrong.

Ws 4:9 Si 25:4–6 White hairs are a crown of honour, 31
they are found in the ways of uprightness.

Better an equable person than a hero, 32
25:28 someone with self-mastery than one who takes a city.

In the fold of the garment the lot is thrown,[e] 33
but from Yahweh comes the decision.

15:16–17 17 Better a mouthful of dry bread with peace 1
than a house filled with quarrelsome sacrifices.[a]

A shrewd servant comes off better than an unworthy child, 2
he will share the inheritance with the brothers.

=27:21 Jr 11:20+ A furnace for silver, a foundry for gold, 3
but Yahweh for the testing of hearts!

An evil-doer pays heed to malicious talk, 4
a liar listens to a slanderous tongue.

14:31 To mock the poor is to insult the Creator, 5
Lv 19:14 Jb 31:29q no one who laughs at distress will go unpunished.[b]

Ps 128:3,6 Si 3:10–11 The crown of the aged is their children's children; 6
the children's glory is their father.

Fine words do not become the foolish, 7
false words become a prince still less.

18:16;21:14; 14:23f A gift works like a talisman for one who holds it: 8
it brings prosperity at every turn.

10:12 Whoever covers an offence promotes love, 9
16:28 whoever again raises the matter divides friends.

10 A reproof makes more impression on a person of understanding
than a hundred strokes on a fool. [c]

11 The wicked person thinks of nothing but rebellion,
but a cruel messenger will be sent to such a one. [d]

12 Rather come on a bear robbed of her cubs
than on a fool in his folly.

13 Disaster will never be far from the house
of one who returns evil for good. Ps 109:4seq.

14 As well unleash a flood as start a dispute;
desist before the quarrel breaks out. Mt 5:25,40

15 To absolve the guilty and condemn the upright, Ex 23:7
both alike are abhorrent to Yahweh. Dt 16:18–20

16 What good is money in the hand of a fool?
To buy wisdom with it? The desire is not there.

17 A friend is a friend at all times, 1 S 20
it is for adversity that a brother is born. Si 6:7–10

18 Whoever offers guarantees lacks sense 6:1a
and goes surety for a neighbour.

19 The double-dealer loves sin,
the proud [e] courts ruin.

20 The tortuous of heart finds no happiness,
the perverse of speech falls into misery.

21 He who fathers a stupid child does so to his sorrow, 10:1
the father of a fool knows no joy. Si 22:3

22 A glad heart is excellent medicine, 14:30
a depressed spirit wastes the bones away.

23 Under cover of his cloak a bad man takes a gift Ex 23:8
to pervert the course of justice. [f] Dt 16:19;27:25
1 S 8:3
Is 1:23
Am 5:12

24 The intelligent has wisdom there before him,
but the eyes of a fool range to the ends of the earth. [g]

25 A foolish child is a father's sorrow, 10:1;29:15
and the grief of her who gave the child birth.

26 To fine the upright is indeed a crime,
to strike the noble is an injustice.

27 Whoever can control the tongue knows what knowledge is, 10:19
someone of understanding keeps a cool temper.

d. lit. 'man of Belial', that is to say 'of Nothingness' (the scoundrel, *see* 6:12). But some consider Belial to denote the devil, *see* 2 Co 6:15.

e. Allusion to the *ephod* worn on the high priest's breast, Ex 28:6a, here identified with the other *ephod* which held the sacred lots, 1 S 2:28*l*.

17 a. Probably an allusion to meat offered in sacrifice and then eaten at a sacred meal.

b. Compare Amenemophis: 'Do not laugh at a blind man, do not make fun of a dwarf, do not do wrong to the infirm . . . man is clay and straw, the god is his architect.

c. Possibly the mention of the *hundred* strokes has an Egyptian origin: the laws of Israel forbade a punishment in excess of forty strokes, Dt 25:3.

d. Perhaps the exterminating angel, *see* Ex 12:23j; that is how Gk understands it: 'The Lord will send a pitiless angel against him.'

e. lit. 'he who makes his door high'.

f. Bribes taken by judges and false witnesses. Cf. 17:8; 18:16 and 21:14 where the 'gift' has a more general sense.

g. i.e. the fool pries everywhere and interferes in everything.

Jb 13:5
Si 20:5

If the fool holds his tongue, he may pass for wise; 28
if he seals his lips, he may pass for intelligent.

18 Whoever lives alone follows private whims, 1
and is angered by advice of any kind. [a]

A fool takes no pleasure in understanding 2
12:23 but only in airing an opinion.

When wickedness comes, indignity comes too, 3
and, with contempt, dishonour.

20:5
Si 21:13
Jn 7:38

Deep waters, such are human words: 4
a gushing stream, the utterance of wisdom.

17:15+;
24:23e
Ps 82:2+

It is not good to show partiality for the wicked 5
and so to deprive the upright when giving judgement.

The lips of a fool go to the law-courts 6
with a mouth that pleads for a beating.

10:14;12:13;
13:3

The mouth of the fool works its owner's ruin, 7
the lips of a fool are a snare for their owner's life.

=26:22

The words of a slanderer are tasty morsels 8
that go right down into the belly.

Whoever is idle at work 9
is blood-brother to the destroyer.

Ps 61:3;124:8

The name of Yahweh is a strong tower; 10
the upright runs to it and is secure.

=10:15

The wealth of the rich forms a stronghold, 11
a high wall, as the rich supposes.

16:18

The human heart is haughty until destruction comes, 12
=15:33 before there can be glory there must be humility.

Si 11:8

To retort without first listening 13
is both foolish and embarrassing.

Sickness the human spirit can endure, 14
but when the spirit is broken, who can bear this?

15:14

The heart of the intelligent acquires learning, 15
the ears of the wise search for knowledge.

17:8,23+;21:14

A present will open all doors 16
and win access to the great.

The first to plead is adjudged to be upright, 17
until the next comes and cross-examines him.

16:33

The lot puts an end to disputes 18
and decides between men of power. [b]

A brother offended is worse than a fortified city, 19
and quarrels are like the locks of a keep. [c]

12:14;13:2

From the fruit of the mouth is a stomach filled, 20
it is the yield of the lips that gives contentment.

21:23
Si 37:18
Jm 3:2–12

Death and life are in the gift of the tongue, 21
those who indulge it must eat the fruit it yields.

22 He who finds a wife finds happiness, 5:15b;31:10seq. Si 26:1–4
receiving a mark of favour from Yahweh.

23 The language of the poor is entreaty, Si 13:3
the answer of the rich harshness.

24 There are [d] friends who point the way to ruin, 17:17;27:10
others are closer than a brother.

1 **19** Better the poor living an honest life =28:6
than the adept at double-talk who is a fool.

2 Where knowledge is wanting, zeal is not good; 21:5 Rm 10:2
whoever goes too quickly stumbles.

3 Folly leads conduct astray, Si 15:11–20 Jm 1:13–14
yet it is against Yahweh that the heart rages.

4 Wealth multiplies friends, 14:20 Si 6:8–12
but the one friend the poor has is taken away.

5 The false witness will not go unpunished, =19:9;21:28
no one who utters lies will go free.

6 The nobleman has many to court his favour, Si 13:5–6 Qo 5:10
to a giver of gifts, everyone is friend.

7 The poor man's brothers hate him, every one; Si 13:21
his friends—how much the more do these desert him!

He goes in search of words, but there are none to be had. [a]

8 Whoever acquires sense wins profit from it,
whoever treasures understanding finds happiness.

9 The false witness will not go unpunished, =19:5
whoever utters lies will be destroyed.

10 It is not fitting for a fool to live in luxury, 30:22 Qo 10:6–7
still less for a slave to govern princes.

11 Good sense makes for self-control, 14:29
and for pride in overlooking an offence.

12 Like the roaring of a lion, the anger of a king, 16:14–15; =20:2
but like dew on the grass his favour.

13 A foolish child is a disaster for the father, 17:25
the bickerings of a wife are like an ever-dripping gutter. =27:15

14 From fathers comes inheritance of house and wealth,
from Yahweh a wife who is discreet. 18:22;31:10seq.

15 Idleness lulls to sleep, 10:4
the feckless soul will go hungry.

16 Keeping the commandment is self-preservation, Lk 10:28;11:28
but whoever despises these ways [b] will die.

18 **a.** Text uncertain: solitude commended or condemned?
b. Probably not a pessimistic view of justice but a reference to the 'judgement of God', cf. 16:33.
c. Text uncertain. Gk is very different: 'A brother helped by his brother is a high and fortified city, he is as strong as a royal rampart.'
d. 'There are' *yesh* conj.; Hebr. *'ish* 'a man'.

19 **a.** Fragmentary proverb, probably lacking first line.
b. Either whoever does not watch over his own conduct, or whoever does not walk in the way indicated by 'the commandment' (16[a]).

28:27
↗Mt 25:40
Whoever is kind to the poor is lending to Yahweh 17
who will repay him the kindness done.

Dt 21:18–21
While there is hope for him, chastise your child, 18
but do not get so angry as to kill him. [c]

The violent lays himself open to a penalty; 19
spare him, and you aggravate his crime. [d]

15:32
Listen to advice, accept correction, 20
to be the wiser in the time to come.

16:1,9
Ps 33:11
Many are the plans in the human heart, 21
but the purpose of Yahweh—that stands firm.

Faithful love is what people look for in a person; 22
they prefer the poor to a liar.

14:27
The fear of Yahweh leads to life, 23
it brings food and shelter, without fear of evil.

=26:15
Into the dish the idler dips his hand, 24
but bring it back to his mouth he cannot.

Strike a cynic, and simpletons will be more wary; 25
9:8
reprove the intelligent and he will understand your meaning.

20:20;23:22;
30:17
Ex 21:17+
He who ill-treats his father and drives out his mother 26
is a child both worthless and depraved.

Give up listening to instruction, my child, 27
if you mean to stray from words of knowledge. [e]

A perjured witness holds the law in scorn; 28
=15:28
the mouth of the wicked feasts on evil-doing.

Punishments were made for mockers, 29
10:13
and beating for the backs of fools.

23:29–35
20 Wine is reckless, liquor rowdy; 1
unwise is anyone whom it seduces.

=19:12
Like the roaring of a lion is the fury of a king; 2
whoever provokes him sins against himself.

It is praiseworthy to stop short of a law-suit; 3
14:17,29
only a fool flies into a rage. [a]

In autumn the idler does not plough, 4
at harvest time he looks—nothing there!

18:4
The resources of the human heart are like deep waters: 5
an understanding person has only to draw on them.

27:2
Mt 6:2,5,16
Many describe themselves as people of faithful love, 6
but who can find someone really to be trusted?

The upright whose ways are blameless— 7
blessed the children who come after!

16:10
Jb 4:17+
Ps 51
1 Jn 1:8–10
A king enthroned on the judgement seat 8
with one look scatters [b] all that is evil.

Who can say, 'I have cleansed my heart, 9
I am purified of my sin'?

10 One weight here, another there; here one measure, there another: 11:1+
both alike are abhorrent to Yahweh.

11 A young man's character appears in what he does,
if his behaviour is pure and straight.

12 Ear that hears, eye that sees, Ex 4:11
Yahweh has made both of these. Ps 94:9

13 Do not love sleep or you will know poverty;
keep your eyes open and have your fill of food.

14 'No good, no good!' says the buyer,
but he goes off congratulating himself.

15 There are gold and jewels of every type, 3:13–15
but a priceless ornament is speech informed by knowledge.

16 Take the man's clothes! He has gone surety for a stranger. 6:1a;=27:13
Take a pledge from him to the profit of persons unknown!

17 Bread is sweet when it is got by fraud, Jb 20:12–14
but later the mouth is full of grit.

18 Plans are matured by consultation;
take wise advice when waging war. 24:6

19 The bearer of gossip lets out secrets; 11:13+
do not mingle with chatterers.

20 Whoever curses father or mother 19:26+
will have his lamp put out in the deepest darkness. Ex 20:12; 21:17+

21 Property quickly come by at first 13:11
will not be blessed in the end.

22 Do not say, 'I shall repay evil'; 25:22+
put your hope in Yahweh and he will keep you safe. Rm 12:17
1 Th 5:15

23 One weight here, another there: this is abhorrent to Yahweh, 11:1+
false scales are not good.

24 Yahweh guides human steps: 16:9;19:21
how could anyone discern the way to go? ‖Ps 37:23

25 Anyone is trapped who cries 'Dedicated!' Dt 23:22seq.
and begins to reflect only after the vow. Qo 5:3–5
Mt 15:5par.

26 A wise king winnows the wicked
and makes the wheel pass over them. [c]

27 The human spirit [d] is the lamp of Yahweh— Mt 6:22
searching the deepest self. ↗1 Co 2:11

28 Faithful love and loyalty mount guard over the king, Ps 61:7
his throne is founded on saving justice. Is 16:5

c. This proverb either shows a tempering of the legal code, *see* Dt 21:18–21, or is merely warning against over-hasty punishment.

d. Text very uncertain. The idea seems to be that by neglecting to punish the violent, you only make their condition worse.

e. Meaning uncertain. Gk reads, 'A son who stops paying attention to what his father teaches him will soon be thinking of bad words.'

20 a. lit. 'but every fool breaks out'.

b. Or 'winnows', 'sifts', (by distinguishing between just and unjust suits) cf. 20:26.

c. Reference to threshing grain, for which a sort of sledge, sometimes on wheels, was and is still used, *see* Is 28:28.

d. The 'spirit', the life principle which God breathes into a human being after forming the body, *see* Gn 2:7.

16:31 The pride of the young is their strength, 29
the ornament of the old, grey hairs.

Wounding strokes are good medicine for evil, 30
blows have an effect on the inmost self. [c]

21 Like flowing water is a king's heart in Yahweh's hand; 1
he directs it wherever he pleases.

=16:2 All actions are straight in the doer's own eyes, 2
Lk 16:15; 18:9–14 but it is Yahweh who weighs hearts.

1 S 15:22d Am 5:21–24, 21n To do what is upright and just 3
is more pleasing to Yahweh than sacrifice. [a]

Haughty eye, proud heart, 4
lamp of the wicked, nothing but sin. [b]

19:2 The hardworking is thoughtful, and all is gain; 5
too much haste, and all that comes of it is want.

To make a fortune with the help of a lying tongue: 6
such is the idle fantasy of those who look for death.

The violence of the wicked proves their ruin, 7
for they refuse to do what is right.

The way of the felon is devious, 8
the conduct of the innocent straight.

19:13;21:19; =25:24 Si 25:16 Better the corner of a roof to live on 9
than a house shared with a quarrelsome woman.

The soul of the wicked is intent on evil, 10
to such a person no neighbour can ever do right.

=19:25 When a cynic is punished, simpletons grow wiser, 11
but someone of understanding acquires knowledge by instruction.

The Upright One [c] watches the house of the wicked; 12
he hurls the wicked to destruction.

Mt 6:15 Jm 2:13 Whoever refuses to listen to the cry of the weak, 13
will in turn plead and not be heard.

17:8,23f Anger is mollified by a covert gift, 14
raging fury by a present under cover of the cloak.

Doing what is right fills the upright with joy 15
but evil-doers with terror.

Whoever strays far from the way of prudence 16
will rest in the assembly of shadows.

23:20–21 Pleasure-lovers stay poor, 17
no one will grow rich who loves wine and good living. [d]

The wicked is a ransom for the upright; 18
and the law-breaker for the honest. [c]

21:9+ Better to live in a desert land 19
than with a quarrelsome and irritable woman.

The wise has valuables and oil at home, 20
but a fool soon runs through both.

21 Whoever pursues uprightness and faithful love
will find life, uprightness and honour. Mt 5:6

22 A sage can scale a garrisoned city
and shatter the rampart on which it relied. Qo 9:13–15

23 Watch kept over mouth and tongue
keeps the watcher safe from disaster. 13:3

24 Insolent, haughty—the name is 'Cynic';
overweening pride marks such behaviour.

25 The idler's desires are the death of him,
since his hands will do no work. 13:4;20:4

26 All day long the godless is racked by desire,[f]
the upright gives without ever refusing. Lk 6:30,34–35

27 The sacrifice of the wicked is abhorrent,[g]
above all if it is offered for bad motives. =15:8 Si 7:9

28 The false witness will perish,
but no one who knows how to listen will ever be silenced. 19:5,9

29 The wicked man's strength shows on his face,
but the honest it is whose steps are firm.

30 No wisdom, no understanding,
no advice is worth anything before Yahweh.[h] Is 8:10

31 Fit out the cavalry for the day of battle,
but the victory is Yahweh's. Ps 20:7 Ho 1:7+

1 **22** Fame is preferable to great wealth,
favour, to silver and gold. Qo 7:1 Si 41:12

2 Rich and poor rub shoulders,
Yahweh has made them both. =29:13 Jb 31:15 Ws 6:7 Mt 5:45

3 The discreet sees danger and takes shelter,
simpletons go ahead and pay the penalty. =27:12

4 The reward of humility is the fear of Yahweh,
and riches, honour and life.

5 Thorns and snares line the path of the wilful,
whoever values life will stay at a distance.

6 Give a lad a training suitable to his character[a]
and, even when old, he will not go back on it. Si 6:18

7 The rich lords it over the poor,
the borrower is the lender's slave.

e. This seems to be a commendation of corporal punishment, but the text of this proverb is uncertain.

21 a. This insistence on sincerity of heart as the necessary condition of all ritual observance recurs throughout the OT. *See* Is 1:11f; Jr 7:21–23; Ho 6:6; Am 5:22seq.

b. lit. 'the torch (*ner*) of the wicked is sin' conj.; 'the labour (*nir*) of the wicked is sin' Hebr., but the text is uncertain.

c. i.e. Yahweh, if the text is not corrupt.

d. lit. 'wine and oil'.

e. Cf. 11:8. The proverb apparently assumes that there must be a certain quota of misery in this world from which, however, God shields the upright and to which he condemns the wicked.

f. 'The godless is racked by desire' Gk; 'he covets covetousness' Hebr.

g. The Gk reads 'abhorrent to Yahweh' as in 15:8.

h. i.e. 'do not exist in his presence' or 'cannot prevail against him'.

22 a. lit. 'on the mouth (the entrance) of his way'. Some interpret as 'from his earliest steps'. Gk omits the whole v.

12:14 Jb 4:8
Whoever sows injustice reaps disaster, 8
and the rod of such anger will disappear. [b]

19:17;28:27 Ps 112:9 Lk 14:13–14
A kindly eye will earn a blessing, 9
such a person shares out food with the poor.

26:20
Expel the mocker and strife goes too, 10
law-suits and dislike die down.

↗Mt 5:8 16:13
Whoever loves the pure of heart 11
and is gracious of speech has the king for a friend.

Yahweh's eyes protect knowledge, 12
but he confounds deceitful speeches.

=26:13
'There is a lion outside,' says the idler, 13
'I shall be killed in the street!'

5:2+
The mouth of an adulterous woman is a deep pit, 14
into it falls the man whom Yahweh rebukes.

Folly is anchored in the heart of a youth, 15
13:24;29:15,17 the whip of instruction will rid him of it.

Harsh treatment enriches the poor, 16
but a gift impoverishes the rich. [c]

III: A SELECTION FROM THE SAGES

Give ear, listen to the sayings of the sages, 17
and apply your heart to what I know,
for it will be a delight to keep them deep within you 18
to have them all ready on your lips.
So that your trust may be in Yahweh, 19
it is you whom I wish to instruct today.

Have I not written for you thirty chapters [d] 20
of advice and knowledge,
to make you know the certainty of true sayings, 21
so that you can return with sound answers to those who sent you?

Do not despoil the weak, for he is weak, 22
Ex 23:6 and do not oppress the poor at the gate, [e]
23:11 for Yahweh takes up their cause, 23
Is 33:1 and extorts the life of their extortioners.

Do not make friends with one who gives way to anger, 24
Si 8:15 make no one quick-tempered a companion of yours,
for fear you learn such behaviour 25
and in it find a snare for yourself.

6:1a
Do not be one of those who go guarantor, 26
who go surety for debts:
if you have no means of paying 27
your bed will be taken [f] from under you.

15:25+; =23:10 Dt 19:14
Do not displace the ancient boundary-stone 28
set by your ancestors.

You see someone alert at his business? 29

His aim will be to serve kings;
not for him the service of the obscure.

23 If you take your seat at a great man's table,
take careful note of what you have before you;
if you have a big appetite
put a knife to your throat.[a]
Do not hanker for his delicacies, =23:6
for they are deceptive food.[b]

Do not wear yourself out in quest of wealth,
stop applying your mind to this.
Fix your gaze on it, and it is there no longer,
for it is able to sprout wings
like an eagle that flies off to the sky.

Do not eat the food of anyone whose eye is jealous,
do not hanker for his delicacies. 23:3
For what he is really thinking about is himself:
'Eat and drink,' he tells you, but his heart is not with you.[c]
You will spit out whatever you have eaten
and find your compliments wasted.

Do not waste words on a fool, Mt 7:6
who will not appreciate the shrewdness of your remarks.

Do not displace the ancient boundary-stone,[d] =22:28+
or encroach on orphans' lands,
for they have a powerful avenger,[e] Ex 22:21–23
and he will take up their cause against you. 22:23

Apply your heart to discipline
and your ears to instructive sayings.

Do not be chary of correcting a child, 19:18
a stroke of the cane is not likely to be fatal. Si 30:1–13
Give him a stroke of the cane,
you will save his soul from Sheol.

My child, if your heart is wise,
then my own heart is glad,
and my inmost self rejoices
when from your lips come honest words.

Do not let your heart be envious of sinners 3:31;=24:14
but remain steady every day in the fear of Yahweh; Ps 37:1–4;73:3
for there is a future,
and your hope will not come to nothing.

b. Meaning uncertain. Gk: 'and he will pay the penalty of his deeds'.

c. This proverb expresses either a natural law by which hardship alone stimulates effort and procures success, or a religious faith in the justice of Yahweh who will reverse the situations of rich and poor.

d. 'thirty (*sheloshim*) chapters': 'chapters' is supplied and 'thirty' emended; Hebr. has 'day before yesterday' *shileshom* or, with vowel emendation, *shalishim*, which has no sense. The reference to thirty chapters presumably comes from the Wisdom of Amenemophis, on which this whole passage is modelled: 'Consider these thirty chapters, they give pleasure, they instruct.'

e. At the city gate, where justice was administered and public business transacted, *see* 24:7.

f. 'will be taken' Gk; 'why should he take?' Hebr.

23 a. Presumably 'set bounds to your gluttony'. Others interpret 'To be a glutton is to put a knife to your throat' (i.e. to endanger your life).

b. Two very similar texts, one by Ptah-hotep and the other by Amenemophis, show that this was a common theme of Egyptian etiquette, *see also* Gn 43:34.

c. The first line is obscure, lit. 'as he thinks in his soul, so he is'. A contrast seems to be intended between real and expressed feelings.

d. 'The ancient boundary-stone' (*'olam*) should perhaps be corrected to 'the boundary-stone of the widow' (*'almanah*), *see* 15:25.

e. The avenger (*go'el*), *see* Nb 35:19c, in this case is Yahweh, cf. Pr 22:23; Jr 50:34.

Listen, my child, and be wise, 19
and guide your heart in the way.

Do not be one of those forever tippling wine 20
nor one of those who gorge themselves with meat;
21:17 for the drunkard and glutton impoverish themselves, 21
and sleepiness is clothed in rags.

19:26 Dt 21:18–21 Listen to your father from whom you are sprung, 22
do not despise your mother in her old age.
Purchase truth—never sell it— 23
wisdom, discipline, and discernment.
10:1 The father of the upright will rejoice indeed, 24
he who fathers a wise child will have joy of it.
17:25 Your father and mother will be happy, 25
and she who bore you joyful.

My child, pay attention to me, 26
let your eyes take pleasure in my way:
22:14 a prostitute is a deep pit, 27
a narrow well, the woman who belongs to another.
7:12 Yes, like a brigand, she lies in wait, 28
increasing the number of law-breakers.

For whom is pity, for whom contempt, 29
for whom is strife, for whom complaint,
for whom blows struck at random,
for whom the clouded eye?
For those who linger over wine too long, 30
ever on the look-out for the blended liquors.
Ep 5:18–19 Do not gaze at wine, how red it is, 31
how it sparkles in the cup!
How smoothly it slips down the throat!
In the end its bite is like a serpent's, 32
its sting as sharp as an adder's.
Your eyes will see peculiar things, 33
you will talk nonsense from your heart.
Ps 107:26–27 You will be like someone sleeping in mid-ocean, 34
like one asleep at the mast-head.
'Struck me, have they? But I'm not hurt. 35
Beaten me? I don't feel anything.
When shall I wake up? . .
I'll ask for more of it!'

23:17 **24** Do not be envious of the wicked 1
or wish for their company,
for their hearts are scheming violence, 2
their lips talking of mischief.

14:1 By wisdom a house is built, 3
by understanding it is made strong;
by knowledge its storerooms are filled 4
with riches of every kind, rare and desirable.

1 S 16:7 Anyone wise is mighty in force, 5
knowledge confirms someone's strength;
Lk 14:31 for it is by strategy that you wage war, 6
=11:14 and victory depends on having many counsellors.

7 For a fool wisdom is an inaccessible fortress: [a]
at the city gate he does not open his mouth.

8 Whoever is intent on evil-doing
is known as a master in cunning.

9 Folly dreams of nothing but sin,
the mocker is abhorrent.

10 If you lose heart when things go wrong, Jb 4:5
your strength is not worth much. [b]

11 Save those being dragged towards death,
but can you rescue those on their way to execution? [c]
12 If you say, 'But look, we did not know,'
will the Weigher of the heart pay no attention? 16:2
Will not the Guardian of your soul be aware
and repay you as your deeds deserve?

13 Eat honey, my child, since it is good;
honey that drips from the comb is sweet to the taste: Ps 19:10
14 and so, for sure, will wisdom be to your soul:
find it and you will have a future =23:18
and your hope will not be cut short.

15 Do not lurk, wicked man, round the upright man's dwelling,
do not despoil his house.
16 For though the upright falls seven times, he gets up again; Jb 5:19
the wicked are the ones who stumble in adversity.

17 Should your enemy fall, do not rejoice, Jb 31:29
when he stumbles do not let your heart exult:
18 for fear that Yahweh will be displeased at the sight
and turn his anger away from him.

19 Do not be indignant about the wicked, Ps 37:1
do not be envious of the evil,
20 for there is no future for the evil,
the lamp of the wicked will go out.

21 Fear Yahweh, my child, and fear the king; ↗1 P 2:17
do not ally yourself with innovators;
22 for suddenly disaster will loom for them,
and who knows what ruin will seize them and their friends? [d]

IV: A FURTHER SELECTION FROM THE SAGES

23 The following are also taken from the sages:

24 **a.** Difficult expression. Others read 'of coral', cf. Jb 28:18; Ezk 27:16, a rare and delicate commodity which a fool would not appreciate.

b. lit. 'narrow', *tzar*, punning on 'wrong', *tzarah*.

c. A verse variously interpreted, perhaps a reference to innocent men unjustly condemned.

d. After this maxim, Gk adds five vv., apparently developing vv. 21–22:

22[a] A son who obeys the word will escape destruction,
he having accepted it with good will. (?)
22[b] Let nothing untruthful be said to the king,
and nothing untruthful will issue from his mouth.
22[c] The tongue of a king is a sword, not an organ of flesh,
whoever falls into its power is crushed.
22[d] For once his wrath is aroused,
he destroys people, sinews and all,
22[e] he devours people's very bones
and, like a flame, burns them up
so that even eagles' young could not eat them.

The Gk then inserts 30:1–14.

18:5;28:21; 31:5 To show partiality in judgement is not good. [e]
Whoever tells the wicked, 'You are upright,' 24
peoples curse him, nations revile him;
but those who correct him, come out of it well, 25
on them will come a happy blessing.

Whoever returns an honest answer 26
plants a kiss on the lips.

Si 7:15 Plan what you want on the open ground, 27
make your preparation in the field;
then go and build your house.

Do not bear witness lightly against your neighbour, [f] 28
nor deceive with your lips.

Mt 6:12, 14–15 Do not say, 'I will treat my neighbour as my neighbour treated me; 29
I will repay everyone what each has earned.'

26:13–16 By the idler's field I was passing, 30
by the vineyard of a man who had no sense,
there it all lay, deep in thorns, 31
entirely overgrown with weeds,
and its stone wall broken down.
And as I gazed I pondered, 32
I drew this lesson from the sight,
=6:10–11 'A little sleep, a little drowsiness, 33
a little folding of the arms to lie back
and poverty comes like a vagrant, 34
and, like a beggar, [g] dearth.'

V: THE SECOND COLLECTION ATTRIBUTED TO SOLOMON

25 Here are some more of Solomon's proverbs, transcribed at the court of 1
Hezekiah king of Judah:

Dt 29:28
Tb 12:7
Rm 11:33 To conceal a matter, this is the glory of God, 2
to sift it thoroughly, the glory of kings.
The heavens for height and the earth for depth, 3
unfathomable, as are the hearts of kings.

From silver remove the dross 4
and it emerges wholly purified; [a]
from the king's presence remove the wicked 5
16:12;29:14 and on uprightness his throne is founded.

Si 7:4;13:9–10
↗Lk 14:7–11 In the presence of the king do not give yourself airs, 6
do not take a place among the great;
better to be invited, 'Come up here', 7
than be humiliated in the presence of the prince.

What your eyes have witnessed [b] 8
do not produce too quickly at the trial,
for what are you to do at the end
should your neighbour confute you?

Mt 18:15 Have the quarrel out with your neighbour. 9
but do not disclose another's secret,

10 for fear your listener put you to shame,
and the loss of repute be irremediable. [e]

11 Like apples of gold inlaid with silver
is a word that is aptly spoken.
12 A golden ring, an ornament of finest gold,
is a wise rebuke to an attentive ear. 15:31

13 The coolness of snow in harvest time, 25:25
such is a trustworthy messenger to those who send him: 13:17
he revives the soul of his master.

14 Clouds and wind, but no rain: Jude 12
such is anyone whose promises are princely but never kept. [d]

15 With patience a judge may be cajoled: Lk 18:1–8
a soft tongue breaks bones.

16 Eat to your satisfaction what honey you may find, 25:27;27:7
but not to excess or you will bring it up again.

17 Do not set foot too often in your neighbour's house,
for fear the neighbour tire of you and come to hate you.

18 A mace, [e] a sword, a piercing arrow,
such is anyone who bears false witness against a companion.

19 Decaying tooth, lame foot,
such is the fickle when trusted in time of trouble:
20 as well take off your coat in bitter weather.

You are pouring vinegar on a wound
when you sing songs to a sorrowing heart.

21 If your enemy is hungry, give him something to eat; Ex 23:4–5+
if thirsty, something to drink. Mt 5:44seq.; 20:22
22 By this you will be heaping red-hot coals on his head, ↗Rm 12:20
and Yahweh will reward you.

23 The north wind begets the rain,
and a backbiting tongue, black looks.

24 Better the corner of a roof to live on =21:9
than a house shared with a quarrelsome woman.

25 Cold water to a thirsty throat; 25:13
such is good news from a distant land.

26 A churned-up spring, a fountain fouled;
such is the upright person trembling before the wicked.

27 It is not good to eat too much honey, 25:16
nor to seek for glory on top of glory. [f]

e. The Law forbids the judge to be a respecter of persons, Lv 19:15; Dt 1:17; 16:19. The prophets similarly insist, though in different terms, on this same duty. Is 10:2; Jr 5:28; Ezk 22:12; Am 2:6; 5:7,10; Mi 3:9,11. The Messiah will judge impartially, Ps 72:4,12,14, Is 11:3–5; Jr 23:5–6, like God himself, *see* Ga 2:6.

f. The Gk interprets this: 'Do not be a lying witness against your fellow-countryman.'

g. 'a beggar' conj., cf. 6:11.

25 a. 'wholly purified' Gk; 'a vessel for the smith' Hebr.

b. 'What' versions; 'which' (linking what went before) Hebr., which continues 'do not come out' instead of 'do not produce it', lit. 'do not make it come out'—an emendation of vowels.

c. Difficult v. 'loss of repute': either what you have done to your neighbour, or what your enemy has done to you.

d. lit. 'who boasts of a lying gift'.

e. 'mace' Gk; Hebr. corrupt.

f. 'glory on top of glory' *kabod mikkabod* conj.; Hebr. *kebodam kabod* 'their glory is glory'.

16:32 An open town, and without defences: 28
such is anyone who lacks self-control.

26 Snow no more befits the summer, nor rain the harvest-time, 1
than honours befit a fool.

As the sparrow escapes, and the swallow flies away, 2
Nb 23:8 Dt 23:5seq. so the undeserved curse will never hit its mark.

A whip for the horse, a bridle for the donkey, 3
10:13;19:29 and for the backs of fools, a stick.

Do not answer a fool in the terms of his folly 4
for fear you grow like him yourself.

Answer a fool in the terms of his folly 5
for fear he imagine himself wise. [a]

He wounds himself, he takes violence for his drink, 6
who sends a message by a fool.

Unreliable [b] as the legs of the lame, 7
=26:9 so is a proverb in the mouth of fools.

As well tie the stone to the sling [c] 8
as pay honour to a fool.

A thorn branch in a drunkard's hand, 9
=26:7 such is a proverb in the mouth of fools.

An archer wounding everyone, 10
such is he who hires the passing fool and drunkard. [d]

↗2 P 2:22 As a dog returns to its vomit, 11
so a fool reverts to his folly.

3:7 You see someone who thinks himself wise? 12
=29:20 More to be hoped for from a fool than from him!

=22:13 'A wild beast on the road!' says the idler, 13
'a lion in the streets!'

The door turns on its hinges, 14
the idler on his bed.

=19:24 Into the dish the idler dips his hand, 15
but is too tired to bring it back to his mouth.

The idler thinks himself wiser 16
than seven people who answer with discretion.

He takes a stray dog by the ears, 17
who meddles in someone else's quarrel.

Like a madman hurling firebrands, 18
arrows and death,
so is anyone who lies to a companion 19
and then says, 'Aren't I amusing?'

No wood, and the fire goes out; 20
22:10 no slanderer, and quarrelling dies down.

Charcoal for live embers, wood for fire, 21
and the quarrelsome for kindling strife.

22 The words of a slanderer are tasty morsels
that go right down into the belly. =18:8

23 Base silver-plate on top of clay:
such are fervent lips and a wicked heart. Mt 23:25–28
1 Jn 3:18

24 Whoever hates may hide it in his speech,
but deep within him lies treachery; Si 12:10–11

25 if he speaks you fair, do not trust him,
since in his heart lurk seven abominations. Si 27:23
Jr 9:4–8

26 Hatred may disguise itself with guile,
to reveal its wickedness later in the assembly. Ps 28:3

27 Whoever digs a pit falls into it,
the stone comes back on him that rolls it. Ps 7:15
Qo 10:8
Si 27:25–27

28 The lying tongue hates its victims,
the wheedling mouth causes ruin.

1 **27** Do not congratulate yourself about tomorrow,
since you do not know what today will bring forth. Lk 12:19–20
Jm 4:13–14

2 Let someone else sing your praises, but not your own mouth, 2 Co 10:12–13
a stranger, but not your own lips.

3 Heavy is the stone, weighty is the sand;
heavier than both—a grudge borne by a fool.

4 Cruel is wrath, overwhelming is anger;
but jealousy, who can withstand that? 6:34–35

5 Better open reproof
than feigned love.

6 Trustworthy are blows from a friend,
deceitful are kisses from a foe. [a] 26:24–26
Mt 26:49

7 The gorged throat revolts at honey, 25:16
the hungry throat finds all bitterness sweet. Lk 15:16

8 Like a bird that strays from its nest, Si 29:21–28
so is anyone who strays from his native land.

9 Oil and perfume gladden the heart,
and the sweetness of friendship rather than self-reliance.

10 Do not give up your friend or your father's friend; Si 37:6
when trouble comes, do not go off to your brother's house,
better a near neighbour than a distant brother. 18:24

11 Learn to be wise, my child, and gladden my heart,
that I may have an answer for anyone who insults me.

12 The discreet sees danger and takes shelter, =22:3
simpletons go ahead and pay the penalty.

26 **a.** The contradiction between this and the preceding proverb is deliberate and plays on the two meanings of the phrase 'in the terms of his folly'.
b. lit. 'feeble' *dallu* conj.; 'draw (as of water)' (?) *dalyu* Hebr.
c. Fixed too securely in the sling and therefore likely to recoil on the slinger.
d. The text of this v. is corrupt. The literal translation of the Hebrew would read 'An archer (?) wounding everyone, and he who hires a fool, and he who hires passers-by'. We emend the second 'and who hires' (*wesoker*) to 'and the drunkard' (*weshikkor*), and restore 'such is'.

27 **a.** Translation uncertain. The word rendered by 'deceitful' is often translated 'abundant'. Some emend to read 'displeasing', 'bad'. The notion of falseness is supported by the antithetic parallelism.

6:1a;=20:16 Take the man's clothes! He has gone surety for a stranger. 13
Take a pledge from him, for persons unknown. [b]

Whoever at dawn loudly blesses his neighbour— 14
it will be reckoned to him as a curse. [c]

19:13 The dripping of a gutter on a rainy day 15
and a quarrelsome woman are alike;
whoever can restrain her, can restrain the wind, 16
and take a firm hold on grease.

Iron is sharpened by iron, 17
one person is sharpened by contact with another.

Whoever tends the fig tree eats its figs, 18
whoever looks after his master will be honoured.

As water reflects face back to face, 19
so one human heart reflects another. [d]

30:15–16 Qo 1:8;6:7 Sheol and Perdition are never satisfied, 20
insatiable, too, are human eyes. [e]

=17:3 A furnace for silver, a foundry for gold: 21
a person is worth what his reputation is worth.

Pound a fool in a mortar 22
among grain with a pestle,
his folly will not leave him.

12:10 Si 7:22 Know your flocks' condition well, 23
take good care of your herds;
for riches do not last for ever, 24
crowns do not hand themselves on from age to age. [f]
The grass once gone, the aftergrowth appearing, 25
the hay gathered in from the mountains,
you should have lambs to clothe you, 26
goats to buy you a field,
goat's milk sufficient to feed you, 27
to feed your household and provide for your serving girls.

Lv 26:17,36 Ps 118:6 **28** The wicked flees when no one is pursuing, 1
the upright is bold as a lion.

A country in revolt throws up many leaders: 2
with one person wise and experienced, you have stability. [a]

The wicked [b] oppresses the weak: 3
here is a devastating rain—and farewell, bread!

Those who forsake the law sing the praises of the wicked, 4
those who observe the law are angered by them.

Ws 3:9 Jn 10:26m 1 Co 2:14 The wicked do not know what justice means, 5
those who seek Yahweh understand everything.

=19:1 Better someone poor living an honest life 6
than someone of devious ways however rich.

23:19–22 An intelligent child is one who keeps the Law; 7
an associate of profligates brings shame on his father.

8 Whoever increases wealth by usury and interest — Ex 22:24+
amasses it for someone else who will bestow it on the poor. [c] — 13:22

9 Whoever refuses to listen to the Law,
such a one's very prayer is an abomination. — 15:8

10 Whoever seduces the honest to evil ways
will fall into his own pit. — 26:27+
The blameless are the heirs to happiness.

11 The rich may think himself wise,
but the intelligent poor will unmask him.

12 When the upright triumph, there is great exultation: — 11:10;29:2;
when the wicked are in the ascendant, people take cover. — =28:28

13 No one who conceals his sins will prosper, — Si 4:26
whoever confesses [d] and renounces them will find mercy. — Lk 18:9–14; 1 Jn 1:9

14 Blessed the person who is never without fear, — Si 3:26
whoever hardens his heart will fall into distress.

15 Like a roaring lion or a springing bear
is a wicked ruler of a powerless people.

16 An unenlightened ruler is rich in rapacity,
one who hates greed will lengthen his days.

17 A man guilty of murder will flee till he reaches his tomb:
let no one halt him!

18 Whoever lives an honest life will be safe, — 10:9
whoever wavers between two ways falls down in one of them.

19 Whoever works his land shall have bread and to spare, — =12:11
whoever chases fantasies has no sense. [e]

20 A trustworthy person will be overwhelmed with blessings,
but no one who tries to get rich quickly will go unpunished.

21 It is not good to show partiality, — 24:23
but people will do wrong for a mouthful of bread. — Dt 16:19+

22 The person of greedy eye chases after wealth,
not knowing that want will be the result.

23 Anyone who reproves another
will enjoy more favour in the end than the flatterer. — 27:5–6

24 Whoever robs father and mother saying, 'Nothing wrong in that!'
is comrade for a brigand.

b. 'persons unknown' *nokrim* conj., cf. 20:16; Hebr. *nokriyyah* 'a foreign woman'.

c. The Talmud forbids greetings before morning prayer.

d. The interpretation of this v. is uncertain. It apparently means that someone sees his own feelings in others, just as a face sees its own reflection; but the Gk understands it in a contrary sense: 'As no face is like another, so no two human hearts are the same.'

e. The eyes are the seat of envy.

f. 'crowns do not hand themselves on' Gk; 'is a crown handed down?' Hebr.

28 a. The Gk interprets this differently: 'When the violent revolt, disputes arise; intelligent people know how to extinguish them.'

b. 'wicked' Gk; 'poor' Hebr.

c. Ill-gotten gains give no lasting profit and in the end revert to the poor.

d. Allusion to the confession of sins, cf. Lv 5:5; Nb 5:7; Ps 32:5; Is 1:16–18; Ho 14:2–4.

e. 'fantasies' or 'futile things', for the author of these proverbs, perhaps mean commercial activities. Many proverbs retained their association with the agricultural ideal of antiquity.

The covetous provokes disputes, 25
15:18 whoever trusts in Yahweh will prosper.

3:5–6 1 Co 3:18 Whoever trusts his own wit is a fool, 26
anyone whose ways are wise will be safe.

11:25;19:17; 22:9 No one who gives to the poor will ever go short, 27
but whoever closes his eyes will have curses in plenty.

=28:12 When the wicked are in the ascendant, people take cover, 28
but when they perish, the upright multiply.

29 Whoever is stiff-necked under reproof 1
will be suddenly and irremediably broken.

11:10;28:12,28 When the upright are on the increase, the people rejoice; 2
when the wicked are in power, the people groan.

5:10;10:1;6:26 Si 9:6 Lk 15:13 The lover of Wisdom makes his father glad, 3
but the patron of prostitutes fritters his wealth away.

14:34 Is 11:4–5 A king gives a country stability by justice, 4
an extortioner brings it to ruin.

11:9 Whoever flatters his companion 5
spreads a net for his feet.

Jb 18:7–10 In the sin of the wicked lies a snare, 6
but the upright exults and rejoices.

Jb 29:16 The upright understands the cause of the weak, 7
the wicked has not the wit to understand it. [a]

Scoffers set a city in ferment, 8
but the wise moderate anger.

Let someone wise argue with a fool, 9
anger and good humour alike will be wasted.

The bloodthirsty hate the honest, 10
but the upright seek them out.

12:16 The fool blurts out every angry feeling, 11
but the wise subdues and restrains them.

When a ruler listens to false reports, 12
all his ministers will be scoundrels.

=22:2 Mt 5:45 Poor and oppressor are found together, 13
Yahweh gives light to the eyes of both.

16:12;20:28 The king who judges the weak with equity 14
sees his throne set firm for ever.

10:1;22:15 The stick and the reprimand bestow wisdom, 15
a young man left to himself brings shame on his mother.

When the wicked are on the increase, sin multiplies, 16
but the upright will witness their downfall.

13:24;19:18 Correct your child, and he will give you peace of mind; 17
he will delight your soul.

Where there is no vision the people get out of hand; 18
happy are they who keep the law. [b]

19 Not by words is a slave corrected: Si 33:25–30
even if he understands, he will take no notice.

20 You see someone too ready of speech? =26:12
There is more to be hoped for from a fool!

21 If a slave is pampered from childhood,
he will prove ungrateful [c] in the end.

22 The hot-head provokes disputes, 14:17 Si 1:22
someone in a rage commits all sorts of sins.

23 Pride brings humiliation, ↗Mt 23:12par.
whoever humbles himself will win honour.

24 To hear the curse [d] and disclose nothing
is to share with the thief and to hate oneself.

25 To be afraid of human beings is a snare,
whoever trusts in Yahweh is secure. 16:20;18:10

26 Many people seek a ruler's favour,
but the rights of each come from Yahweh.

27 Abhorrent to the upright is the sinful,
abhorrent to the wicked is one whose way is straight.

VI: THE SAYINGS OF AGUR 31:1

1 **30** The sayings of Agur son of Jakeh, of Massa. [a] Prophecy of this man for Ithiel, for Ithiel and for Ucal. [b]

2 I am myself the stupidest of people,
bereft of human intelligence,
3 I have not learnt wisdom,
and I lack the knowledge of the holy ones. [c]
4 Who has mounted to the heavens, then come down again? Jn 3:13
Who has gathered the wind in the clasp of his hand?
Who has wrapped the waters in his cloak? Jb 38–39 Si 1:2–3
Who has set all the ends of the earth firm?
What is his name?
What is his child's name?
Do you know?

5 Every word of God is unalloyed, ‖2 S 22:31 =Ps 18:30
a shield to those who take refuge in him.
6 To his words make no addition,
lest he reprove you
and account you a liar.

7 Two things I beg of you,
do not grudge me them before I die:

29 **a.** lit. 'does not understand knowledge'.
b. The 'vision' seems to be an allusion to the activities of the prophets. The word translated 'law' (*torah*) can also mean 'teaching': here, of the prophets.
c. Translation uncertain: the word occurs only here.
d. The curse pronounced on the unidentified criminal or on witnesses who refuse to come forward. Cf. Lv 5:1; Jg 17:2.

30 **a.** 'Massa' *hammassa'i* conj.; Hebr. *hammassa'* 'the prophecy'. On Massa *see* 31:1a. • In the Gk text 30:1–14 has been inserted between 24:22 and 24:23, and 30:15–31:9 follows 24:34.
b. Doubtful interpretation of a probably corrupt text. Others by emending the vowels read 'I am weary, oh God, I am weary and exhausted.' The old versions show the same indecision: Vulg. 'Vision told by the man with whom God is and who, God being with him, has been consoled'. Gk 'This is what the man says to those who trust in God, and I cease.'
c. i.e. of the sages, or 'of the Holy One' (with plural of majesty), i.e. of God.

Ps 119:29 keep falsehood and lies far from me, 8
give me neither poverty nor riches,
Mt 6:11 grant me only my share of food,
Dt 6:12;32:15 for fear that, surrounded by plenty, I should fall away 9
and say, 'Yahweh—who is Yahweh?'
Lv 5:21 or else, in destitution, take to stealing
and profane the name of my God.

Phm 8–20 Do not blacken a slave's name to his master, 10
lest he curse you, and you suffer for it.

Ex 21:17 There is a breed of person that curses his father 11
and does not bless his mother;
a breed that, laying claim to purity, 12
has not yet been cleansed of its filth;
a breed haughty of eye, 13
with disdain in every glance;
a breed with swords for teeth, 14
with knives for jaws,
Jb 19:22 devouring the oppressed from the earth
Is 9:11 and the needy from the land. [d]

VII: NUMERICAL PROVERBS [e]

The leech has two daughters: 'Give! Give!' 15
There are three insatiable things,
four, indeed, that never say, 'Enough!'
27:20 Sheol, the barren womb, 16
Gn 30:1
Nb 16:33f earth which can never have its fill of water,
fire which never says, 'Enough!'

19:26+ The eye which looks jeeringly on a father, 17
and scorns the obedience due to a mother,
will be pecked out by the ravens of the valley,
and eaten by the vultures.

There are three things beyond my comprehension, 18
four, indeed, that I do not understand:
the way of an eagle through the skies, 19
Ws 5:10–12 the way of a snake over the rock,
the way of a ship in mid-ocean,
the way of a man with a girl. [f]

This is how an adulteress behaves: 20
she eats, then wipes her mouth and says,
'I have done nothing wrong!' [g]

Qo 10:5–7 There are three things at which the earth trembles, 21
four, indeed, which it cannot endure:
19:10 a slave become king, 22
a brute gorged with food,
a hateful woman wed at last, 23
Gn 16:3–6 a servant girl inheriting from her mistress.

There are four creatures little on the earth, 24
though they are wisest of the wise: [h]
6:6–8 ants, a race with no strength, 25
yet in the summer they make sure of their food;

26 the coneys,[i] a race without defences,
yet they make their home in the rocks;
27 locusts, which have no king,
yet they all march in good order;
28 lizards, which you can catch in your hand,
yet they frequent the palaces of kings.

29 There are three things of stately tread,
four, indeed, of stately walk:
30 the lion, bravest of beasts,
he will draw back from nothing;
31 a vigorous cock, a he-goat,
and the king when he harangues his people.[j]

32 If you have been foolish enough to fly into a passion
and now have second thoughts, lay your hand on your lips.
33 For by churning the milk you produce butter,
by wringing the nose you produce blood,
and by whipping up anger you produce strife.

VIII: THE SAYINGS OF LEMUEL

1 **31** The sayings of Lemuel king of Massa,[a] taught him by his mother:

2 What, my son! What, son of my womb! 5:1–14
What, son of my vows!
3 Do not expend your energy on women 1 K 11:1–4
nor your wealth on those who ruin kings.[b] Si 9:2

4 Not for kings, O Lemuel, Qo 10:16–17
not for kings the drinking of wine,[c]
not for princes the love of[d] liquor,
5 for fear that in liquor they forget what they have decreed
and pervert the course of justice against all the poor.

6 Procure strong drink for someone about to die, Mt 27:34
wine for him whose heart is heavy:
7 let him drink and forget his misfortune,
and remember his misery no more.

8 Make your views heard, on behalf of the dumb, Ps 72:2–4, 12–14
on behalf of all the unwanted;
9 make your views heard, pronounce an upright verdict,
defend the cause of the poor and the wretched.

d. It is not clear whether this description should be applied to a specific category, nation or social class.

e. The 'numerical proverb' has in it an element of maxim, of riddle, of comparison. This literary device is already found earlier in an undeveloped form, in Hebr. prophetic literature, Is 17:6; Am 1:3,6,9,11,13; Mi 5:4; cf. Ps 62:11seq., and recurs throughout the Wisdom books, Pr 6:16seq.; 30:15–33; Jb 5:19; 40:5; Qo 4:12(?); 11:2; Si 23:16seq.; 25:7; 26:5–7,28; 50:25; cf. 25:1,2. This small collection, 30:15–33, betrays a special interest in the wonders of nature and in the habits of animals.

f. Not his manoeuvres to win her, but the mystery of marriage and procreation.

g. This v. seems to be an inappropriate gloss on the two vv. foregoing.

h. 'of the wise' versions; 'created wise' Hebr.

i. A small mammal like the marmot which lives in rocks and makes itself very inaccessible; *see* Lv 11:5; Ps 104:18.

j. Following Gk, Hebr. 'and a king (having) his army (?) with him'. The beginning of the v. is equally uncertain; instead of 'cock' (following the Arabic), other suggestions are 'cricket' (from Accadian) or even 'horse', 'zebra', 'greyhound', etc.

31 a. 'king of Massa' by linking the two words; 'king; prophecy' Hebr., cf. 30:1. Massa is the name of an Ishmaelite tribe in north Arabia, Gn 25:14. The wisdom of 'the sons of the East', Nb 24:21k, was renowned, *see* 1 K 5:10; Jb 2:11d; Jr 49:7.

b. 'those who ruin' conj.; 'to ruin' Hebr. in place of 'your wealth', a slight correction would allow the reading 'your loins'.

c. Insistence on the dangers of wine is a characteristic of 'desert' morality (cf. the Rechabites, Jr 35, and the modern Arabs).

d. 'the love of' conj.; Hebr. *'o ketib, 'e qere* 'or'.

IX: THE PERFECT HOUSEWIFE[e]

Aleph The truly capable woman[f]—who can find her? 10
She is far beyond the price of pearls.

Bet Her husband's heart has confidence in her, 11
from her he will derive no little profit.

Gimel Advantage and not hurt she brings him 12
all the days of her life.

Dalet She selects wool and flax, 13
she does her work with eager hands.

He She is like those merchant vessels, 14
bringing her food from far away.

Waw She gets up while it is still dark 15
giving her household their food,
giving orders to her serving girls.[g]

Zain She sets her mind on a field, then she buys it; 16
with what her hands have earned she plants a vineyard.

Het She puts her back into her work 17
and shows how strong her arms can be.

Tet She knows that her affairs are going well; 18
her lamp does not go out at night.

Yod She sets her hands to the distaff, 19
her fingers grasp the spindle.

Kaph She holds out her hands to the poor, 20
she opens her arms to the needy.

Lamed Snow may come, she has no fears for her household, 21
with all her servants warmly clothed.

Mem She makes her own quilts, 22
she is dressed in fine linen and purple.

24:7 *Nun* Her husband is respected at the city gates, 23
taking his seat among the elders of the land.

Samek She weaves materials and sells them, 24
she supplies the merchant with sashes.

Ain She is clothed in strength and dignity, 25
she can laugh at the day to come.[h]

Pe When she opens her mouth, she does so wisely; 26
on her tongue is kindly instruction.

Zade She keeps good watch on the conduct of her household, 27
no bread of idleness for her.

Qoph Her children stand up and proclaim her blessed, 28
her husband, too, sings her praises:

Resh 'Many women have done admirable things, 29
but you surpass them all!'

30 *Shin* Charm is deceitful, and beauty empty;
the woman who fears Yahweh is the one to praise.[i]

31 *Taw* Give her a share in what her hands have worked for,
and let her works tell her praises at the city gates.

e. Alphabetical poem (cf. Ps 9–10; 25; 34; 37; 111; 112; 119; 145; Lm 1–4; Si 51:13–29 (Hebr.); Na 1:2–8; each verse (in other examples, each strophe) begins with a consecutive letter of the Hebr. alphabet. On the interpretation of this poem *see* v. 30i and 5:15b. Cf. 11:16; 12:4; 18:22; 19:14 and Si 7:19.

f. The Hebrew expression, translated literally by Gk as 'strong woman', implies both efficiency and virtue: in a word, the perfect mistress of the house.

g. Probably a gloss, it interrupts the rhythm.

h. She looks confidently to the future, whether to the bright fortunes of her family or to the reward God will one day give her for her diligence.

i. This eulogy of the perfect wife may have been understood as an allegorical description of personified Wisdom, *see* 8:22e, as an amplification in Gk seems to suggest ('A wise woman will be praised—the fear of Yahweh, this is what must be extolled.'); and this would explain why this poem, a very fine one in any case, finds its place as the conclusion to this book.

INTRODUCTION TO
ECCLESIASTES

§1 The title of this short book reads: 'The Words of Qoheleth, son of David, king in Jerusalem'. 'Qoheleth', *see* 1:2 and 12; 7:27; 12:8–10, is not a proper name but a common noun, sometimes preceded by the definite article; though feminine in form it is treated as a masculine. The most likely explanation is that Qoheleth indicates the function of one who speaks in the assembly (*qahal*; in Greek *ekklesia*, hence the book's Latin and English title transliterated from the Greek Bible); it could therefore be rendered: the Preacher. This Preacher is called 'son of David, king in Jerusalem', and there is no doubt that he is identified with Solomon to whom the text makes clear reference, 1:16 (cf. 1 K 3:12; 5:10–11; 10:7) and 2:7–9 (cf. 1 K 3:13; 10:23), though the name is not mentioned. This, however, is no more than a conventional literary device; the author commends his thoughts to the public under the name of the greatest sage in Israel. The book's vocabulary and style, as also its doctrine (of which we shall speak later), make it impossible to date it before the Exile. It has often been maintained that the author is not one but many, that two, three, four or even eight hands can be detected. But there is a growing dislike for any such dismemberment, which misconceives the thought and literary form of the book and which is discountenanced by its unity of style and vocabulary. There is, however, a fairly clear break between the first six and the last six chapters. The book as a whole has been edited by one of the writer's disciples, who added the concluding verses, 12:9–14.

As with the other Wisdom Books such as Job and Ecclesiasticus, not to mention the composite Book of Proverbs, the theme progresses fitfully: the idea is stated, repeated, amended. There is no defined plan here, rather variations on a single theme, the futility of things human, which is enunciated at the beginning of the book, 1:2, and at the end, 12:8. Knowledge, wealth, love, life itself, all these things are illusory. Life is no more than a succession of unrelated and meaningless events, 3:1–11, ending in senility, 12:1–7, and death befalling wise and foolish, rich and poor, human and animal alike, 3:18–20. Qoheleth's problem is the same as Job's: do virtue and vice get their deserts on this earth? Both Qoheleth and Job answer: No. Experience gives the lie to the conventional answer, 7:25–8:14. But, unlike Job who seeks a meaning for his sufferings, Qoheleth enjoys good health yet discovers that happiness itself is an empty thing and consoles himself with the limited joys that life has to offer, 3:12–13; 8:15; 9:7–9. Or rather, he tries to console himself, for indeed his failure is as evident at the end as at the beginning.

He taxes his brain over the problem of a future life, but in vain, 3:21; 9:10; 12:7. And yet he has faith in God: the ways of God to human beings may dismay him, but God, he says, does not need to justify them, 3:11,14; 7:13, while human beings for their part must resign themselves to accepting the sorrows and joys that God sends, 7:14; they must keep the commandments and fear God, 12:13.

Clearly, this doctrine is far from being coherent. But rather than explain the self-corrections and self-contradictions by recourse to a plurality of authors, it would seem preferable to attribute them to the oscillation of one man's mind confronted with a mystery of mysteries and lacking the data for a solution. No answer could satisfy either Qoheleth or Job but that of reward and punishment beyond the grave, *see* p. 751.

§2. This book has the characteristics of a period of transition. The old conventional convictions have been shaken and as yet nothing has taken their place. Hebrew thought is here at the crossroads and foreign influence on Qoheleth's thinking has been the object of recent study. But we can rule out the often suggested links with the philosophic thought of the Stoics, Epicureans and Cynics, with which Qoheleth might have been familiar as mediated through Hellenistic Egypt; none of the apparent similarities is conclusive, and the mentality of the author is remote from that of the Greek philosophers. More valid parallels, however, have been established with such Egyptian compositions as the *Dialogue of a Despairing Man with his Soul* or the *Songs of the Harpist* and, more recently, with Mesopotamian wisdom literature and with the *Epic of Gilgamesh*. But no direct influence can be pin-pointed from any of these works. What all have in common are their themes, often very ancient, and already the stock-in-trade of oriental wisdom. Qoheleth in turn brought his own mind to bear on this heritage of the past, as indeed his editor states, 12:9.

Qoheleth is a Palestinian Jew, probably a citizen of Jerusalem. He writes a late Hebrew, peppered with Aramaisms, and uses two words from Persian. This indicates a date well after the Exile, but before the beginning of the second century BC, when Ben Sira made use of the book; palaeography situates fragments of Qo found in the caves of Qumran at about 150 BC. The third century BC is therefore the most likely date of composition. Palestine was then ruled by the Ptolemies and affected by humanistic influences and had not yet experienced the upsurge of faith and hope of the Maccabean period.

Qoheleth represents only one stage in the religious development of Israel; it cannot be assessed in isolation from what has gone before and what will follow. By underlining the inadequacies of earlier notions and by compelling reconsideration of the human enigma, it exposes the need of a new revelation. It warns against attachment to the goods of this world and, by denying that the rich are happy, prepares the world for hearing 'blessed are the poor', Lk 6:20.

ECCLESIASTES

1 Composition of Qoheleth [a] son of David, king in Jerusalem. [b] 1

PART ONE

Prologue [c]

12:8 Sheer futility, [d] Qoheleth says. Sheer futility: everything is futile! 2, 3
Ps 62:9;94:11; 144:4 What profit can we show for all our toil, [e] toiling under the sun? 4
Rm 8:20 A generation goes, a generation comes, 4
Ps 104:5 yet the earth stands firm for ever. 5
Si 14:18 The sun rises, the sun sets; then to its place it speeds and there it rises. 5, 6
Southward goes the wind, then turns to the north; it turns and turns again; then back to its circling goes the wind. 6, 7
Si 40:11 Into the sea go all the rivers, and yet the sea is never filled, and still to their goal the rivers go. 7
Pr 27:20 All things are wearisome. No one can say that eyes have not had enough of seeing, ears their fill of hearing. [f] 8

2:12;3:15;6:10 What was, will be again, 9
what has been done, will be done again,
and there is nothing new under the sun!

Take anything which people acclaim as being new: it existed in the centuries 10
2:16 Ws 2:4 preceding us. 11
No memory remains of the past, and so it will be for the centuries to come—they will not be remembered by their successors.

Life of Solomon [g]

I, Qoheleth, have reigned over Israel in Jerusalem. 12, 13
3:10 Gn 3:17–19 Ho 12:2 Wisely I have applied myself to investigation and exploration of everything that happens under heaven. What a wearisome task [h] God has given humanity to keep us busy! 14
I have seen everything that is done under the sun: how futile it all is, mere chasing after the wind! [i]

What is twisted cannot be straightened, 15
what is not there cannot be counted.

1 K 3:12;5: 9–10;10:1–13 Si 47:14–18 I thought to myself: I have acquired a greater stock of wisdom than anyone 16
before me in Jerusalem. I myself have mastered every kind of wisdom and science.
I have applied myself to understanding philosophy and science, stupidity [j] and 17
folly, and I now realise that all this too is chasing after the wind.

Much wisdom, much grief; 18
the more knowledge, the more sorrow.

2 Pr 14:13 I thought to myself, 'Very well, I will try pleasure and see what enjoyment has 1
to offer.' And this was futile too. 2
This laughter, I reflected, is a madness, this pleasure no use at all. 2
I decided to hand my body over to drinking wine, [a] my mind still guiding me in wisdom; I resolved to embrace folly, to discover the best way for 3
1 K 7:1–12 people to spend their days under the sun. 4
1 Ch 27:27seq. I worked on a grand scale: built myself palaces, planted vineyards; 4, 5
made myself gardens and orchards, planting every 5

kind of fruit tree in them; ·had pools made for watering the young trees of my
plantations. ·I bought slaves, male and female, had home-born slaves as well;
herds and flocks I had too, more than anyone in Jerusalem before me. ·I amassed 1 K 9:28;10
silver and gold, the treasures of kings and provinces; acquired singers, men and
women, and every human luxury, chest upon chest [b] of it. ·So I grew great, greater 1 K 11:1–3
than anyone in Jerusalem before me; nor did my wisdom leave me. ·I denied my 1 K 10:23
eyes nothing that they desired, refused my heart no pleasure, for I found all my
hard work a pleasure, such was the return for all my efforts. ·I then reflected on all
that my hands had achieved and all the effort I had put into its achieving. What
futility it all was, what chasing after the wind! There is nothing to be gained under
the sun.

My reflections then turned to wisdom, stupidity and folly. For instance, what
can the successor of a king do? What has been done already. [c] ·More is to be gained 1:9
from wisdom than from folly, just as one gains more from light than from darkness;
this, of course, I see:

> The wise have their eyes open, [d] 10:2
> the fool walks in the dark. Jn 8:12b
> 1 Jn 2:10–11

No doubt! But I know, too, that one fate awaits them both. ·'Since the fool's fate', 6:8
I thought to myself, 'will be my fate too, what is the point of my having been wise?'
I realised that this too is futile. ·For there is no lasting memory for the wise or the 1:11
fool, and in the days to come both will be forgotten; the wise, no less than the fool, Ps 49:10
must die. ·Life I have come to hate, for what is done under the sun disgusts me, Ws 2:4
since all is futility and chasing after the wind. ·All I have toiled for under the sun Si 44:8–15
and now bequeath to my successor I have come to hate; ·who knows whether he
will be wise or a fool? Yet he will be master of all the work into which I have put my
efforts and wisdom under the sun. That is futile too. ·I have come to despair of all Ps 39:6
the efforts I have expended under the sun. ·For here is one who has laboured
wisely, skilfully and successfully and must leave what is his own to someone who
has not toiled for it at all. This is futile too, and grossly unjust; ·for what does he
gain for all the toil and strain that he has undergone under the sun—·since his days Si 11:18seq.
are full of sorrow, his work is full of stress and even at night he has no peace of Jb 7:2
mind? This is futile too.

There is no happiness except in eating and drinking, and in enjoying one's 3:12–13,22;
achievements; [e] and I see that this too comes from God's hand; ·for who would get 5:17;8:15;
anything to eat or drink, unless all this came from him? [f] ·Wisdom, knowledge and 9:7–8
joy, God gives to those who please him, but on the sinner he lays the task of Si 1:10
Lk 12:19
Jb 27:16–17
Pr 13:22

1 **a.** 'Qoheleth' or 'Ecclesiastes': the personage of the assembly (Hebr. *qahal*, Gk *ekklesia*), i.e. the President or Preacher; or possibly the spokesman for the assembly, personification of the Public which, wearied of conventional teaching, is now itself going to claim a hearing.

b. Literary fiction identifying the author with Solomon, model of sages, 1 K 5:9–14.

c. The determinism of the cosmos, forming the unchanging setting for human existence, inspires Qoheleth with world-weariness, unlike Job (Jb 38–40) and the author of Ps 104, in whom it inspires wonder and adoration.

d. The primary meaning of the term rendered here as 'futility' is 'mist', 'breath', and is part of the gamut of imagery (water, shadow, smoke, etc.) which Hebrew poetry uses to describe the transitory nature of all that is human. In Qo, the word, having lost its concrete sense, means the illusory nature of things and hence the disappointment inherent in them for human beings.

e. In Hebrew *'amal*, usually carrying the sense of hard work, such as is performed by slaves (*see* Dt 26:7), whence labour and suffering. The word occurs very often in Qo: as a noun, twenty times; as a verb, thirteen times.

f. Or 'Everything is (more) wearisome (than) one can describe. The eye is not content with what it can see, nor the ear satisfied by what it has heard.'

g. Even Solomon himself, for all his luxury, 1 K 10:4seq., and despite his wisdom, was not happy.

h. 'Task', in Hebrew *'inyan*: the word occurs only in this book, where it usually carries a pejorative sense: work, seen as a source of worry and fatigue.

i. i.e. useless effort, waste of time.

j. 'Stupidity' MSS, cf. 10:13; 'stupid actions' Hebr.

2 **a.** Instead of reading *limeshok*, lit. 'draw', 'drag' (whence 'hand over'), some correct to *lisemok* and translate 'I sustained my body with wine.'

b. The meaning of the word in post-biblical Hebrew. Others interpret 'a princess, princesses' or 'a concubine, concubines', seeing an allusion to Solomon's harem.

c. 'what can do' conj.; 'who' Hebr. 'what has been done (already)' conj. • 'what people have (already) done to him' Hebr. • Wisdom procures no advantage, not even that of a lasting memorial; nonetheless, it is preferable to stupidity, just as day is preferable to night.

d. lit. 'has eyes in his head'.

e. This maxim, epicurean in flavour, is a polemical argument. Although the author makes use of it as a refrain, 3:12–13; 5:17; 8:15; 9:7, it does not represent his whole view of life: he does not recommend pleasure, as the ultimate motive for human action, to the exclusion of all sense of duty.

f. 'drink' versions; Hebr. 'hurry'. • 'did not all this come from him' (lit. 'apart from him') MSS, versions; Hebr. 'apart from me'.

gathering and storing up for someone else who is pleasing to him.[g] This too is futility and chasing after the wind.

Death[a]

3 There is a season for everything, a time for every occupation under heaven: 1

A time for giving birth, 2
a time for dying;
a time for planting,
a time for uprooting what has been planted.
A time for killing, 3
a time for healing;
a time for knocking down,
a time for building.
A time for tears, 4
a time for laughter;
a time for mourning,
a time for dancing.
A time for throwing stones away, 5
a time for gathering them;
a time for embracing,
a time to refrain from embracing.
A time for searching, 6
a time for losing;
a time for keeping,
a time for discarding.
A time for tearing, 7
a time for sewing;
a time for keeping silent,
a time for speaking.
A time for loving, 8
a time for hating;
a time for war,
a time for peace.

What do people gain from the efforts they make? 9. I contemplate the task that 9, 10
God gives humanity to labour at. 10. All that he does is apt for its time; but although 11
8:17;11:5 Ps 139:17 Si 11:4;18:6 Is 55:8–9 Rm 11:33 he has given us an awareness of the passage of time,[b] we can grasp neither the beginning nor the end of what God does.
I know there is no happiness for a human being[c] except in pleasure and enjoy- 12
2:24e ment through life. 13. And when we eat and drink and find happiness in all our 13
achievements, this is a gift from God.
Ps 33:11 Si 3:14;18:6 I know that whatever God does will be for ever.[d] 14

To this there is nothing to add,
from this there is nothing to subtract,
and the way God acts inspires dread.

1:9 What is, has been already, 15
what will be, is already;
God seeks out anyone who is persecuted.[e]

Again I observe under the sun: 16
4:1;5:7 crime is where justice should be,
the criminal is where the upright[f] should be.

And I think to myself: the upright and the criminal will both be judged by God, 17
since there is a time for every thing and every action here.

18 I think to myself: where human beings are concerned, this is so that God can test
19 them and show them [g] that they are animals. •For the fate of human and the fate of Ps 49:12,20
animal is the same: as the one dies, so the other dies; both have the selfsame
breath. Human is in no way better off than animal—since all is futile. Mt 12:12

20 Everything goes to the same place, 12:7
everything comes from the dust, Gn 2:7;3:19
everything returns to the dust. Jb 14:10;34:15
Ps 104:29
Pr 15:24
21 Who knows if the human spirit mounts upward or if the animal spirit goes Si 16:29–30
downward to the earth? [h]
22 I see there is no contentment for a human being except happiness in achieve- 2:24e
ment; such is the lot of a human beings. No one can tell us what will happen after 6:12
we are gone. Si 16:29,30

Society [a]

1 4 Then again, I contemplate all the oppression that is committed under the sun. 3:16
Take for instance the tears of the oppressed. No one to comfort them! The
2 power their oppressors wield. No one to comfort them! •So, rather than the living
who still have lives to live, I congratulate the dead who have already met death; Jb 3:11–23; 10:18–22
3 happier than both of these are those who are yet unborn and have not seen the 6:3
4 evil things that are done under the sun. •I see that all effort and all achievement Jr 20:17–18 •3:16
spring from mutual jealousy. This too is futility and chasing after the wind.

5 The fool folds his arms Pr 6:9–11
and eats his own flesh away.

6 Better one hand full of repose
than two hands full of achievements
to chase after the wind. [b]

7, 8 And something else futile I observe under the sun: •a person is quite alone—no
child, no brother; and yet there is no end to his efforts, his eyes can never have
their fill of riches. For whom, then, do I work so hard and grudge myself pleasure?
This too is futile, a sorry business.
9, 10 Better two than one alone, since thus their work is really rewarding. •If one Lk 10:1
should fall, the other helps him up; but what of the person with no one to help him
11 up when he falls? •Again: if two sleep together they keep warm, but how can
12 anyone keep warm alone? •Where one alone would be overcome, two will put up
resistance; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken. [c]

g. This was how sages explained the moral problem raised by the prosperity of the wicked. *see* Jb 27:16seq.; Pr 11:8; 13:22. Qoheleth makes his own sarcastic comment on the inadequacy of their teaching.

3 a. Half human occupations are ill-omened, half human activities have to do with sorrow. Death casts its shadow on life, which is a series of contradictory acts, vv. 1–8, without any other goal, vv. 9–13, than death, itself meaningless, vv. 14–22.

b. Or 'God has set eternity in their heart.' This phrase, however, is not to be taken in the Christian sense; it means simply: God has given the human heart (mind) awareness of 'duration', he has endowed it with the power of reflecting on the sequence of events and thus of controlling the present. But, the author adds, this awareness is deceptive; it does not reveal the meaning of life.

c. 'for a human being' *ba'adam*, cf. 2:24, Hebr. *bam* 'for them'.

d. In the conventional theory of retribution, death is the punishment of sin. For Qoheleth death is no more than the common lot; moral considerations are irrelevant. The fates of human and animal are identical. Even in the realm of justice, might is the criterion of right, vv. 16.18, though God himself shows preference for the weak, v. 15[b].

e. 'persecuted' as the word, lit. 'pursued', is interpreted in the midrash Qoheleth Rabba.

f. 'upright' Gk, Targ.; 'uprightness' Hebr.

g. 'and show them' Gk, Syr.; 'and that they see' Hebr. At the end of the v., Hebr. adds two words, lit. 'them, for them', which could be translated 'to each other'. But the context hardly favours this: as appears later, the comparison with the animals is concerned not with wickedness, but with the inevitability of death.

h. This passing doubt is enough to invest death with terror. The end of the book is less radically pessimistic: human life returns to God who gave it, 12:7.

4 a. Life in the social group: brute force and the dangers facing the friendless, 4:1–12, political anomalies, 4:13–16, mechanical religion and the abuse of vows, 4:17–5:6; tyranny, 5:7–8.

b. 'to chase after the wind' conj.: 'and chasing after the wind' Hebr.

c. The image of the threefold cord is also found in a Sumerian text of the Gilgamesh cycle, again illustrating the advantage of being two rather than alone.

Better a youngster poor and wise 13
than a monarch old and silly
who will no longer take advice—
Si 11:5 even though stepping from prison to the throne, 14
even though born a beggar in that kingdom. [d]

I observe that all who live and move under the sun support the young newcomer 15
who takes over. [e] ·He takes his place at the head of innumerable subjects; but his 16
successors will not think the more kindly of him for that. This too is futile and
chasing after the wind.

Watch your step when you go to the House of God: drawing near to listen is 17
better than the offering of a sacrifice by fools, though they do not know that they
are doing wrong. [f]

Pr 20:25
Pr 10:19
Si 7:14
Mt 6:7
5 Be in no hurry to speak; do not hastily declare yourself before God; for God is 1
in heaven, you on earth. Be sparing, then, of speech:

From too much worrying comes illusion, 2
from too much talking, the accents of folly.

Lv 27:1a
Nb 30:3
Dt 23:22–24
If you make a vow to God, discharge it without delay, for God has no love for 3
fools. Discharge your vow. ·Better a vow unmade than made and not discharged. 4
Do not allow your mouth to make a sinner of you, and do not say to the 5
messenger [a] that it was a mistake. Why give God occasion to be angry with you and
ruin all the work that you have done?

Si 34:1–5
From too many illusions 6
come futility and too much talk. [b]

12:13 Therefore, fear God.

3:16;4:1
If in a province you see the poor oppressed, fair judgement and justice violated, 7
do not be surprised, for over every official there watches a higher official, and over
these, higher officials still. ·But what the land yields is for the benefit of all, a king 8
is served by the fields. [c]

Si 14:3–9
Money [d]

No one who loves money ever has enough, 9
no one who loves luxury has any income;

this, too, is futile.

Pr 19:6
Si 13:6
Where goods abound, parasites abound: 10

where is the owner's profit, apart from feasting his eyes?

Pr 13:8
The labourer's sleep is sweet, whether he has eaten little or much, but the surfeit 11
of the rich will not let him sleep at all.

Something grossly unjust I observe under the sun: riches stored and turning to 12
loss for their owner. ·An unlucky venture, and those riches are lost; a son is born 13
Jb 1:21
1 Tm 6:7
to him, and he has nothing to leave him. ·Naked from his mother's womb he came; 14
as naked as he came will he depart; not one of his achievements can he take with
him. ·And something else grossly unjust: that as [e] he came, so must he go; what 15
profit can he show after toiling to earn the wind, ·as he spends the rest of his days in 16
darkness, mourning, [f] many sorrows, sickness and exasperation.

2:24e
So my conclusion is this: true happiness lies in eating and drinking and enjoying 17
whatever has been achieved under the sun, throughout the life given by God: for
this is the lot of humanity. ·And whenever God gives someone riches and property, 18
with the ability to enjoy them and to find contentment in work, this is a gift from
God. ·For such a person will hardly notice the passing of time, so long as God 19
keeps his heart occupied with joy.

1, 2 6 I see another evil under the sun, which goes hard with people: ·suppose
someone has received from God riches, property, honours—nothing at all left
to wish for; but God does not give the chance to enjoy them, and some stranger 2:18–19 Lk 12:20
3 enjoys them. This is futile, and grievous suffering too. ·Or take someone who has
had a hundred children and lived for many years, and, having reached old age, has
never enjoyed the good things of life and has not even got a tomb; it seems to me,
a still-born child is happier. Jb 3:11

4 In futility it came, into darkness it departs,
and in darkness will its name be buried.

5 It has never so much as seen or known the sun; all the same, it will rest more easily
6 than that person, ·who would never have known the good things of life, even by
living a thousand years twice over. Do we not all go to the same place in the end?

7 All toil is for the mouth,
yet the appetite is never satisfied.

8 What advantage has the wise over the fool? 2:15
And what of the pauper who knows how to behave in society? [a] Pr 13:7

9 Better the object seen than the sting of desire: [b]
for the latter too is futile and chasing after the wind.

10 What has been is already defined—we know what people are: 1:9–11
They cannot bring to justice one who is stronger than themselves.

11 The more we say, the more futile it is: what good can we derive from it?
12 And who knows what is best for someone during life, during the days of futile life
which are spent like a shadow? Who can tell anyone what will happen after him Jb 8:9;14:2 Ps 39:6;90:10; 102:11;109:23
under the sun?

PART TWO

Prologue [a]

1 7 Better a good name than costly oil, Pr 22:1
the day of death than the day of birth.
2 Better go to the house of mourning
than to the house of feasting;
for to this end everyone comes,
let the living take this to heart.

d. Conjectural translation of obscure text.

e. Or simply 'the successor', lit. 'the man who replaces him'.

f. Or 'since they know nothing, except how to do wrong'. The whole v. is obscure.

5 a. The 'messenger' may be the angel before whom excuses must be made, since one of the functions of the angels was to keep a register of good works, *see* Tb 12:12b; Ac 10:4, or alternatively the priest who assists at the fulfilment of a vow, *see* Ml 2:7. The LXX correct to 'God'. • On sins committed inadvertently *see* Lv 4; Nb 15:22seq.

b. This little proverb (lit. 'from too many delusions: futilities and too much talking') is probably mutilated. Some correct in line with v. 2 and read 'from too much worrying come illusions, and from too much talking, futility'—or again 'from too many illusions comes futility, a great deal of talk, dissipation of spirit.' But these conjectural readings have no support in ancient versions.

c. Literal translation of a very obscure v., possibly alluding to acts of injustice excused on the grounds of having been committed in obedience to a higher authority, but which result in depriving the poor of the income from their land and ultimately in harming even the rulers.

d. A satire not (as in Pr) on the wicked plutocrat but on money itself, ill or well acquired, ill or well used. Money secures neither life nor happiness. This evaluation prepares the ground for the gospel teaching on detachment, Mt 6:19–21,24,25–34. The sequence of ideas is as follows: money is badly distributed, 5:9, squandered, 5:10, hard to come by, 5:11, painful to lose, 5:12–16. Therefore, it is as well to spend money as it comes, 5:17–19. Three examples of all this: wealth that goes to another, 6:1–2; the rich without a tomb, 6:3–6, poverty aping plenty, 6:7–11. Conclusion: 6:12.

e. 'as' Gk, Syr.; Hebr. corrupt.

f. 'in darkness, mourning' Gk; 'he eats in darkness, mourning' Hebr.

6 a. Meaning uncertain, but possibly a wry comparison between the sage and the person who knows how to keep up appearances.

b. In Hebr *nephesh*, which usually means 'soul', but whose primary sense is 'throat' or 'appetite', whence 'desire', cf. v. 7.

7 a. The first prologue was on boredom, the second on laughter; but it is no less austere.

Better sadness than laughter: 3
a joyful heart may be concealed behind sad looks.
The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, 4
the heart of fools in the house of gaiety.
Better attend to the reprimand of the wise 5
than listen to a song [b] sung by a fool.
For like the crackling of thorns under the cauldron 6
is the laughter of fools:
and that too is futile.
But being oppressed drives a sage mad, 7
and a present corrupts the heart. [c]

Warnings [d]

Better the end of a matter than its beginning, 8
better patience than ambition.

Pr 22:24 Jm 1:19 Do not be too easily exasperated, for exasperation dwells in the heart of fools. 9
Si 39:16,33seq. Do not ask why the past was better than the present, for this is not a question prompted by wisdom. 10

Wisdom is as good as a legacy, 11
profitable to those who enjoy the light of the sun.
For as money protects, so does wisdom, 12
and the advantage of knowledge is this:
that wisdom bestows life on those who possess her.
Consider God's creation: 13
1:15 who, for instance, can straighten what God has bent?
When things are going well, enjoy yourself, 14
and when they are going badly, consider this:
God has designed the one no less than the other
so that we should take nothing for granted. [e]
In my futile life, I have seen everything: 15
8:14 the upright person perishing in uprightness
and the wicked person surviving in wickedness.
Do not be upright to excess 16
and do not make yourself unduly wise:
why should you destroy yourself?
Do not be wicked to excess, 17
and do not be a fool:
Pr 10:27 why die before your time?
It is wise to hold on to one and not let go of the other, 18
since the godfearing will find [f] both.

9:16seq. Pr 21:22 Wisdom makes the wise stronger than a dozen governors in a city. 19
Jb 14:4c 1 Jn 1:8–9 No one on earth is sufficiently upright to do good without ever sinning. 20
Again, do not listen to all that people say, then you will not hear your servant abusing you. 21
For often, as you very well know, you have abused others. 22
Thanks to wisdom, I have found all this to be true; I resolved to be wise, but this was beyond my reach! 23

The past is out of reach, 24
buried deep—who can discover it?

But I have reached the point where, having learnt, explored and investigated wisdom and reflection, I recognise evil as being a form of madness, and folly as something stupid. [g] 25

And I find woman more bitter than Death, Pr 5:3–4
she is a snare,
her heart is a net, and her arms are chains. Jg 16
The man who is pleasing to God eludes her,
but the sinner is captured by her.
This is what I think, says Qoheleth,
having examined one thing after another to draw some conclusion,
which I am still looking for, although unsuccessfully:
one man in a thousand, I may find,
but a woman better than other women—never.
This alone is my conclusion:
God has created man straightforward,
and human artifices are human inventions.

8 Who compares with the sage?
Who else knows how to explain things?
Wisdom lights up the face,
enlivening a grim expression.
Obey the king's command and, because of the divine promise, Rm 13:1seq.
be in no hurry to depart from it; [a]
do not be obstinate in a bad cause,
since the king will do as he likes in any case.
Since the word of a king is sovereign,
what is the point of saying, 'Why do that?'
One who obeys the command will come to no harm;
the heart of the sage knows the right moment and verdict,
for there is a right moment and verdict for everything;
but misfortune lies heavy upon anyone
who does not know what the outcome will be, [b] 10:14
no one is going to say how things will turn out.
No one can control the wind and stop it from blowing,
no one can control the day of death. Ws 2:1
From war there is no escape,
no more can wickedness save the person who commits it. [c]

I have seen all this to be so, having carefully studied everything taking place under the sun, while one person tyrannises over another to the former's detriment.
And again, I have observed the wicked carried [d] to their graves, and people

b. 'a song' here possibly means 'praise'.

c. Obscure v., but the various corrections suggested are unsatisfactory. Possibly Qoheleth means only to indicate the weakness of the sage himself, whose serenity cannot withstand either misfortune or excessive favour.

d. The Law had enunciated the principle of collective retribution: for Israel, prosperity was contingent on fidelity, *see* Lv 26; Dt 7:12seq.; 11:26–28; 28:1–68. The sages had applied this principle to the individual: God renders to each as his works deserve, Jb 34:11; Ps 62:12; Pr 24:12. From this they inferred that a person's present condition was proportionate to his deserts. When experience contradicted this, their answer was: the prosperity of the wicked and the misfortunes of the virtuous are neither of them lasting. This is the thesis of Ps 37 and of the friends of Job. Qoheleth refutes it. He counters the conventional solution with scepticism, 7:9–12. Life must be taken as it comes, without seeking explanations, 7:13–15. If life and death are so capriciously ordained, 7:15, there is no point in making superhuman efforts, 7:16–18. Reputation means nothing, 7:19–22. The world of the senses is inexplicable. Reality is a fathomless mystery, 7:23seq. (with a parenthesis directed against women, 7:25–28). Fate is blind, pitiless (not sparing kings, 8:1–9) and even perverse, 8:10–14. Conclusion: 8:15.

e. lit. 'so that man should find nothing behind him'. Or it may mean 'so that man should discover nothing of what is to come'.

f. 'will find' *yimetza'* conj.; Hebr. *yetze'* 'will come out'. Possibly we should understand the meaning to be 'will bring to a good end' *hotzi'*.

g. 'I have reached the point', lit. 'I have come in my heart', MSS, Targ.; 'and my heart' Hebr. • 'something stupid' conj., cf. 10:13; 'stupid things' Hebr.

8 **a.** Before 'Obey' Hebr adds 'I'. The 'divine promise' may be the promise given by God to the king, 2 S 7; Ps 89, or else the oath sworn to God either by the king or by his subjects.

b. We take this to mean that what happens to a person seems to him worse because he cannot foresee the outcome. Others understand: 'man's great disadvantage is that he does not know . . .'

c. Some correct 'wickedness' (*resha'*) to 'wealth' (*'osher*) and translate 'no more can wealth save its possessor'.

d. 'carried' Gk, Syr.; 'and they go' Hebr. The Gk reads 'and, in the city, people will praise the way they used to behave', *see* Jb 21:32–33; but this is beside the point, since the theme of universal equality, for the good and the bad, in death and oblivion, is an important part of Qoheleth's thinking.

leaving the holy place and, once out in the city, forgetting how the wicked used to behave; how futile this is too!

Because the sentence on the evil-doer is not carried out on the instant, people's 11
hearts are full of desire to do wrong. ·The sinner who does wrong a hundred 12
times lives on. But this too I know, that there is good in store for people who fear God, because they fear him, ·but there is no good in store for the wicked because 13
6:12+ he does not fear God, and so, like a shadow, he will not prolong his days.
Ps 73 Another futile thing that happens on earth: upright people being treated as though 14
Jr 12:1seq. they were wicked and wicked people being treated as though they were upright. To me this is one more example of futility.

2:24e And therefore I praise joy, since human happiness lies only in eating and 15
drinking and in taking pleasure; this comes from what someone achieves during the days of life that God gives under the sun.

Having applied myself to acquiring wisdom and to observing the activity taking 16
place in the world—for day and night our eyes enjoy no rest—·I have scrutinised 17
3:11b God's whole creation: you cannot get to the bottom of everything taking place under the sun; you may wear yourself out in the search, but you will never find it. Not even a sage can get to the bottom of it, even if he says that he has done so.

Destiny

9 Yes, I have applied myself to all this and experienced all this to be so: that 1
Dt 33:3 is to say, that the upright and the wise, with their activities, are in the
Pr 16:1
Ws 7:16 hands of God. [a]

We do not understand either love or hate, [b]
where we are concerned, both of them are ·futile. 2
7:15;8:14 And for all of us is reserved a common fate,
for the upright and for the wicked,
for the good and for the bad; [c]
whether we are ritually pure or not,
whether we offer sacrifice or not:
it is the same for the good and for the sinner,
for someone who takes a vow, as for someone who fears to do so.

This is another evil among those occurring under the sun: that there should be 3
the same fate for everyone. The human heart, however, is full of wickedness; folly lurks in our hearts throughout our lives, until we end [d] among the dead.

But there is hope for someone still linked [e] to the rest of the living: 4
better be a live dog than a dead lion.

The living are at least aware that they are going to die, but the dead know 5
nothing whatever. No more wages for them, since their memory is forgotten. Their love, their hate, their jealousy, have perished long since, and they will never 6
have any further part in what goes on under the sun. [f]

2:24e So, eat your bread in joy, 7
drink your wine with a glad heart,
since God has already approved your actions.
At all times, dress in white 8
and keep your head well scented.
Pr 5:15b Spend your life with the woman you love, 9
all the days of futile life God gives you under the sun,
throughout your futile days,
since this is your lot in life
and in the effort you expend under the sun.
Whatever work you find to do, 10
do it with all your might,

for there is neither achievement, nor planning, nor science,
nor wisdom in Sheol where you are going. Si 14:16

11 Another thing I have observed under the sun:
that the race is not won by the speediest,
nor the battle by the champions;
it is not the wise who get food,
nor the intelligent wealth,
nor the learned favour:
chance and mischance befall them all.

12 We do not know when our time will come:
like fish caught in the treacherous net,
like birds caught in the snare,
just so are we all trapped by misfortune
when it suddenly overtakes us. Lk 12:20

Wisdom and folly

13 Here is another example of the wisdom I have acquired under the sun and it strikes me as important:

14 There was once a small town, with only a few inhabitants; a mighty king made
15 war on it, laying siege to it and building great siege-works[g] round it. •But there was in that town a poverty-stricken sage who by his wisdom saved the town. No one
16 remembered this poor man afterwards. •So I say:

Wisdom is more effective than brute force, 7:19
but the wisdom of a poor man is not valued: Pr 21:22;24:5
no one listens to what he has to say.

17 The calm words of the wise make themselves heard above the shouts of someone commanding an army of fools.

18 Wisdom is worth more than weapons of war,
but a single sin[h] undoes a deal of good.

1 **10** One dead fly[a] can spoil the scent-maker's oil:
a grain of stupidity outweighs wisdom and glory. Ga 5:9

2 The sage's heart leads him aright, 2:14
the fool's leads him astray.[b]

3 A fool walks down the road, he has no wit—
and everyone remarks, 'How silly he is!'

4 If the anger of the ruler rises against you, do not leave your post; composure mitigates grave offences.

5 One evil I observe under the sun: the sort of misjudgement to which rulers are
6, 7 prone—•folly promoted to the top and the rich taking the lowest place. •I see slaves Pr 19:10;30:22
riding on horses and princes on foot like slaves.

8 He who digs a pit falls into it, Ps 7:15
Pr 26:27
Si 27:26–27

9 **a.** 'I have applied myself' conj., cf. 1:13,17; 'I have put towards my heart' (?) Hebr.; perhaps we should suppress the first 'all this' and read 'I have applied my mind to experiencing all this.' • 'their activities' conj. *'abadehem* is a suspect Aramaic word; elsewhere it is always *ma'aseh*; perhaps it should be corrected to *'ahabehem* 'their desires'.

b. Though human beings experience these feelings, they remain a mystery to us. Like death, like fate, love is blind and inexorable.

c. 'futile' versions; 'all' Hebr., dittography. • 'the bad' versions; omitted by Hebr.

d. lit. 'their end' *'aharitam* Sym.; Hebr. *'aharayw* 'after them'.

e. 'linked' *qere* and versions; 'chosen' Hebr. *ketib*.

f. The inevitability of death modifies the following invitation to enjoy life, vv. 7–8 (*see* 2:24e), with its advice to remain faithful to one's lifelong love until the final separation, for which no consolation is foreseen.

g. 'siege-works' (or 'terracings') versions; 'snare' (or 'trap') Hebr.

h. 'sin' Syr.; 'sinner' Hebr.

10 **a.** 'dead fly' *zebub met* conj.; *zebube mawet* 'flies of death'. • Heb. adds 'infect' after 'spoil', probably a dittography.

b. lit. 'The wise man's heart is on the right, the fool's is on the left'.

he who undermines a wall gets bitten by a snake,
he who quarries stones gets hurt by them, 9
he who chops wood takes a risk from it.

If, for want of sharpening, the blade is blunt, you have to work twice as hard; but 10
it is the outcome that makes wisdom rewarding.

If, for want of charming, the snake bites, 11
the snake-charmer gets nothing out of it.

The sayings of a sage give pleasure, 12
Pr 10:32;15:2; 18:7 what a fool says procures his own ruin:
his words have their origin in stupidity 13
and their ending in treacherous folly.
A fool talks a great deal, 14
8:7 but none of us in fact can tell the future;
what will happen after us, who can tell?

A fool [c] finds hard work very tiring, 15
he cannot even find his own way into town.

Pr 31:4–7 Is 3:4 Woe to you, country with a lad for king, 16
and where princes start feasting in the morning!
Happy the land whose king is nobly born, 17
where princes eat at a respectable hour
to keep themselves strong and not merely to revel!

Thanks to idleness, the roof-tree gives way, 18
thanks to carelessness, the house lets in the rain.

Jg 9:13 Ps 104:15 We give parties to enjoy ourselves, 19
wine makes us cheerful
and money has an answer for everything.

Ex 22:27 Do not abuse the king, even in thought, 20
do not abuse a rich man, even in your bedroom,
Lk 12:2–3 for a bird of the air might carry the news,
a winged messenger might repeat what you have said.

11 Cast your bread on the water, 1
eventually you will recover it. [a]
Offer a share to seven or to eight people, 2
you can never tell what disaster may occur.
When clouds are full of rain, 3
they will shed it on the earth.
If a tree falls, whether south or north,
where it falls, there it will lie.
Jn 3:8 Keep watching the wind and you will never sow, 4
keep staring at the clouds and you will never reap.
You do not understand how the wind blows, 5
Ps 139:14–16 or how the embryo grows in a woman's womb: [b]
3:11b no more can you understand the work of God, the Creator of all.
In the morning, sow your seed, 6
until evening, do not cease from labour,
for of any two things you do not know which will succeed,
or which of the two is the better.

Old Age [c]

How sweet light is, 7
how delightful it is to see the sun!

8 However many years you live,
enjoy them all,
but remember, the days of darkness will be many:
futility awaits you at the end.

9 Young man, enjoy yourself while you are young,
make the most of the days of your youth,
follow the prompting and desire of heart and eye, [d]
but remember, God will call you to account for everything.
10 Rid your heart of indignation,
keep your body clear of suffering,
though youth and the age of black hair are both futile.

1 **12** [a]Remember your Creator while you are still young,
before the bad days come,
before the years come which, you will say, give you no pleasure;
2 before the sun and the light grow dim
and the moon and stars,
before the clouds return after the rain;
3 the time when your watchmen become shaky,
when strong men are bent double,
when the women, one by one, quit grinding, [b]
and, as they look out of the window, find their sight growing dim.
4 When the street-door is kept shut,
when the sound of grinding fades away,
when the first cry of a bird wakes you up,
when all the singing has stopped; [c]
5 when going uphill is an ordeal
and you are frightened at every step you take—
yet the almond tree is in flower Sg 2:11+
and the grasshopper is weighed down
and the caper-bush loses its tang; [d]
while you are on the way to your everlasting home Ps 49:11
and the mourners are assembling in the street;
6 before the silver thread snaps, [e]
or the golden bowl is cracked,
or the pitcher shattered at the fountain,
or the pulley broken at the well-head:

c. 'fool' Gk, Targ., MSS; 'fools' Hebr.

11 a. Some take this to mean bait thrown in the water by the fisherman and recovered in the form of his catch; others interpret 'bread' as merchandise, shipped abroad and bringing home a profit. This passage on taking chances throws light on the attitude Qoheleth wishes to instil into his disciple. He wishes not to discourage him for discouragement's sake, but to rob him of his illusions and thus save him from error. After all, risks do have to be taken.

b. lit. 'and similarly, the bones in a pregnant woman's womb'.

c. Long life was the reward promised to the Israelites in the discourses of Dt (5:16.33; 11:9.21; 22:7; etc.), and was the greatest happiness the sages had to offer the virtuous. For Qoheleth, old age brings not happiness but fear of death, 11:7, regrets for youth, 11:8–12:2, slowing-down of life, 12:3–5[b], a waiting for the irremediable, 12:5[c]–7.

d. lit. 'what your eyes see'. Perhaps a popular saying about youth, to which Qoheleth adds a prudent reminder of youth's brevity.

12 a. This very fine poem, instinct with emotion and nostalgia, conjures up old age in more or less metaphorical terms; but it is not always easy to grasp exactly what the metaphors imply. In accordance with one current of rabbinical interpretation, some would see the composition to correspond to the various parts of the body (see particularly v. 3, arms, teeth, eyes), but this interpretation is not convincing. It can also be read as a description of old age as the winter of life, but a winter which, unlike the seasonal winter, does not give place to spring.

b. 'the women' lit. 'those women who grind . . . cease'. • 'one by one' or '(because they are) too few'.

c. lit. 'songs have stopped' *weyeheshu* conj.: Hebr. *weyishahu* 'have been humiliated'. • The allusion to the light sleep of the aged (previous line) seems out of place here; lit. 'you get up at the cry of the bird'; for 'you get up', *wayyaqum*, some propose the correction 'you stop' *weyiddom*.

d. 'loses its tang', uncertain translation, based on substituting the passive (*wetuppar*) for an unattested form (*wetiphereh*). It can also mean 'is without effect'; sometimes also corrected to 'gives its fruit', thus continuing the image of the return of spring: life departing at the very moment when nature itself revives. The grasshopper is 'weighed down' either because it is full fed (another image of spring) or because, on the contrary, the slightest weight is a burden for the elderly.

e. 'gives way' *yinnateq* conj. following Syr. and Symmachus; Hebr. *yeraheq* 'been taken away'.

3:20–21.21h the dust returns to the earth from which it came, 7
and the spirit returns to God who gave it.[f]

1:2 Sheer futility, Qoheleth says, everything is futile.[g] 8

Epilogue[h]

Besides being a sage, Qoheleth taught the people what he himself knew, having 9
weighed, studied and emended many proverbs. ·Qoheleth took pains to write in 10
an attractive style and by it to convey truths.

The sayings of a sage are like goads, like pegs positioned by shepherds: the 11
same shepherd finds a use for both.[i]

Furthermore, my child, you must realise that writing books involves endless 12
hard work, and that much study wearies the body.

5:6 To sum up the whole matter: fear God and keep his commandments, for that 13
Si 1:13
11:9 is the duty[j] of everyone. ·For God will call all our deeds to judgement, all 14
that is hidden, be it good or bad.

f. The earthly part of a person returns to earth. But since nothing on this earth can satisfy a human being, the whole person does not originate from earth, and that which is of God, returns to God.

g. The book ends as it began, but has covered much ground in between. It has taught the reader his wretchedness but also his greatness, by showing that this world is not worthy of him. It incites the reader to disinterested religion and to that kind of prayer in which a creature, aware of its nothingness, adores the mystery of God, cf. Ps 39.

h. The appendix is not by the same hand as the rest of the book. It is perhaps the work of one of Qoheleth's disciples, being a eulogy of Qoheleth, composed in the same style (see vv. 12–14).

i. The goad to urge the animals forward, and the pegs to keep them tied up, are both used by the shepherd when he sees fit, not as his own caprice, but as the good of his flock dictates. The shepherd may, according to some, be an allusion to Moses, according to others, to Solomon or to God; but the text is perhaps corrupt.

j. 'duty' conj.; missing in Hebr.

INTRODUCTION TO
THE SONG OF SONGS

§1 The Song of Songs, that is to say, the greatest of all songs, the loveliest song of all, consists of a series of poems celebrating the mutual love of a Lover and a Beloved, now meeting, now parting, now seeking and now finding each other. The Lover is called 'king', 1:4 and 12, and 'Solomon', 3:7 and 9; the Beloved is called 'the girl of Shulam', 7:1, a name variously thought to be related to the name Solomon, or to refer to Abishag of Shunem, who figures in the story of David and Solomon, 1 K 1:3; 2:21–22. That Solomon was a writer of songs Hebrew tradition was aware, 1 K 5:12; for this reason 'the greatest of all songs' was attributed to him (hence the title, Sg 1:1); in the same way as Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Wisdom were credited to Solomon in his capacity of sage. This titular attribution caused the Song to be placed among the Wisdom Books, after Ecclesiastes in the Greek Bible, between Ecclesiastes and Wisdom (two 'Solomonic' books) in the Vulgate. In the Hebrew Bible the Song is placed among the 'writings', which form the third and most recent part of the Jewish canon.

People have found it surprising that a book that makes no mention of God and whose vocabulary is so passionate should figure in the sacred canon. The doubts in Jewish circles of the first century AD were, however, settled by an appeal to tradition. On these same grounds the Christian Church has always accepted the Song as part of holy scripture.

No book of the Old Testament has been subjected to more diverse interpretations. The latest of these proposes an origin for the Song in the cult of Ishtar and Tammuz, and in the 'divine marriage' ceremonies which, it is thought, the king performed as substitute for the god. A rite of this sort, borrowed from the Canaanites, may, it is suggested, have been practised in ancient times as part of the cult of Yahweh, and the Song could in this case be the revised and expurgated libretto for this ceremony. The cultic, mythological theory cannot be proved and is unconvincing. Nor is it easy to imagine a faithful Israelite editing the hymns of a fertility-cult merely to produce a suite of love-songs from them. Whatever the similarities of expression between the hymns to Ishtar and Tammuz on the one hand and the poems of the Song on the other, these are attributable to the fact that both use the language of love.

The allegorical interpretation is much more ancient. It became current among the Jews from the second century AD onwards: the love of God for Israel and the love of Israel for God are conveyed under the imagery of a relationship between husband and wife: in a word, the marriage theme,

developed by the Prophets from Hosea onwards. Christian authors, principally influenced by Origen, the individual opposition of Theodore of Mopsuestia notwithstanding, have followed the same line as the Jewish exegetes; only, for Christian commentators, the Song became an allegory of the marriage between Christ and his Church, or of the mystical union of the soul with God. This allegorical interpretation under various forms still has its exponents, whether holding to the general theme of Yahweh as husband of Israel, or seeking to relate the varying moods of the Song to the conversions, disillusionments and hopes of the chosen people. The inspired and canonical status of the Song leads these commentators to suppose that it must be celebrating something other than profane love. But the exegetic justifications advanced in favour of the allegorical meaning—based on an accumulation of verbal parallels from the other books of the Bible—seem forced and artificial.

In consequence, a literal interpretation is now very widely accepted. And this is supported by the most ancient tradition of all: there is no sign of allegorical interpretation of the Song before the Christian era, and the writings of Qumran give no hint of any such thing; the New Testament, whatever may have been said in the past, does not lend any support to it; the Jews of the first century used to sing the Song at marriage-feasts, and went on doing so despite the prohibition of Rabbi Aqiba. And the Song, for its part, betrays no allegorical intention, unlike the Prophets who, when they resort to allegory, clearly say so and explain their meaning, Is 5:7; Ezk 16:2; 17:12; 23:4; 31:2; 32:2; etc. Nothing indicates that a key is needed for decoding the Song or that anything should be read into it other than the natural meaning of the text: it is a collection of songs celebrating the loyal and mutual love that leads to marriage. The Song proclaims the lawfulness and exalts the value of human love; and the subject is not merely profane, since God has blessed marriage, which is here understood not so much as a means of procreation as the affectionate and stable association of man and woman, Gn 2. Under the influence of Yahwism, sexual life, which the surrounding Canaanites thought of in terms of relationships between fertility-deities, is here demythologised and treated with a wholesome realism. Human love also figures as a topic in other Old Testament books, as for instance in the ancient stories in Genesis, in the story of David, in Proverbs and in Ecclesiasticus, where it is treated in the same way and sometimes in words very like those of the Song; its wholesomeness justifies the use the Prophets made of it in depicting the relationship between Yahweh and Israel. There can be no objection to the inclusion in the Canon of Scripture of a book consecrated to such a theme. We have no right to set a limit to God's inspiration.

§2 The origin of the Song may be sought in the festivities taking place at weddings, cf. Ps 45; Jr 7:34; 16:9, and useful comparisons have been made with the ceremonies and wedding-songs of the Syrian and Palestinian Arabs. But the Song is not a collection of popular songs. Whatever ancient models the author of the Song may have known, he was an original poet and an able man of letters. The closest parallels are to be found in the love-songs of ancient Egypt, which are also literary compositions; but he cannot be shown to have borrowed his poetic ideas from these. Israel, like the surrounding peoples, must have had its own love-poetry and, in a similar environment,

the language of love would have employed similar images and similarly extravagant metaphors.

The Song does not follow any definite plan. It is a collection of songs united only by their common theme of love. The 'poems' into which this translation has been divided merely suggest the possible grouping of shorter entities and, although a progression of passion may be detectable from first to last, it is useless to look for any marked progression of thought or action from one to the next. Surviving collections of Egyptian songs are set out in much the same way, offering a choice according to circumstance or audience; and this explains why the compositions ring the changes on the same themes and why there are so many doublets in them—since they were not intended all to be sung or recited at one sitting.

Once the allegorical interpretation of the Song has been abandoned, and with it the supposed allusions to historical events, the dating of the book becomes more difficult to establish. Some scholars assign it to a date as early as the reign of Solomon, but the Aramaic features of the language, and the borrowing of one word from Persian, 4:13, and of another from Greek, 3:9, indicate a date after the Exile, in the fifth or fourth centuries BC. The place of composition was certainly Palestine.

Apart from the old attribution to the great sage Solomon, the literal interpretation of the book still justifies its place among the Wisdom Books. Like them, it deals with human nature, and in fact treats of one of its most vital aspects. In its own way, it teaches the excellence and dignity of the love that draws man and woman together, it exorcises the myths attaching to love in those remote times and presents a love as free of puritanical restraint as it is of licentious excess. Over and above this literal meaning, it is perfectly permissible to apply the Song to the relationship between Christ and his Church (which, however, Paul was *not* doing in Ep 5) or to the union of individuals with the God of Love, thus vindicating the way in which the Song has been used by such mystics as St John of the Cross.

THE SONG OF SONGS

TITLE AND PROLOGUE

1 Solomon's Song of Songs. [a] 1

BELOVED: [b] Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, 2
for your love-making is sweeter than wine;
1:12;4:10 delicate is the fragrance of your perfume, 3
your name is an oil poured out, [c]
6:8 and that is why girls love you.

FIRST POEM

Draw me in your footsteps, let us run. 4
The king [d] has brought me into his rooms;
you will be our joy and our gladness.
We shall praise your love more than wine;
how right it is to love you.

DIALOGUE OF THE LOVERS

BELOVED: I am black [e] but lovely, daughters of Jerusalem, [f] 5
like the tents of Kedar,
like the pavilions of Salmah. [g]
Take no notice of my dark colouring, 6
it is the sun that has burnt me.
My mother's sons turned their anger on me,
they made me look after the vineyards.
Is 5:1a My own vineyard I had not looked after! [h]

Tell me then, sweetheart, 7
Gn 37:16 where will you lead your flock to graze, [i]
Ps 23:1–3 where will you rest it at noon?
Ezk 34:1a That I may no more wander like a vagabond
Jn 10:1–16 beside the flocks of your companions.

CHORUS: If you do not know this, O loveliest of women, 8
Jr 31:21 follow the tracks of the flock,
and take your kids to graze
close by the shepherds' tents.

LOVER: I compare you, my love, [j] 9
to my mare harnessed to Pharaoh's chariot.
Your cheeks show fair between their pendants 10
and your neck within its necklaces.

We shall make you golden earrings
and beads of silver.

Duo: [k] —While the king rests in his own room [l]
my nard yields its perfume. 1:3c
My love is a sachet of myrrh
lying between my breasts.
My love is a cluster of henna flowers
among the vines of En-Gedi. [m]

—How beautiful you are, my beloved,
how beautiful you are!
Your eyes are doves.

—How beautiful you are, my love,
and how you delight me!
Our bed is the greensward.

—The beams of our house are cedar trees,
its panelling the cypress.

2 —I am the rose of Sharon,
the lily of the valleys.

—As a lily among the thistles,
so is my beloved among girls. [a]

—As an apple tree among the trees of the wood, 8:5
so is my love among young men.
In his delightful shade I sit,
and his fruit is sweet to my taste.
He has taken me to his cellar, [b]
and his banner over me is love.
Feed me with raisin cakes,

1 **a.** On the attribution to Solomon, *see* Introduction.

b. vv. 2–4 serve as prologue, announcing the general theme of the poems to follow, and striking the key-note of passionate tenderness which dominates the whole collection. Abrupt transitions from third to second person are characteristic also of Egyptian love-songs. The Lover is absent, yet present in the heart of his Beloved, with whom her companions associate themselves, v. 4[b]; these are the daughters of Jerusalem, v. 5. The prologue offers parallels with the royal marriage-song of Ps 45:8–9,15–16.

c. Alliterative play on the words *shem*, 'name', and *shemen*, 'oil', oil being suggested by the perfumes of the previous line.

d. This king is not Yahweh, as the allegorical interpretation would have it, nor Solomon in the original poem. Engaged couples are called 'king' and 'queen' in Syrian marriage-songs. Possibly the line is simply a reminiscence of Ps 45:15.

e. Her sunburnt complexion comes from the farm-work she has been forced to do, v. 6; she compares herself to the black tents, woven from goat-hair, of the Bedouin Arabs. The ancient Arabic poets contrast the pale complexion of well-born girls (here, the daughters of Jerusalem) with that of slaves and servant-girls who had to work out of doors.

f. The daughters of Jerusalem, or the daughters of Zion, 3:11, represent an audience, whom the lovers invoke here and at 2:7; 3:5,11; 5:8,16; 8:4, or who intervene to introduce or accelerate the development of the poem, v. 8; 5:9; 6:1; 7:1.

g. 'Salmah' conj.; 'Solomon' Hebr.—Salmah and Kedar are two nomadic Arab tribes.

h. She has given her heart to the man whom she loves.

i. Perhaps a reminiscence of Gn 37:16. In the literature of love, the theme of separation and search is probably even commoner than that of presence and happy possession. In the Song, it recurs at 3:1–4; 4:8; 5:2–8; 6:1. Here, the setting is that of a pastoral idyll, cf. Jacob and Rachel, Gn 29:1–12; it will be different in Sg 5:2; the situations are not real ones.

j. Comparison of the Beloved to a mare, worthy of a royal comparison, may seem quaint, but was a high compliment to feminine beauty among the ancient Arabic poets, as also with Theocritus.

k. The lovers are together; the rare and heady perfumes, nard, myrrh, henna-flowers, symbolise the pleasures of their meeting, vv. 12–14. There follows a battle of compliments, vv. 15–16; 2:1–3. The meeting-place is ill-defined: a bed of greenery, v. 16, a palace, v. 17, a cellar, 2:4, but *see* note 2b. Contrastingly, however, the outcome of the meeting is clear: the lovers are enfolded in each other's arms, 2:6, and the man begs that no one shall disturb his Beloved, 2:7; this will be taken up as a refrain in 3:5 and 8:3–4. This is perfectly fitting if the Song is considered as a collection of marriage-songs and if no attempt is made to find a continuous development from one poem to another, *see* Introduction.

l. *See* v. 4.

m. The 'Goat's Spring', on the west bank of the Dead Sea with a fertile oasis where, according to other texts, there grew balm and palm trees.

2 **a.** The Beloved compares herself to the rose and the lily; the Lover embroiders on this: she is a lily among thorns, he loves no one but her. Here, as in 4:13–14, it would be wrong to smother the poetry under the weight of botanical notes.

b. lit. 'house of wine': also to be translated 'banqueting hall', Est 7:8; Qo 7:2, and, following Jr 16:8–9, a reference to marriage-feasts.

restore me with apples,
for I am sick with love. [c]

=8:3 His left arm is under my head, 6
his right embraces me.

=3:5;5:8=8:4 —I charge you, 7
daughters of Jerusalem,
by all gazelles and wild does, [d]
5:2;8:5 do not rouse, do not wake my beloved
before she pleases.

SECOND POEM

BELOVED: [e] I hear my love. 8
See how he comes
leaping on the mountains,
bounding over the hills.
My love is like a gazelle, 9
like a young stag.

See where he stands
behind our wall.
He looks in at the window,
he peers through the opening.

My love lifts up his voice, 10
he says to me,
'Come then, my beloved,
my lovely one, come.
6:11;7:13–14 Qo 12:5 For see, winter is past, 11
the rains are over and gone.

'Flowers are appearing on the earth. 12
The season of glad songs has come,
the cooing of the turtledove is heard in our land.
The fig tree is forming its first figs 13
and the blossoming vines give out their fragrance.
Come then, my beloved,
my lovely one, come.

'My dove, hiding in the clefts of the rock, 14
in the coverts of the cliff,
show me your face,
let me hear your voice;
for your voice is sweet
and your face is lovely.'
Catch the foxes for us, 15
the little foxes
that make havoc of the vineyards,
for our vineyards are in fruit. [f]

=6:3 My love is mine and I am his. [g] 16
2:1 He pastures his flock among the lilies.

Before the day-breeze rises, 17
before the shadows flee, [h]
return! Be, my love,

like a gazelle, like a young stag, 8:14
on the mountains of Bether. [i]

1 **3** On my bed at night I sought
the man who is my sweetheart: [a]
I sought but could not find him! 5:6
2 So I shall get up and go through the city; Jn 7:34n;20:13
in the streets and in the squares,
I shall seek my sweetheart.
I sought but could not find him!

3 I came upon the watchmen— 5:7
those who go on their rounds in the city: [b]
'Have you seen my sweetheart?'

4 Barely had I passed them
when I found my sweetheart.
I caught him, would not let him go, Jn 20:17
not till I had brought him
to my mother's house, 8:2,5
to the room where she conceived me!

5 LOVER: I charge you, =2:7;8:4
daughters of Jerusalem,
by gazelles and wild does,
do not rouse, do not wake my beloved
before she pleases.

THIRD POEM

6 POET: [c] What is this coming up from the desert 6:10;8:5
like a column of smoke,

c. Amnon was love-sick for Tamar, 2 S 13:2, the sole biblical parallel, but there are others to be found in Egyptian songs.

d. A pastoral note, as in vv. 9 and 17. It is unlikely that *tzebaot* 'gazelles', and *'ayyalot*, 'does' (in this order) are a cryptogram for *'elohe tzabaot*, the God of Israel, to avoid pronouncing his name in these secular songs.

e. Change of scene. The Beloved is living with her parents in the city. The Lover comes in from the country and appears at the window, vv. 8–9, cf. 5:2seq. Egyptian and Greek poetry contain complaints of lovers faced with a closed door; here the Lover invites his Beloved to join him, by singing to her of the delights of springtime, season of flowers, of birds, and of love, vv. 10–14. The feeling for nature, the freshness, the modernity, of this are unequalled throughout the Old Testament.

f. Independent poetic fragment, probably inserted here under the influence of v. 13 with its mention of vines in flower. Here, the vines are a metaphor for the charms of girls who wish to be rid of their admirers, the little foxes.

g. This affirmation of mutual possession recurs in almost identical terms in 6:3 and 7:11 and in each case is made in the absence of the Lover, thus indicating the stability of love. But love, for its part, yearns for a presence and in each case confidence in the Lover is linked to an appeal or to a delay, here v. 17 and 6:1; 7:12.

h. The day-breeze, *see* Gn 3:8, in Palestine blows in the evening, when the lengthening shadows seem to 'flee'. This is when the Lover will come back from the country, and so we return to the beginning of the poem, v. 8, the end of v. 17 more or less repeating the words of vv. 8–9[a].

i. All explanations of this word as a common noun are forced and it is probably a place-name, either of a real place, Bether to the west of Jerusalem, Jos 15:59, or of a semi-legendary one; parallels in Sg 4:6 and 8:14 speak of mountains of myrrh and balm. Bether may have been the Palestinian equivalent of Punt, the land of spices in Egyptian tradition. An Egyptian love-song says: 'When his arms enfold me, it is like being in the land of Punt.'

3 **a.** vv. 1–4 form a complete unit, to which is added a similar refrain, v. 5, as in 2:7; 8:4. Though the theme is again the search, as in 1:7–8; 5:2–8, this time the setting is the city and the time is night. The title could be 'The lover lost and found again'. For a girl to go out at night and take her sweetheart to her mother's house is so contrary to Jewish custom that some commentators have supposed this to be a dream-sequence. But poets and lovers delight in imagining unlikely situations. The audacity of the pursuit and the longing never more to let the lover part are proofs of passionate love.

b. The night-watchmen, *see* Ps 127:1; Is 21:11–12, recur in Sg 5:7, and were probably typical figures in popular poetry, like the watchman and policeman of our own medieval and modern songs.

c. The poem of vv. 6–11 is not about love, is not put into the mouth of either of the two partners, and is not recited by the 'daughters of Zion', since they themselves are invoked at v. 11. The poet himself is speaking now, and describes a royal procession, which v. 11 associates with wedding-festivities. For a similar celebration, *see* 1 M 9:37–39. Similar customs are still observed by the Syrian and Palestinian Arabs and go back to ancient times, Ps 45:15–16. Vv. 6–10 describe the escort and the finery sent by the bridegroom to meet the bride: their meeting is evoked in v. 11. This short poem makes a good introduction to the eulogy of the Beloved in ch. 4. The description is high-flown, the bridegroom is a 'king', cf. 1:4,12, a 'Solomon'.

breathing of myrrh and frankincense
and every exotic perfume?

Here comes Solomon's litter. 7
Around it are sixty champions,
the flower of the warriors of Israel;
all of them skilled swordsmen, 8
expert in war.
Each man has his sword at his side,
against alarms by night.

King Solomon 9
has had a palanquin made [d]
1:17 of wood from Lebanon.
He has had the posts made of silver, 10
the canopy of gold,
the seat of purple;
the centre is inlaid with ebony. [e]

Daughters of Zion, 11
come and see King Solomon,
wearing the diadem with which his mother crowned him
on his wedding day, [f]
on the day of his heart's joy.

4 LOVER: [a] How beautiful you are, my beloved, 1
how beautiful you are!
Your eyes are doves,
4:3;6:7 behind your veil; [b]
=6:5–7 your hair is like a flock of goats
surging down Mount Gilead.
Your teeth, a flock of sheep to be shorn 2
when they come up from the washing. [c]
Each one has its twin,
not one unpaired with another.
Your lips are a scarlet thread 3
and your words enchanting.
Your cheeks, behind your veil,
are halves of pomegranate.
Your neck is the Tower of David 4
built on layers,
Ezk 27:10–11 hung round with a thousand bucklers,
and each the shield of a hero.
=7:4 Your two breasts are two fawns, 5
twins of a gazelle,
that feed among the lilies.

Before the day-breeze rises, 6
before the shadows flee,
I shall go to the mountain of myrrh,
to the hill of frankincense. [d]

You are wholly beautiful, my beloved, 7
and without a blemish. [e]

Come [f] from Lebanon, my promised bride, [g] 8
come from Lebanon, come on your way.
Look down from the heights of Amanus,
from the crests of Senir and Hermon,

the haunt of lions,
the mountains of leopards. [h]

9 You ravish my heart,
my sister, [i] my promised bride,
you ravish my heart
with a single one of your glances,
with a single link of your necklace.
10 What spells lie in your love, 1:2,4
my sister, my promised bride!
How delicious is your love, more delicious than wine!
How fragrant your perfumes,
more fragrant than all spices!
11 Your lips, my promised bride, Pr 5:3
distil wild honey.
Honey and milk
are under your tongue;
and the scent of your garments
is like the scent of Lebanon. [j] Ho 14:7

12 She is a garden enclosed, [k] 6:2
my sister, my promised bride;
a garden [l] enclosed,
a sealed fountain. Pr 5:16
13 Your shoots form an orchard [m] of pomegranate trees,
bearing most exquisite fruit: [n]
14 nard and saffron,
calamus and cinnamon,
with all the incense-bearing trees;
myrrh and aloes,
with the subtlest odours. [o] Pr 5:15–16
15 Fountain of the garden,

d. The word *'appiryon* occurs only once in Hebr. and is probably borrowed from the Gk *phoreion*, 'litter'.

e. 'ebony' *hobnim* conj.; Hebr. *'ahabah* 'love'. Hebr. adds 'of the daughters of Jerusalem', which can be linked to the beginning of v. 11, if we suppress 'daughters of Zion', not found in the Gk and possibly a gloss.

f. The only other mention of a bridegroom's crown occurs in Is 61:10, where a different word is used.

4 a. The short poem, vv. 1–7, is a eulogy of the physical charms of the Beloved and is partly repeated in 6:5–7; there is another eulogy in 7:2–10, and a eulogy of the physical charms of the Lover occurs in 5:10–16. The portrait of the perfect housewife in Pr 31:10–31 might be a sage's reaction to this type of composition, which was widespread. The Genesis Apocryphon found at Qumran inserts an undistinguished eulogy of the beauty of Sarah into Gn 12:15. Egyptian love-songs contain similar eulogies, which are also a stock-in-trade of Arabic poetry, *wasf*, 'description'. Taken literally, these descriptions would offer a grotesque image of the Beloved or of the Lover. Equally unlikely is the allegorical interpretation which sees in them descriptions of the Holy Land and the Temple. But in fact they do not 'describe', they juxtapose metaphors borrowed from the entire natural world, physical, animal, vegetable, to conjure up, by associated impressions of touch, sight and smell, the sense of admiration, joy and pleasure induced by the presence of the Beloved.

b. The bride was veiled when presented to her husband, Gn 24:65.

c. White as sheep, washed before being shorn.

d. The v. is a repetition of 2:17, perhaps only secondary, evoked by the last words of v. 5, reminiscent of the end of 2:16.

e. Compare the eulogy of Absalom, 2 S 14:25.

f. 'Come' *'eti* versions; Hebr. *'itti* 'with me', as also in the following line.

g. The girl is called 'promised bride' only in this part of the poem, 4:8–5:1, where the word occurs six times.

h. The strophe is hard to explain, and is possibly a fragment of some longer poem. In conjunction with the following strophes, to which it is linked by the keywords 'promised bride' (five times) and 'Lebanon', vv. 11,15, it might be read as an appeal to the Beloved to leave a difficult and dangerous country, to join her Lover.

i. Also in vv. 10,12; 5:1,2. The expression may have been borrowed from Egyptian love-poetry, where it is common. But Egyptian poems use 'brother' to mean the lover, which Sg never does, *see* in contrast 8:1.

j. The Lover is carried away by the looks of his Beloved, v. 9, by the taste of her kisses, v. 11, by the scent of her clothes, vv. 10,11.

k. Like the vineyards of 1:6; 2:15, the garden with its spring and choice flowers, a 'paradise', v. 13, cf. Gn 2:9–10, is a metaphor for the charms of the Beloved. The theme of the 'pretty Gardening-Girl' or of 'Love's Orchard', are found in Egyptian poetry. But the garden is enclosed, v. 12, until the moment when the bride opens it for her Lover, v. 16, on their marriage-night, 5:1. Compare Pr 5:15–20 on conjugal love.

l. 'garden' *gan* versions; Hebr. *gal* 'wave', in any case always in the plural; a copyist's error.

m. In Hebr. *pardes*, as Ne 2:8; Qo 2:5, Persian word meaning 'park', from which our 'paradise'.

n. Hebr. adds 'henna-flowers and nards'.

o. The plants of vv. 13–14 do not grow together and, except for the pomegranate, are not found in Palestine. The garden is imaginary, containing the rarest aromatic plants in existence: a common poetic theme, 1:2–3,12–14; 3:6; 5:5,13. Compare Wisdom in Si 24:12–21.

well of living water,
streams flowing down from Lebanon!

BELOVED: Awake, north wind, 16
come, wind of the south!
Breathe over my garden,
to spread its sweet smell around.
Let my love come into his garden,
let him taste its most exquisite fruits.

5 LOVER: I come into my garden, 1
my sister, my promised bride,
I pick my myrrh and balsam,
I eat my honey and my honeycomb,
I drink my wine and my milk.

Is 55:1–2 POET: Eat, friends, and drink,
drink deep, my dearest friends. [a]

FOURTH POEM

2:7d BELOVED: [b] I sleep, but my heart is awake. 2
Rv 3:20 I hear my love knocking.
'Open to me, my sister, my beloved,
my dove, my perfect one,
for my head is wet with dew,
my hair with the drops of night.'

—'I have taken off my tunic, 3
am I to put it on again?
I have washed my feet,
am I to dirty them again?'
My love thrust his hand 4
through the hole in the door; [c]
I trembled to the core of my being.
Then I got up 5
to open to my love,
myrrh ran off my hands,
pure myrrh off my fingers,
on to the handle of the bolt. [d]

I opened to my love, 6
but he had turned and gone.
My soul failed at his flight, [e]
3:1a I sought but could not find him,
I called, but he did not answer.

3:3b The watchmen met me, 7
those who go on their rounds in the city.
They beat me, they wounded me,
they took my cloak away from me:
those guardians of the ramparts! [f]

=2:7;3:5 I charge you, 8
daughters of Jerusalem,
if you should find my love,
what are you to tell him?
—That I am sick with love!

9 CHORUS: What makes your lover better than other lovers,
O loveliest of women?
What makes your lover better than other lovers,
to put us under such an oath?

10 BELOVED:[g] My love is fresh and ruddy,
to be known among ten thousand.
11 His head is golden, purest gold,
his locks are palm fronds
and black as the raven.
12 His eyes are like doves
beside the water-courses,
bathing themselves in milk,
perching on a fountain-rim.
13 His cheeks[h] are beds of spices, Ps 133:2
banks sweetly scented.
His lips are lilies,
distilling pure myrrh.
14 His hands are golden, rounded,
set with jewels of Tarshish.
His belly a block of ivory
covered with sapphires.
15 His legs are alabaster columns
set in sockets of pure gold.
His appearance is that of Lebanon,
unrivalled as the cedars.
16 His conversation is sweetness itself,
he is altogether lovable.
Such is my love, such is my friend,
O daughters of Jerusalem.

1 **6** CHORUS:[a] Where did your lover go,
O loveliest of women?
Which way did your lover turn
so that we can help you seek him?

2 BELOVED: My love went down to his garden, 4:12–16
to the beds of spices,
to pasture his flock on the grass
and gather lilies.

3 I belong to my love, and my love to me. =2:16
He pastures his flock among the lilies.

5 **a.** The poet's exhortation to the wedding-guests.

b. This delightful scene has the same setting as 3:1–4: night, the search through the city, the watchmen—but there is a reversal of roles: this time, the Lover is outside, wanting to come in, cf. 2:9, while the Beloved teases him, making futile excuses which in fact belie her eagerness to open the door. And when she does so, it is too late.

c. The Lover tries to get in by raising the latch, which from outside had to be done with a wooden key, Jg 3:25; Is 22:22.

d. Either the Beloved has scented herself, or the Lover has left this trace of his attempt and this is all she finds of him!

e. 'his flight' *bedobro* conj.; Hebr. *bedabbero* 'his word'.

f. The watchmen, as in 3:3, but in another role: they mistake the girl for a prostitute, *see* Pr 7:11–12.

g. On the literary form, *see* 4:1a. Some have seen here a description of the Temple at Jerusalem, especially because of vv. 11,14–15. A more plausible model would be one of the chryselephantine (ivory and gold) statues of classical and oriental antiquity. This is a pictorial description of ideal masculine beauty: tall stature, luxuriant hair, good complexion and charm of manner, cf. Saul, 1 S 9:2; 10:23–24, David, 1 S 16:12, Absalom, 2 S 14:25–26. Hyperbole is the rule for this literary form, *see* the description of the High Priest Simon in Si 50:5–12.

h. The lower part of the face, where the beard grows, which was scented, *see* Ps 133:2.

6 **a.** Intervention by the Chorus, to prepare for the conclusion in vv. 2–3: but there is no point in looking for the Lover, since he is present in the heart of his Beloved, she being his 'garden', *see* 4:12k. The security of mutual love is expressed, v. 3, in terms much the same as 2:16.

FIFTH POEM

LOVER: [b]

You are fair as Tirzah, my beloved, 4
enchanting as Jerusalem, [c]
formidable as an army! [d]
Turn your eyes away from me, 5
they take me by assault! [e]
=4:1-3 Your hair is like a flock of goats
surging down the slopes of Gilead.
Your teeth are like a flock of ewes 6
as they come up from being washed.
Each one has its twin,
not one unpaired with another.
Your cheeks, behind your veil, 7
are halves of pomegranate.

There are sixty queens 8
and eighty concubines
(and countless girls). [f]
My dove is my only one, 9
perfect and mine.
Pr 4:3 She is the darling of her mother,
the favourite of the one who bore her.
Pr 31:28 Girls have seen her and proclaimed her blessed,
queens and concubines have sung her praises,
3:6 'Who is this arising like the dawn, 10
Rv 12:1 fair as the moon,
resplendent as the sun, [g]
4:4 formidable as an army?'

4:12k I went down to the nut orchard 11
2:11+;7:13–14 to see the fresh shoots in the valley,
to see if the vines were budding
and the pomegranate trees in flower.
Before I knew . . . my desire had hurled me 12
onto the chariots of Amminadib! [h]

7 CHORUS: [a] Come back, come back, girl from Shulam, [b] 1
come back, come back, where we can look at you!
Why are you looking at the girl from Shulam,
dancing between two lines of dancers? [c]

LOVER: How beautiful are your feet in their sandals, [d] 2
O prince's daughter!
The curve of your thighs is like the curve of a necklace,
work of a master hand.
Your navel is a bowl well rounded 3
with no lack of wine,
your belly a heap of wheat
surrounded with lilies.
=4:5 Your two breasts are two fawns, 4
twins of a gazelle.
Your neck is an ivory tower. 5
Your eyes, the pools of Heshbon,
by the gate of Bath-Rabbim.
Your nose, the Tower of Lebanon,
sentinel facing Damascus.

Your head is held high like Carmel,
and its hair is as dark as purple;
a king is held captive in your tresses.[e]

How beautiful you are, how charming,
my love, my delight![f]
In stature like the palm tree,[g]
its fruit-clusters your breasts.
I have decided, 'I shall climb the palm tree,
I shall seize its clusters of dates!'
May your breasts be clusters of grapes,
your breath sweet-scented as apples,
and your palate like sweet wine.

BELOVED:[h] Flowing down the throat of my love,
as it runs on the lips of those who sleep.[i]
I belong to my love,
and his desire is for me.[j] Gn 3:16

Come, my love,
let us go to the fields.[k]
We will spend the night in the villages,
and in the early morning we will go to the vineyards.
We will see if the vines are budding,
if their blossoms are opening,
if the pomegranate trees are in flower. 2:10–14
Then I shall give you Gn 30:14a
the gift of my love.[l]
The mandrakes yield their fragrance,
the most exquisite fruits are at our doors;
the new as well as the old,
I have stored them for you, my love.

b. Vv. 4–10 form a short poem, the beginning and end of which are indicated by the repetition of the same words at the end of v. 4 and v. 10. Vv. 5[b]–7 are a partial repeat of 4:1–2,3[b] and may be an addition. The Lover proclaims that his Beloved is the only girl for him, meaning more to him than a royal harem, v. 8, cf. 1 K 11:3; 2 Ch 11:21; 13:21.

c. Jerusalem is 'loveliest of all, joy of the universe', Lm 2:15. Tirzah, early capital of the Northern Kingdom, 1 K 14:17, is put in apposition since the name means 'agreeable, pleasant'.

d. Meaning uncertain.

e. Compare Shakespeare: 'For shame, lie not, to say mine eyes are murderers.'

f. Probably a gloss.

g. Compare the eulogy of a wife in Si 26:16–18. The High Priest Simon is compared to the moon and sun, Si 50:6–7. An Egyptian love-song compares the beloved, unique and peerless, cf. here v. 9, to Sirius, the brightest of the stars.

h. Vv. 11–12 are independent of the foregoing poem and are difficult to explain. It is not clear whether the Lover or the Beloved is speaking: the Lover, if the garden of v. 11 represents his Beloved, as in 4:12,16; 5:1, but the Beloved, if we suppose the second part of the v. to be said by her as 7:13. V. 12 is the obscurest in the Song and defies all explanation. • Probably Amminadib is the Palestinian equivalent of 'Prince Mehi', who figures in Egyptian songs as riding in a chariot and interfering in other people's love-affairs.

7 a. The Chorus calls and the Poet (rather than the Lover) intervenes to introduce a new description of the Beloved, vv. 2–6. This balances the description in 4:1–6, using some of the same elements: twin fawns, tower, though in reverse order and more sensually. The images of comparison are disparate: necklace, bowl, wheat, fawns, tower, followed by geographical features.

b. The name appears only here and remains unexplained. Reference has been suggested to the Shulamite who warmed David and whose beauty is extolled in 1 K 1:2–4, or to a feminine form derived from the name Solomon, 'she who belongs to Solomon', i.e. belonging to the Lover, cf. Sg 3:7–11.

c. The girl from Shulam is imagined as dancing between two choruses, who mark the rhythm of her steps by repeated shouts of 'Come back'—a well-known type of eastern dance by no means confined to weddings: hence the subsequent description begins with the dancer's feet. The text may have been recited by the Chorus, rather than by the Lover who speaks for certain only at vv. 7–10 following.

d. *See also* the corresponding description in 4:1–5.

e. Translation uncertain: if right, compare an Egyptian love-song: 'With her hair, she has thrown her nets over me.' • On the 'king' of this v. and the 'prince's daughter' of v. 2, *see* 1:4,12.

f. lit. 'daughter of delights' Syr. and Aquila; 'in the delights' Hebr. • vv. 7–10 express passionate desire for physical possession of the Beloved.

g. Three women in the Bible, Gn 38:6; 2 S 13:1; 14:27, are called Tamar, 'palm tree', a symbol of feminine beauty.

h. The Beloved takes up the Lover's last word (wine) to show how much she loves him in return.

i. Text and meaning uncertain. Gk has 'on my lips and teeth'.

j. Allusion to Gn 3:16 where the same very rare word means the attraction exerted by a man over his wife.

k. Evocation of spring as in 2:10–14, but here the invitation comes from the Beloved. Gardens form a favourite setting for Egyptian love-scenes.

l. Here the word requires its most realistic meaning, developed in the next line: mandrakes were believed to excite love and to promote fertility, *see* Gn 30:14–16. The fruits reserved for the Lover no longer evoke springtime but autumn after love has been consummated.

8

Ah, why are you not my brother, 1
nursed at my mother's breast! [a]
Then if I met you out of doors, I could kiss you
without people thinking ill of me.
I should lead you, I should take you into my mother's 2
house, and you would teach me!
I should give you spiced wine to drink,
juice of my pomegranates.

=2:6 His left arm is under my head 3
and his right embraces me.

=2:7;=3:5 LOVER: I charge you, 4
daughters of Jerusalem,
do not rouse, do not wake my beloved,
before she pleases!

EPILOGUE [b]

3:6 Who is this coming up from the desert 5
leaning on her lover?

2:7;3:5; 5:2;8:4 I awakened you under the apple tree,
where your mother conceived you,
where she who bore you conceived you.

Dt 4:24;6:6,8; 11:18 Pr 3:3 Jr 31:33 BELOVED: [c] Set me like a seal on your heart, [d] 6
like a seal on your arm.
For love is strong as Death,
passion [e] as relentless as Sheol. [f]
The flash of it is a flash of fire,
a flame of Yahweh himself. [g]

Is 43:2 Love no flood can quench, 7
no torrents drown.
Were a man to offer all his family wealth
to buy love,
contempt is all that he would gain.

APPENDICES

Two epigrams [h]

Our sister is little: her breasts are not yet formed. What shall we do for our sister 8
on the day she is spoken for? [i] ·If she is a rampart, on the crest we shall build a 9
battlement of silver; if she is a door, we shall board her up [j] with planks of cedar.

I am a wall, and my breasts represent its towers. And under their [k] eyes I have 10
found true peace.

Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-Hamon. [l] He entrusted it to overseers, and each 11
one was to pay him the value of its produce, a thousand shekels of silver. ·But I 12
tend my own vineyard myself. You, Solomon, may have your thousand shekels,
and those who oversee its produce their two hundred.

Final additions [m]

You who dwell in the gardens, my companions [n] listen for your voice; let 13
me hear it.

14 Haste away, my love,
be like a gazelle,
a young stag,
on the spice-laden mountains. 2:17

8 **a.** Beginning of another short poem, with a different setting, and a more intense and hyperbolical flight of fancy—of a love beginning in the cradle. The 'wine' and the 'juice' of v. 2 are the equivalents of the 'fruits' of the preceding poem. The piece ends with the refrain of 2:6–7.

b. The couplet and triplet of v. 5 are not connected either with each other or with what follows. They seem to be the opening lines of two poems which have not in fact been transcribed, as does also v. 13 below. This lack of context makes impossible any attempt at interpretation. The pronominal suffixes of v. 5^b are masculine in the Hebr., and have been corrected to feminine after the Syr.

c. Nowhere up to this point has the Song defined what love is. The Beloved now does so in the strongest, finest terms, proclaiming its invincible strength, its ineluctable nature and its priceless value. What follows v. 7 is additional material.

d. The seal, representative and sign of the owner's authority, was worn hanging from the neck, Gn 38:18,25, and resting on the chest (here, the heart), or else on the finger, Jr 22:24; Hg 2:23 (Hebr. 'arm' used here includes hand). An Egyptian song says: 'Would I were the seal that she wears on her finger!'

e. Not 'jealousy'; the term is parallel to 'love' in the previous line. What is meant here is passionate love.

f. The subterranean dwelling of the dead: here the equivalent of 'death' in the previous line.

g. Love consumes like the fire of heaven, like the thunderbolt, Jb 1:16.

h. These two pieces have no direct relation with the Song as regards either characters or subject matter. In the first, vv. 8–10, brothers are considering when they should marry off their young sister; the latter retorts that she is old enough to look after herself. The allusion to marriage accounts for its having been attached to the Song. In the second, vv. 11–12, an owner prefers his own vineyard to Solomon's vineyard and great wealth; Naboth's vineyard, 1 K 21:1–3, comes to mind. The vineyard or the garden as metaphors for the Beloved in 1:6; 2:15; 4:12seq., and the mention of Solomon, led the piece to be regarded as a love-song, hence its inclusion here.

i. For marriage.

j. 'board up' *natztzib* conj.; Hebr. *natzur* 'besiege'.

k. 'his' Hebr.; 'their' Gk.

l. Unknown place.

m. V. 13 is probably the beginning of a poem that has not been preserved, to which someone has added a verse inspired by 2:17.

n. 'my companions' conj.; 'the companions' Hebr.

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF WISDOM

§1 The Greek book of *Wisdom* is one of the deutero-canonical books. It was used by the Fathers of the Church from the second century AD, and despite some hesitation and opposition, notably from St Jerome, was recognised as being inspired in just the same way as the books of the Hebrew canon.

In its opening section, the book, entitled *Liber Sapientiae* in the Vulgate, explains the function of Wisdom in human destiny and compares the fate of the good and the bad during life and after, ch. 1–5. The second section, ch. 6–9, treats of the origin and nature of Wisdom and of how it is to be won. The last section, ch. 10–19, celebrates the part played by Wisdom and by God in the history of the chosen people and, concentrating, apart from a brief introduction, on one single but critical event in that history, the deliverance from Egypt. This third section contains also a long and exhaustive digression on idolatry, ch. 13–15.

The author is supposed to be Solomon who, though not named, is clearly indicated in 9:7–8,12, and the book is called *Wisdom of Solomon* in Greek. The author writes as though he were a king, 7:5; 8:9–15, addressing his fellow kings, 1:1; 6:1–11,21. It is evident, however, that this is a literary device; as with Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs, this Wisdom book is published under the nominal patronage of Israel's greatest sage. And indeed the entire book was written in Greek (including the first section, ch. 1–5, wrongly supposed by some scholars to have been originally written in Hebrew). The unity of authorship is apparent in the closely knit composition of the book and also in the consistency of a literary style which is supple and expressive and, when need arises, rhetorical.

There is no doubt that the author is a Jew: he is devoted to 'the God of our ancestors', 9:1, and proud to belong to 'a holy people, a blameless race', 10:15. But he is a hellenised Jew. That he dwells on the events of the Exodus, contrasts Egyptians with Israelites and attacks animal worship, shows that he lived in Alexandria, chief city of the hellenistic world under the Ptolemies and home of so many Jews of the Dispersion. When the author quotes Scripture it is from the Septuagint, the Greek version that came from these circles. He lived, therefore, after this version was made but before Philo of Alexandria (20 BC–AD 54) of whose work he knows nothing. The Greek philosopher, for his part, never seems to have drawn on the Book of Wisdom. There are, however, many points of contact between the thought of the two

writers, living as they did in the same environment at very much the same time. The use of the Book of Wisdom by New Testament writers cannot be conclusively demonstrated, but it seems likely that Paul was influenced by its literary style and that John borrowed some of its ideas to express his own theology of the Word. The book was probably written in the second half of the first century BC and is the most recent of the books of the Old Testament.

§2 The author is writing primarily for his fellow-Jews whose faith is shaken by the attraction of the cultural life of Alexandria, its imposing philosophical systems, its advances in the physical sciences, its fascinating mystery religions, astrology, Hermetic doctrines, its seductive popular cults. Nevertheless, he has the gentiles in mind too, hoping to lead them to God, the lover of all men; certain remarks and turns of phrase betray this intention. But the intention remains a secondary one; the book is very much more concerned with safeguarding Jews than with conciliating gentiles.

Given the author's circumstances, his culture and his purpose, it is not surprising that his work has multiple contacts with Greek thought. The significance of these, however, must not be exaggerated. His hellenistic education provided him with a range of abstract terms and an easy familiarity with processes of argument beyond the capacity of the Hebrew vocabulary and syntax. To this same education he owes several philosophical terms, categories of classification and academic topics. But this restricted and superficial dependence does not mean intellectual commitment: the author borrows only to give expression to ideas deriving from the Old Testament itself. Of the various schools of philosophy and of astrological speculations he probably knew no more than the average cultured man of his own place and time.

§3 The author is neither a philosopher nor a theologian; he is a typical sage of Israel. Like the Wisdom writers before him he commends Wisdom, born of God, obtained by prayer, mainspring of all uprightness, source of every good. But he outstrips his predecessors, adding to the sum of this Wisdom the most recent achievements of human knowledge, 7:17–21; 8:8. The problem of retribution, for so long the study of the sages, *see* Introduction to the Wisdom Books **§3**, finds its solution in this book. The author makes use of the Platonic distinction of body from soul, *see* 9:15, and of the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, to proclaim that God has made the human race for immortality, 2:23, and that incorruption is the reward of Wisdom and the way to God, 6:18–19. This life is only a preparation for another in which the upright live with God and the wicked are punished, 3:9–10. The author makes no allusion to a bodily resurrection. He does, however, seem to admit the possibility of a resurrection of bodies in a spiritualised form, in an attempt hereby to reconcile the Greek notion of immortality with biblical doctrines which were tending towards a bodily resurrection (Daniel).

His doctrine of God's attribute, Wisdom, is traditional. Wisdom was active in the whole work of creation and Wisdom carries history to its goal. The qualities assigned to Wisdom are from ch. 11 onwards attributed to God himself, but this is because Wisdom and God in his function of world-ruler are the same thing. Wisdom, however, is an 'emanation of the glory of the

Almighty . . . a reflection of the eternal light . . . an image of his goodness' 7:25–26, and is therefore distinguished from God, but, at the same time, is the radiance of God's nature. The author, it seems, goes no further than the other Wisdom writers here, *see* Introduction to the Wisdom Books §2: it does not appear that he gives Wisdom an existence of its own; but the whole passage on the nature of Wisdom, 7:22–8:8, is a step forward in the expression of the traditional ideas and a deeper perception of them.

The author was not the first to make a survey of Israel's history. Ben Sira had gone before him, Si 44–50, cf. *also* Ps 78,105,106,135,136; but his originality emerges in two ways. In the first place he looks for explanations of the facts and outlines a religious philosophy of history behind which lies a fresh interpretation of the texts; so, for example, his disquisition on the moderation that God exercised towards Egypt and Canaan, 11:15–12:27. Secondly, and more significantly, he manipulates the biblical narrative in the interests of his thesis. In ch. 16–19, a sustained contrast between the fortunes of Egyptian and Israelite, the author fills out the narrative with imaginative elements, draws together episodes which in effect were disconnected, makes the facts more than lifesize. All this is an excellent example of *midrash*, the exegetical method practised later by the rabbis.

Tastes have changed and the Book of Wisdom has lost its original impact, but its first two sections, ch. 1–9, have much to offer the Christian mind, and the liturgy has made generous use of them.

The text of the Book of Wisdom is preserved in four major MSS: B [Vaticanus, fourth century], S [Sinaiticus, fourth century], A [Alexandrinus, fifth century] and C [Codex Ephraemi rescriptus, fifth century], and in a number of secondary MSS. The best MS is B, which has been used as the basis for this translation and which we describe as *Textus receptus*. The abbreviation *Lat.* indicates the *Itala* version [Latin], incorporated into the Vulgate but not revised by St Jerome.

THE BOOK OF
WISDOM

I: WISDOM AND HUMAN DESTINY

On seeking God and rejecting evil

1 **1** Love uprightness [a] you who are rulers on earth, [b] — Mt 6:33
be properly disposed towards the Lord
and seek him in simplicity of heart; [c] — 2 Ch 15:2
2 for he will be found by those who do not put him to the test, — Pr 8:17
revealing himself to those who do not mistrust him. [d]
3 Perverse thoughts, however, separate people from God,
and power, when put to the test, confounds the stupid. [e]
4 Wisdom will never enter the soul of a wrong-doer,
nor dwell in a body enslaved to sin; [f] — Rm 7:24;8:2
5 for the holy spirit of instruction [g] flees deceitfulness, — Rm 8:14
recoils from unintelligent thoughts,
is thwarted [h] by the onset of vice.

6 Wisdom is a spirit friendly to humanity, — 7:23
though she will not let a blasphemer's words go unpunished; — Pr 8:31
since God observes the very soul [i] — Tt 3:4
and accurately surveys the heart, — Jr 11:20
listening to every word.
7 For the spirit of the Lord fills the world, [j] — Ps 139:7–12
and that which holds everything together [k] knows every word said. [l] — Pr 22:12
8 No one who speaks what is wrong will go undetected, — Si 39:10
nor will avenging Justice pass by such a one. — ↗Ac 2:4
11:20

1 a. Same Gk formula in 1 Ch 29:17 and Ps 45:7. By uprightness is to be understood perfect accord of mind and act with the divine will as manifested in the precepts of the Law and the injunctions of conscience.

b. Cf. Ps 2:10. The author, who, by a literary fiction, will later infer that he is Solomon, 7:7–11; 9:7–8,12, purports to be addressing his fellow-kings (*see* 6:1–11). In fact, however, he is admonishing the Jews threatened by their gentile surroundings.

c. 'seeking God' in order to 'find him' is a recurrent admonition in prophetic and wisdom literature, *see* Am 5:4c, but the influence of 1 Ch 28:9 seems more direct. • On 'simplicity of heart', *see* 1 Ch 29:17; Ep 6:5; Col 3:22.

d. Same Gk expression in Is 65:1 and Jr 29 (LXX 36):13–14.

e. The power of God working in the world, which the author will identify indiscriminately with the Spirit and with Wisdom.

f. The body is not evil in itself but may become the instrument of sin and thus dominate the soul. John, 8:34, and Paul, Rm 7:14–24, give definitive expression to this idea.

g. 'of instruction'. var. 'of wisdom'. Israelite education, traditionally dispensed by the sages, is placed under the influence of a 'holy spirit', cf. Ps 51:11; Is 63:10–11; certain earlier texts had already represented the Holy Spirit as having been Israel's guide in the past, Ne 9:20,30; Is 63:10–11, or as an inner force, Ps 51:11; Ezk 11:19; 36:26–27; Wisdom, too, on occasion, assumed the function of the sages, Pr 1–9, or tended to become identified with the Spirit, *see* Ws 1:6–7; 7:22; 9:17.

h. Text obscure.

i. lit. 'kidneys'; considered the centre of the emotions and of instinctive impulse, Jb 19:27; Ps 16:7; 73:21; Pr 23:16; in the 'heart' is localised conscious activity of intellect and of will, Gn 8:21c. 'heart' and 'kidneys' are frequently associated, Ps 7:9; 26:2; Jr 11:20; 17:10; 20:12; Rv 2:23, to signify human inner forces.

j. The omnipresence of God, affirmed in Jr 23:24 (*see also* 1 K 8:27; Am 9:2–3); is understood in terms of his Spirit in Ps 139:7 and its universal, life-giving activity, Jdt 16:14; Jb 34:14–15; Ps 104:30.

k. The term translated by this expression is borrowed from the vocabulary of the Stoics, very emphatically showing the function of the Spirit of the Lord. The only biblical parallel (distant) seems to be Gn 1:2. Transposed, the term means the effective power of a transcendent God.

l. The Spirit links everything so intimately together that it is immediately aware of every word uttered. By accommodation, the liturgy of Pentecost applies this text to the 'gift of tongues', Ac 2:2–4.

For the schemes of the godless will be examined, 9
and a report of his words will reach the Lord
to convict him of his crimes.
Dt 29:19 There is a jealous ear that overhears everything, 10
not even a murmur of complaint escapes it.
Ex 15:24i So beware of uttering frivolous complaints, 11
Ps 78:19 restrain your tongue from finding fault; [m]
even what is said in secret has repercussions,
and a lying mouth deals death to the soul.

Pr 8:36 Do not court death by the errors of your ways, 12
nor invite destruction through the work of your hands.
2:23–24; 11:23–12:1 For God did not make Death, [n] 13
Ezk 18:32;33:11 he takes no pleasure in destroying the living.
To exist—for this he created all things; [o] 14
the creatures of the world have health in them,
in them is no fatal poison,
and Hades [p] has no power over the world:
3:4c for uprightness is immortal. [q] 15

Life as the godless see it

But the godless [r] call for Death with deed and word, 16
Pr 8:36 counting him friend, they wear themselves out for him;
Si 14:12 Is 28:15 with him they make a pact,
worthy as they are to belong to him. [s]

2 And this is the false argument they use, 1
Jb 7:9; 14: 1–2, 1a Qo 8:8 'Our life is short and dreary, [a]
there is no remedy when our end comes,
no one is known to have come back [b] from Hades.
We came into being by chance [c] 2
and afterwards shall be as though we had never been.
Ps 102:3 The breath in our nostrils is a puff of smoke,
reason a spark from the beating of our hearts;
extinguish this and the body turns to ashes, 3
and the spirit melts away like the yielding air.
Jb 7:9;18:17–19 Qo 1:11; 2:16;9:5seq. In time, our name will be forgotten, [d] 4
nobody will remember what we have done;
Jm 4:14 our life will pass away like wisps of cloud,
dissolving like the mist
that the sun's rays drive away
and that its heat dispels.
1 Ch 29:15 Jb 8:9;14:2 Ps 39:6;144:4 Qo 6:12;8:13 For our days are the passing of a shadow, 5
our end is without return,
the seal is affixed and nobody comes back. [e]

Is 22:13 1 Co 15:32 'Come then, let us enjoy the good things of today, 6
Is 56:12 let us use created things with the zest of youth:
take our fill of the dearest wines and perfumes, 7
on no account forgo the flowers of spring [f]
but crown ourselves with rosebuds before they wither, 8
no meadow [g] excluded from our orgy; 9
let us leave the signs of our revelry everywhere,
1:16 Is 57:6 since this is our portion, this our lot!

Ex 22:20–21+ Lv 25:35–37 'As for the upright man who is poor, [h] let us oppress him; 10
let us not spare the widow,

nor respect old age, white-haired with many years. [i] Lv 19:32
11 Let our might be the yardstick of right, [j]
since weakness argues its own futility.
12 Let us lay traps for the upright man, since he annoys us [k] Jr 11:19; 20:10–13
and opposes our way of life, Mt 23;26:3–4
reproaches us for our sins against the Law, Jn 5:16,18
and accuses us of sins against our upbringing.
13 He claims to have knowledge of God, [l] Mt 11:27
and calls himself a child of the Lord. 5:5
14 We see him as a reproof to our way of thinking, Lk 22:70
the very sight of him weighs our spirits down;
15 for his kind of life is not like other people's, Est 3:8,13[d,e]
and his ways are quite different. [m]
16 In his opinion we are counterfeit;
he avoids our ways as he would filth;
he proclaims the final end of the upright as blessed [n] Mt 5:11
and boasts of having God for his father. Jn 5:18
17 Let us see if what he says is true,
and test him to see what sort of end he will have. [o]
18 For if the upright man is God's son, [p] God will help him Ps 22:8
and rescue him from the clutches of his enemies. ↗Mt 27:43
19 Let us test him with cruelty and with torture,

m. With God and his providence.

n. The author is thinking simultaneously of physical and of spiritual death which are interconnected; sin is the cause of death, and physical death for the sinner is also spiritual and eternal death. The author refers here to the account in Gn 2–3 to comment on the Creator's intentions: human beings were made for immortality. Nothing within the creation can thwart the divine will; on the contrary, 'creatures' help towards human salvation. Paul, Rm 5:12–21, 12g, will later develop this doctrine of death introduced by sin, by contrasting the first sinner Adam and the second Adam, the Saviour.

o. God, 'He who is', Ex 3:13g, created all things to 'be', to have a real, substantial and durable life.

p. 'Hades', the Hebr. Sheol, Nb 16:33f, here represents not the dwelling-place of the dead but the power of personified Death, cf. Mt 16:18; Rv 6:8; 20:14.

q. Anyone who practises 'uprightness', *see* 1:1a, is assured of immortality. Some Latin MSS add 'but vice is the acquisition of death'. This ill-supported addition is not likely to represent the original Gk text.

r. The 'godless' here are primarily renegade, cynical and self-indulgent Jews who even go so far as to persecute their fellow-Jews and to defy God. The materialistic gentiles, to whom they have become assimilated and whose attitudes of mind they have adopted, are included too.

s. The wicked belong to death, as Israel belongs to God, Dt 32:9; 2 M 1:26; Zc 2:16, and as God belongs to his faithful, Ps 16:5; 73:26; 142:5.

2 **a.** This pessimistic view of life is found elsewhere in the Bible, *see* Gn 47:9; Jb 14:1–2; Ps 39:4–6; 90:9–10; Qo 2:23; Si 40:1–2, and is also to be found in Greek literature, where the tone is even more melancholy and disenchanted.

b. Or perhaps 'to have given release'. Hades here, as in Rv 1:18, means the abode of the dead, Nb 16:33f, from which there is no return, Jb 7:9e, and not the power of personified Death as in Ws 1:14 above. The godless do not even believe in its existence, denying this on experiential grounds.

c. The fortuitous agglomeration of elements or of atoms accounts for the origin of each individual, and the agglomeration disperses totally in death. The breath of life is attributed to the phenomenon of the heating and combustion of air, and thought is attributed to a spark generated by 'the beating of the heart'. This mechanistic explanation reinforces various Gk theories hostile to the reality of the soul, at the same time countering biblical doctrines with its ironic image of the 'breath in the nostrils', Gn 2:7; Jb 27:3.

d. In the Bible, this forgetfulness is often regarded as the punishment of the godless, *see* Dt 9:14; Jb 18:17; Ps 9:5–7; Si 44:9; etc., but some texts apply it to all the dead without distinction, Ps 31:12; Qo 2:16; 9:5.

e. Or 'does not bring back'.

f. 'of spring' Gk MSS, Syr. Hex., Arm.; 'of the air' *Text. rec.* and Syr.

g. 'no meadow' conj., following the Lat.; 'none of us' Gk.

h. Sarcasm: the 'upright' is 'poor' notwithstanding the explicit promises of Scripture, Ps 37:25; 112:3; Pr 3:9–10; 12:21.

i. The very people who Scripture teaches should be respected and protected.

j. This attitude with its automatic contempt for the weak is to supplant the Law guaranteeing justice for all. The Bible is familiar with the primacy of force, Jb 12:6; Hab 1:7,11, and often shows it in action; certain Gk theories supported the notion that 'might is right' by analogy with the laws of nature.

k. Literary influence of Is 3:10 (LXX), unless the influence is in the opposite direction.

l. Knowledge, not only of the one God, but of his wishes, Rm 2:17–20, put into practice, perhaps also of his mysterious designs for humanity (cf. Ws 2:22).

m. The godless repeat the accusations often levelled against the Jewish people, whose beliefs and practices set them apart from the rest of humanity.

n. Possibly an allusion to the story of Job, 42:12–15, if only temporal retribution is envisaged. But the expression may perhaps imply the assurance of a reward for the upright in the hereafter, the scope of which the godless deliberately misrepresent.

o. Lat. adds 'and we shall know what his final lot will be': a second translation of the Gk text.

p. In the Bible, the expression 'child of God' often means Israel or the Israelites, Ex 4:22–23; Dt 14:1; Is 1:2; Ho 11:1. But there is a gradual tendency to reserve it for the upright or to the nation of the future, *see* already Ho 2:1. It is occasionally applied to individuals, 2 S 7:14; Ps 2:7; Si 4:10. Although, however, on occasion, an Israelite may invoke God as father, Si 23:1,4; 51:10, *see also* Ps 89:26, no Israelite ever calls himself 'his child'. Throughout the rest of the book, the title is applied to the Israelites of the past as members of a holy people, 9:7; 10:15,17; 12:19,21; 16:26; 18:4.

Is 53:7 Mt 26:67–68; 27:12seq.
and thus explore this gentleness of his
and put his patience to the test.
Let us condemn him to a shameful death 20
since God will rescue him—or so he claims.' [q]

Error of the godless

This is the way they reason, but they are misled, 21
Rm 1:21 Ep 4:18 since their malice makes them blind.
They do not know the hidden things of God, [r] 22
they do not hope for the reward of holiness,
they do not believe in a reward for blameless souls.
1:13n;3:4c For God created human beings to be immortal, 23
Gn 1:26m Ps 8:5 he made them as an image of his own nature; [s]
2 P 1:4 •Gn 3 ↗Rm 5:12 Death came into the world only through the Devil's envy, [t] 24
as those who belong to him find to their cost.

Destinies of the good and bad compared

Dt 33:3 Ps 89:21 Is 51:16 Jn 10:29 4:17
3 But the souls of the upright are in the hands of God, [a] 1
and no torment can touch them.
To the unenlightened, they appeared to die, 2
their departure was regarded as a disaster,
their leaving us like an annihilation; 3
Is 57:2 but they are at peace. [b]
If, as it seemed to us, they suffered punishment, 4
1:15;2:23s their hope was rich with immortality; [c]
Rm 8:18 2 Co 4:17 Jb 23:10 Ps 17:3; 26,28 Pr 17:2 slight was their correction, great will their blessings be. 5
God was putting them to the test [d]
and has proved them worthy to be with him;
he has tested them like gold in a furnace, 6
and accepted them as a perfect burnt offering.
Dn 12:3 Mt 13:43 At their time of visitation, [e] they will shine out; 7
as sparks run through the stubble, so will they. [f]
Ps 49:14; 149:7seq. Dn 7:27 1 Co 6:2 Rv 5:10;20:4–6 They will judge nations, rule over peoples, 8
and the Lord will be their king for ever.
Those who trust in him will understand the truth, [g] 9
•Pr 28:5 1 Co 13:12 1 Jn 3:2 •4:15 those who are faithful will live with him in love; [h]
for grace and mercy await his holy ones,
and he intervenes on behalf of his chosen.

But the godless will be duly punished for their reasoning, 10
for having neglected the upright [i] and deserted the Lord.
Yes, wretched are they who scorn wisdom and discipline: [j] 11
their hope is void,
their toil unavailing,
their achievements unprofitable;
their wives are reckless, 12
Ps 109:9–10 Si 41:5–6 their children depraved,
their descendants accursed.

Better be sterile than have godless children

4:1 Is 54:1 Heb 13:4
Blessed the sterile woman [k] if she be blameless, 13
and has not known an unlawful bed, [l]
for she will have fruit at the visitation of souls. [m]
Is 56:3–4 Blessed, too, the eunuch [n] whose hand commits no crime, 14
and who harbours no resentment against the Lord:
a special favour will be granted to him for his loyalty,

a most desirable portion in the temple of the Lord. [o] Ps 16:5–6
15 For the fruit of honest labours is glorious,
and the root of understanding [p] does not decay. 1:15;2:23
16 But the children of adulterers [q] will not reach maturity,
the offspring of an unlawful bed will disappear.
17 Even if they live long, they will count for nothing,
their old age will go unhonoured at the last;
18 while if they die early, they have neither hope
nor comfort on the day of judgement,
19 for the end of a race of evil-doers is harsh. [r] Si 16:4

1 **4** Better to have no children yet to have virtue, [a] Si 16:3
since immortality perpetuates its memory; [b] Pr 10:7
for God and human beings both recognise it.
2 Present, we imitate it,
absent, we long for it;

q. lit. 'there will be a visitation (of God) for him'. On this visitation, *see* 3:7e. • The points of resemblance to the Passion of Christ, condemned to a 'shameful death' for claiming to be 'Son of God', impressed the first generations of Christians, *see* Mt 27:43, and a number of Fathers of the Church considered this passage to be prophetic. In immediate view the author has the faithful Jews of Alexandria, mocked and persecuted by the renegades and their gentile allies. At the same time, he has described an ideal or typical persecution. Hence, his text eminently applies to the Upright Man of all time, Heb 12:3.

r. The secret designs of God as regards the immortal human destiny.

s. lit. 'of his own property'; var. 'of his own eternity' or 'of his own likeness'. The author adapts the theme of the creation of man in the image of God, Gn 1:26 and uses the allusion apparently to emphasise the eternal nature of God.

t. 'Devil' in the LXX renders the Hebr. 'Satan', *see* Jb 1:6g. Here the author is interpreting Gn 3, cf. Rv 12:9; 20:2. The death introduced by the devil is spiritual, with physical death as its consequence, *see* 1:13; Rm 5:12seq.

3 **a.** i.e. under his protection, cf. Dt 33:3; Is 51:16; Jn 10:28–29, and dependent on him, cf. Jb 12:10.

b. 'Peace' means not only the absence of all evil, Jb 3:17–18; Is 57:2, but a state of security or of happiness under the protection of (v. 1) or in intimacy with (v. 9) God.

c. Hope, Rm 5:2c, has a pre-eminent role in the life of the upright; the object of hope is immortality, *athanasia*. This word, hitherto unused in the OT, but familiar to the Greeks, could mean either the immortality of remembrance, cf. 8:13, or the immortality of the soul. The author uses it here in the second sense, more specifically to mean the blessed immortality in the companionship of God, as reward for uprightness, 1:15; 2:23. He thus develops the hopes of the Psalmist, who could not reconcile himself to losing the intimacy of God by dying, Ps 16:10g.

d. 'To the test', touchstone and means of purifying the upright, cf. Gn 22:1; Tb 12:13; Jb 1:12; Ps 66:10; 1 P 1:6–7.

e. This word, *see* Ex 3:16, here means a favourable intervention by God, possibly coinciding with a general or partial judgement. The expression itself, literally reproducing Jr 6:15; 10:15 (LXX), *see also* Is 24:22, implies a later phase in the condition of upright souls. The verb following presumably means their final glorification; if the notion of 'shining out' does in fact apply to the resurrected elect, Dn 12:3; Mt 13:43, this doctrine of a bodily resurrection is nowhere explicitly mentioned in the book.

f. In many biblical passages, *see* Is 1:31; 5:24; Ob 18; Na 1:10; Zc 12:6; Ml 3:19, the image symbolises the effects of God's avenging anger or of Israel's revenge on its enemies. Here it is used slightly differently, perhaps to mean the participation of the glorified upright in the extermination of evil, preceding the establishing of the kingdom of God, with which they are associated (v. 8).

g. A 'truth' which will vindicate their trust and reveal the full scope of God's design to them.

h. Or, by dividing the phrase differently: 'and those who are faithful in love will dwell with him'. Whichever translation is adopted, the happiness of the elect consists of knowledge and love.

i. Or 'what is upright'.

j. Expression borrowed from Pr 1:7. The word 'wisdom' means the practical wisdom enabling one to live uprightly; the word 'discipline', translated elsewhere as 'instruction', 1:5; 6:17; 7:14, and 'upbringing', 2:12, comprehends the means necessary for acquiring it.

k. Sterility was regarded as a disgrace or as a punishment; fertility was a sign of God's blessing. To the sterile but faithful wife, the author attributes spiritual fertility.

l. lit. 'who has not known the bed in infidelity'. The author is thinking of a faithful Jewess, married to a faithful Jew, in conformity with the prescriptions of the Law. He thus rules out not only adultery and fornication, cf. Heb 13:4, but also conjugal relations within mixed marriages, Dt 7:3; Ezr 9:1–2.

m. var. in many Latin MSS 'of their souls' or 'of holy souls'. This visitation is probably the same as in v. 7.

n. Eunuchs were excluded from the religious assembly of Israel, Dt 23:2, but Is 56:3–5 had announced their rehabilitation in the messianic age, if they faithfully obeyed the Law of God. The author elaborates and adapts the latter text.

o. i.e. in heaven, Ps 11:4; 18:9; Mi 1:2–3; Rv 3:12; 7:15, where the upright enjoy the presence of God.

p. 'understanding' means the wise discernment of true values conducive to an upright life and assuring conformity to God's will, cf. 4:9; 6:15; 7:7; 8:6,18,21. This root is stable, Pr 12:3, and fertile, bearing fruit for eternity, Ws 1:15; 2:23.

q. In biblical usage, the term 'adulterer' is applied to Israel or to Israelites when unfaithful to God, *see* Is 57:3; Jr 9:1; Ezk 23:37; Ho 3:1. It can therefore also include apostate Jews, or Jews who have contracted marriage with gentile women, *see* v. 13*l*, and not merely adulterers in the primary sense of the word; *see also* 4:3,6.

r. In this passage (*see also* v. 12 above) on the wretched lot of a godless lineage, the author repeats ancient biblical themes: the parents are punished in their children and the latter, identified with them in guilt and punishment (*see*, however, Ezk 18:14–20), will die prematurely or never know honourable old age (*see*, however, Jb 21:7–33). The prospect of severe judgement, v. 18, when God takes a final decision, makes the picture gloomier still; cf. 4:3–5.

4 **a.** For this line, most Latin MSS read 'Oh, how beautiful the chaste and radiant race!' This cannot be the original translation, but witnesses to a tendency to read the Greek text as a eulogy of chastity; an ancient patristic tradition understands it as a eulogy of virginity. This interpretation is not convincing, since the author goes on apparently with his antithesis between virtuous sterility (*see* 3:13) and godless fecundity.

b. Immortality in human memory and personal immortality conferred by God, *see* 3:4c.

5:16 crowned, it holds triumph through eternity,
having striven for untainted prizes and emerged the victor. [c]

But the offspring of the godless come to nothing, however prolific, 3
Si 23:25;40:15 sprung from a bastard stock, they will never strike deep roots,
never put down firm foundations.
They may branch out for a time, 4
Ps 58:9 but, on unsteady foundations, they will be rocked by the wind
and uprooted by the force of the storm;
their branches, yet unformed, will be snapped off, 5
their fruit be useless,
too unripe to eat,
fit for nothing.
For children begotten of unlawful bed 6
witness, when put on trial, [d] to their parents' wickedness.

The premature death of the upright [e]

3:3b The upright, though he die before his time, will find rest. 7
Is 57:1–2
Si 25:4–6 Length of days is not what makes age honourable, 8
nor number of years the true measure of life;
Pr 16:31 understanding, this is grey hairs, 9
untarnished life, this is ripe old age.
Having won God's favour, he has been loved 10
Gn 5:34 and, as he was living among sinners, has been taken away. [f]
Si 44:16
Heb 11:5 He has been carried off so that evil may not warp 11
his understanding or deceitfulness seduce his soul;
for the fascination of evil throws good things into the shade, 12
and the whirlwind of desire corrupts a simple heart.
Having come to perfection so soon, he has lived long; 13
his soul being pleasing to the Lord, 14
he has hurried away [g] from the wickedness around him.

Is 57:1 Yet people [h] look on, uncomprehending;
and it does not enter their heads
3:9 that grace and mercy await his chosen ones 15
and that he intervenes on behalf of his holy ones.
The upright who dies condemns the godless who survive, 16
and youth quickly perfected
condemns the lengthy old age of the wicked.
3:2 These people see the end of the wise 17
without understanding what the Lord has in store
or why he has taken such a one to safety;
they look on and sneer, 18
Ps 37:13;59:8 but the Lord will laugh at them.
Pr 1:26
Soon they will be corpses without honour, 19
objects of horror among the dead for ever. [i]
Ac 1:18 For he will shatter them and fling them headlong and dumbfounded.
He will shake them from their foundations;
they will be utterly laid waste,
a prey to grief,
and their memory will perish.

The godless called to judgement [j]

When the count of their sins has been drawn up, in terror they will come, 20
and their crimes, confronting them, will accuse them.
Mt 13:43 5 Then the upright [a] will stand up boldly 1
2:10–20 to face those who had oppressed him

and had thought so little of his sufferings.
2 And, seeing him, they will be seized with terrible fear,
amazed that he should have been so unexpectedly saved.
3 Stricken with remorse, they will say to one another
with groans [b] and labouring breath,
4 'This is the one whom we used to mock,
making him the butt of our insults, fools that we were!
His life we regarded as madness, 2:15
his ending as without honour. 2:20
5 How has he come to be counted as one of the children of God 2:13
and to have his lot among the holy ones? [c] Col 1:12
6 Clearly we have strayed from the way of truth; Pr 21:16
the light of justice has not shone for us, Ps 119:105
the sun has not risen for us. Ml 3:20
7 We have left no path of lawlessness or ruin unexplored,
we have crossed deserts where there was no track,
but the way of the Lord is one we have never known.
8 What good has arrogance been to us?
What has been the purpose of our riches and boastfulness?
9 All those things have passed like a shadow, 2:5
passed like a fleeting rumour. Jb 9:25–26
10 Like a ship that cuts through heaving waves— Pr 30:19
leaving no trace to show where it has passed,
no wake from its keel in the waves.
11 Or like a bird flying through the air—
leaving no proof of its passing;
it whips the light air with the stroke of its pinions,
tears it apart in its whirring rush,
drives its way onward with sweeping wing,
and afterwards no sign is seen of its passage.
12 Or like an arrow shot at a mark,
the pierced air closing so quickly on itself,
there is no knowing which way the arrow has passed.
13 So with us: scarcely born, we disappear; [d]
of virtue not a trace have we to show,
we have spent ourselves in our own wickedness!' [e]

c. Or 'in a competition of untainted struggles'. The image is borrowed from the Gk athletic games, in which the victor received a crown and an escort of honour; cf. 1 Co 9:24.

d. lit. 'at their trial', that is, at the judgement, cf. 1:9; 3:18, which the children will have to undergo; but 'their', grammatically speaking, can equally well refer to the 'parents'.

e. Long life was to be the lot of the upright on earth, *see* Dt 4:40; 5:16; Jb 5:26; Ps 91:16; Pr 3:2,16; 4:10; Si 1:12,20, the godless being doomed to a sudden or violent death, Jb 15:20–23; 18:5–20; Ps 37; 73:18–20, but such assertions were often belied by the facts, *see* 2 K 23:29; Jb 21:7; Qo 8:12–14. The author is envisaging an extreme case, the death of the upright in youth (*see* v. 16[b]) and identifies long life with the inner maturity that attains the true end of human existence and predisposes the soul for blessed immortality.

f. The expression is inspired by the story of the translation of Enoch, Gn 5:24; Si 44:16; Heb 11:5.

g. Or 'she (the soul) has hurried away'; or 'he has hurriedly withdrawn her'.

h. lit. 'the peoples'; var. 'others'. This word, taken up later by 'the godless' is slightly surprising. The construction of the sentence in further complicated by an anacoluthon.

i. Not having received the honours of burial, this being regarded as a frightful punishment, *see* Is 14:19; Jr 22:19; 36:30; Ezk 29:5.

j. A judgement scene, in which God 'will draw up the count' of sins or when sins will have to 'be accounted for'. This judgement, however, concerns only the godless, since the upright have already been admitted to the presence of God, cf. 5:4–5. The author is less interested in the pronouncing of the sentence than in the state of mind of the sinners, tortured by a guilty conscience, cf. 17:10. Their confession, 5:4–13, is to be contrasted with their earlier words, 2:1–20.

5 a. The term seems to have the same scope as in 2:12seq., *see also* 2:20q, though possibly even more generalised. Some critics, however, claim to detect a relationship with the servant, Is 53, and even with the Teacher of Righteousness in the Qumran texts. The treatment indeed suggests a typical figure, representing all who endure similar ordeals.

b. 'with groans' Lat., Coptic; 'they will groan' Gk.

c. 'children of God' and 'holy ones' can mean the angels: cf. on the one hand Jb 1:6; Ps 29:1; 82:1; 89:6, and on the other Jb 5:1; 15:15; Ps 89:5,7; Si 42:17; Dn 4:14; Zc 14:5. On the strength of 2:18, however, it seems preferable to identify the 'children of God' with the elect who enjoy God's intimacy in heaven and who may equally well be called 'holy ones', *see* Ps 16:3; 34:9; Is 4:3; Dn 7:18,21,22; 8:24.

d. Between these two extremes, nothing of durable value has marked their existence.

e. Most Latin MSS add 'This is what those who have sinned say in hell.'

Ps 1:4 Is 29:5 — For the hope of the godless is like chaff carried on the wind,[f] 14
like fine spray[g] driven by the storm;
Ps 37:20;68:3 — it disperses like smoke before the wind,
goes away like the memory of a one-day guest.

Glorious destiny of the upright and punishment of the godless[h]

But the upright live for ever,[i] 15
Is 62:11 — their recompense is with the Lord,[j]
and the Most High takes care of them.
4:2 Pr 4:9 Is 28:5 1 Co 9:25+ 19:8 Ps 7:10 — So they will receive the glorious crown 16
and the diadem of beauty from the Lord's hand;
for he will shelter them with his right hand
and with his arm he will shield them.

Is 59:16–17+ — For armour[k] he will take his jealous love, 17
16:24;19:6 — he will arm creation to punish his enemies;
Ep 6:15 1 Th 5:8 — he will put on justice as a breastplate, 18
and for helmet wear his forthright judgement;
Lv 17:1a — he will take up invincible holiness for shield, 19
of his pitiless wrath he will forge a sword,[l] 20
16:17 — and the universe will march with him to fight the reckless.[m]
Ps 7:12–13; 18:14 — Bolts truly aimed, the shafts of lightning will leap,[n] 21
and from the clouds, as from a full-drawn bow, fly to their mark;
and the catapult will hurl hailstones[o] charged with fury. 22
The waters of the sea will rage against them,
the rivers engulf them without pity,[p]
Is 30:27–28; — a mighty gale will rise against them 23
and winnow them like a hurricane.
Thus wickedness will lay the whole earth waste
and evil-doing bring down the thrones of the mighty.

II: SOLOMON AND THE QUEST FOR WISDOM

Kings should seek Wisdom

1:1 Ps 2:10 Si 33:19 Pr 8:15–16 — 6 [a]Listen then, kings, and understand;[b] 1
rulers of remotest lands, take warning;
hear this, you who govern great populations, 2
taking pride in your hosts of subject nations!
1 Ch 29:12 Dn 2:21,37 Jn 19:11 Rm 13:1 — For sovereignty is given to you by the Lord 3
and power by the Most High,[c]
who will himself probe your acts and scrutinise your intentions.

If therefore, as servants of his kingdom,[d] you have not ruled justly 4 5
nor observed the law,[e]
nor followed the will of God,
he will fall on you swiftly and terribly. 5 6
On the highly placed a ruthless judgement falls; 7
the lowly are pardoned, out of pity, 6
but the mighty will be mightily tormented.
Jb 34:17–19 Si 35:12seq. — For the Lord of all does not cower before anyone, 7
he does not stand in awe of greatness,
Jb 31:15 Pr 22:2 — since he himself has made small and great
and provides for all alike;
but a searching trial awaits those who wield power. 8 9
So, monarchs, my words are meant for you, 9 10

so that you may learn wisdom and not fall into error;
10 for those who in holiness observe holy things will be adjudged holy,[f] 5:5
and, accepting instruction from them, will find their defence in them.
12 11 Set your heart, therefore, on what I have to say,
listen with a will, and you will be instructed.

Wisdom sought is Wisdom found[g]

13 12 Wisdom is brilliant, she never fades.
By those who love her, she is readily seen, Pr 8:17
by those who seek her, she is readily found. Si 6:27
Mt 7:7–11par.
14 13 She anticipates those who desire her by making herself known first. Jn 14:21
14 Whoever gets up early to seek her will have no trouble Si 6:36;39:5
but will find her sitting at the door.
16 15 Meditating on her is understanding in its perfect form,
and anyone keeping awake for her will soon be free from care.
16 For she herself searches everywhere for those who are worthy of her, Pr 1:20–21; 8:2–3
benevolently appearing to them on their ways, Si 15:2
anticipating their every thought.[h] Is 65:1–2,24
18 17 [i]For Wisdom begins with the sincere desire for instruction,[j] 1 Jn 4:10 Pr 4:7
care for instruction means loving her,
19 18 loving her means keeping her laws,[k]
attention to her laws guarantees incorruptibility,[l] 3:4c
20 19 and incorruptibility brings us near to God;
20 the desire for Wisdom thus leads to sovereignty. 3:7–8;5:16
22 21 If then thrones and sceptres delight you, monarchs of the nations,
honour Wisdom, so that you may reign for ever.[m]

f. The author ends this confession of the damned with further images: the godless sees his hope of happiness (cf. 3:11) frustrated for ever, since he has been attached to transitory things.

g. 'spray' Lat., Syr.; 'hoarfrost' Gk (except a few MSS which read 'spider's web').

h. The author contrasts the life of the upright, sure of their eternal reward, vv. 15–16[ab], under the protection of God, v. 16[cd], with the plagues unleashed for the final punishment of the godless, vv. 17–23, a punishment described in the apocalyptic terms of a great battle, Is 24–26; Ezk 38–39, and cosmic convulsions, Am 8:8–9h. This section is perhaps referring to a specific eschatological event.

i. The true life of intimacy with God. Though begun on earth, this life has no end.

j. Or 'their recompense is in the Lord'; cf. Ps 16:5–6; 73:26.

k. This 'armour', inspired by Is 59:16–17, symbolises the attributes of the God of Saving Justice, who puts his sentence into execution by unleashing the elements.

l. On the divine 'sword' *see* Dt 32:41; Is 66:16; Ezk 21.

m. In the Bible, God often uses nature to execute his judgements. Here the author lays stress on this concept and emphasises it even more when he reviews the events of the Exodus (*see* particularly, ch. 16 and 19). The following description makes use of various ancient themes, transposing them into an eschatological context.

n. The storm is the traditional image of divine intervention, *see* Ex 19:16g. On the 'shafts of lightning', *see* Ps 18:14; Hab 3:11; Zc 9:14.

o. As in the time of the Exodus, Ex 9:23–25, and of Joshua, Jos 10:11, and as in the judgements of God foretold by the prophets, Is 28:17; Ezk 13:13; 38:22; *see also* Rv 8:7; 11:19; 16:21.

p. As the Sea of Reeds swallowed the Egyptians, Ex 14:26seq., and as the Kishon washed away the corpses of Sisera's soldiers, Jg 5:21. The unleashing of the waters is the symbol of great catastrophes, Ps 18:4e.

6 **a.** The Latin begins the chapter with an addition, evidently a title: 'wisdom is better than force and a prudent man than a strong one.' This counts as v. 1 in the Vulg.

b. Unlike 1:1, attention is now concentrated on monarchs and their responsibilities, and the scope is universal.

c. The doctrine of the divine origin of power had already been variously asserted in Scripture, notably in 1 Ch 29:12; Pr 8:15–16; Si 10:4; Dn 2:37. The author tightens its application (*see also* Jn 19:11; Rm 13:1) and extends it to include all rulers whatsoever as 'servants' of God's sovereignty.

d. Or 'of his sovereignty'.

e. First of all, the natural law interpreted by conscience, cf. Rm 2:14, but also doubtless the various legal codes defining it, which gentile kings must observe if they wish to be distinguishable from tyrants.

f. i.e. those who religiously obey the will of God and who will be recognised as 'holy ones' (5:5) at the judgement.

g. Here the word 'wisdom' means, not only a doctrine (v. 9), but divine truth shining through that doctrine and appealing to the human soul, v. 13; cf., however, Jn 6:44; Ph 2:13; 1 Jn 4:19.

h. Or 'by all sorts of inventions'.

i. vv. 17–20 are a free imitation of the Gk style of 'chain-argument', in which the attribute of each proposition becomes the subject of the next, and the conclusion (v. 20) links the initial subject (here 'the desire for Wisdom') with the last but one attribute (here being 'near to God', picked up by 'sovereignty').

j. Or 'her sincere beginning is the desire for instruction'.

k. Love implies obedience, Ex 20:6; Dt 5:10; 11:1; Si 2:15; Jn 14:15; etc. The 'laws' of Wisdom are the great religious and moral obligations contained in the divine revelation; possibly also those unwritten laws dictated by conscience and illuminated by the Wisdom of God.

l. The word is used here in a legal sense. Concentration on observing the laws of Wisdom does not in itself confer incorruptibility, but rather gives rise to a real and incontestable claim to receive blessed incorruptibility or immortality from God, cf. 2:23; 3:4.

m. Many Latin MSS add 'love the light of Wisdom, all you who are leaders of peoples.' This supplementary v. in the Vulg. (v. 23) is either a gloss or a doublet.

Solomon proposes to describe Wisdom

What Wisdom is and how she was born, I shall now explain; 22 24
Jb 28 I shall hide no mysteries from you, [n]
but shall follow her steps from the outset of her origin,
setting out what we know of her in full light,
without departing from the truth.
Si 51:23seq. Blighting envy is not the companion for me, 23
for envy has nothing in common with Wisdom.
In the greatest number of wise men lies the world's salvation, 24 26
Pr 29:4 Si 10:1–3 in a sagacious king the stability of a people.
Learn, therefore, from my words; the gain will be yours. 25

Solomon a man like other men

7 I too am mortal [a] like everyone else, 1
Gn 2:7 Jb 10:10c a descendant of the first man formed from the earth.
Ps 139:13–16 Si 17:1 I was modelled in flesh inside a mother's womb,
where, for ten months, [b] in blood I acquired substance— 2
the result of virile seed and pleasure, sleep's companion.
I too, when I was born, drew in the common air, 3
I fell on the same ground that bears us all,
and crying was the first sound I made, like everyone else.
I was nurtured in swaddling clothes, with every care. 4
No king has known any other beginning of existence; 5
1 K 2:2 Jb 1:21 for there is only one way into life, and one way out of it. 6

Solomon's respect for Wisdom

9 And so I prayed, and understanding was given me; 7
1 K 3:6–9,12; 5:9–14 Si 47:12–17 I entreated, and the spirit of Wisdom came to me.
I esteemed her more than sceptres and thrones; [c] 8
compared with her, I held riches as nothing.
I reckoned no precious stone to be her equal, 9
for compared with her, all gold is a pinch of sand,
and beside her silver ranks as mud.
I loved her more than health or beauty, 10
preferred her to the light,
Is 60:19–20 since her radiance never sleeps.
1 K 3:13;10: 21seq. Si 47:18 Mt 6:33 In her company all good things came to me, 11
and at her hands incalculable wealth.
All these delighted me, since Wisdom brings them, [d] 12
7:21;8:5–6 though I did not then realise that she was their mother. [e]
What I learned diligently, I shall pass on liberally, 13
6:22 I shall not conceal how rich she is.
Lk 12:33 For she is to human beings an inexhaustible treasure, 14
and those who acquire this [f] win God's friendship,
commended to him by the gifts of instruction.

His appeal for divine inspiration

May God grant me to speak as he would wish 15
and conceive thoughts worthy of the gifts I have received,
since he is both guide to Wisdom and director of sages;
Jb 12:10 Ps 31:15 Si 10:5 for we are in his hand, yes, ourselves and our sayings, 16
and all intellectual and all practical knowledge.
He it was who gave me sure knowledge of what exists, 17
to understand the structure of the world and the action of the elements,
the beginning, end and middle of the times, 18

the alternation of the solstices and the succession of the seasons,
19 the cycles of the year[g] and the position of the stars,
20 the natures of animals and the instincts of wild beasts, 1 K 5:13
the powers of spirits and human mental processes,
the varieties of plants and the medical properties of roots.
21 And now I understand everything, hidden or visible,[h]
for Wisdom, the designer of all things, has instructed me. 8:4–6,9:9;14:2 Pr 8:22–31,22e

Eulogy of Wisdom[i]

22 For within her is a spirit intelligent, holy, Jm 3:17
unique, manifold, subtle,
mobile, incisive, unsullied,
lucid, invulnerable, benevolent, shrewd,
23 irresistible, beneficent, friendly to human beings,
steadfast, dependable, unperturbed,
almighty, all-surveying, 1:6–10
penetrating all intelligent, pure
and most subtle spirits.
24 For Wisdom is quicker to move than any motion;
she is so pure, she pervades and permeates all things.
25 She is a breath of the power of God, Si 24:3
pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty; Ex 24:16f
so nothing impure can find its way into her.
26 For she is a reflection of the eternal light,[j] ↗Jn 1:9 ↗Heb 1:3
untarnished mirror of God's active power,
and image of his goodness. ↗Col 1:15

27 Although she is alone, she can do everything;
herself unchanging, she renews the world, Ps 102:27; 104:30
and, generation after generation, passing into holy souls,
she makes them into God's friends[k] and prophets;[l]
28 for God loves only those who dwell with Wisdom.
29 She is indeed more splendid than the sun,
she outshines all the constellations;

n. Allusion to the jealously guarded secrets of mystery religions and esoteric doctrines of the day, in which the revelation was revealed only to initiates.

7 **a.** 'a human being' omitted by two of the principal MSS (Vat. and Sin.).

b. Ten lunar months. On the way in which the embryo was thought to develop, *see* Jb 10:10c.

c. This elaboration rests on 1 K 3:9–10 and on those texts exalting Wisdom as the most precious of precious things, Jb 28:15–19; Pr 3:14–15; 8:10–11,19. To these, the author adds qualities held in esteem by the Greeks (v. 10): health, cf., however, Si 1:18; 30:14–16, beauty, cf. Ps 45:2; Si 26:16–17; 36:22, and daylight, *see* Qo 11:7.

d. Or 'commands them as mistress', by governing their use.

e. 'mother' Gk MSS, Lat.; 'origin' *Text. rec.*

f. 'acquire this' Gk MSS, Syr.; 'use this' *Text. rec.*, Lat. (The underlying image is of presents offered to a highly placed person to attract his friendship. These presents 'are conferred by instruction', *see* 3:11j; 6:17, that is to say, by a true moral and religious education governing every aspect of life.)

g. 'of the year' Gk MSS, Lat.; 'of the years' *Text. rec.*

h. Bringing 1 K 5:9–14 up to date, the author endows Solomon with the kind of knowledge prized in the Hellenistic culture of his own day. In this context, God is represented as the source of all truth, and the human sciences as dependent on his wisdom.

i. Here the author contributes his own original elaboration of earlier personifications of Wisdom, *see* Pr 8:22g. As he has already promised, 6:22, he describes both its nature and its origin, first of all by listing the characteristics of the divine Spirit possessed by Wisdom, which themselves help to explain her nature, vv. 22–24—there are 21 attributes, and the figure 3 × 7 is apparently designed to indicate absolute perfection; then by explaining the relationship between Wisdom and God, vv. 25–26, by a choice of images conveying both origin and intimate participation. Borrowing freely from the vocabulary of Gk philosophy, the author next points out the various characteristics of Wisdom and concludes by identifying it with divine providence, 8:1. This eulogy of Wisdom as partaking in intimacy with God, 8:3, as possessing his power, 7:23,25,27, and as collaborating in his creative acts, 7:12,22; 8:4,6, anticipates an entire theology of the Spirit to which it is assimilated, 9:17, and whose traditional functions it assumes, *see* Is 11:2c, and above all the Christology, notably of John but also of the Pauline corpus (*see* Ep and Col) and of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

j. The 'eternal light' is God. Some earlier texts already hinted at the concept of a transcendent light emanating from God, Hab 3:4, illuminating the faithful or his nation, Ps 18:28–29; Is 2:5, being the radiance of his glory, Is 60:1,19–20; Ba 5:9, or residing with him, Dn 2:22g. But only 1 Jn 1:5 will later say explicitly that 'God is light'.

k. Like Abraham, 2 Ch 20:7; Is 41:8; Jm 2:23, and Moses, Ex 33:11.

l. Not only the great prophets and inspired scribes (Si 24:33), but all who, by their holy life and intimacy with God, penetrate into the knowledge of his will and his mysteries, and so become his authorised 'interpreters' to enlighten their fellows.

compared with light, she takes first place,
for light must yield to night, 30
↗Jn 1:5;16:33 but against Wisdom evil cannot prevail.
8 Strongly she reaches from one end of the world to the other 1
and she governs the whole world for its good.

Solomon's love for Wisdom

6:12–16 Wisdom I loved and searched for from my youth; 2
Si 15:2 I resolved to have her as my bride,
I fell in love with her beauty.
She enhances her noble birth by sharing God's life, [a] 3
for the Master of All has always loved her.
Indeed, she shares the secrets of God's knowledge, 4
Pr 8:27,30 and she chooses what he will do.
If in this life wealth is a desirable possession, 5
7:21h what is more wealthy than Wisdom whose work is everywhere?
Or if it be the intellect that is at work, 6
who, more than she, designs whatever exists?
Or if it be uprightness you love, 7
why, virtues are the fruit of her labours, [b]
since it is she who teaches temperance and prudence,
justice and fortitude;
nothing in life is more useful for human beings.
Or if you are eager for wide experience, 8
she knows the past, she forecasts the future;
she knows how to turn maxims, and solve riddles; [c]
she has foreknowledge of signs and wonders,
and of the unfolding of the ages and the times. [d]

Wisdom indispensable to rulers

I therefore determined to take her to share my life, 9
knowing that she would be my counsellor in prosperity
and comfort me in cares and sorrow.
'Thanks to her, I shall be admired by the masses 10
1 K 3:7seq. and honoured, though young, by the elders.
1 K 3:16–18 I shall be reckoned shrewd as a judge, 11
1 K 5:14,21; 10:4–9 and the great will be amazed at me.
They will wait on my silences, 12
and pay attention when I speak;
if I speak at some length, they will lay their hand on their lips. [e]
By means of her, immortality will be mine, 13
Ps 112:6 Si 39:9 I shall leave an everlasting memory to my successors.
1 K 5:1 I shall govern peoples, and nations will be subject to me; 14
at the sound of my name fearsome despots will be afraid; 15
I shall show myself kind to the people and valiant in battle.

'When I go home I shall take my ease with her, 16
for nothing is bitter in her company,
Qo 1:18 when life is shared with her there is no pain,
Pr 3:17–18 nothing but pleasure and joy.'

Solomon prepares to ask for Wisdom

Having meditated on all this, 17
and having come to the conclusion
that immortality resides in kinship with Wisdom, [f]
noble contentment in her friendship, 18

inexhaustible riches in her activities,
understanding in cultivating her society,
and renown in conversing with her,
I went all ways, seeking how to get her.
19 I was a boy of happy disposition,
I had received a good soul as my lot,
20 or rather, being good, I had entered an undefiled body; [g]
21 but, realising that I could never possess Wisdom — Si 1:1
unless God gave her to me,
—a sign of intelligence in itself, to know in whose gift she lay—
I prayed to the Lord and entreated him,
and with all my heart I said:

Solomon's prayer for Wisdom [a] — 1 K 3:6–9

1 9 'God of our ancestors, Lord of mercy, [b]
who by your word have made the universe, — Si 42:15i
2 and in your wisdom have fitted human beings
to rule the creatures that you have made, — Gn 1:28+
3 to govern the world in holiness and saving justice
and in honesty of soul to dispense fair judgement,
4 grant me Wisdom, consort of your throne, — Pr 8:27,30 Si 1:1
and do not reject me from the number of your children.
5 For I am your servant, son of your serving maid, — Ps 86:16; 116:16
a feeble man, with little time to live,
with small understanding of justice and the laws.
6 Indeed, were anyone perfect among the sons of men,
if he lacked the Wisdom that comes from you,
he would still count for nothing.

7 'You have chosen me [c] to be king over your people,
to be judge of your sons and daughters.
8 You have bidden me build a temple on your holy mountain, — 2 S 7:13 1 K 5:19 Si 47:13
and an altar in the city where you have pitched your tent,
a copy of the holy Tent [d] which you prepared at the beginning.
9 With you is Wisdom, she who knows your works, — 8:4;9:4

8 **a.** The youthful Solomon envisages Wisdom as an ideal wife, possessing not only beauty (v. 2), but a divine nobility, then (vv. 4–8) as the source of knowledge, wealth, efficiency, uprightness and experience.

b. The author perhaps takes up an allegorical interpretation of Pr 31:10–31, applied to Wisdom (*see* Pr 31:30i). He then lists the four great virtues of the Greek philosophers, later to become the 'cardinal virtues' of Christian theology.

c. Or 'to interpret'. 'Maxims' and 'riddles' mean moral reflections expressed in deliberately obscure terms, cf. Jg 14:12; Pr 1:6; Si 39:2–3; Ezk 17:2. Solomon excelled at this, 1 K 5:12; 10:1–3; Qo 12:9; Si 47:15–17. The associated 'signs' and 'wonders' refer above all to the miracles of the Exodus, *see* 10:16, although in Gk usage they would be more likely to mean abnormal, natural phenomena, not easily predictable.

d. Or 'the results, the outcomes'. The text, therefore, is dealing either with the unfolding of history, or with times favourable to human actions and undertakings, cf. Qo 3:1–8. This description of the scope of Wisdom completes the picture in 7:17–21.

e. Gesture indicating silence, Pr 30:32; Si 5:12, caused either by astonishment or confusion, Jb 21:5; 40:4; Mi 7:16, or by admiration, Jb 29:9.

f. Kinship or relationship conferred by grace (cf. v. 21). The resulting immortality is first of all one of memory (*see* v. 13), but also certainly personal immortality (*see* 4:1), since Wisdom is to communicate what she herself possesses by nature.

g. This text does not assert the pre-existence of the soul as it might seem to do if isolated from its context; it amends the phrasing of v. 19, which seemed to give pre-eminence to the body, and emphasises the superiority of the soul.

9 **a.** This prayer is modelled on the one in 1 K 3:6–9 and 2 Ch 1:8–10. In it Solomon evokes aspects of his own historical life, vv. 5[c],7–8,12, but the outlook is broadened to embrace the whole human condition in which Solomon participates, vv. 1–3,5[b],6,13–17. The prayer falls into three sections (vv. 1–6; 7–12; 13–18), each echoing the others and each mentioning the sending of Wisdom (4,10,17).

b. 'of mercy' MSS, versions; 'of your mercy' *Text. rec.* • The 'ancestors' are all the ancestors of Israel, especially the Patriarchs, Gn 32:10; 2 Ch 20:6, and not omitting David, 1 K 3:6; 1 Ch 28:9; 2 Ch 1:9.

c. In preference to Adonijah and his other brothers, 1 K 1; 1 Ch 28:5–6.

d. The word 'copy' refers at once to the Temple and to the altar (that is, the altar of burnt offering, visible to everyone, 1 K 8:22,54,62–64). The 'holy Tent', prepared by God himself, is variously to be understood as the heavenly temple of God, Ps 18:7; 96:6; Heb 8:2; 9:11; Rv 3:12. (for a heavenly altar, *see* Rv 6:9; 8:3–4; 14:18), or as the heavenly model of the Temple in Jerusalem, Ex 15:17; 1 Ch 28:19, or as the sanctuary of the Exodus, Si 24:10, designed according to specifications dictated by God, Ex 25:9,40; Ac 7:44; Heb 8:5.

7:21 Pr 8:22–31,22e
she who was present when you made the world;
she understands what is pleasing in your eyes
and what agrees with your commandments.
Despatch her from the holy heavens, 10
send her forth from your throne of glory
to help me and to toil with me
and teach me what is pleasing to you;
7:23 since she knows and understands everything 11
she will guide me prudently in my actions
Ex 24:16f and will protect me with her glory. [e]
Then all I do will be acceptable. 12
I shall govern your people justly
and be worthy of my father's throne.

Rm 11:34 1 Co 2:16 'What human being indeed can know the intentions of God? 13
And who can comprehend the will of the Lord?
For the reasoning of mortals is inadequate, 14
our attitudes of mind unstable;
Jb 4:19 Is 38:12 for a perishable body presses down the soul, 15
Rm 7:14–25 and notes and this tent of clay weighs down the mind with its many cares. [f]
It is hard enough for us to work out what is on earth, 16
Dt 30:11a laborious to know what lies within our reach;
Is 55:9 Jn 3:12 who, then, can discover what is in the heavens?
Mt 11:27 And who could ever have known your will, had you not given Wisdom 17
and sent your holy Spirit from above?
Thus have the paths of those on earth been straightened 18
Ba 4:4 and people have been taught what pleases you,
and have been saved, by Wisdom.' [g]

III: WISDOM AT WORK IN HISTORY

From Adam to Moses

10 It was Wisdom who protected the first man to be fashioned, 1
the father of the world, who had been created all alone, [a]
she it was who rescued him from his fall [b]
9:2 Gn 1:26,28 and gave him the strength to subjugate all things. 2
But when in his wrath a wicked man [c] deserted her, 3
Gn 4:8–13 he perished in his fratricidal fury.

Gn 7–8 1 P 3:20–21 When because of him the earth was drowned, 4
it was Wisdom again who saved it,
14:6–7 Gn 6:9 piloting the upright man [d] on valueless timber.
Again, when, concurring in wickedness, 5
Gn 11:1–9 the nations had been thrown into confusion,
Gn 12:1–3 she singled out the upright man, [e] preserved him blameless before God
Gn 22:1–19 and fortified him against pity for his child.
Gn 19 2 P 2:6–8 She it was who, while the godless perished, saved the upright man [f] 6
as he fled from the fire raining down on the Five Cities,
in witness against whose evil ways 7
a desolate land still smokes,
Dt 32:32 where plants bear fruit that never ripens
and where, monument to an unbelieving soul,
Gn 19:26 there stands a pillar of salt.
For, by ignoring the path of Wisdom, 8
not only did they suffer the loss of not knowing the good,

but they left the world a memorial to their folly,
so that their offences could not pass unnoticed. Gn 19:1a

9 But Wisdom delivered her servants from their ordeals.
10 The upright man,[g] fleeing from the anger of his brother, Gn 27:43
was led by her along straight paths.
She showed him the kingdom of God Gn 28:10–22
and taught him the knowledge of holy things.[h]
She brought him success in his labours Gn 29:1;31:16
and gave him full return for all his efforts;
11 she stood by him against grasping and oppressive men
and she made him rich.
12 She preserved him from his enemies Gn 31:23–29; 32–33
and saved him from the traps they set for him.
In an arduous struggle she awarded him the prize, Gn 32:25–31 Ho 12:4–5
to teach him that piety is stronger than all.[i] 1 Tm 4:8

13 She did not forsake the upright man when he was sold,[j] Gn 37–39
but snatched him away from sin;
14 she accompanied him down into the pit,
nor did she abandon him in his chains Ps 105:17–22
until she had brought him the sceptre of a kingdom Gn 41:40–44
and authority over his despotic masters,
thus exposing as liars those who had traduced him,
and giving him honour everlasting.

The Exodus

15 It was Wisdom who delivered a holy people,[k] 18:1 Ex 19:6+
a blameless race, from a nation of oppressors.
16 She entered the soul of a servant of the Lord,
and withstood fearsome kings[l] with wonders and signs. Ex 7–12; Ps 135:9–10
17 To the holy people she gave the wages of their labours;
she guided them by a marvellous road,
herself their shelter by day—[m]
and their starlight through the night. Ex 13:21–22,22h

e. By her power, cf. Rm 6:4. Or 'she will guard me in her glory' while guiding me by her light, cf. Is 60:1–3; Ba 5:7,9, or while enveloping me like a protective cloud, cf. Si 14:27.

f. The expressions used in this v. are reminiscent of the Greek philosophic antithesis between the body and the soul or spirit, *see* Rm 7:25m, although the author himself does not in fact subscribe to this notion. In the OT, the image of the 'tent' evokes the precariousness of human existence, Jb 4:21; Is 33:20; 38:12; 'of clay', lit. 'of earth', may be a reference to Gn 2:7; Jb 4:19. *See* in the NT 2 Co 4:7; 5:1–4; 2 P 1:13–14, and also the antithesis in Rm 7:14–15; Ga 5:17.

g. In temporal and spiritual dangers. The saving activity of Wisdom is illustrated in the passage following, which introduces the third section of the book. Many Lat. MSS add here 'all those, Lord, who have pleased you since the beginning'.

10 a. Adam, alone in the world, as God is alone in heaven.

b. Some Lat. MSS read 'and she drew him out of the slime of the earth, and snatched him from his fault.' The reading seems to be an explanatory gloss on 'the first to be fashioned'. The theme of the repentance and rehabilitation of Adam (a Jewish notion often adopted by the Fathers of the Church) is related to the compassionate influence of Wisdom, allowing Adam, after his sin, to retain his lordship over the world and giving him the strength to exercise it.

c. Cain, *see* Gn 4:8–13. By the murder of Abel, either he condemned himself to a wretched existence (and tragic end, according to Jewish legend) or he was responsible for the destruction of his posterity by the flood. v. 4, or he gave himself up voluntarily to death, cf. 1:11[d]–12,16.

d. Noah, *see* Gn 6:9.

e. Abraham, *see* Gn 22.

f. Lot, *see* Gn 19.

g. Jacob, *see* Gn 27:41–45; 28:5–6.

h. Or 'of the holy ones', that is, the angels, Gn 28:12. The 'holy things' may mean either revelations concerning the court of heaven, or the promises made to Jacob, Gn 28:13–15.

i. Jacob, in his 'struggle with God', would seem to have won, not by physical strength, but by force of piety. This alone can constrain God and win the assurance of his blessing. The incident is thus here interpreted in the sense of spiritual experience.

j. Joseph, *see* Gn 37; 39–41.

k. The people of the Exodus are 'holy' and 'blameless' because of their vocation, Ex 19:6; Lv 19:2, and the religious values that they represent. The author is, however, idealising the past and will continue to do so throughout the third part of the book. He has a threefold aim: to illustrate historically the different treatments meted out to the upright and the ungodly; to exalt the religious and moral superiority of Judaism; and finally to show that the past prefigures the apocalyptic future.

l. Rhetorical exaggeration: the reference is to Pharaoh.

m. The author attributes to Wisdom what Ex says of God present in the mysterious cloud.

Ex 14:21–29 She brought them across the Red Sea, 18
leading them through an immensity of water,
whereas she drowned their enemies, 19
then spat them out from the depths of the abyss.
So the upright despoiled the godless; [n] 20
Lord, they extolled your holy name,
Ex 15 and with one accord praised your protecting hand;
for Wisdom opened the mouths of the dumb 21
Ps 8:2 Mt 21:16 and made eloquent the tongues of babes. [o]
Dt 18:15,18; 34:10 Ho 12:14 **11** She made their actions successful, by means of a holy prophet. [a] 1
They journeyed through an unpeopled desert 2
and pitched their tents in inaccessible places.
They stood firm against their enemies, fought off their foes. [b] 3

First antithesis: [c] miracle of the water

On you they called when they were thirsty, 4
Ex 17:1–7 Nb 20:2–13 and from the rocky cliff water was given them,
from hard stone a remedy for their thirst.
Thus, what had served to punish their enemies 5 6
became a benefit for them in their difficulties.
Whereas their enemies had only the ever-flowing source 6
Ex 7:17–21 of a river fouled with mingled blood and mud,
Ex 1:15–16 to punish them for their decree of infanticide, [d] 7
Ex 17:3–6 you gave your people, against all hope, water in abundance,
once you had shown by the thirst that they were experiencing 8 9
how severely you were punishing their enemies.
Dt 8:2–5 From their own ordeals, [e] which were only loving correction, 9
they realised how an angry sentence was tormenting the godless;
12:22 Dt 8:5+ for you had tested your own as a father admonishes, 10
but the others you had punished as a pitiless king condemns,
and, whether far or near, they were equally afflicted. 11 12
For a double sorrow seized on them, 12 13
and a groaning at the memory of the past; [f]
when they learned that the punishments they were receiving 13 14
were beneficial to the others, [g] they realised it was the Lord,' [h]
Ex 1:22;2:3 while for the man whom long before they had exposed 14
and later mockingly rebuffed, [i]
they felt only admiration when all was done,
having suffered a thirst so different from that of the upright.

God's forbearance with Egypt

12:24–25; Rm 1:21 For their foolish and wicked notions which led them astray 15
into worshipping mindless reptiles and contemptible beetles, [j]
you sent a horde of mindless animals [k] to punish them
and to teach them that the agent of sin is the agent of punishment. [l] 16 17
And indeed your all-powerful hand which created 17 18
the world from formless matter, [m] did not lack means
to unleash a horde of bears or savage lions on them
or unknown beasts, newly created, full of rage, 18 19
Rv 9:17 breathing out fire,
or puffing out stinking smoke, [n]
Jb 41:10–13 or flashing fearful sparks from their eyes,
beasts able not only to destroy them, being so savage, 19 20
but even to strike them dead by their terrifying appearance.
Jb 4:9 Is 11:4 However, without these, one breath could have blown them over, 20
pursued by Justice,

whirled away by the breath of your power.
You, however, ordered all things by measure, number and weight. Jb 28:25 Si 1:9 Is 40:12

This forbearance explained

22 21 For your great power is always at your service,
and who can withstand the might of your arm?
22 The whole world, for you, can no more than tip a balance,[o] Is 40:15
like a drop of morning dew falling on the ground. Ho 6:4;13:3
23 Yet you are merciful to all,[p] because you are almighty, Si 18:12
you overlook people's sins, so that they can repent. 12:2,10 Rm 2:4;3:25
24 Yes, you love everything that exists, 1:13–14; 2:23–24
and nothing that you have made disgusts you, Gn 1:31+
since, if you had hated something, you would not have made it. Ps 145:9
26 25 And how could a thing subsist, had you not willed it?
Or how be preserved, if not called forth by you?
26 No, you spare all, since all is yours, Lord, lover of life! Ezk 18:23+; 33:11
1 12 For your imperishable spirit is in everything![q] Gn 2:7e
2 And thus, gradually, you correct those who offend;
you admonish and remind them of how they have sinned, Am 4:6e Lk 15:7
so that they may abstain from evil and trust in you, Lord.

God's forbearance with Canaan

3 The ancient inhabitants of your holy land[b]
4 you hated for their loathsome practices, Dt 12:31; 18:10seq.
their acts of sorcery, and unholy rites.
5 Those ruthless murderers of children, Lv 18:21h
those eaters of entrails at feasts of human flesh and of blood,
those initiates of secret brotherhoods,[c]

n. According to Jewish tradition, the Israelites despoiled the dead Egyptians of their weapons.

o. Previously, God had loosened the tongue of Moses, so that he could reason with Pharaoh, Ex 4:10; 6:12,30. Now he intervenes so that all the Israelites, without exception, can praise him. The author is following a Jewish tradition, later to be elaborated by the rabbis.

11 **a.** Moses, Nb 12:7d; Dt 18:15.

b. The long march through the desert is evoked in a few phrases to prepare the way for a new development. Wisdom is not mentioned any more, except in 14:2,5, and the author now addresses God in a meditation on the events of the Exodus. Throughout, though with long digressions (12:2–22; 13:1–15:13), he will be contrasting the treatment meted out to the Israelites, regarded as a nation of upright people, *see* 10:15, with that received by the Egyptians, symbolising irreligious obstinacy. The liberties taken with earlier biblical sources make this part of the book similar to midrash or rabbinical commentary on Scripture.

c. Starting with the miracle of the water in the desert, the author is about to elaborate a complex comparison, the basis of which is stated in v. 5. At the same time, he intends to justify the punishments endured by means of a sort of 'divine retaliation' propounded in v. 16. Other antitheses follow, *see* 16:1,5,15; 17:1; 18:5; 19:1, but opinions are divided on exactly how many there are and on when and where they begin and end.

d. According to Ex 7:14–25 Yahweh turned the waters of the Nile into blood to constrain Pharaoh to let the Israelites go. The author, however, represents the miracle as a punishment for the decree of Ex 1:15seq.

e. Thirst, and perhaps the other sufferings endured by the Israelites in the desert, were intended to make them understand how the Egyptians were punished.

f. 'the memory of the past' corr. following some MSS; 'of past memories' *Text. rec.*

g. Water, withheld from the Egyptians, was miraculously supplied to the Israelites, 11:4.

h. Many Lat. MSS add 'full of admiration at the outcome of the events', an addition derived from v. 4.

i. Moses, exposed on the waters, Ex 1:22; 2:3, rebuffed by Pharaoh, Ex 5:2–5; 7:13,22.

j. The cult of animals: 'reptiles' (crocodile, snake, lizard, frog), 'contemptible beetles' (the scarab) enjoyed great esteem in Ptolemaic Egypt.

k. Frogs, Ex 8:1–2, mosquitoes, 8:13–14, horseflies, 8:20, locusts, 10:12–15.

l. See 12:23; 16:1; 18:4 and Gn 9:6; Jg 1:6–7; 1 S 15:23; 2 M 4:26; 13:8; Pr 5:22.

m. Philosophic expression inspired partly by Plato (*Timaeus* 51A) and already current in the author's times to designate the undifferentiated state of matter, thought to be eternal. The author has no reason to exempt matter from the creative activity of God and is presumably thinking of how the world was organised from chaos, Gn 1.

n. 'stinking smoke', lit. 'a stench of smoke'; 'stench' MSS; versions; 'growling' *Text. rec.*

o. Or 'that does not even tip the scales'.

p. The thought in vv. 23seq. was not new in Israel, but never before had the universality of God's compassion for sinners (*see* Jon 3–4), and the decisive role of love in the creation and preservation of beings been expressed with such force or in dialectical form.

12 **a.** That is to say, the breath of life infused by God into creatures, Gn 2:7; 6:3; Jb 27:3; 34:14–15; Ps 104:29–30. The author is not alluding to the spirit of Stoic philosophy or to the world-soul. The Vulg. and many other Latin MSS translate (wrongly): 'how good and sweet, Lord, your spirit in all beings'.

b. A list is given in Dt 7:1, but the author has principally the Canaanites in mind.

c. 'eaters of entrails' Lat.; '(banquet) at which entrails are eaten' *Text. rec.* 'initiates of secret brotherhoods' several MSS; in the *Text. rec.* the expression is corrupt and meaningless. Evidence of cannibalism has not been found in Canaan, though practised by other peoples in antiquity. The author is borrowing features from the hellenistic mystery religions and alluding to the ill-reputed rites of some of them.

those murderous parents of defenceless beings, 6
Nb 33:51–56 Dt 20:16–18 you determined to destroy at our ancestors' hands,
Dt 11:12 so that this land, dearer to you than any other, 7
might receive a worthy colony of God's children.

6:7;11:23p Ps 78:39; 103:14 •Ex 23:28+ Even so, since these were human, you treated them leniently,[d] 8
sending hornets as forerunners of your army,
to exterminate them little by little.[e]
Not that you were unable to hand the godless over to the upright 9
in pitched battle
11:17–19 or destroy them at once by savage beasts or one harsh word;
12:2 but, by carrying out your sentences gradually, 10
you gave them a chance to repent,
although you knew that they were inherently evil,
innately wicked,
and fixed in their cast of mind;[f] 11
3:12,19 Gn 9:25 for they were a race accursed from the beginning.

This forbearance explained

Nor was it from awe of anyone that you let their sins go unpunished.
For who is there to ask, 'What have you done?' 12
Jb 9:12 Rm 9:19–23 Or who is there to disagree with your sentence?
Jb 9:19 Who to arraign you for destroying nations which you have created?
Who to confront you by championing the wicked?
Dt 32:39 Jb 34:13d For there is no god, other than you, who cares for every one, 13
to whom you have to prove that your sentences have been just.
No more could any king or despot challenge you 14
over those whom you have punished.
Gn 18:25 For, being upright yourself, you rule the universe uprightly, 15
and hold it as incompatible with your power
to condemn anyone who has not deserved to be punished.[g]
For your strength is the basis of your saving justice,[h] 16
and your sovereignty over all makes you lenient to all.
You show your strength 17
when people will not believe in your absolute power,
and you confound any insolence in those who do know it.
But you, controlling your strength, are mild in judgement, 18
and govern us with great lenience,[i]
Ps 115:3;135:6 for you have only to will, and your power is there.

God's lessons for Israel

By acting thus, you have taught your people 19
that the upright must be kindly to his fellows,[j]
and you have given your children the good hope
11:23 that after sins you will grant repentance.
Rm 9:22–23 For, if with such care and indulgence[k] you have punished 20
your children's enemies, though doomed to death,
and have given them time and place to be rid of their wickedness,[l]
with what exact attention have you not judged your children, 21
Gn 12:7+ to whose ancestors, by oaths and covenants,
you made such generous promises?
11:10 Thus, you instruct us, when you punish our enemies in moderation,[m] 22
Mt 5:7;7:2 that we should reflect on your kindness when we judge,
and, when we are judged, we should look for mercy.

Progressive punishment of the Egyptians

23 And this is why people leading foolish and wicked lives
were tortured by you with their own abominations; [a] 11:16
24 for they had strayed too far on the paths of error
by taking the vilest and most despicable of animals [o] for gods, 11:15 Rm 1:23
being deluded like silly little children.
25 So, as to children with no sense,
you gave them a sentence making fools of them.
26 Those, however, who would not take warning from a mocking reproof
were soon to endure a sentence worthy of God.
27 The creatures that made them suffer and against which they protested,
those very creatures that they had taken for gods 11:15
and by which they were punished they saw in their true light;
and he whom hitherto they had refused to know,
they realised was true God.
And this is why the final condemnation fell on them. [p]

Indictment of idolatry: the deification of nature [a]

1 **13** Yes, naturally stupid are all who are unaware of God,
and who, from good things seen,
have not been able to discover Him-who-is, Ex 3:13–14, 14g
or, by studying the works, have not recognised the Artificer. [b] Si 17:8 Ac 14:17
2 Fire, however, or wind, or the swift air, Rm 1:19–20
the sphere of the stars, impetuous water, heaven's lamps,
are what they have held to be the gods who govern the world. Dt 4:19;17:3 Jb 31:26–28
3 If, charmed by their beauty, they have taken these for gods,
let them know how much the Master of these excels them,
since it was the very source of beauty that created them. [c]
4 And if they have been impressed by their power and energy,

d. The emphasis here is not so much on human fragility, Gn 8:21; Ps 78:39; 103:14–15, as on human dignity, Gn 1:26–27; Ps 8:5, which authorises a privileged relationship with divine Wisdom, Pr 8:31. This dignity was also recognised by the Stoics, but with particular insistence on the notion of kindliness.

e. The author changes the meaning given to the episode of the 'horseflies', Ex 23:28; Dt 7:20, by ancient texts, in the attempt to explain the delays attending the extermination of the Canaanites. Instead of thinking exclusively about Israel, God was also exercising his mercy on the sinful Canaanites.

f. Not because of any positive predestination to evil, but because of their refusal to repent. God knew that, like Pharaoh, they would be obstinate, hence the reference to the curse on Canaan, Gn 9:25, here transposed to the moral plane, cf. Ws 3:12,19; 4:3–6.

g. Owing to an early corruption of the verb 'to condemn' and an unlucky tear, almost all the Lat. MSS read 'him too who ought not to be punished, you condemn'.

h. Since God possesses absolute power and has no reason for abusing it (cf. by way of contrast 2:11), he dispenses saving justice with complete impartiality and freedom; by the same token, his sovereign mastery over all beings allows and invites him to be lenient to all.

i. The author either identifies himself with the human race at large, or is beginning to develop (*see* vv. 21–22) the notion of special favour reserved for the Israelites.

j. Following Wisdom's example, 1:6; 7:23, an attitude corresponding to the universalism characteristic of wisdom-writings and to be given new form and content in the NT, *see* Mt 5:43–48.

k. 'with indulgence' some of the MSS; 'with prayer' *Text. rec.*, Syr.; 'you have saved' some MSS, Lat., Arm.; others omit.

l. *See* 12:2. The notion that God tries to tear his people away from sin by means of ordeals and punishments is common in the OT, *see* Am 4:6f. The author deliberately extends it to all sinners, cf. already Jb 33:14–22; 34:29–32; Jon 3–4.

m. 'in moderation' *en metrioteti* conj.; 'with ten thousand (blows)' *en murioteti Text. rec.*

n. Biblical expression for false gods and idols, *see* Dt 7:26; 27:15; etc. The author has the cult of animals in mind, as he resumes the theme of 11:15–16.

o. 'the vilest and most despicable of animals', lit. 'those which even among animals are looked down on among the vile'; 'among the vile' MSS; 'among the animals of enemies' or 'among the hostile' *Text. rec.*

p. Pharaoh eventually acknowledged the action of God, Ex 12:31–32, having long refused to do so, Ex 7–11, but nonetheless continued to defy him.

13 a. Having reverted to animal cults, 12:23–27, the author now presents a general indictment of idolatry in its three major manifestations: divinisation of natural forces and heavenly bodies, 13:1–9; worship of man-made idols, 13:10–15:17; worship of animals, 15:18–19. He apparently adopts a schematic arrangement already current, since similar classifications are found elsewhere in the writings of hellenised Judaism, particularly in Philo. His thought, however, is original, as is his treatment of navigation, 14:1–7, the origins of idolatry, 14:12–21, its evil consequences, 14:22–31, and the privileged state of the Jewish people, 15:1–5.

b. The spectacle and study of nature ought to raise the human spirit to a transcendent God, universal Creator.

c. A Gk touch, cf. vv. 5,7; Si 43:9–12. The OT had often praised the majesty and power of God as manifested in the creation, Jb 36:22–26; Ps 19:1–2; Is 40:12–14 but never the beauty of the world seen as a work of art reflecting its author.

let them deduce from these how much mightier
is he that has formed them,
since through the grandeur and beauty of the creatures 5
13:1a we may, by analogy, contemplate their Author.

Small [d] blame, however, attaches to them, 6
for perhaps they go astray
Ac 17:27 only in their search for God and their eagerness to find him;
familiar with his works, they investigate them 7
and fall victim to appearances, seeing so much beauty.
But even so, they have no excuse: 8
if they are capable of acquiring enough knowledge 9
to be able to investigate the world,
how have they been so slow to find its Master?

The cults of idols [e]

But wretched are they, with their hopes set on dead things, 10
Dt 4:28 2 K 19:18 Is 40:18–20 who have given the title of gods to human artefacts,
gold or silver, skilfully worked,
figures of animals,
or useless stone, carved by some hand long ago.

Is 40:20+ Jr 10:3–5 Take a woodcutter. He fells a suitable tree, 11
neatly strips off the bark all over
and then with admirable skill
15:7–13 works the wood into an object useful in daily life.
The bits left over from his work 12
he uses for cooking his food, then eats his fill.
There is still a good-for-nothing bit left over, 13
a gnarled and knotted billet:
he takes it and whittles it with the concentration of his leisure hours,
he shapes it with the skill of experience,
he gives it a human shape
or perhaps he makes it into some vile animal, 14
smears it with ochre, paints its surface red,
coats over all its blemishes.
He next makes a worthy home for it, 15
Is 46:7 lets it into the wall, fixes it with an iron clamp.
Thus he makes sure that it will not fall down— 16
being well aware that it cannot help itself,
Ba 6:25–27 since it is only an image, and needs to be helped. [f]
And yet, if he wishes to pray for his goods, 17
for his marriage, for his children,
Is 44:17 Jr 2:27 he does not blush to harangue this lifeless thing—
for health, he invokes what is weak,
for life, he pleads with what is dead, 18
for help, he goes begging to total inexperience,
Ps 115:4–7 for a journey, what cannot even use its feet,
for profit, an undertaking, and success in pursuing his craft, 19
he asks skill from something whose hands have no skill whatever.

14 Or someone else, taking ship to cross the wild waves, 1
loudly invokes a piece of wood [a] frailer than the vessel that bears him.
Agreed, the ship is the product of a craving for gain, 2
its building embodies the wisdom [b] of the shipwright;
but your providence, [c] Father, is what steers it, 3
Ps 77:19 Is 43:16 you having opened a pathway even through the sea,

and a safe way over the waves,[d]
4 showing that you can save, whatever happens,
so that, even without experience, someone may put to sea.
5 It is not your will that the works of your Wisdom should be sterile,
so people entrust their lives to the smallest piece of wood,
cross the waves on a raft, yet are kept safe and sound. Ps 107:29–30
6 Why, in the beginning, when the proud giants were perishing,[e] Gn 6:1–5.5a
the hope of the world took refuge on a raft[f] Si 16:7
and, steered by your hand, preserved the seed of a new generation Ba 3:26–28
for the ages to come.

7 For blessed is the wood which serves the cause of uprightness[g] Ga 3:13–14
8 but accursed the man-made idol,[h] yes, it and its maker, Dt 27:15
he for having made it, and it because, though perishable,
it has been called god.
9 For God holds the godless and his godlessness in equal hatred;
10 both work and workman will alike be punished.
11 Hence even the idols of the nations will have a visitation Ex 12:12
Is 2:18.20
since, in God's creation, they have become an abomination, Jr 10:11.15
Zc 13:2
a scandal for human souls,
a snare for the feet of the foolish. Ex 22:33

Origin of the cult of idols

12 The idea of making idols was the origin of fornication, Ex 34:16
Dt 31:16
their discovery corrupted life.[i]
13 They did not exist at the beginning, they will not exist for ever;
14 human vanity brought them[j] into the world,
and a quick end is therefore reserved for them. 14:11
15 A father afflicted by untimely mourning[k]
has an image made of his child so soon carried off,
and now pays divine honours to what yesterday was only a corpse,
handing on mysteries and ceremonies to his people;
16 time passes, the custom hardens and is observed as law.
17 Rulers were the ones who ordered that statues should be worshipped:
people who could not honour them in person,
because they lived too far away,
would have a portrait made of their distant countenance,
to have an image that they could see of the king whom they honoured;
meaning, by such zeal, to flatter the absent as if he were present.
18 Even people who did not know him
were stimulated into spreading his cult by the artist's enthusiasm;
19 for the latter, doubtless wishing to please his ruler,

d. Or 'least', as compared with the idolaters of v. 10.

e. Polemics against idols, current in Gk philosophy, were a commonplace in biblical writings, cf. especially Is 44:9–20; Jr 10:1–16; Ba 6.

f. Description calculated to make the idol appear ridiculous: the wood is of no special value, the worker an uncultured woodcutter, and the result will not stand up.

14 a. The effigy of a tutelary god at the prow or on the poop, cf. Ac 28:11.

b. The technical skill of the artisan, fruit of Wisdom, 8:6; cf. Ex 31:3; 35:31.

c. The term, appearing for the first time here in LXX, is borrowed from Greek philosophy and literature; the idea, however, is biblical, Jb 10:12; Ps 145:8seq. 147:9.

d. Alluding to two texts on the crossing of the Sea of Reeds Ps 77:19; Is 43:16, the author illustrates God's sovereignty over the sea and his complete protective power over seafarers.

e. The giants play an important part in Jewish tradition and legend, *see* Gn 6:4; Si 16:7; Ba 3:26 and in Gk legends.

f. Noah's ark, *see* 10:4.

g. By serving the accomplishment of God's intention.

h. lit. 'the thing made by hand', i.e. human hand, but the expression often means idols in LXX.

i. 'Fornication' is to be understood here as religious infidelity, *see* Ho 1:2b, but the intellectual error leads on to corruption of morals, *see* Rm 1:24–32; Ep 4:17–19.

j. Several good MSS have 'that death made its entry', under the influence of 2:24. Our author holds that monotheism preceded polytheism. Gn takes the same view.

k. Two examples are now adduced of how human vanity brought idols into existence, each emphasising the idolatrous worship paid to deified human beings, rather than the deification itself. The first example relates to the Gk custom of raising dead children to the rank of 'protective heroes', a custom recalled and followed, for example, by Cicero after the death of his daughter Tullia.

exerted all his skill to surpass the reality,
and the crowd, attracted by the beauty of the work, 20
Dn 3:1–7 mistook for a god someone whom recently they had honoured as a man.
And this became a snare for life: 21
that people, whether enslaved by misfortune or by tyranny,
Ex 3:13–14, 14g should have conferred the ineffable Name [l] on sticks and stones.

Rm 1:24–32 **The consequences of idolatry**

It is not enough, however, for them 22
to have such misconceptions about God;
for, living in the fierce warfare of ignorance, [m]
they call these terrible evils peace.
12:5 With their child-murdering rites, their occult mysteries, 23
Lv 18:21h
Rm 1:28–31+ or their furious orgies with outlandish customs, [n]
they no longer retain any purity in their lives or their marriages, 24
one treacherously murdering another or wronging him by adultery.
Everywhere a welter of blood and murder, theft and fraud, 25
corruption, treachery, riot, perjury,
disturbance of decent people, forgetfulness of favours, 26
pollution of souls, sins against nature, [o]
disorder in marriage, adultery and debauchery. [p]
For the worship of idols with no name [q] 27
is the beginning, cause, and end of every evil.
For these people either carry their merrymaking to the point of frenzy, 28
14:23 or they prophesy what is not true, or they live wicked lives,
or they perjure themselves without hesitation;
since they put their trust in lifeless idols 29
they do not reckon their false oaths can harm them.

But they will be justly punished for this double crime: 30
for degrading the concept of God by adhering to idols;
and for wickedly perjuring themselves in contempt for what is holy.
For it is not the power of the things by which they swear 31
but the punishment reserved for sinners
that always follows the offences of wicked people.

Israel not idolatrous

Ex 34:6–7+ 15 But you, our God, are kind and true, 1
slow to anger, governing the universe with mercy.
Even if we sin, we are yours, since we acknowledge your power, [a] 2
but we will not sin, knowing we count as yours.
Jn 17:3 To know you is indeed the perfect virtue, 3
1:15;2:23 and to know your power is the root of immortality. [b]
We have not been duped by inventions of misapplied human skill, 4
or by the sterile work of painters,
13:14 by figures daubed with assorted colours,
the sight of which sets fools yearning 5
and hankering for the lifeless form of an unbreathing image.
13:10 Lovers of evil and worthy of such hopes 6
are those who make them, those who want them
and those who worship them.

13:10–19 **The makers of idols are fools** [c]

Take a potter, now, laboriously working the soft earth, 7
shaping each object for us to use.
Rm 9:21 Out of the self-same clay,

he models vessels intended for a noble use
and those for a contrary purpose, all alike:
but which of these two uses each will have
is for the potter himself to decide. Is 29:16g
8 Then—ill-spent effort!—from the same clay he models a futile god,
although so recently made out of earth himself Gn 2:7e
and shortly to return to what he was taken from, Gn 3:19
when asked to give back the soul that has been lent to him.

9 Even so, he does not worry about having to die
or about the shortness of his life,[d]
but strives to outdo the goldsmiths and silversmiths,
imitates the bronzeworkers,
and prides himself on modelling counterfeits.
10 Ashes, his heart; Is 44:20
more vile than earth, his hope;
more wretched than clay, his life!
11 For he has misconceived the One who has modelled him, Dt 32:15
who breathed an active soul into him Gn 2:7
and inspired a living spirit.[e]
12 What is more, he looks on this life of ours as a kind of game,
and our time here like a fair, full of bargains. Ac 19:24
'However foul the means,' he says, 'a man must make a living.'
13 He, more than any other, knows he is sinning,
he who from one earthy stuff makes both brittle pots and idols.

The folly of the Egyptians: their indiscriminate idolatry

14 But most foolish, more pitiable even than the soul of a little child,[f]
are the enemies who once played the tyrant with your people,[g]
15 and have taken all the idols of the heathen for gods;
these can use neither their eyes for seeing 13:18
nor their nostrils for breathing the air Ps 115:4–7
nor their ears for hearing
nor the fingers on their hands for handling
nor their feet for walking.
16 They have been made, you see, by a human being,
modelled by a being whose own breath is borrowed. Gn 2:7
No man can model a god to resemble himself; Ps 104:29–30
17 subject to death, his impious hands can produce
only something dead.

l. *See* Ex 3:14 for the revelation of the Name of God to Moses.

m. Internal conflict caused by the unleashing of the passions, and external conflict since the passions disrupt society.

n. Allusion to the Bacchanalian orgies of the Dionysiac Mysteries, or else to the frenzy and immorality of the Phrygian Mysteries.

o. lit. 'inversion of generation'.

p. Society, shaken to its foundations by disrespect for life and the rights of others, by the devaluation of marriage, by the collapse of trust, and above all by the constant breaking of oaths (*see* vv. 29–31). These disorders are due, not to misconceptions about the true God, but to idolatrous cults; cf. Rm 1:26–31, possibly inspired by this passage.

q. i.e. non-existent. Or possibly interpret 'Whose name should not be used', *see* Ex 23:13.

15 a. Though sinners, the Israelites do not stop belonging to God, since they know that he exerts his power over all things with kindness and compassion, offering the possibility of repentance, 11:23–12:2; 12:16–18; they continue to acknowledge him as unique Lord, who has made solemn promises to the ancestors and remained faithful to them, 12:19,21–22; 15:1.

b. A living knowledge, that is to say, cf. Jr 9:23–24, a knowledge which is the basis of true uprightness. The idea of immortality, with the image of the root, *see* 3:15, complements that of uprightness, *see* 1:1,15; 3:1–9. For the whole concept, *see* Jn 17:3.

c. Next, the author attacks the makers of idols and satirises a maker of pottery figurines, a craft common enough in the hellenistic world. The description is a parallel to that of the woodcutter, 13:11–19.

d. Instead of thinking of his end, of which the clay he uses ought to remind him, Gn 3:19, the potter makes himself ridiculous by trying to vie with artists working in nobler materials.

e. 'Active soul' and 'living spirit' are synonymous.

f. Since even more easily deceived.

g. The Egyptians, oppressors of Israel before the Exodus and again under the rule of the Ptolemies. The author returns to them (cf. 12:23–27) perhaps by the implicit transition of thought: the potter makes statuettes of the divinities favoured in the syncretistic religion of contemporary Egypt (v. 15).

He himself is worthier than the things he worships;
he will at least have lived, but never they.
11:15 And they worship even the most loathsome of animals, 18
worse than the rest in their degree of stupidity,
without a trace of beauty—if that is what is attractive in animals— 19
and excluded from God's praises and blessing. [h]

Second antithesis: frogs and quails [a]

11:16;12:23,27 **16** Thus they were appropriately punished by similar creatures 1
and tormented by swarms of vermin.
In contrast to this punishment, you did your people a kindness 2
and, to satisfy their sharp appetite,
Ex 16:9–13 Nb 11:10–32 provided quails—a luscious rarity—for them to eat.
Thus the Egyptians, 3
at the repulsive sight of the creatures sent against them,
were to find that, though they longed for food,
they had lost their natural appetite;
whereas your own people, after a short privation,
were to have a rare relish for their portion.
Inevitable that relentless want should seize on the former oppressors; 4
11:8–9 enough for your people to be shown
how their enemies were being tortured.

Third antithesis: locusts and bronze serpent

Even when the fearful rage of wild animals overtook them 5
Nb 21:4–9 and they were perishing from the bites of writhing snakes,
your retribution did not continue to the end.
Affliction struck them briefly, by way of warning, 6
Nb 21:9+ and they had a saving token [b] to remind them of the commandment of your Law,
Jn 3:14–17 for whoever turned to it was saved, not by what he looked at, 7
Is 45:14h but by you, the Saviour of all. [c]
And by such means you proved to our enemies 8
that you are the one who delivers from every evil; [d]
Ex 8:16–20; 10:4–15 for them, the bites of locusts and flies proved fatal 9
and no remedy could be found to save their lives,
11:15–16 since they deserved to be punished by such creatures. [e]

But your children, 10
not even the fangs of poisonous snakes could bring them down;
for your mercy came to their help and cured them.
One sting—how quickly healed!— 11
to remind them of your pronouncements
rather than that, by sinking into deep forgetfulness,
they should be cut off from your kindness. [f]
No herb, no poultice cured them, 12
Ps 107:20 Is 55:10–11 but your all-healing word, Lord.

Dt 32:39 Yes, you are the one with power over life and death, 13
1 S 2:6 Rv 1:18q bringing to the gates of Hades and back again. [g]
A human being out of malice may put to death, 14
but cannot bring the departed spirit back
or free the soul that Hades has once received. [h]

Fourth antithesis: hail and manna

It is not possible to escape your hand. 15

16 The godless who refused to acknowledge you
were scourged by the strength of your arm,
pursued by no ordinary rains, hail and unrelenting downpours, Ex 9:24–25 Ps 78:47–49
and consumed by fire. [i]
17 Even more wonderful, in the water—which quenches all—
the fire raged fiercer than ever;
for the elements fight for the upright. 5:17,20
18 At one moment, the fire would die down,
to avoid consuming the animals sent against the godless [j]
and to make clear to them by that sight,
that the sentence of God was pursuing them;
19 at another, in the very heart of the water,
it would burn more fiercely than fire
to ruin the produce of a wicked land.
20 How differently with your people! You gave them the food of angels, Ex 16 Ps 78:25; 105:40
from heaven untiringly providing [k] them bread already prepared,
containing every delight, to satisfy every taste. [l]
21 And the substance you gave
showed your sweetness towards your children,
for, conforming to the taste of whoever ate it,
it transformed itself into what each eater wished.
22 Snow and ice [m] endured the fire, without melting;
this was to show them that, to destroy the harvests of their enemies,
fire would burn even in hail and flare in falling rain, 16:19
23 whereas, on the other hand, it would even forget its own strength
in the service of feeding the upright.

24 For the creation, being at the service of you, its Creator, 5:17;19:6
tautens to punish the wicked [n]
and slackens for the benefit of those who trust in you.
25 And this is why, by changing into all things, [o] 19:18
it obediently served your all-nourishing bounty, Ps 104:27,28; 136:25;145:16
conforming to the wishes of those who were in need; [p]

h. At the dawn of creation, God had blessed whatever he had endowed with life, Gn 1:22,28; 2:3. After the fall, he laid his curse on the snake, Gn 3:14–15. The animal gods of the Egyptians deserve the same condemnation.

16 a. After this long digression on idolatry (ch. 3–15), the end of the book, 16–19, resumes the contrast between Egyptians and Israelites, *see* 11:4c. The second antithesis has been anticipated by general references to plagues, *see* 11:15–16; 12:23–27. The author continues to elaborate on the ancient biblical narratives (e.g. v. 3), giving them a free interpretation in the midrashic manner.

b. Instead of 'token', a number of important MSS read 'adviser'.

c. The author puts a merciful interpretation on Nb 21:4–9 and also states that the bronze snake had no power of itself. He sees the incident as a recall to the Law and the sign of universal salvation offered by God; this is not apparent in the ancient story. Bronze snake and plan of universal salvation appear in a similar context in Jn 3:13–17.

d. The enemies are imagined to be aware of these events, cf. 11:13, unless the author has his own times in mind.

e. With the plague of locusts, Ex 10:4–15, the author seems to be associating the horseflies, Ex 8:16–20, and mosquitoes, Ex 8:12–15, though the term he uses is vague. The idea of making them death-dealing seems to be an elaboration of Ex 10 ('death-dealing plague') and of Ps 78:45 ('devouring horseflies'); for an apocalyptic transposition of the plagues, *see* Rv 9:3–12.

f. Or 'they should not become insensible to your benefits'.

g. Here the author teaches that God has absolute power over life and death, not only in the sense that he can rescue anyone he pleases from imminent death, *see* Ps 9:13; 107:17–19; Is 38:10–17, but also apparently in the profounder sense that he can bring a soul that has gone to Sheol back to physical life, *see* 1 K 17:17–23; 2 K 4:33–35; 13:21.

h. 'Hades' is not expressed (lit. 'the soul that has been received') but the meaning is not in doubt.

i. All the features of this catalogue refer to the plague of hail, Ex 9:13–35, but the author, in true midrashic manner, exploits all the possibilities: for the 'rains', *see* Ex 9:29 (LXX), 33,34; for the 'fire', *see* Ex 9:23–24; Ps 78:47–49; 105:32 (where there is 'rain' as well).

j. The author seems to think that the earlier plagues are still going on when the seventh, the plague of hail, breaks over Egypt, cf. Ex 9:13–35.

k. var. in some good MSS 'sending them'.

l. Manna, 'bread of angels', Ps 78:25, or 'bread of heaven', Ps 105:40, which 'tasted like a honey-cake', Ex 16:31, is represented here as adapting itself to all tastes and assuming every sort of delectable flavour, and is thus symbolic of the goodness of God (v. 21). This characteristic is reflected in rabbinic texts, bearing witness to an already established Jewish legend.

m. i.e. the manna, which Ex 16:14 compares to dew, and Nb 11:7 (LXX) to ice, *see* 19:21.

n. 'tautens . . . slackens', metaphor borrowed from stringed musical instruments, cf. 19:18.

o. The author tries to explain this peculiarity of manna, *see* vv. 20[c], 21[c], in terms of the physics of the day, by a mutation of its elements or an exchange of properties, but puts less emphasis on this extraordinary phenomenon than on the teaching that flows from it.

p. Or 'of those who were asking' or 'praying'.

so that your beloved children, Lord, might learn 26
that the various crops are not what provide nourishment,
Dt 8:3b but your word which preserves all who believe in you.
For that which fire could not destroy 27
Ex 16:21 melted in the heat of a single fleeting sunbeam,
to show that, to give you thanks, we must rise before the sun 28
Ps 5:3 Si 39:5 and meet you at the dawning of the day; [q]
whereas the hope of the ungrateful melts like winter frost 29
Ps 58:7 and flows away like water running to waste.

Fifth antithesis: darkness and pillar of fire [a]

Ps 92:5–6 Rm 11:33–35 17 Yes, your judgements are great and impenetrable, 1
which is why uninstructed souls have gone astray.
While the wicked supposed they had a holy nation in their power, 2
Ex 10:21–23 they themselves lay prisoners of the dark, in the fetters of long night,
14:3 confined under their own roofs, banished from eternal providence.
While they thought to remain unnoticed with their secret sins, 3
curtained by dark forgetfulness,
they were scattered in fearful dismay,
terrified by apparitions. [b]
The hiding place sheltering them could not ward off their fear; 4
terrifying noises echoed round them;
and gloomy, grim-faced spectres haunted them.
No fire had power enough to give them light, 5
nor could the brightly blazing stars
illuminate that dreadful night.
The only light for them was a great, spontaneous blaze— 6
a fearful sight to see!
And in their terror, once that sight had vanished,
they thought what they had seen more terrible than ever.
Their magical illusions were powerless now, [c] 7
and their claims to intelligence were ignominiously confounded;
for those who promised to drive out fears and disorders from sick souls 8
were now themselves sick with ludicrous fright.
Even when there was nothing frightful to scare them, 9
the vermin creeping past and the hissing of reptiles
filled them with panic;
they died convulsed with fright, 10
refusing even to look at empty air, which cannot be eluded anyhow!
Wickedness is confessedly very cowardly, and it condemns itself; 11
under pressure from conscience it always assumes the worst. [d]
Fear, indeed, is nothing other 12
than the failure of the aids offered by reason;
the less you rely within yourself on these, 13
the more alarming it is not to know the cause of your suffering.
And they, all locked in the same sleep, 14
while that darkness lasted—which was in fact quite powerless
and had issued from the depths of equally powerless Hades—
were now chased by monstrous spectres, 15
now paralysed by the fainting of their souls;
for a sudden, unexpected terror had attacked them. [e]

And thus, whoever it might be that fell there 16
stayed clamped to the spot in this prison without bars.
Whether he was ploughman or shepherd, 17
or somebody at work in the desert.

he was still overtaken and suffered the inevitable fate,
for all had been bound by the one same chain of darkness.
18 The soughing of the wind,
the tuneful noise of birds in the spreading branches,
the measured beat of water in its powerful course,
the headlong din of rocks cascading down,
19 the unseen course of bounding animals,
the roaring of the most savage of wild beasts,
the echo rebounding from the clefts in the mountains,
all held them paralysed with fear. Lv 26:36
20 For the whole world shone with the light of day
and, unhindered, went about its work;
21 over them alone there spread a heavy darkness,
image of the dark that would receive them.
But heavier than the darkness was the burden they were to themselves.

1 **18** For your holy ones, however, there was a very great light. Ex 10:23
The Egyptians, who could hear them but not see them, [a]
called them fortunate because they had not suffered too; [b]
2 they thanked them for doing no injury in return for previous wrongs
and asked forgiveness for their past ill-will. [c]
3 In contrast to the darkness, you gave your people a pillar of blazing fire 10:17 Ex 13:21–22,22h Ps 121:6
to guide them on their unknown journey,
a mild sun for their ambitious migration.
4 But well those others deserved to be deprived of light
and imprisoned in darkness, 11:16
for they had kept in captivity your children,
by whom the incorruptible light of the Law was to be given to the world. Is 2:3,5

Sixth antithesis: night of bereavement and night of deliverance [d]

5 As they had resolved to kill the infants of the holy ones,
and as of those exposed only one child had been saved, Ex 1:22–2:10
you punished them by carrying off their horde of children [e] Ex 12:29–30
and by destroying them all in the wild water. [f] Ex 14:26–28
6 That night had been known in advance to our ancestors, [g]
so that, well knowing him in whom they had put their trust, they would be sure of his promises.
7 Your people thus were waiting
both for the rescue of the upright and for the ruin of the enemy;

q. The lesson, based on a very free interpretation of Ex 16:21, alludes to the practice of offering morning prayer at dawn or first light.

17 a. To the plague of darkness, Ex 10:21–23, the author opposes the daylight that continued to light the world at large and the Israelites, v. 18 and 18:1, and later the light of the Law, 18:4, but the true antithesis is with the 'pillar of fire', 18:3.

b. A remarkable dramatisation of the plague of darkness: the description elaborates on the biblical account and is related to hellenistic midrash, possibly drawing on Jewish legend or rabbinical speculation found also in Philo of Alexandria. Note also the apocalyptic quality of the whole passage: the Egyptian darkness anticipates or typifies the darkness of hell, *see* especially vv. 14,20.

c. Though temporarily successful, Ex 7:11,22; 8:3, they had failed, Ex 8:14, and even brought disaster on their operators, Ex 9:11. Through Pharaoh's magicians, the author is probably attacking those of his own day.

d. First mention of 'conscience' in the Gk Bible, *see* Ac 23:1a; here the word means the moral conscience reproving for sins committed. Reason eliminates imaginary causes of fear, but the burdened conscience confuses reason and prevents it from discharging its proper function.

e. 'had attacked' MSS; 'had befallen' *Text. rec.*

18 a. The Israelites and Egyptians are imagined as living together, *see* Ex 11:4–7; 12:12–13,29–36.

b. 'because they had not' MSS, Lat.; 'although they (themselves) were suffering' *Text. rec.*

c. Or 'pleaded with them to leave', *see* Ex 10:24; 11:8; 12:33.

d. Adducing a further example of the correspondence between crime and punishment, cf. 11:16, the author evokes the massacre of the first-born and the catastrophe in the Red Sea (v. 5), but concentrates on the former.

e. The connection is perhaps based on Ex 4:22–23. Previously, the infanticidal decree, 11:6–7, was used to justify the plague of the Nile turned to blood.

f. The massacre of the first-born and the drowning of the Pharaonic army are linked also in the *Book of Jubilees* (48:14) and in a rabbinical commentary.

g. Either the Israelites on the eve of the Exodus, Ex 11:4–7, or more probably the Patriarchs, to whom God had promised to deliver their descendants from bondage in Egypt, Gn 15:13–14; 46:3–4.

for by the very vengeance that you exacted on our adversaries, 8
you glorified us by calling us to you. [h]
So the holy children of the good offered sacrifice in secret [i] 9
and with one accord enacted this holy law:
that the holy ones should share good things and dangers alike;
and forthwith they chanted the hymns of the ancestors. [j]

Ex 11:6;12:30 In echo came the discordant cries of their enemies, 10
and the pitiful wails of people mourning for their children
could be heard from far away.
Ex 11:5;12:29 One and the same punishment had struck slave and master alike, 11
and now commoner and king had the same sufferings to endure.
Struck by the same death, all had innumerable dead. 12
Nb 33:4 There were not enough living left to bury them,
for, at one stroke, the flower of their offspring had perished.
Those whose spells had made them completely incredulous, 13
when faced with the destruction of their first-born,
Ex 4:22 Dt 1:31+ Ho 11:1 acknowledged this people to be child of God. [k]

When peaceful silence lay over all, 14
Ex 11:4;12:29 and night had run the half of her swift course,
Rv 19:11–13 down from the heavens, from the royal throne, 15
leapt your all-powerful Word
like a pitiless warrior into the heart of a land doomed to destruction. [l]
Heb 4:12 Rv 19:15 Carrying your unambiguous command like a sharp sword,
it stood, and filled the universe with death; 16
though standing on the earth, it touched the sky.
Jb 4:13–15 Immediately, [m] dreams and gruesome visions 17
overwhelmed them with terror,
unexpected fears assailed them.
Hurled down, some here, some there, half dead, 18
they were able to say why they were dying;
for the dreams that had troubled them 19
had warned them why beforehand,
so that they should not perish
without knowing why they were being afflicted.

Threat of annihilation in the desert

Experience of death, however, touched the upright too, [n] 20
Nb 17:6–15 1 Co 10:8 and a great many were struck down in the desert.
But the Retribution did not last long,
for a blameless [o] man hurried to their defence. 21
Wielding the weapons of his sacred office,
Nb 17:11–12 prayer and expiating incense, [p]
he confronted Retribution and put an end to the plague,
thus showing that he was your servant.
He overcame Hostility, [q] not by physical strength, 22
nor by force of arms;
but by word [r] he prevailed over the Punisher,
Ex 32:11–13 by recalling the oaths made to the Fathers, and the covenants.
Already the corpses lay piled in heaps, 23
when he interposed and beat Retribution back
and cut off its approach to the living.
For the whole world was on his flowing robe, 24
Ex 28:17–21,29 •Ex 28:36 the glorious names of the Fathers engraved on the four rows of stones,
and your Majesty on the diadem on his head. [s]

25 From these the Destroyer recoiled, he was afraid of these.[r]
This one experience of Retribution was enough.

Seventh antithesis: the Red Sea[a]

1 **19** But the godless were assailed by merciless anger to the very end,
for he knew beforehand what they would do,
2 how, after letting his people leave and hastening their departure,[b]
they would change their minds and give chase. Ex 11:1a; 14:5–9
3 They were actually still conducting their mourning rites 18:12
and lamenting at the tombs of their dead,
when another mad scheme came into their heads
and they set out to pursue, as though runaways,
the people whom they had expelled and begged to go.
4 A well-deserved fate[c] urged them to this extreme
and made them forget what had already happened,
so that they would add to their torments
the one punishment outstanding[d]
5 and, while your people were experiencing a journey 18:3
contrary to all expectations,
would themselves meet an extraordinary death.

6 For the whole creation, submissive to your commands, 5:17;16:24
had its very nature re-created,[e]
so that your children should be preserved from harm.
7 Overshadowing the camp there was the cloud; Ex 14:19–22
where there had been water, dry land was seen to rise;
the Red Sea became an unimpeded way,

h. The annihilation of the Egyptian first-born, celebration of the Passover, and Exodus, finally designated the Israelites as the people of God, *see* Dt 7:6b.

i. i.e. descended from good stock, of holy lineage; it could also be translated 'the holy children of good things', meaning heirs to the good things promised to the ancestors. The Passover is called a sacrifice, Ex 12:27; Dt 16:2,5. The sacrifice is called 'secret' because celebrated inside their houses, Ex 12:46.

j. The author represents the first Passover in terms of later ones at which the Hallel was chanted, Ps 113–118.

k. Relying on their spells, the Egyptians hoped till this moment that their magicians would be able to beat Moses, (*see* Ex 7:11–13; 8:3,14; 9:11), who they thought was practising a rival magic. But this time, God strikes directly.

l. The massacre of the first-born, attributed to God himself by Ex 11:4; 12:12,23,27,29, accompanied by the Destroyer, Ex 12:23, here becomes the work of the divine Word. The latter had already been represented as executing God's sentences by Is 11:4; 55:11; Jr 23:29; Ho 6:5. This dramatic passage draws its inspiration from v. 16 of 1 Ch 21:15–27 and possibly also from Homer (*Iliad* IV, 443). In apocalyptic terms, the Word of Judgement prefigures, not the Incarnation of the Word (despite the use of this text in the liturgy), but the dreadful aspect of his Second Coming; *see* 1 Th 5:2–4; Rv 19:11–21.

m. What follows has no basis in the narrative of the Exodus.

n. As penalty for the revolt following the punishment of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, Nb 17:6–15. The passage is parenthetic to the series of antitheses.

o. Aaron, 'blameless' because, having been chosen by Yahweh, he remained faithful to him.

p. lit. 'the expiation sacrifice of incense'. By adding 'prayer', not mentioned in the biblical narrative, the author transforms the high priest into an intercessor, cf. 2 M 3:31; 15:12; Ps 99:6; Heb 7:25.

q. 'Hostility' conj.; 'the crowd' *Text. rec.*

r. Either the 'prayer' of v. 21, or a word of command disarming the agent of punishment, later called the Destroyer, v. 25.

s. The author represents Aaron as wearing a robe down to his heels, with the *ephod* and the pectoral with its twelve jewels engraved with the name of the 'ancestors' (the twelve sons of Jacob), *see* Ex 28:17seq.; 39:6seq.; and on his head the golden flower of the 'diadem' bearing the inscription 'consecrated to Yahweh', Ex 28:36seq.; 39:30seq. The insignia of the high priest are given a cosmic symbolism here, as was already customary in hellenised Jewry.

t. Possibly an angel like the one in 1 Ch 21:15–16; cf. Ex 12:23. • 'he was afraid' MSS, versions; 'they were afraid' *Text. rec.*

19 **a.** After preparatory considerations on the final obstinacy of the godless who are hence handed over to pitiless vengeance, the antithesis becomes explicit at v. 5. The author then emphasises the miraculous crossing of the Red Sea by the Israelites, vv. 6–9, freely elaborating on ancient tradition, *see* Ex 14:15a.

b. 'after letting' numerous MSS; 'after deciding' *Text. rec.*, Lat., Syr. • 'leave' MSS; 'be absent' *Text. rec.* 'hastening their departure', lit. 'having packed them off in a hurry'.

c. lit. 'a worthy necessity'. The author uses a Greek expression to explain that Pharaoh's intractability, Ex 14:4,8, though not dictated by blind and pitiless Fate, is a deserved punishment, itself entailing further punishment.

d. The theme of a tally pre-ordained by God—in fact, that space of time allowed by his patience or his compassion—is common in apocalyptic writings.

e. Meaning obscure. The author is apparently referring to the original creation, Gn 1, and means that, to facilitate the crossing of the Red Sea, the natural creation was reorganised or changed. Initially, 'darkness shrouded the abyss' and the earth had risen from the water, Gn 1:1–6: a similar phenomenon is now witnessed, but this time the extraordinary behaviour of air, land and water violates the order established by the Creator. It is not clear whether the author means a transmutation of the elements or a transposition of their properties, cf. 16:25 and 19:18.

the tempestuous waves, a green plain:[f]
5:16 sheltered by your hand, the whole nation passed across, 8
gazing at these amazing prodigies.
Is 63:13–14 Ml 3:20 They were like horses at pasture, 9
they skipped like lambs,
Ex 15 singing your praises, Lord, their deliverer.
For they still remembered the events of their exile, 10
Ex 8:12–15 how the land had bred mosquitoes instead of animals
Ex 8:2 and the River had disgorged millions of frogs instead of fish.
Nb 11:31 Later they were to see a new way for birds to come into being, 11
when, goaded by greed, they demanded something tasty,
Ex 16:13 and quails came up out of the sea to satisfy them.[g] 12

Egypt guiltier than Sodom

On the sinners, however, punishments rained down 13
not without violent thunder as early warning;[h]
and they suffered what their own crimes had justly deserved
since they had shown such bitter hatred to foreigners.
Others,[i] indeed, had failed to welcome strangers who came to them, 14
but the Egyptians had enslaved their own guests and benefactors.
The sinners, moreover, will certainly be punished for it,[j] 15
since they gave the foreigners a hostile welcome;
but the latter, having given a festive reception 16
Gn 45:17–20; 47:1–12 to people who already shared the same rights as themselves,[k]
Ex 1:8–14; 5:4–18 later overwhelmed them with terrible labours.
Hence they were struck with blindness,[l] 17
like the sinners at the gate of the upright,[m]
when, yawning darkness all around them,
Gn 19:11 each had to grope his way through his own door.

16:17–22 **A new harmony in nature**[n]

A new attuning of the elements occurred, 18
as on a harp the notes may change their rhythm,
though all the while preserving the same tone;
and this is just what happened:
land animals became aquatic,[o] 19
swimming ones took to the land,[p]
fire reinforced its strength in water, 20
and water forgot the power of extinguishing it;
16:18 flames, on the other hand, did not char the flesh 21
of delicate animals that ventured into them;
16:22 nor did they melt the heavenly food
resembling ice and as easily melted.

Conclusion

Is 45:17.25 Yes, Lord, in every way you have made your people great and glorious; 22
you have never failed to help them at any time or place.

f. Is 63:14 also speaks of a level place ('valley'), but only by way of comparison. The Palestinian midrash speaks, not only of abundant grass, but of fruit trees lining the road opened through the waters. The 'prodigies' mentioned in the next v. derive from the same idealising process. Later rabbinical tradition enumerates ten miracles attending the crossing of the Red Sea.

g. The author takes Nb 11:31 literally; the quails came out of the sea (as the mosquitoes came out of the earth and the frogs out of the River Nile).

h. This additional touch to the biblical story is suggested either by Ps 77:17–18, or by an ancient interpretation of Ex 14:24, as found in the Targums.

i. The inhabitants of Sodom, proverbially regarded as the worst of criminals. The author will show that the Egyptians violated the laws of hospitality even more gravely.

j. Difficult text, susceptible of different punctuation. As set out here, the sentence construction is incomplete. The author is either going on with his exculpation of the Sodomites, or meaning that they too can expect a punitive 'visitation' (cf. 14:11) and one might translate 'and certainly they will be made to pay'. The punishment perhaps affects the Egyptians too.

k. Probably an allusion to a contemporary grievance of the Alexandrian Jews.

l. Rhetorical description of the plague of darkness.

m. Lot, 10:6; cf. Gn 19:11.

n. Gk writings frequently use musical metaphors for the inter-play of the elements composing the universe. Using a similar comparison, the author applies it to the principal miracles of the Exodus to suggest an explanation for them: either by a change of rhythm in the elements (cf. 16:24) or by some different combination of their properties. The created world is entirely at the service of the people of God, *see* v. 6.

o. The Israelites and their cattle while crossing the Red Sea.

p. The frogs, Ex 8:2.

INTRODUCTION TO
ECCLESIASTICUS

§1 This book forms part of the Greek Bible though it does not appear in the Jewish Canon; it is therefore one of the deuterocanonical books accepted by the Church. The book is named 'Ecclesiasticus' in this edition, though in references the abbreviation for it is 'Si' for Sirach or 'Ben Sira' *(see* below). It was written in Hebrew; St Jerome and the rabbis (who quote from it) knew the book in its original language. About two-thirds of this Hebrew text was discovered in 1896 in fragments of several medieval manuscripts coming from an old synagogue in Cairo. More recently still, small fragments were found in a cave at Qumran and, in 1964, a long text was discovered at Massada, containing 39:27–44:17 in a hand dating from the beginning of the first century BC. The way these versions vary among themselves, as also the way they vary from the Greek and Syriac translations, show that several recensions of the book were in circulation at a very early date.

The Greek text is the only one recognised by the Church as canonical, and it is from this that the present translation has been made (more exactly, from the three principal manuscripts, Sinaiticus, Alexandrinus and Vaticanus, which together form what is called the *Textus receptus*), with a number of Hebrew variants being given in the notes.

The Latin title *Ecclesiasticus* (*liber*) is relatively recent (St Cyprian); it probably calls attention to the fact that the Church adopted it for her official use although the Synagogue did not. In Greek, *see* the *subscriptio* of 51:30, the book was called 'Wisdom of Jesus Ben Sirach' and the author is again named in 50:27. Nowadays he is referred to as Ben Sira or Siracides (from the Greek form: Sirach). In a foreword, vv. 1–35, the grandson of the author tells how he translated the book when he went to settle in Egypt in the 38th year of King Euergetes, v. 27. This can only be Ptolemy VII Euergetes (170–117 BC), and the date corresponds to 132 BC. Ben Sira himself presumably lived and wrote some sixty years before his grandson, about 190–180 BC. A passage in the book confirms this date: Ben Sira's eulogy of the High Priest Simon, 50:1–21, is based on personal reminiscence. This was Simon II, who died shortly after 200 BC.

At this period Palestine had just come under the dominion of the Seleucids (198). Hellenisation, that is to say the imitation of Greek manners, was supported by a section of the ruling class; and soon afterwards Antiochus Epiphanes (175–164) was to attempt to impose it by force. Against these dangerous innovations Ben Sira marshals all the forces of tradition. He is a

scribe in whom the pursuit of wisdom is coupled with zeal for the Law. He is devoted to the Temple with its liturgy and has a high regard for the priestly office; but the sacred books, too, are his spiritual nourishment; he has studied the Prophets and above all the Wisdom writings. He in his turn undertakes to teach wisdom to all who are eager for it, 33:18; 50:27, cf. the translator's foreword, vv. 7–14.

In form, the book resembles its predecessors and models. Apart from the section hymning the glory of God in nature, 42:15–43:33, and in history, 44:1–50:29, the book is no more systematically put together than Proverbs or Ecclesiastes. The most diverse topics are dealt with, in no order and with some repetition; the topics are presented in small groups of loosely connected maxims. Two appendices are attached to the end of the book: a hymn of thanksgiving, 51:1–12, and a poem on the search for wisdom, 51:13–30. The Hebrew text of the latter piece was discovered at Qumran, inserted into a manuscript of the Psalter, which confirms that the poem originally existed as an independent entity before being attached to Ecclesiasticus.

The doctrine of the book is as traditional as its form. The wisdom which Ben Sira commends comes from God; it is rooted in the fear of the Lord; it forms the youthful character and brings happiness. On human destiny and the problem of retribution Ben Sira shares the same uncertainty as Job and Ecclesiastes. He believes in retribution, he is aware of the tragic importance of the hour of death, but he does not yet see how God can reward everyone as their activities deserve, *see* Introduction to Wisdom Books, **§3**. On the nature of divine wisdom, 24:1–22, he elaborates the notions of Proverbs and Job, *see* Introduction to Wisdom Books, **§3**, pp. 750–1.

But Ben Sira's original contribution is to identify Wisdom with the Law of Moses, 24:23–24 (the wisdom poem in Baruch 3:9–4:4 does the same). Unlike his predecessors, he integrates wisdom into the tradition of reverence for the Law. Further, he identifies observance of the Law with a punctilious performance of religious duties, 35:1–10; he is a firm supporter of liturgical worship.

§2 In contrast with earlier sages, Ben Sira meditates on the history of salvation, 44:1–49:16. He reviews the great personalities of the Old Testament from Enoch to Nehemiah. On three of them, Solomon (even though he was the model of sages), Rehoboam and Jeroboam, his verdict is as severe as that passed by deuteronomic historians, and like them he condemns all the kings *en bloc* except David, Hezekiah and Josiah. But he is proud of his people's past, and dwells especially on the saintly figures of the Old Testament and on the wonders God worked through them. He tells how God made a covenant with Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Aaron, Phinehas and David, embracing the whole nation but especially ensuring lasting privileges to certain families, and the priestly families in particular. For the author holds the deepest respect for the priesthood: Aaron and Phinehas take leading places in his gallery of ancestors, and his eulogy concludes with a long and enthusiastic tribute to Simon, the reigning high priest. He looks back on the departed glories with a certain sadness, as he thinks of the present, and he prays as he thinks of judges and prophets 'that their bones may flower again from the tomb', 46:12; 49:10, and that they may have

successors. He wrote on the eve of the Maccabaean revolt; he may perhaps have lived to see it end and to think that his prayer had been heard.

§3 Though in this history of salvation Ben Sira gives prominence to the doctrine of the covenant, it is fairly correct to say that he does not look forward to a messianic deliverance. True, in his prayer of 36:1–17 he reminds God of his promises, begging him to take pity on Zion and reassemble the tribes of Jacob. This expression of prophetic nationalism, however, is unusual for Ben Sira. Like a true sage, he seems to have accepted the situation—humiliating but peaceful—to which his people had been reduced. He is confident that deliverance will come, but it will be the reward for fidelity to the Law, and not the work of a messianic Saviour.

Ben Sira is the last canonical representation of Jewish wisdom in Palestine. He is an outstanding example of those *hasidim* (the 'devout') of Judaism, *see* 1 M 2:42i, who were soon to defend their faith against the persecutions of Antiochus Epiphanes and preserve little islands of faith in Israel, in which the teaching of Christ could later take root. Though Ecclesiasticus was not accepted into the Hebrew Canon, it is frequently quoted in the rabbinical writings; in the New Testament, the Epistle of James borrows many expressions from it, the Gospel of Matthew refers to it a number of times and, even today, the liturgy still echoes this ancient tradition of wisdom.

ECCLESIASTICUS

TRANSLATOR'S FOREWORD [a]

1, 2 The Law, the Prophets, ·and the other writers succeeding them [b] have passed on to
3 us great lessons, ·in consequence of which Israel must be commended for learning
4 and wisdom. ·Furthermore, it is a duty, not only to acquire learning by reading,
5, 6 but also, once having acquired it, to make oneself of use to people outside ·by
7 what one can say or write. ·My grandfather Jesus, having long devoted himself to
8, 9, 10, 11 the reading ·of the Law, ·the Prophets ·and other books of the Fathers ·and having
12 become very learned in them, ·himself decided to write something on the subjects
13 of learning and wisdom, ·so that people who wanted to learn might, by themselves
14 accepting these disciplines, ·learn how better to live according to the Law.
15, 16, 17 You are therefore asked ·to read this book ·with good will and attention
18, 19 and to show indulgence ·in those places where, notwithstanding our efforts at
20 interpretation, we may seem ·to have failed to give an adequate rendering of this
21, 22 or that expression; ·the fact is that there is no equivalent for things originally
written in Hebrew when it is a question of translating them into another language;
23, 24, 25, 26 what is more, ·the Law itself, the Prophets ·and the other books ·differ considerably in translation from what appears in the original text.
27, 28 It was in the thirty-eighth year of the late King Euergetes [c] ·that, coming to
29 Egypt and spending some time here, ·and finding life here consistent with [d] a high
30 degree of wisdom, ·I became convinced of an immediate duty to apply myself in
31 my turn with pains and diligence to the translation of the book that follows; ·and I
32, 33 spent much time and learning on it ·in the course of this period, ·to complete the
34 work and to publish the book ·for the benefit of those too who, domiciled abroad,
35 wish to study, ·to reform their behaviour, and to live as the Law requires.

I: A COLLECTION OF MAXIMS

The origin of wisdom [a]

1 **1** All wisdom comes from the Lord, [b] Pr 2:6
she is with him for ever.
2 The sands of the sea, the drops of rain, Ws 9:4
the days of eternity—who can count them?

F **a.** This foreword by the Greek translator is not strictly a part of Si and is not usually considered canonical.

b. The three-part division of the Hebr. Bible, *see* 1 M 12:9c and p. xi. So also vv. 8–10, 24–25. But it is not certain whether at the time of writing (end of second century BC) the three parts contained exactly what they do today, especially as regards the third.

c. Probably Ptolemy VII Euergetes Physcon (170–117). The date would therefore be 132 BC.

d. 'finding life consistent with', lit. 'a copy of': translation uncertain. Other possible translations: 'I found that the (religious) instruction was far from equalling (our own)'; or 'I found a copy containing no mean instruction.' According to the interpretation adopted here, Ben Sira, in offering his grandfather's book to the Greek public, intends to please a community already cultivated and worthy of this enrichment.

1 **a.** This first chapter is a series of variations on the themes enunciated at the beginning of Pr.

b. The term 'Lord' (*Kyrios*) is commonly used in LXX to render the name 'Yahweh'. Ben Sira's translator uses it very frequently, even to render the other divine names.

The height of the sky, the breadth of the earth, 3
the depth of the abyss [c]—who can explore them?
24:8–9 Pr 8:22e Wisdom was created before everything, 4
prudent understanding subsists from remotest ages. [d]
Ba 3:20–22 Jb 28:12–23 For whom has the root of wisdom ever been uncovered? 6
Her resourceful ways, who knows them? [e]
One only is wise, terrible indeed, 8
seated on his throne, the Lord. [f] 9
Jb 28:27 It was he who created, [g] inspected and weighed her up,
Qo 2:26 Jl 3:1–2 and then poured her out on all his works—
Ac 2:17seq.;33 as much to each living creature as he chose— 10
bestowing her on those who love him.

The fear of God [h]

9:16 The fear of the Lord is glory and pride, 11
happiness and a crown of joyfulness.
The fear of the Lord gladdens the heart, 12
Pr 1:20;2:40 giving happiness, joy and long life.
For those who fear the Lord, all will end well: 13
11:27 on their dying day they will be blessed. [i]
Pr 1:7a The basis of wisdom is to fear the Lord; 14
she was created with the faithful in their mothers' womb;
she has made a home in the human race, an age-old foundation, 15 19
and to their descendants will she faithfully cling.
The fullness of wisdom is to fear the Lord; 16 20
Pr 8:18–19 she intoxicates them with her fruits;
Ws 7:11 she fills their entire house with treasures 17 21
and their storerooms with her produce.
The crown of wisdom is to fear the Lord: 18 22
she makes peace and health flourish.
Jb 28:27 The Lord has seen and assessed her, 19 23
he has showered down knowledge and intelligence, 24
he has exalted the renown of those who possess her.
The root of wisdom is to fear the Lord, 20 25
1:12 and her branches are long life. [j]

Patience and self-control

Pr 29:22 The rage of the wicked [k] cannot put him in the right, 22 28
for the weight of his rage is his downfall.
A patient person puts up with things until the right time comes: 23 29
but his joy will break out in the end.
Till the time comes he keeps his thoughts to himself, 24 30
and many a lip will affirm how wise he is.

Wisdom and uprightness

Wisdom's treasuries contain the maxims of knowledge, 25 31
the sinner, however, holds piety in abhorrence. 32
If you desire wisdom, keep the commandments, [l] 26 33
and the Lord will bestow it on you.
Pr 15:33 For the fear of the Lord is wisdom and instruction, 27 34
and what pleases him is faithfulness and gentleness. 35
Do not stand out against fear of the Lord, 28 36
do not practise it with a double heart.
2:12;5:9 Jm 1:6–8 Do not act a part in public, [m] 29 37
keep watch over your lips.

38 30 Do not grow too high and mighty, for fear you fall — Mt 23:12
and cover yourself in disgrace;
39 for the Lord would then reveal your secrets
and overthrow you before the whole community — Pr 5:14
40 for not having practised fear of the Lord
and for having a heart full of deceit.

The fear of God in time of ordeal [a]

1 2 My child, if you aspire to serve the Lord,
prepare yourself for an ordeal. — Jm 1:2–4
2 Be sincere of heart, be steadfast, — 1 P 4:12
and do not be alarmed when disaster comes. — Rv 2:10
3 Cling to him and do not leave him,
so that you may be honoured at the end of your days. — Rv 3:21
4 Whatever happens to you, accept it,
and in the uncertainties of your humble state, be patient, — Rm 5:3
5 since gold is tested in the fire, — Jm 1:2–4
and the chosen in the furnace of humiliation.
6 Trust him and he will uphold you, — Pr 3:5–6
follow a straight path and hope in him.
7 You who fear the Lord, wait for his mercy;
do not turn aside, for fear you fall.
8 You who fear the Lord, trust him,
and you will not be robbed of your reward.
9 You who fear the Lord, hope for those good gifts of his,
everlasting joy and mercy.
11 10 Look at the generations of old and see:
who ever trusted in the Lord and was put to shame? — Jb 4:7
12 Or who ever, steadfastly fearing him, was forsaken? — Ps 22:4–5; 37:25
Or who ever called to him and was ignored?
13 11 For the Lord is compassionate and merciful, — Ex 34:6–7
he forgives sins and saves in the time of distress. — Ps 145:8seq.
14 12 Woe to faint hearts and listless hands, [b]
and to the sinner who treads two paths.
15 13 Woe to the listless heart that has no faith,
for such will have no protection.
16 14 Woe to you who have lost the strength to endure;
17 what will you do at the Lord's visitation?

c. 'the depth of the abyss', Lat. *see also* Syr.; 'the abyss and wisdom' Gk.

d. The numbering of the verses was originally done on a Latin text, which was longer than the Gk one, hence the absence in this translation of certain vv. which were later additions to the book. These vv. are also found in a group of Gk MSS (which we indicate by the abbreviation: Gk 248). Additional v. 5: 'The source of wisdom is the word of God in heaven; her modes of progression are the eternal laws.'

e. Gk 248, Syr. Hex. and Lat. add [7]: 'To whom has the knowledge of wisdom been manifested? And who has understood the abundance of her ways?'

f. The author emphasises the uniqueness and sublimity of God. Wisdom is an attribute to God, the hallmark of his creation, the gift of God to human beings; though frequently personified in wisdom literature, Pr 8:22e, here it is a created thing and cannot be identified with God.

g. Lat. adds 'in the Holy Spirit', which is a Christian interpolation.

h. The fear of the Lord, for a Jew, merely means religion or piety. The original idea of physical fear, of terror before the fearful power of Yahweh, has at this point practically disappeared from Jewish theology.

i. Here Lat. adds [14] 'The love of God is a wisdom worthy of honour, [15], but those to whom he has appeared love him by contemplating him and by proclaiming his great works.'

j. Gk 248 and Syr. Hex. add [21] 'The fear of the Lord takes sin away, he who perseveres turns away retribution,' and Lat. [26]: 'The fear of the Lord is piety in knowledge, [27] but wisdom is abhorred by sinners. The fear of the Lord chases sin away.'

k. 'the rage of the wicked' conj.; 'wicked rage' Gk.

l. For Ben Sira wisdom and observance of the Law go together, 19:20. Cf. Qo 12:13. Here, wisdom is the reward of observance.

m. lit. 'before human beings' MSS, versions; 'in the mouth (of the world)' Gk.

2 **a.** A recurrent OT theme, particularly in the Ps.

b. The author is seemingly commending resistance under persecution; he is condemning apostasy, even if only outward, vv. 12[b], 15, cf. 2 M 6:21–28.

Those who fear the Lord do not disdain his words, 15 18
Jn 14:15, 21, 23 and those who love him keep his ways.
Those who fear the Lord do their best to please him, 16 19
and those who love him will find satisfaction in the Law. [c]
Those who fear the Lord keep their hearts prepared 17 20
and humble themselves in his presence. 21
2 S 24:14 Let us fall into the hands of the Lord, not into any human clutches; 18 22b
for as his majesty is, so too is his mercy.

Ex 20:12+ Ep 6:1–3 **Duties towards parents**

3 Children, listen to me for I am your father: 1 2
do what I tell you, and so be safe;
for the Lord honours the father above his children 2 3
and upholds the rights of a mother over her sons.
Whoever respects a father expiates sins, 3 4
whoever honours a mother is like someone amassing a fortune. 4 3
Whoever respects a father will in turn be happy with children, 5 6
the day he prays for help, he will be heard.
Long life comes to anyone who honours a father, 6 7
whoever obeys the Lord makes a mother happy. [a]
Such a one serves parents as also the Lord. [b] 7 8b
Mt 21:28–31 Respect your father in deed as well as word, 8 9
so that blessing may come on you from him; 10
Gn 27:27seq.; 48:15–20; 49:3–27 pDt 33:1–25 since a father's blessing makes his children's house firm, 9 11
while a mother's curse tears up its foundations.
Do not make a boast of disgrace overtaking your father, 10 12
your father's disgrace reflects no honour on you;
Pr 17:6 for a person's own honour derives from the respect shown to his father, 11 13
and a mother held in dishonour is a reproach to her children.
Pr 19:26 Mt 15:4–6 My child, support your father in his old age, 12 14
do not grieve him during his life.
Even if his mind should fail, show him sympathy, 13 15
do not despise him in your health and strength;
for kindness to a father will not be forgotten 14
but will serve as reparation for your sins. 17
On your own day of ordeal God will remember you: 15
like frost in sunshine, your sins will melt away.
Ex 21:17+ Pr 19:26;30:17 Whoever deserts a father is no better than a blasphemer, 16 18
and whoever distresses a mother is accursed of the Lord.

Humility

My child, be gentle in carrying out your business, 17 19
and you will be better loved than a lavish giver. [c]
Mt 20:26–28 Ph 2:5–8 The greater you are, the more humbly you should behave, 18 20
and then you will find favour with the Lord; [d]
for great though the power of the Lord is, 20 21
Pr 3:34 Zp 2:3d he accepts the homage of the humble. [e]
Do not try to understand things that are too difficult for you, 21 22
Ps 131:1 or try to discover what is beyond your powers. [f]
Concentrate on what has been assigned you, 22 23
you have no need to worry over mysteries.
Do not meddle with matters that are beyond you; [g] 23 24
what you have been taught already exceeds the scope of the human 25
mind.
For many have been misled by their own notions, [h] 24 26
wicked presumption having warped their judgement. [i]

Pride

27 26 A stubborn heart will come to a bad end, Pr 28:14
and whoever dallies with danger will perish in it.[j] Rm 2:5
28 27 A stubborn heart is weighed down with troubles,
the sinner heaps sin on sin. 5:5
29 28 For the disease of the proud there is no cure, Is 30:1
30 since an evil growth has taken root there.
31 29 The heart of the sensible will reflect on parables,
an attentive ear is the sage's dream.

Charity to the poor

7:32–36;29:8–13
Dt 15:7–11
33 30 Water puts out a blazing fire,
almsgiving expiates sins. Tb 12:9
34 31 Whoever gives favours[k] in return is mindful of the future; 1 P 4:8
at the moment of falling, such a person will find support.
1 **4** My child, do not refuse the poor a livelihood,
do not tantalise the needy.
2 Do not add to the sufferings of the hungry,
do not bait anyone in distress.
3 Do not aggravate a heart already angry,
nor keep the destitute waiting for your alms. Pr 3:27–28,28c
4 Do not repulse a hard-pressed beggar,
nor turn your face from the poor. Tb 4:7
5 Do not avert your eyes from the needy
give no one occasion to curse you;
6 for if someone curses you in distress,
his Maker will give ear to the imprecation. Ex 22:22
Dt 15:9
7 Gain the love of the community
in the presence of the great bow your head.
8 To the poor lend an ear,
and courteously return the greeting.
9 Save the oppressed from the hand of the oppressor, Jb 29:12,17
and do not be mean-spirited in your judgements.
10 Be like a father to the fatherless Ex 22:21
and as good as a husband to their mothers.[a]
11 And you will be like a child to the Most High, Ps 41:1–3
Is 49:15
who will love you more than your own mother does. Lk 6:35
Jn 14:21,23

Wisdom as educator[b]

12 11 Wisdom brings up her own children
and cares for those who seek her. 6:27–28

c. Ben Sira does not oppose love to obedience; he identifies them. Love is disinterested; hope of reward is merely a secondary consideration. The attitude is characteristic of Ben Sira but is found elsewhere in Jewish thought. *See*, for example, *Pirke Abot*, 1:3: 'Do not be like slaves who serve their master for the sake of reward. Be like slaves who serve their master without looking for reward.'

3 **a.** Gk 248 and Lat. add 7[a] 'He who fears the Lord honours his father.'

b. 'his Lord' conj.; 'masters' Gk.

c. 'lavish giver', lit. 'giver of presents' Hebr.; 'agreeable' Gk.

d. Gk 248 and Syr. add [19]'Many are the arrogant and renowned, but the humble are those to whom he reveals his secrets.'

e. The emphasis here is on God's condescension in putting himself within the reach of the humblest. But Hebr. 'for great is the mercy of God, he reveals his secrets to the humble' expresses an idea much more frequent in the OT: God showers his favours on those who behave with humility, Ps 25:14; Pr 3:34; cf. Mt 11:25; Lk 1:52.

f. Against curiosity (vv. 21–24): the Law is a sufficient study for the wise.

g. 'with matters that are beyond you' Hebr.; 'with your unnecessary works' Gk.

h. Hebr. 'For human thoughts are many.'

i. Gk 248 adds [25]'For lack of eyes you want for light; if you are without knowledge do not attempt to convince.'

j. Hebr. 'and whoever loves happiness will be led by it.'

k. The text does not make clear whether this means returning good for good (*see* Hebr.) or good for evil.

4 **a.** But the Hebr. 'widows' may be preferable to 'their mothers', widows and orphans being typical of those to whom charity is enjoined, *see* Dt 10:18; 14:29; 24:19; etc.; Ps 68:5; 146:9; Ezk 22:7.

b. Here, Wisdom is personified as in Pr 1:23–25; 8:12–21; 9:1–6. Her 'children' are those who pursue wisdom and put it into practice, *see* Lk 7:35.

Pr 3:16–18
Ws 6:14; 8:17–18
•Pr 3:35
Jn 14:21
Mt 7:14
Jb 11:6
Dn 2:21–22
Jn 15:15
20:22
Lv 5:5
Nb 5:7
1 K 21:27seq.
Jm 5:16
1 Jn 1:8–9
Jn 18:37
1 Jn 3:18
Ac 20:35
11:24
Lk 12:15–21
Ps 12:5
Ws 2:11
Qo 8:11–14
Rm 2:4;3:25

Whoever loves her loves life, 12 13
those who seek her early will be filled with joy.
Whoever possesses her will inherit honour, 13 14
and wherever he walks the Lord will bless him.
Those who serve her minister to the Holy One, 14 15
and the Lord loves those who love her.
Whoever obeys her rules the nations, 15 16
whoever pays attention to her dwells secure.
If he trusts himself to her he will inherit her, 16 17
and his descendants will remain in possession of her;
for though she takes him at first through winding ways, 17 18
bringing fear and faintness on him, 19
trying him out with her discipline till she can trust him,
and testing him with her ordeals,
she then comes back to him on the straight road, makes him happy 18 20
and reveals her secrets to him. 21
If he goes astray, however, she abandons him 19 22
and leaves him to his own destruction. [e]

Modesty and deference to others [d]

Take circumstances into account and beware of evil, 20 23
and have no cause to be ashamed of yourself; 24
for there is a shame that leads to sin 21 25
and a shame that is honourable and gracious.
Do not be too severe on yourself, 22 26
do not let shame lead you to ruin. 27
Do not refrain from speaking when it will do good, 23 28
and do not hide your wisdom; [e]
for your wisdom is made known by what you say, 24 29
your erudition by the words you utter.
Do not contradict the truth, 25 30
rather blush for your own ignorance.
Do not be ashamed to confess your sins, 26 31a
do not struggle against the current of the river. [f] 32b
Do not grovel to the foolish, 27 31b
do not show partiality to the influential. 32a
Fight to the death for truth, 28 33
and the Lord God will war on your side.
Do not be bold of tongue, 29 34
yet idle and slack in deed;
do not be like a lion [g] at home, 30 35
or cowardly towards your servants.
Do not let your hands be outstretched to receive, 31 36
yet tight-fisted when the time comes to give back.

Wealth and presumption

5 Do not put your confidence in your money 1
or say, 'With this I am self-sufficient.'
Do not be led by your appetites and energy 2
to follow the passions of your heart.
And do not say, 'Who has authority over me?' [a] 3
for the Lord will certainly give you your deserts.
Do not say, 'I have sinned, but what harm has befallen me?' [b] 4
for the Lord's forbearance is long.
Do not be so sure of forgiveness 5
that you add sin to sin.

6 And do not say, 'His compassion is great,
he will forgive me my many sins';
7 for with him are both mercy and retribution, 16:11 Ex 20:5–6
and his anger does not pass from sinners.
8 7 Do not delay your return to the Lord, Is 55:6–7
do not put it off day after day;
9 for suddenly the Lord's wrath will blaze out, Lk 12:35–40
and on the day of punishment you will be utterly destroyed.
10 8 Do not set your heart on ill-gotten gains, Pr 10:2
they will be of no use to you on the day of disaster.

Straightforwardness and self-possession

11 9 Do not winnow in every wind,
or walk along every by-way
(as the double-talking sinner does).
12 10 Be steady in your convictions,
and be a person of your word. Mt 5:37 Jm 5:12
13 11 Be quick to listen, ↗Jm 1:19
and deliberate in giving an answer.
14 12 If you understand the matter, give your neighbour an answer,
if not, keep your hand over your mouth. Pr 30:32 Ws 8:12e
15 13 Both honour and disgrace come from talking,
the tongue is its owner's downfall. Pr 18:21 Jm 3:6
16 14 Do not get a name for scandal-mongering,
do not set traps with your tongue;
17 for as shame lies in store for the thief,
so harsh condemnation awaits the deceitful.
18 15 Avoid offences[c] in great as in small matters,
and do not exchange friendship for enmity,
1 **6** for a bad name will earn you shame and reproach,
as happens to the double-talking sinner.
2 Do not get carried aloft on the wings of passion,
for fear your strength tear itself apart like a bull,
3 and you devour your own foliage and destroy your own fruit
and end by making yourself like a piece of dried-up wood. Jn 15:5–6
4 An evil temper destroys the person who has it
and makes him the laughing-stock of his enemies.

Friendship 37:1–6

5 A kindly turn of speech attracts new friends, Pr 15:1
a courteous tongue invites many a friendly response.
6 Let your acquaintances[a] be many,
but for advisers choose one out of a thousand.
7 If you want to make a friend, take him on trial, 37:7–15
and do not be in a hurry to trust him; 12:8–9 Pr 17:17

c. In Hebr. vv. 15–19, in the first person singular, are presented as a 'discourse by Wisdom', in imitation of Pr 1:22seq.; 8:1seq.

d. The following passage probably alludes to the temptation to which Jews were exposed under the impact of Hellenism, to dissimulate their faith and observances, *see* 1 M 1:12–15; 2 M 4:11–16.

e. 'when it will do good', lit. 'at the time of salvation', meaning uncertain (Hebr. 'in its time'). • 'and do not hide your wisdom' Hebr., Gk 248, Lat. (which add 'for beauty'); omitted by Gk.

f. It would be easier to stop it than to conceal one's sins from God. The confession of sins was not unknown in Judaism, Lv 5:5; Nb 5:7; 2 S 12:13; 1 K 21:27; Ps 38:1,4–5; 51:5.

g. var. (Hebr. and Syr.) 'a dog', which would make the two lines synonymous instead of antithetical.

5 **a.** Like the 'fool' who, even if he does not deny the existence of God, at least denies his providence, Ps 53:1.

b. The sceptic defies divine justice when it is apparently inactive.

c. 'avoid offences' following Hebr.; 'do not be ignorant' Gk.

6 **a.** lit. 'those who are at peace with you', or possibly 'those who wish peace to you'. Compare Hebr. 'the men of your greeting'.

for one kind of friend is so only when it suits him 8
but will not stand by you in your day of trouble.
Another kind of friend will fall out with you 9
and to your dismay make your quarrel public.
Pr 25:9–10 and a third kind of friend will share your table, 10
but not stand by you in your day of trouble:
Pr 19:4,7 when you are doing well he will be your second self, 11
ordering your servants about; [b]
but, if disaster befalls you, he will recoil from you 12
and keep out of your way.
Keep well clear of your enemies, 13
Jr 9:3 and be wary of your friends.
Pr 18:19 Qo 4:9–12 A loyal friend is a powerful defence: 14
whoever finds one has indeed found a treasure.
A loyal friend is something beyond price, 15
there is no measuring his worth.
Pr 17:17;18:24 A loyal friend is the elixir of life, 16
and those who fear the Lord will find one.
Whoever fears the Lord makes true friends, 17
for as a person is, so is his friend too. [c]

Apprenticeship to wisdom

Pr 22:6 My child, from your earliest youth choose instruction, 18
and till your hair is white you will keep finding wisdom.
Like ploughman and sower, cultivate her [d] 19
Pr 8:18–19 Ws 7:14 and wait for her fine harvest,
for in tilling her you will toil a little while, 20
but very soon you will be eating her crops.
How very harsh she is to the undisciplined! 20 21
The senseless does not stay with her for long:
she will weigh as heavily on the senseless as a touchstone 21 22
and such a person will lose no time in throwing her off;
for Wisdom is true to her name, 22 23
she is not accessible to many.
Listen, my child, and take my advice, 23 24
do not reject my counsel:
put your feet into her fetters, 24 25
Mt 11:29 and your neck into her collar;
offer your shoulder to her burden, 25 26
do not be impatient of her bonds;
Dt 6:5 court her with all your soul, 26 27
and with all your might keep in her ways;
search for her, track her down: she will reveal herself; 27 28
once you hold her, do not let her go.
4:11–12 Jr 6:16 Mt 11:29 For in the end you will find rest in her 28 29
and she will take the form of joy for you:
her fetters you will find a mighty defence, 29 30
Pr 1:9 her collars, a precious necklace.
Her yoke [e] will be a golden ornament, 30 31
and her bonds be purple ribbons;
you will wear her like a robe of honour, 31 32
Pr 4:9 you will put her on like a crown of joy.
If you wish it, my child, you can be taught; 32 33
8:8 Pr 13:20 apply yourself, and you will become intelligent.
If you love listening, you will learn, 33 34
if you pay attention, you will become wise.

35 34 Attend the gathering of elders;
if there is a wise man there, attach yourself to him.
35 Listen willingly to any discourse coming from God,
do not let wise proverbs escape you.
36 If you see a man of understanding, visit him early,
let your feet wear out his doorstep.
37 Reflect on the injunctions of the Lord, Ps 1:2
busy yourself at all times with his commandments.
He will strengthen your mind,
and the wisdom you desire will be granted you.

Miscellaneous advice

1 7 Do no evil, and evil will not befall you; Gn 4:7
2 shun wrong, and it will avoid you.
3 My child, do not sow in the furrows of wickedness, Gn 4:15,24 Jb 4:8 Pr 22:8 Ga 6:7–8
for fear you have to reap them seven times over.
4 Do not ask the Lord for the highest place, 13:9–10 Gn 3:12seq.;4:9 Pr 25:6–7 •Lk 18:11
or the king for a seat of honour.
5 Do not parade your uprightness before the Lord,
or your wisdom before the king.
6 Do not scheme to be appointed judge,
for fear you should not be strong enough to stamp out injustice,
for fear of being swayed by someone influential Lv 19:15
and so of risking the loss of your integrity.
7 Do not wrong the general body of citizens
and so lower yourself in popular esteem.
8 Do not be drawn to sin twice over,
for you will not go unpunished even once.
11 9 Do not say, 'God will be impressed by my numerous offerings; Pr 21:27 Am 5:21n
when I sacrifice to God Most High, he is bound to accept.'
9 10 Do not be hesitant in prayer; Jm 1:6
10 do not neglect to give alms. 3:30+
12 11 Do not laugh at someone who is sad of heart,
for he who brings low can lift up high. 1 S 2:7 Lk 1:52
13 12 Do not make up lies against your brother,
nor against a friend either.
14 13 Mind you tell no lies,
for no good can come of it. [a]
15 14 Do not talk too much at the gathering of elders,
and do not repeat yourself at your prayers. Mt 6:7
16 15 Do not shirk tiring jobs
or farm work, ordained by the Most High. Gn 3:17–19 Pr 24:27
17 16 Do not swell the ranks of sinners,
18 remember that the retribution will not delay. 5:7
19 17 Be very humble,
since the recompense for the godless is fire and worms. [b] Jdt 16:17 Is 66:24 Mk 9:48

b. Hebr. 'in your misfortune he leaves you'.

c. Usually interpreted 'for his friend is as dear to him as himself.' But equally probable is 'for his friend will be inevitably like himself, godfearing.' True piety is the guarantee of friendship.

d. 'cultivate her', lit. 'approach her'.

e. 'her yoke' following Hebr.; 'on her' Gk: probably a misreading on the part of the original translator ('*aleah* instead of '*ullah*).

7 **a.** lit. 'its continuity (?) is not for good'. Meaning uncertain but confirmed by Hebr. 'the result is not agreeable'.

b. Hebr., possibly inspired by Jb 25:6, only mentions worms. Worms and fire occur together in Is 66:24 (repeated later by Mk 9:48) and in Jdt 16:17.

Do not barter a friend away for the sake of profit, 18 20
nor a true brother for the gold of Ophir.
Do not turn against a wise and good wife;[c] 19 21
her gracious presence is worth more than gold.
3:25–33 Dt 24:14–15 Do not ill-treat a slave who is an honest worker, 20 22
or a wage-earner who is devoted to you.
Love an intelligent slave with all your heart,[d] 21 23
Ex 21:2 Dt 15:12–15 and do not deny such a slave his freedom.

Children

Pr 27:23 Have you cattle? Look after them; 22 24
if they are making you a profit, keep them.
30:1–13 Pr 13:24+ Have you children? Educate them, 23 25
from childhood make them bow the neck.[e]
42:9–11 Have you daughters? Take care of their bodies, 24 26
but do not be over-indulgent.
1 Co 7:36–38 Marry a daughter off, and you have finished a great work; 25 27
but give her to a man of sense.
Have you a wife to your liking? Do not turn her out; 26 28
but if you do not love her, never trust her.

Parents

Ex 20:12 Tb 4:4 With all your heart honour your father, 27 29
never forget the birthpangs of your mother.
Remember that you owe your birth to them; 28 30
how can you repay them for what they have done for you?[f]

Priests

With all your soul, fear the Lord 29 31
and revere his priests.[g]
With all your might love him who made you, 30 32
and do not abandon his ministers.
Fear the Lord and honour the priest 31 33
and give him the portion enjoined on you: 34
first-fruits, sacrifice of reparation, shoulder-gift,
sanctification sacrifice, first-fruits of the holy things. 35

3:30–4:10; 29:8–13 **The poor and afflicted**

And also give generously to the poor, 32 36
Dt 14:29 Ps 41:1 so that your blessing[h] may lack nothing.
Let your generosity extend to all the living, 33 37
do not withhold it even from the dead.[i]
37:12 Rm 12:15 Mt 25:35 Do not turn your back on those who weep, 34 38
but share the grief of the grief-stricken.
Do not shrink from visiting the sick; 35 39
in this way you will make yourself loved.
In everything you do, remember your end, 36 40
and you will never sin.[j]

Prudence and commonsense

8 Do not try conclusions with anyone influential, 1
in case you later fall into his clutches.
Pr 10:15 Do not quarrel with anyone rich, 2
in case he puts his weight against you;
for gold has destroyed many, 3
and has swayed the hearts of kings.

4 3 Do not argue with anyone argumentative,
do not pile wood on that fire.
5 4 Do not joke with anyone uncouth,
for fear of hearing your ancestors insulted. [a]

6 5 Do not revile a repentant sinner; Lv 19:32
remember that we all are guilty. [b] Mt 7:1–5par.
7 6 Do not despise anyone in old age; Rm 3:9–20
after all, some of us too are growing old. 1 Jn 1:8–10
8 7 Do not gloat over anyone's death;
remember that we all have to die.

Tradition [c]

9 8 Do not scorn the discourse of the wise, Pr 13:20
but make yourself familiar with their maxims,
10 since from these you will learn the theory
and the art of serving the great. Pr 14:35; 16:13seq.
11 9 Do not dismiss what the old men have to say,
for they too were taught by their fathers; [d]
12 from them you will learn how to think,
and the art of the timely answer. Col 4:6

Prudence

13 10 Do not kindle the coals of the sinner,
in case you scorch yourself in his blaze.
14 11 Refuse to be provoked by the insolent,
for fear that such a one try to trap you in your words.

14 12 Do not lend to anyone who is stronger than you are—
if you do lend, resign yourself to loss. 29:4

16 13 Do not stand surety beyond your means;
if you do stand surety, be prepared to pay up. 29:14–20 Pr 6:1a

17 14 Do not go to law with a judge,
since judgement will be given in his favour.

18 15 Do not go travelling with a rash man,
for fear he becomes burdensome to you; Pr 22:24–25
he will act as the whim takes him,
and you will both be ruined by his folly.
19 16 Do not argue with a quick-tempered man, Pr 15:18
do not go with him where there are no other people,

c. Or possibly 'Do not hesitate to marry a wise and good wife,' *see* v. 26.

d. lit. 'let your soul love': the translator seems to have misunderstood the Hebr. 'love as your soul', that is, 'love like yourself'.

e. Hebr. 'and betroth them from childhood'.

f. Hebr. omits these two vv.

g. Ben Sira reveres the liturgy and its ministers, *see* ch. 50. Here, reverence for the priest is juxtaposed with worship of the Lord in the same spirit as those texts to which v. 31 alludes: Ex 29:27; Lv 5:6 (sacrifices of reparation, or 'for sin'); 7:32; Nb 18:11–18 (first-fruits); Dt 18:3 (the shoulder-gift). The 'sacrifice of sanctification' (Hebr. 'of right behaviour') is probably the oblation of Lv 2:1–16.

h. The blessing given by God.

i. On the duty of giving decent burial to the dead, *see* 2 S 21:10–14; Tb 1:17–18; 12:12; Is 34:3; Jr 22:19. At a later period prayers and sacrifices were also offered for them, 2 M 12:38–46. But the Law seems to have forbidden certain non-Jewish rites connected with the dead, Dt 26:14, cf. Si 30:18; Ba 6:26. Ben Sira does not go into details.

j. 'do' Hebr; 'say' Gk. • Even if Ben Sira does not yet have a sure and clear idea of retribution after death, he several times stresses the importance of the hour of death, *see* 11:26–28. There could also be an advance in the Gk translation over the Hebr: the Hebr merely says 'in everything you do consider the end', that is, be careful of the consequences of your actions. By the more precise 'your end' the Gk clearly envisages the last things.

8 **a.** By the type of curse so common in the East.

b. 'guilty' Hebr.; 'in chastisements' Gk.

c. Ben Sira is aware that wisdom is a traditional matter and that in earlier days in Israel as in Egypt it had been the qualification for being a government official, being 'the art of serving the great'.

d. The rabbis think highly of tradition which they call 'the oral law'. *See* Dt 4:9; 11:19; Jb 8:8; 12:12; Ps 44:1; 78:3seq. Most books of the Bible formed part of the oral tradition before being committed to writing. This is notably true of the proverbs and maxims of the sages.

since blood counts for nothing in his eyes,
and where no help is to be had, he will strike you down.

Do not ask a fool for advice, 17 20
since he will not be able to keep a confidence.
In a stranger's presence do nothing that should be kept secret, 18 21
since you cannot tell what use the stranger will make of it.
Do not open your heart to all comers, 19 22
nor lay claim to their good offices. [e]

Women

Nb 5:14–15 **9** Do not be jealous of the wife you love, 1
do not teach her lessons in how to harm you.
Jg 16:4–21 Do not put yourself in a woman's hands 2
1 K 11:1–4 Pr 31:3 or she may come to dominate you completely.
Do not keep company with a prostitute, 3
Pr 23:27;29:3 in case you get entangled in her snares.
Do not dally with a singing girl, 4
Pr 7:6–27 in case you get caught by her wiles.
Jb 31:1 Do not stare at a pretty girl, 5
Mt 5:28 in case you and she incur the same punishment.
Pr 29:3 Do not give your heart to whores, 6
Lk 15:13 or you will ruin your inheritance.
Keep your eyes to yourself in the streets of a town, 7
do not prowl about its unfrequented quarters.
41:22–23 Turn your eyes away from a handsome woman, 8
Pr 2:16 do not stare at a beauty belonging to someone else.
Because of a woman's beauty, many have been undone; 9
this makes passion flare up like a fire.
Pr 5:2a Never sit down with a married woman, 9 12
or sit at table with her drinking wine, 13
in case you let your heart succumb to her
and you lose all self-control and slide to disaster.

Relations with people

Do not desert an old friend; 10 14
the new one will not be his match.
New friend, new wine; 15
when it grows old, you drink it with pleasure.

Ps 37:73 Do not envy the sinner his success; 11 16
you do not know how that will end.
Do not take pleasure in what pleases the godless; 12 17
remember they will not go unpunished here below. [a]

Keep your distance from the man who has the power to put to death, 13 18
and you will not be haunted by the fear of dying.
If you do approach him, make no false move, 19
or he may take your life.
Realise that you are treading among trip-lines, 20
that you are strolling on the battlements. [b]

Cultivate your neighbours to the best of your ability, 14 21
37:7–15 and consult with the wise.
For conversation seek the intelligent, 15 22
let all your discussions bear on the law of the Most High.
Have the upright for your table companions, 16 23
1:11;10:22 and let your pride be in fearing the Lord.

24 17 Work from skilled hands will earn its praise,
but a leader of the people must be skilful in words. [c]
25 18 A chatterbox is a terror to his town, 37:20
a loose talker is detested.

Government

1 **10** A sagacious ruler educates his people,
and he makes his subjects understand order.
2 As the magistrate is, so will his officials be,
as the governor is, so will be the inhabitants of his city.
3 An undisciplined king will be the ruin of his people,
a city owes its prosperity to the intelligence of its leading men.
4 The government of the earth is in the hands of the Lord, Jr 27:5
he sets the right leader over it at the right time. Pr 8:15–16 Is 11:2–5
5 Human success is in the hands of the Lord.
He invests the scribe with honour. Rm 13:1

Against pride

6 Do not resent your neighbour's every offence, Lv 19:18 Mt 5:21–24; 18:21–22
and never act in a fit of passion.

7 Pride is hateful to God and humanity,
and injustice is abhorrent to both.

8 Sovereignty passes from nation to nation
because of injustice, arrogance and money.

9 What has dust and ashes to pride itself on? 17:32 Gn 2:7;18:27
10b Even in life its entrails are repellent. [a]
12 10 A long illness makes a fool of the doctor;
a king today is a corpse tomorrow. [b]
13 11 For in death the portion of all alike will be
insects, wild animals and worms. Jb 17:14 Is 14:11

14 12 The first stage of pride is to desert the Lord Dt 8:14
14 and to turn one's heart away from one's Maker.
13 Since the first stage of pride is sin,
whoever clings to it will pour forth filth.
16 This is why the Lord inflicts unexpected punishments
on such people, utterly destroying them.
17 14 The Lord has turned mighty princes off their thrones 1 S 2:4–8 Lk 1:52
and seated the humble there instead.
18 15 The Lord has plucked up the proud [c] by the roots, 33:12 Dn 2:35
and planted the lowly in their place.
19 16 The Lord has overthrown the lands of the nations Ws 11:21–22 Is 40:15–17
and destroyed them to the very foundations of the earth.
20 17 Sometimes he has taken them away and destroyed them
21 and blotted out their memory from the earth.

e. Hebr. 'and do not turn happiness away'.

9 **a.** 'here below', lit. 'to Sheol'. On the problem of earthly retribution, *see* pp. 750–1.
b. And thus a target for the arrows of the enemy. But the text is uncertain. Hebr. 'on nets'.
c. This maxim draws a parallel between the workman, whose social value lies in his manual dexterity, and a head of State, who enforces his wishes by his eloquence. But the text is uncertain. Hebr. 'Right is obscured by skilful people and the leader of the people is skilful in speaking.'

10 **a.** Text emended following Syr. Hex. and commentaries; Gk is obscure ('a being who, living, throws (?) his intestines'); Hebr. corrupt and unintelligible.
b. The text seems to mean that it is useless for people to try to keep other people alive, death being inevitable, but cf. ch. 38.
c. 'the proud' conj.; 'the nations' Gk (both words look very similar in written Hebr. in which v. 15 is missing); 'the proud nations' Lat.

Pride was not created for human beings, 18 22
nor furious rage for those born of woman.

Persons deserving honour

Jr 9:22–23
1 Co 1:26–31
2 Co 10:17
Jm 1:9seq.
What race deserves honour? The human race. 19 23
What race deserves honour? Those who fear the Lord.
What race deserves contempt? The human race.
What race deserves contempt? Those who break the Law.
A leader is honoured by his brothers, 20 24
and those who fear the Lord are honoured by him. [d]
The rich, the noble, the poor, 22 25
9.16 let them pride themselves on fearing the Lord.
It is not right to despise one who is poor but intelligent, 23 26
and it is not good to honour one who is a sinner.
Magnate, magistrate, potentate, all are to be honoured, 24 27
but none is greater than the one who fears the Lord.
Pr 17:2 A wise slave will have free men waiting on him, 25 28
and the enlightened will not complain. [e]

Frankness and humility

Lk 17:10 Do not try to be smart when you do your work, 26 29
do not put on airs when you are in difficulties.
Better the hardworking who has plenty of everything, 27 30
Pr 12:9 than the pretentious at a loss for a meal.
Jr 9:22
Rm 12:3
1 Co 1:31
My child, be modest in your self-esteem, 28 31
and value yourself at your proper worth.
Who can justify one who inflicts injuries on himself, 29 32
or respect one who is full of self-contempt?
11:1 The poor is honoured for wit, 30 33
and the rich for wealth.
Honoured in poverty, how much the more in wealth! 31 34
Dishonoured in wealth, how much the more in poverty!

The deceptiveness of appearances

11 Wisdom enables the poor to stand erect, 1
and gives to the poor a place with the great.

1 S 16:7
2 Co 10:10–11
Do not praise anyone for good looks, 2
nor dislike anyone for mere appearance.

Small among winged creatures is the bee 3
but her produce is the sweetest of the sweet.

[a]Do not grow proud when people honour you; 4
for the works of the Lord are wonderful
but hidden from human beings. [b]

10:14
Qo 4:14;
10:6–7
Many monarchs have been made to sit on the ground, [c] 5
and the person nobody thought of has worn the crown.
Many influential people have been utterly disgraced, 6
and prominent people have fallen into the power of others.

Deliberation and reflection

Do not find fault before making thorough enquiry; 7
first reflect, then give a reprimand.
Pr 18:13 Listen before you answer, 8
and do not interrupt a speech before it is finished.

9 Do not wrangle about something that does not concern you,
do not interfere in the quarrels of sinners.

10 My child, do not take on a great amount of business; 38:24
if you multiply your interests, you are bound to suffer for it;
hurry as fast as you can, yet you will never arrive, [d]
nor will you escape by running away.
11 Some people work very hard at top speed, Ps 127:1–2
only to find themselves falling further behind. Pr 11:24;21:5

Trust in God alone

12 Or there is the slow kind of person, needing help,
poor in possessions and rich in poverty; Zp 2:3d
and the Lord turns a favourable eye on him,
lifts him out of his wretched condition,
13 and enables him to hold his head high,
thus causing general astonishment.
14 Good and bad, life and death, Jb 1:21;2:10
poverty and wealth, all come from the Lord. [e] Is 45:7
17 To the devout [f] the Lord's gift remains constant,
and his favour will be there to lead them for ever.
18 Others grow rich by pinching and scraping, Jb 27:16–23
Ps 49:17–18
and here is the reward they receive for it: Qo 2:21–23
19 although they say, 'Now I can sit back Lk 12:16–21
and enjoy the benefit of what I have got,'
20 they do not know how long this will last;
they will have to leave their goods to others and die. [g]
21 20 Stick to your job, work hard at it [h]
and grow old at your work.
22 21 Do not admire the achievements of sinners, 9:11
Pr 3:31; 23:17
trust the Lord and mind your own business;
23 since it is a trifle in the eyes of the Lord,
in a moment, suddenly to make the poor rich.
24 22 The blessing of the Lord is the reward of the devout,
in a moment God brings his blessing to flower.
25 23 Do not say, 'What are my needs, Mt 6:25–26
how much shall I have in the future?'
26 24 And do not say, 'I am self-sufficient, 5:1
Lk 12:15–21
what disaster can affect me now?'
27 25 In prosperous times, disasters are forgotten 18:25
Jn 16:21
and in times of disaster, no one remembers prosperity. [i]
28 26 Yet it is a trifle for the Lord on the day someone dies
to repay him as his conduct deserves.

d. Gk 248 adds [21] 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of advancement, but the beginning of rejection is stubbornness and pride.'

e. Cf. Paul's remarks on slavery, Ga 3:28; Col 3:11; Phm 16.

11 a. Hebr. 'Do not jeer at anyone in rags, do not mock anyone who is in trouble.'

b. i.e. unseen and unforeseeable. One turn of the wheel and all conditions are reversed. Cf. 1 S 2:8; Jb 12:17–19; Ps 113:7. This is exemplified in the sayings that follow.

c. Or 'have been put on the pavement' (having reigned); which would give an antithetic parallel, but the Hebr. 'many humbled persons have ascended thrones' supports the reading adopted here.

d. Hebr. 'if you do not run you will not achieve, if you do not seek, you will not find.'

e. Hebr., Gk 248, Lat. and Syr. add [15] 'Wisdom, understanding, and knowledge of the Law come from the Lord, charity and the doing of good works come from him . [16]Folly and darkness were created for sinners; for those who take pleasure in evil, evil grows old.'

f. 'devout' Gk; 'upright' Hebr., as also v. 22; 12:2; 13:17.

g. Possibly this v. was the inspiration for the parable in Lk 12:16–21 (note particularly v. 19). The idea is exactly the same: the uselessness of possessions painfully amassed and of which the owner will be stripped on the day he dies.

h. 'your job' Hebr.; 'your contract' Gk. • 'work hard at it' var.; 'be happy at it' Hebr., cf. Qo 2:24; 3:13.

i. Or perhaps 'Disasters (to come) are forgotten . . . no one remembers (the possibility of future) prosperity.' Envisaging the future, the v. would be more congruent with the context, but the translation would be somewhat forced.

A moment's adversity, and pleasures are forgotten; 27 29
1:13 in a person's last hour his deeds will stand revealed.
Call no one fortunate before his death; 28 30
it is by his end that someone will be known. [j]

Distrust the wicked

Do not bring everyone home with you, 29 31
for many are the traps of the crafty.
Like a captive partridge in a cage, so is the heart of the proud: 30 32
like a spy he watches for your downfall, [k]
ever on the look-out, turning good into bad 31 33
and finding fault with what is praiseworthy.
A hearthful of glowing coals starts from a single spark, 32 34
Pr 1:11 and the sinner lurks for the chance to spill blood.
Beware of a scoundrel and his evil contrivances, 33 35
in case he puts a smear on you for ever.
Give a home to a stranger and he will start trouble 34 36
and estrange you from your own family.

Mt 5:43–48
Lk 14:12–14 ### Rules for doing good

12 If you mean to do a kindness, choose the right person, 1
then your good deeds will not be wasted.
Do good to someone devout, and you will be rewarded, 2
Dt 14:29 if not by that person, then certainly by the Most High.
No good will come to one who persists in evil, 3
or who refuses to give alms. [a]
Give to the devout, 4
do not go to the help of a sinner. [b]
Do good to the humble, 5
give nothing to the godless.
Refuse him bread, do not give him any,
it might make him stronger than you are;
then you would be repaid evil twice over
for all the good you had done him.
Mt 5:45
Lk 6:35 For the Most High himself detests sinners, 6
and will repay the wicked with what they deserve.
Give to the good, 7
and do not go to the help of a sinner.

6:5–17 ### True and false friends

In prosperity you cannot always tell a true friend, 8
Pr 17:17;19:4 but in adversity you cannot mistake an enemy.
When someone is doing well that person's enemies are sad, [c] 9
when someone is doing badly, even a friend will keep at a distance.
Pr 26:24–26 Do not ever trust an enemy; 10
as bronze tarnishes, so does an enemy's malice.
Even if he behaves humbly and comes bowing and scraping, 11
maintain your reserve and be on your guard against him.
Behave towards him as if you were polishing a mirror,
you will find that his tarnish cannot last. [d]
Do not stand him beside you 12
in case he thrusts you out and takes your place.
Do not seat him on your right,
or he will be after your position,
and then you will remember what I have said
and sadly admit that I was right.

13 Who feels sorry for a snake-charmer bitten by a snake,
or for those who take risks with savage animals?—
13b 14 just so for one who consorts with a sinner,
and becomes an accomplice in his sins.
14 15 He will stay with you for a while,
but if you once give way he will press his advantage.
15 16 An enemy may have sweetness on his lips, Pr 26:24–26
and in his heart a scheme to throw you into the ditch. Jr 9:7
16 An enemy may have tears in his eyes,
but if he gets a chance there can never be too much blood for him.
17 17 If you meet with misfortune, you will find him there before you,
and, pretending to help you, he will trip you up.
19 18 He will wag his head and clap his hands, [e]
he will whisper a lot and his expression will change.

Mix with your equals

1 13 Whoever touches pitch will be defiled,
and anyone who associates with the proud will come
to be like them.
2 Do not try to carry a burden too heavy for you,
do not associate with someone more powerful and wealthy
than yourself.
3 Why put the clay pot next to the iron cauldron?
It will only break when they bang against each other. [a]
3 3 The rich does wrong and takes a high line; Pr 18:23
the poor is wronged and has to beg for pardon.
5 4 If you are useful the rich will exploit you,
if you go bankrupt he will desert you.
6 5 Are you well off?—he will live with you,
he will clean you out without a single qualm.
7 6 Does he need you?—he will hoodwink you,
smile at you and raise your hopes;
he will speak politely to you
and say, 'Is there anything you need?'
8 7 He will make you feel small at his dinner-parties Pr 23:1–3
and, having cleaned you out two or three times over,
will end by laughing at you.
Afterwards, when he sees you, he will avoid you
and shake his head about you.

11 8 Take care you are not hoodwinked
and thus humiliated through your own stupidity. [b]
12 9 When an influential person invites you, show reluctance,
and he will press his invitation all the more.

j. 'by his end' Hebr.; 'in his children' Gk. • These three vv. (*see* 7:36) express the author's conviction that when a man dies, his merits and faults will be revealed by a special judgement. He does not, however, expatiate on the form that retribution will take, nor say whether or not it will be eternal.

k. Hebr. 'he is in ambush to rend him like a wolf.' Like a decoy bird placed in a trap, the heart of the proud lures his fellow into the snares of sin.

12 a. Hebr. 'No profit for the one who does a kindness to the wicked; he has not even done a good action.'

b. Lat. adds 'for on the godless and the sinful, he (God) will inflict a punishment, reserving them for the day of punishment. [5]Give to the man who is good and do not receive the sinner.' In contrast, *see* Mt 5:43–48; Lk 6:27–36; Rm 12:20. St Augustine, embarrassed by this injunction, attempted to soften it by commenting: 'Do not give to the sinner as sinner, give to him as man.'

c. Hebr. 'even the man who hates him is his friend' is more apt for the parallelism.

d. Hebr. 'behave towards him as (towards) someone who reveals a secret; he will not be able to hurt you, and remember the consequences of jealousy.'

e. Wagging the head: a gesture of derision, Jb 16:4; Ps 22:7; 109:25; *see* Mt 27:39. For 'clapping hands' *see* Lm 2:15; Ezk 25:6; Na 3:19.

13 a. Classic comparison, found earlier in Aesop.

b. 'through your own stupidity' Lat., Syr.; 'through your own enjoyment' Gk, Hebr. 'Beware of being too insolent (?), do not imitate fools.'

Do not thrust yourself forward, in case you are pushed aside, 10 13
but do not stand aloof, or you will be overlooked. [c]
Do not affect to treat him as an equal, 11 14
do not trust his flow of words;
since all this talking is expressly meant to test you,
under cover of geniality he will be weighing you up.

Pitiless is anyone who retails gossip; 12 15
he will not spare you either blows or chains.
Be wary, take very great care, 13 16
because you are walking with your own downfall. [d]

Every living thing loves its own sort, 15 18
and every man his fellow.
Every creature mixes with its kind, 16 19
and human beings stick to their own sort.
2 Co 6:14–15 How can wolf and lamb agree?— 17 21
Just so with sinner and devout.
What peace can there be between hyena and dog? 18 22
And what peace between rich and poor? [e]
Wild desert donkeys are the prey of lions; 19 23
so too, the poor is the quarry of the rich.
The proud thinks humility abhorrent; 20 24
so too, the rich abominates the poor.
Pr 19:4,7 When the rich stumbles he is supported by friends; 21 25
when the poor falls, his friends push him away. [f]
Pr 14:20 When the rich slips, there are many hands to catch him, 22 26
if he talks nonsense he is congratulated.
The poor slips, and is blamed for it, 27
he may talk good sense, but no room is made for him.
The rich speaks and everyone stops talking, 23 28
and then they praise his discourse to the skies.
The poor speaks and people say, 'Who is this?' 29
and if he stumbles, they trip him up yet more.

Wealth is good where there is no sin, 24 30
poverty is evil, the godless say. [g]

Pr 15:13 A person's heart moulds his expression 25 31
whether for better or worse.
Happy heart, cheerful expression; 26 32
but wearisome work, inventing proverbs. [h]

True happiness

19:16;25:8 **14** Blessed is anyone who has not sinned [a] in speech 1
and who needs feel no remorse for sins.
Blessed is anyone whose conscience does not reproach him 2
and who has never given up hope.

Qo 5:9;6:2 **Envy and greed**

Wealth is not the right thing for the niggardly, 3
and what use are possessions to the covetous?
Jb 27:16–17 Whoever hoards by stinting himself is hoarding for others, 4
Pr 13:22 and others will live sumptuously on his riches.
Lk 12:16–21

If someone is mean to himself, whom does he benefit? 5
He does not even enjoy what is his own.

6 No one is meaner than the person who is mean to himself, Pr 11:17
this is how his wickedness repays him.
7 If he does any good, he does it unintentionally,
and in the end he himself reveals his wickedness.
8 Wicked the person who has an envious eye,
averting his face, [b] and careless of others' lives.

9 The eye of the grasping is not content with what he has, Ws 6:23
greed [c] shrivels up the soul.

10 The miser is grudging of bread,
there is famine at his table.

11 My child, treat yourself as well as you can afford,
and bring worthy offerings to the Lord.
12 Remember that death will not delay,
and that you have never seen Sheol's contract. [d] Nb 16:33
13 Be kind to your friend before you die,
treat him as generously as you can afford.
14 Do not refuse yourself the good things of today, Qo 2:24
do not let your share of what is lawfully desired pass you by.
15 Will you not have to leave your fortune to another,
and the fruit of your labour to be divided by lot?
16 Give and receive, enjoy yourself—
17 there are no pleasures to be found in Sheol. Qo 9:10
18 17 Like clothes, every body will wear out,
the age-old law is, 'Everyone must die.'
19 18 Like foliage growing on a bushy tree,
some leaves falling, others growing,
20 so are the generations of flesh and blood: Qo 1:4
one dies, another is born.
21 19 Every achievement rots away and perishes, Qo 9:6 ↗Rv 14:13
and with it goes its author. [e]

The happiness of the sage

22 20 Blessed is anyone who meditates on wisdom Pr 8:32–35
and reasons with intelligence,
23 21 who studies her ways in his heart
and ponders her secrets. [f]

c. A good example of Ben Sira's moderation and irony. The words of Jesus in Lk 14:8–10, though at first sight very similar, are neither saying the same thing, nor are they saying it for the same reason.

d. Gk 248 adds [14a]'When you hear that in your sleep, wake up; love the Lord throughout your life and pray to him for your salvation.'

e. For Ben Sira, the precept to frequent only one's equals is an extension of the harmony of nature, and therefore congruent with the divine will. His condemnation of wealth is not absolute, *see* v. 24; his intention is to prevent the poor from being led astray by the wealthy and thus incurring the risk of being crushed.

f. This v. is presumably to be understood metaphorically; 'stumbles' can mean 'say silly things' (Hebr. 'speaks') cf. 14:1, and what follows shows that talking is the topic in hand.

g. Or perhaps 'is commensurate with impiety' (Hebr. 'is commensurate with insolence'). Wealth is not in itself bad, but merely dangerous.

h. It is not easy to see the connection between this line and the previous one, but the text is uncertain. Hebr. 'meditations and preoccupations: sad thoughts'.

14 a. lit. 'has not slipped'. Many Psalms similarly celebrate the happiness of the pure in heart, Ps 1; 32; 119; of the wise, Ps 41; of the devout, Ps 128, as opposed to those who are happy' by the world's standards. The passage anticipates the Beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount, Mt 5:1–12.

b. From those who need his help.

c. 'greed', lit. 'the evil eye' conj.; 'bad iniquity' Gk (confusion between *'ayin* and *'awon*, but the Hebr. text we know is different).

d. Probably the decree assigning the date of death, cf. Is 28:15,18.

e. Hebr. 'All men's deeds are destined to perish and the works of his hands will follow him,' i.e. into corruption. Rv 14:13 transforms this notion: a person's works follow him into the glory of a new life. Whereas Qoheleth finds this perplexing and even outrageous, Ben Sira treats it as a lesson in detachment.

f. Cf. Ps 119, especially vv. 15,23,148, on the happiness derived from meditating on the Law. Here the object of study is wisdom, which is to be found notably in the proverbs and maxims of the sages.

He pursues her like a hunter 22
and lies in wait by her path;
he peeps in at her windows 23 24
and listens at her doors;
he lodges close to her house 24 25
and fixes his peg in her walls: [a]
he pitches his tent at her side 25
and lodges in an excellent lodging;
he sets his children in her shade 26
and camps beneath her branches;
he is sheltered by her from the heat 27
and in her glory [b] he makes his home.

15 Whoever fears the Lord will act like this, 1
and whoever grasps the Law [a] will obtain wisdom.
She will come to meet him like a mother, 2
Ws 8:2 and receive him like a virgin bride.
She will give him the bread of understanding to eat 3
24:19–22 Pr 9:5 and the water of wisdom to drink.
Jn 4:1a He will lean on her and will not fall, 4
he will rely on her and not be put to shame.
Ws 8:10–15 She will raise him high above his neighbours, 5
and in full assembly she will open his mouth.
He will find happiness and a crown of joy, 6
he will inherit an everlasting name.
Fools will not gain possession of her, 7
nor will sinners set eyes on her.
Pr 8:13 She stands remote from pride, 8
and liars cannot call her to mind.
Praise is unseemly in a sinner's mouth, 9
since it has not been put there by the Lord.
For praise should be uttered only in wisdom, 10
and the Lord himself then prompts it.

Freedom of choice

Gn 3:12 ↗Jm 1:13–15 Do not say, 'The Lord was responsible for my sinning,' 11
for he does not do [b] what he hates.
Gn 3:13 Do not say, 'It was he who led me astray,' 12
for he has no use for a sinner.
The Lord hates all that is foul, 13
and no one who fears him will love it either.
He himself made human beings in the beginning, 14
and then left them free to make their own decisions. [c]
If you choose, you will keep the commandments 15 16
and so be faithful to his will.
Dt 11:26–28 He has set fire and water before you; 16 17
put out your hand to whichever you prefer.
Dt 30:15–20 Jr 21:8 A human being has life and death before him; 17 18
whichever he prefers will be given him.
For vast is the wisdom of the Lord; 18 19
Ps 33:13–18 he is almighty and all-seeing.
Ps 34:15 His eyes are on those who fear him, 19 20
he notes every human action.
He never commanded anyone to be godless, 20 21
he has given no one permission to sin.

The fate of the obstinate

1 **16** Do not long for a brood of worthless children, Pr 17:21;19:13
and do not take pleasure in godless sons.
2 However many you have, take no pleasure in them,
unless the fear of the Lord lives among them.
3 Do not count on their having long life,
do not put too much faith in their number;
4 for better have one than a thousand,
better die childless than have children who are godless. [a] Ws 4:1
5 4 One person of sense can populate a city,
but a race of lawless people will be destroyed. Ws 3:19
6 5 My eyes have seen many such things,
my ears have heard things even more impressive.
7 6 Fire is kindled in a sinful society, Nb 11:1; 16:1–30
Retribution blazes in a rebellious nation.
8 7 God did not pardon the giants of old Gn 6:1–7
who, confident in their strength, had rebelled.
9 8 He did not spare the people with whom Lot lived; Gn 19:1–29
he abhorred them, rather, for their pride.
10 9 He was pitiless to the nation of perdition [b]—
those people who gloried in their sins—
11 10 as also to the six hundred thousand men on the march, 46:8 Ex 12:37
who had banded together in their obstinacy. [c]
12 11 And had there been only one man stubborn,
it would have been amazing had he escaped unpunished,
since mercy and wrath alike belong to the Lord 5:6 Ex 34:6–7
who is mighty to forgive and to pour out wrath.
13 12 As great as his mercy, so is his severity;
he judges each person as his deeds deserve:
14 13 the sinner will not escape with his ill-gotten gains
nor the patience of the devout go for nothing.
15 14 He takes note of every charitable action, [d]
and everyone is treated as he deserves. [e]

Certainty of retribution

16 17 Do not say, 'I shall hide from the Lord; Ps 139:7–12 Jr 23:24 Am 9:2–3
who is going to remember me up there?
17 I shall not be noticed among so many people;
what am I in the immensity of creation?' [f]

g. To pitch his tent there. Several images are used here for the search for Wisdom: the hunter who pursues her, the spy who tries to overhear what she is saying, the nomad who camps in her shadow.

h. This 'glory' (Hebr. 'refuge') possibly refers to the cloud which manifested the presence of Yahweh, cf. Ex 16:10; 24:16f, the *shekinah* ('presence') of the rabbinical writings.

15 a. Jr 2:8 speaks of four official functions: priest, lawyer, prince, prophet. The man who 'grasps the Law' belongs to the second of these classes: he is the 'scribe' or 'doctor of the Law' who became increasingly important in Judaism, *see* Ezr 7:6c.

b. 'he does not do' Hebr. and one Gk MS; 'do not do' Gk.

c. This v. is often quoted in support of the doctrine of free will. The Hebr. '. . . he has handed him over to his enemy and left him to his own devices' seems more applicable, however, to the origin of evil. V. 15, on the other hand, really does affirm the freedom of the will.

16 a. After 'number', Hebr. adds 'for they will not have a happy future', and after 'one': 'doing the will of God'.

b. The former population of Canaan.

c. Recalling Ex 12:37 or Nb 11:21. These men died in the desert and did not reach Canaan, Nb 14:20–33.

d. Hebr. 'There is a wage for everyone who practises virtue.'

e. Gk 248, Hebr. and Syr. add [15] 'God made Pharaoh obstinate so that he did not acknowledge him, to make his works known under heaven. [16] His mercy shows itself to all creation, he divided his light and his darkness among men' (cf. 12:6 and Mt 5:45).

f. As Adam and Cain tried to hide from the sight of God, Gn 3:10; 4:9.

For see, the sky and the heavens above the sky, 18
the abyss and the earth shake at his visitation.
Jb 37:1–7 Ps 18:7 The mountains and earth's foundations alike 19
quail and tremble when he looks at them.
But to all this no one gives thought. 20
Who keeps his movements in mind?
The storm wind itself is invisible, 21
Rm 11:33 and most of what he does goes undetected. [g]
'Who will report whether justice has been done? 22
Who will be watching? The covenant is remote!' [h]
Such are the thoughts of the person of little sense, 23
stupid, misguided, cherishing his folly.

Human beings in the creation

Listen to me, my child, and learn knowledge, 24
Pr 1:23 and give your whole mind to my words. [i]
I shall expound discipline methodically 25
and proclaim knowledge with precision.

Gn 1 When God created [j] his works in the beginning, 26
he assigned them their places as soon as they were made.
42:21 He determined his works for all time, 27
from their origins to their distant generations.
They know neither hunger nor weariness,
and they never desert their duties.
Not one has ever got in the way of another, 28
and they will never disobey his word. [k] 29
And afterwards the Lord looked at the earth, 29 30
and filled it with his good things.
Gn 1:24–25 He covered its surface with every kind of animal, 30 31
Gn 3:19 Ps 104:29 and to it they will return.

Gn 2:7 Qo 3:20;12:7 **17** The Lord fashioned human beings from the earth, [a] 1
to consign them back to it.
Gn 6:3 He gave them so many days and so much time, 2
Gn 1:28+ Ws 9:2–3 he gave them authority over everything on earth.
He clothed them in strength, like himself, 3
Gn 1:27 and made them in his own image.
Gn 9:2 Ps 8:6–8 He filled all living things with dread of human beings, 4
making them masters over beasts and birds. [b]
He made them a tongue, eyes and ears, 6 5
and gave them a heart to think with. [c]
He filled them with knowledge and intelligence, 7 6
Gn 2:17 and showed them what was good and what evil.
He put his own light in their hearts 8 7
Ws 13:1 Rm 1:19–20 to show them the magnificence of his works, [d]
so that they would praise his holy name 10 8
as they told of his magnificent works.
He set knowledge before them, 11 9
he endowed them with the law of life.
DT 5:2–3 Ps 147:19 He established an eternal covenant with them, 12 10
Dt 30:15–20 and revealed his judgements [e] to them.
Ex 34:10seq. Their eyes saw the majesty of his glory, 13 11
Dt 4:11–12 and their ears heard the glory of his voice.
He said to them, 'Beware of all wrong-doing'; 14
Ex 20:12–17 he gave each a commandment concerning his neighbour. 12

The divine judge

13 15 Their ways are always under his eye,
they cannot be hidden from his sight. [f]
14 17 Over each nation he has set a governor,
15 but Israel is the Lord's own portion. [g] Dt 7:6b
16 19 Their actions are all as plain as the sun to him,
and his eyes rest constantly on their conduct.
17 20 Their iniquities are not hidden from him,
all their sins are before the Lord. [h]
18 22 Almsgiving is like a signet ring to him,
he cherishes generosity in a person like the pupil of an eye. [i]
19 23 One day he will rise and reward them,
he will repay their deserts on their own heads. [j]
20 24 But to those who repent he permits return,
and he encourages those who have lost hope.

Exhortation to repentance

21 25 Return to the Lord and renounce your sins,
22 plead before his face, stop offending him.
23 26 Come back to the Most High, turn away from iniquity [k] Ps 34:14
and hold all that is foul in abhorrence.
26 27 Who is going to praise the Most High in Sheol Ps 6:5;115:17
if we do not glorify him while we are alive?
27 28 The dead can praise no more than those who do not exist,
only those with life and health can praise the Lord.
28 29 How great is the mercy of the Lord, Ps 111:4
his pardon for those who turn to him!
29 30 For we cannot have everything,
human beings are not immortal.
30 31 What is brighter than the sun? And yet it fades.
Flesh and blood think of nothing but evil. Gn 6:5;8:21 Jb 15:14–16
31 32 He surveys the armies of the lofty sky, [l]
and all of us are only dust and ashes. 10:9 Gn 18:27

The greatness of God

1 2 **18** He who lives for ever has created the sum of things.
The Lord alone will be found just. [a] Ps 51:4 Rm 3:4

g. Hebr. [20] 'Nor does he take notice of me; who is concerned about my ways? [21] Should I sin, no eye sees me, if I tell a hidden lie, who knows of it?' The discourse of the sinner continues on these lines to v. 22, vv. 18 and 19 being parenthetical.

h. The objection seems to be that retribution delays and is not certain. On the meaning of 'covenant' here, *see* 14:2d. • Hebr. for this line has 'What hope is there, for the decree is far away?'

i. The scribe is speaking here, not Wisdom personified.

j. '(God) created' *en ktisei* conj. following Hebr.; Gk *en krisei* 'in the judgement'.

k. Ben Sira is referring to the regular motions of the heavenly bodies.

17 a. The author follows the order of Gn 1: creation of stars, plants and animals, human beings.

b. Gk 248 adds [5] 'They received the use of the five powers from the Lord, a share of intelligence was given to them as a sixth, and as a seventh, reason—interpreter of his powers.' This appears to be a gloss of Stoic origin.

c. 'he made them' *wayyitzer* conj.; Gk *diaboulion* = *weyetzer* (Hebr.) 'council'. The Israelites believed the heart to be the seat of reason.

d. 'light', lit. 'eye'. • At the end, Gk 248 adds [9] 'and privileged them to proclaim his marvels for ever'.

e. The Mosaic Law: the following verses refer to the revelation on Sinai.

f. Gk 248 adds [16] 'From childhood their ways lead to evil and they cannot change that heart of stone for a heart of flesh [17] for in dividing the nations of the whole earth . . .' Possibly a gloss derived from Ezk 11:19; 36:26, and asserting human inability to do good. The text itself seems less pessimistic.

g. Gk 248 adds [18] 'His first-born whom he rears with discipline, bestowing on him the light of his love, not deserting him'. • In the days of Ben Sira, Israel had no king. Furthermore, opposition to monarchical government, already marked in ancient times (1 S 8), had all the more grounds for existence at the time of the Maccabaean revival.

h. Gk 248 adds [21] 'But the Lord is good and knows his creatures, he does not destroy or desert them, but rather spares them.'

i. Gk 248 adds 'granting repentance to his sons and daughters'.

j. When and what the retribution will be is not clear.

k. Gk 248 adds 'for he will bring you out of darkness to lead you to the light of salvation.'

l. Probably the stars, cf. 16:26–29; Is 24:21.

18 a. Gk 248 adds 'and there are no others but him.' [3] 'He guides the world with a turn of the hand, all things obey his will; for he is king of all and by his power separates sacred things from profane.'

He has given no one the power to proclaim his works to the end, 4
and who can fathom his magnificent deeds?
Who can assess his magnificent strength, 5
and who can go further and tell all of his mercies?
42:21 Nothing can be added to them, nothing subtracted, 6
it is impossible to fathom the marvels of the Lord.
Ps 139:17seq. When someone finishes he is only beginning, 7 6c
and when he stops he is as puzzled as ever. [b]

The nothingness of human beings

Ps 8:4 What is a human being, what purpose does he serve? 8 7
What is good and what is bad for him?
17:2 The length of his life: a hundred years at most. 9 8
Ps 90:10 Like a drop of water from the sea, or a grain of sand, 10
such are these few years compared with eternity.
This is why the Lord is patient with them 11 9
and pours out his mercy on them.
He sees and recognises how wretched their end is, 12 10
and so he makes his forgiveness the greater. 11
Human compassion extends to neighbours, 13 12
but the Lord's compassion extends to everyone;
rebuking, correcting and teaching, 13
bringing them back as a shepherd brings his flock. [c]
He has compassion on those who accept correction, 14
and who fervently search for his judgements.

The art of giving [d]

My child, do not temper your favours with blame 15
nor any of your gifts with words that hurt.
Does not dew relieve the heat? 16
In the same way a word is worth more than a gift.
Why surely, a word is better than a good present, 17
but a generous person is ready with both.
A fool will offer nothing but insult, 18
and a grudging gift makes the eyes smart.

Reflection and foresight

Learn before you speak, 19
take care of yourself before you fall ill.
Examine yourself before judgement comes, 20
and on the day of visitation you will be acquitted.
Humble yourself before you fall ill, [e] 21
repent as soon as the sin is committed.
Dt 23:22–24 Let nothing prevent your discharging a vow in good time, 22
Qo 5:3 and do not wait till death to set matters right.
Pr 20:25 Prepare yourself before making a vow, 23
Qo 5:1–6 and do not be like someone who tempts the Lord.
Bear in mind the retribution of the last days, 24
the time of vengeance when God averts his face. [f]
In a time of plenty remember times of famine, 25
think of poverty and want when you are rich.
The time slips by between dawn and dusk, 26
everything passes quickly for the Lord.
The wise will be cautious in everything, 27
in sinful times [g] will take care not to offend.

28 Every person of sense recognises wisdom
and will respect anyone who has found her.
29 Those who understand sayings have toiled for their wisdom
and have poured out accurate maxims. [h]

Self-control

30 Do not be governed by your passions,
restrain your desires.
31 If you allow yourself to satisfy your desires,
this will make you the laughing-stock of your enemies.
32 Do not indulge in luxurious living,
do not get involved in such society. [i]
33 Do not beggar yourself by banqueting on credit Pr 23:20–21
when there is nothing in your pocket.
1 19 A drunken workman will never grow rich,
and one who makes light of small matters will gradually sink.
2 Wine and women corrupt intelligent men, Pr 31:3–5
Ho 4:11
the customer of whores loses all sense of shame.
3 Grubs and worms will have him as their legacy, Pr 5:5;7:
26seq.; 9:18
and the man who knows no shame will lose his life. [a]

Against loose talk

4 Being too ready to trust shows shallowness of mind,
and sinning harms the sinner.
5 Taking pleasure in evil [b] earns condemnation;
6 by hating gossip one avoids evil.
7 Never repeat what you are told
and you will come to no harm;
8 whether to friend or foe, do not talk about it, Pr 25:9–10
unless it would be sinful not to, do not reveal it;
9 you would be heard out, then mistrusted,
and in due course you would be hated.
10 Have you heard something? Let it die with you.
Courage! It will not burst you!
11 A fool will suffer birthpangs over a piece of news,
like a woman labouring with child.
12 Like an arrow stuck in the flesh of the thigh,
so is a piece of news inside a fool.

Do not trust everything you hear

13 Question your friend, he may have done nothing at all;
and if he has done anything, he will not do it again.

b. When a human being has exhausted his efforts to know God and his wonders, he has not even started to understand. These observations recall those of Qo, but the conclusion drawn is entirely different; for Ben Sira, the weakness of a human being serves only to emphasise the greatness of God.

c. Cf. 2 M 6:13–16; Ws 12:19–22. Later Judaism was concerned to justify instances of divine punishment. God's all-embracing mercy in its instructive aspect, emphasised here (13[c.d]), appears for the first time in the OT at this point.

d. At this point the discourse on good behaviour is resumed. The disquisition on the magnanimity of God introduces a first collection of maxims dealing with human generosity.

e. Sickness is often represented as punishment for sin, amendment and repentance as a means of preventing sickness.

f. The day of death, cf. 1:13, rather than the day of judgement. Ben Sira is not much preoccupied with eschatology.

g. i.e. days when sin appeals even to the wise.

h. Allusion to wisdom collections, such as Pr. • At the end of the v., Gk 248 adds 'of life. Better, confidence in the one Lord than attach dead hearts to dead men.'

i. Hebr. 'Do not rejoice in a valueless well-being (?), for fear of becoming twice as poor.'

19 **a.** i.e. premature death will be his punishment.

b. 'in evil' Gk MSS including Sinaiticus; 'in his heart' *Text. rec.* Gk 248 adds 'and he who resists pleasures crowns his own life;[6] he who holds his tongue will live in peace.'

Question your neighbour, he may have said nothing at all; 14
and if he has said anything, he will not say it again.
Question your friend, for slander is very common, 15 16
Qo 7:21 do not believe all you hear.
People sometimes make a slip, without meaning what they say; 16 17
and which of us has never sinned by speech?
Question your neighbour before you threaten him, 17 18
Lv 19:17 and defer to the Law of the Most High. [c]

True and false wisdom

Wisdom consists entirely in fearing the Lord, 20
and wisdom is entirely constituted by the fulfilling of the Law. [d]
Being learned in evil, however, is not wisdom, 22 19
there is no prudence in the advice of sinners.
There is a cleverness that is detestable; 23 20
whoever has no wisdom is a fool.
Better be short of sense and full of fear, 24 21
than abound in shrewdness and violate the Law. [e]
There is a wickedness which is scrupulous but nonetheless dishonest, 25 22
and there are those who misuse kindness to win their case. 23
There is the person who will walk [f] bowed down with grief, 26
when inwardly this is nothing but deceit:
he hides his face and pretends to be deaf, 27 24
if he is not unmasked, he will take advantage of you.
There is the person who is prevented from sinning by lack of strength, 28 25
yet he will do wrong when he gets the chance.
You can tell a person by his appearance, 29 26
you can tell a thinker by the look on his face.
The way a person dresses, the way he laughs, 30 27
the way he walks, tell you what he is.

Silence and speech

20 There is the rebuke that is untimely, 1 28
and there is the person who keeps quiet, and he is the shrewd one.
But how much better to rebuke than to fume! 2 20:1
The person who acknowledges a fault wards off punishment. 3

30:20 Like a eunuch trying to take a girl's virginity 4 2
is someone who tries to impose justice by force.

Pr 17:28 There is the person who keeps quiet and is considered wise, 5 3
another incurs hatred for talking too much.

There is the person who keeps quiet, not knowing how to answer, 6
another keeps quiet, knowing when to speak.

The wise will keep quiet till the right moment, 7
but a garrulous fool will always misjudge it.

Someone who talks too much will earn dislike, 8
and someone who usurps authority will earn hatred.

Paradoxes

There is the person who finds misfortune a boon, 9
and the piece of luck that turns to loss.

There is the gift that affords you no profit, 10
and the gift that repays you double.

There is the honour that leads to humiliation,
and there are people in a low state who raise their heads. [a] Lk 1:52

There is the person who buys much for little,
yet pays for it seven times over.

The wise wins love with words,
while fools may shower favours in vain.
The gift of the stupid will bring you no advantage,
his eyes look for seven times as much in return. [b]
He gives little and reviles much,
he opens his mouth like the town crier,
he lends today and demands payment tomorrow;
he is a detestable fellow.
The fool will say, 'I have no friends,
I get no gratitude for my good deeds;
those who eat my bread have malicious tongues.'
How often he will be laughed at, and by how many! [c]

Inappropriate talk

Better a slip on the pavement than a slip of the tongue;
this is how ruin takes the wicked by surprise.

A coarse-grained person is like an indiscreet story
endlessly retold by the ignorant. [d]

A maxim is rejected when coming from a fool,
since the fool does not utter it on the apt occasion. Pr 26:7,9

There is a person who is prevented from sinning by poverty;
no qualms of conscience disturb that person's rest.

There is a person who courts destruction out of false shame, 4:21
courts destruction for the sake of a fool's opinion.

There is a person who out of false shame makes promises to a friend,
and so makes an enemy for nothing.

Lying

Lying is an ugly blot on anyone, Pr 13:5
and ever on the lips of the undisciplined.

A thief is preferable to an inveterate liar,
but both are heading for ruin.

Lying is an abominable habit, Pr 12:22
the liar's disgrace lasts for ever.

c. Gk 248 adds 'who is without anger. [18] The fear of the Lord is the beginning of his clemency and wisdom wins his affection.[19] The knowledge of the Lord's commandments is life-giving discipline, those who do what pleases him gather from the tree of immortality.'

d. Cf. 1:16,18; etc.; Jb 28:28; Ps 111:10; Pr 1:7; 9:10; 15:33. At the end, Gk 248 adds 'and the knowledge of his omnipotence. [21] The servant who says to his master: I will not do what you want, even if he does it later, angers the man who feeds him' cf. Mt 21:28–32.

e. Not all intelligence is wisdom: there is vitiated intellect and sinister shrewdness.

f. 'will walk' some MSS; 'does evil' *Text. rec.*

20 **a.** Meaning uncertain, but this interpretation seems to fit the context and expounds the reciprocity of opposites: honour produces humiliation, abasement produces exaltation, cf. the Magnificat: 'He has pulled down princes from their thrones and raised up the lowly.'

b. Following Syr. and Lat.; 'for he has many eyes instead of one' Gk.

c. Gk 248 and Lat. add 'He accepts neither wealth in a right spirit, nor the absence of wealth with indifference.'

d. Text and translation both uncertain. Perhaps Syr. is preferable: 'Like a fat sheep's tail eaten without salt, so is an unseasonable word.'

Wisdom

The wise gains advancement by words, 27 29
the shrewd wins favour from the great. [e]

Whoever tills the soil will have a full harvest, 28 30
Pr 14:35 whoever wins favour from the great will secure pardon for offences.

Ex 23:8 Presents and gifts blind the eyes of the wise 29 31
Pr 17:8;18:16; 21:14 and stifle rebukes like a muzzle on the mouth.

=41:14–15 Wisdom concealed, and treasure undiscovered, 30 32
Mt 5:14–16 what use is either of these?
Better one who conceals his folly 31 33
than one who conceals his wisdom. [f]

Various sins

21 My child, have you sinned? Do so no more, 1
and ask forgiveness for your previous faults.
Flee from sin as from a snake, 2
if you approach it, it will bite you;
its teeth are lion's teeth, 13
they take human life away.
Pr 5:4 All law-breaking is like a two-edged sword, 3 4
the wounds it inflicts are beyond cure.

Terror and violence make havoc of riches, 4 5
similarly, desolation overtakes the houses of the proud.
A plea from the mouth of the poor goes straight to the ear of God, 5 6
whose judgement comes without delay.

Pr 12:1 Whoever resents reproof walks in the sinner's footsteps; 6 7
whoever fears the Lord is repentant of heart.

The glib speaker is known far and wide, 7 8
but the wary detects every slip.

To build your house with other people's money 8 9
is like collecting stones for your own tomb. [a]

16:6 A meeting of the lawless is like a heap of tow; 9 10
they will end in a blazing fire.

Mt 7:13 The sinner's road is smoothly paved, 10 11
but it ends at the pit of Sheol. [b]

The wise and the foolish

Gn 4:7 Whoever keeps the Law will master his instincts; [c] 11 12
the fear of the Lord is made perfect in wisdom. 13

No one who lacks aptitude can be taught, 12 14
but certain aptitudes give rise to bitterness. 15

The sage's knowledge is as rich as the abyss 13 16
and his advice is like a living spring.
Pr 13:14;18:4 The heart of a fool is like a broken jar, 14 17
it will not hold any knowledge.
If the educated hears a wise saying, 15 18
he praises it and caps it with another;
if a debauchee hears it, he does not like it
and tosses it behind his back.

19 16 The talk of a fool is like a load on a journey,
but it is a pleasure to listen to the intelligent.
20 17 The utterance of the shrewd will be eagerly awaited in the assembly,
what he says will be given serious consideration.

21 18 The wisdom of a fool is like the wreckage of a house,
the knowledge of a dolt is incoherent talk.

22 19 To the senseless fellow instruction is like fetters on the feet,
like manacles on the right hand.

23 20 A fool laughs at the top of his voice,
but the intelligent quietly smiles.

24 21 To the shrewd instruction is like a golden ornament,
like a bracelet on the right arm. [d]

25 22 The step of a fool goes straight into a house,
but a person of much experience has a respectful approach; [e]
26 23 the stupid peeps inside through the door,
a well-bred person waits outside.
27 24 Listening at doors is a sign of bad upbringing,
the perceptive would be ashamed to do so.

28 25 The lips of gossips repeat the words of others, [f]
the words of the wise are carefully weighed.

29 26 The heart of fools is in their mouth,
but the mouth of the wise is in their heart.

30 27 When the godless curses Satan, [g]
he is cursing himself.
31 28 The scandal-monger sullies himself
and earns the hatred of the neighbourhood.

The idler

1 **22** An idler is like a stone covered in filth,
everyone whistles at his disgrace.
2 An idler is like a lump of dung,
anyone picking it up shakes it off his hand.

Degenerate children

3 It is a disgrace to have fathered a badly brought-up son,
but the birth of any daughter is a loss;
4 a sensible daughter will find a husband,
but a shameless one is a grief to her father.
5 A brazen daughter puts father and mother to shame,
and will be disowned by both.

e. The scribe's wisdom is primarily a knowledge of how to get on in life, especially through winning the favour of the influential.

f. Wisdom was created to shine and to enlighten people; to conceal her is to fall short of one's calling. Gk 248 adds 'Better inflexible perseverance in the search for the Lord than the anarchic agitation of one's own life.'

21 a. 'for one's own tomb' Gk 248, Syr.; 'for the winter' (instead of wood to keep warm with?) Gk.

b. These two vv. express a clear belief in retribution, with a strong suggestion of hell-fire to follow (cf. *also* Is 50:11; 66:24). Lat. adopts a similar interpretation: 'but the end will be hell, darkness and torments.'

c. 'his instincts' Syr.; 'his understanding (of the Law)' Gk.

d. This v. is the parallel to v. 19; v. 20, coming in between, is misplaced.

e. 'has a respectful approach' corr. following Hebr.; 'is abashed before a face' Gk.

f. Thus, Gk 248; 'the lips of strangers are grieved at them' *Text. rec.*

g. The author identifies Satan (the tempter, *see* Jb 1–2 and particularly 1:6g) with an individual's own bad instincts. In cursing some being external to himself, the individual is in fact cursing his own wicked nature and impulses.

An untimely remonstrance is like music at a funeral, 6
but a thrashing and correction are wisdom at all times. [a]

Wisdom and folly

Teaching a fool is like gluing bits of pottery together— 9 7
you are rousing someone who is besotted with sleep. 8
You might as well talk to someone sound asleep, 10 9
when you have finished the fool will say, 'What's up?'

Shed tears for the dead, who has left the light behind; 11 10
shed tears for the fool, [b] who has left his wits behind.
Shed quieter tears for the dead who is at rest, 11
for the fool life is worse than death. 12
Mourning for the dead lasts seven days, 12 13
for the foolish and ungodly all the days of their lives.

Do not waste many words on the stupid, 13 14
do not go near a dolt.

Beware of him, or you will have trouble 15
and be soiled by contact with him;
keep away from him, and you will have peace of mind 16
and not be exasperated by his folly.

What is heavier than lead, 14 17
and what is its name if not 'fool'?
Pr 27:3 Sand and salt and a lump of iron 15 18
are a lighter burden than a dolt.

A tie-beam bonded into a building 16 19
will not be dislodged by an earthquake;
so too, a heart resolved after due reflection 20
will not flinch at the critical moment.

A heart founded on intelligent reflection 17
is like a stucco [c] decoration on a smooth wall.

Pebbles [d] placed on top of a wall 18 21
will not stand up to the wind;
no more can the heart of a fool frightened at his own thoughts 22
stand up to fear.

Friendship

Prick an eye and you will draw a tear, 19 24
prick a heart and you reveal its feelings.

Throw stones at birds and you scare them away, 20 25
reproach a friend and you destroy a friendship.

19:13–17 If you have drawn your sword on a friend, 21 26
do not despair; there is a way back.
If you have opened your mouth against your friend, 22 27
do not worry; there is hope for reconciliation;
Pr 11:13; 20:19;25:9 but insult, arrogance, betrayal of secrets, and the stab in the back—
in these cases any friend is lost.

Win your neighbour's confidence when he is poor, 23 28
so that you may enjoy his later good fortune with him;
stand by him in times of trouble, 29
in order to have your share when he comes into a legacy.

30 24 Fire is heralded by the reek of the furnace and smoke,
so too, bloodshed by insults.

31 25 I shall not be ashamed to shelter a friend
nor shall I hide away from him,
32 26 and if evil comes to me through him,
everyone who hears about it will beware of him.

Vigilance [c]

3 27 Who will set a guard on my mouth, Ps 141:3
and an efficient seal on my lips,
to keep me from falling,
and my tongue from causing my ruin?

1 **23** Lord, father and master of my life,
do not abandon me to their whims,
do not let me fall because of them.
2 Who will lay whips to my thoughts,
and the discipline of wisdom to my heart,
to be merciless to my errors Ps 141:5
and not let my sins go unchecked,
3 for fear my errors should multiply
and my sins then abound
and I fall before my adversaries,
and my enemy gloat over me?
4 Lord, father and God of my life,
do not let my eyes be proud, Ps 131:1
5 turn envy away from me,
6 do not let lechery and lust grip me, Rm 13:13
do not leave me a prey to shameless desire.

Swearing

7 Children, listen to what I teach,
no one who keeps it will be caught out.
8 The sinner is ensnared by [a] his own lips,
both the abusive and the proud are tripped by them.
9 Do not get into the habit of swearing,
(10) do not make a habit of naming the Holy One; Mt 5:34seq.; 23:20seq.
11 10 for just as a slave who is constantly overseen Jm 5:12
will never be without bruises, [b]
so someone who is always swearing and uttering the Name
will not be exempt from sin.
12 11 A man forever swearing is full of iniquity,
and the scourge will not depart from his house.
13 If he offends, [c] his sin will be on him,
if he did it unheedingly, he has doubly sinned;
14 if he swears a false oath, he will not be treated as innocent,
for his house will be filled with calamities.

22 **a.** The sages advocate corporal punishment in education, Pr 13:24; 19:18; 22:15; 23:13–14; 29:15,17; it is always effective, whereas the time for verbal rebuke must be carefully chosen. Gk 248 adds [7] 'Children who live a good life, without shortcomings, make one forget their parents' humble origin. [8] Supercilious, badly brought-up and arrogant children bring shame on their family's noble blood.'

b. The 'fool' is someone not simply without wits but obstinate, sceptical, licentious.

c. lit. 'decoration of sand'. Meaning uncertain.

d. 'Pebbles' Gk MSS; 'Stakes' *Text. rec.* Perhaps an allusion to the Palestinian practice of putting loose stones on the tops of walls surrounding vineyards. Jackals, scrambling over, dislodge the stones and the consequent noise alerts the watchman.

e. Note the deeply religious quality of the passage: each good resolution concludes with a prayer.

23 **a.** 'ensnared by' Gk MSS; 'abandoned to' *Text. rec.*

b. Translation uncertain. It could also mean 'a servant for ever questioned under torture will inevitably show the effects of this.'

c. By not fulfilling his oath. The author envisages three cases in order of increasing gravity: a sincere oath unfulfilled, an oath lightly sworn, an insincere oath.

Foul language [d]

One way of talking is like death. 12 15
let it not be found in the heritage of Jacob
since devout people have nothing to do with that: 16
they will not wallow in sin.
Do not get into the habit of using coarse and foul language 13 17
since this involves sinful words.
Remember your father and mother 14 18
when you are sitting with the great,
for fear you forget yourself in their presence [e] 19
and behave like a fool,
and then wish you had not been born
and curse the day of your birth.
No one in the habit of using shameful language 15 20
will break himself of it as long as he lives.

Lechery

There are two types of people who commit sin after sin [f] 16 21
and a third who attracts retribution—
desire, blazing like a furnace, 17 22
will not die down until it has been sated—
the man who lusts after members of his own family 23
is not going to stop until he is quite burnt out;
every food is sweet to the promiscuous, 24
and he will not desist until he dies;
and the man who sins against the marriage bed 18 25
Jb 24:15 and says to himself, 'Who can see me?
There is darkness all round me, the walls hide me, 26
no one can see me, why should I worry?
The Most High will not remember my sins.'
What he fears are human eyes. 19 27
Pr 15:3,11; 17:3;24:12 he does not realise that the eyes of the Lord 28
are ten thousand times brighter than the sun,
observing every aspect of human behaviour,
seeing into the most secret corners.
Pr 8:22seq. All things were known to him before they were created, [g] 20 29
and are still, now that they are finished. [h]
This man will be punished in view of the whole town, 21 30
and will be seized when he least expects it.

Pr 2:16;5:2–20; 6:24–35;7:5 **The adulteress**

Similarly the woman unfaithful to her husband, 22 32
who provides him with an heir by another man:
first, she has disobeyed the Law of the Most High; 23 33
secondly, she has been false to her husband;
and thirdly, she has gone whoring in adultery
and conceived children by another man. 24 34
She will be led before the assembly,
an enquiry will be held about her children.
Her children will strike no root, 25 35
her branches will bear no fruit.
She will leave an accursed memory behind her, 26 36
her shame will never be wiped out.
And those who survive her will recognise 27 37
that nothing is better than fearing the Lord,
and nothing sweeter than adherence to the Lord's commandments. [i]

Discourse of Wisdom [a]

Jb 28
Pr 1:20–33; 8:1–36; 9:1–6
Ba 3:9–4:4

1 **24** Wisdom speaks her own praises,
in the midst of her people she glories in herself.
2 She opens her mouth in the assembly of the Most High,
she glories in herself in the presence of the Mighty One:
5 3 'I came forth from the mouth of the Most High,
6 and I covered the earth like mist. Gn 1:2
7 4 I had my tent in the heights,
and my throne was a pillar of cloud. [b] Ex 13:21–22
8 5 Alone, I have made the circuit of the heavens Jb 22:14
and walked through the depths of the abyss. Pr 8:27
9 6 Over the waves of the sea and over the whole earth,
10 and over every people and nation I have held sway. [c]
11 7 Among all these I searched for rest,
and looked to see in whose territory I might pitch camp. Ps 132:8,13–14
12 8 Then the Creator of all things instructed me
and he who created me fixed a place for my tent.
13 He said, "Pitch your tent in Jacob,
make Israel your inheritance."
14 9 From eternity, in the beginning, he created me, Pr 8:23
and for eternity I shall remain.
10 In the holy tent I ministered before him [d]
15 and thus became established in Zion.
11 In the beloved city he has given me rest,
and in Jerusalem I wield my authority.
16 12 I have taken root in a privileged people,
in the Lord's property, in his inheritance.
17 13 I have grown tall as a cedar on Lebanon,
as a cypress on Mount Hermon;
18 14 I have grown tall as a palm in En-Gedi, [e]
as the rose bushes of Jericho;
19 as a fine olive in the plain,
as a plane tree, I have grown tall.
20 15 Like cinnamon and acanthus, I have yielded a perfume,
like choice myrrh, have breathed out a scent,
21 like galbanum, onycha, labdanum,
like the smoke of incense in the tent. [f] Ex 30:7seq., 34seq.

d. The context shows that the reference is to impurity in speech, but the text itself is vague and the precise sin uncertain.

e. 'when' conj.; 'because' Gk. • 'you forget yourself' Syr.; 'you forget (him)' Gk; 'God forgets you' Lat.

f. Numerical proverb, *see* Pr 30:15e, distinguishing three types of lechery: incest (?), v. 17[c,d], promiscuity, v. 17[e,f], and adultery, vv. 18–19. The structure is somewhat overburdened by v. 17[a,b], which in content form a sort of sub-title.

g. This knowledge of God, antecedent to creation, is divine wisdom itself, Pr 8:22f.

h. God, having created the world, continues to take care of it.

i. Gk 248 and Lat. add [28] 'To follow God is a great honour and to be acceptable to him is to lengthen one's days.'

24 a. This passage should be compared with the other discourses of personified Wisdom (Pr 1:20–33; 8:1–36; 9:1–6) and eulogies of Wisdom (Jb 28; Ba 3:9–4:4). This is the pivotal chapter of the book, summing up the whole doctrine of Wisdom, frequently echoing earlier biblical literature, in which the author offers his own interpretation of the past. Even more than in Proverbs, there are turns of phrase foreshadowing a trinitarian theology: Wisdom is closely united to God and yet distinct from him, characteristics which will later be applied to the person of the Word or to the Spirit. The passage seems to have been one of the principal sources of inspiration for the prologue to the Fourth Gospel, in which several of Wisdom's activities and attributes are ascribed to the Logos.

b. The pillar of cloud in the desert, which, in the oldest texts, was regarded as a manifestation of Yahweh's presence.

c. 'I have held sway' one Gk MS, Syr., Lat.; 'I have acquired' Gk.

d. For Ben Sira the Temple worship in Jerusalem is one more achievement of Wisdom, either because it expresses the divine perfection in the same way as the order of the universe does, or else because this worship is laid down in detail in the Law which itself, 24:23seq., is Wisdom.

e. 'En-Gedi' two Gk MSS; 'on the shores' *Text. rec.*

f. Wisdom plays her part in the temple services, 24:10d. Having listed various natural perfumes, Ben Sira now makes a comparison between Wisdom and the incense used in the liturgy. • Galbanum and labdanum are aromatic, resinous gums like myrrh; onycha is the secretion of a type of shell-fish, also used in making incense.

I have spread my branches like a terebinth, 16 22
and my branches are glorious and graceful.
Jn 15:1a I am like a vine putting out graceful shoots, 17 23
Pr 8:19 my blossoms bear the fruit of glory and wealth. [g]
Approach me, you who desire me, 19 26
and take your fill of my fruits.
Ps 19:10 for memories of me are sweeter than honey, 20 27
inheriting me is sweeter than the honeycomb. 28
Jn 6:35j They who eat me will hunger for more, 21 29
Jn 4:13–14 they who drink me will thirst for more.
No one who obeys me will ever have to blush, 22 30
no one who acts as I dictate will ever sin.'

Wisdom and the Law [h]

Ex 19:1a All this is no other than the Book of the Covenant of the 23 32
Dt 33:4 Most High God,
the Law that Moses enjoined on us, 33
an inheritance for the communities of Jacob. [i]
Gn 2:11 This is what makes wisdom brim over like the Pishon, [j] 25 35
like the Tigris in the season of fruit,
what makes intelligence overflow like the Euphrates, 26 36
Jos 3:15 like the Jordan at harvest time;
and makes discipline flow like the Nile, [k] 27 37
Gn 2:13 like the Gihon when the grapes are harvested.
Jr 2:8 The first man did not finish discovering about her, 28 38
nor has the most recent tracked her down;
for her thoughts are wider than the sea, 29 39
and her designs more profound than the abyss.
Is 58:11 And I, [l] like a conduit from a river, 30 40
Jn 4:14 like a watercourse running into a garden, 41
I said, 'I am going to water my orchard, 31 42
I intend to irrigate my flower beds.'
Is 11:9 And see, my conduit has grown into a river, 43
Ezk 47:1–12 and my river has grown into a sea. [m]
Jn 7:38 Making discipline shine forth from daybreak, 32 34
I shall send its light far and wide.
I shall pour out teaching like prophecy, 33 46
as a legacy to all future generations.
33:18 And note, I have been working not merely for myself, 34 47
but for all who are seeking wisdom.

Proverbs

25 There are three things my soul delights in, 1
and which are delightful to God and to all people: [a]
concord between brothers, friendship between neighbours, 2
and a wife and husband who live happily together.

There are three sorts of people my soul hates, 2 3
and whose existence I consider an outrage:
the poor swollen with pride, the rich who is a liar
and an adulterous old man who has no sense. 4

The aged

If you have gathered nothing in your youth, 3 5
how can you find anything in your old age?

How fine a thing: sound judgement with grey hairs,
and for greybeards to know how to advise!
How fine a thing: wisdom in the aged, Ws 4:8–9
and considered advice coming from people of distinction!
The crown of the aged is ripe experience,
their glory, the fear of the Lord.

Numerical proverbs

There are nine things I can think of which strike me as happy,
and a tenth which is now on my tongue:
the man who can be proud of his children,
he who lives to see the downfall of his enemies;
happy is he who keeps house with a sensible wife;
he who does not toil with ox and donkey; [b]
he who has never sinned with his tongue; 14:1
he who does not serve a man less worthy than himself;
happy is he who has acquired good sense
and can find attentive ears for what he has to say;
how great is he who has acquired wisdom;
but unsurpassed is one who fears the Lord.
The fear of the Lord surpasses everything;
what can compare with someone who has mastered that? [c]

Women

Any wound rather than a wound of the heart!
Any spite rather than the spite of woman!
Any evil rather than an evil caused by an enemy!
Any vengeance rather than the vengeance of a foe!
There is no poison [d] worse than the poison of a snake,
there is no fury worse than the fury of an enemy.
I would sooner keep house with a lion or a dragon Pr 21:9,19; 25:24;27:15
than keep house with a spiteful wife.

A woman's spite changes her appearance
and makes her face as grim as a bear's. [e]
When her husband goes out to dinner with his neighbours,
he cannot help [f] heaving bitter sighs.

g. Gk 248 and Lat. add [18] 'I am the mother of pure love, of fear, of knowledge and of worthy hope,' and Gk 248 'I am bestowed on all my children, from all eternity on those appointed by him.' In place of the last phrase the Latin reads 'In me is all grace of way and of truth, in me all hope of life and of strength,' a Christian gloss alluding to Jn 14:6 and based on the identification of Wisdom with Christ.

h. Wisdom's discourse finishes at this point. The author now develops his thesis on the identity of Wisdom with the Law.

i. Gk 248 adds [24] 'Do not cease to be strong in the Lord, cling to him that he may strengthen you. The Lord Almighty alone is God and there is no Saviour other than he.'

j. Throughout, the author is thinking of the earthly Paradise and its four rivers, Gn 2:10seq., symbolic of fertility.

k. 'flow like the Nile' following Syr.; Gk (Hebr. *'or*) 'shine like a light'.

l. The author himself is speaking now, elaborating the imagery of the preceding vv. While Wisdom is a vast river, watering all Israel, he for his part is a canal, flowing from that river, and watering his own modest garden.

m. By the Lord's favour, the waters grow more and more abundant. The author is now transformed into a prophet, addressing his words to all generations to come, v. 33. He is probably drawing his inspiration from similar material in Is 11:9; Ezk 47:1–12. • Lat. applies the whole passage to personified Wisdom, consistently identifying that with Christ, and adds 'I shall penetrate the deepest recesses of the earth, I shall visit all those who are asleep, I shall illuminate all those who hope in the Lord.'

25 **a.** Following Syr. and Lat.; Gk 'In three things I was pre-eminent, and pre-eminent I remained before God'—making this a discourse delivered by Wisdom.

b. Either in the literal sense, cf. Lv 19:19; Dt 22:10, or, more probably, in the metaphorical one (cf. 2 Co 6:14) of an ill-assorted couple. The line, omitted by Gk, has been restored following Syr., with some support from Hebr. (incomplete).

c. Gk 248 and Lat. add [12] 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of loving him but it is by faith that a man begins to cling to him.'

d. 'poison' Syr.; 'head' Gk and Lat. (the Hebr. word *ro'sh* means both 'head' and 'poison').

e. Hebr. 'changes her husband's expression and makes him look like a bear'.

f. lit. 'in spite of himself' one Gk MS, Hebr., Syr.; 'he sighs bitterly as he listens to them' *Text. rec.*

No spite can approach the spite of a woman, 19 26
may a sinner's lot be hers!

Like the climbing of a sandhill for elderly feet, 20 27
such is a garrulous wife for a quiet husband.
Do not be taken in by a woman's beauty, 21 28
never lose your head over a woman.

Bad temper, insolence and shame hold sway 22 29
where the wife supports the husband.
Low spirits, gloomy face, stricken heart: 23 31
such is a spiteful wife.
Slack hands and sagging knees: 32
such is the wife who does not make her husband happy.

Gn 3:1–6
Rm 5:12
1 Co 15:22
1 Tm 2:14
Sin began with a woman, 24 33
and thanks to her we must all die. [g]

Do not let water find a leak, 25 34
nor a spiteful woman give free rein to her tongue.
If she will not do as you tell her, 26 35
get rid of her. [h] 36

Pr 31:10seq.
26
How blessed is the husband of a really good wife; 1
the number of his days will be doubled.
Pr 12:4
A perfect wife is the joy of her husband, 2
he will live out the years of his life in peace.
A good wife is the best of portions, 3
reserved for those who fear the Lord;
rich or poor, their hearts will be glad, 4
their faces cheerful, whatever the season.

There are three things that I dread, 5
and a fourth which terrifies me: [a]
slander by a whole town, the gathering of a mob, 6
and a false accusation—these are all worse than death; 7
but a woman jealous of a woman means heartbreak and sorrow, 6 8, 9
and all this is the scourge of the tongue. [b]

A bad wife is a badly fitting ox-yoke, [c] 7 10
trying to master her is like grasping a scorpion.
A drunken wife will goad anyone to fury, 8 11
she cannot conceal her own degradation.

A woman's wantonness shows in her wide-eyed look, 9 12
Pr 6:25
her eyelashes leave no doubt.
42:11
Keep a headstrong daughter under firm control, 10 13
or, feeling free, she will take advantage of it.
Keep a strict watch on her shameless eye, 11 14
do not be surprised if she disgraces you.
Like a thirsty traveller she will open her mouth 12 15
and drink any water she comes across;
she will sit down in front of every tent-peg
and open her quiver to any arrow.

The grace of a wife will charm her husband, 13 16
her understanding will make him the stronger. [d] 17
A silent wife is a gift from the Lord, 14 18
no price can be put on a well-trained character.

19 15 A modest wife is a boon twice over,
20 a chaste character cannot be over-valued.
21 16 Like the sun rising over the mountains of the Lord,
such is the beauty of a good wife in a well-run house.
22 17 Like a lamp shining on the sacred lamp-stand,
such is a beautiful face on a well-proportioned body. [e]
23 18 Like golden pillars on a silver base,
such are shapely legs on firm-set heels. [f]

Depressing things

24 28 There are two things which grieve my heart
and a third arouses my anger:
25 a warrior wasting away through poverty,
the intelligent treated with contempt,
27 someone turning back from virtue to sin—
the Lord marks out such a person for a violent death.

Commerce

28 29 It is difficult for a merchant to avoid doing wrong
and for a trader not to incur sin.
1 27 Many have sinned for the sake of profit, [a]
one who hopes to be rich must turn a blind eye. [b]
2 A peg will stick in the joint between two stones,
and sin will wedge itself [c] between selling and buying.
4 3 Whoever does not firmly hold to the fear of the Lord,
his house will soon be overthrown.

Speech

5 4 In a shaken sieve the rubbish is left behind,
so too the defects of a person appear in speech.
6 5 The kiln tests the work of the potter,
the test of a person is in conversation.
7 6 The orchard where the tree grows is judged by its fruit, Mt 7:16
similarly words betray what a person feels. [d]
7 Do not praise anyone who has not yet spoken,
8 since this is where people are tested.

g. Alluding to the first sin. Paul also recalls the guilt of Eve, 2 Co 11:3; 1 Tm 2:14, but *see* Rm 5:12.

h. lit. 'if she will not walk according to your hand, separate her from your flesh', cf. Gn 2:24; Ep 5:31. The Mosaic Law, Dt 24:1–4, allowed divorce, *see* Mt 19:3–9par.

26 a. 'and a fourth which terrifies me' Gk MSS, Lat., *see also* Syr.: 'and faced with a fourth I fall to praying' or 'and at a fourth I have been betrayed' *Text. rec.*

b. 'and all this . . . tongue' Syr.; 'and the scourge of the tongue which affects everyone' Gk.

c. Which rubs and slips back and forth on the creature's neck, causing galls and pain.

d. lit. 'fatten his bones'.

e. Probably alluding to the seven-branched lampstand, 1 M 4:49,50.

f. 'on firm-set heels' S., *see* Lat.; 'on the bosom of a well-built (woman)' Gk. Gk 248 and Syr. add:

19 My son, preserve the bloom of your youth
and do not waste your strength on strangers (cf. Pr 5:9–10).
20 Search the whole plain for a fertile field,
sow your own seed there, trusting in your own good stock.
21 Thus your offspring will survive,
they will grow great, confident of their breeding.
22 A woman for hire is not worth spitting at,
but a lawful wife is as strong as a tower (of death?).
23 A godless wife is assigned to a transgressor as his fate,
but a devout wife given to the man who fears the Lord.
24 A shameless wife takes pleasure in disgracing herself,
a modest wife is diffident even with her husband.
25 A headstrong wife is no more respected than a dog,
but one with a sense of shame fears the Lord.
26 A wife who respects her husband will be acknowledged wise by all,
but one who proudly despises him will be known by all as wicked.
Happy the husband of a good wife,
for the number of his days will be doubled (= 26:1).
27 A loud-mouthed, gossiping wife is like a trumpet sounding the charge,
and any man saddled with one spends his life in the turmoil of war.

27 a. 'for the sake of profit' S.; var. 'for a trifle' *Text. rec.*

b. lit. 'averts his eyes', that is to say, refuses to help; cf. Pr 28:27.

c. 'wedge itself' *sunthlibesetai* conj.; Gk *suntribesetai* 'is crushed'.

d. Text emended; Gk 'so the word comes from the feeling in the human heart'.

Virtue

If you pursue virtue, you will attain it 8 9
Jb 29:14 and put it on like a festal gown.
Birds consort with their kind, 9 10
truth comes home to those who practise it.
The lion lies in wait for its prey, 10 11
so does sin for those who do wrong.

The conversation of the devout is wisdom at all times, 11 12
but the fool is as changeable as the moon.

When visiting stupid people, choose the right moment,[e] 12 13
but among the thoughtful take your time.

The conversation of fools is disgusting, 13 14
Qo 7:3–6 raucous their laughter in their sinful pleasures.

The talk of hard-swearing people makes your hair stand on end, 14 15
their brawling makes you stop your ears.

A quarrel between the proud leads to bloodshed, 15 16
and their insults are embarrassing to hear.

Secrets

22:22 A betrayer of secrets forfeits all trust 16 17
and will never find the kind of friend he wants.
Be fond of a friend and keep faith with him, 17 18
but if you have betrayed his secrets, do not go after him any more; 19
for, as one destroys a person by killing him, 18 20
so you have killed your neighbour's friendship,
and as you let a bird slip through your fingers, 19 21
so you have let your friend go, and will not catch him.
Do not go after him—he is far away, 20 22
he has fled like a gazelle from the snare.
For a wound can be bandaged and abuse forgiven, 21 23
but for the betrayer of a secret there is no hope. 24

Hypocrisy

Ps 35:19 Someone with a sly wink is plotting mischief, 22 25
Pr 6:13;10:10 no one can dissuade him from it.
Honey-tongued to your face, 23 26
he is lost in admiration at your words;
but behind your back he has other things to say,
and turns your words into a stumbling-block.
I have found many things to hate, but nothing as much as him, 24 27
and the Lord hates him too.

Whoever throws a stone in the air, throws it on to his own head; 25 28
a treacherous blow cuts both ways.[f]
Ps 7:15;9:15 The man who digs a pit falls into it, 26 29
Pr 26:27 whoever sets a snare will be caught by it.
Qo 10:8 On anyone who does evil, evil will recoil, 27 30
without his knowing where it comes from.

Sarcasm and abuse are the mark of the arrogant, 28 31
but vengeance lies in wait like a lion for such a one.
The trap will close on all who rejoice in the downfall of the devout, 29 32
and pain will eat them up before they die.[g]

Resentment

33 30 Resentment and anger, these are foul things too,
and a sinner is a master at them both.

1 **28** Whoever exacts vengeance will experience the vengeance of the Lord,
who keeps strict account of sin.

2 Pardon your neighbour any wrongs done to you, Mt 5:23–24; 6:12par., 14–15
and when you pray, your sins will be forgiven.

3 If anyone nurses anger against another, Mt 18:23–35
can one then demand compassion from the Lord?

4 Showing no pity for someone like oneself,
can one then plead for one's own sins?

5 Mere creature of flesh, yet cherishing resentment!—
who will forgive one one's sins?

6 Remember the last things, and stop hating, 7:36;38:20

7 corruption and death, and be faithful to the commandments.

8 7 Remember the commandments, and do not bear your fellow ill-will, Lv 19:17–18

9 remember the covenant of the Most High, and ignore the offence. Ex 23:4–5

Quarrels

10 8 Avoid quarrelling and you will sin less; Pr 15:18

11 for the hot-tempered provokes quarrels,

9 a sinner sows trouble between friends,
introducing discord among the peaceful.

12 10 The way a fire burns depends on its fuel, Pr 26:20–21
a quarrel spreads in proportion to its violence;
a man's rage depends on his strength,
his fury grows fiercer in proportion to his wealth.

13 11 A sudden quarrel kindles fire,
a hasty dispute leads to bloodshed.

14 12 Blow on a spark and up it flares,
spit on it and out it goes;
both are the effects of your mouth.

The tongue ↗Jm 3:1–12

15 13 A curse on the scandal-monger and double-talker, Pr 16:28
such a person has ruined many who lived in concord.

16 14 That third tongue has shattered the peace of many[a]
and driven them from nation to nation;

17 it has pulled down fortified cities,
and overthrown the houses of the great.

19 15 The third tongue has had upright wives divorced,
depriving them of reward for their hard work.

20 16 No one who listens to it will ever know peace of mind,
will ever live in peace again.

21 17 A stroke of the whip raises a weal,
but a stroke of the tongue breaks bones. Pr 25:15

22 18 Many have fallen by the edge of the sword,
but many more have fallen by the tongue.

23 19 Blessed is anyone who has been sheltered from it, Ps 31:20
and has not experienced its fury,

e. Translation uncertain; it could also mean 'Among stupid people, look out for the moment', i.e. be on your guard.

f. lit. 'and a treacherous blow distributes wounds'.

g. Temporal retribution as maintained by the traditional view, cf. Jb 21:20–21.

28 a. Either the third tongue that interferes in a quarrel, or the tongue that makes three victims: the slanderer himself, the listener, the person slandered (thus the Talmud).

who has not dragged its yoke about,
or been bound in its chains;
for its yoke is an iron yoke, 20 24
its chains are bronze chains;
the death it inflicts is a miserable death, 21 25
Sheol is preferable to it.
It cannot gain a hold over the devout, 22 26
they are not burnt by its flames. [b]
Those who desert the Lord will fall into it, 23 27
it will flare up inextinguishably among them,
it will be let loose against them like a lion,
it will tear them like a leopard.
Be sure you put a thorn-hedge round your property, 24 28
lock away your silver and gold;
then make scales and weights for your words, 25 29
22:27 and put a door with bolts across your mouth.
Pr 13:3
Take care you take no false step through it, 26 30
in case you fall a prey to him who lies in wait.

Loans [a]

29 Making your neighbour a loan is an act of mercy, [b] 1
to lend him a helping hand is to keep the commandments.
Lend to your neighbour in his time of need, 2
and in your turn repay your neighbour on time.
Be as good as your word and keep faith with him, 3
and you will find your needs met every time.
8:12 Many treat a loan as a windfall, [c] 4
and embarrass those who have come to their rescue.
Until he gets something, a man will kiss his neighbour's hand, 5
and refer diffidently to his wealth;
but when the loan falls due, he puts this off, 6
he repays with offhand words,
and pleads the inconvenience of the time.
Even if he can be made to pay, his creditor will recover barely half, 6 7
and consider even that a windfall.
But otherwise he will be cheated of his money, 8
and undeservedly [d] gain himself an enemy;
the man will pay him back in curses and abuse, 9
and with insults instead of honour.
Many, not out of malice, [e] refuse to lend; 7 10
they are merely anxious not to be cheated for nothing.

3:30–4:10; 7:32–36 Dt 15:11 Tb 12:8–9 Mt 6:19–21; 19:21

Almsgiving

Nevertheless, be patient with those who are badly off, 8 11
do not keep them waiting on your generosity.
In obedience to the commandment, help the poor; 9 12
do not turn the poor away empty-handed in their need.
Spend your money on your brother or your friend, 10 13
do not leave it under a stone to rust away.
Mt 6:19–21 Jm 5:3
Use your wealth as the Most High has decreed; 11 14
you will find that more profitable than gold.
Tb 4:9–11 Mt 6:19–20 Lk 16:9
Stock your store-rooms with almsgiving; 12 15
this will save you from all misfortune.
Better than sturdy shield or weighty spear, 13 16
this will fight for you against the enemy.

Guarantees

8:13
Pr 6:1a

19 14 A good man will go surety for his neighbour;
only a shameless wretch would desert him.
20 15 Do not forget the favour your guarantor has done you;
he has given his life for you.
22 16 A sinner is careless of his guarantor's prosperity,
the ungrateful forgets his deliverer.
24 17 Going surety has ruined many who were prosperous,
tossing them about in a heavy sea.
25 18 It has driven the powerful from home
to wander among foreign nations.
26 19 A wicked man in a hurry to stand guarantor
in the hope of profit, is hurrying to be sentenced.
27 20 Come to your neighbour's help as far as you can,
but take care not to fall into the same plight.

Staying in other people's houses

28 21 The first thing in life is water, and bread, and clothing, 39:26
and a house for the sake of privacy.
29 22 Better the life of the poor under a roof of planks,
than lavish fare in somebody else's house.
30 23 Whether you have little or much, be content with it,
and you will not hear your household complaining.[f]
31 24 It is a miserable life, going from house to house; Pr 27:8
wherever you stay, you dare not open your mouth,
32 25 you do not belong, you receive no thanks for the drink you pour out
and hear embittering words into the bargain:
33 26 'Come along, stranger, lay the table,
what have you got ready? give me something to eat!'
34 27 'Go away, stranger, make room for someone important;
my brother is coming to stay, I need the house.'
35 28 It is hard for the reasonable
to be begrudged hospitality[g]
to be shamed like a debtor.

Bringing up children

Pr 13:24;
23:13–14;
29:15

1 **30** Whoever loves his son will beat him frequently
so that in after years the son may be his comfort.

2 Whoever is strict with his son will reap the benefit,
and be able to boast of him to his acquaintances.

3 Whoever educates his son will be the envy of his enemy,
and will be proud of him among his friends.

4 Even when the father dies, he might well not be dead, Tb 4:17
since he leaves his likeness behind him.

b. The comparison between the tongue and a fire is found again in Jm 3:5–6. But it may be asked whether Ben Sira, having launched into a description of personified Calumny, may not have lost the thread of his argument in his censures of the tongue as universal enemy.

29 a. Lending (without interest) to Israelites is enjoined in the Law, Ex 22:24; Lv 25:35–37; Dt 15:7–11, cf. Ps 37:21,26; Mt 5:42.

b. Following Syr.; Gk 'He who shows mercy will make loans to his neighbour.'

c. lit. 'as something found'.

d. 'undeservedly' Gk MSS, Syr., Lat.; 'needlessly' *Text. rec.*

e. 'not out of malice' Gk MSS, Syr., Lat.; 'because of the wickedness (of those who borrow)' *Text. rec.*

f. Lat. var. 'and do not let yourself be treated as a stranger'.

g. lit. 'to hear himself reproached as not belonging' Lat.; 'to hear the house reproach him' Gk.

In life he has had the joy of his company, 5
dying, he has no anxieties.
He leaves an avenger against his enemies[a] 6
and a rewarder of favours for his friends.

Whoever coddles his son will bandage his wounds,[b] 7
his heart will turn over at every cry.
A badly broken-in horse turns out stubborn, 8
a son left to himself turns out headstrong.
Pamper your child and he will terrorise you, 9
play along with him and he will bring you sorrow.

Do not laugh with him, or one day you will weep with him 10
and end up gnashing your teeth.
While he is young, do not allow him his freedom 11
and do not wink at his mistakes.
Bend his neck in youth, 12
bruise his ribs while he is a child,
or else he will grow stubborn and disobedient,
and hurt you very deeply.[c]
Be strict with your son, and persevere with him, 13
or you will rue his insolence.

Health

Better be poor if healthy and fit 14
than rich if tormented in body.
Health and strength are better than any gold, 15
a robust body than untold wealth.
No riches can outweigh bodily health, 16
no enjoyment surpass a cheerful heart.
Better death than a wretched life, 17
and everlasting rest than chronic illness.
Good things lavished on a closed mouth 18
are like food offerings put on a grave.[d]
Dt 4:28 Ps 115:4–7 Is 40:19–20+ What use is an offering to an idol 19
which can neither eat nor smell?
How describe someone pursued by the Lord's displeasure?[e] 20
He looks and sighs 20 21
20:4 like a eunuch embracing a pretty girl—how he sighs!

Happiness

Do not abandon yourself to sorrow, 21 22
do not torment yourself with brooding.
Gladness of heart is life to anyone, 22 23
joy is what gives length of days.
Give your cares the slip,[f] console your heart, 23 24
chase sorrow far away;
for sorrow has been the ruin of many, 25
and is no use to anybody.
Jealousy and anger shorten your days, 24 26
and worry brings premature old age.[g]
Pr 15:15 A genial heart makes a good trencherman, 25 27
someone who enjoys a good meal.[h]

Riches

31 The sleeplessness brought by wealth makes a person lose weight, 1
the worry it causes drives away sleep.

The worries of the daytime prevent you from sleeping,[a]
like a serious illness, they keep sleep at bay.
The rich forever toils, piling up money,
and then, leaving off, he is gorged with luxuries;
the poor forever toils, barely making a living,
and then, leaving off, is poorer than ever.

No one who loves money can easily avoid sinning, Pr 28:20
whoever pursues profit will be corrupted by it.[b]
Gold has been the ruin of many;
their coming destruction was self-evident,[c]
since it is a snare[d] for those who sacrifice to it
and stupid people all get caught in it.
Happy the rich who is found to be blameless
and does not go chasing after gold.[e]
Who is he, so that we can congratulate him,
for he has achieved marvels among his fellows?
Who has been through this test and emerged perfect?
He may well be proud of that!
Who has had the chance to sin and has not sinned,
had the chance to do wrong and has not done it?
His fortune will be firmly based
and the assembly will acclaim his generosity.[f]

Dinner parties

Pr 23:1–3,6–8

If you are sitting down to a lavish table,
do not display your greed,
do not say, 'What a lot to eat!'
Remember, it is bad to have a greedy eye.
Is any creature more wicked than the eye?
—That is why it is always[g] weeping!
Do not reach out for anything your host has his eye on,
do not jostle him at the dish.
Judge your fellow-guest's needs by your own,
be thoughtful in every way.[h]
Eat what is offered you like a well brought-up[i] person, Pr 13:25
do not wolf your food or you will earn dislike.
For politeness' sake be the first to stop;
do not act the glutton, or you will give offence,
and if you are sitting with a large party,
do not help yourself before the others do.

30 **a.** In the Hebrew sense of someone who has a right of redemption (*go'el*) (*see* Rt 2:20g; 4:4), but also of someone who is the defender of the oppressed.

b. Meaning uncertain: either the wounds that the child sustains in the course of an ill-disciplined life, or the wounds the father sustains from his ungrateful child.

c. vv. 11^{b}–12^{a}, 12^{d}, omitted by Gk, have been restored following Gk 248, Hebr. and Lat. (+ Syr. for 12^{a}).

d. 'on a grave'; Hebr. var. 'in front of an idol'.

e. i.e. the sick who can take no food, cf. Hebr. 'Thus it is with someone who has a fortune and cannot enjoy it', but the text is probably corrupt.

f. 'Beguile your cares' S., Hebr., Syr.; 'Love your soul' *Text. rec.*

g. All the Gk MSS put 33:16—36:10 before 30:25—33:16. The Syr. and Lat. versions preserve the original order which is also attested by the Hebr. fragments.

h. Hebr. 'The sleep of the heart serves as its food.'

31 **a.** 'prevent (from sleeping)' Hebr. 'summon (sleep)' Gk.

b. Thus Hebr. 'he who pursues corruption will be filled with it' Gk.

c. Hebr. 'They have put their trust in pearls, they have not succeeded in escaping from disaster, nor in being saved on the day of retribution.'

d. lit. 'a stumbling-block'. Grammatically, this refers back to gold, but the author is perhaps thinking of an idol, which would justify the reading 'sacrifice' in two MSS and Lat. (*Text. rec.* 'those who are mad'); Hebr. 'it is a trap for a stupid man.'

e. In Hebr. 'riches', *mammon*, a word of Aramaic origin often used in rabbinical literature, and *see* Mt 6:24; Lk 16:9, 11,13.

f. Probably an allusion to the practice of proclaiming the names of benefactors to the community, in the synagogue. Lat. 'the entire assembly (*ecclesia*) of holy people will publish his good works.'

g. 'always' Hebr.; 'on every face' Gk.

h. Hebr. 'and think of what you yourself dislike.'

i. 'well brought-up' Hebr.; omitted by Gk.

A little is quite enough for a well-bred person; 19 22
his breathing is easy when he lies in bed.
A moderate diet ensures sound sleep, 20 24
one gets up early, in the best of spirits.
Sleeplessness, biliousness and gripe 23
are what the glutton has to endure.
If you are forced to eat too much, 21 25
get up, go and vomit,[j] and you will feel better.
Listen to me, my child, do not disregard me, 22 26
eventually you will see the force of my words.
Be moderate[k] in all your activities 27
and illness will never overtake you.

People praise the person who keeps a splendid table, 23 28
and their opinion of his munificence is sound.
But a niggardly host provokes universal resentment 24 29
and people will retail instances of his meanness.

Pr 20:1; 23:20–21,29–35;31:4–7 Is 5:22;28:1–4

Wine

Do not play the valiant at your wine, 25 30
for wine has been the undoing of many.
The furnace proves the temper of steel, 26 31
and wine proves hearts in the drinking bouts of braggarts.
Wine gives life 27 32
if drunk in moderation.
What is life worth without wine? 33
Ps 104:15 It came into being to make people happy. 35
Jg 9:13 1 Tm 5:23 Drunk at the right time and in the right amount, 28 36
wine makes for a glad heart and a cheerful mind. 37
Pr 20:1 Bitterness of soul comes of wine drunk to excess 29 39
out of temper or bravado.[l]
Drunkenness excites the stupid to a fury to his own harm, 30 40
it reduces his strength while leading to blows.
Do not provoke your fellow-guest at a wine feast, 31 41
do not make fun of him when he is enjoying himself,
do not take him to task 42
or annoy him by reclaiming money owed.

Banquets

32 Have they made you the presider?[a] Do not let it go to your head, 1
behave like everyone else in the party,
see that they are happy and then sit down yourself.
Having discharged your duties, take your place 2
so that your joy may be through theirs,
and you may receive the crown for your competence.[b] 3

Speak, old man—it is proper that you should— 3 4
but with discretion: do not spoil the music.[c] 5
If someone is singing, do not ramble on 4 6
and do not play the sage at the wrong moment.
An amber seal on a precious stone, 5 7
such is a concert of music at a wine feast.
An emerald seal in a golden setting, 6 8
such are strains of music with a vintage wine.

Speak, young man, when you must, 7 9
but twice at most, and then only if questioned.

8 Keep to the point, say much in few words;
give the impression of knowing but not wanting to speak.
13 9 Among eminent people do not behave as though you were their equal;
do not make frivolous remarks when someone else is speaking.
14 10 Lightning comes before the thunder,
favour goes ahead of a modest person. Pr 15:33;18:12
15 11 Leave in good time, do not bring up the rear,
and hurry home without loitering.
16 12 There amuse yourself, and do what you have a mind to,
but do not sin by arrogant talk. [d]
17 13 And for all this bless your Creator,
who intoxicates you with his favours.

The fear of God

18 14 Whoever fears the Lord will accept his correction;
those who look for him will win his favour.
19 15 Whoever seeks the Law will be nourished by it,
the hypocrite will find it a stumbling-block.
20 16 Those who fear the Lord win his approval,
their good deeds shining like a light. [e]

21 17 The sinner waves reproof aside,
he finds an excuse for headstrong behaviour. [f]
22 18 A sensible person never scorns a warning;
foreigners and the proud do not know about fear. [g]

24 19 Never act without reflection,
and you will not regret your actions. [h]
25 20 Do not venture on a rough road,
for fear of stumbling over the stones.
21 Do not be over-confident on an even road
26 22 and beware of your own children.
27 23 Watch yourself [i] in everything you do; Dt 4:9 Pr 13:3;16:17; 22:5
this is also the way to keep the commandments.

28 24 Anyone who trusts in the Law, obeys its precepts,
no one who has confidence in the Lord will come to harm. Ps 23:3seq. Pr 19:16

1 **33** No evil will befall one who fears the Lord, Jb 5:19 Ps 1;91 Pr 12:21;24:16
such a one will be rescued even in the ordeal.
2 No one who hates the Law is wise, [a]
one who is hypocritical about it is like a storm-tossed ship.
3 An intelligent person will put faith in the Law, [b]
for such a one the Law is as dependable as a prophecy.

j. 'go and vomit' Gk MSS, Hebr.; 'in the middle of the meal (?)' *Text. rec.*
k. 'moderate' Hebr.; 'industrious' Gk.
l. 'out of bravado' Hebr. (translation uncertain); 'by a false step (?)' Gk.

32 a. The custom of holding elaborate banquets with an organising chairman chosen by vote or by lot (*see* 2 M 2:27; Jn 2:8) seems to have become fashionable in Palestine under the influence either of the Greeks or of the Romans. The rabbis were later to warn devout Jews against these customs. Ben Sira, however, is merely urging good manners.
b. On festal crowns, *see* Ws 2:8; Is 28:1–4.
c. Term for music, singing or any artistic performance: recited poetry, dramatic interlude.
d. Hebr. 'in the fear of God and not in poverty'.
e. 'will have justice done them . . . light'; Hebr. 'understand justice and bring their thought out of darkness'.
f. Hebr. 'does violence to the Law'.
g. Hebr. 'The wise does not conceal wisdom; the proud and the godless do not keep the Law.'
h. Or 'do not change your mind once you are actually doing something.'
i. 'Watch yourself' following Hebr.; 'rely on yourself' Gk.

33 a. With Hebr.; 'No one wise hates the Law' Gk.
b. Hebr. 'understand the word of Yahweh'.

Prepare what you have to say and you will get a hearing,[c] 4
marshal your information before you answer.
The feelings of a fool are like a cart-wheel, 5
a fool's thought revolves like a turning axle.
A rutting stallion is like a sarcastic friend; 6
he neighs, whoever rides him.

Inequality

Why is one day better than another,[d] 7
though the sun gives the same daylight throughout the year?
They have been differentiated in the mind of the Lord, 8
who has diversified the seasons and feasts;
some he has made more important and has hallowed, 9
others he has made ordinary days.
Human beings come from the ground, 10
Adam himself was formed out of earth;
in the fullness of his wisdom[e] 11
the Lord has made distinctions between them,
and diversified their conditions.
10:14–15 Some of them he has blessed, 12
Is 2:6–8 hallowing and setting them near him;
Lk 1:51–53 others he has cursed and humiliated
by degrading them from their positions.
Is 29:16g Like clay in the hands of the potter 13
Rm 9:21 to mould as[f] it pleases him,
so are human beings in the hands of their Maker
to reward as he judges right.
Opposite evil stands good, 14
opposite death, life;
so too opposite the devout stands the sinner.[g]
Contemplate all the works of the Most High, 15
42:24–25 you will find they go in pairs, by opposites.
Qo 3:1–8

Although the last to come, I have kept my eyes open 16
Is 24:13 like a man picking up what the grape-pickers have left.
Jb 49:9 By the blessing of the Lord I have come in first, 17
Ps 5:2;63:3 and like a true grape-picker have filled my winepress.
Mt 21:33 And note, I have not been working merely for myself, 18
24:34 but for all who seek instruction.

Listen to me, important public figures, 19
presidents of the assembly,[h] give ear!

Independence

Neither to son nor wife, brother nor friend, 20
give power over yourself during your own lifetime.
And do not give your property to anyone else,
in case you regret it and have to ask for it back.
As long as you live and there is breath in your body, 21
do not yield power over yourself to anyone;
better for your children to come begging to you, 22
than for you to have to go begging to them.
In all you do be the master, 23
and leave a reputation unstained.
The day your life draws to a close, 24
at the hour of death, then distribute your heritage.

Slaves [i] Pr 26:3

25 Fodder, the stick and burdens for a donkey,
bread, discipline and work for a slave.
26 Work your slave hard, and you will have peace of mind,
leave his hands idle,[j] and he will be asking for his freedom.
27 Yoke and harness will bow the neck,
for a bad servant, torments and the rack.
28 Set him to work, so that he will not be idle;[k]
idleness teaches every kind of mischief.
29 Keep him at his duties, where he should be,
if he is disobedient, clap him in irons. Pr 29:19
30 But do not be over-exacting with anyone,
and do nothing contrary to justice.

31 You have only one slave? Treat him like yourself, 7:20
since you have acquired him with blood.[l]
32 You have only one slave? Treat him as a brother,
since you need him as you need yourself.
33 If you ill-treat him and he runs away,
which way will you go to look for him?

Dreams [a]

1 34 Vain and deceptive hopes are for the foolish,
and dreams lend wings to fools.
2 As well clutch at shadows and chase the wind
as put any faith in dreams.
3 Dreams are no different from mirrors;
confronting a face, the reflection of that face.[b]
4 What can be cleansed by uncleanness, Jb 14:4
what can be verified by falsehood?
5 Divinations, auguries and dreams are nonsense, Qo 5:6
like the fantasies of a pregnant woman.[c]
6 Unless sent as emissaries from the Most High,
do not give them a thought;
7 for dreams have led many astray,
and those who relied on them have come to grief.
8 Fulfilling the Law requires no such falsehood,
and wisdom is perfected in veracity.[d]

Travelling

9 A much travelled man knows many things,
and a man of great experience will talk sound sense.

c. Hebr. 'and then you will act'.

d. Not, apparently, a cosmological question about the variable length of daylight but a religious one about the differing dignity of feast days and ordinary days, *see* v. 9.

e. 'wisdom' Hebr.; 'knowledge' Gk.

f. 'to mould as' one Gk MS, Lat.; 'all his ways (are) as' Gk.

g. Hebr. and Syr. add 'so, too, opposite light stands darkness.'

h. The synagogue where devout Jews assembled to be taught.

i. On the strict treatment of slaves, *see* Ex 21:20–21; and Mt 18:34; Lk 12:46. Nevertheless, slaves were not entirely at the mercy of their masters: their rights were laid down in detail by the Law; Ex 21:1–6,26–27; Lv 25:46; Dt 15:12–18, *see* vv. 30,31–33 of our passage, cf. the attitude of Paul, Ep 6:5–9; Col 4:1; Phm 16.

j. 'you will have peace of mind'; Hebr. var. 'lest he demand rest'. • 'leave his hands idle'; Hebr. 'if he raises his head'.

k. Hebr. 'lest he rebel'.

l. i.e. you have bought him with your hard-earned money. But the text is uncertain.

34 a. In the OT God sometimes uses dreams to carry his instructions to human beings, Gn 28:10–17; 31:10–13,24; 37:5–11; 41:1–36; etc. cf. Nb 12:6. *See also* Mt 1:20–23; 2:13,22. But recourse to dreams as an ordinary method of divination is censured by Law and Prophets: Lv 19:26; Dt 13:2–6; 18:9–14; Qo 5:6; Jr 29:8, as also by Ben Sira, though he admits the possibility of dreams of authentically divine origin, v. 6.

b. 'Dreams are no different from mirrors' conj. (*see* what follows); 'Visions of dreams are no different' Gk. The dream, like the mirror, only presents an image; or: the dream reflects only what someone already has in his mind, adding nothing nor providing any assurance, cf. v. 5.

c. lit. 'thus the heart of a woman in labour fancies'.

d. Ben Sira contrasts dreams which deceive with the Law and Wisdom that do not.

Someone who has never had his trials knows little; 10
but the travelled man is master of every situation.
I have seen many things on my travels, 11 12
I have understood more than I can put into words.
I have often been in danger of death, 12 13
but I have been spared, and this is why:
the spirit of those who fear the Lord can survive, 13 14
for their hope is in someone with power to save them. 15
No one who fears the Lord need ever hesitate, 14 16
or ever be daunted, since the Lord is his hope.
Happy the soul of one who fears the Lord. 15 17
On whom does he rely? Who supports him? 18
15:19 Ps 33:18; 34:15 The eyes of the Lord watch over those who love him, 16 19
he is their powerful protection and their strong support,
their screen from the desert wind, their shelter from the midday sun, 20
a guard against stumbling, an assurance against a fall.
He revives the spirit and brightens the eyes, 17
he gives health, life and blessing.

35:1a **Sacrifices**

The sacrifice of an offering unjustly acquired is a mockery; 18 21
the gifts of the impious are unacceptable.
The Most High takes no pleasure in offerings from the godless, 19 23
Am 5:21n multiplying sacrifices will not gain pardon for sin.
Offering sacrifice from the property of the poor 20 24
is as bad as slaughtering a son before his father's eyes.
A meagre diet is the very life of the poor, 21 25
to deprive them of it is to commit murder.
To take away a fellow-man's livelihood is to kill him, 22 26
Lv 19:13 to deprive an employee of his wages is to shed blood. 27
Dt 24:14–15 Jr 22:13 If one person builds while another pulls down, 23 28
what will they get out of it but trouble?
If one person prays and another calls down a curse, 24 29
to which one's voice is the Master going to listen?
Nb 19:11 If someone washes after touching a corpse, and then touches it again, 25 30
what is the good of his washing?
Just so with someone who fasts for sin, 26 31
and then goes and commits it again.
Who is going to hear that person's prayer?
What is the good of the self-abasement?

The Law and sacrifices [a]

Lv 3:1a **35** One who keeps the Law multiplies offerings; 1
one who follows the commandments offers communion sacrifices. 2, 3
Lv 2:1a Proof of gratitude is an offering of fine flour, 2 4
Lv 7:11a,12 almsgiving a sacrifice of praise.
To abandon wickedness is what pleases the Lord, 3 5
Lv 16:1a to give up wrong-doing is an expiatory sacrifice.
Do not appear empty-handed in the Lord's presence; 4 6
for all these things are due under the commandment. 7
The offering of the upright graces the altar, [b] 5 8
Ex 29:18d and its savour rises before the Most High.
The sacrifice of the upright is acceptable, 6 9
Lv 2:1–3 its memorial will not be forgotten.
Pr 3:9 Honour the Lord with generosity, 7 10
Dt 26:1a,2 do not stint the first-fruits you bring.

11 8 Add a smiling face to all your gifts, 2 Co 9:7
and be cheerful as you dedicate your tithes. Dt 14:22d
12 9 Give to the Most High as he has given to you, [c] Dt 12:6;14:23; 26:12–15
as generously as your means can afford;
13 10 for the Lord is a good rewarder,
he will reward you seven times over.

Divine justice

14 11 Do not try to bribe him with presents, he will not accept them,
15 do not put your faith in wrongly motivated sacrifices;
12 for the Lord is a judge
who is utterly impartial. Dt 10:7
16 13 He never shows partiality to the detriment of the poor, Jb 34:19 Pr 24:23e
he listens to the plea of the injured party.
17 14 He does not ignore the orphan's supplication, Ex 22:21–23
nor the widow's as she pours out her complaint. Pr 23:10–11
18 15 Do the widow's tears not run down her cheeks,
19 as she accuses the man who is the cause of them?
20 16 Whoever wholeheartedly serves God [d] will be accepted,
his petitions will carry to the clouds.
21 17 The prayer of the humble pierces the clouds: [e] Lm 3:44
and until it does, he is not to be consoled, [f] Lk 18:7
18 nor will he desist until the Most High takes notice of him,
acquits the upright and delivers judgement.
19 And the Lord will not be slow, 2 P 3:9
nor will he be dilatory on their behalf,
20 until he has crushed the loins of the merciless
and exacted vengeance on the nations,
21 until he has eliminated the hordes of the arrogant
and broken the sceptres of the wicked,
24 22 until he has repaid all people as their deeds deserve
and human actions as their intentions merit,
25 23 until he has judged the case of his people
and made them rejoice in his mercy.
26 24 Mercy is welcome in time of trouble,
like rain clouds in time of drought.

Prayer for the deliverance and restoration of Israel [a] Ps 79

1 **36** Take pity on us, Master, Lord of the universe, look at us,
2 spread fear of yourself throughout all other nations. Ps 79:6 Jr 10:25
3 2 Raise your hand against the foreign nations
and let them see your might.
4 3 As, in their sight, you have proved yourself holy to us,
so now, in our sight, prove yourself great to them.
5 4 Let them acknowledge you, just as we have acknowledged Dt 32:19 1 K 8:43
that there is no God but you, Lord. 1 Ch 17:20
6 5 Send new portents, do fresh wonders, Is 45:14
7 win glory for your hand and your right arm.

35 **a.** Ben Sira is both a firm supporter of liturgical worship and a moralist who insists on the Law's precepts of justice and charity. These two enthusiasms unite at this point: Ben Sira maintains that the observance of the Law is itself a fulfilment of ritual worship.

b. lit. 'greases the altar'.

c. Hebr. adds in margin 'He who gives to the poor, lends to God; who will repay him, if not He?', cf. Pr 19:17.

d. Or 'who does a service (for his neighbour)'.

e. Where God dwells, *see* Ps 68:34; 104:3.

f. lit. 'he is not consoled'; Hebr. var. 'it does not pause'.

36 **a.** This prayer reveals the sentiments of pious Jews about the year 190 just before the Maccabaean revolt. A messianic note, rare in Si, is struck here, as also in the psalm with which the Hebr. text ends, 51:12d.

Ps 79:6 Rouse your fury, pour out your rage, 6 8
destroy the opponent, annihilate the enemy. 9
Hasten the day, remember the oath, 7 10
and let people tell of your mighty deeds. [b]
Let fiery wrath swallow up the survivor, 8 11
and destruction overtake those who oppress your people.
Ps 68:21;110:6 Crush the heads of hostile rulers 9 12
who say, 'There is no one else but us!'
Gather together all the tribes of Jacob, 10 13
restore them their heritage as at the beginning. [c]
Ex 4:22 Dt 7:6b Take pity, Lord, on the people called by your name, 11 14
on Israel whom you have made as a first-born.
Have compassion on your holy city, 12 15
2 S 5:9f on Jerusalem, the place where you rest.
Fill Zion with your praises 13 16
and your sanctuary with your glory. [d]
Vindicate those whom you created first, [e] 14 17
fulfil what has been prophesied in your name.
Give those who wait for you their reward, 15 18
let your prophets be proved true.
Grant, Lord, the prayer of your servants, [f] 16
Nb 6:22–27 in the terms of Aaron's blessing on your people,
so that all the earth's inhabitants may acknowledge 17 19
that you are the Lord, the everlasting God.

Discrimination

The stomach takes in all kinds of food, 18 20
but some foods are better than others.
As the palate discerns the flavour of game, 19 21
so a shrewd listener detects lying words.
A perverse character causes depression in others; 20 22
it needs experience to know how to repay such a one.

Pr 5:15b **Choosing a wife**

A woman will accept any husband, 21 23
but some daughters are better than others. [g]
A woman's beauty delights the beholder, 22 24
a man likes nothing better.
Pr 15:4 If her tongue is kind and gentle, 23 25
her husband is the happiest of men.
The man who takes a wife has the makings of a fortune, 24 26
Gn 2:18 a helper to match himself, [h] a pillar of support.
When property has no fence, it is open to plunder, 25 27
when a man has no wife, he is aimless and querulous.
Will anyone trust an armed thief 26 28
who flits from town to town?
So it is with the man who has no nest, 27
and lodges wherever night overtakes him.

6:5–17 **False friends**

Pr 20:6 37 Any friend will say, 'I am your friend too,' 1
but some friends are friends only in name.
Is it not a deadly sorrow 2
when a comrade or a friend turns enemy?
17:31;21:11 Gn 3:22;4:7 O evil inclination, why were you created, [a] 3
to cover the earth with deceit?

4 One kind of comrade congratulates a friend in prosperity
but in time of trouble appears on the other side. [b]
5 One kind of comrade genuinely feels for a friend [c]
and when it comes to a fight, springs to arms.
6 Do not forget the genuine friend, Pr 27:10
do not push him out of mind once you are rich.

Advisers

8 7 Any adviser will offer advice, 6:6
but some are governed by self-interest.
9 8 Beware of someone who offers advice;
first find out what he wants himself—
since his advice coincides with his own interest—
10 in case he has designs on you [d]
11 9 and tells you, 'You are on the right road,'
but stands well clear to see what will happen to you.
12 10 Do not consult anyone who looks at you askance,
conceal your plans from people jealous of you.
11 Do not consult a woman about her rival, [e]
or a coward about war,
a merchant about prices, Pr 20:14
or a buyer about selling,
anyone mean about gratitude,
13 or anyone selfish about kindness,
a lazy fellow about any sort of work,
14 or a casual worker about finishing a job,
an idle servant about a major undertaking—
do not rely on these for any advice.
15 12 But have constant recourse to some devout person, [f] 9:15
whom you know to be a keeper of the commandments,
16 whose soul matches your own,
and who, if you go wrong, will be sympathetic.
17 13 Finally, stick to the advice your own heart gives you,
no one can be truer to you than that;
18 14 since a person's soul often gives a clearer warning
than seven watchmen perched on a watchtower.
19 15 And besides all this beg the Most High Pr 16:9
to guide your steps into the truth.

b. Hebr. 'Hasten the end, remember the appointed time. For who is going to say to you: What are you doing?'

c. The hope of 'ingathering', particularly strong during the Exile, remained a characteristic of Judaism long after the exiles had returned. The Jews always regarded their dispersion abroad as a passing and unfortunate phase, to which the coming of the Messiah would put an end.

d. 'with your praises'; Hebr. var. 'with your majesty'. • 'your sanctuary' (*naon*) with Hebr.; Gk *laon* 'your people'.

e. The exact sense is uncertain. The author may be meaning Israel as a whole, or the patriarchs, who according to an ancient midrash were among the seven things created before the world, or else created wisdom, the first-fruit of creation (Pr 8:22). Or perhaps he believes that the Messiah or the messianic kingdom 'created before all things' is shortly to appear on earth?

f. 'your servants' Gk MSS, Hebr.; 'those who pray to you' *Text. rec.*

g. To restore a hypothetical parallelism here, the alternative reading has been proposed: 'a husband can take any woman, but . . .' Hebr., however, gives the same construction as the Gk. As the text stands, it is apparently emphasising the man's advantage in being able to choose his wife, whereas the latter has no choice in the matter of a husband.

h. Hebr. 'a fortified town'.

37 a. 'created', lit. 'rolled' (in something); the word, whether badly transcribed or emended for theological considerations, is interpreted in accordance with the Hebr.: 'Woe to the wicked man who says, "Why have I been created?" ' • The 'evil inclination' leading human beings to sin is an important element of rabbinical theology.

b. Hebr. 'Evil is the friend who takes advantage of your table and in time of adversity keeps his distance.'

c. lit. 'out of concern for his stomach'. vv. 4–5 contrast two kinds of friend: in danger one runs away, the other remains loyal. In Hebr. v. 5 makes the contrast clearer: 'The good friend fights the enemy and takes up arms against foes.'

d. Text uncertain; Hebr. 'why does that happen?'

e. The following passage provides illustrations of vv. 7–8 by listing advisers who have a personal interest in the advice they give.

f. Hebr. 'he who is in the fear (of God)', cf. Pr 1:7a. For Ben Sira, fear of God is superior to all profane wisdom.

True and false wisdom

Reason [g] should be the basis for every activity, 16 20
reflection must come before any undertaking.
Thoughts are rooted in the heart, 17 21
and this sends out four branches: [h]
Pr 18:21 good and evil, life and death, 18
and mistress of them always is the tongue.
One kind of person is clever at teaching others, 19 22
yet is no good whatever to himself;
9:18 another, very eloquent, is detested 20 23
and ends by starving to death, [i]
not having won the favour of the Lord, 21 24
and being destitute of all wisdom.
Another considers himself wise 22 25
and proclaims his intellectual conclusions as certainties. [j]
But the truly wise instructs his people 23 26
and his intellectual conclusions are certainties. [k]
The wise is showered with blessings, 24 27
and all who see him will call him happy.
Human life lasts a number of days, 25 28
but the days of Israel are beyond counting.
The wise will earn confidence among the people, 26 29
his name will live for ever.

Moderation

During your life, my child, see what suits your constitution, 27 30
do not give it what you find disagrees with it;
1 Co 3:2;6:12; 10:23 Heb 5:12 for not everything is good for everybody, 28 31
nor does everybody like everything.
Do not be insatiable for any delicacy, 29 32
do not be greedy for food,
for over-eating leads to illness 30 33
and excess leads to liver-attacks.
Many people have died from over-eating; 31 34
control yourself, and so prolong your life.

Medicine and illness [a]

38 Treat the doctor with the honour that is his due, [b] 1
in consideration of his services;
for he too has been created by the Lord.
Healing itself comes from the Most High, 2
like a gift received from a king. [c]
The doctor's learning keeps his head high, 3
and the great regard him with awe.
The Lord has brought forth medicinal herbs from the ground, 4
and no one sensible will despise them.
Ex 15:23–25 Did not a piece of wood once sweeten the water, 5
thus giving proof of its power? [d]
He has also given some people the knowledge, 6
so that they may draw credit from his mighty works.
He uses these [e] for healing and relieving pain; 7
the druggist makes up a mixture from them.
Thus, there is no end to his activities; [f] 8
thanks to him, well-being exists throughout the world.

My child, when you are ill, do not rebel,
but pray to the Lord and he will heal you.
Renounce your faults, keep your hands unsoiled,
and cleanse your heart from all sin.
Offer incense and a memorial of fine flour,
make as rich an offering as you can afford. [g] 35:2–5
Then let the doctor take over—the Lord created him too—
do not let him leave you, for you need him.
There are times when good health depends on doctors.
For they, in their turn, will pray the Lord
to grant them the grace to relieve
and to heal, and so prolong your life. [h]
Whoever sins in the eyes of his Maker,
let such a one come under the care of the doctor! [i]

Mourning [j]

My child, shed tears over the dead,
lament for the dead to show your sorrow,
then bury the body with due ceremony
and do not fail to honour the grave. [k]
Weep bitterly, beat your breast, [l]
observe the mourning the dead deserves
for a day or two, [m] to avoid censorious comment,
and then be comforted in your sorrow;
for grief can lead to death,
a grief-stricken heart loses all energy.
In affliction sorrow persists,
a life of grief [n] is hard to bear.
Do not abandon your heart to grief, 30:21
drive it away, bear your own end in mind. [o] 7:36;28:6
Do not forget, there is no coming back;
you cannot help the dead, and you will harm yourself.
'Remember my doom, [p] since it will be yours too;
I yesterday, you today!' [q]
Once the dead are laid to rest, let their memory rest,
do not fret for them, once their spirit departs.

g. Or 'the word' (*logos*), but in this context the word is the expression of creative wisdom.

h. Following Hebr.; Gk 'as token of change of heart, four parts appear.'

i. Hebr. 19 'Another is wise, acting wisely for others, but as regards himself is a fool. 20 Another is wise and disliked for what he says, he will be deprived of all agreeable food.'

j. Hebr. 'for his body'.

k. Hebr. 'A truly wise man is wise for the people of his nation, and the fruits of his intellect are theirs.'

38 a. Possibly some devout Jews thought consulting the doctor showed lack of faith in God. Cf. 2 Ch 16:12. Ben Sira corrects this view.

b. The 'honour' is perhaps the 'honorarium'. Hebr. 'Be friendly with a doctor'.

c. lit. 'which he receives'; it is not clear whether this means the sick person, or the doctor (v. 1) as intermediary. Hebr. 'The doctor has his art from God, and receives presents from the king.'

d. The Greek suggests that the author is giving a natural explanation of the miracle at Marah. For 'its power' Hebr. has 'his (God's) power'.

e. The herbs, already mentioned in v. 4 (vv. 5–6 are a parenthesis).

f. The activities of God do not cease with creation; to human beings and things he gives a share of his power, thus diffusing benefits to the whole world.

g. lit. 'according to your means' Hebr.; 'as not being (?)' Gk.

h. This passage may have inspired Jm 5:14seq., but the advice given in that letter has a different end in view.

i. i.e. may he fall sick. This does not seem to imply any insult to doctors; moreover it is possible that Hebr. should be preferred: 'A man sins in the eyes of his Maker if he defies the doctor.'

j. With the Jews, as with Orientals generally, the funeral rites were spectacular and governed by detailed rules. For various features, *see* Jr 9:17,18; Ezk 24:15–24; Am 5:16; Mt 9:23; Mk 5:38.

k. Hebr. 'and do not make yourself scarce when he expires'.

l. lit. 'make the blow burn': beating the breast was one of the signs of mourning. Hebr. 'carry out the mourning rites'.

m. Seven days, according to 22:12; but there may have been various grades of funeral solemnity.

n. 'a life of grief' conj.; 'a poor man's life' Gk.

o. Or merely 'Think of the future'. The expression *ta eschata*, 7:36; 48:24, is hard to translate.

p. 'my doom' (the dead person speaking), or 'the doom', S., or 'his doom', Vaticanus, Hebr. But whatever the reading adopted, it is the doom that condemns all human beings to die, Gn 2:17; 3:3–4.

q. That is to say: I was alive yesterday, as you are today. Hebr. 'he yesterday'.

Trades and crafts [r]

Leisure gives the scribe the chance to acquire wisdom; 24 25
a man with few commitments can grow wise.
How can the ploughman become wise, 25 26
whose sole ambition is to wield the goad,
driving his oxen, engrossed in their work,
his conversation limited to bullocks,
his thoughts absorbed in the furrows he traces 26 27
and his long evenings spent in fattening heifers?
Similarly with all workmen and craftsmen, 27 28
toiling day and night;
those who engrave seals,
for ever trying to think of a new design,
concentrating on catching a good likeness
and staying up late to get the work done.
Similarly with the blacksmith sitting by his anvil; 28 29
he considers what to do with the pig-iron,
the breath of the fire scorches his skin,
as he contends with the heat of the furnace;
the noise of the hammer deafens him, [s] 30
his eyes are fixed on the pattern;
he concentrates on getting the job done well 31
and stays up late to apply the finishing touches.
Similarly with the potter, sitting at his work, 29 32
turning the wheel with his feet;
constantly on the alert over his work,
each flick of the finger premeditated; [t]
he pummels the clay with his arm, 30 33
and with his feet he kneads it; 34
he concentrates on applying the glaze right
and stays up late to clean the kiln.
All these people rely on their hands 31 35
and each is skilled [u] at his own craft.
A town could not be inhabited without them, 32 36
there would be no settling, no travelling. 37
But you will not find them in the parliament, 33
they do not hold high rank in the assembly.
They do not sit on the judicial bench, 38
and they do not meditate on the Law. [v]
They are not remarkable for their culture or judgement, 34
nor are they found frequenting the philosophers. [w]
They sustain the structure of the world, 39
and their prayer is concerned with their trade.

Ps 1:2 **The scribe**

39 Not so with one who concentrates his mind 1
and his meditation on the Law of the Most High.
He researches into the wisdom of all the Ancients, 1
he occupies his time with the prophecies. [a]
He preserves the discourses of famous men, 2
he is at home with the niceties of parables. [b]
He researches into the hidden sense of proverbs, 3
he ponders the obscurities of parables.
He enters the service of princes, 4
he is seen in the presence of rulers.

He travels in foreign countries, [c]
he has experienced human good and human evil.
At dawn and with all his heart
he turns to the Lord his Creator;
he pleads in the presence of the Most High,
he opens his mouth in prayer
and makes entreaty for his sins. 2 S 12:20–30+
If such be the will of the great Lord,
he will be filled with the spirit of intelligence, Is 11:2
he will shower forth words of wisdom,
and in prayer give thanks to the Lord.
He will grow upright in purpose and learning,
he will ponder the Lord's hidden mysteries.
He will display the instruction he has received,
taking his pride in the Law of the Lord's covenant.
Many will praise his intelligence
and it will never be forgotten.
His memory will not disappear,
generation after generation his name will live.
Nations will proclaim his wisdom, =44:15
the assembly will celebrate his praises.
If he lives long, his name will be more glorious than a thousand others,
and if he dies, that will satisfy him just as well. [d]

Invitation to praise God

And here are some more of my reflections:
yes, I am as full as the moon at the full!
Listen to me, devout children, and blossom
like the rose that grows on the bank of a watercourse. Ps 1:3
Give off a sweet smell like incense,
flower like the lily, spread your fragrance abroad,
sing a song of praise
blessing the Lord for all his works.
Declare the greatness of his name,
proclaim his praise
with song and with lyre,
and this is how you must sing his praises:
'How wonderful, the actions of the Lord! Ps 104:24
Whatever he orders is done at the proper time!' Ps 33:9
You must not say, 'What is this? Why is that?' Qo 3:11
There is a proper time for every question. [e]

r. This passage is not unlike an ancient Egyptian text known as the *Satire on Trades*. Ben Sira limits his catalogue to trades typically Palestinian.

s. 'pig-iron' Vaticanus; 'the work of iron' *Text. rec.* • 'deafens' conj. assuming the Hebr. *yeherash*, read by the Gk translator as *yehaddesh* (frequent confusion of *resh* and *dalet*) 'renews'.

t. Translation uncertain; lit. 'his activity is counted' or 'numbered', perhaps because he has to turn out a fixed number of articles by the end of the day.

u. lit. 'wise'. Craftsmanship is an elementary form of wisdom, *see* Ex 35:30–36:1; 1 K 5:20; 7:13–14. Such 'wisdom', however, cannot be compared with that of the scribe, *see* 39:1–11.

v. lit. 'the covenant of the judgement', cf. 45:17.

w. lit. 'inventors of maxims' conj.; 'maxims' Gk.

39 a. The terms 'law', 'wisdom', 'prophecies', apparently refer to the three sections of the scriptures, *see* Translator's Foreword, 1,8–10,24–25.

b. The scribe is primarily the custodian of the scriptures, but he also has the duty of explaining them to the people, *see* Ezr 7:6c. On the parable or *mashal*, *see* p. 751.

c. The scribe is often a court official, minister, or ambassador.

d. lit. 'that is enough for him' *ekpoiei* conj.; Gk. *empoiei* 'he produces for himself (?)'. Difficult text; it seems to mean that if the scribe dies before achieving renown he ought not to regret the work he has done.

e. These two lines, found only in the Gk, are in part a doublet of v. 21. It apparently means that premature enquiries about the ordering of this world are idle. Some day either by reward or punishment God will demonstrate the purpose of hitherto uncomprehended phenomena, vv. 21,34. Thus the sage who studies will understand 'at the proper time'. This passage may have been intended to refute certain pessimistic propositions put forward by Qohelet.

At his word, the water stops and piles up high, 17 22
at his voice, the watery reservoirs take shape,[f]
at his command, whatever he wants is done, 18 23
1 S 14:6 no one can stop him, if he intends to save.
He can see whatever human beings are doing, 19 24
Ws 1:7–8 nothing can be hidden from his eye;
his gaze stretches from eternity to eternity, 20 25
and nothing can astonish him.
You must not say, 'What is this? Why is that?' 21 26
for everything has been made for a purpose.

As his blessing covers the dry land like a river[g] 22 27
and soaks it like a flood, 28
so retribution is his legacy to the nations, 23 29
just as he has turned fresh waters to salt.
His ways are as smooth for the devout, 24
as they are full of obstacles for the wicked.
33:14–15 Good things were created from the beginning for good people, 25 30
as bad ones[h] were for sinners.
The prime needs of human beings for living 26 31
are water and fire, iron and salt,
wheat-flour, milk and honey,
the juice of the grape, oil and clothing.
All these are good for those who are good, 27 32
but turn out bad for sinners.

Some winds have been created for punishing, 28 33
in his fury, he uses them as scourges;[i]
on the day of doom, they unleash their violence 34
and appease the wrath of their Creator.
Fire and hail, famine and death, 29 35
have all been created for punishing.[j]
Wild animals' fangs, scorpions, vipers, 30 36
the avenging sword for the ruin of the godless:
all of them exult in discharging his orders, 31 37
ready on earth whenever the need arises
and, when their time comes, not falling short of his word.

That is why I was determined from the outset, 32 38
why I have pondered and why I have written,[k]
'The works of the Lord are all good, 33 39
when the time is right, he gives whatever is needed.
You must not say, "This is worse than that," 34 40
for, sooner or later, everything proves its worth.
Ps 145:21 So now, sing with all your heart and voice, 35 41
and bless the name of the Lord!'

Human wretchedness[a]

Gn 3:16–19 Jb 1:21+; 7:1 seq.;14:1–21a Jb 1:21+ **40** A hard lot has been created for human beings, 1
a heavy yoke lies on the children of Adam
from the day they come out of their mother's womb,
till the day they return[b] to the mother of them all.
What fills them with foreboding and their hearts with fear 2
is dread of the day of death.
From the one who sits on a glorious throne 3
to the wretch in dust and ashes,

from the one who wears purple and a crown
to the one dressed in sacking,
all is fury and jealousy, turmoil and unrest,
fear of death, rivalry, strife.
And even at night while he rests on his bed
his sleep only gives a new twist to his worries: [c] — Dt 28:65–67 Jb 7:4
scarcely has he lain down to rest, — Qo 2:23;8:16
when in his sleep, as if in broad daylight, [d]
he is troubled with nightmares,
like one who has escaped from a battle,
and at the moment of rescue he wakes up,
amazed that there was nothing to be afraid of!
For all creatures, human and animal—
and seven times more for sinners—
there is death and blood and strife and the sword,
disasters, famine, affliction, plague.
These things were all created for the wicked, — 39:25,29
and the Flood came because of them.
All that comes from the earth returns to the earth, — =41:10 Gn 3:19 Ps 146:4 Qo 1:7
and what comes from the water returns to the sea. [e]

Various maxims

All bribery and injustice will be blotted out,
but good faith will stand for ever.
Ill-gotten wealth will vanish like a torrent,
like the single thunder-clap that heralds rain.
When he opens his hand, he rejoices, [f]
by the same token, sinners come to ruin.
The sprigs of the godless will not make many branches, — 23:25 Ws 4:3
tainted roots find only hard rock.
The reed that grows by every lake and river's edge — Jb 8:11–12
is the first plant to be uprooted. [g]
Charity is a very paradise of blessing — 40:27
and almsgiving endures for ever. [h]
For a person of private means and one who works hard,
life is pleasant,
better off than either, one who finds a treasure.
Children and the founding of a city perpetuate a name:
more esteemed than either, a perfect wife. [i]

f. Alluding to the numerous miracles connected with water: creation, Gn 1:9, the Flood, Gn 7,11–12, the crossing of the Red Sea, Ex 14:21–22, and of the Jordan, Jos 3:16, and possibly also to the mystery of the clouds as inexhaustible reservoirs of water, *see* Ps 104:6–13.

g. The author is thinking of the beneficial inundations of the Nile. Hebr. has 'like a Nile'.

h. 'bad ones'; Hebr. var. 'good or evil'.

i. Following Gk 248 and Syr.; 'in their fury, they establish scourges'. *Text. rec.*

j. *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs* 'It (the lower heaven) holds fire, snow, and ice ready for the Day of Judgement, in the just punishment of God. For it is there that the spirits of vengeance are, for the punishment of men' (Lv 3:2). Ben Sira, also, sees these scourges as held in reserve but he does not seem to be thinking in terms of eschatology.

k. Solemn preface to the optimistic conclusion: all is willed by God for a specific purpose; all is under control and human beings have no reason to complain; if they suffer, it is because they deserve it.

40 **a.** This passage on the wretchedness of the human state contrasts with the preceding chapter; but there is no inconsistency in the thought: misery has its explanation—it is the consequence of sin, v. 10.

b. 'return' Gk 248, Hebr.; 'burial' *Text. rec.*

c. The Hebr. (uncertain) and the context suggest that sleep brings thoughts no less painful. Cf. Qo 2:22,23.

d. 'as if in broad daylight' conj.; 'as if on the day of watching' Gk.

e. Hebr. 'and what comes from above returns above', cf. Qo 12:7.

f. Difficult text; possibly referring to the virtuous whose generosity spreads joy all around.

g. lit. 'before any plant'; Hebr. 'before any rain'.

h. Hebr. 'Piety will never be shaken and virtue remains for ever.'

i. Hebr. adds between the two lines 'better than either, the discovery of wisdom. Cattle plantation makes you well known.'

Wine and music cheer the heart; 20
better than either, the love of wisdom.[j]
Flute and harp add sweetness to a song; 21
better than either, a melodious voice.
The eye longs for grace and beauty; 22
better than either, the green of spring corn.
Friend or comrade—it is always well met; 23
better than either, a wife and husband.
Pr 17:17 29:8+ Brothers and allies are good in times of trouble; 24
better than either, almsgiving to the rescue.
Gold and silver will steady your feet; 25
more esteemed than either, good advice.
Money and strength make a confident heart; 26
better than either, the fear of the Lord.
40:17 With fear of the Lord, nothing is lacking: 27
no need to seek for other help.
Fear of the Lord is a paradise of blessing, 27 28
protecting better than the highest reputation.

Sponging

My child, do not live by sponging off others, 28 29
better be dead than be a sponger.
A life spent in eyeing someone else's table 29 30
cannot be accounted a life at all.
Other people's food defiles the gullet;
a wise, well-brought-up person will beware of doing this.[k] 31
Jb 20:12–14 What a sponger says may sound very sweet 30 32
but in his belly there burns a fire.

Death

Jb 14:1-2a **41** O death, how bitter it is to remember you 1
for someone peacefully living with his possessions,
for someone with no worries and everything going well 2
and who can still enjoy his food![a]

Jb 3:20seq. O death, your sentence is welcome 2 3
to one in want, whose strength is failing,
to one worn out with age and a thousand worries, 4
resentful and impatient!

Do not dread death's sentence; 3 5
remember those who came before you and those who will come after.
Gn 3:19;6:3 This is the sentence passed on all living creatures by the Lord, 4 6
so why object to what seems good to the Most High?
Qo 6:6;9:10 Whether your life lasts ten or a hundred or a thousand years, 7
its length will not be held against you in Sheol.[b]

The fate of the wicked

Hateful brats, such are the children of sinners, 5 8
who foregather in the haunts of the godless.
Ps 21:10 The inheritance of sinners' children is doomed to perish, 6 9
their posterity will endure lasting reproach.
A godless father will be blamed by his children 7 10
for the reproach he has brought on them.
A bad outlook for you, godless people, 8 11
who have forsaken the Law of God Most High.

12 9 When you were born, you were born to be accursed, [c] Ws 12:11
and when you die, that curse will be your portion.
13 10 All that comes from the earth returns to the earth, =40:11
so too the wicked proceed from curse to destruction.
14 11 Mourning concerns only the bodies of the dead,
but the worthless name of sinners will be blotted out. [d]

15 12 Be careful of your reputation, for it will last you longer Pr 22:1
than a thousand great hoards of gold. Qo 7:1
16 13 A good life lasts a certain number of days,
but a good reputation lasts for ever.

Sense of shame

17 14 Keep my instructions and be at peace, my children.

Wisdom hidden away and treasure undisplayed, =20:30–31
what use is either of these? Mt 5:14–16
18 15 Better someone who hides his folly
than one who hides his wisdom.
19 16 Preserve a sense of shame in the following matters,
20 for not every kind of shame is right to harbour,
nor is every situation correctly appraised by all.
21 17 Be ashamed, before father and mother, of depraved behaviour,
and before prince or potentate of telling lies;
22 18 of wrong-doing before judge or magistrate,
and of impiety before the assembly of the people;
23 19 of sharp practice before your companion and your friend,
24 and of theft before the neighbourhood you live in.
20 Before the truth and covenant of God,
be ashamed of leaning elbows on the table, [e]
21 of being ungracious when giving or receiving,
25 of ignoring those who greet you,
22 of gazing at a loose woman,
26 of repulsing your fellow-countryman,
23 of misappropriating another's portion or gift,
27 of paying court to another man's wife, 9:8–9
24 of making advances to his servant-girl
—do not go near her bed—
28 25 of saying disagreeable things to friends
—do not follow up a gift with a taunt—
42:1 26 of repeating everything you hear
and of betraying confidences.
27 Then you will know what true shame is,
and you will find yourself in everyone's graces.

1 **42** The following things you should not be ashamed of, [a]
and do not sin from fear of what others think:
2 of the Law of the Most High or of the covenant,
of a verdict that acquits the godless, [b]

j. Hebr. 'Wine and drinks put joy into the heart, but more than these two things, love.'
k. Hebr. 'It is inward torture for the intelligent.'

41 **a.** 'food'; Hebr. var. 'pleasure'.
b. Where the longest of lives has come to an end and therefore ceased to be matter for envy.
c. Between the two lines, Hebr. adds 'If you beget children, it is for affliction, if you stumble, it is for everlasting joy' (where presumably the Syr. reading should be adopted: 'if you stumble, you give delight to others').
d. Hebr. 'physically speaking, human beings are futile, but a reputation for goodness is not to be blotted out.'
e. 'on the table', lit. 'on the bits of bread': if this is only a matter of etiquette, it accords ill with the context. Hebr. offers little light: 'to violate oath and covenant, to stretch your elbows over (towards) the bread (?)'

42 **a.** Ben Sira shows how certain actions frowned on by public opinion or by prejudice are nevertheless permissible.
b. The 'godless' are perhaps foreigners; they should be treated as justly as Israelites.

of keeping accounts with a travelling companion, [c] 3
of settling property on your friends,
of being accurate over scales and weights, 4
of making small and large profits,
of gaining from commercial transactions, [d] 5
30:1 of disciplining your children strictly,
33:25,27 of lashing a wicked slave till you draw blood.
With an interfering wife, it is as well to use your seal, 6
and where there are many hands, lock things up.
Whatever stores you issue, do it by number and weight, 7
spendings and takings, put everything in writing.
Pr 10:13; 19:25,29; 26:3 Do not be ashamed to correct a stupid person or a fool, 8
or an old dotard who bickers with young people. [e]
Then you will show yourself really educated
and win the approval of everyone.

Worries of a father with a daughter

Unknown to her, a daughter keeps her father awake, [f] 9
the worry she gives him drives away his sleep:
in her youth, in case she never marries,
married, in case she should be disliked,
as a virgin, in case she should be defiled 10
and found with child in her father's house,
having a husband, in case she goes astray,
Dt 24:1 married, in case she should be sterile!
26:10 Your daughter is headstrong? Keep a sharp look-out 11
that she does not make you the laughing-stock of your enemies,
the talk of the town, the object of common gossip,
and put you to public shame.

Women

Do not stare at any man for his good looks, 12
do not sit down with the women; [g]
for moth comes out of clothes, 13
and woman's spite out of woman.
Qo 7:26–28 Better a man's spite than a woman's kindness: 14
women give rise to shame and reproach. [h]

II: THE GLORY OF GOD

A: IN NATURE

Next, I shall remind you of the works of the Lord, 15
and tell of what I have seen.
Gn 1:3 seq. By the words [i] of the Lord his works come into being
and all creation obeys his will. [j]
The shining sun looks down on all things, 16
and the work of the Lord is full of his glory.
The Lord has not granted the Holy Ones [k] the power 17
to tell of all his marvels
which the Almighty Lord has solidly constructed
for the universe to stand firm in his glory. [l]
Pr 15:11 He has fathomed both the abyss and the human heart 18
and seen into their devious ways;

for the Most High knows all there is to know
and sees the signs of the times. [m]
19 He declares what is past and what will be,
and reveals the trend of hidden things.
20 Not a thought escapes him, Ps 139:1–4
not a single word is hidden from him.
21 He has embellished the magnificent works of his wisdom,
he is from everlasting to everlasting,
22 nothing can be added to him, nothing taken away, 18:6 Qo 3:14
he needs no one's advice.
23 22 How lovely, all his works, 16:24–29
how dazzling to the eye!
24 23 They all live and last for ever,
and, whatever the circumstances, all obey.
25 24 All things go in pairs, by opposites, 33:14–15 Qo 3:1–8
he has not made anything imperfect: [n]
26 25 one thing complements the excellence of another.
Who could ever grow tired of gazing at his glory?

The sun [a] Ps 19:1–6

1 **43** Pride of the heights, a clear vault of the sky— Gn 1:14–18 Ps 8:3
such is the beauty of the heavens, a glorious sight.
2 The sun, as he emerges, proclaims at his rising,
'How wonderful a thing, the work of the Most High!'
3 At his zenith, he parches the ground,
who can withstand his blaze?
4 We have to blow the furnace to produce any heat,
the sun burns the mountains three times as much;
breathing out blasts of fire,
flashing his rays, he dazzles the eyes.
5 Great is the Lord who created him
and whose word speeds him on his course.

The moon

6 And then the moon, ever punctual Ps 89:39; 104:19
to mark the times, an everlasting sign:
7 It is the moon that signals the feasts,
a luminary that wanes after being full. [b]
8 The month derives its name from hers, [c]
she waxes wonderfully in her phases,

c. 'keeping accounts' (*logismou* instead of *logou*) following the Hebr. 'travelling companion' conj.; 'a companion and travellers' Gk.

d. Cf., on the other hand, 26:29 and 27:2. Business dealings are lawful but full of temptation.

e. Hebr. 'who sins by fornication'.

f. Hebr. 'a daughter is a deceptive treasure for her father.'

g. Hebr. 'let her not show her beauty to any man, let her not gossip with women.'

h. Ben Sira is stricter than Pr, itself severe on women, cf. Pr 5:15b. Even when taking the paradox into account, it should be noted that later rabbinical teaching took the same line.

i. Hebr. 'word'. One of the earliest appearances of the doctrine of the creative Word, cf. 43:26; Gn 1; Ps 33:6; Ws 9:1,2; Jn 1:1a. In wisdom literature as a whole it is rather Wisdom that is spoken of as creative, *see* Pr 8:22f.

j. Line translated following Sin., Hebr. and Syr.; omitted by Gk.

k. i.e. the angels, Jb 5:1a.

l. Hebr. (for 17[c,d]) 'The Lord has given his armies the strength to subsist before his glory.'

m. The stars are 'signs of the times' not only because they distinguish the seasons, 43:6; Gn 1:14–18, but also because, according to a widespread belief, the future was already written in the heavens, Jr 10:2. Here there may be a more specific reference to the extraordinary signs expected to announce the coming of the Messiah, Mt 24:29–31.

n. Hebr. 'All things are different from one another, and nothing has been made in vain.'

43 **a.** Compare this lyrical passage with those of Dn 3:52–90 and Ps 19:4seq.; 136; 145; 148. The text is difficult, and the Hebr., being very different, is little help.

b. The two great Jewish feasts, Passover and Shelters, *see* Ex 23:14d, began on the day of full moon (14th of the month) and lasted for 8 days.

c. Either because the same Hebr. word (*yerah*) means 'moon' and 'month', or because the alternative word for 'month' (*hodesh*) means 'newness' (new moon).

banner of the hosts on high, 9
shining in the vault of heaven.

Ba 3:33–35 **The stars**

The glory of the stars makes the beauty of the sky, 9 10
a brilliant adornment of the Lord on High.
At the words of the Holy One they stand as he decrees, 10 11
and never grow slack at their watch.

The rainbow

50:7 Gn 9:13 Ezk 1:28 See the rainbow and praise its Maker, 11 12
so superbly beautiful in its splendour.
Across the sky it forms a glorious arc 12 13
drawn by the hands of the Most High.

The wonders of nature

Jb 38:22seq. Ps 147:16–18 By his command he sends the snow, 13 14
he speeds the lightning by his command.
In the same way, his treasuries open 14 15
and the clouds fly out like birds.
His great power solidifies the clouds, 15 16
then pulverises them into hail.
Ps 29:8 At the roar of his thunder, the earth writhes in labour, 17a 18a
at the sight of him, the mountains quake. 16 17a
At his will the south wind blows, 17b
or the storm from the north and the whirlwind.[d] 17b 18b
He sprinkles snow like birds alighting, 18 19
it comes down like locusts settling.
The eye marvels at the beauty of its whiteness, 20
and the mind is amazed at its falling.
Over the earth, like salt, he also pours hoarfrost, 19 21
which, when it freezes, bristles like thorns.
The cold wind blows from the north, 20 22
and ice forms on the water;
it forms on every piece of standing water,
covering it like a breastplate.
The wind swallows up the mountains and scorches the desert, 21 23
like a fire it consumes the vegetation.
But cloud brings swift healing, 22 24
and dew brings joy after the heat.

Jb 7:12f Ps 104:5seq. By his own resourcefulness he has tamed the abyss, 23 25
and planted it with islands.
Those who sail the sea tell of its dangers, 24 26
their accounts fill our ears with amazement:
for there too exist strange and wonderful works, 25 27
Ps 104:25seq.; 107:23seq. animals of every kind and huge sea creatures.
Thanks to God, his messenger reaches port, 26 28
everything works out according to his word.

We could say much more and still fall short; 27 29
to put it concisely, 'He is all.'[e]
Ps 96:4;145:3 Where shall we find sufficient power to glorify him, 28 30
since he is the Great One, above all his works,
the awe-inspiring Lord, stupendously great, 29 31
and wonderful in his power?

32 30 Exalt the Lord in your praises
33 as high as you may—still he surpasses you.
34 Exert all your strength when you exalt him,
do not grow tired—you will never come to the end.
35 31 Who has ever seen him to describe him?
Who can glorify him as he deserves? Jn 1:18;5:57; 6:46
36 32 Many mysteries remain even greater than these,
for we have seen only a few of his works, Jb 26:14
37 33 the Lord himself having created all things
and given wisdom to those who are devout. 1:9–10;42:17

B: IN HISTORY

1 M 2:51–64
Heb 11

Eulogy of the ancestors [a]

1 44 Next let us praise illustrious men, [b]
our ancestors in their successive generations.
2 The Lord has created an abundance of glory, [c]
and displayed his greatness from earliest times.
3 Some wielded authority as kings
and were renowned for their strength;
others were intelligent advisers
and uttered prophetic sayings.
4 Others directed the people by their advice,
by their understanding of the popular mind,
and by the wise words of their teaching; [d]
5 others composed musical melodies
and set down ballads;
6 others were rich and powerful,
living peacefully in their homes.
7 All these were honoured by their contemporaries
and were the glory of their day.
8 Some of them left a name behind them,
so that their praises are still sung.
9 While others have left no memory
and disappeared as though they had not existed.
They are now as though they had never been,
and so too, their children after them.

10 But here is a list of illustrious men
whose good works have not been forgotten. [e]
11 In their descendants they find
a rich inheritance, their posterity.
12 Their descendants stand by the commandments 39:9
and, thanks to them, so do their children's children.

d. Following Hebr. order.

e. Not of course in the pantheistic sense. For Ben Sira, everything comes from God, whose transcendence he constantly asserts (*see*, in this passage, v. 28) and everything belongs to him.

44 a. This eulogy shows how a devout Jew of the 2nd century before Christ thought of the history of his people, cf. 1 M 2:51–64.

b. *See* 44:10, where in Hebr. the same expression occurs: man of piety (*hesed*) giving rise to the term 'Hasidaeans' (*hasidim*), *see* 1 M 2:42; 7:13, those Jews who at the time of the Maccabaean revolt were remarkable for their loyalty to God and the Law. That the Gk translator has not given a strictly accurate rendering of the term may be because, at the time of writing, the connotations of the word were rather too precise.

c. Vv. 2–9 may be either a description of 'human glory' as known outside Israel, with which the author contrasts (vv. 1 and 10seq.) that of the ancestors of the Jews, or else a general survey of the glories of Israel preceding the more detailed account.

d. Hebr. 'rulers of nations in their planning, civil servants in their profound thoughts, learned sages in their books, preceptors in their traditions'.

e. Hebr. 'their hope will not cease', a reading which seems to imply a hope of immortality, which does not figure in the Gk.

Their offspring will last for ever, 13
their glory will not fade.
Their bodies have been buried in peace, 14
and their name lives on for all generations.
=39:10 The peoples will proclaim their wisdom, 15
the assembly will celebrate their praises.

Enoch

Gn 5:24 LXX
Heb 11:5 Enoch pleased the Lord and was transferred to heaven, 16
an example for the conversion[f] of all generations.

Noah

Gn 6:9 Noah was found perfectly upright, 17
Is 6:13 in the time of retribution he became the heir:
↗1 P 3:20
↗2 P 2:5 because of him a remnant was preserved for the earth[g] 18
at the coming of the Flood.[h]
Gn 8:21–22;
9:9d Everlasting covenants[i] were made with him 18 19
that never again should every living creature perish by flood.

Abraham

Gn 12:2;17:4seq.
Rm 4:1,13–18 Abraham, the great ancestor of a host of nations, 19 20
no one was ever his equal in glory.[j]
He observed the Law of the Most High, 20
and entered into a covenant with him.
Gn 17:10d He confirmed the covenant in his own flesh, 21
Gn 22:1–19
1 M 2:52
Heb 11:17 and proved himself faithful under ordeal.[k]
The Lord therefore promised him on oath 21 22
to bless the nations through his descendants,
Gn 22:18;12:3;
15:5 to multiply him like the dust on the ground,
Ac 3:25 to exalt his descendants like the stars, 23
Ga 3:8–9 and to give them the land as their heritage,
from one sea to the other,
Gn 15:18
Jg 20:1a from the River to the ends of the earth.

Isaac and Jacob

Gn 17:19;
26:3–5 To Isaac too, for the sake of Abraham his father, 22 24
Gn 28:14 he assured ·the blessing of all humanity; 23 25
he caused the covenant to rest on the head of Jacob.
He confirmed him in his blessings[l] 26
and gave him the land as his inheritance;
he divided it into portions,
and shared it out among the twelve tribes.

Moses

45 From Jacob's stock he produced a generous man 1 27
who found favour in the eyes of all humanity,[a]
beloved by God and people, 45:1
Moses, of blessed memory.
42:17k He made him the equal of the holy ones in glory 2
and made him strong, to the terror of his enemies.
Ex 8:8seq.,26
seq.;9:33;
10:18seq. By the word of Moses, he made prodigies cease 3
and raised him high in the respect of kings;
Ex 19:1seq.;
33:20i he gave him commandments for his people,
and showed him something of his glory.
Nb 12:3 For his loyalty and gentleness he sanctified him, 4
choosing him alone out of all human beings;

he allowed him to hear his voice, Ex 19:19seq.
and led him into the darkness; Ex 20:21;24:18
he gave him the commandments face to face, Ex 20:1seq., 22seq.;
the law of life and knowledge, Dt 4:6–8;32:47
to teach Jacob his ordinances
and Israel his decrees.

Aaron

He raised up Aaron, a holy man like Moses,
his brother, of the tribe of Levi.
He made an everlasting covenant with him,
and gave him the priesthood of the people.
He adorned him with impressive vestments,
he dressed him in a robe of glory. [b]
He clothed him in glorious perfection
and invested him with rich ornaments, Ex 28:6–12,31–35,42
the breeches, the long robe, the *ephod*.
To surround the robe he gave him pomegranates,
and many gold bells all round Ex 28:33–34
to chime at every step,
for their sound to be heard in the Temple
as a reminder to the children of his people;
and a sacred vestment of gold and aquamarine Ex 28:2–5
and scarlet, the work of an embroiderer;
the pectoral of judgement, the *urim* and *thummim*, [c] Ex 28:6a
of plaited crimson, the work of a craftsman; 1 S 14:41r
precious stones cut like seals Ex 28:17–21
mounted in gold, the work of a jeweller,
as a reminder with their engraved inscriptions
of the number of the tribes of Israel;
and a golden diadem on his turban, Ex 28:36–39
engraved with the seal of consecration; Ws 18:24+
superb ornamentation, magnificent work,
adornment to delight the eye.
There had never been such lovely things before him,
and no one else has ever put them on,
but only his own sons,
and his descendants for all time.
His sacrifices were to be burnt entirely,
twice each day and for ever.
Moses consecrated him Lv 8:1–13
and anointed him with holy oil;
and this was an everlasting covenant for him,
and for his descendants as long as the heavens endure, [d]

f. lit. 'a reason for conversion'. The Hebr. reading, 'an example of understanding' possibly alludes to the mysteries which Enoch witnessed and revealed to mankind (*Book of the Secrets of Enoch*). Lat. 'to bring conversion to the nations'.

g. 'heir' following Hebr. (rendering uncertain); 'exchange' Gk; 'reconciliation' Lat. • The prophetic doctrine of the 'remnant' from which salvation will come after disaster (*see* Is 4:3c) is applied by Ben Sira to the story of Noah.

h. Hebr. 'because of his covenant the Flood ceased'.

i. The Noachic covenants of the priestly code. But the Hebr. only speaks of an 'everlasting sign' (the rainbow, Gn 9:12–13).

j. Hebr. 'no one will inflict a stain on his glory.'

k. On Abraham's faith, *see* Gn 12:1; 15:6c; 22:1; Rm 4:1–25; Ga 3:6–14.

l. Hebr. 'on the head of Israel', cf. Gn 32:28. A marginal gloss replaces the word 'blessing' (*berakah*) by 'birthright' (*bekorah*), *see* Gn 25:29seq.; 1 Ch 5:1 (where the word 'birthright' in the Hebr. is read 'blessing' by Gk).

45 a. As preserved in this context, these two vv. apply very well to Moses, but there is a possibility that originally they may have referred to Joseph, who is not otherwise mentioned except in the summing up of the eulogy, 49:15. If so, part of the original eulogy must have disappeared.

b. Ben Sira's love of liturgical pomp has already been noted, *see* 35:1–10; 50:1–21.

c. lit. 'the lots of truth', which is more or less how LXX translates *urim* and *thummim* in Ex 28:30. But Hebr. 'the *ephod* and the belt' seems more appropriate, cf. following line.

d. 'as long as the heavens endure' Hebr.; 'in the days of the sky' Gk.

that he should preside over worship, act as priest,
and bless the people in the name of the Lord.
Lv 2:2,9,16 He chose him out of all the living 16 20
to offer sacrifices to the Lord,
incense and perfume as a memorial
to make expiation for the people.
Lv 16:1a He entrusted him with his commandments, 17 21
committed to him the statutes of the Law[c]
for him to teach Jacob his decrees
and enlighten Israel on his Law.
Nb 16:1–17:15 Others plotted against him, 18 22
they were jealous of him in the desert,
Dathan and Abiram and their men,
Korah and his crew in fury and rage.
The Lord saw it and was displeased, 19 23
his raging fury made an end of them;
he worked miracles on them, 24
consuming them by his flaming fire.
And he added to Aaron's glory, 20 25
he gave him an inheritance;
Nb 18:12–13 he allotted him the offerings of the first-fruits,
before all else, as much bread as he could want. 26
Ex 29:28,31seq. Lv 6:9–11; 7:9–10,32–36 Thus they eat the sacrifices of the Lord 21
which he gave to him and his posterity.
But of the people's territory he inherits nothing, 22 27
Nb 18:20 he alone of all the people has no share,
Ps 16:5+ 'For I myself am your share and heritage.'

Phinehas

Phinehas son of Eleazar is third in glory 23 28
because of his zeal in the fear of the Lord,
Nb 25:7seq. because he stood firm when the people revolted, 29
with a staunch and courageous heart;
and in this way made expiation for Israel.
Nb 25:11–13 Hence a covenant of peace was sealed with him, 24 30
making him governor of both sanctuary[f] and people,
and securing to him and his descendants
the high priestly dignity for ever.
There was also a covenant with David 25 31
son of Jesse, of the tribe of Judah,
a royal succession by exclusively linear descent,[g]
but the succession of Aaron passes to all his descendants.
May God endow your hearts with wisdom[h] 26
to judge his people uprightly,
so that the virtues of your ancestors may never fade,
and their glory may pass to all their descendants!

Joshua

Jos 1:1b **46** Mighty in war was Joshua son of Nun, 1
successor to Moses[a] in the prophetic office,
who well deserved his name,[b]
and was a great saviour of the chosen people, 2
wreaking vengeance on the enemies who opposed him,
and so bringing Israel into its inheritance.
How splendid he was when, arms uplifted, 2 3
he brandished his sword against cities!

43 Who had ever shown such determination as his?
He himself led the battles of the Lord. [c]
54 Was not the sun held back by his hand, Jos 10:13
and one day drawn out into two?
65 He called on the Most High, the Mighty One, [d]
while pressing the enemies from all directions,
and the great Lord answered him
with hard and violent hailstones.
76 He fell on that enemy nation, [e]
and at the Descent destroyed all resistance Jos 10:10–15
8 to make the nations acknowledge his warlike prowess
and that he was waging war on behalf of the Lord. [f]

Caleb

7 For he was a follower of the Mighty One,
9 in the time of Moses showing his devotion,
he and Caleb son of Jephunneh, Nb 14:6–10
by opposing the whole community,
by preventing the people from sinning, [g]
and by silencing the mutters of rebellion.
10 8 Hence these two alone were preserved
out of six hundred thousand men on the march, 16:10c
and brought into their inheritance,
into a land where milk and honey flow.
11 9 And the Lord conferred strength on Caleb too, Jos 14:10–11
which stayed by him into old age,
so that he could invest the highlands of the country Nb 14:24
which his descendants kept as their inheritance, Jos 14:12–15
12 10 so that every Israelite might see
that it is good to follow the Lord.

The Judges

13 11 The Judges too, each when he was called,
all men whose hearts were never disloyal,
who never turned their backs on the Lord—
14 may their memory be blessed!
15 12 May their bones flourish again [h] from the tomb,
and may the names of those illustrious men
be worthily borne by their sons!

e. lit. 'the covenants of judgement'. For the translator of Si the 'covenants' always connote the 'statutes'. The high priest evidently had to be an authority on the Law, *see* Lv 10:11; Dt 33:10.

f. 'of the sanctuary' Hebr.; 'of the holy ones' Gk.

g. Text obscure: lit. 'succession of the king, of the son only from the son', but the following v. seems to indicate this translation.

h. Aspiration addressed to the contemporary descendants of Aaron. The Hebr. for this v. is very different: 'And now bless Yahweh who is good, who crowns you with glory: may he give you wisdom of the heart, so that your good deeds and high achievements may not be forgotten for generations to come.'

46 a. 'Joshua son of Nun'; Gk has 'Jesus son of Nave' conforming to the tradition of LXX, *see* Jos 1:1. 'successor'; Hebr. 'servant', *see* Ex 33:11.

b. *Yehoshua'* (=Joshua) means 'Yahweh-saves'. Hebr. has 'who has fashioned to be in his time a great salvation for his chosen ones'.

c. 'He himself led' Gk 248 and Hebr.; 'for the Lord himself delivered the enemies' *Text. rec.*

d. This is the translation of Hebr. *'elyon* or *'el 'elyon*, which occurs fourteen times in Si, from chapter 41 onwards. Throughout the first part of the book, the titles 'God' and 'Yahweh', in Gk *Kyrios*, occur.

e. Text emended following Lat.; Gk 'he unleashed war against the nation'. Possibly an allusion to the victory over the Amorites at Gibeon, Jos 10:10–15, cf. the 'slope' or the 'descent' of Beth-Horon, Jos 10:10–11.

f. var. (Venetus) 'their war (was against the Lord)'; Lat. 'that it is not easy to struggle against the Lord'.

g. Hebr. 'averting wrath from the assembly'.

h. lit. 'send out (shoots)', cf. 49:10; Is 66:14. Not so much an explicit witness to the doctrine of the resurrection as an aspiration that the judges may have worthy successors in the days of Ben Sira, who was writing shortly before the Maccabaean revolt.

Samuel

Samuel was the beloved of his Lord; 13 16
prophet of the Lord, he instituted the kingdom,[i]
1 S 10:1;16:13 and anointed rulers over his people.
By the Law of the Lord he judged the assembly, 14 17
and the Lord watched over Jacob.
By his loyalty he was recognised as a prophet, 15 18
by his words he was known to be a trustworthy seer.
46:5;47:5 He called on the Lord, the Mighty One, 16
1 S 7:9–10 when his enemies pressed in from all directions, 19
by offering a sucking lamb.
And the Lord thundered from heaven, 17
1 S 7:7–13 and made his voice heard in a rolling peal; 20
he massacred the leaders of the enemy,[j] 18
and all the rulers of the Philistines. 21
Before the time of his everlasting rest 19
1 S 12 he bore witness to the Lord and his anointed, 22
'Of no property, not even a pair of sandals,
have I ever deprived a soul.'
Nor did anyone accuse him.
1 S 28:6–25 And, having fallen asleep, he prophesied again, 20 23
warning the king of his end;
he spoke from the depths of the earth in prophecy,
to blot out the wickedness of the people.

Nathan

2 S 7:12 **47** After him arose Nathan, 1
to prophesy in the time of David.

David

Lv 4:8 As the fat is set apart from the communion sacrifice, 2
so was David chosen out of the Israelites.
1 S 17:34–37 He played with lions as though with kids, 3
and with bears as though with lambs.
1 S 17 While still a boy, did he not slay the giant 4
and take away the people's shame,
by hurling a stone from his sling 5
and cutting short the boasting of Goliath?
For he called on the Lord Most High, 5 6
who gave strength to his right arm
to put a mighty warrior to death
and assert the strength[a] of his own people.
1 S 18:7 Hence they gave him credit for ten thousand, 6 7
and praised him while they blessed the Lord,
2 S 5:1–3 by offering him a crown of glory.
For he destroyed the enemies on every front, 7
he annihilated his foes, the Philistines, 8
and crushed their strength for ever.[b]
In all his activities he gave thanks 8 9
2 S 23:1 to the Holy One Most High in words of glory;[c]
he put all his heart into his songs 10
1 Ch 16:4seq. out of love for his Creator.
He placed singers before the altar, 9 11
melodiously to sing;

he gave the feasts their splendour,
the festivals their solemn pomp,
causing the Lord's holy name to be praised
and the sanctuary to resound from dawn.
The Lord took away his sins, 2 S 12:13, 24–25
making his strength ever greater;
he gave him a royal [d] covenant, 2 S 7:1a
and a glorious throne in Israel.

Solomon

A wise son succeeded him,
who lived content, thanks to him. [e]
Solomon reigned in a time of peace,
and God gave him peace all round 1 K 5:17–19
so that he could raise a house to his name 1 K 6
and prepare an everlasting sanctuary.
How wise you were despite your youth, 1 K 3:4–28; 5:9–14
like a river, brimming over with intelligence!
Your mind ranged the earth,
you filled it with mysterious sayings.
Your name reached the distant islands,
and you were loved for your peace. [f]
Your songs, your proverbs, your sayings
and your answers [g] were the wonder of the world. 1 K 10:1–10
In the name of the Lord God, [h]
of him who is called the God of Israel,
you amassed gold like so much tin, 1 K 10:11seq.,27
and made silver as common as lead.
You abandoned your body to women, 1 K 11:1–13
you became the slave of your appetites.
You stained your honour,
you profaned your stock,
so bringing retribution on your children
and affliction for your folly: [i]
the empire split in two, 1 K 12
from Ephraim arose a rebel kingdom.
But the Lord never goes back on his mercy, 2 S 7:1a; Ps 89:30–37
never cancels any of his words,
will neither deny offspring to his elect
nor stamp out the line of the man who loved him.
And hence, he has granted a remnant to Jacob Is 4:3c
and to David a root sprung from him.

i. Hebr. 'Beloved by the people and pleasing to his Creator was he who was dedicated from his mother's womb, a nazirite of Yahweh in the prophetic function. Samuel judge and priest; by the word of Yahweh he instituted the kingdom.'

j. 'of the enemy' Hebr.; 'of Tyre' Gk (confusion between *tzar* and *tzor*).

47 **a.** lit. 'the horn', common biblical metaphor (especially in the Psalms) to express physical or moral power.

b. Hebr. 'Therefore the girls replied to him and surnamed him with the name of "Ten Thousand". When he had assumed the crown, he fought and on all fronts subdued the enemy. He set up towns among the Philistines and, to this very day, he broke their horn.'

c. The Psalms, *see* 2 S 23:1.

d. 'royal' Gk 248, Hebr., Lat.; 'of kings' *Text. rec.*

e. Solomon benefited from the temporal achievements of David; but, on the religious level, it is also to be understood that God favoured Solomon for the sake of David, cf. vv. 20,22; 1 K 11:12.

f. Allusion to the name of Solomon ('the peaceful one'), as v. 13.

g. 'Your songs': Sg. On the wisdom and literary activity of Solomon, *see* 1 K 5:9–14. For the 'answers', *see* 1 K 10:1–10 (the Queen of Sheba).

h. Hebr. 'You were called by the glorious name invoked on Israel' perhaps alludes to the name given to Solomon at his birth: Jedidiah 'beloved-of-Yahweh', 2 S 12:25.

i. Hebr. 'affliction on your bed', i.e. your posterity.

Rehoboam

1 K 12 Solomon rested with his ancestors, 23 26
leaving one of his stock as his successor, 27
the stupidest member of the nation, 28
brainless Rehoboam, who drove the people to rebel.[j]

Jeroboam

1 K 12:26–33 Next, Jeroboam son of Nebat, who made Israel sin, 24 29
and set Ephraim on the way of evil;
1 K 13:33–34 from then on their sins multiplied so excessively
2 K 17:21–23 as to drive them out of their country; 30
for they tried out every kind of wickedness, 25 31
until vengeance overtook them.

Elijah

48 Then the prophet Elijah arose like a fire, 1
his word flaring like a torch.
1 K 17:1;18:2 It was he who brought famine on them 2
1 K 19:10,14 and decimated them in his zeal.
By the word of the Lord he shut up the heavens, 3
1 K 18:36seq. three times also he brought down fire.
2 K 1:10,12
How glorious you were in your miracles, Elijah! 4
Has anyone reason to boast as you have?—
1 K 17:17–24 rousing a corpse from death, 5
from Sheol, by the word of the Most High;
1 K 21:17–24 dragging kings down to destruction, 6
2 K 1:16 and high dignitaries from their beds;
1 K 19:9–18 hearing a rebuke[a] on Sinai 7
and decrees of punishment on Horeb;
anointing kings as avengers, 8
and prophets to succeed you;
2 K 2:1–11 taken up in the whirlwind of fire, 9
in a chariot with fiery horses;
designated in the prophecies of doom 10
to allay God's wrath before the fury breaks,
Ml 3:24 *to turn the hearts of fathers towards their children,*
Lk 1:17 and to restore the tribes of Jacob.
2 K 2: 10–12 Blessed, those who will see you, 11
1 Th 4:5 and those who have fallen asleep in love;
for we too shall certainly have life.[b] 12

Elisha

Such was Elijah, who was enveloped in a whirlwind; 12 13
2 K 2:9seq. and Elisha was filled with his spirit;
throughout his life no ruler could shake him,
and no one could subdue him.
No task was too hard for him, 13 14
and even in death his body prophesied.[c]
In his lifetime he performed wonders, 14 15
and in death his works were marvellous.

Infidelity and punishment

Despite all this the people did not repent, 15 16
nor did they give up their sins,

until they were herded out of their country — 2 K 18:11–12
and scattered all over the earth;
17 16 only a few of the people were left,
with a ruler of the House of David.
18 Some of them did what pleased the Lord,
others piled sin on sin.

Hezekiah

19 17 Hezekiah fortified his city — 2 K 20:20k
and laid on a water-supply inside it; — 2 Ch 32:5,30
with iron he tunnelled through the rock — Is 22:11
and constructed storage-tanks.
20 18 In his days Sennacherib invaded — 2 K 18:13h;
and sent Rabshakeh;[d] — 19:35+
he lifted his hand against Zion — Is 36–37
and boasted loudly in his arrogance.
21 19 Then their hearts and hands trembled,
they felt the pangs of a woman in labour,
22 20 but they called on the merciful Lord,
stretching out their hands towards him.
Swiftly the Holy One heard them from heaven
23 and delivered them by the agency of Isaiah;
24 21 he struck the camp of the Assyrians
and his Angel annihilated them.

Isaiah

25 22 For Hezekiah did what is pleasing to the Lord — 2 K 18:3
and was steadfast[e] in the ways of David his father,
enjoined on him by the prophet Isaiah,
a great man trustworthy in his vision.
26 23 In his days the sun moved back; — 2 K 20:4–11
he prolonged the life of the king. — Is 38:4–8
27 24 In the power of the spirit he saw the last things,
he comforted the mourners of Zion,
28 25 he revealed the future to the end of time,
and hidden things long before they happened.[f]

Josiah

1 **49** The memory of Josiah is like blended incense
prepared by the perfumer's art;
2 it is as sweet as honey to all mouths,
and like music at a wine feast.
3 2 He took the right course, of converting the people,[a] — 2 K 22–23
he rooted out the iniquitous abominations,

j. Hebr. 'wide of folly, short of intelligence'. There may be a play on words here, using the constituent syllables of the name Rehoboam, *rahab* 'wide' and *'am* 'people'. The Gk and Hebr. readings seem each to have preserved one element of this etymology.

48 a. The 'rebuke' is perhaps implicit in the vision of 1 K 19:9–14.

b. Text uncertain. Having eulogised the prophet, the author asserts that those who will see Elijah when he returns, as also those who have died 'in love' (in the love of God?), will live for ever. This is a clear expression of the hope of immortality. The Hebr., however, unfortunately defective here ('blessed he who sees you') is perhaps only alluding to Elisha who saw Elijah disappear, 2 K 2:10,12. If so, the v. merely marks a transition to the next section, vv. 12–14.

c. After dying the prophet raised a dead man to life, 2 K 13:20–21. But the text is overloaded. Hebr. 'beneath him his body was created'.

d. Ben Sira's translator has made a proper name out of *rab shakeh* (the 'chief cupbearer'). • Gk here adds 'and departed'.

e. Play on the name Hezekiah ('Yahweh-makes-strong').

f. Possibly the prophecies on the end of the Exile, Is 40–55, or those of ch. 24–27, or of ch. 61.

49 a. Hebr. 'he was afflicted by our perversion'.

he set his heart on the Lord, 3 4
in godless times he upheld the cause of religion.

The last kings and prophets

Apart from David, Hezekiah and Josiah, 4 5
they all heaped wrong on wrong,
they abandoned the Law of the Most High: 6
the kings of Judah disappeared;
for they handed their power over to others [b] 5 7
and their honour to a foreign nation.
Lm 1:4;2:3 The holy, chosen city was burnt down, 6 8
her streets were left deserted,
as Jeremiah had predicted; [c] for they had ill-treated him, 7 9
Jr 1:5 though consecrated a prophet in his mother's womb,
Jr 1:10 *to tear up* and afflict *and destroy*,
but also *to build up and to plant*.
Ezk 1–3;9–10 Ezekiel saw a vision of glory 8 10
which God showed to him
above the chariot of the great winged creatures,
for he mentioned the enemies in the downpour [d] 9 11
to the advantage of those who follow the right way.
As for the twelve prophets, [e] 10
46:12h may their bones flower again from the tomb,
since they have comforted Jacob 12
and redeemed him in faith and hope.

Zerubbabel and Joshua

How shall we extol Zerubbabel? 11 13
Hg 2:23 He was like a signet ring on the right hand,
so too was Joshua son of Jozadak; 12 14
they who in their days built the Temple
and raised a sanctuary sacred to the Lord,
destined to everlasting glory.

Nehemiah

Great too is the memory of Nehemiah, 13 15
who rebuilt our walls which lay in ruins,
erected the bolted gates
and rebuilt our houses.

Retrospect

44:16 No one else has ever been created on earth to equal Enoch, 14 16
for he was taken up from earth.
And no one else ever born has been like Joseph, 15 17
the leader of his brothers, the prop of his people;
Gn 50:25–26 his bones received a visitation. 18
Shem and Seth were the most honoured of men, 16 19
but above every living creature is Adam. [f]

Simon the high priest

50 It was the High Priest Simon son of Onias [a] 1
who repaired the Temple during his lifetime
and in his day fortified the sanctuary.
He laid the foundations of double depth, 2
the high buttresses of the Temple precincts. [b]

3 In his day the pool was excavated, [c]
a reservoir as huge as the sea.
4 Anxious to save the people from ruin,
he fortified the city against siege.
5 How splendid he was with the people thronging round him,
when he emerged from the curtained shrine, [d] Lv 16
6 like the morning star among the clouds, Lv 16:13
like the moon at the full, [e] Rv 2:28+
7 like the sun shining on the Temple of the Most High, [f]
8 like the rainbow gleaming against brilliant clouds,
8 like a rose in springtime, [g]
like a lily by a spring,
like a branch of the incense tree in summer,
9 9 like fire and incense in the censer, [h]
10 like a massive golden vessel
encrusted with every kind of precious stone,
11 10 like an olive tree loaded with fruit,
like a cypress soaring to the clouds;
11 when he took his ceremonial robe
and put on his magnificent ornaments,
12 when he went up to the holy altar
and filled the sanctuary precincts with his grandeur;
13 12 when he received the portions from the hands of the priests,
himself standing by the altar hearth,
crowned with the circle of his brothers,
as a cedar of Lebanon is by its foliage,
14 as though surrounded by the trunks of palm trees.
13 When all the sons of Aaron in their glory,
15 with the offerings of the Lord in their hands,
stood before the whole assembly of Israel,
14 while he completed the rites at the altars,
nobly presenting the offerings to the Almighty, Most High!
16 15 He would reach out his hand to the cup [i]
and pour a libation of wine,
17 pouring it at the foot of the altar,
a fragrance pleasing to the Most High, King of All,
18 16 then the sons of Aaron would shout 45:9
and blow their metal trumpets, Nb 20:2–10
making a mighty sound ring out
as a reminder before the Most High;
19 17 and immediately the people all together
would fall on their faces to the ground,

b. Either by relying on foreign alliances or, more simply, by provoking the exile as punishment for their sins, cf. Hebr. 'He (God) handed over', instead of 'they handed over'.

c. lit. 'by the hand of Jeremiah'.

d. Possibly an allusion to the prophecy against Gog, Ezk 38–39 (*see* especially 38:22), but the text is uncertain and the mention of the 'enemies' may be due to confusion between Hebr. *'iyob* ('Job') and *'oyeb* ('enemy'). Hebr. [8] 'Ezekiel saw a vision, he revealed the features of the chariot; [9] and he also mentioned Job who accomplished all the straight ways,' cf. Ezk 14:14,20.

e. The twelve Minor Prophets who, according to the order of the Hebrew canon, follow the three major ones. As regards the prophetic books, Ben Sira's Bible was already complete.

f. After 'living', 'in the creation' has been omitted.

50 **a.** The reference is to Simon II, son of Onias III, about 220–195.

b. The 'double depth' and the 'high buttresses' cannot be identified with any certainty. Hebr. 'In his time were built the wall and the dwelling-corners at the king's palace.' No other biblical text mentions these improvements, but Josephus states that Antiochus III (223–187) gave money for the upkeep of the Temple, which would seem to confirm what Ben Sira says.

c. 'was excavated' Hebr.; 'was reduced' Gk.

d. lit. 'from the house of the curtain', i.e. the Debir or Holy of Holies, separated from the Hekal by a curtain, Ex 36:35–38. Here the author is describing the ceremonies of the day of Expiation, Lv 16.

e. Hebr. adds 'on feast days'.

f. 'on the Temple of the Most High'; Hebr. 'on the royal palace'.

g. Hebr. 'like the flower on the bough at festal times'.

h. 'in the censer'; Hebr. var. 'for the oblation'.

i. Reference to a libation-rite not described in Lv. Cf. Ex 29:12; Lv 8:15, where blood is used.

in adoration of their Lord,
the Almighty, God Most High,
and with the cantors chanting their hymns of praise. 18 20
Sweet was the melody of all these voices,
as the people pleaded with the Lord Most High 19 21
and prayed in the presence of the Merciful,
until the service[j] of the Lord was completed
and the ceremony at an end.
Lv 9:22 Then he would come down and raise his hands 20 22
over the whole assembly of the Israelites,
Nb 6:23–27 to give them the Lord's blessing from his lips,
being privileged to pronounce his name;[k]
and once again the people would bow low 21 23
to receive the blessing of the Most High.

Exhortation

And now bless the God of all things,[l] 22 24
the doer of great deeds everywhere,
who has exalted our days from the womb
and has acted mercifully towards us.
May he grant us cheerful hearts 23 25
and bring peace in our time,
in Israel for ages on ages.
May his mercy be faithfully with us, 24 26
may he redeem us in our own times![m]

Pr 30:15e **Numerical proverb**

There are two nations that my soul detests, 25 27
the third is not a nation at all:
the inhabitants of Mount Seir,[n] the Philistines, 26 28
and the stupid people living at Shechem.[o]

Conclusion

Instruction in wisdom and knowledge 27 29
is what has been written in this book
by Jesus son of Sira Eleazar of Jerusalem,[p]
who has poured a rain of wisdom from his heart.
Blessed is he who devotes his time to these 28 30
and grows wise by taking them to heart!
If he practises them he will be strong enough for anything, 29 31
since the light of the Lord is his path.[q]

APPENDICES

Hymn of thanksgiving

51 I shall give thanks to you, Lord and King, 1
and praise you, God my Saviour,
I give thanks to your name; 2
for you have been my guard and support 2
Ex 15:2 and redeemed my body from destruction,[a] 3
Ps 120:2 from the snare of the lying tongue,
from lips that fabricate falsehood;
in the presence of my assailants, you were on my side;
you have been my support, you have redeemed me,

4 3 true to your abounding kindness — Ex 34:6 Ps 103:8
—and the greatness of your name—you liberated me
from the fangs of those seeking to devour me, — Ps 35:4
5 from the clutches of those seeking my life,
from the many ordeals which I have endured,
6 4 from the stifling heat which hemmed me in,
from the heart of a fire which I had not kindled,
5 from deep in the belly of Sheol, — Nb 16:33f
6 treacherous denunciations to the king.
8 My soul has been close to death, — Ps 88:3
my life had gone down to the brink of Sheol.
10 7 I was completely surrounded, there was no one to help me;
I looked for someone to help me, there was no one.
11 8 Then I remembered your mercy, Lord,
and your deeds from earliest times,
12 how you deliver those who wait for you patiently,
and save them from the clutches of their enemies.
13 9 And I sent up my plea from the earth, [b]
I begged to be delivered from death.
14 10 I called on the Lord, the father of my Lord, [c]
'Do not desert me in the days of ordeal,
in the days of the proud, when we are helpless.
15 I shall praise your name unceasingly
and gratefully sing its praises.'
11 And my plea was heard,
16 for you saved me from destruction,
you delivered me from that time of evil.
17 12 And therefore I shall thank you and praise you,
and bless the name of the Lord. [d]

Poem on the quest for wisdom [e]

18 13 When I was still a youth, before I went travelling, — 6:18;15:2seq.; 34:9–12 Ws 8:2
in my prayers I asked outright for wisdom.

j. 'service' Hebr.; 'adornment' Gk.

k. The Day of Expiation was the only occasion on which the sacrosanct name could be pronounced over the people, as a form of blessing.

l. Hebr. 'Yahweh, God of Israel'.

m. Hebr. 'May his mercy be faithfully with Simon, may he fulfil in him the covenant of Phinehas, may it not be withdrawn from him or from his posterity as long as the heavens endure.'

n. 'Seir' Hebr., Lat.; 'Samaria' Gk.

o. The Samaritans. Hence the reading 'Seir', i.e. the Edomites, in the previous line, and not 'Samaria' which would be repetitious.

p. Hebr. 'Wise instruction and well-thought-out proverbs of Simeon, son of Jesus son of Eleazar, son of Sira.'

q. Hebr. 'for the fear of Yahweh is life'. • Gk 248 adds 'and to the devout he gives wisdom. Blessed be the Lord for ever. Amen. Amen.'

51 **a.** Hebr. 'Stronghold of my life, for you have delivered my soul from death, you have saved my flesh from the pit, you have kept my foot from Sheol, you have protected me from the slander of the people . . .'

b. Hebr. 'and I prayed from the gates of Sheol'

c. This expression may suggest a Christian interpretation intruded into the Gk text; possibly, however, it is simply an imaginative translation of a corrupt text. But cf. Ps 2:7; 110:1 (LXX). Hebr. 'I proclaimed: Yahweh, you are my father, for you are the champion of my salvation.'

d. The Hebr. here inserts a psalm of praise which resembles Ps 136 and the *shemoneh 'esreh* (the 'eighteen' prayers recited daily by Jews), cf. *also* Si 36:1–17:

'Praise Yahweh, for his love is everlasting.
Praise the God of praise, for his love is everlasting.
Praise the keeper of Israel, for his love is everlasting.
Praise the Creator of the universe, for his love is everlasting.
Praise him who redeems Israel, for his love is everlasting.
Praise him who gathers the dispersed of Israel, for his love is everlasting.
Praise him who built his city and his Temple, for his love is everlasting.
Praise him who makes the horn of the House of David flourish, for his love is everlasting.
Praise him who has chosen the children of Zadok as his priests, for his love is everlasting.
Praise the buckler of Abraham, for his love is everlasting.
Praise the rock of Israel, for his love is everlasting.
Praise the Mighty One of Jacob, for his love is everlasting.
Praise him who has chosen Zion, for his love is everlasting.
Praise the king of kings of kings, for his love is everlasting.
He raises the horn of his people and the praise of all his faithful,
the sons of Israel, the people close to him.
Alleluia.'

e. In Hebr. this is an alphabetical poem, *see* Pr 31:10f, but the text is poorly preserved.

Outside the sanctuary I would pray for her, 14 19
and to the last I shall continue to seek her.
From her blossoming to the ripening of her grape 15
my heart has taken its delight in her. 20
Ps 25:5;26:3 My foot has pursued a straight path,
I have sought her ever since my youth.
By bowing my ear a little, I have received her, 16 21
and have found much instruction. 22
Thanks to her I have advanced; 17
glory be to him who has given me wisdom![f] 23
For I was determined to put her into practice, 18 24
have earnestly pursued the good, and shall not be put to shame.[g]
My soul has fought to possess her, 19 25
I have been scrupulous in keeping the Law;
I have stretched out my hands to heaven 26
and bewailed how little I knew of her;[h]
I have directed my soul towards her, 20 27
and in purity I have found her;
having my heart fixed on her from the outset, 28
I shall never be deserted;[i]
my very core having yearned to discover her, 21 29
I have now acquired a good possession.
In reward the Lord has given me a tongue 22 30
with which I shall sing his praises.
Come close to me, you ignorant, 23 31
take your place in my school. 32
Why complain about lacking these things 24
Am 8:11 when your souls are so thirsty for them?
I have opened my mouth, I have said: 25 33
Pr 4:5,7 'Buy her without money, 34
Is 55:1 put your necks under her yoke, 26
let your souls receive instruction,[j]
Mt 11:29 she is near, within your reach.' 35
Dt 30:11–14
See for yourselves: how slight my efforts have been 27
to win so much peace. 36
Pr 16:16 Buy instruction with a large sum of silver,[k] 28
Mt 13:44–46 thanks to her you will gain much gold.
May your souls rejoice in the mercy of the Lord, 29 37
may you never be ashamed of praising him.
Do your work before the appointed time 30 38
and at the appointed time he will give you your reward.[l]

(*Subscript:*)[m] Wisdom of Jesus, son of Sira.

f. Hebr. 'Her yoke was an honour for me, to him who instructs me I shall give thanks.'

g. Hebr. 'and I shall never leave her once I have found her.'

h. Hebr. 'My soul has embraced her and I have not turned my face away from her. My hand opened her gates, I . . . and I gazed at her.'

i. Hebr. 'and so I shall not desert her'.

j. Hebr. lit. 'the burden' instead of 'instruction', adding at the end 'and he who applies himself to this, will find her.'

k. This v. is in apparent contradiction with v. 25, and the sages took pride in giving free instruction.

l. Hebr. adds 'Blessed be Yahweh for ever, and may his name be praised from generation to generation.'

m. Hebr. 'Thus far the words of Simeon son of Jesus called Ben Sira. Wisdom of Simeon son of Jesus, son of Eleazar, son of Sira. May the name of Yahweh be blessed from now and for ever.'

THE PROPHETS

INTRODUCTION TO
THE PROPHETS

§1 The Hebrew Bible groups the Books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the collection of the Twelve Minor prophets under the title of 'Later Prophets'; this it puts after the Joshua-Kings group which it entitles 'Earlier Prophets'. The Greek Bible puts the prophetic books after the Psalms and the Wisdom Books (the 'Writings' or 'Hagiographa') arranging them differently from the Hebrew and adding to them Lamentations and Daniel (which the Hebrew Bible places towards the end of its catalogue); it also contains additional material not written, or not preserved, in Hebrew, including the Book of Baruch (after Jeremiah), the Letter of Jeremiah (after Lamentations), and the additions to the Book of Daniel. In the Latin Church the Vulgate substantially adopted this arrangement but followed the Hebrew in putting the minor after the four major prophets, and appended the Letter of Jeremiah to the Book of Baruch which was placed after Lamentations.

§2 The nature of prophecy

To a greater or lesser degree and in varying forms, the great religions of antiquity always had their 'inspired' speakers who claimed to pronounce in the name of the god. This was particularly true of Israel's neighbours: a case of prophetic ecstasy is reported at Byblos in the ninth century BC, seers and prophets are attested at Hama on the Orontes in the eighth century, and several times at Mari on the Euphrates in the eighteenth century BC. In form and content, their messages, addressed to the king, resemble those of the earliest prophets of Israel mentioned in the Bible, in which we also read of the seer Balaam, summoned from Aram by the king of Moab, Nb 22–24, and of the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal summoned by Jezebel, a native of Tyre, and discomfited by Elijah on Mt Carmel, 1 K 18:19–40; and the Bible goes on to speak of the four hundred prophets consulted by Ahab, 1 K 22:5–12. Like Jezebel's prophets, these were a group of wild ecstatics, though they claimed to speak in the name of Yahweh. The claim was false, but evidently contemporary Yahwism recognised that such an institution was not in itself illegitimate. We find groups of 'inspired' men in company with Samuel, 1 S 10:5; 19:20, and in the time of Elijah, 1 K 18:4, prophetic confraternities were in touch with Elisha, 2 K 2:3–18; 4:38seq.; 6:1seq.; 9:1; this is the last we hear of them save for the allusion in Am 7:14. Under the influence of music, 1 S 10:5, they would either go into a collective ecstasy

that also affected their audience, 1 S 10:10; 19:20–24, or perform symbolic mimes, 1 K 22:11.

Elisha himself on one occasion resorted to music before prophesying, 2 K 3:15. More common with the prophets was the symbolic action; thus Ahijah of Shiloh, 1 K 11:29seq., but also Isaiah, Is 20:2–4, frequently Jeremiah, Jr 13:1seq.; 19:1seq.; 27:2seq., notably Ezekiel, 4:1–5:4; 12:17,18; 21:23seq.; 37:15seq. During these performances, or on other occasions, their behaviour was at times extravagant and their psychological states abnormal, but these things were only incidental to the proper mission of those prophets whose actions and words the Bible preserves for us. In this they are sharply distinguished from the ecstatics of the ancient prophetic confraternities.

Nevertheless, they are called by the same name, *nabi*. Doubtless the derived verb sometimes means 'to be beside oneself', 1 S 18:10 and elsewhere, from the way in which certain 'prophets' behaved, but this secondary use does not affect the original meaning of the noun itself. It is more probable that this noun is connected with a root that means 'to call', 'to proclaim'. The *nabi* is therefore either 'he who is called' or 'he who proclaims'; these two meanings together describe the essence of prophecy in Israel. The prophet is the bearer and interpreter of the word of God. This is succinctly expressed in two parallel passages: in Ex 4:15–16, Aaron is the interpreter of Moses, Aaron the 'mouth' of Moses, Moses 'the god who inspired him'; in Ex 7:1, Moses is to be 'a god for Pharaoh', and Aaron his 'prophet' (*nabi*). We are reminded of the words of Yahweh to Jeremiah, 'I have put my words into your mouth', Jr 1:9. The prophets are aware that their message is from God, introducing it with the words 'Yahweh declares', 'Word of Yahweh', 'Prophecy of Yahweh'.

This word compels them and they must speak it, 'The Lord Yahweh has spoken: who will not prophesy?' Amos cries, Am 3:8, and Jeremiah struggles vainly in its grip, Jr 20:7–10.

At some point in their lives each received an irresistible divine call, Am 7:15; Is 6, *see* especially Jr 1:4–10, and was chosen as God's envoy, Is 6:8; the price of attempting to elude this vocation is stated in the early part of the story of Jonah. These men were sent to proclaim God's demands and to be 'signs' of this divine will in their own persons. For it is not only the words they speak and the actions they perform that tell of God, but their whole lives. Hosea's unhappy marriage is a symbol, Ho 1–3; Isaiah walks naked for a portent, Is 20:3, and he with his children are 'signs and portents', Is 8:18; the life of Jeremiah is itself a lesson, Jr 16; Ezekiel is 'a sign for the House of Israel' when he carries out the strange commands of God, Ezk 4:3; 12:6,11; 24:24.

The divine message comes to them in various ways: by vision as in Is 6, Ezk 1,2,8, Dn 8–12, Zc 1–6 (but rarely by night, *see* Nb 12:6; cf. Dn 7; Zc 1:8seq.), by hearing, but most often by internal inspiration (in this sense we are usually to understand the formulae: 'The word of Yahweh came to me', 'Word of Yahweh to . . .'), sometimes unexpectedly, sometimes occasioned by some quite ordinary circumstance like the sight of an almond branch, Jr 1:11, of two baskets of figs, Jr 24, or a visit to the potter's workshop, Jr 18:1–4. Equally various are the methods the prophets use to convey their message: lyrical fragments, prose narratives, in parable or direct

speech, curt oracular style or the various literary forms of exhortation, diatribe, sermon, proverb, formal psalms, love songs, satire, funeral lament, etc.

This variety in both reception and transmission of the divine message is in large part a result of the individual temperament and natural talents of each prophet. Yet beneath this variety there is something all have in common: the genuine prophet is fully aware that he is a mouthpiece, no more; his words, though his own, are not his own. He has no doubt that the word of God has come to him and that he must pass it on to others. The source of this conviction is a mysterious, we may call it mystical, experience of a direct contact with God. As we have said, the divine seizure often provokes 'abnormal' manifestations but, as with the great mystics, these are incidental. It is important to notice that the prophet, like the mystic, is raised to a 'supranormal' psychological state by this divine intervention. To deny this would be to reduce the prophet to the rank of poet or to credit him with the illusions of misguided visionaries.

§3 The prophet rarely addresses his message to a single person, Is 22:15seq., or, if he does so, it is with others in view, Jr 20:6; Am 7:17. The king, responsible for the whole nation, is an exception. Thus Nathan in the case of David, Elijah in that of Ahab, Isaiah of Ahaz and Hezekiah, Jeremiah of Zedekiah; after the return from exile the high priest, leader of the community, is also the recipient of the prophetic message, Zc 3. But, these exceptions apart, what distinguishes the great prophets whose works have been preserved to us from their predecessors in Israel and analogous figures in the Middle East, is that their message is addressed to the whole nation. In every description of a prophet's call, it is made clear that his mission is to the nation, Is 6:9; Ezk 2:3; Am 7:15, or, in the case of Jeremiah, to all the nations.

The prophet's message relates to both present and future. His mission is to the men of his own time; to them he communicates the will of God. But in so far as he declares the mind of God he stands beyond time, and his preaching is supported and continued by the fulfilment of the predictions he makes. At times he foretells some event in the near future, the realisation of which will vindicate his words and his divine mission, 1 S 10:1seq.; Is 7:14; Jr 28:15seq.; 44:29–30; at times he tells of punishment to come in retribution for the crimes against which he thunders, or of prosperity in reward for the repentance for which he pleads. Prophets of the later period look still further ahead to the final triumph of God, though here too there is always a lesson for the present. Since the prophet, however, is an instrument of God and no more, his message may exceed the bounds of its historical context and even of his own appreciation; the message may remain veiled in mystery until the future explains its significance by fulfilling it.

There are two aspects to the message: threat and consolation. Jeremiah was sent 'to uproot and to knock down, to build up and to plant'. And indeed the message often makes bitter hearing, a tissue of menaces and reproaches, so much so that severity comes to be a sign that a prophet is genuine, Jr 28:8–9, *see also* 1 K 22:8; Jr 26:16–19. This is because the true prophet is haunted by the idea of sin, the obstacle to the will of God. The prospects of salvation,

however, are never forgotten. The Book of Consolation, Is 40–55, is a peak of prophecy; nor is there any justification for questioning the authenticity of passages in the older prophets which speak of future happiness, passages such as we find in Ho 2:16–25; 11:8–11; 14:2–9; Am 9:8–15. In God's dealings with his people, pardon and punishment are complementary.

Though the prophet is sent to the people of Israel, his vision, like the strong arm of God which is his theme, reaches more distant horizons. In the major prophets there are groups of proclamations against the nations, Is 13–23; Jr 46–51; Ezk 25–32; the Book of Amos opens with sentence pronounced on Israel's neighbours; Obadiah delivers a proclamation against Edom; Nahum is one long proclamation against Nineveh.

The prophet himself knows that he speaks in God's name, but what of his hearers? Spurious prophets appear more than once in the Bible. Such prophets may be sincere but deluded, or they may be deliberate frauds; they are not distinguished from the true prophet by their behaviour. They succeed in duping the people, and the genuine prophets are forced to denounce them: thus Micaiah ben Imlah denounces the prophets of Ahab, 1 K 22:8seq., Jeremiah attacks Hananiah, Jr 28, and all spurious prophets in general, Jr 23, Ezekiel condemns prophets and prophetesses in Israel, Ezk 13. How can one know if a message is from God? How recognise the genuine prophet? The Old Testament offers two criteria: the fulfilment of a prophecy, Dt 18:22; Jr 28:9, and *see* 1 S 10:1seq.; Is 7:14; Jr 28:15seq.; 44:29–30, but also, and of more importance, the agreement of the prophet's teaching with Yahwistic doctrine, Dt 13:1–6; Jr 23:22.

The texts we have quoted from Deuteronomy show that prophecy was an officially recognised institution of Israelite religion. The prophets were on occasion associated with the priests, Jr 8:1; 23:11; 26:7seq.; Zc 7:3, and Jeremiah tells us that in the Temple at Jerusalem there was a room 'of Ben-Johanan, a man of God', probably a prophet. From these indications and from similarities between some prophetic messages and liturgical compositions, certain recent scholars have inferred that the prophets, even the most notable among them, were attached to the Temple and played an official part in its worship. This hypothesis goes far beyond the evidence of the texts on which it is built; these are sufficiently explained by some looser connection between the prophets and the main centres of Israelite worship, as also by the influence of the liturgy on certain of the prophets' proclamations, in particular those of Habakkuk, Zechariah and Joel.

The nature of the prophetic function has to be deduced from a variety of facts and of texts, but from these emerges this fundamental idea: the prophet is one who has an immediate experience of God; he is one to whom the holiness and will of God have been revealed; he contemplates present and future through the eyes of God; he is sent to remind men of their duty to God and to bring them back to obedience and love. Prophecy thus understood, and despite the similarities which may be traced with phenomena characteristic of other religions and among neighbouring peoples, is a thing peculiar to Israel, a providential instrument of God for the guidance of his chosen people.

§4 History of the prophetic movement

Given this definition of the prophet's nature and function, it is not surprising that Moses is accounted the father of them all, Dt 18:5,18, and their most distinguished representative, Nb 12:6–8; Dt 34:10–12, for he spoke with God face to face and conveyed his Law to the chosen people. His privileges did not die with him and 'the spirit dwells' in Joshua, his successor, Nb 27:18, cf. Dt 34:9. In the period of the Judges we meet Deborah the prophetess, Jg 4–5, and the unnamed prophet of Jg 6:8, and later Samuel himself, prophet and seer, 1 S 3:20; 9:9; cf. 2 Ch 35:18. Subsequently the prophetic spirit is found diffused among the groups of visionaries whose eccentric behaviour has already been mentioned, 1 S 10:5; 19:20, after whom come the more sober brotherhoods, the 'sons of the prophets', 2 K 2; these brotherhoods disappear later, but even after the return from exile we still hear of 'prophets' spoken of in the plural, Zc 7:3. Nothing is known of the influence of these brotherhoods on the religious life of the nation, but other prophets appear, not of their number, whose influence is considerable: thus Gad, prophet of David, 1 S 22:5; 2 S 24:11, and Nathan, under the same king, 2 S 7:2seq.; 12:1seq.; 1 K 1:11seq.; so also Ahijah under Jeroboam, 1 K 11:29seq.; 14:2seq., Jehu son of Hanani under Baasha, 1 K 16:7, Elijah and Elisha under Ahab and his successors, 1 K 17 to 2 K 13 *passim*, Jonah under Jeroboam II, 2 K 14:25, the prophetess Huldah under Josiah, 2 K 22:14seq., Uriah under Jehoiakim, Jr 26:20. To this list the Books of Chronicles add Shemaiah under Rehoboam, 2 Ch 12:5seq., Iddo under Rehoboam and under Abijah, 2 Ch 12:15; 13:22, Azariah under Asa, 2 Ch 15:1seq., Oded under Ahaz, 2 Ch 28:9seq., and a few others whose names are not given.

Most of these prophets are barely more than just mentioned, but we know a little more about a few of them. Nathan is the prophet who assures David of the permanence of his divinely favoured dynasty, the first link in the increasingly precise chain of prophecies on the Messiah, son of David, 2 S 7:1–17. This same prophet reproves David for his adultery with Bathsheba but, on his repentance, assures him of God's forgiveness, 2 S 12:1–25. Elijah and Elisha we know relatively well, thanks to the narratives in the Books of Kings. Elijah appears as the champion of the true God at a time when imported gentile cults are threatening the religion of Yahweh; on the summit of Carmel he wins a signal victory over the prophets of Baal, 1 K 18. His meeting with God at Horeb, the mountain of the covenant, shows how closely his own work is related to that of Moses, 1 K 19. He is the champion of the true faith primarily but also of sound morals; he sternly pronounces God's judgement on Ahab who has murdered Naboth for the sake of his vineyard, 1 K 21. An aura surrounds this figure whose disappearance is so mysteriously described, 2 K 2:1–18, and in Jewish tradition Elijah has grown more important with the passage of time. Unlike him, Elisha the hermit-prophet, plays a prominent part in contemporary affairs: in the Moabite war, 2 K 3, in the wars against the Syrians, 2 K 6–7, in Hazael's usurpation at Damascus, 2 K 8:7–15, and Jehu's usurpation in Israel, 2 K 9:1–3. He is consulted by the powerful, by Joash of Israel, 2 K 13:14–19, Ben-Hadad of Damascus, 2 K 8:7–8, Naaman the Syrian, 2 K 5. He is also connected with

the 'brotherhoods of prophets', who related marvellous tales about him, 2 K 4:1–7,38–44; 6:1–7.

Not unnaturally most of our information is about the prophets in the scriptural canon. Each of these will be treated separately when the books bearing their names are discussed; suffice it here to note their place in the prophetic movement and to point out in what their originality consisted with regard to the previous period. The prophets intervene in those times of crisis preceding or accompanying the major turning-points of the nation's history: the threat of Assyria and the ruin of the Northern Kingdom, the ruin of the Kingdom of Judah and the departure for exile, the end of the exile and the return. Their message is not for the king but for the people, and since their message has this general import it is written down and thus continues to exert a general influence. The ministry of the first of these prophets, Amos, is dated in the mid-eighth century, about fifty years after the death of Elisha, and the great age of prophecy (less than two centuries) continues until the Exile; the period is dominated by the two great figures of Isaiah and Jeremiah, though to the same epoch belong Hosea, Micah, Nahum, Zephaniah and Habakkuk. The end of the ministry of Jeremiah coincides with the beginning of that of Ezekiel, the prophet of the Exile. But with Ezekiel the atmosphere changes: spontaneity and verve decline, the visions are on the grand scale and very involved, their description is meticulous, and interest in the 'final days' increases; in short, apocalyptic literary form is beginning to make its appearance. In this period, even so, the great Isaian tradition is continued, with elaborations, in Is 40–55 (the 'Book of Consolation'). Haggai and Zechariah, the prophets of the Return, are more restricted in their outlook: they are entirely concerned with the rebuilding of the Temple. After these comes Malachi to point out the defects of the newly established community. The short Book of Jonah follows; adapting the ancient and sacred texts to teach its new lesson, it heralds the literary form called 'midrash'. In Joel and in the second part of Zechariah we re-encounter the apocalyptic literary fashion set by Ezekiel; so too in Daniel, where images of past and future come together in one great vision that transcends time, a vision of the destruction of evil and of the coming of the kingdom of God. At this point, it seems, the high inspiration of the prophets is exhausted and we begin to hear of the 'prophets of old', Dn 9:6,10, and cf., even before, Zc 7:7,12, while Zc 13:2–6 foresees the end of a prophetic office discredited by prophets who have proved spurious. But an outpouring of the Spirit is promised for messianic times in Jl 3:1–5, and the promise is fulfilled at Pentecost, *see* Ac 2:16seq.; this was the true beginning of the new age initiated by the preaching of the Baptist, the last of the prophets of the old Law, 'a prophet and more than a prophet', Mt 11:9; Lk 7:26.

§5 The teaching of the prophets

The prophets played an important part in the religious development of Israel. They strove to keep the nation faithful to the true religion of Yahweh but, additionally, were the instruments especially chosen by God to further divine revelation. In this multiple activity each prophet made his own characteristic contribution to the doctrinal structure. These contributions were comple-

mentary, continuing to assert the three dominant features of Old Testament theology: monotheism, morality and future salvation.

Monotheism: Israel took many centuries to reach a philosophical definition of monotheism: the affirmation of the existence of one unique God, the denial of the existence of any other god. For many centuries it was accepted that other nations had their own gods who were no concern of Israel: Israel acknowledged only Yahweh, who was the most powerful of all gods and demanded exclusive honours. The transition from this conception and practice to an abstract definition was effected by the preaching of the prophets. When Amos, earliest of the canonical prophets, describes Yahweh as God, the Lord of nature and master of persons and events, he is only recalling old truths in strong support of his threats. But the teaching and implications of this ancient faith emerge ever more clearly. Because the revelation of the God of Sinai had been associated with the idea of choice and covenant, Yahweh might well appear as a God exclusive to Israel, tied to the land and its shrines. The prophets do indeed insist on the bond between Yahweh and his chosen people, but they also show how the fortunes of other nations are in his hands, Am 9:7. He sits as judge over smallest states as over widest empires, Am 1–2 (*see also* all the 'prophecies against the nations'), he grants them power and withdraws it, Jr 27:5–8, he uses them as instruments and weapons of his vengeance, Am 6:11; Is 7:18–19; 10:6; Jr 5:15–17, but drops them when he pleases, Is 10:12. The land of Israel is Yahweh's possession, Jr 7:7, the Temple his home, Is 6; Jr 7:10–11; but the prophets foretell destruction for the Temple, Jr 7:12–14; Mi 3:12, and Ezekiel foresees the glory of Yahweh deserting Jerusalem, Ezk 10:18–22; 11:22–23.

By the side of Yahweh, Lord of all the earth, there is no room for any other gods. When foreign cults, and compromises with them, threaten the faith of Israel, the prophets assert the impotence of false gods and the worthlessness of idols, Jr 2:5–13,27–28; 5:7; 16:20; Ho 2:7–15. During the Exile, when the hopes of the nation collapse and the power of Yahweh may have seemed defeated, the indictment of idols becomes more biting and better reasoned in Deutero-Isaiah, Is 40:19–20; 41:6–7,21–24; 44:9–20; 46:17; *see also* Jr 10:1–16, and at a later date the Letter of Jeremiah, Ba 6, and Dn 14, while the assertion of monotheism becomes absolute, Is 44:6–8; 46:1–7,9.

This God is transcendent, an attribute for which the favourite expression of the prophets is 'holy'; this is a recurrent theme in the preaching of Isaiah (Is 6 and *passim*: 1:4; 5:19,24; 10:17,20), but also *see* Is 40:25; 41:14,16,20, Jr 50:29,51:5; Ho 11:9; Hab 1:12,3:3. He is wrapped in mystery, Is 6; Ezk 1, and is infinitely above the 'children of men' (Ezekiel's continually recurring phrase emphasising the distance between the prophet and the God who speaks to him). And yet he is near; his kindness makes him so; and it is more than kindness, for Hosea and Jeremiah present it in allegory as wedded love between Yahweh and Israel, Ho 2; Jr 2:2–7; 3:6–8, an allegory which Ezekiel draws out at length, Ezk 16 and 23.

Morality: God is pure holiness, human beings are unclean, Is 6:5, a conviction which gives the prophets a sharp appreciation of sin. This moral outlook is

not an innovation; it is implicit in the ancient Decalogue, it lies behind Nathan's rebuke of David, 2 S 12, and Elijah's rebuke of Ahab, 1 K 21. But in our canonical prophets it becomes a repeated theme: sin is what divides humanity from God, Is 59:2, since sin is an offence against the God of Saving Justice (Amos), the God of Love (Hosea), the God of Holiness (Isaiah). It may be said that sin is central to the vision of Jeremiah; it infects the entire nation, corrupting it, as it seems, beyond hope, Jr 13:23. Wickedness is rife and invites the vengeance of God, the great judgement of 'the Day of Yahweh', Is 2:6–22; 5:18–20; Ho 5:9–14; Jl 2:1–2; Zp 1:14–18, so surely that for Jeremiah a criterion of genuine prophecy is that it should foretell disaster, Jr 28:8–9. As the sin is national and collective, so too must be the punishment; even so, the idea of individual punishment also makes its appearance in Jr 31:29–30 (cf. Dt 24:16) and is confirmed in Ezk 18, cf. 33:10–20.

But what is known as the 'ethical monotheism' of the prophets is not a form of anti-legalism. Their morality is based on the law enunciated by God but all too often misunderstood or broken, cf. for example the discourse in Jr 7:5–10 and how it is related to the Decalogue.

Parallel with this runs a deepening appreciation of what religion demands. Anyone who is to escape punishment for sins must 'seek God', Jr 50:4; Am 5:4; Zp 2:3, and this means, as Zephaniah explains, observing God's commandments, pursuing what is right, practising humility, *see* Is 1:17; Ho 10:12; Am 5:24; Mi 6:8. God asks for a religion of the heart, and Jeremiah declares this to be a condition of the covenant that is to come, Jr 31:31–34. Religion and external worship must live by this spirit; the prophets attack all ritual practice not related to moral conduct, Is 1:11–17; Jr 6:20; Ho 6:6; Mi 6:6–8. But it is wrong to represent them as hostile to liturgical practices as such; public worship and the Temple were ruling preoccupations with Ezekiel, Haggai and Zechariah.

Future salvation: Punishment is not, however, God's last word. He does not want his people to perish utterly; they may repeatedly betray him—he still does not forsake his promise. A 'remnant' will be allowed to survive, Is 4:3c. This idea makes its appearance in Am 5:15; in the subsequent prophets it is developed and further defined. There is in the prophetic mind no perspective to distinguish God's imminent punitive intervention from his remote and final judgement; hence the 'remnant' is at one and the same time those who survive the immediate peril and those who are to win final salvation. The course of history itself makes the distinction clear. Crisis succeeds crisis and the survivors of each successive crisis are the 'remnant': they are the population of Israel suffered to remain after the fall of Samaria, Am 5:15, or of Judah after Sennacherib's invasion, Is 37:31–32; they are the exiles in Babylon after the fall of Jerusalem Jr 24:8; they are also those who return to Palestine after the Exile, Ezr 9:8,13–15; Zc 8:6,11,12. But whatever the crisis, these survivors are always considered as the promising shoot, the nucleus, of a sacred nation, divinely assured of its great future, Is 11:10; 37:31; Ezk 37:12–14; Mi 4:7; 5:6–7; Zc 8:11–13.

In this future age there will be such happiness as the chosen people have never known; those of Israel and of Judah who have been scattered among the nations will return to a Land of Promise, Is 11:12–13; Jr 30–31, astonish-

ingly fertile, Is 30:23–26; 32:15–17, and the people of God will take vengeance on their enemies, Mi 4:11–13; 5:6–8. Material prosperity and power do not, however, lie at the heart of prophetic hope; they are only concomitants of the realisation of the kingship of God, for this, the essential hope, implies a profoundly spiritual outlook: virtue and holiness, Is 29:19–24, a new mode of life and divine forgiveness, Jr 31:31–34, true knowledge of God, Is 2:3; 11:9; Jr 31:34, peace and joy, Is 2:4; 9:6; 11:6–8; 29:19.

To establish and govern this ideal kingdom, King Yahweh would have his earthly representative, who would be at once his adopted son and loyal vassal: in a word, an ideal earthly ruler. He would be known as Yahweh's 'Anointed One' (in Hebrew, *messiah*)—it is a prophet, Nathan, who, by promising David a permanent dynasty, 2 S 7, gives the first expression of that royal messianism echoed by certain Psalms. Thus, despite disappointments and the bad behaviour of most of David's successors, we find the hopes of the prophets Isaiah, Micah and Jeremiah still centred on an individual king, in the near or in the distant future. The Messiah (for at this point in history, the capital letter is appropriate) would be of Davidic descent, Is 11:1; Jr 23:5 = 33:15; like David himself, he will come from Bethlehem-Ephrathah, Mi 5:1, the noblest titles conceivable will be his, Is 9:5, and the spirit of Yahweh with all its accompanying gifts will rest on him, Is 11:1–5. For Isaiah, he is *immanuel* ('God with us'), Is 7:14; for Jeremiah, *yahweh zidqenu* ('Yahweh-is-our-saving-justice'), Jr 23:6: two titles which between them sum up the messianic ideal at its purest.

This hope survived the collapse of pretensions to political domination and the hard lesson of the Exile. Despite the fleeting hopes attached to Zerubbabel, who was of Davidic descent, by Haggai and Zechariah, royal messianism went into eclipse: there was no descendant of David on the throne, nor was there any throne, and Israel had been incorporated into an alien world-empire. Ezekiel, it is true, looks forward to the coming of a new David but calls him 'prince' and not 'king', describing him as a mediator and shepherd rather than as a mighty monarch, Ezk 34:23–24; 37:24–25; Zechariah foretells the coming of a king, but he will be humble and pacific, Zc 9:9–10. For Second Isaiah, Yahweh's Anointed One is not a Davidic king but the King of Persia, Cyrus, Is 45:1, God's instrument for liberating his people; but the same prophet describes another kind of saviour, the servant of Yahweh, who will be the teacher of his people and the light of all nations, preaching the law of God in all humility, despised and rejected by his own, yet winning their salvation at the price of his own life, Is 42:1–7; 49:1–9; 50:4–9, and especially 52:13 – 53:12. Nevertheless, there was a resurgence of the older theme: just before the beginning of the Christian era hope for a king Messiah was widespread, though others hoped for a priestly Messiah, while yet others set their hopes in a supernatural one.

The early Christian community applied all these prophetic texts to Jesus, however mutually contradictory they might seem at first sight. He was Jesus (= Joshua, i.e. Saviour), the Christ (= Messiah, i.e. the Anointed One), of Davidic descent, born in Bethlehem, Zechariah's pacific king, Second Isaiah's 'suffering servant', the child Immanuel foretold by Isaiah, as also the Son of man of heavenly origin seen by Daniel. But these references to ancient prediction should not be allowed to obscure the originality of this Christian

messianism, which has its basis in the person and life of Jesus. If he fulfilled the prophecies, he did so by transcending them, and he himself repudiated the traditional political notion of messianic world-ruler.

§6 The books of the prophets

The prophets after whom the canonical books are named are commonly called 'writing prophets'. The term is unfortunate. From what has been said of the prophetic function it is evident that the prophet was not a writer; he was first and foremost a speaker, a preacher. His message was originally a spoken one, and the question arises: how did it become a written book?

The contents of these books are of three different kinds: **1** There are the 'prophetic sayings': these are utterances, spoken either by God or by the prophet in God's name or else they are poetic passages conveying some teaching, prediction, threat, promise, etc. **2** Narratives told in the first person: here the prophet relates his own experiences, and principally his own vocation. **3** Narratives in the third person: these recount events in the prophet's life or the conditions in which he worked. These three types of literary composition are not mutually exclusive; indeed, narrative sections frequently include either prophecy or discourse.

The passages in the third person point to an author other than the prophet. There is clear proof of this in the Book of Jeremiah. The prophet dictated to Baruch, Jr 36:4, all the words that he uttered in God's name over a period of twenty-three years, *see* Jr 25:3. When this collection was burned by King Jehoiakim, Jr 36:23, a fresh scroll was written by the same Baruch himself: to him we must also attribute the biographical narratives that follow, Jr 37–44, though they close with a message of comfort for Baruch from Jeremiah, Jr 45:1–5. A remark is also made to the effect that Baruch's second scroll, Jr 36:32, contained 'many similar words in addition' (added by Baruch or by others).

Similar circumstances may lie behind the composition of other prophetic books. Probably the prophets themselves either wrote or dictated a part of their prophecies or an account of their experiences, *see* Is 8:1; 30:8; Jr 30:2; 51:60; Ezk 43:11; Hab 2:2. Some part of this prophetic legacy may have been faithfully preserved by the oral tradition of the prophets' followers or by disciples of these latter (that Isaiah had disciples would appear from Is 8:16). These same groups would have treasured recollections of the prophet's life as well as of his prophecies: thus, for example, the traditions about Isaiah incorporated in the Books of Kings, 2 K 18–20, and carried over from there into the Book of Isaiah, Is 36–39; so also the account of the conflict between Amos and Amaziah, Am 7:10–17.

From these various units collections were formed: related prophecies and passages either dealing with the same subject (e.g. the passages against the nations in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel) or else weighing threat of punishment against promise of salvation (as in Micah) were drawn together. All these became the subject of reading and meditation and helped to keep alive for new generations the spirit of the prophets who had gone before. Thus Jeremiah's contemporaries quote one of the prophecies of Micah, Jr 26:17–18, and reference is often made to the former prophets, Jr 28:8, a reference that

becomes a recurrent formula in Jr 7:25; 25:4; 26:5; and *see* Ezr 9:11; Dn 9:6; 10; Zc 1:4–6; 7:7, 12. The books of the prophets were kept alive by groups of the devout who found in them the food for their faith and devotion; indeed, as in the case of Baruch's scroll, Jr 36:32, 'many similar words were added', under divine inspiration either to adapt the books to the spiritual needs of a new generation or to improve them. Sometimes, as we shall see when we deal with the Books of Isaiah and Zechariah, these additions could be considerable. By making such alterations, the heirs of the prophets considered that they were at once preserving and maturing the treasure received from their masters.

§7 In the Hebrew Bible and in the Greek and Latin versions, as in this edition, the books of the four major prophets appear in chronological order. The arrangement of the twelve minor prophets is more arbitrary, but we shall discuss them here in order of composition, in so far as this can be established.

§8 Isaiah

The prophet Isaiah was born in about 765 BC. In the year of King Uzziah's death, 740, he received his prophetic vocation while in the Temple of Jerusalem: his mission was to proclaim the fall of Israel and of Judah as punishment for the nation's infidelity, 6:1–13. He exercised his ministry for forty years, which were dominated by the growing threat presented to Israel and Judah by Assyria. There are four periods to which the prophet's utterances can be more or less accurately attributed: **1** The first belong to the few years between his prophetic call and the accession of Ahaz in 736 BC. Isaiah was then preoccupied mainly with the moral corruption resulting from the prosperity of Judah, 1–5. **2** Razon, king of Damascus, and Pekah, king of Israel, tried to persuade the young king of Judah to join an alliance against Tiglath-Pileser III, king of Assyria. When he refused, they attacked him and he appealed to Assyria for help. Isaiah then intervened, trying in vain to discourage this policy based on human expediency. From this period date the 'Book of Immanuel', 7:1—11:9 for the most part, but also 5:26–29 (?); 17:1–6; 28:1–4. After the failure of his mission to Ahaz, Isaiah withdrew from public affairs, *see* 8:16–18. **3** The appeal of Ahaz to Tiglath-Pileser put Judah under Assyrian protection and hastened the fall of the Northern Kingdom, part of the territory of which was annexed by Assyria in 734; by 721 Samaria itself had fallen. In Judah Hezekiah, who succeeded Ahaz in 716, was a devout king, bent on reform. There was a resumption, however, of political intrigue, this time for Egyptian support against Assyria. Isaiah, true to his principles, pleaded for trust in God, not in a military alliance. To the beginning of Hezekiah's reign are attributed 14:28–32; 18; 20; 28:2–22; 29:1–14; 30:8–17. The city-state of Ashdod, having risen in revolt against the Assyrian overlord, was reduced by Sargon in 711, Is 20, after which Isaiah relapsed into silence. **4** He began prophesying again in 705 when Hezekiah allowed himself to be drawn into rebellion against Assyria. Sennacherib ravaged Palestine in 701. The king of Judah resolved to defend Jerusalem; Isaiah supported him in his resistance, assuring him of God's help, and the

capital was in fact saved. From this last period date at least the prophecies of 1:4–9 (?); 10:5–15, 27[b]–32; 14:24–27, and those passages in ch. 28–32 not already attributed to the preceding period. We know nothing about Isaiah's career after 700. According to Jewish tradition, he was martyred under Manasseh.

The prominent part played by Isaiah in his country's affairs made him a national figure, but he was also a poet of genius. Brilliance of style and freshness of imagery make his work pre-eminent in the literature of the Bible; he wrote a concise, majestic and harmonious prose unsurpassed by any of the biblical writers who were to follow him. But his greatness lies above all in the religious order. The vision in the Temple at the time of his vocation, a revelation of the transcendence of God and human unworthiness, left a lasting mark on the prophet. His concept of God has a note of exultation in it but also of awe: God is the Holy, the Strong, the Mighty One, the King. Human beings are creatures defiled by sin for which God demands reparation. For God insists on justice among people and sincerity in divine worship. God looks for faithfulness and Isaiah is the prophet of faith; in times of crisis all he prescribes is trust in God and in no one else; by this alone will salvation be won. He knows clearly how hard the test will be, but his hope is that a 'remnant' will be spared, with the Messiah for its king. Isaiah is the greatest of the messianic prophets. The Messiah he foretells is a descendant of David who will establish peace and justice on earth and propagate the knowledge of God, 2:1–5; 7:10–17; 9:1–6; 11:1–9; 28:16–17.

A religious genius of this quality inevitably made an impression on his period and produced a school of disciples, who preserved his sayings and added to them. The book which bears his name is the result of a long process of composition, all the stages of which it is impossible now to reconstruct. The final arrangement is similar to that of Jeremiah (Greek version) and of Ezekiel: sayings against Jerusalem and Judah, ch. 1–12; sayings against the nations, ch. 13–23; promises, ch. 24–35. But the arrangement is by no means rigid and the foregoing analysis has already shown that the chronology of the book only imperfectly corresponds to that of Isaiah's career. The book has been put together from various collections of sayings. Certain groupings go back to the prophet himself, *see* 8:16; 30:8. His immediate or remote disciples made other collections, sometimes glossing their master's words and sometimes adding to them. The sayings against the nations, grouped together in ch. 13–23, have attracted later material, particularly ch. 13–14 against Babylon (exilic). More extensive additions are: 'the Apocalypse of Isaiah', ch. 24–27, which from literary type and doctrinal content cannot be dated earlier than the fifth century BC; a post-exilic prophetic liturgy, 33; a 'little Apocalypse', ch. 34–35, influenced by Second Isaiah. Lastly, by way of appendix, the account of Isaiah's behaviour during Sennacherib's campaign, 36–39, has been added from 2 K 18–19, with a thanksgiving psalm attributed to Hezekiah, 38:9–20.

§9 The book has, however, received even weightier additions. On linguistic grounds alone, ch. 40–55 cannot be the work of the prophet of the eighth century. Not only is his name never mentioned in this section, but the historical setting is about two centuries later: Jerusalem has been captured,

the people are captives in Babylon, Cyrus has already made his appearance and is about to be the instrument of their deliverance. It would not, of course, be impossible for God in his omnipotence to transport a prophet into the distant future, cut him off from the present and change his thoughts and images. But this would presuppose a split in his personality and a disregard of the contemporaries to whom he had been sent which would be unique in the Bible, and contrary to the very nature of prophecy which touches the future only in function of the present. These chapters contain the teaching of an anonymous upholder of the Isaian tradition, a great prophet like Isaiah himself and whom for want of a better name we call Deutero-Isaiah or Second Isaiah. He preached in Babylon between the early victories of Cyrus in 550 BC presaging the collapse of the Babylonian Empire, and the liberating edict of 538 allowing the first group of Jews to return to their homeland. The collection, though not strictly speaking an ordered whole, has more unity than ch. 1–39. It begins with the equivalent of a prophetic vocation-narrative, 40:1–11, and ends with a definite conclusion, 55:6–13. From its opening words, 'Console my people, console them', 40:1, it has become known as the 'Book of the Consolation of Israel'.

And that indeed is its principal theme. Whereas the prophecies of ch. 1–39 were for the most part threatening and full of allusions to events in the reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah, those of ch. 40–55 are remote from this historical context and convey a message of comfort. Judgement has been fulfilled by the ruin of Jerusalem, the time of restoration is at hand. And this will be a complete renewal, an aspect emphasised by the importance given to the joint themes of God the Creator and God the Saviour. A new Exodus, more marvellous than the first, is about to bring the people home to a new Jerusalem, more beautiful than the first. This distinction between two eras, that of 'things past' and that of 'things to come' marks the beginning of literary eschatology. In comparison with First Isaiah, the thought shows greater theological development. Monotheism is dogmatically affirmed and the fatuity of belief in other gods is demonstrated by their impotence to act. Emphasis is laid on the fathomless wisdom and providence of God. Religious universalism receives clear expression for the first time. These truths are presented in an exalted style and urgent rhythm, emphasising the imminence of salvation.

Embedded in the book are four lyrical passages, the 'Songs of the Servant of Yahweh', 42:1–4 (possibly 5–9); 49:1–6; 50:4–9 (possibly 10–11); 52:13 – 53:12. They depict a perfect servant of Yahweh—re-gatherer of his people and light of the nations—one who preaches the true faith, who expiates the people's sins by his own death and is glorified by God. These passages rank among the most closely studied texts in the Old Testament, and agreement has not yet been reached either over their origin or over their significance. The attribution of the first three songs to Second Isaiah seems valid enough; the fourth is possibly the work of one of his disciples. The identity of the servant is much disputed, being regarded by many as a personification of the community of Israel, to which other passages in Second Isaiah certainly apply the title 'servant'. The characteristics of the servant are, however, very strongly drawn; hence other exegetes, today the majority, consider the servant to be a historical person, either of the past or of the Second Isaiah's

own times. From this point of view, the most attractive suggestion is to identify the servant with Second Isaiah himself and to suppose that the fourth song was added after his death. A third theory synthesises both these interpretations by holding that the servant was indeed an individual who in some way embodies the destiny of his people.

Be that as it may, an interpretation limited to the past or to the sixth century takes insufficient account of the texts themselves. The servant is the mediator of salvation yet to come, a justification for the messianic interpretation which one strain of Jewish tradition has put on these passages, the aspect of suffering always excluded. By contrast, the texts about the servant's sufferings and vicarious expiation were the very ones which Jesus emphasised, applying them to himself and his mission, Mk 10:45; Lk 22:19–20,37, while earliest Christian preaching identified him as the perfect Servant foretold by Second Isaiah, Mt 12:17–21; Jn 1:29.

§10 The last part of the book, ch. 56–66, was at one time thought to be the work of yet a third prophet, called for convenience Trito-Isaiah or Third-Isaiah. It is generally regarded today as being a composite collection. The psalm in 63:7 – 64:11 seems to be earlier than the end of the Exile; the saying in 66:1–4 is contemporary with the rebuilding of the Temple in 520 BC. Ch. 60–62 are very closely related to Second Isaiah both in thought and style. Ch. 56–59, generally speaking, seem to date from the fifth century BC. Ch. 65–66 (excluding 66:1–4) with their strongly apocalyptic flavour are ascribed by some exegetes to the Hellenistic period, although others date them to shortly after the return from Exile. Taken as a whole, this last part of the book seems to be the work of Second Isaiah's disciples. It has also been considered to be a deliberate re-interpretation of the work of Second Isaiah, composed some time after the return from exile. In any case it is the final product of the Isaian tradition, active from the days of the great eighth-century prophet himself.

A complete manuscript of the Book of Isaiah has recently been discovered in a cave near the Dead Sea. It appears to date from the second century BC. It differs from the Massoretic text in its system of spelling and has a number of variants, some of which have been used to establish the present text. These are indicated in the notes by the abbreviation $1QIs^a$.

§11 Jeremiah

In about 646 BC, just over a century after Isaiah, Jeremiah was born of a priestly family living in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem. His life and character are better known to us than those of any other prophet, thanks to the biographical narratives in the third person scattered throughout his book, the chronological sequence of which is as follows: 19:1–20:6; 26; 36; 45; 28–29; 51:59–64; 34:8–22; 37–44. The 'Confessions of Jeremiah', 11:18–12:6; 15:10–21; 17:14–18; 18:18–23; 20:7–18, come from the prophet himself. They do not constitute an autobiography but form a moving witness to the inner crises which he experienced, describing them in the style of the 'psalms of lamentation'. Called by God as a young man in 626–627 BC, the thirteenth year of Josiah, 1:2, he lived through the tragic years preceding and succeeding

the ruin of the kingdom of Judah. Hopes had been raised by Josiah's religious reforms and his rallying of the nation, but these were destroyed by the death of the king at Megiddo in 609 and the disruption of the balance of power in that ancient world by the fall of Nineveh in 612 and the expansion of the Chaldaean empire. From 605 onwards Nebuchadnezzar imposed his will on Palestine; Judah rebelled, encouraged by the persistent intrigues of Egypt, and in 597 Nebuchadnezzar captured Jerusalem and deported part of its population. A second revolt brought back the Chaldaean armies and in 587 Jerusalem was again captured, its Temple burnt and more of its inhabitants deported. Jeremiah lived throughout these catastrophic events, preaching, threatening, prophesying disaster, vainly admonishing the incompetent Davidic kings one after the other; by the war party he was dubbed a defeatist, persecuted and imprisoned. When Jerusalem fell, Jeremiah remained in Palestine with his friend Gedaliah whom the Chaldaeans had appointed governor; the prophet could see, however, that all hopes for the future lay in those who had been exiled. When Gedaliah was assassinated, a party of Jews, fearing reprisals, fled to Egypt, taking Jeremiah with them. It is probable that he died there.

The prophet's own inner conflicts were as dramatic as the events in which he played a part. Of an affectionate and gentle disposition, he was nevertheless called 'to uproot and to knock down, to destroy and to overthrow', 1:10, and disaster was the keynote of his message, 20:8. This man of peace was for ever at war, with his own people, with kings, priests, false prophets, the nation itself, 'a man of strife and of dissension for the whole country', 15:10. He was tortured by a duty he could not refuse, 20:9. In prayer he referred to his anguish repeatedly: 'Why is my suffering continual?', 15:18; *see also* the passage that anticipates Job's 'a curse on the day when I was born', 20:14seq.

All this suffering purified his soul of everything unworthy and made it open to God. Before expressing it in his prophecy of the new covenant, 31:31–34, Jeremiah practised a really inward and heartfelt religion; this is what makes him near and dear to Christians. This personal religion led him to rethink traditional teaching: God examines the heart, 11:20, and rewards each according to his works, 31:29–30; friendship with God, 2:2, is broken by sin which is the consequence of a perverted will, 4:4; 17:9; 18:12. His warm religion makes Jeremiah not unlike Hosea, who influenced him; his conception of the Law as an 'inward' force, his respect for the function of love in true religion, his concern for the person as an individual, show affinities with Deuteronomy. Jeremiah certainly approved of the reforms inspired by Deuteronomy and undertaken by Josiah, but was cruelly disappointed to see how ineffective these reforms were in changing the nation's moral and religious life for the better.

During his lifetime Jeremiah was a failure; after his death he grew steadily in stature. His doctrine of a new covenant written in the heart made him the father of all that was best in Judaism. His influence may be seen in Ezekiel, in Deutero-Isaiah and in several of the Psalms. In the Maccabaean period he was considered a protector of the nation, 2 M 2:1–8; 15:12–16. By maintaining the primacy of the things of the spirit and by showing how intimate human contact with God must be, Jeremiah paved the way for the new

covenant of Christian times; his life of renunciation and of suffering in the service of God, which may well have contributed to the portrait of the servant in Is 53, makes Jeremiah an antetype of Christ.

That Jeremiah's influence persisted shows that his words must often have been studied, meditated and interpreted. This contribution of the prophet's spiritual children can be seen in the construction of the book. This clearly was not written at one sitting. Besides the poetic utterances and biographical passages, it contains prose sermons in a style very like that of Deuteronomy. The authenticity of these has been contested; they have been attributed to deuteronomic editors after the Exile. In fact, however, their style is that of Judaean prose in the seventh and early sixth centuries BC, while their theology is characteristic of a religious movement to which Jeremiah and the Deuteronomist both belonged. They are the authentic echo of Jeremiah's preaching, set down and collected by his admirers. All this material has not come down to us in a single form. The Greek version is considerably shorter (by one-eighth) than the Massoretic text and often differs in detail; discoveries at Qumran show that both these recensions existed in Hebrew. Furthermore, the Greek puts the sayings against the nations after 25:13 and in a different order from the Hebrew, which positions them at the very end of the book, ch. 46–51. Originally these prophecies perhaps formed a separate collection; they are not all the work of Jeremiah. Even if by him, the sayings against Moab and Edom have been extensively rewritten; the long saying against Babylon, 50–51, dates from the end of the Exile. Ch. 52 is included as an historical appendix; it is parallel to 2 K 24:18–25:30. Other, shorter, supplementary passages have also been inserted into the body of the book; they witness to the use made of it by the exiles in Babylon and the post-exilic community, and to the respect in which it was then held. The many duplicate passages are also proofs of editorial activity. Lastly, the numerous indications of time are not in sequence. The book as we have it now is in a state of disorder, the outcome of a protracted compilation, the stages of which are very hard to sort out.

Ch. 36, however, gives some very useful data: in 605 Jeremiah dictated to Baruch the sayings he had made, 36:2, since the beginning of his ministry in 626. This scroll, burnt by Jehoiakim, was rewritten and supplemented, 36:32. We can do no more than conjecture what this collection contained. It appears to have had 25:1–12 for introduction, and it assembled the pre-605 passages which are now in ch. 1–18; but, according to 36:2, it also contained certain ancient prophecies against the nations referred to in 25:13–38. In the same sections, the supplements later added are passages dating from after 605 and further sayings against the nations. Into those were inserted the pages of 'Confessions' (described in detail above). Two small booklets were added, one on the kings, 21:11–23:8, the other on the prophets, 23:9–40, which may originally have been distinct.

In this way we are able to identify two sections of the book: one containing threats against Judah and Jerusalem, 1:1–25:13, the other containing prophecies against the nations, 25:13–38 and ch. 46–51. Ch. 26–35 make up a third section; this is a collection, out of order, of rather more cheerful passages. Nearly all of these are in prose and are mostly drawn from a biography of Jeremiah for which, it is supposed, Baruch was responsible.

Exception must be made of ch. 30–31, a small book of consolation, written in verse form. The fourth section, ch. 36–44, is in prose; it continues the biography of Jeremiah and describes his sufferings during and after the siege of Jerusalem. It ends with 45:1–5 which may be regarded as Baruch's signature.

§12 Lamentations

The Hebrew Bible groups this short book with the 'Writings' (Hagiographa) and counts it as one of the five *megillot*, the 'rolls' or 'scrolls' read on major feast-days. The Greek Bible and the Vulgate put it immediately after Jeremiah, entitling it 'The Lamentations of Jeremiah'. This tradition of authorship is based on 2 Ch 35:25 and supported by the poems themselves, the subject-matter of which reflects the times of the prophet. Even so, it is difficult to credit Jeremiah with the book. The Jeremiah we know from his authentic pronouncements could never have said that the voice of prophecy was silenced, 2:9; nor could he have praised Zedekiah, 4:20, or put his trust in Egyptian help, 4:17. His spontaneity would have burst through the artificial literary curbs we find in these alphabetical poems: in the first four, each strophe begins with a different letter, and in the fifth, each of the twenty-two verses.

Ch. 1, 2 and 4 are written in the form of a dirge for the dead, ch. 3 is an individual lament, ch. 5 ('Prayer of Jeremiah' in the Vulgate) a collective one. They were probably written in Palestine after the fall of Jerusalem in 587. They are apparently the work of a single author, who with great pathos describes the mourning of city and people; but from this darkness shines a ray of unconquerable trust in God and of wholehearted repentance, which makes the short book of lasting value. The Jews chant it on the great fast commemorating the destruction of the Temple.

§13 Baruch

The Book of Baruch is one of the deutero-canonical books not found in the Hebrew Bible. The Greek Bible puts it between Jeremiah and Lamentations; the Vulgate immediately after Lamentations. According to its introduction, 1:1–14, it was written in Babylon by Baruch, Jeremiah's secretary, after the deportation and sent to Jerusalem to be read at liturgical gatherings. It contains: a prayer acknowledging guilt but expressing hope, 1:15–3:8; a 'wisdom' poem, 3:9–4:4, in which Wisdom is identified with the Law; a prophetic passage, 4:5–5:9, in which a personified Jerusalem speaks to the exiles and the prophet consoles her with a reminder of messianic hopes.

The introduction was written in Greek; the prayer, 1:15–3:8, clearly goes back to a Hebrew original, as may the other two parts. The most probable date of composition is the middle of the first century BC.

In the Greek Bible, Lamentations separates the Letter of Jeremiah from Baruch, but the Vulgate adds the Letter (with a separate title) to Baruch, ch. 6. The Letter is an apologetic argument against idolatry; its style undistinguished, it develops themes already used in Is 44:9–20; Jr 10:1–16. The idolatry here attacked is late Babylonian. The Letter, apparently written in

Hebrew, is of the Greek period; more precise dating is not possible. It is alluded to, seemingly, in 2 M 2:1–3.

A small fragment of the Greek text, discovered at Qumran, can be dated on palaeographical evidence to *c.* 100 BC.

This collection, grouped under the name of Baruch, gives us valuable information about the Jewish communities in the Dispersion and the ways by which their religious life was sustained: contact with Jerusalem, prayer, devotion to the Law, thirst for retribution, messianic hope. Like Lamentations, it also testifies to the enduring reputation of Jeremiah, both short books being assigned to the prophet and his disciple. Baruch's reputation continued to grow: from the second century AD, two apocalypses written under his name have been preserved, one in Greek, the other in Syriac (with Greek fragments).

§14 Ezekiel

The Book of Ezekiel, unlike that of Jeremiah, appears to be a well-constructed whole. After the introduction, ch. 1–3, in which the prophet receives his mission from God, the body of the book is divided clearly into four sections: **1** Ch. 4–24, consisting almost exclusively of reproaches and threats addressed to the Israelites before the siege of Jerusalem. **2** Ch. 25–32, of proclamations against the nations, in which the prophet widens his anathema to include those who have influenced the faithless Israelites and urged them on. **3** Ch. 33–39, of comfort for the Israelites during and after the siege, with a promise of a brighter future. **4** Ch. 40–48, of provisions for the political and religious constitution of the future community, once it is re-established in Palestine.

Beneath this systematic arrangement nevertheless there are noteworthy irregularities. There are numerous duplicate passages, e.g. 3:17–21 = 33:7–9; 18:25–29 = 33:17–20. References to Ezekiel's being struck dumb by God, 3:26; 24:27; 33:22g, are separated by protracted discourses. The vision of the chariot of God, 1:4–3:15, is interrupted by the vision of the book, 2:1–3:9. In the same way, the description of the sins of Jerusalem, 11:1–21, is a continuation of ch. 8 and clearly interrupts the account of the chariot's departure which begins at 10:18–22 and continues in 11:22. Nor are the dates of ch. 26–33 in sequence. An author writing the book as one consistent whole could hardly be responsible for these irregularities; it is much more likely that they are the result of disciples' combining and supplementing the documents or recollections at their disposal. To some extent, therefore, the Book of Ezekiel has undergone the same treatment as other prophetic books. The consistency both of style and of teaching, however, is proof of the fidelity of the prophet's disciples to his own mind and, for the most part, to his actual words. Their editorial activity is particularly noticeable in the final part of the book, ch. 40–48, though the basic material still comes from Ezekiel himself.

The question, however, arises, whether the disciples' editorial work has not changed the perspective of the book in one important respect. As the text stands, Ezekiel's whole ministry is among the exiles in Babylon between 593 and 571, the first and last dates indicated, 1:2 and 29:17. In these

circumstances, it is surprising that the sayings of the first section seem to be addressed to people living in Jerusalem, and that Ezekiel at times gives the impression that he is actually present in the capital, *see* especially 11:13. Hence the hypothesis of a twofold ministry: Ezekiel remaining in Palestine and preaching there until the fall of Jerusalem in 587 and joining the Babylonian exiles only after this event. The vision of the scroll in 2:1–3:9 would indicate the prophet's divine vocation in Palestine, and that of the chariot, 1:4–28 and 3:10–15, would indicate his arrival among the exiles. The transfer of this vision of the chariot to the beginning of the book from its third section has thus, it is maintained, altered the whole focus. This hypothesis helps to solve some difficulties but creates others. It demands substantial rearrangements of text; it has to be postulated that even during his 'Palestinian' ministry Ezekiel usually lived outside Jerusalem, since he is 'transported' thither in 8:3; finally, it would be odd for neither Ezekiel nor Jeremiah to refer to each other's activity if they were preaching together in the capital. Moreover, the objections against the traditional view should not be exaggerated; reproaches addressed to the people of Jerusalem were useful lessons for the exiles; and as far as Ezekiel's apparent presence in Jerusalem is concerned, he was transported thither, 'in visions' as the text expressly says, 8:3, and thence 'in vision' brought back, 11:24. The hypothesis of a twofold ministry no longer commands much support.

In either case, the same imposing figure emerges from the book. Ezekiel was a priest, 1:3. The Temple was his ruling interest; whether the Temple of the present defiled by impure rites, ch. 8, and deserted by the glory of Yahweh, ch. 10, or the Temple of the future, the plan of which he describes in meticulous detail, ch. 40–42, and to which he sees God returning, ch. 43. He holds the Law in veneration, and the accusation of 'profaning the Sabbaths' is the constant refrain of his indictment of Israel, ch. 20. He detests legal impurity, 4:14; 44:7, and is scrupulous in distinguishing the sacred from the profane, 45:1–6; 48:9seq. As a priest he was responsible for deciding cases of law and morals, hence the casuistic tendency of his teaching, ch. 18. His outlook and vocabulary are akin to the Law of Holiness, Lv 17–26. Yet it can be demonstrated neither that he was inspired by it nor that the Law of Holiness in any way depended on him; the most remarkable similarities occur in those passages—the responsibility of the editors. All that can be said is that both works were handed down by people with very similar preoccupations. Ezekiel's work belongs to the Priestly tradition just as that of Jeremiah belongs to the deuteronomic.

But this priest is also a prophet of action. More than any other he resorts to symbolic gestures. He mimes the siege of Jerusalem, 4:1–5:4, the departure of the exiles, 12:1–7, the king of Babylon at the parting of the ways, 21:23seq. the union of Judah and Israel, 37:15seq. Even in his own personal trials sent him by God he is a 'sign' to Israel, 24:24, as Hosea and Isaiah and Jeremiah had been. The elaborateness of his symbolic actions is in marked contrast to the simplicity of those of his predecessors.

Ezekiel is primarily a visionary. His book contains only four formal visions but these occupy a substantial part of it: ch. 1–3; 8–11; 37; 40–48. They admit us to a fantastic world: the four living creatures of Yahweh's chariot, the monstrous performance of worship in the Temple with its swarms of beasts

and of idols, the dry bones that come to life, the blueprint of a future temple from which an imaginary river flows through a geographic Utopia. This lively imagination he applied also to his allegories: Oholah and Oholibah, ch. 23; the Shipwreck of Tyre, ch. 27; Pharaoh the Crocodile, ch. 29 and 32; the Giant Tree, ch. 31; the Descent into Hell, ch. 32.

In contrast to this gift of pictorial imagination, and possibly as the price paid for it (as though the eye had robbed the tongue of power), Ezekiel's style is monotonous and without colour, frigid, feeble, astonishingly poor when compared with the classics of prophecy, the strong simplicity of Isaiah and the compelling warmth of Jeremiah. The art of Ezekiel excels by its evocation of size and depth, projecting an atmosphere of awe before the mysteries of God.

Ezekiel, therefore, though having much in common with his predecessors, breaks new ground. This is also true of his doctrine. He makes no appeal to the past history of his people. Recalls to the promises made to the patriarchs and to the Sinaitic covenant occur occasionally, but even if God has so far preserved a nation that was defiled from birth, 16:3seq., this is not to fulfil the promises but to vindicate the honour of his name, ch. 20. Similarly, the substitution of an everlasting covenant for the old one, 16:60; 37:26seq., is described not as a reward for the people's 'return' to God but rather as an act of pure benevolence; it is after this, not before, that repentance comes, 16:62–63. The Messiah of Ezekiel, of whom little is said, is no longer a glorious king; true, he is to be a new David but only the 'shepherd' of his people, 34:24; 37:24, a 'prince', 34:24, and no longer a king, for whom there would be no room in Ezekiel's vision of a future where God is king, 45:7seq. The prophet breaks with tradition also when he asserts the principle of individual and not collective retribution, ch. 18, *see also* 33. This theological solution to the problem of sin will prove to be a temporary one, and will yield eventually to the pressure of facts and gradually lead to the idea of retribution in another world. Ezekiel breaks too, as Jeremiah does, with the tradition that God is inseparable from his Temple—this despite Ezekiel's own priesthood and affection for the sanctuary. Priest and prophet, often divided in Israel, are united in him; ritual remains, but derives its value from the dispositions of the participants. Ezekiel's entire teaching centres on inner conversion: men must achieve a new heart and a new spirit, 18:31, or rather God will himself bestow 'another', a 'new' heart, and infuse a 'new' spirit, 11:19; 36:26. Here, as with the free divine gift that precedes repentance, we are very near to the theology of grace later developed by John and Paul.

The elements of Israelite religion are thus all raised to a high spiritual level; this is Ezekiel's great contribution. He is called 'the father of Judaism', often only with reference to his separation of sacred from profane, to his concern for legal purity and for ritual detail, which anticipates Pharisaism. This is quite unjust. Like Jeremiah, yet in his own way, Ezekiel initiates a tradition of unworldy spirituality persisting through Judaism and emerging in the New Testament. Jesus is the Good Shepherd foretold by Ezekiel, and the founder of the worship 'in spirit' which Ezekiel had preached.

Ezekiel, in another mood, stands at the source of the apocalyptic tradition. His elaborate visions prepare us for those of Daniel, and it is not surprising that his influence is so often perceptible in the Book of Revelation.

§15 Daniel

In subject-matter the Book of Daniel falls into two parts. Ch. 1–6 are narratives: **1** Daniel and his three companions in the service of Nebuchadnezzar. **2** Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the composite statue. **3** Adoration of the golden effigy, and Daniel's three friends in the furnace. **4** Nebuchadnezzar's madness. **5** Belshazzar's banquet. **6** Daniel in the lions' den. From all these trials, in which the reputation and even the life of Daniel or of his companions is at stake, they emerge victorious, and the idolaters glorify God for having saved them. The action takes place in Babylon in the reigns of Nebuchadnezzar, of his 'son' Belshazzar, and of 'Darius the Mede', Belshazzar's successor. Ch. 7–12 are visions granted to Daniel. **7** the Four Beasts. **8** The Goat and the Ram. **9** The Seventy Weeks. **10–12** The great vision of the Time of Retribution and of the End. They are assigned to the reigns of Belshazzar, Darius the Mede and Cyrus king of Persia, and located in Babylonia.

From the existence of these two sections some have deduced two distinct documents of different periods combined by an editor. But there are other indications which are against such a distinction. The narratives are indeed in the third person, while the visions are described by Daniel himself; but the first vision, ch. 7, has its introduction and conclusion in the third person. The beginning of the book is in Hebrew, but in 2:4 there is a sudden change to Aramaic which continues to the end of ch. 7 and so into the vision section; the remaining chapters are in Hebrew. Many explanations of this duality of language have been offered, none satisfactory. There is no correspondence, therefore, between the division established by subject-matter (narratives, visions) and the division on grounds of style (first and third person) or of language (Hebrew, Aramaic). On the other hand ch. 7 has its commentary in ch. 8, but is parallel to ch. 2; its Aramaic is indeed the same as in 2–4, but certain of its stylistic characteristics recur in 8–12, though these chapters are in Hebrew. This ch. 7, therefore, links the book's two sections and proves that it is in fact an integral composition. Also, Belshazzar and Darius the Mede both appear in each section of the book, so the historical problem is present as much in one section as in the other. Lastly, the literary devices and habits of thought are consistent throughout the book, which is the strongest argument for its unity.

The date of composition is decided by clear evidence given in ch. 11. The wars between the Seleucids and Ptolemies and a portion of the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes are described with a wealth of detail quite unnecessary for the author's purpose. This account bears no resemblance to any of the Old Testament prophecies and, despite its prophetic style, refers to events already past. But from 11:40 onwards the tone changes and the 'Time of the End' is foretold in a way that is reminiscent of the other prophets. The book must therefore have been written during the persecution under Antiochus Epiphanes and before his death, even before the success of the Maccabaean revolt; that is to say between 167 and 164.

There is nothing in the rest of the book to contradict this dating. The narratives of the first section are set in the Chaldaean period, but there are indications that the author is writing a long time after the events. Belshazzar

was the son of Nabonidus and not, as the book says, of Nebuchadnezzar; nor was he ever king. Darius the Mede is unknown to historians, nor is there room for him between the last Chaldaean king and Cyrus the Persian who had already conquered the Medes. The neo-Babylonian background is described in words of Persian origin; the instruments in Nebuchadnezzar's orchestra are given names transliterated from the Greek. The dates given in the book agree neither among themselves nor with history as we know it, and they seem to have been placed at the chapter heads without much care for chronology. The author has made use of oral and written traditions still current in his own times. The Dead Sea manuscripts contain fragments of a Daniel cycle related to the canonical book, notably a prayer of Nabonidus reminiscent of Dn 3:31–4:34, in which the name Nebuchadnezzar replaces that of Nabonidus. The author, or his sources, made the hero of these pious tales a certain Daniel or Danel whom Ezk 14:14–20; 28:3 mentions as a righteous man and sage of antiquity. Danel also figures in the Ras Shamra poems of the fourteenth century BC.

The late composition of the book explains its position in the Hebrew Bible. It was admitted after the canon of the Prophets had already been fixed, and placed between Esther and Ezra among the varied group of 'other writings' forming the last section of the Hebrew canon. The Greek and Latin Bibles put it among the Prophets and add certain deutero-canonical sections, namely, the Psalm of Azariah and the Canticle of the Three Youths, 3:24–90; the story of Susanna illustrating the shrewdness of the young Daniel, ch. 13; and the stories of Bel and the sacred serpent, which are satires on idolatry, ch. 14. The Greek translation of the Septuagint (LXX) differs considerably from that of Theodotion (Theod.), the latter being very close to the Massoretic text (MT).

The aim of the book was to sustain faith and hope among the Jews persecuted by Antiochus Epiphanes. Daniel and his companions had been similarly tempted to desert the Law, ch. 1, and to commit idolatry, ch. 3 and 6. From these trials they emerged victorious, and the persecutors were forced to acknowledge the power of the true God. The contemporary persecutor is painted in darker colours, but when the wrath of God is satisfied, 8:19; 11:36, the time of the end will come, 8:17; 11:40, when the persecutor will be destroyed, 8:25; 11:45. This will mean the end of sorrows and of sin and the coming of the kingdom of the saints, ruled over by a 'Son of man' whose reign will endure for ever, ch 7.

This expectation of the end, this hope of the kingdom, runs through the whole book, 2:44; 3:33 (*100*); 4:31; 7:14. God will bring it to fulfilment after a lapse of time fixed by him, but long enough to embrace the whole of human history. The various stages of the world's history become stages in the operation of God's eternal purpose, so that these world-stages, past, present, future, are themselves prophetic since all are contemplated through the eyes of God 'who controls times and seasons', 2:21. By this double vision, at once in time and transcending time, the author reveals the prophetic significance of history. This secret, known only to God, 2:18, etc.; 4:6, is revealed by mysterious intermediaries who are the messengers and agents of the Most High. The doctrine of angels is asserted in the Book of Daniel, as in Ezekiel and particularly in Tobit. The revelation concerns the hidden plan of God

for his people and for the nations. It concerns both peoples and individuals. An important passage on the resurrection proclaims the rising of the dead either to eternal life or to eternal punishment, 12:2. The expected kingdom will include all nations, 7:14, and will have no end; it will be a kingdom of saints, 7:18, the kingdom of God, 3:33 (*100*); 4:31, the kingdom of the Son of man to whom all power is given, 7:13–14.

The mysterious Son of man, whom 7:18,21–27 identify with the community of the Saints, is also its head, the ruler of the eschatological kingdom, but he is not the Davidic Messiah. Jewish tradition came to regard the Son of man as a person, rather than as a personification, and the title was perhaps adopted in the New Testament to emphasise the transcendental and spiritual nature of Jesus' messiahship, Mt 8:20h.

The Book of Daniel is no longer part of the true prophetic tradition. It does not contain the preaching of a prophet commissioned by God with a message for his contemporaries, but was composed and committed to writing by an author who concealed his identity under a pseudonym, as was the case in the earlier Book of Jonah. The edifying stories in the first part of the book have affinities with a type of wisdom literature, of which an early example is the story of Joseph in Genesis, and a later one the Book of Tobit, written shortly before Daniel. The visions in the second part unfold the revelation of a divine secret, explained by angels and concerning the future, in a deliberately enigmatic style; this 'sealed book', 12:4, is the first mature apocalypse, a literary form found already developing in Ezekiel and later to flower in Jewish literature. The New Testament counterpart to the Book of Daniel is the Book of Revelation, but in this the seals of the closed book are broken, Rv 5–6, its words are secret no longer since 'the time is close', Rv 22:10, and the coming of the Lord is expected, 1 Co 16:22; Rv 22:20.

§16 The Twelve Minor Prophets

The last book in the Hebrew canon of the Prophets is simply called 'The Twelve', being a collection of twelve short books attributed to different prophets. Its title in the Greek Bible is 'Dodekapropheton'. The Church knows it as 'The Minor Prophets', not because the collection is of less importance than the 'major' prophets but because the books are shorter. These books already formed a collection when Ecclesiasticus was being written, Si 49:10. The Hebrew Bible, followed by the Vulgate, arranges these short books in the historical order assigned to them by tradition. The order is somewhat different in the Greek Bible which, moreover, places them before the major prophets.

In this edition the books will be found in the traditional order stemming from the Hebrew, but in this Introduction they will be treated in what is more probably their true historical order.

§17 Amos

Amos was a sheep-farmer of Tekoa on the edge of the Desert of Judaea, 1:1; belonging to no prophetic brotherhood, he was called from his flocks by Yahweh and sent to prophesy to Israel, 7:14. After a brief ministry mainly

at the schismatic shrine of Bethel, 7:10seq., but also probably in Samaria, *see* 3:9; 4:1; 6:1, he was expelled from Israel and returned to his former occupation.

He preached under Jeroboam II, 783–743, by material standards a glorious reign during which the Northern Kingdom expanded and grew wealthy, but during which the rich exploited the poor, and fine liturgical show disguised the lack of sound religion. A true son of the countryside, rough, direct, proud, rich in the imagery of country-dwellers, Amos in the name of God condemned corrupt city life, social injustice, the deceitful consolations of insincere ceremonial, 5:21–22. Yahweh, sovereign lord of all the world, punisher of nations, ch. 1–2, would severely punish Israel, who, being chosen by God, should practise a morality stricter than that of others, 3:2. The 'Day of Yahweh' (the phrase occurs here for the first time in the Bible) will be one of darkness and not light, 5:18seq.; to wreak his dreadful vengeance, 6:8seq., God summons a nation, 6:14, Assyria, which, though not named, is always in the prophet's mind. Yet Amos kindles a spark of hope; he looks forward to the salvation of the House of Jacob, 9:8, for the 'remnant' of Joseph, 5:15 (the first use of this expression by a prophet). This profound doctrine of God, all-powerful and universal lord, eternally just, is formulated without the slightest hesitation; the prophet never once gives the impression of innovating: his originality lies in the forcefulness with which he restates the demands of pure Yahwism.

The book has reached us in some disorder; the prose narrative, 7:10–17, in particular, separating two visions, would be better placed at the end of the prophecies. Certain short passages leave us in doubt about their authorship. The doxologies, 4:13; 5:8–9; 9:5–6, may have been added for liturgical recitation. The short sayings against Tyre, Edom, 1:9–12, and Judah, 2:4–5, seem to date from the Exile. Further doubts have been raised by $9:8^{b}$–10 and especially by 9:11–15. There are no solid grounds for suspecting the former, but it is possible that 9:11–15 are an addition. No argument should be based on the promises of salvation which the latter passage contains, since from early times such promises had always been features of the prophets' preaching, *see* Amos in 5:15 and his contemporary Hosea. But the references to the collapsing hut of David, to vengeance on Edom and to a return and re-establishment of Israel, indicate the period of the Exile and may be attributed, with later modifications here and there, to a deuteronomic editing of the book.

§18 Hosea

Hosea, a native of the Northern Kingdom, was a contemporary of Amos, since his ministry began under Jeroboam II. It continued through the reigns of his successors, but Hosea does not seem to have lived to see the fall of Samaria in 721. It was a sombre period for Israel with the victorious advance of Assyria, 734–732, internal rebellions, four kings being assassinated in fifteen years, and increasing religious and moral corruption.

Of Hosea's life during those turbulent times we know nothing beyond his own domestic troubles, ch. 1–3, but these were to condition his ministry as a prophet. The interpretation of these opening chapters is much disputed,

but the following seems most probable: Hosea has married a wife whom he loves but who deserts him; his love remains, however, and, having put her to the test, he takes her back. The prophet's painful experience becomes a symbol of Yahweh's dealings with his people. Hosea's awareness of this symbolism has perhaps influenced his presentation of the facts. Ch. 2 draws the moral and at the same time provides the key to the whole book. Israel, the bride of God, has become a faithless harlot, has aroused the anger and jealousy of her divine husband. God's love remains; he will punish her, but only to bring her back and restore her to the joys of their first love.

For the first time, God's relationship with Israel is described in terms of marriage, a figure most boldly chosen and passionately expressed by a prophet at once affectionate and fiery. The underlying theme of all his preaching is divine love misunderstood by the people on whom it is lavished. Once the short golden period in the desert was over, Israel played false to her loving God. Hosea indicts the ruling classes sternly. The kings, chosen in defiance of God's will, have toyed with human policies, degrading God's chosen people to the level of the other nations. The priests, ignorant and avaricious, are leading the people to their ruin. Like Amos, Hosea attacks injustice and violence, but he is more insistent on the evils of apostasy. The worship of Yahweh at Bethel is idolatrous worship; Yahweh is coupled with Baal and Astarte in the licentious rites of the high places. Now Yahweh is a jealous God, demanding an undivided heart, 'What I want is love, not sacrifice; knowledge of God, not burnt offerings,' 6:6. Punishment is therefore sure to come; yet God punishes only to save. Israel stripped and shamed will come to remember the days of her faithfulness; Yahweh will welcome his repentant people back; happiness and peace will return.

Critics at one time supposed all prophecies of happiness and everything concerning Judah to be additional to the original book. More sober conclusions prevail today. Hosea's message would be completely distorted were he to be represented as a prophet only of disaster, and it is only natural that his attention should also embrace the neighbouring kingdom of Judah. It must, however, be admitted that Hosea's prophecies, though collected in Israel, received their final form in Judah after one or two revisions. Traces of this editorial work appear in the title, 1:1, as also in the text, *see* for example 1:7; 5:5; 6:11; 12:3. The final verse of the book, 14:10, is the reflection of an exilic or post-exilic sage summing up the moral of the book. Exegetical problems in Hosea are made worse by the deplorable state of the Hebrew text, which is one of the least well preserved in the whole Old Testament.

The Book of Hosea has had a profound influence on the Old Testament; there are echoes of Hosea in the exhortations of later prophets to a religion of the heart, with God's love as its motive force. Jeremiah was deeply influenced by Hosea. It is not surprising that the New Testament quotes Hosea or, not infrequently, draws upon him. The wedding imagery of God's love for his people is taken up by Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the second part of Isaiah. The New Testament and the early Christian community apply it to the union between Christ and his Church. Christian mysticism has extended the application to the individual soul.

§19 Micah

The prophet Micah (not to be confused with Micaiah ben Imlah who lived in the reign of Ahab, 1 K 22) was a Judaean, a native of Moresheth to the west of Hebron. He exercised his ministry under the kings Ahaz and Hezekiah, that is to say, before and after the fall of Samaria in 721, and possibly until Sennacherib's invasion in 701. He was therefore a contemporary of Hosea and, for a longer period, of Isaiah. Being of peasant extraction he has much in common with Amos: suspicion of city life, concrete and at times coarse expression, a taste for swift strokes of imagery and for play on words.

The book falls into four parts, threat alternating with promise: 1:2–3:12, arraignment of Israel; 4:1–5:14, promises to Zion; 6:1–7:7, Israel arraigned for the second time; 7:8–20, hopes. The contrast between the promises to Zion and the threats that precede and follow is altogether too violent, and this symmetrical arrangement must be due to editorial work. It is hard to determine the extent of this editorial adjustment, performed by those who cherished the prophet's memory. Scholars are agreed that 7:8–20 clearly belongs to the period of return from exile. To this period also are best assigned the prophecy of 2:12–13, out of place among the threats, and the prophecies of 4:6–7; 5:6–7. But 4:1–5 is found almost identically in Is 2:2–5 and in neither context does it seem original. These additions do not, however, justify the excision of all promises for the future from the authentic message of Micah. The collection of prophecies in ch. 4–5 was made during or after the Exile, but contains authentic material and, more particularly, there is no compelling reason to deny Micah the messianic prophecy of 5:1–5, which harmonises so well with Isaiah's own expectations at the same period, Is 9:1seq.; 11:1seq.

Of the life of Micah and the circumstances of his call we know nothing. He was, however, keenly aware that God had called him to the office of prophet, and this makes him fearless in prophesying disaster, as the false prophets are not, 2:6–11; 3:5–8. He is the bearer of God's message, which is in the first instance a message of condemnation. Yahweh arraigns his people, 1:2; 6:1seq., and finds them guilty; their religion and above all their morals are corrupt. Micah scourges the moneyed capitalist, the inexorable usurer, the swindling tradesman, families divided by rivalry, avaricious priests and prophets, tyrants, venal judges. These are the very antithesis of the divine ideal: 'to do what is right, to love loyally, to walk humbly with God', 6:8, an admirable formula summing up the spiritual demands of the prophets, and most particularly Hosea. God has decreed punishment: he will come to judge and punish his people in a world upheaval, 1:3–4; Samaria will be destroyed, 1:6–7, as will the towns of the lowlands where Micah lives, 1:8–15; even Jerusalem itself will become a heap of ruins, 3:12.

But the prophet is not without hope, 7:7. He elaborates Amos' teaching about the remnant and foretells the birth in Ephrathah of a pacific king who will pasture Yahweh's flock, 5:1–5.

The influence of Micah was persistent; the contemporaries of Jeremiah knew and quoted one of his proclamations against Jerusalem, Jr 26:18. The

New Testament particularly seizes on Micah's text concerning the birth of the Messiah in Bethlehem-Ephrathah, Mt 2:6; Jn 7:42.

§20 Zephaniah

According to the title of his book, the prophet Zephaniah worked in the reign of Josiah, 640–609. His attacks on alien manners, 1:8, and on the worship of false gods, 1:4–5, his rebuke of court officials, 1:8, his silence about the king, all point to a period before the religious reform, during the minority of Josiah, between 640 and 630, thus immediately before the beginning of the ministry of Jeremiah. Judah, robbed of part of its territory by Sennacherib, has experienced Assyrian rule, and the wicked reigns of Manasseh and Amon have favoured religious disorders. The increasing weakness of Assyria now raises hopes of national recovery accompanied by religious reform.

The book falls into four short sections: the Day of Yahweh, 1:2–2:3; prophecies against the nations 2:4–15; against Jerusalem, 3:1–8; promises, 3:9–20. Unjustifiable attempts have been made to exclude certain prophecies against the nations and all the promises of the fourth section. Like all the prophetic books, however, Zephaniah has been retouched here and there and had additions made to it, though in this case not many: notably the predictions of the conversion of the nations, 2:11 and 3:9–10, both alien to their contexts, and inspired by Deutero-Isaiah; the authenticity of the little psalms 3:14–15 and 16–18[a] is disputed; and the concluding verses, 3:18[b]–20, are generally agreed to date from the time of the Exile.

Zephaniah's message is, in brief, a prophecy of the Day of Yahweh (cf. Amos), of a catastrophe affecting not only Judah but also the nations. Judah is condemned for religious and moral corruption springing from pride and rebelliousness, 3:1,11. Zephaniah has a deep appreciation of sin (an anticipation of Jeremiah); it is an offence against the person of the living God. The punishing of the nations should serve as a warning, 3:7, to reduce God's people to obedience and humility, 2:3; salvation is promised to only a humble and submissive 'remnant', 3:12–13. This is as far as Zephaniah's messianism goes, but it is enough to reveal the spiritual nature of the promises he makes.

The short book of Zephaniah has had a restricted influence and is only once used in the New Testament, Mt 13:41. But the description of the Day of Yahweh, 1:14–18, inspired the description by Joel, and, in the Middle Ages, the opening words of the *Dies Irae*.

§21 Nahum

The Book of Nahum opens with a psalm on the retribution of Yahweh against the wicked and with short prophetic passages contrasting the punishment of Assyria with the salvation of Judah, 1:2–2:3. But its main theme, stated in the heading of the book, is the destruction of Nineveh, which Nahum foretells and describes with a power that reveals him as one of the great poets of Israel, 2:4–3:19. There is no reason to deny him the authorship of the opening psalm and prophecies, which form an excellent prologue to this terrifying picture. It has been maintained, though without convincing

proof, that this introduction (or indeed the whole book) had a liturgical origin or had at least been used in the Temple liturgy.

The prophecy dates from a little before the fall of Nineveh in 612 BC. It pulsates with Israel's hatred for the people of Assyria, the traditional enemy, and also with the hopes that the fall of Assyria arouses. But through this violent nationalism, where there is no anticipation of the gospel whatever, or even of the worldwide outlook of the second part of Isaiah, run the ideals of justice and faith; the fall of Nineveh is a judgement of God, who punishes those who oppose his holy purpose, 1:11; 2:1, the oppressors of Israel, 1:12–13, and of all the nations, 3:1–7.

The Book of Nahum must have raised the human hopes of Israel in 612, but the joy was short lived: the fall of Jerusalem followed close on the fall of Nineveh. After this, the scope of the message grows wider and deeper; Is 52:7 borrows the image of Na 2:1 to apply it to a universal and more spiritual salvation. Fragments of a commentary on Nahum discovered at Qumran arbitrarily apply the prophet's sayings to the enemies of the Qumran community.

§22 Habakkuk

The short Book of Habakkuk is very carefully constructed. It opens with a dialogue between the prophet and his God; twice the prophet complains, twice the divine proclamation answers, 1:2–2:4. The second proclamation calls down five curses on the wicked oppressor, 2:5–20. Next, in a psalm, the prophet celebrates the final triumph of God, ch. 3. The authorship of this last chapter has been disputed, but without it the composition would lose its symmetry. The musical instructions that precede, punctuate and follow the psalm merely prove that it was used liturgically. That the whole book was so used is doubtful; the liturgical quality of its style was probably more imitative than functional. Hence, arguments that Habakkuk was a cultic prophet, a member of the Temple personnel, fail to convince. A commentary on Habakkuk found at Qumran does not go beyond ch. 2, but this has no bearing on the authenticity of ch. 3.

The historical context of the prophecy and the identification of the oppressor are both doubtful. The Assyrians, the Chaldaeans, and even Jehoiakim king of Judah have been suggested. The last hypothesis cannot be maintained; each of the other two commands support. Given that the oppressors are the Assyrians, God's instrument against them would be the Chaldaeans, 1:5–11, and the date of the prophecy would be shortly after the fall of Nineveh in 612. If, however, the book refers throughout to the Chaldaeans, named in 1:6, God has made use of them to punish his people, but they in their turn will be punished for their excessive cruelty, since Yahweh is on the march to save his people; the prophet awaits this intervention with an anxiety that finally gives way to joy. If this interpretation is correct, the book should be dated between the battle of Carchemish in 605 (which made Nebuchadnezzar master of the Middle East) and the first siege of Jerusalem in 597. Thus Habakkuk would be slightly later than Nahum and, like him, a contemporary of Jeremiah.

Habakkuk sounds a note new to the teaching of the prophets; he has the

temerity to demand an account from God of his ordering of the world. Judah indeed has sinned, but why should a God of holiness, 1:12, with eyes too pure to look at evil, 1:13, choose the savage Chaldaeans to wreak his vengeance? Why must the bad be punished by the worse? Why should he appear to strengthen the arm of injustice? This is the problem of evil posed at international level and Habakkuk's dismay is felt by many people today. To them as to him comes the divine answer: by paradoxical ways Almighty God prepares the final triumph of uprightness; trusting in God, the life of the upright will be secure, *see* 2:4, a precious maxim of Habakkuk's which Paul was to incorporate into his teaching on faith, Rm 1:17; Ga 3:11; Heb 10:38.

§23 Haggai

The last, the post-exilic, period of prophecy opens with Haggai. The change is striking. Before the Exile the watchword of the prophets was Punishment. During the Exile it became Consolation. Now it is Restoration. Haggai appears at a critical moment in the development of Judaism; the birth of the new Palestinian community. His short exhortations are precisely dated from the end of August to the middle of December 520 BC. The first Jews to return from Babylonia to rebuild the Temple were quickly discouraged. The prophets Haggai and Zechariah stirred them to new efforts and urged Zerubbabel the governor and the High Priest Joshua to resume work on the Temple; this was done in September 520, 1:15; *see* Ezr 5:1.

The four brief discourses composing this book are entirely concerned with this. Since the Temple is still in ruins and neglected, Yahweh has frustrated the misplaced efforts of the farmers; its rebuilding, however, will usher in an age of prosperity. However unimposing, this new Temple will dim the glory of the old; and power is promised to Zerubbabel as God's chosen viceroy.

The coming of Yahweh and the setting up of his kingdom are represented as being conditional on the rebuilding of the Temple; the age of eschatological salvation is about to dawn. Temple and Davidic descendant thus become the focus of a messianic hope to be more clearly expressed by Zechariah.

§24 Zechariah

The Book of Zechariah consists of two distinct parts: ch. 1–8; 9–14. The introduction is dated October–November 520, two months after the first prophecy of Haggai. The body of the first part of the book contains eight of the prophet's visions beginning in February 519,1:7–6:8; these are followed by the symbolic coronation of Zerubbabel (editors later substituted the name of the High Priest Joshua when hopes placed in Zerubbabel had evaporated and all political power had passed to the priesthood), 6:9–14. Ch. 7 is a brief survey of the history of Israel, while ch. 8 looks forward to the messianic age; both originate over a question asked in November 518 BC about the duty of fasting.

Well dated and consistent in thought, this first section is certainly authentic; it does, however, show signs of having been revised, either by Zechariah himself or by his disciples. The universalist prophecies of 8:20–23, for instance, have been added after 8:18–19, which was the original conclusion.

Like Haggai, Zechariah was preoccupied with the rebuilding of the Temple. But he lays more stress on national restoration and the irreproachable moral conduct that this demands; and his eschatological expectation is more urgent. The restoration is expected to inaugurate a messianic era in which the priesthood, represented by Joshua, will be held in great honour, 3:1–7, but sovereign power will be wielded by the 'Branch', 3:8, a messianic title which 6:12 applies to Zerubbabel. The two Anointed Ones, 4:14, will rule in perfect harmony, 6:13. In this way Zechariah revives the royal messianism of earlier days but combines it with the priestly interests of Ezekiel, whose influence is discernible in many other ways: the prominent part played by visions, the apocalyptic approach, the concern for purity. These, and the intervention of angels, anticipate the Book of Daniel.

The second part, ch. 9–14, which in any case begins with a new title, 9:1, is entirely different. Its sections are without date or name. We hear no more of Zechariah, of Joshua, of Zerubbabel or of the building of the Temple. The style is different and use is frequently made of earlier books, particularly of Jeremiah and Ezekiel. The historical background is different too: Assyria and Egypt appear as names symbolic of all oppressors.

These chapters were almost certainly composed in the final decades of the fourth century BC, after Alexander the Great's conquest of the Middle East. Despite recently renewed efforts to prove that these chapters are homogeneous, it now has to be admitted that they are not. Two distinct sections can be discerned, each with its own title, ch. 9–11 and ch. 12–14; the first is almost entirely in verse, the second almost entirely in prose. A Deutero-Zechariah and Trito-Zechariah have been postulated, but the fact of the matter is that these two sections are themselves composite. The first possibly uses ancient pre-exilic pieces of poetry and refers to historical events which are difficult to identify (application of 9:1–8 to Alexander's conquest seems the most tenable). The second part, ch. 12–14, describes, in apocalyptic terms, the ordeals and triumphs of Jerusalem in the last days. Eschatology, however, is also present in the first part, and some themes are found in both, for instance that of the 'shepherds' of the people, 10:2–3; 11:4–14; 13:7–9.

This part of the book is of particular interest for its messianic teaching which, however, is not presented systematically: the recovery of the House of David, ch. 12 *passim*, the expectation of a humble and pacific messianic King, 9:9–10, but also an obscure prophecy about someone who is 'pierced', 12:10; and an armed theocracy, 10:3–11:3, which nevertheless is a liturgical community as in Ezekiel. These elements are reconciled in the person of Christ, and the New Testament often quotes these chapters of Zechariah or at least alludes to them, Mt 21:4–5; 27:9 (Zechariah combined with Jeremiah); Mt 26:31 = Mk 14:27; Jn 19:37.

§25 Malachi

This book is probably anonymous, since 'Malachi' means 'my messenger' and seems to have been taken from 3:1. It is composed of six passages similar in construction: Yahweh, or his prophet, makes a statement; this is disputed by priests or people, then developed in a discourse in which threat and promise of salvation appear side by side. There are two main themes: the

failures of priests, 1:6–2:9, and of people, 3:6–12, in their religious duties; the scandal of mixed marriage and divorce, 2:10–16. The prophet foretells the Day of Yahweh which will purify the priesthood, consume the wicked, and secure the triumph of the upright, 3:1–5,13–21; vv. 22–23 of ch. 3 are additional, as are perhaps $2:11^{b}$–13^{a}.

The contents of this book make it possible to date it; it is later than the renewal of worship in the new Temple, 516, and earlier than the prohibition of mixed marriage under Nehemiah, 445, probably fairly near this second date. The enthusiasm aroused by Haggai and Zechariah has subsided, and the community is content to drift. Inspired by Deuteronomy and Ezekiel, the prophet expects the advent of the Angel of the Covenant heralded by a mysterious messenger, 3:1, in whom Mk 1:2 (cf. Mt 11:10; Lk 7:27) sees John the Baptist, the precursor. In this messianic era the moral order will be restored, 3:5, as also true religion, 3:4, culminating in a perfect sacrifice offered to God by all nations, 1:11.

§26 Obadiah

This shortest (21 verses) of the prophetic books is full of problems; interpreters dispute its unity, its literary form, its date (some putting it as early as the ninth century BC, others as late as the Greek period). To add to the difficulty, nearly half the book, vv. 2–10, has a doublet in Jr 49:7–22, but in a different order and as additions to a saying, the attribution of which to Jeremiah is itself disputed. The prophecy of Obadiah is devoted to two themes: the punishment of Edom foretold in several short sayings, vv. 1^{b}–14, with v. 15^{b} as its conclusion; the Day of Yahweh when Israel will take its revenge on Edom, vv. 15^{a}, 16–18, with its conclusion, 'Yahweh has spoken'. The eschatological promises in vv. 19–21 are additions. The book forms part of the anti-Edomite polemic current after 587 BC, cf. Ps 137:7; Jr 49:7seq. already mentioned; Lm 4:21–22; Ezk 25:12seq.; 35:1seq.; Ml 1:2seq. The Edomites had taken advantage of the destruction of Jerusalem to invade southern Judaea. The memory of these events was still very much alive and the prophecy seems to have been composed in Judah before the return from Exile. There is no need to attribute the passage on the Day of Yahweh to a later date or another author; only the concluding verses seem to be a post-exilic addition.

This passionate appeal for national vengeance is in sharp contrast to the internationalism of the second part of Isaiah, for instance. But it is also a tribute to the terrible justice and power of Yahweh, the defender of the right, and must not be isolated from the whole prophetic movement, of which it represents no more than a fleeting moment.

§27 Joel

The Book of Joel falls naturally into two parts. In the first, an invasion of locusts lays Judah waste; this calls for a religious ceremony of lamentation and prayer; to this Yahweh replies by promising the cessation of the plague and the return of prosperity, 1:2–2:27. The second part describes in apocalyptic style the judgement on the nations and the final triumph of Yahweh

and of Israel, ch. 3–4. The unity of the two parts is maintained by reference to the Day of Yahweh, the actual theme of ch. 3–4 but already mentioned in 1:15; 2:1–2,10–11. The locusts are Yahweh's army, sent to execute his sentence, a Day of Yahweh from which repentance and prayer offer the means of deliverance; the plague becomes a figure of the great, last judgement, the Day of Yahweh to usher in the eschatological age. There is no evidence for postulating two authors or two periods of composition. Some modern critics date the book to the end of the monarchy; the majority, however, opt for the post-exilic period on the following grounds: the absence of any reference to a king, the allusions to the Exile and also to the Temple as already rebuilt, and the affinities with Deuteronomy and the later prophets, Ezekiel, Zephaniah, Malachi, and Obadiah who is quoted in 3:5. The book was probably written in about 400 BC.

Its links with public worship are obvious. Ch. 1–2 have the characteristics of a penitential liturgy, ending with the prophetic promise of divine forgiveness. Hence, the theory has been advanced that Joel was a cultic prophet, attached to the ministry of the Temple. These characteristics may, however, be accounted for as a literary imitation of liturgical forms. The book is not a transcript of a sermon given in the Temple, but a written composition intended to be read. It marks the end of the prophetic movement.

The outpouring of the spirit of prophecy on all God's people in the eschatological age, 3:1–5, is the answer to Moses' prayer in Nb 11:29. The New Testament considers this prophecy to have been fulfilled by the coming of the Spirit on Christ's apostles, and Peter quotes the entire passage, Ac 2:16–21; Joel is the prophet of Pentecost. He is also the prophet of repentance, and his exhortations to fasting and prayer, whether borrowed from the Temple ceremonial or modelled on it, later found a natural place in the Lenten liturgy of the Church.

§28 Jonah

Unlike the other prophetic books, this short work is entirely narrative. It tells the story of a disobedient prophet who first struggles to evade his divine mission and then complains to God that his mission has, against his expectations, been successful. The hero of this droll adventure is a prophet mentioned in 2 K 14:25, who lived in the reign of Jeroboam II. The book, however, does not claim to be his work and certainly cannot be by him. The 'great city' of Nineveh, destroyed in 612, is no more than a distant memory; thought and phrase are borrowed from Jeremiah and Ezekiel; the language of the book is late. All points to a date after the Exile, somewhere in the fourth century. The psalm, 2:3–10, which is of a different literary form, and which has no connection either with the plight of Jonah or with the doctrine of the book, was added later.

This late date is warning enough against any interpretation of the book as history. This is excluded by other arguments as well. There is no trace in Assyrian or biblical documents of a conversion of the king of Nineveh with all his people to the God of Israel. And, though God is indeed master of nature, the successive prodigies here narrated read like a succession of practical jokes played by God on his prophet: the sudden storm, the choice

of Jonah by lot, the great fish, the plant growing in a night and withering in an hour; while the whole story is told with undisguised irony quite alien to the writing of history.

The book is intended to amuse and instruct; it is a didactic tale, and its doctrine marks one of the peaks of the Old Testament. It rejects a too rigid interpretation of prophecy, asserting that even the most uncompromising of threats is an expression of the merciful will of God, who pardons at the first sign of repentance. If Jonah's prophecy fails to come true, this is because decrees of destruction are always conditional. What God wants is conversion; this being achieved, the prophet's mission is completely successful, cf. Jr 18:7–8.

Rejecting the narrow racialism into which the post-exilic community was tempted to withdraw, the book proclaims an astonishingly broadminded catholicity. All the characters in the story are likeable, the foreign sailors, the king, the populace, even the animals of Nineveh, all except the only Israelite on the stage—and he a prophet! God is indulgent to his rebellious prophet but, more remarkably, his mercy extends even to Israel's most detested enemy.

We are on the threshold of the New Testament: God is not only the God of the Jews, he is also the God of the gentiles, for there is only one God, Rm 3:29–30. In Mt 12:41 and Lk 11:29–32 Jesus was to cite the conversion of the Ninevites as an example of repentance, and Mt 12:40 sees Jonah inside the great fish as a prefiguring of Christ in the tomb. This use of the story of Jonah should not be invoked as a proof of its historicity. Jesus employs the Old Testament story as Christian preachers use the New Testament parables; the intention is the same: to teach by means of well-known illustrations, without implying any opinion as to the historical reality of the facts.

ISAIAH

I: THE FIRST PART OF THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

A: PROPHECIES BEFORE THE SYRO-EPHRAIMITE WAR

Title [a]

Mi 1:1 1 The vision of Isaiah son of Amoz concerning Judah and Jerusalem, which he received in the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah kings of Judah.

Against an ungrateful people

Dt 4:26;32:1+ Mi 1:2 •Dt 32:5–6,10 Ba 4:8 Jr 8:7

Listen, you heavens; earth, attend, for Yahweh is speaking, [b] 2
'I have reared children and brought them up,
but they have rebelled against me.
The ox knows its owner and the donkey its master's crib; 3
Israel does not know, my people do not understand.'
Disaster, sinful nation, people weighed down with guilt, 4
30:9;31:1 race of wrong-doers, perverted children!
Lv 17:1a Jr 2:13 They have abandoned Yahweh, despised the Holy One of Israel, [c]
they have turned away from him.
Lv 26:14–33 Jr 5:3 Where shall I strike you next, if you persist in treason? 5
Am 4:6–12 The whole head is sick, the whole heart is diseased,
from the sole of the foot to the head there is nothing healthy: [d] 6
only wounds, bruises and open sores
Jr 30:12–15 Lk 10:34 not dressed, not bandaged, not soothed with ointment,
your country a desolation, your towns burnt down, 7
your soil, foreigners lay it waste before your eyes,
Gn 19:1a a desolation like devastation by foreigners. [e]
The daughter of Zion [f] is left like a shanty in a vineyard, 8
like a shed in a cucumber field, like a city besieged.
4:3c 19:1–29 Gn 18:16–33; ↗Rm 9:29 Had Yahweh Sabaoth not left us a few survivors, 9
we should be like Sodom, we should be the same as Gomorrah.

29:13–14 **Against hypocrisy** [g]

Dt 32:32 Hear what Yahweh says, you rulers of Sodom; 10
listen to what our God teaches, you people of Gomorrah.

Am 5:21n 'What are your endless sacrifices to me?' says Yahweh. 11
'I am sick of burnt offerings of rams
and the fat of calves.
I take no pleasure in the blood
of bulls and lambs and goats.
When you come and present yourselves before me, 12
who has asked you to trample through my courts?

13 Bring no more futile cereal offerings,
the smoke from them fills me with disgust.
New Moons, Sabbaths, assemblies—I cannot endure solemnity
combined with guilt.
14 Your New Moons and your meetings I utterly detest; Ho 2:13
to me they are a burden I am tired of bearing.
15 When you stretch out your hands I turn my eyes away.
You may multiply your prayers, I shall not be listening. Jr 14:12
Mi 3:4
Your hands are covered in blood, [h] 59:2–3
16 wash, make yourselves clean. Jr 2:34
Take your wrong-doing out of my sight.
17 Cease doing evil. •Learn to do good,' Am 5:14–15
search for justice, discipline the violent,
be just to the orphan, plead for the widow. [i] Ex 22:20–22+

18 'Come, let us talk this over,' says Yahweh. 43:26
'Though your sins are like scarlet, Ps 32:1+;51:7
they shall be white as snow;
though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool. [j]
19 If you are willing to obey, you shall eat the good things of the earth. Lv 26:3–12
Dt 28:1–14
20 But if you refuse and rebel, the sword shall eat you instead— •Lv 26:14–39
for Yahweh's mouth has spoken.' [k] Dt 28:15seq.
•=40:5;58:14
‖Mi 4:4

Lament for Jerusalem [l]

21 The faithful city, Jr 2:20
what a harlot she has become! Ezk 16;23
Zion, once full of fair judgement,
where saving justice used to dwell, [m]
but now assassins!

22 Your silver has turned into dross, Jr 6:29
your wine is watered. Ezk 22:18
23 Your princes are rebels,
accomplices of brigands.

1 **a.** The title gives the chronological framework for the prophet's entire activity, but it is difficult to decide whether it introduces the whole book in its final form, ch. 1–66, or only ch. 1–39, or even only ch. 1–12. Be that as it may, 'Judah and Jerusalem' is to be taken not in a geographical sense but as a designation for the chosen people for whose instruction all the prophecies are uttered, even those concerning the Northern Kingdom and foreign peoples.

b. Heaven and earth are summoned as witnesses in God's lawsuit against his people, *see* Dt 4:26; 30:19; 32:1; Ps 50:4. The following poem refers to the devastation of the country and the siege of Jerusalem, either by Sennacherib in 701 BC, *see* 36:1seq.; 2 K 18:13seq., or during the Syro-Ephraimite War of 735 BC, *see* 7:1–2; 2 K 16:5–9.

c. Isaiah's favourite way of referring to Yahweh, *see* 6:3g.

d. These vv., which in their literal sense refer to the people of Judah punished for their sins, have been applied to the passion of Christ, as also the analogous texts about the suffering servant, 53:3seq.

e. Thus Hebr., but the line adds nothing to what has gone before and the Hebr. term translated as 'devastation' invariably designates the punishment suffered by Sodom and Gomorrah, referred to in vv. 9–10 and 3:9. Hence the frequent emendation of 'by foreigners' *zarim* to 'of Sodom' *sedom*; none of the versions supports this, however.

f. Personification of the city of Jerusalem, 10:32; 16:1; etc., or of its population, 37:22; Lm 4:22; Zp 3:14. 'Zion' was the name of the Jebusite citadel which later became the 'City of David', *see* 2 S 5:9f.

g. The prophecy probably dates from the first period of Isaiah's ministry, before 735 BC. Like Am 5:21–27, the prophet castigates ceremonies divorced from inner spirituality; he recurs to this in 29:13–14, in terms which Jesus was later to apply to the Pharisees, Mt 15:8–9.

h. Of sacrificial victims, but also of innocent people.

i. Orphans and widows, being economically weak, are protected by the law, Ex 22:21–22; Dt 10:18; 14:29; 27:19; etc., and the prophets frequently plead their cause, Jr 7:6; 22:3. *See* by way of contrast, Is 1:23; 9:16; Jr 49:10–11; Ezk 22:7.

j. Like judgement, Ps 9:7–8, forgiveness of sins is a divine prerogative, Ex 34:6c; Ho 11:8–9. God in his mercy puts an end to sin, thus restoring humanity to its true relationship with his Creator. No sin is too extreme to exhaust divine forgiveness, Ps 130. The condition on which God insists is avowal of the sin and repentance, 57:15; Ps 19:12; 25:11,18; 32:5; 51:17–18; etc., and the inner conversion which this implies, Jr 3:14; Ezk 18:30–32; 33:11; cf. Is 30:18; Lm 5:21. Forgiveness of sins is also a feature of the messianic kingdom, Jr 31:31*l*; cf. Ezk 36:25–26, a prerogative exercised by Jesus, Mk 2:5–11par.

k. The 'sword', that is to say, the invasion with all its attendant disasters is still only a threat, which may be removed by submitting to God, v. 19.

l. The beginning of this poem is in the *qinah* (lament) rhythm which has uneven lines (3+2 stresses or 4+3).

m. 'Zion' Gk and *Vet. Lat.*; Hebr. omits. • The theme of Jerusalem as a prostitute is reminiscent of the preaching of Hosea and anticipates the allegories of Jr 3:6–13; Ezk 16; 23. Her fall contrasts with her original fidelity, which she will recover when she has once been purged by punishment, v. 26.

All of them greedy for presents
and eager for bribes,
they show no justice to the orphan,
and the widow's cause never reaches them.

Hence, the Lord Yahweh Sabaoth, 24
the Mighty One of Israel, says this,
'Disaster, I shall get the better of my enemies,
I shall avenge myself on my foes.

'I shall turn my hand against you, 25
I shall purge your dross as though with potash,
I shall remove all your alloy.

'And I shall restore your judges as at first, 26
your counsellors as in bygone days,
1:21 Zc 8:3 after which you will be called City of Saving Justice,
Faithful City.' [n]

Zion will be redeemed by fair judgement, 27
and those who return, by saving justice.
Rebels and sinners alike will be destroyed, 28
and those who abandon Yahweh will perish. [o]

Against sacred trees [p]

How ashamed you will be of the terebinths 29
which gave you such delight;
and how you will blush for the gardens which you chose!
For you will be like a terebinth with faded leaves, 30
like a garden without water;
the strong will become like tinder, his work like the spark; 31
both will go up in flames together,
with no one to put them out.

Everlasting peace

2 The vision of Isaiah [a] son of Amoz, concerning Judah and Jerusalem. [b] 1

‖Mi 4:1-3 It will happen in the final days 2
that the mountain of Yahweh's house
will rise higher than the mountains
and tower above the heights.
56:6-8; 60:11-14 Zc 8:20seq.; 14:16 Then all the nations will stream to it,
many peoples will come to it and say, 3
'Come, let us go up to the mountain of Yahweh,
to the house of the God of Jacob
that he may teach us his ways
so that we may walk in his paths.'
Lk 24:47 Jn 4:22 For the Law will issue from Zion
and the word of Yahweh from Jerusalem.

9:6 Then he [c] will judge between the nations 4
and arbitrate between many peoples.
11:6-9.6e Ho 2:20 Jl 4:9-11 Zc 9:9-10 They will hammer their swords into ploughshares
and their spears into sickles.
Nation will not lift sword against nation,
no longer will they learn how to make war.

60:1-3 House of Jacob, come, let us walk in Yahweh's light. 5

The brilliance of Yahweh's majesty [d]

6 You have rejected your people, the House of Jacob,
for it has long been full of sorcerers — Dt 18:14
like the Philistines, [e]
and is overrun with foreigners.
7 The country is full of silver and gold and treasures unlimited,
the country is full of horses, its chariots are unlimited; — Dt 17:16–17
8 the country is full of idols. — Ps 20:7
They bow down before the work of their hands,
before what their own fingers have made.

9 Human nature has been humbled, humankind brought low: — =5:15
do not raise them again!
10 Go into the rock, hide in the dust, — Ho 10:8
in terror of Yahweh, at the brilliance of his majesty, — ↗2 Th 1:9 Rv 6:16
when he arises to make the earth quake. [f]

11 Human pride will lower its eyes,
human arrogance will be humbled,
and Yahweh alone will be exalted, on that day.
12 That will be a day for Yahweh Sabaoth, [g]
for all who are majestic and haughty,
for all who are proud, to be brought low,
13 for all the cedars of Lebanon, high and proud,
and for all the oaks of Bashan;
14 for all the high mountains
and for all the proud hills;
15 for every lofty tower
and for every towering wall;
16 for all the ships of Tarshish — Ps 48:7c
and for everything held precious. [h]

17 Human pride will be humbled,
human arrogance brought low,
and Yahweh alone will be exalted, on that day.

n. A proper name defines the nature of the being that bears it, and fixes its destiny, cf. the names of Jacob, Gn 25:26; 27:36, and of his sons, Gn 29:31–30:24, etc. A change of name signifies a change of vocation, cf. Abraham, Gn 17:5; Israel, Gn 32:29; etc. The names the prophets give people are efficacious signs, viz. Isaiah, 7:3 (cf. 10:21); 7:14; 8:1–3 (cf. 8:18), and Hosea, 1:4,6,9; 2:1–3,25. The Jerusalem of the future was to receive other prophetic names, Is 60:14; 62:4,12; Ezk 48:35. Here Jerusalem's new names, referring back to v. 21, are 'faithfulness' and 'saving justice'. For Isaiah, as for Amos, saving justice is primarily judicial equity but in a deeper sense means participating in God's saving justice, by which he reveals his holiness, *see* 5:16f.

o. These two vv., forming a somewhat prosaic commentary on the foregoing, have perhaps been added by one of Isaiah's disciples.

p. Isaiah rarely attacks heathen customs, though *see also* 2:6–8. The trees in question were not in themselves cult-objects but sheltered religious practices borrowed from the Canaanites, *see* Dt 12:2b, where the examples quoted show that these abuses were to be found not only in the kingdom of Israel but in that of Judah too.

2 a. Substantially, this prophecy also occurs in Mi 4:1–3. Its origin is disputed. The most likely opinion is that here Mi depends on Is; the arguments against Isaian authorship of the text (in particular, its universalism) are not conclusive.

b. This new title introduces the small collection of prophecies comprising ch. 2–5.

c. Yahweh.

d. This poem, the unity of which is attested by the repetition of the same phrases (vv. 9,11,17 and 10,19,21), dates from the first period of Isaiah's activity when Judah was enjoying a long period of prosperity under Uzziah and Jotham; but it could also apply to Samaria which had not at this point fallen into the anarchy and decadence which it was soon to experience. The prophet foretells a devastating intervention on the part of Yahweh.

e. The frequent emendation of 'long' *miqqedem* to 'of diviners' *qosemim* or 'of divination' *miqsam*, is not supported by the versions; it does, however, justify the 'and' occurring in the text before 'sorcerers', which we perforce omit. Divination was widely practised in the ancient Middle East, Israel being no exception, 8:19; 1 S 28:3seq., despite being condemned in Ex 22:17; Lv 19:31; 20:27; Dt 18:10–11,14. Nothing is known about divination among the Philistines, but their diviners are mentioned in 1 S 6:2.

f. 'when he . . . quake' Gk; Hebr. omits. The whole v. and the concluding, possibly corrupt, words of v. 9 are missing in 1QIs[a]. The v. is repeated in vv. 19 and 21.

g. On the 'Day of Yahweh' *see* Am 5:18m. Here, Yahweh's intervention is described as an earthquake, Is 2:10,19,21.

h. Text uncertain; frequently emended to 'for boats', which yields a good parallelism.

Jr 10:11.15 When the idols all disappear, 18
2:10+ they will go into the caverns of the rocks 19
and into the fissures of the earth
in terror of Yahweh, at the brilliance of his majesty,
when he arises to make the earth quake.

31:7 That day, people will fling to moles and bats the silver idols and golden idols 20
which have been made for them to worship,

and go into the crevices of the rocks 21
and the clefts in the cliffs,
in terror of Yahweh, at the brilliance of his majesty,
when he arises to make the earth quake.

Jr 17:5 Have no more to do with humankind, 22
Gn 2:7;6:3 Jb 34:14 which has only the breath in its nostrils.
How much is this worth? [i]

Anarchy in Jerusalem [a]

3 Now the Lord Yahweh Sabaoth 1
is about to deprive Jerusalem and Judah
of resources and provisions—
all reserves of food, all reserves of water—
of hero, warrior, judge, prophet, 2
diviner, elder, ·captain, dignitary, 3
counsellor, architect, soothsayer.
Qo 10:16 'I shall give them boys for princes, 4
raw lads [b] to rule over them.'
People will be ill-treated by one another, 5
each by his neighbour;
the young will insult the aged,
and the low, the respected.
Yes, a man will catch hold of his brother 6
in their father's house, to say,
'You have a cloak, so.you be leader,
and rule this heap of ruins.'
And, that day, the other will protest, 7
'I am no healer;
in my house there is neither food nor clothing;
do not make me leader of the people.'
For Jerusalem has collapsed 8
and Judah has fallen,
because their words and deeds affront Yahweh
and insult his glorious gaze.
Their complacency bears witness against them, 9
Gn 13:13c; 18:20–21; 19:4–11 they parade their sin like Sodom;
they do not conceal it, all the worse for them,
for they have hatched their own downfall.
Say, 'Blessed the upright, 10
for he will feed on the fruit of his deeds;
woe to the wicked, it will go ill with him, 11
for he will be treated as his actions deserve.' [c]
O my people, their oppressors pillage them 12
and extortioners rule over them! [d]
O my people, your rulers mislead you
and efface the paths you ought to follow!
Ho 4:1–5 Yahweh has risen to accuse, 13

is standing to pass judgement on the people. ▶Mi 6:1–5
14 Yahweh is about to try
the elders and the princes of his people,
'You are the ones who have ravaged the vineyard, 5:1–7
the spoils of the poor are in your houses.
15 By what right do you crush my people
and grind the faces of the poor?' Am 2:7
says the Lord Yahweh Sabaoth.

The women of Jerusalem

16 Yahweh says:

Because Zion's daughters are proud 32:9–14
and walk with heads held high Am 4:1–3
and enticing eyes—with mincing steps they go,
jingling the bangles on their feet—
17 the Lord will give Zion's daughters scabby heads, Am 8:10
Yahweh will lay their foreheads bare.

18 That day the Lord will take away the ornamental chains, medallions, crescents,
19, 20 pendants, bracelets, trinkets, ·diadems, ankle-chains, necklaces, scent bottles,
21, 22 amulets, ·finger-rings, nose-rings, ·party dresses, cloaks, scarves, purses, mirrors,
23 linen clothes, turbans and mantillas. [e]

24 Then, instead of perfume, a stink;
instead of belt, a rope,
instead of hair elaborately dressed, a shaven scalp, Am 8:10
instead of gorgeous clothes, sacking round the waist, [f]
and brand marks instead of beauty.

Misery in Jerusalem

25 Your men will fall by the sword,
your warriors in battle,
26 and her gates will moan and mourn;
she will sit on the ground, deserted.

1 4 That day, seven women will catch hold of one man and say, 'We will eat our own food, and wear our own clothing, but just let us bear your name. Take our disgrace away.' [a]

Yahweh's seedling [b]

2 That day, Yahweh's seedling will turn to beauty and glory, Jr 23:5–6
what the earth brings forth will turn to the pride and ornament Zc 3:8;6:12
of Israel's survivors. 52:1;60:21

i. v. 22, missing from Gk and alien to the context, is probably a gloss.

3 a. This poem is assigned to the beginning of the reign of Ahaz, about 735 BC. With an immature king and threatened with foreign intervention, *see* 2 K 15:37, the country was in danger of foundering in anarchy. The text seems to be composed of two originally independent pieces, vv. 1–9[a] and 12–15; vv. 9[b]–11 are additional.

b. Alternatively, this may be construed as a plural of abstraction, hence: '(governing) as the fancy takes them'.

c. Vv. 10–11, proverbial in character, interrupt the description of anarchy; v. 10 is very different in Gk.

d. 'pillage' conj.; Hebr. has singular. • 'extortioners' versions; 'women' Hebr.

e. The catalogue of trinkets, vv. 18–23, is possibly additional. The exact meaning of a number of terms is uncertain.

f. In Hebr. *saq*, coarse material from which sacks were made, Gn 42:25, etc., but also a penitential or mourning garment, worn round the otherwise naked body, Is 20:2; Gn 37:34; 1 K 20:31; 21:27; Am 8:10; etc.

4 a. In the city, where the male population has been decimated by war, 3:25–26, several women will ask the same man if they can 'bear his name', that is to say, if he will be their master in the Hebr. sense of the expression. The proud women of Jerusalem will become concubines.

b. The 'seedling' and 'what the earth brings forth' designate either the Messiah, Jr 23:5 = 33:15; Zc 3:8; 6:12, or the 'remnant' of Israel (*see* following note), compared to a tree reburgeoning in the soil of Palestine. Vv. 2–6 or at least vv. 4–6 are generally thought to be a post-exilic composition.

Those who are left in Zion and remain in Jerusalem 3
Zp 3:13 will be called holy,
Dn 12:1a all those in Jerusalem noted down to live. [c]
When the Lord has washed away 4
the filth of Zion's daughters
and with the wind of judgement and the wind of burning cleansed
Jerusalem of the blood shed in her,
Yahweh will create, 5
over every house on Mount Zion
and over those who assemble there,
Ex 13:21–22+ a cloud by day,
and by night smoke with the brightness of a flaring fire. [d]
Rv 7:15–16 For over all will be the Glory as canopy •and tent 6
25:4–5 to give shade by day from the heat,
refuge and shelter from the storm and the rain.

27:2–5 **The song of the vineyard** [a]
Ps 80:8–18
Jr 2:21;5:10; 6:9;12:10
Ezk 15:1–8; 17:3–10; 19:10–14
Ho 10:1
↗Mt 21:18–19d, 33g, 44
Jn 15:1–2,1a

5 Let me sing my beloved 1
the song of my friend for his vineyard.

My beloved had a vineyard
on a fertile hillside.
He dug it, cleared it of stones, 2
and planted it with red grapes. [b]
In the middle he built a tower,
he hewed a press there too.
He expected it to yield fine grapes:
wild grapes were all it yielded.

And now, citizens of Jerusalem and people of Judah, 3
Mi 6:1–5 I ask you to judge between me and my vineyard.
Jr 2:4–7 What more could I have done for my vineyard 4
that I have not done?
Why, when I expected it to yield fine grapes,
has it yielded wild ones?

Very well, I shall tell you what I am going to do to my vineyard: 5
I shall take away its hedge, for it to be grazed on,
and knock down its wall, for it to be trampled on.
I shall let it go to waste, unpruned, undug, 6
32:13 overgrown by brambles and thorn-bushes,
2 S 1:21 and I shall command the clouds to rain no rain on it.
Now, the vineyard of Yahweh Sabaoth is the House of Israel, 7
and the people of Judah the plant he cherished.
He expected fair judgement, but found injustice,
uprightness, but found cries of distress.

Jr 22:13–19 **Curses** [c]
Ezk 7:5–26
Am 6:1–7
Mi 2:1–5
Hab 2:6–20
Mt 23
Lk 6:24–26

Woe to those who add house to house 8
and join field to field
until there is nowhere left
and they are the sole inhabitants of the country.
Yahweh Sabaoth has sworn this in my hearing, 9
'Many houses will be brought to ruin,
great and fine ones left untenanted;
7:23 for ten acres of vineyard will yield only one barrel, 10
and ten bushel of seed will yield only one bushel.' [d]

11 Woe to those who get up early to go after strong drink,
and stay up late at night inflamed with wine. 22:13;28:1, 7–8;56:12
12 Nothing but harp and lyre, tambourine and pipe, 1 K 16:9–10 Ws 2:7–9 Jl 1:5 Am 4:1 Mi 2:11
and wine for their drinking bouts.

Never a thought for the works of Yahweh, Ps 28:5
never a glance for what his hands have done.
13 That is why my people is in exile, for want of perception;
her dignitaries starving, her populace parched with thirst.
14 [e]That is why Sheol opens wide its throat
and gapes with measureless jaw
and down go her noblemen and populace
and her loud revellers merry to the last!

15 Human nature has been humbled, humankind brought low, =2:9,11
and the eyes of the proud have been humbled.
16 Yahweh Sabaoth is the more respected for his judgement,
God the Holy One has displayed his holiness by his justice![f] 1:26n;6:3g
17 Now the lambs will graze in their old pastures, 7:25
and the fields laid waste by fat cattle will feed the kids.[g]

18 Woe to those who drag guilt along by the reins of duplicity,
drag along sin as though with a cart rope;
19 to those who say, 'Why doesn't he do his work[h] quickly 2 P 3:4
so that we can see it;
why doesn't the Holy One of Israel's design hurry up and come true
so that we can experience it?'

20 Woe to those who call what is bad, good, and what is good, bad, Pr 17:15 Mt 23:13
who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness,
who substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter.

21 Woe to those who think themselves wise Jn 9:40–41 Rm 1:21–22
and believe themselves enlightened.

c. Faithless Israel will be punished, but because God loves his people a small 'remnant' will escape the invader's sword. This idea, already familiar to Amos, 3:12; 5:15; 9:8–10, is taken up by Isaiah, 6:13; 7:3c and 10:19–21; 28:5–6; 37:4 (= 2 K 19:4); 37:31–32, cf. Jr 3:14; 5:18; Ezk 5:3; 9; Mi 4:7; 5:2; Zp 2:7,9; 3:12–13. This purified and henceforth faithful remnant left in Jerusalem will once again become a powerful nation. After the disaster of 587 a new conception appears: the remnant will be found among the exiles, Ba 2:13; Ezk 12:16; in exile they will turn to God, Ezk 6:8–10; cf. Dt 30:1–2, and God will then re-assemble them for the messianic restoration, Is 11:11,16; Jr 23:3; 31:7; 50:20; Ezk 20:37; Mi 2:12–13. Back from exile this remnant, again unfaithful, will be further reduced in number and purified, Ob v.17 = Jl 3:5; Hg 1:12; Zc 1:3; 8:11; 13:8–9; 14:2. In the event, Christ proves to be the true 'Seedling' of the new and sanctified Israel, 11:1,10; cf. 4:2; Jr 23:3–6. • Unlike Israel, the non-Yahwist nations will have no 'remnant', 14:22,30; 15:9; 16:14; Ezk 21:37; Am 1:8; Ob v. 18.

d. Evocation of the column of cloud or fire which guided the Israelites during their exodus from Egypt. The allusion to the Exodus confirms the late date of the poem, cf. 10:26, which is an addition, 11:15–16, which is exilic, and the presentation of the return from exile as a second exodus in Second Isaiah, 40:3e.

5 **a.** A poem composed by Isaiah at the beginning of his ministry, perhaps based on a grape-harvest song. The theme of Israel as a vine, chosen and afterwards rejected, had been broached by Hosea, 10:1, and was to be taken up by Jeremiah, 2:21; 5:10; 6:9; 12:10, and Ezekiel, 15:1–8; 17:3–10; 19:10–14; cf. Ps 80:8–18; Is 27:2–5. Jesus was later to give it a new twist in the parable of the wicked husbandmen, Mt 21:33–44 and par. (see also the barren fig tree, Mt 21:18–19 and par.). In Jn 15:1–2 he unfolds the mystery of the 'true' vine. Other aspects of the vine theme appear in Dt 32:32–33 and Si 24:17.

b. In Hebr. *soreq*, the name of a high-quality plant, 16:8; Jr 2:21, cf. Gn 49:11, designated by the colour of its fruit.

c. These curses also date from the beginning of Isaiah's ministry, but were perhaps not all uttered on a single occasion. To the six curses of 5:2–24, it is sometimes suggested that a seventh should be added, 10:1–4, which may have been accidentally displaced. The curse is one of the literary forms of prophetic preaching, see marginal references. Here Isaiah is very close to Amos.

d. 'barrel . . . bushel', lit. 'only one *bath*, a *homer* of seed will yield only one *ephah*'.

e. Vv. 14–16 seem to be out of context and possibly belong to the poem in 2:6–22, the refrain of which, vv. 9 and 11, recurs here, v. 15.

f. God's 'holiness', *see* 6:3g, 'separates' him from all created things: since he transcends them, they cannot contaminate him. But this transcendent sanctity of God is apparent in his dealings with human beings in its aspect as 'justice' (1:26n), thereby emphasising its moral nature: God rewards good and punishes evil; this is God's 'judgement'. God's faithful love does not clash with his 'justice', on the contrary it is part of it, since God's kindness in forgiving Israel and the repentant sinner comes from his faithfulness to what he has promised, Ps 51:14; Mi 7:9. Justice is to be the overriding characteristic of the messianic kingdom, when God has transmitted some of his holiness to his people, 1:26; 4:3; cf. Mt 5:48.

g. 'kids' Gk; 'foreigners' Hebr.

h. A reference to the 'Day of Yahweh', foretold by the prophet in 2:12, and which the sceptics are drawing down on themselves by their insolence.

Woe to those whose might lies in wine bibbing, 22
their heroism in mixing strong drinks,
who acquit the guilty for a bribe 23
and deny justice to the upright.[i]
Yes, as the flame devours the stubble, 24
as the straw flares up and disappears,
their root will be like decay
and their shoot be carried off like dust,
for having rejected the law of Yahweh Sabaoth,
for having despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.

Yahweh's anger[j]

This is why Yahweh's anger has blazed out against his people; 25
and he has raised his hand against them to strike them;
why the mountains have shuddered
and why corpses are lying like dung in the streets.
After all this, his anger is not spent.
9:11,16,20;10:4 No, his hand is still raised!

Yahweh summons the invaders[k]

Jr 5:15–17; 6:22–30 He hoists a signal for a distant nation,[l] 26
he whistles them up from the ends of the earth;
and see how swift, how fleet they come!

None of them tired, none of them stumbling, 27
none of them asleep or drowsy,
none of them with belt unfastened,
none of them with broken sandal-strap.

Their arrows are sharpened, 28
their bows all strung,
their horses' hoofs you would think were flint
and their wheels, a whirlwind!

Ho 5:14 Am 3:12 Their roar is like that of a lioness, 29
like fierce young lions they roar,
growling they seize their prey
and carry it off, with no one to prevent it,

growling at it,[m] that day, 30
like the growling of the sea.
Only look at the country: darkness and distress,
8:20–23 and the light turned to darkness by the clouds.[n]

B: THE BOOK OF IMMANUEL

The call of Isaiah[a]

1 K 22:19 Rv 4:2 Ezk 1:1;10:21 6 In the year of King Uzziah's death[b] I saw the Lord seated on a high and lofty 1
throne; his train filled the sanctuary.[c] ·Above him stood seraphs,[d] each one 2
with six wings: two to cover its face,[e] two to cover its feet[f] and two for flying; ·and 3
they were shouting these words to each other:

↗Rv 4:8 Nb 14:21 Holy, holy, holy[g] is Yahweh Sabaoth.
His glory fills the whole earth.

The door-posts shook at the sound of their shouting, and the Temple was full of 4
Ex 19:16g; smoke.[h] ·Then I said: 5

'Woe is me! I am lost,
for I am a man of unclean lips
and I live among a people of unclean lips,
and my eyes have seen the King, Yahweh Sabaoth.'

▶40:34–35
▶1 K 8:10–12
▶↗Jn 12:41
▶↗Rv 15:8

Ex 33:20i

6 Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding in its hand a live coal which it
7 had taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. ·With this it touched my mouth and said:

Jr 1:9
Dn 10:16

'Look, this has touched your lips,[i]
your guilt has been removed
and your sin forgiven.'

8 I then heard the voice of the Lord saying:

'Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?'

9 And I said, 'Here am I, send me.'[j] ·He said:

Ex 4:10–13
Jr 1:6

'Go, and say to this people,
"Listen and listen, but never understand!
Look and look, but never perceive!"
10 Make this people's heart coarse,
make their ears dull, shut their eyes tight,
or they will use their eyes to see,
use their ears to hear,
use their heart to understand,
and change their ways and be healed.'[k]

↗Mt 13:14–15par.
↗Ac 28:26–27
•42:18i
↗Jn 12:40

Jr 5:21
Ezk 12:2

11 I then said, 'Until when, Lord?'[l] He replied, 'Until towns are in ruins and
12 deserted, houses untenanted and a great desolation reigns in the land, ·and Yahweh has driven the people away and the country is totally abandoned.
13 And suppose one-tenth of them are left in it, that will be stripped again, like the terebinth, like the oak, cut back to the stock; their stock is a holy seed.'[m]

i. 'the upright' (sing.) Gk; Hebr. has plural.

j. The fragment vv. 25–30 probably belongs to the poem in 9:7–20, the refrain of which also occurs here.

k. This poem may refer to one of the great Assyrian invasions in the days of Isaiah: those of Tiglath-Pileser III in 735 or 732, of Shalmaneser in 722, of Sargon in 711, or of Sennacherib in 701. But the invader is not named, and the subject may be of general application: God summons a powerful nation as the instrument of his vengeance, *see* 10:5a, Dt 28:49–52.

l. 'nation' conj., from context; Hebr. has plural.

m. i.e. at the country of Judah, cf. remainder of v.

n. The darkness of the 'Day of Yahweh', cf. Am 5:18,20.

6 a. The more natural place for the vision would have been at the beginning of the book, but the book, *see* Introduction to Prophets, pp. 1168–9, is composed of independent collections of material. The vision aptly introduces the 'Book of Immanuel' which assembles the prophecies relating to the Syro-Ephraimite war when the threats of vv. 11–13 came true.

b. Probably in 740 BC.

c. The Hekal, the chamber leading into the Debir or 'Holy of Holies', *see* 1 K 6:1–38.

d. Etymologically, the 'burning ones', but apart from the name these winged beings have nothing in common with the fiery serpents of Nb 21:6,8; cf. Dt 8:15, or the flying ones of Is 14:29; 30:6. These were figures of human shape but equipped with six wings, they were of a type with the mysterious beings who carry Yahweh's chariot in Ezk 1 and 10, like the analogous figures attached to the ark, Ex 25:18i. Later tradition gave the names 'seraphs' and 'cherubim' to two orders of angels.

e. For fear of seeing Yahweh, *see* Ex 33:20i.

f. Euphemism for sexual organs.

g. God's holiness is a central theme of Isaiah's preaching; he frequently calls Yahweh 'the Holy One of Israel', 1:4; 5:19,24; 10:17,20; 41:14,16,20; etc. This divine sanctity requires people to be sanctified, i.e. separated from everything profane, Lv 17:1c, purified from sin, Is 6:5–7, sharing in the 'justice' of God, *see* Is 1:26n; 5:16f.

h. The sign of God's presence on Sinai, Ex 19:16g, in the Tent in the desert, Ex 40:34–35, and in the Temple in Jerusalem, 1 K 8:10–12; Ezk 10:4.

i. The prophet is the bearer of the word of God; he is his 'mouth', cf. Ex 4:16. Similarly, Yahweh touches Jeremiah's mouth, Jr 1:9, and Ezekiel eats the scroll containing the word of God, Ezk 3:1–3. All fire purifies, Jr 6:29, *see* Mt 3:11i; much more so the fire from the altar.

j. The readiness of Isaiah recalls the faith of Abraham, Gn 12:1–4, and is in contrast to the hesitation of Moses, Ex 4:10–12, and especially of Jeremiah, Jr 1:6.

k. The prophet's preaching will be met by incomprehension on the part of his audience. The imperatives used in vv. 9 and 10 should not mislead since they have the force of the indicative, cf. 29:9: God does not desire this incomprehension, he foresees it and incorporates it into his designs. It reveals sin lodged in the heart and precipitates judgement; compare the hardening of Pharaoh's heart, Ex 4:21; 7:3; etc. This passage in Isaiah is quoted several times in the NT, Mt 13:14–15par.; Jn 12:40; Ac 28:26–27, with special reference to the parables, Mt 13:13.

l. The prophet does not want to accept the condemnation as final. Without confounding his hope, God's reply stresses the gravity of the ordeals which will precede salvation.

m. A difficult v. The final phrase is missing in Gk, but should be retained: from the truncated stock, a new tree will grow, *see* 4:2–3c.

Isaiah intervenes

2 K 16:5–9 7 In the reign of Ahaz son of Jotham, son of Uzziah king of Judah, Razon [a] king 1
of Aram advanced on Jerusalem with Pekah son of Remaliah king of Israel, to
attack it; but he was unable to attack it. [b] ·The House of David was informed: 2
'Aram has halted in Ephraimite territory.' At this, his heart and his people's hearts
shook like forest trees shaking in the wind.

Yahweh then said to Isaiah, 'Go out with your son Shear-Jashub, [c] and meet 3
2 K 20:20k Ahaz at the end of the conduit of the upper pool, on the road to the Fuller's Field,
and say to him, "Pay attention and keep calm. Do not be frightened or demoral- 4
ised by these two smouldering sticks of firewood, by the fierce anger of Razon,
Aram and the son of Remaliah, ·or because Aram, Ephraim and the son of 5
Remaliah have been plotting against you and saying: ·Let us mount an attack on 6
Judah, destroy it, force it onto our side and install the son of Tabeel [d] there as king.

"Lord Yahweh says this: 7

This will not happen, it will never occur,
for the head of Aram is Damascus, 8
and the head of Damascus is Razon;
another sixty-five years,
and Ephraim will cease to be a people.
The head of Ephraim is Samaria, 9
and the head of Samaria is the son of Remaliah.
If you will not take your stand on me
28:16;30:15 2 Ch 20:20 you will not stand firm." ' [e]

Isaiah intervenes again

Yahweh spoke to Ahaz again and said: 10

Ask Yahweh your God for a sign, 11
either in the depths of Sheol or in the heights above.

Dt 6:16 But Ahaz said, 'I will not ask. I will not put Yahweh to the test.' 12
He then said: 13

Listen now, House of David:
are you not satisfied with trying human patience
that you should try my God's patience too?
The Lord will give you a sign in any case: [f] 14
Mi 5:2 ↗Mt 1:23 It is this: the young woman [g] is with child
and will give birth to a son
9:5b whom she will call Immanuel.
7:22 On curds and honey will he feed 15
until he knows how to refuse the bad
and choose the good.
Dt 1:39 1 K 3:9 Before the child knows how to refuse the bad and choose the good, 16
the lands whose two kings are frightening you [h] will be deserted.
Yahweh will bring times for you, 17
your people and your ancestral House,
such as have not been seen
since Ephraim broke away from Judah [i] (the king of Assyria).

Prediction of an invasion [j]

When that day comes, 18
Yahweh will whistle up mosquitoes
from the distant streams of Egypt
and bees from the land of Assyria,
and they will all come and settle 19

on the streams in the gullies, in the holes in the rocks,
on all the thorn-bushes and on all the water-points.
20 That day the Lord will shave,
with a razor hired from the other side of the River
(with the king of Assyria),
the head and the hair of the leg,
and take off the beard, too.
21 When that day comes, each man will raise
one heifer and two sheep,
22 and because of the abundant milk they give,
(on curds will he feed)
all who are left in the country
will feed on curds and honey.
23 When that day comes, wherever there used to be a thousand vines 5:10
worth a thousand pieces of silver,
all will be brambles and thorn-bushes;
24 to be ventured into only with arrows and bow,
for the country will be nothing but brambles and thorn-bushes.
25 No more will you venture
on any hillside formerly under the hoe
for fear of the brambles and thorn-bushes;
it will be fit only for pasturing the cattle, 5:17
a tramping-ground for sheep.

7 **a.** 'Razon' Gk and Assyrian inscriptions; 'Rezin' Hebr.

b. This was the Syro-Ephraimite War: the king of Aram and king of Israel hoped to force Judah into a coalition against Assyria. In spite of Isaiah's warnings, Ahaz appealed for help to Tiglath-Pileser III, who attacked Damascus and Samaria, at the same time reducing Judah to vassalage, Ahaz having put his own country at Assyria's mercy, *see* 2 K 16:5–16.

c. This prophetic name, *see* 1:26n, means 'A remnant will return', i.e. will be converted to Yahweh and thus escape punishment, *see* 4:3c; 10:20–23.

d. Probably an Aramaean of the Damascus court. The name means 'God is good' but MT revocalises it to mean 'good for nothing'.

e. Difficult text. Some textual critics propose the repositioning of v. 8^b after v. 9^a and the emending of '65 years' to '5 or 6 years'. Samaria in fact fell in 722 or 721 BC. As the text stands, it implies an unwritten contrast between Judah, the capital of which is Jerusalem and the true 'head' of which is Yahweh, and its less privileged enemies. Furthermore, the prophet foretells the disappearance of the Northern Kingdom but makes this contingent on an act of faith in God. For the prophets, faith is not so much a theoretical belief in the existence and uniqueness of God as an attitude of confidence based on God's choice of Israel: he has chosen Israel, he is Israel's God, Dt 7:6b, he alone has the power to save his people. This unconditional trust, a guarantee of salvation, 28:16, excludes all reliance not only on human beings but still more on false gods, 30:15; Ps 52:7; Jr 17:5.

f. The sign which King Ahaz refuses to ask for is given him by God nonetheless. It is the birth of a child whose name, Immanuel, meaning 'God with us', cf. 8:8,10, is prophetic, *see* 1:26n, and proclaims that God is about to protect and bless Judah. In other passages, 9:1–6; 11:1–9, Isaiah gives a more precise description of some of the aspects of the salvation brought by this child. These prophecies are an expression of the royal messianism already outlined by the prophet Nathan, 2 S 7, and later to be developed by Ezk 34:23; Mi 4:14–5:1; Hg 2:23; cf. Ps 2,45,72, 110. By means of a king and heir of David, God will give salvation to his people; the hopes of Yahweh's devotees lie in the permanence of the Davidic succession. Even if Isaiah had the birth of a son to Ahaz, for instance Hezekiah, immediately in mind (as seems likely, uncertainties about chronology notwithstanding, and as Gk seems to have understood it, reading 'whom *you* will call . . .'), we may sense from the solemnity of the prophetic saying and the emphatic meaning of the symbolic name given to the child that Isaiah saw more in this royal birth than immediate circumstances, namely a decisive intervention by God, towards the final establishment of the messianic kingdom. Thus the prophecy of Immanuel goes beyond its immediate realisation, and the evangelists, Mt 1:23 quoting Is 7:14, Mt 4:15–16 quoting Is 8:23–9:1, cf. Jn 1:5, followed by the whole Christian tradition, have understood it as a prophecy of the birth of Christ.

g. Gk reads 'the virgin', being more explicit than the Hebr. which uses '*almah*, meaning either a young girl or a young, recently married woman. This LXX reading is, however, an important witness to an early Jewish interpretation, later adopted by the evangelist: Mt 1:23 understands the text to be a prophecy of the virginal conception of Jesus.

h. Like the previous prophecy, 7:7–9, this one foretells reverses about to overtake the kingdoms of Samaria and Damascus as God's promised method of avenging the kingdom of Judah now under threat.

i. i.e. a period of prosperity and glory such as Israel experienced in the reigns of David and Solomon. The second episode of the prophecy of Immanuel ends on this vision of hope. • 'the king of Assyria' is a gloss based on a misinterpretation.

j. The following passage has nothing to do with the Syro-Ephraimite War, but concerns Egypt and Assyria. It is not a prophetic utterance of blessing but the prediction of a devastation of the country by Assyria. It would seem to date from some time later, during Isaiah's final years of activity, before Sennacherib's invasion. It was probably inserted here because of the mention of curds and honey, v. 22, echoing v. 15. But whereas in v. 15 this food was a sign of heavenly favour, cf. Ex 3:8,17; etc.; Dt 6:3; 11:9; etc., in v. 22 it is the only food to be found in a devastated country which has reverted to elementary pastoralism.

The birth of a son to Isaiah [a]

8 Yahweh said to me, 'Take a large tablet and on it with an ordinary stylus write, 1
2 K 16:10–16;18:2 "Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz". ·And take [b] reliable witnesses, the priest Uriah 2
and Zechariah son of Jeberechiah.'
I then had intercourse with the prophetess, who then conceived and gave birth 3
to a son. Yahweh said to me, 'Call him Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz, ·for before the 4
7:16 child knows how to say "mother" or "father", the wealth of Damascus and the
booty of Samaria will be carried away while the king of Assyria looks on.'

Shiloah and the Euphrates [c]

Jn 9:7 Yahweh spoke to me again and said, ·'Since this people has rejected the waters of 5, 6
7:1–2 Shiloah which flow smoothly, and has trembled before [d] Razon and the son of
Rv 12:15j Remaliah, ·now, against it, the Lord will bring the mighty, swelling waters of the 7
River (the king of Assyria and all his glory); the River will flood up all its channels
and overflow all its banks; ·it will flow into Judah, flooding everything and passing 8
on; it will reach right up to the neck, and the spreading of its wings will cover the
whole extent of your country, Immanuel! [e]

7:14 Realise [f] this, peoples, and be afraid, 9
listen, all members of far-off nations!
Arm yourselves yet be afraid!
Arm yourselves yet be afraid!
Devise plans as you may: they will come to nothing! 10
Make what pronouncements you like; it will not come about!
7:14 For God is with us!'

Isaiah's mission [g]

For this was how Yahweh spoke to me when his hand seized hold of me 11
and he taught me not to follow the path of this people, saying,
'Do not call conspiracy all that this people calls conspiracy; 12
↗1 P 3:14 do not dread what they dread, have no fear of that.
Yahweh Sabaoth is the one you will proclaim holy, 13
him you will dread, him you will fear.
↗Mt 4:13–16 ↗Rm 9:33 1 P 2:8 He will be a sanctuary, [h] a stumbling-stone, 14
a rock to trip up the two Houses of Israel;
a snare and a trap for the inhabitants of Jerusalem,
over which many of them will stumble, fall and be broken, 15
28:13 be ensnared and made captive.
Bind up the testimony, seal the instruction 16
in the heart of my disciples.'
My trust is in Yahweh who hides his face from the House of Jacob; 17
I put my hope in him.
1:26n;7:3;8:3–4 Look, I and the children whom Yahweh has given me 18
↗Heb 2:13 shall become signs and portents in Israel on behalf of
Yahweh Sabaoth who dwells on Mount Zion.
1 S 28:3b And should people say to you, 19
'Go and consult ghosts and wizards that whisper and mutter'—
a people should certainly consult its gods
and the dead on behalf of the living!
As regards instruction and testimony, 20
without doubt this is how they will talk,
and hence there will be no dawn for them. [i]

Wandering in darkness [j]

Oppressed and starving he will wander the country; 21
and, once starving, he will become frenzied

and curse his king and his God; turning his gaze upward,
22 then down to earth, there will be only anguish,
gloom, the confusion of night, swirling darkness.
23 For is not everything dark as night for a country in distress?

Deliverance

9:1 As the past humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, so the future will glorify the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan, the territory of the nations. [k] ↗Mt 4:13–16

31 **9** The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; Jn 8:12b
on the inhabitants of a country in shadow dark as death
light has blazed forth.
2 You have enlarged the nation, you have increased its joy; Ps 126
they rejoice before you as people rejoice at harvest time,
as they exult when they are dividing the spoils.

43 For the yoke that weighed on it, the bar across its shoulders, 10:25–26;14:25
the rod of its oppressor,
these you have broken as on the day of Midian. Jg 7:15–25

54 For all the footgear clanking over the ground [a]
and all the clothing rolled in blood,
will be burnt, will be food for the flames.

65 For a son has been born for us, 7:14f
a son has been given to us, Gn 3:15;49:10
and dominion has been laid on his shoulders; Nb 24:17
and this is the name he has been given, 2 S 7:12–16
'Wonder-Counsellor, Mighty-God, Mi 5:1–3
Eternal-Father, Prince-of-Peace', [b] Zc 9:9
76 to extend his dominion in boundless peace, Ep 2:14
over the throne of David and over his kingdom Mt 28:18
to make it secure and sustain it Lk 2:14
in fair judgement and integrity.

8 **a.** Despite the parallelism with 7:16, this short prophetic saying is quite different in scope from the one about Immanuel and has nothing to do with royal messianism. The prophetic name of Isaiah's second son is a sign and portent, *see* 1:26n; 7:3; 8:18; it means 'Speedy-spoil-quick-booty' and foretells the imminent sack of Damascus and Samaria by the Assyrians. Compare the symbolic names of Hosea's children, Ho 1:4,6,9.

b. 'take' Gk; 'let me take' Hebr.

c. The waters of Shiloah, v. 6, cf. 7:3, symbolise God's protection, to which the people prefers the help of Assyria ('the River', v. 7, i.e. the Euphrates), which will turn to its disadvantage, *see* 7:1b.

d. 'trembled (lit. melted) before' conj.; Hebr. 'exultation' (?) makes no sense, unless related to the verb of the same root 'to rejoice' and taken to refer to a pro-Syrian party active in Judah. The versions read 'have chosen (as king)', which is historically impossible.

e. The use of this prophetic name, cf. 7:14, here and, undisguised in v. 10, underlines the unity of this group of prophetic sayings; the punishments foretold are preparing the way for the fulfilment of the promises.

f. 'Realise this' Gk; 'Were you going' (?) Hebr.

g. Here, Isaiah seems to be explaining the reason for his attitude, for the benefit of his disciples, v. 16. Yahweh himself has taught him to oppose the people of Judah and put his trust in no one but God—a difficult attitude to adopt in circumstances so ambiguous, vv. 14–15, and destined to make true fidelity the more apparent.

h. Instead of 'sanctuary' *miqdash*, Targ. reads 'trap' *moqesh* as at end of v. The present text seems to be either a mistake or a scribal correction.

i. vv. 19–20, possibly misplaced, are very obscure. Isaiah is reporting the words of his opponents who claim that the people has the right to practise divination, *see* 2:6e. The answer, v. 19b, is probably ironic, and the prophet seems to conclude, v. 20, by saying that this kind of talk leads to a dead-end. But the text is uncertain and the meaning is in doubt.

j. Here again we seem to have a misplaced prophetic fragment. In principle, it seems to be about someone travelling through the ravaged country and giving vent to his distress. But it is not clear what connection this short poem has with its immediate context. It ought perhaps to be attached to 5:26–30, to which it would make an appropriate continuation.

k. This v., foretelling a glorious future in contrast to the humiliating past for the northern parts of Palestine, apparently alludes to Tiglath-Pileser III's campaign in Galilee and the deportation of 732 BC, *see* 2 K 15:29. In the following prophetic saying, Isaiah foretells a 'Day of Yahweh' which will bring deliverance to the deportees; at the same time, he foretells the peaceful reign of a child of royal race, the Immanuel of 7:14.

9 **a.** lit. 'footgear of clangour'. • The destruction of warlike equipment heralds an age of peace, symbolically described in 11:6–9, see earlier 2:4.

b. These titles are similar to those found in coronation rescripts of the Egyptian pharaohs. The royal child will possess the wisdom of Solomon, the valour and piety of David, the great virtues of Moses and the patriarchs, cf. 11:2. Christian tradition and the Christmas liturgy apply these titles to Christ, presenting him as the true Immanuel.

Lk 1:32–33 From this time onwards and for ever,
the jealous love of Yahweh Sabaoth will do this. [c]

The ordeals of the Northern Kingdom [d]

55:10–11 The Lord has launched a word at Jacob 7 8
and it has fallen on Israel;
and the people will all soon know it, 8 9
Ephraim and the inhabitants of Samaria,
who say in the pride of their arrogant hearts,
'The bricks have fallen down but we shall rebuild with dressed stone; 9 10
the sycamores have been felled but we shall replace them with cedars.'
But, against them, Yahweh has raised their foe Razon, [e] 10 11
he has whipped up their enemies,
Aram to the east, Philistines to the west, 11 12
Pr 30:14 to devour Israel with gaping jaws. [f]
Jr 10:25 After all this, his anger is not spent.
Mi 3:3 No, his hand is still raised!
Hab 1:13

5:25j But the people would not come back to him who struck them, 12 13
Jr 5:3–6 they would not seek out Yahweh Sabaoth;
Ho 7:10–15 hence Yahweh has topped and tailed Israel, 13 14
Am 4:6–11,6f cutting off palm and reed in a single day. [g]
(The 'top' is the elder and the man of rank; 14 15
the 'tail' is the prophet teaching lies.)
This people's leaders have led them astray, 15 16
and those who are led by them are swallowed up. [h]
Hence the Lord will no longer take delight in their young people, 16 17
or pity on their orphans and widows,
since all of them are godless and evil,
and everything they say is madness.
After all this, his anger is not spent.
No, his hand is still raised!

Yes, wickedness has been burning like a fire, 17
devouring bramble and thorn-bush, 18
setting the forest thickets ablaze—
up they go in billowing smoke!
The country has been set on fire [i] 18 19
by the fury of Yahweh Sabaoth,
and the people are like food for the flames.
No one spares a thought for his brother.
They have sliced to the right and are still hungry, 19 20
they have eaten to the left and are not satisfied;
each devours the flesh of his own arm.
Manasseh devours Ephraim, Ephraim Manasseh, 20
together they turn against Judah.
After all this, his anger is not spent. 21
No, his hand is still raised!

10 Woe to those who enact unjust decrees, 1
who compose oppressive legislation
to deny justice to the weak 2
1:17,23; 3:14; 5:23 and to cheat the humblest of my people of fair judgement,
Ex 22:20–21+ to make widows their prey
and to rob the orphan.
Jr 5:31 What will you do on the day of punishment, 3
when disaster comes from far away?

To whom will you run for help
and where will you leave your riches,
4 to avoid squatting among the captives
or falling among the slain?
After all this, his anger is not spent.
No, his hand is still raised!

Against the king of Assyria [a]

5 Woe to Assyria, rod of my anger, 14:24–27
the club in their hands is my fury!
6 I was sending him against a godless nation, 47:6
commissioning him against the people who enraged me, Zc 1:15
to pillage and plunder at will
and trample on them like the mud in the streets.
7 But this was not his intention
nor did his heart plan it so,
for he dreamed of putting an end to them,
of liquidating nations without number!
8 For he thought, 'Are not my officers all kings? 36:18–20
9 Is not Calno like Carchemish,
Hamath like Arpad,
Samaria like Damascus? [b]
10 As my hand has found the kingdoms of the false gods, [c]
where there were more images than in Jerusalem and Samaria,
11 as I have treated Samaria and her false gods
shall I not treat Jerusalem and her statues too?'

12 When the Lord has completed all his work on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, he will punish [d] the fruit of the king of Assyria's boastful heart and the insolence of his haughty looks.
13 For he thinks:

'By the strength of my own arm I have done this Dt 8:17+
and by my own wisdom: how intelligent I have been!
I have abolished the frontiers between peoples,
I have plundered their treasures,
like a hero, I have subjugated their inhabitants.
14 My hand has found, as though a bird's nest,
the riches of the peoples.

c. Yahweh's jealous love for his people prompts him both to punish their unfaithfulness, *see* Ex 20:5; Dt 4:24, and to procure their well-being.

d. This poem, with refrain, vv. 11[b],16.20[b]; 10:4[b], cf. 5:25, was uttered against the Northern Kingdom during a time of hostility between Israel and Judah, either in 739 BC, during the preparations for the war against Ahaz, 2 K 15:37, or in 734 BC, when the war was over and the Northern Kingdom was dominated by Assyria, 2 K 15:29.

e. 'their foe Razon' conj.; 'the foes of Razon' Hebr., making no sense.

f. The combined hostility of Philistines and Aramaeans may have been a fact, but is not attested elsewhere.

g. 'top and tail, palm and reed' seem to mean rulers and ruled, cf. 19:15; Dt 28:13,44. The following v. is probably an explanatory gloss.

h. Perhaps 5:25, probably misplaced, ought to be inserted here.

i. 'set on fire' Gk; Hebr. not clear.

10 a. This seems to refer to Sennacherib and the invasion of 701 BC. Compare vv. 8–11 with 36:18–20. Without knowing it, the king of Assyria is the instrument executing God's judgement on a rebellious people, *see* 5:26; 7:18; 8:7; 13:5. For Jeremiah, similarly, Nebuchadnezzar was to be a scourge in God's hand, Jr 50:23; 51:20, being in fact his servant, Jr 25:9; 27:6; 43:10. But the mission, of which the invader is unaware, does not relieve him of responsibility. His pride and cruelty will be punished on a day chosen by God, v. 12.

b. Isaiah cites the powerful cities which have been ravaged by the Assyrians in previous campaigns: Calno in northern Syria, captured by Tiglath-Pileser III in 738; Carchemish, on the Euphrates, taken by Sargon in 717; Hamath, on the Orontes, captured by Sargon in 720; Arpad near Aleppo, already besieged and captured by Tiglath-Pilesar before the Syro-Ephraimite War; Samaria, which fell in 721, and Damascus, in 732.

c. Isaiah makes the Assyrian king talk like a good Yahwist for whom foreign gods were 'nothings-whatever', *'elilim*, a term often used by Isaiah for idols.

d. 'he will' Gk; 'I shall' Hebr. • This whole prose v. has been interpolated.

Like someone collecting deserted eggs,
I have collected the whole world
while no one has fluttered a wing
or opened a beak to squawk.'

45:9 Rm 9:20–21
Does the axe claim more credit than the man who wields it, 15
or the saw more strength than the man who handles it?
As though a staff controlled those who raise it,
or the club could raise what is not made of wood!
That is why Yahweh Sabaoth is going to inflict 16
leanness on his stout men,
and beneath his glory kindle a fever burning like a fire.
The light of Israel will become a fire 17
37:36 and its Holy One a flame
burning and devouring
his thorn-bushes and brambles in a day.
He will consume his luxuriant forest and productive ground, 18
he will ravage body and soul:
it will be like a consumptive wasting away;
and what remain of the trees of his forest 19
will be so few that a child could write their number.[e]

The little remnant[f]

When that day comes, 20
the remnant of Israel and the survivors of the House of Jacob
will stop relying on the man who strikes them
and will truly rely on Yahweh,
the Holy One of Israel.
4:3c A remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, 21
to the mighty God.
↗Rm 9:27 Israel, though your people are like the sand of the sea, 22
only a remnant of them will return:
a destruction has been decreed
Rm 5:20–21 which will make justice overflow,
for, throughout the country, 23
the Lord Yahweh Sabaoth will enforce the destruction now decreed.

14:24–27; 30:27–33; 31:4–9; 37:22–29 **Trust in God**[g]

That is why the Lord Yahweh Sabaoth says this: 24

My people who live in Zion,
do not be afraid of Assyria!
He may strike you with the rod,
he may raise the club against you
(on the way from Egypt),[h]
but in a very short time 25
the retribution will come to an end,
and my anger will destroy them.
Yahweh Sabaoth will brandish a whip at him 26
9:3 Jg 7:25 Ex 14:16 as he struck Midian at Oreb's Rock,
will brandish his rod at the Sea
as he raised it on the way from Egypt.[i]
When that day comes, 27
his burden will fall from your shoulder,
and his yoke from your neck,
and the yoke will be destroyed . . .[j]

The invasion [k] Mi 1:10–15

28 He has reached Aiath,
he has moved on to Migron,
he has left his baggage train at Michmash. 1 S 14:5
29 They have passed through the defile,
they have bivouacked at Geba. 1 S 14:2,16
Ramah quaked, Gibeah of Saul has fled. 1 S 1:19; 15:34
30 Cry your loudest, Bath-Gallim!
Pay attention, Laish!
Answer her, Anathoth! [l] Jr 1:1
31 Madmenah has run away,
the inhabitants of Gebim have taken cover.
32 This very day, as he halts at Nob, 1 S 21:2
he will shake his fist at the mountain of the daughter of Zion,
the hill of Jerusalem.
33 See how the Lord Yahweh Sabaoth violently lops off the foliage!
The ones standing highest are cut down, the proudest are laid low!
34 The forest thickets fall beneath the axe,
and the Lebanon falls to the blows of a Mighty One.

The descendant of David [a] 42:1–12 Ps 72 Jr 23:5a Mt 3:16n ↗Rm 15:12 ↗1 P 4:14 ↗Rv 22:16

1 **11** A shoot will spring from the stock of Jesse, [b]
a new shoot will grow from his roots.
2 On him will rest the spirit of Yahweh, [c]
the spirit of wisdom and insight,
the spirit of counsel and power, 9:5
the spirit of knowledge and fear of Yahweh:
3 his inspiration will lie in fearing Yahweh. [d]
His judgement will not be by appearances.
his verdict not given on hearsay.
4 He will judge the weak with integrity ↗Rv 19:11
and give fair sentence for the humblest in the land.

e. Some think that vv. 16–19 are about Judah, rather than the king of Assyria.

f. This short prophetic saying seems to be a commentary on the name given by Isaiah to his eldest son Shear-Jashub, 'a remnant will return', *see* 7:3. The theology of the 'remnant', dear to Isaiah, *see* 4:3c, is resumed here under its two aspects of: prediction of an exemplary punishment leaving only a small remnant surviving, vv. 22–23; and promise, for this remnant, of a conversion (*yashub*, 'it will return'), accompanied by forgiveness and new blessings, vv. 20–21.

g. This prophetic saying seems to have been uttered shortly before Sennacherib's attack in 701 BC.

h. Gloss taken from v. 26.

i. The whole v. is additional, interrupting the development of the poem, *see* 4:5d.

j. The last words of the v. are not clear (lit. 'before the fat'). Some suggest attaching 'will be destroyed' to the previous phrase and then emending to read: 'he has advanced on Samaria', making this the beginning of the following passage.

k. vv. 28–32 describe the invader's advance. If the passage applies to Sennacherib, *see* v. 5, this was not the route taken by his army, *see* 2 K 18:17, but a conventional description of an invasion coming from the north, cf. Is 14:31. The towns have not all been identified; the last, Nob, was on Mount Scopus, overlooking Jerusalem.

l. 'Answer her' Syr.; 'Unlucky' Hebr.

11 a. A messianic poem describing in some detail the salient characteristics of the coming Messiah: of Davidic stock: v. 1, he will be filled with the spirit of the prophets, v. 2, will establish in society that 'integrity' which is the reflection of God's sanctity on earth, vv. 3seq., *see* 1:26n; 5:16f; he will restore the peace of Eden, vv. 6–8, which is the fruit of knowledge of God, v. 9.

b. Father of David, 1 S 16:1seq., *see* Rt 4:22, ancestor of all the kings of Judah and the Messiah, cf. Mt 1:6–16.

c. The 'Spirit of Yahweh' or 'holy Spirit of Yahweh', 42:1; 61:1seq.; 63:10–13; Ps 51:12; Ws 1:5; 9:17, his 'breath' ('breath' and 'spirit' translate the same word, *ruah*), is found active throughout biblical history. Before creation it rests on the abyss, Gn 1:2, and to it all creatures owe life, Gn 2:7; Ps 33:6; 104:29–30, cf. Ezk 37:5–6,9–10. It inspires the Judges, Jg 3:10; 6:34; 11:29, and Saul, 1 S 11:6. It gives craftsmen their skill, Ex 31:3; 35:31, judges their discretion, Nb 11:17, Joseph his wisdom, Gn 41:38. But especially it inspires the prophets, 48:16; 61:1; Nb 11:17 (Moses), 25–26; 24:2; 1 S 10:6,10; 19:20; 2 S 23:2 (David); 2 K 2:9 (Elijah); 2 Ch 15:1; 20:14; 24:20; Mi 3:8; Zc 7:12, whereas false prophets follow their own spirit, Ezk 13:3, *see also* Dn 4:5,15; 5:11–12,14. This text teaches that this spirit of the prophets will be bestowed on the Messiah; Jl 3:1–2 later foretells that in the messianic era it will be poured out on all people, *see* Ac 2:16–17. Like the doctrine of wisdom, *see* Pr 8:22e; Ws 7:22i, the doctrine of the Spirit is to achieve its perfect expression in the New Testament, *see* Jn 1:33x; 14:16i, 26r; Ac 1:8j; 2:4,24u; Rm 5:5d.

d. The prophetic spirit confers on the Messiah the outstanding virtues of his great ancestors: the wisdom and insight of Solomon, the heroism and prudence of David, the knowledge and fear of God characteristic of patriarch and prophet, of Moses, Jacob and Abraham. Cf. 9:5. The list of these qualities, as given in LXX and Vulg. (these add 'piety', a repetition of the 'fear of Yahweh'), has become the Christian 'seven gifts of the Holy Spirit'.

↗Rv 19:15 ↗2 Th 2:8
He will strike the country with the rod of his mouth
and with the breath of his lips bring death to the wicked.

Uprightness will be the belt around his waist, 5
Ep 6:14 and constancy the belt about his hips.

65:25
The wolf will live with the lamb, [e] 6
the panther lie down with the kid,
calf, lion and fat-stock beast together,
with a little boy to lead them.
The cow and the bear will graze, 7
their young will lie down together.
The lion will eat hay like the ox.
Ps 91:13 The infant will play over the den of the adder; 8
the baby will put his hand into the viper's lair.
No hurt, no harm will be done 9
on all my holy mountain,
40:5 for the country will be full of knowledge of Yahweh
Jr 31:33–34 ↗Hab 2:14 as the waters cover the sea.

Return from the dispersion [f]

↗Rm 15:12 ↗Rv 22:16
That day, the root of Jesse, standing as a signal for the peoples, 10
will be sought out by the nations and its home will be glorious.
When that day comes, 11
the Lord will raise his hand a second time
to ransom the remnant of his people,
those still left, from Assyria, from Egypt,
from Pathros, Cush and Elam,
from Shinar, Hamath and the islands of the Sea. [g]
49:22 He will hoist a signal for the nations 12
and assemble the outcasts of Israel;
he will gather the scattered people of Judah
from the four corners of the earth.
Jr 3:18h Then Ephraim's jealousy will cease 13
and Judah's enemies be suppressed;
Ephraim will no longer be jealous of Judah
nor Judah any longer hostile to Ephraim, [h]
but together they will swoop on the Philistines' back, to the west, 14
and together pillage the people of the east.
Edom and Moab will be subject to their sway
Jr 49:2 and the Ammonites will obey them.
Then Yahweh will dry up [i] the gulf of the Sea of Egypt, 15
he will raise his hand against the River
with the heat of his breath.
He will divide it into seven streams
for them to cross dry-shod.
35:8;40:3; 43:19;49:11; 57:14;62:10 Ba 5:7 Ex 14:22 And there will be a highway for the remnant of his people 16
for those still left, from Assyria,
as there was for Israel
when he came out of Egypt. [j]

Psalm [a]

12 And, that day, you will say: 1

'I praise you, Yahweh, you have been angry with me
but your anger is now appeased and you have comforted me.
Look, he is the God of my salvation: 2

I shall have faith and not be afraid,
for Yahweh is my strength and my song, [b] ‖Ex 15:2
he has been my salvation.'

3 Joyfully you will draw water 55:1
from the springs of salvation Jn 4:1a
4 and, that day, you will say,
'Praise Yahweh, invoke his name. ‖Ps 105:1;
Proclaim his deeds to the people,
declare his name sublime.
5 Sing of Yahweh, for his works are majestic,
make them known throughout the world.
6 Cry and shout for joy, you who live in Zion,
For the Holy One of Israel is among you in his greatness.'

C: PROCLAMATIONS ABOUT FOREIGN NATIONS [a]

Against Babylon [b]

21:1–10;
47:1–15
Jr 50–51
Rv 17–18

1 **13** Proclamation about Babylon, seen by Isaiah son of Amoz.

2 On a bare hill hoist a signal,
shout for them,
beckon them to come
to the Nobles' Gate.
3 I have issued orders
to my sacred warriors, [c]
I have summoned my heroes to serve my anger,
my proud champions.
4 The noise of a great crowd in the mountains,
like an immense people,
the tumultuous sound of kingdoms,
of nations mustering:
it is Yahweh Sabaoth
marshalling the troops for battle.

e. Humanity's rebellion against God, Gn 3, had broken the harmony between humanity and nature, Gn 3:17–19, and between one human being and another Gn 4. The prophets foretell war and oppression as the punishment for the sins of Israel. The messianic era, however, with its forgiveness of sin, its reconciliation with God, its reign of justice, will establish the peace that results from these: it will pay to till the land, Ho 2:20,23–24; Am 9:13–14; weapons of war will all be set aside, Is 2:4; 9:4; Mi 4:3–4; 5:9–10; Zc 9:10; there will be lasting peace, Is 9:6; 32:17; 60:17–18; Jl 4:17; Zp 3:13; Zc 3:10. The new covenant is a covenant of peace, Ezk 34:25; 37:26. The messianic kingdom is a kingdom of peace, Ps 72:3,7; Zc 9:8–10. And this peace will extend to the animal kingdom, and even to the snake which was responsible for the first fault. Here the messianic age is symbolically described as a return to the peace of Eden.

f. This poem, dating from the end of exile in Babylon, has been inserted here on the strength of its mentioning the root of Jesse, v. 10, *see* v. 1.

g. List of countries to which the Jews had been dispersed at the period of the Exile: Pathros in Upper Egypt, Ethiopia (Cush), Persia (Elam), Babylonia (Shinar), Hamath in Syria; the 'islands of the sea' (i.e. coastal towns) are Greece and more distant settlements round the Mediterranean.

h. In the messianic context, the prophets often foretell the end of the schism between, and the reconciliation of, Israel and Judah, Jr 3:18; 23:5–6; 31:1; Ezk 37:15–27; Ho 2:2; Mi 2:12; Zc 9:10.

i. 'will dry up' versions; 'will vow to destruction' Hebr. The 'River' is the Euphrates, *see* v. 16.

j. The miracles predicted are a repetition of those of Moses and Joshua, the crossing of the Sea and the crossing of the Jordan. The return of the exiles is described as a new Exodus, *see* 40:3d.

12 a. This psalm, of uncertain date and origin, has been inserted here as conclusion to the Book of Immanuel. It is the thanksgiving hymn of someone in distress whom God has helped and rescued. The second part, more lyrical in tone, extols Yahweh's glory.

b. Thus Gk, 1QIs[a], cf. Ex 15:2; 'and the song and Yah (is) Yahweh' MT.

13 a. Ch. 13–23 consist of proclamations about foreign nations, grouped together as in Jr 46–51 and Ezk 25–32. The collection contains pieces later than Isaiah, in particular the proclamations about Babylon in ch. 13–14.

b. This poem dates from the end of the Exile: Babylon, still in its splendour, v. 19, is about to fall to the onslaught of the Medes, v. 17, *see* v. 5. It is in the form of a 'lamentation' or *qina*, *see* 1:21*l*.

c. lit. 'my sanctified ones'; cf. Jr 51:27–28 (against Babylon); Jr 6:4; 22:7; Jl 4:9 (against Jerusalem). Consecration of the warriors is one of the aspects of holy war, Jos 3:5. But these new wars of Yahweh are no longer waged on behalf of Israel, and may even be waged against it.

They come from a distant country, from the far horizons, 5
Yahweh and the instruments of his fury
to lay the whole country waste.
Ezk 30:2–3 ↗Jl 1–15 Howl! For the Day of Yahweh is near, 6
Am 5:18m coming like devastation from Shaddai.
This is why all hands fall limp. 7
why all the men are losing heart;
they are panic-stricken, 8
21:3;26:17 Jr 4:31+ seized with pains and convulsions;
they writhe like a woman in labour,
they look at one another appalled,
with feverish faces.
Mt 24:29o Look, the Day of Yahweh is coming, 9
merciless, with wrath and burning anger,
to reduce the country to a desert
and root out the sinners from it.
For in the sky the stars and Orion 10
Am 8:9g will shed their light no longer,
the sun will be dark when it rises,
and the moon will no longer give its light.
I am going to punish the world for its wickedness 11
and the wicked for their guilt,
and put an end to the pride of the arrogant
and humble the haughtiness of despots.
I shall make people scarcer than pure gold, 12
human life scarcer than the gold of Ophir.
Hg 2:6 This is why I am going to shake the heavens, 13
why the earth will reel on its foundations,
under the wrath of Yahweh Sabaoth,
the day when his anger ignites.
Then like a hunted gazelle, like sheep that nobody gathers in, 14
everyone will head back to his people,
everyone will flee to his native land.
Jr 51:20–23 All those who are found will be stabbed, 15
all those captured will fall by the sword,
Ho 10:14l their babies dashed to pieces before their eyes, 16
their houses plundered, their wives raped.
Look, against them I am stirring up the Medes [d] 17
who care nothing for silver,
who set no value by gold.
Bows will annihilate the young men, 18
they will have no pity for the fruit of the womb,
or mercy in their eyes for children.
And Babylon, that pearl of kingdoms, 19
that splendid jewel of the Chaldaeans,
will, like Sodom and Gomorrah,
be overthrown by God.
34:10–17 Never again will anyone live there or reside there 20
for all generations to come.
Never again will the Arab pitch his tent there,
or the shepherds bring their flocks to nest.
But beasts of the desert will make their haunt there 21
and owls fill their houses,
there ostriches will settle their home,
Lv 17:7c there goats will dance.
Hyenas will howl in its towers, [e] 22

jackals in its delightful palaces,
for its doom is about to come
and its days will not last long.

The end of the Exile [a]

14 Yahweh will have pity on Jacob, he will choose Israel once more and resettle
them on their native soil. Foreigners will join them, attaching themselves to
the House of Jacob. •Peoples will take them and escort them home, and the House 61:5
of Israel will take them as slaves, men and women on Yahweh's soil. They will Ep 2:12–15m,n
enslave those who enslaved them and will master their oppressors. Zp 2:9
Zc 2:13

The death of the king of Babylon [b]

When that day comes, and Yahweh gives you rest from your suffering and torment
and the grim servitude to which you have been subjected, •you will recite this satire
on the king of Babylon and say:

'How did the tyrant end?
How did his arrogance end? [c] Jr 50:23–24
Rv 18:9–19
Yahweh has broken the staff of the wicked,
the sceptre of rulers,
furiously lashing peoples
with continual blows,
angrily hammering nations,
pursuing without respite.
The whole world is at rest and calm,
shouts of joy resounding, Jr 51:48
Rv 18:20;
the cypresses, the cedars of Lebanon, 19:1–2
rejoice aloud at your fate,
"Now that you have been laid low,
no one comes up to fell us." [d]

'On your account, Sheol below Nb 16:33f
is astir to greet your arrival. Ezk 32:18–32
He has roused the ghosts to greet you,
all the rulers of the world.
He has made all the kings of the nations
get up from their thrones.
They will all greet you with the words,
"So, you too are now as weak as we are!
You, too, have become like us.
Your pride has been flung down to Sheol
with the music of your lyres;
under you a mattress of maggots,
over you a blanket of worms.
How did you come to fall from the heavens, Lk 10:18
Jn 12:31
Daystar, son of Dawn? [e] Rv 8:10;9:1;
12:9

d. Indo-European warrior-tribes, first allied with Babylon against Assyria, but later, having been united with the Persians under Cyrus, causing the ruin of Babylon in 539 BC.

e. 'towers' Vulg.; 'widows' Hebr.

14 a. This prediction of the return of the exiles and the conversion of the nations is out of place in this collection of proclamations about foreign peoples. It is similar in thought to 49:22; 66:20, *see* 45:14h.

b. This satire (*mashal*) on a fallen tyrant is directed against a king of Babylon, presumably either Nebuchadnezzar or Nabonidus, and therefore belongs with the prophecies of the Exile. It is possible, however, that the original poem may have been composed earlier with a king of Assyria, Sargon II or Sennacherib, in mind and then adapted to fit the exilic period.

c. 'arrogance' versions and 1QIs[a]; MT corrupt.

d. The kings of Assyria and Babylon exploited the forests of the Lebanon for their buildings.

e. vv. 12–15 seem to be based on a Phoenician model. At all events, they display several points of contact with the Ras-Shamra poems: Daystar and Dawn were two divinities; the 'mount of Assembly' was where the gods used to meet, like Mount Olympus in Greek mythology. The Fathers identified the fall of the Morning Star (Vulg. 'Lucifer') with that of the prince of the demons.

How did you come to be thrown to the ground,
conqueror of nations?
You who used to think to yourself: 13
Lk 10:15 I shall scale the heavens;
higher than the stars of God
I shall set my throne.
Ps 48:2+ I shall sit on the Mount of Assembly
far away to the north.
Gn 3:5 I shall climb high above the clouds, 14
Ezk 28:2
Dn 11:3–6 I shall rival the Most High."
2 Th 2:4
Ezk 31:16–18; Now you have been flung down to Sheol, 15
32:18–32
Dn 10:13b into the depths of the abyss!

'When they see you, they will scrutinise you 16
and consider what you have become,
"Is this the man who made the world tremble,
who overthrew kingdoms?
He made the world a desert, 17
he levelled cities
and never freed his prisoners to go home."
All other kings of nations, all of them, 18
lie honourably, each in his own tomb;
but you have been thrown away, unburied, 19
like a loathsome branch,[f]
covered with heaps of the slain pierced by the sword
who fall on the rocks of the abyss
Jr 22:19 like trampled carrion.

'You will not rejoin them in the grave, 20
for you have brought your country to ruin
and destroyed your people.
The offspring of the wicked
leave no name behind them.
Prepare the slaughter for his sons 21
for the guilt of their father!
Never again must they rise to conquer the world
and cover the face of the earth with their cities.

'I will rise against them, declares Yahweh Sabaoth, and deprive Babylon of 22
4:3c name, remnant, offspring and posterity, declares Yahweh. ·I shall turn it into the 23
haunt of hedgehogs, a swamp. I shall sweep it with the broom of destruction,
declares Yahweh Sabaoth.'[g]

10:24+ **Against Assyria**[h]

Yahweh Sabaoth has sworn it, 24
'Yes, what I have planned will take place,
what I have decided will be so:

'I shall break Assyria in my country, 25
I shall trample on him on my mountains.
9:3 Then his yoke will slip off them,
his burden will slip from their shoulders.'

This is the decision taken in defiance of the whole world; 26
this, the hand outstretched in defiance of all nations.

Once Yahweh Sabaoth has decided, who will stop him? 27
Once he stretches out his hand, who can withdraw it?

Against the Philistines

28 In the year Ahaz died [i] came this proclamation:

29 All Philistia, do not rejoice
because the rod which used to beat you is now broken,
for the serpent stock will produce a viper,
its offspring will be a flying dragon.

30 While the first-born of the poor are grazing
and the destitute are resting in safety,
I shall make your stock die of hunger
and then slaughter [j] what remains of you.

31 Howl, gate! Shriek, city!
Totter, all Philistia!
For a smoke is coming from the north, [k] 20:1 Jr 1:13seq.
and there are no deserters in those battalions.

32 What reply will be given then
to the messengers of that nation? [l]—
That Yahweh founded Zion
and there the poor of his people will find refuge.

On Moab [a]

1 **15** Proclamation about Moab: ‖Jr 48 Ezk 25:8–11 Am 2:1–3

Laid waste in a night, [b]
Ar-Moab lies silent;
Laid waste in a night,
Kir-Moab lies silent.

2 The daughter of Dibon has climbed [c]
to the high places to weep;
on Nebo and in Medeba
Moab laments.

Every head shaven, ‖Jr 48:37–38
every beard cut off,
3 they wear sackcloth in their streets;
on their roofs and in their squares,
everyone is lamenting
and collapsing in tears.

f. 'branch', in Hebr. *netzer*, alluding to the name Nebuchadnezzar. • To be deprived of burial was the worst of curses, *see* 1 K 13:21–22; Jr 22:19.

g. These two vv. in prose seem to have been added to give emphasis to the end of the poem.

h. Prophecy of Isaiah probably delivered in 701, at the time of Sennacherib's invasion, cf. 10:24–27; 30:27–33; 31:4–9; 37:22–29.

i. This prophecy possibly dates from the years preceding Sennacherib's invasion. The 'rod which used to beat' Philistia would in that case have been Sargon II who invaded Philistia on several occasions, the last being in 711 BC, *see* 20:1seq. Sargon died in 705, but his successor Sennacherib, 'viper' or 'flying dragon', was to prove an even more redoubtable enemy. If this interpretation is correct, the reference to the death of Ahaz in the title must be an addition. Alternatively, perhaps the 'viper' and the 'flying dragon' were identified as Hezekiah son of Ahaz who, according to 2 K 18:8, devastated Philistia.

j. '(I shall) kill' Vulg. and 1QIs^{a}; 'he will kill' Hebr.

k. The Assyrian and Babylonian invasions came from the north, *see* Jr 1:3; 4:6; 6:1,27; Ezk 26:7.

l. Perhaps messengers sent by the Philistines to draw Judah into an anti-Assyrian coalition; but the text is uncertain. Be that as it may, the answer affirms the impregnability of Zion under Yahweh's protection.

15 a. Isaian authorship of the long poem on Moab in ch. 15–16 is disputed. Some consider the prophecies to pre-date Isaiah, who adapted them to his own times, *see* the prose conclusion, 16:13–14. Others date the poems, or part of them, to a period later than Isaiah. There are numerous parallels in them with the prophecy on Moab in Jr 48.

b. Devastation has overtaken the whole of Moab, the principal towns of which are mentioned in vv. 1–4, going roughly from south to north, from Kir (Kerak) to Heshbon and Elealeh, north of Nebo and Medeba. Vv. 5–9 describe the flight of the inhabitants southwards: Zoar (*see* Gn 19:22) and the Ravine of the Willows, the southern frontier of Moab.

c. 'The daughter of Dibon has climbed' conj.; following Targ. and Syr.; 'He climbs to the temple of Dibon' Hebr.

Heshbon and Elealeh are crying out in distress, 4
Nb 21:23 ‖Jr 48:34 their voices can be heard as far as Jahaz.
That is why the warriors of Moab are shivering,
his soul trembles at the sound.
‖Jr 48:36 Gn 19:22 His heart cries out in distress for Moab, 5
whose fugitives are already at Zoar,
nearly at Eglath-Shelishiyah. [d]

They climb the slope of Luhith,
weeping as they go;
on the road to Horonaim
they utter heart-rending cries.

The Waters of Nimrim 6
have become a waste land,
the grass dried up, the plants withered away,
nothing green any more.

That is why they are carrying 7
what they could save of their stores
across the Ravine of the Willows.

For the cry for help re-echoes 8
round the territory of Moab;
their wailing, right to Eglaim,
to Beer-Elim, their wailing;

Dimon's [e] waters are swollen with blood, 9
and I have worse in store for Dimon:
a lion for those of Moab who survive,
for those left on its soil.

The Moabites' petition

16 Send the lamb to the ruler of the land, 1
from Sela by the desert,
to the mountain of the daughter of Zion, [a]
for soon, like a fluttered bird, 2
like nestlings cast out,
will be the women of Moab at the fords of the Arnon.

Hold a council, make a decision. [b] 3
At noon spread your shadow
as if it were night.
Hide those who have been driven out,
do not betray the fugitive,
let those who have been driven out of Moab 4
come and live with you;
be their refuge in the face of the devastator.
Once the oppression is past, [c]
and the devastation has stopped
and those now trampling on the country have gone away,
the throne will be made secure in faithful love, 5
and on it will sit in constancy within the tent of David
a judge seeking fair judgement and pursuing uprightness.

We have heard about Moab's pride, 6
about how very proud it is,
about its arrogance, its pride, its rage,
its bravado, which will come to nothing! [d]

Moab's lament ||Jr 48:29–33

7 And so Moab is wailing for Moab,
wailing, every one of them.
For the raisin cakes of Kir-Hareseth [e]
you mourn, stricken with grief.
8 For Heshbon's vineyards are withering,
the vine of Sibmah
whose red grapes used to overcome
the overlords of the nations.
It used to reach to Jazer,
had wound its way into the desert,
its shoots grew so numerous
they spread across the sea.
9 And so I weep, as Jazer weeps,
for the vine of Sibmah.
I water you with my tears,
Heshbon and Elealeh.
For over your harvest and vintage
the cheering has died away;[f]
10 joy and gladness
have vanished from the orchards.
No more revelry in the vineyards,
no more happy shouting;
no more the treader treads wine in the presses,
the cheering has ceased.
11 That is why my whole being
quivers like harp strings for Moab,
my very heart, for Kir-Heres.
12 Moab will be seen,
wearing itself out on the high places
and going to its temple to pray,
but it will accomplish nothing.

13, 14 Such was the word which Yahweh spoke about Moab in the past. •And now Yahweh has spoken in these terms, 'Within three years, as a hired worker reckons them, the glory of Moab will be humbled, despite its teeming population. It will be reduced to nothing, an insignificant remnant.' [g] 4:3c

Against Damascus and Israel Jr 49:23–27 Am 1:3–5

1 **17** Proclamation about Damascus: [a]

d. 'his heart' Gk, Targ.; 'my heart' Hebr. • 'its fugitives' 1QIs[a]; 'its bolts' Hebr.

e. 'Dimon' is perhaps a dialect variant of 'Dibon', *see* v. 2, chosen as evoking the idea of blood, Hebr. *dam*.

16 a. Difficult text, variously translated. Apparently the Moabites, threatened by the invasion, are trying to put themselves under the protection of the king of Judah or take refuge in his territory. The lamb sent would presumably be a token of submission, cf. 2 K 3:4. • Sela (the Rock) has sometimes been identified with modern Petra situated in Edom, but there must have been other 'Rocks' in Moab or the adjacent desert.

b. Vv. 3–4[a] contain the Moabite fugitives' petition to be granted asylum in Judah. To support their request, they express their confidence, vv. 4[b]–5, in the future of Judah, especially in the stability of the Davidic throne, founded on the premises frequently proclaimed by Isaiah.

c. It is tempting to translate: 'until the oppression . . .' and to link this phrase to the preceding one, but no textual witness supports this.

d. V. 6 seems to give Judah's answer to the Moabites.

e. Kir-Hareseth, as also Kir-Heresh in v. 11, is the same place as Kir-Moab (Kerak), 15:1, *see* 2 K 3:25. The subsequent place-names, from Heshbon to Elealeh, are grouped in the northern part of Moab, suitable for viticulture.

f. lit. 'the shout has fallen', i.e. the joyful shout of the grape-harvesters. Others translate: 'the (war) cry has rung out (over)', but parallelism with the following vv. favours the former interpretation.

g. This prose addition may be the confirmation of an earlier prophecy now very shortly to be fulfilled, *see* 15:1a. The hired worker's year was very strictly computed.

17 a. Despite the title, Damascus is the subject only of the first strophe and even then in parallel with Israel, which forms the subject of the following strophes. The prophecy perhaps dates from about 735 BC, when Damascus and Israel were allied against Judah, *see* 7:1b. Damascus was taken by Tiglath-Pilesar in 732, and Samaria by Sargon in 721.

Damascus will soon cease to be a city,
it will become a heap of ruins.
Its [b] towns, abandoned for ever, 2
will be pastures for flocks;
there they will rest with no one to disturb them.
Ephraim will be stripped of its defences 3
and Damascus of its sovereignty;
4:3c and the remnant of Aram will be treated
like the glory of the Israelites—
declares Yahweh Sabaoth.

When that day comes, Jacob's glory will diminish, 4
from being fat he will grow lean;
as when a reaper [c] gathers in the standing corn 5
harvesting the ears of corn with his arm,
Jos 15:8;18:16 or when they glean the ears in the Valley of Rephaim,
nothing will remain but pickings, 6
as when an olive tree is beaten;
two or three berries left on the topmost bough,
four or five berries on the branches of the tree—
declares Yahweh, God of Israel.

That day, a man will look to his Creator and his eyes will turn to the Holy One of 7
Israel. ·He will no longer look to altars, his own handiwork, or to what his own 8
Ex 34:13e fingers have made: the sacred poles and incense-altars. [d]

That day, its cities of refuge will be abandoned 9
as were the woods and heaths
at the Israelites' advance: [e]
there will be desolation.
Since you have forgotten the God of your salvation, 10
48:8 and failed to keep the Rock, your refuge, in mind,
Dt 32:4 you plant pleasure-gardens, [f]
you sow exotic seeds;
the day you plant them, you get them to sprout, 11
and, next morning, your seedlings are in flower;
but the harvest will vanish on the day of disease
and incurable pain.

Disaster! The thunder of vast hordes, [g] 12
a thunder like the thunder of the seas,
the roar of nations roaring like the roar of mighty floods,
of nations roaring like the roar of ocean! 13
He rebukes them and far away they flee,
driven like chaff on the mountains before the wind,
like an eddy of dust before the storm.
At evening all is terror, 14
by morning all have disappeared.
Such will be the lot of those who plunder us,
such, the fate of our despoilers.

Against Cush [a]

18 Disaster! Land of the whirring locust 1
beyond the rivers of Cush,
who send ambassadors by sea, 2
in little reed-boats across the waters!
Go, swift messengers [b]

to a nation tall and bronzed,
to a people feared far and near,
a mighty and masterful nation
whose country is criss-crossed with rivers.
3 All you who inhabit the world,
you who people the earth,
when the signal is hoisted on the mountains, you will see,
when the ram's-horn is sounded, you will hear. ‖Jl 2:1b
4 For this is what Yahweh has told me, [c]
'I shall sit here quietly looking down,
like the burning heat in the daytime,
like a dewy mist in the heat of harvest.'
5 For, before the harvest, once the flowering is over
and blossom turns into ripening grape,
the branches will be cut off with pruning knives, Jn 15:2
and the shoots taken off, cut away.
6 All has been abandoned
to the mountain birds of prey
and the wild animals:
the birds of prey will summer on them,
and all the wild animals winter on them.

7 Then, an offering will be brought to Yahweh Sabaoth on behalf of a people tall and bronzed, on behalf of a people feared far and near, on behalf of a mighty and masterful nation whose country is criss-crossed with rivers: to the place where the name of Yahweh Sabaoth resides, Mount Zion. [d] 56:4–7 Zp 3:10 Ac 8:27seq.

Against Egypt

Jr 46 Ezk 29–32

1 **19** Proclamation about Egypt: [a]

Look! Yahweh, riding a swift cloud, Ps 68:4+
is coming to Egypt.
The false gods of Egypt totter before him
and Egypt's heart quails within her.
2 I shall stir up Egypt against Egypt,
they will fight one another,
brother against brother, friend against friend,
city against city, kingdom against kingdom.
3 Egypt's spirit will fail within her
and I shall confound her deliberations.
They will consult false gods and wizards,
ghosts and sorcerers.

b. Following Gk. Instead of 'Its towns, abandoned for ever', Hebr. reads: 'The towns of Aroer (will be) abandoned'; but only two Aroers are known: one in Moab on the Arnon and the other in the territory of Gad and hence a great distance from Damascus.

c. 'reaper' conj.; 'harvest' Hebr.

d. Vv. 7–8, predicting conversion, are a later addition to this prophecy of woe.

e. Instead of woods and heaths, Gk has Amorites and Hivites, overcome by the Israelites at the conquest of Canaan. This may indeed have been the original text, but in any case the imminent invasion is contrasted with the glorious conquest of the country under Joshua.

f. Allusion to 'Adonis-gardens', ephemeral creations grown in honour of the god of vegetation, Adonis-Tammuz, *see* Ezk 8:14.

g. vv. 12–14 apparently refer to Sennacherib's invasion and the deliverance of Jerusalem in 701 BC, *see* 29:5–7; 37:36.

18 a. Cush, the ancient name of Ethiopia, here indicates Egypt which in the days of Isaiah was governed by an Ethiopian dynasty.

b. Pharaoh's envoys whom the prophet invites to go home and stop intriguing for an anti-Assyrian alliance.

c. The prophet predicts that Egypt is to be ravaged by invasion. Egypt was in fact invaded, pillaged and subjugated by Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal in the first half of the seventh century.

d. Prose conclusion predicting the conversion of Ethiopia which, laid low by these events, will send its offerings to the Temple in Jerusalem.

19 a. Isaiah was opposed to any alliance with Egypt, *see* 30:1seq.; 31:1seq. He describes Egypt here as torn with dissension, liable to lead to despotism or foreign domination, v. 4. Nothing was to be gained from that quarter.

And I shall hand Egypt over 4
to the clutches of a cruel master,
a ruthless king will rule them—
declares Yahweh Sabaoth.

The waters will ebb from the sea,[b] 5
the river will dry up and run low.
the streams will become foul, 6
the rivers of Egypt sink and dry up.
Rush and reed will turn black,
the Nile-plants on the banks of the Nile; 7
all the vegetation of the Nile
will wither, blow away and be no more.
The fishermen will groan, it will be mourning 8
for all who cast hook in the Nile;
those who spread nets on the waters will lose heart.
The workers of carded flax 9
and the weavers of white cloth
will be confounded,
the weavers dismayed, 10
all the workmen dejected.
Yes, the princes of Zoan[c] are fools, 11
Pharaoh's wisest councillors make up a stupid council.
How dare you say to Pharaoh,
'I am descended from sages, I am descended from bygone kings'?
Where are these sages of yours? 12
Let them tell you, so that all may know,
the plans Yahweh Sabaoth has made against Egypt!
The princes of Zoan are fools, 13
the princes of Noph,[d] self-deceivers,
the top men of her provinces
have led Egypt astray.
29:10 Yahweh has infused them 14
1 S 16:14e
1 K 22:19–23 with a giddy spirit;
they have led Egypt astray in all she undertakes
like a drunkard straying about as he vomits.
Nowadays no one does for Egypt 15
9:13 what top and tail, palm and reed used to do.

The conversion of Egypt[e]

Jr 51:30 That day Egypt will be like women, trembling and terrified at the threatening hand 16
Na 3:13 of Yahweh Sabaoth, when he raises it against her. ·The land of Judah will become 17
Egypt's shame; whenever she is reminded of it, she will be terrified, because of the
plan which Yahweh Sabaoth has laid against her. ·That day in Egypt there will be 18
five towns speaking the language of Canaan and pledging themselves to Yahweh
Sabaoth; one of them will be called City of the Sun. ·That day there will be an altar 19
dedicated to Yahweh in the centre of Egypt and, close to the frontier, a pillar
dedicated to Yahweh, ·and this will be a sign and a witness to Yahweh Sabaoth in 20
Egypt. When they cry to Yahweh for help because of oppressors, he will send them
a Saviour and leader to deliver them. ·Yahweh will reveal himself to Egypt, and 21
the Egyptians will acknowledge Yahweh that day and will offer sacrifices and
cereal offerings, and will make vows to Yahweh and perform them. ·And if 22
Yahweh strikes Egypt, having struck he will heal, and they will turn to Yahweh
who will hear their prayers and heal them. ·That day there will be a highway from 23
Egypt to Assyria. Assyria will have access to Egypt and Egypt have access to
Assyria. Egypt will serve with Assyria.

24 That day Israel will make a third with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing at the centre
25 of the world, ·and Yahweh Sabaoth will bless them in the words, 'Blessed be my people Egypt, Assyria my creation, and Israel my heritage.'

Relating to the capture of Ashdod [a]

1 **20** The year the general-in-chief, sent by Sargon king of Assyria, came to 2 K 18:17
2 Ashdod and stormed and captured it; ·at that time Yahweh spoke through Isaiah son of Amoz and said, 'Go, undo the sackcloth round your waist and take the sandals off your feet.' And he did so, and walked about, naked and barefoot. [b]
3 Yahweh then said, 'As my servant Isaiah has been walking about naked and
4 barefoot for the last three years as a sign and portent for Egypt and Cush, ·so the king of Assyria will lead the captives of Egypt and the exiles of Cush, young and
5 old, naked and barefoot, their buttocks bared, to the shame of Egypt. ·Then they 2 S 10:4
6 will be afraid and ashamed of Cush their hope and Egypt their pride, ·and the 30:3–7
inhabitants of this coast [c] will say on that day, "Look what has happened to our hope, to those to whom we fled for help, to escape from the king of Assyria. How are we going to escape?" '

The fall of Babylon [a]

13–14;47:1–15
Jr 50–51
Rv 17–18

1 **21** Proclamation about the coastal desert: [b]

As whirlwinds sweeping over the Negeb,
he comes from the desert, from a fearsome country.
2 A harsh vision has been shown me, ↗Rv 17:3
'The traitor betrays and the despoiler despoils.
Advance, Elam, lay siege, Media!' [c]
I have cut short all groaning.
3 This is why my loins are racked with pain,
why I am seized with pangs like the pangs of a woman in labour;
I am too distressed to hear, too afraid to look.
4 My heart is bewildered, dread overwhelms me,
the twilight I longed for has become my horror.
5 They lay the table, spread the cloth, Dn 5
they eat, they drink. [d]
Up, princes, grease the shield!

6 For this is what the Lord has told me,
'Go, post a look-out, let him report what he sees. Hab 2:1a
7 He will see cavalry, horsemen two by two,
men mounted on donkeys, men mounted on camels; [e]

b. vv. 5–10 foretell a new plague for Egypt: the drying up of the Nile, on which the country's wealth depends.

c. Tanis, a city in the Delta.

d. Memphis, near Cairo, capital of Lower Egypt.

e. This prose passage is late and pre-supposes a Jewish settlement in Egypt, vv. 18–19, *see* Jr 44:1. It foretells the conversion of Egypt and its reconciliation with Assyria and Israel; the three peoples will be blessed by Yahweh, and Egypt and Assyria will enjoy the same privileges as Israel. Such wide universalism is not to be found again before Second Isaiah.

20 **a.** Ashdod, a Philistine town, was captured by Sargon II in 711 BC. The town having risen in revolt at the instigation of Egypt, this seems to have inspired Isaiah to predict an Assyrian victory over Egypt. This passage is a tradition about Isaiah, as are ch. 36–39, but is not to be found in 2 K.

b. The only prophecy portrayed in action attributed to Isaiah. Jeremiah and Ezekiel, however, often used this means of preaching, *see* pp. 1158, 1175. • On sackcloth as mourning costume, *see* 3:24f.

c. The Philistines and Israelites, who were always tempted to rely on Egypt and form coalitions with it against Assyria.

21 **a.** This prophecy, like those of ch. 13–14, foretells the destruction of Babylon, v. 9, by the Persians and Medes under Cyrus in 539 BC, *see* v. 2. It may possibly be a reworking of an earlier poem directed against Assyria, in which case it would refer to the fall of Nineveh in 612 under the combined onslaught of the Medes and Babylonians; the poem could not then be by Isaiah even in its original form.

b. The expression is possibly a translation of Assyrian *mat tamti*, 'maritime country', designating southern Babylonia.

c. Elam, situated to the east of Mesopotamia, was the homeland of the Medes and Persians, who overthrew the Babylonian Empire in the sixth century.

d. According to a tradition found in Dn 5 and in Herodotus, on the night when Babylon fell to the Persians an orgy was taking place there.

e. Not the invading army but the hurrying messengers, and later the caravans, coming to announce the news, *see* v. 9.

let him watch alertly, be very alert indeed!'
Then the look-out[f] shouted, 8
'On the watchtower, Lord,
I stay all day
and at my post
I stand all night.
Now the cavalry is coming, horsemen two by two.' 9
He shouted again and said,
↗Rv 14:8;18:2 'Babylon has fallen, has fallen,
and all the images of her gods he has shattered to the ground!'
Am 1:3h You whom I have threshed, grain of my threshing-floor,[g] 10
what I have heard from Yahweh Sabaoth, God of Israel,
I am telling you now.

On Edom[h]

Proclamation about Dumah: 11

From Seir, someone shouts to me,
'Watchman, what time of night?
Watchman, what time of night?'

The watchman answers, 12
'Morning is coming, then night again.
If you want to ask, ask!
Come back! Come here!'

Against the Arabs

Proclamation about the wastelands:[i] 13

In the thickets, on the wastelands, you spend the night,
Gn 10:7;25:3 Jr 49:8 you caravans of Dedanites.
Bring water for the thirsty! 14
The inhabitants of Tema went
with bread to greet the fugitive.
For these have fled before the sword, 15
the naked sword and the bent bow,
the press of battle.

For this is what the Lord has told me, 16
16:14 'In one year's time as a hired worker reckons it, all the glory of Kedar will be
Jr 49:28seq. finished ·and, of the valiant archers, the Kedarites, hardly any will be left, for 17
Yahweh, God of Israel, has spoken.'

Against rejoicing in Jerusalem[a]

22 Prophecy on the Valley of Vision:[b] 1

Now what is the matter with you
for you all to be up on the housetops,
full of excitement, boisterous town, joyful city? 2
Your slain have not fallen to the sword
nor died in battle.
Your leaders have all fled together, 3
captured without a bow between them,
all who could be found have been captured at a blow,
far though they had fled.
That is why I said, 'Turn your eyes away from me, 4
let me weep bitterly;
Jr 31:15 do not try to comfort me

over the ruin of the daughter of my people.'

For this is a day of rout, panic and confusion,
the work of the Lord Yahweh Sabaoth
in the Valley of Vision.
The wall is sapped,
cries for help ring out to the mountains.
6 Elam has picked up his quiver,
with manned chariots and horsemen, and Kir has bared his shield. [c]
7 Your fairest valleys are full of chariots
and the horsemen take up positions at the gates;
8 thus falls the defence of Judah.

That day you turned your gaze
to the weapons in the House of the Forest. 1 K 7:2–5
9 You saw how many breaches there were in the City of David. 2 S 5:9f
You collected the waters of the lower pool. 2 K 20:20k
10 You surveyed the houses in Jerusalem
and pulled houses down to strengthen the wall.
11 Between the two walls you made a reservoir
for the waters of the old pool. [d]
But you did not look to the Creator of these things,
you did not look to the One who fashioned them long ago.

12 That day the Lord Yahweh Sabaoth called on you
to weep and mourn,
to shave your heads, to put on sackcloth.
13 But instead there is joy and merriment,
killing of oxen, slaughtering of sheep,
eating of meat, drinking of wine,
'Let us eat and drink, 5:11+ Ws 2:6–9
for tomorrow we shall be dead.' ↗1 Co 15:32
14 Then Yahweh Sabaoth revealed this to my ears,
'This guilt will never be forgiven you, until you are dead,'
says the Lord Yahweh Sabaoth.

Against Shebna [e] 36:3,11,22 2 K 18:18,26,37

15 The Lord Yahweh Sabaoth says this:

f. 'the look-out', lit. 'the one who looks' *haro'eh* 1QIs[a]; MT *'aryeh* 'the lion'.

g. lit. 'my crushed one, son of my threshing-floor', meaning the Israelites exiled to Babylon whose deliverance is near.

h. It is doubtful if this short proclamation about Seir = Edom is by Isaiah. • To the question asked, no clear answer is given: the end may be a call to conversion. The mention of Dumah is puzzling: it was an oasis in northern Arabia, outside Edom; the name also appears among the sons of Ishmael, Gn 25:14. It means 'fortress' but may also be vocalised to mean 'silence' and therefore be an allusion to the prophecy's obscurity, compare the titles of prophecies in vv. 1 and 13.

i. The title 'on the wastelands' given to this prophecy is merely taken from its first v. It is concerned with Arab tribes who have been the victims of an invasion evidently coming from the north. The inhabitants of Tema (modern Teima), Gn 25:15; Jr 25:23, are exhorted to welcome the fugitives from Dedan (the oasis now known as el-Ela), Gn 10:17; Jr 49:8; Ezk 25:13; 27:20. Kedar is a less specific name for the same regions, Gn 25:13; Jr 49:28; Ezk 27:21. In 715 BC, Sargon was to advance into north-western Arabia after his campaign in Transjordan; Judah may well have felt threatened.

22 a. This prophecy dates from the deliverance of Jerusalem in 701 BC, which put an end to Sennacherib's hitherto victorious campaign, 36:1seq.; 37:8seq.; 2 K 18:13h; 19:9e. Isaiah, having already foretold this deliverance, now protests against the exaggerated joy to which it has given rise, and insists that punishment is still imminent.

b. The title is taken from v. 5, cf. 21:11. No valley of this name is known in the environs of Jerusalem. Some emend to 'valley of Hinnom' (Gehenna), but the versions lend no support to this.

c. The Elamites and Aramaeans (? Kir, cf. Am 1:5; 9:7) are possibly mentioned here as allied to, or mercenaries of, Sennacherib.

d. Works undertaken by Hezekiah in anticipation of Sennacherib's attack or between his two campaigns. • On the 'House of the Forest', *see* 1 K 7:2b; on repairs to the city walls, *see* 2 K 20:20; on the reservoir, *see* 2 K 20:20; Si 48:17.

e. Isaiah's only prophecy about a private individual. Shebna was a jack-in-office, possibly a foreigner, who had climbed to the highest dignity of state, that of master of Hezekiah's palace. Isaiah alone mentions his deprivation and his replacement by Eliakim, but 2 K gives the result of this measure: where Eliakim is master of the palace and Shebna has been demoted to secretary, 2 K 18:26,37; 19:2 = Is 36:3,11,22; 37:2. What may have been his tomb has been discovered at Siloam, in one of the cemeteries of Jerusalem.

Go and find that steward,
Shebna, the master of the palace:
'What do you own here, who gave you the right 16
for you to hew yourself a tomb here?'
He is hewing himself a tomb,
is digging a resting-place for himself in the rock.
But Yahweh will throw you away, strong as you are, 17
will grasp you in his grip,
will screw you up into a ball, 18
a ball thrown into a vast space.
There you will die, with your splendid chariots,
disgrace to your master's palace!
I shall hound you from your office, 19
I shall snatch you[f] from your post
and, when that day comes, 20
I shall summon my servant
36:3,11,22 2 K 18:18,26,37 Eliakim son of Hilkiah.
I shall dress him in your tunic, 21
I shall put your sash round his waist,
I shall invest him with your authority;
and he will be a father
to the inhabitants of Jerusalem
and to the House of Judah.
Mt 16:19 ↗Rv 3:7 I shall place the key of David's palace on his shoulder; 22
when he opens, no one will close,
when he closes, no one will open.[g]
I shall drive him like a nail into a firm place; 23
and he will become a throne of glory for his family.

'On him will depend all the glory of his family, the descendants and offspring, all 24
the vessels of small capacity too, from cups to pitchers. •That day declares Yahweh 25
Sabaoth, the nail driven into a firm place will give way, will be torn out and fall.
And the whole load hanging on it will be lost. For Yahweh has spoken.'[h]

Ezk 26–28 Am 1:9–10 Zc 9:2–4

Against Tyre

23 Proclamation about Tyre:[a] 1

2:16h Howl, ships of Tarshish, for all has been destroyed—
no more houses, no way of getting in:
the news has reached them from Kittim.[b]
Be struck dumb, inhabitants of the coast, 2
you merchants of Sidon,
whose messengers[c] cross the sea
to the wide ocean. 3
The grain of the Canal, the harvest of the Nile,
formed her revenue.
She was the market for the nations.
Blush, Sidon (citadel of the seas),[d] 4
for this is what the sea has said,
'I have felt no birth-pangs, never given birth,
never reared boys nor brought up girls.'

When the news reaches Egypt, 5
they will tremble to hear Tyre's fate.
1 K 10:22 Ps 48:7c Cross to Tarshish, howl, inhabitants of the coast. 6

Is this your proud city 7

founded far back in the past,
whose steps led her far afield
to found her colonies?
8 Who took this decision
against Tyre, who used to hand out crowns,
whose traders were princes, ↗Rv 18:23
whose merchants, men honoured in the city?
9 Yahweh Sabaoth took this decision
to wither the pride of all beauty
and humiliate those honoured in the city.
10 Cultivate your country like the Delta, daughter of Tarshish,[e]
for your marine docks are no more.
11 He has raised his hand against the sea,
he has shaken kingdoms,
Yahweh has ordained the destruction
of the fortresses of Canaan.

12 He has said, 'Exult no more,
ill-treated virgin daughter of Sidon!
Get up, cross to Kittim,
no respite for you there, either.'
13 Look at the land of the Chaldaeans,
a people who used not to exist!
Assyria assigned it to the creatures of the wilds;
they raised their siege-towers against it,
demolished its bastions,
reduced it to ruin.[f]
14 Howl, ships of Tarshish, for your fortress has been destroyed.

15 When that day comes, Tyre will be forgotten for seventy years, the length of one king's life. But when the seventy years are over, Tyre will become like the whore in Jr 25:11–12 the song:

16 'Take your harp, walk the town,
whore whom men have forgotten!
Play sweetly, song after song,
to make them remember you.'

17 At the end of the seventy years Yahweh will visit Tyre. She will receive her pay again and play the whore with all the kingdoms of the world on the surface of the
18 earth. •But her profits and wages will be dedicated to Yahweh. They will not be stored or hoarded, but her profits will go to those who live in Yahweh's presence, for them to have as much food as they want and splendid clothes.[g]

f. 'I shall snatch' versions; 'he will snatch' Hebr.

g. Opening and closing the doors of 'the king's palace' was one of the functions of the Egyptian chief minister, to whom the master of the palace corresponded in Judah.

h. This prose supplement refers to the disgrace of Eliakim himself; his whole family, which had profited by his rise to power, was dragged down with him.

23 **a.** A difficult prophecy announcing the unexpected and spectacular ruin of the impregnable city of Tyre and describing the effects produced by this event. Built on an island close to the coast, Tyre was attacked or besieged by world-conquerors, Shalmaneser, Sennacherib, Nebuchadnezzar (siege lasting 11 years!), *see* Ezk 26–28. It was destroyed by Alexander in 332 BC. It is hard to say what precise event the prophet has in mind here. The mention of Sidon, vv. 2,4,12, does not necessarily mean that two prophecies have been combined; the name Sidon can also mean Phoenicia in general, *see* 1 K 16:31c.

b. The island of Cyprus, where there were Phoenician colonies. • On Tarshish, *see* 1 K 10:22f.

c. 'whose messengers' *mal'akayk* 1QIs[a]; MT *mil'uk* 'used to fill you'.

d. Gloss on Sidon but accidentally misplaced in Hebr. after 'the sea'.

e. 'till' Gk, 1QIs[a]; 'cross' MT. • 'daughter of Tarshish' is difficult to explain: 'daughter of Tyre' would seem more apposite, in parallel with 'daughter of Sidon', v. 12.

f. The whole v. seems to be corrupt; trans. uncertain.

g. The prose vv. (excluding the song quoted in v. 16) are a late addition, comparable to those of 18:7 and 19:16–25. Tyre will recover its prosperity; the fruits of its trade, of its 'whorings', formerly offered to false gods, will henceforth be consecrated to Yahweh.

D: APOCALYPSE [a]

Yahweh's judgement

24 See how Yahweh lays the earth waste, 1
makes it a desert, buckles its surface,
scatters its inhabitants,
priest and people alike, master and slave, 2
mistress and maid, seller and buyer,
lender and borrower, creditor and debtor.
Ravaged, ravaged the earth will be, 3
despoiled, despoiled,
for Yahweh has uttered this word.
Ho 4:3a The earth is mourning, pining away, 4
the pick of earth's people [b] are withering away.
The earth is defiled 5
by the feet of its inhabitants,
for they have transgressed the laws,
Gn 9:16 violated the decree, broken the everlasting covenant. [c]
That is why the curse has consumed the earth 6
and its inhabitants pay the penalty,
that is why the inhabitants of the earth have been burnt up
and few people are left.

Song about the ruined city [d]

The new wine is mourning, the vine is withering away, 7
the once merry-hearted are sighing.
The cheerful sound of tambourines is silent, 8
Jr 7:34;16:9; 25:10 Ezk 26:13 Rv 18:22 the sound of revelling is over,
the cheerful sound of the harp is silent.
No more will they sing over their wine, 9
liquor will taste bitter to the drinker.
The city of nothingness is in ruins, 10
every house is shut, no one can enter.
People shout in the streets to try to get wine; 11
all joy has vanished,
happiness has been banished from the country.
Nothing but rubble in the city, 12
the gate has collapsed in ruins.
For at the heart of earth's life, among the peoples, 13
17:6 it is as at the beating of the olive trees,
as at the gleaning of the grapes
when the grape harvest is over.
They raise their voices, shouting for joy, 14
in Yahweh's honour they shout from the west.
'Yes, in the east, give glory to Yahweh, 15
in the islands of the sea, to the name of Yahweh, God of Israel!'
We have heard psalms from the remotest parts of earth, 16
'Glory to the Upright One!'

The last battle [e]

But I thought, 'What an ordeal,
what an ordeal! What misery for me!'
The traitors have betrayed,
the traitors have acted most treacherously.

17 Fear, the pit and the snare for you, ‖Jr 48:43–44
inhabitants of the city!
18 And whoever flees from the cry of fear
will fall into the pit,
and whoever climbs out of the pit
will be caught in the snare.
Yes, the sluice-gates above are open, 2:10+ Gn 7:11
the foundations of the earth are quaking. Am 8:9h
19 A cracking, the earth cracks open,
a jolting, the earth gives a jolt,
a lurching, the earth lurches backwards and forwards.
20 The earth will reel to and fro like a drunkard,
it will be shaken like a shanty;
so heavy will be its sin on it,
it will fall, never to rise again.
21 When that day comes, Yahweh will punish
the armies of the sky above
and on earth the kings of the earth;
22 they will be herded together,
herded together like prisoners in a dungeon
and shut up in gaol,
and, after long years, punished.
23 The moon will be confused and the sun ashamed,
for Yahweh Sabaoth is king Ps 47:1a
on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem,
and the Glory will radiate on their elders. Ex 24:9–11,16f ↗Rv 4:4,10–11

A hymn of thanksgiving [a]

1 25 Yahweh, you are my God, Ps 31:14
I shall praise you to the heights, I shall praise your name;
for you have accomplished marvels,
plans long-conceived, faithfully, firmly.
2 For you have made the town a heap of stones,
the fortified city a ruin.
The foreigners' citadel is a city no longer,
it will never be rebuilt.
3 Hence mighty peoples will honour you,
the city of pitiless nations hold you in awe;
4 For you have been a refuge for the weak,
a refuge for the needy in distress,
a shelter from the storm, 4:5–6 Rv 7:15–16
shade from the heat;

24 **a.** Ch. 24–27 see beyond the immediate events to God's final judgement; of this they give a poetic description interspersed with supplicatory and thanksgiving psalms. Though not all the distinctive qualities are present, these ch. anticipate apocalyptic literature as found in Dn, Zc 9–14, and the apocryphal *Book of Enoch*. This is certainly one of the latest parts of Is, and cannot be dated earlier than the fifth century.

b. lit. 'the elevation of earth's people' Hebr.; 'the earth's great men' Gk.

c. Not, it seems, the covenant with Abraham or the Mosaic covenant, but God's covenant with the entire human race analogous to the covenant with Noah according to the Priestly tradition in Gn 9:9–17. Once this covenant is violated, judgement overtakes the entire world, v. 6.

d. The destruction of 'the city of nothingness', v. 10, constitutes the occasion for this apocalypse, *see* 25:2; 26:5; 27:10–11. It is evidently a pagan city hostile to Jerusalem, 26:1–6, and its destruction comes to symbolise divine judgement. It has been identified with Babylon, destroyed by Xerxes I in 485 BC, or with Tyre, destroyed by Alexander in 332 BC, or even with Samaria, destroyed by John Hyrcanus in 110 BC. Nonetheless, the explicit mention of Moab in 25:10, the quotation at 24:17–18 of Jr 48:43–44 about Moab, as well as the allusion to the vineyards, 24:7–9, recalling the vineyards of Moab in 16:7–10, give grounds for thinking that it may refer to the ruin of a Moabite city, possibly the capital, at some indeterminate time.

e. Resumption of the description of Judgement, interrupted by the song about the ruined city.

25 **a.** This hymn refers to the events previously related: the destruction of the city, v. 2; 24:10; the conversion of distant peoples, v. 3; 24:15; and victory over the proud, vv. 2.4; 24:21–22.

for the breath of the pitiless
is like a winter [b] storm.
Like heat in a dry land 5
you calm the foreigners' tumult;
as heat under the shadow of a cloud,
so the song of the pitiless dies away.

Mt 8:11 **The divine banquet** [c]

On this mountain, for all peoples, 6
Yahweh Sabaoth is preparing
Jn 6:51,54 a banquet of rich food, a banquet of fine wines,
of succulent food, of well-strained wines.
On this mountain, he has destroyed 7
the veil which used to veil all peoples,
the pall enveloping all nations;
35:10 he has destroyed death for ever. 8
Ho 13:14
1 Co 15:26
↗Rv 7:17;
↗21:4;35:10 Lord Yahweh has wiped away the tears from every cheek;
he has taken his people's shame away everywhere on earth,
for Yahweh has spoken.

And on that day, it will be said, 9
'Look, this is our God,
in him we put our hope that he should save us,
this is Yahweh, we put our hope in him.
Let us exult and rejoice since he has saved us.'
For Yahweh's hand will rest on this mountain, 10
and Moab [d] will be trodden under his feet
as straw is trodden into the dung-heap.
He may stretch his hands wide on the mountain 11
like a swimmer stretching out his hands to swim.
But he will humble his pride
despite what his hands may attempt.
And the impregnable fortress of your walls, 12
he has overthrown, laid low,
flung to the ground, in the dust.

A hymn of thanksgiving

26 That day, this song will be sung in Judah: 1
60:18 'We have a fortress city, [a]
the walls and ramparts provide safety.
Ps 118:19–20 Open the gates! Let the upright nation come in, 2
the nation that keeps faith!
This is the plan decreed: you will guarantee peace, 3
the peace entrusted to you.
Trust in Yahweh for ever, 4
Dt 32:4 for Yahweh is a rock for ever.
Ps 62:7 He has brought low the dwellers on the heights, 5
the lofty citadel;
he lays it low, brings it to the ground,
flings it down in the dust.
It will be trodden under foot, 6
by the feet of the needy, the steps of the weak.'

A psalm [b]

The path of the Upright One is honesty; 7
you smooth the honest way of the upright.

8 Following the path of your judgements,
Yahweh, we set our hopes in you,
your name, your memory are all our soul desires.
9 At night my soul longs for you Ps 42:1
and my spirit within me seeks you out;
for when your judgements appear on earth
the inhabitants of the world learn what saving justice is.
10 If pity is shown to the wicked
without his learning what saving justice is,
he will act wrongly in the land of right conduct
and not see the majesty of Yahweh.
11 Yahweh, your hand is raised but they do not see!
The antagonists of your people will look and grow pale;
with your fiery wrath you will devour your enemies.

12 Yahweh, you will grant us peace,
having completed all our undertakings for us.
13 Yahweh our God, other lords than you have ruled us
but, loyal to you alone, we invoke your name.
14 The dead will not come back to life,
the shadows will not rise again,
for you have punished them, annihilated them,
wiping out their very memory.
15 You have made the nation larger, Yahweh,
made the nation larger and won yourself glory,
you have rolled back the frontiers of the country.

16 Yahweh, in distress they had recourse to you,
they expended themselves in prayer, [c]
since your punishment was on them.
17 As a pregnant woman near her time of delivery 13:8+;37:3 Ho 13:13
writhes and cries out in her pangs,
so have we been, Yahweh, in your eyes:
18 we have been pregnant, we have writhed,
but we have given birth only to wind:
we have not given salvation to the earth,
no inhabitants for the world have been brought to birth.
19 Your dead will come back to life, your corpses will rise again. Ezk 37:1–14,11e
Wake up and sing, you dwellers in the dust, Ho 13:14 Mt 11:5 Ep 5:14
for your dew will be a radiant dew,
but the earth will give birth to the shades.

The Lord's judgement [d]

20 Go, my people, go to your private room, ↗Mt 6:6
shut yourselves in.
Hide yourselves a little while Jb 14:13–15
until the retribution has passed.

b. 'winter' *qor* conj.; Hebr. *qir* 'wall'.

c. Using and amplifying universalist concepts already found in earlier prophets, 2:2–3; 56:6–8; 60:11–14; Zc 8:20; 14:16; etc., the author describes the flooding in of foreign nations to Jerusalem as an immense banquet. On the strength of this text, the idea of a messianic banquet became current in Judaism and appears in the NT: Mt 22:2–10; Lk 14:14,16–24.

d. *See* 24:7d. Even so, the mention of Moab is surprising, since this is the only proper name in the poem, where the name 'Moab' has been omitted in the quotation from Jr 24:17–18; hence the suggested emendation to 'enemy' *'oyeb*, but this has no textual support.

26 a. Jerusalem, fortified by Yahweh and serving as refuge for the upright, is contrasted with the 'lofty citadel', v. 5, the ruined city of ch. 24–25, *see* 24:7d.

b. Yahweh's judgement, being just, vv. 7–10, assures the deliverance and glory of his people, vv. 11–15; the present ordeals prepare for the rebirth, vv. 16–19. The pangs of child-bearing became a conventional image for the tribulations inevitably preceding the coming of the Messiah, *see* Mt 24:8; Mk 13:8; Jn 16:20–22.

c. Meaning uncertain.

d. Yahweh's people are invited to take shelter while he executes his sentence on the wicked.

Mi 1:3
↗Rv 3:10;6:10
For see, Yahweh emerges from his dwelling 21
to punish the inhabitants of earth for their guilt;
and the earth will reveal the blood shed on it
and no longer hide its slain.

27 That day Yahweh will punish, 1
with his unyielding sword, massive and strong,
Leviathan the fleeing serpent,
Jb 3:8e; 40:25seq.
Leviathan the coiling serpent;
he will kill the dragon that lives in the sea. [a]

5:1–7,1b **Yahweh's vineyard** [b]

That day 2
sing of the splendid [c] vineyard!
I, Yahweh, am its guardian, 3
from time to time I water it;
so that no harm befall it,
I guard it night and day.

—I do not have a wall. 4
Who can reduce me to brambles and thorn-bushes? [d]
—I shall make war and trample on it
and at the same time burn it.

Or should they beg for my protection, 5
let them make their peace with me,
peace let them make with me.

Pardon and punishment [e]

In days to come, Jacob will take root, 6
Israel will bud and blossom
and the surface of the world be one vast harvest.
Has he struck him as he was struck by those who struck him? 7
Has he murdered him as he was murdered by those who murdered him?
By expelling, by excluding him, you have executed a sentence, 8
he has blown him away with a breath as rough as the east wind.
For that is how Jacob's guilt will be forgiven, 9
such will be the result of renouncing his sin,
when all the altar-stones have been smashed to pieces
like lumps of chalk,
17:8
Ex 34:13e
when the sacred poles and incense-altars stand no longer.
For the fortified city is abandoned now, 10
deserted, forsaken as a desert
where calves browse, where they lie down,
destroying its branches.
When boughs go dry, they get burnt, 11
women come and use them for firewood.
Now, this is a people that does not understand,
and so its Maker will not take pity on it,
he who formed it will not show it any mercy.

The Israelites return [f]

Jl 2:1b
When that day comes, 12
Yahweh will start his threshing
from the course of the River to the Torrent of Egypt,
and you will be gathered one by one, Israelites!
When that day comes, 13

the great ram's-horn [g] will be sounded,
and those lost in Assyria will come,
and those banished to Egypt,
and they will worship Yahweh
on the holy mountain, in Jerusalem.

Mt 24:31
1 Co 15:52
1 Th 4:16

E: POEMS ON ISRAEL AND JUDAH

Against Samaria [a]

1 28 Woe to the haughty crown of Ephraim's drunkards, 5:11–13+
to the fading flower of its proud splendour
sited at the head of the lush valley,
to those prostrated by wine!
2 See, a strong and mighty man in the Lord's service,
like a storm of hail, a destroying tempest,
like immense flood-waters overflowing,
with his hand he throws them to the ground.
3 They will be trampled underfoot,
the haughty crown of Ephraim's drunkards,
4 and the faded flower of its proud splendour
sited at the head of the lush valley.
Like a fig ripe before summer comes:
whoever spots it forthwith picks and swallows it.

5 That day [b] Yahweh Sabaoth
will be a crown of splendour
and a proud diadem
for the remnant of his people, 4:3c
6 a spirit of fair judgement 11:2–4.2c
for him who sits in judgement,
and the strength of those who repel the assault on the gate.

Against false prophets [c]

7 These too have been confused by wine, 5:11–13+
have gone astray owing to liquor.
Priest and prophet have become confused by liquor,
are sodden with wine, have strayed owing to liquor,
have become confused in their visions,
have strayed in their decisions.

27 a. On Leviathan, *see* Jb 3:8e. The text here is influenced by one of the Ras-Shamra poems (14th century BC) which reads: 'You will crush Leviathan the fleeing serpent, you will consume the twisting serpent, the mighty one with seven heads.'

b. As in 5:1–7, Israel is depicted as a vineyard, lovingly tended by God, if recourse is had to him.

c. 'splendid' *hemed* conj.; Hebr. *hemer* 'unfermented wine'.

d. 'wall' (*homah*) conj.; Hebr. *hemah* 'fury'. • 'who . . . thorn-bushes' conj. MT divides the lines differently and, translated literally, would give: 'who will give me brambles and thorn-bushes in (by?) war?'; the text is far from clear. Apparently this half-verse represents the words of the vineyard speaking in person.

e. Owing to the apparent disorder and corrupt state of the text, the sense of this passage is obscure. vv. 7–8,10–11 seem to be about Israel's oppressors, identified with the 'fortified city' of this apocalypse, v. 10. vv. 6 and 9, being a promise to Israel whose guilt has been atoned for, may have been the introduction to the prophecy in ch. 12–13.

f. This 'prophecy', placed here as a conclusion, predicts the return of all the scattered Israelites to Jerusalem.

g. The ram's-horn, having a number of uses, Jl 2:1b, here sounds the gathering for Judgement Day.

28 a. Prophecy delivered some time before the fall of Samaria (721). The city of Samaria, built on a hill, is compared to a crown of flowers, such as adorned the heads of guests at feasts in antiquity. Other prophets, Ho 7:5–7; Am 3:9,15, etc., refer to the wealth and corruption of Samaria.

b. With the faded crown of Samaria, vv. 5–6 contrast the glory which Yahweh himself will be for the rest of his people. The mention of the 'remnant' suggests that this passage is later, *see* 4:3c; the similarity of imagery may account for its having been placed next to the previous prophecy.

c. The prophecies of vv. 7–22 date from slightly before Sennacherib's campaign of 701, when Hezekiah was considering taking part in an anti-Assyrian coalition. The first prophecy is directed against people taking part in religious banquets in the Temple, who treated Isaiah's words as the unintelligible babbling of a child. They would not find the language of the Assyrian soldiers soon to be unleashed on them by Yahweh any easier to understand.

Yes, every table is covered in filthy vomit, 8
not one is clean!

'Whom does he think he is lecturing? 9
Whom does he think his message is for?
Babies just weaned?
Babies just taken from the breast?
With his 10
"Sav lasav, sav lasav,
kav lakav, kav lakav,
zeer sham, zeer sham!" '[d]

Jr 5:15
↗1 Co 14:21
Now, with stammering lips 11
and in a foreign language,
he will talk to this nation.
He used to say to them, 'Here you can rest! 12
Here you can let the weary rest!
Here all is quiet.'
But they refused to listen.
Now Yahweh is going to say this to them, 13
'Sav lasav, sav lasav,
kav lakav, kav lakav,
zeer sham, zeer sham.'
So that when they walk they will fall over backwards
and so be broken, trapped and taken captive.

Against evil counsellors

Hence listen to Yahweh's word, you insolent men, 14
rulers of this people in Jerusalem.
Because you have said, 'We have made a treaty with Death 15
↗Ws 1:16
Si 14:12
and have struck a pact with Sheol.
Jr 5:12
Am 9:10
When the scourging flood comes over,
it will not touch us,
for we have made lies our refuge
and hidden under falsehood.'[e]
So the Lord Yahweh says this,[f] 16
'Now I shall lay a stone in Zion,
Ps 118:22–23;
↗Mt 16:18,
↗21:42;
↗Rm 9:32–33
↗1 Co 3:11
Ep 2:20
1 P 2:6
•7:9e
•1:26n
a granite stone, a precious corner-stone,
a firm foundation-stone:
no one who relies on this will stumble.
And I will make fair judgement the measure, 17
and uprightness the plumb-line.'

28:15
But hail will sweep away the refuge of lies
and floods wash away the hiding-place;
your treaty with Death will be broken[g] 18
and your pact with Sheol will not hold.
When the scourging flood comes over,
you will be trodden down by it;
every time it comes over, it will seize on you, 19
for it will come over, morning after morning,
day by day and night by night.
Nothing but fear will make you understand what you hear.
For the bed is too short to stretch in, 20
the blanket too narrow for covering.[h]
2 S 5:17–25
Yes, as on Mount Perazim, Yahweh will rise, 21
as in the Valley of Gibeon, he will storm

to do his work, his mysterious work,
to do his deed, his extraordinary deed.
22 Stop scoffing, then,
or your bonds will be tightened further,
for I have heard it: it has been irrevocably decided
as regards the whole country
by the Lord Yahweh Sabaoth.

A parable [i]

23 Listen closely to my words,
be attentive, understand what I am saying.
24 Does the ploughman plough all day to sow,
breaking up and harrowing his ground?
25 Once he has levelled its surface,
does he not scatter fennel, sow cummin?
Then he puts in wheat, millet, barley (. . .) [j]
and, round the edges, spelt,
26 for his God has taught him this rule and instructed him.
27 Fennel must not be crushed with a sledge, [k]
nor cart-wheels driven over cummin;
fennel must be beaten with a stick,
and cummin with a flail.
28 When you are threshing wheat,
you do not waste time crushing it;
you get the horse and cart-wheel moving,
but you do not grind it fine.
29 All this is a gift from Yahweh Sabaoth,
marvellous advice leading to great achievements.

On Jerusalem [a] 36:1–2; 37:33–37

1 **29** Woe, Ariel, Ariel, 33:7
city where David encamped.
Let year after year pass,
let the feasts make their full round,
2 then I shall inflict trouble on Ariel,
and there will be sighing and sobbing,
and I shall make it truly Ariel.
3 I shall encamp all round you,
I shall lay siege to you
and mount siege-works against you. ↗Lk 19:43
4 You will be laid low, will speak from the underworld,
your words will rise like a murmur from the dust.

d. lit. 'order on order, order on order, rule on rule, rule on rule, a little here, a little there.' But there is no point in translating the words since they are chosen merely for their sound.

e. The alliance against Assyria recommended by the nation's rulers, would be an alliance with death and Hell.

f. vv. 16–17[a] form a brief prophecy interrupting the development of the poem. The divine architect of the New Jerusalem lays a foundation-stone of justice and uprightness, possibly inscribed with the name: 'No one who relies on this will stumble', compare the symbolic names, 'City of Saving Justice, Faithful City' in 1:26.

g. 'broken' *tuphar* Targ.; Hebr. *kuppar* 'covered'.

h. The prophet seems to be quoting a popular proverb.

i. The wisdom of the countryman, who plants his seeds and threshes each kind differently, is an emanation of Yahweh's wisdom in the way he treats his people.

j. After 'barley' Hebr. adds an unknown word, possibly the name of another cereal.

k. The sledge with sharp wheels or stones for threshing wheat.

29 a. This prophecy may be dated from the period preceding the siege of Jerusalem in 701 BC. The symbolic name Ariel, designating Jerusalem here and at 33:7 (emended), can be explained in several ways. Usually, it is considered to be related to the name *har'el* or *'ari'eyl* (upper part of the altar or altar hearth), given by Ezekiel (Ezk 43:15) to the upper part of the altar, the hearth, on which the sacrificial victims were burnt: this would express the sacred character of the city. This interpretation would seem to be confirmed by the reference to the regular Temple-cult in Jerusalem at the end of v. 1.

Your voice from the earth will be like a ghost's,
it will whisper as though coming from the dust.

The horde of your enemies will be like fine dust, 5
the horde of the warriors like flying chaff.
And suddenly, in an instant,
you will be visited by Yahweh Sabaoth 6
Ex 13:22h; 19:16+ with thunder, earthquake, mighty din,
hurricane, tempest, flame of devouring fire.
It will be like a dream, like a vision at night: 7
the horde of all the nations at war with Ariel,
all those fighting, besieging and troubling it.
It will be like the dream of a hungry man: 8
he eats, then wakes up with an empty belly;
or like the dream of a thirsty man:
he drinks, then wakes up exhausted with a parched throat.
So will it be with the horde of all the nations
making war on Mount Zion.

Be stupefied and stunned, [b] 9
go blind, unseeing,
drunk but not on wine,
staggering but not through liquor.
19:14 For Yahweh has infused you with a spirit of lethargy, 10
1 S 16:14e he has closed your eyes (the prophets),
↗Rm 11:8 he has veiled your heads (the seers). [c]

Rv 5:1–3 For to you every vision has become like the words of a sealed book. You give it 11
to someone able to read and say, 'Read that.' He replies, 'I cannot, because it is
sealed.' ·You then give the book to someone who cannot read, and say, 'Read 12
that.' He replies, 'I cannot read.' [d]

1 10–20,10g Am 5:21n **Prophecy** [e]

The Lord then said: 13

↗Mt 15:8–9 Because this people approaches me only in words,
honours me only with lip-service
while their hearts are far from me,
↗Col 2:22 and reverence for me, as far as they are concerned,
is nothing but human commandment, a lesson memorised,
very well, I shall have to go on 14
astounding this people with prodigies and wonders:
↗1 Co 1:19 for the wisdom of its wise men is doomed,
the understanding of any who understand will vanish.

The triumph of right [f]

Woe to those who burrow down 15
to conceal their plans from Yahweh,
who scheme in the dark
Jb 22:13 Ps 10:4 and say, 'Who can see us? Who knows who we are?'
How perverse you are! 16
45:9; 64:7 Jr 18:1–6; 19:1–13 Ws 12:12 Si 33:13 ↗Rm 9:20–21 Is the potter no better than the clay?
Something that was made, can it say of its maker,
'He did not make me'?
Or a pot say of the potter,
'He does not know his job'? [g]
Is it not true that in a very short time 17

the Lebanon will become productive ground,
so productive you might take it for a forest?
18 That day the deaf — Mt 11:5d
will hear the words of the book
and, delivered from shadow and darkness,
the eyes of the blind will see.
19 The lowly will find ever more joy in Yahweh — 1 S 2:5seq.+
and the poorest of people will delight in the Holy One of Israel; — 6:3g
20 for the tyrant will be no more, the scoffer has vanished
and all those on the look-out for evil have been destroyed:
21 those who incriminate others by their words,
those who lay traps for the arbitrator at the gate
and groundlessly deprive the upright of fair judgement.
22 That is why Yahweh, God of the House of Jacob,
Abraham's redeemer, says this, — 41:8;51:2
'No longer shall Jacob be disappointed,
no more shall his face grow pale,
23 for when he sees his children,[h]
my creatures, home again with him,
he will acknowledge my name as holy,
he will acknowledge the Holy One of Jacob to be holy
and will hold the God of Israel in awe.
24 Erring spirits will learn to understand
and murmurers accept instruction.'

Against the embassy to Egypt[a]

1 30 Woe to the rebellious children—declares Yahweh—
who make plans which do not come from me
and make alliances not inspired by me, — Jr 2:18
and so add sin to sin!
2 They are leaving for Egypt,
without consulting me,
to take refuge in Pharaoh's protection,
to shelter in Egypt's shadow.
3 Pharaoh's protection will be your shame, — 36:5–9
the shelter of Egypt's shadow your confounding.
4 For his princes have gone to Zoan
and his messengers have reached Hanes.[b]
5 Everyone has been disappointed
by a people who cannot help,
who bring neither aid nor profit,
only disappointment and confusion.

b. The translation seeks to render the alliteration of Hebr., which subordinates the precise meaning of the first verb, 'to linger', to this effect.

c. The words in parenthesis are glosses explaining the metaphors.

d. Vv. 11–12 are possibly additional, in an attempt to make vv. 9–10 clearer.

e. Prophecy difficult to date. The prophet attacks hypocritical religion, as in 1:10–20.

f. Yahweh's gaze penetrates the plans of the wicked, vv. 15–16. He will deliver the humble from their enemies and establish the rule of justice, vv. 17–21. Vv. 22–24 seem to be additional. It is not characteristic of Isaiah to talk of the 'House of Jacob' or to refer to the past, here Abraham.

g. The ancient story of creation, Gn 2:7, had already pictured Yahweh as a potter, shaping man from the earth. The prophets after Isaiah frequently use this figure to show that human beings are dependent and fragile in the hands of God; so also Paul.

h. 'his children' possibly a gloss on the words following.

30 a. Prophecy delivered when an embassy from Hezekiah was leaving to ask the Pharaoh for Egyptian help against the Assyrians (about 703–702).

b. Zoan was Tanis; Hanes was the Anusis of Herodotus and the Heracleopolis Magna of the Romans, two cities in the Delta.

Another prophecy against an embassy [c]

Proclamation about the beasts of the Negeb: 6

Nb 21:4–9
Dt 8:14–15
Into the land of distress and of anguish,
of lioness and roaring [d] lion,
14:29 of viper and flying dragon,
they bear their riches on donkeys' backs,
their treasures on camels' humps,
to a nation that cannot help:
Egypt, whose help is vain and futile; 7
and so I call her 'Rahab-the-collapsed'. [e]

Testament [f]

Now go, inscribe this on a tablet, 8
write it on a scroll,
so that it may serve for time to come
for ever and for ever.
1:2–4 This is a rebellious people, they are lying children, 9
children who will not listen to Yahweh's Law.
To the seers they say, 'See nothing!' 10
1 K 22:8–27
Jr 11:21
Am 2:12;7:13
To the prophets, 'Do not prophesy the truth to us;
tell us flattering things; have illusory visions;
turn aside from the way, leave the path, 11
rid us of the Holy One of Israel.'

So the Holy One of Israel says this, 12
Ps 62:10 'Since you have rejected this word
and put your trust in fraud and disloyalty
and rely on these,
for you this guilt will prove to be 13
a breach opening up,
a bulge at the top of a wall
which suddenly and all at once comes crashing down.
He will shatter it like an earthenware pot, 14
ruthlessly knocking it to pieces,
so that of the fragments not one shard can be found
with which to take up fire from the hearth
or scoop water from the storage-well.'

6:3g For Lord Yahweh, the Holy One of Israel, says this, 15
'Your salvation lay in conversion and tranquillity,
7:9e your strength in serenity and trust
and you would have none of it. [g]
Ho 1:7+ "No," you said, "we shall flee on horses." 16
And so flee you will!
And again, "We shall ride on swift ones."
And so your pursuers will be swift!
Dt 32:30 A thousand will quake [h] at the threat of one 17
and when five threaten you will flee,
until what is left of you will be
like a flagstaff on a mountain top,
like a signal on a hill.'

God will forgive [i]

But Yahweh is waiting to be gracious to you, 18
54:8 the Exalted One, to take pity on you,

for Yahweh is a God of fair judgement;
blessed are all who hope in him. Ps 2:12

19 Yes, people of Zion living in Jerusalem,
you will weep no more.
He will be gracious to you when your cry for help rings out;
as soon as he hears it, he will answer you.
20 When the Lord has given you the bread of suffering
and the water of distress,
he who is your teacher will hide no longer,
and you will see your teacher with your own eyes.
21 Your ears will hear these words behind you,
'This is the way, keep to it,'
whether you turn to right or left.
22 You will hold unclean the silverplating of your idols
and the goldplating of your images.
You will throw them away like the polluted things they are,
shouting after them, 'Good riddance!'
23 He will send rain for the seed you sow in the ground,
and the bread that the ground provides will be rich and nourishing.
That day, your cattle will graze in wide pastures.
24 Oxen and donkeys that work the land
will eat for fodder wild sorrel,
spread by the shovel-load and fork-load.
25 On every lofty mountain, on every high hill
there will be streams and water-courses, on the day of the great slaughter Jl 4:18
when the strongholds fall.
26 Then moonlight will be bright as sunlight
and sunlight itself be seven times brighter
—like the light of seven days in one—
on the day Yahweh dresses his people's wound
and heals the scars of the blows they have received.

Against Assyria[j]

27 See, the name of Yahweh comes from afar,
blazing his anger, heavy his threat.
His lips are brimming over with fury,
his tongue is like a devouring fire.
28 His breath is like a river in spate Ws 5:23
coming up to the neck,
to sift the nations with the sieve of destruction,

c. Probably the same embassy as the subject of the previous prophecy. Its title is taken from the opening words of the prophecy, as in 21:13i. The prophet contrasts the hardships and dangers of the journey with the futility of its results.

d. 'roaring' *nohem* conj.; *mehem* Hebr. 'of them'.

e. 'collapsed' *hammoshbat* conj.; Hebr. *hemshebet* unintelligible. • Rahab, like Leviathan, *see* 27:1, was a monster of primordial chaos, 51:9; Jb 2:6; 12:13, cf. 9:13; Ps 89:11. Here and in Ps 87:4, it stands for Egypt. Maintaining the same emendation, one might also translate: 'Rahab-the-tamed': the monster has been rendered harmless, cf. Jb 40:25–26 in connection with Leviathan, the crocodile of Egypt.

f. Vv. 9–17 of the poem date from the beginning of the reign of Hezekiah. They comprise three quite distinct prophecies, vv. 9–11; 12–14; 15–17, repeating Isaiah's complaints against his contemporaries. These having refused to listen, the prophet puts his threats into writing: the future will prove him right, v. 8. This seems to mark the beginning of a period of silence, from which the prophet emerged before Sennacherib's invasion. Another period of silence was perhaps marked by 8:16–18, after the Syro-Ephraimite War, *see* p. 1167.

g. What God demanded, as earlier at the time of the Syro-Ephraimite War, *see* 7:9, was trust in him, *see* 28:16, instead of recourse to a foreign alliance, in this case with Egypt.

h. 'quake' *yeherad* conj.; Hebr. *'ehad* 'one'.

i. A section, apart from v. 18, in uncertain rhythm. Its weakness of form is matched by its content, being a compilation of themes occurring in the second and third parts of Is, cf. for instance 44:9; 60:20; 65:10. It is later than the Exile and v. 18 acts as a link with the authentic prophecies preceding it.

j. Prophecy probably delivered when Sennacherib was threatening Jerusalem. The terrifying nature of Yahweh's intervention is expressed here with unrivalled force.

to harness the peoples in a bridle, that will lead them astray.
Your song will be like that on a festal night, 29
and there will be joy in your hearts
as when to the sound of the flute people make a pilgrimage
to the mountain of Yahweh, the Rock of Israel.
Ex 19:16g Ps 29:1a Yahweh will make his majestic voice ring out, 30
he will show the weight of his arm
in the heat of his anger, with a devouring fire,
with thunderbolt, downpour and hailstones.
Yes, at Yahweh's voice Assyria will be terrified, 31
he will strike him with his rod;
each time he goes by, will fall the punishing rod [k] 32
that Yahweh will lay on him,
to the sound of tambourines and harps,
in the battles which he will wage against him with uplifted hand.
Yes, Topheth has been ready for a long time now, [l] 33
that too is ready for the king,
deep and wide his pyre,
fire and wood in plenty.
Yahweh's breath, like a stream of brimstone,
will set fire to it.

Against the Egyptian alliance [a]

30:1–7 31 Woe to those going down to Egypt 1
for help,
Ho 1:7+ who put their trust in horses,
who rely on the quantity of chariots,
and on great strength of cavalrymen,
6:3g but do not look to the Holy One of Israel
or consult Yahweh.
Yet he too is wise and can bring disaster 2
and he will not go back on his word;
he will rise against the breed of evil-doers
and against those who protect wrong-doers.
Ezk 28:9 The Egyptian is human, not divine, 3
his horses are flesh, not spirit;
Ezk 14:26 Yahweh will stretch out his hand:
the protector will stumble,
the protected will fall
and all will perish together.

Against Assyria [b]

Yes, this is what Yahweh has said to me: 4
As a lion or lion cub
growls over its prey,
when scores of shepherds
are summoned to drive it off,
without being frightened by their shouting
or cowed by the noise they make,
just so will Yahweh Sabaoth descend
to fight for Mount Zion and for its hill. [c]
Dt 32:11 Ps 36:7; Like hovering birds, 5
so will Yahweh Sabaoth protect Jerusalem;
by protecting it, he will save it,
by supporting it, he will deliver it.
Come back to the one whom the Israelites have so deeply betrayed! 6

7 For, that day, each of you will throw away 2:20
the false gods of silver and the false gods of gold
which your own sinful hands have made.
8 Assyria will fall by the sword, not that of a man,
will be devoured by the sword, of no human being,
he will flee before the sword
and his young warriors will be enslaved.
9 In his terror he will abandon his rock,
and his panic-stricken officers desert the standard—
declares Yahweh, whose fire is in Zion,
whose furnace, in Jerusalem.

A good king [a]

1 **32** There will be a king who reigns uprightly 11:3–4 Jr 23:5–6
and princes [b] who rule with fair judgement;
2 each will be like a shelter from the wind,
a refuge from the storm,
like streams on arid ground,
like the shade of a solid rock in a desolate land.
3 The eyes of seers will no longer be closed, 6:10;30:10+
the ears of hearers will be alert,
4 the heart of the hasty will learn to think things over,
and the tongue of stammerers will speak promptly and clearly.
5 The fool will no longer be called generous, 5:20
nor the rascal be styled bountiful.

Niggard and noble [c]

6 For the fool speaks folly Ps 14:1 Qo 10:13
and his heart is set on villainy;
he is godless in his actions
and his words ascribe error to Yahweh;
he starves the hungry of their food
and refuses drink to the thirsty.
7 Everything to do with the rascal is evil,
he devises infamous plans
to ruin the poor with lying words Ps 10:2,7–11
even when the needy has right on his side;
8 but the noble person plans only noble things,
noble his every move.

Against the women of Jerusalem [d]

9 Stand up, you haughty women, listen to my words; 3:16–24 Am 4:1–3
you over-confident daughters, pay attention to what I say.

k. 'punishing' some MSS; 'foundation' Hebr. • The end of the v. is problematic. One may also translate lit. 'and in battles of raised hand he will fight against him'. The word translated 'raised hand' elsewhere means the swaying gesture of the hands with which the priest dedicated offerings, but in 19:16 it is a threatening gesture.

l. 'Topheth', which can mean 'burner', was the place in the Valley of Ben-Hinnom where children were offered as burnt sacrifices to 'Molech', *see* Lv 18:21h, to which the 'king' (*melek*) may allude in the next line, if it does not refer to the king of Assyria.

31 a. Prophecy probably delivered in the same circumstances as those of 30:1–5,6–7.

b. Probably at the time of Sennacherib's attack.

c. Alternative translation: 'against Mount Zion and against its hill', in which case this would be an independent prophecy against Jerusalem. What follows, *see* v. 5, however, favours the translation adopted.

32 a. A description of ideal government, given in messianic terms, cf. 29:18; 35:5, though less pointedly than in 9:1–6; 11:1–9.

b. 'princes' conj.; 'for princes' Hebr.

c. The description has much in common with passages in Pr. It may have been composed by a sage and introduced here as a commentary on v. 5 which mentions fool and rascal.

d. A warning for the women in the style of 3:16–24, but possibly later. The time-indicator in v. 10 is reminiscent of 29:1; here perhaps too, it should be understood in a fairly general sense.

Within one year and a few days 10
you will tremble, you over-confident women;
grape-harvesting will be finished,
gathering will never happen again.

Shudder, you haughty women, 11
tremble, you over-confident women;
strip, undress, put sackcloth round your waists.

Beat your breasts for the pleasant fields, 12
for the fruitful vine,
for my people's soil where the bramble-bush will be growing 13
and for all the happy houses, for the rejoicing city.

For the citadel will be abandoned 14
and the thronged city deserted,
Ophel and the Keep [e] will be denuded for ever,
the playground of wild donkeys
and the pasture of flocks,

11:2–9 **Outpouring of the spirit** [f]

Jl 3:1 until the spirit is poured out on us from above, 15
and the desert becomes productive ground,
so productive you might take it for a forest.

Fair judgement will fix its home in the desert, 16
and uprightness live in the productive ground,
11:6e and the product of uprightness will be peace, 17
the effect of uprightness being quiet and security for ever.

My people will live in a peaceful home, 18
in peaceful houses, tranquil dwellings.
And should the forest be totally destroyed [g] 19
and the city gravely humiliated,
you will be happy to sow wherever there is water 20
and to let the ox and donkey roam free.

The expected deliverance [a]

33 Woe to you, destroying though not yourself destroyed, 1
betraying though not yourself betrayed;
when you have finished destroying, you will be destroyed,
when you have stopped [b] betraying, you will be betrayed.
Ps 32:10;33:22 Yahweh, show us your mercy, 2
we hope in you.
Be our arm [c] every morning
Ps 46:1 and our salvation in time of distress.
At the sound of tumult the peoples flee, 3
Nb 10:35 when you stand up the nations scatter.
Ps 46:6;48:4–7;68:1 Your spoil is gathered in as a grasshopper gathers in, 4
like a swarm of locusts people descend on it.
Ps 57:5;83:18;97:9 Yahweh is exalted, for he is enthroned above, 5
he has filled Zion with fair judgement and saving justice.

You can count on this all your days: 6
wisdom and knowledge are the riches that save,
the fear of Yahweh is his treasure.

29:1 Look, Ariel [d] is lamenting in the streets, 7
the ambassadors of peace are weeping bitterly.

8 The highways are deserted,
no travellers any more on the roads.
Agreements are broken, witnesses[e] held in contempt,
there is respect for no one.
9 The land pines away in mourning, Am 1:2
the Lebanon is withering with shame,
Sharon has become like the wasteland, 35:2
Bashan and Carmel are shuddering.
10 'Now I shall stand up,' says Yahweh, Ps 12:5
'now I shall rise, now draw myself up.
11 You conceive chaff, you give birth to straw:
like fire, my breath[f] will devour you.
12 The peoples will be burnt up as though by quicklime,
like cut thorns they will be burnt on the fire.
13 You who are far away, listen to what I have done,
and you who are near, realise my strength.'
14 The sinners in Zion are panic-stricken
and fear seizes on the godless,
'Which of us can survive the devouring fire, Dt 4:24
which of us survive everlasting burning?' ↗Heb 12:29
15 The one who acts uprightly and speaks honestly, Ps 15
who scorns to get rich by extortion,
who rejects bribes out of hand,
who refuses to listen to plans involving bloodshed
and shuts his eyes rather than countenance crime:
16 such a man will live on the heights,
the craggy rocks will be his refuge,
he will be fed, he will not want for water.[g]

The return to Jerusalem

17 Your eyes will gaze on the king in his beauty,
they will look on a country stretching far and wide.
18 Your heart will meditate on past terrors,
'Where is the man who did the counting? ↗1 Co 1:20
Where is the man who did the weighing?
Where is the man who counted off the towers?'
19 No more will you see that insolent people,
that people of unintelligible speech,
of barbarous and meaningless tongue. 28:11
20 Gaze at Zion, city of our feasts;
your eyes will see Jerusalem
as a home that is secure, 54:2
a tent not to be moved,
none of its tent-pegs ever to be pulled out,
none of its guy-ropes ever to be broken.

e. Ophel was the site of ancient Jerusalem, south of the Temple, *see* 2 Ch 27:3; Ne 3:27. The 'Keep' (uncertain trans. of a word occurring only once) probably corresponded to the great tower of Ne 3:26–27.

f. A post-exilic poem adding the prediction of the coming of the Spirit to the threats contained in the previous prophecy, cf. Jl 3:1–2. A coincidence of vocabulary between vv. 9–11 and 18 was perhaps responsible for its being inserted here.

g. 'destroyed' *weyarad* conj.; Hebr. *ubarad* 'it will hail'.

33 a. Despite many references to Isaian themes, the style and vocabulary of this whole ch. forbid its attribution to the prophet. Frequent parallels with Ps suggest that this is a post-exilic prophetic liturgy. Absence of proper names and clear allusions make it impossible to date it precisely.

b. 'have stopped' 1QIs[a]; MT unintelligible.

c. 'our arm' versions; 'their arm' Hebr.

d. 'Ariel' conj., cf. 29:1; Hebr. *'er 'ellam* unintelligible.

• The recital of the woes of Jerusalem is a common theme in supplicatory psalms.

e. 'witnesses' 1QIs[a]; 'towns' Hebr.

f. 'my' Targ.; 'your' Hebr.

g. Vv. 14–16, with their question and answering catalogue of virtues required for drawing near to God, take the form of a dialogue-liturgy of type similar to Ps 15; 24:3–5.

There it is that Yahweh shows us his power, 21
like a place of rivers and very wide canals
on which will row no galley,
over which will pass no majestic ship. [b]
(For Yahweh is our judge, Yahweh our lawgiver, 22
Yahweh is our king and our Saviour.)
Your tackle has given way, 23
it cannot support the mast,
it cannot hoist the pennon.
And so there is much booty to be shared out;
the lame fall to plundering,
and no one living there will say, 'I am sickly'; 24
the people living there will find their guilt forgiven.

63:1–6 Jr 49:7–22 **The sentence on Edom** [a]

34 Come near and listen, you nations, 1
pay attention, you peoples.
Dt 32:1 Let the earth and its contents listen,
the world and its entire population.
Ezk 25:12 Am 1:11 For Yahweh is angry with all the nations, 2
enraged with all their hordes.
He has vowed them to destruction,
handed them over to slaughter.
Their dead will be thrown away, 3
the stench will rise from their corpses,
the mountains will run with their blood,
the entire array of heaven will fall apart. 4
Mt 24:29*o* 2 P 3:12 ↗Rv 6:14 The heavens will be rolled up like a scroll
and all their array will fade away,
as fade the leaves falling from the vine,
as fade those falling from the fig tree.

For my sword has drunk deep in the heavens: 5
see how it now falls on Edom, [b]
on the people vowed to destruction,
to punish them.
Yahweh's sword is gorged with blood, 6
it is greasy with fat,
with the blood of lambs and goats,
with the fat of the kidneys of rams.
63:1 For Yahweh has a sacrifice in Bozrah,
a great slaughter in the land of Edom.
The wild oxen will fall with them, 7
the bullocks with the bulls;
their land will be drenched with blood
and their dust will be greasy with fat.
For this will be Yahweh's day of vengeance, 8
the year of retribution in Zion's lawsuit.

Gn 19:24–28 ↗Rv 14:10–11 Its streams will turn into pitch, 9
its dust into brimstone,
its country will turn into blazing pitch.
Never quenched night or day, 10
↗Rv 19:3 its smoke rising for ever,
it will lie waste age after age,
no one will travel through it for ever and ever.

11 It will be the haunt of pelican and hedgehog, 13:20–22
the owl and the raven will live there;
over it Yahweh will stretch the measuring line of chaos 2 K 21:13 Lm 2:8
and the plumb-line of emptiness.

12 There will be no more nobles Rv 18:2
to proclaim the royal authority;
there will be an end of all its princes.
13 Brambles will grow in its bastions,
nettles and thorn-bushes in its fortresses,
it will be the lair of jackals, Ps 44:19
an enclosure for ostriches.
14 Wild cats will meet hyenas there,
satyr will call to satyr, 13:21 Lv 17:7c
there Lilith too will lurk [c]
and find somewhere to rest.
15 The snake will nest and lay eggs there,
will hatch and gather its young into the shade;
and there the vultures will assemble, Mt 24:28
each one with its mate.
16 Search in Yahweh's book, [d] and read,
not one of these will be missing,
not one of them lacking a mate;
for thus his mouth [e] has ordained it,
and his spirit has brought them together.
17 He has thrown the lot for each,
his hand has measured out their share;
they will possess it for ever,
and live there age after age. [f]

The triumph of Jerusalem [a]

1 35 Let the desert and the dry lands be glad,
let the wasteland rejoice and bloom; 41:19
2 like the asphodel, •let it burst into flower,
let it rejoice and sing for joy.
The glory of Lebanon is bestowed on it, 60:13
the splendour of Carmel and Sharon; 33:9
then they will see the glory of Yahweh, 40:5
the splendour of our God.
3 Strengthen all weary hands, 40:29–31 ↗Heb 12:12

h. The passage may either be taken to mean that Yahweh himself will be a substitute for the rivers which in Egypt and Assyria assure the wealth and safety of the country; or that Yahweh will give Israel itself a river-system as a source of blessings, but that these watercourses will not be used by hostile shipping. • The imagery of v. 21 is continued in v. 23; v. 22 is apparently additional.

34 a. Ch. 34–35 are sometimes known as the Little Apocalypse; they contain a description of the final terrible battles to be waged by Yahweh against the nations in general and against Edom in particular, ch. 34, followed by a prediction of the Last Judgement, which will re-establish Jerusalem in all its glory. The intention and style of this section, which is dependent on Second Isaiah, are similar to those of ch. 24–27 (the 'Apocalypse of Isaiah') and belong like them to the book's last phase of composition.

b. At the time of the fall of Jerusalem in 587 BC, the Edomites showed themselves particularly hostile to the kingdom of Judah and took advantage of its misfortunes. Hence, the later prophets and writers adopt a severe attitude towards Edom, *see* 63:1; Ps 137:7; Lm 4:21–22; Ezk 25:12; 35:15; Ob 10–16. Here the ruin of Edom illustrates Yahweh's general sentence on the nations. Cf. the 'city of emptiness' (city of Moab) in the apocalypse of ch. 24–27; *see* 24:7d,10.

c. 'satyrs' or 'he-goats', cf. 13:21, but the parallel makes mythological beings preferable here, *see* Lv 17:7c. Lilith was a female demon who haunted ruins.

d. Some have seen this as a reference to Isaiah's own book or to a collection of prophecies attributed to him; the wild animals are indeed almost the same as in 13:20–22. Alternatively, the reference may be to Yahweh's book of decrees concerning his creation, vv. 16b–17, cf. Ps 139:16.

e. 'his mouth' 1QIs[a]; 'my mouth' MT.

f. The wild animals of vv. 11seq. The devastated territory of Edom, v. 11, will be partitioned for them as their heritage, just as the Promised Land had been for the Israelites.

35 a. In contrast to the sentence pronounced on Edom, there now follow the blessings in store for Jerusalem. Contacts with Second Isaiah are particularly numerous here.

steady all trembling knees
and say to the faint-hearted, 4
'Be strong! Do not be afraid.
40:10 Here is your God,
vengeance is coming,
divine retribution;
he is coming to save you.'

↗Mt 11:5 ↗Lk 7:22 Then the eyes of the blind will be opened, 5
the ears of the deaf unsealed,
↗Ac 3:8 then the lame will leap like a deer 6
and the tongue of the dumb sing for joy;
41:18;43:20; 48:21 for water will gush in the desert
Jn 4:1a and streams in the wastelands,
the parched ground will become a marsh 7
and the thirsty land springs of water;
the lairs where the jackals used to live
will become plots of reed and papyrus.

11:16j And through it will run a road for them and a highway 8
which will be called the Sacred Way;
the unclean will not be allowed to use it;
He will be the one to use this road,[b]
the fool will not stray along it.
No lion will be there, 9
no ferocious beast set foot on it,
nothing of the sort be found;
it will be used by the redeemed.
=51:11 Ps 126 For those whom Yahweh has ransomed will return, 10
they will come to Zion shouting for joy,
their heads crowned[c] with joy unending;
rejoicing and gladness will escort them
Rv 21:4 and sorrow and sighing will take flight.

APPENDICES[a]

‖37:10seq. ‖2 K 18:13–37 **Sennacherib's invasion**

36 In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, Sennacherib king of Assyria 1
advanced on all the fortified towns of Judah and captured them. ·From 2
Lachish the king of Assyria sent the cupbearer-in-chief with a large force to King
Si 48:18 Hezekiah in Jerusalem. The cupbearer-in-chief took up position near the conduit
7:3 of the upper pool on the road to the Fuller's Field. ·The master of the palace, 3
22:20seq. Eliakim son of Hilkiah, Shebna the secretary and the herald Joah son of Asaph
went out to him. ·The cupbearer-in-chief said to them, 'Say to Hezekiah, "The 4
great king, the king of Assyria, says this: What makes you so confident? ·Do you 5
think[b] empty words are as good as strategy and military strength? Who are you
30:3 relying on, to dare to rebel against me? ·There you are, relying on that broken 6
reed, Egypt, which pricks and pierces the hand of the person who leans on it. That
is what Pharaoh king of Egypt is like to all who rely on him. ·You may say to me: 7
We rely on Yahweh our God. But haven't his high places and altars been suppressed by Hezekiah, who told Judah and Jerusalem: This is the altar before which
you must worship? ·Very well, then, make a wager with my lord the king of 8
Assyria: I will give you two thousand horses if you can find horsemen to ride them.
·How could you repulse a single one[c] of the least of my master's soldiers? And yet 9
you have relied on Egypt for chariots and horsemen. ·And lastly, have I marched 10

on this country to lay it waste without warrant from Yahweh? Yahweh himself said to me: March on this country and lay it waste." '
11 Eliakim, Shebna and Joah said to the cupbearer-in-chief, 'Please speak to your servants in Aramaic, for we understand it; do not speak to us in the Judaean
12 language within earshot of the people on the ramparts.' ·But the cupbearer-in-chief said, 'Do you think my lord sent me here to say these things to your master or to you? On the contrary, it was to the people sitting on the ramparts who, like you, are doomed to eat their own dung and drink their own urine.'
13 The cupbearer-in-chief then drew himself up and shouted loudly in the Judaean
14 language, 'Listen to the words of the great king, the king of Assyria. ·The king says
15 this, "Do not let Hezekiah delude you! He will be powerless to save you. ·Do not let Hezekiah persuade you to rely on Yahweh by saying: Yahweh is sure to save us;
16 this city will not fall into the king of Assyria's clutches. ·Do not listen to Hezekiah,
17 for the king of Assyria says this: Make peace with me, ·surrender to me, and every one of you will be free to eat the fruit of his own vine and of his own fig tree and to drink the water of his own storage-well until I come and take you away to a country
18 like your own, a land of corn and good wine, a land of bread and vineyards. ·Do not let Hezekiah delude you by saying: Yahweh will save us. Has any god of any
19 nation been able to save his country from the king of Assyria's clutches? ·Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim? Where 10:9
20 are the national gods of Samaria? [d] Did they save Samaria from my clutches? ·Of all the national gods, which ones have saved their countries from my clutches, that Yahweh should be able to save Jerusalem from my clutches?" '
21 They, however, kept quiet and said nothing in reply, since the king had given the
22 order, 'You are not to answer him.' ·The master of the palace, Eliakim son of Hilkiah, Shebna the secretary and the herald Joah son of Asaph, with their clothes torn, went to Hezekiah and reported what the cupbearer-in-chief had said.

The prophet Isaiah is consulted

‖2 K 19:1–7

1 37 On hearing this, King Hezekiah tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and went
2 to the Temple of Yahweh. ·He sent Eliakim master of the palace, Shebna the secretary and the elders of the priests, wearing sackcloth, to the prophet Isaiah
3 son of Amoz. ·They said to him, 'This is what Hezekiah says, "Today is a day of suffering, of punishment, of disgrace. Children come to birth and there is no
4 strength to bring them forth. ·May Yahweh your God hear the words of the Ho 13:13h cupbearer-in-chief whom his master, the king of Assyria, has sent to insult the living God, and may Yahweh your God punish the words he has heard! Offer your prayer for the remnant still left." ' 4:3c
5, 6 When King Hezekiah's ministers came to Isaiah, ·he said to them, 'Say to your master, "Yahweh says this: Do not be afraid of the words which you have heard or the blasphemies which the king of Assyria's minions have uttered against me.
7 Look, I am going to put a spirit in him and, on the strength of a rumour, he will go back to his own country, and in that country I shall make him fall by the sword." '

The cupbearer returns to his master

2 K 19:8–9

8 The cupbearer turned about and rejoined the king of Assyria, who was then

b. Yahweh; but the line is sometimes taken to be a gloss, since it interferes with the rhythm.

c. lit. 'on their head'; the image is of a traveller balancing his luggage (joy) on his head.

36 a. Ch. 36–39 reproduce, with a few variants, 2 K 18:13,17–20:19 (see notes to 2 K). The ch. have been borrowed from 2 K and put at the end of the first part of Is to complete the collection of traditions relating to the prophet. In ch. 36–37, the editor has combined two sources: 36:1–37:9[a], 37–38, as also ch. 38–39, come from prophetic circles, possibly from a biography of Isaiah; a parallel account, 37:9[b]–36 emphasises Hezekiah's piety and Isaiah's intervention, attributing several prophecies to the prophet which, if authentic, have been to some degree retouched by his disciples, from whom this account is apparently derived. It ends on a note of the supernatural, 37:36.

b. 'Do you think', lit. 'you say' 2 K 18:20; 'I say' Hebr.

c. 'a single one' conj.; 'a single governor' Hebr., gloss or dittography.

d. 'Where are the national gods of Samaria?' conj. following 2 K 18:34 Gk and *Vet. Lat.*, and compare what follows.

attacking Libnah, the cupbearer having learnt that the king had already left Lachish ·on hearing that Tirhakah king of Cush was on his way to attack him. 9

‖2 K 19:9–19 **Second account of Sennacherib's activities**

Sennacherib again [a] sent messengers to Hezekiah, saying, ·'Tell Hezekiah king of 10
Judah this, "Do not let your God on whom you are relying deceive you with the
promise: Jerusalem will not fall into the king of Assyria's clutches. ·You have 11
learnt by now what the kings of Assyria have done to all the other countries,
putting them under the curse of destruction. Are you likely to be saved? ·Did the 12
gods of the nations whom my ancestors devastated save them—Gozan, Haran,
Rezeph and the Edenites who were in Tel Basar? [b] ·Where is the king of Hamath, 13
the king of Arpad, the king of Lair, [c] of Sepharvaim, of Hena, of Ivvah?" '

Hezekiah took the letter from the messengers' hands and read it; he then went 14
up to the Temple of Yahweh and spread it out before Yahweh. ·Hezekiah said this 15
prayer in the presence of Yahweh, ·'Yahweh Sabaoth, God of Israel, enthroned 16
on the winged creatures, you alone are God of all the kingdoms of the world, you
made heaven and earth. ·Give ear, Yahweh, and listen; open your eyes, Yahweh, 17
and see! Hear the words of Sennacherib, who has sent to insult the living God. ·It 18
is true, Yahweh, that the kings of Assyria have destroyed all the nations (and their
countries); ·they have thrown their gods on the fire, for these were not gods but 19
human artefacts—wood and stone—and hence they have destroyed them. ·But 20
now, Yahweh our God, save us from his clutches, I beg you, and let all the
kingdoms of the world know that you alone are God, Yahweh.'

‖2 K 19:20–28 **Isaiah intervenes**

Isaiah son of Amoz then sent the following message to Hezekiah, 'Yahweh, God 21
of Israel, says this, "In answer to the prayer which you have addressed to me about
Sennacherib king of Assyria. ·Here is the pronouncement which Yahweh has made 22
about him:

She despises you, she scorns you,
the virgin daughter of Zion;
she tosses her head at you,
the daughter of Jerusalem!
Whom have you insulted, whom did you blaspheme? 23
Against whom raised your voice
and lifted your haughty eyes?
Against the Holy One of Israel.
Through your minions you have insulted the Lord, 24
thinking: With my many chariots
I have climbed the mountain-tops,
the utmost peaks of Lebanon.
I have felled its mighty cedars,
its finest cypresses,
have reached its furthest peak,
its forest garden.
Yes, I have dug and drunk 25
of foreign waters; [d]
under the soles of my feet
I have dried up all Egypt's rivers.

Do you hear? Long ago 26
I prepared this,
from days of old I actually planned it,
now I carry it out.
You were to lay walled cities
in heaps of ruins;

27 that was why their inhabitants,
feeble of hand,
were dismayed and discomfited,
were weak as grass,
were frail as plants,
were like grass of housetop and meadow
under the east wind.[e]
28 But whether you stand up or sit down, Ps 139:2
whether you go out or come in, I know it
(and how you rave against me).[f]
29 Because you have raved against me
and your arrogance has reached my ears,
I shall put a hook through your nostrils
and a muzzle on your lips,
and make you return by the road
by which you came.

A sign for Hezekiah ‖2 K 19:29–31

30 And this will be the sign for you:
This year will be eaten the self-sown grain,
next year what sprouts in the fallow;
but in the third year sow and reap,
plant vineyards and eat their fruit.
31 The surviving remnant of the House of Judah will bring forth 4:3c
new roots below and fruits above;
32 for a remnant will issue from Jerusalem,
and survivors from Mount Zion.
Yahweh Sabaoth's jealous love will accomplish this." '

A prophecy on Assyria ‖2 K 19:32–34

33 'This, then, is what Yahweh says about the king of Assyria:

He will not enter this city,
will shoot no arrow at it,
confront it with no shield,
throw up no earthwork against it.
34 By the road by which he came, by that he will return;
he will not enter this city, declares Yahweh.
35 I shall protect this city and save it
for my sake and my servant David's sake.'

Sennacherib is punished ‖2 K 19:35–37

36 That same night[g] the angel of Yahweh went out and struck down a hundred and eighty-five thousand men in the Assyrian camp. In the early morning when it was time to get up, there they lay, so many corpses.
37 Sennacherib struck camp and left; he returned home and stayed in Nineveh.
38 One day when he was worshipping in the temple of his god Nisroch, his sons Adrammelech and Sharezer struck him down with the sword and escaped into the territory of Ararat. His son Esarhaddon succeeded him.

37 **a.** 'again' 2 K 19:19 and 1QIs[a]; MT omits.
b. 'Tel Basar' conj.; 'Telassar' Hebr., as also in 2 K 19:12.
c. Or 'a king per city', which may be a gloss.
d. 'foreign' 2 K 19:24; Hebr. omits.
e. 'under the east wind' 1QIs[a]; MT has 'before growing' (?) and omits 'whether you stand up' from beginning of next v.
f. The last line, omitted by Gk, is probably a doublet of v. 29[a].
g. 'That same night' 2 K 19:35; Hebr. omits.

‖2 K 20:1–11 **The illness and cure of Hezekiah**

38 About then, Hezekiah fell ill and was at the point of death. The prophet 1
Isaiah son of Amoz came and said to him, 'Yahweh says this, "Put your
affairs in order, for you are going to die, you will not live." ' ·Hezekiah turned his 2
face to the wall and addressed this prayer to Yahweh, ·'Ah, Yahweh, remember, 3
I beg you, that I have behaved faithfully and with sincerity of heart in your presence
and done what you regard as right.' And Hezekiah shed many tears.

Then the word of Yahweh came to Isaiah, ·'Go and say to Hezekiah, "Yahweh, 4, 5
the God of your ancestor David, says this: I have heard your prayer and seen your
tears. I shall cure you: in three days' time you will go up to the Temple of Yahweh. [a]
I shall add fifteen years to your life. ·I shall save you and this city from the king of 6
Assyria's clutches and defend this city for my sake and my servant David's sake." '

[b]'Bring a fig poultice,' Isaiah said, 'apply it to the ulcer and he will recover.' 21
Hezekiah said, 'What is the sign to tell me that I shall be going up to the Temple of 22
Yahweh?' ·'Here', Isaiah replied, [c] 'is the sign from Yahweh that he will do what 7
he has said. ·Look, I shall make the shadow cast by the declining sun [d] on the 8
steps—the steps to Ahaz's roof-room—go back ten steps.' And the sun went back
the ten steps by which it had declined.

Ps 116 **The canticle of Hezekiah** [e]

Canticle [f] of Hezekiah king of Judah after his illness and recovery. 9

I thought: In the noon of my life 10
I am to depart.
At the gates of Sheol I shall be held
for the rest of my days.
Ps 27:13 I thought: I shall never see Yahweh again 11
in the land of the living,
I shall never see again a single one
of those who live on earth. [g]
2 Co 5:1–4
2 P 1:13–14 My home has been pulled up, and thrown away 12
Ws 9:15f like a shepherd's tent; [h]
Jb 7:6 like a weaver, I have rolled up my life,
he has cut me from the loom.
Jb 4:20
Ps 90:5–6 From dawn to dark, you have been making an end of me;
till daybreak, I cried for help; [i] 13
Jb 10:16 like a lion, he has crushed all my bones,
from dawn to dark, you have been making an end of me.
I twitter like a swallow, 14
Ps 69:3 I moan like a dove,
Ps 121:1 my eyes have grown dim from looking up.
Lord, I am overwhelmed, come to my help.
How can I speak and what can I say to him? [j] 15
He is the one to act.
I must eke out the rest of my years
in bitterness of soul.

The Lord is over them; they live, 16
and everything in them lives by his spirit. [k]
Ps 103:3–4 You will cure me. Restore me to life.
At once, my bitterness turns to well-being. 17
For you have preserved my soul
from the pit of nothingness,
you have thrust all my sins behind you.
Ps 6:5c
Si 17:27
Ba 2:17 For Sheol cannot praise you, 18
nor Death celebrate you;

those who go down to the pit
can hope no longer in your constancy.
19 The living, the living are the ones who praise you,
as I do today.
Fathers tell their sons Dt 4:9
about your constancy.
20 Yahweh, come to my help
and we will make our harps resound
all the days of our life
in the Temple of Yahweh.

The Babylonian embassy ‖2 K 20:12–19

1 **39** At that time, the king of Babylon, Merodach-Baladan son of Baladan, sent
letters and a gift to Hezekiah, for he had heard of his illness and his
2 recovery. ·Hezekiah was delighted at this and showed the ambassadors his entire
treasury, the silver, gold, spices, precious oil, his armoury too, and everything to
be seen in his storehouses. There was nothing in his palace or in his whole domain
that Hezekiah did not show them.
3 The prophet Isaiah then came to King Hezekiah and asked him, 'What have
these men said, and where have they come to you from?' Hezekiah answered,
4 'They have come from a distant country, from Babylon.' ·Isaiah said, 'What have
they seen in your palace?' 'They have seen everything in my palace,' Hezekiah
answered. 'There is nothing in my storehouses that I have not shown them.'
5, 6 Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, 'Listen to the word of Yahweh Sabaoth, ·"The
days are coming when everything in your palace, everything that your ancestors
have amassed until now, will be carried off to Babylon. Not a thing will be left,"
7 Yahweh says. ·"Sons sprung from you, sons begotten by you, will be abducted to
8 be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon." ' ·Hezekiah said to Isaiah, 'This
word of Yahweh that you announce is reassuring,' for he was thinking, 'There is
going to be peace and security during my lifetime.'

II: THE BOOK OF THE CONSOLATION OF ISRAEL [a]

Prediction of deliverance [b]

1 **40** 'Console my people, console them,' 49:13;51:12; 52:7–12
says your God. Lk 2:25
2 'Speak to the heart of Jerusalem
and cry to her
that her period of service is ended,
that her guilt has been atoned for, Lm 4:22

38 **a.** 'I shall . . . Yahweh' 2 K 20:5; Hebr. omits.
b. vv. 21–22 were misplaced when the Canticle of Hezekiah was inserted. The parallel in 2 K 20 gives a more complete account and possibly witnesses to the existence of two recensions.
c. 'Isaiah replied' 2 K 20:9; Hebr. omits.
d. 'the sun' versions, Targ.; Hebr. lit. 'with the sun' misplaced after 'steps'. • 'of Ahaz's roof-room' 1QIs[a]; 'Ahaz's' MT.
e. There is nothing in the text to connect the canticle with Hezekiah. It does not occur in the parallel narrative of 2 K 20. It is a post-exilic psalm representing the complaint of a devout believer stricken with a serious and sudden illness. The text is in a poor state of preservation.
f. 'Canticle' conj.; 'Letter' Hebr.
g. 'on earth' *haled* conj.; Hebr. *hadel* unintelligible.
h. 'a shepherd's' versions; 'my shepherd's' Hebr.
i. 'I cried for help' *siwa'ti* conj.; Hebr. *siwwiti* 'I soothed'.
j. 'what shall I say to him' Targ.; 'what will he say to me' Hebr.
k. 'in them' (masc.) 1QIs[a]; 'in them' (fem.) • MT. 'his spirit' 1QIs[a]; 'my spirit' MT.

40 **a.** Title traditionally given to the second part of Is (ch. 40–55), based on the opening vv. 'Consolation' is the dominant theme of these ch., in contrast to the generally menacing prophecies of ch. 1–39. The author is known as 'Second Isaiah', an anonymous prophet at the end of the Exile, *see* Introduction to the Prophets §9.
b. The book opens with a cantata for several voices: the nation's servitude is over and a new Exodus is about to take place under God's leadership. The theme, found throughout the book, is restated at the end, 55:12–13.

that, from the hand of Yahweh, she has received
double punishment for all her sins.' [c]

↗3:4–6:45:2 Si 48:10 Ml 3:1,23–24 ↗Mt 3:3par. ↗Lk 1:76;
A voice [d] cries, 'Prepare in the desert 3
a way for Yahweh.
Make a straight highway for our God [e]
across the wastelands.

Ba 5:7
Let every valley be filled in, 4
every mountain and hill be levelled,
every cliff become a plateau,
every escarpment a plain;

35:2;58:8;60:1 Ex 24:16f Jn 1:14 1:20;58:14
then the glory of Yahweh will be revealed 5
and all humanity will see it together,
for the mouth of Yahweh has spoken.'

A voice said, 'Cry aloud!' and I said, 'What shall I cry?' [f] 6
—'All humanity is grass
and all its beauty like the wild flower's.
The grass withers, the flower fades 7
when the breath of Yahweh blows on them.
(The grass is surely the people.)

51:12 Jb 14:2 Ps 37:2;90:5+; 103:15seq. ↗Jm 1:10–11 ↗1 P 1:24–25 •Ps 119:89 Mt 24:35 Jn 1:1a
The grass withers, the flower fades, 8
but the word of our God remains for ever.'

Go up on a high mountain, 9
messenger of Zion.
Shout as loud as you can,
messenger of Jerusalem!
Shout fearlessly,
say to the towns of Judah,
'Here is your God.'

Here is Lord Yahweh coming with power, 10
his arm maintains his authority,
=62:11
his reward is with him
and his prize precedes him.

Ezk 34:1a
He is like a shepherd feeding his flock, [g] 11
gathering lambs in his arms,

Dt 32:11e Lk 15:5
holding them against his breast
and leading to their rest the mother ewes.

The majesty of God [h]

Jb 28:23–27; 38:4–5 Pr 30:4 Ws 11:20
Who was it measured the water of the sea [i] in the hollow of his hand 12
and calculated the heavens to the nearest inch,
gauged the dust of the earth to the nearest bushel,
weighed the mountains in scales,
the hills in a balance?

↗Rm 11:34 ↗1 Co 2:16
Who directed the spirit of Yahweh, 13
Jb 15:8;21:22; 36:22–26; 38:2–21 Pr 8:22–31 Jr 23:18
what counsellor could have instructed him?
Whom has he consulted to enlighten him, 14
to instruct him in the path of judgement,
to teach him knowledge
and show him how to understand?

Si 10:16–17
See, the nations are like a drop in a bucket, 15
they count as a grain of dust on the scales.

Ws 11:22
See, coasts and islands [j] weigh no more than fine powder.
The Lebanon is not enough for the burning fires 16

nor its animals enough for the burnt offering.

17 All the nations are as nothing before him, Ps 62:9 Dn 4:32
for him they count as nothingness [k] and emptiness.

18 To whom can you compare God? 40:18;46:5 Ac 17:29
What image can you contrive of him? [l]

19 The craftsman casts an idol, 41:6–7;44:9–20 Ps 115:3–8 Ws 13:11–19 Jr 10:1–16; 51:15–19 Ba 6
a goldsmith overlays it with gold
and casts silver chains for it.

20 Someone too poor to afford a sacrifice [m]
chooses a piece of wood that will not rot;
he then seeks out a skilled craftsman
to set up an idol that will not totter.

21 Did you not know,
had you not heard?
Was it not told you from the beginning?
Have you not understood how the earth was set on its foundations?

22 He who sits enthroned above the circle of the earth, Dn 4:32
the inhabitants of which are like grasshoppers, 44:24
stretches out the heavens like a cloth, Ps 104:2
spreads them out like a tent to live in.

23 He reduces princes to nothing, Jb 34:18–19 Ps 2:2–5;
the rulers of the world to mere emptiness.

24 Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown, 17:13–14
scarcely has their stem taken root in the soil,
than he blows on them and they wither
and the storm carries them away like chaff.

25 'To whom can you compare me, 45:5
or who is my equal?' says the Holy One. [n] 6:3g

26 Lift your eyes and look: Gn 15:5
he who created these things [o]
leads out their army in order, 1 S 1:3c
summoning each of them by name. Ps 147:4
So mighty is his power, so great his strength, Ba 3:34–35

c. Jerusalem has been forced into 'service' like a mercenary or slave; she had paid for her offence twice over, like a thief, cf. Ex 22.

d. The identity of the voice, obeying the order in v. 2, has been deliberately left mysterious by the prophet. The evangelists, *see* Mt 3:3; Jn 1:23, quote this text in its LXX form: 'A voice of one who cries in the desert'.

e. Babylonian texts speak in similar terms of processional or triumphal ways prepared for a god or victorious king. Here it is the road by which Yahweh will lead his people through the desert in a new Exodus. The wonders of the Exodus had already been recalled by Isaiah, 10:25–27, as an earnest of God's protection. The prophets of the Exile elaborate this theme. As of old, God will come and save his people, 46:3–4 and 63:9 (repeating Ex 19:4); Jr 16:14–15; 31:2. The miracles of the first Exodus, Mi 7:14–15, the crossing of the Sea of Reeds, 11:15–16j; 43:16–21; 51:10; 63:11–13, the water from the rock, 48:21, the bright cloud, 52:12, *see also* 4:5–6, the journey through the desert, 40:3seq., *see also* Ba 5:7–9, become both type and guarantee of the second, from Babylon to Jerusalem. On the theme of the Exodus *see also* Ho 2:16p.

f. The celestial voice replaces the theophanies attendant on the prophetic call, 6:8–13; Jr 1:4–10; Ezk 1–2, perhaps indicating a more lively awareness of God's transcendence. Here as in the cases noted above, the prophet asks for and receives clear directions for the mission entrusted to him.

g. The theme of the good shepherd, stated by Jr 23:1–6, elaborated by Ezk 34 and further developed by Jesus, Mt 18:12–14par.; Jn 10:11–18.

h. The contrast between God's greatness and human weakness is a frequent theme in wisdom literature, Jb 28; 38–39; Pr 8:22seq.; 30:4. But the wisdom books more explicitly ascribe all this creative and regulative activity to divine Wisdom, Jb 28:23–27; Pr 8:22–31; Si 1:1–3.

i. 'the water of the sea' 1QIs[a]; 'the waters' MT.

j. The 'islands', frequently mentioned in the Book of Consolation, are the archipelagoes and distant coasts of the Mediterranean, and in this sense the word is often put in parallel with 'the nations'.

k. 'as nothingness' 1QIs[a]; 'less than nothingness' (?) MT.

l. The v. expresses the incomparability of the true God, cf. 25:1, which forms the basis for the prohibition of images in the Decalogue and after. Vv. 19–20 have been inserted later and are continued at 41:6–7, concerning the making of idols (cf. the long addition of 44:9–20). Nonetheless, polemics against non-Yahwist gods form a common theme in the second part of Is, cf. 41:21i; 42:8,17; 45:16,20; 46:5–7; *see also* Ps 115:3–8; Ws 13:11–15; Jr 10:1–6; 51:15–19; Ba 6.

m. Trans. uncertain, but we take the line to be in contrast to the previous v.

n. Second Isaiah adopts the same title, *see* 41:14, etc, by which Isaiah chose to refer to the God of Israel, *see* 6:3g.

o. The stars, forming 'the army' or 'array of heaven', cf. 34:4; Dt 17:3; 2 K 17:16; Jr 8:2; etc. In Babylon, where this proclamation was written, they were regarded as divinities.

that not one fails to answer.
49:14–16 How can you say, Jacob, how can you repeat, Israel, 27
'My way is hidden from Yahweh,
my rights are ignored by my God'? [p]
Did you not know? Had you not heard? 28
Gn 21:33 Yahweh is the everlasting God,
he created the remotest parts of the earth.
He does not grow tired or weary,
↗Rm 11:34 his understanding is beyond fathoming.
He gives strength to the weary, 29
he strengthens the powerless.
Youths grow tired and weary, 30
the young stumble and fall,
Ps 103:5 but those who hope in Yahweh will regain their strength, 31
they will sprout wings like eagles,
though they run they will not grow weary,
though they walk they will never tire.

45:1–8 **Cyrus, the instrument of Yahweh** [a]

Hab 2:20 41 Coasts and islands, fall silent before me, 1
and let the peoples renew their strength,
let them come forward and speak;
let us assemble for judgement.
'Who has raised from the east 2
him whom saving justice summons in its train, [b]
him to whom Yahweh delivers up the nations
40:23 and subjects kings,
him who reduces them to dust with his sword,
and to driven stubble with his bow,
him who pursues them and advances unhindered, 3
his feet scarcely touching the road? [c]
Who has acted thus, who has done this? 4
He who calls each generation from the beginning:
I, Yahweh, who am the first
44:6+ and till the last I shall still be there.' [d]
The coasts and islands have seen and taken fright, 5
the remotest parts of earth are trembling:
they are approaching, they are here!
40:19–20 People help one another, [e] 6
they say to each other, 'Take heart!'
The woodworker encourages the smelter, 7
the polisher encourages the hammerer,
saying of the soldering, 'It is sound';
and he fastens it with nails
to keep it steady.

43:1–7 **Israel, chosen and protected by Yahweh**

But you, Israel, my servant, [f] 8
Jacob whom I have chosen,
Dt 7:6+ descendant of Abraham my friend,
2 Ch 20:7
Ps 136:22 whom I have taken to myself, from the remotest parts of the earth 9
Jr 30:10
↗Jm 2:23 and summoned from countries far away,
to whom I have said, 'You are my servant,
I have chosen you, I have not rejected you,'
8:10+ do not be afraid, for I am with you; 10
do not be alarmed, for I am your God.

I give you strength, truly I help you,
truly I hold you firm with my saving right hand.
11 Look, all those who rage against you 45:24
will be put to shame and humiliated;
those who picked quarrels with you
will be reduced to nothing and will perish.
12 You will look for them but will not find them,
those who used to fight you;
they will be destroyed and brought to nothing,
those who made war on you.
13 For I, Yahweh, your God,
I grasp you by your right hand;
I tell you, 'Do not be afraid,
I shall help you.'
14 Do not be afraid, Jacob, you worm!
You little handful of Israel!
I shall help you, declares Yahweh;
your redeemer is the Holy One of Israel. [g] 6:3g;40:25
15 Look, I am making you into a threshing-sledge, 28:27
new, with double teeth;
you will thresh and beat the mountains to dust
and reduce the hills to straw.
16 You will winnow them and the wind will carry them off, Mt 3:12
the gale will scatter them;
whereas you will rejoice in Yahweh,
will glory in the Holy One of Israel.
17 The oppressed and needy search for water, and there is none,
their tongue is parched with thirst.
I, Yahweh, shall answer them,
I, the God of Israel, shall not abandon them.
18 I shall open up rivers on barren heights [h] 35:6–7;43:20; 48:21
and water-holes down in the ravines; Ps 114:8
I shall turn the dry ground into a lake
and dry ground into springs of water.
19 I shall plant the desert with cedar trees,
acacias, myrtles and olives;
in the wastelands I shall put cypress trees,
plane trees and box trees side by side;

p. Jacob-Israel represents the chosen people, here the Babylonian exiles, wondering whether Yahweh has forgotten his people, cf. earlier Ezk 37:11.

41 **a.** In response to the people's doubts, *see* 40:27, this great poem foretells the coming of a liberator. He is Cyrus, who is not named until 44:28, but was readily identifiable to Second Isaiah's contemporaries, cf. vv. 2–3 and 25. The poem was composed at the moment when Cyrus' thunderous advance made the fall of Babylon a predictable conclusion. Yahweh had raised him up, not to chastise like Sennacherib or Nebuchadnezzar, but to deliver.

b. The Hebr. word here rendered as 'saving justice' implies a restoration of the order willed by Yahweh and may also have the sense of 'victory', *see also* v. 10; 54:17.

c. 'scarcely touching', lit. 'with his feet he does not tread' *yabus* conj.; Hebr. *yabo'* 'he does not come'. • The image suggests the speed of Cyrus' advance.

d. For further use of this expression for the eternal nature of Yahweh, *see* Rv 1:8,17; 21:6; 22:13.

e. vv. 6–7 are an interpolation belonging to 40:19–20. *See* 40:18*l*.

f. This is the first appearance of the theme of 'the servant', occupying a prominent place in Second Isaiah's preaching; this theme is linked to that of Yahweh's choice, *see* 43:10–20; 44:1–2; 45:4, and the latter goes back to the calling of Abraham. Israel-Jacob, 'descendant of Abraham', has been chosen to be Yahweh's witness, 43:10; though the nation has been unfaithful, 42:19, God will forgive and save it, 44:1–5; 48:20. Rather than the relationship between master and slave, the notion of 'servant' here implies a relationship of trust and love. • On the 'songs of the servant', *see* Introduction to the Prophets, §9, pp. 1169–70.

g. The 'redeemer', *go'el*, is primarily the nearest male relative, the avenger of blood, Nb 35:19c, who pays off a debt and frees the debtor from prison and whose duty it is to protect the widow, Rt 2:20i. Hence the word is used of God as protector of the oppressed and liberator of his people. In this sense it is very frequent in Ps, Ps 19:14g, and in the second part of Is, 43:14; 44:6,24; 47:4; 48:17; 59:20; *see* Jr 50:34. The NT and Christian theology were later to take up the same idea and apply it to Jesus, he too being the 'redeemer'.

h. As Moses in the past had brought forth water from the rock to quench his people's thirst, Ex 17:1–7, so, during the coming return from exile, rivers will flow down from the mountains and make the desert into a fertile plain. Through the wonders attending the return from exile, the prophet foresees features of the Messianic age, *see* 11:6; Ezk 47:1–12.

so that people may see and know, 20
so that they may all observe and understand
that the hand of Yahweh has done this,
that the Holy One of Israel has created it.

The fatuity of idols [i]

43:8–13; 44:7–11
'Present your case,' says Yahweh, 21
'Produce your arguments,' says Jacob's king.
'Let them produce and reveal to us 22
what is going to happen.
What happened in the past?
Reveal it so that we can consider it
and know what the outcome will be.
Or tell us about the future,
reveal what is to happen next, 23
and then we shall know that you are gods.
At least, do something, be it good or bad,
so that we may feel alarm and fear.
41:29 Look, you are less than nothingness, 24
and what you do is less than nothing;[j]
to choose you is an outrage.'
I have raised him from the north and he has come, 25
from the east he has been summoned by name.[k]
He tramples on rulers like mud,[l]
like a potter treading clay.
Who revealed this from the beginning for us to know, 26
and in the past for us to say, 'That is right'?
No one in fact revealed it, no one proclaimed it,
no one has heard you speak.
First-fruits of Zion, look, here they come! 27
I send a messenger to Jerusalem,[m]
and I look—no one, 28
not a single counsellor among them
who, if I asked, could give an answer.
41:24 Taken altogether they are nothingness,[n] 29
what they do is nothing,
their statues, wind and emptiness.

↗Mt 12:18–21 **First song of the servant** [a]

42 Here is my servant whom I uphold, 1
11:1–10 Mt 3:16n Jn 1:32–34 my chosen one in whom my soul delights.
I have sent my spirit upon him,[b]
he will bring fair judgement to the nations.
He does not cry out or raise his voice, 2
his voice is not heard in the street;
he does not break the crushed reed 3
or snuff the faltering wick.
14:6 Jn 8:45 Faithfully he presents fair judgement;
he will not grow faint, he will not be crushed[c] 4
until he has established fair judgement on earth,
and the coasts and islands are waiting for his instruction.
Thus says God, Yahweh, 5
who created the heavens and spread them out,
who hammered into shape the earth and what comes from it,
who gave breath to the people on it,
and spirit to those who walk on it:

6 I, Yahweh, have called you in saving justice,
I have grasped you by the hand and shaped you;[d]
I have made you a covenant of the people
and light to the nations, Jn 8:12b
7 to open the eyes of the blind, Lk 7:22 Jn 9
to free captives from prison,
and those who live in darkness from the dungeon. Ps 107:10 Lk 1:79
8 I am Yahweh, that is my name![e] Jn 8:32
I shall not yield my glory to another,
nor my honour to idols. 48:11
9 See how the former predictions have come true.
Fresh things I now reveal;
before they appear I tell you of them.

Song of victory

10 Sing a new song to Yahweh![f] Ps 96:1 Rv 5:9
Let his praise be sung from remotest parts of the earth
by those who sail the sea and by everything in it,
by the coasts and islands and those who inhabit them.
11 Let the desert and its cities raise their voices,
the encampments where Kedar lives.
Let the inhabitants of the Rock cry aloud for joy[g]
and shout from the mountain tops.
12 Let them give glory to Yahweh
and, in the coasts and islands, let them voice his praise.
13 Yahweh advances like a hero, Nb 10:35 Jg 5:4
like a warrior he rouses his fire. Zp 1:14
He shouts, he raises the war cry,
he shows his might against his foes.
14 'From long ago I have been silent,
I have kept quiet, held myself in check,
groaning like a woman in labour,
panting and gasping for air.
15 I shall ravage mountain and hill,

i. As Yahweh had put the nations on trial, v. 1, so now he summons the false gods to appear before him. Their inability to predict the future and to act on world events is the proof of their vacuity. Second Isaiah contains the first explicit expression of absolute monotheism, *see* 43:8–13; 44:6–8; 45:5, the way for which is prepared by the practical type of monotheism represented by exclusive worship of Yahweh, God of Israel, *see* 42:8e and p. 1169. On polemic against idols, *see* 40:18*l*.

j. 'nothing' *'ephes* conj.; Hebr. *'apa'* unintelligible.

k. 'he has been summoned by name' conj., cf. 45:3; 'he calls (or proclaims) my name' Hebr. The formula means the selection of someone for a particular mission, Ex 31:2; Nb 1:17, at the same time expressing a privileged relationship between Yahweh and the person whom 'he calls by name', *see* 43:1; 45:3–4.

l. 'tramples on' *yabus* conj.; Hebr. *yabo'* 'he walks'.

m. lit. trans. of possibly corrupt text. This is presumably, as in v. 25, an allusion to Yahweh's announcement of deliverance by Cyrus, while the false gods remain dumb, v. 28.

n. 'nothingness' 1QIs[a], Targ.; 'misfortune' MT.

42 a. This is the first of the four 'songs of the servant' (42:1–4 (5–9); 49:1–6; 50:4–9 (10–11); 52:13–53:12), on which *see* Introduction to the Prophets, §9. Some consider that this first song ends at v. 7, others even at v. 4. In this poem, the servant is presented as a prophet, the object of a mission and a divine destiny, v. 6, cf. v. 4; Jr 1:5, quickened by the Spirit, Is 42:1, to teach the entire world, vv. 1 and 3, discreetly and firmly, vv. 2–4, in spite of opposition. But his mission transcends that of other prophets, since he is himself both covenant and light, v. 6, and performs a task of liberation and salvation, v. 7.

b. The choosing of the servant is accompanied by an outpouring of the Spirit as for the charismatic leaders of old time, the Judges, *see* Jg 3:10, and the early kings, Saul, 1 S 9:17, *see* Is 10:9–10, and David, 1 S 16:12–13; *see* Is 11:1–2. • By specifying *'Jacob*, my servant, . . . *Israel*, my chosen one', the Gk version bears witness, as does the gloss on 49:3, to a Jewish tradition identifying the servant with the community of Israel, thus designated in other passages of Second Isaiah, *see* 41:8f.

c. 'will not be crushed' Gk, Targ.; 'will not run' Hebr.

d. In Hebr. the same word as in Gn 2:7 to describe Yahweh, 'modelling' the body of the first man.

e. The name revealed to Moses, Ex 3:13g,14, of the one who alone exists. There is no other God, cf. 40:25; 43:10–12; 44:6–8; 45:3,5–6,14–15,18,20–22; 46:5,9; 48:11; cf. 41:21–29. He is the Creator of all things, 40:12seq., 21seq., 28; 42:5; 43:1; 44:24; 45:9–12; 48:13; 51:13; 54:5, eternal, 41:4; 44:6; 48:12. He 'will not yield his glory to another', here and at 48:11. The exultant monotheism of the Book of Consolation thus resumes the earlier theme of Yahweh's 'jealousy', Dt 4:24f; cf. Ex 20:3, reinforcing it with an explicit assertion of the transcendence of God.

f. This 'new song', v. 10, cf. Ps 96:1; 98:1; 149:1, is a lyrical celebration of Yahweh's victory, in which the whole world is invited to take part.

g. Kedar: a nomadic tribe, cf. 21:16–17. The Rock (Hebr. *Sela*): a desert city in Edom, cf. 16:1; 2 K 14:7.

shall wither all their vegetation;
44:27;50:2 Ps 107:33 I shall turn the torrents into firm ground [h]
and dry up the marshes.
35:5;42:19j I shall lead the blind by a road they do not know, 16
by paths they do not know I shall conduct them.
I shall turn the darkness into light before them
and the quagmires into solid ground.
This I shall do—without fail.'
Those who trust in idols will recoil, 17
they will blush for shame, who say to metal images,
'You are our gods.'

6:9–10 **Israel's blindness** [i]

Listen, you deaf! 18
Look and see, you blind!
41:8f Mt 13:9–15 Who so blind as my servant, 19
so deaf as the messenger I send?
(Who so blind as the friend I have taken to myself,
so deaf as Yahweh's servant?) [j]
You have seen many things but not observed them; 20
your ears are open but you do not hear. [k]
Yahweh wished, because of his saving justice, 21
to make the Law great and glorious.
Yet here is a people pillaged and plundered, 22
all of them shut up in caves,
imprisoned in dungeons.
They have been pillaged, with no one to rescue them,
plundered, with no one to say, 'Give it back!'
Which of you will listen to this, 23
who pay attention and listen in future?
Who surrendered Jacob to the plunderer 24
and Israel to the pillagers?
Was it not Yahweh, against whom we had sinned,
in whose ways they would not walk
and whose Law they would not obey?
On him he poured out his blazing anger 25
and the fury of war;
9:17–18 Am 4:6f it enveloped him in flames and yet he did not understand;
it burned him up, but he did not learn a lesson.

God, Israel's protector and liberator [a]

44:2 **43** And now, thus says Yahweh, 1
he who created you, Jacob,
who formed you, Israel:
41:14g Do not be afraid, for I have redeemed you;
41:8 I have called you by your name, you are mine.
Ps 91 Should you pass through the waters, I shall be with you; 2
or through rivers, they will not swallow you up.
↗1 Co 3:15 Should you walk through fire, you will not suffer,
and the flame will not burn you.
For I am Yahweh, your God, 3
the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour.
I have given Egypt for your ransom,
1 K 10:1a Cush and Seba in exchange for you. [b]
Since I regard you as precious, 4
since you are honoured and I love you,

I therefore give people in exchange for you,
and nations in return for your life.
5 Do not be afraid, for I am with you. 8:10+
I shall bring your offspring from the east,
and gather you from the west.
6 To the north I shall say, 'Give them up!'
and to the south, 'Do not hold them back!'
Bring back my sons from far away
and my daughters from the remotest part of the earth,
7 everyone who bears my name,
whom I have created for my glory,
whom I have formed, whom I have made.

Yahweh alone is God [c] 41:21–29; 42:18i

8 Bring forward the people that is blind, yet has eyes, 44:7–11
that is deaf and yet has ears.
9 Let all the nations assemble,
let the peoples gather here!
Which of them has proclaimed this
and revealed things to us in the past?
Let them bring their witnesses to justify themselves,
let others hear and say, 'It is true.'
10 You yourselves are my witnesses, declares Yahweh, Ac 1:8j
and the servant whom I have chosen, 41:8f; Jn 15:16
so that you may know and believe me
and understand that it is I. Jn 8:24,28i
No god was formed before me, 44:6+
nor will be after me.
11 I, I am Yahweh, Dt 32:39
and there is no other Saviour but me. Ho 13:4 Ac 4:12
12 I have revealed, have saved, and have proclaimed,
not some foreigner among you.
You are my witnesses, declares Yahweh,

13 I am God, ·yes, from eternity I am. [d] 42:8e Dt 32:39
No one can deliver from my hand;
when I act, who can thwart me?

Against Babylon

14 Thus says Yahweh,
your redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: 41:14g
For your sake I have sent to Babylon,
I shall knock down all the prison bars,

h. lit. 'into islands'. v. 15 is in antithetical parallelism with 41:18, but is not a threat; it expresses Yahweh's absolute sovereignty over nature.

i. It is not God who, deaf and blind to Israel's fate, draws down disaster on him, but Israel who is deaf and blind; he understands neither what is happening to him nor why it happens to him. This prophecy is parallel to the instructions given to Isaiah at the time of his calling, *see* 6:10k. • vv. 21 and 24[b] seem to be additional.

j. 'the friend I have taken to myself' trans. conj.; elsewhere the Hebr. word means 'repaid' but it can be understood in the sense of 'received into friendship'. 'deaf' Sym. and 2 Hebr. MSS; Hebr. repeats 'blind'. • This entire repetition of v. 19[a] is probably a gloss.

k. 'you do not' conj.; 'he does not' Hebr.

43 a. Prophecy of salvation, parallel to that in 41:8–20. Israel has nothing to fear, vv. 1 and 5, since the choice by Yahweh long ago is a guarantee of approaching deliverance.

b. Cush and Seba (as distinct from Saba in northern Arabia) are two regions in Africa, south of Egypt, *see* 45:14. This is not a precise historical reference, merely an evocation of far-away peoples. Yahweh is supreme master of all nations and Israel's approaching deliverance is part of his universal design.

c. Israel, though deaf and blind to the events of its own history, *see* 42:18i, serves by this very history as witness to Yahweh against the nations and their gods: a further demonstration of monotheism from the impotence of the false gods, *see* 41:21i.

d. 'from eternity' versions; 'from today' Hebr. This short prophecy is perhaps the continuation of 43:1–7.

and the Chaldaeans' shouts of joy will change to lamentations. [e]
6:3g Lv 17:1a I am Yahweh, your Holy One, 15
the Creator of Israel, your king.

40:3e Ex 14:21–29 **Miracles of the new Exodus**

Thus says Yahweh, 16
who made a way through the sea,
a path in the raging waters,
who led out chariot and horse 17
together with an army of picked troops:
they lay down never to rise again,
they were snuffed out, put out like a wick.
No need to remember past events, 18
65:17 no need to think about what was done before. [f]
↗2 Co 5:17 ↗Rv 21:5 Look, I am doing something new, 19
now it emerges; can you not see it?
11:16j Yes, I am making a road in the desert
and rivers in wastelands.
The wild animals will honour me, 20
the jackals and the ostriches,
35:6–7 Ex 17:1–7 for bestowing water in the desert
and rivers on the wastelands
for my people, my chosen one, to drink.
↗1 P 2:9 The people I have shaped for myself 21
will broadcast my praises.

Israel's ingratitude [g]

But, Jacob, you have not invoked me; 22
no, Israel, you have grown weary of me.
You have not brought me lambs as your burnt offerings 23
and have not honoured me with your sacrifices.
I have not subjected you to cereal offering,
I have not wearied you by demanding incense.
You have not bought expensive reed for me [h] 24
or sated me with the fat of your sacrifices.
Instead you have subjected me with your sins,
you have wearied me with your crimes,
I, I it is who blot out your acts of revolt for my own sake 25
and shall not call your sins to mind.
Remind me, and we will judge this together; 26
state your own case and justify yourself.
Gn 27:36 Jr 9:3 Ho 12:4 Your first ancestor sinned, [i] 27
your interpreters revolted against me. [j]
That is why I deposed the chief men of my sanctuary, 28
why I put Jacob under the curse of destruction
and subjected Israel to insult.

The blessing in store for Israel

41:8f **44** And now listen, Jacob my servant, 1
Israel whom I have chosen.
43:1;44:24 Ps 22:9 Thus says Yahweh who made you, 2
who formed you in the womb; he will help you.
Do not be afraid, Jacob my servant,
Dt 32:15; 33:5,26 Jeshurun [a] whom I have chosen.
For I shall pour out water on the thirsty soil 3
Jn 7:38–39 and streams on the dry ground.

I shall pour out my spirit on your descendants, 11:2c;42:1b
my blessing on your offspring,
4 and they will spring up among the grass,
like willows on the banks of a stream.
5 One person will say, 'I belong to Yahweh,'
another will call himself by Jacob's name.
On his hand another will write 'Yahweh's' [b]
and be surnamed 'Israel'.

There is only one God 41:4,14g,21–29;42:8e;43:8–13;48:12

6 Thus says Yahweh, Israel's king, Dt 32:39
Yahweh Sabaoth, his redeemer: ↗Rv 1:8,17;21:6;22:13
I am the first and I am the last; 43:10
there is no God except me.
7 Who is like me? Let him call out, Dn 10:13b
let him affirm it and convince me it is so;
let him say what has been happening [c]
since I instituted an eternal people,
and predict to them what will happen next!
8 Have no fear, do not be afraid:
have I not told you and revealed it long ago?
You are my witnesses. 43:10,12
Is there any God except me? 45:21
There is no Rock; I know of none. 17:10 Dt 32:4

The fatuity of idols [d] Jr 2:26–28;10:1–16

9 The makers of idols are all nothingness; the works they delight in serve no purpose.
And these are the witness against them: they see nothing, they know nothing; and
10 so they will be put to shame. •Who ever fashioned a god or cast an image without
11 hope of gain? •Watch how all its devotees will be put to shame, and the men who
made it too, who are only human. Let them all assemble, let them stand forward
and feel both fear and shame!
12 The blacksmith makes an axe over the charcoal, beats it into shape with a
hammer, works on it with his strong arm. Then he feels hungry and his strength
deserts him; having drunk no water, he is exhausted.
13 The wood carver takes his measurements, outlines the image with chalk, exe-
cutes it with the chisel, following the outline with a compass. He makes it look like
a human being, with human standards of beauty, so that it can reside in a house.
14 He has cut down cedars, has selected an oak and a terebinth which he has grown
for himself among the trees in the forest and has planted a pine tree which the rain
15 has nourished. •Once it is suitable to burn, he takes some of it to warm himself; Ws 13:11–19
having kindled it, he bakes bread. But he also makes a god and worships it; he

e. 'prison bars' *berihim* compare Vulg.; Hebr. *barihim* 'fugitives'. • 'to lamentations' *ba'aniyyot* conj.; Hebr. *ba'oniyyot* 'on ships'.

f. The prodigies of the past, the crossing of the Sea and the destruction of the Egyptian army, will be eclipsed by the even greater wonders which God is about to perform in the new Exodus.

g. This prophecy of blame, exceptional in Second Isaiah, plays on the words 'to make weary' and 'to subject'. Whereas God might have wearied and subjected Israel by cultic obligations, Israel instead has made a servant of God and wearied him by its sins. But God will forgive this if Israel admits its wrong-doing, vv. 25–26.

h. An aromatic reed prized for its scent, in secular and religious use, Sg 4:14; Ezk 27:19.

i. This is clearly Jacob, *see* v. 22, regarded unfavourably here, following a tradition alien to Gn but found in Ho 12:3–4.

j. The prophets, *see* for instance 1 K 13:11–32; 19:2–4, and the false prophets to whom the people listened.

44 a. A poetic name for Israel, found elsewhere only in Dt 32:15; 33:5 and 26 and Si 37:25 (Hebr.), is of uncertain meaning: perhaps 'loyal' from *yashar* 'honest', 'upright', as opposed to Jacob 'he who supplants'.

b. A sign of belonging to Yahweh, like the name of the Beast marked on its devotees in Rv 13:16–17, or the tattooing practised in Hellenistic cults. The passage refers to converts to Yahwism who are integrated into Jacob-Israel. • In 49:16, Yahweh engraves Zion on the palms of his hands, so as not to forget her.

c. 'let him say' added as in 1QIs[a]. The last two lines are uncertain.

d. This satire on the makers of idols, in which neither God nor Israel is mentioned, is an addition from the same hand as 42:6–7. *See* Jr 10:1–16, which is similarly inauthentic.

makes an idol from it and bows down before it. ·Half of it he burns on the fire, over 16
this half he roasts meat, eats it[e] and is replete; at the same time he warms himself
and says, 'Ah, how warm I am, watching the flames!' ·With the remainder he 17
makes a god, his idol, bows down before it, worships it and prays to it. 'Save me,'
he says, 'for you are my god.'[f]

They know nothing, they understand nothing, since their eyes are incapable of 18
seeing and their hearts of reflecting. ·Not one of them looks into his heart, not one 19
of them has the knowledge and wit to think, 'I burned half of it on the fire and
cooked food over the embers. Am I right to make something disgusting out of what
is left? Am I right to bow down before a block of wood?'

He hankers after ashes, his deluded heart has led him astray; he will not save 20
himself, he will not think, 'What I have in my hand is nothing but a lie!'

Loyalty to Yahweh[g]

46:8 Remember these things, Jacob, 21
and Israel, since you are my servant.
41:8f I formed you, you are my servant;
49:14–16 Israel, I shall not forget you.
I have dispelled your acts of revolt like a cloud 22
and your sins like a mist.
Come back to me, for I have redeemed you.
Heavens, shout for joy, for Yahweh has acted! 23
Underworld, shout aloud!
Shout for joy, you mountains,
forests and all your trees!
41:14g For Yahweh has redeemed Jacob
and displayed his glory in Israel.

God, Creator of the world and lord of history[h]

Thus says Yahweh, your redeemer, 24
he who formed you in the womb:
I, Yahweh, have made all things,
42:5 I alone spread out the heavens.
When I hammered the earth into shape, who was with me?
I, who foil the omens of soothsayers 25
1 Co 1:20 and make fools of diviners,
who confound sages
turning their knowledge into folly,
who confirm the word of my servant 26
and make the plans of my envoys succeed;
who say to Jerusalem, 'You will be inhabited,'
and to the towns of Judah, 'You will be rebuilt
and I shall restore the ruins of Jerusalem';
42:15; who say to the ocean, 'Dry up! 27
I shall make your rivers run dry';
who say to Cyrus, 'My shepherd.' 28
He will perform my entire will
by saying to Jerusalem, 'You will be rebuilt,'
and to the Temple, 'You will be refounded.'[i]

41:1–5 **Cyrus, the instrument of God**[a]

45 Thus says Yahweh to his anointed one, 1
to Cyrus whom, he says, I have grasped by his right hand,
to make the nations bow before him
and to disarm kings,[b]
to open gateways before him

so that their gates be closed no more:
2 I myself shall go before you, 40:4
I shall level the heights,
I shall shatter the bronze gateways,
I shall smash the iron bars. Ps 107:16
3 I shall give you secret treasures
and hidden hoards of wealth,
so that you will know that I am Yahweh,
who call you by your name, 43:1
the God of Israel.
4 It is for the sake of my servant Jacob 41:8f
and of Israel my chosen one,
that I have called you by your name,
have given you a title though you do not know me.
5 I am Yahweh, and there is no other, 40:25;44:6+
there is no other God except me. 2 S 7:22
Though you do not know me, I have armed you
6 so that it may be known from east to west
that there is no one except me.
I am Yahweh, and there is no other,
7 I form the light and I create the darkness, Am 4:13
I make well-being, and I create disaster, Jb 2:10
I, Yahweh, do all these things. Si 11:14
Am 3:6

Prayer [c]

8 Rain down, you heavens, from above, Dt 32:2
and let the clouds pour down saving justice, Ps 85:10–11
let the earth open up and blossom with salvation, 51:5;56:1;
and let justice sprout up with it; [d] 61:11
I, Yahweh, have created it!

The supreme power of Yahweh

9 Woe to anyone who argues with his Maker, 29:16g
one earthenware pot among many! Rm 9:20
Does the clay say to its potter, 'What are you doing?
Your work has no hands!' [e]
10 Woe to anyone who asks a father, 'Why are you begetting?'
and a woman, 'Why are you giving birth?'

e. 'he roasts meat, eats it' Gk, *see* v. 19; Hebr. inverts the two verbs.

f. As well as Ws 13:11seq., a parallel is to be found in Horace, *Sat.* I, 8, 1seq.

g. vv. 21–23 follow on from vv. 1–8, before the insertion of vv. 9–20. v. 23 perhaps forms the conclusion to the section beginning at 42:10.

h. Resumption of the theme of God's omnipotence about to be manifested most particularly in the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the part to be played by Cyrus, explicitly named for the first time in v. 28, cf. 41:1–5, to whom the prophecy of 45:1–7 will be addressed.

i. The second part of the v. is perhaps an addition; it repeats v. 26[c] and mentions the rebuilding of the Temple which does not occur elsewhere in Second Isaiah. But the addition is an ancient one and the versions have been confused by the attribution of these words to Cyrus, instead rendering v. 28[c]: 'I it is who say,' cf. v. 26.

45 a. This is a royal enthronement prophecy like those in Ps 2 and 110: Cyrus is summoned 'by name', Is 45:3–4, *see* 41:25k, and receives the title of 'Yahweh's anointed one' which used to be reserved for the kings of Israel and became the title of the awaited saviour-king, *see* Introduction to the Prophets, §5. The paradox is that the title is here conferred on a foreign ruler who does not know Yahweh, vv. 4–5. The prophecy is curiously similar to a Babylonian text, the 'Cyrus Cylinder', in which Marduk, who was not a Persian god, 'named the name of Cyrus and summoned him to rule the whole world.' The latter text, drawn up by the priests of Babylon, was written, like Second Isaiah's prophecy, at the moment of Cyrus' victorious advance, in 539 BC.

b. lit. 'I shall ungird the loins of kings', cf. 1 K 20:11 and the inverse formula 'gird the loins', 'buckle on the sword'.

c. This prayer (Lat. *Rorate coeli desuper* . . .) is immediately concerned with the deliverance and 'saving justice' that Cyrus is shortly to bring, but which are Yahweh's creation, *see* 41:2b. By substituting 'upright one' and 'Saviour' for the abstract terms of the Hebr., St Jerome emphasised the messianic import of the prophecy.

d. First Isaiah already compared the messianic prince to a new shoot bursting from the stock of David, 4:2; 6:13; 11:1, *see* Jr 23:5 = 33:15. In *Zc* 3:8, the word 'branch' becomes a messianic title.

e. i.e. perhaps, 'is incomplete' or 'is useless'. The image of the potter, inspired by 29:16, cf. Jr 18:1–12; 19:1–11, is used again by Paul, Rm 9:20–21.

Thus says Yahweh, 11
the Holy One of Israel and his Maker:
I am asked for signs regarding my sons,[f]
I am given orders about the work I do.
It was I who made the earth 12
and I created human beings on it,
mine were the hands that spread out the heavens
and I have given the orders to all their array.
I myself have raised him[g] in saving justice 13
and I shall make all paths level for him.
He will rebuild my city
and bring my exiles home
without ransom or indemnity,
says Yahweh Sabaoth.

The conversion of the nations[h]

Thus says Yahweh: 14
The produce of Egypt, the commerce of Cush
Si 36:4 and the men of Seba, tall of stature,
1 K 10:1 will come over to you and belong to you.
They will follow you, walking in chains,
they will bow before you,
they will pray to you,
'With you alone is God, and there is no other!
The gods do not exist.'
Truly, you are a God who conceals himself, 15
God of Israel, Saviour![i]
They are shamed and humbled, every one of them, 16
humiliated they go, the makers of idols.
Israel will be saved by Yahweh, 17
saved everlastingly.
You will never be ashamed or humiliated
for ever and ever.
For thus says Yahweh, the Creator of the heavens— 18
he is God, who shaped the earth and made it,
who set it firm;
he did not create it to be chaos,
he formed it to be lived in:
I am Yahweh, and there is no other.
Dt 30:11–14 I have not spoken in secret, 19
Jn 18:20 in some dark corner of the underworld.
Ac 26:26 I did not say, 'Offspring of Jacob,
search for me in chaos!'
I am Yahweh: I proclaim saving justice,
I say what is true.

God, lord of the whole universe[j]

Assemble, come, all of you gather round, survivors of the nations. 20
They have no knowledge, those who parade their wooden idols
and pray to a god
that cannot save.
Speak up, present your case, 21
let them put their heads together!
41:22;43:9–12; 48:5 Who foretold this in the past,
who revealed it long ago?
Ps 18:31 Was it not I, Yahweh?

There is no other god except me,
no saving God, no Saviour except me!
22 Turn to me and you will be saved,
all you ends of the earth,
for I am God, and there is no other.
23 By my own self I swear it;
what comes from my mouth is saving justice,
it is an irrevocable word:
All shall bend the knee to me, ↗Rm 14:11 Ph 2:10–11
by me every tongue shall swear,
24 saying, 'In Yahweh alone [k]
are saving justice and strength,'
until all those who used to rage at him 41:11
come to him in shame.
25 In Yahweh the whole race of Israel
finds justice and glory.

44:8

The fall of Babylon [a]

1 **46** Bel is crouching, Nebo cowering, Jr 50:2
their idols are being put on animals, on beasts of burden,
the loads you have been carrying
are a burden to a weary beast.
2 They are cowering and crouching together,
no one can save this burden,
they themselves have gone into captivity.
3 Listen to me, House of Jacob,
all who remain of the House of Israel,
whom I have carried since the womb, 63:9 Ex 19:4
whom I have supported since you were conceived. [b] Ps 22:10
4 Until your old age I shall be the same,
until your hair is grey I shall carry you.
As I have done, so I shall support you,
I myself shall carry and shall save you.
5 With whom can you compare me, equate me, [c] 44:7
to whom can you liken me, making equals of us?
6 They lavish gold from their purses
and weigh out silver on the scales. [d]
They engage a goldsmith to make a god, 40:19–20+
then bow low and actually adore!
7 They lift it on their shoulders and carry it,
and put it down where it is meant to stand,
so that it never moves from the spot.
You may cry out to it in distress, it never replies,
it never saves anyone in trouble.

f. 'his creator', lit. 'his fashioner', cf. Gn 2:7–8. • 'signs' *'otot* conj.; Hebr. *'otiyyot* 'things to come'.

g. Cyrus, as before, cf. 41:2.

h. This universalism, foreseeing a future gathering of the nations round Jerusalem to worship the God of Israel, is also found in 2:2–4 (= Mi 4:1–3); Jr 12:15–16; 16:19–21; Zp 3:9–10. It is one of the key ideas of the Book of Consolation, 42:1–4,6; 45:14–16,20–25; 49:6; 55:3–5; *see also* 60. It reappears after the Exile, *see* Zc 2:15; 8:20–23; 14:9,16. See also Ps 87 and Jon.

i. This isolated v. points a theological lesson: Yahweh no longer acts directly in history as formerly, he hides behind his instruments (Cyrus); but, for his people, he still remains the Saviour whose omnipotence is patently manifest in his creative work, vv. 18–19.

j. The polemic against false gods, already encountered several times in Second Isaiah (*see* 40:12–31,18*l*), here attains a universalism not so clearly expressed heretofore, *see* v. 14 above.

k. 'saying, In Yahweh alone' Gk; 'in Yahweh alone, he told me' Hebr.

46 a. The prophet foresees the capture of Babylon by Cyrus. The gods of the Assyro-Babylonian pantheon, Bel, god of the sky, and Nebo, god of wisdom, are crushed. The Babylonians flee, carrying their gods, i.e. the idols representing them.

b. Unlike the idolaters carrying their gods as they flee, Yahweh has carried Israel from the beginning.

c. The contrast between the conquered Babylonian gods and Yahweh the triumphant God of Israel leads the prophet to resume his theme of the true God's incomparable power, cf. 41:21–29; 42:8; 43:8–13; 44:7.

d. 'scales', lit. 'reed', i.e. the arm of the balance.

44:21 Remember this and stand firm; [e] 8
rebels, look into your hearts.
Remember the things that happened long ago, 9
for I am God, and there is no other,
God, and there is none like me.
41:26–27; 45:21+ From the beginning I revealed the future, 10
in advance, what has not yet occurred.
Ps 33:11 I say: My purpose will come about,
Ep 1:11 I shall do whatever I please;
41:2,5;45:13 I call a bird of prey from the east, [f] 11
my man predestined, from a distant land.
What I have said, I shall do,
what I have planned, I shall perform.
Listen to me, you hard-hearted people 12
51:5 far removed from saving justice:
I am bringing my justice nearer, 13
it is not far away,
my salvation will not delay.
I shall place my salvation in Zion
and my glory in Israel.

13 and notes **Lament for Babylon** [a]

47 Step down! Sit in the dust, 1
virgin daughter of Babylon. [b]
3:26 Sit on the ground, no throne,
daughter of the Chaldaeans,
for never again will you be called
tender and delicate.
Take the grinding mill, crush up the meal. 2
Remove your veil,
tie up your skirt, bare your legs,
cross the rivers.
Jr 13:22 Ho 2:5i Let your nakedness be displayed 3
and your shame exposed.
I am going to take vengeance
and no one will stand in my way. [c]

41:14g Our redeemer, Yahweh Sabaoth is his name, 4
the Holy One of Israel, says: [d]
Sit in silence, bury yourself in darkness, 5
daughter of the Chaldaeans,
for never again will you be called
the mistress of kingdoms.
10:6 Zc 1:15 Being angry with my people, 6
I rejected my heritage,
surrendering them into your clutches.
You showed them no mercy,
you made your yoke very heavy on the aged.
You thought, 'I shall be a queen forever.' 7
You did not reflect on these matters
or think about the future.

Now listen to this, voluptuous woman, 8
‖Zp 2:15 ↗Rv 18:7–8 lolling at ease
and thinking to yourself,
'I am the only one who matters. [e]

I shall never be widowed,
never know bereavement.'
9 Yet both these things will befall you,
suddenly, in one day.
Bereavement and widowhood
will suddenly befall you
in spite of all your witchcraft
and the potency of your spells.
10 Confident in your wickedness,
you thought, 'No one can see me.'
Your wishes and your knowledge
were what deluded you,
as you thought to yourself,
'I am the only one who matters.'
11 Hence, disaster will befall you
which you will not know how to charm away,
calamity overtake you
which you will not be able to avert,
ruination will suddenly befall you,
such as you have never known.
12 Keep to your spells then ↗Rv 18:23
and all your sorceries,
at which you have worked so hard since you were young.
Perhaps you will succeed,
perhaps you will strike terror!
13 You have had many tiring consultations:
let the astrologers come forward now and save you,
the star-gazers
who announce month by month
what will happen to you next.
14 Look, they are like wisps of straw,
the fire will burn them up.
They will not save their lives
from the power of the flame.
No embers these, for keeping warm,
no fire to sit beside!
15 Such will your wizards prove to be for you,[f]
for whom you have worked so hard since you were young;
each wandering his own way,
none of them can save you.

Yahweh has foretold everything[a]

1 48 Listen to this, House of Jacob,
you who are called by the name of Israel

e. Meaning uncertain: sometimes emended to 'be confused', but Gk 'be firm' seems to support the proposed trans.

f. i.e. Cyrus, who swoops on his enemies like a bird of prey. The term is not pejorative.

47 a. The poem is a *qinah*, or lament with uneven lines. It is the only example in Second Isaiah of such 'prophecies against the nations' as are found in the other prophets; its style is reminiscent of prophecies of punishment directed against Jerusalem.

b. Expression commonly used for a personified town or country, *see* 23:12 (Sidon); 37:22 = 2 K 19:21; Jr 14:17 ('my people'); 46:11 (Egypt); Lm 1:15 (Judah); 2:13 (Zion).

c. 'no one will' conj.; 'I shall not' Hebr.

d. In Hebr. the v. has no verb and is possibly a gloss; Gk, followed here, has 'says'.

e. Babylon is apparently trying to rival Yahweh, cf. 42:8; 45:14; 46:9. She will be punished for her pride.

f. 'wizards': the term normally means 'merchants' (etymologically: 'those who come and go'?) but, in the light of an identical word in Accadian, it can be taken to mean 'wizard', 'magician', *see* vv. 9.12–13.

48 a. Long beforehand, God had predicted 'things past' to his incredulous and rebellious people, v. 3, i.e. the earlier events of salvation-history. Now he announces 'new things', v. 6, i.e. the deliverance which he is in the act of performing for the honour of his name. The severe tone of the prophecy is surprising in the prophet of Consolation.

and issued from the waters of Judah, [b]
Jr 5:2 who swear by the name of Yahweh
and invoke the God of Israel,
Am 5:21n though not in good faith or uprightness;
for they call themselves after the holy city 2
and rely on the God of Israel,
Yahweh Sabaoth is his name.
Things now past I revealed long ago, 3
they issued from my mouth, I proclaimed them;
suddenly I acted and they happened.
Ex 32:9d For I knew you to be obstinate, [c] 4
your neck an iron sinew
and your forehead bronze.
As I told you about it long before, 5
42:9 before it happened I revealed it to you,
so that you could not say, 'My statue did it,
my idol, my metal image, ordained this.'
You have heard and seen all this, 6
why won't you admit it?
Now I am going to reveal new things to you,
secrets that you do not know;
they have just been created, not long ago, 7
and until today you have heard nothing about them,
so that you cannot say, 'Yes, I knew about this.'
No, you have not heard, you have not known, 8
for a long time your ear has not been attentive,
for I knew how treacherous you were;
1:2+ you have been called a rebel since the womb.
For the sake of my name I shall defer my anger, 9
for the sake of my honour I shall be patient with you,
rather than destroy you.
Look, I have purchased you, but not for silver, [d] 10
I have chosen you out of the cauldron of affliction.
Ezk 36:22 For my sake and my sake only shall I act, 11
for why should my name be profaned? [e]
42:8 I will not yield my glory to another.

Yahweh has chosen Cyrus

Listen to me, Jacob, 12
Israel whom I have called:
44:6+ I, and none else, am the first,
I am also the last.
My hand laid the foundations of earth 13
and my right hand spread out the heavens.
Rm 4:17 I summon them
and they all present themselves together.
Assemble, all of you, and listen; 14
which of them has revealed this?
Yahweh loves him; he will do his pleasure
on Babylon and the race of the Chaldaeans; [f]
I, I have spoken, yes, I have summoned him, 15
I have brought him, and he will succeed.

Israel's destiny

Come near and listen to this: [g] 16
45:19 from the first, I never spoke obscurely;

when it happened, I was there,
and now Lord Yahweh has sent me with his spirit.
17 Thus says Yahweh, your redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: 41:14g
I am Yahweh your God and teach you for your own good,
I lead you in the way you ought to go.
18 If only you had listened to my commandments!
Your prosperity would have been like a river
and your saving justice like the waves of the sea.
19 Your descendants would have been numbered like the sand, Gn 15:5; 22:17
your offspring as many as its grains.
Their name would never be cancelled or blotted out from my presence.

The end of the Exile [h]

20 Come out from Babylon! Flee from the Chaldaeans! Jr 50:8;51:6.45 Rv 18:4
Declare this with cries of joy, proclaim it,
carry it to the remotest parts of earth,
say, 'Yahweh has redeemed his servant Jacob.' 41:8f
21 Those he led through the arid country never went thirsty; 40:3c Ps 78:15–16
he made water flow for them from the rock,
he split the rock and out streamed the water. Ex 17:1–7
22 There is no peace, says Yahweh, for the wicked. 57:21

Second song of the servant [a] 42:1a

1 **49** Coasts and islands, listen to me, 41:1a
pay attention, distant peoples.
Yahweh called me when I was in the womb, Ps 2:7 Jr 1:5
before my birth he had pronounced my name. [b] Ga 1:15
2 He made my mouth like a sharp sword, Heb 4:12 Rv 1:16; 19:15
he hid me in the shadow of his hand.
He made me into a sharpened arrow
and concealed me in his quiver.
3 He said to me, 'Israel, [c] you are my servant, ↗Mt 3:17n
through whom I shall manifest my glory.'
4 But I said, 'My toil has been futile, 53:10–12

b. Obscure imagery. The Targum understands it as 'of the seed of Judah'. Gk has merely 'issued from Judah'.

c. Israel's obstinacy is a familiar theme of the prophets and the historical books. Israel has 'stiffened his neck', Ex 32:9; Dt 9:13; 2 K 17:14; Jr 7:26, has made himself blind and deaf, Is 6:9–10; 42:19–20; 43:8, by refusing to serve God, by breaking the yoke of his Law, Jr 2:20; 5:5. His punishment is to bend his neck to the yoke of a foreign nation, Dt 28:48; cf. Is 9:3; 10:27; Jr 27:8,11,12; 30:8. But Yahweh has not rejected his people, vv. 9–11, and the revelation of his salvation will triumph over the blindness of the rebels, 42:7,16,18; 43:8–12.

d. 'purchased' Gk; 'purified' Hebr. It would be tempting to read: 'I have purified you . . . I have tested you in the furnace . . .' (with 1QIs[a]), but this would require the emending of 'not for silver' to 'like silver', which is not attested by any witness.

e. 'my name' added, following Gk and Lat.; Hebr. only has 'why should it be profaned?'—possibly a reader's gloss.

f. 'the race of the Chaldaeans' Gk; 'his arm (are) the Chaldaeans' Hebr. • Yahweh's beloved is either Israel or Cyrus who is certainly referred to in the following v. But the text is perhaps corrupt.

g. Apparently the prophet intervenes at this point to utter a new prophecy, vv. 17–19, a meditation on what the destiny of Israel would have been, if Israel had been faithful. The promises are those made by Yahweh to Abraham, Gn 13:16; 17:6seq.; 22:17, and echoed throughout the Bible, especially in Dt and in the sayings of the prophets, *see* 1 K 4:20; Ho 2:1.

h. The day of deliverance has come. This triumph-song concludes the section 47–48.

49 a. Scholars disagree over the length of this song, some believing that it ends at v. 6, while others include vv. 7–9. This second song takes up the same theme as the first (42:1–8), while emphasising certain aspects of the servant's mission: predestination, vv. 1 and 5, a mission not merely extending to Israel whom he is to re-gather, v. 5, but also to the nations, to whom he must bring light, v. 6, new and striking teaching, v. 2, bringing light and salvation, v. 6. To this it adds mention of a failure, vv. 4 and 7[a], of his trust in God alone, vv. 4 and 5, and of a final triumph, v. 7. The third and fourth songs, 50:4–9 (10–11); 52:13–53:12, add further details about the person and mission of the servant.

b. The prophet has been predestined, like Jeremiah, *see* Jr 1:5.

c. 'Israel' is generally considered to be a gloss inspired by 44:21 and incompatible with vv. 5–6 which make a distinction between the servant and Jacob/Israel. The word, however, appears in all witnesses to the text. It can be justified perhaps by the ambivalence of the figure of the servant, who is sometimes Israel and sometimes Israel's leader and Saviour.

I have exhausted myself for nothing, to no purpose.'
Yet all the while my cause was with Yahweh
and my reward with my God.
And now Yahweh has spoken, 5
who formed me in the womb to be his servant,
to bring Jacob back to him
and to re-unite Israel to him;[d]
Jn 17:5 —I shall be honoured in Yahweh's eyes,
Ph 2:8–11 and my God has been my strength.—
He said, 'It is not enough for you to be my servant, 6
to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back the survivors of Israel;
↗Lk 2:32 I shall make you a light to the nations
↗Ac 13:47 so that my salvation may reach the remotest parts of earth.'
Thus says Yahweh, 7
41:14g the redeemer, the Holy One of Israel,[e]
to the one who is despised, detested by the nation,[f]
to the slave of despots:
60:10 Kings will stand up when they see,
princes will see and bow low,
because of Yahweh who is faithful,
the Holy One of Israel who has chosen you.

The joyful homecoming

Thus says Yahweh: 8
↗2 Co 6:2 At the time of my favour I have answered you,
on the day of salvation I have helped you.
= 42:6 I have formed you and have appointed you
to be the covenant for a people,
to restore the land,
to return ravaged properties,
42:7 to say to prisoners, 'Come out,' 9
to those who are in darkness, 'Show yourselves.'
Along the roadway they will graze,
and any bare height will be their pasture.[g]
4:5–6;25:4–5 They will never hunger or thirst, 10
↗Rv 7:16 scorching wind and sun will never plague them;
for he who pities them will lead them,
Jn 4:1a will guide them to springs of water.
11:6j;40:3–4 I shall turn all my mountains into a road 11
and my highways will be raised aloft.
Look! Here they come from far away, 12
look, these from the north and the west,
those from the land of Sinim.[h]

Shout for joy, you heavens; earth, exult! 13
Mountains, break into joyful cries!
For Yahweh has consoled his people,
40:1 is taking pity on his afflicted ones.
40:27;54:8c Zion was saying, 'Yahweh has abandoned me, 14
Ps 22:1–2 the Lord has forgotten me.'
Ho 11:8–9
Can a woman forget her baby at the breast, 15
feel no pity for the child she has borne?
Even if these were to forget,
44:21 I shall not forget you.[i]
Jr 31:20
Look, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands, 16
60:10 your ramparts are ever before me.

17 Your rebuilders are hurrying,[j]
your destroyers and despoilers will soon go away.

18 Raise your eyes and look around you: =60:4
all are assembling, coming to you.
By my life, declares Yahweh,
you will put them all on like jewels,
like a bride, you will fasten them on.
19 For your desolate places and your ruins
and your devastated country
from now on will be too cramped for your inhabitants,[k]
and your devourers will be far away.
20 Once more they will say in your hearing,
the children of whom you were bereft,
'The place is too cramped for me, 54:1–3
make room for me to live.'
21 Then you will think to yourself,
'Who has borne me these? 65:23 Jr 31:27 Zc 2:8
I was bereft and barren,
exiled, turned out of my home;
who has reared these?
I was left all alone,
so where have these come from?'

22 Thus says Lord Yahweh:
Look, I am beckoning to the nations
and hoisting a signal to the peoples: 11:12
they will bring your sons in their arms[l] 60:4,9 Ba 5:6
and your daughters will be carried on their shoulders.
23 Kings will be your foster-fathers
and their princesses, your foster-mothers. 60:16
They will fall prostrate before you, faces to the ground, 60:14
and lick the dust at your feet.
And you will know that I am Yahweh;
those who hope in me will not be disappointed. 30:18
24 Can the body be snatched from the warrior, Ex 25:3
can the tyrant's captive be set free?[m] Jr 31:11 Lk 11:21–22par.
25 But thus says Yahweh:
The warrior's captive will indeed be snatched away
and the tyrant's booty will indeed be set free;
I myself shall fight those who fight you
and I myself shall save your children.
26 I shall make your oppressors eat their own flesh, 9:19
they will be as drunk on their own blood as on new wine. Rv 16:6
And all humanity will know 60:16
that I am Yahweh, your Saviour,
your redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob. 41:14g

d. 'be re-united to him' versions, 1QIs[a]; 'not be re-united' MT.

e. If this v. is still part of the second servant-song (*see* 49:1a), it is a prediction of his humiliations and glorification, described at greater length in the fourth song. If, however, the v. is to be attached to the section following, it refers to Israel humiliated by forty years of exile and about to be marvellously re-established by God.

f. 'despised' and 'detested', reading passive participles with the versions and 1QIs[a]; MT has active participles.

g. Vv. 9–11 resume the theme of the marvellous highway of the Return, *see* 35:5–10; 41:17–20; 43:19–20.

h. Probably Syene, known as Elephantine to the Greeks, the modern Aswan, where there was a Jewish colony.

i. Vv. reminiscent of the message of Hosea, Jeremiah and the Deuteronomist, *see* 54:8c.

j. 'your rebuilders' 1QIs[a], versions; 'your sons' MT.

k. 'will be too cramped' versions; 'you are too cramped' Hebr. The people of the Return will be far more numerous than the original population, their numbers being increased by all those who join them, vv. 22–23.

l. lit. 'on their breast', a particularly affectionate way of carrying children.

m. 'tyrant' Syr.; 'upright man' Hebr. The liberation appears impossible, but God will accomplish it, cf. v. 22.

Israel's punishment [a]

50 Thus says Yahweh: 1
Dt 24:1–4 Jr 3:6–8 Ho 2:4–9 Where is your mother's writ of divorce
by which I repudiated her?
Or to which of my creditors
52:3 Ba 4:6 have I sold you? [b]
Look, you have been sold for your own misdeeds,
your mother was repudiated for your acts of rebellion.
Rv 3:20 Why was there no one there when I came? 2
65:12;66:4 Why did no one answer when I called?
Nb 11:23 Is my hand too short to redeem?
Have I not strength to save?
Ps 106:9;107:33 Na 1:4 Look, with a threat I can dry the sea,
and turn rivers to desert;
the fish in them go rotten for want of water
and die of thirst.
I dress the heavens in black, 3
I cover them in sackcloth. [c]

42:1a **Third song of the servant** [d]

Jn 3:11e Lord Yahweh has given me a disciple's tongue, 4
for me to know how to give a word of comfort to the weary.
Morning by morning he makes my ear alert
to listen like a disciple.
Lord Yahweh has opened my ear 5
52:13–53:12 and I have not resisted,
I have not turned away.
I have offered my back to those who struck me, 6
my cheeks to those who plucked my beard;
I have not turned my face away
Mt 26:67; 27:30par. from insult and spitting. [e]
Lord Yahweh comes to my help, 7
this is why insult has not touched me,
Ezk 3:8–9 this is why I have set my face like flint
Ps 25:3 and know that I shall not be put to shame.
↗Rm 8:31–33 He who grants me saving justice is near! Who will bring a case against me? 8
Let us appear in court together!
Who has a case against me?
Let him approach me!
Look, Lord Yahweh is coming to my help! 9
Who dares condemn me?
51:8 Look at them, all falling apart
Jb 13:28 Ho 5:12 like moth-eaten clothes!
Which of you fears Yahweh 10
Ex 23:20–21 Jn 3:11e and listens to his servant's voice?
42:16 Which of you walks in darkness
and sees no light?
Let him trust in the name of Yahweh
and lean on his God! [f]
Ps 7:13 Look, all you who light a fire 11
and arm yourselves with firebrands, [g]
walk by the light of your fire
and the firebrands you have kindled!
This is what you will get from me:
you will lie down in torment!

The blessings in store for the chosen people [a]

1 51 Listen to me, you who pursue saving justice, ↗Mt 5:6;6:33
you who seek Yahweh.
Consider the rock from which you were hewn,
the quarry from which you were dug.
2 Consider Abraham your father
and Sarah who gave you birth.
When I called him he was the only one Gn 12:1–3
but I blessed him and made him numerous. Ezk 33:24
3 Yes, Yahweh has pity on Zion,
has pity on all her ruins;
he will turn her desert into an Eden Gn 2:8–17
and her wastelands into the garden of Yahweh. Ezk 36:35
Joy and gladness will be found in her, Rv 2:7;22:1–2
thanksgiving and the sound of music.

God's reign of saving justice [b]

4 Pay attention to me, my people,
listen to me, my nation,
for a law will come from me,
and I shall make my saving justice the light of peoples.
5 My justice is suddenly approaching,
my salvation appears,
my arm is about to judge the peoples.
The coasts and islands will put their hope in me
and put their trust in my arm.
6 Raise your eyes to the heavens,
look down at the earth;
for the heavens will vanish like smoke, ‖Ps 102:25–26
the earth wear out like clothing Mt 24:35par.
and its inhabitants die like vermin, 2 P 3:7–12
but my salvation will last for ever Rv 20:11
and my saving justice remain inviolable. 56:1

7 Listen to me, you who know what saving justice means,
a people who take my laws to heart:
do not fear people's taunts,
do not be alarmed by their insults,

50 a. A difficult and perhaps incomplete poem. It is not clear whether or not it is a continuation of the previous one, though it seems to be on the same theme as 49:24–26; it is a reply to those Israelites who refuse to believe in the coming deliverance.

b. Both questions call for an answer in the negative: it cannot be proved that God has repudiated Israel, cf. Dt 24:1–4 and the imagery of Ho 2:4–9, or sold his children, Ex 21:7. God is still faithful. The Israelites themselves are responsible, *see* remainder of v. This is a special instance of the use of the theme of the unfaithful wife, Jr 3:1; Ezk 16; Ho 2:4–9.

c. A desolated countryside, cf. 42:15; 44:27, and stormy sky, cf. Ex 13:22; 19:16, announce God's coming to judge mankind.

d. In this third song, the servant appears less like a prophet and more like a sage, a faithful disciple of Yahweh, vv. 4–5, charged in his turn to teach the 'God-fearers', that is to say, all pious Jews, v. 10, but also the strays or infidels who 'walk in darkness'. Thanks to his courage and God's help, vv. 7–9, he will endure persecution, vv. 5–6, until God grants him final triumph, vv. 9–11. The servant speaks up to and including v. 9.

e. The description of the servant's sufferings is further developed in the fourth song, 52:13–53:12, cf. Mt 26:67; 27:30par.

f. At this point the prophet speaks again, inviting the Israelites and perhaps the unenlightened nations (those who 'walk in darkness'), cf. 49:6, to put their hope in God; he then condemns those who 'stoke the fire', v. 11, perhaps the sowers of discord.

g. 'arm yourselves', lit. 'who dress': the heads of fire-arrows used to be dressed with wisps of tow. Trans. uncertain.

51 a. The beginning of a long poem on the restoration of Zion, ending at 52:12. It may have been composed as one unit or be a collection of short songs linked together by the same theme of salvation and the same exhortations to 'listen', 51:1,4,7, and to 'awake', 51:9,17; 52:1. The first section recalls the blessings of time past, notably the blessing granted to Abraham, Gn 12:1–3, cf. *also* Ezk 33:24, in which lay the origin of the gift of the Promised Land where the exiled people is shortly to be re-established.

b. It is difficult not to see a connection between this programme and the work attributed to the servant, particularly in the first two songs. The servant too will be the light of nations, v. 4, cf. 49:6, he will establish law and salvation, vv. 4–6, cf. 42:1,4; 49:6, in short, it will be the servant who establishes the kingship of God on earth.

50:9 Jb 13:28
for the moth will eat them like clothing, 8
the grub will devour them like wool,
but my saving justice will last for ever
and my salvation for all generations.

The awakening of Yahweh [c]

Awake, awake! Clothe yourself in strength, 9
arm of Yahweh.
Awake, as in the olden days,
generations long ago!
30:7e Jb 3:8e;7:12f
Was it not you who split Rahab in half,
who pierced the Dragon through?
Was it not you who dried up the sea, 10
the waters of the great Abyss; [d]
63:13;40:3e Ex 14:5–31
who made the sea-bed into a road
for the redeemed to go across?
35:10
This is why those whom Yahweh has ransomed will return, 11
they will enter Zion shouting for joy,
their heads crowned with a joy unending;
joy and gladness will escort them
and sorrow and sighing will take flight. [e]

Yahweh, the consoler [f]

I, I am your consoler. 12
Why then should you be afraid
of mortal human beings, of a child of man,
40:7+;66:13
whose fate is that of the grass?
Dt 32:5.15
You forget about Yahweh your Creator 13
who spread out the heavens and laid the earth's foundations,
and have never stopped trembling all day long
before the fury of the oppressor
when he was bent on destruction.
Where is the oppressor's fury now?
The despairing captive is soon to be set free; 14
he will not die in the dungeon,
nor will his food run out.
‖Jr 31:35
I am Yahweh your God who stirs up the sea, making its waves roar— 15
Yahweh Sabaoth is my name.
59:21+
I put my words into your mouth, 16
I hid you in the shadow of my hand,
to spread out the heavens and lay the earth's foundations [g]
and say to Zion, 'You are my people.'

The awakening of Jerusalem [h]

52:1
Awake, awake! 17
To your feet, Jerusalem!
You who from Yahweh's hand
have drunk the cup of his wrath.
Mt 20:22d Rv 14:8
The chalice, the stupefying cup,
you have drained to the dregs.
There is no one to guide her 18
of all the children she has borne,
no one to grasp her hand
of all the children she has reared.
Double disaster has befallen you [i]— 19
Jr 15:5
who is there to sympathise?

Pillage and ruin, famine and sword—
who is there to console you?[j] Na 3:7
20 Your children are lying helpless
at the end of every street
like an antelope trapped in a net;
they are filled to the brim with Yahweh's wrath,
with the rebuke of your God.
21 So listen to this, afflicted one,
drunk, though not with wine.
22 Thus says your Lord Yahweh,
your God, defender of your people:
Look, I am taking
the stupefying cup from your hand,
the chalice, the cup of my wrath,
you will not have to drink again.
23 I shall hand it to your tormentors
who used to say to you,
'On the ground! So that we can walk over you!'
And you would flatten your back like the ground,[k]
like a street for them to walk on.

The liberation of Jerusalem[a]

1 52 Awake, awake! 51:9
Clothe yourself in strength, Zion.
Put on your finest clothes,
Jerusalem, Holy City;
for the uncircumcised and the unclean ↗Rv 21:27
will enter you no more.
2 Shake off your dust; get up,
captive Jerusalem![b]
The chains have fallen from your neck,
captive daughter of Jerusalem!

3 For Yahweh says this,
'You were sold for nothing;
you will be redeemed without money.' 45:13
4 For the Lord Yahweh says this,
'Long ago my people went to Egypt and settled there as aliens;
finally Assyria oppressed them for no reason.

c. Yahweh is called on to renew the wonders of the past, his victory over the powers of primordial chaos and the crossing of the Sea, to bring the exiles back to Zion.

d. Middle Eastern cosmologies represented the creation as the victory of the creator-god over the monsters of chaos, called Rahab, Jb 9:13; 26:12; Ps 89:10, the Dragon (Tannin or Leviathan), Is 27:1; Jb 7:12; Ps 74:14; Ezk 29:3, and the Abyss (Tehom, with which may be compared Tiamath of Babylonian cosmology), cf. Gn 1:2; Ps 104:7–9; Hab 3:10. By the times of Second Isaiah, these mythological names were no more than poetic devices.

e. This v. exactly reproduces 35:10 but is re-used here as the climax to vv. 9–10.

f. Yahweh speaks again, to comfort Israel, cf. 40:1. The latter need fear no mortal, however strong, since Yahweh, the lord of creation, protects his people.

g. 'spread out' Syr., cf. v. 13; 'planted' Hebr.

h. Jerusalem, prostrate with grief, is invited to stand up, as Babylon had been ordered to sit in the dust, 47:1. But the prophet first reminds Jerusalem of the depth of her distress. The imagery of the 'cup of wrath' to be handed to the persecutors, v. 22, is also found in Ps 75:8; Jr 13:13; 25:15–18; 48:26; 49:12; 51:7; Lm 4:21; Ezk 23:32–34; Ob v. 16; Hab 2:15–16; Zc 12:2.

i. Either in the sense of exceptional punishment, or the plagues in the second half of the v., taken two by two.

j. 'who . . . console you?' versions, 1QIs[a]; 'who I shall console you' (?) MT.

k. A humiliation often imposed on the conquered.

52 **a.** The opening words repeat those of 51:9, but the prophet is now addressing Jerusalem, whose captivity is about to end. vv. 3–6 are often regarded as a prose addition, but the thought is certainly that of Second Isaiah.

b. 'captive' *shebiyah* conj.; Hebr. *shebi* 'captivity'. • 'the chains have fallen' Hebr. *ketib*, 1QIs[a]; 'drop the chains' *qere*, versions.

So now what is to be done,' [c] 5
declares Yahweh,
'since my people have been carried off for nothing,
their masters howl in triumph,'
declares Yahweh,
Ezk 36:20–22 'and my name is held in contempt all day, every day?
↗Rm 2:24 Because of this my people will know my name, 6
because of this they will know when the day comes,
that it is I saying, Here I am!'

A prediction of salvation [d]

How beautiful on the mountains, 7
Na 2:1 are the feet of the messenger announcing peace,
↗Rm 10:15 of the messenger of good news,
Mk 16:15–16 who proclaims salvation
Ac 10:36 and says to Zion,
'Your God is king!'
The voices of your watchmen! 8
Now they raise their voices,
shouting for joy together,
Ex 33:20i for with their own eyes they have seen
Ezk 43:1–5 Yahweh returning to Zion.
Break into shouts together, 9
shouts of joy, you ruins of Jerusalem;
for Yahweh has consoled his people,
he has redeemed Jerusalem.
Yahweh has bared his holy arm 10
for all the nations to see,
and all the ends of the earth
have seen the salvation of our God.
Jr 51:45 Go away, go away, leave that place, 11
↗2 Co 6:17 do not touch anything unclean.
Rv 18:4 Get out of her, purify yourselves,
you who carry Yahweh's vessels!
Ex 12:31–34.39 For you are not to hurry away, 12
you are not to leave like fugitives.
Ex 13:21;14:19 No, Yahweh marches at your head
and the God of Israel is your rearguard. [e]

42:1a **Fourth song of the servant** [f]
Ps 22
Ws 2:12–24 Look, my servant will prosper, 13
will grow great, will rise to great heights.

Jn 12:32*l* As many people were aghast at him 14
Ep 1:20–21 —he was so inhumanly disfigured [g]
Ph 2:9 that he no longer looked like a man—
•Mt 27:29–31 so many nations will be astonished [h] 15
Jn 19:5 and kings will stay tight-lipped before him,
↗Rm 15:21 seeing what had never been told them,
learning what they had not heard before.
↗Jn 12:38 Who has given credence to what we have heard? 1
↗Rm 10:16 **53** And who has seen in it a revelation of Yahweh's arm? [a]
Like a sapling he grew up before him, 2
like a root in arid ground. [b]
He had no form or charm to attract us,
no beauty to win our hearts;

3 he was despised, the lowest of men, Ps 22:6–7
a man of sorrows, familiar with suffering,
one from whom, as it were, we averted our gaze,
despised, for whom we had no regard.
4 Yet ours were the sufferings he was bearing, ↗Mt 8:17
ours the sorrows he was carrying,
while we thought of him as someone being punished
and struck with affliction by God; Heb 2:10
5 whereas he was being wounded for our rebellions, 2 Co 5:21 Rm 4:25 Ga 3:13
crushed because of our guilt;
the punishment reconciling us fell on him,
and we have been healed by his bruises. ↗1 P 2:24
6 We had all gone astray like sheep, Ezk 34 ↗1 P 2:25
each taking his own way,
and Yahweh brought the acts of rebellion 2 Co 5:21
of all of us to bear on him.
7 Ill-treated and afflicted, ↗Mt 26:63 1 P 2:23
he never opened his mouth,
like a lamb led to the slaughter-house,[c] Jr 11:19 Mt 27:14 Jn 1:29v
like a sheep dumb before its shearers ↗Ac 8:32–33
he never opened his mouth.

8 Forcibly, after sentence, he was taken.
Which of his contemporaries was concerned[d]
at his having been cut off from the land of the living,
at his having been struck dead for his people's rebellion?[e]
9 He was given a grave with the wicked, ↗Mt 27:38par.
and his tomb is with the rich,[f] ↗Mt 27:60
although he had done no violence,
had spoken no deceit. 1 P 2:22

c. Or, following *ketib*, 'who is on my side here?' In either case there is doubt over what is meant. It seems that God is insisting on the gratuitousness of the salvation which he is bringing to his people. The latter have drawn no profit from their ordeal and have not been converted, hence their oppressors are triumphant and Yahweh's name is dishonoured, v. 5, cf. 48:11; Ezk 20:9,14; 36:20. By freely granting salvation, however, Yahweh will lead Israel to being converted and so save the honour of his name, v. 6.

d. The Book of Consolation is a 'Gospel', it announces Good News, *see* 40:9. The messengers running to the country and the watchmen who see them coming announce joy, that is to say, the inauguration of Yahweh's personal reign in Zion. His reign, which will replace that of earthly kings, has long since been announced by the prophets, *see* 43:15; Jr 3:17; 8:19; Ezk 20:33; 34:11–16; Mi 2:13; 4:7; Zp 3:15. It is also celebrated in the 'psalms of the reign of Yahweh', Ps 47; 93; 96; 97; 98; 99; 145; 146.

e. The new Exodus takes place under God's protection, like the first, Ex 14:19. But this time it will not be a hasty departure, Ex 12:11, a flight, 14:5. It will be a procession in which are carried, not the jewels seized from the Egyptians, but the sacred vessels of the Temple, given back by Cyrus.

f. The fourth song of the servant again takes up the theme of suffering, compare Ps 22. The persecutions which the servant will very patiently endure, 53:7, scandalise the spectators, 52:14–15; 53:2–3,7–9, but are in fact an intercession and an expiation of sins, 53:4,6,8,10–12. The song appears to be in dialogue form: Yahweh utters a prophecy, vv. 13–15; the kings or the peoples then reply, 53:1–10, describing the sufferings of the servant and possibly excusing themselves for not having understood their meaning; finally, God proclaims an outcome favourable to the servant, 53:11–12.

g. lit. 'his appearance (was) disfigurement (to the point of) no longer being a man.' The expression is awkward, but the sense is confirmed by the parallelism. • 'at him' Targ., Syr.; 'at you' Hebr.

h. 'will be astonished' Gk; 'he will sprinkle' (?) Hebr.

53 a. The community speaks, announcing the fate of the servant: a new and almost incredible revelation. But the initial surprise and incomprehension, vv. 3^b,4^b,6,8, later give way to a better understanding: these sufferings are undergone exclusively for the good of the many, vv. 11–12.

b. In 11:1,10, the images of sapling and root accompanied the joyful prediction of the Davidic Messiah. Here, however, they evoke only the humble and wretched aspect of the servant's existence.

c. John the Baptist was probably alluding to this v. combined with v. 4, when he declared Jesus to be 'the lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world,' Jn 1:29. In Aramaic, the same word *talya'* means both lamb and servant. Perhaps the Forerunner used this word intentionally, but the Evangelist, writing in Greek, was obliged to choose one of the two possible meanings.

d. 'contemporaries': the Hebr. word means 'generation' in the sense of life-span, and by extension those who are alive during this period. It never means birth or origin, and the meaning suggested by Gk and Lat. ('Who can relate his generation?') and applied by the Fathers to the eternal generation of the Word or to Jesus' miraculous conception, is not an accurate translation of the Hebr. Emendation of the text has been proposed, but the present text is supported by all witnesses.

e. 'been struck' *nugga'* conj.; Hebr. *nega'* 'a stroke'. • 'his people' 1QIs^a; 'my people' MT.

f. 'his tomb' *bomato* 1QIs^a; MT. *bemotaw* 'in his death'. Christian preaching interpreted this as a prophecy of the burial of Jesus in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathaea, 'a rich man', *'ashir* Mt 27:57–60. The text is difficult, however, and many emend 'rich' *'ashir* to 'evil-doers' *'ose ra'*.

It was Yahweh's good pleasure to crush him with pain; 10
if he gives his life as a sin offering, [g]
he will see his offspring and prolong his life,
and through him Yahweh's good pleasure will be done.

After the ordeal he has endured, 11
he will see the light and be content. [h]
Rm 3:26 1 P 3:18 By his knowledge, the upright one, my servant will justify many
by taking their guilt on himself.

Ps 2:8 Col 2:15 Hence I shall give him a portion with the many, 12
and he will share the booty with the mighty,
for having exposed himself to death
Mt 26:28i ↗Mk 15:28 ↗Lk 22:37 Jn 1:29v Rm 4:25 •↗Heb 9.28 1 P 2:24 and for being counted as one of the rebellious,
whereas he was bearing the sin of many
and interceding for the rebellious.

↗Ga 4:27 **Jerusalem restored to Yahweh's favour** [a]

1 S 2:5 Ps 113:9 Jr 10:20 54 Shout for joy, barren one who has borne no children! 1
Break into cries and shouts of joy, you who were never in labour!
For the children of the forsaken one are more in number
than the children of the wedded wife, says Yahweh.
33:20;49:20; 26:15 Widen the space of your tent, 2
extend the curtains of your home, do not hold back! [b]
Lengthen your ropes, make your tent-pegs firm,
for you will burst out to right and to left, 3
your race will dispossess the nations
and repopulate deserted towns.
Do not fear, you will not be put to shame again, 4
do not worry, you will not be disgraced again;
for you will forget the shame of your youth
and no longer remember the dishonour of your widowhood.
Ho 1:2b For your Creator is your husband, 5
Yahweh Sabaoth is his name,
the Holy One of Israel is your redeemer,
he is called God of the whole world.
49:14–15 Yes, Yahweh has called you back 6
like a forsaken, grief-stricken wife,
like the repudiated wife of his youth,
says your God.
I did forsake you for a brief moment, 7
but in great compassion I shall take you back.
Ps 30:5 In a flood of anger, for a moment 8
I hid my face from you.
60:10 Rm 11:29 1 Jn 3:1–2; 4:10–19 •41:14g But in everlasting love I have taken pity on you, [c]
says Yahweh, your redeemer.
Gn 9:11 For me it will be as in the days of Noah 9
when I swore that Noah's waters
should never flood the world again.
So now I swear never to be angry with you
and never to rebuke you again.
Jdt 16:15 For the mountains may go away 10
and the hills may totter,
but my faithful love will never leave you,
Ezk 34:25; 37:26 Rm 11:29 my covenant of peace will never totter,
says Yahweh who takes pity on you.

The new Jerusalem [d]

Rv 21:2,10–27

11 Unhappy creature, storm-tossed, unpitied,
look, I shall lay your stones on agates — 60:17–18 Tb 13:17
and your foundations on sapphires. — Rv 21:2,10–27
12 I shall make your battlements rubies,
your gateways firestone
and your entire wall precious stones.
13 All your children will be taught by Yahweh — Jr 31:33–34 ↗Jn 6:45
and great will be your children's prosperity.
14 In saving justice you will be made firm, — 1:26n
free from oppression: you will have nothing to fear;
free from terror: it will not approach you.
15 Should anyone attack you, that will not be my doing,
and whoever does attack you, for your sake will fall.
16 I created the smith
who blows on the charcoal-fire
to produce a weapon for his use;
I also created the destroyer
to ruin it.
17 No weapon forged against you will succeed.
Any voice raised against you in court you will refute.
Such is the lot of the servants of Yahweh,
the saving justice I assure them,
declares Yahweh.

Final invitation [a]

1 **55** Oh, come to the water all you who are thirsty; — Si 51:25 Jn 4:1a
though you have no money, come!
Buy and eat; come, buy wine and milk — Rv 21:6;22:17
without money, free!
2 Why spend money on what cannot nourish
and your wages on what fails to satisfy?
Listen carefully to me, and you will have good things to eat — Pr 9:3–6 Si 24:19–22
and rich food to enjoy. — Jn 6:35
3 Pay attention, come to me;
listen, and you will live.

I shall make an everlasting covenant with you
in fulfilment of the favours promised to David. [b] — 2 S 7:1a Jr 32:40
4 Look, I have made him a witness to peoples, — ↗Ac 13:34
a leader and lawgiver to peoples. — Rv 1:5h
5 Look, you will summon a nation unknown to you,

g. 'if he gives' Vulg.; 'if you give' or 'if (his soul) gives (a sacrifice)' Hebr.

h. 'the light' Gk, 1QIs[a]; Hebr. omits. Here Yahweh speaks to explain the mystery of the sufferings of the 'upright servant'; he is not suffering for any guilt of his own but takes the rebellious acts of the many on himself and intercedes for them.

54 **a.** To describe the contrasts between Jerusalem's past ordeals and approaching re-establishment, the prophet uses traditional imagery: of the barren wife who becomes fertile, cf. 1 S 2:5; Ps 113:9; and of the repudiated wife who is taken back, cf. Ho 1:16–17; but he emphasises that she will be returned to favour, whereas earlier prophets had principally seen punishments in store, cf. Jr 3:1,6–12; Ezk 16; 23; Ho 1–3.

b. 'extend!' versions; 'be extended' Hebr.

c. Yahweh's 'everlasting love' for his people, *see* 43:4; Dt 4:37; 7:8; 10:15; Jr 31:3; Zp 3:17; Ml 1:2, like the love of a father for his children. Is 1:2; 49:14–16; Jr 31:20; Ho 2:25; 11:1seq., or of a husband for his wife, Is 62:4–5; Jr 2:2; 31:21–22; Ezk 16:8,60; Ho 2:16–17,21–22; 3:1, is described here as a free gift.

d. Unlike the realistic description of Ezk 40–48, the prophet offers a vision symbolising future splendours, a theme further developed in the last part of the book, 60; 62; 65:16–25.

55 **a.** Final invitation to participate in the benefits of the new covenant, vv. 1–5, and to be converted while there is still time, vv. 6–11. vv. 1–2 are reminiscent of the invitation to Wisdom's banquet, Pr 9:1–6.

b. On this everlasting covenant, 59:21; 61:8, which is also the new covenant, *see* Jr 31:31*l*. This reminder of the promises made to David is unique in Second Isaiah, where no restoration of the monarchy is ever envisaged.

a nation unknown to you will hurry to you
for the sake of Yahweh your God,
because the Holy One of Israel has glorified you.

Ho 5:6+ Am 5:4c Jn 7:34 •Dt 4:7 Ps 145:18
Seek out Yahweh while he is still to be found, 6
call to him while he is still near.
Let the wicked abandon his way 7
and the evil one his thoughts.
Zc 1:3 Lk 15:20
Let him turn back to Yahweh who will take pity on him,
to our God, for he is rich in forgiveness;
for my thoughts are not your thoughts 8
and your ways are not my ways,
declares Yahweh.
Ps 103:11
For the heavens are as high above earth 9
as my ways are above your ways,
my thoughts above your thoughts.
For, as the rain and the snow come down from the sky 10
and do not return before having watered the earth,
fertilising it and making it germinate
↗2 Co 9:10
to provide seed for the sower and food to eat,
Ws 18:14–15 Am 8:11 Zc 1:5–6 Jn 1:1a
so it is with the word that goes from my mouth: 11
it will not return to me unfulfilled
or before having carried out my good pleasure
and having achieved what it was sent to do. [c]

Conclusion [d]

Yes, you will go out with joy 12
and be led away in safety.
Mountains and hills will break into joyful cries before you
and all the trees of the countryside clap their hands.
41:19;44:3–4
Cypress will grow instead of thorns, 13
myrtle instead of nettles.
And this will be fame for Yahweh,
an eternal monument never to be effaced.

III: THIRD PART OF THE BOOK OF ISAIAH [a]

Promises to foreigners [b]

56 Thus says Yahweh: 1
46:13;51:6,8
Make fair judgement your concern, act with justice,
for soon my salvation will come
and my saving justice be manifest.
Blessed is anyone who does this, 2
anyone who clings to it,
58:13seq. Ex 20:8f
observing the Sabbath, not profaning it,
and abstaining from every evil deed.
Ex 12:48o
No foreigner adhering to Yahweh should say, 3
'Yahweh will utterly exclude me from his people.'
No eunuch should say,
'Look, I am a dried-up tree.'
Ws 3:14–15
For Yahweh says this: To the eunuchs who observe my Sabbaths 4
and choose to do my good pleasure
and cling to my covenant,
I shall give them in my house and within my walls 5
1 S 1:8
a monument and a name better than sons and daughters;

I shall give them an everlasting name
that will never be effaced. [c]
6 As for foreigners who adhere to Yahweh to serve him,
to love Yahweh's name and become his servants,
all who observe the Sabbath, not profaning it,
and cling to my covenant:
7 these I shall lead to my holy mountain
and make them joyful in my house of prayer.
Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar,
for my house will be called a house of prayer for all peoples. [d]

8 Lord Yahweh who gathers the exiles of Israel declares:
There are others I shall gather besides those already gathered. [e]
9 Come and gorge, all you wild beasts,
all you beasts of the forest!

The unworthiness of the nation's leaders [f]

10 Its watchmen are all blind,
they know nothing.
Dumb watchdogs all, unable to bark,
they dream, lie down, and love to sleep.
11 Greedy dogs, never satisfied, such are the shepherds,
who understand nothing;
they all go their own way,
each to the last man after his own interest.
12 'Come, let me fetch wine;
we will get drunk on strong drink,
tomorrow will be just as wonderful as today
and even more so!'

1 **57** The upright person perishes
and no one cares.
The faithful is taken off
and no one takes it to heart.
Yes, because of the evil times
the upright is taken off;
2 he will enter peace,
and those who follow the right way [a]
will find rest on their beds.

Against idolatry [b]

3 But you, you children of a witch, come here,

Rv 2:17;3:5
18:7+
Ps 15:1
1 K 8:41–43
↗Mt 21:13par.
Jn 10:16h
3:12;9:15
Ezk 34:2
Jr 10:21; 12:10;23:1–2
5:11+;28:7seq.
Ws 4:11

c. The word of Yahweh is like a messenger who does not return until he has discharged his mission. Here it is personified, as is Wisdom elsewhere, Pr 8:22f; Ws 7:22i, or the Spirit, Is 11:2c.

d. Conclusion to the Book of Consolation, reverting to the theme of the new Exodus: the joy of home-coming and the transformation of the desert into fertile soil, cf. 43:19; 44:3–4.

56 a. *See* p. 1170.

b. Prophecy in rhythmical prose, probably composed after the return from exile. Faithful to the traditions of several great prophets, *see* 45:14i, the author predicts that foreign proselytes will soon be admitted to Judaism, on condition that they 'cling to the covenant', vv. 4,6, which necessarily includes circumcision as the sign of the covenant. The restrictions laid down in Dt 23:2–9 are abolished, especially those involving eunuchs, *see* Is 56:3–4.

c. 'I shall give' 1QIs[a], versions; 'I shall give him' MT.

d. This saying announces a double novelty: prayer is more important than sacrifices, even in the Temple, and all peoples are invited to take part.

e. The short prophecy contained in this v. is a confirmation of the previous one: the 'others' are the proselytes and eunuchs, rather than the members of the non-Babylonian dispersion.

f. The prophet seems to be drawing a distinction here between the national leaders (the 'shepherds' who are like lazy dogs) and their subalterns (the 'dogs' who are like real shepherds, but greedy and selfish). This prophecy, possibly pre-exilic, enlarges on a favourite theme of Jeremiah, 2:8,26–27; 5:4–5,31; 10:21; 23:1–2,11seq., and of Ezekiel, 8:11seq.; 34, namely, the unworthiness of the leaders of Judah in the years before the Exile.

57 a. 'those who follow' conj.; Hebr. has sing.

b. This prophecy, like the foregoing, perhaps dates from the last days of the monarchy, when idolatrous practices were rife in Jerusalem. But they persisted in Palestine during and after the Exile, 66:3–4,17. The poem is in the vigorous style of the 7th- and 6th-century prophets (Jr 1:16; 7:8, cf. Is 2:6–8; Ezk 8). Some of the allusions to specific idolatrous rites are obscure.

adulterous race prostituting yourselves!
At whom are you jeering, 4
at whom are you making faces [c]
and sticking out your tongue?
Are you not the spawn of rebellion,
a lying race?
Dt 12:2b Jr 2:20 Lusting among the terebinths, 5
and under every spreading tree,
Lv 18:21h sacrificing children in the ravines,
below the clefts in the rocks. [d]
The smooth stones of the ravines will be your portion, 6
yes, these will be your lot.
To these you have poured libations,
have brought your cereal offering.
Can all this appease me?
On a mountain high and lofty 7
you have put your bed.
Thither, too, you have climbed
Dt 23:19f to offer sacrifice. [e]
Behind door and doorpost 8
you have set your reminder. [f]
Ezk 16:15seq. Yes, far from me, you exposed yourself,
climbed on to your bed,
and made the most of it.
You struck a profitable bargain
with those whose bed you love,
whoring with them often,
with your eyes on the sacred symbol.
You went to Molech [g] with oil, 9
you were prodigal with your perfumes;
you sent your envoys far afield,
down to Sheol itself.
Though tired by so much travelling, 10
you never said, 'It is no use.'
Finding your strength revive,
you never gave up.
Who was it you dreaded, and feared, 11
that you should betray me,
no longer remember me
and not spare a thought for me?
Was I not silent for a long time?
So you cannot have been afraid of me.
Now I shall expose this uprightness of yours, 12
and little good it did you.
When you cry for help, 13
let those thronging round you save you!
The wind will carry them all away,
one puff will take them off.
56:7;60:21;65:9; Ps 25:13c;37:9 But whoever trusts in me will inherit the country,
he will own my holy mountain.

Salvation for the weak [h]

11:16j Ps 68:4+ Then it will be said: 14
Level up, level up, clear the way,
remove the obstacle from my people's way,

for thus says the High and Exalted One
who lives eternally
and whose name is holy, Lv 17:1a
'I live in the holy heights
but I am with the contrite and humble,
to revive the spirit of the humble, Ps 51:18
to revive the heart of the contrite.

16 'For I do not want to be forever accusing Ps 103:3
nor always to be angry,
or the spirit would fail under my onslaught,
the souls that I myself have made.

17 'Angered by his wicked cupidity,
I hid[f] and struck him in anger, 54:8c
but he rebelliously went the way of his choice.

18 'I saw how he behaved, but I shall heal him, Ex 15:26
I shall lead him, fill him with consolation,
him and those who mourn for him,
19 bringing praise to their lips.
Peace, peace to far and near, Yahweh says, ↗Ep 2:17
and I shall heal him.'
20 The wicked, however, are like the restless sea Jude 13
that cannot be still,
whose waters throw up mud and dirt.
21 'No peace', says Yahweh, 'for the wicked.' 48:22

Fasting pleasing to God[a]

1 58 Shout for all you are worth, do not hold back,
raise your voice like a trumpet.
To my people proclaim their rebellious acts,
to the House of Jacob, their sins.
2 They seek for me day after day,
they long to know my ways,
like a nation that has acted uprightly
and not forsaken the law of its God.
They ask me for laws that are upright,
they long to be near God:
3 'Why have we fasted, if you do not see,[b] Ml 3:14
why mortify ourselves if you never notice?' Mt 6:18
Look, you seek your own pleasure on your fastdays
and you exploit all your workmen;
4 look, the only purpose of your fasting is to quarrel and squabble
and strike viciously with your fist.

c. lit. 'At whom are you opening your mouth wide?' The parallelism suggests mockery rather than greed.

d. It is uncertain whether or not these child-sacrifices were identical with the sacrifices to Molech, on which *see* Lv 18:21h.

e. Allusion to sacred prostitution as practised in Canaanite nature cults, Nb 25, and sometimes practised in Israel as well, 1 K 14:24; 22:47; 2 K 23:7; Ho 4:14, although forbidden, Dt 23:18–19. The prophets, however, used the vocabulary of prostitution in their invective against idolatry, to symbolise Israel's infidelity to its God and also to give a realistic description of Canaanite cultic activities.

f. This 'reminder' or 'monument' (end of v.) seems to have been a cult-symbol, but the sense of the entire v. is obscure.

g. 'The King', a title given to many Semitic deities; here perhaps Melkart of Tyre, god of the underworld, *see* end of v.

h. A post-exilic poem showing Yahweh as caring for the poor and oppressed. On the spirituality of 'Yahweh's poor', *see* Zp 2:3d.

i. That is to say, either 'hid my face', an expression of divine disapproval, or 'did not intervene'.

58 a. Post-exilic prophecy in the spirit of the great prophets, insisting that inward religion must accompany outward observance, *see* 1:10g; Am 5:21n. Here the subject is fasting, the nucleus of the prophecy being vv. 5–7.

b. The only fast prescribed by the Law was for the Day of Expiation, Lv 23:26–32, but at various periods a number of fasts were added either to commemorate national disasters, Zc 7:1–5; 8:18–19, or to implore God's mercy, Jr 36:6,9; Jon 3:5; cf. 1 K 21:9,12.

Fasting like yours today
will never make your voice heard on high.
Is that the sort of fast that pleases me, 5
a day when a person inflicts pain on himself?
Hanging your head like a reed,
spreading out sackcloth and ashes?
Is that what you call fasting,
a day acceptable to Yahweh?
Jr 34:8–9 Is not this the sort of fast that pleases me: 6
Am 5:21n
Mt 25:34–40 to break unjust fetters,
to undo the thongs of the yoke.
to let the oppressed go free,
and to break all yokes?
Is it not sharing your food with the hungry, 7
and sheltering the homeless poor;
if you see someone lacking clothes, to clothe him,
and not to turn away from your own kin?
Then your light will blaze out like the dawn 8
and your wound be quickly healed over.
52:12 Saving justice for you will go ahead
and Yahweh's glory come behind you.
Then you will cry for help and Yahweh will answer; 9
you will call and he will say, 'I am here.'
If you do away with the yoke,
the clenched fist and malicious words,
if you deprive yourself for the hungry 10
and satisfy the needs of the afflicted,[c]
Jn 8:12b your light will rise in the darkness,
and your darkest hour will be like noon.
Yahweh will always guide you, 11
will satisfy your needs in the scorched land;
he will give strength to your bones[d]
Jr 31:12 and you will be like a watered garden,
Jn 4:14 like a flowing spring
whose waters never run dry.
61:4 Your ancient ruins will be rebuilt; 12
Ne 3seq. you will build on age-old foundations.
You will be called 'Breach-mender',
'Restorer of streets to be lived in'.[e]

The Sabbath[f]

56:2+ If you refrain from breaking the Sabbath, 13
from taking your own pleasure on my holy day,
if you call the Sabbath 'Delightful',
and the day sacred to Yahweh 'Honourable',
if you honour it by abstaining from travel,
from seeking your own pleasure and from too much talk,
then you will find true happiness in Yahweh, 14
Dt 32:13 and I shall lead you in triumph over the heights of the land.
I shall feed you on the heritage of your father Jacob,
1:20;40:5 for the mouth of Yahweh has spoken.

Penitential psalm[a]

50:2+ 59 No, the arm of Yahweh is not too short to save, 1
nor his ear too dull to hear,
but your guilty deeds have made a gulf 2

between you and your God.
Your sins have made him hide his face from you — Dt 31:17
so as not to hear you, — 1:15
3 since your hands are stained with blood
and your fingers with guilt;
your lips utter lies,
your tongues murmur wickedness.
4 No one makes upright accusations
or pleads sincerely.
All rely on empty words, utter falsehood,
conceive trouble and give birth to evil. — Jb 15:35 Ps 7:14 Mt 3:7+
5 They are hatching adders' eggs
and weaving a spider's web;
eat one of their eggs and you die,
crush one and a viper emerges.
6 Their webs are useless for clothing,
their deeds are useless for wearing;
their deeds are deeds of guilt,
violence fills their hands.
7 Their feet run to do evil; — ↗Pr 1:16 ↗Rm 3:15–17
they are quick to shed innocent blood.
Their thoughts are thoughts of guilt,
wherever they go there is havoc and ruin.
8 They do not know the way of peace,
there is no fair judgement in their course,
they have made their own crooked paths,
and no one treading them knows any peace.

9 Thus fair judgement is remote from us
nor can uprightness overtake us.
We looked for light and all is darkness, — Jr 8:15 Am 5:18–20
for brightness and we walk in gloom. [b] — Jn 8:12b
10 Like the blind we feel our way along walls,
we grope our way like people without eyes.
We stumble as though noon were twilight, — Dt 28:29
among the robust [c] we are like the dead.
11 We growl, all of us, like bears,
like doves we make no sound but moaning,
waiting for the fair judgement that never comes,
for salvation, but that is far away.

12 How often we have rebelled against you — Jr 14:7
and our sins bear witness against us.
Our rebellious acts are indeed with us, — Ps 51:3
we are well aware of our guilt:
13 rebellion and denial of Yahweh,

c. lit. 'if you give your soul to the hungry (Gk: the bread of your soul) and satisfy the soul of the afflicted'. But the word *nephesh* normally translated as 'soul' also means 'desire', 'appetite', hence several shades of meaning are possible here, between which it is hard to choose.

d. Meaning uncertain: the verb used here, *halatz*, seems to be related to the noun 'warrior', *halutz*, but there are other possibilities, not to mention suggested emendations.

e. The passage dates from the beginning of the restoration in the Persian period, certainly before Nehemiah had rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem and perhaps even before the rebuilding of the Temple, which is not mentioned.

f. The lines on the Sabbath seem to have been added to the foregoing prophecy. On the Sabbath, *see* Ex 20:8f.

59 **a.** A penitential liturgy in the same spirit as the previous ch. and possibly dating from the same period: the promised salvation is slow in coming; not God but human sins are to blame. Vv. 1–2 state this explicitly and the rest of the poem elaborates the theme, beginning with an indictment, vv. 3–8.

b. Following the prophet's accusation comes the community's confession, becoming more specific from v. 12 to v. 15[a].

c. Meaning uncertain. The word translated as 'robust' seems to be derived from the word *shemen*, 'fat', but many translators prefer to emend the text. Gk omits the word.

turning our back on our God,
talking violence and revolt,
murmuring lies in our heart.
Fair judgement is driven away 14
and saving justice stands aloof,
for good faith has stumbled in the street
and sincerity cannot enter.
Good faith has vanished; 15
anyone abstaining from evil is victimised.

Yahweh saw this and was displeased
that there was no fair judgement. [d]
He saw there was no one 16
and wondered there was no one to intervene.
63:5 So he made his own arm his mainstay,
his own saving justice his support.
↗Ws 5:17–23 He put on saving justice like a breastplate, 17
↗Ep 6:14–17 ↗1 Th 5:8 on his head the helmet of salvation.
He put on the clothes of vengeance like a tunic
and wrapped himself in jealousy like a cloak.
To each he repays his due, 18
retribution to his enemies, reprisals on his foes,
to the coasts and islands he will repay their due.
Ps 102:15 From the west, Yahweh's name will be feared, 19
and from the east, his glory,
for he will come like a pent-up stream
impelled by the breath of Yahweh.
41:14g ↗Rm 11:26 Then for Zion will come a redeemer, 20
for those who stop rebelling in Jacob,
declares Yahweh.

55:3b **Prophecy** [e]

Rm 11:27 'For my part, this is my covenant with them, says Yahweh. My spirit with which I 21
51:16 2 S 23:2 Jr 1:9 endowed you, and my words that I have put in your mouth, will not leave your mouth, or the mouths of your children, or the mouths of your children's children, says Yahweh, henceforth and for ever.'

45:14h Rv 21:9–27 **The splendour of Jerusalem** [a]

60 Arise, shine out, for your light has come, 1
and the glory of Yahweh has risen on you.
Look! though night still covers the earth 2
9:1+ and darkness the peoples,
on you Yahweh is rising
and over you his glory can be seen.
Ex 24:16f The nations will come to your light 3
↗Rv 21:24 and kings to your dawning brightness.
Lift up your eyes and look around: 4
49:18–22 Ba 5:5–6 all are assembling and coming towards you,
your sons coming from far away
and your daughters being carried on the hip.
At this sight you will grow radiant, 5
your heart will throb and dilate,
Ps 72:10 since the riches of the sea will flow to you,
the wealth of the nations come to you;
camels in throngs will fill your streets, 6
the young camels of Midian and Ephah;

everyone in Saba will come,
bringing gold and incense
and proclaiming Yahweh's praises. [b]
7 All the flocks of Kedar will gather inside you,
the rams of Nebaioth will be at your service [c]
as acceptable victims on my altar,
and I shall glorify my glorious house.

8 Who are these flying like a cloud,
like doves to their dovecote?
9 Why, the coasts and islands put their hope in me [d]
and the vessels of Tarshish take the lead
in bringing your children from far away,
and their silver and gold with them,
for the sake of the name of Yahweh your God,
of the Holy One of Israel who has made you glorious.
10 Foreigners will rebuild your walls
and their kings will serve you.
For though I struck you in anger,
in mercy I have pitied you.
11 Your gates will always be open, [e]
never closed, either day or night,
for the riches of the nations to be brought you
and their kings to be let in.

12 For the nation and kingdom that will not serve you will perish,
and the nations will be utterly destroyed. [f]

13 The glory of the Lebanon [g] will come to you,
cypress, plane-tree, box-tree, one and all,
to adorn the site of my sanctuary,
for me to honour the place where I stand.
14 Your oppressors' children will humbly approach you,
at your feet all who despised you will fall
addressing you as 'City of Yahweh',
'Zion of the Holy One of Israel'. [h]
15 Instead of your being forsaken and hated,
avoided by everyone,
I will make you an object of eternal pride,
a source of joy from age to age.
16 You will suck the milk of nations,
you will suck the wealth [i] of kings,

Ex 2:15
1 K 10:1a
•Mt 2:11
Gn 25:13
Ps 48:7c
||55:5
49:17
54:8
↗Rv 21:25–26
35:2
1 K 5:19–20
49:23
↗Rv 3:9
1:26n
62:4,12
49:23

d. In vv. 15b–20, Yahweh comes as judge and redeemer. The passage has elements in common with the apocalypse of ch. 24–27.

e. A prose prophecy announcing the eternal nature of Yahweh's covenant with Israel, characterised by the outpouring of the Spirit and prophetic activity, cf. 40:7–8; 51:16; 61:1; Jr 1:9. Coming after the concluding formula of v. 20, it is an addition.

60 **a.** Ch. 60–62 form a whole in style and content and are related to ch. 40–55. If not composed by Second Isaiah, they are at least the work of one of his disciples, re-telling the Master's message of consolation to the post-exilic community whose hopes and faith require support.

b. The riches of the sea come by Phoenician and Greek ships from the west. The riches of the East and of Egypt come by caravans across the deserts of Syria and Sinai. Midian, Ephah and Sheba are peoples of Arabia, cf. 45:14; Gn 25:1–4.

c. For Kedar, see 21:13i,16–17. Nebaioth, an Arabian people, *see* Gn 25:13; 28:9; 36:3.

d. Or, by emendation, 'the ships are assembling' (*tziyyim yiqqawu* instead of *'iyyim yeqawu*), which would improve the parallelism with the following line. Gk, however, also reads 'the coasts and islands'.

e. 'will be open' versions; 'open (your gates)' Hebr.

f. V. 12, interrupting the continuity, is very probably additional.

g. The cedars. These will be used to build the new Jerusalem as previously they had been used to build the Temple of Solomon, 1 K 5:15seq.

h. A new name and, like the ones given to Jerusalem by Isaiah, 1:26n, a symbolic one. Equally symbolic are the names which follow: of walls and gates, v. 18, of Zion and its territory, 62:4, of city and inhabitants, 62:12.

i. lit. 'the breasts.' Gk already interprets this bold metaphor as 'wealth': it is uncertain if this was based on the same text or a different one.

49:26 and you will know that I, Yahweh, am your Saviour,
that your redeemer is the Mighty One of Jacob.
For bronze I shall bring gold 17
and for iron I shall bring silver,
and for wood, bronze,
and for stone, iron;
1:26 I shall make Peace your administration
and Saving Justice your government.
Violence will no longer be heard of in your country, 18
nor devastation and ruin within your frontiers.
You will call your walls 'Salvation'
Rv 21:12,14 and your gates 'Praise'.[j]

↗Rv 21:23;22:5 No more will the sun give you daylight, 19
nor moonlight shine on you,
but Yahweh will be your everlasting light,
your God will be your splendour.
Your sun will set no more 20
nor will your moon wane,
for Yahweh will be your everlasting light
Rv 21:4 and your days of mourning will be over.
57:13 Your people, all of them upright, 21
will possess the country for ever,
the shoot I myself have planted,[k]
my handiwork, for my own glory.
The smallest will grow into a thousand, 22
the weakest one into a mighty nation.
When the time is ripe, I, Yahweh,
shall quickly bring it about.

A prophet's mission[a]

11:2;42:1 Mt 11:5d;3:16n ↗Lk 4:18–19; 7:22 **61** The spirit of Lord Yahweh is on me 1
for Yahweh has anointed me.
He has sent me to bring the news[b] to the afflicted,
to soothe the broken-hearted,
Lv 25:10n to proclaim liberty to captives. 2
release to those in prison,
to proclaim a year of favour from Yahweh
and a day of vengeance for our God,
Mt 5:5 to comfort all who mourn,
(to give to Zion's mourners), 3
to give them for ashes a garland,
for mourning-dress, the oil of gladness,
for despondency, festal attire;
and they will be called 'terebinths of saving justice',
planted by Yahweh to glorify him.[c]
58:12 Am 9:14 They will rebuild the ancient ruins, 4
they will raise what has long lain waste,
they will restore the ruined cities,
all that has lain waste for ages past.
14:2 Strangers will come forward to feed your flocks, 5
foreigners be your ploughmen and vinedressers;
Ex 19:3–6c ↗Rv 1:6 but you will be called 'priests of Yahweh' 6
and be addressed as 'ministers of our God'.
You will feed on the wealth of nations,
you will supplant them in their glory.

7 To make up for your shame, you will receive double;[d]
instead of disgrace, shouts of joy will be their lot;
yes, they will have a double portion in their country
and everlasting joy will be theirs.
8 For I am Yahweh: I love fair judgement,
I hate robbery and wrong-doing,[e]
and I shall reward them faithfully
and make an everlasting covenant with them. 55:3+
9 Their race will be famous throughout the nations
and their offspring throughout the peoples.
All who see them will admit
that they are a race whom Yahweh has blessed. Gn 12:3b

Thanksgiving

10 I exult for joy in Yahweh, 1 S 2:1
my soul rejoices in my God, Hab 3:18
for he has clothed me in garments of salvation, Lk 1:46seq.
he has wrapped me in a cloak of saving justice,
like a bridegroom wearing his garland,[f]
like a bride adorned in her jewels. Rv 19:8;21:2
11 For as the earth sends up its shoots
and a garden makes seeds sprout,
so Lord Yahweh makes saving justice and praise 45:8
spring up in the sight of all nations.

The splendour of Jerusalem[a]

1 62 About Zion I will not be silent,
about Jerusalem I shall not rest
until saving justice dawns for her like a bright light
and her salvation like a blazing torch.
2 The nations will then see your saving justice,
and all kings your glory,
and you will be called a new name 56:5c;65:15
which Yahweh's mouth will reveal.
3 You will be a crown of splendour in Yahweh's hand,
a princely diadem in the hand of your God.
4 No more will you be known as 'Forsaken' 60:15+
or your country be known as 'Desolation'; Ho 2:25
instead, you will be called 'My Delight is in her' 1:26n
and your country 'The Wedded';[b]
for Yahweh will take delight in you
and your country will have its wedding.

j. The walls and gates of Jerusalem had names, *see* Ne 2:13–15. Here new names are given; they are symbolic, *see* v. 14; 1:26n.

k. 'I have planted' *qere*, versions; 'he has planted' *ketib*; 'Yahweh has planted' 1QIs[a].

61 a. The prophet, very probably the author of ch. 60 and 62, announces that he has received a message of consolation from God, vv. 1–3: all will be rebuilt, v. 4; foreigners will assure the material needs of Israel, now a nation of priests and crowned with glory, vv. 5–7; God speaks to institute an everlasting covenant, vv. 8–9. Vv. 10–11 are the prophet's thanksgiving, spoken on Zion's behalf. The poem echoes the themes of the servant songs, *see* 42:1; 42:7; 49:9, also 50:4–11 where the servant speaks in person, as here.

b. Although the word used does not explicitly say so, the news is evidently good news, the glad tidings of God's imminent intervention, cf. 11:2; 42:1.

c. This line, apparently a doublet of 60:21[b], seems to have been introduced as an explanatory gloss.

d. Or, according to another interpretation, a 'double shame', corresponding to the 'double portion' and echoing the 'double punishment' of 40:2; but the text is uncertain.

e. 'wrong-doing' versions; 'burnt offerings' Hebr. (different vowel arrangement).

f. 'wearing his garland' *yakin* conj.; Hebr. *yekahen* 'doing duty as a priest'.

62 a. Another poem on the glory of Jerusalem, cf. 60, but here the theme of marriage plays a greater part: the triumph of Jerusalem and the country in which it stands is to become Yahweh's bride, cf. 50:1; 54:6–7.

b. 'Forsaken' (*'azubah*), 'My Delight is in her' (*hephtzibah*): these names, conferred on Jerusalem and Judah because of their meaning, are real names attested elsewhere in the Bible, *see* 1 K 22:42; 2 K 21: 1. In this conferring of new names we recognise the prophetic usage instituted by Ho 2:25, cf. Is 1:26; 60:14; 62:12.

Like a young man marrying a virgin, 5
your rebuilder will wed you, [c]
65:19 and as the bridegroom rejoices in his bride,
so will your God rejoice in you.

52:8 On your walls, Jerusalem, I have posted watchmen; 6
they will never fall silent, day or night.
No peace for you, as you keep Yahweh's attention!
And give him no peace either 7
until he restores Jerusalem
and makes her the pride of the world!
Yahweh has sworn by his right hand 8
and by his mighty arm:
Dt 28:30–33 Never again shall I give your grain
to feed your enemies.
Never again will foreigners drink the wine
for which you have toiled.
No, the reapers will eat it and praise Yahweh, 9
the harvesters will drink it in my sacred courts!

Conclusion [d]

11:16j Pass through, pass through the gates. 10
Clear a way for my people!
Level up, level up the highway,
remove the stones!
49:22 Hoist a signal to the peoples!
This is what Yahweh has proclaimed 11
to the remotest part of earth:
↗Mt 21:5 Say to the daughter of Zion, 'Look, your salvation is coming;
=40:10 with him comes his reward, his achievement precedes him!'

1:26n; 60:14g They will be called 'The Holy People', 12
'Yahweh's Redeemed',
while you will be called 'Sought-after',
'City-not-forsaken'.

Judgement of the nations [a]

Dt 2:5c 63 Who is this coming from Edom, 1
34:1–17 from Bozrah in crimson garments,
↗Rv 19:13 so magnificently dressed,
marching [b] so full of strength?
—It is I, whose word is saving justice,
whose power is to save.
—Why are your garments red, 2
your clothes like someone treading the winepress?
Jl 4:13 —I have trodden the winepress alone; 3
of my people, not one was with me. [c]
↗Rv 14:19–20; 19:15 So I trod them down in my anger,
I trampled on them in my wrath.
Their blood [d] squirted over my garments
and all my clothes are stained.
For I have decided on a day of vengeance, 4
my year of retribution has come.
I looked: there was no one to help me; 5
I was appalled but could find no supporter!
59:16 Then my own arm came to my rescue
and my own fury supported me.

6 I crushed the peoples in my anger,
I shattered [e] them in my fury
and sent their blood streaming to the ground.

Meditation on the history of Israel [f]

7 I shall recount Yahweh's acts of faithful love, Ps 89:1
Yahweh's praises,
in return for all that Yahweh has done for us,
for his great kindness to the House of Israel,
for all that he has done in his mercy,
for the abundance of his acts of faithful love.

8 For he said, 'Truly they are my people,
children who will not betray me,' Dt 32:5
and he became their Saviour.
9 In all their troubles,
it was no messenger [g] or angel
but his presence that saved them.
In his love and pity
he himself redeemed them,
lifted them up and carried them 46:3seq. Ex 19:4+
throughout the days of old.
10 But they rebelled Dt 32:15 Ac 7:51
and vexed his holy Spirit. Ep 4:30
Then he became their enemy
and himself waged war on them.
11 But he called the past to mind,
Moses his servant. [h]
Where is he who saved them from the sea, Ex 2:1–10
the Shepherd of his flock? Heb 13:20
Where was he who put Nb 11:17 Ne 9:20
his holy Spirit among them,
12 whose glorious arm led the way
by Moses' right hand?
Who divided the waters before them Ex 14:5–31
to win himself everlasting renown, Ps 135:13
13 who led them through the depths 51:10
as easily as a horse through the desert?
They stumbled as little
14 as cattle going down to the plain.
Yahweh's Spirit led them to rest.
This was how you guided your people Ps 77:20
to win yourself glorious renown. [i]

c. 'your rebuilder will wed you' *yib'alek bonek* conj., from context and see 54:5; MT *yib 'aluk banayk* 'your sons will wed you'.

d. This short poem seems to serve as conclusion to the unit 60–62. It resumes a number of themes in the Book of Consolation, cf. 40:3–5,10; 49:22; 57:14.

63 a. This fine fragment of apocalyptic poetry is written in the form of a dialogue between Yahweh and the prophet. Yahweh appears like a grape-harvester whose clothes are stained with juice. What he has been trampling in the wine-press, however, are Israel's traditional enemies, of whom Edom stands as type, *see* 34:1–7. Some emend 'Edom' and 'Bozrah' and translate 'Who is this that comes all in red, in crimson garments like a wine-harvester?'; hence the application of the passage to the suffering Messiah.

b. 'marching' *tzo 'ed* conj.; Hebr. *tzo'eh* 'bowing'.

c. '(not) a man of my people' 1QIs[a]; 'of the peoples' Hebr.

d. lit. 'Their juice', extending the metaphor of the grapes. Note, by a contrary image, that the juice is often called 'the blood' of the grape.

e. 'I shattered them' *we'ashabberam* Hebr. MSS; MT. *we'ashakkeram* 'I made them drunk'.

f. The long poem, 63:7–64:11 is in the form of a collective, supplicatory psalm, cf. particularly Ps 44, 89 and Lamentations. The references at 63:18 and 64:9–10 to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 587 BC show that the memory of the catastrophe was still very fresh. The poem dates from the beginning of the Exile. Its appeal to past history, 63:7–14, conforms to Deuteronomic theology: God punishes his rebellious people, then rescues them.

g. 'messenger' *tzir* Gk; Hebr. *tzar* 'anguish'.

h. 'his servant' Syr. MSS; 'his people' Hebr.

i. Vv. 11–14 evoke God's first great saving act, the deliverance from Egypt, as the earnest of salvation to come.

64:7–11 Look down from heaven and see[j] 15
from your holy and glorious dwelling.
Where is your zeal and your might?
Ho 11:8 Are your deepest feelings,
your mercy to me, to be restrained?
Dt 1:31+ Tb 13:4 After all, you are our Father. 16
If Abraham will not own us,
if Israel will not acknowledge us,
you, Yahweh, are our Father,
41:14g 'Our Redeemer' is your name from of old.
Why, Yahweh, do you let us wander from your ways 17
and let our hearts grow too hard to fear you?
Return, for the sake of your servants,
Dt 32:9 the tribes of your heritage.
Your holy people have owned it for so short a time, 18
our enemies have trampled on your sanctuary.
We have long been like those you do not rule, 19
people who do not bear your name.

Oh, that you would tear the heavens open and come down[k] 64:1
Ps 144:5 Rv 19:11 —in your presence the mountains would quake, 2
Ps 18:7seq.;50:3 64 as fire sets brushwood alight, 1
as fire makes water boil—
to make your name known to your foes;
the nations would tremble at your presence,
at the unexpected miracles you would do. 2 3
(Oh, that you would come down,
in your presence the mountains would quake!)[a]

↗1 Co 2:9 Never has anyone heard, 3 4
no ear has heard, no eye has seen[b]
any god but you act like this
for the sake of those who trust him.
You come to meet those 4 5
who are happy to act uprightly;
keeping your ways reminds them of you.
Yes, you have been angry and we have been sinners;
now we persist in your ways[c] and we shall be saved.
We have all been like unclean things 5 6
Lv 15:19–24 and our upright deeds like filthy rags.
We wither,[d] all of us, like leaves,
and all our misdeeds carry us off like the wind.
There is no one to invoke your name, 6 7
to rouse himself to hold fast to you,
for you have hidden your face from us
and given us up[e] to the power of our misdeeds.
And yet, Yahweh, you are our Father; 7 8
we the clay and you our potter,
29:16g all of us are the work of your hands.
Yahweh, do not let your anger go too far 8 9
and do not remember guilt for ever.
Look, please, we are all your people;
your holy cities have become a desert, 9 10
Zion has become a desert,
Jerusalem a wasteland.
Our holy and glorious Temple, 10 11
in which our ancestors used to praise you,

has been burnt to the ground;
all our delight lies in ruins.
12 11 Yahweh, can you restrain yourself at all this?
Will you stay silent and afflict us beyond endurance?

The coming judgement [a]

1 **65** I have let myself be approached by those who did not consult me, ↗Rm 10:20
I have let myself be found by those who did not seek me.
I said, 'Here I am, here I am!'
to a nation that did not invoke my name. [b]
2 Each day I stretched out my hands ↗Rm 10:21
to a rebellious people
who follow a way which is not good,
as the fancy takes them;
3 a people constantly provoking me to my face Dt 32:21
by sacrificing in gardens,
burning incense on bricks,
4 living in tombs,
spending the night in dark corners,
eating the meat of pigs,
putting unclean foods [c] on their plates.
5 'Keep your distance,' they say,
'do not touch me, lest my sanctity come near you!' [d]
Such words are like stifling smoke to me,
an ever-burning fire.
6 Look, it is inscribed before me:
I shall not be silent until I have repaid them,
repaid them in full, [e]
7 punished your guilt and your ancestors' guilt together,
Yahweh declares.
For having burnt incense on the mountains
and insulted me on the hills,
I shall pay them back in full for what they have done.

8 Yahweh says this:
As when a bunch of grapes is found still to have juice in it,
people say, 'Do not destroy it,
for it contains a blessing,'
so I shall act for my servants' sake,
I shall not destroy them all. 4:3c

j. The actual supplication begins here, framed by the two invocations of v. 15 and 64:11, corresponding to each other. Between them, themes normal to supplications follow in no particular order. Note the insistance on the fatherhood of God, v. 16; 64:7.

k. The sentence continues at 64:1[b]. The appeal for Yahweh to come is interrupted by the mention of features characteristic of theophanies, cf. Ps 18:7–8; 144:5.

64 **a.** Gloss repeating 63:19.

b. Paul, 1 Co 2:9, seems to be quoting this formula in more rhythmical form: 'no eye has seen, no ear has heard . . .' It is hard to tell whether he is quoting freely or whether he had a different text of Is from ours.

c. lit. 'we are in them for ever', which may refer to the 'ways' earlier in the v. Others however construe very differently: 'We persist in our misdeeds – are we likely to be saved?' The passage would then be a cry of discouragement. The matter is in doubt and the text may be corrupt.

d. 'we wither' Gk; Hebr. uncertain.

e. 'you have given us up' versions; 'you have made us tremble' (?) Hebr.

65 **a.** Ch. 65–66 form an apocalyptic collection, dating, for the most part, from the post-exilic period. The rhythm is sometimes uncertain, giving grounds for thinking that some passages were written in prose.

b. 'that did not invoke my name' versions; 'that was not called by my name' Hebr.

c. lit. 'scraps (collective) of unclean foods' or, following *qere* and 1QIs[a], 'juice of unclean foods'. As in 66:17, cf. Ezk 8:7–13, the reference is to non-Yahwist ceremonies practised secretly in Jerusalem during the Exile, which the community had to fight against on its return. They are, however, not yet the mystery religions of the Hellenistic period.

d. Words put into the mouths of initiates, supposedly endowed with a 'holiness' which might be transferred by accidental contact.

e. lit. 'into their bosom', cf. Ps 7:12; Jr 32:18. The folds of the cloak served as a food-bag, *see* Rt 3:15; 2 K 4:39; Lk 6:38. The expression recurs at the end of v. 7.

I shall produce descendants from Jacob 9
and heirs to my mountains from Judah,
57:13 my chosen ones will own them
and my servants will live there.
Sharon will be a pasture for flocks, 10
Jos 7:24,26 the Valley of Achor a feeding ground for cattle,
for those of my people who have sought me.
But as for those of you who abandon Yahweh, 11
who forget my holy mountain,
who lay the table for Gad,
who fill cups of mixed wine for Meni,[f]
you I shall destine to the sword 12
and all of you will stoop to be slaughtered,
50:2;66:4 Jr 7:13 because I called and you would not answer,
I spoke and you would not listen;
you have done what I consider evil,
you chose to do what displeases me.
Therefore Lord Yahweh says this: 13
Lk 6:20–26 You will see my servants eating
while you go hungry;
you will see my servants drinking
while you go thirsty;
you will see my servants rejoicing
while you are put to shame;
you will hear my servants shouting for joy of heart, 14
while you shriek for sorrow of heart
and howl with a broken spirit.
And you will leave your name behind as a curse for my chosen ones, 15
'May Lord Yahweh strike you dead!'[g]
1:26n;56:5; 62:2 But to his servants he will give another name.
Rv 2:17;3:12j Whoever blesses himself on earth will bless himself by the God of truth, 16
and whoever swears an oath on earth will swear by the God of truth,
for past troubles will be forgotten
and hidden from my eyes.
51:6;66:22 ↗Rv 21:1 For look, I am going to create new heavens and a new earth,[h] 17
43:18 and the past will not be remembered
and will come no more to mind.
Rather be joyful, be glad for ever 18
at what I am creating,
1:26n;60:14g for look, I am creating Jerusalem to be 'Joy'
and my people to be 'Gladness'.
62:5 I shall be joyful in Jerusalem 19
and I shall rejoice in my people.
↗Rv 21:4 No more will the sound of weeping be heard there,
nor the sound of a shriek;
never again will there be an infant there who lives 20
only a few days,
Zc 8:4 nor an old man who does not run his full course;
for the youngest will die at a hundred,
and at a hundred the sinner will be accursed.
62:8 Dt 28:30–33 Jr 31:5 Am 9:14 They will build houses and live in them, 21
they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit.
They will not build for others to live in, 22
or plant for others to eat;
for the days of my people will be like the days of a tree,
and my chosen ones will themselves use what they have made.

23 They will not toil in vain,
nor bear children destined to disaster,
for they are the race of Yahweh's blessed ones
and so are their offspring.
24 Thus, before they call I shall answer,
before they stop speaking I shall have heard.
25 The wolf and the young lamb will feed together,
the lion will eat hay like the ox, 11:7
and dust be the serpent's food. Gn 3:14
No hurt, no harm will be done
on all my holy mountain, 11:9
Yahweh says.

Prophecy on the Temple [a]

1 66 Thus says Yahweh:
With heaven my throne Mt 5:34seq. ↗Ac 7:49–55
and earth my footstool,
what house could you build me, 1 K 8:27
what place for me to rest,
2 when all these things were made by me Ps 24:1–2
and all belong [b] to me?—declares Yahweh.
But my eyes are drawn to the person
of humbled and contrite spirit,
who trembles at my word.

3 Some slaughter a bull, some kill a human being, [c]
some sacrifice a lamb, some strangle a dog,
some present an offering of pig's blood,
some burn memorial incense, a revolting blessing;
all these people have chosen their own ways
and take delight in their disgusting practices.
4 I too take delight in making fools of them, [d]
I shall bring what they most fear down on them
because I have called and no one would answer, 50:2;65:12
I spoke and no one listened.
They have done what I regard as evil,
have chosen what displeases me.

Judgement on Jerusalem [e]

5 Listen to the word of Yahweh,
you who tremble at his word.

f. Gad, the Aramaean god of luck. Meni, unknown: possibly a god of fate. Hebr. seems to be punning on this name and the first word of the following v., *maniti*, 'I shall destine'.

g. Understood: 'like these wicked people'.

h. In the early prophets, the messianic happiness prophesied for the future was described more or less as a return to paradise, *see* 11:6e. But in apocalyptic literature, though not entirely repudiating earlier forms, *see* v. 25, quoting 11:7,9, the prophet envisages a complete renewal. A new world is foretold and described throughout all apocalyptic literature, 2 P 3:13; Rv 21:1.

66 a. This prophecy has no relation to its context. It condemns the Temple, the rebuilding of which had been undertaken after the Jews' return from exile, as Nathan had condemned it under David, 2 S 7:5–7, and as Stephen was to condemn it, Ac 7:48seq., quoting this passage. It rejects a too materialistic form of religion in favour of the religion of 'the poor', v. 2[b], *see* Zp 2:3d.

b. 'belong' Gk, Syr.; 'belonged' Hebr.

c. The passage sets out four lawful acts of worship and four Canaanite acts of worship in parallel: human sacrifices, the killing of dogs, the eating of pork, the veneration of idols. This does not mean that someone who slaughters a bull is no better than someone who sacrifices a human, etc. So radical a condemnation of formal religion is nowhere found in the OT. What it does mean is that the people who perform these lawful acts of worship also practise Canaanite rites. Thus the passage is a condemnation of the syncretism practised in the same circles as those envisaged in v. 17; 65:3–5.

d. Text uncertain. The word is the same as in 3:4 ('raw lads'), see 3:4b. Gk translates by 'mockery', which fits the context well, but some modern translators prefer 'ill-treatment', 'misfortune'.

e. Apparently the continuation of the apocalypse of ch. 65, but with a new theme expressing the hopes of God's people.

Your brothers, who hate and reject you
because of my name, have said.
'Let Yahweh show his glory,[f]
let us witness your joy!'
But they will be put to shame.

Listen! An uproar from the city! 6
Rv 16:17 A voice from the Temple!
The voice of Yahweh
bringing retribution on his enemies.

Before being in labour she has given birth. 7
Rv 12:5 Before the birth pangs came, she has been delivered of a child.[g]

Who ever heard of such a thing, 8
who ever saw anything like this?
Can a country be born in one day?
Can a nation be brought forth all at once?
For Zion, scarcely in labour, has brought forth her children!

Shall I open the womb and not bring to birth? 9
says Yahweh.
Shall I, who bring to birth, close the womb?
says your God.

Rejoice with Jerusalem, 10
be glad for her, all you who love her!
Jn 16:20 Rejoice, rejoice with her,
all you who mourned her!

So that you may be suckled and satisfied 11
from her consoling breast,
so that you may drink deep with delight
from her generous nipple.

For Yahweh says this: 12
Look, I am going to send peace
flowing over her like a river,
and like a stream in spate
the glory of the nations.

You will be suckled, carried on her hip
and fondled in her lap.
As a mother comforts a child, 13
so I shall comfort you;
you will be comforted in Jerusalem.

Jn 16:22 At the sight your heart will rejoice, 14
and your limbs regain vigour like the grass.
To his servants Yahweh will reveal his hand,
but to his enemies his fury.

2 Th 1:8b For see how Yahweh comes in fire, 15
his chariots like the whirlwind,
to assuage his anger with burning,
his rebukes with flaming fire.

For by fire will Yahweh execute fair judgement, 16
and by his sword, on all people;
and Yahweh's victims will be many.

17 As for those who sanctify themselves
and purify themselves to enter the gardens, [h]
following the one in the centre,
who eat the flesh of pigs, revolting things and rats:
their deeds and their thoughts will perish together, [i]
declares Yahweh.

An eschatological discourse [j]

18 I am coming to gather every nation and every language. They will come to witness Ezk 34:13
19 my glory. •I shall give them a sign and send some of their survivors [k] to the nations: Mt 24:31;25:32
to Tarshish, Put, Lud, Meshech, Tubal and Javan, [l] to the distant coasts and islands
that have never heard of me or seen my glory. They will proclaim my glory to the
20 nations, •and from all the nations they will bring all your brothers as an offering to
Yahweh, on horses, in chariots, in litters, on mules and on camels, to my holy
mountain, Jerusalem, Yahweh says, like Israelites bringing offerings in clean
21 vessels to Yahweh's house. •And some of them I shall make into priests and Ps 87:7e
Levites, Yahweh says. [m]
22 For as the new heavens and the new earth I am making will endure before me, 65:17
declares Yahweh, so will your race and your name endure. 2 P3:13

23 From New Moon to New Moon,
from Sabbath to Sabbath,
all humanity will come and bow
in my presence, Yahweh says.
24 And on their way out they will see
the corpses of those
who rebelled against me;
for their worm will never die Jdt 16:17
nor their fire be put out, Si 7:17
and they will be held in horror by all humanity. [n] ↗Mk 9:48

f. 'manifest his glory' Gk; 'glorify' Hebr.

g. Imagery expressing the sudden and miraculous advent of the new world; cf. 26:17–18 where the same imagery of child-birth is found, with a somewhat different application.

h. The v. is isolated from its context and perhaps ought to be joined to 65:3–5. It alludes to acts of a secret cult, presided over by a priest (or priestess, if we read the feminine with *qere* and 1QIs[a]), cf. Ezk 8:11. This parallel shows that the text can be explained without reference to later Hellenistic mystery religions.

i. 'revolting things', cf. Lv 7:21; 11:10–42. There is no point in emending the word to get 'reptiles' from it (*sheretz* instead of *sheqetz*, *see* Gn 1:20). • 'their deeds and their thoughts' is taken from the beginning of v. 18 (faulty verse-division).

j. vv. 18–24 were probably added as a conclusion to ch. 40–66 or even to the whole book. The whole passage seems originally to have been in verse but has been distorted by the insertion of the list of nations, v. 19, and the list of means of transport, v. 20. The nations will all be converted and will restore the dispersed Jews to Jerusalem as an offering to God; nonetheless, Israel is the recipient of the divine promises. Nowhere else in the OT are universalism and particularism so pointedly juxtaposed.

k. The 'survivors' of the nations, cf. 45:20–25, are the converts, who are sent to preach the faith to the most distant parts of the world. It is remarkable that these earliest 'missionaries', for such they are, should be converts from paganism.

l. The list is an addition, borrowing its elements from Ezk 27:10–13. The probable identifications are: Tarshish, Spain; Put (thus Gk; 'Pul' Hebr.), Lybia; Lud, Lydia; Meshech (thus Gk; Hebr. *moshqe' qeshet* 'the archers'), Phrygia; Tubal, Cilicia; Javan, the Ionians and more generally the Greeks.

m. Some converts will actually be admitted to the sacred ministry. Same remarkable open-mindedness as in v. 19.

n. As contrast to the perpetual worship offered by Yahweh's devotees, vv. 22–23, follows the endless punishment which will overtake his enemies, v. 24. Rather than finish the reading of the book on this terrible note of warning, it was the custom of the Synagogue to end by repeating the promise of v. 23.

JEREMIAH

Title

1 K 2:26–27
Zp 1:1

1 The words of Jeremiah son of Hilkiah, one of the priests living at Anathoth [a] in the territory of Benjamin. 2 The word of Yahweh came to him in the days of Josiah son of Amon, king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign; 3 then in the days of Jehoiakim son of Josiah, king of Judah, until the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah son of Josiah, king of Judah, until the deportation of Jerusalem, in the fifth month. [b]

I: PROPHECIES AGAINST JUDAH AND JERUSALEM

A: IN THE REIGN OF JOSIAH

The call of Jeremiah

The word of Yahweh came to me, saying: 4

Is 49:1,5
Lk 1:15
Rm 8:29
↗Ga 1:15

'Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; 5
before you came to birth I consecrated you; [c]
I appointed you as prophet to the nations.'

Ex 4:10
Is 6:8j

I then said, 'Ah, ah, ah, Lord Yahweh; you see, I do not know how to speak: I am only a child!' 6

But Yahweh replied, 7
'Do not say, "I am only a child,"
for you must go to all to whom I send you
and say whatever I command you.
Ezk 2:6 Do not be afraid of confronting them, 8
for I am with you to rescue you,
Yahweh declares.'

Is 6:6–7
Ezk 3:1–3

Then Yahweh stretched out his hand and touched my mouth, and Yahweh said to me: 9

2 S 23:2
Is 59:21

'There! I have put my words into your mouth.
Look, today I have set you 10
over the nations and kingdoms,
18:7;31:28;
45:4
Si 49:7
Ho 6:5
to uproot and to knock down,
to destroy and to overthrow,
to build and to plant.'

The word of Yahweh came to me, asking, 'Jeremiah, what do you see?' I answered, 'I see a branch of the Watchful Tree.' 11 12 Then Yahweh said, 'Well seen,
Is 55:10–11
Ezk 12:28
Dn 9:14
for I am watching [d] over my word to perform it.'

A second time the word of Yahweh came to me, asking, 'What do you see?' I answered, 'I see a cooking pot on the boil, with its mouth tilting from the north.' [e] 13
4:5–31
Then Yahweh said: 14

'From the north disaster will come boiling over 4:6;61:1,22
on all who live in the country,
15 for I am now summoning
all the families of the kingdoms of the north,
Yahweh declares.
They will come, and each will set his throne
in front of the gates of Jerusalem,
all round, against its walls
and against all the towns of Judah.
16 I shall pronounce my judgements on them
because of all their wickedness,
since they have abandoned me,
offering incense to other gods
and worshipping what their own hands have made.

17 'As for you, prepare yourself for action.
Stand up and tell them 1:7–8
all I command you.
Have no fear of them
and in their presence I will make you fearless.
18 For look, today I have made you 15:20
into a fortified city,
a pillar of iron,
a wall of bronze
to stand against the whole country:
the kings of Judah, its princes,
its priests and the people of the country.
19 They will fight against you
but will not overcome you,
for I am with you,
Yahweh declares,
to rescue you.'

The earliest preaching of Jeremiah: [a] the infidelity of Israel

1, 2 **2** The word of Yahweh came to me, saying, ·'Go and shout this in Jerusalem's ears:

'Yahweh says this:
"I remember your faithful love, [b] 11:15
the affection of your bridal days, Ex 13:17d
when you followed me through the desert, Ho 2:16–17,16p
through a land unsown. Rv 14:4e
3 Israel was sacred to Yahweh; Ex 19:6+
the first-fruits of his harvest;
all who ate this incurred guilt,
disaster befell them,
Yahweh declares." '

1 **a.** Modern Anata, a village about 4 miles (6 km) north east of Jerusalem, to which the priest Abiathar was exiled by Solomon, *see* 1 K 2:26.

b. vv. 2–3 refer to a period from about 608 BC to July 587. They do not therefore apply to ch. 40–44. (For the chronology of the period, *see* Chronological Table.)

c. To 'know', when said of God, means to choose and predestine, *see* Am 3:2; Rm 8:29. To 'consecrate' means not so much inward sanctification as a setting apart for the prophetic ministry.

d. 'Watchful' (*sheqed*) is the Hebrew name for the almond tree, watching for the spring to be the first to blossom; here it suggests the Vigilant One (*shoqed*), God ever-wakeful.

e. lit. 'its face from the face of the north'. Alternative trans.: 'its contents (lit. 'its surface') tilting from the north'.

2 **a.** With the exception of a few passages, ch. 2–6 contain Jeremiah's earliest preaching, before the reform under Josiah (621). With the relapse into idolatry and the threat of Nebuchadnezzar in the reign of Jehoiakim, these passages were to gain a new relevance.

b. The word *hesed*, *see* Ho 2:21u, stands for the intimacy between the Israelite nation and God its Husband, within the covenant.

Ho 4:1–3
Listen to Yahweh's word, House of Jacob 4
and all the families of the House of Israel.
Yahweh says this, 5
'What did your ancestors find wrong in me
2 K 17:15 for them to have deserted me so far
Ps 115:8 as to follow Futility[c]
Ho 9:10 and become futile themselves?
They never said, "Where is Yahweh, 6
Dt 8:14–16; 32:10–12 who brought us out of Egypt
and led us through the desert,
through a land of plains and ravines,
through a land of drought, of shadow dark as death,
a land through which no one passes
and where no human being lives?"
Ex 3:8e I brought you to a country of plenty,[d] 7
Dt 8:7–10 to enjoy its produce and good things;
but when you entered you defiled my country
and made my heritage loathsome.
The priests never asked, "Where is Yahweh?" 8
8:8 Those skilled in the Law did not know me,
Ezk 34:1a the shepherds too rebelled against me
and the prophets prophesied by Baal
and followed the Useless Ones.[e]
So I must state my case against you once more, 9
Yahweh declares,
and state my case against your children's children:
Cross to the isles of the Kittim and look, 10
18:13–16 send to Kedar and carefully observe,[f]
see if anything like this has happened before!
Does a nation change its gods? 11
—and these are not gods at all!
Yet my people have exchanged their Glory[g]
Ex 24:16f for the Useless One!
Ps 106:20
↗Rm 1:23 You heavens, stand aghast at this, 12
horrified, utterly appalled,
Yahweh declares.
For my people have committed two crimes: 13
they have abandoned me,
Jn 4:1a the fountain of living water,
and dug water-tanks for themselves,
cracked water-tanks
that hold no water.

'Is Israel a slave? 14
Was he born into serfdom,
for him to be preyed on like this?
Lions have roared at him, 15
they have made their voices heard.
They have left this country a desert,
his towns lie burnt and uninhabited.
The people of Noph and Tahpanhes 16
Is 3:17;7:20 have shaved your skull![h]
4:18;6:19 Have you not brought this on yourself, 17
by abandoning Yahweh your God,
when he was guiding you on your way?
Is 30:1–3 What is the good of going to Egypt now 18

to drink the water of the Nile?
What is the good of going to Assyria
to drink the water of the River? [i]
19 Your wickedness will bring its own punishment,
your infidelities will bring you to book,
so give thought and see
how evil and bitter it is
to abandon Yahweh your God
and not to stand in awe of me,
the Lord Yahweh Sabaoth declares.

20 'It is long ago now since you broke your yoke, Mt 11:28–30
burst your bonds
and said, "I will not serve!"
Yet on every high hill Dt 12:2b;23:19f
and under every green tree 1 K 14:23+
you have sprawled and played the whore. [j] Ezk 16:16
21 Yet I had planted you, a red vine 5:10;6:9;8:13
of completely sound stock. Is 5:1a
How is it you have turned into seedlings
of a vine that is alien to me?
22 Even though you scrub yourself with soda
and put in quantities of soap,
the stain of your guilt would still be visible to me,
the Lord Yahweh declares.
23 How dare you say, "I am not defiled,
I have not run after the Baals?"
Look at your behaviour in the Valley, [k]
realise what you have done.
24 A wild she-donkey, at home in the desert,
snuffing the breeze in desire;
who can control her when she is on heat?
Males need not trouble to look for her,
they will find her in her month.
25 Beware! Your own foot will go unshod,
your own throat grow dry!
But you said, "It is no use! No!
For I love the Strangers Ho 2:7
and they are the ones I shall follow." Am 2:4

26 'Like a thief ashamed at being caught,
so will the House of Israel be:
they, their kings, their chief men,
their priests and their prophets,
27 who say to a piece of wood, "You are my father,"
and to a stone, "You gave birth to me."

c. Here an idol, as in 10:15; 16:19; 51:18. Those who worship it become like it, cf. Ho 9:10.

d. In Hebrew *karmel*: the name of Mount Carmel.

e. The idols, as before, followed by even the responsible members of the nation, including the 'shepherds', the people's political and religious leaders.

f. Kittim: the inhabitants of Kition in Cyprus, Gn 10:4; Nb 24:24; here, in a general sense, the islanders of the western Mediterranean. The word later came to mean the Romans, *see* Dn 11:30. • Kedar: a tribe of Transjordanian nomads, Gn 25:13; Is 21:16.

g. i.e. their God, Yahweh. '*their* Glory' is a scribal correction (*tiqqun sopherim*) for '*my* Glory' which apparently was too offensive.

h. 'have shaved' *ye'aruk* conj.; 'have grazed on' *yir'uk* Hebr. Noph (or Moph, Ho 9:6) is Memphis, capital of Lower Egypt. Tahpanhes, or Daphne, modern Tell Defneh, is a town to the east of the Delta. • Jeremiah alludes to the Egyptian intervention of 608–605.

i. 'Nile', lit. 'Shihor', a branch of the Nile; 'the River' is the Euphrates. These metaphors stand for the policy of appealing to the great powers; the prophets unanimously opposed this.

j. Refusing to serve God, Israel becomes enslaved to idols. Prostitution is a metaphor for idolatry, *see* Ho 1:2b, no doubt linked here to sacred prostitution, cf. Dt 23:19.

k. Probably the Valley of Ben-Hinnom or Gehenna where Topheth was, *see* 7:31; Lv 18:21h.

For they turn to me their backs,
never their faces;
yet when trouble comes they shout,
"Get up! Save us!"
Dt 32:37–38 Where are your gods you made for yourself? 28
Let them get up if they can save you
when trouble comes!
For you have as many gods
=11:13 as you have towns, Judah! *l*
Why make out a case against me? 29
You have all rebelled against me,
Yahweh declares.
Am 4:6f In vain I have struck your children, 30
they have not accepted correction;
Mt 23:27 your own sword has devoured your prophets
like a marauding lion.
Now you of this generation, listen to what Yahweh says: 31
Have I been a desert for Israel,
or a land of gloom?
Why do my people say,
2:23 "We are our own masters,
we will come to you no more"?
Does a girl forget her ornaments, 32
a bride her sash?
And yet my people have forgotten me,
days beyond number.

'How well you set your course 33
in pursuit of love!
And so you have schooled your ways
to wicked deeds.
The very skirts of your robe are stained 34
Is 1:15 with the blood of the poor,
of innocent men you never caught breaking and entering! *m*
And in spite of all this,
you say, "I am innocent, 35
let his anger turn from me!"
Now I pass sentence on you
for saying, "I have not sinned."

'How frivolously *n* you undertake 36
a change of course!
But you will be disappointed by Egypt
just as you were by Assyria.
You will have to leave there too 37
with your hands on your head,
for Yahweh has rejected those that you rely on,
you will come to no good with them.'

Conversion *a*

3 'If a man divorces his wife 1
and she leaves him
and becomes someone else's,
Dt 24:1–4 has he the right to go back to her? *b*
Has not that piece of land
been totally polluted?

And you, having played the whore with many lovers,
you claim the right to come back to me!
Yahweh demands.

2 'Lift your eyes to the bare heights and look! 2:20
Where have you not offered your sex! Dt 12:2b
You waited by the roadside for them
like an Arab in the desert.
You have polluted the country
with your prostitution and your vices:
3 this is why the showers have been withheld, 5:24;14:4
the late rains have not come. Lv 26:19

'But you maintained a prostitute's bold front,
with no trace of a blush.
4 From now on, do not cry out at me, "My father!
My beloved ever since I was young!
5 Will he keep up his anger for ever,
maintain his wrath to the end?"
You say this but still go on sinning,
being so obstinate.'

The Northern Kingdom urged to repent [c]

6 In the days of King Josiah, Yahweh said to me, 'Have you seen what disloyal Israel Ezk 16:1a; ↗23
has done? How she has made her way up every high hill and to every green tree, Dt 12:2b
7 and played the whore there? •I thought, "After doing all this she will come back to
8 me." But she did not come back. Her faithless sister Judah saw this. •She also saw [d]
that I had repudiated disloyal Israel for all her adulteries and given her her divorce Dt 24:1
papers. Her faithless sister Judah, however, was not afraid: she too went and
9 played the whore. •And with her shameless whoring, she polluted the country; she
10 committed adultery with stones and pieces of wood. •Worse than all this: Judah,
her faithless sister, has come back to me not in sincerity, but only in pretence,
Yahweh declares.'
11 And Yahweh said to me, 'Disloyal Israel is upright, compared with faithless
12 Judah. •So go and shout words towards the north, and say:

"Come back, disloyal Israel,
Yahweh declares,
I shall frown on you no more,
since I am merciful,
Yahweh declares.
I shall not keep my anger for ever.
13 Only acknowledge your guilt:
how you have rebelled against Yahweh your God,
how you have prostituted yourself with the Strangers [e]
under every green tree
and have not listened to my voice,
Yahweh declares.

l. Here Gk and *Vet. Lat.* add: 'and as many altars for Baal as Jerusalem has streets', cf. 11:13.

m. The only permissible form of homicide was of a housebreaker caught in the act, Ex 22:1.

n. By minor changes of vowels, as with versions. MT lit. 'how much you go' (?), which might at a pinch be understood to mean: 'Why have you gone so far before changing course?'

3 **a.** Two passages, 3:6–13 and 3:14–18, interrupt the poem, which is continued in 3:19–4:4. • At the beginning of v. 1, we omit 'saying', with Gk and Syr.

b. Dt 24:1–4 forbids such remarriage. Israel, though not repudiated by God, has been so unfaithful that her return and reconciliation would be a miracle of grace, *see* vv. 19seq; 31:23; Ho 1–3.

c. This section dates from the reign of Josiah and is to be assigned to the period following the reform of 622. It attests Jeremiah's consistent hope for the Northern Kingdom, cf. 30:1–31:22. It seems to have inspired Ezk 23.

d. Following one Hebr. MS, some Gk MSS and Syr.; Hebr. 'I saw'.

e. The false gods, as before. Allusion to the syncretic cult in the reigns of Manasseh and Amon.

Zion in the messianic age [f]

"Come back, disloyal children, Yahweh declares, for I alone am your Master, and 14
Is 4:3c I will take you, one from a town, two from a family, and bring you to Zion. ·I shall 15
23:4 Ezk 34:1a give you shepherds after my own heart, who will pasture you wisely and discreetly.
Then, when you have increased and grown numerous in the country, Yahweh 16
Ex 25:8d declares, no one will ever again say: The ark of the covenant of Yahweh! It will not enter their minds, they will not remember it or miss it, nor will another one be
Is 1:26n Ezk 48:35 made. [g] ·When that time comes, Jerusalem will be called: The Throne of Yahweh, 17
Is 45:14h and all the nations will converge on her, on Yahweh's name, on Jerusalem, and will no longer follow their own stubborn and wicked inclinations.

"When those days come, the House of Judah will join the House of Israel; 18
Gn 13:14–15 together they will come from the land of the north to the country I gave your ancestors as their heritage." [h]

Continuation of the poem on conversion [i]

'And I was thinking: 19
How am I to rank you as my children?
Dt 1:31+ I shall give you a country of delights,
the fairest heritage of all the nations!
Ps 89:28 I thought: You will call me Father
and will never cease to follow me.
But like a woman betraying her lover, 20
House of Israel, you have betrayed me,'
Yahweh declares.

A noise is heard on the bare heights: [j] 21
the weeping and entreaty of the Israelites,
for they have gone wildly astray,
have forgotten Yahweh their God.
'Come back, disloyal sons, 22
I want to cure your disloyalty.'
'We are here, we are coming to you,
for you are Yahweh our God.
Ps 75:7;121:1–2 Is 2:12–18 The hills are a delusion after all, 23
so is the tumult of the mountains. [k]
Yahweh our God is, after all,
the saving of Israel.
Shame [l] has devoured what our ancestors worked for 24
ever since we were young,
their flocks and herds, their sons and their daughters.
Let us lie down in our shame, 25
let our confusion cover us,
for we have sinned against Yahweh our God,
we and our ancestors, from our youth until today,
and have not listened to the voice of Yahweh our God.'

4 'If you come back, Israel, 1
Yahweh declares,
if you come back to me,
if you take your Horrors out of my sight,
if you go roving no more,
if you swear, "As Yahweh lives!" 2
truthfully, justly, uprightly,
Gn 12:3b then the nations will bless themselves by him
and glory in him.

'For Yahweh says this 3

to the men of Judah and Jerusalem,
"Clear the ground that lies neglected, Ho 10:12
do not sow among thorns. Mt 13:22par.
4 Circumcise yourselves for Yahweh, [a] Dt 10:16
apply circumcision to your hearts,
men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem,
or my wrath will leap out like a fire =21:12
and burn with no one to quench it,
in return for the wickedness of your deeds." '

Invasion from the north [b] 1:13–15

5 Announce it in Judah,
proclaim it in Jerusalem, say,
'Sound the trumpet in the countryside, Jl 2:1b
shout the message aloud:
Mobilise! =8:14
Take to the fortified towns!
6 Signpost the way to Zion!
Run! Do not delay!
For I am bringing disaster from the north,
an immense calamity.
7 The lion is up from his thicket,
the destroyer of nations is on his way,
he has come from his home
to reduce your land to a desert;
your towns will be in ruins, uninhabited.
8 So wrap yourselves in sackcloth,
lament and wail,
since Yahweh's burning anger
has not turned away from us.

9 'That day,' Yahweh declares,
'the king's heart will fail him,
the princes' hearts will fail them too,
the priests will stand aghast,
the prophets stupefied.'
10 Then I said, 'Ah, Lord Yahweh,
how sadly you deceived this people and Jerusalem
when you used to say, [c] "You will have peace," 14:13
whereas the sword is now at our throats!
11 When that time comes, this will be said
to this people and to Jerusalem:
The scorching wind from the desert heights

f. This passage presupposes the events of 587.

g. Evidently the ark had been destroyed with the Temple by the Chaldaeans in 587. Jerusalem itself is to become 'the throne of Yahweh' as the ark had formerly been, Ex 25:10e; 2 S 6:7.

h. For messianic days the prophets foretell a kingdom united as in the time of David and Solomon, 23:5–6; 31:1; Is 11:13–14; Ezk 37:15–27; Ho 2:2; Mi 2:12; Zc 9:10.

i. Continued from v. 5. What law did not permit, v. 1, grace makes possible.

j. Contrasting with 3:2.

k. Following Gk, Syr.; Hebr. corrupt, lit. 'for the delusion from the hills tumult of the mountains.'

l. i.e. Baal, cf. 11:13; the following lines refer to the sacrifices offered to him.

4 **a.** For Israel, circumcision, Gn 17:10d, was the symbol of the covenant. For Jeremiah the symbol is meaningless without inward devotion, 'circumcision of the heart', *see* Dt 10:16. Israel refuses to listen to God, he has 'uncircumcised ears, 6:10; he refuses to repent, he has an 'uncircumcised heart', 9:24–25, cf. Lv 26:41, Yahweh himself, by converting Israel, will circumcise its heart, Dt 30:6. Foreigners are said to be uncircumcised in heart and flesh, Ezk 44:7. The NT uses the same metaphor, Ac 7:51, and Paul teaches that true circumcision, the circumcision which is the mark of the true Israel, is that of the heart, Rm 2:25–29, cf. 1 Co 7:19; Ga 5:6; 6:15; Ph 3:3; Col 2:11; 3:11.

b. Here as in 1:15, the enemy from the north is not any nation in particular. Jeremiah possibly has in mind both the Scythians (who, between 630 and 625, are found on the Syria-Palestine frontier) and the Assyrians. In 605, when the Chaldaean invasion threatened, this prophecy would have alarming relevance.

c. Allusion to the promises of the false prophets, 14:13; 23:17; cf. 28:8–9.

comes towards the daughter of my people
51:2 —and not to winnow or to cleanse!
A gale of wind comes to me from over there. 12
Now I myself shall pass sentence on them!'

Look, he is advancing like the clouds, 13
his chariots like a hurricane,
his horses swifter than eagles.
Disaster for us! We are lost!
Wash your heart clean of wickedness, Jerusalem, 14
and so be saved.
How long will you go on harbouring
your pernicious thoughts?
For a voice from Dan shouts the news, 15
proclaims disaster from the highlands of Ephraim. [d]
Report it to the nations, 16
proclaim it to Jerusalem,
'Enemies are coming from a distant country, [e]
shouting their war cry against the towns of Judah;
they surround her like watchmen round a field 17
because she has rebelled against me,'
Yahweh declares.
'Your own behaviour and actions 18
have brought this on yourself.
Your wickedness, how bitter,
has stabbed you to the heart!'

10:19 In the pit of my stomach how great my agony! [f] 19
Walls of my heart!
My heart is throbbing!
I cannot keep quiet,
for I have heard the trumpet call,
the battle cry.
Ruin on ruin is the news: 20
the whole land is laid waste,
10:20 my tents are suddenly destroyed,
in one moment all that sheltered me.
How long must I see the standard 21
and hear the trumpet call?

Dt 32:6,28 'This is because my people are stupid, [g] 22
they do not know me,
they are slow-witted children,
they have no understanding,
Mi 7:3 they are clever enough at doing wrong,
but do not know how to do right.'

I looked to the earth—it was a formless waste; 23
to the heavens, and their light had gone.
I looked to the mountains—they were quaking 24
and all the hills rocking to and fro.
I looked—there was no one at all, 25
the very birds of heaven had all fled.
I looked—the fruitful land was a desert, 26
all its towns in ruins
before Yahweh,
before his burning anger.

27 Yes, Yahweh has said this,
'The whole country will be laid waste,
though I shall not annihilate it completely. 5:18
28 For this, the earth will go into mourning
and the heavens above grow dark. Ho 4:3a
For I have spoken, I have decided,
I shall not change my mind or go back on it.'

29 At the din of horseman and archer
the entire city takes to flight:
some plunge into the thickets,
others scale the rocks;
every town is abandoned, [h]
not a single person is left there.
30 And, once despoiled, what are you going to do?
You may dress yourself in scarlet, Is 3:16-24
Ezk 23:40
put on ornaments of gold,
enlarge your eyes with paint
but you make yourself pretty in vain.
Your former lovers disdain you, Ezk 16:37-40;
23:22-29
your life is what they are seeking.
31 Yes, I hear screams like those of a woman in labour,
anguish like that of a woman giving birth to her first child; 6:24;13:21;
22:23;50:43
they are the screams of the daughter of Zion, gasping, Ps 48:6
Is 13:8+
hands outstretched,
'Unhappy me! I am dying,
the murderers have killed me!'

Reasons for the invasion [a]

1 5 Rove the streets of Jerusalem,
now look and enquire,
see in her squares
if you can find an individual, Ps 14:1-3
Mi 7:2
one individual who does right
and seeks the truth,
and I will pardon her, Gn 18:16-33
Ezk 14:12d
Yahweh says. [b]
2 Although they say, 'As Yahweh lives,'
they are, in fact, swearing a false oath.
3 Yahweh, do your eyes not look for truth?
You have struck them; they have not felt it. Am 4:6f
You have annihilated them, for they ignored the lesson.
They have set their faces harder than rock,
they have refused to repent. Rv 16:9,11
4 I thought, 'These are only the poor!
They behave stupidly
since they do not know Yahweh's way
or the ruling of their God.

d. Dan: on the north frontier of Palestine, Gn 14:14; Jos 19:47; Jg 18:29; 20:1a. Ephraim: here the mountainous area between Shechem and Bethel settled by descendants of the tribe of Ephraim son of Joseph, Jos 16:1seq; 17:15; 1 S 1:1.

e. 'enemies' *tzarim* conj.; Hebr. *notzrim* 'watchers'.

f. Jeremiah identifies himself with his suffering country.

g. Yahweh is the speaker.

h. 'every town' Gk; Hebr. repeats 'the entire city'.

5 **a.** To the principal indictment against the idolatrous contamination of Yahwistic worship, Jeremiah adds practical atheism, and obduracy, vv. 3, 12–13, sensuality, vv. 7–8, exploitation of the poor, vv. 26–29, the blame for which he throws on the ruling classes, vv. 4–5, the priests and the prophets, v. 31:

b. 'Yahweh says' Gk; Hebr. omits.

I shall approach the great men 5
and speak to them,
for these will know Yahweh's way
and the ruling of their God.'
2:20 But these, too, have broken the yoke,
Mt 11:28–30 have burst the bonds.
And so, a lion from the forest will slaughter them, 6
a wolf from the plains will despoil them,
a leopard will be lurking round their towns:
anyone who goes out will be torn to pieces—
because of their many crimes,
their countless infidelities.

'Why should I pardon you? 7
Your sons have abandoned me,
to swear by gods that are not gods at all. [c]
Dt 32:15 I fed them full, and they became adulterers,
they hurried to the brothel.
They are well-fed, roving stallions, 8
each neighing for his neighbour's wife.
=5:29;9:8 Shall I fail to punish this, 9
Yahweh demands,
or on such a nation
to exact vengeance?
Scale her terraces! Destroy! 10
But do not annihilate her completely!
2:21+ Strip off her branches,
for Yahweh does not own them!
How treacherously they have treated me, 11
the House of Israel and the House of Judah! [d]
Yahweh declares.

'They have denied Yahweh, 12
Ps 14:1 they have said, "He is nothing; [e]
Zp 1:12 no evil will overtake us,
Is 28:15 we shall not see sword or famine.
Am 9:10 And the prophets? Nothing but wind; 13
the word is not in them;
let those very things happen to them!" '
Because of this, 14
Yahweh, God Sabaoth, says this,
'Since you have said such things,
23:29 now I shall make my words
Ho 6:5 a fire in your mouth
Rv 11:5 and make this people wood
for the fire to devour.
Dt 28:49–52 Now I shall bring on you 15
a nation from afar, House of Israel,
Yahweh declares,
an enduring nation,
an ancient nation,
Is 28:11 a nation whose language you do not know,
nor can you grasp what they say.
Their quiver a gaping tomb, 16
they are all of them fighters.
They will devour your harvest and your food, 17
devour your sons and daughters,

devour your flocks and herds,
devour your vines and fig trees,
and demolish your fortified towns
in which you trust—with the sword!'[f]

Lesson to be drawn from the punishment

18 'Yet even in those days, Yahweh declares, I shall not annihilate you completely. Is 4:3c
19 'And when you ask, "Why has Yahweh our God done all this to us?" you will 16:10seq.; 22:8seq.
give them this answer, "As you abandon me to serve alien gods in your own Dt 29:23–24
country, so you must serve aliens in a country not your own." •Dt 28:47–48

In a time of famine (?) 8:18–23;14

20 'Announce this in the House of Jacob,
proclaim it in Judah, and say,
21 "Now listen to this,
stupid, brainless people[g]
who have eyes and do not see, Dt 29:3+
who have ears and do not hear! Is 6:10
Ezk 12:2
22 Have you no fear of me? Mt 13:13e
Yahweh demands.
Will you not tremble before me
who set the sand as limit to the sea,
as an everlasting barrier it cannot pass? Jb 38:8–11
Ps 104:9
Its waves may toss but not prevail,
they may roar but cannot pass beyond.
23 But this people
has a rebellious, unruly heart;
they have rebelled and gone!
24 Nor do they say to themselves:
Now we ought to fear Yahweh our God
who gives the rain, of autumn 3:3;14:22
and of spring, at the right season, Dt 11:14
and reserves us
the weeks appointed for harvest. 1 S 12:17i
25 Your misdeeds have upset all this,
your sins have deprived you of these blessings." '

Resumption of the theme of the invasion

26 Yes, there are wicked men among my people
who watch like fowlers on the alert;[h]
they set traps
and they catch human beings.
27 Like a cage full of birds
so are their houses full of loot;
they have grown rich and powerful because of it,
28 they are fat, they are sleek,
in wickedness they go to any lengths:
they have no respect for rights,

c. Whereas they say of the true God, 'He is nothing!', v. 12.

d. 'House of Israel' here perhaps denotes the Southern Kingdom, *see* ch. 2, and 'House of Judah' may be a gloss. The term meant different things at different times: originally it applied to the twelve tribes of the people of the covenant, Jos 24, and later, in a secular sense, was used to denote the Northern Kingdom, 2 S 5:5. Its religious significance was not forgotten, however, and Isaiah speaks of the 'two Houses of Israel', Is 8:14. After the fall of the Kingdom of Samaria (721 BC), the name was used for the Southern Kingdom, Is 5:7; Ezk 4:3; 5:4; Mi 2:1.

e. lit. 'Not he'. This is a denial not of God's existence but of his intervention, *see* Ps 14:1a. An alternative interpretation is '(We want) none of him.'

f. The prophecy continues at v. 26.

g. lit. 'heartless', *see* Gn 8:21c; Ho 7:11.

h. Plural for the sake of the context; Hebr. has sing. • 'like fowlers on the alert' trans. uncertain: the verb normally means 'to abase oneself', hence perhaps 'to bend, to crouch' (on the alert).

for orphans' rights, and yet they succeed!
They have not upheld the cause of the needy.
=5:9 Shall I fail to punish this, 29
Yahweh demands,
or on such a nation
to exact vengeance?
Horrible, disgusting things 30
are happening in the land:
14:14 the prophets prophesy falsely 31
and the priests exploit the people.[i]
And my people love it!
Is 10:3 But when the end comes, what will you do?

More about the invasion

6 Flee in a body, Benjaminites, 1
right away from Jerusalem!
Sound the trumpet in Tekoa!
Jl 2:1b Light the beacon on Beth-ha-Cherem![a]
1:13–15 For disaster lowers from the north,
an immense calamity.
Beautiful, delicate as she is, 2
I shall destroy the daughter of Zion!
12:10 Shepherds are advancing on her 3
with their flocks.
They have pitched their tents all round her,
each grazes his part.
Prepare for holy war against her![b] 4
To arms! We shall attack at noon!
Disaster for us! The light is fading,
the evening shadows lengthen.
To arms! We shall attack at night 5
and destroy her palaces.
For Yahweh Sabaoth says this, 6
'Cut down trees,
Lk 19:43 throw up an earthwork outside Jerusalem:
this is the city to be punished,[c]
with nothing but oppression in her.
As a well keeps its water fresh 7
so she keeps her wickedness fresh.
Violence and ruin are what you hear in her,
wounds and blows always forced on my attention.
Reform, Jerusalem, 8
or I shall turn my attention away from you
and reduce you to a desert,
a land without people.'
Yahweh Sabaoth says this, 9
'They will glean, glean what is left of Israel[d]
2:21+ like a vine.
Like a grape-picker, pass your hand again over the branches!'
To whom should I speak, whom warn,[e] 10
for them to hear?
Look, their ears are uncircumcised,
they cannot listen.
4:4a Look, for them Yahweh's word is something to sneer at,
they have no taste for it.
So I am full of Yahweh's wrath, 11

I am weary of holding it in.
Then pour it on the children in the streets,
and on the bands of youths as well,
for husband and wife will both be taken,
the greybeard and the man weighed down with years.
12 Their houses will pass to other men, =8:10–12
so will their fields and wives.
Yes, I shall stretch my hand
over those living in this country,
Yahweh declares.
13 For, from the least to greatest,
they are all greedy for gain;
prophet no less than priest, 23:11
all of them practise fraud.
14 Without concern they dress my people's wound,
saying, 'Peace! Peace!'
whereas there is no peace.[f]
15 They should be ashamed of their loathsome deeds.
Not they! They feel no shame,
they do not even know how to blush.
And so as others fall, they too will fall,
will be thrown down when I come and punish them,
Yahweh says.

16 Yahweh says this,
'Stand at the crossroads and look,
ask for the ancient paths:[g] 18:15
which was the good way? Take it
and you will find rest for yourselves. ↗Mt 11:29
But they have said, "We will not take it."
17 I posted look-outs on your behalf: Ezk 3:17
Listen to the sound of the trumpet! Ho 9:8+
But they said, "We will not listen."
18 Then hear, you nations,
and know, assembly,
what is going to happen to them!
19 Listen, earth!
Watch, I shall bring disaster
on this people:
it is the fruit of the way they think, Pr 1:29–30
since they have not listened to my words
nor to my law, but have rejected it.

i. lit. 'take into their hands', with the verb *radah* II used in Jg 14:9, rather than 'govern' (*radah* I) for their hands, i.e. for their own advantage.

6 **a.** The Benjaminites living in northern Judah are perhaps imagined as having taken refuge in Jerusalem. • Tekoa: home of the prophet Amos, 5 miles (8 km) south of Bethlehem. Beth-ha-Cherem: cf. Ne 3:14, site unknown, possibly Ramath Rahel, about 3 miles (5 km) south of Jerusalem.

b. lit. 'sanctify the war against her', war in those days being considered a sacred duty, *see also* 22:7. But, despite the vocabulary, this is the reverse of the ideal of the holy war in which Yahweh fights with his people, *see* Dt 1:30; 20:4; Is 31:4, or at least against its enemies, Is 13:3–4. For Jeremiah, war is no longer a religious act, since Yahweh has deserted the camp of Israel, whom he has decided to punish, cf. 21:5; 34:22.

c. lit. 'visited' (by God). Divine visitations might be to rescue, 15:15; Ex 3:16; Lk 1:68, or to punish, Jr 6:15; 8:12; 9:24, cf. Is 10:3.

d. Here, as in 8:3, the expression is not yet technical. It becomes so in 23:3; 31:7 (there translated 'remnant'), indicating the faithful Israel, heir to the blessings to come, *see* Is 4:3c.

e. Jeremiah, instructed to collect a few who will listen to him, says, vv. 10–11 [a], that no one will pay attention. God's answer follows.

f. Allusion to the lying promises of the false prophets, 4:10; 14:13; 23:16–17; 28:8–9, of whom Jeremiah is to make bitter enemies by his forecasts of disaster. They foretell 'peace', *shalom*, which means not merely the absence of external danger (a primary preoccupation in the times of Jeremiah) but an ideal state of happiness in which individual and nation prosper in right relations with God and social harmony: the 'peace' characterising the messianic age, *see* Is 11:6e.

g. Sometimes those of their sinful ancestors, Jb 22:15, sometimes, as here, those of their faithful ones, cf. 18:15; Ps 139:14,

1 K 10:1a
What do I care about incense 20
imported from Sheba, [h]
or fragrant cane
from a distant country?
Am 5:21n
Your burnt offerings are not acceptable,
your sacrifices do not please me.
And so, Yahweh says this, 21
'In front of this people I shall now lay obstacles
for them to stumble over;
father and son alike,
neighbour and friend will perish.'

Yahweh says this, 22
=50:41–43
'Look, a people is coming from the land of the north,
from the far ends of the earth a great nation is rising;
they are armed with bow and spear, 23
they are cruel and pitiless;
their noise is like the roaring of the sea;
they are riding horses,
they are ready to fight against you as one man,
against you, daughter of Zion.
We have heard the news, 24
our hands fall limp,
anguish has gripped us,
4:31+
pain like that of a woman in labour.
Do not go out into the countryside, 25
do not venture onto the roads,
for the enemy's sword is there,
20:10b
terror on every side.
Put on sackcloth, daughter of my people, 26
roll in ashes;
Am 8:10
Zc 12:10
mourn as for an only son,
a very bitter dirge.
For on us suddenly
the destroyer is coming.

'I have appointed you as tester of my people, [i] 27
to learn and to test how they behave.
All of them are total rebels 28
peddlers of slander,
hard as bronze and iron, [j]
all agents of corruption.
9:6
The bellows blast away 29
Is 1:22
Ezk 22:18,20
to make the fire burn away the lead. [k]
Ml 3:2–3
In vain the smelter does his work,
for the dross is not purged out.
"Silver-reject", men call them, 30
and indeed Yahweh has rejected them!'

B: PROPHECIES MAINLY IN THE REIGN OF JEHOIAKIM

11:15–17;
26:1–19,1a
Ezk 24:21
True worship [a]
a: Against the Temple [b]

7 The word that came to Jeremiah from Yahweh, saying, •'Stand at the gate of 1, 2
the Temple of Yahweh and there proclaim this message. Say, "Listen to the
word of Yahweh, all you of Judah who come in by these gates to worship Yahweh.

3 Yahweh Sabaoth, the God of Israel, says this: Amend your behaviour and your Is 1:16–17
4 actions and I will let you stay in this place. ·Do not put your faith in delusive
words, such as: This is Yahweh's sanctuary, Yahweh's sanctuary, Yahweh's sanc-
5 tuary! ·But if you really amend your behaviour and your actions, if you really treat
6 one another fairly, ·if you do not exploit the stranger, the orphan and the widow, 22:3
if you do not shed innocent blood in this place and if you do not follow other gods, Ex 20:2–3,3b
7 to your own ruin, ·then I shall let you stay in this place, in the country I gave for
8 ever to your ancestors of old. ·Look, you are putting your faith in delusive,
9 worthless words! ·Steal, would you, murder, commit adultery, perjure yourselves,
10 burn incense to Baal, follow other gods of whom you know nothing?—·and then
come and stand before me in this Temple that bears my name, saying: Now we are
11 safe to go on doing all these loathsome things! ·Do you look on this Temple that
bears my name as a den of bandits? I, at any rate, can see straight, Yahweh ↗Mt 21:13+
declares.

12 "Now go to the place which used to be mine at Shiloh,[c] where I once gave my 1 S 1–3;4: 12–22
name a home; see what I have done to it because of the wickedness of my people Ps 78:59–69
13 Israel! ·And now, since you have done all these things, Yahweh declares, and
refused to listen when I spoke so urgently, so persistently, or to answer when I Is 50:2;65:12; 66:4
14 called you, ·I shall treat this Temple that bears my name, and in which you put
your heart, the place that I gave you and your ancestors, just as I treated Shiloh,
15 and I shall drive you out of my sight, as I did all your kinsfolk, the whole race of
Ephraim."

b: Alien gods

16 'You, for your part, must not intercede for this people, nor raise either plea or 11:14;14:11
17 prayer on their behalf; do not plead with me, for I will not listen to you. ·Can you
not see what they are doing in the towns of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem?
18 The children collect the wood, the fathers light the fire, the women knead the
dough, to make cakes for the Queen of Heaven;[d] and, to spite me, they pour 44:17–19
19 libations to alien gods. ·Is it really me they spite, Yahweh demands, is it not in fact
20 themselves, to their own confusion? ·So, Lord Yahweh says this, "My anger, my
wrath will be poured down on this place, on man and beast, on the trees of the
countryside and the fruits of the soil; it will burn, and not be quenched."

c: Worship without sincerity 11:1–14

21 'Yahweh Sabaoth, the God of Israel, says this, "Add your burnt offerings to your 6:20
22 sacrifices and eat all the meat. ·For when I brought your ancestors out of Egypt, Am 5:21n
I said nothing to them, gave them no orders, about burnt offerings or sacrifices.[e]
23 My one command to them was this: Listen to my voice, then I will be your God
and you shall be my people. In everything, follow the way that I mark out for you,
24 and you shall prosper. ·But they did not listen, they did not pay attention; they
followed their own devices, their own stubborn and wicked inclinations, and got 9:13

h. Or Saba, 1 K 10:1a.

i. Hebr. adds 'as a fortified city': same word as in 1:18.

j. lit. '(they are) bronze and iron.'

k. Simile drawn from the refining of metals, here specifically the treatment of silver ore, from which the silver and lead have to be extracted separately. When Israel is put in the melting-pot, however, no pure metal emerges.

7 **a.** The following discourses, placed together because of their common concern with religious observance, date from the reign of Jehoiakim.

b. That the Temple was sanctified by the presence of Yahweh, 1 K 8:10seq, *see* Dt 4:7b, might make it seem indestructible, and Sennacherib's setback outside the very walls of Jerusalem in 701 had shown how Yahweh protected his holy city, 2 K 19:32–34; Is 37:33–35. The conclusion was too readily drawn that this protection would be effective a second time. Jeremiah is about to shock his countrymen, ch. 26, by asserting, like Micah before him, Mi 3:12, that their confidence is illusory: that God may well desert his Temple. Ezekiel similarly was to see the Glory of Yahweh abandoning the sanctuary, Ezk 11:23. Ch. 26 narrates the events that prompted this tirade delivered in the early days of Jehoiakim (608).

c. The shrine at Shiloh, although the residence of the ark, had been destroyed by the Philistines, 1 S 4. The Jews were chary of mentioning this national disaster; Ps 78:60 is the only text to mention it, after Jeremiah. Shiloh is about 25 miles (40 km) north of Jerusalem.

d. Ishtar (Astarte), goddess of fertility in the Mesopotamian pantheon; she was identified with the planet Venus. The form of the word 'queen' is unusual and found only in Jr, cf. 44:17–25.

e. Jeremiah is right in saying that the Decalogue, the charter of the covenant, contains no ritual ordinances. He does not merely, however, have animal sacrifices in mind, cf. 33:11, but is at one here with a prophetic tradition maintaining that ritual worship is not the essential part of religion, *see* Ho 6:6; Am 5:21n; Mi 6:6–8.

worse rather than better. ·From the day your ancestors left Egypt until today, I 25
have sent you all my servants the prophets, persistently sending them day after
25:4;26:5; 29:19;44:4 day.[f] ·But they have not listened to me, have not paid attention; they have 26
2 Ch 36:15 deliberately resisted, behaving worse than their ancestors. ·So you will tell them 27
Ezk 3:4–7 all this, but they will not listen to you; you will call them, but they will not answer
you." ·Then you are to say to them, "This is the nation that will neither listen to 28
Is 7:9e the voice of Yahweh its God nor take correction. Sincerity is no more, it has
vanished from their mouths.

19:1–13 **d: More about idolatrous worship: a threat of exile**

"Cut off your tresses, throw them away! 29
On the bare heights raise a dirge.
for Yahweh has rejected, has abandoned,
a brood that enrages him!"

'Yes, the people of Judah have done what displeases me, Yahweh declares. 30
=32:34 They have set up their Horrors[g] in the Temple that bears my name, to defile it,
Lv 18:21h and have built the high places of Topheth[h] in the Valley of Ben-Hinnom, to burn 31
their sons and daughters: a thing I never ordered, that had never entered my
thoughts. ·So now the days are coming, Yahweh declares, when people will no 32
=19:6 longer say Topheth or Valley of Ben-Hinnom, but Valley of Slaughter. Topheth
16:4;34:20 will become a burial ground, for lack of other space; ·the corpses of this people will 33
be food for the birds of the sky and the animals of earth, and there will be no one to
16:9;25:10 Is 24:8 drive them off. ·I shall silence the shouts of rejoicing and mirth and the voices of 34
↗Ba 2:23 bridegroom and bride, in the towns of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem, for the
country will be reduced to desert.'

8 'When that time comes, Yahweh declares, the bones of the kings of Judah, the 1
bones of its chief men, the bones of the priests, the bones of the prophets and
Ezk 6:4–5 the bones of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, will be taken from their tombs. ·They 2
will be spread out before the sun, the moon, the whole array of heaven, whom they
have loved and served, followed, consulted and worshipped.[a] They will not be
16:4;=25:33 2 K 9:37 gathered or reburied but left lying on the surface like dung. ·And death will seem 3
preferable to life to all the survivors of this wicked race, wherever[b] I have driven
them, Yahweh Sabaoth declares.

Threats, laments, advice.
Israel's perversity[c]

'You are to tell them, "Yahweh says this: 4
If someone falls, can he not stand up again?
If people stray, can they not turn back?
Why does this people persist in acts of infidelity, 5
why does Jerusalem persist in continuous infidelity?
They cling to illusion,
they refuse to turn back.
I have listened attentively: 6
they have never said anything like that.
Not one repents of wickedness
saying: What have I done?
Each one keeps returning to the course
like a horse charging into battle.
Is 1:3 Even the stork in the sky 7
knows the appropriate season;
turtledove, swallow and crane
observe their time of migration.
But my people do not know
Yahweh's laws!" '

The Law as administered by the priests

8 How can you say, 'We are wise,
since we have Yahweh's Law?'
Look how it has been falsified
by the lying pen of the scribes![d]
9 The wise are put to shame,
alarmed, caught out
because they have rejected Yahweh's word.
What price their wisdom now?

2:8
↗Mt 23

Repetition of an earlier threat[e]

10 So I shall give their wives to other men,
their fields to new masters,
for, from the least to greatest,
they are all greedy for gain;
prophet no less than priest,
all of them practise fraud.
11 Without concern they dress
the wound of the daughter of my people,
saying, 'Peace! Peace!'
whereas there is no peace.
12 They should be ashamed of their loathsome deeds.
Not they! They feel no shame,
they do not even know how to blush.
And so as others fall, they too will fall,
will be thrown down when the time for punishing them comes,
Yahweh says.

=6:12–15

Ezk 13:10c

Threats against Judah the Vine

13 I shall put an end to them, Yahweh declares,
no more grapes on the vine,
no more figs on the fig tree
only withered leaves:
I have found them people to trample on them!
14 Why are we sitting still?
Mobilise![f]
Take to the fortified towns
and there fall silent,[g]
since Yahweh our God means to silence us
by giving us poisoned water to drink
because we have sinned against him.
15 We are hoping for peace—no good came of it!
For the time of healing—nothing but terror!
16 From Dan you can hear
the snorting of his horses;
at the neighing of his stallions

Is 5:1a
Mt 21:18–22+
Lk 13:6–9

=4:5

9:14

=14:19
Is 59:9

4:15

f. 'day after day' Syr.; 'day' Hebr.

g. The false gods, as before.

h. For 'Topheth', the 'incinerator', where children were sacrificed in honour of Molech (32:35), *see* Lv 18:21h; Is 30:33*l*.

8 **a.** Worship of the heavenly bodies was widely practised in the reigns of Manasseh and Amon.

b. Hebr. repeats 'the survivors'; Gk and Syr. omit.

c. This section, 8:4–10:25, is a collection of prophecies delivered early in the reign of Jehoiakim, about 605 BC. The three poems, 8:4–7, 13–17; 9:1–8, continue and expand the reproaches against Israel. The lament, 9:9–21, is continued in 10:17–22 and ends with the prayer of Jeremiah in 10:23–24. Other poems of Jeremiah have then been added, 8:8–9; 8:10–12; 8:18–23; 9:22–23; 9:24–25. The fragment 10:1–16 seems to be by another hand.

d. In this case the priests, guardians of the tradition preserved in the texts. The 'word', v. 9, presumably means the teaching of the prophets and the law, in oral form and perhaps in part committed to writing.

e. This fragment, duplicating 6:12–15, is omitted by Gk.

f. The same Hebr. verb means 'to mobilise' and 'to put an end to'.

g. In the silence of death.

the whole country quakes;
they are coming to devour the country and its contents,
the town and those that live in it.'
Nb 21:6 Dt 32:24 Yes, now I am sending you 17
poisonous snakes
against which no charm exists;
Gn 3:14–15 and they will bite you,
Yahweh declares.

5:20–25;14 **A lament of the prophet during a famine**

Incurable sorrow overtakes me, [h] 18
my heart fails me.
Hark, from the daughter of my people the cry for help, 19
ringing far and wide throughout the land!
'Is Yahweh no longer in Zion,
her King no longer there?'
(Why have they provoked me with their idols,
with their futile foreign gods?)
'Harvest is over, summer at an end, 20
and we have not been saved!'
The wound of the daughter of my people wounds me too, 21
all looks dark to me, terror grips me.
Is there no balm in Gilead any more? [i] 22
Is no doctor there?
Then why is there no progress
in the cure of the daughter of my people?
Who will turn my head into a fountain, 23 9:1
and my eyes into a spring of tears,
that I can weep day and night
over the slain of the daughter of my people?

The moral corruption of Judah

9 Who will find me a wayfarer's shelter 1 2
in the desert,
for me to quit my people,
and leave them far behind?
For all of them are adulterers,
a conspiracy of traitors.
Ps 12:1–4; 116:11 They bend their tongues like a bow; 2 3
not truth but falsehood
holds sway in the land; [a]
yes, they go from crime to crime,
but me they do not know,
Yahweh declares.
12:6 Mi 7:5 Let each be on his guard against his friend; 3 4
do not trust a brother,
Gn 27:36 Ho 12:4 for every brother aims but to supplant, [b]
and every friend is a peddler of slander.
Each one cheats his friend, 4 5
never telling the truth;
they have trained their tongues to lie
and devote all their energies to doing wrong.
You live in a world of bad faith! 5 6
Out of bad faith, they refuse to know me,
Yahweh declares.
And, so, Yahweh Sabaoth declares, 6 7

now I shall purge them and test them, 6:29k
no other way to treat the daughter of my people!
8 7 Their tongue is a deadly arrow,
their words are in bad faith;
with his mouth each wishes his neighbour peace,
while in his heart plotting a trap for him.
9 8 Shall I fail to punish them for this, 5:9
Yahweh demands,
or on such a nation
fail to exact vengeance?

Sorrow in Zion

10 9 I raise the wail and lament for the mountains,
the dirge for the desert pastures,
for they have been burnt: [c] no one passes there,
the sound of flocks is heard no more.
Birds of the sky and animals, Ho 4:3a
all have fled, all are gone.
11 10 I shall make Jerusalem a heap of ruins,
a lair for jackals,
and the towns of Judah
an uninhabited wasteland. 34:22

12 11 Who is wise enough to understand this? To whom has Yahweh's mouth spoken to explain it?

Why is the country annihilated,
burnt like the desert where no one passes?

13 12 Yahweh says, 'This is because they have forsaken my Law which I gave them Ex 19:5
14 13 and have not listened to my voice or followed it, ·but have followed their own
15 14 stubborn hearts, have followed the Baals as their ancestors taught them.' ·So 7:24
Yahweh Sabaoth, the God of Israel, says this, 'Now I shall give this people =23:15
16 15 wormwood to eat and poisoned water to drink. ·I shall scatter them among 8:14
nations unknown to their ancestors or to them; and I shall pursue them with the Dt 4:27; 28: 36.64
sword until I have annihilated them.' Rv 8:11

17 16 Yahweh Sabaoth says this,
'Prepare to call for the mourning women!
Send for those who are best at it!
18 17 Let them lose no time in raising the lament over us!
Let our eyes rain tears,
our eyelids run with weeping!
19 18 A lament makes itself heard in Zion,
"What ruin is ours,
what utter shame!
For we must leave the country,
our homes have been knocked down!" '
20 19 Now listen, you women, to Yahweh's word,
let your ears take in the word his own mouth speaks.
Teach your daughters how to wail

h. 'incurably' Gk; 'my gaiety' (?) Hebr. • '(sorrow) overtakes me'. lit. 'mounts (on me)' *'alah* conj.; 'on (sorrow, on me)' *'aley* Hebr. At a pinch, with only the second emendation, one might construe, 'a source of gaiety and for me sorrow'.

i. Gilead, east of the River Jordan and north of the River Jabbok, an area producing balm and aromatic herbs. Gn 37:25; 43:11, *see* also Jr 46:11.

9 **a.** 'not truth holds sway' Gk; 'and they are not strong for truth' Hebr.

b. lit. 'supplanting supplants', *'aqob ya'eqob*, a pun on the name *ya'aqob*, Jacob, and allusion to his role as 'supplanter', Gn 25:26g. Alternative trans. 'every brother plays the role of Jacob.'

c. Jerusalem is threatened; the reference is perhaps to Nebuchadnezzar's first campaign, in 605, 2 K 24:1.

and teach one another this dirge,
'Death has climbed in at our windows, 20 21
and made its way into our palaces;
it has cut down the children in the street,
the young people in the squares—
Speak! Yahweh declares this— 21 22
human corpses are strewn
8:2 like dung in the open field,
like sheaves left by the reaper,
with no one to gather them.'

True wisdom

Yahweh says this, 22 23
↗1 Co 1:31 'Let the sage not boast of wisdom,
↗2 Co 10:17 nor the valiant of valour,
↗Jm 1:9 nor the wealthy of riches!
But let anyone who wants to boast, boast of this: 23 24
of understanding and knowing me. [d]
For I am Yahweh, who acts with faithful love, [e]
justice, and uprightness on earth:
yes, these are what please me,'
Yahweh declares.

4:4a **Circumcision, a false guarantee**

'Look, the days are coming, Yahweh declares, when I shall punish all who are 24 25
Rm 2:25 circumcised only in the flesh: ·Egypt, Judah, Edom, the Ammonites, Moab, and 25
all the men with shaven temples [f] who live in the desert. For all those nations, [g] and
the whole House of Israel too, are uncircumcised at heart.'

Ps 115:4–8 **Idols and the true God** [a]
Is 40:19–20+;
44:9d

10 Listen, House of Israel, to the word that Yahweh addresses to you. Yahweh 1
says this:

'Do not learn the ways of the nations 2
or take alarm at the heavenly signs,
alarmed though the nations may be at them.
Yes, the customs [b] of the peoples are quite futile: 3
wood, nothing more, cut out of a forest,
worked with a blade by a carver's hand,
then embellished with silver and gold, 4
then fastened with hammer and nails
to keep it from moving.
Like scarecrows in a melon patch, they cannot talk, 5
they have to be carried, since they cannot walk.
Have no fear of them: they can do no harm
—nor any good either!'

Ps 86:8+ Yahweh, there is no one like you, 6
Is 40:18; so great you are,
42:8e so great your mighty name.
↗Rv 15:4 Who would not revere you, King of nations? 7
Yes, this is your due.
Since of all the wise among the nations,
and in all their kingdoms,
there is not a single one like you.

All of them are brutish and stupid: 8

the Futile Ones' teaching is but wood,
9 silver leaf imported from Tarshish
and gold from Ophir,[c]
the work of carver or goldsmith;
then dressed up in violet and purple,
all the work of skilled men.
10 But Yahweh is the true God.
He is the living God,
the everlasting King.
The earth quakes when he is wrathful,
the nations cannot endure his fury.

11 'Tell them this, "The gods who did not make the heavens and the earth will vanish from the earth and from under these heavens." ' | Ws 14:11

12 By his power he made the earth, =51:15–19
by his wisdom set the world firm, Jb 38
but his discernment spread out the heavens. Ps 104
13 When he thunders Pr 8:27–31
there is a roaring of waters in heaven;
he raises clouds from the remotest parts of the earth, ‖Ps 135:7
makes the lightning flash for the downpour,
and brings the wind from his storehouse.
14 At this all people stand stupefied, uncomprehending,
every goldsmith blushes for his idols;
his castings are but delusion,
with no breath in them.
15 They are futile, a laughable production;
when the time comes for them to be punished, they will vanish.
16 The Heritage of Jacob is not like these,
for he is the maker of everything,
and Israel is the tribe that is his heritage.
His name is Yahweh Sabaoth.

Panic in the country

17 Pick up your pack from the ground, Ezk 12:3
you the besieged![d]
18 For Yahweh says this,
'Now I shall throw out
the inhabitants of the country,
this time,
and bring distress on them,
so that they may find me!'[e]
19 Disaster is on me! What a wound![f] 4:31

d. The 'knowledge of Yahweh' is the sum of true religion, *see* Ho 2:22v, and one of the main themes of Jeremiah's preaching, *see* Jr 2:8; 22:15–16; 24:7; 31:34.

e. *hesed*, *see* Ho 2:21u.

f. The Arabs.

g. 'those nations' *haggoyim ha'elleh* conj.; *haggoyim 'arelim* Hebr. 'these nations (are) uncircumcised', but *see* v. 24.

10 a. This section, 10:1–16, apparently not by Jeremiah, elaborates on themes in the second part of Is: the nothingness of false gods, *see* Is 40:20m, and the majesty of Yahweh the Creator, *see* Is 42:8m. The text is overloaded: vv. 6–8, 10 are absent from Gk, in which the order is different; v. 11 is an Aramaic gloss on v. 12. Vv 12–16 are repeated in 51:15–19.

b. lit. 'the decrees' or 'the laws', but the word is used pejoratively here to mean the rules obeyed by idolatrous nations, cf. 2 K 17:8.

c. 'Uphaz' Hebr.; the word also occurs in Dn 10:5 but is probably a misspelling of Ophir (Syr. and Targ.). Ophir, an unidentified place on the west coast of Arabia, was the land of gold, Gn 10:29; 1 K 9:28. For Tarshish, which attempts have been made to identify with Tartessos in southern Spain, *see* 1 K 10:22f.

d. The personified Israelite nation is apostrophised again; the danger appears more imminent than in 9:9–21.

e. 'find me' conj.; 'find' Hebr. A change in the vowels would give the reading 'for them to be found', i.e. caught by their enemies; but the theme of the return to God as a result of suffering is frequent among the prophets, *see* 29:12–13; 31:16–19; Is 17:4–7; 30:20; Ba 2:30–32; Ho 5:14–15; Mi 4:10–11; Zc 10:9. *See also* Dt 4:29.

f. Lament of the personified nation.

My injury is incurable!
And I used to think,
'If this is the worst, I can bear it!'
4:20 But now my tent is destroyed, 20
all my ropes are snapped,
Is 54:1–2 my sons have left me and are no more;
no one is left to put my tent up again
or to hang the side-cloths.
Ezk 34:1a The shepherds are the ones who have been stupid: 21
they have not searched for Yahweh.
This is why they have not prospered
and why their whole flock has been dispersed.
Listen! A terrible noise! 22
A mighty uproar from the land of the north
to reduce the towns of Judah
to desert, to a lair for jackals!

I know, Yahweh, 23
Pr 20:24 no one's course is in his control,
nor is it in anyone's power, as he goes his way,
to guide his own steps.
‖Ps 6:1; 38:1 Correct me, Yahweh, but with moderation, 24
not in your anger, or you will reduce me to nothing.

‖Ps 79:6–7 Pour out your anger on the nations 25
who do not acknowledge you,
1 Th 4:5
2 Th 1:8 and on the families
that do not call on your name,
30:16
Is 9:11 for they have devoured Jacob,
have devoured and made an end of him
and reduced his home to desolation.

Jeremiah and observance of the covenant [e]

7:21–28 11 The word that came to Jeremiah from Yahweh, 2 'Hear the terms of this 1, 2
covenant; tell them to the people of Judah and to the inhabitants of Jerusa-
Dt 27:26 lem. 3 Tell them, "Yahweh, God of Israel, says this: Cursed be anyone who will 3
not listen to the terms of this covenant 4 which I ordained for your ancestors when 4
I brought them out of Egypt, out of that iron-foundry. Listen to my voice, I told
Dt 4:20 them, carry out all my orders, then you will be my people and I shall be your God,
Dt 6:3;7:12–13; 10:15;11:9 so that I may fulfil the oath I swore to your ancestors, that I may give them a 5
country flowing with milk and honey, as is the case today." ' I replied, 'So be it,
Yahweh!' 6 Then Yahweh said to me, 'Proclaim all these terms in the towns of 6
Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem, saying, "Listen to the terms of this covenant
and obey them. 7 For when I brought your ancestors out of Egypt, I solemnly 7
warned them, and have persistently warned them until today, saying: Listen to my
voice. 8 But they did not listen, did not pay attention; instead, each followed his 8
own stubborn and wicked inclinations. And against them, in consequence, I put
into action the words of this covenant which I had ordered them to obey and which
they had not obeyed." '

Yahweh said to me, 'Plainly there is conspiracy among the people of Judah and 9
Nb 25:1–3
Ho 9:10 the citizens of Jerusalem. 10 They have reverted to the sins of their ancestors who 10
refused to listen to my words: they too are following other gods and serving them.
The House of Israel and the House of Judah have broken my covenant which I
made with their ancestors. 11 And so, Yahweh says this, "I shall now bring a disaster 11
Pr 1:28
Is 59:2 on them which they cannot escape; they will call to me for help, but I shall not
Ezk 8:18 listen to them. 12 The towns of Judah and the citizens of Jerusalem will then go and 12

call for help to the gods to whom they burn incense, but these will be no help at all to them in their time of distress! ▶Mi 3:4 •Jg 10:14

13 "For you have as many gods =2:28
as you have towns, Judah!
You have built as many altars to Shame,
as many incense altars to Baal,
as Jerusalem has streets!

14 "You, for your part, must not intercede for this people, nor raise either plea or prayer on their behalf, for I will not listen when their distress forces them to call to me for help." 7:16

Rebuke to the frequenters of the Temple [b] 7:1–15.21–28

15 'What is my beloved doing in my house? 2:2
She has achieved her wicked plans.
Can vows and consecrated meat
turn disaster from you [c]
for you to be so happy?
16 "Green olive-tree covered in fine fruit", Is 5:1a
was Yahweh's name for you.
With a shattering noise
he has set fire to it,
its branches are broken.'

17 And Yahweh Sabaoth, who planted you, has decreed disaster for you because of the evil the House of Israel and the House of Judah have done, provoking me by burning incense to Baal.

Jeremiah persecuted at Anathoth [d] 15:10d

18, 19 Yahweh informed me and I knew it; you then revealed their scheming to me. •I for my part was like a trustful lamb being led to the slaughterhouse, not knowing the Is 53:7 schemes they were plotting against me, 'Let us destroy the tree in its strength, [e] let us cut him off from the land of the living, so that his name may no longer be Ps 83:3 remembered!'

20 Yahweh Sabaoth, whose judgement is upright, 17:10;=20:12
tester of motives and thoughts, 1 K 8:39
I shall see your vengeance on them, Ps 7:9;44:21
for I have revealed my cause to you. Pr 15:11
Ws 1:6h
↗Ac 1:24
↗Rv 2:23

21 Against the people of Anathoth who are determined to kill me [f] and say to me,
22 'Do not prophesy in the name of Yahweh or you will die at our hands!' •Yahweh Is 30:10 says this, 'I am about to punish them. Their young people will die by the sword, Am 2:12
23 their sons and daughters by famine. •Not one will be left when I bring disaster on the people of Anathoth, when the year for punishing them comes.'

11 a. In 622 BC, King Josiah undertook a religious reform, 2 K 22:3–23:27, supported by the Priestly and prophetic parties. Apparently Jeremiah took an active part in it, as this passage records. It contains many phrases characteristic of Dt, the discovery of which, 2 K 22:8, prompted the reform. The nucleus of the passage, vv. 6, 8[b], 9–12, is to be ascribed to Jeremiah; the remainder is composed of secondary additions. Vv. 7–8 are absent from Gk.

b. Proclamation probably delivered in the Temple at the same period as those in ch. 7 • V. 17 is the continuation of 11:1–14.

c. 'my beloved', fem. Gk; masc. Hebr. • 'vows' Gk; 'many' Hebr. 'turn disaster from you' (lit. 'make your disaster pass from under you') Gk; 'pass from under you, for your disaster' Hebr.

d. By championing the reform, and thus the suppression of the local shrines, Dt 12:5, cf. 2 K 23, Jeremiah earned the hatred of his fellow townsfolk.

e. 'in its strength' *beleho* conj.; 'in its bread' *belahmo* Hebr.; 'we shall put wood (that is, according to Targ., poison) in his bread' Gk. • The Christian liturgy applies this v. to the Passion of Christ.

f. 'me' Gk; 'you' Hebr. (perhaps a clumsy piece of direct speech).

Jb 21
Ps 49;73

The prosperity of the wicked [a]

12 Your uprightness is too great, Yahweh, 1
for me to dispute with you.
But I should like to discuss some points of justice with you:
Why is it that the way of the wicked prospers?
Why do all treacherous people thrive?
You plant them, they take root, 2
they flourish, yes, and bear fruit.
You are on their lips,
yet far from their heart.
You know me, Yahweh, you see me, 3
you probe my heart, which is close to yours.
11:19 Drag them off like sheep for the slaughterhouse,
Ps 5:10c reserve them for the day of butchery.

5:20–25; 8:18–23;14; Ho 4:3a (How long will the land be in mourning, and the grass wither all over the 4
countryside? The animals and birds are dying as a result of the wickedness of the inhabitants.)

For they say,
'God does not see our fate.' [b]

'If you find it exhausting to race against me on foot, 5
how will you compete against horses?
In a country at peace you feel secure,
but how will you fare in the thickets [c] of the Jordan?

'For even your brothers and your own family will betray you. They will pursue 6
you in full cry. Put no faith in them when they speak you fair!'

Yahweh laments his ravaged inheritance

7:14 I have abandoned my house, 7
left my heritage,
I have delivered what I dearly loved
into the clutches of its enemies.
To me, my heritage has behaved 8
like a lion in the forest,
it roared at me ferociously:
so I now hate it.
I see my heritage as a brightly-coloured bird of prey 9
attacked by birds of prey on every side! [d]
Go, assemble all the wild animals,
make them come and dine!
6:3 Many shepherds have laid my vineyard waste, 10
have trampled over my plot of land,
the plot of land which was my joy,
reducing my favourite estate
to a deserted wilderness.
They have made it a waste; [e] 11
wasted, it mourns before me.
The whole country has been devastated
and no one takes it to heart.
The devastators have arrived 12
on all the bare heights of the desert
(for Yahweh wields a devouring sword);
from one end of the country to the other,
there is no peace for any living thing.

13 Wheat they have sown, thorns they reap:
they have worn themselves out, to no profit.
They are disappointed in their harvests,[f]
because of Yahweh's burning anger.

The neighbouring peoples: their judgement and salvation

14 Yahweh says this, 'As regards all my evil neighbours who have laid hands on the
heritage I granted my people Israel, look, I shall uproot them from their soil,
15 (though I shall uproot the House of Judah from among them). ·But having
uprooted them, I shall take pity on them again and bring them back each to its own
16 heritage, each to its own country, ·and if they carefully learn my people's ways and 4:2 Is 45:14h
swear by my name, "As Yahweh lives", as they have taught my people to swear by
17 Baal, then they will be re-established among my people. ·But if any nation refuses
to listen, I shall uproot it for ever and destroy it, Yahweh declares.'

The useless waistcloth[a]

1 13 Yahweh said this to me, 'Go and buy a linen waistcloth and put it round
2 your waist. But do not dip it in water.' ·And so, as Yahweh had ordered, I
3 bought a waistcloth and put it round my waist. ·A second time the word of Yahweh
4 came to me, ·'Take the waistcloth that you have bought and are wearing round
5 your waist. Up, go to the Euphrates and hide it there in a hole in the rock.' ·So I
6 went and hid it by the Euphrates as Yahweh had ordered me. ·A long time later,
Yahweh said to me, 'Up, go to the Euphrates and fetch the waistcloth I ordered
7 you to hide there.' ·So I went to the Euphrates, and I searched, and I took the
waistcloth from the place where I had hidden it. And there was the waistcloth
8 ruined, no use for anything. ·Then the word of Yahweh was addressed to me as
9 follows, ·'Yahweh says this, "In the same way I shall ruin the pride of Judah, the
10 immense pride of Jerusalem. ·This evil people, these people who refuse to listen to
my words, who follow their own stubborn inclinations and run after other gods,
serving and worshipping them—this people will become like this waistcloth, no
11 good for anything. ·For just as a waistcloth clings to a man's waist, so I made the Ps 76:10e; 109:19
whole House of Israel and the whole House of Judah cling to me, Yahweh declares,
to be my people, my glory, my honour and my pride. But they have not listened."

The wine jugs smashed together

12 'You will also say this to them, "Yahweh, God of Israel, says this: Any jug can be
filled with wine." And if they answer you,[b] "Do you think we do not know that any
13 jug can be filled with wine?" ·you are to say, "Yahweh says this: Look, I shall fill
all the inhabitants of this country, the kings who occupy the throne of David, the
14 priests, the prophets and all the citizens of Jerusalem, with drunkenness. ·Then I Is 51:17h
shall smash them one against the other, parents and children all together, Yahweh
declares. Mercilessly, relentlessly, pitilessly, I shall destroy them." '

A vision of exile

15 Listen and pay attention, do not be proud:
Yahweh is speaking!

12 **a.** This is the first time that this problem is posed in the OT. *See* pp. 750–1.
b. 'God' Gk; 'he' Hebr.
c. lit. 'the height', i.e. the steep banks, covered in vegetation and therefore dangerous since the haunts of all sorts of wild animals. Alternative trans. 'the flood' (lit. 'the swelling') but cf. 49:19; 50:44. • Far from granting the prophet's plea for revenge, Yahweh's answer predicts further persecutions for him; far from answering his question, it leaves the problem of retribution still a mystery, cf. Jb 38:1seq; 40:1–5; 42:1–6.
d. An allusion to the incursions of Moabites, Ammonites and Edomites into Palestine after 602 BC, 2 K 24:1–2.
e. 'They have' versions; 'He has' Hebr.
f. 'their' conj.; 'your' Hebr.

13 **a.** A symbolic action, *see* 18:1a; Is 20; Ezk 4; 12; 24:15seq. Unless it is to be interpreted as a vision, the action would seem to take place at the Wadi Fara, about 4 miles (6 km) north of Anathoth (compare the town of Parah, Jos 18:23), the name of which evokes that of the Euphrates (Hebr. *perat*). The meaning is plain: Israel whom Yahweh had fastened as close to himself as a waistcloth round his waist, *see* Ps 76:10, has broken away and contracted the corruption of Babylonian idolatry.
b. 'if they answer' Gk; 'they will answer' Hebr.

Give glory to Yahweh your God 16
Jn 12:35–36 before the darkness comes,
before your feet stumble
on the darkened mountains.
You hope for light,
Am 5:18 but he will turn it to shadow dark as death,
will change it to blackness.
If you do not listen to this warning, 17
I shall weep in secret for your pride;
my eyes will weep bitterly
and stream with tears,
for Yahweh's flock is being led into captivity.

Jehoiachin threatened [c]

Tell the king and the queen mother, 18
'Sit in a lower place,
since your glorious crown
has fallen from your head.
The towns of the Negeb are shut off [d] 19
with no one to give access to them.
All Judah has been deported,
deported wholesale.'

An admonition to impenitent Jerusalem

Raise your eyes and look at these [e] 20
now coming from the north.
Where is the flock once entrusted to you,
the flock which was your pride?
4:30+ What will you say when they come and punish you, 21
you yourself having taught them?
Against you, in the lead, will come your friends.
4:31+ Then will not anguish grip you
as it grips a woman in labour?
And should you ask yourself, 22
5:19 'Why is all this happening to me?'
it is because of your great guilt
Is 47:2–3 Ho 2:5i that your skirts have been pulled up
and you have been manhandled. [f]
Can the Ethiopian change his skin, 23
or the leopard his spots?
Mt 7:16–19par. And you, can you do right,
being so accustomed to wrong?
'I shall scatter you like chaff [g] 24
on the desert wind.
This is your share, the part allotted you, 25
from me, Yahweh declares,
because you have forgotten me
and put your trust in Delusion.
I am the one who pulls your skirts up over your face 26
to let your shame be seen.
2:20j Oh! Your adulteries, your shrieks of pleasure, 27
your vile prostitution!
On the hills, in the fields,
I have seen your Horrors. [h]
Jerusalem, disaster is coming for you!
How much longer till you are made clean?'

The great drought [a]

5:20–25; 8:18–23

1 **14** The word of Yahweh that came to Jeremiah on the occasion of the drought. Ho 4:3a Am 4:7

2 'Judah is in mourning,
her towns [b] are pining,
sinking to the ground;
a cry goes up from Jerusalem.
3 The nobles send their servants for water,
they come to the water-tanks,
find no water,
and return with their pitchers empty.
Dismayed and bewildered,
they cover their heads.
4 Because the soil is all cracked
since the country has had no rain;
the farmers are dismayed,
they cover their heads.
5 Even the doe in the countryside
giving birth abandons her young,
for there is no grass;
6 the wild donkeys standing on the bare heights
gasp for air like jackals:
their eyes grow dim
for lack of pasture.'

Lm 1:4

Lv 26:18–20

3:3

7 Although our sins witness against us,
Yahweh, for your name's sake, intervene!
Yes, our acts of infidelity have been many,
we have sinned against you!
8 Yahweh, hope of Israel, [c]
its Saviour in time of distress,
why are you like a stranger in this country,
like a traveller staying only for one night?
9 Why are you like someone bemused,
like a warrior who has no power to rescue?
And yet, Yahweh, you are among us,
we are called by your name.
Do not desert us!

Is 59:12

17:13

7:30;15:15 Dt 28:10

10 Yahweh says this about this people, 'They take such pleasure in darting hither and thither, they cannot restrain their feet! But Yahweh takes pleasure in them no longer; now he will keep their guilt in mind and punish their sins.'

‖Ho 8:13

11, 12 Yahweh then said to me, 'Do not intercede for this people or their welfare. •If they fast, I will not listen to their plea; if they offer burnt offerings and cereal offerings I will not accept them. Rather, I shall make an end of them by sword, famine and plague.'

7:16

c. Jehoiachin reigned for only 3 months; he and his mother were exiled to Babylon in 598 BC.

d. Presumably by the Edomites, whose raids had been almost continuous since 602 BC.

e. With Gk, which adds 'Jerusalem'; Hebr. *ketib* has sing. for both verbs; *qere* has plural.

f. lit. 'your heels have been ravished'; euphemism.

g. 'you' conj.; 'them' Hebr.

h. 'Delusion', v. 25, and 'Horrors': the false gods, as before.

14 a. Probably in the reign of Jehoiakim (609–598). This dialogue between the prophet and Yahweh has features borrowed from a liturgical lament (cf. Ps 74;79; Jl 1–2): description of the famine, vv. 14:2–6; lament of the people, vv. 7–9; reply of Yahweh, vv. 10–12; complaint of Jeremiah, vv. 13–16; second description of the famine, vv. 17–18; second lament of the people, vv. 19–22; second reply of Yahweh; 15:1–4. But to the collective confession of the people, as to the pleading of Jeremiah, Yahweh returns a negative answer, and to the threat of famine adds that of invasion.

b. lit. 'her gates', cf. Dt 12:17; 16:5.

c. 'Yahweh' 13 Gk MSS, *Vet. Lat.*; MT omits.

23 & notes 'Ah, Lord Yahweh,' I answered, 'here are the prophets telling them, "You 13
will not see the sword, famine will not touch you; I promise you true peace in
this place." '
5:31;27:10; 29:9 Then Yahweh said to me, 'The prophets are prophesying lies in my name; I have 14
not sent them, I gave them no orders, I never spoke to them. Delusive visions,
hollow predictions, daydreams of their own, that is what they prophesy to you.
Therefore, Yahweh says this: The prophets who prophesy in my name when I 15
have not sent them, and tell you there will be no sword or famine in this country,
these same prophets will meet their end by sword and famine. ·And as for the 16
people to whom they prophesy, they will be tossed into the streets of Jerusalem,
victims of famine and the sword, with not a soul to bury them: neither them nor
their wives, nor their sons, nor their daughters. I shall pour their own wickedness
down on them.

'So say this word to them: [d] 17
May my eyes shed tears
night and day, unceasingly,
since the daughter of my people has sustained a fearsome wound,
a crippling injury.
If I go into the countryside, 18
there lie those killed by the sword;
if I go into the city,
I see people tortured with hunger;
even prophets and priests
roam the country at their wits' end.'

Have you rejected Judah altogether? 19
Does your very soul revolt at Zion?
Why have you struck us down without hope of cure?
=8:15;13:16 Am 5:18 We were hoping for peace—no good came of it!
For the moment of cure—nothing but terror!
Yahweh, we acknowledge our wickedness 20
and our ancestors' guilt:
we have indeed sinned against you.
For your name's sake do not reject us, 21
do not dishonour the throne of your glory. [e]
Remember us; do not break your covenant with us.
Ps 147:8 Can any of the nations' Futile Ones make it rain? 22
Can the heavens of their own accord give showers?
Are you not the one, Yahweh our God?
In you is our hope,
since you make all these things.

Ex 32:11e Ps 99:6 **15** Yahweh said to me, 'Even if Moses and Samuel [a] pleaded before me, I could 1
not sympathise with this people! Drive them out of my sight; away with
them! ·And if they ask you, "Where shall we go?" tell them this, "Yahweh 2
says this:

=43:11 ↗Rv 13:10 Those for the plague, to the plague;
those for the sword, to the sword;
those for famine, to famine;
those for captivity, to captivity!

"I shall consign them to four kinds of thing, Yahweh declares: the sword to kill, 3
the dogs to drag away, the birds of heaven and wild animals of earth to devour and
to destroy. ·I shall make them an object of horror to all the kingdoms of the 4
earth, because of Manasseh [b] son of Hezekiah, king of Judah, and what he did
in Jerusalem."

The horrors of war [c]

Who is there to pity you, Jerusalem,
who to grieve for you,
who to go out of his way
and ask how you are?
'You yourself have rejected me, Yahweh declares,
you have turned your back on me;
so I have stretched my hand over you and destroyed you.
Tired of relenting,
I have winnowed them with a winnow
at the country's gates.
They have been bereft, I have destroyed my people,
but they refuse to leave their ways.
I have made their widows outnumber
the sand of the sea.
On the mother of young warriors
I bring the destroyer in broad daylight.
Suddenly I bring
anguish and terror down on her.
The mother of seven sons grows faint
and gasps for breath.
It is still day, but already her sun has set,
she is dismayed and distracted;
and the rest of them I shall consign to the sword,
to their enemies, Yahweh declares.'

Is 51:19

The call of Jeremiah renewed [d]

1:4–10,17–19

A disaster for me, mother, that you bore me
to be a man of strife and dissension for the whole country.
I neither lend nor borrow,
yet all of them curse me.
Have I not genuinely done my best to serve you, Yahweh?
Have I not interceded with you
in time of disaster and distress! [e]

'Can iron break the iron of the north and the bronze? [f]
Your wealth and your treasures
I shall hand over to plunder, without repayment,
because of all your sins, throughout your territory.
I shall enslave you to your enemies [g]
in a country which you do not know,

Lk 2:34

=17:3–4

d. Editorial link clumsily introducing what follows.
e. Zion.

15 a. The great intercessors, *see* Ex 32:11e; 1 S 7:8–12; Ps 99:6. To these, later tradition adds Jeremiah himself, 2 M 15:14e.

b. The man chiefly responsible for the idolatry infecting Yahwism for nearly three-quarters of a century, 2 K 21.

c. This poem was probably pronounced just before the siege of 596 BC.

d. Another dialogue between God and Jeremiah, *see* 11:18–12:5. It reveals a spiritual crisis of the prophet halfway through his ministry. Here, as in 12:5, God, far from soothing Jeremiah's distress, condemns it as 'despicable' and demands of him a new 'conversion', which he sanctions by renewing, in almost identical terms, the commands and promises of Jeremiah's original call, vv. 19–20, cf. 1:9, 17–19. On these 'confessions of Jeremiah' *see* 11:18–12:5; 15:10–21; 17:14–18; 18:18–23; 20:7–18, and pp. 1170–1.

e. 'To be honest' *'amen* Gk; '(Yahweh) said' *'amar* Hebr. • 'serve(d)' *sherattika* conj.; 'fortified *sharatika* Hebr. *ketib*; 'freed' *sheritika qere*. • At the end of the v., Hebr. adds 'the enemy', possibly a gloss explaining the time of disaster'. • The v. is very obscure. Following Gk, we assign the words to Jeremiah, which best fits the context. Hebr., with some strain, can be translated: 'Yahweh said, "Have I not rescued you for your own good? Have I not made the enemy come and plead with you in time of disaster and distress?" ' In this case, v. 12 should presumably not be taken as a threat against Israel, linking it with what follows, but as a promise to make Jeremiah as solid as bronze (cf. v. 20; 1:18), linking it with v. 11.

f. Vv. 12–14 (or vv. 13–14, *see* previous note) largely duplicate 17:3–4 and are out of context here.

g. Thus several Hebr. MSS, Gk, Syr. and *Vet. Lat.*, and corresponding to 17:4; 'I shall make your enemies pass' Hebr.

for my anger has kindled a fire
that will burn you up.'

Yahweh, you know! 15
Remember me, take care of me.
and avenge me on my persecutors.
However long your anger endures, do not snatch me away.
Ps 69:7 Realise that I suffer insult for your sake.
Ezk 3:1,3 When your words came, I devoured them: 16
your word was my delight
and the joy of my heart;
14:9+ for I was called by your Name, [h]
Yahweh, God Sabaoth.
16:8 I never sat in the company of scoffers [i] 17
amusing myself;
with your hands on me I held myself aloof,
since you had filled me with indignation.
Why is my suffering continual, 18
my wound incurable, refusing to be healed?
Truly, for me you are a deceptive stream
with uncertain waters!

To which Yahweh replied, 19
'If you repent, I shall restore you [j]
to plead before me.
If you distinguish between the precious and the base,
1:9 you shall be as my own mouth.
They will come back to you,
but you must not go back to them.
1:18–19 As far as these people are concerned, I shall make you 20
a fortified wall of bronze.
They will fight against you
but will not overcome you,
because I am with you
to save you and rescue you,
Yahweh declares.
I shall rescue you from the clutches of the wicked 21
and redeem you from the grasp of the violent.'

The prophet's life is itself symbolic [a]

16 The word of Yahweh was addressed to me as follows: 1
'You are not to marry or have sons and daughters in this place. ·For 2, 3
Yahweh says this regarding the sons and daughters to be born in this place, about
the mothers who give birth to them, and about the fathers who beget them in this
8:2 land, ·"They will die of deadly diseases, unlamented and unburied; they will be 4
like dung spread on the ground; they will meet their end by sword and famine, and
their corpses will be food for the birds of the sky and the beasts of earth." [b]

'Yes, Yahweh says this, "Go into no house where there is mourning, do not go 5
and lament or grieve with them; for I have withdrawn my peace from this people,
Yahweh declares, and faithful love and pity too. ·High or low, they will die in this 6
country, without burial or lament; there will be no gashing, no shaving of the head
for them. [c] ·No bread will be broken for the mourner to comfort him for the dead; 7
no cup of consolation will be offered him for his father or his mother. [d]

"And do not enter a house where there is feasting, to sit with them and eat and 8
drink. ·For Yahweh Sabaoth, the God of Israel, says this: In this place, before 9
7:34;25:10 your eyes, in your own days, I will silence the shouts of rejoicing and mirth and the
voices of bridegroom and bride.

10 "When you tell these people this and they ask you: Why has Yahweh decreed 5:19+
such complete and total disaster for us? What have we done wrong? What sin have
11 we committed against Yahweh our God? ·then you are to answer: It is because
your ancestors abandoned me, Yahweh declares, and followed other gods, and Dt 29:24
served and worshipped them. They abandoned me and did not keep my Law.
12 And you for your part have behaved even worse than your ancestors. Look, each
of you follows his own stubborn and wicked inclinations, without listening to me.
13 And so, I shall eject you from this country into a country unknown to you or to
your ancestors, and there you can serve other gods, [e] day and night, for I shall show
you no more favour."

The return of the scattered Israelites =23:7–8

14 'Look, the days are coming, Yahweh declares, when people will no longer say, "As
15 Yahweh lives who brought the Israelites out of Egypt!" ·but, "As Yahweh lives Ex 20:2
who brought the Israelites back from the land of the north and all the countries to
which he had driven them." I shall bring them back to the very soil I gave their
ancestors.'

The invasion foretold [f]

16 'Watch, I shall send for many fishermen, Yahweh declares, and these will fish them
up; next, I shall send for many huntsmen, and these will hunt them out of every
17 mountain, every hill, and out of the holes in the rocks. ·For my eyes watch all Jb 34:21
Heb 4:13
their ways, these are not hidden from me, and their guilt does not escape my gaze.
18 I shall requite their guilt and their sin twice over, since they have polluted my ↗Rv 18:6
country with the carcases of their Horrors, and filled my heritage with their
Abominations.' [g]

The conversion of the nations [h]

19 Yahweh, my strength, my stronghold,
my refuge in time of distress!
To you the nations will come Is 45:14h
from the remotest parts of the earth and say,
'Our fathers inherited nothing but Delusion,
Futility of no use whatever.
20 Can anyone human make his own gods? Is 40:19–20+; 42:8e
These are not gods at all!'
21 'Now listen, I will make them acknowledge,
this time I will make them acknowledge
my hand and my might;
and then they will know that Yahweh is my name.'

Judah's contaminated worship [a]

1 17 'The sin of Judah is written Dn 7:10i
with an iron pen,

h. Expression used with regard to the Temple, 7:10seq. cf. 1 K 8:43.

i. The scoffers, the rich and the arrogant go together and are condemned as a single category in the Psalms, Wisdom books and gospels, Mt 5:3seq.; Lk 6:25.

j. An expression typical of Jeremiah's style, cf. 17:14; 20:7. The prophet thus underlines the very close link between human and divine action. Alternative trans. 'If you return, I shall return you', cf. *also* 1:17, containing the same idea but with sharper emphasis on human co-operation which makes it possible for God to act. Conversely, human beings must realise that they are powerless, if God does not act on them, cf. 31:18.

16 a. The prophets often use symbolic actions to reinforce their preaching, *see* 18:1a, but sometimes their very lives become symbol and sign, *see* Is 8:18; Ezk 24:15–24; Ho 1;3.

b. Absence of funeral rites or burial was regarded as a frightful curse, 22:18–19; 1 K 14:11; Ezk 29:5.

c. Such funeral rites, though forbidden by the Law, Lv 19:27–28; Dt 14:1, were practised in Israel, Jr 7:29; 41:5.

d. 'bread' Gk. • 'for them' Hebr. 'for the mourner' Vulg.; 'for mourning' Hebr. '(offered) him' Gk; 'them' Hebr. This refers to a funeral meal.

e. 'To serve other gods' is an ancient expression for living in exile (1 S 26:19 cf. 2 K 5:17) outside Palestine, which was thought to be Yahweh's only possession.

f. Prophecy uttered before 598 BC.

g. Horrors and Abominations: false gods polluting the Holy Land like so many corpses, *see* Lv 18:25seq.; 26:30.

h. This passage has affinities with the second part of Is and is probably not by Jeremiah.

17 a. vv. 1–4 are absent from Gk.

engraved with a diamond point
31:33 on the tablet of their heart
Ex 27:2b and on the horns of their altars, [b]
Pr 3:3;7:3 while their children remember 2
Dt 12:2b their altars and their sacred pole [c]
beside the green trees, on the lofty hills.
My mountain on the plain, 3
=15:13–14 your wealth and all your treasures
I shall hand over to be plundered,
because of the sin of your high places [d]
throughout your territory.
You will have to relinquish your heritage [e] 4
which I gave you;
I will enslave you to your enemies
in a country which you do not know,
for my fiery anger kindled by you
will burn for ever. [f]

A group of wisdom sayings

Yahweh says this, 5
Ps 146:3–4 'Accursed be anyone who trusts in human beings,
who relies on human strength
and whose heart turns from Yahweh.
Such a person is like scrub in the wastelands: 6
when good comes, it does not affect him [g]
since he lives in the parched places of the desert,
uninhabited, salt land.

‖Ps 40:4 'Blessed is anyone who trusts in Yahweh, 7
with Yahweh for his reliance.
Ps 1:3 He is like a tree by the waterside 8
Ezk 47:12 that thrusts its roots to the stream:
when the heat comes it has nothing to fear,
its foliage stays green;
untroubled in a year of drought,
it never stops bearing fruit.

'The heart is more devious than any other thing, 9
Mk 7:21 and is depraved; who can pierce its secrets?
11:20+ I, Yahweh, search the heart, 10
Pr 17:3 test the motives,
32:9 to give each person what his conduct
Ps 62:13 and his actions deserve.
↗Mt 16:27

'The partridge will hatch eggs it has not laid. 11
No different is the person who gets riches unjustly:
his days half done, they will desert him
and he prove a fool after all.'

Confidence in the Temple and in Yahweh [h]

A glorious throne, sublime from the beginning, 12
such is our Holy Place.
14:8 Yahweh, hope of Israel, 13
all who abandon you will be put to shame,
those who turn from you will be registered in the underworld, [i]
2:13+ since they have abandoned Yahweh, the fountain
of living water.

A prayer for vengeance 15:10d

14 Heal me, Yahweh, and I shall be healed, Ps 6:2–3
save me, and I shall be saved,
for you are my praise.
15 Look, they keep saying to me,
'Where is Yahweh's word? Let it come true then!'[j]
16 Yet I have never urged you to send disaster,[k]
I never desired the fatal day,
this you know;
what came from my lips was not concealed from you.
17 Do not be a terror to me,
you, my refuge in time of disaster. Ps 5:10c
18 Let my persecutors be confounded, not me,
let them, not me, be terrified.
On them bring the day of disaster,
destroy them, destroy them twice over!

Observance of the Sabbath[l] Ex 20:8f

19 Yahweh said this to me, 'Go and stand at the Gate of the Sons of the People by
20 which the kings of Judah go in and out—and at all the gates of Jerusalem. •Say to
them, "Listen to the word of Yahweh, you kings of Judah, all you people of Judah
21 too, and all you inhabitants of Jerusalem who pass through the gates. •Yahweh
says this: As you value your lives, on no account carry a burden on the Sabbath day
22 or bring it in through the gates of Jerusalem. •Bring no burden out of your houses
on the Sabbath day, and do no work. Keep the Sabbath day holy, as I ordered your
23 ancestors. •They would not hear, would not pay attention; they deliberately 7:26;19:15
24 refused to listen or accept instruction. •But if you listen carefully to me, Yahweh Dt 9:13+ •22:4–5
declares, and bring no burden in through the gates of this city on the Sabbath day,
25 if you keep the Sabbath holy and do no work on that day, •then, through the gates
of this city, kings and princes occupying the throne of David will continue to make
their entry, riding in chariots or on horseback, they, their chief men, the people of Zc 9:9h
Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And this city will be inhabited for ever. Ezk 37:25 Jl 4:20
26 They will come from the towns of Judah, from the districts round Jerusalem, from
the territory of Benjamin, from the lowlands, from the highlands, from the Negeb,
to offer burnt offering and sacrifice, and cereal offering and incense, to offer
27 thanksgiving sacrifices in the Temple of Yahweh. •But if you do not listen to me to
keep the Sabbath day holy, and to refrain from entering the gates of Jerusalem
with burdens on the Sabbath day, then I shall set fire to its gates; it will devour the
palaces of Jerusalem and not be quenched." '

Jeremiah visits the potter[a]

1, 2 **18** The word that came to Jeremiah from Yahweh as follows, •'Get up and
make your way down to the potter's house, and there I shall tell you what I
3 have to say.' •So I went down to the potter's house; and there he was, working at

b. 'their altars' Vulg.; 'the altars' Hebr.

c. lit. 'their asherahs', *see* Ex 34:13e; Jg 2:13i.

d. Cf. 15:13. We transpose 'because of the sin of' before 'your high places'; Hebr. inverts.

e. 'relinquish', lit. 'relax your hand', *yadeka* conj.; 'relax and by you' *ubeka* Hebr.

f. A variation on 15:14.

g. lit. 'he does not see it', a verb very similar when written to the one used in parallel v. 8, 'it has nothing to fear' and giving rise to faulty vowels.

h. These two vv. do not seem to be by Jeremiah, cf. 7:1–15.

i. 'from you' conj.; 'from me' Hebr. 'registered in the underworld', i.e. in Sheol among the dead.

j. The threats of Jeremiah have not materialised. The time is therefore before 598 BC.

k. 'I never urged you to send disaster', lit. 'I did not hurry behind you for disaster' (*lera'ah*) conj.; 'I hurried no more than a shepherd (*mero'eh*) behind you' Hebr.

l. Most commentators deny the authenticity of this passage on the grounds of the importance it attributes to the Sabbath, unusual in Jeremiah.

18 **a.** The time of this enacted parable is before 598, since the great disaster has not yet taken place, *see* v. 12. Symbolic gesture had accompanied the preaching of the earliest prophets, of Samuel for example, 1 S 15:27–28, of Ahijah of Shiloh, 1 K 11:29–39, and of the false prophet Zedekiah, 1 K 22:11–12. This procedure was not simply a dramatisa-

the wheel.[b] ·But the vessel he was making came out wrong, as may happen with 4
clay[c] when a potter is at work. So he began again and shaped it into another vessel,
as he thought fit. ·Then the word of Yahweh came to me as follows, ·"House of 5.6
Israel, can I not do to you what this potter does? Yahweh demands. Yes, like clay
Is 29:16g in the potter's hand, so you are in mine, House of Israel. ·Sometimes I announce 7
1:10 that I shall uproot, break down and destroy a certain nation or kingdom, ·but 8
should the nation I have threatened abandon its wickedness, I then change my
Ezk 18:21–24 mind about the disaster which I had intended to inflict on it. Sometimes I announce 9
Jon 3:10
·1:10 that I shall build up and plant a certain nation or kingdom, but should that nation 10
do what displeases me and refuse to listen to my voice, I then change my mind
about the good which I was intending to confer on it. ·So now, say this to the 11
people of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, "Yahweh says this: Listen, I am
preparing a disaster for you, I am working out a plan against you. So now, each
one of you, turn back from your evil ways, amend your conduct and actions."
2:25 They, however, will say, "It is no use! We shall follow our own plans; each of us 12
will act on his own wicked inclinations." '

About Israel's repudiation of Yahweh[d]

Therefore, Yahweh says this, 13
2:10–12 'Ask, please, among the nations
if anyone has heard anything like this.
The Virgin of Israel
has done a very horrible thing.
Does the snow of Lebanon 14
ever leave the rocks of its slopes?
Do the rivers of foreign lands,
their cold flowing waters, ever run dry?[e]
2:32 And yet my people have forgotten me! 15
They burn incense to a Nothing!
They have been made to stumble in their ways,[f]
the ancient paths,
to walk in paths,
on an unmade road,
19:8 to make their country an object of horror, 16
1 K 9:8
Jb 16:4 everlastingly derided:
Lm 2:15–16 every passer-by will be appalled at it
Mt 27:39p and shake his head.
Like the east wind, I shall scatter them 17
before the enemy.
I shall show them my back, not my face,[g]
the day they are ruined.'

15:10d **A plot against Jeremiah**

'Come on,' they said, 'let us concoct a plot against Jeremiah, for the Law will not 18
perish for lack of priests, nor advice for lack of wise men, nor the word for lack of
prophets. Come on, let us slander him and pay no attention to anything he says.'[h]

Pay attention to me, Yahweh, 19
hear what my adversaries are saying.
Ps 35:7.12 Should evil be returned for good? 20
Now they are digging a pit for me.
Remember how I pleaded before you
and spoke good of them,
to turn your retribution away from them.
Ps 5:10c So, hand their sons over to famine, 21
abandon them to the edge of the sword.

Let their wives become
childless and widowed.
Let their husbands die of plague,
their young men be cut down by the sword in battle.
22 Let cries re-echo from their houses
as you bring raiders suddenly on them. 12:9d
For they have dug a pit to catch me, 2 K 24:2–4
they have laid snares to trap my feet.
23 But you, Yahweh, know
all about their murderous plot against me.
Do not forgive their guilt, Ne 3:37
do not efface their sin from your sight.
Let them be hurled down before you,
deal with them while you are angry!

The broken jug and the altercation with Pashhur [a]

1 **19** Then Yahweh said to Jeremiah, 'Go and buy a potter's earthenware jug.
Take some of the people's elders and some of the senior priests with you. [b]
2 Go out towards the Valley of Ben-Hinnom, just outside the Gate of the Pot-
3 sherds. [c] There proclaim the words I shall say to you. •You must say, "Kings of
Judah, inhabitants of Jerusalem! Listen to the word of Yahweh! Yahweh Sabaoth,
the God of Israel, says this: I am about to bring such a disaster on this place that
4 the ears of every one who hears of it will ring. •For they have abandoned me and 1 S 3:11
have made this place unrecognisable, and offered incense here to other gods which 2 K 21:12
neither they nor their ancestors nor the kings of Judah ever knew before. They
5 have filled this place with the blood of the innocent; •for they have built high places 7:31–33
for Baal to burn their sons as burnt offerings to Baal, a thing I never ordered, never Lv 18:21h
6 mentioned, that had never entered my thoughts. •So now the days are coming,
Yahweh declares, when people will no longer call this place Topheth, or Valley of

tion of the spoken prophecy: it was a pre-enactment of the event threatened or promised, in such a way that the event itself became as inevitable as the gesture was irrevocable. The same phenomenon recurs among the 'writing' prophets. Hosea's whole mission is inextricable from a symbolic action which in turn is his private predicament, Ho 1–3. With Isaiah the symbolic gesture is found less frequently, though *see* Is 20 and the symbolic names he gives to his children, Is 7:3 (*see* 10:21); 8:1–4, 18, *see* Is 1:26n. Jeremiah performs, or interprets, many symbolic actions: the almond tree and the pot, 1:11–14; the waistcloth hidden by the Euphrates, 13:1–11 (though this may have been enacted only in vision); the potter, 18:1–12; the jug, ch. 19; the figs, ch. 24; the yoke, ch. 27–28; the buying of the field, ch. 32. To which we may add that his life itself is a symbol, 16:1–8, and that his sufferings (though he gives this no emphasis) identify him in advance with the nation itself about to suffer, and make him pre-figure the suffering servant, *see* Is 42:1a. Later, Ezekiel was to perform more symbolic actions: the brick 'besieged', Ezk 4:1–3; the rationed food, 4:9–19; the hair, ch. 5; the mime of the exile, 12:1–20; the pot, 24:3–14; the two sticks 37:15–28; and he too, like Hosea, interprets his personal experiences symbolically: his illness, 4:4–8; his wife's death, 24:15–24; his dumbness and recovery, 24:27; 33:22. Symbolism of this kind is also found in the NT, *see* the fig tree cursed by Jesus, Mt 21:18–19 and par., the prophecy of Agabus, Ac 21:10–14.

b. lit. 'at the two wheels': the mechanism consisted of two circular plates, mounted on a vertical spindle and moved by the potter's feet.

c. 'as (may happen with) clay' *kahomer*, with some MSS; 'with clay' *bahomer*, MT.

d. By way of commentary on 18:12, the editor has inserted this passage characteristic of the early preaching of Jeremiah, cf. 2:10–32, but very timely under Jehoiakim with the recrudescence of idolatry.

e. 'run dry' *'im yinnashetu* conj.; 'are torn away' *'im yinnateshu* Hebr. • The text of the whole v. is uncertain and various emendations have been suggested; instead of 'the field' *sadai*, Aquila reads 'the Almighty' *shaddai*; instead of 'the rivers of foreign lands (lit. 'foreign waters'), sweet', it is sometimes proposed, by slight emendation, to read 'the springs of Egypt', though this is mere conjecture unsupported by any ancient witness to the text. • The 'foreign waters' would appear to be the great rivers of Mesopotamia and Egypt.

f. i.e. the leaders of the people have led them astray; unless the Gk reading is preferred: 'they (the members of the nation) have stumbled.'

g. lit. 'I shall make them see', versions; 'I shall see them' Hebr.

h. The work of these three classes of spiritual leaders will still go on, none the worse for the disappearance of the trouble-maker.

19 **a.** This passage appears to be composite. It comprises: **1** A symbolic action taking place before a few witnesses near the Gate of the Potsherds and interpreted subsequently in the Temple, thus provoking the animosity of Pashhur: 19:1, 2^{bc}, 10–11^{a} 14–15; 20:1–6. The incident presumably occurred in about 605 BC, before the events narrated in ch. 36. **2** A discourse delivered at Topheth, addressed to the kings of Judah and the people of Jerusalem: $19:2^{a}$, 3–9, 11^{b}–13; it repeats earlier Jeremian themes which had acquired a new relevance under Jehoiakim; it refers back to the jug incident, v. 7.

b. 'Then' Gk; 'Thus' Hebr. • 'to Jeremiah' conj.; 'to me' Gk; Hebr. omits. • 'Take with you', Syr., Targ.; Hebr. omits.

c. The Gate of the Potsherds, or Pottery Gate, cannot be sited with any certainty. The direction given (Gehennah) suggests that it may have stood to the east of the Dung Gate, not far perhaps from 'the king's garden', *see* 39:4, but some people think that Pottery Gate and Dung Gate were two names for the same place.

Ben-Hinnom, but Valley of Slaughter. ·Because of this place, I shall empty [d] Judah
and Jerusalem of sound advice; I shall make them fall by the sword before their
enemies, by the hand of those determined to kill them; I shall give their corpses as
food to the birds of the sky and the animals of earth. ·And I shall make this city an 8
18:16 object of horror and derision; every passer-by will be appalled at it and whistle at
the sight of all the wounds it has sustained. ·I shall make them eat the flesh of their 9
Dt 28:53–57 own sons and daughters: they will eat one another during the siege, in the shortage
2 K 6:28–29
Ezk 5:10+ to which their enemies, and those determined to kill them, will reduce them."

'You must break this jug in front of the men who are with you, ·and say to 10, 11
them, "Yahweh Sabaoth says this: I am going to break this people and this city just
Ps 2:9 as one breaks a potter's pot, so that it can never be mended again.
Is 30:14 "Topheth will become a burial ground, for lack of other burial space. ·That is 12
how I shall treat this place, Yahweh declares, and its inhabitants, by making this
city like Topheth. ·The houses of Jerusalem and those of the kings of Judah, all the 13
houses on the roofs of which they offered incense to the whole array of heaven and
poured libations to other gods, will be unclean, like this place Topheth." '[e]

Jeremiah then came back from Topheth where Yahweh had sent him to pro- 14
phesy, and stood in the court of the Temple of Yahweh and said to all the people,
'Yahweh Sabaoth, the God of Israel, says this, "Yes, on this city, and on all the 15
towns belonging to it, I shall bring all the disaster which I had decreed for it, since
7:26 they have stubbornly refused to listen to my words." '
Dt 9:13

20 Now the priest Pashhur son of Immer, who was the chief of police in the 1
Temple of Yahweh, heard Jeremiah making this prophecy. ·Pashhur struck 2
the prophet Jeremiah and then put him in the stocks, in the Upper Benjamin Gate
leading into the Temple of Yahweh. ·Next day, Pashhur had Jeremiah taken out 3
of the stocks; Jeremiah then said to him, 'Not Pashhur but Terror-on-every-Side is
Yahweh's name for you. ·For Yahweh says this, "I am going to hand you over to 4
terror, you and all your friends; they will fall by the sword of their enemies, your
own eyes will see it. The whole of Judah, too, I shall hand over to the king of
Babylon; he will carry them off captive to Babylon and put them to the sword.
And all the wealth of this city, all its stores, all its valuables, all the treasures of 5
the kings of Judah, I shall hand over to their enemies who will plunder them, round
them up and carry them off to Babylon. ·As for you, Pashhur, and your whole 6
household, you will go into captivity; you will go to Babylon; there you will die,
and there be buried, you and all your friends to whom you have prophesied lies." '

15:10d **Selections from the 'Confessions' of Jeremiah**

You have seduced me, Yahweh, and I have let myself be seduced; 7
you have overpowered me: you were the stronger. [a]
I am a laughing-stock all day long,
they all make fun of me.
For whenever I speak, I have to howl 8
and proclaim, 'Violence and ruin!'
For me, Yahweh's word has been the cause
of insult and derision all day long.
I would say to myself, 'I will not think about him, 9
I will not speak in his name any more,'
23:29 but then there seemed to be a fire burning in my heart,
imprisoned in my bones.
Jb 32:19–20 The effort to restrain it wearied me,
Ps 39:3 I could not do it.
‖Ps 31:13 I heard so many disparaging me, 10
'Terror on every side! [b]
Denounce him! Let us denounce him!'
All those who were on good terms with me
watched for my downfall,

'Perhaps he will be seduced into error.
Then we shall get the better of him
and take our revenge!'
11 But Yahweh is at my side like a mighty hero;
my opponents will stumble, vanquished,
confounded by their failure;
everlasting, unforgettable disgrace will be theirs.
12 Yahweh Sabaoth, you who test the upright, [c] =11:20+
observer of motives and thoughts, I shall see your vengeance on them,
for I have revealed my cause to you.
13 Sing to Yahweh,
praise Yahweh,
for he has delivered the soul of one in need [d]
from the clutches of evil doers.

14 A curse on the day when I was born!
May the day my mother bore me be unblessed! [e]
15 A curse on the man who brought my father the news, 1:5;15:10 ↗Jb 3
'A son, a boy has been born to you!'
making him overjoyed.
16 May this man be like the towns Gn 19:24-25
that Yahweh overthrew without mercy;
may he hear the warning-cry at dawn
and the shout of battle at high noon,
17 for not killing me in the womb;
my mother would have been my grave
and her womb pregnant for ever.
18 Why ever did I come out of the womb
to see toil and sorrow
and end my days in shame?

C: PROPHECIES MAINLY LATER THAN THE REIGN OF JEHOIAKIM

Jeremiah answers the envoys of Zedekiah [a]

1 **21** The word that came to Jeremiah from Yahweh when King Zedekiah sent
Pashhur son of Malchiah to him, with the priest Zephaniah son of Maaseiah,
2 to say this, •'Please consult Yahweh for us, since Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon
is making war on us: perhaps Yahweh will work one of his many miracles for us
3 and force him to withdraw.' •Jeremiah said to them, 'Take this answer to Zedekiah,
4 "Yahweh, God of Israel, says this: I shall bring back the weapons of war which 34:1-7
you are now carrying, and with which you are fighting the king of Babylon and the
Chaldaeans now besieging you; from outside the walls, I shall stack them in the
5 centre of this city. •And I shall fight against you myself with outstretched hand and
6 mighty arm, in anger, fury and great wrath. •I shall strike down the inhabitants of

d. A play on words between *baqaq* 'to empty' and *baqbuq* 'jug'.

e. The pollution is due to the corpses, *see* Lv 21:1seq.; 26:30.

20 a. Imagery of seduction and struggle characterises Yahweh's ascendancy over the prophet. Here the prophet seems to rebel against a God whom he regards as responsible for his misfortune. Such despair is rarely expressed in the Bible (but *see* Jb 3:1seq.; Ps 88). Jeremiah, however, remains convinced that Yahweh is the God of Grace and, even in the depths of his anguish, utters a cry of hope, vv. 11-13.

b. The enemies of Jeremiah mock him with his own familiar expression, *see* v. 3; 20:3; 46:5; 49:29.

c. Or 'aright' with 2 Hebr. MSS, Syr. and Arab; cf. 11:20.

d. The needy one *'ebion*, or the poor *'anaw*, cf. 22:16, used in a religious sense here: ill-treated by people but confident in God. 'Yahweh's poor', *see* Zp 2:3d, were to be Jeremiah's spiritual children.

e. Called from his mother's womb, 1:5, Jeremiah curses the day of his birth. This curse, later repeated in Jb 3, marks the climax of his spiritual suffering.

21 a. The time is the siege of Jerusalem in 588 BC; the passage is perhaps placed here to point the contrast between the Pashhur of v. 1 and the Pashhur of 20:1. The Gk omits several words of this passage.

this city, human and animal; they will die of a great plague. ·Then, Yahweh 7
declares, I shall deliver Zedekiah king of Judah, his officials, the people and those
of this city who have escaped the plague, the sword, or the famine, into the clutches
of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, into the clutches of their enemies and into the
clutches of those determined to kill them; mercilessly, relentlessly, pitilessly, he
will put them to the sword."
'And you must say to this people, "Yahweh says this: Look, I offer you a choice 8
Dt 30:15 between the way of life and the way of death. ·Anyone who stays in this city will 9
=38:2 die by sword, by famine, or by plague; but anyone who leaves it and surrenders to
39:18;45:5 the Chaldaeans now besieging you will live; he will escape with his life. ·For I am 10
determined on disaster, and not prosperity, for this city, Yahweh declares. It will
be handed over to the king of Babylon, and he will burn it down." '

Address to the royal family of Judah

To the royal House of Judah. [b] Listen to the word of Yahweh, ·House of David! 11, 12
Yahweh says this:

Each morning give fair judgement,
rescue anyone who has been wronged
from the hands of his oppressor,
=4:4 or else my wrath will leap out like a fire,
it will burn and no one will be able to quench it,
because of the wickedness of your actions.
My quarrel is with you, resident of the valley, 13
Rock-in-the-Plain, [c]
Yahweh declares,
with you that say, 'Who would dare attack us and enter our lairs?'
I shall punish you as your actions deserve, 14
Yahweh declares,
=50:32 I shall set fire to its forest
and it will devour all around it.

22 Yahweh said this, 'Go down [a] to the palace of the king of Judah and there 1
say this word, ·"Listen to the word of Yahweh, king of Judah now occupying 2
the throne of David, you, your officials and your people who go through these
gates. ·Yahweh says this: Act uprightly and justly; rescue from the hands of the 3
oppressor anyone who has been wronged, do not exploit or ill-treat the stranger,
17:24–25 the orphan, the widow; shed no innocent blood in this place. ·For if you are 4
scrupulous in obeying this command, then kings occupying the throne of David
will continue to make their entry through the gates of this palace riding in chariots or
on horseback, they, their officials and their people. ·But if you do not listen to these 5
words, then I swear by myself, Yahweh declares, this palace shall become a ruin!
"Yes, this is what Yahweh says about the palace of the king of Judah: 6

You are like Gilead to me,
22:23 like a peak of Lebanon.
Ezk 17:3 All the same, I will reduce you to a desert,
to uninhabited towns.
I dedicate men to destroy you, [b] 7
each man with his weapons;
21:13+ they will cut down your finest cedars
and throw them on the fire.

5:19+ "And when many nations pass this city, they will say to one another: Why has 8
1 K 9:7–9 Yahweh treated this great city like this? ·And the answer will be: Because they 9
abandoned the covenant of Yahweh their God to worship other gods and serve
them." '

Prophecies against various kings: against Jehoahaz

Do not weep for the man who is dead, 2 K 23:29–30
do not raise the dirge for him.
Weep rather for the one who has gone away,
since he will never come back,
never see his native land again.[c] 2 K 23:34

For this is what Yahweh has said about Shallum son of Josiah, king of Judah,
who succeeded Josiah his father and was forced to leave this place, 'He will never
come back to it ·but will die in the place to which he has been taken captive; and he
will never see this country again.

Against Jehoiakim

'Disaster for the man who builds his house without uprightness, Am 6:8 Hab 2:9,12
his upstairs rooms without fair judgement,
who makes his fellow-man work for nothing, Dt 24:15
without paying him his wages,
who says, "I shall build myself a spacious palace
with airy upstairs rooms,"
who makes windows in it,
panels it with cedar, and paints it vermilion.
Are you more of a king
because of your passion for cedar?
Did your father go hungry or thirsty?
But he did what is just and upright,
so all went well for him.
He used to examine the cases of poor and needy,
then all went well.
Is not that what it means to know me? Yahweh demands. 9:23d
You on the other hand have eyes and heart
for nothing but your own interests,
for shedding innocent blood
and perpetrating violence and oppression.'

That is why Yahweh says this about Jehoiakim son of Josiah, king of Judah:

'No lamenting for him,
"My poor brother! My poor sister!" 34:5 1 K 13:30
No lamenting for him,
"His poor lordship! His poor majesty!"
He will have a donkey's funeral 36:30 Is 14:18–19
—dragged away and thrown
out of the gates of Jerusalem.' 2 Ch 36:5–6

Against Jehoiachin[d]

'Climb the Lebanon range and shriek,
raise your voice in Bashan,
shriek from the Abarim,[e]

b. The heading (*see* 23:9) covers the section 21:11–23:8; it indicates a collection that may once have formed a separate unit.

c. i.e. Jerusalem, with its valley (the Kidron or the Tyropoeon) and the rock of Ophel dominating it and crowned with the royal palace. The 'forest' image is repeated in 22:6seq. where it refers to the cedar-wood pillars of the palace, *see* 1 K 7:2.

22 a. From the Temple which stood above the palace, cf. 26:10; 36:12.

b. lit. 'I sanctify', *see* 6:4b.

c. 'the man who is dead': Josiah, killed in 609 BC, *see* 2 K 23:29; 'the one who has gone away': Jehoahaz (also called Shallum, v. 11), deported to Egypt the same year, *see* 2 K 24:33–34.

d. In vv. 20–23 Jeremiah addresses personified Jerusalem, who bewails the events of 598 BC; he then makes a bitter commentary on these events.

e. Mount Lebanon to the north; Bashan to the north-east on the further side of the River Jordan (*see* Dt 3:10). the Abarim Range to the east, with its highest peak Mount Nebo (Nb 33:47).

for all your lovers have been ruined![f]
I spoke to you in your prosperity. 21
2:25,31: but you said, "I will not listen!"
3:25;7:23seq.; 11:7seq. From your youth this has been how you behaved,
refusing to listen to my voice.
The wind will shepherd all your shepherds away 22
and your lovers will go into captivity.
Then you will certainly blush with shame
at the thought of all your wickedness.
You who have made the Lebanon your home 23
21:13;22:6 and made your nest among the cedars,
how you will groan[g] when anguish overtakes you,
4:31+ pangs like those of a woman in labour!

'As I live, Yahweh declares, even if Coniah[h] son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, 24
Hg 2:23 were the signet ring on my right hand, I would still wrench you off! ·I shall hand 25
you over to those determined to kill you, to those you dread, to Nebuchadnezzar
king of Babylon, to the Chaldaeans. ·I shall hurl you and the mother who bore 26
you into another country; you were not born there but you will both die there.
They will not return to the country to which they desperately long to return.' 27

Is he a shoddy broken pot, 28
this man Coniah,
a crock that no one wants?
Why are he and his offspring ejected,
hurled into a country
they know nothing of?
O land, land, land, 29
listen to the word of Yahweh!
Yahweh says this, 30
'List this man as : Childless;[i]
a man who made a failure of his life,
since none of his offspring will succeed
in occupying the throne of David,[j]
or ruling in Judah again.'

Messianic prophecies. The future king

Ezk 34:1a 23 'Disaster for the shepherds who lose and scatter the sheep of my pasture, 1
Yahweh declares. ·This, therefore, is what Yahweh, God of Israel, says 2
about the shepherds who shepherd my people, "You have scattered my flock, you
have driven them away and have not taken care of them. Right, I shall take care of
Is 4:3c you for your misdeeds, Yahweh declares! ·But the remnant of my flock I myself 3
31:10 shall gather from all the countries where I have driven them, and bring them back
3:15 to their folds; they will be fruitful and increase in numbers. ·For them I shall raise 4
up shepherds to shepherd them and pasture them. No fear, no terror for them any
more; not one shall be lost, Yahweh declares!

Look, the days are coming, Yahweh declares, 5
=33:15–16 when I shall raise an upright Branch for David;[a]
Is 4:2;11:1a Zc 3:8;6:12 he will reign as king and be wise,
doing what is just and upright in the country.
3:18h In his days Judah will triumph 6
and Israel live in safety.
And this is the name he will be called,
'Yahweh-is-our-Saving-Justice.' "[b]

=16:14–15 'So, look, the days are coming, Yahweh declares, when people will no longer 7

8 say, "As Yahweh lives who brought the Israelites out of Egypt," ·but, "As Yahweh
lives who led back and brought home the offspring of the House of Israel from the
land of the north and all the countries to which he[c] had driven them, to live on
their own soil." '

A tract against the false prophets 14:13–16 Dt 13:2–6 Ezk 13:1

9 On the prophets.[d]

My heart[e] is broken within me,
I tremble in all my bones;
I am like a drunken man,
like a man overcome with wine,
because of Yahweh and his holy words:

10 'For the country is full of adulterers;
yes, because of a curse, the country is in mourning
and the pasturage in the desert has dried up;
they are prompt to do wrong,
make no effort to do right.
11 Yes, even prophet and priest are godless, 6:13
I have detected their wickedness in my own House,
Yahweh declares.
12 Because of this, their way will prove
treacherous going for them;
in the darkness where they are driven,
there they will fall.
For I shall bring disaster on them,
when the year for punishing them comes,
Yahweh declares.

13 'In the prophets of Samaria
I have seen insanity:
they prophesied in the name of Baal 2:8;5:31
and led my people Israel astray.
14 But in the prophets of Jerusalem
I have seen something horrible:
adultery, persistent lying,
such abetting of the wicked
that no one renounces his wickedness.
To me they are all like Sodom Gn 19
and its inhabitants are like Gomorrah.
15 So this is what Yahweh Sabaoth says about the prophets,
"Now I shall give them wormwood to eat =9:14
and make them drink poisoned water,
since from the prophets of Jerusalem
godlessness has spread throughout the land."

f. Here not the false gods, *see* 3:13, nor the allies of Judah, *see* 4: 30, but the kings and leading men of Judah, *see* v. 22.

g. Following Gk, Syr., Hebr. has the passive (unused) form of the verb 'to pardon', which might at a pinch be translated 'how pitiable you will be.'

h. Another name for Jehoiachin.

i. In the royal genealogical registers; *see* Is 4:3.

j. Zerubbabel, Jehoiachin's grandson, was governor of Judah only after the return from exile.

23 a. 'Branch' was later to become a proper noun and messianic title, Zc 3:8; 6:12.

b. This symbolic name, *see* Is 1:26n, given to the Messiah, is contrasted with the name Zedekiah which means 'Yahweh-is-my-Saving-Justice'.

c. 'he' Gk; 'I' Hebr.

d. The title (as in 21:11) of a composite booklet, its text overloaded, vv. 9–40. The first section, vv. 9–12, in which Jeremiah apparently for the first time becomes aware of the wickedness of the false prophets, may date from the time of Josiah. The subsequent sections could equally well reflect the situation under Jehoiakim or under Zedekiah. On this polemic against the false prophets, *see* pp. 1159–60.

e. Jeremiah is the speaker here, but Yahweh himself speaks at vv. 10–12.

'Yahweh Sabaoth says this, 16
"Do not listen to what those prophets prophesy to you;
they are deluding you,
they retail visions of their own,
and not what comes from Yahweh's mouth.
To those who despise me, they keep saying: 17
Yahweh has spoken: you will have peace!
and to all who follow their own stubborn inclinations:
No disaster will touch you."

1 Co 2:16 But who has been present in Yahweh's council and seen, and heard his word? 18
Who has paid attention to his word and listened to it?[f]

=30:23–24 Look, Yahweh's hurricane, his wrath, bursts out, 19
a fearsome hurricane,
to burst on the heads of the wicked;
Yahweh's anger will not withdraw 20
until he has performed, has carried out,
what he has in mind.
In the final days, you will understand this clearly,
'I did not send these prophets, 21
yet they ran!
I did not speak to them,
yet they prophesied!
Had they been present in my council, 22
28:9c they could have proclaimed my words to my people
and turned them from their evil way
and from the wickedness of their deeds![g]

'Am I a God when near, Yahweh demands, 23
and not a God when far away?
Ps 139:7–12 Can anyone hide somewhere secret 24
Si 16:17 without my seeing him? Yahweh demands.
Am 9:2–3 Do I not fill heaven and earth?
Ws 1:7 Yahweh demands.

'I have heard what the prophets say who make their lying prophecies in my 25
name. "I have had a dream," they say, "I have had a dream!"[h] ·How long are 26
there to be those among the prophets who prophesy lies and are in fact prophets of
their own delusions? ·They are doing their best, by means of the dreams that they 27
keep telling each other, to make my people forget my name, just as their ancestors
forgot my name in favour of Baal. ·Let the prophet who has had a dream tell it for 28
a dream! And let him who receives a word from me, deliver my word accurately!

'What have straw and wheat in common?
Yahweh demands.
5:14;20:9 Is my word not like fire, 29
Yahweh demands,
is it not like a hammer shattering a rock?

'So, then, I have a quarrel with the prophets, Yahweh declares, that steal my 30
words from one another. ·I have a quarrel with the prophets, Yahweh declares, 31
who wag their tongues to utter prophecies. ·I have a quarrel with the prophets who 32
make prophecies out of lying dreams, Yahweh declares, who recount them, and
lead my people astray by their lies and their bragging. I certainly never sent them
or commissioned them, and they serve no good purpose for this people, Yahweh
declares.

'And when this people, or a prophet, or a priest, asks you, "What is Yahweh's 33

burden?" you must answer, "You are the burden, and I shall get rid of you, Yahweh declares!" [i]

34 'As for the prophet, the priest, or anyone else, who says, "Yahweh's burden", I
35 shall punish that man, and his household too. ·This is what you must say to one
another, among yourselves, "What answer has Yahweh given?" or "What has
36 Yahweh said?" ·But stop using the expression "Yahweh's burden", for what each
man says will be his own responsibility. And you twist the words of the living God,
37 of Yahweh Sabaoth, our God. ·This is the way to speak to a prophet, "What
38 answer has Yahweh given?" or "What has Yahweh said?" ·But if you say,
"Yahweh's burden", then Yahweh says this, "Since you use the expression
'Yahweh's burden', when I have warned you to stop saying, 'Yahweh's burden',
39 believe me, I shall pick you up[j] and fling you from my presence, you and the city I
40 gave to you and to your ancestors. ·I shall bring down everlasting shame on you,
everlasting and unforgettable disgrace." '

The two baskets of figs [a]

29:1–20
Mt 21:18–19par.

1 **24** Yahweh gave me a vision: set out in front of the Temple of Yahweh [b] were
two baskets of figs. This was after Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had led 2 K 24:12–16
Jeconiah son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, away into exile from Jerusalem, with
the chief men of Judah, the blacksmiths and metalworkers, and had taken them to
2 Babylon. ·One basket contained excellent figs, like those that ripen first; the other
3 contained very bad figs, so bad they were uneatable. ·Yahweh said to me, 'What
do you see, Jeremiah?' 'Figs,' I answered, 'the good ones excellent, the bad ones
4 very bad, so bad as to be uneatable.' ·Then the word of Yahweh was addressed to
5 me, ·"Yahweh, the God of Israel, says this, "As these figs are good, so I mean to Ezk 11:14–21
concern myself with the welfare of the exiles of Judah whom I have sent from this
6 place to the country of the Chaldaeans. ·My eyes will watch over them for their
good, to bring them back to this country, to build them up and not to break them 1:10
7 down, to plant them and not to uproot them. ·I shall give them a heart to 4:4a;31:31l, 33,34;32:39 ↗1 Jn 5:20
acknowledge that I am Yahweh. They will be my people and I shall be their God,
8 for they will return to me with all their heart. ·As for the bad figs, the figs so bad as
to be uneatable—yes, Yahweh says this—that is how I shall treat Zedekiah king of
Judah, his chief men and what is left of Jerusalem: those who remain in this country
9 and those living in Egypt. [c] ·I shall make them an object of horror, a disaster, to all 15:4;26:6; 29:18;42:18; 44:12
the kingdoms of the earth, a thing of shame, a byword, a laughing-stock, a curse,
10 wherever I shall drive them. ·Sword, famine and plague I shall send against
them until they have vanished from the soil I gave to them and to
their ancestors." '

D: BABYLON THE SCOURGE OF YAHWEH [a]

1 **25** The word that was addressed to Jeremiah about all the people of Judah in
the fourth year of Jehoiakim son of Josiah, king of Judah (that is to say the

f. The v. is perhaps a clumsily inserted gloss on v. 22.

g. On the criteria of genuine prophecy, *see* pp. 1159–60.

h. God may indeed use dreams to convey a message, Nb 12:6, but the message and its origin need discernment.

i. lit. 'You are the burden' Gk; 'What burden' Hebr. (faulty provision of vowels and word division). • Jeremiah rejects the normal sense of the word *massa'*, 'burden' and, in the figurative sense, 'prophecy' (weighing someone down) 'response', *see* Is 13:1; 14:28; 19:1; Zc 9:1; 12:1; Ml 1:1.

j. Following versions and 5 Hebr. MSS. The verb (*na-sa'* from which *massa'* derives) continues the play on the word 'burden'. MT reads the verb *nasha'* 'to forget', or 'to lend against a pledge'.

24 a. This vision, cf. 13:1a, is reminiscent of Am (8:1–2). It may be assigned to the reign of Zedekiah, about 593 BC. The verdict given by Jeremiah (*see also* 29:1–23) is matched by that of Ezk (11:14–21): from the exiles God will recruit a people devoted to him, *see* Is 4:3c.

b. 'set out' Gk; 'appointed' Hebr. • The country people used to bring the first-fruits of their crops to the Temple.

c. Perhaps those who shared the captivity of Jehoahaz, 2 K 23:34, perhaps Israelite refugees in Egypt.

25 a. This passage recapitulates the activity of the prophet Jeremiah from his call, and proclaims the imminence of the Chaldaean danger, thus giving new urgency to all the earlier threats. It may be regarded as a summary, *see* v. 13, of the scroll first dictated by Jeremiah to Baruch

first year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon). ·The prophet Jeremiah proclaimed 2
it before all the people of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem:

'For twenty-three years, from the thirteenth year of Josiah son of Amon, king of 3
Judah, until today, the word of Yahweh has been addressed to me and I have never
7:25f tired of speaking to you (but you have not listened. ·Furthermore, Yahweh has 4
untiringly sent you all his servants the prophets, but you have not listened or paid
attention). ·The message was this, "Turn back, each one of you, from your evil 5
behaviour and your evil actions, and you will go on living on the soil Yahweh long
ago gave to you and your ancestors for ever. ·(And do not follow other gods to 6
serve and worship them, do not provoke me with things you yourselves have made,
and then I shall not harm you.) ·But you have not listened to me (Yahweh declares, 7
so that you have now provoked me with things you yourselves have made, and thus
harmed yourselves)."

'So—this is what Yahweh Sabaoth says, "Since you have not listened to my 8
words, ·I shall now send for all the families of the north (Yahweh declares, that is, 9
for Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, my servant) [b] and bring them down on this
Jos 6:17b country and its inhabitants (and on all these surrounding nations); I shall curse
them with utter destruction and make them an object of horror, of scorn, and ruin
7:34;16:9 Ezk 26:13 ↗Rv 18:22 them for ever. ·From them I shall banish the shouts of rejoicing and mirth, the 10
voices of bridegroom and bride, the sound of the handmill and the light of the
lamp; ·and this whole country will be reduced to ruin and desolation, and these 11
27:7;29:10 2 Ch 36:21–22 Is 23:15 ↗Dn 9:2seq. nations will be enslaved to the king of Babylon for seventy years. [c] ·(But when the 12
seventy years are over, I shall punish the king of Babylon and that nation, Yahweh
declares, for the wrong they have done, that is, the country of the Chaldaeans, and
make it desolate for ever), ·and against that country I shall perform all the words 13
with which I have threatened it, that is, everything written in this book." '

II: INTRODUCTION TO THE PROPHECIES AGAINST THE NATIONS

The vision of the cup [d]

What Jeremiah prophesied against all the nations.

LXX 32:13–38 ('For these in their turn are to be enslaved [e] to powerful nations and great kings, 14
and I shall pay them back as their deeds and handiwork deserve.')

Is 51:17h Rv 14:8–16, 8i;16 For Yahweh, the God of Israel, said this to me, 'Take this cup of the wine of 15
wrath and make all the nations to whom I send you drink it; ·they will drink and 16
reel and lose their wits, because of the sword I am sending among them.' ·I took 17
the cup from Yahweh's hand and made all the nations to whom Yahweh sent me
drink it [f] ·(Jerusalem and the towns of Judah, its kings and its chief men, to make 18
them a ruin, an object of horror and derision and a curse, as is the case today):
Pharaoh king of Egypt, his officials, his chief men and all his people, ·with the 19, 20
whole conglomeration of peoples there (all the kings of the country of Uz); [g] all the
kings of the country of the Philistines, Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron and what is still left
of Ashdod; ·Edom, Moab and the Ammonites; ·(all) the kings of Tyre, (all) the 21, 22
kings of Sidon, the kings of the island across the sea; [h] ·Dedan, Tema, Buz, all the 23
people with shaven temples; [i] ·all the kings of Arabia (and all the kings of 24
the conglomeration of peoples) who live in the desert ·(all the kings of Zimri), [j] 25
all the kings of Elam, and all the kings of Media; ·all the kings of the north, near 26
and far, one after another: in short, all the kingdoms on the face of the earth. (As
for the king of Sheshak, [k] he will drink last of all.)

'You will say to them, "Yahweh Sabaoth, the God of Israel, says this: Drink! 27
Get drunk! Vomit! Fall, never to rise again, before the sword that I am sending
among you!" ·If they refuse to take the cup from your hand and drink, you will 28
↗1 P 4:17 say to them, "Yahweh Sabaoth says this: You must drink! ·Look, for a start, 29
I am bringing disaster on the city that bears my name, so are you likely to go

unpunished? You certainly will not go unpunished, for next I shall summon a sword against all the inhabitants of the land, Yahweh declares."

30 'For your part, you are to prophesy all these words to them. Say to them:

"Yahweh roars from on high, Am 1:2+
he thunders from his holy dwelling-place,
loudly he roars at his own fold,
shouts aloud like those who tread the grape Is 63:3–6
at all the inhabitants of the land.
31 The noise resounds to the remotest parts of the earth.
For Yahweh is indicting the nations,
arraigning all humanity for judgement;
the wicked he assigns to the sword,
Yahweh declares. *l*
32 Yahweh Sabaoth says this:
Look, disaster is spreading
from nation to nation,
a mighty tempest is rising
from the far ends of the earth.

33 "Those slaughtered by Yahweh that day will be scattered across the world from end to end. No dirge will be raised for them; no one will gather them or bury them; =8:2 they will stay lying on the surface like dung.

34 "Howl, shepherds, shriek,
roll on the ground, you lords of the flock,
for your days have come to be slaughtered
and to be scattered,
and like a choice vase you will fall.
35 No refuge then for the shepherds,
no escape for the lords of the flock!
36 Listen! A shriek from the shepherds,
a howl from the lords of the flock!
For Yahweh has laid their pasture waste,
37 the peaceful sheepfolds are reduced to silence
owing to Yahweh's furious anger.
38 The lion has left his lair *m*
and their country is a wasteland now,
owing to the devastating fury,
owing to his furious anger." '

in 605 BC, *see* 36:2, then rewritten and completed, 36:32, *see* p. 1172. • There are considerable divergences between Hebr. and Gk; with occasional exceptions we follow Hebr. Brackets indicate passages that appear not to be original (several are absent from Gk).

b. According to the religious conception of history shared by the prophets, even idolaters were in God's service, *see* 42:9; Is 10:5a.

c. Round number for the years of exile, repeated in 29:10 and, in another form, in 27:7. The figure is also found in 2 Ch 36:21 and is the basis for the calculation in Dn 9.

d. This is a sort of preface to the prophecies against the nations, ch. 46–51, the earliest of which must have formed part of the scroll dictated in 605 BC. Gk puts these prophecies immediately after ch. 25; Hebr. places them at the end of the book. • Again, in this section, Hebr. and Gk show differences.

e. 'are to be enslaved' conj.; 'were enslaved' Hebr.

f. The peoples threatened fall into four groups, here named in the order in which they appear in ch. 46–51: **1** Egypt. **2** The Philistines on the west. **3** Edom, Moab, Ammon on the east. **4** Dedan, Tema, Buz to the south-east. Vv. 18–29 were expanded, while the collection of prophecies was taking its present shape, by the addition of the Phoenicians, *see* 47:4, Elam, *see* 49:34, and Babylon, *see* 50–51. • Apparent additions to the text, not found in Gk, are printed in brackets.

g. Uz: between north-western Arabia and Edom, *see* Gn 36:28; Jb 1:1.

h. Cyprus, but the other Phoenician colonies perhaps as well.

i. Dedan: a North Arabian tribe on the borders of Edom, *see* 49:8; Is 21:13. Tema: a related clan, Is 21:14. Buz: also in the north-western part of the Arabian peninsula, and related to Uz, Gn 22:21. The 'people with shaven temples' were other Arabs, cf. 9:25.

j. Or perhaps Zimki, which would be a cryptogram for Elam, though, this form of writing being posterior to Jeremiah, the words would be a gloss. If, however, one were to read 'Gimri' as a generic formed from Gomer son of Japheth, Gn 10:2–3, the Cimmerians would be intended.

k. Cryptogram for Babylon.

l. Vv. 30–31, which describe the universal judgement, like Is 66, are perhaps post-exilic.

m. 'The lion' conj.; 'Like the lion' Hebr. The lion may be Yahweh, cf. Is 31:4, or the enemy (Nebuchadnezzar) ready to ravage the country, cf. Jr 2:15. Alternative reading: 'Like the lion, one quits one's lair, since their country . . .' but the abrupt change from sing. to plur. does not favour this.

III: PROPHECIES OF HAPPINESS

A: INTRODUCTION: JEREMIAH THE TRUE PROPHET

Mt 24;26: 59–66 Lk 19:41–44 LXX 33 7:1–15

Arrest and trial of Jeremiah [a]

26 At the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim son of Josiah, king of Judah, this word came to Jeremiah [b] from Yahweh, 2 'Yahweh says this, "Stand in the court of the Temple of Yahweh. To all the people from the towns of Judah who come to worship in the Temple of Yahweh you will say everything I have ordered Jon 3:10 you to say, not omitting one syllable. 3 Perhaps they will listen and each turn from his evil way: if so, I shall relent and not bring the disaster on them which I intend 44:10,23 Dt 28:15 because of their misdeeds." 4 Say to them, "Yahweh says this: If you will not listen to me and follow my Law which I have given you, 5 and pay attention to the words 7:25–26;11:7–8 of my servants the prophets whom I have never tired of sending to you, although 7:12c you never have paid attention, 6 I shall treat this Temple as I treated Shiloh, and make this city a curse for all the nations of the world." '

The priests and prophets and all the people heard Jeremiah say these words in the Temple of Yahweh. 8 When Jeremiah had finished saying everything that Yahweh had ordered him to say to all the people, the priests and prophets and all the people seized hold of him and said, 'You will die for this! 9 Why have you made this prophecy in Yahweh's name, "This Temple will become like Shiloh, and this city become an uninhabited ruin"?' And the people all crowded in on Jeremiah in the Temple of Yahweh. 10 Hearing of this, the chief men of Judah came up from the royal palace to the Temple of Yahweh and took their seats at the entry of the New Gate of the Temple of Yahweh. [c]

The priests and prophets then said to the chief men and all the people, 'This man Mt 26:65–66par. deserves to die, since he has prophesied against this city, as you have heard with your own ears.' 12 Jeremiah, however, replied to all the chief men and all the people as follows, 'Yahweh himself sent me to prophesy against this Temple and this city all the things you have heard. 13 So now amend your behaviour and actions, listen to the voice of Yahweh your God, and Yahweh will relent about the disaster that he has decreed for you. 14 For myself, I am, as you see, in your hands. Do whatever you please or think right with me. 15 But be sure of this, that if you put me to death, you Mt 27:24–25 will be bringing innocent blood on yourselves, on this city and on its inhabitants, since Yahweh has truly sent me to you to say all this for you to hear.'

The chief men and all the people then said to the priests and prophets, 'This man does not deserve to die: he has spoken to us in the name of Yahweh our God.' 17 And some of the country's elders rose to address all the assembled people. 18 'Micah of Moresheth,' they said, 'who prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, had this to say to all the people of Judah, "Yahweh Sabaoth says this:

Mi 3:12

Zion will become ploughland,
Jerusalem a heap of rubble
and the Temple Mount a wooded height." [d]

'Did Hezekiah king of Judah and all Judah put him to death for this? Did they not rather, fearing Yahweh, plead with him, to such effect that Yahweh relented about the disaster which he had decreed for them? Are we now to burden our souls with such a crime?'

There was another man, too, who used to prophesy in Yahweh's name, Uriah son of Shemaiah, from Kiriath-Jearim. He prophesied exactly the same things against this city and this country as Jeremiah. 21 When King Jehoiakim with all his officers and all the chief men heard what he said, the king was determined to put him to death. On hearing this, Uriah took fright and, fleeing, escaped to Egypt. King Jehoiakim, however, sent [e] Elnathan son of Achbor to Egypt with others,

23 who brought Uriah back from Egypt and took him to King Jehoiakim, who had
24 him put to the sword and his body thrown into the common burial ground. ·But
Jeremiah had a protector in Ahikam son of Shaphan,[f] so he was not handed over
to the people to be put to death.

B: THE PAMPHLET FOR THE EXILES[a]

The symbolic yoke and the message to the neighbouring kings

18:1a

1 27 (At the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah[b] son of Josiah, king of Judah, LXX 34
2 this word came to Jeremiah from Yahweh:) ·Yahweh said this to me, 'Make
3 yourself thongs and yokes and put them on your neck. ·Then send them to the king
of Edom, the king of Moab, the king of the Ammonites, the king of Tyre, and the
king of Sidon, through their envoys accredited to Zedekiah king of Judah[c] in
4 Jerusalem. ·Give them the following message for their masters, "Yahweh Sabaoth,
5 God of Israel, says this: You must tell your masters this: ·I by my great power and
outstretched arm made the earth, the human beings and the animals that are on
6 earth, and I give them to whom I please. ·For the present, I have handed all these Lk 4:5–6 Rm 13:1 Rv 13:2.4
countries over to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, my servant; I have even put
7 the wild animals at his service. ·(All the nations will serve him, his son and his Jdt 11:7 Ba 3:16–17
grandson, until the time for his own country comes in its turn, when mighty nations
8 and great kings will enslave him.) ·Any nation or kingdom that will not serve
Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and will not bow its neck to the yoke of the king
of Babylon, I shall punish that nation with sword, famine and plague, Yahweh
9 declares, until I have destroyed it by his hand.[d] ·For your own part, do not listen to
your prophets, your diviners, dreamers,[e] magicians and sorcerers, who tell you: 14:14;28:8–9
10 You will not be enslaved by the king of Babylon. ·They prophesy lies to you, the
result of which will be that you will be banished from your soil, that I shall drive
11 you out, and you will perish. ·The nation, however, that is prepared to bend its
neck to the yoke of the king of Babylon and serve him, I shall leave in peace on its
own soil, Yahweh declares, to farm it and stay on it." '
12 To Zedekiah king of Judah I spoke in exactly the same terms. 'Bend your necks',
I told him, 'to the yoke of the king of Babylon; serve him and his people and you
13 will survive. ·(Why so anxious to die, you and your people, by sword, famine and
plague, with which Yahweh has threatened the nation refusing to serve the king of
14 Babylon?) ·Do not listen to the words the prophets say to you, "You will not be
15 enslaved by the king of Babylon." They prophesy lies to you. ·Since I have not
sent them, Yahweh declares, they prophesy untruths to you in my name. The result
will be that I shall drive you out, you will perish, and so will the prophets who
prophesy to you.'
16 I also spoke to the priests and to all this people as follows, 'Yahweh says this,
"Do not listen to the words of your prophets who prophesy to you as follows:
Look, the vessels of the Temple of Yahweh will very shortly be brought back from
17 Babylon. They prophesy lies to you. ·(Do not listen to them; serve the king of

26 **a.** These biographical passages may be attributed to Baruch; here he summarises the discourse against the Temple, 7:1–15, and tells of what followed it.

b. 'to Jeremiah' Syr. and *Vet. Lat.*; Hebr. and Gk omit.

c. 'the New Gate of the Temple of Yahweh' MSS, versions; 'Yahweh's gate' Hebr. It was a formal trial conducted by royal officials.

d. This threat had been conditional; it may have influenced Hezekiah in his attempted reform, 2 K 18:4seq.

e. After 'sent', Hebr. adds; 'people to Egypt.'

f. The king's scribe who had supported the reform under Josiah, 2 K 22:8seq. The family of Shaphan was always well disposed to Jeremiah; Gedaliah grandson of Shaphan, was also to prove the prophet's protector, Jr 40:5–6.

27 **a.** Linguistic peculiarities indicate ch. 27–29 as a distinct entity. These chapters may have formed a collection intended for the exiles. • Ch. 27, considerably shorter in the Gk version, has had numerous glosses added.

b. 'Zedekiah' conj. following vv. 3, 12 and 28:1; 'Jehoiakim' Hebr.

c. The accession of Psammeticus II in Egypt resulted in an anti-Babylonian coalition (593–592 BC) of these smaller powers; Judah joined them.

d. An unusual expression; perhaps emend with Syr. and Targ. to read: 'until I have handed it over to him.'

e. 'dreamers' Gk; 'dreams' Hebr.

Babylon and you will survive. Why should this city become a ruin?) ·If they are 18
real prophets, if Yahweh's word is really with them, they ought now to be pleading
with Yahweh Sabaoth that the remaining vessels in the Temple of Yahweh, in the
palace of the king of Judah and elsewhere in Jerusalem, do not go to Babylon too!
1 K 7:15seq., 23seq.,27seq. For this is what Yahweh Sabaoth says about (the pillars, the Sea, the stands and) 19
the other vessels still remaining in this city. ·those not carried off by Nebuchadnez- 20
2 K 24:8–17 zar king of Babylon when he took Jeconiah son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, into
exile from Jerusalem to Babylon (with all the leading men of Judah and Jerusalem).
Yes, this is what Yahweh Sabaoth, God of Israel, says about the vessels still 21
remaining in the Temple of Yahweh, in the palace of the king of Judah and
elsewhere in Jerusalem: ·They will be carried off to Babylon (and stay there until 22
the day I punish them), Yahweh declares. (Then I shall bring them back and
restore them to this place.)" '

14:13–16;23; 9–40 **The dispute with Hananiah** [a]

LXX 35 **28** That same year, at the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah, in 1
the fifth month of the fourth year, the prophet Hananiah son of Azzur, a
Gibeonite, spoke as follows to Jeremiah [b] in the Temple of Yahweh in the presence
of the priests and of all the people, ·"Yahweh Sabaoth, the God of Israel, says this, 2
"I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon. ·In exactly two years' time I shall 3
bring back all the vessels of the Temple of Yahweh which Nebuchadnezzar king of
Babylon took away from here and carried off to Babylon. ·And I shall also bring 4
back Jeconiah son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah and all the exiles of Judah who have
gone to Babylon, Yahweh declares, for I shall break the yoke of the king
of Babylon." '

The prophet Jeremiah then replied to the prophet Hananiah in front of the 5
priests and all the people present in the Temple of Yahweh. ·"So be it!' the prophet 6
Jeremiah said, 'May Yahweh do so! May he fulfil the words that you have prophes-
ied and bring all the vessels of the Temple of Yahweh and all the exiles back to this
place from Babylon. ·Listen carefully, however, to this word that I am now going 7
to say for you and all the people to hear: ·From remote times, the prophets who 8
preceded you and me prophesied war, disaster and plague for many countries and
for great kingdoms; ·the prophet who prophesies peace can be recognised as one 9
Dt 18:21–22 Ezk 2:5;33:33 truly sent by Yahweh only when his word comes true.' [c]

The prophet Hananiah then snatched the yoke off the neck of the prophet 10
Jeremiah and broke it. ·In front of all the people Hananiah then said, 'Yahweh 11
says this, "This is how, in exactly two years' time, I shall break the yoke of
Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and take it off the necks of all the nations." ' At
this, the prophet Jeremiah went away.

After the prophet Hananiah had broken the yoke he had snatched off the 12
prophet Jeremiah's neck, the word of Yahweh came to Jeremiah, ·"Go to Hananiah 13
and tell him this, "Yahweh says this: You have broken the wooden yokes only to
make iron yokes to replace them! ·For Yahweh Sabaoth, the God of Israel, says 14
this: An iron yoke is what I now lay on the necks of all these nations to enslave
them to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. (They will be enslaved to him; I have
=27:6 even given him the wild animals.)" '

The prophet Jeremiah said to the prophet Hananiah, 'Listen carefully, Hanan- 15
iah: Yahweh has not sent you; and thanks to you this people is now relying on what
is false. ·And so, Yahweh says this, "I am going to send you off the face of the 16
Dt 13:6 earth: you will die this year (since you have preached rebellion against Yahweh)." '

The prophet Hananiah died the same year, in the seventh month. [d] 17

The letter to the exiles

LXX 36 **29** This is the text of the letter that the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem 1
to those who were left of the elders in exile, to the priests, the prophets and
all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had deported from Jerusalem to Babylon.

This was after King Jeconiah had left Jerusalem with the queen mother, the eunuchs, the chief men of Judah and Jerusalem, and the blacksmiths and metal-workers. •The letter was entrusted to Elasah son of Shaphan and to Gemariah son of Hilkiah, whom Zedekiah king of Judah had sent to Babylon, to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. [a] The letter said: 2 K 24:12–16

'Yahweh Sabaoth, the God of Israel, says this to all the exiles deported from Jerusalem to Babylon: •Build houses, settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce; •marry and have sons and daughters; choose wives for your sons, find husbands for your daughters so that these can bear sons and daughters in their turn; you must increase there and not decrease. •Work for the good of the city to which I have exiled you; pray to Yahweh on its behalf, since on its welfare yours depends. •For Yahweh Sabaoth, the God of Israel, says this: Do not be deceived by the prophets who are with you or by your diviners; do not listen to the dreams you have, •since they prophesy lies to you in my name. I have not sent them, Yahweh declares. •For Yahweh says this: When the seventy years granted to Babylon are over, I shall intervene on your behalf and fulfil my favourable promise to you by bringing you back to this place. •Yes, I know what plans I have in mind for you, Yahweh declares, plans for peace, not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. •When you call to me and come and pray to me, I shall listen to you. •When you search for me, you will find me; when you search wholeheartedly for me, •I shall let you find me (Yahweh declares. I shall restore your fortunes and gather you in from all the nations and wherever I have driven you, Yahweh declares. I shall bring you back to the place from which I exiled you). 25:11c; Dt 4:29–31,30h; 2 Ch 15:2–4; Ws 6:12–13; Is 55:6–9; Am 5:4c

'Since you say: Yahweh has raised up prophets for us in Babylon—•this is what Yahweh says [b] about the king now occupying the throne of David and all the people living in this city, your brothers who did not go with you into exile: Yahweh Sabaoth says this: I am now going to send them sword, famine and plague; I shall make them like rotten figs, so bad as to be uneatable. •I shall pursue them with sword, famine and plague. I shall make them an object of terror to all the kingdoms of the earth, a curse, a thing of horror, scorn and derision to all the nations where I have driven them, •because they have refused to listen to my words, Yahweh declares, although I have persistently sent them all my servants the prophets; but they [c] would not listen, Yahweh declares. But all you exiles, whom I have sent from Jerusalem to Babylon, listen to Yahweh's word! 14:14+; 24 =15:4; 7:25–26+

'This is what Yahweh Sabaoth, God of Israel, says about Ahab son of Kolaiah, and Zedekiah son of Maaseiah, who prophesy lies to you in my name: I shall hand them over now to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon who will put them to death before your very eyes. •This curse, based on their fate, will be used by all the exiles of Judah in Babylon: May Yahweh treat you like Zedekiah and Ahab, roasted alive by the king of Babylon, •because they have done a scandalous thing in Israel, committing adultery with their neighbour's wives and speaking lying words in my name without orders from me. I know all the same and am witness to it, Yahweh declares.'

28 **a.** Another biographical chapter relating events contemporaneous with those of the preceding chapter. The year is 593 BC.

b. 'to Jeremiah' conj. demanded by context; 'to me' Hebr.

c. In stating that the prophet foretells disaster, Jeremiah implicitly refers to the sinful conduct of the nation, always condemned by the true prophets. On the criteria of genuine prophecy, *see* pp. 1159–60.

d. The fulfilment of a short-term prophecy was a sign that the prophet's ministry was from God, cf. 20:6; 29:32; 44:29–30; 45:5; Dt 18:21f.

29 **a.** Possibly the same mission as in 51:59.

b. Vv. 16–20, missing in Gk, are additional, all the more obviously so since the sentence begun in v. 15 finishes in v. 21.

c. 'they' conj. demanded by context; 'you' Hebr.

Prophecy against Shemaiah

'And to Shemaiah of Nehelam you will speak as follows: ·Yahweh Sabaoth, God 24, 25
of Israel, says this: Since you, on your own initiative, have sent a letter to all the
people in Jerusalem, to the priest Zephaniah son of Maaseiah (and to all the
priests), saying: ·Yahweh has appointed you priest in place of the priest Jehoiada 26
to keep order in the Temple of Yahweh, to put any crazy fellow posing as a
prophet in the stocks and collar, ·why then have you not disciplined Jeremiah of 27
Anathoth, now posing as a prophet to you? ·Why, he has even sent us a message 28
in Babylon, saying: It will be a long time. Build houses, settle down; plant
gardens and eat what they produce.'. . .[d]

(Now, after the priest Zephaniah had read this letter to the prophet Jeremiah), 29
the word of Yahweh came then to Jeremiah as follows, ·'Send this message to 30, 31
all the exiles, "This is what Yahweh says about Shemaiah of Nehelam: Since
Shemaiah has prophesied to you without my sending him, and since he has caused
you to rely on what is false ·for that reason, Yahweh declares, I shall punish 32
Shemaiah of Nehelam and his descendants; no male member of his family will
survive among this people to see the happiness that I will bestow on my people
=28:16 Dt 13:6 (Yahweh declares, since he has preached rebellion against Yahweh)." '

C: THE BOOK OF CONSOLATION

Promise of recovery for Israel[a]

LXX 37 **30** The word which came to Jeremiah from Yahweh, as follows, ·'Yahweh, 1, 2
God of Israel, says this, "Write for yourself in a book all the words I have
spoken to you. ·For look, the days are coming, Yahweh declares, when I shall 3
bring back the captives of my people Israel (and Judah), Yahweh says. I shall make
them come back and take possession of the country I gave to their ancestors." '
These are the words Yahweh spoke about Israel (and Judah): 4

Yahweh says this: 5
We have heard a cry of panic,
of terror, not of peace.
Now ask and see: 6
can a man bear children?
Then why do I see each man
4:31+ with his hands on his loins like a woman in labour?
Why has every face grown pale?
Disaster! This is the great day, 7
no other like it:
a time of distress for Jacob,
though he will be saved from it.

Is 9:3+ (That day, Yahweh Sabaoth declares, I shall break the yoke now on your neck 8
5:19 and snap your chains; and foreigners will enslave you no more, ·but Israel 9
Ho 3:5 and Judah will serve Yahweh their God, and David their king whom I shall raise
up for them.)[b]

=46:27-28 Is 41:8f So do not be afraid, my servant Jacob, 10
Yahweh declares,
Israel, do not be alarmed:
for look, I shall rescue you from distant countries
and your descendants from the country where they are captive.
Mi 4:4 Jacob will return and be at peace,
secure, with no one to trouble him.

11 For I am with you to save you,
Yahweh declares,
I shall make an end of all the nations
where I have driven you,
but I shall not make an end of you,
only discipline you in moderation,
not to let you go quite unpunished.

12 Yes, Yahweh says this:
Your wound is incurable,
your injury past healing.
13 There is no one to plead your cause;
for an ulcer there are remedies, Is 1:5–6
but for you no cure at all.
14 All your lovers [c] have forgotten you, 4:30 Lm 1:2
they look for you no more.
Yes, I have struck you as an enemy strikes,
with cruel punishment
(because of your great guilt and countless sins).
15 Why cry out about your wound?
Your pain is incurable!
Because of your great guilt and countless sins,
I have treated you like this.
16 But [d] all those who devoured you will be devoured,
all your enemies, all, go into captivity,
those who despoiled you will be despoiled, Is 33:1
and all who pillaged you be pillaged.
17 For I shall restore you to health
and heal your wounds, Yahweh declares,
you who used to be called 'Outcast', Is 62:4
'Zion for whom no one cares'. [e]

18 Yahweh says this:
Look, I shall restore the tents of Jacob Is 54:1–3
and take pity on his dwellings:
the town will be rebuilt on its mound, Ps 51:18i
the stronghold where it ought to stand.
19 From them will come thanksgiving
and shouts of joy.
I shall make them increase, they will not decrease;
I shall make them honoured, no more to be humbled.

d. The sentence beginning 'Since' in v. 25 is left in suspense. Vv. 24–25 seem to have been tampered with. Gk, which is very different, seems to have found the text embarrassing but is just as unsatisfactory.

30 a. The greater part of the 'Book of Consolation', 30:1–31:22, was written between the reform of 622 BC and the death of Josiah (609 BC). The deuteronomic reform, *see* 2 K 22:3–23:24, had both stimulated the cult of Yahweh by breaking with the religious syncretism introduced by Manasseh, and revived national aspirations: the decline of Assyria had allowed Josiah to undertake the reconquest of Samaria and Galilee, 2 K 23:15, 19; 2 Ch 35:18. This gave rise to the hope that the exiles of 721 BC might return to a restored kingdom of David. The poems that follow express this hope. Yahweh still loves the Israel of the north, 31:3, 15–20, cf. Ho 11:8–9; he will bring the exiles back to their homes, v. 3; 31:2–14, cf. Ho 10:11; religious unity will be restored with Zion as its centre, 31:6, cf. Is 11:10–16. Later, this promise of return was extended to Judah, conquered and exiled in its turn. Subsequent prophecies, vv. 8–9; 31:1, 23–26, 27–28, with glosses in vv. 3, 4; 31:31, associate Judah with Israel, thus giving the 'Book of Consolation' its final, messianic scope: Israel and Judah will unite, *see* 3:18h, to serve 'Yahweh their God and David their king', v. 9. This gathering of scattered Israel becomes a major theme of the exilic, Is 43:5seq.; 49:5–6, 12, 18–23; etc.; Ezk 11:17; 20:34; 28:25; 34:12–13; etc. and post-exilic prophets, Zc 10:6–12; *see also* Jn 11:52.

b. 'the yoke' Gk and *Vet. Lat.*; 'his yoke' Hebr. • 'enslave you' conj.; 'enslave it' Hebr,; 'enslave them' Gk (which reads: 'their neck . . . their chains'). 'Israel and Judah' supplied; in Hebr. the subject is understood. • These 2 vv. are an addition which, like the words 'and Judah' of vv. 2, 4, was designed to extend the messianic promises to the entire nation (see also the reference to a new David).

c. Here, the nations on whom Israel relied for support, *see* Ezk 16; 23.

d. 'But' conj.; 'Therefore' Hebr.

e. lit. 'This Zion, she for . . .'; apparently an adaptation, making the Israel of this ch. into the whole community of God's people, and not merely the Northern Kingdom. • Gk 'your booty', presumably for 'our booty', may reflect the original reading (*tzadenu*, emended to *tziyon*).

Their sons will be as once they were, 20
their community fixed firmly before me,
and I shall punish all their oppressors.
Their prince will be one of their own, 21
their ruler come from their own people,[f]
and I shall permit him to approach me freely;
Ex 19:12e; 33:20i for who, otherwise, would be so bold
as to approach me, Yahweh demands?

31:31l Ezk 11:20 You will be my people and I shall be your God.[g] 22
•=23:19–20 Look, Yahweh's hurricane, his wrath, bursts out, 23
a roaring hurricane,
to burst on the heads of the wicked;
Yahweh's burning anger will not turn aside 24
until he has performed, has carried out,
what he has in mind.
In the final days, you will understand this.

LXX 38 3:18h **31** When that time comes, Yahweh declares, I shall be the God of all the 1
families of Israel, and they will be my people.

Yahweh says this: 2
Ho 2:16–17 They have found pardon in the desert,[a]
those who have survived the sword.
Israel is marching to his rest.
Yahweh has appeared to me from afar; 3
Is 54:8c Ho 11:1–9 I have loved you with an everlasting love
and so I still maintain my faithful love for you.
Ps 51:18i I shall build you once more, yes, you will be rebuilt, 4
Virgin of Israel!
Once more in your best attire,
and with your tambourines,
you will go out dancing gaily.
Once more you will plant vineyards 5
on the mountains of Samaria
Is 65:21–22 Am 9:14 (those who plant will themselves enjoy the fruit).
Yes, a day will come when the watchmen shout 6
on the mountains of Ephraim,
'Up! Let us go up to Zion,
to Yahweh our God!'[b]

For Yahweh says this: 7
Shout with joy for Jacob!
Hail the chief of nations!
Proclaim! Praise! Shout,
'Yahweh has saved his people,[c]
Is 4:3c the remnant of Israel!'

Watch, I shall bring them back 8
from the land of the north
and gather them in from the far ends of the earth.
With them, the blind and the lame,
women with child, women in labour,
all together: a mighty throng will return here!
Ps 126:5–6 Is 40:3d In tears they will return, 9
in prayer I shall lead them.[d]
Jn 4:1a I shall guide them to streams of water,
by a smooth path where they will not stumble.

For I am a father to Israel,
and Ephraim is my first-born son. Dt 1:31+ ↗2 Co 6:18

10 Listen, nations, to the word of Yahweh.
On the farthest coasts and islands proclaim it, say,
'He who scattered Israel is gathering him, 23:3
will guard him as a shepherd guarding his flock.' Ezk 34:1a Jn 10:16
11 For Yahweh has ransomed Jacob,
rescued him from a hand stronger than his own. Is 49:25 Lk 11:21–22
12 They will come, shouting for joy on the heights of Zion,
thronging towards Yahweh's lavish gifts,
for wheat, new wine and oil,
sheep and cattle;
they will be like a well-watered garden,
they will sorrow no more.
13 The young girl will then take pleasure in the dancing,
and young men and old alike;
I shall change their mourning into gladness, Ps 30:11;90:15 Jn 16:22
comfort them, give them joy after their troubles;
14 I shall refresh my priests with rich food,
and my people will gorge themselves on my lavish gifts,
Yahweh declares.

15 Yahweh says this:
A voice is heard in Ramah, ↗Mt 2:17–18
lamenting and weeping bitterly:
it is Rachel weeping for her children, [e] 1 S 10:2b
refusing to be comforted for her children,
because they are no more. [f]
16 Yahweh says this:
Stop your lamenting
dry your eyes,
for your labour will have a reward,
Yahweh declares,
and they will return from the enemy's country.
17 There is hope for your future after all,
Yahweh declares,
your children will return to their homeland.
18 I have indeed heard Ephraim's grieving,
'You flogged me, I took a flogging,
like a young, untrained bull. Ho 4:16
Bring me back, let me come back, Ps 80:3
for you are Yahweh my God!
19 For, since I turned away, I have repented;
having understood, I beat my breast. [g] Ezk 21:17;36:31

f. Not as under the Assyrian domination when the governor was representative of a foreign power.

g. This v., which is an addition, contains the formula of the covenant, *see* Dt 26:17–28; 27:9; 28:9, frequently repeated by Jeremiah, *see* Jr 31:31*l*.

31 **a.** For the desert as the scene of conversion, *see* Ho 2:16p. The theme of the second Exodus which will bring Israel back from exile, broached here and in vv. 8–9, 21, is resumed and developed in the second part of Is, *see* Is 40:3.

b. Religious unity recovered round the sanctuary of Zion.

c. 'has saved his' Gk, Targ.; 'save thy' Hebr.

d. The text is unexpected and it is tempting to emend, as Gk, to read: 'In tears they went away, consoled I shall bring them back', cf. Ps 126:5–6, though this is probably a correction merely to make an easier text. The tears in question would seem to be tears of repentance.

e. Rachel, wife of Jacob and mother of Joseph, who was himself the father of Ephraim and Manasseh. Her tomb was at Ramah, 1 S 10:2, the modern Er-Ram, 6 miles (10 km) north of Jerusalem, not far from Ephrathah, *see* Gn 35:19, on the borders of Benjamin, Jos 18:25. Bethlehem, having a clan of Ephrathites, also acquired the name Ephrathah, Mi 5:1, whence the tradition siting Rachel's tomb near Bethlehem (*see* the gloss on Gn 35:19).

f. 'they are no more' versions; 'we are no more' or 'he is no more' Hebr.

g. lit. 'the thigh', gesture of vexation, sadness, sorrow or remorse, cf. Ezk 21:17.

I was deeply ashamed, I blushed,
aware of the disgrace incurred when I was young.'
Is Ephraim, then, so dear a son to me, 20
Pr 3:12 Rv 3:19 a child so favoured,
that whenever I mention him
I remember him lovingly still?
Is 49:14–16 Ho 11:8–9 That is why I yearn for him,
why I must take pity on him,
Yahweh declares.

Is 40:3d Set up your signposts, 21
raise yourself landmarks,
fix your mind on the road,
the way by which you went.
3:12 Come home, Virgin of Israel,
come home to these towns of yours.
How long will you hesitate, 22
rebellious daughter?
For Yahweh is creating something new on earth:
Ho 2:18–19 the Woman sets out to find her Husband again. [h]

Promise of restoration to Judah [i]

Yahweh Sabaoth, the God of Israel, says this, 'In the country of Judah and in its 23
towns, they will use these words once more, when I bring their captives home:

"Yahweh bless you,
home of saving justice,
Is 11:9 holy mountain!"

Ps 23:2–3 'And in this country, Judah and all its towns, the ploughmen and those who wander 24
with their flocks, will live together, •for I shall give the weary all they need and 25
satisfy all those whose strength has gone.'

At this, I awoke and saw 26
that my sleep had been sweet to me. [j]

Israel and Judah

'Look, the days are coming, Yahweh declares, when I shall sow the House of Israel 27
Is 49:19–20 Zc 2:8 1:10 and the House of Judah with the seed both of people and of cattle. •And as I once 28
watched over them to uproot, to knock down, to overthrow, destroy and bring
disaster, so now I shall watch over them to build and to plant, Yahweh declares.

Dt 24:16b **Individual retribution** [k]

'In those days people will no longer say: 29

‖Ezk 18:2 "The fathers have eaten unripe grapes;
the children's teeth are set on edge."

But each will die for his own guilt. Everyone who eats unripe grapes will have his 30
own teeth set on edge.

The new covenant [l]

↗Heb 8:8–12 Lk 22:20par. 'Look, the days are coming, Yahweh declares, when I shall make a new covenant 31
with the House of Israel (and the House of Judah), •but not like the covenant I 32
Ezk 19:1a made with their ancestors the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of
Egypt, a covenant which they broke, even though I was their Master, Yahweh
↗Heb 10:16 declares. •No, this is the covenant I shall make with the House of Israel when those 33
24:7; 32:39–40 ↗2 Co 3:3 days have come, Yahweh declares. Within them I shall plant my Law, writing it on

34 their hearts. Then I shall be their God and they will be my people. ·There will
be no further need for everyone to teach neighbour or brother, saying,
"Learn to know Yahweh!" No, they will all know me, from the least to the
greatest, Yahweh declares, since I shall forgive their guilt and never more call their
sin to mind.'

Ho 2:22v
1 Jn 2:27
↗Heb 10:17

Israel will endure

35 Yahweh who provides the sun to shine by day,
who regulates [m] moon and stars to shine by night,
who stirs the sea, making its waves roar,
he whose name is Yahweh Sabaoth, says this,

Gn 1:14
Ps 136:7seq.
‖Is 51:15

36 'Were this established order ever to pass away
before me, Yahweh declares,
then the race of Israel would also cease
being a nation for ever before me!'

33:20–21
Ps 89:33–37

37 Yahweh says this,
'Were the heavens above ever to be measured,
the foundations of the earth below ever to be fathomed,
then I too would reject the whole race of Israel
for all that they have done, Yahweh declares.'

Jerusalem magnificently rebuilt [n]

38 Look, the days are coming, Yahweh declares, when the City will be rebuilt for
39 Yahweh, from the Tower of Hananel to the Corner Gate. ·Then once again the
measuring line will stretch straight to the Hill of Gareb, turning then to Goah.

Ezk 41:13
Zc 2:5

40 And the whole valley, with its corpses and ashes, and all the ground beside [o] the
ravine of the Kidron as far as the corner of the Horse Gate, eastwards, will be
consecrated to Yahweh. It will never be destroyed or demolished again.

Jos 6:17b
Zc 14:11
↗Rv 22:3

h. A resumption of the loving relationship between Israel and her Husband, Yahweh, *see* Ho 1:2b. The text has the same messianic scope as Is 54:5seq.

i. This and the following prophecy were pronounced in about 587 BC. *See* 30:1a.

j. A comment by the prophet, perhaps quoting lines from a popular song.

k. Here Jeremiah refutes a common saying (also refuted by Ezekiel, 18:2), expressing the old principle of collective responsibility: in this context the penalty contracted by all the members of a family for the fault of one. He foretells that a new principle will be applied in the future—Ezekiel was to declare that the time had come already—namely that sinners will be punished individually, *see* Ezk 14:12d; 18.

l. In vv. 31–34 Jr reaches its highest peak of spirituality. The old covenant has been violated, v. 32, Ezk 16:59, and the attempted reform under Josiah has been short lived: it is evident now that God has other plans. A disaster will ensue, leaving only a 'remnant' of the nation, Is 4:3c, and then an everlasting covenant will be made, v. 31, as in the days of Noah, Is 54:9–10. The former covenantal terms remain; obedience to the Law, and the divine presence bestowing peace and material prosperity, Ezk 36:29–30, this ideal being summed up in the formula: 'I shall be your God and you will be my people', v. 33; 7:23; 11:4; 30:22; 31:1; 32:38; Ezk 11:20; 36:28; 37:27; Zc 8:8; *see also* Dt 7:6b. But the covenant is 'new' in three respects: **1** God's spontaneous forgiveness of sin, v. 34; Ps 51:1–2, 7; Ezk 36:25, 29. **2** Individual responsibility and retribution, v. 29, *see* Ezk 14:12d. **3** Interiorisation of religion: the Law is to be no longer a code regulating external activity but an inspiration working on the human heart, v. 33; 24:7; 32:39, under the influence of the Spirit of God, who gives a new heart, Ps 51:10 Ezk 36:26–27, cf. Jr 4:4a, capable of 'knowing' God, Ho 2:22. This new and eternal covenant, proclaimed again by Ezekiel, Ezk 36:25–28, by the closing chapters of Is, Is 55:3; 59:21; 61:8, cf. Ba 2:35, and operative in Ps 51, will be inaugurated by the sacrifice of Christ, Mt 26:28 and par.—and the apostles will proclaim its fulfilment, Rm 11:27; 2 Co 3:6; Heb 8: 6–13; 9:15seq.; 1 Jn 5:20i.

m. 'regulates' *hoqeq* conj.; 'the laws of' *huqqot* Hebr.

n. The ruins left by the Babylonians would be rebuilt: the Tower of Hananel on the north-eastern part of the city walls, Ne 3:1; the Corner Gate, on the north-west, 2 K 14:13; the Horse Gate, on the south-east, Ne 3:28. Gareb is not otherwise known; Goah, also appearing only here, may have been situated at the junction of the three valleys: Gehenna, the Tyropoean and the Kidron; the valley of corpses and ashes (lit. 'fatty ashes' of the sacrificial victims, *see* Lv 1:16; 4:12; 6:3–4) being Gehenna, Jr 7:31; 19:6, which lay south west of Jerusalem, while the Kidron lay to the east. This account of a reconstructed Jerusalem anticipates Ezekiel.

o. 'beside' *'al* conj.; 'as far as' *'ad* Hebr.

D: ADDITIONS TO THE BOOK OF CONSOLATION

18:1a **Jeremiah buys a field in token of future prosperity** [a]

LXX 39 **32** The word that came to Jeremiah from Yahweh in the tenth year of Zedekiah 1
king of Judah, which was the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar. ·The 2
army of the king of Babylon was then besieging Jerusalem, and the prophet
Jeremiah was confined in the Court of the Guard in the king of Judah's palace,
where Zedekiah king of Judah had confined him, saying, 'Why do you keep 3
prophesying like this, "Yahweh says this: I am going to hand this city over to the
king of Babylon and he will capture it; ·and Zedekiah king of Judah will not escape 4
39:7;52:11 the clutches of the Chaldaeans, but will certainly be handed over to the king of
Babylon, speak to him personally and see him face to face. ·He will take Zedekiah 5
away to Babylon and there he will stay (until I attend to him, Yahweh declares. If
you fight the Chaldaeans you will not succeed!)" '

Jeremiah said, 'The word of Yahweh has been addressed to me as follows, 6
"Look, Hanamel the son of your uncle Shallum will come to you and say: Buy my 7
field at Anathoth, for you have the right of redemption to purchase it." ·And, as 8
Yahweh had said, my cousin Hanamel came to me, in the Court of the Guard and
said, "Buy my field at Anathoth in the territory of Benjamin, for you have the right
Nb 35:19c of inheritance and right of redemption; buy it." I knew then that this was Yahweh's
order. ·Accordingly, I bought the field from my cousin Hanamel of Anathoth and 9
weighed him out the money: seventeen silver shekels. ·I drew up the deeds and 10
sealed it, called in witnesses and weighed out the money on the scales. ·I then took 11
both the sealed deed of purchase (with its stipulations and clauses) and its open
copy ·and handed over the deed of purchase to Baruch son of Neriah, son of 12
Mahseiah, in the presence of my cousin [b] Hanamel, of the witnesses who had signed
the deed of purchase, and of all the Judaeans who then happened to be in the Court
of the Guard. ·In their presence I gave Baruch this order, ·"Yahweh Sabaoth, God 13, 14
of Israel, says this: Take these deeds, the sealed deed of purchase and its open
copy, and put them in an earthenware pot, so that they may be preserved for a long
time. ·For Yahweh Sabaoth, God of Israel, says this: Houses, fields and vineyards 15
will again be bought in this country."

'After I had entrusted the deed of purchase to Baruch son of Neriah, I prayed to 16
Yahweh as follows, ·"Ah, Lord Yahweh, you made the heavens and the earth by 17
your great power and outstretched arm. To you nothing is impossible. ·You show 18
Ex 34:6–7,6c faithful love to thousands but repay the fathers' guilt in full [c] to their children after
them. Great and mighty God, whose name is Yahweh Sabaoth, ·great in purpose, 19
17:10 mighty in deed, whose eyes are open on all human ways, rewarding every individual
Ps 33:13–15 as that person's ways and actions deserve! ·You performed signs and 20
wonders in Egypt, as you still do in Israel and among humanity today. You have
won the name for yourself which is yours today. ·You brought your people Israel 21
Dt 4:34 out of Egypt with signs and wonders, with mighty hand and outstretched arm and
fearsome terror. ·Then you gave them this country which you had promised on 22
Ex 3:8c oath to their ancestors, a country flowing with milk and honey. ·They then entered 23
26:4 it, taking possession of it, but they would not listen to your voice nor follow your
Law: they would do nothing you ordered them to do; and so you made this total
disaster befall them. ·Look! The earthworks are already in place to take the city 24
and, by means of sword, famine and plague, the city is now within the clutches of
the Chaldaeans attacking it. What you said has now come true, as you see. ·Yet 25
you yourself, Lord Yahweh, told me: Buy the field, pay for it, have it witnessed
although the city is already in the Chaldaeans' clutches." '

The word of Yahweh was addressed to me [d] as follows, ·'Look, I am Yahweh, 26, 27
32:17 God of all humanity. Is anything impossible to me?
Zc 8:6
Lk 1:37 'So, Yahweh says this, "I shall hand this city over to the Chaldaeans and to 28

29 Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and he will capture it; •the Chaldaeans attacking
this city will enter it, fire it and burn it to the ground, with the houses on whose
roofs incense has been offered to Baal and libations poured to other gods, to
30 provoke my anger. •For the people of Israel and Judah alike have done nothing
but what displeases me since they were young. (The people of Israel in fact have
31 done nothing but provoke my anger by their actions, Yahweh declares.) •Yes,
from the day when this city was built until today, it has been such cause of anger
32 and wrath to me that I mean to remove it from my sight, •on account of all the
wickedness the people of Israel and the people of Judah have done to provoke my
anger; they, their kings, their chief men, their priests, their prophets, the people of
33 Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. •They turned to me their backs, never
their faces; and though I taught them[e] so urgently, so untiringly, they would not
34 listen and accept correction. •Instead, they set up their Horrors in the Temple that =7:30–31
35 bears my name to defile it, •and built the high places of Baal in the Valley of Ben-
Hinnom, to burn their sons and daughters alive in honour of Molech: a thing I have Lv 18:21h
never ordered, that had never entered my thoughts—that they would cause Judah
to sin by anything so loathsome!

36 "So now, this is what Yahweh, God of Israel, says about this city of which you
now say:[f] By means of sword, famine and plague, it is already within the king of
37 Babylon's clutches: •Look, I shall gather them in from all the countries where I
have driven them in my anger, my fury and great wrath. I shall bring them back to
38 this place and make them live in safety. •Then they will be my people, and I shall
39 be their God. •I shall give them singleness of heart and singleness of conduct so 24:7
that they will always fear me, for their own good and that of their children after
40 them. •I shall make an everlasting covenant with them, never to cease in my efforts 31:31*l*
Dt 30:9
for their welfare, and I shall put respect for me in their hearts, so that they will
41 never turn away from me again. •My joy will lie in them and in doing them good,
42 and I shall plant them firmly in this country, with all my heart and soul. •For
Yahweh says this: Just as I have brought this complete and total disaster on this
43 people, so I shall bring them all the good things I have promised them. •Fields will
again be bought in this country of which you now say: It is a wasteland without
44 human or animal, already in the clutches of the Chaldaeans. •People will buy
fields, pay money, draw up deeds, seal them and have them witnessed in the
territory of Benjamin, in the districts round Jerusalem, in the towns of Judah, of
the highlands, of the lowlands and of the Negeb. For I shall bring back their
captives, Yahweh declares." '

Another promise of recovery[a]

1 33 Jeremiah was still confined to the Court of the Guard when the word of LXX 40
2 Yahweh came to him a second time, as follows, •'Yahweh who made the
3 earth,[b] who formed it and set it firm—Yahweh is his name—says this, •"Call to 29:12
me and I will answer you; I will tell you great secrets of which you know nothing.
4 For this is what Yahweh, God of Israel, says about the houses of this city and the
palaces of the kings of Judah which are about to be destroyed by means of the
5 earthworks and the sword; •about those now fighting the Chaldaeans, only to fill
the city[c] with corpses, those whom I have slaughtered in my furious anger, those

32 a. The incident, which is given a symbolic interpretation, *see* 18:1a, took place in 587 BC, when the siege foretold in 34:21–22 had been resumed, vv. 2, 24. The purchase of the field is doubtless connected with the distribution of property for which Jeremiah wanted to go to Anathoth, 37:12. The original, autobiographical text, vv. 6[b]-17[a], 24–29[a], 42–44, seems to have been expanded by an introduction, vv. 1–6[a] a prayer, vv. 17[b]–23 (reminiscent of Ne 9), and a messianic passage, vv. 29[b]-41, resuming themes characteristic of Jeremiah.

b. 'my cousin' (lit. 'the son of my uncle') Gk MSS, Syr., *see* vv. 7–9; 'my uncle' Hebr. • Baruch was Jeremiah's secretary, *see* 36:32.

c. lit. 'into the breast'; apparently the expression refers to the custom of carrying provisions in the fold of the gown, Rt 3:15; 2 K 4:39, cf. Is 65:6e. Alternative translation: 'straight to the heart'.

d. 'me' Gk, *Vet. Lat.*, cf. v. 16; 'Jeremiah' Hebr.

e. 'I taught them' versions; 'of teaching' Hebr.

f. 'you' (singular) Gk; 'you' (plural) Hebr. So also in v. 43.

33 a. This prophecy dates from the same period as that of ch. 32.

b. 'who made the earth' Gk; 'who made it; Yahweh' Hebr.

c. 'to fill the city' following Gk ('to fill it'); 'to fill them' Hebr.

whose wickedness has made me hide my face from this city: •Look, I shall bring 6
them [d] remedy and cure; I shall cure them and reveal a new order of peace and
loyalty to them. •I shall bring back the captives of Judah and the captives of Israel 7
31:31f and shall rebuild them as before. •I shall cleanse them of all their guilt, by which 8
Ezk 36:25 they have offended me, I shall forgive all their guilty actions, by which they have
offended me and rebelled against me. •And, for me, Jerusalem [e] will become a 9
name of joy and praise and pride for all the nations on earth to see; when they hear
of all the prosperity that I shall give, they will be seized with fear and trembling at
all the prosperity and the peace that I provide for it."

'Yahweh says this, "In this place of which you now say: It is a ruin, without 10
human or animal, in the towns of Judah and desolate streets of Jerusalem where
25:10 there is neither human nor animal, once more will be heard •shouts of rejoicing 11
and mirth, the voices of bridegroom and bride, and the singing of those who bring
1 Ch 16:34 thanksgiving sacrifices to the Temple of Yahweh: Give thanks to Yahweh Sabaoth,
Ps 100:5b; 106:1;107:1 for Yahweh is good, for his faithful love is everlasting. For I shall bring back the
Ezk 3:11 country's captives, as before, Yahweh says."

[f]'Yahweh Sabaoth says this, "In this ruinous place, without human or animal, in 12
all its towns, once again there will be pastures for the shepherds to rest their flocks.
In the towns of the highlands, of the lowlands and the Negeb, in the territory of 13
Benjamin, in the districts round Jerusalem and in the towns of Judah, once again
the flocks shall pass under the hand of someone who counts them, Yahweh says.

The institutions of the future [g]

"Look, the days are coming, Yahweh declares, when I shall fulfil the promise of 14
happiness I made to the House of Israel and the House of Judah:

=23:5–6 In those days and at that time, 15
Is 4:2b I shall make an upright Branch grow for David,
who will do what is just and upright in the country.
In those days Judah will triumph 16
and Israel live in safety.
And this is the name the city will be called:
Yahweh-is-our-Saving-Justice." [h]

2 S 7:1a 'For Yahweh says this, "David will never lack a male descendant to occupy the 17
Lk 1:32–33 Zc 4:14f throne of the House of Israel, •nor will the levitical priests ever lack male descen- 18
Heb 7:17 1 P 2:5–6 dants to stand before me and offer the burnt offering, to burn the cereal offering
Rv 1:6 and offer sacrifice every day." '

31:35–36 The word of Yahweh came to Jeremiah as follows, •'Yahweh says this, "If you 19, 20
Ps 89:33–37 could break my covenant with the day and my covenant with the night so that day
2 S 7:1a and night do not come at their due time, •then my covenant with David my servant 21
might also be broken and he would have no son to reign on his throne, and so also
might my covenant with the levitical priests, who are my ministers. •As surely as 22
Gn 15:5 the array of heaven cannot be counted, nor the sand of the sea be measured, so
surely shall I increase the heirs of David my servant and the Levites who minister
to me." '

The word of Yahweh came to Jeremiah as follows, •'Have you not noticed what 23, 24
these people say, "The two families which Yahweh chose he has now rejected"?
So they despise my people, whom they no longer think of as a nation. •Yahweh 25
says this, "If I have not created day [i] and night and fixed the laws governing heaven
and earth, •why, then I shall reject the descendants of Jacob and of David my 26
servant and cease to choose rulers from his descendants for the heirs of Abraham,
Isaac and Jacob! For I shall bring back their captives and take pity on them." '

E: MISCELLANEOUS PROPHECIES

The fate of Zedekiah [a]

21:1-7;32:1-5

34 The word came to Jeremiah from Yahweh when Nebuchadnezzar king of Lxx 41
Babylon and his whole army, with all the kingdoms of the earth under his
dominion and all the peoples, were waging war on Jerusalem and all its towns,
2 'Yahweh, God of Israel, says this, "Go and speak to Zedekiah king of Judah and
tell him, Yahweh says this: I am going to hand this city over to the power of the
3 king of Babylon, and he will burn it down. ·And you yourself will not escape his
clutches but will certainly be captured and handed over to him. You will see the
king of Babylon face to face and speak to him personally. Then you will go to
4 Babylon. ·Even so, listen to the word of Yahweh, Zedekiah king of Judah! This is
5 what Yahweh says about you: You will not die by the sword; ·you will die in peace.
And as spices were burnt for your ancestors, the kings who in times past preceded
you, so spices will be burnt for you and a dirge sung for you: Alas for his highness! 22:18
I have spoken, Yahweh declares." '
6 The prophet Jeremiah repeated all these words to Zedekiah king of Judah in
7 Jerusalem, ·while the army of the king of Babylon was attacking Jerusalem and all
such towns of Judah as still held out, namely Lachish and Azekah, these being the
only fortified towns of Judah remaining. [b]

The episode of the liberated slaves [c]

8 The word came to Jeremiah from Yahweh after King Zedekiah had made a
covenant [d] with all the people in Jerusalem to issue a proclamation freeing their
9 slaves: ·each man was to free his Hebrew slaves, men and women, no one was any
10 longer to keep a brother Judaean in slavery. ·All the chief men and all the people
who had entered into the covenant had agreed that everyone should free his slaves,
men or women, and no longer keep them as slaves: they had agreed on this and set
11 them free. ·Afterwards, however, they changed their minds, recovered the slaves,
men and women, whom they had set free, and reduced them to slavery again.
12, 13 'The word of Yahweh came then to Jeremiah as follows, ·'Yahweh, God of Israel,
says this, "I made a covenant with your ancestors when I brought them out of
14 Egypt, out of the house of slavery; it said: ·At the end of seven years each one of Dt 15:12-13
you is to free his brother Hebrew who has sold himself to you: he may be your
slave for six years, then you must send him away free. But your ancestors did not
15 listen to me and would not pay attention. ·Now, today you repented and did what
pleases me by proclaiming freedom for your neighbour; you made a covenant
16 before me in the Temple that bears my name. ·And then you changed your minds
and, profaning my name, each of you has recovered his slaves, men and women,
whom you had sent away free to live their own lives, and has forced them to
become your slaves again."

d. 'bring them' versions; 'bring it (to the city)' Hebr.
e. lit. 'it'.
f. Vv. 14–26 are absent from Gk.
g. The passage, which is not by Jeremiah, describes the administration of the messianic community as in Zc 4:1–14; 6:13. In the messianic age the functions of king and priest will be closely associated.
h. 'the name' Theod., Hebr. omits (5 MSS excepted). • Vv. 15–16 are a repetition of 23:5–6, but the last couplet glorifies Jerusalem. On the messianic name of Jerusalem, *see* Is 1:26n; Ezk 48:35.
i. 'created day' *bara'ti yom* conj.; 'my covenant with day' *beriti yomam* Hebr.

34 **a.** This incident must belong to the opening months of the siege, 588–587 BC, when Nebuchadnezzar had not yet concentrated his forces on Jerusalem but was still fighting in the south and south-east, v. 7; Zedekiah still has time to avert the catastrophe by surrendering, like Jehoiakim in 605 BC.
b. Azekah, located at Tell Zakariyeh, about 19 miles (30 km) south west of Jerusalem, and Lachish, Tell ed-Duweir, 12.5 miles (20 km) south west of Azekah, were indeed the two fortified towns to resist Nebuchadnezzar longest. An ostrakon of the period found at Tell ed-Duweir testifies to the resistance.
c. The incident took place during the suspension of the siege, vv. 21–22.
d. Or better, a 'pact' or 'agreement', but the same Hebr. word *berit* is used for any agreement between two parties, *see* for instance 2 K 11:4; Jb 31:1, as for the covenant between God and his people, used to point the contrast here at v. 13.
e. Hebr. adds 'from Yahweh'; Gk and Syr. omit.

'So Yahweh says this: "You have disobeyed me, by failing to grant freedom to 17
brother and neighbour. Very well, I in my turn, Yahweh declares, shall leave
29:18 sword, famine and plague free to deal with you and I shall make you an object of
horror to all the kingdoms of the earth. ·As for the people who have broken my 18
covenant, who have not observed the terms of the covenant which they made
before me, I shall treat them like the calf that people cut in two to pass between its
pieces.[f] ·The chief men of Judah and Jerusalem, the eunuchs, the priests, and all 19
the country people who have passed between the pieces of the calf, ·I shall hand 20
7:33 over to their enemies and those determined to kill them, and their corpses will be
food for the birds of the sky and the animals of earth. ·As for Zedekiah king of 21
Judah and his chief men, I shall hand them to their enemies, to those determined
to kill them, and to the army of the king of Babylon which has just withdrawn.
Listen, I shall give the order, Yahweh declares, and bring them back to this city to 22
9:10 attack it and capture it and burn it down. And I shall make an uninhabited waste of
the towns of Judah." '

The example of the Rechabites[a]

LXX 42 35 The word which came to Jeremiah from Yahweh in the days of Jehoiakim 1
son of Josiah, king of Judah, ·'Go to the clan of the Rechabites and speak 2
to them; bring them into one of the rooms of the Temple of Yahweh and offer
them wine to drink.' ·So I took Jaazaniah son of Jeremiah, son of Habazziniah, 3
with his brothers and all his sons, the whole Rechabite clan, ·and brought them to 4
the Temple of Yahweh into the room of Ben-Johanan[b] son of Igdaliah, a man of
God, which was next to that of the chief men, above the room of Maaseiah son of
Shallum, guardian of the threshold. ·I then set pitchers full of wine, and some cups, 5
before the members of the Rechabite clan and said, 'Drink some wine.'
2 K 10:15 But they replied, 'We do not drink wine, because our ancestor Jonadab son of 6
Rechab gave us this order, "You must not drink wine, neither you nor your sons
for ever; ·nor must you build houses, sow seed, plant vineyards or own them, but 7
must live in tents all your lives, so that you may live long on the soil to which you
are alien." ·We have punctiliously obeyed the orders of our ancestor, Jonadab son 8
of Rechab, never drinking wine ourselves, nor our wives, our sons or our daugh-
ters, ·not building houses to live in, owning neither vineyard nor field nor seed, 9
living in tents.[c] We have obeyed the orders of our ancestor Jonadab, respecting 10
them in every particular. ·However, when Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon 11
invaded this country, we decided, "We must get away! We will go to Jerusalem to
escape the armies of the Chaldaeans and Aramaeans." So that is why we are living
in Jerusalem.'

Then the word of Yahweh came to Jeremiah as follows, ·'Yahweh Sabaoth, the 12, 13
God of Israel, says this, "Go and say to the people of Judah and the inhabitants of
Jerusalem: Will you never learn the lesson and listen to my words, Yahweh
demands? ·The words of Jonadab son of Rechab, ordering his sons to drink no 14
wine, have been observed; obedient to their ancestors' command, they drink none
even today . But to me, who spoke to you so urgently, so untiringly, you have not
7:13;25:4–7 listened. ·I have urgently and untiringly sent you all my servants the prophets to 15
say: Turn back, each one of you, from your evil behaviour and amend your actions,
do not follow other gods to serve them, and you will go on living on the soil I gave
to you and your ancestors. But you have not paid attention or listened to me.
Thus the sons of Jonadab son of Rechab have kept the command their ancestor 16
gave them, but this people has not listened to me. ·And so, Yahweh, God 17
Sabaoth, God of Israel, says this: Look, on Judah and the citizens of Jerusalem I
am going to bring all the disaster which I have decreed for them, because I spoke to
them and they would not listen, called to them and they would not answer." '

Then Jeremiah said to the Rechabite clan, 'Yahweh Sabaoth, the God of Israel, 18
says this, "Because you have obeyed the orders of your ancestors Jonadab and
observed all his rules and done everything he ordered you to do, ·therefore, 19

Yahweh Sabaoth, the God of Israel, says this: Jonadab son of Rechab will never lack a male descendant to stand before me [d] for ever." '

IV: THE SUFFERINGS OF JEREMIAH

The scroll written in 605–604 BC [a]

36 In the fourth year of Jehoiakim [b] son of Josiah, king of Judah, this word LXX 43
came to Jeremiah from Yahweh, •'Take a scroll and on it write all the
words I have spoken to you about Israel, Judah and all the nations, from the day I
first spoke to you, in the time of Josiah, until today. •Perhaps when the House of
Judah hears about all the disaster I intend to inflict on them, they will turn, each
one of then, from their evil behaviour, so that I can forgive their sinful guilt.'
Jeremiah then summoned Baruch son of Neriah, who at his dictation wrote down
on the scroll all the words Yahweh had spoken to him. [c]
Jeremiah then gave Baruch this order, 'As I am prevented from entering the 20:1–2
Temple of Yahweh, •you yourself must go and, from the scroll you wrote at my
dictation, read all Yahweh's words to the people in his Temple on the day of the
fast, and in this way you can read them in the hearing also of all the Judaeans who
come in from their towns. •Perhaps their prayers will move Yahweh and they will
turn one and all from their evil behaviour, for great is the furious anger with which
Yahweh has threatened this people.' •Baruch son of Neriah duly carried out the
order that the prophet Jeremiah had given him, to read all Yahweh's words from
the book in his Temple.
Now, in the fifth year of Jehoiakim son of Josiah, king of Judah, in the ninth
month, [d] all the people of Jerusalem and all the people who could get to Jerusalem
from the towns of Judah were summoned to a fast before Yahweh. •Baruch then
read Jeremiah's words from the book; this happened in the room of Gemariah son
of the scribe Shaphan, in the upper court at the entry of the New Gate of the 26:24f
Temple of Yahweh, where all the people could hear.
Micaiah son of Gemariah, son of Shaphan, having heard all Yahweh's words
read from the book, •went down to the royal palace, to the scribe's room. All the
chief men were in session: the scribe Elishama, Delaiah son of Shemaiah, Elnathan
son of Achbor, Gemariah son of Shaphan, Zedekiah son of Hananiah and all the
other chief men; •and to them Micaiah reported all the words he heard as Baruch
was reading the book aloud to the people. •The chief men then by common consent
sent Jehudi son of Netaniah to Baruch, with Shelemiah [e] son of Cushi, to say,
'Come, and bring the scroll with you which you have been reading to the people.'
Bringing the scroll with him, Baruch son of Neriah appeared before them. 'Sit
down,' they said, 'and read it out.' So Baruch read it to them. •Having heard all the
words they turned to one another in alarm and said to Baruch, 'We must certainly
inform the king of this.' •They then questioned Baruch, 'Tell us', they said, 'how
you came to write all these words.' [f] •'Jeremiah dictated them all [g] to me,' Baruch

f. On this ancient covenant ritual in which the contracting parties passed between the two halves of a sacrificed animal, *see* Gn 15:17f.

35 a. This incident took place towards the end of the reign of Jehoiakim, when Jerusalem was about to be besieged for the first time by the Babylonians (598 BC); since about 602 BC, incursions into Palestine by armed bands had been almost incessant, *see* 2 K 24:2, and because of this many people abandoned the countryside to take refuge in Jerusalem, v. 11.

b. 'of Ben-Johanan' following 1 Hebr. MS, 1 Gk MS, Arab. and Targ.; 'of the sons of Hanan' Hebr.

c. The Rechabite clan, a survival from nomadic days, represented a reaction against urban civilisation in favour of the ancient religious practices of the desert, Ho 2:16p.

d. The phrase is commonly used of the priestly liturgical functions; but it can also be applied to laymen; a person is 'before Yahweh' while alive on earth.

36 a. On the scroll containing the prophecies dictated by Jeremiah to his secretary Baruch, *see* p. 1172.

b. 605 BC Jehoiakim has just capitulated to Nebuchadnezzar and feels safe.

c. Some critics suggest transposing v. 9 here.

d. December 604 BC.

e. 'with Shelemiah' conj.; 'son of Shelemiah' Hebr.

f. Hebr. adds 'at his dictation', lit. 'with his mouth'; Gk omits; probably a dittography, see note on following v.

g. lit. 'He said them all to me with his mouth.' They are at the same time 'Jeremiah's words', v. 10, and 'Yahweh's words', vv. 6, 8, 11, *see* v. 4. The prophet is indeed 'the mouth of God', 1:9; 15:19. *See* Ex 4:15–16.

replied, 'and I wrote them down in ink in this book.' •The chief men said to Baruch, 19
'You and Jeremiah had better go into hiding; and do not tell anyone where you
are.' •Whereupon they went off to the king in the palace court, depositing the 20
scroll in the room of the scribe Elishama. They then informed the king of the whole
affair.

The king sent Jehudi for the scroll, and he brought it from the room of the scribe 21
Elishama and read it to the king and all the chief men standing round the king.
The king was sitting in his winter apartments—it was the ninth month—with a 22
fire burning in a brazier [h] in front of him. •Each time Jehudi had read three or four 23
columns, the king cut them off with a scribe's knife and threw them into the fire in
the brazier until the whole of the scroll had been burnt in the brazier fire. •But in 24
spite of hearing all these words, neither the king nor any of his courtiers took alarm
or tore their clothes; •and although Elnathan and Delaiah and Gemariah had urged 25
the king not to burn the scroll he would not listen to them, •but ordered the king's 26
son [i] Jerahmeel and Seraiah son of Azriel and Shelemiah son of Abdeel to arrest
the scribe Baruch and the prophet Jeremiah. But Yahweh had hidden them.

Then the word of Yahweh came to Jeremiah, after the king had burnt the scroll 27
containing the words Baruch had written at Jeremiah's dictation, •'Take another 28
scroll and write down all the words that were written on the first scroll burnt by
Jehoiakim king of Judah. •And as regards Jehoiakim king of Judah, you are to say, 29
"Yahweh says this: You have burnt that scroll, saying: Why have you written
down: The king of Babylon will certainly come and lay this country waste and leave
it without human or animal? •So, this is what Yahweh says about Jehoiakim king 30
of Judah: He will have no one to occupy the throne of David, and his corpse will
be tossed out to the heat of the day and the frost of the night. •I shall punish him, 31
his offspring and his courtiers for their guilt; on them, on the citizens of Jerusalem
and on the people of Judah I shall bring the total disaster which I had decreed for
them but to which they have paid no attention." '

Jeremiah then took another scroll and gave it to the scribe Baruch son of Neriah, 32
who in it at Jeremiah's dictation wrote all the words of the book that Jehoiakim
king of Judah had burnt, with many similar words in addition.

2 K 24:17–20

A verdict on Zedekiah

LXX 44 13:18–19; 22:20–30

37 Zedekiah son of Josiah became king, succeeding Coniah son of Jehoiakim. 1
Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had made him king of Judah. •But neither 2
he nor his courtiers nor the people of the country paid any attention to the words
Yahweh spoke through the prophet Jeremiah.

Zedekiah consults Jeremiah during the respite of 588 BC

King Zedekiah sent Jehucal son of Shelemiah and the priest Zephaniah son of 3
42:2b Maaseiah to the prophet Jeremiah with this message, 'Intercede for us with
Yahweh our God.' •Now Jeremiah was still moving freely among the people: he 4
had not yet been put in prison. •Meanwhile Pharaoh's army was on the move from 5
Egypt and the Chaldaeans besieging Jerusalem had raised the siege when they
heard the news.

Then the word of Yahweh came to the prophet Jeremiah as follows, •'Yahweh, 6, 7
God of Israel, says this, "To the king of Judah who sent you to consult me make
this reply: Is Pharaoh's army marching to your aid? It will withdraw to its own
country, Egypt. •The Chaldaeans will return to attack this city; they will capture it 8
and burn it down. •Yahweh says this: Do not cheer yourselves up by thinking: The 9
Chaldaeans are leaving us for good. They are not leaving. •Even if you cut to pieces 10
the whole Chaldaean army now fighting against you until there were only
the wounded left, they would stand up again, each man in his tent, to burn this
city down." '

The arrest of Jeremiah. Improvement in his treatment

11 At the time when the Chaldaean army, threatened by Pharaoh's [a] army, had raised
12 the siege of Jerusalem, ·Jeremiah set out from Jerusalem for the territory of 32:1a
13 Benjamin to see about a piece of his property among the people there. [b] ·He was at
the Benjamin Gate when the guard commander there, a certain Irijah son of
Shelemiah, son of Hananiah, arrested the prophet Jeremiah, shouting, 'You are
14 deserting to the Chaldaeans!' ·'It is a lie!' Jeremiah answered. 'I am not deserting
to the Chaldaeans.' But Irijah would not listen to Jeremiah and took him under
15 arrest to the chief men. ·And the chief men, furious with Jeremiah, had him beaten
and shut up in the house of the scribe Jonathan, which had been turned into a
16 prison. ·Thus Jeremiah found himself in an underground vault. And there for a
long time he stayed.
17 Later, King Zedekiah had him sent for, and the king questioned him privately in
his palace. 'Is there any word from Yahweh?' he asked. 'There is,' Jeremiah
18 answered, and added, 'you will be handed over to the king of Babylon.' ·Jeremiah
then said to King Zedekiah, 'What wrong have I done you, or your courtiers or this
19 people, for you to have put me in prison? ·Where are your prophets now who
20 prophesied, "The king of Babylon will not attack you or this country"? ·So now I
beg you to hear me, my lord king! I beg you to approve my request! Do not have
21 me taken back to the house of the scribe Jonathan, or I shall die there.' ·King
Zedekiah then gave an order, and Jeremiah was confined in the Court of the Guard
and given a loaf of bread a day from the Street of the Bakers as long as there was
bread left in the city. So Jeremiah stayed in the Court of the Guard.

Jeremiah is thrown into the storage-well. Ebed-Melech intervenes

1 38 But Shephatiah son of Mattan, Gedaliah son of Pashhur, Jucal son of LXX 45
Shelemiah and Pashhur son of Malchiah heard the words which Jeremiah
2 was saying to all the people, ·'Yahweh says this, "Anyone who stays in this city will =21:9
die by sword, famine or plague; but anyone who leaves it and surrenders to
3 the Chaldaeans will live; he will escape with his life. ·Yahweh says this: This city 39:18;45:5
will certainly be handed over to the army of the king of Babylon, and he will
capture it." '
4 The chief men then said to the king, 'You must have this man put to death: he is
unquestionably disheartening the remaining soldiers in the city, and all the people
too, by talking like this. This man is seeking not the welfare of the people but their
5 ruin.' ·'He is in your hands as you know,' King Zedekiah answered, 'for the king is
6 powerless to oppose you.' [a] ·So they took Jeremiah and put him into the storage-
well of the king's son Malchiah in the Court of the Guard, letting him down with
ropes. There was no water in the storage-well, only mud, and into the mud
Jeremiah sank.
7 But Ebed-Melech the Cushite, [b] a eunuch attached to the palace, heard that
Jeremiah had been put into the storage-well. As the king was sitting in the
8 Benjamin Gate, ·Ebed-Melech came out from the palace and spoke to the king.
9 'My lord king,' he said, 'these men have done a wicked thing by treating the
prophet Jeremiah like this: they have thrown him into the storage-well. He will
10 starve to death there, since there is no more food in the city.' ·At this the king
gave Ebed-Melech the Cushite the following order: 'Take thirty men with you
from here and pull the prophet Jeremiah out of the storage-well before he dies.'
11 Ebed-Melech took the men with him and went into the palace to the Treasury

h. 'with a fire . . . brazier' versions; 'and with a brazier' Hebr.

i. The title 'king's son', cf. 38:6; 1 K 22:26–27, indicates a court functionary, perhaps, from the context, a police officer.

37 a. Hophra, *see* 44:30, who reigned from 589 to 569 BC.

b. Probably the same matter as was to occupy Jeremiah sometime later, and which is reported in ch. 32.

38 a. 'to oppose you' *'ittekem* conj.; '(with) you' *'etkem* Hebr.

b. i.e. Ethiopian.

wardrobe;[c] out of it he took some torn, worn-out rags which he lowered on ropes to Jeremiah in the storage-well. ·Ebed-Melech the Cushite then said to Jeremiah, 12
'These torn, worn-out rags are for you to put under your armpits to pad the ropes.'
Jeremiah did this. ·Then they hauled Jeremiah up with the ropes and pulled him 13
out of the storage-well. And Jeremiah stayed in the Court of the Guard.

The last conversation between Jeremiah and Zedekiah

King Zedekiah had the prophet Jeremiah summoned to him at the third entrance 14
to the Temple of Yahweh. 'I want to ask you for a word,' the king said to Jeremiah,
'keep nothing back from me.' ·Jeremiah answered Zedekiah, 'If I do proclaim it to 15
you, are you not sure to have me put to death? And if I give you advice, you will
not listen to me.' ·King Zedekiah then secretly swore this oath to Jeremiah, 'As 16
Yahweh lives, giver of this life of ours, I will have you neither put to death nor
handed over to these men who are determined to kill you.' ·Jeremiah then said to 17
Zedekiah, 'Yahweh, God Sabaoth, God of Israel, says this, "If you go out and
surrender to the king of Babylon's generals, your life will be safe and this city will
not be burnt down; you and your family will survive. ·But if you do not go out and 18
surrender to the king of Babylon's generals, this city will be handed over to the
Chaldaeans and they will burn it down; nor will you yourself escape their
clutches." ' ·King Zedekiah then said to Jeremiah, 'I am afraid of the Judaeans 19
who have already gone over to the Chaldaeans: I might be handed over to them
and they would ill-treat me.' ·'You will not be handed over to them,' Jeremiah 20
replied. 'Please listen to Yahweh's voice as I have relayed it to you, and then all
will go well with you and your life will be safe. ·But if you refuse to surrender, this 21
is what Yahweh has shown me: ·the sight of all the women left in the king of 22
Judah's palace being led off to the king of Babylon's generals and saying:

"They have misled you, they have triumphed over you,
those friends of yours![d]
Your feet have sunk in the mud!
They are up and away!"

'Yes, all your wives and children will be led off to the Chaldaeans, and you yourself 23
will not escape their clutches but will be a prisoner in the clutches of the king of
Babylon. And as for this city, it will be burnt down.'[e]

Zedekiah then said to Jeremiah, 'Do not let anyone else hear these words or you 24
will die. ·If the chief men hear that I have been talking to you, and come and say, 25
"Tell us what you said to the king and what the king said to you;[f] keep nothing
back from us, or we shall put you to death," ·you must reply, "I presented this 26
request to the king: that he would not have me sent back to Jonathan's house to
die." '

And in fact all the chief men came to Jeremiah and questioned him. He told 27
them exactly what the king had ordered him to say. They then left him in peace,
since the conversation had not been overheard. ·And Jeremiah stayed in the Court 28
of the Guard until the day Jerusalem was captured. And he was there when
Jerusalem actually was captured.

The fall of Jerusalem and what happened to Jeremiah[a]

LXX 46 52:4seq. 2 K 25:1–21

39 In the ninth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the tenth month,[b] Nebu- 1
chadnezzar king of Babylon advanced on Jerusalem with his entire army,
and they laid siege to it. ·In the eleventh year of Zedekiah, in the fourth month,[c] 2
a breach was made in the city wall.

The king of Babylon's officials, all having made their entry, took their seats 3
in the Middle Gate: Nergal-Sharezer, Samgar-Nebo, Sar-Sechim a high dignitary of state, Nergal-Sharezer the chief astrologer, and all the king of Babylon's other officials . . .[d]

4 On seeing them, Zedekiah king of Judah and all the fighting men fled, leaving
the city under cover of dark, by way of the king's garden through the gate between
5 the two walls, and made their way towards the Arabah.[e] ·But the Chaldaean
troops pursued them and caught up with Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho. They
captured him and took him to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon at Riblah in the
6 territory of Hamath,[f] where he passed sentence on him. ·The king of Babylon had
Zedekiah's sons slaughtered before his eyes at Riblah; the king of Babylon also
7 had all the leading men of Judah put to death. ·He then put out Zedekiah's eyes
8 and, loading him with chains, carried him off to Babylon. ·The Chaldaeans burnt
down the royal palace and the private houses,[g] and demolished the walls of
9 Jerusalem. ·Nebuzaradan commander of the guard deported the remainder of the
population left behind in the city, the deserters who had gone over to him, and the
10 rest of the artisans[h] to Babylon. ·But Nebuzaradan commander of the guard left
some of the poor people behind in the country of Judah, those who had nothing, at
the same time giving them vineyards and fields.
11 With regard to Jeremiah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had given the follow-
12 ing orders to Nebuzaradan, commander of the guard, ·'Take him, look after him;
do him no harm, but treat him as he may ask you.'
13 He entrusted this mission[i] to (Nebuzaradan commander of the guard,) Nebush-
azban the high dignitary of state, Nergal-Sharezer the chief astrologer and all the
king of Babylon's other officials.
14 These despatched men to take Jeremiah from the Court of the Guard and turned
him over to Gedaliah son of Ahikam, son of Shaphan for safe conduct home. So he
remained among the people.

A prophecy assuring the safety of Ebed-Melech[j]

45:1–5

15 While Jeremiah was confined in the Court of the Guard, the word of Yahweh came
16 to him as follows, ·'Go and say to Ebed-Melech the Cushite, "Yahweh, God of
Israel says this: Look, I am about to perform my words about this city for its ruin
17 and not for its prosperity. That day they will come true before your eyes. ·But I
shall rescue you that day, Yahweh declares, and you will not be handed over to the
18 hands of the men you fear. ·Yes, I shall certainly rescue you: you will not fall to the 21:9;38:2
sword; you will escape with your life, because you have put your trust in me,
Yahweh declares." '

c. 'to the wardrobe' *meltahat* conj., cf. 2 K 10:22; 'underneath' *tahat* Hebr.

d. lit. 'the men of your peace'. The lines seem to have been borrowed from a popular song.

e. 'it will be burnt down' some Hebr. MSS, Gk; 'you (masc.) will . . . down' or 'it (fem.) i.e the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, will burn it down' Hebr.

f. Hebr. tranposes 'and what the king said to you' to end of v.; we follow Syr.

39 a. The text of this section is composed of disparate, ill-assorted elements. The Greek version lacks 38:28[b] and 39:4–13. Apparently, to the original biographical elements relating to Jeremiah, 38:28[b]; 39:3, 14, were added, first, 39:1–2, the account of the siege from the start to the opening of the breach, as in 2 K 25:1–4[a] (Jr 52:4–7[a]) which exists also in Gk; next, 39:4–10, an account of the end of the siege and of what followed it, which is an abridgement of 2 K 25:4[b]–7, 9–12 (Jr 52:7[b]–16); and finally, 39:11–13 with its information on the prophet's release.

b. December 589–January 588 BC, at the end of the 9th year of Zedekiah's reign.

c. June–July 587 BC.

d. Difficult v.: the text seems to be confused. The repetition of the name Nergal-Sharezer is suspect; the 'high dignitary of state' (lit. 'chief eunuch,' though the term often has the wider sense of court official) is called Nebushazban in v. 13. Furthermore, the names Samgar-Nebo and Sar-Sekim are dubious and appear only here. Some suggest emending *samgar* to 'prince of Sin-Magir' (appearing on a Babylonian list) and *nebo* to Nebushazban,' also suppressing *sar-sekim* (which may be a title and doublet of 'high dignitary of state') and one mention of Nergal-Sharezer. But these emendations, which would indeed make the whole passage more coherent, have no textual support.

e. '(they) made' Syr., cf. 52:7; '(he) made' Hebr. • The king's garden was near the pool of Siloam, *see* 2 K 25:4d; Ne 3:15, south east of Jerusalem. The Arabah (lit. 'plain') is that part of the Jordan depression between the south end of the Dead Sea and the Gulf of Aqaba; here, in a more general sense, the area, 'wastelands' or 'plain', near the Dead Sea, *see* v. 5.

f. Modern Rableh, 47 miles (75 km) south of Hamath, modern Hama, a town in Syria on the River Orontes.

g. lit. 'the houses of the people' Syr.; 'the house of the people' Hebr.; perhaps the reading ought to be 'the House (of Yahweh and the houses) of the people,' corresponding to 52:13 and 2 K 25:9.

h. 'artisans' conj., cf. 52:15; 'people' Hebr., which adds 'who were left'.

i. Trans. uncertain: lit. 'he despatched', but perhaps it should be understood as 'Nebuzaradan . . . Nebushazban . . . despatched (men)'. This seems to be due to a clumsy joining of the v. to v. 14, which originally seems to have followed v. 3. • Nebuzaradan did not in fact enter Jerusalem until a month after the city had fallen, *see* 2 K 25:8.

j. This passage continues the narrative of 38:7–13.

Further details about the treatment of Jeremiah

LXX 47 40 The word which came to Jeremiah from Yahweh after Nebuzaradan com- 1
mander of the guard had released him from Ramah, where he had found
him in chains with all the other captives from Jerusalem and Judah who were being
deported to Babylon: [a]

The commander of the guard took Jeremiah and said to him, 'Yahweh your God 2
foretold calamity for this country, ·and now he has brought it. He has done what 3
he threatened to do, because you had sinned against Yahweh and would not listen
to his voice; so all this has happened to you. ·Look, today I am having your hands 4
unchained. If you like to come with me to Babylon, come: I shall look after you. If
you do not want to come with me to Babylon, do not. Look, you have the whole
country before you: go wherever you think it best and most suitable to go.' ·And 5
before Jeremiah retired, he added, 'You can go back to Gedaliah son of Ahikam,
son of Shaphan, whom the king of Babylon has appointed governor of the towns of
Judah, and stay with him among the people, or go anywhere else you think
suitable.' With that, the commander of the guard gave him provisions and a
present, and dismissed him. ·Jeremiah went to Mizpah, to Gedaliah [b] son of 6
Ahikam and stayed with him, among those people still left in the country.

‖2 K 25:22–26 **Gedaliah the governor; his assassination**

When the military leaders who with their men were still in the field, all heard that 7
the king of Babylon had appointed Gedaliah son of Ahikam as governor of the
country, making him responsible for the men, women and children, and those of
the poor country people who had not been deported to Babylon, ·they came to 8
Gedaliah at Mizpah: Ishmael son of Nethaniah, Johanan and Jonathan sons of
Kareah, Seraiah son of Tanhumeth, the sons of Ephai the Netophathite, Jezaniah
son of the Maacathite, they and their men. ·To them and to their men Gedaliah 9
son of Ahikam, son of Shaphan, swore an oath. 'Do not be afraid', he said, 'of
serving the Chaldaeans, stay in the country, serve the king of Babylon, and all will
go well with you. ·I for my part, as the man answerable to the Chaldaeans when 10
they come to us, shall stay here at Mizpah, whereas you can harvest the wine,
summer fruit and oil, fill your storage jars and settle in the towns which you
have seized.'

Similarly, when all the Judaeans living in Moab, with the Ammonites, in Edom 11
Is 4:3c and elsewhere, heard that the king of Babylon had left a remnant in Judah and had
appointed Gedaliah son of Ahikam, son of Shaphan as their governor, ·the Ju- 12
daeans all came back from wherever they had been driven. On their return to the
land of Judah, to Gedaliah at Mizpah, they harvested an immense quantity of wine
and summer fruit.

Now Johanan son of Kareah and all the military leaders still in the field, came to 13
Gedaliah at Mizpah ·and said to him, 'Are you aware that Baalis king of the 14
Ammonites has sent Ishmael son of Nethaniah to assassinate you?' [c] But Gedaliah
son of Ahikam would not believe them. ·Johanan son of Kareah then spoke in 15
secret to Gedaliah at Mizpah, as follows: 'Please let me go and kill Ishmael son of
Nethaniah, and no one will be any the wiser. Why should he assassinate you and
cause the dispersal of all the Judaeans who have rallied round you. Why should the
remnant of Judah perish?' ·But Gedaliah son of Ahikam replied to Johanan son of 16
Kareah, 'You will do no such thing, for what you say about Ishmael is false.'

LXX 48 41 In the seventh month, however, Ishmael son of Nethaniah son of Elishama, 1
who was of royal descent, came with officers of the king and ten men to
Gedaliah son of Ahikam at Mizpah. And as they were taking their meal together,
there at Mizpah, ·Ishmael son of Nethaniah stood up with his ten men, and 2
attacking Gedaliah son of Ahikam, son of Shaphan, with their swords, they killed
the man whom the king of Babylon had made governor of the country. ·And all 3
the Judaeans who were with him, that is with Gedaliah at Mizpah, and the
Chaldaean soldiers who happened to be there, Ishmael killed too. [a]

4 On the day after the murder of Gedaliah, before the news had become known,
5 eighty men arrived from Shechem, Shiloh and Samaria, with their beards shaved
off, their clothing torn, and covered in self-inflicted gashes; they were bringing
cereal offerings and incense with them to present to the Temple of Yahweh.[b]
6 Ishmael son of Nethaniah went out of Mizpah to meet them, weeping as he went.
7 When he met them he said, 'Come to Gedaliah son of Ahikam.' ·But once they
were well inside the town, Ishmael son of Nethaniah slaughtered them, with the
8 help of his men, and had them thrown into the storage-well.[c] ·There were ten of
them, however, who said to Ishmael, 'Do not kill us: we have stocks of wheat and
barley, oil and honey, hidden away in the fields.' So he spared them and did not kill
9 them with their brothers. ·The storage-well into which Ishmael threw the corpses
of all the men he had killed was a large one,[d] the one which King Asa had built as 1 K 15:16–22
a precaution against Baasha king of Israel. Ishmael son of Nethaniah filled it with
10 the murdered men. ·Ishmael then took all the rest of the people prisoner who were
at Mizpah, the king's daughters and all the remaining people in Mizpah, whom
Nebuzaradan, commander of the guard, had entrusted to Gedaliah son of Ahikam.
Ishmael son of Nethaniah took them prisoner and set out, intending to cross over
to the Ammonites.
11 When Johanan son of Kareah and all the military leaders who were with him
12 heard about all the crimes committed by Ishmael son of Nethaniah, ·they mustered
all their men and set out to attack Ishmael son of Nethaniah. They caught up with
13 him at the great Pool of Gibeon.[e] ·At the sight of Johanan son of Kareah and all
14 the military leaders with him, all the people with Ishmael were delighted. ·All the
people whom Ishmael had taken as prisoners from Mizpah turned about, went
15 back and joined Johanan son of Kareah. ·Ishmael son of Nethaniah, however,
16 escaped from Johanan with eight of his men and fled to the Ammonites. ·Johanan
son of Kareah and all the military leaders with him then rallied all the remaining
people whom Ishmael son of Nethaniah had taken as prisoners[f] from Mizpah after
killing Gedaliah son of Ahikam: men—fighting men—women, children and eu-
17 nuchs, whom they brought back from Gibeon. ·Setting off, they made a halt at
18 Khan Kimham near Bethlehem, intending to go on to Egypt, ·to get away from the 2 K 25:26
Chaldaeans. They were now terrified of them, since Ishmael son of Nethaniah had
killed Gedaliah son of Ahikam whom the king of Babylon had made governor of
the country.

The flight to Egypt

1 **42** Then all the military leaders, in particular Johanan son of Kareah and LXX 49
Azariah[a] son of Hoshaiah, and all the people from least to greatest, ap-
2 proached ·the prophet Jeremiah and said, 'Please hear our petition and intercede[b]
with Yahweh your God for us and for all this remnant—and how few of us are left Is 4:3c
3 out of many, your own eyes can see—·so that Yahweh your God may show us the
4 way we are to go and what we must do.' ·The prophet Jeremiah replied, 'I hear
you; I will indeed pray to Yahweh your God as you ask; and whatever answer

40 **a.** There are evident gaps in the group of biographical narratives about Jeremiah. He was released in Jerusalem, 39:14, but here we find him among the captives at Ramah, *see* 31:15e. This second account must follow 39:11–12.

b. Mizpah, probably modern Tell en-Nasbah, 8 miles (13 km) north of Jerusalem, and a former Israelite sanctuary, *see* Jg 20:1; 1 S 7:5; 10:17. • Gedaliah came of a family of a high Judaean officials who were well-disposed towards Jeremiah, 26:24f.

c. Baalis was still holding out against Nebuchadnezzar and presumably felt further threatened by Gedaliah's submissiveness. • Ishmael, an army officer of Davidic descent, v. 8, no doubt regarded Gedaliah as a political upstart.

41 **a.** The anniversary of this event (September 587) was celebrated in subsequent years, *see* Zc 7:5; 8:19.

b. Evidently Jerusalem was still regarded as the religious centre by many Israelites of the Northern Kingdom, or at least had regained this status since the reform under Josiah, 2 K 23:19–20. The fall of Jerusalem has not put an end to Temple worship.

c. 'had them thrown' Syr.; Hebr. omits, but see v. 9. • The motive for the massacre is not clear: possibly theft, *see* v. 8, or concealment of Gedaliah's assassination.

d. lit. 'a large storage-well' Gk; 'by the hand of Gedaliah' Hebr.

e. Modern El-Jib, about 6 miles (10 km) north west of Jerusalem.

f. 'whom (Ishmael) had taken as prisoners' *'asher shabah 'otam* conj., *see* v. 10seq., 'whom he (Johanan) had recovered from (Ishmael)' *'asher heshib me'et* Hebr.

42 **a.** 'Azariah' Gk and 43:2; (Jezaniah) Hebr.; but perhaps he should be identified with the Jezaniah of 40:8.

b. Jeremiah here, and cf. 15:11; 2 M 15:14, plays the part of intercessor like Moses, Ex 32:11.

Yahweh your God gives you, I will tell you, keeping nothing back from you.'
They in their turn said to Jeremiah, 'May Yahweh be a true and faithful witness 5
against us, if we do not follow the instructions that Yahweh your God sends us
through you. ·Whether we like it or not, we shall obey the voice of Yahweh our 6
God to whom we are sending you, so that we may prosper by obeying the voice of
Yahweh our God.'

Ten days later the word of Yahweh came to Jeremiah. ·He then summoned 7, 8
Johanan son of Kareah and all the military leaders who were with him, and all the
people from least to greatest, ·and said, 'Yahweh, God of Israel, to whom you 9
deputed me to present your petition says this, ·"If you will only stay[c] in this 10
1:10 country, I shall build you and not overthrow you; I shall plant you and not uproot
you, for I am sorry about the disaster I have inflicted on you. ·Do not be afraid of 11
the king of Babylon, whom you fear now; do not fear him, Yahweh declares, for I
am with you to save you and rescue you from his clutches. ·I shall take pity on 12
you, so that he pities you and lets you return to your native soil. ·But if you say: 13
We will not stay in this country; if you disobey the voice of Yahweh your God,
and say: No, Egypt is where we shall go, where we shall not see war or hear the 14
trumpet-call or go short of food; that is where we want to live; ·in that case, 15
remnant of Judah, listen to Yahweh's word: Yahweh Sabaoth, God of Israel, says
this: If you are determined to go to Egypt, and if you do go and settle there, ·the 16
sword you fear will overtake you there in Egypt, and there you will die. ·Yes, all 17
those who are determined to go to Egypt and settle there, will die by sword, famine
and plague: not a single one of them will survive or escape the disaster I shall inflict
on them. ·Yes, Yahweh Sabaoth, the God of Israel, says this: Just as my furious 18
anger was poured out on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so will my fury be poured
24:9 out on you if you go to Egypt: you will become an object of execration and horror,
a curse, a laughing-stock; and you will never see this place again." ·[d]Remnant of 19
Judah, Yahweh has told you, "Do not go into Egypt." Understand clearly that
today I have given you a solemn warning. ·You were not being sincere when you 20
sent me to Yahweh your God and said, "Intercede for us with Yahweh our God;
tell us exactly what Yahweh our God says and we will do it." ·Today I have told 21
you, but you have not obeyed the voice of Yahweh your God or any part of the
message he sent me to give you. ·So understand this clearly: you will die by sword, 22
famine and plague in the place where you want to go and settle.'

LXX 50 **43** When Jeremiah had finished telling all the people all the words of Yahweh 1
their God, which Yahweh their God had sent him to tell them—all the
words quoted above—·Azariah son of Hoshaiah, and Johanan son of Kareah, and 2
all those arrogant men, said to Jeremiah, 'You are lying. Yahweh our God did not
send you to say, "Do not go to Egypt and settle there." ·It was Baruch son of 3
Neriah, who keeps inciting you against us, to hand us over to the Chaldaeans so
that they can put us to death or deport us to Babylon.'

So neither Johanan nor any of the military leaders nor any of the people obeyed 4
the voice of Yahweh by staying in the country of Judah. ·Instead, Johanan son of 5
Kareah and all the military leaders led off the entire remnant of Judah, those who
had come back from all the nations where they had been driven to live in the
country of Judah: ·men, women, children, the royal princesses too, and every 6
single person that Nebuzaradan commander of the guard had left with Gedaliah
son of Ahikam, son of Shaphan, including the prophet Jeremiah and Baruch son of
Neriah. ·And so, in disobedience to the voice of Yahweh, they reached Egypt and 7
arrived at Tahpanhes.[a]

Jeremiah foretells the invasion of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar

At Tahpanhes the word of Yahweh was addressed to Jeremiah as follows, ·'Take 8, 9
some large stones and bury them in the cement on the terrace outside the entrance
of Pharaoh's palace in Tahpanhes, where the Judaeans can see you.[b] ·Then say to 10
them, "Yahweh, God of Israel, says this: Look, I shall send for my servant

Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and he [c] will place his throne on these stones I 25:9;27:6
11 have buried, and spread his canopy above them. ·When he comes, he will defeat
Egypt:

Those for the plague, to the plague; =15:2
those for captivity, to captivity;
those for the sword, to the sword!

12 "He will set fire [d] to the temples of the gods of Egypt; he will burn these gods or
take them prisoner; like a shepherd wrapping his cloak round him, so he will wrap
13 Egypt round him, and then leave without anyone laying hands on him. ·He will
break the obelisks of the temple of the Sun in Egypt, [e] and burn down the temples
of the gods of Egypt." '

The last episode of Jeremiah's ministry:
the Judaeans in Egypt and the Queen of Heaven

1 44 The word that came to Jeremiah for all the Judaeans living in Egypt, those, LXX 51:1–30
that is, living in Migdol, Tahpanhes, Noph and the territory of Pathros. [a]
2 'Yahweh Sabaoth, God of Israel, says this, "You have seen all the disaster I have
brought on Jerusalem and all the towns of Judah; today they lie in ruins and
3 uninhabited. ·This was because of the wicked deeds they committed to provoke
my anger, by going and offering incense and serving other gods whom neither they,
4 nor you, nor your ancestors knew anything about, ·although I urgently and
untiringly sent you all my servants the prophets to say: You must not do this 7:25–26+
5 loathsome thing, which I hate. ·But they would not listen or pay attention, and
6 turn from their wickedness and stop offering incense to other gods. ·And so my
furious anger overflowed, burning down the towns of Judah and the streets of
Jerusalem, which were reduced to ruins and wasteland, as they still are today.
7 And now, Yahweh, God Sabaoth, God of Israel, says this: Why bring complete
disaster on yourselves by cutting yourselves off from Judah—your men, women,
8 children and babes in arms—so as to leave yourselves no remnant, ·by provoking Is 4:3c
my wrath by your actions, offering incense to other gods in Egypt where you have
come to settle, as though bent on your own destruction and on becoming a curse 42:18
9 and a laughing-stock for all the nations of the earth? ·Have you forgotten the
wicked deeds of your ancestors, of the kings of Judah and of your princes, [b] your
own wicked deeds and those of your wives, committed in the country of Judah and
10 in the streets of Jerusalem? ·To this day they have felt neither contrition nor fear;
they have not observed my Law or my statutes, which I prescribed for you, as for
11 your ancestors. ·So, Yahweh Sabaoth, God of Israel, says this: Look, I have
12 determined on disaster and shall destroy Judah completely. ·I shall take the
remnant of Judah who were determined to come to Egypt and settle there, and in
Egypt they will perish; they will fall to the sword or perish of famine, from least to
greatest; by sword and famine they will die and be an object of execration and
13 horror, a curse, a laughing-stock. ·I shall punish those who live in Egypt just as I
14 punished Jerusalem: by sword, famine and plague. ·Of the remnant of Judah which
has come to settle in Egypt, not a single one will escape or survive to return to the
country of Judah where they long to return and live. For none of them will return,
except a few refugees." '

c. lit. 'if you stay to stay' Gk, Targ.; 'if you stay once more' Hebr.

d. Vv. 19–22 seem more appropriately placed after 43:3 (supposing a link 'Jeremiah replied' and translating the first word of v. 4 as 'but' which would be more usual) but no textual witness favours the transposition.

43 a. A frontier town, east of the Nile delta, *see* 2:16h.

b. Jeremiah symbolically, *see* 18:1a, lays the foundations for Nebuchadnezzar's throne.

c. 'he' Gk and Syr., 'I' Hebr.

d. 'He' versions; 'I' Hebr. • This successful expedition took place in 568–567 BC, under the pharaoh Amasis.

e. Here Gk reads 'which is at On' (Gn 41:45, 50; 46:20). The Egyptian name On appears in Greek as 'Heliopolis', the 'City of the Sun', now part of Cairo. There was a temple of Ra the Sun there.

44 a. Migdol lies east of Tahpanhes, 43:7[a]. Noph is the same as Memphis, 2:16h. Pathros stands for the Egyptian term 'Land of the South', i.e. Upper Egypt. This introduction thus represents Jeremiah's discourse as addressed to the whole Jewish Diaspora in Egypt (Elephantine, one of the islands in the Nile just below Aswan, in Upper Egypt already had a Jewish colony, *see* 2 M 1:1b).

b. 'your princes' Gk; 'his wives' Hebr.

At this, all the men who knew that their wives offered incense to other gods, and 15
all the women who were standing there, a great crowd (and all the people living in
Egypt, in Pathros), answered Jeremiah as follows, •'We have no intention of 16
listening to the word you have just spoken to us in Yahweh's name, •but intend to 17
7:18d go on doing all we have vowed to do: offering incense to the Queen of Heaven[c]
and pouring libations in her honour, as we used to do, we and our ancestors, our
kings and our chief men, in the towns of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem: we
Ho 2:7 had food in plenty then, we lived well, we suffered no disasters. •But since we gave 18
up offering incense to the Queen of Heaven and pouring libations in her honour,
we have been destitute and have perished either by sword or by famine. •Besides,[d] 19
when we offer incense to the Queen of Heaven and pour libations in her honour,
do you think we make cakes for her with her features on them, and pour libations
to her, without our husbands' knowledge?'

To all the people, men and women, all those who had made this answer, 20
Jeremiah retorted, •'The incense you offered in the towns of Judah and the streets 21
of Jerusalem, you, your ancestors, your kings, your chief men and the people at
large—was this not what Yahweh kept remembering, and found so repellent
that •Yahweh could not endure your misdeeds and your loathsome practices any 22
longer, with the result that your country has become the uninhabited ruin, the
object of horror and cursing it is today? •Because you offered incense, because you 23
26:4 sinned against Yahweh, refusing to listen to the voice of Yahweh, or to observe his
Law, his statutes and his decrees—that is why the present disaster has over-
taken you.'

Further, Jeremiah said to all the people, and particularly to all the women, 24
'Listen to the word of Yahweh, all you Judaeans in Egypt, •Yahweh Sabaoth, God 25
of Israel, says this, "You and your wives, what your mouths promised, your hands
have indeed performed! You said: We shall punctiliously fulfil the vows we have
made and offer incense to the Queen of Heaven and pour libations in her honour.
Very well, keep your vows, perform them punctiliously! •But listen to the word of 26
Yahweh, all you Judaeans living in Egypt: I swear by my great name, Yahweh says,
that my name will no longer be uttered by any man of Judah throughout Egypt; no
one will say: As Lord Yahweh lives.[e] •No, I am going to keep my eye on them for 27
disaster, not for prosperity, and all the Judaeans in Egypt will perish either by the
sword or by famine until they are wiped out. •Yet, though few in number, those 28
who escape the sword will return to the country of Judah from Egypt. Then the
entire remnant of Judah which has come and settled in Egypt will know whose
word comes true, mine or theirs.

"And here is the sign for you, Yahweh declares, that I shall punish you in this 29
place: so that you will know that the words with which I threaten you will come
true: •Yahweh says this: Look, I shall hand Pharaoh Hophra[f] king of Egypt, over 30
to his enemies and to those determined to kill him, just as I handed Zedekiah king
of Judah over to his enemy Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, who was determined
to kill him." '

39:15–18 **A prophecy of comfort for Baruch**[a]

Lxx 51:31–35 45 The word that the prophet Jeremiah addressed to Baruch son of Neriah 1
when the latter wrote these words down in a book at Jeremiah's dictation in
the fourth year of Jehoiakim[b] son of Josiah, king of Judah, •'This is what Yahweh 2
God of Israel says about you, Baruch! •"You have been thinking: what disaster for 3
me, and Yahweh has added further grief to my troubles! I am worn out with
groaning, and find no relief!" •Say to him as follows, "[a]Yahweh says this: Now I 4
1:10 am knocking down what I have built, am uprooting what I have planted, over the
whole country! •And you ask for special treatment! Do not ask, for I am now going 5
21:9;38:2; 39:18 to bring disaster on all humanity, Yahweh declares, but you I shall allow to escape
with your life, wherever you may go." '

V: PROPHECIES AGAINST THE NATIONS[a]

1 **46** The words of Yahweh that were addressed to the prophet Jeremiah against the nations.

Prophecies against Egypt. The defeat at Carchemish

Is 19
Ezk 29:1
Zp 2:12h
LXX 26

2 On Egypt.

Against the army of Pharaoh Necho king of Egypt, which was at Carchemish[b] on the River Euphrates when Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon defeated it in the fourth year of Jehoiakim son of Josiah, king of Judah.

3 Buckler and shield at the ready!
Onward to battle!
4 Harness the horses:
into the saddle, horsemen!
To your ranks! On with your helmets!
Sharpen your spears,
put on your breastplates!
5 Why do I see them
retreating, panic-stricken?
Their heroes, beaten back, Am 2:14–16
are fleeing headlong,
with not a look behind.
Terror on every side,
Yahweh declares!
6 No flight for the swift,
no escape for the strong!
Up in the north on the River Euphrates,
they have collapsed, have fallen.

7 Who was it rose like the Nile, Is 8:7–8
his waters foaming like a torrent?
8 Why, Egypt rose like the Nile,
his waters foaming like a torrent.
'I shall rise', he said, 'and drown the earth;
sweep away town and its inhabitants!
9 Charge, horses!
Forward, chariots!
Let the warriors advance,
men from Cush and Put with shield in hand,
men from Lud who bend the bow!'[c]
10 For this is the Day of Lord Yahweh Sabaoth,
a day of vengeance when he takes revenge on his foes: Am 5:18m

c. Ishtar, 7:18d; the cakes made in her honour, v. 19, represented the naked goddess.

d. The women speak at this point.

e. The worshippers of Ishtar also made a show of invoking Yahweh.

f. In Gk, Apries (589–569 BC), *see* 37:7; he succeeded Necho and was later killed by Amasis, prince of Libya. Jeremiah makes this short-term prophecy, offering its fulfilment as a sign, *see* 28:17d, commending his prediction of a more distant event, namely invasion by Nebuchadnezzar in 568–567 BC, *see* 43:12d.

45 a This passage, preserving a prophecy addressed personally to Jeremiah's secretary, stands as it were for Baruch's signature; presumably he was also the author of the biographical fragments in ch. 26–44.

b. In 605 BC, *see* 36:1.

46 a. The Hebr. text places the prophecies against the nations at the end of the book, ch. 46–51. In the Gk version, however, they retain their original position and follow their introductory ch. 25, which seems to have been expanded in the light of subsequent events, *see* 25:17f.

b. The modern Syrian township of Jerablus, north east of Aleppo on the Euphrates. Situated on a ford leading from Syria to Mesopotamia, the town was the scene of battle in 605 BC, between Necho (609–594) attempting to shore up the collapsing Assyrian empire (who, in the course of his advance, had killed Josiah at Megiddo, 2 Ch 35:19–25; see Jr 22:10), and Nebuchadnezzar (605–562). The victory of the latter made him master of Syria and Palestine, *see* 2 K 24:7d.

c. Before 'who bend' Hebr. inserts 'who carry', probably a dittography. • Cush was Ethiopia; Put, Somali; Lud, an African people associated with Put in most biblical passages, Is 66:19; Ezk 27:10; 30:5.

the sword will devour until gorged,
until drunk with their blood,
for Lord Yahweh Sabaoth is holding a sacrificial feast
in the land of the north, on the River Euphrates.
8:22 Go up to Gilead and fetch balm, 11
virgin daughter of Egypt!
You multiply remedies in vain,
nothing can cure you!
The nations have heard of your shame, 12
your wailing fills the world,
for warrior has stumbled against warrior,
and both have fallen together.

42:15–22; 43:8–13 **The invasion of Egypt** [d]

The word that came from Yahweh to the prophet Jeremiah when Nebuchadnezzar 13
king of Babylon advanced to attack Egypt.

44:1 Publish it in Egypt, 14
proclaim it in Migdol,
proclaim it in Noph and Tahpanhes!
Say, 'Stand your ground, be prepared,
for the sword is devouring all round you!'
Is 46:1–2 Why has Apis fled? 15
Why has your Mighty One not stood firm? [e]
Why, Yahweh has overturned him,
he has caused many to fall! 16
Falling over one another,
they say, 'Up, and back to our own people,
to the country where we were born,
away from the devastating sword!'
They have given Pharaoh king of Egypt the nickname, [f] 17
'Much-noise-but-he-lets-the-chance-slip-by'!
As I live, the King declares, 18
whose name is Yahweh Sabaoth,
he is coming, a very Tabor among mountains,
a Carmel high above the sea!

Get your bundle ready for exile, 19
fair inhabitant of Egypt!
Noph will be reduced to a desert, [g]
desolate, uninhabited.
Egypt was a splendid heifer, 20
but a gadfly from the north has settled on her.
The mercenaries she had with her, these too 21
were like fattened calves:
but they too have taken to their heels,
have all run away, not held their ground,
for their day of disaster has overtaken them,
their time for being punished.

Hear her hissing like a snake [h] 22
as they advance in force
to fall on her with their axes,
like woodcutters,
they will fell her forest, Yahweh declares, 23
however impenetrable it was
for they are more numerous than locusts,

There is no counting them.
24 The daughter of Egypt is put to shame,
handed over to a people from the north.

25 Yahweh Sabaoth, God of Israel, has said, 'Look, I shall punish Amon of No,[i]
Pharaoh, Egypt, its gods, its kings, Pharaoh and those who put their trust in him.
26 I shall hand him over to those who are determined to kill him, to Nebuchadnezzar
king of Babylon, to his generals. But afterwards, Egypt will be inhabited again as
in the past, Yahweh declares.[j]

27 But do not be afraid, my servant Jacob, =30:10–11
Israel, do not be alarmed:[k]
for look, I shall rescue you from afar
and your descendants from the country where they are captive.
Jacob will return and be at peace,
secure, with no one to trouble him.
28 Do not be afraid, my servant Jacob,
Yahweh declares, for I am with you:
I shall make an end of all the nations
where I have driven you,
but I shall not make an end of you,
I shall discipline you only as you deserve,
not leaving you quite unpunished.

Prophecy against the Philistines

1 **47** The word of Yahweh that came to Jeremiah about the Philistines before LXX 29
2 Pharaoh attacked Gaza.[a] •'Yahweh says this: •Jos 13:2b
Ezk 25:15–17
Am 1:6–8
Zp 2:4–7

Look, the waters are rising from the north
to become an overwhelming flood,
overwhelming the country and all in it,
the town and its inhabitants!
People cry for help, and there is wailing
from all the country's inhabitants
3 at the thunder of his chargers' hoofs,
the crash of his chariots, the grinding of his wheels.
Fathers forget about their children,
their hands fall limp
4 because the day has come
for all the Philistines to be destroyed,
for Tyre and Sidon to be stripped
to the last of their allies.
Yes, Yahweh is destroying the Philistines,
the remnant from the Isle of Caphtor.[b] Jos 13:2b

d. This prophecy was uttered later than the foregoing. The invasion in question took place in 568–567 BC, during the reign of the pharaoh Amasis, *see* 43:12d.

e. 'has Apis fled' Gk; 'has he been overthrown' Hebr. 'your Mighty One' singular with 65 Hebr. MSS, Gk; MT has plural. • The Apis bull, the incarnation of the god Ptah, was the protector of Memphis; while alive, it was fed in a temple; once dead, it became an Osiris-Apis, or Osar-Api, whence the name Serapeum, the necropolis where it was embalmed and buried. As against this totem, the One True God was indeed 'the Mighty One of Jacob', *see* Gn 49:24; Ps 132:2, Is 1:24; 49:26; 60:16.

f. lit. 'they have called by this name' Gk; 'they have called there' Hebr. The pharaoh was Hophra, who raised Zedekiah's hopes in 588 BC only to disappoint them, ch. 37.

g. Memphis, *see* 2:16h; 44:1.

h. 'hissing' Gk; 'advancing' (see next line) Hebr.

i. Amon, the ram-headed god of Thebes; No, the Egyptian name for Thebes, *see* Ezk 30:14–16; Na 3:8.

j. For similar prophecies of recovery for nations punished by Yahweh, *see* 48:47; 49:6, 39; Is 19:21seq.

k. The prophecy of recovery for Egypt in v. 26 is matched by the promise to Israel in vv. 27–28. These last verses repeat 30:10–11. Here, however, 'Jacob' and 'Israel' no longer mean the Northern Kingdom but, in the spirit of the second part of Is, all Yahweh's people.

47 a. Either Pharaoh Necho, according to Herodotus (*History* II, 159, in which Magdolos would then correspond to Megiddo and Cadytis to Gaza); or Pharaoh Hophra who, also according to Herodotus (II, 161), made war on Tyre and Sidon, possibly attacking their Philistine allies at the same time.

b. Crete, the traditional homeland of the Philistines, Dt 2:23; Am 9:7. On the Philistine cities, *see* 25:20.

Baldness has befallen Gaza, 5
Ashkelon has been reduced to silence.
You who remain in the valley,
how long will you gash yourselves? [c]
Oh, sword of Yahweh, 6
how long before you rest?
Back into your scabbard,
stop, keep still!
Yet how can it rest [d] 7
when Yahweh has given it an order,
Ashkelon and the sea coast,
the targets assigned to it?

Prophecies against Moab [e]

LXX 31
Nb 22:36h
2 K 3:46
‖Is 15–16
Ezk 25:8–11
Am 2:1–3
Zp 2:8–11

48 On Moab. [b] Yahweh, God of Israel, says this: 1

Wretched Nebo, for it has been ravaged,
Kiriathaim has been shamed and taken,
shame and distraction on the citadel,
the pride of Moab is no more! 2
At Heshbon they plotted her downfall,
'Come, let us put an end to her as a nation!'
And you too, inhabitants of Madmen, will be silenced,
the sword will be after you.

A cry of agony goes up from Horonaim, 3
'Devastation! Dire calamity.
Moab has been shattered,' 4
the agonised cries of her little ones ring out.
‖Is 15:5 Up the slope of Luhith, 5
weeping they go. [c]
On the road down to Horonaim
is heard the shriek of disaster,
'Away! Flee for your lives 6
like the wild donkey into the desert!' [d]
Yes, since you relied on your deeds and your wealth, 7
you will be captured too.
Chemosh [e] will go into exile,
with all his priests and princes.
The despoiler will descend on every town, 8
not one will escape;
the Valley will be ravaged, the Plain be plundered
as Yahweh has said.
Give Moab wings [f] 9
so that she can fly away,
for her towns will be laid in ruins
where no one will ever live again.

(Accursed be he who does Yahweh's work negligently! Accursed be he who deprives his sword of blood!) 10

From his youth Moab lived at ease, 11
he settled on his lees,
never having been decanted,
never having gone into exile:
and so he kept his own flavour,
his aroma was unchanged. [g]

12 And so the days are coming, Yahweh declares, when I shall send him decanters to
13 decant him; they will empty his pitchers and break his wine jars to bits. ·Moab will
be shamed by Chemosh then, as the House of Israel was shamed by Bethel[h] in 1 K 12:29 Am 5:5 Ho 10:5
which they put their trust.

14 How can you say, 'We are heroes,
sturdy fighting men'?
15 Moab has been ravaged, his cities scaled,
the flower of his youth goes down to the slaughter,
declares the King, whose name is Yahweh Sabaoth.
16 Moab's ruin is coming soon,
his downfall comes at top speed.
17 Grieve for him, all you living near him,
all you who knew his name.
Say, 'How shattered it is, that mighty rod, 22:18+
that splendid sceptre!'

18 Come down from your glory, sit on the parched ground,[i]
daughter of Dibon,
for the despoiler of Moab has advanced on you,
he has destroyed your strongholds.
19 Stand by the roadside, keep watch,
daughter of Aroer.
Question fugitive and runaway,
ask, 'What has happened?'[j]
20 'Moab has been shattered and shamed.
Wail and shriek!
Shout along the Arnon,
Moab has been laid waste!'

21, 22 Judgement has also come on the Plain, on Holon, Jahzah, Mephaath, ·Dibon, Nb 33:46 Jos 13:17–19
23, 24 Nebo, Beth-Diblathaim, ·Kiriathaim, Beth-Gamul, Beth-Meon, ·Kerioth,
Bozrah, and all the towns of Moab, far and near.[k]

25 Moab's horn has been cut off,
his arm is broken, Yahweh declares.

26 Make him drunk! He has set himself up against Yahweh; let Moab wallow in his Is 51:17h Ezk 25:8–11
27 vomit and become a laughing-stock in his turn. ·Was Israel not a laughing-stock to

c. For 'who remain in the valley', a minor emendation would give the reading, as in Gk: 'of the Anakim', cf. Jos 11:22. • Shaven head and self-inflicted wounds were signs of mourning, *see* Lv 21:5; Mi 1:16.

d. 'it rest' versions, see remainder of v.; 'you rest' Hebr.

48 a. It is difficult to identify the original nucleus of this prophecy, the text of which incorporates several biblical passages of earlier date: Nb 21:27–30; 24:17; Is 15–16. It may have been delivered shortly after 605 BC, *see* 25:21, or 593 BC, *see* 27:3, or 587 BC, *see also* Ezk 25:8–11.

b. Moab lay south of Ammon, in Transjordan; the place-names mentioned here are: Mount Nebo (Dt 34:1); Kiriathaim, perhaps modern Khirbet al-Quraiyat, south west of Medeba; Heshbon, modern Hesban, 7.5 miles (12 km) north of Medeba and forming a play on words with *hashab* 'to plot'; Madmen, modern Khirbet Dimna, 7.5 miles (12 km) north of Kerak and forming a play on words with *damam* 'to be silenced'; Horonaim, apparently in the eastern part of the country, on the edge of the desert; Luhith, unidentified, on the other hand, seems to have been in the west. If, furthermore, at v. 4[b] following Gk, we read 'proclaim it as far away as Zoar' (south of the Dead Sea, *see* Gn 14:2, 8), it becomes clear that the terror caused by the invasion convulsed the country from end to end.

c. lit. 'they climb it' *bo* conj., cf. Is 15:5; Hebr. repeats 'weeping' *beke*.

d. 'wild donkey' (Hebr. *'arod*) Gk; 'Aroer' Hebr.

e. National god of the Moabites, vv. 13, 46; cf. Nb 21:29; 1 K 11:7, 33.

f. The Hebr. word (*sis*) normally means 'flower'; here we may perhaps have an unusual meaning for the word, unless it should be emended to *nosah* 'plumage', 'wings', *see* Jb 39:13; Ezk 17:3. Gk reads *tziyun* 'tomb' and translates: 'give Moab a tomb, for she has been devastated.'

g. Moab, a land of vineyards, *see* vv. 32–33, was famous for its wine.

h. The name of an important sanctuary in northern Israel, which after the schism became the rival of Jerusalem, *see* 1 K 12:29; Am 7:13, but also the name of a god in the heterodox religion of the Jewish colony of Elephantine.

i. lit. 'sit down in thirst'. • Dibon, modern Diban, about 3 miles (5 km) north west of Aroer, v. 19, modern Arair, on the River Arnon. Diban was the site of the discovery of the stele of Mesha king of Moab, otherwise known as the Moabite Stone: 2 K 3:4b.

j. 'runaway' masc., versions; fem. Hebr. • The answer is given in vv. 20, 25 (where 'Yahweh declares', omitted by Gk, is possibly an addition) and v. 28; the prose passages are commentaries.

k. Many of the towns mentioned here have not been identified with any certainty, but the whole point of the list is to emphasise the scale of the disaster.

you? Was he caught red-handed with the thieves, for you to shake your head whenever you mention him?

Leave the towns, make the rocks your home, 28
inhabitants of Moab.
Learn from the dove that makes its nest
in the walls of the gaping gorge.

‖Is 16:6 We have heard about Moab's pride, 29
so very proud!
What arrogance! What pride! What conceit!
What a haughty heart!
—I know all about his presumption, Yahweh declares, 30
his empty boasting,
those empty deeds of his!
‖Is 16:7 —and so I lament for Moab, 31
for all Moab I raise my cry
and mourn for the people of Kir-Heres.
More than for Jazer I weep for you, 32
vineyard of Sibmah! *l*
your shoots stretched beyond the sea,
they reached all the way to Jazer.
On your harvest and vintage
the despoiler has descended.
Is 16:10 Gladness and joy have vanished 33
from the orchards of Moab.
I have dried up the wine in the presses,
the treader of grapes treads no more,
the joyful shouting has ceased. *m*

Is 15:4–5 The cries of Heshbon and Elealeh can be heard as far as Jahaz. The shrieks 34
resound from Zoar to Horonaim and Eglath-Shelishiyah, for even the Waters of
Nimrim have become a wasteland. *n*
Is 15:5 And in Moab I shall make an end, Yahweh declares, of anyone offering sacrifice 35
on the high places and anyone offering incense to his gods.
That is why my heart sobs like a flute for Moab, sobs like a flute for the people of 36
47:5 Kir-Heres, since the wealth he had acquired is lost. ·Yes, every head is shaved, 37
Lv 21:5 Is 15:2–3 every beard cut off, gashes are on every hand, sackcloth round every waist. ·On 38
all the housetops of Moab and in all its squares there is nothing but lamenting, for
I have broken Moab like an unwanted pot, Yahweh declares. ·How shattered he 39
is! Wail! Moab so shamefully in retreat! Moab has become a laughing-stock, a
thing of horror to all his neighbours.

For Yahweh says this: 40
=49:22 (Look, like an eagle, he will hover,
spreading his wings over Moab.)
The towns have been captured, 41
the strongholds seized.
(And the heart of Moab's warriors, that day,
will be like that of a woman in labour pains.)
Moab will be destroyed, no longer a people, 42
for setting itself up against Yahweh.
‖Is 24:17–18 Terror, the pit and the snare for you, 43
inhabitant of Moab,
Yahweh declares.

And anyone who escapes from terror 44
will fall into the pit,

and anyone who climbs out of the pit
will be caught in the snare.
Yes, I shall bring all this on Moab [o]
when the year comes for punishing them,
Yahweh declares.

45 In the shelter of Heshbon the fugitives
have paused, exhausted.
But fire will burst from Heshbon, Nb 21:28–29
a flame from the palace of Sihon, [p]
consuming the brows of Moab, Nb 24:17
the head of a turbulent brood.
46 Disaster for you, Moab!
The people of Chemosh are lost!
For your sons have been taken into exile
and your daughters into captivity.

47 But I shall bring back Moab's captives 46:26j
in the final days, Yahweh declares.

Thus far the judgement on Moab. [q]

Prophecy against Ammon [a]

1 **49** To the Ammonites. LXX 30
Dt 2:19e
Ezk 25:1–7
Am 1:13–15
Zp 2:8–11

Yahweh says this:
Has Israel no sons?
Has he no heir?
Why should Milcom have inherited Gad
and his people have settled in its towns? [b]
2 And so the days are coming,
Yahweh declares,
when I shall make the war cry ring out
for Rabbah-of-the-Ammonites.
She will become a desolate mound
and her daughter towns will be burnt down.
Then Israel will inherit from his heirs,
Yahweh says.
3 Wail, Heshbon, for Ar has been laid waste! [c] Nb 20:21–22+
Shriek, daughters of Rabbah!
Wrap yourself in sackcloth, raise the dirge,
run to and fro among the sheep-pens!
For Milcom is going into exile,
with all his priests and princes.

l. Kir-Heres, 'wall of potsherds', is used here as a nickname for Kir-Moab, the ancient Moabite capital, modern Kerak, Jazer, probably Khirbet Yazzir, in the northern part of Moab. Sibmah, between Heshbon, v. 2 and Nebo; the sea to which the vineyard is said to have extended was the Dead Sea, on the west.

m. 'the treader' versions, *see* Is 16:10; 'the cheering' Hebr., dittography. • 'has ceased', lit. 'rings out (no more)' *herim* or *yehuddad*, assuming an unattested form of the word 'cheering' *hedad*, repeated in Hebr.

n. 'The cries' conj.; 'Because of the cries' Hebr. • 'and Elealeh' conj., *see* Is 15:4; 'as far as Elealeh' Hebr. • Only Zoar in the south, and Heshbon and Elealeh a few km from each other in the north, *see* v. 1b, have been convincingly identified. The 'Waters of Nimrim' were probably situated north of the Dead Sea, although the Wadi Numeira, to the south east, has also been suggested.

o. 'all this' Gk and Syr.; 'on her' Hebr.

p. 'from the palace' *mibbet*, 3 Hebr. MSS; 'from the middle' *mibben* MT. • Sihon was the Amorite king who had Heshbon as his capital city, Nb 21:27–28; Dt 2:26–37.

q. A scribal note, cf. 51:64.

49 a. The prophecy is authentic, except for v. 2, a later addition.

b. The territory of the Ammonites, lying to the north of Moab in Transjordan, had its capital at Rabbah, v. 2, or Rabbath-Ammon, modern Amman. At the conquest of Palestine by the twelve tribes, this territory was allotted to the tribe of Gad, *see* Nb 32; Jos 13:24–28; by taking it away from the Israelites after 734 BC, and then again in 721, the Ammonites and with them Milcom, their national god, had acted as usurpers. • Here and at v. 3, we read 'Milcom' with versions and 1 K 11:5, 7, 33; 2 K 23:13, rather than *malkam*, 'their king' Hebr.

c. 'in your Valley', conj.; 'of valleys, your valley flows' Hebr. The principal valley in Ammon is that of the River Jabbok.

How you used to glory in your Valley,[d] 4
rebellious daughter,
confident in your resources,
'Who will dare to attack me?'
Look, I shall bring terror on you. 5
Lord Yahweh Sabaoth declares,
from all directions;
you shall be driven away, everyone for himself,
with no one to rally the fugitives.

46:26j (But later I shall bring back the captive Ammonites, Yahweh declares.) 6

Dt 2:1a
Ps 137:7
Ezk 25:12–14
Am 1:11–12
‖Ob 1–9

Prophecy against Edom[e]

To Edom. 7

Yahweh says this:
Ba 3:22 Is there no wisdom left in Teman?
Have the shrewd run out of commonsense,[f]
has their wisdom vanished?
Away! Take to your heels! Go into hiding, 8
inhabitants of Dedan,
Ml 1:2–5 for I shall bring ruin on Esau[g]
when the time comes for me to punish him.
‖Ob 5–6 If grape-pickers were to come to you, 9
would they not leave a few gleanings?
If robbers came during the night,
would they not steal only as much as they wanted?
But I for my part have stripped Esau, 10
have laid his hiding places bare:
he can hide no longer.
His race is destroyed,
so are his brothers and neighbours; he is no more!
Leave your orphans, I shall support them, 11
and let your widows rely on me!

25:28–29
Is 51:17h
For Yahweh says this, 'Look, those who would not have had to drink the cup 12
will have to drink it all the same; so why should you go unpunished? You will not
go unpunished, but will certainly have to drink. ·For by my own self I have sworn, 13
Yahweh declares, that Bozrah[h] will become an object of horror, a laughing-stock,
a desert, a curse, and all its towns ruins for ever.'

‖Ob 1–4 I have received a message from Yahweh, 14
a herald has been sent throughout the nations,
'Muster! March against this people!
Prepare for battle!'
For look, I shall reduce you to the smallest of nations, 15
to the most despised of people.
Your reputation for ferocity, 16
your proud heart has misled you.
You whose home is in the crannies of the Rock,[i]
who cling to the top of the peak!
51:53
Hab 2:9 Though you make your nest as high as the eagle's,
I shall bring you down from there, Yahweh declares.

Edom will become an object of horror; everyone going near will be appalled, 17
=50:40 and whistle at the sight of all her wounds. ·As at the overthrow of Sodom and 18
Gomorrah and their neighbouring towns, no one will live there any more, Yahweh
says, no human being settle there again.

19 Look, like a lion he climbs from the thickets of the Jordan =50:44–46
to the perennial pasture!
In a flash, I shall make them run away,
and there appoint someone I shall choose.
For who is there like me?
Who can hale me into court? Jb 9:19
Name me the shepherd Ws 12:12
who can stand up to me.
20 So now hear the plan
that Yahweh has laid against Edom,
the schemes he has in mind
against the inhabitants of Teman:
they will certainly be dragged away
like the smallest of the flock!
Their pastures will certainly be sacked before their eyes!
21 The earth quakes at the sound of their downfall,
the sound of it echoes to the Sea of Reeds.[j]
22 Look, like an eagle, he will soar and hover, =48:40
spreading his wings over Bozrah.
And the heart of Edom's warriors, that day,
will be like that of a woman in labour pains. Ob 9

Prophecy against the towns of Syria[k]

23 To Damascus.

Hamath and Arpad are shamed, Is 17:1–3
for they have heard bad news. Am 1:3–5
They are convulsed with anxiety
like the sea that cannot be calmed.[l]
24 Damascus is aghast, she prepares for flight,
she is seized with trembling
(anguish and sorrow have laid hold on her as on a woman in labour). 4:31+
25 What now! That famous town deserted,
that city of gaiety?[m]

26 And so in her squares her young men will fall, and all her fighting men will perish, that day, Yahweh Sabaoth declares. =50:30

27 I shall light a fire inside the walls of Damascus,
to devour the palaces of Ben-Hadad.[n] Am 1:4–5

Prophecy against the Arab tribes 25:23–24 Is 21:13–17

28 To Kedar and the kingdoms of Hazor,[o] which were conquered by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. Yahweh says this:

d. Heshbon in Moab, *see* 48:1b, probably conquered by the Ammonites. • 'Ar' (in Transjordan *see* Nb 21:28) conj.; Heb. has 'Ai', but this is in Cisjordan.

e. This prophecy was delivered in about 605 BC. Note the parallel with Ob vv. 1–9.

f. 'shrewd' Gk; 'sons' Hebr. (incorrect arrangement of vowels). Edom was famous for its sages, *see* 1 K 5:10–11; Jb 2:11d; Ba 3:11–23.

g. Dedan: the oasis of El-Ela in Arabia. In Ezk 25:13, Teman (perhaps modern Tawilan, near Petra) and Dedan seem to represent the extremities (north and south) of Edom. • On Esau or Edom, *see* Gn 36:8.

h. Bozrah, capital of Edom (as opposed to Bozrah in Moab, 48:24) is modern El-Buseirah, about 25 miles (40 km) south of the Dead Sea.

i. The 'Rock' of Edom, *see* 2 K 14:7; Is 16:1, long identified with the city of Petra, may well have been situated further north, in the area of Bozrah.

j. Hebr. repeats 'the sound of it'; Gk omits. • The 'Sea of Reeds', modern Red Sea.

k. This saying on Damascus, a city not mentioned in the introductory list of 25:20–26, perhaps refers to the panic in Syria, then under Egyptian suzerainty, when Egypt was defeated at Carchemish in 605 BC, *see* 46:2b

l. 'like the sea' *kayyam*, conj.; 'in the sea' *bayyam* Hebr. • Hamath, *see* 39:5. Arpad, modern Tell Erfad, north of Aleppo.

m. 'city of gaiety' Syr., 'city of my joy" Hebr.

n. Ben-Hadad III, son of Hazael and king in Damascus about 840 BC, *see* 2 K 13:24; Am 1:4.

o. Hazor, a collective name designating the semi-sedentary Arabs as opposed to the Bedouin of the desert; 'kingdom' is to be understood in a loose sense, a group of people under the authority of a tribal chieftain.

Up! March on Kedar,
destroy the sons of the east!
Let their tents and their flocks be captured, 29
their tent-cloths and all their gear;
let their camels be seized
and the shout go up, 'Terror on every side!'
Away! Get into hiding as fast as you can, 30
inhabitants of Hazor, Yahweh declares,
for Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon has made a plan against you,
he has a scheme in mind against you,
Up! March on a nation at its ease, 31
living secure, Yahweh declares,
that has no gates, no bars,
that lives in a remote place!
Their camels will be the plunder, 32
their countless sheep the spoil.
I shall scatter them to the winds,
those Crop-Heads,
and bring ruin on them from every side,
Yahweh declares.
Hazor will become the lair of jackals, 33
desolate for ever.
No one will live there any more,
no human being settle there again.

Prophecy against Elam [p]

LXX 25:14–20 The word of Yahweh that came to the prophet Jeremiah about Elam, at the 34
beginning of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah. ·'Yahweh Sabaoth says this: 35

Look, I shall break Elam's bow,
the source of his might.
I shall bring four winds on Elam 36
from the four corners of the sky,
and I shall scatter them to all these winds:
there will not be a single nation
to which people expelled from Elam do not go.

I shall make the Elamites tremble before their enemies, 37
before those determined to kill them.
I shall bring disaster on them,
my burning anger, Yahweh declares.
I shall pursue them with the sword
until I have destroyed them all.
I shall set up my throne in Elam, 38
uprooting its king and princes,
Yahweh declares.

46:26j In the final days, I shall bring Elam's captives back, Yahweh declares. 39

LXX 27 **Prophecy against Babylon** [q]
Is 13;14;21:1;47 Rv 18

50 The word that Yahweh spoke against Babylon, against the country of the 1
Chaldaeans, through the prophet Jeremiah.

Is 46:1 **The fall of Babylon and the liberation of Israel**

Announce it to the nations, proclaim it, 2
hoist a signal and proclaim it,
making no secret of it, say,

'Babylon is captured, Bel disgraced,
Marduk shattered. [b]
(Her idols are disgraced,
her Obscenities shattered.)'
3 For a nation is marching on her from the north,
to turn her country into a desert:
no one will live there any more;
human and animal have fled and gone.

4 In those days and at that time
the people of Israel will return
(they and the people of Judah); [c]
they will come weeping
in search of Yahweh their God.
5 They will ask the way to Zion
and turn their faces towards her,
'Come, let us bind ourselves to Yahweh [d]
by an everlasting covenant never to be forgotten!'

6 Lost sheep, such were my people; Ezk 34:1a Mt 9:36o
their shepherds led them astray, the mountains misled them;
from mountain to hill they went,
forgetful of their fold.
7 Whoever came across them devoured them,
their enemies said, 'We are not to blame,
since they have sinned against Yahweh, the Home of Justice,
against Yahweh, the Hope of their ancestors.'
8 Escape from Babylon, 51:6,45 Is 48:20;52:11 Rv 18:4
leave the country of the Chaldaeans. [e]
Be like he-goats, leading the sheep!
9 For look, I shall raise a league
of mighty nations to attack Babylon,
from the land of the north.
They will take up position against her;
by them she will be taken.
Their arrows, like an experienced soldier's,
never return in vain.
10 Chaldaea will be plundered,
all her plunderers will be satisfied, Yahweh declares.

11 Rejoice! Have your triumph,
you plunderers of my heritage!
Be playful like a heifer let out to grass! [f]
Neigh like stallions!
12 But your mother is covered with shame,
disgraced is the woman who bore you;
she is the least of nations now;
a desert, a parched land, a wasteland.

p. Elam was the name for the high plains lying east of Mesopotamia, from which the Median and Persian invasions were later to come. As early as 597 BC, Jeremiah may have foreseen the conquest of Elam by the Persians.

50 **a.** In the following prophecies two dominant themes recur: the fall of Babylon and the return from exile, both expected by Jeremiah, though not in the immediate future, *see* 27:7; 29:10, 28. Here, as in the second part of Is, the fall of Babylon (539 BC) is treated as if it were about to occur.

b. Bel, 'the Master' (compare Baal), the usual name for Marduk (or Merodach), the chief god of Babylon, *see* 51:44; Is 46:1; Ba 6:40; Dn 14.

c. Here, as in v. 33 and 51:5, glossators seem to have been responsible for adding Judah alongside Israel, cf. similarly, 31:31. In point of fact, these glosses serve no purpose, since here 'Israel' stands for the totality of God's people.

d. 'let us bind ourselves to' Syr.; 'and they will be bound to' Hebr.

e. 'leave' *qere*, versions; 'they will leave' *ketib*.

f. lit. 'in the grass' *baddeshe'*, *see* Gk ('calves in the grass'); 'treading' *dashah* Hebr.

Because of Yahweh's anger, 13
no one will live there any more,
she will become a total solitude.
All who pass by Babylon will be appalled
and whistle at the sight of all her wounds.

Take position against Babylon, surround her, 14
all you who bend the bow.
Shoot at her! Do not spare your arrows,
for she has sinned against Yahweh!
Raise the war cry against her from all sides. 15
She surrenders! Her bastions fall!
Her walls collapse!
51:6 Is 59:18 This is Yahweh's vengeance! Take revenge on her.
Treat her as she has treated others.
Deprive Babylon of the man who sows, 16
of the man who wields the sickle at harvest.
Away from the devastating sword,
let everyone return to his own people,
let everyone flee to his own country!

Israel was a straying sheep 17
pursued by lions.

51:34 First, the king of Assyria devoured him, and latterly Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon crunched his bones. ·So Yahweh Sabaoth, God of Israel, says this: Look, 18
I shall punish the king of Babylon and his country as I punished the king of Assyria.

I will bring Israel back to his pastures 19
to browse on Carmel and in Bashan,
on the highlands of Ephraim and in Gilead,[g]
and he will be satisfied.
In those days and at that time, Yahweh declares, 20
you may look for Israel's guilt, it will not be there,
for Judah's sins, you will not find them,
Is 4:3c for I shall pardon the remnant that I leave.

The fall of Babylon proclaimed to Jerusalem

March on the country of Merathaim, 21
march on it
and on the inhabitants of Pekod;[h]
slaughter and curse with destruction every last one of them,[i]
Yahweh declares,
carry out my orders to the letter!
The din of battle fills the country, 22
immense destruction.

How utterly shattered 23
51:8,20 Is 14:4–6 =51:41 that hammer of the whole world!
What a thing of horror Babylon has become
throughout the nations!
I set a snare for you, Babylon; you were caught 24
before you knew it.
You have been found and overpowered
for having defied Yahweh.

Yahweh has opened his armoury 25
and taken out the weapons of his fury.

For Lord Yahweh Sabaoth has work to do
in the country of the Chaldaeans.
26 Fall on her from every side,[j]
open her granaries,
pile her in heaps, curse her with destruction, Jos 6:17c
until nothing is left of her.

27 Slaughter all her bulls,
down to the slaughterhouse with them!
Disaster on them, their day has come,
their time for being punished.

28 Listen! Fugitives and runaways
from the country of Babylon
arrive in Zion and proclaim
the revenge of Yahweh our God,
revenge for his Temple!

The sin of arrogance[k]

29 Call up the archers against Babylon!
All you who bend the bow,
invest her on all sides,
leave her no way of escape.
Repay her as her deeds deserve; Ex 21:25f
treat her as she has treated others, Ps 28:4
for she was arrogant to Yahweh, Is 14:13–14
to the Holy One of Israel. Rv 18:6

30 And so in her squares her young men will fall, and all her fighting men will =49:26
perish, that day, Yahweh declares.

31 My quarrel is with you, 'Arrogance!'
Lord Yahweh Sabaoth declares,
your day has come,
the time for me to punish you.
32 'Arrogance' will stumble, she will fall,
no one will lift her up:
I shall set fire to her towns
and it will devour all around it.

Yahweh the redeemer of Israel Is 41:14g

33 Yahweh Sabaoth says this:
The people of Israel are oppressed
(and the people of Judah too),
all their captors hold them fast,
they will not let them go.
34 But their redeemer is strong:
Yahweh Sabaoth is his name.
He will take up their cause, 51:10,36
to give our country rest
but make the inhabitants of Babylon tremble.

g. Gilead and Bashan, in Transjordan, were famous for their pasturage, *see* Nb 32; Am 4:1a; Mi 7:14. Carmel (meaning 'orchard') and the wooded hills of Ephraim (*see* Jos 17:18) also presumably evoked the picture of a fertile and welcoming country to these exiles.

h. The orders are addressed to those who are to attack Babylon. Merathaim, equivalent to the Babylonian word *maratu*, 'lagoons', designates the region where the Tigris and Euphrates flow into the Persian Gulf. Pekod, Ezk 23:23, was the name of a people to the east of Babylon.

i. lit. 'their last' *'aharitam* Targ.; 'behind them' *'aharehem* Hebr.

j. 'from every side'; meaning uncertain. The word usually means 'end', 'extremity', but may on occasion mean a whole, a totality ('without exception', 'from all directions').

k. The sin of over-weening pride (*hubris* in Gk), cf. Gn 3; 11:1-9; Is 14:12–13; Ezk 28; Am 4.

A sword against the Chaldaeans, Yahweh declares, 35
against the inhabitants of Babylon,
against her princes and her sages!
A sword against her diviners: may they lose their wits! 36
A sword against her warriors: may they panic!
A sword against her horses, her chariots 37
and the conglomeration of people inside her:
51:30 may they be like women!
51:13 A sword against her treasures: may they be plundered!
51:36 Drought on her waters: may they dry up! 38
For it is a country of idols,
and they are mad about those bogeys of theirs!

↗Rv 18:2 Hence wild cats and jackals will live there, 39
and ostriches make their home there.
She will never again be inhabited, for ever,
but remain uninhabited age after age.
=49:18 As when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, 40
and their neighbouring towns,
Yahweh declares,
51:26,37 no one will live there any more,
no human being settle there again.

The enemy from the north and the lion of Jordan *l*

=6:22–23 Look, a people is coming from the north, 41
a mighty nation;
from the far ends of the earth
many kings are stirring.
They are armed with bow and spear, 42
they are cruel and pitiless;
their noise is like the roaring of the sea;
they ride horses,
ready as one man to fight you,
daughter of Babylon!
The king of Babylon has heard the news, 43
=6:24 his hands fall limp,
anguish has seized him,
pain like that of a woman in labour.

=49:19–21 Look, like a lion he climbs the thickets of the Jordan 44
to the perennial pasture!
In a flash I shall make them run away
and there appoint someone I shall choose.
For who is there like me?
Who can hale me into court?
Name me the shepherd
who can stand up to me.
So now hear the plan 45
that Yahweh has laid against Babylon,
the schemes he has in mind
against the country of the Chaldaeans:
they will certainly be dragged away
like the smallest in the flock!
Their pastures will certainly be sacked before their eyes!
The earth quakes at the sound of Babylon's capture, 46
and the shouting echoes through the nations.

Yahweh makes war on Babylon

1 51 Yahweh says this: LXX 28
Against Babylon and the inhabitants of Leb-Kamai [a]
I shall rouse a destructive wind.
2 I shall send winnowers [b] to Babylon to winnow her 4:11 Mt 3:12
and leave her country bare,
for she will be beleaguered on all sides,
on the day of disaster.
3 Let no archer bend his bow!
Let no man swagger in his breastplate! [c]
—No quarter for her young men!
Curse her whole army with destruction! Jos 6:17c
4 In the country of the Chaldaeans the slaughtered will fall,
in the streets of Babylon, those run through by the sword.
5 For Israel and Judah have not been bereft
of their God, Yahweh Sabaoth,
although their country was full of sin
against the Holy One of Israel.

6 Escape from Babylon 50:8 Rv 18:4
(save your lives, each one of you);
do not perish for her guilt,
for now is the time for Yahweh's vengeance: 50:15
he will pay her her reward!
7 Babylon was a golden cup in Yahweh's hand, 25:15–29 Is 51:17h
she made the whole world drunk, ↗Rv 18:3
the nations drank her wine
and then went mad. [d]
8 Babylon has suddenly fallen, is broken: 50:23 ↗Rv 18:2
wail for her!
Fetch balm for her wounds,
perhaps she can be cured!
9 —'We tried to cure Babylon; she has got no better.
Leave her alone and let us each go to his own country.' 50:16
—Yes, her sentence reaches to the sky,
rises to the very clouds.
10 Yahweh has shown the uprightness of our cause. 50:34
Come, let us tell in Zion
what Yahweh our God has done.

11 Sharpen the arrows,
fill the quivers!

Yahweh has roused the spirit of the kings of the Medes, [e] because he has a plan Is 13:17
against Babylon to destroy it; this is Yahweh's revenge, revenge for his Temple.

12 Against the walls of Babylon raise the standard!
Strengthen the guard!
Post the sentries!
Take up concealed positions!

l. This prophecy re-applies to Babylon the threat of an enemy coming from the north, originally uttered against Judah, 6:22–24, and the prophecy against Edom, 49:19–21.

51 **a.** A cryptogram for Kashdim (Chaldaeans); *see also* 25:25–6 ('Sheshak' for Babel?).
b. 'winnowers' Aq., Symm., 'foreigners' Hebr.
c. The two negative commands *'al . . . 'al*), read with 15 Hebr. MSS and versions (MT: *'el . . . 'el* 'towards . . . towards'), is addressed to the besieged. The following lines are addressed to the besiegers. • Hebr. (*ketib*) repeats 'bend', a dittography omitted by *qere* and versions.
d. Hebr. repeats 'the nations'; versions omit.
e. The poem originally spoke of an enemy from the north, 50:3, 9, 41; 51:48. The prose gloss says more specifically the Medes (identified here, as in Is 13:17, with the Persians).

For Yahweh has both planned and done what he promised he would to the inhabitants of Babylon.

50:37–38 ↗Rv 17:1,15
Enthroned beside abundant waters, 13
rich in treasures,
you now meet your end,
the finish of your pillaging.[f]
By his own self Yahweh Sabaoth has sworn: 14
I shall fill you with men as though with grasshoppers,
and over you they will raise the triumph-shout.

=10:12–16
By his power he made the earth, 15
by his wisdom set the world firm,
by his discernment spread out the heavens.
When he thunders 16
there is a roaring of waters in heaven;
‖Ps 135:7 he raises clouds from the furthest limits of the earth,
makes the lightning flash for the downpour,
and brings the wind from his storehouse.
At this everyone stands stupefied, uncomprehending, 17
every goldsmith blushes for his idols;
his castings are but delusion,
with no breath in them.
They are futile, a laughable production, 18
when the time comes for them to be punished, they will vanish.
The Heritage of Jacob is not like these, 19
for he is the maker of everything,
and Israel is the tribe that is his heritage;[g]
His name is Yahweh Sabaoth.

Yahweh's hammer and the giant mountain

50:23
You were my mace, 20
a weapon of war.
With you I crushed nations,
struck kingdoms down,
with you crushed horse and rider, 21
with you crushed chariot and charioteer,
with you crushed man and woman, 22
with you crushed old man and young,
with you crushed young man and girl,

with you crushed shepherd and flock, 23
with you crushed ploughman and team,
with you crushed governors and magistrates,

and I shall repay Babylon and the inhabitants of Chaldaea, before your eyes, for all the wrongs they have done to Zion, Yahweh declares. 24

I am setting myself against you, 25
mountain of destruction,
Yahweh declares,
destroyer of the whole world!
I shall reach out my hand for you
and send you tumbling from the crags
and make you a burnt-out mountain.
No corner-stone will be taken from you again 26
and no foundation-stone,

for you will be a desert for ever,
Yahweh declares. 50:40

The end of Babylon is imminent

27 Raise the standard throughout the world,
sound the trumpet among the nations!
Consecrate nations to make war on her;
summon kingdoms against her:
Ararat, Minni, Ashkenaz;[h]
appoint a recruiting-officer for her enemies,
bring up the cavalry, bristling like locusts.

28 Consecrate nations to make war on her: the kings of Media, her governors, all her magistrates and the whole territory under their rule.

29 Then the earth trembled and writhed,
for Yahweh's plan against Babylon was being executed:
to change the country of Babylon
into an unpopulated desert.

30 The warriors of Babylon have done with fighting,
they have stayed inside their fortresses;
their courage exhausted,
they are now like women. 50:37 Is 19:16 Na 3:13
Her houses are on fire,
her gates are shattered.
31 Courier follows close on courier,
messenger on messenger,
to tell the king of Babylon
that his city has been taken from all sides,
32 the fords occupied,
the bastions burnt down
and the fighting men seized with panic.
33 For Yahweh Sabaoth, the God of Israel, says this:
the daughter of Babylon is like a threshing-floor
when it is being trodden:
a little while, and then the time
for harvesting her will come.

Yahweh's vengeance

34 He devoured me, consumed me, 50:17
Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon,
left me like an empty dish,
like the Dragon he has swallowed me whole,
filled his belly with my titbits[i]
and threw me out.
35 'On Babylon be the wounds I suffered!'[j]
the daughter of Zion will say.
'On the inhabitants of Chaldaea be my blood!'
Jerusalem will say.

f. 'the finish' (lit. 'are finished') *wetam* conj.; 'the measure' *'ammat* Hebr.

g. 'Israel' Targ., cf. 10:16; Hebr. omits.

h. Northern peoples living in the general area of Armenia: Ararat or Urartu; Minni, round Lake Van; Ashkenaz or the Scythians.

i. 'with my titbits' *ma'adannay* conj.; 'away from my delights' *me'adanay* Hebr. Rearranging vowels and redividing some of the words, one might also translate: 'he has driven me out of my Eden.' Jerusalem is the speaker.

j. lit. 'my violence, my broken flesh'.

So, Yahweh says this: 36
50:34 Look, I am taking up your cause
to make sure you are avenged.
I shall dry her river up,
make her springs run dry.
Babylon will become a heap of stones, 37
50:39 the lair of jackals,
a thing of horror and of scorn,
50:40 with no one living in it.
Like lions they roar together, 38
they growl like lions' whelps.
Are they feverish? I will prepare them a drink 39
=51:57 Ps 76:5 and make them drink until they are tipsy
and fall into an everlasting sleep,
never to wake again,
Yahweh declares.
I will drag them away to the slaughterhouse like lambs, 40
like rams and goats.

A dirge for Babylon

25:26 What! Has Sheshak been taken, 41
been conquered, the pride of the whole world?
=50:23 What a thing of horror Babylon has become
throughout the nations!
The sea has risen over Babylon, 42
she sinks beneath its boisterous waves.
Her towns have been turned into wasteland, 43
a parched land, a desert,
a country where no one lives
and where nobody goes.

Yahweh punishes the idols

50:2b I shall punish Bel in Babylon 44
and make him disgorge what he has swallowed.
In future the nations
will stream to him no more.
The very walls of Babylon will fall.
50:8;51:6 Get out of her, my people; 45
save your lives, each one of you,
from Yahweh's furious anger.

Mt 24:6seq. But do not be faint-hearted! Do not take fright at rumours hawked round the 46
country: one rumour spreads one year, next year another follows; violence rules on earth and one tyrant succeeds another.

So look, the days are coming 47
when I shall punish the idols of Babylon.
Her entire country will be humbled,
with all her slaughtered lying on home-soil.
↗Rv 18:20; 19:1–2 The heaven and earth and all within them 48
will shout for joy over Babylon,
for the destroyers from the north
are coming to her, Yahweh declares.
Babylon in her turn must fall, 49
you slaughtered ones of Israel,
just as through Babylon there fell
men slaughtered all over the world.

50 You who have escaped her sword,
leave her, do not wait!
Remember Yahweh from afar,
let Jerusalem come into your mind. Ps 137:5
51 —'We were ashamed when we heard of the outrage,
we were covered in confusion
because foreigners had entered Ps 74:3–8 Lm 1:10
the Temple of Yahweh's holy places.'
52 —So look, the days are coming,
Yahweh declares,
when I shall punish her idols,
and the wounded will groan throughout her country.

53 Were Babylon to scale the heavens 49:16 Is 14:13
or reinforce her towering citadel,
destroyers would still come to her on my orders,
Yahweh declares.
54 The din of shouting from Babylon,
of immense destruction, from the country of the Chaldaeans!
55 Yes, Yahweh is laying Babylon waste
and silencing her monstrous din,
whose waves used to roar like the ocean
and their tumultuous voices rang out.
56 For the destroyer has fallen on Babylon,
her warriors are captured, their bows are broken.
Yes, Yahweh is a God of retribution,
he never fails to repay.
57 I shall make her princes and her sages drink, 51:39
her governors, her magistrates, her warriors;
they will fall into an everlasting sleep,
never to wake again,
declares the King,
whose name is Yahweh Sabaoth.

Babylon rased to the ground

58 Yahweh Sabaoth says this:
The walls of Babylon the Great
will be rased to the ground
and her lofty gates
will be burnt down.
Thus peoples toil for nothing ||Hab 2:13
and nations wear themselves out, for the flames.

The written prophecy thrown into the Euphrates [k]

59 This is the order that the prophet Jeremiah gave to Seraiah son of Neriah, son of
Mahseiah when Seraiah left for Babylon with Zedekiah king of Judah, in the fourth
60 year of his reign. Seraiah was lord chamberlain. ·Now, on one sheet, Jeremiah had
written down the entire disaster that was to befall Babylon, that is, all these words
61 recorded here against Babylon. ·Jeremiah then said to Seraiah, 'When you reach
62 Babylon, see to it that you read all these words aloud. ·Then say, "You, Yahweh,
have promised to destroy this place, so that no one will live here ever again, neither
63 human nor animal, and it will be desolate for ever." ·Then, when you have finished 51:26
reading this sheet, tie a stone to it and throw it into the middle of the Euphrates,

k. This symbolic gesture, *see* 18:1a, which was to be kept secret, took place in about 593 BC. It demonstrates the faith of the prophet in the irrevocability of God's word, and also his complete lucidity of mind: at the very moment when Jeremiah was preaching submission to Babylon, he made no bones about admitting the crimes of the Babylonians.

↗Rv 18:21 with the words, "So shall Babylon sink, never to rise again from the disaster which I am going to bring on her." ' 64

Thus far the words of Jeremiah. [i]

VI: APPENDIX [a]

‖2 K 24:18–25:30 **The destruction of Jerusalem and the pardon of Jehoiachin**

52 Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he came to the throne, and he reigned for eleven years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Hamital daughter of Jeremiah, of Libnah. [b] 1
·He did what is displeasing to Yahweh, just as Jehoiakim had done. 2
·That this should happen to Jerusalem and Judah was due to Yahweh's anger, resulting in his casting them away from his presence. 3

=39:1–10 Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon. 4
·In the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, [c] on the tenth day of the month, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon advanced on Jerusalem with his entire army; he pitched camp in front of the city and threw up earthworks round it. 5
·The city lay under siege till the eleventh year of King Zedekiah. 6
·In the fourth month, [d] on the ninth day of the month, when famine was raging in the city and there was no food for the populace, 7
·a breach was made in the city wall. The king [e] and all the fighting men then fled, leaving the city under cover of dark, by way of the gate between the two walls, which is near the king's
39:4e garden—the Chaldaeans had surrounded the city—and made his way towards the Arabah. 8
·The Chaldaean troops pursued the king and caught up with Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho, where all his troops deserted. 9
·But the Chaldaeans captured the king and took him to the king of Babylon at Riblah in the territory of Hamath, where he passed sentence on him. 10
·He had Zedekiah's sons slaughtered before his eyes; he also had all the chief men of Judah put to death at Riblah. 11
·He then put
Ezk 12:13 out Zedekiah's eyes and, loading him with chains, the king of Babylon carried him off to Babylon where he kept him prisoner until his dying day.

In the fifth month, [f] on the tenth day of the month—it was in the nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon—Nebuzaradan commander of the guard, a member of the king of Babylon's staff, entered Jerusalem. 12
·He burnt down the Temple of Yahweh, the royal palace and all the houses in Jerusalem. [g] 13
·The Chaldaean troops who accompanied the commander of the guard demolished all the walls surrounding Jerusalem. 14

Nebuzaradan commander of the guard deported (some of the poor people and) [h] the remainder of the population left in the city, the deserters who had gone over to the king of Babylon, and the rest of the artisans. 15
·But Nebuzaradan commander of the guard left some of the poor country-people behind as vineyard workers and ploughmen. 16

The Chaldaeans broke up the bronze pillars from the Temple of Yahweh, the wheeled stands and the bronze Sea, which were in the Temple of Yahweh, and took all the bronze away to Babylon. 17
·They also took the ash containers, the scoops, the knives, the sprinkling bowls, the incense bowls, and all the bronze furnishings used in worship. 18
·The commander of the guard also took the bowls, the censers, the sprinkling bowls, the ash containers, the lamp-stands, the goblets and the saucers: everything that was made of gold and everything made of silver. 19
As regards the two pillars, the one Sea, the twelve bronze oxen supporting the Sea, [i] and the wheeled stands, which King Solomon had made for the Temple of Yahweh, there was no reckoning the weight of bronze in all these objects. 20
·As regards the pillars, the height of one pillar was eighteen cubits, its circumference was twelve cubits, it was four fingers thick, and hollow inside; 21
·on it stood a capital of bronze, the height of the capital being five cubits; round the capital were filigree and pomegranates, all in bronze. So also for the second pillar. [j] 22
·There were ninety-six pomegranates round the sides, [k] making a hundred pomegranates round the filigree in all. 23

24 The commander of the guard took prisoner Seraiah the chief priest, Zephaniah
25 the priest next in rank, and the three guardians of the threshold. ·In the city he took prisoner an official who was in command of the fighting men, seven of the king's personal friends who were discovered in the city, the secretary to the army commander responsible for military conscription, and sixty men of distinction
26 discovered in the city. ·Nebuzaradan commander of the guard took these men and
27 brought them to the king of Babylon at Riblah, ·and at Riblah, in the territory of Hamath, the king of Babylon had them put to death. Thus Judah was deported from its country.

28 The number of people deported by Nebuchadnezzar was as follows.[l] In the
29 seventh year: three thousand and twenty-three Judaeans; ·in the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar, eight hundred and thirty-two persons were deported from
30 Jerusalem; ·in the twenty-third year of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuzaradan commander of the guard deported seven hundred and forty-five Judaeans. In all: four thousand six hundred persons.[m]

31 But in the thirty-seventh year of the exile of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the twelfth month, on the twenty-fifth day of the month, Evil-Merodach king of Babylon, in the year he came to the throne,[n] pardoned Jehoiachin king of Judah
32 and released him from prison. ·He treated him kindly and allotted him a seat
33 above those of the other kings who were with him in Babylon. ·So Jehoiachin laid aside his prisoner's garb and for the rest of his life always ate at the king's table.
34 And his upkeep was permanently ensured by the king, day after day, for the rest of his life until the day he died.[o]

l. This colophon, absent from Gk, must originally have followed v. 58. It is preceded by the final verb of v. 58, 'wear themselves out', repeated here accidentally.

52 a. This chapter is a repetition, with some complementary material, of 2 K 24:18–25:30 (*see* notes), and is in part parallel with Jr 39:1–10; the three passages draw on the one source. It has been added to Jr as Is 36–39 were added to Is. It shows how the prophet's threats came true and ends, like 2 K, by offering a hope for the future, such as Jeremiah too had entertained.

b. Libnah, a town belonging to the tribe of Judah, Jos 15:42, was probably modern Tell es-Safi, north of the Philistine town of Gath.

c. End of December, 589 BC.

d. June–July, 587 BC.

e. 'The king' conj., cf. 39:4 and v. 8; Hebr. omits.

f. July–August, 587 BC.

g. Here and at 2 K 25:9, a gloss adds, 'he also burnt the house of every important person.'

h. The words printed in brackets are missing from 39:5; 2 K 25:11, and perhaps come from v. 16.

i. 'the twelve . . . Sea' are not found in 2 K 25:16; the bronze oxen had already been taken, in the reign of Ahaz, 2 K 16:17.

j. Hebr. adds 'and the pomegranates'.

k. Meaning uncertain. The word comes from the root meaning 'wind', 'breath'. Alternative translations, therefore: 'which hung free' or 'in relief' (lit. 'in the air'), but the 'winds' can also mean 'sides', Ezk 42:20 (cf. Ezk 37:9, about the four cardinal points, the four 'sides' of the world).

l. This short list, vv. 28–30, peculiar to Jr, seems to have been borrowed from a Babylonian source and apparently takes account only of adults. The regnal years are calculated in the Babylonian fashion which does not count the incomplete year of accession.

m. The dates of these three deportations are thus 598, 597 and lastly 587 BC. The final one may have been prompted by the rebellion of Ammon and Moab, which possibly had supporters in Judah.

n. In 561 BC.

o. Jr ends with Jehoiachin's pardon, symbolising the end of the captivity.

LAMENTATIONS

FIRST LAMENTATION [a]

1 *Aleph*

How deserted she sits, 1
the city once thronged with people!
Once the greatest of nations,
Ba 4:12 she is now like a widow.
Once the princess of states,
she is now put to forced labour.

2:18 Jr 9:17 *Bet*

All night long she is weeping, 2
tears running down her cheeks.
Ps 69:20 Jr 30:14 Not one of all her lovers [b]
remains to comfort her.
Jn 13:18 Her friends have all betrayed her
and become her enemies.

Gimel

Judah has gone into exile [c] 3
after much pain and toil.
Living among the nations
she finds no respite;
her persecutors all overtake her
where there is no way out.

Jr 14:2 *Dalet*

The roads to Zion are in mourning; 4
no one comes to her festivals now.
Is 3:26 Her gateways are all deserted;
her priests groan;
her young girls are grief-stricken;
she suffers bitterly.

2:17 Dt 28:25 Ps 89:42 *He*

Her foes now have the upper hand, 5
her enemies prosper,
for Yahweh has made her suffer
for her many, many crimes;
her children have gone away into captivity
driven in front of the oppressor.

Ezk 10:18seq.; 11:22seq. *Waw*

And from the daughter of Zion 6
all her splendour has departed.
Her princes were like stags
which could find no pasture,
exhausted, as they flee
before the hunter.

Zain

Jerusalem remembers 7
her days of misery and distress; [d]

when her people fell into the enemy's clutches
there was no one to help her.
Her enemies looked on
and laughed at her downfall.

8 *Het*
Jerusalem has sinned so gravely
that she has become a thing unclean.
All who used to honour her despise her,
having seen her nakedness; Is 47:3 Ezk 16:37
she herself groans aloud
and turns her face away.

9 *Tet*
Her filth befouls her skirts—
she never thought to end like this,
and hence her astonishing fall
with no one to comfort her. 1:2
'Yahweh, look at my misery,
for the enemy is triumphant!'

10 *Yod*
The enemy stretched out his hand
for everything she treasured;[e] 2 K 24:13
she saw the heathen
enter her sanctuary, Dt 23:4 Jr 51:51
whom you had forbidden Ezk 44:7–9
to enter your Assembly. Ac 21:28

11 *Kaph*
All her people are groaning,
looking for something to eat; Dt 28:51seq.
they have bartered their treasures for food,
to keep themselves alive.
'Look, Yahweh, and consider
how despised I am!

12 *Lamed*
'All you[f] who pass this way,
look and see:
is any sorrow like the sorrow Dn 9:12;12:1 Mt 24:21
inflicted on me,
with which Yahweh struck me
on the day of his burning anger?

13 *Mem*
'He sent fire from on high
deep into my bones;
he stretched a net for my feet,
he pulled me back;
he left me shattered,
sick all day long.

14 *Nun*
'He has watched out for my offences,
with his hand he enmeshes me,
his yoke is on my neck, Dt 28:48
he has deprived me of strength.

1 **a.** The poet describes the pitiable plight of Jerusalem. Personified Zion speaks in v. 9 and v. 11, to utter a complaint, vv. 12–16, then a prayer, vv. 18seq., which is simultaneously a confession, an aspiration and an imprecation. • Gk inserts the introduction 'When Israel had been taken into captivity and Jerusalem had become a desert, it happened that the prophet Jeremiah sat down in tears: he uttered this lamentation over Jerusalem, he said . . .'

b. The former allies of Judah, cf. Jr 4:30; 30:14; Ezk 16:37–40; 23:22–29.

c. Contrary to normal practice, Judah is personified here in the feminine.

d. Hebr. adds 'all her precious things existing from the days of old', a gloss breaking the rhythm.

e. The treasures of the Temple, cf. Jos 6:24; 1 K 14:26; 2 K 24:13, but also no doubt the possessions of private persons deposited there, *see also* 2 M 4:3seq.

f. 'You' Vulg.; 'Not for you' Hebr.

The Lord has put me into clutches
which I am helpless to resist. [g]

Samek 15 'The Lord has rejected
all my warriors within my walls,
he has summoned a host against me
to crush my young men;
Is 63:3 Jl 4:13 in the winepress the Lord trampled
the young daughter of Judah.

1:2 *Ain* 16 'And that is why I weep;
my eyes stream with water, [h]
since a comforter who could revive me
is far away.
My children are shattered,
for the enemy has proved too strong.'

Pe 17 Zion stretches out her hands,
with no one to comfort her.
Yahweh has commanded Jacob's enemies
to surround him;
1:8 they treat Jerusalem
as though she were unclean.

Zade 18 'Yahweh is in the right,
for I rebelled against his command.
Listen, all you peoples,
and see my sorrow.
My young girls and my young men
have gone into captivity.

1:2 *Qoph* 19 'I called to my lovers;
they failed me.
My priests and my elders
expired in the city,
1:11 as they searched for food
to keep themselves alive.

Resh 20 'Look, Yahweh. I am in distress!
Jr 4:19 My inmost being is in ferment;
my heart turns over inside me—
how rebellious I have been!
Dt 32:25 Jr 9:20 Outside, the sword bereaves;
inside it is like death.

Shin 21 'Listen, for I am groaning,
with no one to comfort me.
All my enemies have heard of my disaster,
they are glad about what you have done.
Am 5:18m Bring the Day you once foretold,
so that they may be like me! [i]

Jr 51:35 *Taw* 22 'Let all their wickedness come before you,
and treat them
as you have treated me
for all my crimes;
numberless are my groans,
and I am sick at heart.'

SECOND LAMENTATION[a]

1 2 *Aleph*
In his anger, with what darkness
has the Lord enveloped the daughter of Zion!
He has flung the beauty of Israel
from heaven to the ground,
without regard for his footstool[b] — Ezk 43:7
on the day of his anger.

2 *Bet*
The Lord pitilessly engulfed
all the homes of Jacob;
in his fury he tore down
the fortresses of the daughter of Judah; — Dt 28:52
he threw to the ground, he desecrated
the kingdom and its princes.

3 *Gimel*
In his burning anger
he broke all the might of Israel, — Ps 75:4c
withdrew his protecting right hand
at the coming of the enemy,
and blazed against Jacob like a fire — 4:11
that burns up everything near it.

4 *Dalet*
Like an enemy he bent his bow,
and his right hand held firm;[c] — Jr 21:5–6
like a foe he slaughtered
all those who were a delight to see;
on the tent of the daughter of Zion
he poured out his fury like fire.

5 *He*
The Lord behaved like an enemy;
he engulfed Israel,
he engulfed all its citadels,
he destroyed its fortresses
and for the daughter of Judah
multiplied weeping on wailing.

6 *Waw*
He wrecked his domain like a garden,[d]
destroyed his assembly-points, — 2 Ch 36:19 Jr 52:13
Yahweh erased the memory
of festivals and Sabbaths in Zion; — 1:4 Is 1:13 Ho 2:13 Zp 3:18
in the heat of his anger he treated
king and priest with contempt.

7 *Zain*
The Lord has rejected his altar, — Ezk 24:21
he has come to loathe his sanctuary

g. V. reconstructed in line with Gk-Luc. and Syr., Hebr. disordered, reads literally, 'It is bound, the yoke of my sins, in his hand they are entangled, they have risen on to my neck, he has deprived me of strength, the Lord has put me into clutches, I can resist no more.' • Here and elsewhere below, 'the Lord' represents the Massoretic reading of the sacred name 'Yahweh' (pronounced *adonai*, lit. 'my Lord'), which passed into the written text instead of the name itself. The original word, YHWH, is preserved in a few MSS.

h. lit. 'my eye, my eye'; the repetition could be merely stylistic, cf. 3:20, but could also express the plural.

i. 'Listen' Syr.; 'They have listened' Hebr. • 'Bring' Syr.; 'You have brought' Hebr. • Disastrous for Israel in pre-exilic thought, *see* Am 5:18; Zp 1:14, the Day of Yahweh was later to bode disaster for the nations, *see* Jl 3:14.

2 **a.** In vv. 1–12 the poet describes the wretched fate of kings, priests, prophets, elders, children; then, addressing Zion, vv. 13–17, he reminds her how the false prophets have lied, and urges her to bewail her fate before God, vv. 18–22.

b. Yahweh's footstool was the Temple, *see* Ps 99:5; 132:7; Ezk 43:7.

c. As in Jr 12:7; 30:14, Yahweh is presented, tragically, as his people's enemy.

d. Instead of 'like a garden' (*gan*), the original reading may have been 'like a thief' (*gannab*), changed later out of respect for God.

and has given her palace walls
into the clutches of the enemy;
from the uproar they made in Yahweh's temple
it might have been a festival day![e]

Jr 5:10 *Het* Yahweh has resolved to destroy 8
the walls of the daughter of Zion,
2 K 21:13 Is 34:11 stretching out the line, not staying his hand
until he has engulfed everything,
thus bringing mourning on wall and rampart;
alike they crumbled.

Tet Her gates have sunk into the ground; 9
he has broken and shattered their bars.
Dt 4:6,8; 28:36 2 K 25:7 Ps 74:9 Ezk 7:26 Her king and her princes are among the gentiles,
there is no instruction,
furthermore her prophets cannot find
any vision from Yahweh.

Yod Mute, they sit on the ground, 10
Jr 6:26 the elders of the daughter of Zion;
they have put dust on their heads
and wrapped themselves in sackcloth.
The young girls of Jerusalem bow their heads
to the ground.

Kaph My eyes are worn out with weeping, 11
my inmost being is in ferment,
my heart plummets
at the destruction of my young people,
as the children and babies grow faint
in the streets of the city.

Lamed They keep saying to their mothers, 12
1:11 'Where is some food?'
as they faint like wounded men
in the streets of the city,
as they breathe their last
on their mothers' breasts.

1:12 *Mem* To what can I compare or liken you, 13
daughter of Jerusalem?
Who can rescue and comfort you,[f]
young daughter of Zion?
For huge as the sea is your ruin:
Jr 30:12 who can heal you?

Jr 5:31;29:8 Ezk 13:10 *Nun* The visions your prophets had for you 14
were deceptive whitewash;
they did not lay bare your guilt
so as to change your fortunes:
the visions they told you
were deceptive.[g]

Samek All who pass your way 15
Jr 19:8 Mt 27:39par. clap their hands at the sight;
they whistle and shake their heads
over the daughter of Jerusalem,

'Is this the city they call Perfection of Beauty,
the joy of the whole world?' Ezk 16:14

16 *Pe*
Your enemies open their mouths
in chorus against you;
they whistle and grind their teeth;
they say, 'We have swallowed her up.
This is the day we were waiting for; Am 5:18
at last we have seen it!'

17 *Ain*
Yahweh has done what he planned,
has carried out his threat,
as he ordained long ago: Dt 28:15
he has destroyed without pity,
increasing the might of your foes—
and letting your foes get the credit.

18 *Zade*
Cry then to the Lord,
rampart of the daughter of Zion;[h]
let your tears flow like a torrent, 1:2
day and night;
allow yourself no respite,
give your eyes no rest!

19 *Qoph*
Up, cry out in the night-time
as each watch begins!
Pour your heart out like water
in Yahweh's presence!
Raise your hands to him
for the lives of your children
(who faint with hunger
at the end of every street)![i]

20 *Resh*
'Look, Yahweh, and consider:
whom have you ever treated like this?
Should women eat their little ones, 4:10
the children they have nursed? Dt 28:53 Jr 19:9
Should priest and prophet be slaughtered Ba 2:3
in the Lord's sanctuary?

21 *Shin*
'Children and old people are lying
on the ground in the streets;
my young men and young girls
have fallen by the sword;
you have killed them, on the day of your anger,
you have slaughtered them pitilessly.

22 *Taw*
'As though to a festival you called together
terrors from all sides,[j] Jr 20:10b
so that, on the day of Yahweh's anger,
none escaped and none survived.

e. But it was the enemy's war cry.

f. 'compare' Vulg.; 'testify' Hebr. • 'Who . . . comfort you' Gk; 'To what can I liken you to comfort you' Hebr.

g. 'whitewash', an allusion to Ezk 13:10. • 'to change your fortunes', a frequent expression in Jr, also meaning 'to bring back the captives'. • 'they gave you', lit. 'they saw for you'.

h. 'Cry then' *tza'aqi lak* conj.; Hebr. *tza'aq libbam* 'their heart cries'. • The image of the rampart later in the v. does not make the best of sense, and some read 'groan, daughter of Zion' *hemi* instead of *homat*; but this conj. has no textual support.

i. The last couplet breaks the rhythm and is additional, inspired by vv. 11–12; it also appears in Gk.

j. 'terrors' conj.; 'my terrors' Hebr.

Those whom I had nursed and reared,
my enemy has annihilated them all.'

THIRD LAMENTATION[a]

3 *Aleph*

I am the man familiar with misery 1
under the rod of his fury.
He has led and guided me 2
Jn 8:12b into darkness, not light.
Against none but me does he turn his hand, 3
again and again, all day.

Jb 30:30 *Bet*

He has wasted my flesh and skin away, 4
has broken my bones.
He has besieged me and made hardship 5
a circlet round my head.[b]
Ps 143:3 He has forced me to dwell where all is dark, 6
like those long-dead in their everlasting home.

Jb 3:23; 19:8 *Gimel*

He has walled me in so that I cannot escape; 7
he has weighed me down with chains;
even when I shout for help, 8
he shuts out my prayer.
He has closed my way with blocks of stone, 9
he has obstructed my paths.

Dalet

For me he is a lurking bear, 10
Jb 10:16 a lion in hiding.
Heading me off, he has torn me apart, 11
leaving me shattered.
Jb 16:12–13 He has bent his bow and used me 12
as a target for his arrows.

He

He has shot deep into me 13
with shafts from his quiver.
Dt 28:37 Jb 30:9 Ps 69:11seq. Jr 20:7 I have become a joke to all my own people,[c] 14
their refrain all day long.
He has given me my fill of bitterness, 15
Ps 69:21 Jr 23:15 he has made me drunk with wormwood.

Waw

He has broken my teeth with gravel, 16
he has fed me on ashes.[d]
Jr 16:5 I have been deprived of peace,[e] 17
I have forgotten what happiness is
Jb 17:15 and thought, 'My lasting hope 18
in Yahweh is lost.'

Zain

Bring to mind my misery and anguish; 19
it is wormwood and gall!
My heart dwells on this continually 20
and sinks within me.
This is what I shall keep in mind 21
and so regain some hope:

Het

Surely Yahweh's mercies are not over, 22
Ex 34:6–7 his deeds of faithful love not exhausted;
every morning they are renewed; 23
great is his faithfulness![f]

24 'Yahweh is all I have,' I say to myself, Ps 16:5;73:26
'and so I shall put my hope in him.'

25 *Tet* Yahweh is good to those who trust him,
to all who search for him.
26 It is good to wait in silence Ps 40:1
for Yahweh to save. Is 30:18
27 It is good for someone to bear the yoke
from a young age,

28 *Yod* to sit in solitude and silence Jr 15:17
when it weighs heavy,
29 to lay one's head in the dust—
maybe there is hope—
30 to offer one's cheek to the striker, Is 50:6
to have one's fill of disgrace! Mt 5:39

31 *Kaph* For the Lord will not reject
anyone for ever.
32 If he brings grief, he will have pity Is 54:8–9
out of the fullness of his faithful love,
33 for it is not for his own pleasure Ezk 33:11
that he torments and grieves the human race.

34 *Lamed* When all the prisoners in a country
are crushed underfoot,
35 when human rights are overridden
in defiance of the Most High,
36 when someone is cheated of justice,
does not the Lord see it?

37 *Mem* Who has only to speak and it is so done? Gn 1
Who commands, if not the Lord? Ps 33:9
38 From where, if not from the mouth of the Most High,
do evil and good come? Is 45:7
39 Why then should anyone complain?
Better to be bold against one's sins. [g]

40 *Nun* Let us examine our path, let us ponder it
and return to Yahweh. Is 55:7
41 Let us raise our hearts and hands [h]
to God in heaven.
42 We are the ones who have sinned, who have rebelled,
and you have not forgiven.

43 *Samek* You have enveloped us in anger,
pursuing us, slaughtering without pity.
44 You have wrapped yourself in a cloud
too thick for prayer to pierce. 3:8
45 You have reduced us to rubbish Dt 28:37
and refuse among the nations. 1 Co 4:13

3 **a.** Here, as in several Psalms, the complaint of an individual expands (in vv. 40–47) into a collective lament. The generalities in vv. 22–39 are representative of themes common in wisdom literature.

b. 'hardship a circlet round my head' *roshi tela'ah* conj.; Hebr. *rosh utela'ah* 'with gall and hardship'. • A difficult verse. The image of illness is apparently immediately followed by the imagery of a siege, but the text is uncertain.

c. Some Hebr. MSS and Syr. read 'a joke to all nations', indicating that the man of v.1 had later come to be identified with Israel.

d. 'fed me on ashes' Gk; 'overturned me in ashes' Hebr.

e. 'I was deprived' Syr; 'you deprived' Hebr.

f. 'his faithfulness' conj.; 'your faithfulness' Hebr. • Vv. 22–24 are missing in Gk.

g. 'to be bold' reading *yehi geber*, lit. 'to be a man', instead of *hay geber*, whose first word Hebr. attaches to the previous line.

h. 'and our hands' Vulg.; 'towards our hands' Hebr.

Pe

Our enemies open their mouths 46
in chorus against us.
Terror and pitfall have been our lot, 47
ravage and ruin.
My eyes dissolve in torrents of tears 48
at the ruin of my beloved people.

Ain

My eyes will weep ceaselessly, 49
without relief,
Is 63:15 until Yahweh looks down 50
and sees from heaven.
My eyes have grown sore 51
over all the daughters of my city.

Zade

Unprovoked, my enemies 52
Ps 35:19; 69:4 hunted me down like a bird.
They shut me finally in a pit, 53
they closed me in with a stone.
The waters rose over my head; 54
I thought, 'I am lost!'

Qoph

Yahweh, I called on your name 55
from the deep pit.
Ps 130:2 You heard my voice, do not close your ear 56
to my prayer, to my cry.
You are near when I call to you. 57
You said, 'Do not be afraid!'

Resh

Lord, you defended my cause, 58
you have redeemed my life.[f]
Yahweh, you have seen the wrong done to me, 59
grant me redress.
You have seen their vindictiveness, 60
all their plots against me.

Shin

You have heard their insults, Yahweh, 61
all their plots against me,
the whispering and murmuring of my enemies 62
against me all day long.
Look, whether they sit or stand, 63
3:14 I am their refrain.

Jr 51:56 *Taw*

Yahweh, repay them 64
as their deeds deserve.
Lay hardness of heart 65
as your curse on them.
Angrily pursue them, root them out 66
from under your heavens![k]

FOURTH LAMENTATION

Jr 6:27–30 **4** *Aleph*

How the gold has tarnished, 1
how the fine gold has changed!
The sacred stones lie scattered
at the corner of every street.[a]

Bet

The children of Zion, 2
as precious as finest gold—

to think that they should now be reckoned
like crockery made by a potter! Jr 19:11

3 *Gimel* The very jackals give the breast,
and suckle their young:
but the daughter of my people is as cruel
as the ostriches of the desert. Jb 39:13–17

4 *Dalet* The tongue of the baby at the breast
sticks to its palate for thirst;
little children ask for bread, 2:11–12
no one gives them any.

5 *He* Those who used to eat only the best,
now lie dying in the streets;
those who were reared in the purple
claw at the rubbish heaps,

6 *Waw* for the wickedness of the daughter of my people
exceeded the sins of Sodom,
which was overthrown in a moment Gn 19
without a hand's being laid on it.

7 *Zain* Once her young people were brighter than snow,
whiter than milk;
rosier than coral their bodies,
their hue like sapphire. [b]

8 *Het* Now their faces are blacker than soot,
they are not recognised in the streets,
the skin has shrunk over their bones,
as dry as a stick.

9 *Tet* Happier those killed by the sword
than those killed by famine:
they waste away, sunken
for lack of the fruits of the earth. [c]

10 *Yod* With their own hands, kindly women 2:20
cooked their children;
this was their food
when the daughter of my people was ruined.

11 *Kaph* Yahweh indulged his fury,
he vented his fierce anger,
he lit a fire in Zion 2:3
which devoured her foundations.

12 *Lamed* The kings of the earth never believed,
nor did any of the inhabitants of the world,
that foe or enemy would ever penetrate
the gates of Jerusalem.

13 *Mem* Owing to the sins of her prophets Jr 6:13
and the crimes of her priests,

i. 'to my prayer' Gk (which omits the following word, probably a gloss); 'to my liberation' Hebr.

j. God is the *go'el* of those who trust in him, *see* Rt 2:20i; Is 41:14g.

k. 'your heavens' Gk MSS, Syr.; 'Yahweh's heavens' Hebr.

4 a. The gold and sacred stones symbolise the population of Jerusalem.

b. 'her young people' *ne'areka* conj.; Hebr. *nezireka* 'her Nazirites', 'their hue' following Syro-Hex . and Origen; the Hebr. *gizerah* (from a root meaning 'to cut', 'to separate') remains unexplained in this passage.

c. lit. 'they flow away, pierced' perhaps in the sense 'made transparent by famine'.

Ezk 7:23

who had shed the blood of the upright,
in the heart of the city,

Nun

Nb 35:32–33

they wandered blindly through the streets, 14
polluted with blood,
so that no one dared
to touch their clothes.

Lv 13:45

Samek

'Keep away! Unclean!' people shouted, 15
'Keep away! Keep away! Don't touch!'
If they left and fled to the nations,
they were not allowed to stay there either. [d]

Pe

The face of Yahweh destroyed them, 16
he will look on them no more.
There was no respect for the priests,
no deference for the elders.

Ain

Continually we were wearing out our eyes, 17
watching for help—in vain.
From our towers we watched for a nation
which could not save us anyway. [e]

Jr 37:7
Ezk 29:6

Zade

Men dogged our steps, 18
to keep us out of our streets.
Our end was near, our days were done,
our end had come.

Qoph

Our pursuers were swifter 19
than eagles in the sky;
they hounded our steps through the mountains,
they lay in ambush for us in the wilds.

Resh

The breath of our nostrils, Yahweh's anointed, [f] 20
was caught in their traps,

2 K 25:5–6

he of whom we said, 'In his shadow
we shall live among the nations.'

Shin

Rejoice, exult, daughter of Edom, 21
you who reside in Uz! [g]

Gn 9:21
Is 51:17h
Jr 25:16
Hab 2:15seq.

To you in turn the cup will pass;
you will get drunk and strip yourself naked!

Is 40:2

Taw

Your wickedness is atoned for, daughter of Zion, 22
he will never banish you again.

Ps 137:7

But your wickedness, daughter of Edom, will he punish,
your sins he will lay bare!

FIFTH LAMENTATION [a]

5 Yahweh, remember what has happened to us; 1
consider, and see our degradation.

Our heritage has passed to strangers, 2
our homes to foreigners.

We are orphans, we are fatherless; 3
our mothers are like widows.

We have to buy our own water to drink, 4
our own wood we can get only at a price.

5 The yoke is on our necks; we are persecuted; [b]
exhausted we are, allowed no rest.

6 We made a pact with Egypt, Jr 2:18
with Assyria, to have plenty of food. [c]

7 Our ancestors sinned; they are no more,
and we bear the weight of their guilt. [d] Ezk 18:2

8 Slaves rule us; [e]
there is no one to rescue us from their clutches.

9 At peril of our lives we earn our bread,
by risking the sword of the desert.

10 Our skin is as hot as an oven, [f]
from the scorch of famine.

11 The women in Zion have been raped,
the young girls in the towns of Judah.

12 Princes have been hanged by their hands;
the face of the old has won no respect.

13 Youths have been put to the mill,
boys stagger under loads of wood.

14 The elders have deserted the gateway;
the young have given up their music.

15 Joy has vanished from our hearts;
our dancing has turned to mourning.

16 The crown has fallen from our heads.
Alas that ever we sinned!

17 This is why our hearts are sick;
this is why our eyes are dim:

18 because Mount Zion is desolate;
jackals roam to and fro on it. Is 34:13–15

19 Yet you, Yahweh, rule from eternity;
your throne endures from age to age. [g] Ps 102:12; 145:13; 146:10

20 Why do you never remember us? Ps 13:1
Why do you abandon us so long?

21 Make us come back to you, Yahweh, and we will come back. Jr 31:18
Restore us as we were before!

22 Unless you have utterly rejected us,
in an anger which knows no limit.

d. The guilty were treated like lepers. • After 'fled', Hebr. adds 'they said'. An alternative translation would therefore be, 'The nations, for their part, said, "They cannot stay here."'

e. The nation was Egypt, Judah's ally in the previous war.

f. Zedekiah, *see* 2 K 25:6. • 'The breath of our nostrils', i.e. our very life.

g. For Uz, *see* Gn 36:28; Jb 1:1. Far from helping conquered Judah, the neighbouring peoples of Moab, Ammon and particularly Edom, took advantage of her defeat, *see* Is 34:5b, hence the frequent anathemas against Edom in post-exilic prophetic literature, *see* Is 34; Ezk 25.

5 **a.** Entitled 'The Prayer of Jeremiah' in the Vulg.

b. Restoring 'the yoke' *'ol* which has fallen from the text by haplography before 'on' *'al*.

c. Israel is now at the mercy of its traditional enemies for its very existence. 'Assyria' is a conventional expression, here designating Babylon, *see* Jr 2:18.

d. The author sees the present disaster in terms of collective retribution; this has not yet yielded to the principle of individual retribution, *see* Ezk 14:12d.

e. The Chaldaean officials. The technical term for officers of the king ('servants') is used here in an insulting sense.

f. 'is' Gk; 'are' Hebr.

g. Despite the ruin of his earthly Temple, Yahweh, ever glorious and mighty, reigns in heaven.

THE BOOK OF BARUCH

INTRODUCTION

Baruch and the Jews in Babylon [a]

Jr 32:12; 36:4

1 This is the text of the book written in Babylon by Baruch son of Neraiah, son of Mahseiah, son of Zedekiah, son of Hasadiah, son of Hilkiah, ·in the fifth year, [b] on the seventh day of the month, at the time when the Chaldaeans had captured Jerusalem and burned it down.

2 K 24:8–17
Jr 22:24–30

Baruch read the text of this book aloud to Jeconiah [c] son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, and to all the people who had come to hear the reading, ·to the nobles and the sons of the king, [d] and to the elders; to the whole people, that is, to the least no less than to the greatest, to all who lived in Babylon beside the river Sud. ·On hearing it they wept, fasted and prayed before the Lord; ·and they collected as much money as each could afford ·and sent it to Jerusalem to the priest Jehoiakim [e] son of Hilkiah, son of Shallum, and the other priests, and all the people who were with him in Jerusalem. ·Also on the tenth day of Sivan he was given the utensils of the house of the Lord, which had been removed from the Temple, to take them back [f] to the land of Judah; these were silver utensils which Zedekiah son of Josiah,

2 K 24:14

king of Judah, had had made ·after Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had deported Jeconiah from Jerusalem to Babylon, together with the princes, the metalworkers, [g] the nobles and the common people.

Now, they wrote, we are sending you money to pay for burnt offerings, offerings for sin, and incense. Prepare oblations and offer them on the altar of the Lord our

Jr 29:7
1 Tm 2:1–2

God; ·and pray for the long life of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and of his son Belshazzar, that they may endure on earth as long as the heavens endure; and that the Lord may give us strength and enlighten our eyes, so that we may lead our lives under the protection of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and of his

Dn 5:2.13

son Belshazzar, and that we may serve them for a long time and win their favour. Also pray to the Lord our God for us, because we have sinned against him, and the anger, the fury of the Lord, has still not turned away from us. ·Lastly, you must read the booklet which we are sending you, publicly in the house of the Lord on the feastday [h] and appropriate days. ·You must say:

I: THE PRAYER OF THE EXILES

Confession of sins

=2:6
Jr 7:19
Dn 9:7–8

Saving justice is the Lord's, we have only the look of shame we bear, as is the case today for the people of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, ·for our kings and

Tb 3:3–4
Dn 9:5–6
2:10

princes, our priests, our prophets, and for our ancestors, ·because we have sinned before the Lord, ·have disobeyed him, and have not listened to the voice of the Lord our God telling us to follow the commandments which the Lord had ordained

19 for us. ·From the day when the Lord brought our ancestors out of Egypt until today Jr 7:25–26
we have been disobedient to the Lord our God, we have been disloyal, [i] refusing to
20 listen to his voice. ·And we are not free even today of the disasters and the curse Lv 26:14–39 Dt 28:15–68
which the Lord pronounced through his servant Moses the day he brought our Dn 9:11
21 ancestors out of Egypt to give us a land flowing with milk and honey. ·We have not Ex 3:8
listened to the voice of the Lord our God in all the words of those prophets
22 he sent us; ·but, each following the dictates of our evil heart, we have taken to Jr 7:24
serving alien gods, and doing what is displeasing to the Lord our God.

1 2 And so the Lord has carried out the sentence which he passed on us, on our Dn 9:12–13
judges who governed Israel, on our kings and leaders and on the people of
2 Israel and of Judah; ·what he did to Jerusalem has never been paralleled under
3 the wide heavens—in conformity with what was written in the Law of Moses; ·we
were each reduced to eating the flesh of our own sons and daughters. Dt 28:53–57+ Lm 2:20
4 Furthermore, he has handed them over into the power of all the kingdoms that
surround us, to be the contempt and execration of all the neighbouring peoples Dt 28:37 Jr 29:18
5 among whom the Lord scattered them. ·Instead of being masters, they found
themselves enslaved, because we had sinned against the Lord our God by not Dt 28:13,43
listening to his voice.
6 Saving justice is the Lord's; we and our ancestors have only the look of shame =1:15 Dn 9:7–8
7 we bear today. ·All those disasters which the Lord pronounced against us have
8 now befallen us. ·And yet we have not tried to win the favour of the Lord by each
9 of us renouncing the dictates of our own wicked heart; ·so the Lord has been alert
to our misdeeds and has brought disaster down on us, since the Lord is upright in Jr 1:12;31:28; 44:27
10 everything he had commanded us to do, ·and we have not listened to his voice so as Dn 9:14
to follow the commandments which the Lord had ordained for us. 1:18

The prayer

11 And now, Lord, God of Israel, who brought your people out of Egypt with a
mighty hand, with signs and wonders, with great power and with outstretched arm, Dt 6:21–22 Jr 32:20–21
12 to win yourself a name such as you have today, ·we have sinned, we have commit- Dn 9:15–16
13 ted sacrilege; Lord our God, we have broken all your precepts. ·Let your anger Ps 106:6
turn from us since we are no more than a little remnant among the nations where Am 3:12i
14 you have dispersed us. ·Listen, Lord, to our prayers and our entreaties; deliver us Ps 25:11
for your own sake and let us win the favour of the people who have deported us,
15 so that the whole world may know that you are the Lord our God, since Israel and
16 his descendants bear your name. ·Look down, Lord, from your holy dwelling- Dt 6:21–22 Jr 32:20–21
17 place and think of us, bow your ear and listen, ·open your eyes, Lord, and look; Dn 9:15–16
the dead down in Sheol, whose breath has been taken from their bodies, are not Is 38:18
18 the ones to give glory and due recognition to the Lord; ·whoever is overcome with Dt 28:65–67
affliction, who goes along bowed down and frail, with failing eyes and hungering
soul, [a] that is the one to give you glory and due recognition, Lord.
19 We do not rely on the merits of our ancestors and of our kings to offer you our Ezk 36:22 Dn 9:18
20 humble plea, Lord our God. ·No, you have sent down your anger and your fury on
21 us, as you threatened through your servants the prophets when they said, ·'The

1 **a.** On the various elements of which Ba is composed, *see* p. 1173.

b. The year 582, probably in the 5th month, anniversary of the fall of Jerusalem, which was doubtless commemorated among the exiles as it was in Palestine, *see* Zc 7:3; hence the gathering referred to in vv. 3–4.

c. Called also Jehoiachin.

d. i.e. officials, courtiers, cf. Jr 36:26; 38:6.

e. Evidently the priest next senior in rank, *see* 2 K 25:18, still living at the half-ruined sanctuary in Jerusalem, where public worship continued to be held, Jr 41:5, although the high priest Jehozadak had been carried off into exile, 1 Ch 5:41. The genealogy ascribed to Jehoiachin is that of the high-priestly line, 1 Ch 5:39, but no high priest of this name is attested until about a century later, Ne 12:10, 12, 26.

f. The historical books speak of a return of the sacred vessels only under Cyrus, Ezr 1:7–11.

g. 'metalworkers', following Jr 24:1; 'captives' Gk.

h. The feast of Shelters, *see* Ex 23:14d, when two assemblies were held, on the first and eighth days, *see* Lv 23:35–36.

i. 'we have been disloyal' restored in line with Dn 9:5 (*maradnu*) a corruption of which (*miharnu*) 'we have been hasty' seems to have given rise to the Gk 'we have acted hastily (or unreflectingly)'.

2 **a.** This passage refers to the religion of 'the poor', to whom salvation is promised, *see* Zp 2:3d.

Jr 27:12 Lord says this: *Bend your necks and serve the king of Babylon*, and you will remain in the country which I gave to your ancestors. ·But if you do not listen to the voice 22
Jr 7:34 of the Lord and serve the king of Babylon ·then *I shall silence the shouts of rejoicing* 23
and mirth and the voices of bridegroom and bride in the towns of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem, and the whole country will be reduced to desert, with no inhabitants.' ·But we would not listen to your voice and serve the king of Babylon, 24
and so you carried out what you had threatened through your servants the
Jr 8:1–2 prophets: that the bones of our kings and of our ancestors would be dragged from
Jr 36:30 their resting places. ·They were indeed *tossed out to the heat of the day and the frost* 25
Jr 14:12 *of the night.* And people died in dreadful agony, from famine, sword and plague.
And so, because of the wickedness of the House of Israel and the House of Judah, 26
you have made this House, that bears your name, what it is today.

And yet, Lord our God, you have treated us in a way worthy of all your goodness 27
and boundless tenderness, ·just as you had promised through your servant Moses, 28
Lv 26:39 the day you told him to write your Law in the presence of the Israelites, and said,
'If you do not listen to my voice, this great and innumerable multitude will 29
certainly be reduced to a tiny few among the nations where I shall scatter them—
Dt 9:14+ for I knew that, being an obstinate people, they would not listen to me. But in 30
Lv 26:44seq. Zc 10:9 the country of their exile, they will come to themselves ·and acknowledge that I 31
Jr 4:4a am the Lord their God. I shall give them a heart and an attentive ear, ·and they 32
Ezk 36:26+ will sing my praises in the country of their exile, they will remember my name;
they will stop being obstinate and, remembering what became of their ancestors 33
Dt 30:1,9seq. who sinned before the Lord, will turn from their evil deeds. ·Then I shall bring 34
them back to the country which I promised on oath to their ancestors Abraham,
Isaac and Jacob, and make them masters in it. I shall make their numbers grow;
Jr 31:31 they will not dwindle again. ·And I shall make an everlasting covenant with them; 35
so that I am their God and they are my people. And never again shall I drive my
people Israel out of the country which I have given them.'

2:18 3 Almighty Lord, God of Israel, a soul in anguish, a troubled heart now cries to 1
Ps 29:10 Lm 5:9 you: ·Listen and have pity, Lord, for we have sinned before you. ·You sit 2, 3
Ps 44:22 enthroned for ever, while we are perishing for ever. ·Almighty Lord, God of 4
Israel, hear the prayer of the dead of Israel,[a] of the children of those who have
sinned against you and have not listened to the voice of the Lord their God; hence
the disasters which dog us. ·Do not call to mind the misdeeds of our ancestors, but 5
remember instead your power and your name. ·You are indeed the Lord our God 6
Jr 31:33 and we will praise you, Lord, ·since you have put respect for you in our hearts to 7
encourage us to call on your name. We long to praise you in our exile, for we have
rid our hearts of the wickedness of our ancestors who sinned against you. ·Look, 8
2:4 today we are still in exile where you have scattered us as something contemptible,
accursed, condemned, for all the misdeeds of our ancestors who had abandoned
the Lord our God.

II: WISDOM, THE PREROGATIVE OF ISRAEL

Pr 4:20–22 Listen, Israel, to commands that bring life; 9
hear, and learn what knowledge means.
Why, Israel, why are you in the country of your enemies, 10
growing older and older in an alien land,
defiling yourselves with the dead,[b] 11
reckoned with those who go to Sheol?
Si 1:5 Jr 2:13 It is because you have forsaken the fountain of wisdom! 12
Had you walked in the way of God, 13
Is 48:18 you would be living in peace for ever.
Learn where knowledge is, where strength, 14
where understanding, and so learn

where length of days is, where life,
where the light of the eyes and where peace.

15 But who has found out where she lives, Jb 28:12,20
who has entered her treasure house? [c]
16 Where now are the leaders of the nations
and those who ruled even the beasts of earth, Jr 27:6
17 those who sported with the birds of heaven,
those who accumulated silver and gold
on which all people rely,
and whose possessions had no end,
18 those who worked so carefully in silver
—but of whose works no trace is to be found?
19 They have vanished, gone down to Sheol.
Others have risen to their places,
20 more recent generations have seen the day
and peopled the earth in their turn,
but the way of knowledge they have not found;
21 they have not recognised the paths she treads.
Nor have their children had any grasp of her,
remaining far from her way. [d]
22 Nothing has been heard of her in Canaan, Jb 2:11d
nothing has been seen of her in Teman;
23 the children of Hagar in search of worldly wisdom, Gn 25:12
the merchants of Midian and Teman, [e] Ex 2:15e
the tale-spinners and the philosophers have none of them
found the way to wisdom
or remembered the paths she treads.

24 How great, Israel, is the house of God, [f]
how wide his domain,
25 immeasurably wide,
infinitely lofty!
26 In it were born the giants, famous from the beginning, Gn 6:4
immensely tall, expert in war; Dt 1:28g
27 God's choice did not fall on these, 1 S 16:7
he did not show them the way of knowledge;
28 they perished for lack of wisdom,
perished by their own folly.
29 Who has ever climbed the sky and seized her Dt 30:11a
to bring her down from the clouds? Ws 9:4
Si 24:4
30 Who has ever crossed the ocean and found her
to bring her back in exchange for the finest gold?
31 No one can learn the way to her, Jb 28:13–14
no one can understand the path she treads.

32 But the One who knows all discovers her, Jb 28:23
he has grasped her with his own intellect,
he has set the earth firm for evermore
and filled it with four-footed beasts,
33 he sends the light—and it goes, Gn 1:14
he recalls it—and trembling it obeys;

3 **a.** The Israelites brought near to death, cf. Is 59:10; Lm 3:6; Ezk 37:11seq.
b. The Gk translator possibly read *nitmeta* 'defiling yourselves' by mistake for Hebr. *nidmeta* 'you are like'.
c. As in Jb 28:13–28, this question is first answered negatively: no one can achieve wisdom unaided, Ba 3:16–31; the positive answer follows: wisdom is God's possession, he has enriched Israel with it by his gift of the Law, Ba 3:24–4:4.
d. 'her way' Gk MSS, Syr.; 'their way' Gk.
e. 'Midian' conj.; 'Merran' Gk.
f. The universe.

the stars shine joyfully at their posts; 34
Jb 38:35 when he calls them, they answer, 'Here we are'; 35
Ps 147:4 they shine to delight their Creator.
Is 40:26 It is he who is our God, 36
no other can compare with him.
He has uncovered the whole way of knowledge 37
Ps 147:19 and shown it to his servant Jacob.
Si 24:8,10seq. to Israel his well-beloved;
Pr 8:31 only then did she appear on earth 38
Ws 9:10 and live among human beings. [g]
Jn 1:14
4 She is the book of God's commandments, 1
Si 24:23 the Law that stands for ever;
Pr 1:32–33; those who keep her shall live,
8:35–36 those who desert her shall die.
Turn back, Jacob, seize her, 2
Pr 6:23 in her radiance make your way to light:
do not yield your glory to another, 3
your privilege to a people not your own.
Dt 4:8,32–37 Israel, blessed are we: 4
Ws 9:18 what pleases God has been revealed to us!

III: THE COMPLAINTS AND HOPES OF JERUSALEM [a]

Take courage, my people, 5
memorial of Israel! [b]
Is 50:1;52:3 You were sold to the nations, 6
but not for extermination.
You provoked God;
and so were delivered to your enemies,
since you had angered your Creator 7
Dt 32:17 by offering sacrifices to demons, and not to God.
Dt 32:5,10,15 You had forgotten the eternal God who reared you. 8
Is 1:2 You had also grieved Jerusalem who nursed you,
for when she saw God's anger 9
falling on you, she said:

Listen, you neighbours of Zion:
God has sent me great sorrow.
I have seen my sons and daughters taken into captivity, 10
which the Eternal brought down on them.
I had reared them joyfully; 11
in tears, in sorrow, I watched them go away.
Do not, any of you, exult over me, 12
Lm 1:1–2 a widow, deserted by so many;
I am bereaved because of the sins of my children,
who turned away from the Law of God,
who did not want to know his precepts 13
and would not follow the ways of his commandments
or tread the paths of discipline as his justice directed.
Come here, neighbours of Zion! 14
Remember my sons' and daughters' captivity,
which the Eternal brought down on them.
Dt 28:49–50 How he brought a distant nation down on them, 15
Jr 5:15;6:22,23 a ruthless nation speaking a foreign language,

they showed neither respect for the aged,
nor pity for the child;
16 they carried off the widow's cherished sons,
they left her quite alone, bereft of her daughters.
17 For my part, how could I help you?
18 He who brought those disasters down on you,
is the one to deliver you from your enemies' clutches.
19 Go, my children, go your way!
I must stay bereft and lonely;
20 I have taken off the clothes of peace
and put on the sackcloth of entreaty;
all my life I shall cry to the Eternal.

21 Take courage, my children, call on God:
he will deliver you from tyranny, from the clutches of your enemies;
22 for I look to the Eternal for your rescue,
and joy has come to me from the Holy One
at the mercy soon to reach you
from your Saviour, the Eternal.
23 In sorrow and tears I watched you go away,
but God will give you back to me in joy and gladness for ever. Jr 31:12–13
24 As the neighbours of Zion have now witnessed your captivity,
so will they soon see your rescue by God,
which will come upon you with great glory and splendour of the Eternal. Is 60:1–3
25 My children, patiently bear the anger brought on you by God.
Your enemy has persecuted you,
but soon you will witness his destruction
and set your foot on his neck. Is 51:23
26 My favourite children have travelled by rough roads, Lm 2:22
carried off like a flock by a marauding enemy.
27 Take courage, my children, call on God:
he who brought this on you will remember you.
28 As by your will you first strayed from God,
so now turn back and search for him ten times harder;
29 for as he has been bringing down those disasters on you,
so will he rescue you and give you eternal joy.
30 Take courage, Jerusalem:
he who gave you your name [c] will console you.
31 Disaster will come to all who have ill-treated you
and gloated over your fall.
32 Disaster will come to the cities where your children were slaves;
disaster to whichever one received your children,
33 for just as she rejoiced at your fall
and was happy to see you ruined,
so will she grieve over her own desolation.
34 I shall deprive her of the joy of a populous city,
and her insolence will turn to mourning;
35 fire from the Eternal will befall her for many a day, Is 34:9–10,14
and demons will dwell in her for ages. Lv 16:8b;17:7d
36 Jerusalem, turn your eyes to the east, Is 60:4–5
see the joy that is coming to you from God.
37 Look, the children you watched go away are on their way home;

g. By becoming incarnate in the Jewish Law; no universalism envisaged here.

4 **a.** After the introductory verses, 5–9[a] personified Jerusalem addresses the neighbouring towns and her own scattered children, vv. 9[b]–29; the poet then replies with a promise of recovery in messianic days, 4:30–5:9.

b. Those who perpetuate the name of Israel.

c. Thus making the city his own, Ps 46:4; Is 60:14.

reassembled from east and west, they are on their way home
at the Holy One's command, rejoicing in God's glory.

5 Jerusalem, take off your dress of sorrow and distress, 1
Is 52:1 put on the beauty of God's glory for evermore,
Is 61:10 wrap the cloak of God's saving justice around you, 2
put the diadem of the Eternal One's glory on your head,
for God means to show your splendour to every nation under heaven, 3
and the name God gives you for evermore will be, 4
'Peace-through-Justice, and Glory-through-Devotion'. [a]
Arise, Jerusalem, stand on the heights 5
and turn your eyes to the east:
see your children reassembled from west and east
at the Holy One's command, rejoicing because God has remembered.
Though they left you on foot 6
driven by enemies,
Is 49:22; 60:4 now God brings them back to you,
carried gloriously, like a royal throne. [b]
Is 40:3–4 For God has decreed the flattening 7
of each high mountain, of the everlasting hills,
the filling of the valleys to make the ground level
Is 40:5;42:16 so that Israel can walk safely in God's glory.
Is 41:19 And the forests and every fragrant tree will provide shade 8
for Israel, at God's command;
for God will guide Israel in joy by the light of his glory, 9
with the mercy and saving justice which come from him.

IV: THE LETTER OF JEREMIAH

Jr 29:1 *A copy of the letter which Jeremiah sent to those about to be led captive to Babylon by the king of the Babylonians, to tell them what he had been commanded by God:*

6 'Because of the sins which you have committed before God you are to 1
be deported to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar king of the Babylonians. •Once 2
you have reached Babylon you will stay there for many years, as long as seven
generations; after which I shall bring you home in peace. •Now in Babylon 3
Is 40:20 Jr 10:1–16 you will see gods made of silver, of gold, of wood, being carried shoulder-
high, [a] and filling the gentiles with fear. •Be on your guard! Do not imitate the 4
foreigners, do not have any fear of their gods •as you see their worshippers 5
prostrating themselves before and behind them. Instead, say in your hearts,
Ex 23:20i "Master, it is you that we must worship." •For my angel is with you; your lives 6
will be in his care.

Ps 115:4–5; 135:17 Jr 10:14 Hab 2:19 'Overlaid with gold and silver, their tongues polished smooth by a craftsman, 7
they are counterfeit and have no power to speak. •As though for a girl fond of 8
finery, these people take gold and make crowns for the heads of their gods.
And sometimes, the priests filch gold and silver from their gods to spend on 9
themselves, even giving some of it to the prostitutes on the terrace. [b] •They 10
dress up these gods of silver, gold and wood, in clothes, like human beings; on
their own they cannot protect themselves from either tarnish or woodworm;
when they have been dressed in purple cloaks, their faces have to be dusted, 11
because of the temple dust which settles thick on them. •One holds a sceptre 12
like the governor of a province, yet is powerless to put to death anyone
who offends him; •another holds sword and mace in his right hand, yet is 13
powerless to defend himself against war or thieves. •From this it is evident that 14
they are not gods; do not be afraid of them.

15 'Just as a pot in common use becomes useless once it is broken, so are these
16 gods enshrined inside their temples. ·Their eyes are full of dust raised by the
17 feet of those who enter. ·Just as the doors are locked on all sides on someone
who has offended a king and is under sentence of death, so the priests secure
the temples of these gods with gates and bolts and bars for fear of burglary.
18 They light more lamps for them than they do for themselves, and the gods
19 see none of them. ·They are like one of the temple beams, which are said v. 6.18
to be gnawed away from within; the termites creep out of the ground and eat
20 them and their clothes too, and they feel nothing. ·Their faces are blackened
21 by the smoke that rises from the temple. ·Bats, swallows, birds of every kind
22 perch on their bodies and heads, and so do cats. ·From this, you can see for
yourselves that they are not gods; do not be afraid of them.
23 'The gold with which they are parading their futility before the world is
supposed to make them look beautiful, but if someone does not rub off the
tarnish, these gods will not be shining much on their own, and even while they
24 were being cast, they felt nothing. ·However much was paid for them, there is
25 still no breath of life in them. ·Being unable to walk, they have to be carried
on men's shoulders, which shows how futile they are. It is humiliating Is 46:7
for their worshippers, too, who have to stand them up again if they fall over. Ws 13:16
26 Once they have been stood up, they cannot move on their own; if they
tilt askew, they cannot right themselves; offerings made to them might as
27 well be made to the dead. ·Whatever is sacrificed to them, the priests
re-sell and pocket the profit; while their wives salt down part of it, but
give nothing to the poor or to the helpless. As to the sacrifices themselves,
why, women during their periods and women in childbed are not afraid Lv 12:4;15:19 seq.;20:18
28 to touch them! ·From all this you can tell that they are not gods; do not be
afraid of them.
29 'Indeed, how can they even be called gods, when women do the offering[c] to
30 these gods of silver, gold and wood? ·In their temples, the priests stay
sitting down, their garments torn, heads and beard shaved and heads un-
31 covered; ·they roar and shriek before their gods as people do at funeral feasts.[d]
32 The priests take robes from the gods to clothe their own wives and
33 children. ·Whether these gods are treated badly or well, they are incapable of
paying back either treatment; as incapable too of making or unmaking kings,
34 equally incapable of distributing wealth or money. If anyone fails to honour a
35 vow he has made to them, they cannot call him to account. ·They can neither
36 save anyone from death nor rescue the weak from the strong, ·nor restore sight to Ps 68:5;146:7–8
37 the blind, nor save anyone in trouble, ·nor take pity on a widow, nor be
38 generous to an orphan. ·These wooden gods overlaid with gold and silver
are about as much use as rocks cut out of the mountain side. Their worship-
39 pers will be confounded! ·So how can anyone think or say that they are gods?
40 'The Chaldaeans themselves do them no honour; if they find someone who is
dumb and cannot speak, they present him to Bel, entreating him for the
41 gift of speech, as though he could perceive it! ·And they are incapable of
drawing the conclusion and abandoning those gods—such is their lack of per-
42 ception. ·Women with strings round their waists sit in the streets, burning bran
43 like incense; ·when one of these has been picked up by a passer-by and been
to bed with him, she then gloats over her neighbour for not having been thought
44 as worthy as herself and for not having had her string broken.[e] ·Whatever is
done for them is spurious. So how can anyone think or say that they are gods?

5 **a.** For other messianic names given to Jerusalem, *see* Is 1:26, 60:14n; Jr 33:16; Ezk 48:35.
b. For the theme of the New Exodus, *see* Is 40:3e.

6 **a.** Here and at v. 5, an allusion to Babylonian processions, in which the statues of the gods were carried out of the temples.
b. The sacred prostitutes of Babylonian temples.
c. This was forbidden by Jewish Law.
d. Allusion to cults celebrating the annual death and resurrection of certain gods.
e. This custom was associated with sacred prostitution. Fumigations with bran seem to have been a magical practice with aphrodisiac intent.

'Made by woodworkers and goldsmiths, they are only what those work- 45
men decide to make them. ·Their makers have not long to live themselves, so 46
how can the things they make be gods? ·Their legacy to their descendants is 47
nothing but delusion and dishonour. ·If war or disasters befall them, the 48
priests discuss where best to hide themselves and these gods; ·how can any- 49
one fail to realise that they are not gods, if they cannot save themselves from
war or from disasters? ·And since they are only made of wood overlaid with 50
gold or silver, it will later become apparent that they are spurious; it will be
obvious to everyone, to nations as to kings, that they are not gods but the work
of human hands, and that there is no divine activity in them. ·Does anyone 51
still need convincing that they are not gods?

'They can neither appoint a king over a country, nor give rain to human- 52
kind, ·nor regulate their own affairs, nor rescue anyone who suffers a wrong; 53
they are as helpless as crows between sky and ground. ·If fire falls on the temple 54
of these wooden gods overlaid with gold or silver, their priests fly to safety
while they for their part stay there like beams, to be burnt. ·They cannot 55
put up any resistance to a king or to enemies. ·So how can anyone think 56
or say that they are gods?

'These wooden gods overlaid with gold or silver cannot evade thieves or 57
marauders; strong men may rob them of their gold and silver and make
off with the robes they are dressed in; yet they are powerless to help even
themselves. ·Better to be a king displaying his prowess, a household pot of use 58
to its owner, than to be these counterfeit gods; or merely the door of a house,
protecting what is inside, than these counterfeit gods; or a wooden pillar in a
palace than these counterfeit gods. ·The sun, the moon and the stars, which 59
shine and have been given work to do, are obedient; ·similarly, the lightning, as 60
it flashes, is a fine sight; in the same way, the wind blows across every country,
the clouds execute the order God gives them to pass over the whole earth, 61
and the fire, sent from above to consume mountain and forest, carries out
its orders. ·Now these gods are not their equals, either in beauty or in 62
power. ·So, no one can think or say that they are gods, powerless as they 63
are to administer justice or to do anyone any good. ·Therefore, knowing that 64
they are not gods, do not be afraid of them.

'For they can neither curse nor bless kings, ·nor produce signs in heaven for 65, 66
the nations, nor shine like the sun, nor shed light like the moon. ·The 67
animals are better off than they are, being able to look after themselves by
making for cover. ·There is not the slightest shred of evidence that they are 68
gods; so do not be afraid of them!

'Their wooden gods overlaid with gold and silver are like a scarecrow in a 69
field of cucumbers—protecting nothing. ·Or again, their wooden gods 70
overlaid with gold and silver are like a thorn-bush in a garden—any kind of bird
may perch on it—or like a corpse thrown out into the dark. ·From the purple 71
and linen[f] rotting on their backs you can tell that they are not gods; and in the
end, eaten away, they will be the dishonour of the country. ·Better, then, 72
someone upright who has no idols; dishonour will never come near him.'

f. Gk 'marble', probably translating the Hebr. word normally meaning 'linen', though also 'alabaster'.

EZEKIEL

INTRODUCTION

1 In the thirtieth year, on the fifth day of the fourth month, as I was among the
2 exiles by the River Chebar, heaven opened and I saw visions from God. ·On
3 the fifth of the month—it was the fifth year of exile for King Jehoiachin—·the word
of Yahweh was addressed to the priest Ezekiel son of Buzi, in Chaldaea by the
River Chebar. [a] There the hand of Yahweh came on him. [b]

The vision of the Chariot of Yahweh [c]

10 Rv 4

4 I looked; a stormy wind blew from the north, a great cloud with flashing fire and
brilliant light round it, and in the middle, in the heart of the fire, a brilliance like
5 that of amber, ·and in the middle what seemed to be four living creatures. They 10:8–22 Ex 25:18i
6 looked like this: They were of human form. ·Each had four faces, each had four ↗Rv 4:6–8
7 wings. ·Their legs were straight; they had hooves like calves, glittering like
8 polished brass. ·Below their wings, they had human hands on all four sides
9 corresponding to their four faces and four wings. ·They touched one another with Is 6:2
their wings; they did not turn as they moved; each one moved straight forward.
10 As to the appearance of their faces, all four had a human face, and a lion's face
to the right, and all four had a bull's face to the left, and all four had an eagle's
11 face. [d] ·Their wings [e] were spread upwards, each had one pair touching its neigh-
12 bour's, and the other pair covering its body. ·And each one moved straight
forward; they went where the spirit urged them, they did not turn as they moved.
13 Between these living creatures were what looked like [f] blazing coals, like torches,
darting backwards and forwards between the living creatures; the fire gave a
14 brilliant light, and lightning flashed from the fire, ·and the living creatures kept Ex 19:18
disappearing and reappearing like flashes of lightning. [g] Ps 104:4
15 Now, as I looked at the living creatures, I saw a wheel touching the ground
16 beside each of the four-faced living creatures. ·The appearance and structure of 10:9–13
the wheels were like glittering chrysolite. All four looked alike, and their appear-
ance and structure were such that each wheel seemed to have another wheel inside
17 it. ·In whichever of the four directions they moved, [h] they did not need to turn as

1 **a.** Vv. 1–3 appear to juxtapose two distinct introductions. One, vv. 2–3[a], speaks of Ezekiel in the third person and serves as introduction to the whole book, dating the prophet's first vision to the 5th year of Jehoiachin's exile, 593–592. The other, v.1, may have introduced the vision of the Chariot of Yahweh before this occupied its present position, *see* pp. 1174–5. If so, the date ('the thirtieth year') is difficult to interpret, unless we amend it to 'thirteenth year' (of Jehoiachin's exile), i.e. summer of 585.

b. A phrase commonly used by Ezekiel to indicate ecstasy, *see* 3:22; 8:1; 33:22; 37:1; 40:1. The versions read 'on me' instead of 'on him', requiring v.3[b] to be read with v. 4.

c. This vision is clearly meant for the exiles. Though some details are obscure, its general sense is clear, namely Yahweh's transcendence of place: he is not tied to the Temple of Jerusalem but can follow his people to their place of exile.

d. These strange creatures are reminiscent of the Assyrian *karibu* (a name akin to that of the great winged creatures over the ark, *see* Ex 25:18i), creatures with a human head, the body of a lion, the hooves of a bull and the wings of an eagle; their effigies stood guard outside the palaces of Babylon. These servants of the gods are here shown harnessed to the chariot of the God of Israel, a vivid illustration of Yahweh's transcendence. The characteristics of these creatures were later used to describe the 'four living beings' in Rv (4:7–8 etc.). In Christian tradition they have become symbolic of the four evangelists.

e. 'Their wings' Gk; 'Their faces and their wings' Hebr.

f. 'Between' versions; 'the likeness of' Hebr. • 'what looked like', lit. 'an appearance of' Gk; 'their appearance' Hebr.

g. lit. 'ran (?) and returned'. v. found only in Hebr., possibly a gloss.

h. Text uncertain. lit. 'as they went they advanced in their four directions.'

they moved. ·Their circumference was of awe-inspiring size, and the rims of all 18
Zc 4:10d four sparkled all the way round.[i] ·When the living creatures moved, the wheels 19
↗Rv 4:8 moved beside them; and when the living creatures left the ground, the wheels too
left the ground. ·They moved in whichever direction the spirit chose to go,[j] and 20
the wheels rose with them, since the wheels shared the spirit of the animals.
10:16 When the living creatures moved on, they moved on; when the former halted, 21
the latter halted; when the former left the ground, the wheels too left the ground,
since the wheels shared the spirit of the animals. ·Over the heads of the living 22
10:1 creatures was what looked like a solid surface glittering like crystal,[k] spread out
Ex 24:10 ↗Rv 4:6 over their heads, above them,[l] ·and under the solid surface, their wings were 23
spread out straight, touching one another, and each had a pair covering its body.[m]
10:5 I also heard the noise of their wings; when they moved, it was like the noise of 24
Gn 17:1b flood-waters, like the voice of Shaddai, like the noise of a storm, like the noise of
an armed camp; and when they halted, they lowered their wings; ·there was a 25
noise too.[n]

Beyond the solid surface above their heads, there was what seemed like a 26
↗Rv 4:2–3 sapphire, in the form of a throne. High above on the form of a throne was a form
with the appearance of a human being.

8:2 I saw a brilliance like amber, like fire, radiating from what appeared to be the 27
waist upwards; and from what appeared to be the waist downwards, I saw what
looked like fire, giving a brilliant light all round. ·The radiance of the encircling 28
Gn 9:13–15 light was like the radiance of the bow in the clouds on rainy days. The sight was like
8:4 Ex 24:16f Dn 8:17 ↗Rv 1:17 the glory of Yahweh.[o] I looked and fell to the ground, and I heard the voice of
someone speaking to me.

The vision of the scroll[a]

Dn 10:11 2 He said, 'Son of man,[b] get to your feet; I will speak to you.' ·As he said these 1, 2
3:24 words the spirit came into me and put me on my feet, and I heard him speaking
Dt 9:7,24 to me. ·He said, 'Son of man, I am sending you to the Israelites, to the rebels[c] who 3
have rebelled against me. They and their ancestors have been in revolt against me
up to the present day. ·Because they are stubborn and obstinate[d] children, I am 4
sending you to them, to say, "Lord Yahweh says this." ·Whether they listen or 5
12:2;33:33 not, this tribe of rebels will know there is a prophet among them. ·And you, son of 6
Jr 1:8,17 man, do not be afraid of them or of what they say, though you find yourself
surrounded with brambles and sitting on scorpions. Do not be afraid of their words
or alarmed by their looks, for they are a tribe of rebels. ·You are to deliver my 7
words to them whether they listen or not, for they are a tribe of rebels.[e] ·But you, 8
son of man, are to listen to what I say to you; do not be a rebel like that rebellious
Ps 19:10 Jr 15:16 tribe. Open your mouth and eat what I am about to give you.'

When I looked, there was a hand stretching out to me, holding a scroll. ·He 9, 10
↗Rv 5:1;10:2 unrolled it in front of me; it was written on, front and back; on it[f] was written
'Lamentations, dirges and cries of grief'.

3 He then said, 'Son of man, eat what you see; eat this scroll, then go and speak 1
Ps 19:10 Jr 15:16 to the House of Israel.' ·I opened my mouth; he gave me the scroll to eat ·and 2, 3
↗Rv 10:8–11 then said, 'Son of man, feed on this scroll which I am giving you and eat your fill.'
So I ate it, and it tasted sweet as honey.[g]

Jr 7:27 He then said, 'Son of man, go to the House of Israel and tell them what I have 4
Is 28:9–13; 33:19 said. ·You are not being sent to a nation that speaks a difficult foreign language; 5
you are being sent to the House of Israel. ·Not to big nations that speak difficult 6
foreign languages, and whose words you would not understand—if I sent you to
Jon 3 Mt 11:21–24; 12:38–42 them, they would listen to you; ·but the House of Israel will not listen to you 7
because it will not listen to me. The whole House of Israel is defiant and obstinate.
Is 50:7 But now, I am making you as defiant as they are, and as obstinate as they are; ·I 8, 9
am making your resolution as hard as a diamond, harder than flint. So do not be
afraid of them, do not be overawed by them, for they are a tribe of rebels.'

Then he said, 'Son of man, take to heart everything I say to you, listen carefully, 10

11 then go to your exiled countrymen and talk to them. Say to them, "Lord Yahweh says this," whether they listen or not.'

12 The spirit lifted me up, and behind me I heard a great vibrating sound, 'Blessed 1 K 18:12c
13 be the glory of Yahweh in his dwelling-place!' ·This was the sound of the living •Lk 2:13–14
creatures' wings beating against each other, and the sound of the wheels beside
14 them: a great vibrating sound. ·The spirit lifted me up and took me, and I went,
15 bitter and angry, and the hand of Yahweh lay heavy on me. ·I came to Tel Abib, to the exiles beside the River Chebar where they were living, and there I stayed with them in a stupor for seven days.

The prophet as watchman [b]

16, 17 After seven days the word of Yahweh was addressed to me as follows, ·'Son of man, I have appointed you as watchman for the House of Israel. When you hear a 33:1–9
18 word from my mouth, warn them from me. ·If I say to someone wicked, "You will Is 21:6,8,11
die," and you do not warn this person; if you do not speak to warn someone wicked to renounce evil and so save his life, it is the wicked person who will die for the
19 guilt, but I shall hold you responsible for that death. ·If, however, you do warn someone wicked who then fails to renounce wickedness and evil ways, the wicked
20 person will die for the guilt, but you yourself will have saved your life. ·When 18:24; 33:12–13
someone upright renounces uprightness to do evil and I set a trap for him, it is he 2 P 2:21
who will die; since you failed to warn him, he will die for his guilt, and the uprightness he practised will no longer be remembered; but I shall hold you
21 responsible for his death. ·If, however, you warn someone upright not to sin and this person does not sin, such a one will live, thanks to your warning, and you too will have saved your life.'

I: BEFORE THE SIEGE OF JERUSALEM

Ezekiel is struck dumb

22 While I was there the hand of Yahweh came on me; he said, 'Get up, go out into
23 the valley, and there I shall speak to you.' ·I got up and went out into the valley; the glory of Yahweh was resting there, like the glory I had seen by the River 1:28
24 Chebar, and I fell to the ground. ·The spirit of Yahweh then entered me and put 2:2
me on my feet and spoke to me.

25 He said, 'Go and shut yourself in your house. ·Son of man, you are about to be
26 tied and bound, [c] and unable to mix with other people. ·I am going to make your tongue stick to the roof of your mouth; you will be dumb, and no longer able to
27 reprove them, for they are a tribe of rebels. ·When I speak to you, however, I shall

i. lit. 'had eyes', but the word must be understood in its figurative sense of 'sparkle' vv. 4, 7, 16, 22, 27; 8:2, 10:9. The mention of these reflections is perhaps a gloss inspired by 10:12.

j. after 'moved' Hebr. adds 'for the spirit to go forward.'

k. After 'crystal', Hebr. adds 'awe-inspiring'; Gk omits.

l. The throne of Yahweh is therefore supported, rather than drawn along, by the living creatures. Compare the ark of the covenant, Ex 25:10e; there Yahweh is 'enthroned on the winged creatures', 1 S 4:4, etc.

m. Hebr. repeats, 'each had a pair covering it', a dittography missing from MSS and Gk.

n. Hebr. adds, 'above the platform over their heads when they halted and lowered their wings', dittography.

o. The Israelites were afraid of seeing Yahweh's face, and in theophanies Yahweh normally allowed them to see only 'his glory', that is, the exterior signs surrounding and revealing his presence, Ex 33:18, 22. The glory usually took the form of a bright cloud, Ex 16:10; for the glory *see also* 43:1.5. Here the cloud is accompanied by a brilliant, luminous silhouette in human shape.

2 **a.** The vision of the chariot of Yahweh is continued later, 3:12. It is interrupted here by the vision of the scroll, which was probably Ezekiel's first vision (in 593) in which he received his prophetic call, *see* p. 1174.

b. The expression 'son of man' used by God of his prophet is peculiar to Ezk (Dn 8:17 excepted), *see* Mt 8:20h.

c. 'to the rebels' Gk; 'to the nations, the rebels' Hebr.

d. lit. 'hard of face and stiff of heart'.

e. 'set of rebels' Gk, Syr. and MSS; 'rebels' Hebr.

f. 'on it (was written)' *'aleha* conj.; Hebr. *'eleha* 'to it'.

3 **a.** The mouth of Isaiah had been touched by a seraph, Is 6:5–7, that of Jeremiah by Yahweh himself who 'put his words into the prophet's mouth', Jr 1:9, an idea which Ezekiel expresses even more realistically.

b. In 33:1–9 the same theme is developed more coherently; it may have been reproduced, barely modified, here, since it outlines the programme of the prophet's future career. Ezekiel stresses the individual responsibility of his hearers, *see* 14:12d.

c. Some understand a paralysis of some kind, cf. 4:4seq, the physical ordeal acquiring, by revelation, a symbolic meaning incorporating it into the prophetic message, *see* Jr 18:1a.

24:27;29:21; 33:22 open your mouth and then you will say to them, "Lord Yahweh says this: Let anyone prepared to listen, listen; let anyone who refuses, refuse!"—for they are a tribe of rebels.'

Jr 18:1a **The siege of Jerusalem foretold**

4 'For your part, son of man, take a brick and lay it in front of you; on it scratch 1
a city, Jerusalem. ·You are then to besiege it,[a] trench round it, build earth- 2
works, pitch camps and bring up battering-rams all round. ·Then take an iron pan 3
and place it as though it were an iron wall between you and the city. Then fix your gaze on it; it is being besieged and you are besieging it. This is a sign for the House of Israel.

'Lie down on your left side and take the guilt of the House of Israel on yourself.[b] 4
You will bear their guilt for as many days as you lie on that side. ·Allowing one day 5
for every year of their guilt, I ordain that you bear it for three hundred and ninety days; this is how you will bear the House of Israel's guilt. ·And when you have 6
finished doing this, you are to lie down again, on your right side, and bear the guilt of the House of Judah for forty days. I have set the length for you as one day for one year.[c] ·Then fix your gaze on the siege of Jerusalem, raise your bared arm and 7
3:25 prophesy against her. ·Look, I am going to tie you up and you will not be able to 8
turn over from one side to the other until the period of your seclusion is over.

'Now take wheat, barley, beans, lentils, millet and spelt; put them all in the same 9
pot and make them into bread for yourself. You are to eat it for as many days as you are lying on your side—three hundred and ninety days. ·Of this food, you are 10
to weigh out a daily portion of twenty shekels and eat it a little piece at a time. And you are to ration the water you drink—a sixth of a *hin*—drinking that a little 11
at a time.[d] ·You are to eat this in the form of a barley cake baked where they can 12
see you, on human dung.' ·And Yahweh said, 'This is how the Israelites will have 13
to eat their defiled food, wherever I disperse them among the nations.' ·I then said, 14
Ex 22:30 Lv 17:15 Dt 14:3–21 Ac 10:14 'Lord Yahweh, my soul is not defiled. From my childhood until now, I have never eaten an animal that has died a natural death or been savaged; no tainted meat has ever entered my mouth.' ·'Very well,' he said, 'I grant you cow-dung[e] instead of 15
human dung; you are to bake your bread on that.' ·He then said, 'Son of man, I am 16
12:18–19 Lv 26:26 Ps 105:16 going to cut off Jerusalem's food supply;[f] in their extremity, the food they eat will be weighed out; to their horror, the water they drink will be rationed, ·until there 17
Lv 26:39 is no food or water left, and they fall into a stupor and waste away because of their guilt.'

5 'Son of man, take a sharp sword, use it like a barber's razor and run it over 1
your head and beard. Then take scales and divide the hair you have cut off. Burn one-third inside the city, while the days of the siege are working themselves 2
21 out. Then take another third and chop it up with the sword all round the city. The last third you are to scatter to the wind, while I unsheathe the sword behind them.[a] Also take a few hairs[b] and tie them up in the folds of your cloak; ·and of these 3, 4
again take a few, and throw them on the fire and burn them. From them fire will come on the whole House of Israel.[c]

'The Lord Yahweh says this, "This is Jerusalem, which I have placed in the 5
38:12 middle of the nations, surrounded with foreign countries. ·She has rebelled more 6
perversely against my observances than the nations have, and against my laws than the surrounding countries have; for they have rejected my observances and not kept my laws."

'Therefore, the Lord Yahweh says this, "Because your disorders are worse than 7
those of the nations round you, since you do not keep my laws or respect my observances, and since you do not respect even the observances of the surrounding nations, ·very well, the Lord Yahweh says this: I, too, am against you and shall 8
Jr 1:16 execute my judgements[d] on you for the nations to see. ·Because of all your 9
loathsome practices I shall do such things as I have never done before, nor shall
Dt 28:53+ ever do again. ·Those of you who are parents will eat their children, and children 10

will eat their parents. I shall execute judgement on you and disperse what remains Lv 26:33
11 of you to the winds. •For, as I live—declares Lord Yahweh—as sure as you have
defiled my sanctuary with all your horrors and all your loathsome practices, so I
12 too shall reject [e] you without a glance of pity, I shall not spare you. •A third of your 7:4;8:18; 9:10; 24:14
citizens will die of plague or starve to death inside you; a third will fall by the sword
round you; and a third I shall scatter to the winds, unsheathing the sword behind
13 them. [f] •I shall sate my anger and bring my fury to rest on them until I am avenged;
and when I have sated my fury on them, then they will know that I, Yahweh, spoke
14 out of jealousy for you. •Yes, I shall reduce you to a ruin, an object of derision to
15 the surrounding nations, in the eyes of all who pass by. •You will be an object of
derision and insults, an example, an object of amazement to the surrounding Lv 26:32
nations, when I execute judgement on you in furious anger and furious punish-
16 ments. I, Yahweh, have spoken. •On them I shall send the deadly arrows
of famine, which will destroy you—for I shall send them to destroy you; then I
17 shall make the famine worse and cut off your food supply. •I shall 4:16
send famine and wild animals on you to rob you of your children; plague and
bloodshed will sweep through you, and I shall bring the sword down on you. I,
Yahweh, have spoken." '

Against the mountains of Israel

1, 2 6 The word of Yahweh was addressed to me as follows, •'Son of man, turn
3 towards the mountains of Israel and prophesy against them. [a] •Say, "Mountains
of Israel, hear the word of the Lord Yahweh. The Lord Yahweh says this to
mountains and hills and ravines and valleys: Look, I am going to summon the
4 sword against you and destroy your high places. •Your altars will be wrecked, and Lv 26:30–31
your incense burners smashed; I shall fling your butchered inhabitants down in
5 front of your foul idols; [b] •I shall lay the corpses of the Israelites in front of their
6 foul idols and scatter their bones all round your altars. •Wherever you live, the Jr 8:1–2
towns will be destroyed and the high places wrecked, to the ruin and wrecking [c] of
your altars, the shattering and abolition of your foul idols, the smashing of your Is 2:18 Jr 10:14–15
7 incense burners and the utter destruction of all your works. •As the butchered fall Mi 1:7
about you, you will know that I am Yahweh. [d]

8 "But I shall spare some of you to escape the sword among the nations, when you Is 4:3c
9 have been dispersed in their lands; •and your survivors will remember me among Lv 26:40–41 Dt 30:1–2
the nations where they are held captive, since I shall have broken [e] their adulterous
hearts for having deserted me, and destroyed their eyes for having turned adulter- 16:23
ously towards their foul idols. They will loathe themselves for all the wrong they

4 **a.** Ezekiel is commanded to mime the forthcoming siege of Jerusalem (the brick 'besieged', the motionless prophet, the poor food meagrely rationed, the hair burnt or scattered to the winds). For similar symbolic gestures, particularly elaborate with Ezekiel, *see* Jr 18:1a.

b. 'on yourself' conj.; 'on it' Hebr.

c. Unsuccessful attempts have been made to put a strict interpretation on these figures as prophecies of the duration of the respective exiles of Israel and Judah. Presumably they are to be taken only as the prophecy of a siege, the duration of which has not been revealed, designed as punishment for the protracted infidelity of the two kingdoms.

d. About 0.5 lb (227 gr.) of bread and 2 pints (1 litre) of water.

e. Dried dung is used as fuel in the East.

f. lit. 'staff of bread', for bread was stored on a stick, *see* 5:16; 14:13; Lv 26:26; Ps 105:16.

5 **a.** The siege will end in massacre; the meaning of the prophet's mime is unmistakable.

b. The 'remnant' that is spared and, after further ordeal, saved, *see* Is 4:3c.

c. Meaning obscure. Possibly a gloss suggested by 19:14.

d. 'I shall execute my judgements' (*'asiti mishpatim*) is frequently emended to 'I shall do justice' (*'asiti shepatim*), a frequent expression in Ezk. But the Hebr. word also means 'customs' and is used in that sense in the previous v. ('observances'). Possibly then a play on words is intended: You have not observed my customs (lit. 'executed my *mishpatim*'), very well, I shall execute my *judgements* on you.

e. 'reject' versions; 'shave' Hebr.

f. This catalogue of disaster: sword, famine and plague, very common in Jr (14:12; 21:7, 9; 24:10; 27:8, 13; 29:17, 18; 32:24, 36; 34:17; 38:2; 42:17, 22; 44:13) frequently recurs with variations in Ezk (6:11–12; 7:15; 12:16; 14:21, *see also* 33:27).

6 **a.** 'against' *'al* conj.; Hebr., *'el* 'towards' but the use of these prepositions is fairly lax in Ezk, a trace perhaps of popular dialect.

b. In Hebr. *gillulim*. The word seems to have been invented by Ezekiel (who uses it 38 times), possibly on analogy with *shiqqutzim* 'horrors', used earlier by Jeremiah, and influenced by *'elilim* 'false gods', 'nothings', used by Isaiah. It is related to the root *galal* 'to roll' and the noun *gelal* 'dirt', 'filth', presumably indicating the disgusting nature of the idols.

c. 'wrecking' versions; 'guilt' Hebr.

d. 'you will know that I am Yahweh', a recurrent expression in Ezekiel. Yahweh's deeds force people, however ill-disposed, to acknowledge his omnipotence, *see* Is 42:8e.

e. 'I shall have broken' versions; 'I shall have been broken (because of)' Hebr.

have caused by their loathsome practices. ·Then they will know that I am Yahweh 10
and that I was not talking lightly when I said that I would inflict these disasters on them."

The sins of Israel

25:6 'The Lord Yahweh says this, "Clap your hands, stamp your feet, and say: Alas for 11
all the loathsome sins of the House of Israel, which is about to fall by sword, famine
and plague! ·Far off, they will die by plague; near at hand they will fall by the 12
sword; and any who survive or are spared will die of famine. This is how I shall sate
my fury on them. ·Then you will know that I am Yahweh, when their butchered 13
Dt 12:2b corpses lie among their foul idols, all round their altars, on every high hill, on every
mountain top, under every green tree, under every leafy oak, wherever they offer
Ex 29:18d a smell pleasing to all their idols. ·I shall point my finger at them and reduce the 14
2 K 23:33;25:6 country to an empty wasteland from the desert to Riblah,[f] everywhere they live,
and they will know that I am Yahweh." '

Am 5:18m **The end is near**

7 The word of Yahweh was addressed to me as follows, ·'Son of man, say,[g] 1, 2
"Lord Yahweh says this to the land of Israel: Finished! The end is coming for
=7:8–9 the four corners of the country. ·This is the end for you; I shall unleash my anger 3
on you, and judge you as your conduct deserves and call you to account for all your
5:11e loathsome practices. ·I shall show you no pity, I shall not spare you; I shall repay 4
you for your conduct and for the loathsome practices in which you persist. Then
you will know that I am Yahweh.
↗Rv 8:13;9:12; 11:14 "The Lord Yahweh says this: Disaster, a unique disaster, is coming. ·The end is 5, 6
coming, the end is coming, it is on the move towards you, it is coming now. ·Now 7
it is your turn,[h] you who dwell in this country. Doom is coming, the day is near;[i]
=7:3–4 no joy now, only tumult, on the mountains. ·Now I shall soon vent my fury on you 8
and sate my anger on you: I shall judge you as your conduct deserves and repay
you for all your loathsome practices. ·I shall show neither pity nor mercy, but shall 9
repay you for your conduct and the loathsome practices in which you persist. Then
you will know that I am Yahweh and that I strike.
"Now is the day, your turn has come, it has come, it appears, the sceptre has 10
blossomed,[j] pride is at its peak. ·Violence has risen to become the scourge of 11
wickedness . . .[k] ·Doom is coming, the day is near. Neither should buyer rejoice, 12
nor seller regret, for the fury rests on everyone alike.[l] ·The seller will not be able 13
to go back on his bargain;[m] each persists in his sins; they take no defensive
measures. ·The trumpet sounds, all is ready, but no one goes into battle, since my 14
fury rests on all alike.

The sins of Israel

↗Mt 24:16–18 "Outside, the sword; inside, plague and famine. Whoever is living in the country- 15
side will die by the sword; whoever is living in the city will be devoured by famine
and plague. ·And those who escape will escape to the mountains and there, like 16
21:12 doves of the valleys, I shall slaughter them all,[n] each one for his sin. ·Every hand 17
will grow limp, every knee turn to water. ·They will put on sackcloth, each one 18
Am 8:10 trembling. Every face will be ashamed and every head be shaved.[o] ·They will throw 19
Pr 11:4 their silver away in the streets and their gold they will regard as a pollution; neither
their silver nor their gold will be able to save them on the day of Yahweh's fury.
Never again will they have enough to eat, never again will they fill their bellies,
since that was the occasion for their guilt. ·They used to pride themselves on the 20
beauty of their jewellery, out of which they made their loathsome images, their
horrors; so now I have made it pollute them. ·I shall hand it[p] over as plunder to 21
foreigners, as loot to the most evil people on earth. They will profane it. ·I shall 22
turn my face away from them, while my treasure-house is profaned and robbers
will force their way in and profane it.

23 "Forge yourself a chain; [k] for the country is full of bloody executions and the city
24 full of deeds of violence, •so I shall bring the cruellest of the nations to seize their
houses. I shall put an end to the pride of their élite, and their sanctuary will be
25 profaned. •Terror is on the way: they will look for peace and there will be none.
26 Disaster will follow on disaster, rumour on rumour; they will pester the prophet Is 29:14 Lm 2:9
for a vision; the priest will be at a loss over the law and the elders on how to advise. Mi 3:6
27 The king will go into mourning, [l] the prince be plunged in grief, the hands of the
country people tremble. I shall treat them as their conduct deserves, and judge
them as their own verdicts merit. Then they will know that I am Yahweh!" '

A vision of the sins of Jerusalem

1 8 In the sixth year, on the fifth day of the sixth month, [a] I was sitting at home and 14:1;20:1
the elders of Judah were sitting with me, when suddenly the hand of the Lord 1:3b
Yahweh fell on me there.
2 I looked, and there was a form with the appearance of a human being. [b] Down- 1:26–28
wards from what seemed to be the waist there was fire; and upwards from the waist
3 there was a brilliance like the glitter of amber. [c] •Something like a hand was
stretched out and it took me by a lock of my hair; and the spirit lifted me between Dn 14:36 3:12
heaven and earth and, in visions from God, [d] took me to Jerusalem, to the entrance
4 of the inner north gate, where stands the idol that provokes jealousy. [e] •There was Dt 32:21
5 the glory of the God of Israel; it looked like what I had seen in the valley. •He said, •1:28;3:22seq. Ex 24:16f
'Son of man, raise your eyes to the north.' I raised my eyes to the north, and there,
6 to the north of the altar gate, stood this statue of jealousy at the entrance. •He
said, 'Son of man, do you see what they are doing, the monstrous, loathsome
things that the House of Israel is practising here, to drive me out of my sanctuary?
And you will see practices more loathsome still.'
7 He next took me to the entrance to the court. I looked; there was a hole in the
8 wall. •He said, 'Son of man, bore through the wall.' I bored through the wall, until
9 I had made an opening. •He said, 'Go in and look at the loathsome things they are
10 doing inside.' •I went in and looked and there was every kind of reptile and
repulsive animal, and all the foul idols of the House of Israel, carved all round the
11 walls. •Seventy elders of the House of Israel were worshipping the idols—among
them Jaazaniah son of Shaphan—each one with his censer in his hand, from which
12 rose a fragrant cloud of incense. •He said, 'Son of man, have you seen what the
elders of the House of Israel do in the dark, each in his personal image-shrine? Lv 26:1
13 They say, "Yahweh cannot see us; Yahweh has abandoned the country." ' •He 9:9 Is 29:15
said, 'You will see them at practices more loathsome still.'
14 He next took me to the entrance of the north gate of the Temple of Yahweh

f. 'from the desert to Riblah' MSS; 'the desert of Diblatha' Hebr. Riblah, *see* 2 K 23:33; 25:6*seq*, here stands for the most northerly point of Palestine, and 'the desert' is its southern boundary, *see* Jg 20:1a.

7 **a.** 'say' Gk, Syr.; Hebr. omits.
b. Trans. uncertain, lit. 'the crown is coming towards you', as also in v. 10.
c. The 'Day of Yahweh', *see* Am 5:18m.
d. Text very obscure. We have tried to give a translation consistent with v.7; literally, the Hebr. would give 'the crown has come, has come out, the rod has blossomed'.
e. The end of this verse is unintelligible, lit. 'not (coming) from them, nor from their multitude, nor from their tumult, and they are worthless'. The Gk interprets the whole verse 'He will break the prop of the wicked, without tumult, without haste.'
f. lit. 'against all its (Jerusalem's?) multitude'. So also in v.14.
g. Hebr. adds 'even if their living being is still alive, for the vision destined for its entire multitude will not be revoked (?)'; Gk omits.
h. 'I shall slaughter them all' Gk; 'all moaning' Hebr.
i. Sign of disgrace.
j. Perhaps the city of Jerusalem.
k. Perhaps alluding to the coming deportation; but the text is doubtful.
l. These words, absent from Gk, seem to be a later addition inspired by the reference to 'the prince'. Ezekiel does not use the term 'king' for the human ruler of Israel; for him, God alone is king of Israel, 20:23, the ruler is referred to as 'the prince', 12:12.

8 **a.** September–October 592 BC.
b. 'like a human being' Gk; 'like fire' Hebr.
c. As in 1:26–28, Yahweh himself appears to the prophet. In v.4 it is only the 'glory of Yahweh', *see also* 1:28.
d. These are to show the prophet the guilt of Jerusalem, not for past sins or for any collective identification with sinners who disregard the Law, but for present and positive faults calling for immediate punishment, *see* 14:12d.
e. The jealousy of Yahweh aroused by any form of idolatry. The 'idol of idolatry' is perhaps the statue of Astarte set up in the Temple of Manasseh, 2 K 21:7.

where women were sitting, weeping for Tammuz.[f] •He said, 'Son of man, do you 15
see that? You will see even more loathsome things than that.'

He then led me to the inner court of the Temple of Yahweh. And there, at the 16
entrance to Yahweh's sanctuary, between the portico and the altar, there were
about twenty-five men, with their backs to Yahweh's sanctuary and their faces
turned towards the east. They were prostrating themselves to the east, before the
rising sun. •He said to me, 'Son of man, do you see that? Is it not bad enough for 17
the House of Judah to be doing the loathsome things they are doing here? But they
fill the country with violence and provoke my anger further; look at them now
5:11e putting that branch to their nostrils.[g] •And so I shall react in fury; I shall show 18
Jr 11:11+ neither pity nor mercy. They may cry as loudly as they like to me; I will not listen.'

The punishment[a]

9 Then he shouted loudly for me to hear, 'The scourges of the city are approach- 1
Tb 5:4b ing, each carrying his weapon of destruction!' •Immediately six men advanced 2
from the upper north gate, each holding a deadly weapon. Among them was a man
dressed in linen, with a scribe's ink-horn in his belt. They came in and halted in
1:28o front of the bronze altar. •The glory of the God of Israel rose from above the 3
Ex 25:18i winged creature where it had been, towards the threshold of the Temple. He called
to the man dressed in linen with a scribe's ink-horn in his belt •and Yahweh said to 4
Ex 12:7,13 him, 'Go all through the city, all through Jerusalem, and mark a cross[b] on the
↗Rv 7:2,3 foreheads of all who grieve and lament over all the loathsome practices in it.' •I 5
heard him say to the others, 'Follow him through the city and strike. Not one
Ex 32:27 glance of pity; show no mercy; •old men, young men, girls, children, women, kill 6
Nb 25:5,8 and exterminate them all. But do not touch anyone with a cross on his forehead.
↗Rv 9:4 Begin at my sanctuary.' So they began with the old men who were in the Temple.
He said to them, 'Defile the Temple; fill the courts with corpses; then go out!' They 7
went out and hacked their way through the city.

While they were hacking them down, I was left alone; I fell on my face, crying 8
11:13 out, 'Ah, Lord Yahweh, are you going to annihilate all that is left of Israel by
Is 6:11;4:3c venting your fury on Jerusalem?' •He said, 'The guilt of the House of Israel and 9
Am 7:2,5 •24:9 Judah is immense; the country is full of bloodshed, the city full of perversity, for
8:12 they say, "Yahweh has abandoned the country, Yahweh cannot see." •Then, I too 10
Ps 10:11+ shall neither give one glance of pity nor show any mercy. I shall repay them for
what they have done.' •The man dressed in linen with the scribe's ink-horn in his 11
belt then came back and made his report, 'I have carried out your orders.'

1:22 10 Then, in vision I saw[a] that above the solid surface over the heads of the 1
1:26 winged creatures there was above them something like sapphire, which
↗Rv 4:3 seemed to be like a throne. •He then said to the man dressed in linen, 'Go in 2
between the wheels below the winged creatures; take a handful of burning
Gn 19:24 coal from between the winged creatures and scatter it over the city.' He went in
↗Rv 8:5 as I watched.

The winged creatures were on the right of the Temple as the man went in, and 3
1:28o the cloud filled the inner court. •The glory of Yahweh rose from above the winged 4
Ex 24:16f; 40:34–35 creatures, towards the threshold of the Temple; the Temple was filled by the cloud
1 K 8:10–11 and the court was full of the brightness of the glory of Yahweh. •The noise of the 5
•1:24 winged creatures' wings could be heard even in the outer court, like the voice of
Ex 19:19 Ps 29:30 God Almighty when he speaks.

When he had given the order to the man dressed in linen, 'Take the fire from 6
between the wheels, between the winged creatures,' the man went in and stood by
one of the wheels. •One of the winged creatures then reached his hand out towards 7
the fire between the winged creatures, took some of it and put it into the hands of
the man dressed in linen, who took it and came out again.

There appeared to be what looked like a human hand under the winged crea- 8
1:5–21 tures' wings. •And I looked, and there were four wheels beside the winged 9
creatures, one wheel beside each winged creature, and the appearance of the

10 wheels was like the sparkle of chrysolite. ·In appearance, all four looked alike, as
though each wheel had another wheel inside it.
11 In whichever of the four directions they moved, they did not need to turn as they
moved, but whichever way the head was facing there they followed; they did not
12 turn as they moved, ·and their entire bodies, their backs, their hands, their wings,
13 as well as the wheels, had eyes all the way round (the wheels of all four). ·In my Rv 4:8
14 hearing, these wheels were called 'galgal'. [b] ·Each had four faces; the first was a
winged creature's face, the second a human face, [c] the third a lion's face and the Rv 4:7
15 fourth an eagle's face. ·The winged creatures rose; this was the being I had seen by
16 the River Chebar. ·When the winged creatures moved, the wheels moved beside
them; and when the winged creatures raised their wings to leave the ground, the
17 wheels did not turn beside them. ·When the former halted the latter halted; when
the former rose, the latter rose with them, since they shared the same living spirit.

The glory of Yahweh leaves the Temple 1:28*o* Ex 24:16f

18 The glory of Yahweh then came out over the Temple threshold and paused over
19 the winged creatures. ·These raised their wings and rose from the ground as I
watched, and the wheels were beside them. They paused at the entrance to the east
gate [d] of the Temple of Yahweh, with the glory of the God of Israel over them, 43:2seq.
20 above. ·This was the winged creature I had seen beneath the God of Israel by the
21 River Chebar; I knew that they were winged creatures. ·Each had four faces and
22 four wings and what seemed to be human hands under their wings. ·Their faces
were like those I had seen by the River Chebar. [e] Each one moved straight forward.

The sins of Jerusalem (continued) [a]

1 **11** The spirit lifted me up and brought me to the east gate of the Temple of 3:12
Yahweh, the gate that looks eastwards. There at the entrance to the gate
stood twenty-five men, among whom I saw Jaazaniah son of Azzur and Pelatiah 8:16
son of Benaiah, leaders of the people.
2 He [b] said to me, 'Son of man, these are the wicked schemers who are spreading
3 their bad advice through this city. ·They say, "There will be no house-building yet
4 awhile. The city is the cooking pot and we are the meat." [c] ·So prophesy against 24:1–14
5 them, prophesy, son of man!' ·The spirit of Yahweh fell on me, and he said to me,
'Say, "Yahweh says this: I know what you are saying, House of Israel, I know how
6 insolent you are. ·You have filled this city with more and more of your victims; you
7 have strewn its streets with victims. ·And so the Lord Yahweh says this: Your
victims, whom you have put in it, are the meat, and the city is the cooking pot; but

f. Assyro-Babylonian deity of popular origin, known in Mediterranean mythology as Adonis ('My Lord'). Mourning was held for him every year in the month of Tammuz (June–July) to commemorate the period of his stay in the underworld.

g. The ceremony referred to here cannot be identified with any certainty.

9 a. The vision reveals that the punishment will not strike indiscriminately; it will spare the innocent, *see* 14:12d.

b. lit. 'a *taw*', as the Vulg. translates. In the ancient script this letter was cruciform.

10 a. After the massacre of the inhabitants, the destruction of the city itself.

b. Precise connotation here and at vv. 2 and 6 uncertain, but basically something that revolves or whirls.

c. 'the first face', 'the second face' Syr.; 'the face of the first', 'the face of the second' Hebr.

d. 'they paused' versions; 'he paused' Hebr. The east gate overlooked the Kidron valley towards the Mount of Olives, cf. 11:23.

e. Hebr. adds 'their appearance and them (?)'; Gk omits.

11 a. This passage, 11:1–21, should be attached to ch. 8 (prior to the destruction of the city) unless it is a doublet, cf. 8:7seq. The vision of the departure of Yahweh, cf. 10:18–22, should have its normal continuation in 11:22–23.

b. Yahweh, as Gk and Syr. make clear.

c. The import of these evil counsellors' advice is by no means clear. According to the Gk, which reads the first sentence as a question, Ezekiel seems to be denouncing the sense of false security indulged in by those who think they have escaped the calamity and now propose to settle down in Jerusalem. The image of the meat in the pot, resumed and developed at 24:1–4 would also seem to refer to the false security of those who now think themselves safe, as the meat is protected by the pot from the flames. The MT, however, which we follow, seems to show Ezekiel denouncing an extreme form of defeatism, with the image of the pot elaborating on this pessimism by foretelling the dire results of such a lack of confidence, v.8. Possibly, however, the prophet is denouncing the selfish reactions of those who hope to take advantage of the situation caused by the first deportation, there being no point in building houses when there were so many left untenanted, and no point in worrying any more, since disaster would not strike the survivors in Jerusalem a second time. Be that as it may, Ezekiel insists that the danger has not gone away.

I shall take you out of it.[d] •You are afraid of the sword and I shall bring the sword 8
down on you—declares the Lord Yahweh—•and I shall take you out of it and hand 9
you over to foreigners and bring you to justice; •you will fall by the sword on the 10
soil of Israel; I shall execute justice on you, and you will know that I am Yahweh.
This city will be no cooking pot for you, nor will you be the meat inside; I shall 11
execute justice on you on the soil of Israel; •and you will know that I am Yahweh, 12
whose laws you have not obeyed and whose judgements you have not kept;
Dt 12:29–30 instead, you have adopted the customs of the nations round you." '

Now as I was prophesying, Pelatiah son of Benaiah dropped dead. I fell to the 13
9:8+ ground and cried out, 'Ah, Lord Yahweh, are you going to annihilate the remnant of Israel?'

Jr 24 **The new covenant promised to the exiles**

The word of Yahweh was then addressed to me as follows, •'Son of man, to your 14, 15
brothers one and all, to your kinsfolk and to the whole House of Israel, the
inhabitants of Jerusalem have said, "Keep well away from Yahweh. This country
33:24 has now been made over to us!"[e] •So say, "The Lord Yahweh says this: Yes, I 16
36:19 have sent them far away among the nations and I have dispersed them to foreign
countries; and for a while I have been a sanctuary for them in the country to which
36:24–25 they have gone." •So say, "The Lord Yahweh says this: I shall gather you back 17
Dt 30:3–5 from the peoples, I shall collect you in from the countries where you have been
scattered and give you the land of Israel. •When they come back, they will purge it 18
18:31;36:26 of all its horrors and loathsome practices. •I shall give them a single heart and I 19
Ps 51:12–14
36:27f;44:7 shall put a new spirit in them;[f] I shall remove the heart of stone from their bodies
Dt 30:6–8
Jr 4:4a and give them a heart of flesh, •so that they can keep my laws and respect my 20
Jr 31:31f judgements and put them into practice. Then they will be my people and I shall be
their God. •But those whose hearts[g] are set on their horrors and loathsome 21
practices I shall repay for their conduct—declares the Lord Yahweh." '

1:28o **The glory of Yahweh leaves Jerusalem**
Ex 24:16f

The winged creatures then raised their wings and the wheels moved with them, 22
with the glory of the God of Israel over them, above. •And the glory of Yahweh 23
rose from the centre of the city and halted on the mountain to the east of the city.
3:12 Then the spirit lifted me up and took me, in vision, in the spirit of God, to the 24
exiles in Chaldaea,[h] and the vision which I had seen faded. •I then told the exiles 25
everything that Yahweh had shown me.

Jr 18:1a **The mime of the exile**[a]

12 The word of Yahweh was addressed to me as follows, •'Son of man, you are 1, 2
living among a tribe of rebels who have eyes and never see, they have ears
2:5–7 and never hear, because they are a tribe of rebels. •So, son of man, pack an exile's 3
Is 6:10
Jr 5:21 bundle and set off for exile by daylight while they watch. You will leave your home
and go somewhere else while they watch. Then perhaps they will see that they are
a tribe of rebels. •You will pack your baggage like an exile's bundle, by daylight, 4
while they watch, and leave like an exile in the evening, while they watch. •While 5
they watch, make a hole in the wall, and go out through it. •While they watch, you 6
will shoulder your pack and go out into the dark; you will cover your face so that
Is 8:18+ you cannot see the ground, since I have made you an omen for the House of Israel.'
Jr 18:1a

I did as I had been told. I packed my baggage like an exile's bundle, by daylight; 7
and in the evening I made a hole through the wall with my hands; then I went out
into the dark and shouldered my pack while they watched.

Next morning the word of Yahweh was addressed to me as follows, •'Son of 8, 9
man, did not the House of Israel, did not that tribe of rebels, ask you, "What are
you doing?" •Say, "The Lord Yahweh says this: This prophecy concerns Jerusa- 10
lem and the whole House of Israel who live there." •Say, "I am an omen for you; 11
as I have done, so will be done to them; they will be deported into exile. •Their 12

prince will shoulder his pack in the dark and go out through the wall; a hole will be
13 made to let him out; he will cover his face, so that he cannot see the country. •I
shall throw my net over him and catch him in my mesh; I shall take him to Babylon, =17:20
to the land of the Chaldaeans, though he will not see it; and there he will die.
14 And all those in attendance on him, his army and all his troops, I shall scatter to Lv 26:33
15 all the winds and unsheathe the sword behind them. •Then they will know that I
am Yahweh, when I scatter them throughout the nations and disperse them in
16 foreign countries. •But I shall let a few of them escape the sword, famine and Is 4:3c
plague, to describe all their loathsome practices to the peoples among whom they
will go, so that these too may know that I am Yahweh." '
17, 18 The word of Yahweh was addressed to me as follows, •"Son of man, you are to 4:16
tremble as you eat your food and shudder apprehensively as you drink your water,
19 and you are to say to the people of the country, "The Lord Yahweh says this to
the inhabitants of Jerusalem. They will shudder apprehensively as they eat their
food, and drink their water in fear, so that the country and its population may be
20 freed from the violence of its inhabitants.[b] •When the populous cities have been
destroyed and the country has been reduced to desert, then you will know that I
am Yahweh." '

Popular proverbs

21, 22 The word of Yahweh was addressed to me as follows, •"Son of man, what do you
understand by the saying pronounced over the land of Israel, "Days go by and 2 P 3:3–4
visions fade"?[c]
23 'Very well, tell them, "The Lord Yahweh says this: I shall put an end to this
saying; it will never be used in Israel again." Instead, tell them:
24 "The days are coming when every vision will come true, •for there will be no
25 more futile visions or deceptive prophecy in the House of Israel, •since I, Yahweh,
shall speak. And what I shall say will come true without delay; for what I shall say, Is 55:11
I shall perform in your own lifetime, you tribe of rebels—declares the Lord
Yahweh." '
26, 27 The word of Yahweh was addressed to me as follows, •"Son of man, the House
of Israel is now saying, "The vision that this man sees concerns the distant future;
28 he is prophesying for times far ahead." •Very well, tell them, "The Lord Yahweh
says this: There will be no further delay in the fulfilling of any of my words. What ↗Rv 10:6
I have said shall be done now—declares the Lord Yahweh." ' Jr 1:11–12

Against the false prophets

Jr 14:13–16; 23:9–40; 27:9–10, 16–18; 28

1, 2 **13** The word of Yahweh was addressed to me as follows, •"Son of man,
prophesy against the prophets of Israel; prophesy.[a] and say to those who
3 make up prophecies out of their own heads, "Hear what Yahweh says: •The Lord
Yahweh says this: Disaster is in store for the foolish prophets who follow their own
4 spirit and have seen nothing! •Your prophets, Israel, are like ruin-haunting jackals!
5 "You have not ventured into the breach; you have not built up the wall round
6 the House of Israel, to hold fast in battle on the Day of Yahweh. •Theirs are futile Am 5:18m
visions and false predictions, who say: A prophecy from Yahweh, when Yahweh
7 has not sent them; yet they expect their words to come true. •Have not the visions

d. 'I shall' versions; 'he will' Hebr.

e. The inhabitants of Jerusalem, spared from deportation, considered themselves the chosen ones of the nation. Jeremiah had already attacked this assumption, prophesying, Jr 24, that Yahweh would ultimately prefer the exiles. Ezekiel adds that possession of the Temple is of little importance since Yahweh can be a 'sanctuary' for his people in a foreign country, *see* 1:3c.

f. 'a single heart', or perhaps 'another heart' (Gk) or 'a new heart' (Syr.) *see* 18:31; Jr 4:4a. • 'in them' versions; 'in you' Hebr.

g. 'whose hearts' Targ.; 'and to the heart which' Hebr.

h. Vv. 24–25 correspond to 8:3: the prophet, having been transported to Jerusalem to see the visions of ch. 8–11, is returned by the spirit to his place of exile.

12 a. This new symbolic action, mimed in dumb-show, foretells the approaching deportation of the population of Jerusalem.

b. This translation follows the Gk.

c. People had evidently refused to believe Ezekiel's prophecies of disaster; he now turns their own words against them: punishment is imminent.

13 a. 'prophesy' Gk; 'who prophesied' Hebr.

you see been futile, have not the predictions you make been false, although you say: A prophecy of Yahweh, when I have not spoken?

"Very well, the Lord Yahweh says this: Because of your futile words and false 8
predictions, I am now against you—declares Lord Yahweh. ·My hand will be 9
against the prophets who have futile visions and give false predictions; they will not be admitted to the council of my people, their names will not be entered in the roll of the House of Israel, they will not set foot on the soil of Israel; and they will know that I am the Lord Yahweh. ·This is because they have misled my people by 10
Jr 6:14f saying Peace! when there is no peace. [b] When my people were repairing a wall,
22:28 these men came and plastered it over! [c] ·Tell these plasterers: [d] It will rain hard, it 11
will hail, [e] it will blow a gale, ·and down will come the wall! Will not people ask 12
you: What has become of the plaster you slapped on it? ·Well then, the Lord 13
Yahweh says this: I am going to unleash a stormy wind in my fury, torrential rain in my anger, hailstones in my destructive fury, ·and I shall shatter the wall you 14
plastered and knock it down and lay its foundations bare. It will fall and you will perish under it; then you will know that I am Yahweh."

'When I have sated my anger on the wall and those who plastered it, I shall say 15
to you, "The wall is gone, and so are those who plastered over it, ·the prophets of 16
Israel who prophesy about Jerusalem and have visions of peace for her when there is no peace—declares the Lord Yahweh."

Against false prophetesses

'Also, son of man, turn to the women of your people who make up prophecies out 17
of their own heads; prophesy against them. [f] ·Say, "The Lord Yahweh says this: 18
Disaster is in store for women who sew ribbons round each wrist [g] and make head-cloths for people of all sizes, in their hunt for souls! Are you to hunt the souls of my people and keep your own souls safe? ·You dishonour me in front of my people for 19
1 S 9:7d a few handfuls of barley, a few bits of bread, killing those who ought not to die and sparing those who ought not to live, lying to my people who love listening to lies.

"Very well, the Lord Yahweh says this: Look, I am now against your ribbons, 20
with which you hunt souls like birds, [h] and I shall tear them off your arms and free those souls whom you hunt like birds. ·I shall tear your head-cloths to pieces and 21
rescue my people from your clutches; no longer will they be fair game for you to ensnare. Then you will know that I am Yahweh.

"For having intimidated with lies the heart of the upright whom I had done 22
nothing to alarm, and for having encouraged the wicked not to give up wicked ways and so be saved, ·very well, you will have no more futile visions and make no more 23
predictions, for I shall rescue my people from your clutches, and you will know that I am Yahweh." '

Against idolatry

20:1–4 **14** Next, some elders of Israel visited me and while they were sitting with me, 1
the word of Yahweh was addressed to me as follows, ·'Son of man, these 2, 3
men have enshrined their foul idols in their hearts and placed the cause of their sinning right before their eyes. Why should I let myself be consulted by them? ·So 4
speak to them; tell them this, "Lord Yahweh says this: Every member of the House of Israel who enshrines his foul idols in his heart and places the cause of his sinning right before his eyes, and who then approaches the prophet, will get this answer from me, Yahweh, as the multiplicity of his idols deserves, ·and in this way I hope 5
to win back the hearts of the House of Israel who have all been estranged from me by their foul idols."

'So say to the House of Israel, "The Lord Yahweh says this: Come back, turn 6
away from your foul idols, turn your backs on all your loathsome practices; ·for if 7
any member of the House of Israel—or any foreigner living in Israel [a]—deserts me to enshrine his foul idols in his heart and places the cause of his sinning right before his eyes and then approaches a prophet to consult me through him, he will get his

8 answer from me, Yahweh. [b] ·I shall set my face against that person; I shall make
him an example and a byword; I shall rid my people of him, and you will know that
9 I am Yahweh. ·And if the prophet is seduced into saying something, I, Yahweh,
shall have seduced that prophet; [c] I shall point my finger at him and rid my people
10 Israel of him. ·Both will be punished for their guilt; the prophet's punishment will
11 be the same as that of the person who consults him, ·so that the House of Israel will
never stray from me again or defile themselves again with these crimes, but be my
people and I their God—declares the Lord Yahweh." '

Individual responsibility [d] 18;33:10–20

12, 13 The word of Yahweh was addressed to me: ·"Son of man, when a country sins
against me by being unfaithful and I point my finger at it and destroy its supply of
14 food, inflicting famine on it and denuding it of human and animal, ·even if the
three men, Noah, Danel and Job, [e] were living in it, they would save no one but Gn 18:22–23
15 themselves by their uprightness—declares the Lord Yahweh. ·Were I to unleash
wild beasts on that country to rob it of its children and reduce it to a desert which
16 no one would dare to cross because of the animals, ·even if these three men were
living there, as I live—declares the Lord Yahweh—they would not be able to save
either son or daughter; they alone would be saved, and the country would become
17 a desert. ·Were I to bring the sword down on that country and say, "Sword, cross
18 the country!" so as to denude it of human and animal, ·even if these three men
were living there, as I live—declares the Lord Yahweh—they would not be able to
19 save either son or daughter; they alone would be saved. ·If I were to send the
plague on that country and vent my fury on it by bloodshed, so as to denude it of
20 human and animal, ·even if Noah and Danel and Job were living there, as I live—
declares the Lord Yahweh—they would be able to save neither son nor daughter,
only themselves by their uprightness.

21 'The Lord Yahweh says this, "Even if I send my four dreadful scourges on
Jerusalem—sword, famine, wild beasts and plague—to denude it of human and Rv 6:8

b. The word 'peace' means not merely the absence of danger from abroad but prosperity and harmony within the community, *see* Jr 6:14f.

c. Ezekiel denounces the false prophets for their misleading optimism. Jerusalem is like a house threatened by the unruly elements; although the structure needs serious repair, the prophets are content to plaster over the cracks.

d. Hebr. adds 'and it will fall', dittography.

e. After 'hail', Hebr. adds 'I sent (?)'.

f. Next, the prophet denounces practitioners of the black arts.

g. 'each wrist' versions; 'all my wrists' Hebr.

h. 'like birds' (as also at end of v.) uncertain, though possibly, as the Aramaic suggests, connected with flying. In Gk, the word is missing the first time and rendered 'for the dispersion' at end of v. Before the second 'like birds', we omit 'souls' (an unusual form of the word and probably a dittography).

14 a. In the legislation of Ezk, the foreigner settling in Israel, *see* Ex 12:48*o*, has the same legal status as an Israelite, Ezk 47:22.

b. Yahweh refuses to give an answer through his prophet when the apostate Israelites consult him. He will answer them himself by punishing them.

c. i.e. 'if the prophet lets himself be seduced into giving an answer, I shall have allowed this to happen, because I have decided to destroy him.'

d. With ch. 18 and 33:10–20, this text marks a decisive advance in the development of moral teaching in the OT. Early texts were concerned with the individual mainly as an integral part of family, tribe and, later, nation. Not only Noah but his relations too are saved, Gn 6:18; Abraham is called by God but his whole clan accompanies him to Canaan, Gn 12. This outlook also conditioned concepts of responsibility and of retribution. When Abraham intercedes for Sodom, Gn 18:22–23, he is asking not that the good be isolated and spared but that, by virtue of a solidarity that can work both ways, the good should earn immunity for the wicked. It had been taken for granted that a city or a nation would be punished as one entity, upright and sinner alike, and also that the fate of the children would correspond to the behaviour of their parents, Ex 20:5; Dt 5:9; 7:10; cf. Jr 31:29 = Ezk 18:2. But the prophets were later to lay stress on the individual and thus correct the emphasis of the earlier teaching. Jeremiah may see the break with this solidarity in sin and punishment between the generations as something still to come, Jr 31:29–30, but the Deuteronomist has already protested against the punishment of the children for the sins of the parents, Dt 24:16, cf. 2 K 14:6. Ezekiel, convinced by the vision of ch. 8–10 that the imminent punishment of Jerusalem is a result of her present sins, becomes the champion and exponent of the principle of individual responsibility. A person's salvation or ruin does not depend on ancestor or associates; not even on his own past life. Yahweh is concerned only with his present dispositions. These radical assertions of individualism will in their turn be qualified by the principle of solidarity as expressed in the fourth song of the servant of Yahweh, Is 52:13–53: 12, *see* Is 42:1a. These assertions, however, if strictly and exclusively applied to human life in this world, are contradicted by everyday experience (*see* Job), and this contradiction calls for further doctrinal development, effected by the revelation of sanctions beyond the grave (*see* Introduction to Wisdom Books, §3). In the end, the NT (and especially Paul) resolves the tension between the individualism of Ezekiel and the principle of collective solidarity by showing how Christian hope is based on faith in the risen Christ in union with whom humanity, created and saved by God, is united in redemption as it previously was in sin.

e. Three popular heroes well known to Israelite tradition; Noah, whose story is preserved in Gn 6–9; Job, whose legend was to inspire one of the finest poetic compositions in the Bible; and Danel, not otherwise mentioned in the Bible (except in Ezk 28:3), whose wisdom and uprightness was celebrated by the poets of Ras-Shamra.

animal, •even so, there will be a remnant left, a few men and women who come 22
through; when they come to you and you see their conduct and actions, you will
take comfort in spite of the disaster which I have brought on Jerusalem, in spite of
all I have brought on her. •They will comfort you, when you see their conduct and 23
actions, and so you will know that I have not done in vain all I have done to her—
declares the Lord Yahweh." '

Is 5:1a **A parable of the vine**

15 The word of Yahweh was addressed to me as follows: 1

Son of man, how is the wood of the vine better 2
than wood from the branch of a forest tree?
Is its wood used for making anything? 3
Are pegs on which to hang things made from it?
There it is, thrown on the fire for fuel. 4
The fire burns off both ends;
the middle is charred; can it be kept for anything now? [a]
While it was intact, you could make nothing with it; 5
burned and charred, is it any more useful now?

So, the Lord Yahweh says this: 6

As the wood of the vine among the forest trees,
which I have thrown on the fire for fuel,
so shall I treat the inhabitants of Jerusalem.
I shall set my face against them. 7
They have escaped one fire, but fire will devour them yet.
And you will know that I am Yahweh, when I set my face against them.
I shall reduce the country to a desert, because of their infidelity— 8
declares the Lord Yahweh.

23 Is 1:21 Jr 2:2;3:6seq. Ho 1–3 Mt 22:2–14; 25:1–13 Jn 3:29 Ep 5:25–33 Rv 17

An allegorical history of Jerusalem [a]

16 The word of Yahweh was addressed to me as follows, •'Son of man, confront 1, 2
Jerusalem with her loathsome practices! •Say, "The Lord Yahweh says this: 3
By origin and birth you belong to the land of Canaan. Your father was an Amorite
and your mother a Hittite. •At birth, the very day you were born, there was no one 4
to cut your navel-string, or wash you in water to clean you, or rub you with salt, or
wrap you in swaddling clothes. •No one looked at you with pity enough to do any 5
of these things out of sympathy for you. You were exposed in the open fields in
your own dirt on the day you were born.

"I saw you kicking on the ground in your blood as I was passing, and I said to 6
you as you lay in your blood: Live! [b] •and I made you grow like the grass of the 7
fields. You developed, you grew, you reached marriageable age. [c] Your breasts
Ho 2:5 became firm and your hair grew richly, but you were stark naked. •Then I saw you 8
Dt 23:1a Rt 3:9 Ex 19:1a as I was passing. Your time had come, the time for love. I spread my cloak over
you and covered your nakedness; I gave you my oath, I made a covenant with
you—declares the Lord Yahweh—and you became mine. •I bathed you in water, 9
I washed the blood off you, I anointed you with oil. •I gave you embroidered 10
dresses, fine leather shoes, a linen headband and a cloak of silk. •I loaded you with 11
jewels, gave you bracelets for your wrists and a necklace for your throat. •I gave 12
you nose-ring and earrings; I put a beautiful diadem on your head. •You were 13
loaded with gold and silver and dressed in linen and silk and brocade. Your food
Dt 32:13 was the finest flour, honey and oil. You grew more and more beautiful; and you
rose to be queen. •The fame of your beauty spread through the nations, since it 14
was perfect, because I had clothed you with my own splendour—declares the
Lord Yahweh.

Dt 31:16 Is 57:8 "But you became infatuated with your own beauty and used your fame to play 15

16 the whore, lavishing your debauchery on all comers.[d] •You took some of your
clothes to make for yourself high places bright with colours[e] and there you played
17 the whore.[f] •You also took your jewellery, made with my gold and silver which I Ex 32:2seq.
18 had given you, and made yourself male images to serve your whorings. •You took Ho 2:10
your embroidered clothes and used these to dress them up, and you offered them
19 my oil and my incense. •And the bread I gave you, the finest flour, the oil and
honey with which I fed you, you offered them as a pleasing smell.

20 "What is more—declares the Lord Yahweh—•you took the sons and daughters Lv 18:21h
you had borne me and sacrificed them as food to the images. Was not your whoring
21 enough in itself, •for you to slaughter my children and hand them over to be burnt
22 in their honour?•And in all your loathsome practices and your whorings you never
called your early days to mind, when you were stark naked, kicking on the ground
in your own blood.

23 "To crown your wickedness—disaster upon you, disaster! declares the Lord
24 Yahweh—•you built yourself a mound and made yourself a high place in every Dt 12:2b
25 open space. •At the entry to every alley you made yourself a high place, defiling
your beauty and opening your legs to all comers in countless acts of fornication.
26 You have also fornicated with your big-membered neighbours, the Egyptians, Is 30:31
27 provoking my anger with further acts of fornication. •So now I have raised my hand
against you, I have cut down on your food, I have put you at the mercy of your
28 enemies, the Philistine women,[g] who blush at your lewd behaviour. •Still unsatis-
fied, you prostituted yourself to the Assyrians; you played the whore with them, 2 K 21:1–18
29 but were not satisfied even then.[h] •You committed further acts of fornication in 2 Ch 33:1–10
the country of merchants, with the Chaldaeans, and these did not satisfy
you either.

30 "How simple-minded[i] you are!—declares the Lord Yahweh—for although you
31 do all the things that a professional prostitute would, •in building a mound[j] and
making yourself a high place in every street, you do not act like a proper prostitute
32 because you disdain to take a fee. •An adulteress welcomes strangers instead of
33 her husband. •All prostitutes accept presents, but you give presents to all your Ho 8:9h
34 lovers, you bribe them to come from all over the place to fornicate with you! •In
fornicating, you are the opposite of other women, since no one runs after you to
fornicate with you; since you give the fee and do not get one, you are the very
opposite!

35, 36 "Very well, whore, hear the word of Yahweh!' •The Lord Yahweh says this:
For having squandered your money[k] and let yourself be seen naked while whoring

15 a. If the comparison is to be urged, Israel has been deprived of the territory of Samaria in 720 and of Judah in 597. Jerusalem itself (the middle) is no longer 'intact' since it already suffered one siege and deportation.

16 a. Israel, faithless wife of Yahweh, 'whore' of alien gods: a familiar image in prophetic literature from Ho onwards, *see* Ho 1:2b. Ezekiel elaborates the theme into a long allegory (continued in another form in ch. 23) about Jerusalem, the religious and political capital of the country. As in Ho, the allegory ends, vv. 60–63, with a free pardon from the husband who establishes a new covenant, thus prefiguring the marriage of God with his people in messianic days, a theme to be further developed in the NT.

b. Hebr. repeats 'and I said . . . Live!', dittography. The child is left befouled by blood and grows quite wild till the covenant on Sinai, described under the image of a marriage.

c. 'I made you grow', lit. 'I made you into a multitude'. • 'marriageable age' *be'et 'iddim* conj.; *ba'adi 'adayim* Hebr. 'with the finest jewels'.

d. Hebr. adds 'he was to him (?)', omitted by some Gk MSS and Syr.

e. Possibly this means 'tents on the high places'.

f. We omit four unintelligible words, lit. 'they (fem.) do not come and it will not be so.'

g. The cities of the Philistine coast profited from Judah's reversals under Ahaz, 2 Ch 28:18, under Hezekiah in 701 according to the *Annals of Sennacherib* (in reprisal for an alliance with Egypt), and perhaps after the first deportation, Jr 13:19, and here Ezk 25:15–17.

h. Especially in the reign of Manasseh when subservience to Assyria encouraged idolatry.

i. Trans. conj., Hebr. *libbah* is here understood as rare form of *leb* or *lebah*, 'heart'; but it could be understood from an Assyro-Babylonian root, as 'anger'. The translation would then be 'I am filled with anger.'

j. 'setting up' *bibenotek* versions; Hebr. *bibenotayik* 'in your daughters'.

k. 'squandered your money', lit. 'poured out your bronze', alluding to the presents to the lovers. Other commentators think the text corrupt.

with your lovers and all the foul idols of your loathsome practices and for giving
↗Rv 17:5,6 them your children's blood[l]—•for all this, I shall assemble all the lovers to whom 37
you have given pleasure, all the ones you liked and also all the ones you disliked;
Ho 2:12 yes, I shall assemble them round you and strip you naked in front of them, and let
↗Rv 17:16 them see you naked from head to foot. •I shall pass on you the sentence that 38
adulteresses and murderesses receive; I shall hand you over to their jealous fury;[m]
I shall hand you over to them; they will destroy your mound and pull down your 39
high place; they will tear off your clothes, take away your jewels and leave you
Ho 2:5i stark naked. •Then they will call an assembly of citizens to deal with you, who will 40
stone you to death and hack you to pieces with their swords, •and burn down your 41
premises and execute justice on you, while many other women look on; and I shall
put an end to your whoring: no more paid lovers for you! •Once my fury is 42
exhausted with you, then my jealousy will leave you; I shall be calm and not angry
any more. •Since you never called to mind your early days and have done nothing 43
but provoke me, now I in my turn shall bring your conduct down on your own
head—declares the Lord Yahweh!

"Have you not added this lewd behaviour to your other loathsome practices?
So now all dealers in proverbs will apply this one to you: Like mother, like 44
daughter. •Yes; you are a true daughter of your mother, who hated her husband 45
and her children; you are a true sister of your sisters,[n] who hated their husbands
16:3 and their children. Your mother was a Hittite and your father an Amorite. •Your 46
elder sister is Samaria, who lives to the north of you with her daughters. Your
younger sister is Sodom, who lives to the south of you with her daughters.
You never failed to imitate their behaviour and copy their loathsome practices,[o] 47
and soon your behaviour was more corrupt than theirs was. •As I live—declares 48
the Lord Yahweh—your sister Sodom and her daughters never did what you and
your daughters have done. •The crime of your sister Sodom was pride, gluttony, 49
calm complacency; such were hers and her daughters' crimes. They never helped
the poor and needy; •they were proud, and engaged in loathsome practices before 50
Gn 19 me, and so I swept them away as you have seen.[p] •And yet Samaria never 51
committed half the crimes that you have.

"You have done more loathsome things than they have. By all your loathsome
practices you have made your sisters seem innocent, •and now you bear the shame 52
of which you have freed your sisters; since the sins which you have committed are
more revolting than theirs, they are more upright than you are. So now, bear the
disgrace and shame of having put your sisters in the right.

"I shall restore their fortunes, I shall restore Sodom and her daughters, I shall 53
restore Samaria and her daughters, and then I shall restore your fortune with
theirs, •so that you can bear your shame and disgrace for all you have done, and 54
so console them. •When your sisters, Sodom and her daughters, are restored to 55
what they were, and Samaria and her daughters are restored to what they were,
then you too and your daughters will be restored to what you were. •Did you not 56
gloat over your sister Sodom when you were so proud, •before you were stripped 57
naked? Like her, you are now the laughing-stock of the women of Edom,[q] of all
the women round, of the women of Philistia, who pour out their contempt upon
you. •You have brought this on yourself, with your lewdness and your loathsome 58
practices—declares the Lord Yahweh.

"For the Lord Yahweh says this: I shall treat you as you have deserved for 59
36:31 making light of an oath and breaking a covenant, •but I shall remember my 60
Jr 31:3,31–34
Ho 2:16–25 covenant with you when you were a girl and shall conclude a covenant with you
that will last for ever. •And you for your part will remember your behaviour and 61
feel ashamed of it when you receive your elder and younger sisters and I make
them your daughters, although this is not included in my covenant with you. •I 62
shall renew my covenant with you;[r] and you will know that I am Yahweh, •and so 63
remember and feel ashamed and in your confusion be reduced to silence, when I
forgive you for everything you have done—declares the Lord Yahweh." '

The allegory of the eagle

1, 2 **17** The word of Yahweh was addressed to me as follows, •'Son of man, put a
3 riddle, propound a parable to the House of Israel. •Say, "The Lord Yahweh says this:

A great eagle [a] with great wings,
long-pinioned,
rich with many-coloured plumage,
came to the Lebanon.
4 He took the top of the cedar tree,
he plucked off the top branch,
he carried it off to the country of merchants
and set it down in a city of shopkeepers.
5 Next, he took one of the country's seeds
and put it in a fertile field;
by the side of a generous stream, [b]
like a willow tree, he placed it.
6 It grew and became a fruitful vine — Is 5:1a
of modest size,
grew up towards the eagle,
its roots grew downwards.
So it became a vine,
branching out and sprouting new shoots.

7 But there was another great eagle [c]
with great wings and thick plumage.
And now the vine twisted its roots towards him
and stretched its branches towards him,
for him to water it
away from the bed where it was planted.
8 It was in a fertile field,
by the side of a wide stream
that the vine had been planted,
to branch out and bear fruit
and become a noble vine."

9 Say, "The Lord Yahweh says this:
Will it succeed? [d]
Will the eagle not tear out its roots
and strip off its fruit,
so that all the new leaves it puts out will wither,
and no great strength is needed nor many people
to pull it up by the roots?
10 Planted it may be—will it succeed?
Will it not shrivel up when the east wind blows?
It will wither in the bed where it was growing!" '

11 The word of Yahweh was addressed to me as follows:
12 'Say to that tribe of rebels, "Do you not know what this means?" Say this,

l. lit. 'because of your children's blood' versions; 'like your children's blood' Hebr.

m. 'I shall hand you over to fury', conj., cf. 23:25; 'I shall give you the blood of fury' Hebr.

n. 'your sisters' (twice) versions; 'your sister' Hebr., as also in v. 52 (twice).

o. Trans. conj.; text doubtful.

p. 'you have seen' versions; 'I have seen' Hebr.

q. 'Like her' Gk; 'Like the time' Hebr. • 'Edom' Syr.; 'Aram' Hebr.

r. Ezekiel's insistence that God's favour is bestowed on Jerusalem freely, and not as reward for her repentance (which occurs after the new covenant, not before) anticipates the NT revelation of 1 Jn 4:10.

17 a. Nebuchadnezzar who, in 597, having deported Jehoiachin, put Zedekiah on the throne, *see* vv. 12 seq.

b. Before 'by the side of' Hebr. inserts 'take', absent from versions.

c. 'another' versions; 'one' Hebr. This eagle is Egypt, on whose help Zedekiah was always disposed to rely for support against Babylon, *see* v.15.

d. 'Will it succeed?' MSS, versions; 'It will succeed' Hebr.

2 K 24:10–17 'Look, the king of Babylon came to Jerusalem; he carried away the king and the princes, and took them to his home in Babylon. ·He took a member of the royal 13
family and made a treaty with him, forcing him to swear loyalty, having already deported the leading men of the country, ·so that the kingdom would remain 14
modest and without ambitions, and would keep and honour his treaty. ·But the 15
2 K 24:20 prince rebelled against him and sent envoys to Egypt to procure himself horses and a large number of troops. Will he succeed? Will a man who has done this go unpunished? Can he break a treaty and go unpunished? ·As I live, I swear it— 16
declares the Lord Yahweh—in Babylon, in the country of the king who put him on the throne, whose oath he has disregarded and whose treaty he has broken, there he will die. ·Despite the pharaoh's great army and hordes of men, he will not be 17
able to save him [e] by fighting, however many earthworks are raised, however many trenches dug to the loss of many lives. ·He has disregarded the oath by breaking 18
the treaty to which he had pledged himself and, having done all this, will not go unpunished.

"So, the Lord Yahweh says this: As I live, I swear it: my oath which he has 19
disregarded, my treaty which he has broken, I shall make them both recoil on his
=12:13 own head. ·I shall throw my net over him, he will be caught in my mesh; I shall 20
take him to Babylon and punish him there for being unfaithful to me. ·All the pick [f] 21
of all his troops will fall by the sword, and the survivors be scattered to all the winds. And you will know that I, Yahweh, have spoken.

"The Lord Yahweh says this: [g] 22

From the top of the tall cedar tree, [h]
from the highest branch I shall take a shoot
and plant it myself on a high and lofty mountain.
20:40 I shall plant it on the highest mountain in Israel. 23
It will put out branches and bear fruit
and grow into a noble cedar tree.
31:6 Every kind of bird will live beneath it,
↗Mt 13:32 every kind of winged creature will rest in the shade of its branches.
And all the trees of the countryside will know 24
that I, Yahweh, am the one
Ps 113:7–9 Lk 1:51–53 who lays the tall tree low and raises the low tree high,
21:3 Lk 23:31 who makes the green tree wither and makes the withered
bear fruit.
I, Yahweh, have spoken, and I will do it." '

14:12d;33:10–20 **Individual responsibility**

18 The word of Yahweh was addressed to me as follows, ·'Why do you keep 1, 2
repeating this proverb in the land of Israel:

‖Jr 31:29k The parents have eaten unripe grapes;
and the children's teeth are set on edge?

'As I live—declares the Lord Yahweh—you will have no further cause to repeat 3
this proverb in Israel. ·Look, all life belongs to me; the father's life and the son's 4
=18:20 Dt 24:16 life, both alike belong to me. The one who has sinned is the one to die.
Ps 15:2–5; 24:3–6 'But if a man is upright, [a] his actions law-abiding and upright, ·and he does not 5, 6
eat on the mountains [b] or raise his eyes to the foul idols of the House of Israel, does not defile his neighbour's wife or touch a woman during her periods, ·oppresses no 7
Mt 25:35seq. one, returns the pledge on a debt, does not rob, gives his own food to the hungry,
Lv 25:35–37 his clothes to those who lack clothing, ·does not lend for profit, does not charge 8
interest, abstains from evil, gives honest judgement between one person and another, ·keeps my laws and sincerely respects my judgements—someone like this 9
is truly upright and will live—declares the Lord Yahweh.

'But if he has a son prone to violence and bloodshed, who commits one of these [c] 10

misdeeds—•even though the father never has—a son who dares to eat on the mountains, who defiles his neighbour's wife, •who oppresses the poor and needy, robs, fails to return pledges, raises his eyes to foul idols, engages in loathsome practices, •lends for profit, or charges interest, such a person will by no means live;[d] having committed all these appalling crimes he will die, and his blood be on his own head.

'But if he in turn has a son who, in spite of seeing all the sins that his father has committed, does not imitate him, •does not eat on the mountains or raise his eyes to the foul idols of the House of Israel, does not defile his neighbour's wife, oppresses no one, takes no pledges, does not rob, gives his own food to the hungry, his clothes to those who lack clothing, •abstains from evil,[e] does not lend for profit or charge interest, respects my judgements and keeps my laws, he will not die for his father's sins: he will most certainly live. •But his father, because he was violent, robbed others[f] and never did good among his people, will most certainly die in his guilt.

'Now, you say, "Why doesn't the son bear his father's guilt?" If the son has been law-abiding and upright, has kept all my laws and followed them, most certainly he will live. •The one who has sinned is the one who must die; a son is not to bear his father's guilt, nor a father his son's guilt. The upright will be credited with his uprightness, and the wicked with his wickedness. =18:4 Dt 24:16

'If the wicked, however, renounces all the sins he has committed, respects my laws and is law-abiding and upright, he will most certainly live; he will not die.[g] None of the crimes he committed will be remembered against him from then on; he will most certainly live because of his upright actions. •Would I take pleasure in the death of the wicked—declares the Lord Yahweh—and not prefer to see him renounce his wickedness and live? Rm 2:6b =33:16 33:11 Ws 11:26 Lk 15:7,10,32 Jn 8:11 Rm 11:32 2 P 3:9 •3:20;33:12–13

'But if the upright abandons uprightness and does wrong by copying all the loathsome practices of the wicked, is he to live? All his upright actions will be forgotten from then on; for the infidelity of which he is guilty and the sin which he has committed, he will most certainly die.

'Now, you say, "What the Lord does is unjust." Now listen, House of Israel: is what I do unjust? Is it not what you do that is unjust? •When the upright abandons uprightness and does wrong and dies,[h] he dies because of the wrong which he himself has done. •Similarly, when the wicked abandons wickedness to become law-abiding and upright, he saves his own life. •Having chosen to renounce all his previous crimes, he will most certainly live: he will not die. •And yet the House of Israel says, "What the Lord does is unjust." Is what I do unjust, House of Israel? Is it not what you do that is unjust? •So in future, House of Israel, I shall judge each of you by what that person does—declares the Lord Yahweh. Repent, renounce all your crimes, avoid all occasions for guilt. •Shake off all the crimes you have committed, and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why die, House of Israel? •I take no pleasure in the death of anyone—declares the Lord Yahweh—so repent and live!' =33:20 Mt 16:27 11:19f Jr 4:4a 33:11;18:23 Ws 1:13 •Mt 3:2c

e. 'save' *yoshia'* conj.; *ya'aseh* 'make'.

f. 'The pick' *mibeharayw* MSS, Targ. and Syr.; Hebr. *miberahayw* 'fugitives'.

g. After the explanatory prose section the poem goes on to foretell the future restoration in terms of a messianic age.

h. Hebr. adds 'and I shall give', missing from versions and several MSS.

18 a. The following catalogue recalls the confessions or 'professions' which seem to have accompanied certain liturgical ceremonies.

b. Eating ritual meals on high places was a feature of the idolatrous local cults.

c. 'one of these' Syr.; 'a brother of one of these' Hebr.

d. lit. 'to live, he will not live' (a common turn of phrase) Gk; 'and living, he will not live' Hebr.

e. 'from evil' Gk, cf. v. 8; 'from the wretched' Hebr.

f. 'robbed others' conj., cf. vv. 7, 12, 16; 'robbed his brother (?)' Hebr.

g. A person is not only liberated from ancestral guilt, but can also escape the burden of his own past. Here the idea of individual, and not collective, obedience or disobedience is emphasised. Present dispositions, and these alone, determine the judgement of God, *see* 14:12d and Mt 3:2c.

h. Hebr. adds 'because of them'; Gk and Syr. omit.

A lament for the queen-mother and princes of Israel [a]

19 'Now, raise a lament for the princes of Israel. •Say: 1, 2

What was your mother?
A lioness among lions.
lying among the cubs
she nursed her whelps.
She reared one of her whelps: 3
he grew into a young lion;
he learnt to tear his prey;
he became a man-eater.
The nations came to hear of him; 4
he was caught in their pit;
2 K 23:33,34 they dragged him away with hooks
to Egypt. [b]
Her expectation thwarted, 5
and seeing her hope dashed,
she took another of her whelps
and made a young lion of him.
He prowled among the lions, 6
he grew into a young lion,
he learnt to tear his prey;
he became a man-eater.
He tore down their palaces, [c] 7
he destroyed their cities;
the land and all its inhabitants were appalled
by the sound of his roars.
The nations marched out against him 8
from the surrounding provinces;
they spread their net over him;
he was caught in their pit.
They shackled him with hooks, 9
2 K 24:8–17 they took him to the king of Babylon
and threw him into a fortress, [d]
so that his voice could never again be heard
on the mountains of Israel.

17:6–10 Is 5:1a Your mother was like a vine [e] 10
planted beside the water,
47:12+ Ps 1:3 fruitful and leafy,
Rv 22:1–2 because the water flowed so full.
She had stout stems 11
which became kingly sceptres;
she grew higher and higher,
up into the clouds;
she was admired for her height
and the number of her branches.
But she was furiously uprooted 12
and thrown on the ground;
the east wind dried up her fruit,
she was broken to pieces;
Jn 15:6 her stout stem dried up, [f]
the fire devoured it.
Now she has been transplanted to the desert, 13
to a dry and thirsty land.
5:4 Fire burst out of her stem 14

devouring her branches and fruit.
No more stout stem for her,
no more kingly sceptre.'

This is a lament; it was used as such.

An account of Israel's infidelities 16:1a

20 In the seventh year, on the tenth day of the fifth month,[a] some of the elders 14:1–5
of Israel came to consult Yahweh and were sitting with me, ·when the word
of Yahweh was addressed to me as follows, ·'Son of man, speak to the elders of
Israel. Say, "The Lord Yahweh says this: Have you come to consult me? As I live,
I will not be consulted by you—declares the Lord Yahweh."
'Are you ready to judge them? Are you ready to judge them, son of man? 22:2;23:36
Confront them with the loathsome practices of their ancestors. ·Say, "The Lord
Yahweh says this: On the day when I chose Israel, when I pledged my word[b] to the Dt 7:6b
House of Jacob, I made myself known to them in Egypt; I pledged my word to
them and said: I am Yahweh your God. ·That day I pledged them my word that I Ex 3:13–14g
would bring them out of Egypt to a country which I had reconnoitred for them, a
country flowing with milk and honey, and the loveliest of them all. ·And I said to =20:15
them: Each of you must reject the horrors which attract you; do not pollute Ex 3:8e
yourselves with the foul idols of Egypt; I am Yahweh your God. ·But they rebelled Lv 18:3
against me and would not listen to me. Not one of them rejected the horrors which
attracted them; they did not give up the foul idols of Egypt. I then resolved to vent
my fury on them, to sate my anger on them in Egypt; ·But respect for my own =20:14;36:22
name kept me from letting it be profaned in the eyes of the nations among whom
they were living,[c] and before whom I had made myself known to them and
promised to bring them out of Egypt. ·So I brought them out of Egypt and led
them into the desert. ·I gave them my laws and taught them my judgements, in Lv 18:5+
whose observance people find life. ·And I also gave them my Sabbaths as a sign Ex 20:8f;31:13
between me and them, so that they might know that I, Yahweh, am the one who
sanctifies them. ·The House of Israel, however, rebelled against me in the desert; Ex 14:11+
they refused to keep my laws, they scorned my judgements, in whose observance
people find life, and they grossly profaned my Sabbaths. I then resolved to vent my
fury on them in the desert and destroy them. ·But respect for my own name kept =20:9
me from letting it be profaned in the eyes of the nations, before whom I had Ex 32:12+
brought them out. ·Even so, I pledged them my word in the desert that I would not =20:6+
lead them to the country which I had given them, a country flowing with milk and Nb 14:28–30
honey, and the loveliest of them all, ·since they had scorned my judgements, had Dt 1:34,35
refused to keep my laws and had profaned my Sabbaths, their hearts being attached Ps 95:11
to foul idols. ·In spite of this, I took pity on them; I refrained from destroying them
and did not make an end of them in the desert.
"I said to their children in the desert: Do not follow the laws of your ancestors,
do not practise their judgements, do not defile yourselves with their foul idols. ·I
am Yahweh your God. Keep my laws, respect my judgements and practise them.
Keep my Sabbaths holy; let them be a sign between me and you, so that people
may know that I am Yahweh your God. ·Their children, however, rebelled against

19 **a.** This poem is a *qinah*, i.e. a lament characterised rhythmically by an inequality of the lines within each couplet. Cf. 26:17–18; 27:3–9, 25–36. It is a political allegory, but it is not easy to interpret all its elements. The lioness is Israel, whose kings are the whelps.

b. King Jehoahaz, deposed and taken away to Egypt by Necho in 609.

c. 'tore down their palaces' *wayyaroa' 'armenotayw* versions; Hebr. *wayyeda' 'almenotayw* 'knew their widows'. Probably an allusion to Jehoiachin carried off to Babylon in 597. The prophet does not mention Jehoiakim (609–598) who died a natural death and therefore furnished no lesson for Zedekiah and his contemporaries.

d. 'into a fortress', Gk; 'into traps' Hebr.

e. 'like' Targ.; 'in your blood' Hebr. Another allegory, the vine is the nation once prosperous but soon to be destroyed.

f. 'she was broken . . . (it) dried up' Gk; 'they were broken . . . (they) dried up' Hebr.

20 **a.** July–August 591.

b. lit. 'raised my hand towards', a gesture used in taking oaths.

c. The sole reason for Yahweh's forbearance with his people, despite their apostasy, is the honour of his name.

me; they refused to keep my laws, they did not respect or practise my judgements,
Lv 18:5 which must be practised by all who want to live; they profaned my Sabbaths. I then
resolved to vent my fury on them, to sate my anger on them in the desert. ·But I 22
20:14 restrained my hand; respect for my own name kept me from letting it be profaned
in the eyes of the nations, before whom I had brought them out. ·Once again, 23
however, I pledged them my word that I would scatter them throughout the nations
and disperse them in foreign countries, ·because they had not followed my judge- 24
ments but had rejected my laws and profaned my Sabbaths, their eyes being
fastened on the foul idols of their ancestors. ·And for this reason I gave them laws 25
that were not good and judgements by which they could never live; [d] ·and I polluted 26
Lv 18:21h them with their own offerings, making them sacrifice every first-born son in order
to fill them with revulsion, so that they would know that I am Yahweh."

'For this reason, son of man, speak to the House of Israel. Say to them, "The 27
Lord Yahweh says this: Here is another way by which your ancestors outraged me
by their infidelity. ·Once I had brought them into the country which I had pledged 28
Dt 12:2b my word to give them, they then saw all sorts of high hills, all kinds of leafy trees,
and there they performed their sacrifices and made offerings that provoked my
anger; there they set out their pleasing smell and poured their libations. ·I then 29
said to them: What is this high place where you go? And they gave, and still give it,
the name of Bamah." [e]

'So, say to the House of Israel, "The Lord Yahweh says this: If you are polluting 30
yourselves as your ancestors did by fornicating with their horrors—·for by offer- 31
ing your gifts and by burning your children as sacrifices, you have been
polluting yourselves with all your foul idols to this very day—shall I let myself be
consulted by you, House of Israel? As I live—declares Lord Yahweh—I shall not
let myself be consulted by you. ·And what you sometimes imagine will never be so, 32
when you say: We shall be like the peoples, the tribes of foreign lands, worshipping
wood and stone. ·As I live I swear it—declares the Lord Yahweh—I am the one 33
who will reign over you, with a strong hand and outstretched arm, once my fury is
sated. · With a strong hand and outstretched arm, once my fury is sated, I shall 34
bring you back from the peoples and gather you again from the countries through-
out which you have been scattered. ·I shall lead you into the desert of the nations [f] 35
and there I shall judge you face to face. ·As I judged your ancestors in the desert of 36
Egypt, so will I judge you—declares the Lord Yahweh. ·I shall make you pass 37
under the crook, [g] bring you to respect the covenant ·and rid you of the rebels who 38
have revolted against me; I shall bring them out of the country where they are
staying, but they will not enter the country of Israel, and you will know that I am
16:59–63,62r Yahweh.' ·House of Israel, Lord Yahweh says this: Go on, all of you, worship your 39
36:20;43:8 foul idols, but later we shall see if you don't listen to me! Then you will stop
Lv 17:1a profaning my holy name with your offerings and your foul idols. ·For on my holy 40
17:23 mountain, on the high mountain of Israel—declares the Lord Yahweh—is where
the whole House of Israel, everyone in the country, will worship me. There I shall
accept and there expect your presents, your choicest offering and all your conse-
crated gifts. ·I shall welcome you like a pleasing smell when I bring you back from 41
the peoples and gather you from the countries throughout which you have been
scattered, and through you I shall display my holiness for all the nations to see;
and you will know that I am Yahweh, when I bring you back to the soil of Israel, 42
to the country which I pledged my word to give to your ancestors. ·There you will 43
remember your past behaviour and all the actions by which you have defiled
yourselves, and you will loathe yourselves for all the wrongs which you have
20:14 committed. ·And you will know that I am Yahweh, when I treat you as respect 44
for my own name requires, and not as your wicked behaviour and corrupt actions
deserve, House of Israel—declares the Lord Yahweh." '

The sword of Yahweh

1, 2 45, 46 **21** The word of Yahweh was addressed to me as follows, •"Son of man, turn to the right; utter your word towards the south, prophesy against the forest 16:46+
47 3 land of the Negeb. •Say to the forest of Negeb, "Hear the word of Yahweh! The Lord Yahweh says this: Listen; I am about to kindle a fire in you which will burn up 17:24 Ps 83:14 Is 9:17;10: 17–19 Jr 21:14 Lk 23:31
every green tree in you as well as every dry one; it will be an unquenchable blaze
48 4 and every face will be scorched by it from the Negeb to the north. •All humanity
49 5 will see that it was I, Yahweh, who kindled it, and it will not be extinguished." ' •I said, 'Lord Yahweh, they say of me, "He does nothing but speak in riddles!" '

6, 7 21:1, 2 Then the word of Yahweh was addressed to me as follows, •"Son of man, turn towards Jerusalem, utter your word towards the sanctuary[a] and prophesy against
3 8 the land of Israel. •Say to the land of Israel, "Yahweh says this: Now I am against you; I am about to unsheathe my sword and rid you of the upright and the wicked
4 9 alike.[b] •Since I am going to rid you of upright and wicked alike, I shall unsheathe
5 10 my sword against everyone alive, from the Negeb to the north, •so that everyone alive will know that I, Yahweh, am the one who has unsheathed my sword; it will not go back again."

6 11 'Son of man, groan as though your heart were breaking. Utter your bitter groans
7 12 where they can see you. •And if they say, "Why these groans?" reply, "Because of the news which is about to come, all hearts will sink, all hands grow weak, all spirits 7:17
grow faint and all knees turn to water. It is coming now, it is here!—declares Lord Yahweh." '

13, 14 8, 9 The word of Yahweh was addressed to me as follows, •"Son of man, prophesy. Say, "The Lord says this. Say:[c]

Lv 26:25
The sword, the sword
has been sharpened and polished,
10 15 sharpened for slaughter,
polished to flash like lightning . . .[d]
16 He has had it polished to be wielded,
11 this sword sharpened and polished
to put in the slaughterer's hand!
12 17 Shout and wail, son of man,
for it will come on my people,
on all the chief men of Israel doomed like my people to the sword!
18 So beat your breast,[e] •for this will be an ordeal . . .[f] Jr 31:19
declares the Lord Yahweh.
19 So prophesy, son of man, and clap your hands!
Let the sword pass three times,
that sword for victims,
that sword for a great victim,[g]
threatening them from every side!
15 20 To make hearts sink and make sure many fall,

d. Primitive theology ascribed to Yahweh customs and practices which were purely human in origin. Here Ezekiel seems to have in mind the commandment to offer the newly born (Ex 22:28–29), often so grossly misconstrued by the Israelites, *see* Lv 18:21h.

e. Play on the word *bamah*: 'high place' = *habbamah*: '(where) you go' = *habba'im*.

f. The expression indicates the Syrian Desert.

g. As the shepherd makes the sheep file past him to count them, *see* Lv 27: 32. *See also* Ezk. 34:1a.

21 **a.** Plural form as in 7:24.

b. Ezekiel again enunciates the ancient principle of collective punishment, though elsewhere, 14:12d; 18, he advances that of individual responsibility.

c. A poem, in urgent rhythm, on the sword of Yahweh given into the hands of the 'slaughterer', i.e. the Babylonians, to execute God's judgement. The text is badly preserved; many details are difficult to interpret.

d. The remainder of the v. is unintelligible and the versions offer no light. Hebr. 'or we shall rejoice. The sceptre of my son defies all wood.' Gk 'ready to liberate (?), slaughters, defies, rejects all wood.'

e. lit. 'slap your thigh', gesture of mourning and pain.

f. Remainder of v. unintelligible, lit. 'and what would happen if there were not also a defiant sceptre?' The mention of the 'defiant sceptre' apparently alludes to the equally obscure end of v. 15.

g. Trans. conj. of apparently corrupt text. The 'great victim' would seem to allude to Zedekiah, denounced for breaking his oath of allegiance in vv. 30–32.

I have posted the slaughtering sword at every gate
to flash like lightning, polished for slaughter. [h]
Be sharp, [i] on the right, be ready on the left, 21 16
whichever way your blade is needed!
I too shall clap my hands 22 17
and sate my fury!
I, Yahweh, have spoken." '

The king of Babylon at the crossroads

The word of Yahweh was addressed to me as follows, •'Son of man, mark out two 23, 24 18, 19
roads for the sword of the king of Babylon to come along, making both of them
begin from the same country. Then put up a signpost, put it where the road leaves
for the city, •trace the route which the sword should take for Rabbah-of-the- 25 20
Ammonites, and for Judah, to the fortress of Jerusalem. •For the king of Babylon 26 21
has halted at the fork where these two roads diverge, to take the omens. He has
shaken the arrows, questioned the household gods, inspected the liver. •The lot 27 22
marked 'Jerusalem' is in his right hand: there to set up battering-rams, give the
4:2,3 word for slaughter, raise the war cry, level battering-rams against the gates, cast up
earthworks, build entrenchments. [j] •The inhabitants will believe that these omens 28 23
are idle, for they have received sworn guarantees, but he will bring their guilt to
mind and capture them. •And so the Lord Yahweh says this, "Since you have 29 24
brought your guilt to mind by parading your misdeeds and flaunting your sins in
everything you do: because you have drawn attention to yourselves, you will be
captured. •As for you, impious and wicked prince of Israel, whose doom is 30 25
approaching to put an end to your crimes, •the Lord Yahweh says this: They will 31 26
Lv 8:9 take away your diadem and remove your crown. Everything will be changed; the
Is 40:4
Mt 23:12 low will be raised and the high brought low! •Ruin, ruin, I shall bring such ruin as 32 27
Gn 49:10 never was before, until the rightful ruler comes, on whom I shall bestow it." [k]

The punishment of Ammon [l]

'Son of man, prophesy and say, "The Lord Yahweh says this: In reply to the 33 28
Ammonites and their jeers, say: The sword, the sword is drawn for slaughter,
polished to devour, to flash like lightning—•while you have empty visions and 34 29
consult lying omens—to cut the throats [m] of the wicked, whose doom is approaching
to put an end to their crimes. •Put it back in the scabbard. The place where you 35 30
were created, the land of your origin, will be where I judge you. •I shall vent my 36 31
fury on you, breathe the fire of my rage against you and hand you over to barbarous
men whose trade is destruction. •You will be fuel for the fire, your blood will flow 37 32
through the country, you will leave no memory behind you; for I, Yahweh, have
spoken!" '

The crimes of Jerusalem [a]

20:4;23:36 **22** The word of Yahweh was addressed to me as follows, •'Son of man, are you 1, 2
ready to judge? Are you ready to judge the blood-stained city? Confront
her with all her loathsome practices! •Say, "The Lord Yahweh says this: City 3
shedding blood inside yourself to hasten your doom, making foul idols on your soil
to defile yourself, •you have incurred guilt by the blood you have shed, you have 4
defiled yourself with the foul idols you have made, you have shortened your days,
5:14 you have come to the end of your years. This is why I have made you an object of
scorn to the nations and a laughing-stock to every country. •From far and near they 5
will taunt you with your infamous disorders.

18:5–9 "Look! In you the princes of Israel, one and all, have furthered their own 6
Lv 19:3 interests at the cost of bloodshed; [b] •in you people have despised their fathers and 7
Dt 27:16
Ex 22:21–22 mothers; in you they have ill-treated the settler; in you they have oppressed the
widow and orphan. •You have treated my sanctuary with contempt, you have 8
Lv 19:30 profaned my Sabbaths. •In you informers incite to bloodshed; in you people eat on 9

10 the mountains and act licentiously; ·in you they have sexual intercourse with their ▶Lv 19:16 ▶Dt 12:2b
11 fathers; in you they force themselves on women in their periods; ·in you one man ·Lv 18:7 ·Lv 18:19
engages in loathsome practices with his neighbour's wife, another lewdly defiles ·Lv 18:20 Lv 18:15
12 his daughter-in-law, another violates his sister, his own father's daughter. ·In you ·Lv 18:9
people take bribes for shedding blood; you lend for profit and charge interest, you ·Dt 27:25 ·Lv 25:35–37
profit from your fellow by extortion and have forgotten about me—declares the
Lord Yahweh.
13 "Now I shall clap my hands at your acts of banditry and the blood that flows in 6:11
14 you. ·Will your heart be able to resist, will your hands be steady, the day when I
15 call you to account? I, Yahweh, have spoken and shall act. ·I shall scatter you Lv 26:33
among the nations and disperse you in foreign countries, and so put an end to the
16 filthiness now inside you; ·through your own fault, you will be profaned[c] in the
eyes of the nations, and you will know that I am Yahweh!" '
17, 18 The word of Yahweh was addressed to me as follows, ·"Son of man, for me, the
House of Israel has become dross: copper, tin, iron, lead, all mixed up together in Is 1:22,25 Jr 6:28–30
19 the melting-pot; they are dross.[d] ·And so, Lord Yahweh says this, "Since you have
20 all become dross, right! I shall collect you inside Jerusalem.[e] ·As silver, copper,
iron, lead and tin are collected in the melting-pot, and the fire is blown underneath
to melt them down, so I shall collect you in my furious anger and have you melted Ml 3:2–3
21 down; ·I shall collect you and blow up the fire of my rage for you and have you
22 melted down inside the city. ·As silver is melted in the melting-pot, so you will be
melted down inside the city, and you will know that I, Yahweh, have vented my
fury on you." '
23, 24 The word of Yahweh was addressed to me as follows,[f] ·"Son of man, say to her,
25 "You are a land that has not received rain[g] or shower on the day of anger. ·In you,
the princes[h] are like a roaring lion tearing its prey. They have eaten the people, Zp 3:3,4 Ex 20:13,15
26 seized wealth and jewels and widowed many inside her. ·Her priests have violated
my law and desecrated my sanctuary; they have made no distinction between Lv 19:30
sacred and profane, they have not taught people the difference between clean and Lv 17–22 ·Lv 11–16
unclean; they have turned their eyes away from my Sabbaths and I have been ·Lv 23:3
27 dishonoured by them. ·In her the leaders are wolves tearing their prey, shedding Ex 20:8–11
28 blood and killing people to steal their possessions. ·Her prophets have plastered 13:10–16
these things over with their empty visions and lying prophecies, saying: Yahweh
29 says this, although Yahweh has not spoken. ·The people of the country have taken
to extortion and banditry; they have oppressed the poor and needy and ill-treated
30 the settler in a way that is unjustifiable. ·I have been looking for someone among
them to build a barricade and oppose me in the breach, to defend the country and Ps 106:23
31 prevent me from destroying it; but I have found no one. ·Hence I have vented my Is 59:15–16

h. 'the slaughtering sword' Gk; Hebr. doubtful. • 'polished' *merutah* Targ.; Hebr. *me'uttah* makes no sense.

i. 'Be sharp' Gk; 'Be unique' Hebr.

j. The first mention of battering-rams is probably faulty, though also found in the versions. By marching against Jerusalem, rather than against Rabbah, capital of Ammon (modern Amman), Nebuchadnezzar was not obeying an 'idle omen', but reacting to Israel's offence, the latter having rebelled against him and appealed to Egypt, *see* v. 28.

k. 'such as never was before', lit. 'even that was not.' 'bestow it', i.e. the crown, but who the 'rightful ruler' may be is (perhaps intentionally) left in doubt: whether Jehoiachin, previously dethroned, or a future messiah. • The concluding words of the v. are reminiscent of Jacob's prophecy over Judah, Gn 49: 10, sometimes emended to read 'the sceptre will not depart from Judah, nor the baton of command from between his feet until he comes to whom it belongs'; but this text is corrupt and by no means clear.

l. The lot having fallen on Jerusalem, v. 27, the Ammonites may think they have escaped, but they too will be punished.

m. lit. 'to put on the throat' conj.; 'to put you on the throat' Hebr. The next two words are grammatically incorrect.

22 a. The theme is that of ch. 16, 20, 23. Here, however, the prophet does not speak in parable, nor does he refer to the sins of past generations but to those of the present, listed in vv. 1–12.

b. lit. 'each according to his arm'.

c. 'your own fault', lit. 'through yourself'. Others emend to 'I shall be profaned (or dishonoured) by you,' following Gk, but the Gk translator has not understood properly and has derived the verb *halal* (to profane) from the root *nahal* (to inherit).

d. Hebr. adds 'of silver', perhaps an accidental misplacement, *see* v. 20. Already used by Isaiah (1:21, 25) and Jeremiah (6:28 seq.), the image is more fully developed here as a metaphor for the invasion and siege of Jerusalem.

e. The pronouncement may have been made when the people of Judah were crowding into Jerusalem to take refuge there, shortly before the siege of 589–587.

f. This third section of the pronouncement was perhaps written after the city had fallen.

g. 'has not received rain' Gk; 'has not been cleaned' Hebr.

h. 'the princes' Gk; 'the conspiracy of her prophets' Hebr.

fury on them; I have put an end to them in the fire of my rage. I have made their conduct recoil on their own heads—declares the Lord Yahweh." '

16:1a Jr 3:6–13 **An allegorical history of Jerusalem and Samaria** [a]

20:7–8 **23** The word of Yahweh was addressed to me as follows, 1, 2
·"Son of man, there were once two women, daughters of the same mother. 3
·They played the whore in Egypt; they played the whore when they were still girls. There their nipples were handled, there their virgin breasts were first fondled. 4
·Their names were: Oholah the elder, Oholibah her sister. [b] They belonged to me and bore sons and daughters. As regards their names, Samaria is Oholah, Jerusalem Oholibah. Now Oholah played the whore, although she belonged to me; she lusted after her 5
lovers, her neighbours the Assyrians, 6
·dressed in purple, governors and magistrates, all of them young and desirable, and skilful horsemen. 7
·She played the whore with all of them, the pick of Assyria, and defiled herself with all the foul idols of all those with whom she was in love, 8
·nor did she give up the whoring begun in Egypt, where men had slept with her from her girlhood, fondling her virgin breasts, debauching her over and over again.

'That is why I have handed her over to her lovers, to the Assyrians with whom 9
she was in love. 10
·They stripped her naked, seized her sons and daughters and put her to the sword. She became notorious among women for the justice done on her.

'Her sister Oholibah saw all this, but she was even more depraved, and her 11
whorings were worse than her sister's. 12
·She fell in love with her neighbours the Assyrians, governors and magistrates, dressed in sumptuous clothes, skilful horseman, all young and desirable. 13
·Then I saw that she had defiled herself, that both sisters were equally bad. 14
·She began whoring worse than ever; no sooner had she seen wall-carvings of men, pictures of Chaldaeans coloured vermilion, 15
·men with sashes round their waists and elaborate turbans on their heads, all so lordly of bearing, depicting the Babylonians, natives of Chaldaea, 16
·than she fell in love with
2 K 20:12–19 them at first sight and sent messengers to them in Chaldaea. [c] 17
·The Babylonians came to her, shared her love-bed and defiled her with their whoring. Once defiled by them, she withdrew her affection from them. 18
·Thus she flaunted her whoring, exposing her body, until I withdrew my affection from her as I had withdrawn it from her sister. 19
·But she began whoring worse than ever, remembering her girlhood, when she had played the whore in Egypt, 20
·when she had been in love with their profligates, big-membered as donkeys, ejaculating as violently as stallions.

'You were hankering for the debauchery of your girlhood, when they used to 21
handle your nipples in Egypt and fondle your young breasts. [d] 22
·And so, Oholibah, Lord Yahweh says this, "I shall set all your lovers against you, from whom you have withdrawn your affection, and bring them to assault you from all directions: the Babylonians and all the Chaldaeans, the men of Pekod and Shoa and Koa, [e] 23
and all the Assyrians with them, young and desirable, all governors and magistrates, all famous lords and skilful horsemen. 24
·From the north, [f] they will advance on you with chariots and wagons and an international army and beset you with shield, buckler and helmet on all sides. I shall charge them to pass sentence on you and they will pass sentence on you as they think fit. 25
·I shall direct my jealousy against you; they will treat you with fury; they will cut off your nose and ears, and what is left of your family will fall by the sword; they will seize your sons and daughters, and what is left will be burnt. 26
·They will strip off your garments and rob you of your jewels. 27
·I shall put an end to your debauchery and to the whorings you
Ex 16:3;17:3 began in Egypt; you will not look to the Egyptians any more, you will never think of them again. 28
·For the Lord Yahweh says this: Now, I shall hand you over to those you hate, to those for whom you no longer feel affection. 29
·They will treat you with hatred, they will rob you of the entire fruit of your labours and leave you stark naked. And thus your shameful whorings will be exposed, your debauchery and your whorings. 30
·This will happen to you because you have played the whore with the nations and have defiled yourself with their foul idols. 31
·Since you have copied

32 your sister's behaviour, I shall put her cup in your hand." ·The Lord Yahweh says this: Ps 75:8+ Is 51:17i Jr 25:15–18

You will drink your sister's cup,[g]
a cup both deep and wide,
leading to laughter and mockery,
so ample the draught it holds.
33 You will be filled with drunkenness and sorrow.
Cup of affliction and devastation,
the cup of your sister Samaria,
34 you will drink it, you will drain it;
then you will break it in pieces
and lacerate your own breasts.

For I have spoken—declared the Lord Yahweh.

35 "And so, the Lord Yahweh says this: Since you have forgotten me and have turned your back on me, you too will have to bear the weight of your debauchery
36 and whorings." ' ·And Yahweh said to me, 'Son of man, are you ready to judge 20:4;22:2
37 Oholah and Oholibah and charge them with their loathsome practices? ·They have been adulteresses, their hands are dripping with blood, they have committed adultery with their foul idols. As for the children they had borne me, they have
38 offered them as burnt sacrifices to feed them.[h] ·And here is something else they Lv 18:21h have done to me: they have defiled my sanctuary today and have profaned my
39 Sabbaths. ·The same day as sacrificing their children to their idols, they have been to my sanctuary and profaned it. Yes, this is what they have done in my Lv 19:30 own house.

40 'Worse still,[i] they summoned men from far away, invited by messenger, and
41 they came. For them you bathed, you painted your eyes, put on your jewels ·and sat on a sumptuous bed, by which a table was laid out. On this you had put my
42 incense and my oil. ·The noise of the carefree company resounded, made by the crowd of men brought in from the desert;[j] they put bracelets on the women's arms
43 and magnificent crowns on their heads. ·I thought, "That woman, worn out with
44 adultery! Are they going to fornicate with her too?"[k] ·Yet they visit her like any common prostitute, just as they visited those profligate women Oholah and Oho-
45 libah. ·All the same, there are upright men who will judge them as adulteresses Lv 20:10 Dt 22:21–22 and murderesses are judged, since they are adulteresses and their hands are dripping with blood."

46 'The Lord Yahweh says this, "Summon an assembly to deal with them, and hand
47 them over to terror and pillage; ·let the assembly stone them and dispatch them with their swords; let their sons and daughters be slaughtered and their houses set
48 on fire. ·This is how I shall purge the country of debauchery, so that all women will
49 be taught the lesson never to ape your debauchery again. ·Your debauchery will recoil on yourselves, and you will bear the weight of the sins committed with your foul idols and you will know that I am the Lord Yahweh." '

23 **a.** The allegory of Israel's history, *see* 16:1a, is resumed here and elaborated by the comparison between Samaria and Jerusalem.

b. Oholah: 'her-tent'. Oholibah: 'my-tent-(is-)in-her'. The etymology of the words seems to contrast the schismatic cult of Samaria with the authentic cult of Jerusalem. They may, however, allude to events or practices unknown to us. Possibly there is reference to the tents pitched on the 'high places'.

c. Possibly an allusion to the friendly relations between Hezekiah and Merodach-Baladan, *see* Is 39.

d. 'handle' *be'assot* conj., *see* v. 3; Hebr. *ba'asot* 'make'. • 'in Egypt' versions; 'of Egypt' Hebr. • 'fondle' *uma'ek* conj., *see* v. 3; Hebr. *lema'an* 'in order to'.

e. Pekod, already mentioned in Jr 50:21, was an Aramaean tribe to the east of Babylonia. Both are mentioned in cuneiform inscriptions. Shoa, possibly identifiable with the Sutu, has not been located.

f. 'from the north' Gk; Hebr. has unknown word.

g. This short poem is probably a popular song or a satirical epigram which Ezekiel applies to Jerusalem. The image of the cup had been current since Jeremiah, *see also* Ps 16; 75.

h. Gk and Syr.; 'for them' Hebr. • On the theme of child-sacrifice, *see* 20:25–26; Jr 7:31; 19:5; 32:35. Also Lv 18:21h.

i. The prophet now addresses his contemporaries directly and blames them for their recent sins; hence the use of the second person. The passage no doubt contains a number of allusions to recent specific political events, but the text is corrupt and not easily understood.

j. Text corrupt; trans. conj. After 'company' we omit 'and to men'.

k. Text uncertain.

Announcement of the siege of Jerusalem

24 In the ninth year, on the tenth day of the tenth month, [a] the word of Yahweh 1
was addressed to me as follows, ·'Son of man, write down today's date, yes, 2
today's, for this very day the king of Babylon began his attack on Jerusalem. [b] ·So 3
pronounce a parable for this tribe of rebels. Say, "The Lord Yahweh says this:

11:3–12

Put the pot on the fire;
put it on; pour the water in! [c]
Now put the cuts of meat all in together, 4
all the best cuts, leg and shoulder.
Fill it with the best bones.
Take the best of the flock, 5
then heap wood [d] underneath;
boil it thoroughly
until even the bones are cooked.

"For the Lord Yahweh says this: 6

Disaster is in store for the bloody city,
for that rusty cooking pot
whose rust will not come off!
Empty it, bit by bit,
not bothering to draw lots;
for she is still full of bloodshed, 7
she has put blood on the naked rock;
she did not pour it on the ground
so as to cover it with dust.
To make anger rise, to exact vengeance, 8
Jb 16:18f I have put her blood on the naked rock,
so that it should not be covered:

"So, the Lord Yahweh says this: 9

Disaster is in store for the bloody city!
I too plan to build a great fire.
Heap on the wood, light it, 10
cook the meat, prepare the seasoning
let the bones burn!
Put the empty pot on the coals 11
to make it hot,
until the bronze glows,
the filth inside melts
and the rust is burnt away!

"'But all that rust would not come off in the fire. ·Your filth [f] is infamous. Since 12, 13
I have tried to purge you and you would not let yourself be purged of your filth, so
now you will never be purged of your filth until I have sated my anger on you. ·I, 14
Yahweh, have spoken; this will happen; I shall act and not relent; I shall show no
5:11e pity, no compassion. You will be judged as your conduct and actions deserve—
declares the Lord Yahweh." '

Jr 18:1a **Ordeals for the prophet**

The word of Yahweh was addressed to me as follows, ·'Son of man, at a blow I am 15, 16
Si 36:22 about to deprive you of the delight of your eyes. [g] But you are not to lament, not to
Jr 16:5–7,6c weep, not to let your tears run down. ·Groan in silence, do not go into mourning 17
for the dead, knot your turban round your head, put your sandals on your feet, do
not cover your beard, do not eat the usual food.' [h] ·I told this to the people in the 18
morning, and my wife died in the evening, and the next morning I did as I had been

19 ordered. ·The people then said to me, 'Will you not explain what meaning these
20 actions have for us?' ·I replied, 'The word of Yahweh has been addressed to me as
21 follows, ·"Say to the House of Israel, the Lord Yahweh says this: I am about to
profane my sanctuary, the pride of your strength, the delight of your eyes, the joy Jr 7:1–5 Lm 2:7
of your hearts. Your sons and daughters whom you have left behind will fall by the
22 sword. ·Then you will do as I have done: [i] you will not cover your beards or eat the
23 usual food; ·you will keep your turbans on your heads and your sandals on your
feet; you will not lament or weep but will waste away for your crimes, groaning
24 among yourselves. ·Thus Ezekiel is a sign for you. You will do exactly what he has 12:6+
done. And when this happens, you will know that I am Lord Yahweh! "
25 'And, son of man, the day that I deprive them of their strength, their crowning
joy, the delight of their eyes, the joy of their hearts, their sons and daughters,
26, 27 that day a survivor will bring you the news. ·That day your mouth will be 3:26;33:22
opened to speak to the survivor; you will speak and no longer be dumb; you will be
a sign for them, and they will know that I am Yahweh.'

II: PROPHECIES AGAINST THE NATIONS [a]

Against the Ammonites [b]

21:33–37 Dt 2:19e Am 1:13–15 Jr 49:1–6

1, 2 **25** The word of Yahweh was addressed to me as follows, ·'Son of man, turn
3 towards the Ammonites and prophesy against them. ·Say to the Ammonites, "Hear the word of the Lord Yahweh. The Lord Yahweh says this:
"Since you [c] gloated over my sanctuary when it was profaned, and over the land of Israel when it was ravaged, and over the House of Judah when it went into exile,
4 I shall let the sons of the East [d] take possession of you; they will pitch their camps Nb 24:21k
inside you, they will make their home in you. They will be the ones to eat your
5 produce and drink your milk. ·I shall turn Rabbah into a camel yard and the towns [e] of Ammon into sheepfolds. And so you will know that I am Yahweh.
6 "The Lord Yahweh says this: Since you have clapped your hands and danced for 6:11
7 joy, full of malicious delight at Israel's fate, ·my hand will be against you for this; I shall hand you over to be looted by the peoples, obliterate you as a nation and wipe you out as a country. I shall reduce you to nothing, and you will know that I am Yahweh.

Against Moab

Nb 22:36n Jr 48 Am 2:1–3 Zp 2:8–11

8 "The Lord Yahweh says this:
"Since Moab and Seir [f] have said: Look at the House of Judah; it is no different

24 **a.** December 589–January 588.
b. Hence, from the data of 2 K 25:1; Jr 52:4 (cf. 39:1), the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem. If the prophet is now in Babylonia, this date, which he sets down in writing, will later serve to verify the accuracy of his revelations.
c. A symbolic action. The prophet ironically mimes the boast of 11:3 claiming the impregnability of Jerusalem. The details are not all easy to interpret but the general sense is clear: the city is so corrupt that nothing can save it. A transitory ordeal would not be enough; the city must be destroyed. The walls will not protect its people, who will be driven out and scattered.
d. 'wood' *ha'etzim* conj., cf. v. 10; Hebr. *ha'atzamin* 'bones'.
e. At the beginning of v., Hebr. reads 'She has wearied me (with) her labours' (?); Gk omits. • At the end of v., we omit the word 'rust', accidentally repeated.
f. 'Your filth' conj.; 'In your filth' Hebr.
g. Term of affection, here designating the prophet's wife, v. 18.
h. lit. 'bread of men'. These are mourning ceremonies, but the exact allusion escapes us.
i. Not that the citizens of Jerusalem are forbidden to lament their sins, but that there will be no time for doing so; the catastrophe will be too sudden and too sharp.

25 **a.** As in Is 13–23; Jr 47–51; Am 1–2, Ezekiel's pronouncements against the nations are grouped together, ch. 25–32. Ch. 25–28 are concerned with Israel's immediate neighbours, Ammon, Moab, Edom and the Philistines, ch. 25, Tyre and Sidon, ch. 26–28, then Egypt, ch. 29–32. The dates given in 26:1; 29:1; 30:20; 31:1; 32:1, 17 range from BC 587 to BC 585, during and after the siege of Jerusalem. The same historical background obtains in ch. 24 and 33, which form a setting for these sayings. The brief saying against Tyre, 29:17–21, dated 571, is a later addition to the collection.
b. The Ammonites, Dt 2:19e, had taken part in the various rebellions against Nebuchadnezzar. Later they deserted their allies and profited from Jerusalem's misfortune.
c. Addressed to Ammon, here personified; the pronoun is in the singular.
d. Nomadic Arabs, cf. Nb 24:21k; Is 11:14; Jr 49:28.
e. 'towns' conj.; 'sons' Hebr.
f. Seir designates the mountainous plateau south east of the Dead Sea in Edomite territory (but *see* Dt 2:1); the name is often used as a synonym for Edom, 35:2; Gn 32:4; Nb 24:18; Jg 5:4. It is surprising to find it here since the next saying is devoted to Edom. The word is absent from Gk and is perhaps a gloss.

from any other nation; ·very well, I shall expose Moab's heights; its cities will no 9
longer be cities [g] throughout the land—the jewels of the country, Beth-Jeshimoth,
Baal-Meon and Kiriathaim. ·I shall let the sons of the East and the Ammonites 10
take possession of them, so that they will no longer be remembered by the nations.
I shall bring Moab to justice, and they will know that I am Yahweh. 11

35 **Against Edom**

Dt 2:1a
Ps 137:7
Is 34
Jr 49:7–22
Am 1:11–12

"The Lord Yahweh says this: 12
"Since Edom has taken revenge on the House of Judah and committed great
crimes in doing so, ·very well, the Lord Yahweh says this: My hand will be against 13
Is 21:13–14 Edom and denude it of human and animal. I shall lay it waste, from Teman as far
as Dedan [h] they will be put to the sword. ·I shall take vengeance on Edom by means 14
of my people Israel. They will treat Edom as my anger and fury dictate, and they
will know this is my vengeance—declares the Lord Yahweh.

Jos 13:2b
Zp 2:4–7

Against the Philistines

"The Lord Yahweh says this, 15
"Since the Philistines have acted in revenge and, motivated by malice, have
taken revenge, doing their best to destroy because of their long-standing hatred,
very well, the Lord Yahweh says this: My hand will be against the Philistines; I 16
shall exterminate the Cherethites [i] and destroy the rest of the coastal peoples. ·I 17
shall perform frightful acts of vengeance and inflict furious punishments on them;
and they will know that I am Yahweh, when I exact my vengeance on them." '

Is 23

Against Tyre [a]

26 In the eleventh year, on the first of the month, [b] the word of Yahweh was 1
addressed to me as follows,
'Son of man, since Tyre has said of Jerusalem: 2

25:3

"Aha! She is shattered, the Gateway to the Nations;
she now gives way to me.
Her riches are ruined!" [c]
Very well, the Lord Yahweh says this, 3
"Now, Tyre, I am against you,
I shall raise many nations against you 4
as the sea raises its waves.
They will destroy the walls of Tyre,
they will demolish her towers;
I shall sweep the dust of her away
and reduce her to a naked rock. [d]
She will be a drying-ground out to sea for fishing-nets. 5
For I have spoken—declares Lord Yahweh.
She will be the prey of the nations.
As for her daughters on the mainland, 6
these will be put to the sword,
and they will know that I am Yahweh."

29:17–21

'For the Lord Yahweh says this, "From the north, I shall bring Nebuchadnezzar, 7
king of Babylon, king of kings, down on Tyre with horses, chariots, cavalry and an
enormous army. [e]

He will put your daughters 8
on the mainland to the sword.
4:1–3 He will build siege-works against you,
cast up a siege-ramp against you,
raise a screen against you;
he will pound your walls with his battering-rams, 9

and demolish your towers with his siege-engines.
10 His horses are so many that their dust will hide you.
The noise of his horsemen and his chariot-wheels
will make your walls tremble as he enters your gates
as though storming into a city through the breach.
11 With his horses' hoofs he will trample through all your streets;
he will put your people to the sword,
and throw your massive pillars to the ground.
12 Your wealth will be seized, your merchandise looted,
your walls rased, your luxurious houses shattered,
your stones, your timbers, your very dust, thrown into the sea.
13 I shall put an end to the sound of your songs; Is 24:8–9
the sound of your harps will not be heard again. Jr 25:10 Rv 18:22
14 I shall reduce you to a naked rock,
and make you into a drying-ground for fishing-nets,
never to be rebuilt;
for I, Yahweh, have spoken
—declares the Lord Yahweh."

Lament over Tyre

15 'The Lord Yahweh says this to Tyre, "Will not the islands[f] quake at the sound of
16 your fall, while the wounded groan and the slaughter takes place inside you? ·All
the princes of the sea will leave their thrones, lay aside their cloaks, take off their Jon 3:6
embroidered robes. Dressed in terror they will sit on the ground trembling incessantly, stunned at your fate.
17 "They will raise the lament[g] for you as follows: Rv 18:9–19

You are destroyed then, vanished from the seas,
famous city, former sea-power,
who with her citizens,
used to spread terror
all over the mainland![h]
18 Now the islands are trembling
on the day of your fall;
the islands of the sea are terrified by your end.

19 "For the Lord Yahweh says this:
"When I make you a ruined city like other deserted cities, when I raise the deep
20 against you and the ocean covers you, ·when I fling you down with those who go 32:18–32
down into the abyss, with the people of long ago, and put you deep in the underworld, in the ruins of long ago with those who sink into oblivion, so that you
21 can never come back or be restored to the land of the living,' ·I will make you an
object of terror; you will not exist. People will look for you but never find you Rv 18:21
again—declares the Lord Yahweh!" '

g. 'its cities', conj.; 'from its cities' Hebr.; but the whole v. is obscure and the translation uncertain.

h. Teman was a southerly part of Edom, but the two names are often used synonymously, *see* Jr 49:20; Dedan, the modern oasis of El-Ela, was an Arab country south east of Edom, cf. Is 21:13; Jr 49:8.

i. Neighbours of, *see* Jos 13:2b, and related to the Philistines, *see* 2 S 8:18*l*. Here the two names are virtually synonymous.

26 a. Tyre at the beginning of the sixth century was a great commercial city. It played a leading part in all the anti-Babylonian activities before 587, but deserted its ally, Jerusalem, and rejoiced in its downfall.

b. The year 587–586. The Gk reads 'twelfth year' and 'first month', i.e. April 586.

c. 'her riches' conj., 'I shall grow rich' Hebr.

d. Tyre, *tzor*, was built on a rock, *tzur*, lying off the coast.

e. The siege of Tyre, begun by Nebuchadnezzar, lasted 13 years and ended without much advantage to the victor, 29:17–21. The radical destruction prophesied here was accomplished only later, by Alexander the Great.

f. The term 'islands' means the Phoenician trade-counters all round the Mediterranean and beyond.

g. A *qinah*, *see* 19:1a.

h. 'You are destroyed' Hebr.; 'she is destroyed' conj. 'vanished' versions, rearrangement of vowels of MT 'inhabited'. • 'the mainland' *hayyabashah* Syr.; Hebr. *yoshebeha* 'her inhabitants'.

i. The 'abyss' synonymous with 'Sheol', is the underworld, inhabited by the souls of the dead, *see* Nb 16:33f. • 'come back *tashubi*, conj.; Hebr. *teshebi* 'live'. • 'and be restored' versions; 'for me to give beauty' Hebr.

Second lament over the fall of Tyre [a]

27 The word of Yahweh was addressed to me as follows, 2 'Son of man, raise 1, 2
the lament for Tyre. 3 Say to Tyre, "City enthroned at the gateway of the 3
sea, agent between the peoples and the many islands, Lord Yahweh says this:

Tyre, you used to say: I am a ship [b]
perfect in beauty.
Your frontiers were far out to sea; 4
those who built you
made you perfect in beauty.
Cypress from Senir [c] they used 5
for all your planking.
They took a cedar from Lebanon
to make a mast above you.
From oaks of Bashan 6
they made your oars.
They built you a deck of cedar inlaid with ivory
from the Kittim [d] isles.
Embroidered linen from Egypt was used for your sail 7
and for your flag.
Purple and scarlet from the Elishah islands
formed your deck-tent.
The people of Sidon and Arvad [e] 8
were your oarsmen.
The sages of Tyre were aboard,
serving as sailors.
The elders and craftsmen of Gebal [f] were there 9
to caulk your seams.

"Every sea-going ship [g] and crew frequented you to guarantee your trade. 10
Jr 46:9c 10 Men from Persia, Lud and Put served as warriors in your army; hanging up shield and
helmet in you, they displayed your splendour. 11 The sons of Arvad with their army 11
manned your walls all round, while the Gammadians manned your towers; hanging
Is 23:1a their shields all round your walls, they completed your beauty. 12 Tarshish traded 12
with you because of your abundant resources and exchanged your merchandise for
38:2 silver, iron, tin and lead. 13 Javan, Tubal and Meshech [h] traded with you. For your 13
38:2b merchandise they traded slaves and bronze artefacts. 14 The people of Beth-Togar- 14
25:13 mah [i] traded your horses, chargers, mules. 15 The people of Dedan traded with you; 15
many islands were your customers and paid you in ivory tusks and ebony. 16 Edom [j] 16
traded with you for the sake of your many manufactured goods, exchanging
garnets, purple, embroideries, fine linen, coral and rubies for your goods. 17 Judah 17
Jg 11:33 and the land of Israel also traded with you, bringing corn from Minnith, *pannag*,
honey, oil and balm. [k] 18 Damascus traded with you, for quantities of your manufac- 18
Ho 14:8 tured goods and other goods of all kinds, furnishing you with wine from Helbon
Gn 10:27 and wool from Zahar. [l] 19 Dan and Javan, from Uzal onwards, [m] supplied you with 19
25:13 wrought iron, cassia and reeds in exchange for your goods. 20 Dedan traded with 20
you in saddle-cloths. 21 Arabia and all the sheikhs of Kedar were your customers; 21
Gn 10:7 1 K 10:1a they paid in lambs, rams and he-goats. 22 The merchants of Sheba and Raamah 22
traded with you; they supplied you with the finest spices, precious stones and gold
Gn 11:31;12:5 for your merchandise. 23 Haran, Canneh and Eden, the merchants of Sheba, Asshur 23
and Chilmad [n] traded with you. 24 They traded rich clothes, embroidered and purple 24
cloaks, multi-coloured materials and strong plaited cords for your markets.

Ships of Tarshish sailed on your business; 25
you were full and heavily loaded [o]
far out to sea.

Out to the open sea
your oarsmen rowed you.
The east wind has wrecked you
far out to sea.
Your riches, your goods, your cargo,
your seamen, your sailors,
your caulkers, your commercial agents,
all the warriors you carry,
and all the passengers who are aboard
will founder far out to sea
on the day of your shipwreck.

When they hear the cries of your sailors
the coasts will tremble.
Then the oarsmen will all desert
their ships.
The sailors and seafaring people
will stay ashore.
They will raise their voices for you ↗Rv 18:19
and weep bitterly.
They will throw dust on their heads
and roll in ashes;
they will shave their heads for you
and put sackcloth round their waists.
With heartfelt bitterness they will weep for you,
bitterly wail.
Wailing, they will raise the lament for you,
they will lament over you:

Who is like Tyre,[p] ↗Rv 18:18
far out to sea?
When you unloaded your goods
to satisfy so many peoples,
you enriched the kings of the earth
with your excess of wealth and goods. ↗Rv 18:19
Now you have been wrecked by the waves,
by the depths of the sea.
Your cargo and all your passengers
have foundered with you.

27 **a.** This allegorical description of a shipwreck uses technical terms the meaning of which is not always clear.

b. 'I am a ship' *'oniyyah 'ani* conj.; Hebr. *'ani* 'I am'.

c. The Amorite name for Hermon, cf. Dt 3:9.

d. 'of cedar inlaid with' *bite 'ashurim* Targ.; Hebr. *bat 'ashurim* 'daughter of the Assyrians'. • Kittim here means not only the people of Cyprus but those of other islands and parts of the Mediterranean coastline, *see* 26:15f.

e. These two towns of the Phoenician coast more or less recognised the economic suzerainty of Tyre.

f. i.e. Byblos, another Phoenician city.

g. The poem is here interrupted by a detailed list of the commercial interests of Tyre, not forming part of the original saying.

h. Javan, i.e. Ionia, indicates the Greek or even the western peoples in general. On Tubal and Meshech, *see* 38:6.

i. Probably Armenia, *see* 38:2b.

j. 'Edom' versions; 'Aram' Hebr.

k. *'pannag'*, unknown word, possibly a kind of cake. Others suppose millet (following Syr.) or balm (Vulg.). • Minnith was a region in Ammon.

l. The wine of Helbon, north of Damascus, was famous and is mentioned in Assyrian documents. • Zahar is unknown and perhaps is not a place-name; some suggest 'unbleached wool'.

m. An Arab tribe like Sheba and Raamah, v. 22–23; Gn 10:27; 1 K 10:1a, though possibly a region is intended here. Dan and Javan seem out of place here: Javan has already appeared in v. 13, while Dan has no cause to be mentioned, see v. 17. Perhaps these are otherwise unknown Arab tribes near Uzal. But the text may be corrupt. Suppressing Dan (which is missing from Gk), some emend *yavan* to *yayin* '(they will furnish you) . . . with wine (from Uzal)'.

n. Haran is on the upper Euphrates. Canneh and Eden probably correspond to the Kannu and Bit Adini of Assyrian texts, towns on the middle Euphrates. For Sheba, *see* 1 K 10:1a. Chilmad is an unknown town, probably near Asshur.

o. Or 'rich and glorious'; but the prophet seems simultaneously to be suggesting the weight of cargo carried in this magnificent ship and its imminent shipwreck.

p. 'comparable (to Tyre)' versions, '(like Tyre) the silent one' (?) Hebr.

All those who live in the islands 35
will be stunned at your fate.
Their kings will quake with horror,
with downcast expressions.
The merchants of the nations 36
will whistle at your fate.
You will be an object of terror,
gone for ever." '

Against the king of Tyre

28 The word of Yahweh was addressed to me as follows, •"Son of man, say to 1, 2
the ruler of Tyre, "The Lord Yahweh says this:

Because your heart has grown proud,
Gn 3:5 2 Th 2:4 Is 14:13 you thought: I am a god;
I am divinely enthroned
far out to sea.
Though you are human, not divine,
you have allowed yourself to think like God.
14:14 So, you are wiser than Danel; 3
no sage [a] as wise as you!
By your wisdom and your intelligence 4
you have made yourself a fortune,
you have put gold and silver
into your treasuries.
Such is your skill in trading, 5
your fortune has continued to increase,
and your fortune has made your heart grow prouder.

"And so, the Lord Yahweh says this: 6

Since you have allowed yourself to think like God,
very well, I am going to bring foreigners against you, 7
the most barbarous of the nations.
They will draw sword against your fine wisdom,
they will desecrate your splendour,
they will throw you down into the grave 8
and you will die a violent death
far out to sea.
Will you still think: I am a god, 9
when your slaughterers confront you?
Is 31:3 But you will be human, not divine,
in the clutches of the ones who strike you down!
You will die like the uncircumcised 10
at the hand of foreigners.

"For I have spoken—declares the Lord Yahweh." '

The fall of the king of Tyre [b]

The word of Yahweh was addressed to me as follows, •"Son of man, raise a lament [c] 11, 12
for the king of Tyre. Say to him, "The Lord Yahweh says this:

You used to be a model of perfection, [d]
full of wisdom,
perfect in beauty;
you were in Eden, in the garden of God. 13
All kinds of gem formed your mantle:
sard, topaz, diamond, chrysolite, onyx,

jasper, sapphire, garnet, emerald,
and your ear-pendants and spangles[e] were made of gold;
all was ready on the day you were created.
14 I made you a living creature with outstretched wings, as guardian,[f] Gn 3:24
you were on the holy mountain of God; Is 14:13
you walked amid red-hot coals. 10:2
15 Your behaviour was exemplary from the day you were created
until guilt first appeared in you,
16 because your busy trading
has filled you with violence and sin.
I have thrown you down from the mountain of God
and destroyed you, guardian winged creature, amid the coals. 10:2,7
17 Your heart has grown proud because of your beauty,
your wisdom has been corrupted by your splendour.
I have thrown you to the ground;
I have made you a spectacle for kings.
18 By the immense number of your crimes,
by the dishonesty of your trading,
you have defiled your sanctuary.
So I have brought fire out of you to devour you;
I have reduced you to ashes on the ground
before the eyes of all who saw you.
19 Of the nations, all who know you
are stunned at your fate.
You are an object of terror;
gone for ever." '

Against Sidon[g]

20, 21 The word of Yahweh was addressed to me as follows, •'Son of man, turn towards
22 Sidon and prophesy against her. •Say, "The Lord Yahweh says this:

I am against you, Sidon,
I will show my glory in you!
They will know I am Yahweh,
once I execute sentence on her
and display my holiness in her.
23 For I shall send her the plague,
and there will be blood in her streets,
and in her the dead will fall
under the sword raised against her from all sides,
and they will know that I am Yahweh.

Israel delivered from the nations

24 "No more, for the House of Israel, shall any of the hostile nations surrounding them be a thorn that wounds or a briar that tears; and they will know that I am Yahweh.

28 **a.** 'no sage Gk; 'no secret' Hebr.

b. At that time Ittobaal II, though the poem is addressed not so much to an individual as to the personified might of the city.

c. Another *qinah*, *see* 19:1a, though not in conventional *qinah*-rhythm, the term being used here in a more general sense.

d. lit. 'a seal of perfection' Gk; 'sealing the model' Hebr.

e. 'ear-pendants' and 'spangles': trans. conj. The first term normally means 'lyre', the second, an unusual form (unique example of a noun formed from the root normally meaning 'to dig' or 'pierce'), is possibly a technical term used by goldsmiths.

f. 'outstretched wings' Vulg.; Hebr. hitherto unidentified. These verses seem to contain reminiscences not only of the biblical tradition of the garden of Eden but also of elements of eastern mythologies: the mountain of the gods, situated in the farthest north, *see* Ps 48:1–2; Is 14:13, the allusion to the guardian *karibu*, *see* Gn 3:24, and to the burning coals, Ezk 10:2, to the fall and annihilation Ezk 28:16. Some details, however, remain obscure.

g. Sidon, one of the principal towns of Phoenicia, but before the Persian period less important than Tyre. According to Jr 27:3, Sidon was party to the policy leading to the ruin of Judah; hence Ezekiel's hostility.

"The Lord Yahweh says this: When I gather the House of Israel back from the 25
peoples where they are dispersed, I shall display my glory in them for the nations
=37:25 Gn 28:13 to see. They will live on the soil which I gave to my servant Jacob. ·They will live 26
there in confidence, build houses, plant vineyards. They will live in safety, once I
inflict punishments on all the hostile nations surrounding them, and they will know
that I am Yahweh their God." '

Is 19 Jr 46 **Against Egypt**

29 In the tenth year, on the twelfth day of the tenth month,[a] the word of 1
Yahweh was addressed to me as follows, ·'Son of man, turn towards 2
Pharaoh king of Egypt[b] and prophesy against him and against the whole of Egypt.
Speak and say, "The Lord Yahweh says this: 3

Look, I am against you, Pharaoh king of Egypt—
32 Jb 40:25–41:26 the great crocodile wallowing in his Niles
who thought: My Nile is mine, I made it.[c]
I shall put hooks through your jaws, 4
make your Nile fish stick to your scales,
and pull you out of your Niles
with all your Nile fish sticking to your scales.
I shall drop you in the desert, with all your Nile fish. 5
You will fall in the wilds
Jr 25:33 and not be taken up or buried.[d]
I shall give you as food
to the wild animals and the birds of heaven,
and all the inhabitants of Egypt will know that I am Yahweh, 6
2 K 18:21 Is 36:6 for they have given no more support than a reed to the House of Israel.
Wherever they grasped you, you broke in their hands 7
and cut their hands all over.
Whenever they leaned on you, you broke,
making all their limbs give way.[e]

"So, the Lord Yahweh says this: I shall send the sword against you to denude 8
you of human and animal. ·Egypt will become a desolate waste, and they will know 9
that I am Yahweh. Because he thought: The Nile is mine, I made it, ·very well, I 10
am against you and your Niles. I shall make Egypt a waste[f] and a desolation, from
Migdol to Syene and beyond to the frontiers of Ethiopia. ·No human foot will pass 11
through it, no animal foot will pass through it. For forty years it will remain
uninhabited. ·I shall make Egypt the most desolate of countries; for forty years its 12
cities will be the most desolate of wasted cities. And I shall scatter the Egyptians
among the nations and disperse them among the countries.' ·The Lord Yahweh, 13
however, says this: After forty years have passed, I shall gather the Egyptians back
from the nations where they were dispersed.[g] ·I shall bring the Egyptian captives 14
back and re-install them in the land of Pathros,[h] in the country of their origin.
There they will constitute a modest kingdom. ·Egypt will be the most modest of 15
kingdoms and no longer dominate other nations; for I shall reduce it, so that it will
not rule other nations ever again. ·It will no longer be anything for the House of 16
Israel to trust in, but will be a reminder of the guilt which lay in turning to it for
help. And they will know that I am Lord Yahweh." '

In the twenty-seventh year, on the first day of the first month,[i] the word of 17
Yahweh was addressed to me as follows:

'Son of man, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon has taken his army in a great 18
expedition against Tyre. Their heads have all gone bald, their shoulders are all
chafed, but even so he has derived no profit, either for himself or for his army,
from the expedition mounted against Tyre. ·Since this is so, the Lord Yahweh 19
30:10,24; 32:11seq. says this, "Look, I shall hand Egypt over to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. He
will carry off its riches, loot it, put it to the sack; that will be the wages for his army.

20 As wages for the trouble he has taken, I am giving him Egypt instead (for they Jr 43:10;44:30; 46:26
have been working for me)—declares the Lord Yahweh.
21 "That day, I shall raise up a new stock[j] for the House of Israel and allow you to
open your mouth among them.[k] And they will know that I am Yahweh." '

Against Egypt: the day of Yahweh

1, 2 **30** The word of Yahweh was addressed to me as follows,[a] ·'Son of man,
3 prophesy and say, "The Lord Yahweh says this: Howl: Disaster day! ·For Am 5:18m
the day is near, the day of Yahweh is near; it will be a day dark with cloud, a time
of doom for the nations.
4 "The sword will come on Egypt, and anguish on the country of Cush when the
slaughtered fall in Egypt, when her riches are carried away and her foundations
5 are destroyed. ·Cush, Put and Lud, all Arabia, Cub[b] and the children of the Jr 46:9c
country of the covenant will fall by the sword with them.
6 "Yahweh says this:
"The supports of Egypt will fall; the pride of her strength will crumble; they will
fall by the sword from Migdol to Syene—declares the Lord Yahweh. 29:10
7 "They will be the most desolate of desolate countries, and its cities the most
8 ruined of cities. ·And they will know that I am Yahweh when I set fire to Egypt and
all its supports are shattered.
9 "That day, I shall send messengers by ship to terrify the carefree Cushites, and
10 anguish will overtake them on the day of Egypt—it is coming now! ·The Lord
Yahweh says this: I shall destroy the huge population of Egypt at the hand of
11 Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. ·He and his people, the most barbarous of
nations, will be brought to ravage the country. They will draw the sword against 29:11–12
12 Egypt and fill the country with corpses. ·I shall dry up the courses of the Nile and
sell the country to the wicked. I shall lay the whole country waste and everything in
it, at the hand of foreigners. I, Yahweh, have spoken.
13 "The Lord Yahweh says this: I shall destroy the foul idols and take the false gods
away from Noph.[c] Egypt will be left without a ruler. I shall spread fear through
14 Egypt. ·I shall lay Pathros waste, set Zoan on fire, inflict my punishments on No. 29:14h
15 I shall vent my fury on Sin, the bastion of Egypt; I shall wipe out the throngs of
16 No. ·I shall set fire to Egypt; Sin will be seized with convulsions; a breach will be
17 opened at No and the waters flood out.[d] ·The young men of On and Pi-Beseth will
18 fall by the sword and the cities themselves go into captivity. ·At Tahpanhes day
will turn to darkness when I shatter the sceptres of Egypt there, when the pride of
her strength ceases. A cloud will cover Egypt itself, and its daughters will go into
19 captivity. ·Such will be the punishments I inflict on Egypt. And they will know that
I am Yahweh." '
20 In the eleventh year, on the seventh day of the first month,[e] the word of Yahweh

29 **a.** December 588–January 587.
b. Hophra (Apries), 589–566, with whom Judah intrigued for assistance.
c. 'made it' Syr.; 'made myself' Hebr.
d. 'buried' *tiqqaber* Targ.; Hebr. *tiqqabetz* 'gathered'.
e. 'hands' lit. 'hand' Gk and Syr.; 'shoulder' Hebr. • 'making give way' Syr.; 'making firm' Hebr. (inversion of two letters).
f. 'a waste' versions; 'wastes of destruction' Hebr. • Migdol, a fortress in northern Egypt. • Syene (Assuan), a city in the extreme south near the Ethiopian frontier.
g. The exiles from Egypt thus receive the same promise of return as has been given to Israel, *see* 11:16–17; here, however (unlike the second part of Isaiah, *see* Is 45:14h), they are not to be associated with the chosen people in the restored worship of Yahweh.
h. Pathros, the 'land of the South', i.e. Upper Egypt.
i. March–April 571. Chronologically the last of the divine utterances in Ezekiel; it completes or revises his earlier ones. As compensation for his partial failure against Tyre, v. 18, cf. 26:7, Nebuchadnezzar is given permission to plunder Egypt, which he invaded in 568, *see* Jr 43:12. As agent of divine punishment he deserves his wages.
j. Symbol of strength, sometimes with a messianic implication, Ps 132:17.
k. There are several instances in Ezk of periods of dumbness, followed by the authorisation to open the mouth and speak in Yahweh's name, 3:26; 24:26–27; 33:21–22. Here, it would seem that the prophet, reduced to silence by his confusion, cf. 16:63, is at last allowed to express his gratitude.

30 **a.** This divine utterance is supplementary, though perhaps late, to the utterance in ch. 29.
b. 'Arabia' *ha'arab* Symm., Theod.; Hebr. *ha'ereb* 'union'. • Cub is unknown and should perhaps be read 'Lub' with Gk, i.e. Libya.
c. i.e. Memphis in Lower Egypt. for Pathros *see* 29:14h. Zoan is Tanis, a city of the Delta. No is Thebes, capital of Upper Egypt, *see* Jr 46:25i. Sin is a fortress in the Delta. On is Heliopolis, Pi-Beseth Bubastis, both towns in Lower Egypt. Tahpanhes is a frontier town east of the Delta.
d. 'and the waters will flood out' Gk; 'and Noph, the enemies of the day' (?) Hebr.
e. March–April 587.

was addressed to me as follows, ·"Son of man, I have broken the arm of Pharaoh 21
king of Egypt; you can see that no one has dressed his wound by applying remedies
to it, by bandaging it and by dressing it, to make it strong enough to wield the
sword.[f] ·This being so, the Lord Yahweh says this, "Look, I am against Pharaoh 22
king of Egypt; I shall break his arms, the sound one and the broken one, and make
the sword drop from his hand.[g] ·I shall scatter Egypt among the nations and 23
disperse it among the countries. ·I shall strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon 24
and put my sword in his hand. I shall break Pharaoh's arms and, confronted with
his enemy, he will groan like a dying man. ·I shall strengthen the arms of the king 25
of Babylon, and the arms of Pharaoh will fall. And they will know that I am
Yahweh, when I put my sword into the hands of the king of Babylon and he wields
it against Egypt. ·I shall scatter Egypt among the nations and disperse it among the 26
countries; and they will know that I am Yahweh." '

The cedar tree

31 In the eleventh year, on the first day of the third month,[a] the word of 1
Yahweh was addressed to me as follows, ·"Son of man, say to Pharaoh king 2
of Egypt and his throng of subjects:[b]

"What can compare with you for greatness?
I know: a cedar tree in the Lebanon[c] 3
with noble branches, dense foliage, lofty height.
Its top pierces the clouds.
The waters have made it grow, the deep has made it tall, 4
pouring its rivers round the place where it is planted,
sending rivulets to all the wild trees.
This is why its height was greater than that of other wild trees, 5
its branches increased in number, its boughs stretched wide,
because of the plentiful waters making it grow.[d]
17:23 All the birds of heaven nested in its branches; 6
under its boughs all wild animals dropped their young;
in its shade sat many, many people.
It was beautiful in its size, in the span of its boughs; 7
for its roots were in plentiful waters.
There was no cedar like it in the garden of God, 8
no cypress had branches such as these,
no plane tree could match its boughs,
no tree in the garden of God could rival its beauty.
I had made it so lovely with its many branches 9
Gn 2:8 that it was the envy of every tree in Eden, in the garden of God.

"Very well, the Lord Yahweh says this: 10

"Since it has raised itself to its full height, has lifted its top into the clouds, and
has grown arrogant about its height, ·I have handed it over to the prince of the 11
nations,[e] for him to treat as its wickedness deserves; I have rejected it.
Foreigners, the most barbarous of nations, have cut it down and deserted it. On 12
the mountains, in all the valleys, lie its branches; its broken boughs are in every
ravine throughout the country; everybody in the country has fled[f] its shade and
deserted it. ·On its wreckage perch all the birds of heaven; all the wild animals 13
have advanced on its branches.

"So in future let no tree rear its height beside the waters, none push its top into 14
the clouds, no watered tree stretch its height towards them. For all of them are
doomed to death, to the depths of the underworld, with the common run of
humanity, with those who sink into oblivion.

Nb 16:33f "The Lord Yahweh says this: The day it went down to Sheol, I imposed 15
mourning, I closed the deep over it. I stopped its rivers and the plentiful waters
dried up; I made Lebanon dark because of it, and all the wild trees wilted because

16 of it. •With the noise when it fell I made the nations quake, as I hurled it down to
Sheol, with those who sink into oblivion. In the depths of the underworld all the 32:18–31
trees of Eden took comfort, the pick of the loveliest trees of the Lebanon, all Is 14:15
17 irrigated by the waters. •And its offspring[g] among the nations, once living in its
shade, went down to Sheol with it, to those who have been slaughtered by the
sword.[h]
18 "Which of the trees of Eden compares with you for glory and greatness? Yet you
have been hurled down with the trees of Eden, to the depths of the underworld,
among the uncircumcised, and there you lie with those who have been slaughtered
by the sword. So much for Pharaoh and all his throng—declares the Lord
Yahweh." '

The crocodile

1 **32** In the twelfth year, on the first day of the twelfth month,[a] the word of
2 Yahweh was addressed to me as follows, •'Son of man, raise a lament for
Pharaoh king of Egypt. Say to him:

"Young lion of nations, you are destroyed!
Once you were like a crocodile in the lagoons; 29:3–5
emerging from your rivers, Jb 40:25–41:26
you churned up the water with your trampling
and fouled their streams.

3 "The Lord Yahweh says this: 31:12–16

I shall throw my net over you in a great concourse of nations;
and they will trawl you up in my net.
Then I shall leave you high and dry,
4 I shall throw you out into the wilds
and make all the birds of heaven settle on you,
and glut all the beasts of the earth with you.
5 I shall strew your flesh on your mountains
and fill the valleys with your corruption;
6 I shall water the country with what flows from you,
with your blood, on the mountainsides,
and you will fill the ravines.
7 When I extinguish you I shall cover the skies Am 8:9h
and darken the stars. Mt 24:29
I shall cover the sun with clouds
and the moon will not give its light.
8 I shall dim every luminary in heaven because of you
and cover your country in darkness
—declares the Lord Yahweh.

9 "I shall grieve the heart of many peoples when I bring about your destruction
10 among the nations, in countries unknown to you.[b] •I shall stun many peoples with

f. Egypt tried to intervene with a view to raising the siege of Jerusalem, but failed, *see* Jr 37:5–8.

g. Prediction of a further defeat which will destroy the remainder of the Egyptian armies.

31 **a.** May–June 587.

b. The same images are used in the allegory of ch. 17 but with a different meaning. They describe the magnificence of Egypt which will suddenly be destroyed by divine punishment.

c. 'to a cedar tree' *te'ashshur* conj.; 'Assur is a cedar tree' *'ashshur 'erez* Hebr. The rare word *te'ashshur*, *see* 27:6; Is 41:19; 60:13, seems to have been glossed with the normal word *'erez*, then transformed into a more current word (though meaningless in this context) by a copyist who did not understand it.

d. 'making it grow' trans. conj. The verb normally means 'to reach' or 'stretch', hence 'sprout', 'grow', but the grammatical form is abnormal here (lit. 'in the act of growing for him'). Alternative rendering: 'owing to the waters stretching towards it'.

e. Nebuchadnezzar, *see* 29:19; Jr 43:12d, who was to invade Egypt in 568. Identification with Cambyses, who invaded Egypt in 525, is uncalled for.

f. 'fled' *yiddedu* conj.; Hebr. *yiredu* 'gone down'.

g. 'its offspring' *zare'o* conj.; Hebr. *zero'o* 'its arm'.

h. The Pharaoh being the cedar, the other kings are the other trees in the earthly paradise, *see* vv. 7–9. All these 'trees', having gone down to Sheol, will be consoled by the arrival of the Pharaoh, 32:17seq.

32 **a.** February–March 585.

b. vv. 10–15 seem a later addition, the subject being not so much Pharaoh as his subjects and allies. The conclusion, v. 16, must originally have been joined to v. 9.

shock at your fate; their kings will tremble with horror at your fate, when I brandish my sword before their eyes. The day you fall, each will tremble in terror for his life.
For the Lord Yahweh says this: The sword of the king of Babylon will overtake 11
you. •I shall make your throngs of subjects fall at the swords of my warriors. They 12
are the most barbarous of nations. They will annihilate the pride of Egypt, and all its throngs will be destroyed. •I shall also destroy all its cattle beside the plentiful 13
waters. No human foot will churn them, no animal foot will churn them up again; then I shall let their waters settle and make their rivers glide like oil—declares the 14
Lord Yahweh.

"When I reduce Egypt to a ruin and the country is stripped of its contents, when 15
I strike all those who live there, they will know that I am Yahweh.

"Such is the lament which the daughters of the nations will raise. They will raise 16
it over Egypt and all its throng. This is the lament they will raise—declares the Lord Yahweh." '

31:16–18
Is 14:9–11,15

Pharaoh goes down to Sheol

In the twelfth year, on the fifteenth day of the first month,[c] the word of Yahweh 17
was addressed to me as follows, •'Son of man, lament over the throng of Egypt, for 18
down she must go with the daughters of majestic nations[d] to the depths of the underworld with those who sink into oblivion.

"'Whom do you surpass in beauty? Down with you, make your bed with the 19
uncircumcised, •with those who have been slaughtered by the sword. (The sword 20
has been given, it has been drawn.) She and all her throngs[f] have fallen. •From 21
the depths of Sheol, the mightiest heroes, her allies, will say to her, "They have come down, they have lain down, uncircumcised, slaughtered by the sword."[g]

'Assyria is there and all her hordes, with their graves all round her; all of them 22
slaughtered, fallen by the sword; •their graves have been made in the deepest part 23
of the abyss, and her hordes, with their graves all round her; all of them slaughtered, killed by the sword, who once spread terror through the world of the living.

'Elan is there and all her throng round her grave, all of them slaughtered, fallen 24
by the sword; they have gone down uncircumcised to the depths of the underworld, who once spread terror throughout the world of the living. They have borne their shame with those who sink into oblivion. •Among the slaughtered, they have put a 25
bed for her, among her throng with their tombs round her, all of them uncircumcised, slaughtered by the sword for having spread terror throughout the world of the living. They have borne their shame with those who sink into oblivion. They have been put among the slaughtered.

27:13;38:2,3; 39:1
Is 66:19 LXX

'Meshech, Tubal are there and all her throng, with their graves round her, all of 26
them uncircumcised, slaughtered by the sword for having spread terror through the world of the living. •They do not lie with the heroes who fell long ago, those 27
who went down to Sheol fully armed, who had their swords laid under their heads and their shields[h] put under their bones, since the heroes inspired the world of the living with terror. •But you will be broken with the uncircumcised and lie with 28
those slaughtered by the sword.

'Edom is there, her kings and all her princes who, despite their valour, have 29
been laid with those slaughtered by the sword. They lie with the uncircumcised, with those who sink into oblivion.

'All the princes of the north and all the Sidonians are there, who have gone down 30
with the slaughtered, because of the terror which their power inspired. Ashamed, uncircumcised, they lie among those slaughtered by the sword and bear their shame with those who sink into oblivion.

'Pharaoh will see them and take comfort at the sight of all this throng slaughtered 31
by the sword—Pharaoh and all his throng—declares the Lord Yahweh. • For having 32
spread terror through the world of the living, he will be laid with the uncircumcised, with those slaughtered by the sword, Pharaoh and all his throng—declares the Lord Yahweh.'

III: DURING AND AFTER THE SIEGE OF JERUSALEM[a]

The prophet as watchman

3:17–21

1, 2 **33** The word of Yahweh was addressed to me as follows,[b] •'Son of man, speak
to the people of your country. Say to them, "When I send the sword against
the people of that country, take one of their number and post him as a watchman;
3 if he sees the sword coming against the country, he must sound his horn to warn Jl 2:1b
4 the people. •If someone hears the sound of the horn but pays no attention and the
sword overtakes him and destroys him, he will have been responsible for his own
5 death. •He has heard the sound of the horn and paid no attention; his death will be
his own responsibility. But the life of someone who pays attention will be secure.
6 "If, however, the watchman has seen the sword coming but has not blown his
horn, and so the people are not alerted and the sword overtakes them and destroys
a single one of them, that person will indeed die for his guilt, but I shall hold the
watchman responsible for his death."
7 'Son of man I have appointed you as watchman for the House of Israel. When =3:17–19
8 you hear a word from my mouth, warn them from me. •If I say to someone wicked,
"Evil-doer, you are to die," and you do not speak to warn the wicked person to
renounce such ways, the wicked person will die for this guilt, but I shall hold you
9 responsible for the death. •If, however, you do warn someone wicked to renounce
such ways and repent, and that person does not repent, then the culprit will die for
this guilt, but you yourself will have saved your life.

Conversion and perversity

14:12–20,12d; 18:21–30,21g

10 'Son of man, say to the House of Israel, "You are continually saying: Our crimes
and sins weigh heavily on us; we are wasting away because of them. How are we to
11 go on living?"[c] •Say to them, "As I live—declares the Lord Yahweh—I do not
take pleasure in the death of the wicked but in the conversion of the wicked who 18:23
changes his ways and saves his life. Repent, turn back from your evil ways. Why Ws 1:13n Lk 15:7,10,32
die, House of Israel?"
12 'Son of man, say to the members of your nation, "The uprightness of an upright
person will not save him once he takes to wrong-doing; the wickedness of a wicked
person will not ruin him once he renounces his wickedness. No one upright will be
13 able to live on the strength of uprightness, having once taken to sinning. •If I say to
someone upright: You are to live,[d] and then, trusting in this uprightness, he does
wrong, none of the uprightness will be remembered; because of the wrong-doing,
14 he will die. •If, however, I say to someone wicked: You are to die, and he turns
15 back from sin and does what is lawful and upright, •if he[e] returns pledges, restores
what he has stolen, keeps the laws that give life and no longer does wrong, he will Ne 9:29
16 live and will not die. •None of his previous sins will be remembered against him; =18:22
having done what is lawful and upright, he will live.
17 "But the members of your nation say: What the Lord does is unjust. But it is =18:29

c. 'the first month' Gk; Hebr. omits. • March–April 586 and therefore earlier than the preceding prophecy, if these dates are rightly preserved.

d. 'down she must go . . . majestic' conj. Hebr. uncertain.

e. The text of the next 3 vv. is poorly preserved. Possibly, as in Gk, v. 19 should be repositioned between vv. 21[a] and 21[b] of which the concluding words are perhaps an accidental repetition from v.19[b]

f. Trans. conj. of very obscure text. Instead of 'He and (all) his (throngs)' Hebr. has two feminine pronouns without antecedents. Others suppress 'the sword', following versions, and read: 'She (Egypt) has been handed over; they will drag her away with all her throng.'

g. Pharaoh is welcomed into Sheol by all the kings of the nations killed in battle before him.

h. 'long ago' versions; 'among the uncircumcised' Heb. • 'their shields' *tzinnotam* conj.; Hebr. *'awonotam* 'their guilt'.

i. '(he) having spread' Targ.; 'I have spread' Hebr.

33 a. The third section of the book contains the prophecies uttered after Nebuchadnezzar's invasion of Palestine (others are found in the second section: the poems against the nations).

b. At the beginning of a new period in this ministry, the prophet receives the same mission as that received after his inaugural vision, 3:17–21, in almost identical words.

c. The discouraged nation feels crushed under the weight of its sins and unable to escape from them. Ezekiel offers the possibility of conversion, developing in vv. 10–20, the theme already treated in 18:21–31.

d. 'You are to live' versions; 'He is to live' Hebr.

e. Hebr. adds 'the wicked man'; versions omit.

what you do that is unjust. •When an upright person gives up being upright and 18
does wrong, he dies for it. •And when a wicked person gives up being wicked and 19
does what is lawful and upright, because of this he lives. •But you say: What the 20
=18:30 Lord does is unjust! I shall judge each of you by what you do, House of Israel." '

The taking of the city

24:26–27 In the twelfth year of our captivity, on the fifth day of the tenth month,[f] a fugitive 21
arrived from Jerusalem and said to me, 'The city has been taken.' •Now the hand 22
3:26–27 of the Lord had been on me the evening before the fugitive arrived; he had opened
my mouth before the fugitive came to me the next morning; my mouth had been
opened and I was dumb no longer.[g]

The ravaging of the country

The word of Yahweh was then addressed to me as follows, •'Son of man, the 23, 24
Is 51:2 people living in those ruins on the soil of Israel say this, "Abraham was alone when
he was given possession of this country. But we are many; the country has been
11:15 given us as our heritage."[h]
Lv 1:5e;17; 10–14 'Very well, tell them, "The Lord Yahweh says this: You eat blood,[i] you raise 25
your eyes to your foul idols, you shed blood; are you to own the country? •You rely 26
Lv 18:20 on your swords, you engage in loathsome practices, each of you defiles his neigh-
bour's wife; are you to own the country?" •Tell them this, "The Lord Yahweh says 27
this: As I live, I swear it, those in the ruins will fall to the sword, those in the
countryside I shall give to the wild animals for them to eat, and those among the
crags and in caves will die of plague. •I shall make the country a desolate waste, 28
and the pride of its strength will be at an end. The mountains of Israel will be
deserted and no one will pass that way again. •Then they will know that I am 29
Yahweh, when I make the country a desolate waste because of all the filthy things
they have done."

The results of the preaching

'Son of man, the members of your nation are talking about you on the ramparts 30
and in doorways. They keep saying to one another, "Come and hear the word that
has come from Yahweh." •They throng towards you; my people sit down in front 31
Mt 7:26 Lk 8:21 of you and listen to your words, but they do not act on them. What they act on is
the lie[j] in their mouths, and their hearts are set on dishonest gain. •As far as they 32
↗Lk 7:32 are concerned, you are like a love song pleasantly sung to a good musical
accompaniment. They listen to your words, but no one acts on them. •When the 33
2:5 Dt 18:21h thing takes place—and it is beginning now—they will know that there has been a
prophet among them.'

Jr 23:1–6;31:10 Zc 11:4–17 ↗Mt 18:12–14 ↗Lk 15:4–7 ↗Jn 10:1–18+ **The shepherds of Israel**[a]

34 The word of Yahweh was addressed to me as follows, •'Son of man, 1, 2
prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy and say to them,
"Shepherds,[b] the Lord Yahweh says this: Disaster is in store for the shepherds of
Israel who feed themselves! Are not shepherds meant to feed a flock? •Yet you 3
have fed on milk,[c] you have dressed yourselves in wool, you have sacrificed the
1 P 5:2–4 fattest sheep, but failed to feed the flock. •You have failed to make weak sheep 4
strong, or to care for the sick ones, or bandage the injured ones. You have failed to
Mt 18:12–14 Lk 15:4–7 •Is 56:9–12 Zc 10:2 Mt 9:36 bring back strays or look for the lost. On the contrary, you have ruled them cruelly
and harshly. •For lack of a shepherd they have been scattered, to become the prey 5
of all the wild animals; they have been scattered. •My flock is astray on every 6
mountain and on every high hill;[d] my flock has been scattered all over the world;
no one bothers about them and no one looks for them.
"Very well, shepherds, hear the word of Yahweh: •As I live, I swear it— 7, 8
declares the Lord Yahweh—since my flock has been pillaged and for lack of a
shepherd is now the prey of every wild animal, since my shepherds have ceased to

bother about my flock, since my shepherds feed themselves rather than my flock,
9, 10 very well, shepherds, hear the word of Yahweh: •The Lord Yahweh says this:
Look, I am against the shepherds. I shall take my flock out of their charge and
henceforth not allow them to feed my flock. And the shepherds will stop feeding
themselves, because I shall rescue my sheep from their mouths to stop them from
being food for them.
11 "For the Lord Yahweh says this: Look, I myself shall take care of my flock and
12 look after it. •As a shepherd looks after his flock when he is with his scattered
sheep, so shall I look after my sheep. I shall rescue them from wherever they have
13 been scattered on the day of clouds and darkness. •I shall bring them back from the
peoples where they are; I shall gather them back from the countries and bring them Is 66:18–19 Mt 24:31;25:32
back to their own land. I shall pasture them on the mountains of Israel, in the
14 ravines and in all the inhabited parts of the country. •I shall feed them in good
pasturage; the highest mountains of Israel will be their grazing ground. There they
will rest in good grazing grounds; they will browse in rich pastures on the mountains
15 of Israel. •I myself shall pasture my sheep, I myself shall give them rest—declares
16 the Lord Yahweh. •I shall look for the lost one, bring back the stray, bandage the Is 40:11 Lk 15:4–7
injured and make the sick strong. I shall watch over[e] the fat and healthy. I shall be
a true shepherd to them.
17 "As for you, my sheep, the Lord Yahweh says this: I shall judge between sheep ↗Mt 25:32–34
18 and sheep, between rams and he-goats. •Not content to drink the clearest of the
19 water, you foul the rest with your feet. •And my sheep must graze on what your
20 feet have trampled and drink what your feet have fouled. •Very well, the Lord
Yahweh says this: I myself shall judge between the fat sheep and the thin sheep.
21 Since you have jostled with flank and shoulder and butted all the ailing sheep
22 with your horns, until you have scattered them outside, •I shall come and save my
sheep and stop them from being victimised. I shall judge between sheep and
sheep.
23 "I shall raise up one shepherd, my servant David, and put him in charge of them
24 to pasture them; he will pasture them and be their shepherd. •I, Yahweh, shall be
their God, and my servant David will be ruler among them. I, Yahweh, have
25 spoken. •I shall make a covenant of peace with them; I shall rid the country of wild Is 11:6–9.6e Jr 23:5–6 Ho 2:20
animals. They will be able to live secure in the desert and go to sleep in the woods.
26 I shall settle them round my hill;[f] I shall send rain at the proper time; it will be a
27 rain of blessings. •The trees of the countryside will yield their fruit and the soil will
yield its produce; they will be secure on their soil. And they will know that I am
Yahweh when I break the bars of their yoke and rescue them from the clutches of
28 their slave-masters. •No more will they be a prey to the nations, no more will the

f. December 586–January 585, but this date is suspect: the capture of the city took place in the fourth month of the eleventh year of Zedekiah, 2 K 25:3; Jr 39:2. The news would thus have taken seventeen months to reach Ezekiel, though a caravan took about four months to make the journey, *see* Ezr 7:9; 8:31. The correct reading has perhaps been preserved in some Hebr. and Gk MSS, and Syr., which read: 'the eleventh year'.

g. Ezekiel had been deprived of speech by 'the hand of Yahweh', cf. 3:24–27; 24:27.

h. The observation shows the people's affection for their country but also, even after the disaster of 587, a presumptuous confidence in their future.

i. Translation doubtful, lit. 'you eat on the blood.' Possibly emend to 'You eat on the mountains,' cf. 18:6.

j. 'the lie' *kezabim* conj.; Hebr. '*agabim* 'passion'. Word used in subsequent v. meaning 'love (song)'.

34 a. The image of the king-shepherd is deeply rooted in Eastern literary tradition. Jeremiah used it of the kings of Israel to rebuke their slackness in office, Jr 2:8; 10:21; 23:1–3, and to proclaim that God would give his people new shepherds who would pasture them with integrity, Jr 3:15; 23:4, and that from these shepherds would come a 'Branch', Jr 23:5–6, i.e. the Messiah. Ezekiel takes up the theme from Jr 23:1–6, later to be resumed in Zc 11:4–17; 13:7. For their wickedness he rebukes the shepherds, here the kings and lay leaders of the people, vv. 1–10. Yahweh will take from them the flock they have ill-treated and himself become the shepherd of his people (cf. Gn 48:15; Ps 23; 80:1; Is 40:11); this is in effect the proclamation of a theocracy, vv. 11–16; and in point of fact the monarchy was not restored after the return from exile. But the time was to come when Yahweh would give his people a shepherd of his own choice, vv. 23–24, a 'prince' (*see* 45:7–8;46:8–10,16–18), another David. The terms in which this prince's reign is described, vv. 25–31, and the name 'David' by which he is called (*see* 2 S 7:1a; compare with Is 11:1a; Jr 23:5) suggest a messianic age in which God himself, by means of his Messiah, rules his people in justice and peace. In this text of Ezekiel we discern the outline of the parable of the Lost Sheep, Mt 18:12–14; Lk 15:4–7, but more especially of the allegory of the Good Shepherd, Jn 10:11–18, which by virtue of its original context here is seen to be a claim to messiahship on the part of Jesus.

b. 'Shepherds' Syr., cf. v. 9; 'To the shepherds' Hebr.

c. 'milk' Gk; 'fat' Hebr. (different vowel arrangement).

d. Probably alluding to worship on the 'high places'.

e. 'I shall watch over' versions; 'I shall destroy' Hebr.

f. Following Gk, Hebr. reads 'of her and the surroundings of my hill I shall make a blessing.' The hill is Zion.

wild animals of the country devour them. They will live secure, with no one to frighten them. •I shall make splendid vegetation grow for them; no more will they 29
suffer from famine in the country; no more will they have to bear the insults of other nations. •So they will know that I, their God, am with them and that 30
they, the House of Israel, are my people—declares the Lord Yahweh. •And you, 31
my sheep, are the flock of my human pasture, and I am your God—declares the Lord Yahweh." '

25:12–14+ Dt 2:1b **Against the mountains of Edom** [a]

35 The word of Yahweh was addressed to me as follows, •"Son of man, turn 1, 2
towards Mount Seir and prophesy against it. •Say to it, "The Lord Yahweh 3
says this: Look, I am against you, Mount Seir; I shall stretch out my hand against you; I shall make you a desolate waste; •I shall lay your towns in ruins. You will 4
become a waste and you will know that I am Yahweh. •Since, following a long- 5
standing hatred, you betrayed the Israelites to the sword on the day of their distress, on the day when an end came for their guilt, •very well, as I live—declares 6
↗Rv 16:6 the Lord Yahweh—I destine you to bloodshed, and bloodshed will pursue you. I swear it; you have incurred guilt by shedding blood, [b] and bloodshed will pursue you. •I shall make Mount Seir a desolate waste and denude it of anyone travelling 7
to and fro. •I shall fill its mountains with its slaughtered; on your hills, in your 8
valleys and in all your ravines, those slaughtered by the sword will fall. •I shall 9
make you a perpetual waste, your towns will never be inhabited again, and you will know that I am Yahweh.

"Since you said: The two nations and the two countries will be mine; we are 10
going to take possession of it, although Yahweh was there, [c] •very well, as I live— 11
declares the Lord Yahweh—I shall act with the same anger and jealousy as you acted in your hatred for them. I shall make myself known for their sake, when I punish you, •and you will know that I, Yahweh, have heard all the blasphemies 12
which you have uttered against the mountains of Israel, such as: They have been laid waste, they have been given to us for us to devour. •Great was your insolence 13
towards me, many your speeches against me; I have heard! •Lord Yahweh says 14
this: To the joy of the whole world, I shall make you a waste. •Since you rejoiced 15
because the heritage of the House of Israel had been laid waste, I shall do the same to you, Mount Seir; and you will become a waste, and so will the whole of Edom; and they will know that I am Yahweh.' "

Prophecy about the mountains of Israel [a]

36 'Son of man, prophesy to the mountains of Israel. Say, "Mountains of 1
Israel, hear the word of Yahweh. •The Lord Yahweh says this: Since the 2
enemy has gloated over you by saying: Aha! These eternal heights are owned by us now, •very well, prophesy! Say: The Lord Yahweh says this: Since you have been 3
ravaged and seized on from all sides, and have become the property of the rest of the nations, and become the subject of people's talk and gossip, •very well, 4
mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord Yahweh! The Lord Yahweh says this to the mountains and hills, to the ravines and valleys, to the devastated ruins and abandoned cities which have been put to the sack and have become a laughing-stock to the rest of the nations all round; •very well, the Lord Yahweh 5
says this: I swear it in the heat of my jealousy; I am speaking to the rest of the nations and to the whole of Edom who so exultantly and contemptuously took possession of my country to despoil its pastureland."

'Because of this, prophesy about the land of Israel. Say to the mountains and 6
hills, to the ravines and valleys, "The Lord Yahweh says this: I am speaking in my jealousy and rage; because you are enduring the insults of the nations, •very well, 7
the Lord Yahweh says this: I raise my hand and I swear that the nations all around you shall have their own insults to bear.

"Mountains of Israel, you will grow branches and bear fruit for my people Israel, 8

who will soon return.[b] •Yes, I am coming to you, I shall turn to you; you will be
tilled and sown. •I shall increase your population, the whole House of Israel, yes,
all. The cities will be inhabited and the ruins rebuilt. •I shall increase your popula-
tion, both human and animal; they will be fertile and reproduce. I shall repopulate
you as you were before; I shall make you more prosperous than you were before,
and you will know that I am Yahweh. •Thanks to me, men will tread your soil
again, my people Israel; they will own you and you will be their heritage, and never
again will you rob them of their children.

"The Lord Yahweh says this: Since people have said of you: You are a man-
eater, you have robbed your nation of its children,[c] •very well, you will eat no
more men, never rob your nation of its children again[d]—declares the Lord
Yahweh. •I shall never again let you hear the insults of the nations, you will never
again have to bear the taunts of the peoples, you will never again rob the nation
of its children—declares the Lord Yahweh." '

16, 17 The word of Yahweh was addressed to me as follows, •'Son of man, the
members of the House of Israel used to live in their own territory, but they defiled
it by their conduct and actions; to me their conduct was as unclean as a woman's
menstruation. •I then vented my fury on them because of the blood they shed in Lv 15:19–27
the country and the foul idols with which they defiled it. •I scattered them among
the nations and they were dispersed throughout the countries. I sentenced them
as their conduct and actions deserved. • 'They have profaned my holy name among 20:39+
the nations where they have gone, so that people say of them, "These are the ↗Rm 2:24
people of Yahweh; they have been exiled from his land." •But I have been
concerned about my holy name, which the House of Israel has profaned among the
nations where they have gone. •And so, say to the House of Israel, "The Lord
Yahweh says this: I am acting not for your sake, House of Israel, but for the sake 16:60–63
of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you have Ps 115:1
Is 48:11
gone. •I am going to display the holiness of my great name, which has been Mt 6:9
profaned among the nations, which you have profaned among them. And the
nations will know that I am Yahweh—declares the Lord Yahweh—when in you I
display my holiness before their eyes. •For I shall take you from among the nations
and gather you back from all the countries, and bring you home to your own
country. •I shall pour clean water over you and you will be cleansed; I shall cleanse Jn 3:5;4:1a
you of all your filth and of all your foul idols. •I shall give you a new heart, and put 11:19f
Jr 4:4a
a new spirit in you; I shall remove the heart of stone from your bodies and give you
a heart of flesh instead. •I shall put my spirit in you, and make you keep my laws, Jr 31:31*l*
Ga 5:22–25
and respect and practise my judgements.[f] •You will live in the country which I gave 1 Jn 3:23–24

35 **a.** This prophecy against 'Mount Seir,' i.e. Edom, would find a more natural place among the 'Prophecies against the nations', but is evidently placed here to balance the subsequent prophecy addressed to the mountains of Israel.

b. 'you have incurred guilt by shedding blood' Gk, cf. 22:4; 'you have hated blood' Hebr.

c. After 587, Edom occupied only southern Judah (Idumaea), and, episodic raids notwithstanding, never attempted to invade all Judah and Israel, the 'two countries', cf. 37:22. But the exiles interpreted the news of the Edomite invasion as a threat to Yahweh's entire domain.

36 **a.** This prophecy foretells the revenge of the mountains of Israel on the mountains of Edom, the subject of the previous prophecy. It was probably uttered shortly after 587, when the neighbouring peoples were making incursions into the Holy Land, *see* v.6.

b. Such faith in a home-coming in the near future is striking at this time of shock and discouragement, cf. ch. 37 and Is 40–55.

c. Referring either to the poor soil of Palestine which is to be made wonderfully rich, v. 30, or to the practice of child-sacrifice, Lv 18:21h. Possibly both are in the prophet's mind.

d. 'you will never rob (your nation) of its children again' *lo' teshakkeli* MSS, versions; Hebr. *lo' tekashsheli* '(and your nations) you will never stumble again'. The same conj. emendation has been made in v. 15.

e. At beginning of v., we omit 'He has come.'

f. The spirit (breath) of God, which creates and gives life, Gn 1:2; 2:7e; 6:17f, lays hold on people to endow them with superhuman power, Gn 41:38; Ex 31:2; 1 S 16:13, particularly the prophets, Jg 3:10. The characteristic of the messianic age is to be an extraordinary outpouring of the Spirit, Zc 4:6[b]; 6:8, on all people, endowing them with special graces, Nb 11:29; Jl 3:1–2; Ac 2:16–21, 17k. But, more mysteriously, for each recipient the Spirit will be the principle of an inward renewal making possible a faithful observance of the law of God, 11:19; 36:26–27; 37:14; Ps 51:12–15; Is 32:15–19; Zc 12:10; thus the Spirit will be the principle inspiring the new covenant, Jr 31:31*l*; cf. 2 Co 3:6d; like life-giving water it will nourish fruits of integrity and holiness, Is 44:3; Jn 4:1a, which in turn will guarantee the favour and protection of God for humanity, Ezk 37:24; 39:29. This effusion of the Spirit will be effected through the Messiah who will be the first recipient of it, to be able to accomplish his saving work, Is 11:1–3; 42:1; 61:1; *see also* Mt 3:16n.

your ancestors. You will be my people and I shall be your God. •I shall save you 29
from everything that defiles you, I shall summon the wheat and make it plentiful
and impose no more famines on you. •I shall increase the yield of tree and field, so 30
that you will never again bear the ignominy of famine among the nations. •Then 31
16:61–63 you will remember your evil conduct and actions. You will loathe yourselves for
your guilt and your loathsome practices. •I assure you that I am not doing this for 32
your sake—declares the Lord Yahweh. Be ashamed and blush for your conduct,
House of Israel.

"The Lord Yahweh says this: On the day I cleanse you from all your guilt, I shall 33
repopulate the cities and cause the ruins to be rebuilt. •Waste land, once desolate 34
for every passer-by to see, will now be farmed again. •And people will say: This 35
Is 51:3 land, so recently a waste, is now like a garden of Eden, and the ruined cities once
abandoned and levelled to the ground are now strongholds with people living
in them. •And the nations left round you will know that I, Yahweh, have rebuilt 36
what was levelled and replanted what was ruined. I, Yahweh, have spoken and
shall do it.

"The Lord Yahweh says this: As a further mark of favour, I shall let myself be 37
consulted by the House of Israel; I shall increase their numbers like a human flock,
like a flock of sacrificial animals, like the flock in Jerusalem on her solemn feasts. 38
So your ruined cities will be filled with human flocks, and they will know that
I am Yahweh." '

The dry bones

3:12 **37** The hand of Yahweh was on me; he carried me away by the spirit of Yahweh 1
and set me down in the middle of the valley,[a] a valley full of bones. •He 2
made me walk up and down and all around among them. There were vast quantities
of these bones on the floor of the valley; and they were completely dry. •He said to 3
me, 'Son of man, can these bones live?' I said, 'You know, Lord Yahweh.' •He 4
said, 'Prophesy over these bones. Say, "Dry bones, hear the word of Yahweh.
The Lord Yahweh says this to these bones: I am now going to make breath[b] enter 5
Is 26:19+ you, and you will live. •I shall put sinews on you, I shall make flesh grow on you, I 6
shall cover you with skin and give you breath, and you will live; and you will know
that I am Yahweh." ' •I prophesied as I had been ordered. While I was prophesy- 7
ing, there was a noise, a clattering sound; it was the bones coming together.[c] •And 8
as I looked, they were covered with sinews; flesh was growing on them and skin
was covering them, yet there was no breath in them. •He said to me, 'Prophesy to 9
the breath; prophesy, son of man. Say to the breath, "The Lord Yahweh says this:
Gn 2:7 Come from the four winds, breath; breathe on these dead, so that they come to
Ps 104:30
Rm 8:11 life!" ' •I prophesied as he had ordered me, and the breath entered them; they 10
↗Rv 11:11; 20:4d came to life and stood up on their feet, a great, an immense army.[d]
•Dn 12:2+ Then he said, 'Son of man, these bones are the whole House of Israel. They keep 11
saying, "Our bones are dry, our hope has gone; we are done for."[e] •So, prophesy. 12
Say to them, "The Lord Yahweh says this: I am now going to open your graves; I
shall raise you from your graves, my people, and lead you back to the soil of Israel.
And you will know that I am Yahweh, when I open your graves and raise you 13
from your graves, my people, •and put my spirit in you, and you revive, and I 14
resettle you on your own soil. Then you will know that I, Yahweh, have spoken
and done this—declares the Lord Yahweh." '

Judah and Israel in one kingdom

The word of Yahweh was addressed to me as follows, •'Son of man, take a stick 15, 16
and write on it, "Judah and those Israelites[f] loyal to him." Take another stick and
write on it, "Joseph (Ephraim's wood) and all the House of Israel loyal to him."[g]

'Join one to the other to make a single piece of wood, a single stick in your hand. 17
And when the members of your nation say, "Will you not tell us what you mean?" 18
say, "The Lord Yahweh says this: I am taking the stick of Joseph (now in 19

Ephraim's hand) and those tribes of Israel loyal to him and shall join them to the stick of Judah. I shall make one stick out of the two, a single stick in my hand." Zc 11:7,14

20 'When the pieces of wood you have written on are in your hand in full sight of
21 them, •say, "The Lord Yahweh says this: I shall take the Israelites from the nations where they have gone. I shall gather them together from everywhere and bring
22 them home to their own soil. •I shall make them into one nation in the country, on the mountains of Israel, and one king is to be king of them all; they will no longer
23 form two nations, nor be two separate kingdoms. •They will no longer defile Jr 3:18h themselves with their foul idols, their horrors and any of their crimes. I shall save them from the acts of infidelity[h] which they have committed and shall cleanse
24 them; they will be my people and I shall be their God. •My servant David will reign 34:23 ↗Jn 10:16 over them, one shepherd for all; they will follow my judgements, respect my laws
25 and practise them. •They will live in the country which I gave to my servant Jacob, =28:26 the country in which your ancestors lived. They will live in it, they, their children, Jr 17:25 Jl 4:20 their children's children, for ever. David my servant is to be their prince for ever.
26 I shall make a covenant of peace with them, an eternal covenant with them. I shall Jr 31:31*l* ↗2 Co 6:16 resettle them and make them grow; I shall set my sanctuary among them for ever.
27 I shall make my home above them; I shall be their God, and they will be my
28 people. •And the nations will know that I am Yahweh the sanctifier of Israel, when my sanctuary is with them for ever." '

Against Gog, king of Magog[a] ↗Rv 20:7–10

1, 2 **38** The word of Yahweh was addressed to me as follows, •'Son of man, turn towards Gog, to the country of Magog, towards the paramount prince of
3 Meshech and Tubal,[b] and prophesy against him. •Say, "The Lord Yahweh says Gn 10:2
4 this: I am against you, Gog, paramount prince of Meshech and Tubal. •I shall turn 27:13 you about, I shall fix hooks in your jaws[c] and bring you out with your entire army, 29:4 horses and horsemen, all perfectly equipped, a huge array armed with shields and
5 bucklers, and all wielding swords. •Persia and Cush and Put are with them, all with 27:10+
6 buckler and helmet; •Gomer and all its troops, Beth-Togarmah in the far north
7 and all its troops,[d] and many nations with you. •Be ready, be well prepared, you and all your troops and the others rallying to you, and hold yourself at my service.[e]
8 "Many days will pass before you are given orders; in the final years you will march on this country, whose inhabitants will have been living in confidence,[f] remote from other peoples, since they escaped the sword and were gathered in
9 from various nations, here in the long-deserted mountains of Israel. •Like a storm you will approach, you will advance and cover the country like a cloud, you, all your troops and many nations with you.

37 **a.** The valley already mentioned in 3:22–23 and 8:4.

b. In Hebr. the one word *ruah* means 'spirit', 'breath', 'wind'.

c. lit. 'the bones came towards one another' Gk; 'you made the bones come . . . ' Hebr.

d. Here, as in Is 26:19; Ho 6:2; 13:14, God announces, vv. Ezk 37:11–14, the messianic restoration of Israel after the sufferings of the Exile, *see also* Rv 20:4a. But also, by the imagery chosen, he is already preparing minds for the idea of an individual resurrection of the body, glimpsed in Jb 19:25 *see* Jb 19:26g and explicitly stated in 2 M 7:9–14, 23–36; 12:43–46; Dn 12:2; see 2 M 7:9c. For the NT, *see* Mt 22:29–32 and especially 1 Co 15.

e. This remark suggests that the vision takes place in Babylon, among the discouraged exiles.

f. Here the term is not used in antithesis to Judaeans, but means the whole population of the Southern Kingdom.

g. i.e. the whole Northern Kingdom which vanished after the fall of Samaria and the deportation of 721.

h. 'acts of infidelity' *meshubot* MSS, Syr.; Hebr. *moshebot* 'dwellings'.

38 **a.** Though not a pure apocalypse, this poem already shows a number of apocalyptic features. While the earlier prophets were in the main concerned with contemporary morality and only occasionally looked ahead to a more glorious future, the purpose of an apocalypse, whether written or spoken, is usually to console by the visions the prophet has seen. These visions reveal a future that will eclipse present misery. Often, too, they reveal the forthcoming triumphs of divine judgement and, opening eschatological vistas, unveil mysteries of the world to come. Although this form of literature was particularly cultivated in later Judaism, the Bible contains several examples of its earlier stages of development, *see* pp. 1162, 1178–9. Ezk 38–39 marks the earliest stage. Further examples occur in Is 24–27; Dn 7–12; Zc 9–14. The most vigorous period of development was the second century BC (the *Book of Enoch*, etc.). It is represented in the NT by the apocalypse of John (Rv).

b. Meshech and Tubal are countries in Asia Minor, 27:13, Is 66:19*l*. The 'country of Magog', here and Ezk 39:6 only, is an invented name, meaning 'country of Gog'. It seems useless to try to identify Gog. Doubtless deriving features from several contemporary personalities, he figures here as the type of victorious barbarian who in an unspecified distant future will inflict the final ordeals on Israel.

c. Yahweh seizes Gog and will enforce obedience on him.

d. Probably the Cimmerians, also from the north.

e. 'at my service' Gk; 'at their service' Hebr.

f. Hence long after the return to Palestine.

"The Lord Yahweh says this: That day, a thought will enter your mind and you 10
will form a sinister plan.[g] ·You will think: I shall attack this undefended country 11
and march on this peaceful nation living secure, all living in towns without walls or
bars or gates. ·You will come to plunder and loot and turn your might against the 12
ruins they live in, against this people gathered back from the nations, these stock-
25:13h breeders and traders who live at the Navel of the World.[h] ·Sheba and Dedan, the 13
1 K 10:1a merchants and all the magnates[i] of Tarshish will ask you: Have you come for
plunder? Are you massing your troops with a view to looting? To make off with
gold and silver, seize cattle and goods, and come away with unlimited spoil?"

'So, son of man, prophesy. Say to Gog, "The Lord Yahweh says this: Is it not 14
true that you will set out[j] at a time when my people Israel is living secure?
You will leave your home in the far north, you and many nations with you, a great 15
army of countless troops all mounted. ·You will invade Israel, my people. You will 16
be like a cloud covering the country. In the final days, I myself shall bring you to
Ex 14:4 attack my country, so that the nations will know who I am, when I display my
holiness to them, by means of you, Gog.

"The Lord Yahweh says this: It was of you[k] that I spoke in the past through my 17
servants the prophets of Israel, who prophesied in those days, foretelling your
invasion.[l] ·The day Gog attacks the land of Israel—declares the Lord Yahweh— 18
my furious wrath will boil up.[m] In my anger, ·in my jealousy, in the heat of my fury 19
I say it: That day, I swear, there will be such a huge earthquake in the land of
Israel, ·that the fish in the sea and the birds of heaven, the wild beasts, all the 20
reptiles creeping along the ground, and all people on the surface of the earth will
Am 8:9h quake before me. Mountains will fall, cliffs crumble, all walls collapse, and ·I shall 21
summon every kind of sword[n] against him—declares the Lord Yahweh—and each
will turn his sword against his comrade. ·I shall punish him with plague and 22
bloodshed, and rain down torrential rain, hailstones, fire and brimstone on him,
on his troops and on the many nations with him. ·I shall display my greatness and 23
Ex 14:4 holiness and bring the many nations to acknowledge me; and they will know that I
am Yahweh." '

39 [o]"So, son of man, prophesy against Gog. Say, "The Lord Yahweh says this: 1
38:3–4 Look, I am against you, Gog, paramount prince of Meshech and Tubal. ·I 2
shall turn you about, lead you on, and bring you from the farthest north against the
mountains of Israel. ·I shall break the bow in your left hand and dash the arrows 3
out of your right. ·You will fall on the mountains of Israel, you, all your troops and 4
the nations with you. I shall make you food for every kind of bird of prey and wild
animals. ·You will fall in the wilds, for I have spoken—declares the Lord Yahweh. 5
I shall send down fire on Magog and on those living undisturbed in the islands, and 6
38:23 they will know that I am Yahweh. ·I shall see that my holy name is acknowledged 7
by my people Israel, and no longer allow my holy name to be profaned; and the
nations will know that I am Yahweh, holy in Israel.[b]

"All this is to happen, all this is to take place—declares the Lord Yahweh. This 8
is the day I predicted.

"The inhabitants of the towns of Israel will go out and set fire to and burn the 9
weapons, the shields and bucklers, bows and arrows, javelins and spears. They will
burn these for seven years ·and not fetch wood from the countryside or cut it 10
in the forests, since they will be burning the weapons. They will plunder those
who plundered them, and despoil those who despoiled them—declares the
Lord Yahweh.

"That day, I shall give Gog a famous spot in Israel for his grave, the valley of the 11
Obarim, east of the Sea—the valley that halts the traveller[c]—and there Gog and
his whole throng will be buried, and it will be called the Valley of Hamon-Gog.[d]
The House of Israel will take seven months to bury them and cleanse the country. 12
All the people of the country will dig their graves, thus winning themselves 13
renown, the day when I display my glory—declares the Lord Yahweh. ·And men 14
will be detailed to the permanent duty of going through the country and burying

those left above ground and cleansing it. They will begin their search once the
15 seven months are over,[e] •and as they go through the country, if one of them sees
any human bones, he will set up a marker beside them until the gravediggers have
16 buried them in the valley of Hamon-Gog •(and Hamonah is also the name of a Nb 19:16 Dt 21:23
town)[f] and have cleansed the country."

17 'Son of man, the Lord Yahweh says this, "Say to the birds of every kind and to
all the wild animals: Muster, come, gather from everywhere around for the sacrifice Rv 19:17–18
I am making for you, a great sacrifice on the mountains of Israel, so that you can
18 eat flesh and drink blood. •You will eat the flesh of heroes, you will drink the blood
of the princes of the world. They are all rams and lambs, goats and fat bulls of
19 Bashan. •You will glut yourselves on fat and drink yourselves drunk on blood
20 at this sacrifice I am making for you. •You will glut yourselves at my table on
horses and chargers, on heroes and every kind of warrior—declares the
Lord Yahweh."

Conclusion[g]

21 'I shall display my glory to the nations, and all nations will see my sentence when I Ex 14:4
22 inflict it and my hand when I strike them. •The House of Israel will know that I am
23 Yahweh their God, from that day forward for ever. •The nations too will know
that the House of Israel were exiled for their guilt; because they were unfaithful to
me, I hid my face from them and put them into the clutches of their enemies, so
24 that they all fell by the sword. •I treated them as their loathsome acts of infidelity
deserved and hid my face from them.

25 'So, the Lord Yahweh says this, "Now I shall bring Jacob's captives back and
take pity on the whole House of Israel and show myself jealous for my holy name.
26 They will forget their disgrace and all the acts of infidelity which they committed
against me when they were living safely in their own country, with no one to disturb
27 them. •When I bring them home from the peoples, when I gather them back from
the countries of their enemies, when I display my holiness in them for many nations
28 to see, •they will know that I am Yahweh their God who, having sent them into
exile among the nations, have reunited them in their own country, not leaving a
29 single one behind. •I shall never hide my face from them again, since I shall pour 11:19+;37:14
out my spirit on the House of Israel—declares the Lord Yahweh." '

IV: THE TORAH OF EZEKIEL[a]

The future Temple

1 **40** In the twenty-fifth year of our captivity, at the beginning of the year, on the
tenth day of the month, fourteen years to the day from the capture of the

g. Unaware of being the instrument of Yahweh, Gog supposes himself a free agent, *see* Is 10:4a.

h. Jerusalem, centre of the world, *see* Jg 9:37*l*.

i. lit. 'fierce lions', animal metaphor for rapacity.

j. 'you will set out' Gk; 'you will know it' Hebr.

k. 'It was of you' versions; 'Was it of you?' Hebr.

l. After 'in those days', Hebr. adds 'years'; Gk omits. Allusions to a future invasion are found in the earlier prophets, see for example Jr 3–6, but Ezekiel here seems to be thinking of prophets earlier than Jeremiah.

m. So far, Gog has been the instrument of Yahweh who now, however, turns on him to inflict a terrible defeat.

n. 'every kind of sword' *lekol hereb* conj.; Hebr. *lekol haray hereb* 'all my mountains, the sword'.

39 a. Ch. 39 is not a doublet of ch. 38 but a development of its closing verses—a detailed account of the defeat of Gog and its consequences.

b. Or possibly, with the versions and some Hebr. MSS, 'the Holy One of Israel,' an expression very common in Is, but nonetheless suspect here.

c. 'famous' versions; 'there' Hebr. • Instead of 'valley of the Obarim' or 'valley of the Travellers', one might read, with Coptic, 'valley of the Abarim', the play on words in the remainder of the v. having given rise to mistaken placing of vowels. The Abarim range is in Moab, Nb 27:12; the valley 'that halts the traveller' is perhaps that of the River Arnon, a deep and rocky gorge.

d. i.e. 'of the horde of Gog'.

e. After 'burying', Hebr. adds 'the travellers'; Gk omits. • There will be so many corpses that it will take seven months to bury them, v. 12, and only after these seven months have elapsed will a task-force be detailed to see that there are no further corpses to be buried, since only one would be enough to pollute the country.

f. Gloss on Hamon, but no such town is known, and the text is doubtful.

g. The conclusion to the whole section, not to the prophecy against Gog. It sums up the teaching of Ezekiel as expressed in 5:8, 10; 28:26; 34:30.

40 a. The final section of Ezk, ch. 40–48, is a blueprint for the religious and political rehabilitation of the Israelite nation in Palestine. The prophet is inspired by his profound

8:3 •1:1–3;37:1 ↗Rv 21:10 city,[b] the hand of Yahweh was on me. He carried me away: •in divine visions, he carried me away to the land of Israel and put me down on a very high mountain, on the south of which there seemed to be built a city.[c] •He took me to it, and there I saw a man,[d] whose appearance was like brass. He had a flax cord and a measuring rod in his hand and was standing in the gateway. •The man said to me, 'Son of man, look carefully, listen closely and pay attention to everything I show you, since you have been brought here only for me to show it to you. Tell the House of Israel everything that you see.'

2 3 ↗Rv 11:1;21:15 4 Ex 25:9,40

The outer wall

Now, the Temple was surrounded on all sides by an outer wall. The man was holding a measuring rod six cubits long, each cubit a forearm and a handsbreadth.[e] He measured the thickness of this construction—one rod; and its height—one rod.

5 Ex 27:9–19; 38:9–20 2 Ch 3:3;4:5

The east gate[f]

He went to the east gate, climbed the steps and measured its threshold: one rod deep.[g] •Each guardroom one rod by one rod; and the piers[h] between the guardrooms five cubits thick, and the threshold of the gate inwards from the porch of the gate: one rod.[i] •He measured the porch of the gate: eight cubits; its piers: two cubits; the porch of the gate was at the inner end. •There were three guardrooms on each side of the east gate, all three of the same size; the piers between them all of the same thickness each side. •He measured the width of the entrance: ten cubits; and the width all down the gateway: thirteen cubits. •There was a rail in front of the guardrooms; each rail on either side was one cubit. And the guardrooms on either side were six cubits square. •He measured the width of the gate from the back wall of one guardroom to the back wall of the other;[j] it was twenty-five cubits across, the openings being opposite each other. •He measured the porch: twenty cubits: the court surrounded the gate on all sides.[k] •From the front of the entrance gate, to the far end of the porch of the inner gate: fifty cubits. All round inside the gate there were trellised windows[l] in the guardrooms and in their piers; similarly, in the porch there were windows all round and palm trees on the piers.[m]

6 7 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16

The outer court

He then took me to the outer court, which had rooms and a paved terrace going all the way round; there were thirty rooms on this terrace. •This terrace, which came up to the sides of the gates and matched their depth, was the Lower Terrace. He measured the width of the court,[n] •from the front of the lower gate to the façade of the inner court, outside: a hundred cubits (on the east and on the north).

17 18 19

The north gate

He measured the length and breadth of the north gate of the outer court. •It had three guardrooms on each side; its piers and porch were of the same size as those of the first gate: fifty cubits long and twenty-five cubits wide. •Its windows, its porch and its palm trees were of the same size as those of the east gate. There were seven steps up to it, and its porch was at the inner end.[o] •In the inner court there was, opposite the north gate, a gate like the one opposite the east gate.[p] He measured the distance from one gate to the other: a hundred cubits.

20, 21 22 23

The south gate

He took me to the south side where there was a south gate; he measured its guardrooms,[q] piers and porch; they were of the same size as the others. •The gateway, as well as its porch, had windows all round, like the windows of the others; it was fifty cubits long and twenty-five cubits wide, •and it had seven steps up to it; its porch was at the inner end and had palm trees on its piers, one on either

24 25 26

27 side. •The inner court had a south gate; he measured the distance southwards from
one gate to the other: a hundred cubits.

The inner court. The south gate

28 He then took me into the inner court by the south gate; he measured the south gate
29 which was of the same size as the others. •Its guardrooms, piers and porch were of
30 the same size as the others. •The gateway, as well as its porch, had windows all
31 round; it was fifty cubits long and twenty-five cubits wide.[r] •The porch gave on to
the outer court. It had palm trees on its piers and eight steps leading up to it.

The east gate

32 He took me to the eastern part[s] of the inner court and measured the gate. It was of
33 the same size as the others. •Its guardrooms, piers and porch were of the same size
as the others. The gateway, as well as its porch, had windows all round; it was fifty
34 cubits long and twenty-five cubits wide. •Its porch gave on to the outer court.
There were palm trees on its piers on either side and eight steps leading up to it.

The north gate

35, 36 He then took me to the north gate and measured it. •Its guardrooms, piers[t] and
porch were of the same size as the others. The gateway had windows all round; it
37 was fifty cubits long and twenty-five cubits wide. •Its porch gave on to the outer
court. There were palm trees on its piers on either side and eight steps leading
up to it.[u]

Subsidiary buildings at the gate

38 There was a room, the entrance to which was in the porch of the gateway,[v] where
39 they washed the burnt offerings. •And inside the porch of the gateway were slabs, Lv 1:9 2 Ch 4:6
two on either side, for slaughtering the burnt offerings, the sacrifice for sin and the
40 sacrifice of reparation. •Outside, at the approach to the entrance of the north gate,
were two slabs, and on the other side, at the porch end of the gate were two slabs.

knowledge of past history, but he does his best to adapt the earlier legislation to new conditions, and take advantage of recent experience to preserve Israel from the temptations and apostasies which have led the nation to ruin. Henceforth Ezekiel assumes the role of organiser intent on realising long-foreseen and long-desired reforms. His earlier promises of restoration and of a covenant animated by the Spirit presupposed a reorganisation of the community. Living at a time when the whole structure of Israel needed to be rebuilt, Ezekiel was able to draw up a founding charter for what was shortly to emerge as Judaism, and to provide a basis for all future efforts and aspirations from Ezra to the heavenly Jerusalem of the apocalypse of John. In all this, the Christian reader will admire the high ideal of holiness, 43:7; 44:23, and the sense of the presence of God, 48:35, later to be shared by the Church.

b. September–October 573: the religious year began in spring, but the beginning of the civil year coincided with the first month of autumn.

c. Jerusalem evidently, though a Jerusalem expanded and idealised.

d. The 'man', clearly an angel, explains the prophet's vision to him. Angelic interpreters are a feature of late prophetic literature, *see* Dn 8:16; 9:21seq; 10:5seq; Zc 1:8seq; 2:2; Rv 1:1; 10:1–11.

e. There seem to have been two cubits: the common cubit of 6 palms, (18 in, 45cm), or handsbreadth, and the older 'great cubit' of 7 palms (21in, 53cm). Ezekiel makes it clear that he uses the latter, which measures 'one (common) cubit and a palm.' Further information concerning ancient weights and measures will be found in the Tables of measures and money.

f. The three gates of the outer court are alike; only the east gate is described in detail, though this is not entirely clear, the text being poorly preserved. The basic design, however, is that of the fortified gates of Megiddo, Hazor and Gezer, built by Solomon and his successors. It is thus a visual memory of pre-exilic Jerusalem.

g. Hebr. repeats 'and the threshold: one rod deep', dittography; Gk omits.

h. 'the pilasters' Gk; Hebr. omits.

i. We omit v. 8: 'He measured the porch of the gate, on the inside: one rod,' dittography; versions omit.

j. 'from the back wall of one guardroom to the back wall of the other' *miggaw . . . legaw* conj.; Hebr. *miggag . . . legaggo* 'from the roof of one guardroom to its roof'.

k. This v. is unintelligible in Hebr.; we emend 'He measured' *wayyammad* instead of 'He made; *wayya'as* the remainder follows Gk, but makes little sense.

l. Trans. conj.; lit. 'blocked windows'.

m. These elaborate gates, the only openings in the surrounding wall, were to allow strict watch to be kept over the entrances. Ezekiel insists that the Temple should be kept pure from foreigners and sinners.

n. 'of the court' Gk; Hebr. omits.

o. 'at the inner end' Gk; 'opposite them' Hebr., as also in v. 26.

p. 'like the one opposite the east gate' Gk; 'and at the eastern' Hebr.

q. 'the guardrooms' Gk; Hebr. omits.

r. Gk, lit. 'and its porches all round, twenty-five cubits long and five wide'.

s. Or, with Gk: 'He took me to the east gate'; either way, the general meaning is clear.

t. Plural with *qere* and Gk; sing. Hebr. *ketib*.

u. 'Its porch' Gk; 'Its pilaster' Hebr. The vv. between vv. 37 and 47 are additional: vv. 38–43, the accommodation for preparing the sacrificial victims, near the north gate just described, vv. 35–37; and vv. 44–46, the sacristies at the north and south gates.

v. 'in the porch of the gateway' Gk; 'in the pilasters, the gateways' Hebr.

There were four slabs on one side and four slabs on the other side of the gateway, 41
eight slabs in all, on which the slaughtering was done. ·There were also four slabs 42
of dressed stone for the burnt offerings, a cubit and a half long, a cubit and a half
wide and a cubit high, on which the instruments for slaughtering the burnt offerings
and sacrifice were placed; ·runnels a handsbreadth wide went all round the top, 43
and on these slabs was put the sacrificial flesh.

Then he took me into the inner court; there were two rooms in the inner court, 44
one on the side of the north gate, facing south, the other on the side of the south
Nb 3:27–32 gate, facing north.* ·He told me, 'The room looking south is for the priests 45
responsible for the service of the Temple, ·and the room looking north is for the 46
44:15b priests responsible for the service of the altar. These are the sons of Zadok, those
of the sons of Levi who approach Yahweh to serve him.'

The inner court

He measured the court; it was a hundred cubits long and a hundred cubits wide, a 47
square with the altar standing in front of the Temple.

1 K 6:3 2 Ch 3:4 ### The Temple.[x] The Ulam

He took me to the Ulam of the Temple and measured the piers of the Ulam:[y] five 48
cubits either side; and the width of the entrance was three cubits either side. ·The 49
length of the Ulam was twenty cubits and its width twelve cubits. There were ten
1 K 7:21 2 Ch 3:15–17 steps leading up to it,[z] and there were columns by the piers, one on either side.

1 K 6:3 2 Ch 3:5–7 ### The Hekal

41 He took me to the Hekal and measured its piers: six cubits wide on the one 1
side, six cubits wide on the other.[a] ·The width of the entrance was 2
ten cubits, and the returns[b] of the entrance were five cubits on the one side and
five cubits on the other. He measured its length: forty cubits; and its width:
twenty cubits.

1 K 6:20 2 Ch 3:8–9 ### The Debir

He then went inside and measured the pier at the entrance: two cubits; then the 3
entrance; six cubits; and the returns of the entrance: seven cubits. ·He measured 4
its length; twenty cubits; and its width against the Hekal: twenty cubits. He then
Ex 26:33–34 said to me, 'This is the Holy of Holies.'

1 K 6:5–6 ### The side cells[c]

He then measured the wall of the Temple: six cubits. The width of the lateral 5
structure was four cubits, all round the Temple. ·The cells were one above the 6
other in three tiers of thirty cells each.[d] The cells were recessed into the wall, the
wall of the structure comprising the cells, all round, forming offsets; but there were
no offsets in the wall of the Temple itself. ·The width of the cells increased, storey 7
by storey, corresponding to the amount taken in from the wall from one storey to
the next, all round the Temple.[e]

Then I saw that there was a paved terrace all round the Temple. The height of 8
this, which formed the base of the side cells, was one complete rod of six cubits.[f]
The outer wall of the side cells was five cubits thick. There was a passage between 9
the cells of the Temple ·and the rooms, twenty cubits wide, all round the Temple. 10
As a way in to the lateral cells on the passage there was one entrance on the 11
north side and one entrance on the south side. The width of the passage was five
cubits right round.

The building on the west side[g]

The building on the west side of the court was seventy cubits wide, the wall of the 12
building was five cubits thick all round and its length was ninety cubits. ·He 13
measured the length of the Temple: a hundred cubits. ·The length of the court plus 14

the building and its walls: a hundred cubits. •He measured the length of the building, along the court, at the back, and its galleries on either side: a hundred cubits.

Particulars of the Temple itself

1 K 6:15–18

The inside of the Hekal and the porches of the court, •the thresholds, the windows, the galleries on three sides, facing the threshold, were panelled with wood all round from floor to windows,[h] and the windows were screened with latticework. •From the door to the inner part of the Temple, as well as outside, and on the wall all round, both inside and out,[i] •were carved great winged creatures and palm trees, one palm tree between two winged creatures; each winged creature had two faces: •a human face turned towards the palm tree on one side and the face of a lion towards the palm tree on the other side, throughout the Temple, all round. •Winged creatures and palm trees were carved on the wall[j] from the floor to above the entrance. •The door-posts of the Temple were square.

1 K 6:29–30

The wooden altar

Ex 30:1–3
1 K 6:20–21

In front of the sanctuary there was something like •a wooden altar, three cubits high and two cubits square.[k] Its corners, base and sides were of wood. He said to me, 'This is the table in the presence of Yahweh.'

The doors

1 K 6:31–35

The Hekal had double doors and the sanctuary •double doors. These doors had two hinged leaves, two leaves for the one door, two leaves for the other. •On them (on the doors of the Hekal), were carved great winged creatures and palm trees like those carved on the walls. There was a wooden porch roof on the front of the Ulam on the outside, •and windows with flanking palm trees on the sides of the Ulam, the cells to the side of the Temple and the porch-roofs.[l]

Subsidiary buildings of the Temple[a]

42 He then took me out into the outer court on the north side and led me to the room facing the court, that is to say, to the front of the building on the north side.[b] •Along the front, it was a hundred cubits long on the north side and fifty cubits wide. •Facing the gateways[c] of the inner court and facing the paving of the outer court was a gallery in front of the triple gallery, •and in front of the rooms

w. 'he took me . . . rooms' Gk; 'outside the inner court were rooms for singers' Hebr. • 'one' Gk; 'which (is)' Hebr. 'south (gate)' Gk; 'east (gate)' Hebr.

x. The Temple proper, with its three parts: Ulam or Vestibule, Hekal or Hall (the 'Holy'), Debir or Sanctuary (the 'Holy of Holies'). It is an almost exact replica of the Temple of Solomon, 1 K 6, and hence described with less detail than the surrounding constructions, the arrangement of which is entirely original.

y. 'the piers of the Ulam' *'ele ha'ulam* conj., following Gk; Hebr. *'el 'ulam* 'towards the Ulam'.

z. 'ten steps' Gk; 'the steps which' Hebr.

41 a. Hebr. adds 'the width of the tent', a gloss omitted by several MSS and Gk.

b. 'the returns' Gk; 'the width' Hebr.

c. Similar cells existed in the Temple of Solomon; 1 K 6:5–6. Here, however, their disposition is obscure and their purpose unstated. It has been suggested that they were the 'treasury' of the Temple. • Difference in style suggests that vv. 5–15[a] may be additional, though they seem a necessary contribution to the description of the Temple.

d. Hebr. is very obscure, lit. 'the cells, cells on cells, three and thirty times.' We translate with the help of the versions.

e. 'increased' conj.; 'turned' Hebr. • 'corresponding to . . . wall' following Gk; 'for they surrounded the Temple' Hebr., which adds, lit. 'that is why the width of the Temple towards the top, and so, the lower part went up towards the top by way of the middle (?).' The Hebr. perhaps conceals a reference to a spiral stair linking the various floors, but is too obscure to translate. The general idea is that the outer wall of the cell building got narrower from floor to floor on the inside, and the cells grew proportionately wider.

f. Hebr. adds an incomprehensible word.

g. Apparently a great roofless hall; its purpose is not known. There seems to have been no such building in the Temple of Solomon. *See*, however, 2 K 23:11 and 1 Ch 26:18, where reference is made to something on the west side.

h. 'on three sides' trans. conj.; lit. 'to of them'. • 'from floor' conj.; 'and the floor' Hebr.

i. Hebr. adds an unintelligible word.

j. 'on the wall' conj., *see* v. 25; 'and the wall of the Hekal' Hebr. *ketib*; 'Hekal' is marked as not intended to be read aloud.

k. 'two cubits (3ft, 91cm) square' Gk; Hebr. omits.

l. We rely on Gk for the whole of this passage, the style being compressed and the text probably corrupt.

42 a. Vv. 1–14 are a collection of disparate elements emanating from priestly circles during the Exile, to complete Ezekiel's description. The text is poorly preserved and some vv. are hard to understand. • Vv. 15–20 complete the measuring of the Temple begun in ch. 40.

b. 'on the north side' Gk; 'the north gate' Hebr.

c. 'the gateways' Gk; 'the twenty' Hebr.

was a walk, ten cubits measured inwards and a hundred cubits long;[d] their doors looked north. ·The top-floor rooms were narrow because the galleries took up part 5
of the width, being narrower than those on the ground floor or those on the middle floor of the building; ·these were divided into three storeys and had no columns 6
such as the court had. Hence they were narrower than the ground floor ones or the middle-floor ones (below them). ·The outer wall parallel to the rooms, facing them 7
and giving onto the outer court, was fifty cubits long, ·the length of the rooms 8
facing the outer court being fifty cubits, while for those facing the hall of the Temple it was a hundred cubits. ·Beneath the rooms there was an entrance from 9
the east, leading in from the outer court.

In the thickness of the wall of the court, on the south side[e] fronting the court and 10
the building, were rooms. ·A walk ran in front of them, as with the rooms built on 11
the north side; they were of the same length and breadth, and were of similar design with similar doors in and out. ·Before[f] the rooms on the south side there 12
was an entrance at the end of each walk, opposite the corresponding wall on the east side, at their entries. ·He said to me, 'The northern and southern rooms giving 13
onto the court are the rooms of the sanctuary, in which the priests who approach
Lv 2:3b Yahweh will eat the most holy things. In them will be placed the most holy things: the oblation, the sacrifice for sin and the sacrifice of reparation, since this is a holy place. ·Once the priests have entered, they will not go out of the holy place into the 14
outer court without leaving their liturgical vestments there, since these vestments
Lv 17:1a are holy; they will put on other clothes before going near places assigned to the people.'

45:2 **Measurements of the court**

When he had finished measuring the inside of the Temple, he took me out to the 15
east gate and measured it right round the sides. ·He measured the east side with 16
his measuring rod: a total of five hundred cubits[g] by the measuring rod. ·He then 17
measured the north side: a total of five hundred cubits by the measuring rod. ·He 18
then measured the south side: five hundred cubits by the measuring rod ·was the 19
total. On the west side he measured five hundred cubits by the measuring rod. He measured the entire enclosing wall on all four sides: length five hundred, 20
breadth five hundred, separating the sacred from the profane.

The return of Yahweh[a]

43 He took me to the gate, the one facing east. ·I saw the glory of the God of 1, 2
Israel approaching from the east. A sound came with him like the sound of
10:18–19;11: 22–23 the ocean, and the earth shone with his glory. ·This vision was like the one I had 3
1 seen when I had come for the destruction of the city, and like the one I had seen by the River Chebar. Then I fell to the ground.

The glory of Yahweh arrived at the Temple by the east gate. ·The Spirit lifted 4, 5
1 K 8:10–11 me up and brought me into the inner court; I saw the glory of Yahweh fill the Temple. ·And I heard someone speaking to me from the Temple[b] while the man 6
37:26–27+ Ex 25:8d Rv 21:3 stood beside me. ·He said, 'Son of man, this is the dais of my throne, the step on 7
which I rest my feet. I shall live here among the Israelites for ever; and the House of Israel, they and their kings,[c] will never again defile my holy name with their whorings and the corpses of their kings, ·by putting their threshold beside my 8
Ex 19:12e threshold and their door-posts beside my door-posts, with a party wall shared by them and me.[d] They used to defile my holy name by their loathsome practices, and this is why I put an end to them in my anger. ·From now on they will banish their 9
whorings and the corpses of their kings from my presence and I shall live among them for ever.

'Son of man, describe this Temple to the House of Israel, to shame them out of 10
their loathsome practices. (Let them draw up the plan of it.) ·And, if they are 11
ashamed of their behaviour, show them the design and plan of the Temple, its exits and entrances, its shape, how all of it is arranged, the entire design and all its

principles. Give them all this in writing so that they can see and take note of its
12 design and the way it is all arranged and carry it out. ·This is the charter of the
Temple: all the surrounding space on the mountain top is an especially holy area.
(Such is the charter of the Temple.)'

The altar [c]

Ex 27:1–8
1 K 8:64
2 Ch 4:1;7:7

13 These were the dimensions of the altar, in cubits each of a cubit plus a hands-
breadth. The base: one cubit high and one cubit wide; the space by the runnel, all
14 round the edge of the altar, one handsbreadth. ·From the ground level of the base
up to the lower plinth, two cubits high and one cubit wide; from the lesser plinth to
15 the greater plinth, four cubits high and one cubit wide. ·The altar hearth: four
16 cubits high, with four horns projecting from the hearth, ·the hearth was four-
17 square: twelve cubits by twelve cubits; ·and the square plinth: fourteen cubits by
fourteen cubits; and the ledge all round: half a cubit; and the base: one cubit all
round. The steps were on the east side.

The consecration of the altar

Ex 29:36–37
Lv 8:10–16
1 M 4:52–56

18 He said to me, 'Son of man, the Lord Yahweh says this, "As regards the altar, this
is how things must be done when it has been built for the sacrifice of the burnt
19 offering and for the pouring of blood. ·To the levitical priests—those of the race
of Zadok—who approach me to serve me—declares the Lord Yahweh—you must
20 give a young bull as a sacrifice for sin. ·You must take some of its blood and put it
on the four horns, on the four corners of the plinth and on the surrounding ledge.
21 In this way you will purify it and make expiation on it. ·Then take the bull of the
sacrifice for sin and burn it in that part of the Temple which is cut off from the
22 sanctuary. ·On the second day, you must offer an unblemished he-goat as
the sacrifice for sin, and the altar must be purified again as was done with the
23 bull. ·When you have finished the purification, you must offer a young, unblem-
24 ished bull and an unblemished ram from the flock. ·You must present them before
Yahweh, and the priests will sprinkle salt on them and offer them as burnt offerings
25 to Yahweh. ·As a sacrifice for sin, every day for seven days you must offer a he-
26 goat, a bull and an unblemished ram from the flock. ·In this way the altar will be
27 expiated and will be purified and inaugurated. ·At the end of that time, on the
eighth day and afterwards, the priest will offer your burnt offerings and your
communion sacrifices on the altar, and I shall look favourably on you—declares
the Lord Yahweh." '

44:15h

Lv 8:33–35

The use of the east gate

1 **44** He brought me back to the outer east gate of the sanctuary. It was shut.
2 Yahweh said to me, 'This gate will be kept shut. No one may open it or go
through it, since Yahweh, God of Israel, has been through it. And so it must be
3 kept shut. ·The prince himself, however, may sit there to take his meal in the
presence of Yahweh. [e] He must enter and leave through the porch of the gate.'

Rules of admission to the Temple

43:6–11

4 He led me through the north gate to the front of the Temple. And then I looked; I

d. 'a hundred cubits long' (50 yds, 46m) versions; 'a way of a cubit' Hebr.

e. 'on the south side' Gk; 'on the east side' Hebr., but cf. vv. 12–13.

f. 'Below the' conj.; 'Like the' Hebr., dittography. The rest of the v. is very obscure and the versions offer little help.

g. 'five hundred cubits' versions; 'five cubits of rods' Hebr.

43 **a.** The vision of the return of Yahweh corresponds with that of his departure, 10:18–19; 11:22–23.

b. Yahweh himself, not the angel accompanying Ezekiel.

c. Hebr. adds 'their high places'; 'with them' Gk.

d. The previous Temple adjoined the palace of David, 1 K 7:8. Ezekiel relegates the palace to another part of the city, reserving the entire eastern height of Jerusalem for the Temple.

e. Vv. 13–27 are two subsequent additions about the structure and dedication of the altar. They do not imply that Zerubbabel's altar had already been erected.

44 **a.** Cf. 46:1–2. Evidently an allusion to a sacred meal, presumably that accompanying the communion sacrifice, Lv 7:15; Dt 12:7, 18.

saw the glory of Yahweh filling the Temple of Yahweh; and I fell to the ground.
Yahweh said to me, 'Son of man, pay attention, look carefully and listen closely to 5
everything I explain; these are all the arrangements of the Temple of Yahweh and
all its laws. Be careful about who is admitted to the Temple and who is excluded
from the sanctuary.[b] ·And say to the rebels of the House of Israel, "The Lord 6
Yahweh says this: You have gone beyond all bounds with all your loathsome
Gn 17:10d Jr 4:4a practices, House of Israel,[c] ·by admitting aliens, uncircumcised in heart and body, 7
22:26 to frequent my sanctuary and profane my Temple, while offering my food, the fat
and the blood, and breaking my covenant[d] with all your loathsome practices.
Instead of maintaining the service of my holy things, you have deputed someone 8
Ac 21:28–29 else to maintain my service in my sanctuary.[e] ·The Lord Yahweh says this: No 9
alien, uncircumcised in heart and body, may enter my sanctuary, none of the aliens
living among the Israelites.[f]

The Levites

"As regards the Levites who abandoned me when Israel strayed far from me by 10
following its idols,[g] they must bear the weight of their own sin. ·They must be 11
servants in my sanctuary, responsible for guarding the Temple gates and serving
the Temple. They will kill the burnt offerings and the sacrifice for the people, and
hold themselves at the service of the people. ·Since they used to be at their service 12
in front of their idols and were an occasion of guilt for the House of Israel, very
well, I stretch out my hand against them—declares the Lord Yahweh—they will
bear the weight of their guilt. ·They may never approach me again to perform the 13
Lv 2:3b priestly office in my presence, nor touch my holy things and my most holy things;
they must bear the disgrace of their loathsome practices. ·I shall give them the 14
responsibility of serving the Temple; I shall make them responsible for serving it
and for everything to be done in it.

Nb 18:1–19 **The priests**

"As regards the levitical priests, the sons of Zadok,[h] who maintained the service 15
of my sanctuary when the Israelites strayed far from me, they will approach me to
serve me; they will stand in my presence to offer me the fat and blood—declares
the Lord Yahweh. ·They will enter my sanctuary and approach my table to serve 16
me; they will maintain my service. ·Once they enter the gates of the inner court, 17
they must wear linen vestments; they must wear no wool when they serve inside
the gates of the inner court and in the Temple. ·They must wear linen caps on their 18
Lv 6:3–4 heads and linen breeches on their loins; they may not wear anything round their
waists that makes them sweat.[i] ·When they go out to the people in the outer 19
court,[j] they must remove the vestments in which they have performed the liturgy
and leave them in the rooms of the Holy Place, and put on other clothes, so as not
Lv 21:5 to hallow the people with their vestments.[k] ·They may neither shave their heads 20
Lv 10:9 nor let their hair grow long,[l] but must cut their hair carefully. ·No priest may drink 21
Lv 21:7,14 wine on the day he enters the inner court. ·They may not marry widows or divorced 22
women, but only virgins of the race of Israel; they may, however, marry a widow,
if she is the widow of a priest. ·They must teach my people the difference between 23
what is sacred and what is profane and make them understand the difference
between what is clean and what is unclean. ·They must be judges in law-suits; they 24
20:11–12,16, 19–20 must judge in the spirit of my judgements; they must follow my laws and ordinances
Lv 21:1–5 at all my feasts and keep my Sabbaths holy. ·They may not go near[m] a dead person, 25
in case they become unclean, except in these permissible cases, that is, for father,
mother, daughter, son, brother or unmarried sister. ·After one of them has been 26
purified, seven days must elapse; ·then, the day he enters the Holy Place in the 27
inner court to minister in the Holy Place, he must offer his sacrifice for sin—
Nb 18:20–24 Dt 18:1–2 declares the Lord Yahweh. ·They may have no heritage;[n] I myself shall be their 28
·Jos 13:14g heritage. You may give them no patrimony in Israel; I myself shall be their
patrimony. ·Their food must be the oblation, the sacrifice for sin and the sacrifice 29

30 of reparation. Everything dedicated by vow in Israel shall be for them. •The best Lv 27:28e
of all your first-fruits and of all the dues and of everything you offer, must go to the
priests; and the best of your dough you must also give to the priests, so that a
31 blessing may rest on your house. •Priests must not eat the flesh of anything that has
died a natural death or been savaged, be it bird or animal." ' [o]

The division of the country.[a] The portion for Yahweh 48:8–20

1 45 ' "When you draw lots to divide the country by heritage, you must set a
sacred portion of the country aside for Yahweh: twenty-five thousand cubits
2 long and twenty thousand wide. The whole of this land must be sacred, •and of this
an area five hundred by five hundred cubits[b] must be for the sanctuary, with a 42:15–20
3 boundary fifty cubits wide right round. •Out of this area you must also measure a
section twenty-five thousand by ten thousand cubits, in which will be the sanctuary,
4 the Holy of Holies. •This will be the sacred portion of the country, belonging to the
priests who officiate in the sanctuary and approach Yahweh to serve him. It will
5 contain room for their houses and room for the sanctuary. •A portion twenty-five
thousand by ten thousand cubits will be owned by the Levites serving the Temple,
6 with towns for them to live in.[c] •You must give the city possession of an area five
thousand by twenty-five thousand cubits, near the land belonging to the sanctuary;
this must be for the whole House of Israel.

The portion for the prince

7 "The prince must have a territory either side of the sacred portion and of the
property of the city, adjacent to the sacred portion and the property of the city,
stretching westwards from the west and eastwards from the east, its size equal to
8 one of the portions between the west and the east frontiers •of the country. This
will be his property in Israel. Then my princes will no longer oppress my people;
they must leave the rest of the country for the House of Israel, for its tribes.
9 "The Lord Yahweh says this: Enough, princes of Israel! Give up your violence Jr 22:3–5
and plundering, do what is upright and just, stop crushing my people with taxa-
10, 11 tion—declares the Lord Yahweh. •Have fair scales, a fair *ephah*, a fair *bat*. •Let Lv 19:35–36
the *ephah* and *bat* be equal, let the *bat* hold one-tenth of a *homer* and the *ephah*
12 one-tenth of a *homer*. Let the measures be based on the *homer*.[d] •The shekel must
be twenty *gerah*. Twenty shekels, twenty-five shekels and fifteen shekels must
make one *mina*.

b. Trans. uncertain, lit. 'at the entrance to the Temple and at all the exits from the sanctuary'.

c. Vv. 6–31 on the clergy of the Temple are additional but very possibly date from before the end of the Exile; they institutionalise the actual distinction which had arisen since the deuteronomic reform, between the old Levites of the provincial sanctuaries who were relegated to inferior status, and the Zadokite Priests who formed the clergy of Jerusalem. This explained why the Levites, cf. Ezr 2:40, as opposed to the priests, were reluctant to return from the Exile, Ezr 8:15–19.

d. lit. 'you broke' versions; 'they broke' Hebr.

e. An allusion to the employment of more or less assimilated aliens, cf. Dt 29:10; Jos 9:27, in the service of the Temple of Jerusalem.

f. In the Temple of Herod in the days of Jesus, the following notice, cut in Greek, was still to be seen. 'Let no alien pass beyond the balustrade and wall surrounding the sanctuary. Whoever is caught doing so will have only himself to blame for the death which will be his penalty.' Several of these stone inscriptions have been unearthed.

g. The Levites were frequently employed at the 'high places'. When these shrines were abolished by Dt and the reform under Josiah, these Levites lost their official standing and were forced to live on charity, Dt 12:12, 18, or else to reaffiliate themselves to the sanctuary in Jerusalem, Dt 18:6–8. Ezekiel approves the latter course but assigns them a subordinate status; they are to take over the duties of the aliens expelled from the Temple service.

h. The levitical priests, *see* Dt 18:1–5, are those who remained loyal to the service of the sanctuary in Jerusalem. They were of the line of Zadok, the priest appointed by Solomon after the deprivation of Abiathar, 1 K 2:27–35.

i. lit. 'not to belt themselves with sweat'. Sweat was apparently regarded as unclean, unless the word here means something else which we do not know about.

j. Hebr. repeats 'in the outer court'; versions omit.

k. The laity were forbidden to touch consecrated objects; they run the risk of being 'hallowed' or 'sanctified', *see* Lv 17a:1.

l. Long, unkempt hair symbolised either a vow, Nb 6:5, or mourning, cf. Ezk 24:17, 23.

m. 'They are not to go near' versions; sing. Hebr.

n. 'They are to have no heritage' Vulg.; 'it is to be their heritage' Hebr.

o. According to Lv 7:24, the prohibition applied to all Israelites.

45 a. Ch. 45–46 belong to the final editing of the book and consist of a series of additions, loosely connected. The first, vv. 1–8, on the portions of territory assigned to Yahweh and the prince, anticipates 48:8–22 but is placed here on the strength of the dues (same word in Hebr.) set aside as the portion of the priests, mentioned in 44:30.

b. These are the dimensions of the Temple.

c. 'with towns to live in' Gk; 'twenty rooms' Hebr.

d. The *ephah* (1.25 bushels, 45 litres) is a solid, the *bat* (10 gallons UK, 12 USA, 45 litres) is a liquid measure. The *homer* and *kor* (v. 14) are the same. For the modern equivalents of ancient measures *see* Tables of measures and money.

Ex 30:13–16 Mt 23:23

Offerings for worship

"This is the offering that you must levy: the sixth of an *ephah* for every *homer* of 13
wheat, and the sixth of an *ephah* for every *homer* of barley. ·The dues on oil: one 14
bat of oil out of every ten *bat* or out of every *kor* (which is equal to ten *bat* or one
homer, since ten *bat* equal one *homer*). ·You must levy one sheep on every flock of 15
Lv 1:1b; 2:1a;3:1a two hundred from the pastures of Israel for the oblation, the burnt offerings and
the communion sacrifice. This must form your expiation—declares the Lord
Yahweh. ·Let all the people of the country be subject to this due for the prince of 16
Israel. ·The prince must make himself responsible for providing the burnt offer- 17
Ex 23:14d Lv 23:24k ings, the oblation and the libations for feasts, New Moons, [e] Sabbaths and all the
solemn festivals of the House of Israel. He must provide the sacrifice for sin, the
oblation, the burnt offerings and the communion sacrifices to make expiation for
the House of Israel.

Ex 12:1a

The feast of the Passover

"The Lord Yahweh says this: On the first day of the first month, you must take a 18
young bull without blemish, to purify the sanctuary. ·The priest must take blood 19
from the sacrifice for sin and put it on the doorposts of the Temple, on the four
corners of the altar plinth and on the doorposts of the gates [f] of the inner court.
You must do the same on the seventh of the month, on behalf of anyone who has 20
sinned through inadvertence or ignorance. This is how you must make expiation
for the Temple. ·On the fourteenth day of the first month, you must celebrate the 21
feast of the Passover. For seven days everyone must eat unleavened loaves. ·On 22
that day, the prince must offer a bull as a sacrifice for sin, for himself and all the
people of the country. ·For the seven days of the feast, he must offer Yahweh burnt 23
offerings of seven bulls and seven rams without blemish, daily for a week, and one
he-goat daily as a sacrifice for sin, ·and as an oblation, one *ephah* for each bull and 24
one *ephah* for each ram, and a *hin* of oil for every *ephah*.

Ex 23:14d

The feast of Shelters

"For the feast that falls on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, he must do the 25
same for seven days, offering the sacrifice for sin, the burnt offerings, the oblation
and the oil." '

Miscellaneous regulations [g]

45:17 Ex 20:8f Nb 28:9–14

' "The Lord Yahweh says this: The east gate of the inner court must be kept 1
46 shut for the six working days. On the Sabbath day, however, it must be
opened, as also on the day of the New Moon; ·and the prince must go in through 2
the porch of the outer gate and take his position by the doorposts of the gate. The
priests must then offer his burnt offerings and his communion sacrifice. He must
prostrate himself on the threshold of the gate and go out, and the gate must not be
shut again until the evening. ·The people of the country must prostrate themselves 3
in the presence of Yahweh at the entrance to the gate on Sabbaths and days of the
New Moon. ·The burnt offering offered to Yahweh by the prince on the Sabbath 4
day must consist of six unblemished lambs and one unblemished ram, ·with an 5
oblation of one *ephah* for the ram, and such oblation as he pleases for the lambs,
and a *hin* of oil for every *ephah*. ·On the day of the New Moon it must consist of an 6
unblemished young bull, six unblemished lambs and one unblemished ram, ·when 7
he must make an oblation of one *ephah* for the bull and one *ephah* for the ram, and
what he pleases for the lambs, and a *hin* of oil for every *ephah*.

"When the prince goes in, he must enter by the porch of the gate, and he must 8
leave by the same way. ·When the people of the country come into the presence of 9
Ex 23:14–17 Yahweh at the solemn festivals, those who have come in by the north gate to
prostrate themselves must go out by the south gate, and those who have come in by
the south gate must go out by the north gate; no one must turn back to leave

10 through the gate by which he entered but must go out on the opposite side. ·The
prince will be with them, coming in like them and going out like them.
11 "On feast days and solemn festivals the oblation must be one *ephah* for every
bull, one *ephah* for every ram, what he pleases for the lambs, and a *hin* of oil for
12 every *ephah*. ·When the prince offers Yahweh voluntary burnt offerings or a
voluntary communion sacrifice, the east gate must be opened for him, and he must
offer his burnt offerings and his communion sacrifice as he does on the Sabbath
13 day; when he has gone out, the gate must be shut after him. ·Every day he must
offer [b] an unblemished lamb one year old as a burnt offering to Yahweh; he must Lv 7:16;22:23 Ex 29:39seq.
14 offer this every morning. ·Every morning in addition he must offer an oblation of
one-sixth of an *ephah* and one-third of a *hin* of oil, for mixing with the flour. This is
15 the oblation to Yahweh, a perpetual decree, fixed for ever. ·The lamb, the oblation
and the oil must be offered morning after morning for ever. [c]
16 "Lord Yahweh says this: If the prince presents part of his hereditary portion to
one of his sons, the gift must pass into the ownership of his sons and become their
17 hereditary property. ·If, however, he presents part of his hereditary portion to one
of his slaves, it will belong to the man only until the year of liberation and then
18 must revert to the prince. [d] Only his sons may retain his hereditary portion. ·The
prince may not take any part of the people's hereditary portion, thus robbing them
of what is theirs; he must provide the patrimony of his sons out of his own property,
so that no member of my people is robbed of what is his!" '
19 ·He took me through the entrance at the side of the north gate that leads to the 42:1–9
rooms of the Holy Place set apart for the priests. And there before us, to the west,
20 was a space at the end. ·He said to me, 'This is where the priests must boil the Lv 4–5
slaughtered animals for the sacrifice for sin and the sacrifice of reparation, and
where they must bake the oblation, without having to carry them into the outer Lv 2 •44:19
21 court and so run the risk of hallowing the people.' ·He then took me into the
outer court and led me to each of its four corners; in each corner of the outer court
22 was a compound; ·in other words, the four corners of the court contained four
23 small compounds, forty cubits by thirty, all four being the same size. [f] ·All four
24 were enclosed by a wall, with hearths all round the bottom of the wall. ·He said,
'These are the kitchens where the Temple servants must boil the sacrifices offered
by the people.'

The spring in the Temple [e]

Ps 46:4 Jl 4:18 Zc 13:1;14:8 Jn 4:1a ↗Rv 22:1seq. Jn 19:34

1 47 He brought me back to the entrance of the Temple, where a stream flowed
eastwards from under the Temple threshold, for the Temple faced east. The
2 water flowed from under the right side of the Temple, south of the altar. ·He took
me out by the north gate and led me right round outside as far as the outer east gate
3 where the water flowed out on the right-hand side. ·The man went off to the east
holding his measuring line and measured off a thousand cubits; he then made me
4 wade across the stream; the water reached my ankles. ·He measured off another
thousand and made me wade across the stream again; the water reached my knees.
He measured off another thousand and made me wade across the stream again;
5 the water reached my waist. ·He measured off another thousand; it was now a river

e. For the feast of the New Moon, *see* Nb 28:11–14.
f. 'doorposts' (twice) versions; sing. Hebr. • 'gates' conj.; sing. Hebr.

46 **a.** Ch. 46 is composite, consisting of: rules on the use of the gates by the prince and people, vv. 1–12, with an appendix on the perpetual sacrifice, vv. 13–15; an addition on the unalienable character of the prince's domain, vv. 16–18; and a supplement on the Temple kitchens, vv. 19–24.
b. 'he must offer' some MSS and versions; 'you must offer' Hebr., as also in v. 14.
c. The daily sacrifice was indeed zealously resumed by post-exilic Judaism, and ceased only in the final days of the siege of Jerusalem in August, AD 70.
d. 'revert to' Gk; 'come to an end' Hebr. • The 'year of liberation' was presumably the jubilee year, occurring every 50 years, *see* Lv 25:1a.
e. The logical place for this passage is following 42:12.
f. 'small compounds' Gk; 'incense-courts (?)' Hebr. • At the end, Hebr. *ketib* adds 'corners (?)', marked as not to be read aloud and omitted by versions.

47 **a.** vv. 1–12 follow on from 43:1seq: the marvellous river is a manifestation of the blessings conferred on the country by Yahweh's return to live among his people. The image is used again in Rv 22:1–2.

which I could not cross; the stream had swollen and was now deep water, a river impossible to cross. ·He then said, 'Do you see, son of man?' He then took me and 6
brought me back to the bank on the river. ·Now, when I reached it, I saw an 7
↗Rv 22:2 ·Zc 14:8 enormous number of trees on each bank of the river. ·He said, 'This water flows 8
east down to the Arabah[b] and to the sea; and flowing into the sea it makes its
Ex 15:25 waters wholesome. ·Wherever the river flows, all living creatures teeming in it will 9
live. Fish will be very plentiful, for wherever the water goes it brings health, and
life teems wherever the river[c] flows. ·There will be fishermen on its banks. Fishing 10
nets will be spread from En-Gedi to En-Eglaim. The species of fish will be the same
as the fish of the Great Sea.[d] ·The marshes and lagoons, however, will not become 11
19:10–11 Ps 1:3 Is 44:4 Jr 17:8 wholesome, but will remain salt. ·Along the river, on either bank, will grow every 12
·↗Rv 22:2 kind of fruit tree with leaves that never wither and fruit that never fails; they will
bear new fruit every month, because this water comes from the sanctuary. And
their fruit will be good to eat and the leaves medicinal.'

Nb 34:1–12 Jos 1:4;13:1–6 Jg 20:1+ **The frontiers of the Holy Land**[e]

'The Lord Yahweh says this, "This will be the territory which you must distribute 13
among the twelve tribes of Israel, with two portions for Joseph.[f] ·You will each 14
have a fair share of it, since I swore to your fathers that I would give it to them, and
this country now falls to you as your heritage. ·These will be the frontiers of the 15
country. On the north, from the Great Sea, the road from Hethlon to the Pass of
Hamath,[g] Zedad, ·Berothah, Sibraim lying between the territories of Damascus 16
and Hamath, to Hazer-ha-Tikon on the borders of Hauran; ·the frontier will 17
extend from the sea to Hazer-Enon, with the territory of Damascus and the
territory of Hamath to the north; that[h] will be the northern frontier. ·On the east, 18
the Jordan will serve as frontier between Hauran and Damascus, between Gilead
and Israel, down to the Eastern Sea as far as Tamar;[i] that will be the eastern
Nb 34:3–5 Jos 15:1–4 frontier. ·On the south, from Tamar southward to the Waters of Meribah in 19
Kadesh, to the Wadi and the Great Sea; that will be the southern frontier. ·And to 20
the west, the Great Sea will serve as frontier up to the point opposite the Pass of
Hamath; that will be the western frontier. ·You must distribute this country among 21
yourselves, among the tribes of Israel. ·You must distribute it as a heritage 22
Ex 12:48*o* for yourselves and the aliens settled among you who have fathered children
Lv 19:34 among you, since you must treat them as citizens of Israel. They must draw lots for
their heritage with you, among the tribes of Israel. ·You will give the alien his 23
heritage in the tribe where he has settled—declares the Lord Yahweh." '

Distribution of the Holy Land[a]

48 ' "This is the list of the tribes. One portion in the far north by way of 1
Hethlon to the Pass of Hamath, to Hazer-Enon, with the territory of
Damascus to the north, and marching with Hamath,[b] from the eastern limit to the
western limit: Dan. ·One portion bordering Dan, from the eastern limit to 2
the western limit: Asher. ·One portion bordering Asher, from the eastern limit 3
to the western limit: Naphtali. ·One portion bordering Naphtali, from the eastern 4
limit to the western limit: Manasseh. ·One portion bordering Manasseh, from the 5
eastern limit to the western limit: Ephraim. ·One portion bordering Ephraim, 6
from the eastern limit to the western limit: Reuben. ·One portion bordering 7
Reuben, from the eastern limit to the western limit: Judah. ·One portion bordering 8
Judah, from the eastern limit to the western limit, is the portion which you must set
aside, twenty-five thousand cubits wide, and as long as each of the other portions
from the eastern limit to the western limit. The sanctuary will be in the centre of it.

"The portion which you must set aside for Yahweh must be twenty-five thousand 9
45:1–6 cubits long and ten thousand cubits wide. ·This sacred portion must belong to the 10
priests, being, on the north side, twenty-five thousand cubits; on the west side ten
thousand cubits wide, on the east side ten thousand cubits wide and on the south
side twenty-five thousand cubits long; the sanctuary of Yahweh will be in the centre

of it. ·This will be for the consecrated priests, those of the sons of Zadok who 44:15–16
maintained my liturgy and did not go astray with the straying Israelites, as the
Levites went astray. ·And so their portion must be taken out of the especially holy
portion of the land, near the territory of the Levites. ·The territory of the Levites, Nb 35
like the territory of the priests, must be twenty-five thousand cubits long and ten
thousand wide—the whole length being twenty-five thousand and the width ten
thousand. ·It will be illegal for them to sell or exchange any part of it, and the
domain can never be alienated, since it is consecrated to Yahweh. ·As regards the
remainder, an area of five thousand cubits by twenty-five thousand, this must be
for the common use of the city, for houses and pastures. In the middle will be the
city. ·These will be its dimensions: on the north side, four thousand five hundred ↗Rv 21:15–17
cubits; on the south side, four thousand five hundred cubits; on the east side, four
thousand five hundred cubits; on the west side, four thousand five hundred cubits.
The pasture land of the city must extend two hundred and fifty cubits to the north,
two hundred and fifty to the south, two hundred and fifty to the east, two hundred
and fifty to the west. ·One strip, contiguous to the sacred portion, must be left
over, consisting of ten thousand cubits to eastward and ten thousand to westward,
marching with the sacred portion; this will bring in a revenue for feeding the
municipal workmen. ·And the municipal workmen, drawn from all the tribes of
Israel, will farm it. ·The portion must have a total area of twenty-five thousand
cubits by twenty-five thousand. You must allocate a square area from the sacred
portion to constitute the city. ·What is left over will be for the prince, on either side
of the sacred portion and of the property of the city, marching with the twenty-five
thousand cubits to eastward[c] to the eastern frontier, and marching with the
twenty-five thousand cubits to westward to the western frontier—running parallel
with the other portions and belonging to the prince. In the centre will be the sacred
portion and the sanctuary of the Temple. ·Thus, apart from the property of the
Levites and the property of the city which lie in the middle of the prince's portion,
everything between the borders of Judah and the borders of Benjamin must belong
to the prince.

"As regards the rest of the tribes: One portion from the eastern limit to
the western limit: Benjamin. ·One portion bordering Benjamin, from the eastern
limit to the western limit: Simeon. ·One portion bordering Simeon, from the
eastern limit to the western limit: Issachar. ·One portion bordering Issachar,
from the eastern limit to the western limit: Zebulun. ·One portion bordering
Zebulun, from the eastern limit to the western limit: Gad. ·On the southern border
of Gad, on the south side, the border will run from Tamar to the Waters of Meribah
in Kadesh, to the Wadi and the Great Sea. ·This is how you must distribute the
country to the tribes of Israel as their heritage, and these must be their portions—
declares the Lord Yahweh.

b. Here the term means the deep depression of the River Jordan. The sea is the Dead Sea whose bitter waters are to be sweetened.

c. 'the river' versions; 'the two rivers' Hebr.

d. The Mediterranean.

e. This description of the Promised Land belongs to the same tradition as Nb 34:1–12, *see also* 34:1a. Some of the place-names are difficult to site, but the northern frontier was apparently to pass north of Tripoli and include the territory of Damascus, vv. 15–16; 48:1—a purely imaginary arrangement. The River Jordan marks the eastern frontier, v. 18.

f. 'This will be'; lit. 'Behold' versions; Hebr. uncertain. 'two portions' Targ. 'portions' Hebr. The two portions were for Ephraim and Manasseh, the sons of Joseph, to make up the twelve territorial tribes of Israel, separate provision having already been made for the tribe of Levi, 45:1–6.

g. 'Hamath' transposed from v. 16, with Gk.

h. 'that' Syr; 'and' Hebr., as also in v. 18.

i. 'as far as Tamar' Syr., cf. v. 19; Hebr. uncertain. • The Eastern Sea was the Dead Sea.

48 a. The ch. is the most unrealistic part of Ezekiel's blueprint. He divides the country into parallel strips running from the eastern frontier to the Mediterranean, without reference to geographical or demographical factors. In conformity with the boundaries set to the Promised Land in ch. 47, the Transjordanian tribes are resettled to the west of the River Jordan. There are seven tribes to the north and five tribes to the south of the sacred territory, which is Yahweh's portion and where Jerusalem is situated. This reserved portion is subdivided between the priests (with the Temple) and the Levites, and what is left over is assigned to the city as common land; the territory of the prince stretches to east and west of this sacred portion, vv. 9–22 used again in 45: 1–8.

b. After 'marching with Hamath', we omit 'they will belong to him'. • 'from the eastern limit to the western limit' Gk, cf. v.3seq; 'from the east side, the sea (?)' Hebr.

c. 'to eastward' *qedimah* conj., Hebr. *terumah* 'portion'; Gk omits.

The gates of Jerusalem [d]

"Here are the exits from the city. On the north side, four thousand five hundred 30
↗Rv 21:12–13 cubits are to be measured off. ·The gates of the city are to be named after the tribes 31
of Israel. Three gates to the north: one the gate of Reuben; one the gate of the
Judah; one the gate of Levi. ·On the east side, there will be four thousand five 32
hundred cubits and three gates: one the gate of Joseph; one the gate of Benjamin;
one the gate of Dan. ·On the south side, four thousand five hundred cubits are to 33
be measured off, and there are to be three gates: one the gate of Simeon; one the
gate of Issachar; one the gate of Zebulun. ·On the west side, there will be four 34
thousand five hundred cubits and three gates: one the gate of Gad; one the gate of
Asher; one the gate of Naphtali. ·Total perimeter: eighteen thousand cubits. 35
Is 1:26n 'The name of the city in future must be: Yahweh-is-there." '[e]

d. vv. 30–35, concerned with the city and no longer with the Temple, are an addition to the book.

e. In Hebr. *yahweh sham*, possibly intended to suggest the sound of the name 'Jerusalem', but in any case summing up the entire religious and liturgical activity of Ezekiel.

DANIEL

INTRODUCTION: THE YOUNG HEBREWS AT THE COURT OF NEBUCHADNEZZAR

1 In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king 2 of Babylon marched on Jerusalem and besieged it. ·The Lord let Jehoiakim king of Judah fall into his power, as well as some of the vessels belonging to the Temple of God. These he took away to Shinar,[a] putting the vessels into the treasury of his own gods.

2 K 24:1seq.
1 Ch 36:5–7
Gn 10:10

3 From the Israelites, the king ordered Ashpenaz, his chief eunuch, to bring a 4 certain number of boys of royal or noble descent; ·they had to be without any physical defect, of good appearance, versed in every branch of wisdom, well-informed, discerning,[b] suitable for service at the royal court. Ashpenaz was to 5 teach them to speak and write the language of the Chaldaeans. ·The king assigned them a daily allowance of food and wine from the royal table. They were to receive an education lasting for three years, after which they would enter the royal service. 6, 7 Among them were the Judaeans Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. ·The chief eunuch gave them other names, calling Daniel Belteshazzar, Hananiah Shadrach, Mishael Meshach, and Azariah Abed-Nego.[c]

2 K 25:29–30

8 Daniel, who was determined not to incur pollution by food and wine from the 9 royal table, begged the chief eunuch to spare him this defilement.[d] ·God allowed 10 Daniel to receive faithful love and sympathy from the chief eunuch. ·But the eunuch warned Daniel, 'I am afraid of my lord the king: he has assigned you food and drink, and if he sees you looking thinner in the face than the other boys of your 11 age, my head will be in danger with the king because of you.' ·To the guard assigned to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah by the chief eunuch, Daniel 12 then said, ·'Please allow your servants a ten days' trial, during which we are given 13 only vegetables to eat and water to drink. ·You can then compare our looks with those of the boys who eat the king's food; go by what you see, and treat your 14 servants accordingly.' ·The man agreed to do what they asked and put them on ten 15 days' trial. ·When the ten days were over, they looked better and fatter than any of 16 the boys who had eaten their allowance from the royal table; ·so the guard withdrew their allowance of food and the wine they were to drink, and gave them 17 vegetables. ·To these four boys God gave knowledge and skill in every aspect of literature and learning; Daniel also had the gift of interpreting every kind of vision and dream.

Jdt 12:2
Gn 39:4,21
Est 2:9
↗Rv 2:10
Gn 41:12

18 When the time stipulated by the king for the boys to be presented to him came 19 round, the chief eunuch presented them to Nebuchadnezzar. ·The king conversed with them, and among all the boys found none to equal Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael

1 **a.** After 'to the land of Shinar' (Gk 'to Babylonia', *see* Jos 7:21), Hebr. adds 'to the temple of his gods'.

b. Not therefore to be trained merely as pages. In eastern courts those destined for the career of 'letters' (scribes, translators, archivists, scholars, astrologers, etc.) were trained from childhood.

c. Probably the copyist has deliberately changed the gentile name Abed Nebu, 'servant of Nabu'. The name of this god forms the theophoric element in the name Nebuchadnezzar. Compare similar treatment of the name Baal in such forenames as Ishbaal, Meribbaal, transformed into Ishbosheth, Mephibosheth, 2 S 2:8; 4:4.

d. In the days of enforced hellenisation under Antiochus Epiphanes, a breach of the dietary law was the equivalent of apostasy, *see* 2 M 6:18–7:42.

1 K 10:3–4 and Azariah. So they became members of the king's court, ·and on whatever point 20
of wisdom or understanding he might question them, he found them ten times
better than all the magicians and soothsayers in his entire kingdom. Daniel re-
mained there until the first year of King Cyrus.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S DREAM: THE COMPOSITE STATUE

The king questions his soothsayers

2 In the second year of his reign, Nebuchadnezzar had a series of dreams;[a] he 1
was perturbed by this and sleep deserted him. ·The king then had magicians 2
and soothsayers, sorcerers and Chaldaeans[b] summoned to tell him what his dreams
meant. They arrived and stood in the king's presence. ·The king said to them, 'I 3
have had a dream, and my mind is troubled by a wish to understand it.' ·The 4
Chaldaeans answered the king:

(Aramaic) 'May your majesty live for ever![c] Tell your servants the dream, and we shall
reveal its meaning for you.' ·The king answered the Chaldaeans, 'This is my firm 5
resolve: if you cannot tell me what I dreamt and what it means, I shall have you
torn limb from limb and your houses turned into dunghills. ·If, on the other hand, 6
5:17 you can tell me what I dreamt and what it means, I shall give you presents, rewards
and high honour. So tell me what I dreamt and what it means.' ·A second time they 7
said, 'Let the king tell his dream to his servants, and we shall reveal its meaning.'
But the king retorted, 'It is plain to me that you are trying to gain time, knowing 8
my proclaimed resolve. ·If you do not interpret my dream for me, there will be but 9
one sentence passed on you all; you have agreed among yourselves to make me
misleading and tortuous speeches while the time goes by. So tell me what my
dream was, and then I shall know whether you can interpret it.' ·The Chaldaeans 10
answered the king, 'Nobody in the world could explain the king's problem; what is
more, no other king, governor or chief would think of putting such a question to
any magician, soothsayer or Chaldaean. ·The question the king asks is difficult, 11
Gn 41:16 and no one can find the king an answer to it, except the gods, whose dwelling is not
with mortals.' ·At this the king flew into a rage and ordered all the Babylonian 12
sages to be put to death. ·On publication of the decree to have the sages killed, 13
search was made for Daniel and his companions to have them put to death.

Daniel intervenes

Then, with shrewd and cautious words, Daniel approached Arioch, the king's chief 14
executioner, when he was on his way to kill the Babylonian sages. ·To this royal 15
official Arioch he said, 'Why has the king issued such a harsh decree?' Arioch
explained matters to Daniel, ·and Daniel went off to ask the king for a stay of 16
execution to give him the opportunity of revealing his interpretation to the king.
Daniel then went home and told his friends Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah 17
Gn 24:7 what had happened, ·urging them to beg the God of heaven[d] to show his mercy 18
and explain the mysterious secret,[e] so that Daniel and his friends might be spared
the fate of the other Babylonian sages. ·The mystery was then revealed to Daniel 19
in a night-vision, and Daniel blessed[f] the God of heaven. ·This is what 20
Daniel said:

Ne 9:5
Ps 41:13 May the name of God
be blessed for ever and ever,
Jb 12:13
Rv 5:12 since wisdom and power are his alone.
It is he who controls the procession of times and seasons, 21
↗Ac 1:7i who makes and unmakes kings,
Rm 13:1 who confers wisdom on the wise,

and knowledge on those with discernment,
22 who uncovers depths and mysteries, Pr 2:6+ Jb 12:22 Ps 139:11seq.
who knows what lies in darkness;
and light dwells with him. [g]
23 To you, God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise
for having given me wisdom and strength:
to me you have explained what we asked you,
to us you have explained the king's problem.

24 So Daniel went to see Arioch, whom the king had made responsible for putting the Babylonian sages to death. Going in, he said, 'Do not put the Babylonian sages to death. Take me into the king's presence and I will reveal the meaning to the
25 king.' •Arioch lost no time in bringing Daniel to the king. 'Among the exiles from Judah,' he said, 'I have discovered a man who can reveal the meaning to the king.'
26 The king said to Daniel (who had been given the name Belteshazzar), 'Can you
27 tell me what I dreamt and what it means?' •Facing the king, Daniel replied, 'None of the sages, soothsayers, magicians or exorcists has been able to tell the
28 king the truth of the mystery which the king has propounded; •but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries and who has shown King Nebuchadnezzar what is to take place in the final days. These, then, are the dream and the visions that passed through your head as you lay in bed: [h] 1 Co 2:10–11 ↗Rv 1:1,19;4:1

29 'Your Majesty, on your bed your thoughts turned to what would happen in the
30 future, and the Revealer of Mysteries disclosed to you what is to take place. •This mystery has been revealed to me, not that I am wiser than anyone else, but for this sole purpose: that the king should learn what it means, and that you should understand your inmost thoughts.

31 'You have had a vision, Your Majesty; this is what you saw: a statue, a great
32 statue of extreme brightness, stood before you, terrible to see. •The head of this statue was of fine gold, its chest and arms were of silver, its belly and thighs of
33, 34 bronze, •its legs of iron, its feet part iron, part clay. •While you were gazing, a stone broke away, untouched by any hand, [i] and struck the statue, struck its feet of iron
35 and clay and shattered them. •Then, iron and clay, bronze, silver and gold, all broke into pieces as fine as chaff on the threshing-floor in summer. The wind blew Ps 1:4 them away, leaving not a trace behind. And the stone that had struck the statue
36 grew into a great mountain, filling the whole world. •This was the dream; we shall now explain to the king what it means.

37 'You, Your Majesty, king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given
38 sovereignty, power, strength and honour [j]—•human beings, wild animals, birds Jdt 11:7 Jr 27:6

2 **a.** Supernatural dreams are a means of communication between God and humanity, *see* chapters 4 and 7. Cf. the dreams of Abraham, Gn 15:12; Abimelech, Gn 20:3; Jacob, Gn 28:10–22. *See also* Gn 37:5d; Mt 1:20h.

b. 'Chaldaean' here means all those practising divination, an art commonly believed to have originated in Chaldaea. The various terms used in the lists of 2:2,10,27; 4:4; 5:7,11,15 have no precise technical significance.

c. The greeting is often found in Accadian texts and was used in the Persian court until the Islamic period.

d. Expression to designate the God of the Jews, when Jews and non-Jews are conversing, 2:37,44; Ezr 5:11; 6:9,10; Ne 1:4; 2:4,20; Tb 7:12; Jdt 5:8; similarly 'Lord of heaven', Dn 5:23; Tb 7:11; 'King of heaven', Dn 4:34; 'the Great God', Dn 2:44; Ezr 5:8.

e. *raz*, mystery, is a word of Persian origin; its biblical use is confined to Dn, but it is found in the Qumran scrolls: its primary meaning is 'secret', but it seems already to possess something of the profundity of the Greek *mysterion* as used by Paul, *see* Rm 16:25*l*.

f. The Jewish 'blessing' begins with an invocation to God or to his name, followed by a commemoration of his favours. When used liturgically it ends with a repetition of the initial eulogy, mentioning in abbreviated form the particular favour obtained.

g. The OT describes God as surrounded by light, Ex 24:17; Ezk 1:27; Hab 3:4, and as light itself, Ws 7:26; Is 60:19–20. The NT expresses this idea more clearly still, *see* for example 1 Tm 6:16; Jm 1:17; 1 Jn 1:5–7; but compare Jn 8:12b. Some early Jewish commentators cite this verse to vindicate the title 'Light' for the expected Messiah.

h. The allegories in Dn, of which this is the first, are veiled descriptions of the great successive empires of history: Neo-Babylonian, Median, Persian, Greek (Alexander's Asiatic kingdom governed by his successors). The allegory is here borrowed from ancient speculations on the ages of the world, the symbolism being used of metals in descending scale of value. Last of all comes the messianic kingdom. The empires of earth collapse and give place to a new kingdom which, being founded by God, is everlasting; the 'kingdom' of Heaven, *see* Mt 4:17f. • Jesus will later call himself 'Son of man', *see* Dn 7:13k and Mt 8:20h; he will also refer to himself, *see* Mt 21:42–44; Lk 20:17–18, as the corner-stone formerly rejected, Ps 118:22, and as the foundation stone of Is 28:16, with a clear allusion to the stone which breaks away from the mountain and crushes him on whom it falls, Dn 2:34,44–45.

i. lit. 'without hands', cf. Is 31:8.

j. Nebuchadnezzar's power comes to him from God, and not from the divine nature which he himself claims, *see* 3; Jdt 3:8; 6:2; 11:7.

of the air, wherever they live, he has entrusted to your rule, making you king of them all—you are the golden head. ·And, after you, another kingdom will rise, 39
not as great as yours, and then a third, of bronze, which will rule the whole world.
7:7;8:5; 21;11:3 There will be a fourth kingdom, hard as iron, as iron that pulverises and crushes 40
all. Like iron that breaks everything to pieces, it will crush and break all the earlier kingdoms. ·The feet [k] you saw, part earthenware, part iron, are a kingdom which 41
will be split in two, but which will retain something of the strength of iron, just as you saw the iron and the clay of the earthenware mixed together. ·The feet were 42
part iron, part potter's clay: the kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle.
And just as you saw the iron and the clay of the earthenware mixed together, so 43
the two will be mixed together in human seed; [l] but they will not hold together any more than iron will blend with clay. ·In the days of those kings, the God of heaven 44
3:33/100; 4:31;7:14 will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and this kingdom will not pass into the hands of another race: it will shatter and absorb all the previous kingdoms
2 S 7:16 Lk 1:33 and itself last for ever—·just as you saw a stone, untouched by hand, break away 45
Mt 21:42–44par. from the mountain and reduce iron, bronze, earthenware, silver and gold to powder. The Great God has shown the king what is to take place. The dream is true, the interpretation exact.'

The king's profession of faith

At this, King Nebuchadnezzar fell prostrate before Daniel; he gave orders for 46
Lv 2:1a;6:8 Daniel to be offered an oblation and a fragrant sacrifice. ·The king said to Daniel, 47
3:90;11:36 Dt 10:17 'Your god is indeed the God of gods, the Master of kings, and the Revealer of Mysteries, since you have been able to reveal this mystery.' ·The king then 48
conferred high rank on Daniel and gave him many handsome presents. He also made him governor of the whole province of Babylon and head of all the sages of Babylon. ·At Daniel's request, the king entrusted the affairs of the province of 49
Babylon to Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego; Daniel himself remained in attendance on the king.

THE ADORATION OF THE GOLDEN STATUE

Nebuchadnezzar sets up a golden statue

3 King Nebuchadnezzar had a golden statue made, [a] sixty cubits high and six 1
cubits wide, which he set up on the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon.
King Nebuchadnezzar then summoned the satraps, magistrates, governors, 2
counsellors, treasurers, judges, lawyers, and all the provincial authorities to assemble and attend the dedication of the statue set up by King Nebuchadnezzar.
Satraps, magistrates, governors, counsellors, treasurers, judges, lawyers and all 3
the provincial authorities then assembled for the dedication of the statue set up by King Nebuchadnezzar and stood in front of the statue which King Nebuchadnezzar
↗Rv 5:9;7:9; 13:7;14:6; 17:15 had set up. ·A herald then loudly proclaimed: 'Peoples, nations, languages! Thus 4
are you commanded: ·the moment you hear the sound of horn, pipe, lyre, zither, 5
harp, bagpipe and every other kind of instrument, [b] you will prostrate yourselves and worship the golden statue set up by King Nebuchadnezzar. ·Anyone who 6
↗Rv 13:14–15 does not prostrate himself and worship will immediately be thrown into the burning fiery furnace.' ·And so, the instant all the peoples heard the sound of 7
horn, pipe, lyre, zither, harp, bagpipe and all the other instruments, all the peoples, nations and languages prostrated themselves and worshipped the statue set up by King Nebuchadnezzar.

The denunciation and condemnation of the Jews

Some Chaldaeans then came forward and maliciously accused the Jews. ·They 8, 9
said to King Nebuchadnezzar, 'May Your Majesty live for ever! ·You have issued 10

a decree, Your Majesty, to the effect that everyone on hearing the sound of horn,
pipe, lyre, zither, harp, bagpipe and every other kind of instrument is to pros-
11 trate himself and worship the golden statue; ·and that anyone who does not
12 prostrate himself and worship is to be thrown into the burning fiery furnace. ·Now,
there are certain Jews to whom you have entrusted the affairs of the province of
Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego; these men have ignored your
command, Your Majesty; they do not serve your gods, and refuse to worship the
13 golden statue you have set up.' ·Shaking with fury, Nebuchadnezzar sent for
Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego. The men were immediately brought before
14 the king. ·Nebuchadnezzar addressed them, 'Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego,
is it true that you do not serve my gods, and that you refuse to worship the golden
15 statue I have set up? ·When you hear the sound of horn, pipe, lyre, zither, harp,
bagpipe and every other kind of instrument, are you prepared to prostrate your-
selves and worship the statue I have made? If you refuse to worship it, you will be
thrown forthwith into the burning fiery furnace; then which of the gods could save
16 you from my power?' ·Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego replied to King Nebu-
17 chadnezzar, 'Your question needs no answer from us: ·if our God, the one we
serve, is able to save us from the burning fiery furnace and from your power, Your Ps 37:39–40
18 Majesty, he will save us; ·and even if he does not, then you must know, Your
19 Majesty, that we will not serve your god or worship the statue you have set up.' ·This
infuriated King Nebuchadnezzar; his expression was changed now as he looked at
Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego. He gave orders for the furnace to be made
20 seven times hotter than usual ·and commanded certain stalwarts from his army to
bind Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego and throw them into the burning fiery
21 furnace. ·They were then bound in their cloaks, trousers, headgear and other
22 garments, and thrown into the burning fiery furnace. ·The king's command was so
urgent and the heat of the furnace was so fierce, that the men carrying Shadrach,
23 Meshach and Abed-Nego were burnt to death by the flames from the fire; ·the
three men, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego fell, bound, into the burning fiery
furnace.

The song of Azariah in the furnace [c] 9:3–19 and notes Ezr 9:6–15

24 *And they walked in the heart of the flames, praising God and blessing the Lord.*
25 *Azariah stood in the heart of the fire, praying aloud thus:*

26 *May you be blessed and revered, Lord, God of our ancestors,* 4:34 1 Ch 29:10,20
may your name be held glorious for ever.
27 *For you are upright in all that you have done for us,* Ne 9:33 Tb 3:2–6 Rv 16:7;19:2
all your deeds are true,
all your ways right,
all your judgements true.
28 *True is the sentence you have given*
in all that you have brought down on us
and on Jerusalem, the holy city of our ancestors,
for you have treated us rightly and truly,
as our sins deserve.

29 *Yes, we have sinned and committed a crime by deserting you,* 9:5–8
yes, we have greatly sinned;
we have not listened to your commandments, Ne 1:7 Is 59:12–13 Ba 1:17seq.

k. Aram. adds 'and toe-nails'. Similarly, in v. 42, 'toes' has been corrected to 'feet'.

l. Probably alluding to the intermarriage of Seleucids and Ptolemies which failed, however, to cement any union between these successors of Alexander.

3 **a.** LXX and Theod. add 'in his eighteenth year'; LXX further adds 'having subdued towns and provinces and all the inhabitants of the world from India to Ethiopia'.

b. This 'zither' or 'trigon' was a triangle with four strings and the harp a type of guitar.

c. There is little doubt that the long italicised passage that follows (vv. 24–90) is from an Aramaic original; it is preserved only in the Greek and Syr. versions. We follow Theod.; LXX has some variant readings and occasional differences in order. In the Aramaic text v. 24 corresponds to Greek v. 91.

we have not observed them, 30
we have not done what you commanded us to do
for our own good.
Lv 26:14,38 Dt 28:15.63seq. *Yes, all that you have brought down on us,* 31
all that you have done to us,
you have been fully justified in doing.
You have handed us over to our enemies, 32
to a lawless people, the worst of the godless,
to an unjust king, the worst in the whole world;
today we have no right to open our mouths, 33
shame and dishonour are the lot
of those who serve and worship you.

Ex 32:11+ *Do not abandon us for ever,* 34
for the sake of your name;
do not repudiate your covenant,
do not withdraw your favour from us, 35
2 Ch 20:7 Is 41:8 ↗Jm 2:23 *for the sake of Abraham, your friend,* [d]
of Isaac, your servant,
and of Israel, your holy one,
Gn 15:5;22:17 *to whom you promised to make their descendants as many as the stars of heaven* 36
and as the grains of sand on the seashore.
Dt 28:62 Jr 42:2 *Lord, we have become the least of all nations,* 37
we are put to shame today throughout the world,
because of our sins.

Lm 2:9 Ho 3:4 *We now have no leader, no prophet, no prince,* 38
no burnt offering, no sacrifice, no oblation, no incense,
no place where we can make offerings to you
and win your favour. 39
Ps 51:17 Ho 6:6 Mi 6:7–8 *But may the contrite soul, the humbled spirit,*
be as acceptable to you
as burnt offerings of rams and bullocks, 40
as thousands of fat lambs:
such let our sacrifice be to you today,
and may it please you that we follow you whole-heartedly,
Ps 25:3 *since those who trust in you will not be shamed.*
And now we put our whole heart into following you, 41
into fearing you and seeking your face once more.
Do not abandon us to shame 42
but treat us in accordance with your gentleness,
in accordance with the greatness of your mercy.
Rescue us in accordance with your wonderful deeds 43
and win fresh glory for your name, O Lord.
Confusion seize all who ill-treat your servants: 44
Ps 35:26;40:15 *may they be covered with shame,*
deprived of all their power,
and may their strength be broken.
Ps 83:18 *Let them learn that you alone are God and Lord,* 45
glorious over the whole world.

All this time, the king's servants, who had thrown them into the furnace, had been 46
stoking it with crude oil, pitch, tow and brushwood •*until the flames rose forty-nine* 47
Tb 5:4b *cubits above the furnace* •*and, leaping out, burnt those Chaldaeans to death who* 48
were standing round it. •*But the angel of the Lord came down into the furnace beside* 49
Azariah and his companions; he drove the flames of the fire outwards from the

50 *furnace ·and, in the heart of the furnace, wafted a coolness to them as of the breeze and dew, so that the fire did not touch them at all and caused them no pain or distress.*

The song of the three young men

51 *Then all three in unison began to sing, glorifying and blessing God in the furnace, with the words:*

52 *May you be blessed, Lord, God of our ancestors,* 3:26
be praised and extolled for ever.
Blessed be your glorious and holy name,
praised and extolled for ever.
53 *May you be blessed in the Temple of your sacred glory,* Ps 150:1 Is 6:1
exalted and glorified above all for ever:
54 *blessed on the throne of your kingdom,*
exalted above all, glorified for ever:
55 *blessed are you who fathom the abyss, enthroned on the winged creatures,* [e] Ex 25:18i 2 S 6:2
praised and exalted above all for ever:
56 *blessed in the expanse of the heavens,*
exalted and glorified for ever.

57 *Bless the Lord, all the Lord's creation:* Ps 103:22; 145:10
praise and glorify him for ever!
58 *Bless the Lord, angels of the Lord,* Ps 103:20; 148:2
praise and glorify him for ever!
59 *Bless the Lord, heavens,* Ps 148:4
praise and glorify him for ever!
60 *Bless the Lord, all the waters above the heavens,*
praise and glorify him for ever!
61 *Bless the Lord, powers of the Lord,* Ps 103:21
praise and glorify him for ever!
62 *Bless the Lord, sun and moon,* Ps 148:3
praise and glorify him for ever!
63 *Bless the Lord, stars of heaven,*
praise and glorify him for ever!

64 *Bless the Lord, all rain and dew:*
praise and glorify him for ever!
65 *Bless the Lord, every wind,* Ps 148:8
praise and glorify him for ever!
66 *Bless the Lord, fire and heat,*
praise and glorify him for ever!
67 *Bless the Lord, cold and warmth,* [f]
praise and glorify him for ever!
68 *Bless the Lord, dew and snow-storm,*
praise and glorify him for ever!
69 *Bless the Lord, frost and cold,*
praise and glorify him for ever!
70 *Bless the Lord, ice and snow,*
praise and glorify him for ever!
71 *Bless the Lord, nights and days,*
praise and glorify him for ever!
72 *Bless the Lord, light and darkness,*
praise and glorify him for ever!

d. Abraham's noblest title, still current in Islamic tradition.

e. One of the ways of invoking Yahweh at the ark of the covenant, cf. 1 S 4:4. On the great winged creatures in the Temple at Jerusalem, *see* Ex 25:18i; 1 K 6:22–28; 2 Ch 3:10–13.

f. Vv. *67–68* are found only in LXX and in one MS of Theod.

Bless the Lord, lightning and cloud, 73
praise and glorify him for ever!

Let the earth bless the Lord: 74
praise and glorify him for ever!
Ps 148:9 *Bless the Lord, mountains and hills,* 75
praise and glorify him for ever!
Bless the Lord, every plant that grows, 76
praise and glorify him for ever!
Bless the Lord, springs of water, 77
praise and glorify him for ever!
Bless the Lord, seas and rivers, 78
praise and glorify him for ever!
Bless the Lord, whales, and everything that moves in the waters, 79
praise and glorify him for ever!
Bless the Lord, every kind of bird, 80
praise and glorify him for ever!
Ps 148:10 *Bless the Lord, all animals wild and tame,* 81
praise and glorify him for ever!

Bless the Lord, all the human race: 82
praise and glorify him for ever!
Ps 135:18 *Bless the Lord, O Israel,* 83
praise and glorify him for ever!
Bless the Lord, priests, 84
praise and glorify him for ever!
Ps 134:1 *Bless the Lord, his servants,* 85
praise and glorify him for ever!
Bless the Lord, spirits and souls of the upright, 86
praise and glorify him for ever!
Zp 2:3d *Bless the Lord, faithful, humble-hearted people,* 87
praise and glorify him for ever!

Hananiah, Azariah and Mishael, bless the Lord, 88
praise and glorify him for ever!—
For he has rescued us from the Underworld,
he has saved us from the hand of Death,
he has snatched us from the burning fiery furnace,
he has drawn us from the heart of the flame!
Ps 106:1; 136:1–2 *Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good,* 89
for his love is everlasting.
Bless the Lord, the God of gods, all who fear him, 90
give praise and thanks to him,
for his love is everlasting!

The king acknowledges the miracle

King Nebuchadnezzar sprang to his feet in amazement. He said to his advisers, 24 91
'Did we not have these three men thrown bound into the fire?' They answered the
king, 'Certainly, Your Majesty'. ·'But', he went on, 'I can see four men walking 25 92
free in the heart of the fire and quite unharmed! And the fourth looks like a child
of the gods!'[g] ·Nebuchadnezzar approached the mouth of the burning fiery furnace 26 93
and said, 'Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego, servants of God Most High,[h] come
out, come here!' And from the heart of the fire out came Shadrach, Meshach and
Abed-Nego. ·The satraps, magistrates, governors, and advisers of the king 27 94
crowded round the three men to examine them: the fire had had no effect on their
bodies: not a hair of their heads had been singed, their cloaks were not scorched,
no smell of burning hung about them. Nebuchadnezzar said, ·'Blessed be the God 28 95

of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego: he has sent his angel to rescue his servants who, putting their trust in him, defied the order of the king, and preferred to forfeit
29 their bodies[i] rather than serve or worship any god but their God. •I therefore decree as follows, "Peoples, nations, and languages! Let any of you speak disres- 6:27
pectfully of the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego, and I shall have him torn limb from limb and his house turned into a dunghill; for there is no other god who can save like this." '
97 30 The king then showered favours on Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego in the province of Babylon.

THE WARNING DREAM AND THE MADNESS OF NEBUCHADNEZZAR

Nebuchadnezzar's proclamation

98 31 'King Nebuchadnezzar, to all peoples, nations and languages dwelling throughout the world: may you prosper more and more!
99 32 'It is my pleasure to make known the signs and wonders with which the Most High God has favoured me.

100 33 How great his signs,
how mighty his wonders!
His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, 2:44;4:31
his empire endures age after age!'

Nebuchadnezzar describes his dream

1 **4** 'I, Nebuchadnezzar,[a] was living comfortably in my house, prosperously in
2 my palace. •I had a dream; it appalled me. Dread assailed me as I lay in bed;
3 the visions that passed through my head tormented me. •So I decreed that all the sages of Babylon be summoned to explain to me what the dream meant.
4 Magicians, soothsayers, Chaldaeans and exorcists came, and I told them what
5 I had dreamt, but they could not interpret it for me. •Daniel, renamed Belteshazzar after my own god,[b] and in whom the spirit of the holy gods[c] 5:11,14;13:45
resides, then came into my presence. I told him my dream:
6 ' "Belteshazzar, chief of magicians," I said, "I know that the spirit of the holy gods resides in you and that no mystery puts you at a loss. This is[d] the dream I have had; tell me what it means.
7 ' "The visions that passed through my head as I lay in bed were these:

I saw a tree[e] Ezk 31:3–14
in the middle of the world;
it was very tall.
8 The tree grew taller and stronger,
until its top reached the sky
and it could be seen from the very ends of the earth.
9 Its foliage was beautiful, its fruit abundant, Ezk 17:23
in it was food for all.

g. The protecting angel, *see* v. 28 (95).
h. The title is found in Ps, but elsewhere only on the lips of non-Jews, *see* Gn 14:18; Nb 24:16; Is 14:14.
i. Theod. adds 'to the fire', a reading used by Paul, 1 Co 13:3.

4 **a.** Gk is more detailed: 'In the seventeenth year of his reign, Nebuchadnezzar said'. • In LXX, despite some omissions, this chapter is a quarter as long again as in the Massoretic text.
b. The god Bel, also the theophoric element in Belshazzar, *see* 5:1a.
c. The same divine inspiration as the pharaoh, for instance, discerns in Joseph from the wisdom of his advice, Gn 41:38; but *see* Is 11:2c; 63:10. • The Aram. plural should not be corrected to the singular (compare Theod.): Nebuchadnezzar talks like the gentile he still is; but contrast 4:34. Similarly, Belshazzar at 5:11,14.
d. 'This is' *hazi* conj.; Aram. *hezwe* 'the visions of (my dream)'.
e. For the tree as a symbol of a nation's growing power, cf. Ezk 17:1–10 and 22–24 and especially 31:3–14; also Is 10:33–11:1.

For the wild animals it provided shade,
↗Mt 13:31-32 the birds of heaven nested in its branches,
all living creatures found their food on it.

' "I watched the visions passing through my head as I lay in bed: 10

Next, a Watchful One,[f] a holy one, came down from heaven.
At the top of his voice he shouted: 11
Cut the tree down, lop off its branches,
strip off its leaves, throw away its fruit;
let the animals flee from its shelter
and the birds from its branches.
But leave the stump with its roots in the ground, 12
bound with hoops of iron and bronze,
in the grass of the countryside.
Let it be drenched by the dew of heaven
and have its lot with the animals, eating grass!
Let it cease to have a human heart,[g] 13
and be given the heart of a beast,
and seven times[h] shall pass over it!

Such is the sentence proclaimed by the Watchers, 14
the verdict announced by the holy ones[i]—
so that every living thing may learn
2:28h Jb 36:7 Jr 27:5 that the Most High rules over human sovereignty;
he confers it on whom he pleases,
and raises the lowest of humankind.

' "This was the dream I had—I, Nebuchadnezzar the king. Now it is for you, 15
Belteshazzar, to pronounce on its meaning, since not one of the sages in my kingdom has been able to interpret it for me; you, however, can do so, since the spirit of the holy gods resides in you." '

Daniel interprets the dream

Daniel, known as Belteshazzar, was confused for a time and upset. 16

The king said, 'Belteshazzar, do not be upset at the dream and its meaning.' Belteshazzar answered, 'My lord, may the dream apply to those who hate you, and its meaning to your foes! ·The tree you saw, so large and strong and tall that it 17
reached the sky and could be seen throughout the world, ·the tree with beautiful 18
foliage and abundant fruit, with food for all in it, providing shade for the wild animals, with the birds of heaven nesting in its branches: ·that tree is yourself, 19
Your Majesty, for you have grown great and strong; your stature is now so great that it reaches the sky, and your empire extends to the ends of the earth.

'And the Watchful one seen by the king, the holy one coming down from heaven 20
and saying, "Cut the tree down and destroy it, but leave stump and roots in the ground, bound with hoops of iron and bronze in the grass of the countryside; let it be drenched by the dew and have its lot with the wild animals until seven times have passed over it": ·the meaning of this, Your Majesty, the verdict of the Most 21
High passed on my lord the king, is this:

You will be driven from human society 22
and will make your home with the wild animals,
you will feed on grass, as oxen do,
you will be drenched by the dew of heaven;
seven times will pass over you
until you have learnt
that the Most High rules over human sovereignty
and confers it on whom he pleases.

23 'And the order, "Leave the stump and roots of the tree", means that your kingdom will be kept for you until you come to understand that Heaven rules all.
24 May it please the king to accept my advice: by upright actions break with your sins, break with [j] your crimes by showing mercy to the poor, and so live long and peacefully.' Tb 12:9 Si 3:30

The dream comes true

25, 26 This all happened to King Nebuchadnezzar. •At the end of twelve months, while
27 strolling on the roof of the royal palace in Babylon, •the king was saying, 'Great Babylon! Was it not built by me as a royal residence, by the force of my might and
28 for the majesty of my glory?' [k] •The words were not out of his mouth when a voice came down from heaven:

'Of you, King Nebuchadnezzar, it is decreed:
the empire has been taken from you,
29 you will be driven from human society
and will make your home with the wild animals;
you will feed on grass, as oxen do,
and seven times will pass over you
until you have learnt
that the Most High rules over human sovereignty
and gives it to whom he pleases.'

30 The words were immediately fulfilled: Nebuchadnezzar was driven from human society and ate grass as oxen do; he was drenched by the dew of heaven; his hair grew like an eagle's feathers, and his nails became like a bird's talons.
31 'When the time was over, [l] I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes to heaven: my reason returned. And I blessed the Most High,

praising and glorifying him who lives for ever, 12:7 Si 18:1
for his empire is an everlasting empire,
his kingship endures, age after age. 2:28h,44+
32 All who dwell on earth count for nothing; Is 40:22–24
as he thinks fit, he disposes the army of heaven Mt 6:10
and those who dwell on earth.
No one can arrest his hand
or ask him, "What have you done?" Jb 9:12 Qo 8:4 Is 45:9

33 'At that moment my reason returned and, for the honour of my royal state, my glory and splendour returned too. My counsellors and noblemen acclaimed me; I
34 was restored to my throne, and to my past greatness even more was added. •And now I, Nebuchadnezzar, Rm 9:20

praise, extol and glorify the King of heaven,
all of whose deeds are true,

f. An angel, always alert to carry out the commands of God. Compare the wheels 'with eyes (or: reflections) all round' in Ezk 1:18, and the 'eyes of the Lord' in Zc 4:10[b]. The use of the term 'Watchful One', which in the Bible is confined to Dn, is very common in apocryphal works, notably the *Book of Enoch*, the *Book of Jubilees*, the *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*, and the *Damascus Document*: it designates the archangels, not infrequently the fallen archangels. In later tradition the 'Watchful Ones' are guardian angels.

g. Or possibly 'Let his heart cease to be a human heart'.

h. Here the 'times', or indeterminate periods, are probably years.

i. The Watchers, or holy ones, merely proclaim what God has determined.

j. From the verb here translated as 'break with' is derived an Aramaic noun meaning 'salvation, redemption'; it is possible, therefore, to translate 'expiate your sins'. The 'upright actions' refer here to all that is upright ('just') in human relationships with God; such uprightness goes far beyond legal justice or purely human justice. In its narrow sense the word means 'good works', particularly almsgiving, as in Tb 12:9; 14:11.

k. Babylon was one of the wonders of the ancient world. Its name later became a symbol for imposing, though unstable, human achievements: it then came to symbolise human and demonic arrogance, the antithesis of the heavenly Jerusalem which is the city of God. Cf. Rv 14:8; 16:19; 17:5; 18:2,10,21, drawing on the prophetic tradition, *see* Is 21:9; etc. The whole of Dn 4 is intended to show how such arrogance is humbled: Nebuchadnezzar recovers his wits only when he acknowledges the true God.

l. In LXX, the king's recovery is due to his repentance and prayer: an angel appears to him in a dream and tells him that his kingdom will be restored to him.

3:27 Dt 32:4 all of whose ways are right,
and who can humble those who walk in pride.'

BELSHAZZAR'S FEAST

5 King Belshazzar[a] gave a great banquet for his noblemen, a thousand of them, 1
and, in the presence of this thousand, he drank his wine. ·Having tasted the 2
wine, Belshazzar gave orders for the gold and silver vessels to be brought which his
1:2 father Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the sanctuary in Jerusalem, so that the
king, his noblemen, his wives and the women who sang for him could drink out of
them. ·The gold and silver vessels taken from the sanctuary of the Temple of God 3
in Jerusalem were brought in, and the king, his noblemen, his wives and the women
who sang for him drank out of them. ·They drank their wine and praised their 4
↗Rv 9:20 idols of gold and silver,[b] of bronze and iron, of wood and stone. ·Suddenly, the 5
fingers of a human hand appeared and began to write on the plaster of the palace
wall, directly behind the lamp-stand; and the king could see the hand as it wrote.
The king turned pale with alarm: his hip-joints went slack and his knees began to 6
knock. ·He shouted for his soothsayers, Chaldaeans, and exorcists. And the king 7
said to the Babylonian sages, 'Anyone who can read this writing and tell me what
5:16.29 Est 8:15 it means shall be dressed in purple, and have a chain of gold put round his neck,
and be one of the three men who govern the kingdom.'[c] ·The king's sages all 8
crowded forward, but they could neither read the writing nor explain to the king
what it meant. ·Greatly alarmed, King Belshazzar turned even paler, and his 9
noblemen were equally disturbed. ·Then the queen, attracted by the noise made 10
by the king and his noblemen, came into the banqueting hall. 'May Your Majesty
live for ever!' said the queen. 'Do not be alarmed, do not look so pale. ·In your 11
4:5 kingdom there is a man in whom lives the spirit of the holy gods. In your father's
days he was known for a perception, intelligence and wisdom comparable to that
of the gods. King Nebuchadnezzar, your father, made him head of the magicians,
soothsayers, Chaldaeans and exorcists.[d] ·Since this man Daniel, whom the king 12
had renamed Belteshazzar, is filled with such a marvellous spirit and such know-
ledge and intelligence in interpreting dreams, solving enigmas and unravelling
difficult problems, send for him; he will be able to tell you what this means.'

Daniel was brought into the king's presence; the king said to Daniel, 'Are you 13
the Daniel who was one of the Judaean exiles brought by my father the king from
Judah? ·I am told that the spirit of the gods lives in you, and that you are known for 14
your perception, intelligence and marvellous wisdom. ·The sages and soothsayers 15
have already been brought to me to read this writing and tell me what it means, but
they have been unable to reveal its meaning. ·I am told that you are able to give 16
interpretations and to unravel difficult problems, so if you can read the writing and
tell me what it means, you shall be dressed in purple, and have a chain of
gold put round your neck, and be one of the three men who govern the kingdom.'

Then Daniel spoke up in the presence of the king. 'Keep your gifts for yourself,' 17
2:6 he said, 'and give your rewards to others! I can certainly read the writing to the
king and tell him what it means. ·Your Majesty, the Most High God gave 18
Nebuchadnezzar your father sovereignty, greatness, majesty and glory.[e] ·He 19
made him so great that all peoples, nations and languages shook with dread before
him: he killed whom he pleased, spared whom he pleased, promoted whom he
pleased, degraded whom he pleased. ·But because his heart grew swollen with 20
pride, and his spirit stiff with arrogance, he was deposed from his sovereign throne
and stripped of his glory. ·He was driven from human society, his heart was more 21
like an animal's than a man's; he lived with the wild donkeys; he fed on grass like
oxen; his body was drenched by the dew of heaven, until he had learnt that the
Most High rules over human sovereignty and appoints whom he pleases to rule it.
But you, Belshazzar, who are his son, you have not humbled your heart, in spite 22

of knowing all this. •You have defied the Lord of heaven, you have had the vessels from his Temple brought to you, and you, your noblemen, your wives and the women singing for you have drunk your wine out of them. You have praised gods of gold and silver, of bronze and iron, of wood and stone, which can neither see, hear nor understand; but you have given no glory to the God in whose hands are your breath itself and all your fortunes. •That is why he has sent the hand which has written these words. •The writing reads: *mene, mene, teqel* and *parsin*.[f] The meaning of the words is this: *mene*: God has *measured* your sovereignty and put an end to it; •*teqel*: you have been *weighed* in the balance and found wanting; *parsin*: your kingdom has been *divided* and given to the Medes and the *Persians*.'

5:4 Jb 12:10 Ps 135:15–17 Is 40:19-20+

At Belshazzar's order Daniel was dressed in purple, a chain of gold was put round his neck and he was proclaimed as one of the three men who governed the kingdom.

That same night, the Chaldaean king Belshazzar was murdered,
and Darius the Mede received the kingdom, at the age of sixty-two.[a]

6

DANIEL IN THE LION PIT

The satraps resent Daniel's promotion

It pleased Darius to appoint a hundred and twenty satraps over his kingdom for the various parts, •and over them three presidents—of whom Daniel was one—to whom the satraps were to be responsible. This was to safeguard the king's interests. This Daniel, by virtue of the marvellous spirit residing in him, was so evidently superior to the other presidents and satraps that the king considered appointing him to rule the whole kingdom. •The presidents and satraps, in consequence, started hunting for some affair of state by which they could discredit Daniel; but they could find nothing to his discredit, and no case of negligence; he was so punctilious that they could not find a single instance of maladministration or neglect. •These men then thought, 'We shall never find a way of discrediting Daniel unless we try something to do with the law of his God.' •The presidents and satraps then went in a body to the king. 'King Darius,' they said, 'live for ever! •We are all agreed, presidents of the realm, magistrates, satraps, councillors and governors, that the king should issue an edict enforcing the following regulation: Whoever within the next thirty days prays to anyone, divine or human, other than to yourself, Your Majesty, is to be thrown into the lions' den. •Your Majesty, ratify the edict at once by signing this document, making it unalterable, as befits the law of the Medes and the Persians, which cannot be revoked.' •King Darius accordingly signed the document embodying the edict.

5:7,16,29 Est 1:19k

5 **a.** The Babylonian form is Bel-shar-usur, 'May-Bel-protect-the-king'. The historical personage bearing this name is the son, not of Nebuchadnezzar, but of Nabonidus; he did not bear the title of 'king', *see* p. 1178.

b. 'and silver' Theod.; omitted by Aram.

c. The title 'second' to the King certainly existed in Babylon, there is never mention of a 'third'. The expression, obscure in Aram., probably means here, as in 5:29 and 6:3, that Daniel will hold office in a ministerial triumvirate, and not that he will rank third in the kingdom after the monarch.

d. Aram. adds 'your father, O King', omitted by versions.

e. Daniel summarises what has already been narrated in ch. 4.

f. The Aramaic repeats *mene* (unlike LXX, Theod., Vulg., Josephus; and vv. 26–28 also apparently presume three oracular words, not four). Aram. also reads *parsin* (not *phares* as in the textual witnesses just enumerated). These mysterious words may conceal the names of three oriental measures of weight, or coins: a *mina*, a shekel, and a half-*mina* (*paratz*), thus lending themselves to the successive play on words in vv. 26–28: *mene* suggesting the verb *mana*, to measure, *teqel* the verb *shaqal*, to weigh out, *parsin* suggesting both the verb *paras*, to divide, and the Persians. The interpretation of the sequence of terms is disputed: allusion to the decreasing influence of the three successive empires (of the Babylonians, 'Medes', and Persians); or of the three kings, Nebuchadnezzar, Evil-Merodach and Belshazzar; or else of Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, and the kings of the 'Medes and Persians'.

6 **a.** 'Darius the Mede' is unknown to history, and the Persian Cyrus had already conquered Media before he captured Babylon. *See* p. 1178.

Daniel continues to pray

When Daniel heard that the document had been signed, he retired to his house. 11 10
1 K 8:44,48 Tb 3:11 Ps 5:7;28:2; 55:17;138:2 The windows of his upstairs room faced towards Jerusalem. [b] Three times each day, he went down on his knees, praying and giving praise to God as he had always done. ·These men came along in a body and found Daniel praying and pleading 12 11
with God. ·They then went to the king and reminded him of the royal edict, 'Have 13 12
you not signed an edict forbidding anyone for the next thirty days to pray to anyone, divine or human, other than to yourself, Your Majesty, on pain of being thrown into the lions' den?' 'The decision stands', the king replied, 'as befits the law of the Medes and the Persians, which cannot be revoked.' ·They then said to 14 13
the king, 'Your Majesty, this man Daniel, one of the exiles from Judah, disregards both you and the edict which you have signed: he is at his prayers three times each day.' ·When the king heard these words he was deeply distressed and determined 15 14
to save Daniel; he racked his brains until sunset to find some way to save him. ·But 16 15
the men kept pressing the king, 'Your Majesty, remember that in conformity with the law of the Medes and the Persians, no edict or decree can be altered when once issued by the king.'

Daniel is thrown to the lions

The king then ordered Daniel to be brought and thrown into the lion pit. The king 17 16
said to Daniel, 'Your God, whom you have served so faithfully, will have to save you.' ·A stone was then brought and laid over the mouth of the pit; and the king 18 17
sealed it with his own signet and with that of his noblemen, so that there could be no going back on the original decision about Daniel. ·The king returned to his 19 18
palace, spent the night in fasting and refused to receive any of his concubines. [c] Sleep eluded him, ·and at the first sign of dawn he got up and hurried to the lion 20 19
pit. ·As he approached the pit he called in anguished tones to Daniel, 'Daniel, 21 20
servant of the living God! Has your God, whom you serve so faithfully, been able to save you from the lions?' ·Daniel answered the king, 'May Your Majesty live for 22 21
3:49 Tb 5:4b Heb 11:33 ever! ·My God sent his angel who sealed the lions' jaws; they did me no harm, 23 22
since in his sight I am blameless; neither have I ever done you any wrong, Your Majesty.' ·The king was overjoyed and ordered Daniel to be released from the pit. 24 23
Daniel was released from the pit and found to be quite unhurt, because he had trusted in his God. ·The king then sent for the men who had accused Daniel and 25 24
had them thrown into the lion pit, and their wives and children too; and before they reached the floor of the pit the lions had seized them and crushed their bones to pieces.

The king's profession of faith

King Darius then wrote to all nations, peoples and languages dwelling throughout 26 25
the world:

3:29/96 'May you prosper more and more! ·This is my decree: Throughout every 27 26
dominion of my realm, let all tremble with fear before the God of Daniel:

4:31 He is the living God, he endures for ever,
his kingdom will never be destroyed
and his empire never come to an end.
3:32seq./99seq. He saves, sets free, and works signs and wonders 28
in the heavens and on earth;
he has saved Daniel from the power of the lions.'

This Daniel flourished in the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian. [d] 29 28

DANIEL'S DREAM: THE FOUR BEASTS

The vision of the beasts,[a] the One most venerable and the son of man

2 ↗Rv 13

1 7 In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream and visions
that passed through his head as he lay in bed. He wrote the dream down, and
2 this is how the narrative began: ·Daniel said, 'I have been seeing visions in the
3 night. I saw that the four winds of heaven were stirring up the Great Sea; ·four
4 great beasts emerged from the sea, each different from the others. ·The first[b] was
like a lion with eagle's wings and, as I looked, its wings were torn off, and it was
lifted off the ground and set standing on its feet like a human; and it was given a
5 human heart. ·And there before me was a second beast,[c] like a bear, rearing up on
one side, with three ribs in its mouth, between its teeth. "Up!" came the command
6 "Eat quantities of flesh!" ·After this I looked; and there before me was another
beast,[d] like a leopard, and with four bird's wings on its flanks; it had four heads
7 and was granted authority. ·Next, in the visions of the night, I saw another vision:
there before me was a fourth beast,[e] fearful, terrifying, very strong; it had great
iron teeth, and it ate its victims, crushed them, and trampled their remains under-
foot. It was different from the previous beasts and had ten horns.

8 'While I was looking at these horns, I saw another horn sprouting among them, Zc 2:2
a little one;[f] three of the original horns were pulled out by the roots to make way
for it; and in this horn I saw eyes like human eyes, and a mouth full of boasting.[g] ↗Rv 13:5

9 While I was watching,
thrones were set in place[h] ↗Rv 20:4
and one most venerable took his seat.
His robe was white as snow, Mk 9:3
the hair of his head as pure as wool. ↗Rv 1:14
His throne was a blaze of flames,
its wheels were a burning fire.
10 A stream of fire poured out, Ps 50:3
issuing from his presence.
A thousand thousand waited on him, ↗Rv 5:11
ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him.
The court was in session Jn 5:22
and the books lay open.[i] ↗Rv 20:12

11 'I went on watching: then, because of the noise made by the boastings of the
horn, as I watched, the beast was put to death, and its body destroyed and ↗Rv 19:20
12 committed to the flames. ·The other beasts were deprived of their empire, but
received a lease of life[j] for a season and a time.

b. The custom of praying with the face towards Jerusalem dates at least from the Exile.

c. Translation conj.; others favour 'musical instruments'.

d. 'flourished' Aram.; 'was placed over the kingdom' LXX. • In LXX the chapter ends with the death of Darius and the accession of Cyrus the Persian.

7 a. The vision corresponds to the dream of Nebuchadnezzar in ch. 2; the four metals (the kingdoms) of the dream, shattered by the stone, 2:28h, are now four beasts succeeded by the Son of man. The eschatological significance underlying this vision of human history is even more clearly brought out in Rv 13.

b. The Babylonian empire.

c. The kingdom of the Medes: the author sees the Medes as immediate successors to the Babylonians, *see* 6:1a.

d. The Persian empire.

e. The empire of Alexander (d. 323) and his successors, cf. 2:40; 8:5; 11:3. The ten horns are kings of the Seleucid dynasty. The 'horn' is frequently used as a symbol of physical strength and/or political power, Dt 33:17; 1 K 22:11; Ps 75:5; 92:10.

f. Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175–164) who came to power only after getting rid of several rival claimants.

g. Referring to the eloquent blasphemies of Antiochus, v. 25; 11:36; 1 M 1:21,24,45 and Rv 13:5.

h. For judges. The holy ones of God are privileged to sit in judgement at his side according to ancient Jewish tradition (the *Book of Enoch*), and the promises of Jesus are even more explicit, Mt 19:28; Lk 22:30; Rv 3:21; 20:4. The wheeled and blazing throne of God recalls the divine chariot described in Ezk 1.

i. The book in which human actions, good and bad, are recorded, Jr 17:1; Ps 40:8; 56:8; Ml 3:16; Lk 10:20; Rv 20:12i. On the *Book of Life*, *see* 12:1a.

j. That the other empires should survive—for an indeterminate period—offers no further danger to the faith, once the People of God cease to be subject to them.

I was gazing into the visions of the night, 13
↗Mt 8:20h; 24:30;26:64par. ↗Rv 1:7;14:14 when I saw, coming on the clouds of heaven,
as it were a son of man. [k]
He came to the One most venerable
and was led into his presence.
On him was conferred rule, 14
honour and kingship,
and all peoples, nations and languages became his servants.
2:28h,44+ Ps 110:1–2,2a Mt 4:17f His rule is an everlasting rule
which will never pass away,
and his kingship will never come to an end.

The interpretation of the vision

'I, Daniel, was deeply disturbed and the visions that passed through my head 15
alarmed me. [l] •So I approached one of those who were standing by and asked him 16
about all this. And in reply he revealed to me what these things meant. •"These 17
four great beasts are four kings who will rise up from the earth. •Those who receive 18
Ac 9:13g royal power are the holy ones [m] of the Most High, and kingship will be theirs for
ever, for ever and ever." •Then I asked about the fourth beast, different from all 19
the rest, very terrifying, with iron teeth and bronze claws; it ate its victims, crushed
them, and trampled their remains underfoot; •and about the ten horns on its 20
head—and why the other horn sprouted and the three original horns fell, and why
this horn had eyes and a mouth full of boasting, and why it looked more impressive
↗Rv 11:7;13:7 than its fellows. •This was the horn I had watched making war on the holy ones and 21
proving the stronger, •until the coming of the One most venerable who gave 22
↗Rv 20:4 •Mk 1:15 judgement in favour of the holy ones [n] of the Most High, when the time came for
the holy ones to assume kingship. •This is what he said: 23

"The fourth beast
is to be a fourth kingdom on earth,
different from all other kingdoms.
It will devour the whole world,
trample it underfoot and crush it.
↗Rv 17:12 As for the ten horns: from this kingdom 24
will rise ten kings, and another after them;
this one will be different from the previous ones
and will bring down three kings;
11:36 he will insult the Most High 25
and torment the holy ones of the Most High.
He will plan to alter the seasons and the Law, [o]
and the Saints will be handed over to him
8:14;12:7 ↗Rv 12:14 for a time, two times, and half a time. [p]
But the court will sit, and he will be stripped of his royal authority 26
which will be finally destroyed and reduced to nothing.
And kingship and rule 27
and the splendours of all the kingdoms under heaven
will be given to the people of the holy ones of the Most High,
2 S 7:16 whose royal power is an eternal power,
whom every empire will serve and obey."

'Here the narrative ends. 28

'I, Daniel, was greatly disturbed in mind, and I grew pale; but I kept these things to myself.'

DANIEL'S VISION: THE RAM AND THE HE-GOAT

The vision

8 In the third year of King Belshazzar [a] a vision appeared to me, Daniel, after the one that had originally appeared to me. [b] ·I gazed at the vision, and as I gazed I found myself in Susa, [c] the citadel in the province of Elam; gazing at the vision, I found myself at the Ulai Gate. [d] ·I raised my eyes to look, and I saw a ram [e] standing in front of the gate. It had two horns; both were tall, but one taller than the other, and the one that rose the higher was the second. [f] ·I saw the ram butting westwards, northwards and southwards. No animal could stand up to it, nothing could escape its power. It did as it pleased and became strong. (Hebrew)

This is what I observed: a he-goat [g] from the west, encroaching over the entire surface of the world though never touching the ground, and between its eyes the goat had one majestic horn. [h] ·It advanced on the two-horned ram, which I had seen standing in front of the gate, and charged at it in the full force of its fury. ·I saw it reach the ram; it was enraged with the ram and struck it, breaking both its horns, so that the ram was not strong enough to hold its ground; it threw it to the ground and trampled it underfoot; no one was there to rescue the ram. ·The he-goat then grew more powerful than ever; but at the height of its strength the great horn snapped, and in its place sprouted four majestic horns, pointing to the four winds of heaven. [i]

From one of these, the small one, sprang a horn which grew to great size towards south and east and towards the Land of Splendour. [j] ·It grew right up to the armies of heaven and flung armies and stars [k] to the ground, and trampled them underfoot. 11:16,41 Zc 7:14 ↗Rv 12:4

It even challenged the power of the Prince of the army; [l] it abolished the perpetual sacrifice and overthrew the foundation of his sanctuary, ·and the army too; over the sacrifice it installed iniquity [m] and flung truth to the ground; the horn was active and successful. 11:31

I heard a holy one [n] speaking, and another holy one say to the speaker, [o] 'How long is this vision to be—of perpetual sacrifice, [p] of horrifying iniquity, of sanctuary 12:6 ↗Rv 6:10

k. Like the Hebr. *ben 'adam*, the Aram. *bar nasha'* used here, has the primary meaning 'man', cf. Ps 8:4. In Ezk, God addresses the prophet thus. But here in Dn the expression allusively signifies something further. That it indicates an individual is attested by early Jewish apocryphal writings (Enoch, 2 Esd) inspired by this passage, as also by rabbinical tradition from the 2nd to the 9th centuries. Jesus also uses the expression himself, *see* Mt 8:20h. That it has a collective sense also is deduced from v. 18 (and v. 22) where the 'son of man' and 'the holy ones of the Most High' seem more or less identified. But the collective (and equally messianic) sense is an extension of the individual sense: the 'son of man' being leader, representative and exemplar of the 'holy ones of the Most High'.

l. After 'Daniel', two incomprehensible Aramaic words are omitted here, as in LXX.

m. 'the holy ones' are the holy people of God, as in 8:24; Is 4:3; *see* Ex 19:6c; Nb 16:3.

n. Or possibly 'delegated judgement to the holy ones'.

o. Allusion to the hellenising policy of Antiochus Epiphanes, and in particular to his ban on observance of the Sabbath and feastdays, cf. 1 M 1:41–53.

p. *See* 4:13h. Three and a half years (the half-week of years of 9:27) correspond approximately to the duration of the persecution under Antiochus. This figure (also expressed as 42 months each of 30 days—or as 1260 days) is adopted in Rv 11:2–3; 12:14; 13:5 for the duration of the Roman persecution; *see also* Lk 4:25 and Jm 5:17. In all these texts, as throughout Dn, the figure stands for a period of distress permitted by God for a limited time, after which there will be relief for the faithful.

8 **a.** Hebrew text begins again at 8:1. On Belshazzar *see* 5:1a.

b. The vision of ch. 7, of which the prophecies are presented under a different form in ch. 8.

c. One of the royal residences of the Achmenid dynasty. It is not clear whether Daniel should be understood as actually being in Susa, or if that is part of the vision.

d. The River Ulai flows through Susa. • 'Gate' is the conj. translation, supported by versions, of a word which occurs only here and in vv. 3 and 6. Others translate 'bank' or 'torrent'.

e. On the symbolism of rams and he-goats, *see* Ezk 34:17seq. and Zc 10:3.

f. The taller horn represents the power of the Persians triumphing over the power of the Medes, then succeeding and absorbing it, v. 20.

g. Alexander, cf. v. 21 and 2:40; 7:7; 11:3.

h. Trans. conj.; perhaps merely 'protuberance'.

i. Death of Alexander and division of his empire. Of his heirs, only the Seleucids are considered here, as in 7:7; but in this passage, unlike 7:7, only Antiochus Epiphanes is mentioned (v. 9), not his predecessors.

j. Palestine.

k. The stars symbolise the People of God, 12:3 (*see also* Mt 13:43).

l. God himself.

m. The Hebr. is obscure and the translation approximate. It may mean either that 'iniquity' (i.e. 'the appalling abomination') has been substituted for the sacrifice in the Temple, or else that the persecutor has decided that sacrifice is henceforth to be reckoned a crime.

n. Probably an angel, *see* 4:10f.

o. lit. 'to a certain one who spoke'. The questions over which the seer is pondering are presented as part of a mysterious dialogue; for this device see also Zc 1:8–17.

p. LXX adds 'abolished'.

and army trampled underfoot?' ·The first replied,[q] 'Until two thousand three 14
hundred evenings and mornings[r] have gone by: then the sanctuary will have its
rights restored.'[s]

The angel Gabriel interprets the vision

As I, Daniel, gazed at the vision and tried to understand it, I saw someone standing 15
in front of me who looked like a man. ·I heard a human voice cry over[t] the Ulai, 16
9:21–23 Lk 1:19.26 'Gabriel, tell him the meaning of the vision!' ·He approached the place where I 17
10:15–19 Ezk 2:1 Rv 1:17 was standing; as he approached, I was seized with terror and fell prostrate on the
ground. 'Son of man,' he said to me, 'understand this: the vision shows the time of
the End.' ·He was still speaking, when I fainted, face downwards on the ground. 18
He touched me, however, and raised me to my feet. ·'Come,' he said, 'I shall tell 19
Am 5:18m you what is going to happen when the Retribution[u] is over, about the final times.
11:2a As for the ram which you saw, its two horns are the kings of Media and of Persia. 20
The hairy he-goat is the king of Greece, the large horn between its eyes is the first 21
king. ·The horn which snapped and the four horns which sprouted in its place are 22
four kingdoms rising from his nation but not having his strength.

'And at the end of their reign, when the measure of their sins is full,[v] 23
a king will arise, a proud-faced, ingenious-minded man.
His power will grow greater and greater, 24
though not through any power of his own;[w]
he will plot[x] incredible schemes.
he will succeed in whatever he undertakes,
he will destroy powerful men
7:18 and the holy ones, God's people.
Such will be his resourcefulness of mind 25
that all his treacherous activities will succeed.
He will grow arrogant of heart
and destroy many people by taking them unawares.
He will challenge the power of the Prince of princes
2:34 but, without any human intervention,[y] he will be broken.
↗Rv 19:9; 21:5;22:6 The vision of the evenings and the mornings which has been revealed 26
is true,
12:4,9–13 ↗Rv 10:4 but you must keep the vision secret, for there are still many days to go.'[z]

At this I, Daniel, lost consciousness; I was ill for several days. Then I got up to 27
discharge my duties in the king's service, keeping the vision a secret and still not
understanding what it meant.

THE PROPHECY OF THE SEVENTY WEEKS

Daniel's prayer

3:25–45 Ne 1:5–11;9 Ba 1–2

9 It was the first year of Darius son of Artaxerxes, a Mede by race who assumed 1
the throne of Chaldaea.[a] ·In the first year of his reign I, Daniel, was studying 2
the scriptures, counting over the number of years—as revealed by Yahweh to the
prophet Jeremiah—that were to pass before the desolation of Jerusalem would
Jr 25:11–12; 29:10 come to an end, namely seventy years. ·I turned my face to the Lord God begging 3
for time to pray and to plead, with fasting, sackcloth and ashes. ·I pleaded with 4
Lv 26:40 Yahweh my God and made this confession:[b]
Ex 34:6+ Dt 7:9,21 Ne 1:5 'O my Lord, God great and to be feared, you keep the covenant and show
faithful love towards those who love you and who observe your commandments:
1 K 8:47 Ba 1:17 we have sinned, we have done wrong, we have acted wickedly, we have betrayed 5
your commandments and rulings and turned away from them. ·We have not 6
Ne 9:34 listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our

7 chief men, our ancestors and all people of the country. •Saving justice, Lord, is ▶Jr 7:25–26+; 44:21
yours; we have only the look of shame we wear today, we, the people of Judah, the •Ba 1:15–16
inhabitants of Jerusalem, the whole of Israel, near and far away, in every country Is 57:19
to which you have dispersed us because of the treachery we have committed against •Dt 28:64
8 you. •To us, our kings, our chief men and our ancestors, belongs the look of shame,
9 O Yahweh, since we have sinned against you. •And it is for the Lord our God to
10 have mercy and to pardon, since we have betrayed him, •and have not listened to Ne 9:17
the voice of Yahweh our God nor followed the laws he has given us through his Dt 28:15
11 servants the prophets. •The whole of Israel has flouted your Law and turned away, Jr 26:4+
unwilling to listen to your voice; and the curse and imprecation written in the Law Lv 26:14–39
of Moses, the servant of God, have come pouring down on us, because we have Dt 28:15–68
12 sinned against him. •He has carried out the threats which he made against us and Ba 1:19–2:3
the chief men who governed us [c]—that he would bring so great a disaster down on
13 us that the fate of Jerusalem would find no parallel under all heaven. •And now, as
written in the Law of Moses, this whole calamity has befallen us; even so, we have
not appeased Yahweh our God by renouncing our crimes and learning your truth.
14 Yahweh has watched [d] for the right moment to bring disaster on us, since Yahweh Jn 8:32
our God is just in all his dealings with us, and we have not listened to his voice. 1 Jn 3:19h
15 And now, Lord our God, who by your mighty hand brought us out of Egypt—the •Ne 9:33
renown you won then endures to this day—we have sinned, we have done wrong. Ba 2:11–13
16 Lord, by all your acts of saving justice, [e] turn away your anger and your fury from •Dt 6:21
Jerusalem, your city, your holy mountain, for as a result of our sins and the crimes Jr 32:20–21
of our ancestors, Jerusalem and your people are objects of scorn to all who Ps 44:14
17 surround us. •And now, our God, listen to the prayer and pleading of your Ba 2:14
servant. [f] For your own sake, [g] Lord, let your face smile again on your desolate Ps 4:6d
18 sanctuary. •Listen, my God, listen to us; open your eyes and look at our plight and 2 K 19:16
at the city that bears your name. Relying not on our upright deeds but on your Is 37:17
19 great mercy, we pour out our plea to you. •Listen, Lord! Forgive, Lord! Hear, •Lm 5:18
Lord, and act! For your own sake, my God, do not delay—since your city and your •Ba 2:19
people alike bear your name.' Ne 9:19, 21, 27
Ps 40:17

The angel Gabriel explains the prophecy

8:15–18; 10:9–11

20 I was still speaking, still at prayer, confessing my own sins and the sins of my people
Israel, and placing my plea before Yahweh my God for the holy mountain of my
21 God, •still speaking, still at prayer, when Gabriel, the being I had originally seen in
22 vision, swooped on me in full flight [h] at the hour of the evening sacrifice. •He Ex 29:39
came, [i] he spoke, he said to me, 'Now, Daniel; I have come down to teach you how
23 to understand. •When your pleading began, a word was uttered, and I have come

q. 'to him' versions; 'to me' Hebr.

r. That is to say, either 2300 days, or 1150 days. If the expression refers to the two daily sacrifices suspended throughout the persecution, as may be the case, the period would be not 2300 days but 1150. But either figure is remote from the three and a half years (1260 days) of 7:25, and the meaning remains obscure.

s. The phrase has a messianic sense beyond the immediate historical one.

t. Hebr. 'through', possibly meaning through the Ulai Gate, *see* v. 2.

u. The time of distress, being divinely foreseen and willed, is the time of God's retribution, 11:36; 1 M 1:64; Is 10:25; 26:20.

v. lit. 'as at the completion of their sins'.

w. The persecutor is the instrument of God's retribution.

x. 'plot' conj.; 'destroy' Hebr.

y. Possibly a dual allusion here: no one killed Antiochus, who is said to have died of melancholy, 1 M 6:8–16; 2 M 9. The death of persecutors, like their triumph, v. 24, is in the hands of God alone; cf. 2:34.

z. Unlike the two prophecies of Ezk 12:21–28 which are fulfilled almost immediately, Daniel's visions are to be realised only after a period the duration of which is not made clear, cf. 12:4.9–13.

9 **a.** *See* 6:1a and 7:5c.

b. The prayer that follows includes many biblical reminiscences. It has affinities with that of Azariah, 3:24–45; Ba 1 and 2 are modelled on it.

c. lit. 'the judges who judged us'.

d. In Jr 1:11–12, cf. 31:28; 44:27, the symbol of the almond tree (*sheqed*) introduces the prophecy of Yahweh who watches (*shoqed*) for the moment to make his word come true, whether for good or evil.

e. i.e. in the name of the retributive justice manifest in the actions by which you have rescued your people in the past.

f. Cf. 1 K 8:28; Ne 1:6,11; Ps 130:2.

g. 'your own sake' following Theod. and v. 19; 'because of my Lord' Hebr.

h. lit. 'flying in flight touched me'.

i. 'He came' LXX and Syr.; 'He told me' Hebr.

10:11,19 to tell you. You are a man specially chosen.[j] Grasp the meaning of the word, understand the vision:[k]

'Seventy weeks are decreed[l] 24
for your people and your holy city,
for putting an end to transgression,
for placing the seal on sin,
for expiating crime,
Is 53:11 Rm 3:24–26 for introducing everlasting uprightness
for setting the seal[m] on vision and on prophecy,
1 Ch 23:13 Mt 3:16n Ac 10:38 for anointing the holy of holies.[n]
Know this, then, and understand: 25
From the time there went out this message:
Ezr 3:1–3 "Return and rebuild Jerusalem"
to the coming of an Anointed Prince,[o] seven weeks
and sixty-two weeks,
with squares and ramparts restored and rebuilt,[p]
but in a time of trouble.
And after the sixty-two weeks 26
an Anointed One[q] put to death without his . . .[r]
city and sanctuary ruined
by a prince who is to come.
The end of that prince will be catastrophe
and, until the end, there will be war
and all the devastation decreed.[s]
He will strike a firm alliance with many people[t] 27
for the space of a week;
and for the space of one half-week
1 M 1:45 he will put a stop to sacrifice and oblation,[u]
11:31;12:11 1 M 1:54 ↗Mt 24:15par. •11:36 and on the wing of the Temple[v] will be the appalling abomination[w]
until the end, until the doom assigned to the devastator.'

THE GREAT VISION

THE TIME OF RETRIBUTION

The vision of the man dressed in linen

10 In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia, a revelation was made to Daniel 1
known as Belteshazzar, a true revelation of a great conflict.[a] He grasped
9:23 the meaning of the revelation; what it meant was disclosed to him in a vision.
9:3 At that time, I, Daniel, was doing a three-week penance; •I ate no agreeable 2, 3
food, touched no meat or wine, and did not anoint myself, until these three weeks
were over. •On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, as I stood on the bank of 4
8:2 that great river, the Tigris, •I raised my eyes to look about me, and this is what I 5
saw:

↗Rv 1:13–15 Ezk 1 Mt 28:3 A man dressed in linen, with a belt of pure gold round his waist:
his body was like beryl, 6
his face looked like lightning,
his eyes were like fiery torches,
his arms and his face had the gleam of burnished bronze,
Ezk 1:24 the sound of his voice was like the roar of a multitude.

Ac 9:7 I, Daniel, alone saw the apparition; the men who were with me did not see the 7
vision, but so great a trembling overtook them that they fled to hide. •I was left 8

alone, gazing on this great vision; I was powerless, my appearance was changed and contorted; my strength deserted me.

The apparition of the angel

9 I heard a voice speaking, and at the sound of the voice I fell fainting, face 8:16–18
10 downwards on the ground. ·I felt a hand touching me, setting my knees and my 9:21–23
11 hands trembling. ·He said, 'Daniel, you are a man specially chosen; understand ↗Rv 1:17
the words that I am about to say; stand up; I have been sent to you now.' He said 9:23;10:19
12 this, and I stood up trembling. ·He then said, 'Daniel, do not be afraid: from that
first day when, the better to understand, you resolved to mortify yourself before
God, your words have been heard; and your words are the reason why I have
13 come. ·The Prince of the kingdom of Persia has been resisting me for twenty-one
days, but Michael,[b] one of the Chief Princes, came to my assistance. I have left Jude 9
14 him[c] confronting the kings of Persia ·and have come to tell you what will happen to Rv 12:7
your people in the final days. For here is a new vision about those days.' Gn 49:1

15 When he had said these things to me, I prostrated myself on the ground, without
16 saying a word; ·then someone looking like a man touched my lips. I opened my 7:13
mouth to speak, and I said to the person standing in front of me, 'My lord, anguish Is 6:7
17 overcomes me at this vision, and my strength deserts me. ·How can your servant Jr 1:9
18 speak to my lord now that I have no strength left and my breath fails me?' ·Once
19 again, the person like a man touched me; he gave me strength. ·'Do not be afraid,'
he said, 'you are a man specially chosen; peace be with you; play the man, be
strong!' And as he spoke to me I felt strong again and said, 'Let my lord speak, you
have given me strength.'

The prelude to the prophecy[d]

20a, 21a He then said, 'Do you know why I have come to you? ·It is to tell you what is
20b written in the Book of Truth. ·I must go back to fight the Prince of Persia; when I
21b have overcome him, the Prince of Javan[e] will come next. ·In all this, there is no
one to lend me support except Michael your Prince,

1, 2 **11** on whom I rely to give me support and to reinforce me. ·And now I shall tell
you the truth about these things.

j. The word 'man' is not in the text, but *see* 10:11,19.

k. As in the adjacent chapters, the following prophecy refers to the persecution under Antiochus Epiphanes, but here the style is allusive and enigmatic (no proper names are mentioned, and the figures given are conventional and approximate). This suggests that the text has a reference beyond the immediate historical one.

l. The 'weeks' are 'weeks of years'; the number 70 implies completion. The period is computed from the date of the revelation made to Jeremiah, *see* v. 25, to the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the return of the exiles, an event which 2 Ch 36:22–23 (= Ezr 1:1–2) sees as the realisation of Jeremiah's prophecy, brought about by the liberating decree of Cyrus in 538 BC.

m. 'To seal' means sometimes 'to put an end to', sometimes 'to guarantee'; here it has the comprehensive sense of 'fulfilling'.

n. Either the altar, or the Temple, or the high priest, *see* 1 Ch 23:13: the re-establishment of the priesthood coincides with the restoration of altar and Temple; in this prophecy, no distinction is made.

o. Messiah or 'Anointed One', *see* Ex 30:22d; 1 S 9:26n; Is 45:1.

p. Reconstruction of Jerusalem in the Persian period.

q. This Anointed One may, following Theod., be identified with the high priest Onias III, cf. 2 M 4:30–38; deposed *c.* 175 and assassinated by the followers of Antiochus Epiphanes; he could also be the Prince of the Covenant in 11:22.

r. A word seems to be missing from the text. Theod. supplies 'fault'. Others suggest 'successor'.

s. i.e. by God, *see* 8:25y.

t. The hellenising faction among the Jews, *see* 11:32; 1 M 1:43; 2 M 4:10. Those who supported foreign ideas and ways were to be the bane of the orthodox throughout the Maccabaean period.

u. The parallel passages show that this is the work of the blasphemers: it does not mean therefore the substitution of the sacrifice of the new covenant for that of the old.

v. 'of the Temple' is not in the Hebr., but the sense is clear.

w. lit. 'desolating' or 'horrifying abomination'. The phrase (*shiqqutzim meshomem*) evokes firstly the idols or 'Baals' of antiquity, the worship of which by Israel was condemned by the prophets (*shiqqutz*, 'abomination' being a contemptuous designation of Baal, and *shomem* a malicious pun of the Phoenician title *baal shamen* 'king of the heavens'); secondly, Zeus Olympios to whom the Temple of Jerusalem was dedicated by the persecutor, *see* 2 M 6:2.

10 a. lit. 'great legion (or: army)'. The reference is apparently to the war waged by the angels, *see* vv. 12–21.

b. The angel of Yahweh who confronts Satan in Zc 3:1–2, is called Michael ('Who-is-like-God?') in Jude 9, where he leaves Satan's condemnation to God. The same conflict is described in Rv 12:7–12. Michael is the guardian angel of the people of God (v. 21 and 12:1), *see* Ex 23:20i. The Prince of Persia is apparently one of the guardian angels of the nations hostile to Israel. This mysterious conflict between the angels emphasises that the fate of nations is a secret from these protectors, until God chooses to reveal it.

c. 'I have left him' Gk; 'I was left' Hebr., but the verb form is unusual.

d. The order of the following verses is doubtful. In 11:1[a] we omit 'And as for me, in the first year of Darius the Mede' Hebr.

e. Javan (Ionia) stands for Greece.

Early struggles between Seleucids and Ptolemies

'Three more kings[a] are going to rise in Persia; a fourth will come and be richer
than all the others, and when, thanks to his wealth, he has grown powerful, he will
make war on all the kingdoms of Greece. ·A mighty king will rise and govern a vast 3
empire and do whatever he pleases. ·But once he has come to power, his empire 4
will be broken up and parcelled out to the four winds of heaven, though not to his
descendants: [b] it will not be ruled as he ruled it, for his sovereignty will be uprooted
and will pass to others than his own descendants.

'The king of the south will grow powerful, but one of his princes will grow more 5
powerful still, with an empire greater than his own.[c] ·Some years later, these will 6
conclude a treaty[d] and, to ratify the agreement, the daughter of the king of the
south will go to the king of the north. Her arm will not, however, retain its strength,
nor his posterity endure: she will be handed over, she, her escorts and her child,[e]
and he who has had authority over her.[f] In due time ·a sprig from her roots will rise 7
in his place, will march on the defences, force the stronghold of the king of the
north, and succeed in overcoming them.[g] ·He will even carry off all their gods, 8
their statues, their precious gold and silver vessels as booty to Egypt.[h] For some
years he will leave the king of the north in peace, ·but the latter will invade the 9
kingdom of the king of the south, then retire to his own country. ·His sons[i] will 10
next be on the march, mustering a host of powerful forces; and he[j] will advance,
deploy, break through and march on the southern stronghold once again. ·The 11
king of the south will fly into a rage and set out to give battle to the king of the
north, who will have an immense army on his side, but this army will be defeated
by him. ·The army will be annihilated; he will be triumphant; he will overthrow 12
tens of thousands; yet he will have no enduring strength. ·The king of the north 13
will come back, having recruited an even larger army than before, and finally, after
some years, he will advance a second time with a great army and plentiful supplies.
At that time, many will take up arms against the king of the south, and the more 14
violent of your own people will rebel in the hope of realising the vision; but they
will fail. ·The king of the north will then come and throw up siege-works to capture 15
a strongly fortified city. The forces of the south will not stand their ground; the
pick of the people will not be strong enough to resist. ·The invader will do as he 16
8:9j pleases, no one will be able to resist him: he will take his stand in the Land of
Splendour, destruction in his hands. ·He will set about conquering his entire 17
kingdom, but will then make a treaty with him and, to overthrow the kingdom,[k]
give him a woman's hand;[l] but this will not last or be to his advantage. ·He will 18
next turn to the coasts and islands[m] and conquer many of them, but a magistrate
will put a stop to his outrages in such a way that he will be unable to repay outrage
for outrage.

'He will then turn on the strongholds of his own country, but will stumble, fall, 19
and never be seen again.[n] ·In his place there will rise a man[o] who will send an 20
extortioner to despoil the royal splendour; in a few days he will be shattered,
though neither publicly nor in battle.[p]

Antiochus Epiphanes

'In his place will rise a wretch:[q] royal honours will not be given to him, but rather 21
he will insinuate himself into them at his pleasure and will gain possession of the
kingdom by intrigue. ·Armies will be utterly routed and crushed by him, the Prince 22
of the covenant[r] too. ·Through his alliances he will act treacherously and, despite 23
the smallness of his following, grow ever stronger. ·At his pleasure, he will invade 24
rich provinces, acting as his fathers or his fathers' fathers never acted, distributing
among them plunder, spoil and wealth,[s] plotting his stratagems against the for-
tresses—for a time.

'He will summon up his might and courage against the king of the south[t] with a 25
great army. The king of the south will march to war with a huge and powerful

26 army but will not succeed, since he will be outwitted by trickery. ·Those who
shared his food will ruin him; his army will be swept away, many will fall in
the slaughter.
27 'The two kings, seated at one table, hearts bent on evil, will tell their lies; but
28 they will not have their way, for the appointed time is still to come. ·Then the
wretch will return greatly enriched to his own country, his heart set against the
29 holy covenant; he will take action and then return to his own country. ·In due time,
he will make his way southwards again,[u] but this time the outcome will not be as
30 before. ·The ships of the Kittim[v] will oppose him, and he will be worsted. He will
retire and take furious action against the holy covenant and, as before, will favour 2 M 5:11
those who forsake that holy covenant.[w]
31 'Forces of his will come and profane the Citadel-Sanctuary;[x] they will abolish 8:11
32 the perpetual sacrifice and install the appalling abomination there. ·Those who 9:27w
break the covenant he will seduce[y] by his blandishments, but the people who know
33 their God will stand firm and take action. ·Those of the people who are wise 12:3
leaders will instruct many; for some days, however, they will stumble[z] from sword
34 and flame, captivity and pillage. ·And thus stumbling, little help will they receive,
35 though many will be scheming in their support.[aa] ·Of the wise leaders some will

11 a. Evidently three Persian kings. 'Darius the Mede' being excluded. The 'fourth' is less probably the last of the Achaemenids (Darius III Codomannus, 336–330, defeated by Alexander), more probably Xerxes the Great, 486–465, whose expedition against Greece took place in 480.

b. After Alexander's death, his empire was shared out, not among his sons but among his generals (the *Diadochoi* or 'successors'), *see* 2:40seq.; 7:7; 8:8.

c. 'than his own', lit. 'than his empire' conj.; 'his empire' Hebr. • The 'King of the south' is Ptolemy I Soter (323–285), the first sovereign of the hellenistic dynasty in Egypt. The 'prince' is Seleucus I Nicator (305/4–281) who initially supported Ptolemy I to defeat Antigonus (the battle of Gaza, 312, from which dates the Seleucid era), and subsequently founded his own huge Asiatic empire.

d. Antiochus II Theos (261–246) having made an alliance with Ptolemy II Philadelphos (285–246) married Ptolemy's daughter Berenice, in about 253. Laodice (wife and half-sister of Antiochus) was then divorced, but being later taken back, poisoned her husband and Berenice, as well as the latter's son by Antiochus, and members of their entourage. Seleucus II Callinicus (246–226), Laodice's son, was soon attacked by Ptolemy III Euergetes (246–221) who returned to Egypt loaded with booty but did not press his victory home. Reference is made in v. 9 to a counter-offensive by Seleucus for which there is little evidence in historical sources.

e. 'his posterity' Theod., Symm., 'his arm' Hebr. • 'her child' *hayyaledah* conj.; Hebr. *hayyoledah* 'her parent'; Syr. 'her children'.

f. Her husband.

g. lit. 'he will deal with them and will prevail'.

h. The first explicit mention of 'Egypt' in the Hebr., hitherto called 'the south'; for 'the south', LXX reads 'Egypt' throughout.

i. Seleucus III Ceraunus (226–223) and Antiochus III the Great (223–187).

j. The following verses recount the triumphs of Antiochus the Great, 'the King of the north'. In 220, he undertook the conquest of Palestine; Ptolemy IV Philopator (221–205) immediately raised an army of mercenaries and Egyptian troops and marched to the frontier where he inflicted heavy losses on Antiochus (the battle of Raphia, v. 11), but the victory was not pressed home, v. 12, and for 8 years Antiochus waged unrelenting war for the recovery of his Asiatic empire. He mounted an attack in force, v. 13, when Ptolemy V Epiphanes (204–180) came to the throne; this time he was reinforced by an alliance with Philip V of Macedon and by internal revolt in Egypt. The prolonged siege of Gaza is referred to in v. 15. An Egyptian counter-offensive in Judaea only slightly delayed the entry of Antiochus into Jerusalem, vv. 15–16.

k. 'will make a treaty with him' conj.; Hebr. corrupt. 'the kingdom', lit. 'her', as also 'she will not last nor will she be to his advantage'; but it is impossible to understand this as referring to Cleopatra: the concluding words of this obscure verse must allude to the renewed outbreak of hostilities owing to the well-founded mistrust on the Egyptian side.

l. lit. 'the daughter of women'. Antiochus, foreseeing intervention from Rome, decided on an alliance with Egypt, becoming betrothed to Cleopatra, Ptolemy's daughter: the marriage took place at Raphia in 193.

m. The towns of the seaboard: taking advantage of the Egyptian treaty, Antiochus made his way back to Asia Minor and, defying Roman threats, occupied Greek and Egyptian towns. But in 189 he suffered an overwhelming defeat at the hands of the consul Lucius Cornelius Scipio (the 'magistrate' of v. 18) at Magnesia.

n. To pay the huge war-debt imposed on him, Antiochus undertook an expedition to Elymais to plunder one of the temples of Bel, in the course of which he met his death in 187.

o. Seleucus IV Philopator (187–175), son of Antiochus the Great; he commissioned Heliodorus, one of his ministers, to confiscate the treasures of the Jerusalem Temple: the supernatural vision which thwarted this plan is described in 2 M 3. • The end of the phrase is uncertain and the translation conjectural.

p. Heliodorus had him assassinated.

q. Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175–164) who seized the throne by supplanting Demetrius, the young son of his brother Seleucus IV.

r. The high priest Onias III, *see* 9:26q.

s. Text adds 'among them', i.e. his own supporters.

t. The first campaign of Antiochus against Ptolemy VI Philometor of Egypt (son of his sister Cleopatra); Ptolemy, misled by his advisers, was captured by Antiochus who simulated friendship but plundered Egypt. On the way back, Antiochus savagely ill-treated the Jews, v. 28.

u. The second Egyptian campaign of Antiochus was to end in ignominy. The Roman consul Gaius Popilius Laenas arrived at Alexandria and informed Antiochus of the Senate's order to withdraw.

v. The Vulg. translates 'Romans', and this is certainly the meaning here. Originally the term 'Kittim' meant Cyprus, but the Bible uses it also of the regions bordering the Mediterranean, particularly in the West, cf. Gn 10:4; Nb 24:24; Is 23:1.12; Jr 2:10; Ezk 27:6 (Vulg. 'Italia').

w. The renegade Jews won over to the hellenistic way of life; *see* 1 M 1:11–15,43,52.

x. Cf. the 'citadel of the Temple' in Ne 2:8, *see also* 1 M 1:31,33.

y. lit. 'make hypocrites of'.

z. Play on words in Hebr. between 'stumble' *ksl* and 'learned' *skl*, as also in v. 35.

aa. Possibly referring to the early successes of Judas Maccabaeus in rallying those who remained staunch to Judaism.

12:10 stumble, and so a number of them will be purged, purified and made clean—until the time of the End, for the appointed time is still to come.

'The king will do as he pleases, growing more and more arrogant, considering 36
himself greater than all the gods; [bb] he will utter incredible blasphemies against the
2:47+;8:19 God of gods, and he will thrive until the wrath reaches bursting point; for what has
↗2 Th 2:4 been decreed will certainly be fulfilled. ·Heedless of his fathers' gods, heedless of 37
Rv 13:5 the god whom women love, heedless of any god whatever, he will consider himself
greatest of all. [cc] ·Instead of them, he will honour the god of fortresses, will honour 38
a god unknown to his ancestors with gold and silver, precious stones and valuable
presents. ·He will use the people of an alien god [dd] to defend the fortresses; he will 39
confer great honours on those whom he acknowledges, by giving them wide
authority and by parcelling the country out for rent. [ee]

THE TIME OF THE END

The end of the persecutor

'When the time comes for the End, the king of the south will try conclusions with 40
him; but the king of the north will come storming down on him with chariots,
cavalry, and a large fleet. He will invade countries, overrun them and drive on.
8:9j He will invade the Land of Splendour, and many will fall; but Edom, Moab, and 41
what remains [ff] of the sons of Ammon will escape him.

'He will reach out to attack countries: Egypt will not escape him. ·The gold and 42, 43
silver treasures and all the valuables of Egypt will lie in his power. Libyans and
Cushites [gg] will be at his feet: ·but reports coming from the East and the north will 44
worry him, and in great fury he will set out to bring ruin and complete destruction
to many. ·He will pitch the tents of his royal headquarters between the sea and the 45
mountains of the Holy Splendour. Yet he will come to his end [hh]—there will be no
help for him.'

10:13b **12** 'At that time Michael will arise—the great Prince, defender of your people. 1
Jr 30:7 That will be a time of great distress, unparalleled since nations first came
Jl 2:2 into existence. When that time comes, your own people will be spared—all those
↗Mt 24:21par. whose names are found written in the Book. [a]

Resurrection and retribution

2 M 7:9c 'Of those who are sleeping in the Land of Dust, many will awaken, some to 2
Ezk 37:10d everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting disgrace. [b] ·Those who are wise will 3
↗Jn 5:28–29 shine as brightly as the expanse of the heavens, and those who have instructed
·Is 66:24 many in uprightness, [c] as bright as stars for all eternity.
·Mt 25:46
·↗Mt 13:43
1 Co 15:41–42 'But you, Daniel, must keep these words secret and keep the book sealed until 4
·8:26 the time of the End. Many will roam about, this way and that, [d] and wickedness will
↗Rv 10 continue to increase.' [e]

The sealed prophecy

I, Daniel, then looked and saw two other people standing, one on the near bank of 5
10:5 the river, the other on the far. ·One of them said to the man dressed in linen who 6
was standing further up the stream, 'How long until these wonders take place?' ·I 7
heard the man speak who was dressed in linen, standing further up the stream: he
↗Rv 10:5–6 raised his right hand and his left to heaven and swore by him who lives for ever, 'A
·4:31; time and two times, and half a time; and all these things will come true, once the
Si 18:1
·7:25;8:14 crushing of the holy people's power is over.' ·I listened but did not understand. I 8
then said, 'My lord, what is to be the outcome?' ·'Go, Daniel,' he said. 'These 9
words are to remain secret and sealed until the time of the End. ·Many will be 10
11:35 cleansed, made white and purged; the wicked will persist in doing wrong; the
↗Rv 22:11 wicked will never understand; those who are wise will understand. ·From the 11

moment that the perpetual sacrifice is abolished and the appalling abomination set ↗Mt 24:15i
12 up: a thousand two hundred and ninety days. ·Blessed is he who perseveres and
13 attains a thousand three hundred and thirty-five days.[f] ·But you, go away and rest; 7:25p
and you will rise for your reward at the end of time.'[g]

SUSANNA AND THE JUDGEMENT OF DANIEL[a]

1, 2 **13** In Babylon there lived a man named Joakim. ·He was married to a woman
called Susanna daughter of Hilkiah, a woman of great beauty; and she was
3 God-fearing, for ·her parents were worthy people and had instructed their daugh-
4 ter in the Law of Moses. ·Joakim was a very rich man and had a garden by his
house; he used to be visited by a considerable number of the Jews, since he was
5 held in greater respect than any other man. ·Two elderly men had been selected
from the people, that year, to act as judges. Of such the Lord had said, 'Wickedness
has come to Babylon through the elders and judges posing as guides to the people.'[b]
6 These men were often at Joakim's house, and all who were engaged in litigation
7 used to come to them. ·At midday, when the people had gone away, Susanna
8 would take a walk in her husband's garden. ·The two elders, who used to watch
9 her every day as she came in to take her walk, gradually began to desire her. ·They
threw reason aside, making no effort to turn their eyes to Heaven, and forgetting
10 the demands of virtue. ·Both were inflamed by passion for her, but they hid their
11 desire from each other, ·for they were ashamed to admit the longing to sleep with
12, 13 her, ·but they made sure of watching her every day. ·One day, having parted with
the words, 'Let us go home, then, it is time for the midday meal,' they went off in
14 different directions, ·only to retrace their steps and find themselves face to face
again. Obliged then to explain, they admitted their desire and agreed to look for
15 an opportunity of surprising her alone. ·So they waited for a favourable moment;
and one day Susanna came as usual, accompanied only by two young maidservants.
16 The day was hot and she wanted to bathe in the garden. ·There was no one about
17 except the two elders, spying on her from their hiding place. ·She said to the
servants, 'Bring me some oil and balsam and shut the garden door while I bathe.'
18 They did as they were told, shutting the garden door and going back to the house
by a side entrance to fetch what she had asked for; they knew nothing about the
elders, for they had concealed themselves.
19 Hardly were the maids gone than the two elders sprang up and rushed upon her.
20 'Look,' they said, 'the garden door is shut, no one can see us. We want to have
21 you, so give in and let us! ·Refuse, and we shall both give evidence that a young
22 man was with you and that this was why you sent your maids away.' ·Susanna

bb. Like Alexander, 8:4 and 11:3, and Antiochus the Great, 11:16, but unlike the Achaemenids who in their inscriptions consistently ascribe their success to the will of Ahura Mazda. Antiochus in his old age had himself represented on his coins with the features of Zeus Olympios.

cc. The successors of Seleucus I honoured Apollo as their principal deity; Antiochus Epiphanes was a devotee also of Zeus Olympios, cf. v. 36, whom he identified with Jupiter Capitolinus, v. 38. The 'god whom women love' is Adonis (Tammuz), *see* Ezk 8:14.

dd. Allusion to the Syrians and renegade Jews with whom the king had garrisoned the new citadel, known as the Acra, *see* 1 M 1:33–34.

ee. Reference to the Seleucid policy of leasing conquered territory back to its defeated inhabitants, *see* 1 M 3:36.

ff. 'what remain' *she'erit* conj.; 'beginnings' or 'chiefs'. *re'shit* Hebr.

gg. The peoples west and south of Egypt respectively.

hh. The death of Antiochus, *see* 8:25.

12 a. The *Book of the Predestined*, or the *Book of Life*, cf. Ex 32:32–33; Ps 69:28; 139:16; Is 4:3; Lk 10:20; Rv 20:12. *See also* Dn 7:10i.

b. One of the key texts of the OT on the resurrection of the body, *see* 2 M 7:9c.

c. lit. 'those who have made (men) upright', hence 'teachers of uprightness'. The preceding verse suggests that the reference here is not only to the great name that the devout leave behind them, as in Ws 3:7 and Is 1:31, but to an eschatological transformation of the whole person into a glorified state.

d. In search of truth; *see* Am 8:12.

e. 'wickedness' LXX; 'knowledge' Hebr.

f. There is no satisfactory explanation for the difference between the figures of 8:14r (1150), 12:11 (1290) and 12:12 (1335).

g. After 'go away' Hebr. adds 'to the end', omitted by Gk. • For the final recompense, Mi 2:5 cf. Ps 1:5.

13 a. Here the Hebr. text ends and the Greek additions begin, *see* pp. 1177–78.

b. It is not clear what biblical text is envisaged.

Lv 20:10 Dt 22:22 Jn 8:4–5 sighed. 'I am trapped,' she said, 'whatever I do. If I agree, it means death for me;[c] if I resist, I cannot get away from you. 23 But I prefer to fall innocent into your power than to sin in the eyes of the Lord.' 24 She then cried out as loud as she could. The two elders began shouting too, putting the blame on her, 25 and one of them ran to open the garden door. 26 The household, hearing the shouting in the garden, rushed out by the side entrance to see what had happened to her. 27 Once the elders had told their story, the servants were thoroughly taken aback, since nothing of this sort had ever been said of Susanna.

28 Next day a meeting was held at the house of her husband Joakim. The two elders arrived, full of their wicked plea against Susanna, to have her put to death. 29 They Nb 5:18–22 addressed the company, 'Summon Susanna daughter of Hilkiah and wife of Joakim.' She was sent for, 30 and came accompanied by her parents, her children and all her relations. 31, 32 Susanna was very graceful and beautiful to look at; she was veiled, so the wretches made her unveil in order to feast their eyes on her beauty. 33, 34 All her own people were weeping, and so were all the others who saw her. The Lv 24:14 two elders stood up, with all the people round them, and laid their hands on her head.[d] 35 Tearfully she turned her eyes to Heaven, her heart confident in God. The elders then spoke, 'While we were walking by ourselves in the garden, this 36 woman arrived with two maids. She shut the garden door and then dismissed the servants. 37 A young man, who had been hiding, went over to her and they lay together. 38 From the end of the garden where we were, we saw this crime taking place and hurried towards them. 39 Though we saw them together, we were unable to catch the man: he was too strong for us; he opened the door and took to his heels. 40 We did, however, catch this woman and ask her who the young man was. She refused to tell us. That is our evidence.' 41

Since they were elders of the people and judges, the assembly accepted their word: Susanna was condemned to death. 42 She cried out as loud as she could, Ps 33:13–15 Pr 15:11 Heb 4:13 'Eternal God, you know all secrets and everything before it happens; 43 you know that they have given false evidence against me. And now I must die, innocent as I am of everything their malice has invented against me!'

44, 45 The Lord heard her cry and, as she was being led away to die, he roused the 4:5;5:11,14 holy spirit residing in a young boy called Daniel 46 who began to shout, 'I am innocent of this woman's death!' 47 At this all the people turned to him and asked, 'What do you mean by that?' 48 Standing in the middle of the crowd, he replied, 'Are you so stupid, children of Israel, as to condemn a daughter of Israel unheard, and without troubling to find out the truth? 49 Go back to the scene of the trial: these men have given false evidence against her.'

50 All the people hurried back, and the elders said to Daniel, 'Come and sit with us Ws 4:8–9 and tell us what you mean, since God has given you the gifts that elders have.' Daniel said, 'Keep the men well apart from each other, for I want to question 51 them.' 52 When the men had been separated, Daniel had one of them brought to him. 'You have grown old in wickedness,' he said, 'and now the sins of your earlier days have overtaken you, 53 you with your unjust judgements, your condemnation Ex 23:7 of the innocent, your acquittal of the guilty, although the Lord has said, "You must not put the innocent and upright to death." 54 Now then, since you saw her so clearly, tell me what sort of tree you saw them lying under.' He replied, 'Under an acacia tree.'[e] 55 Daniel said, 'Indeed! Your lie recoils on your own head: the angel of God has already received from him your sentence and will cut you in half.' 56 He dismissed the man, ordered the other to be brought and said to him, 'Son of Canaan, not of Judah, beauty has seduced you, lust has led your heart astray! This is how you have been behaving with the daughters of Israel, and they have 57 been too frightened to resist; but here is a daughter of Judah who could not stomach your wickedness! 58 Now then, tell me what sort of tree you surprised them under.' He replied, 'Under an aspen tree.' 59 Daniel said, 'Indeed! Your lie recoils on your own head: the angel of God is waiting with a sword to rend you in half, and destroy the pair of you.'

60 Then the whole assembly shouted, blessing God, the Saviour of those who trust
61 in him. ·And they turned on the two elders whom Daniel had convicted of false
62 evidence out of their own mouths. ·As the Law of Moses prescribes, they were Dt 19:16-21
given the same punishment as they had schemed to inflict on their neighbour. They
63 were put to death. And thus, that day, an innocent life was saved. ·Hilkiah and his
wife gave thanks to God for their daughter Susanna, and so did her husband
Joakim and all his relations, because she had been acquitted of anything
dishonourable.
64 From that day onwards, Daniel's reputation stood high with the people.

BEL AND THE DRAGON[a]

Daniel and the priests of Bel

1 **14** [b]When King Astyages joined his ancestors, Cyrus of Persia succeeded him.
2 Daniel was very close to the king, who respected him more than any of his
3 other friends.[c] ·Now, in Babylon there was an idol called Bel,[d] to which twelve
bushels of the finest flour, forty sheep and six measures of wine were offered every
4 day. ·The king venerated this idol and used to go and worship it every day. Daniel,
5 however, worshipped his own God. ·'Why do you not worship Bel?' the king asked
Daniel. 'I do not worship idols made by human hand,' Daniel replied, 'I worship
the living God who made heaven and earth and who is lord over all living creatures.'
6 'Do you not believe, then,' said the king, 'that Bel is a living god? Can you not see
7 how much he eats and drinks each day?' ·Daniel laughed. 'Your Majesty,' he said,
'do not be taken in; he is clay inside, and bronze outside, and has never eaten or
8 drunk anything.' ·This made the king angry; he summoned his priests, 'Tell me
who eats all this food,' he said, 'or die.[e] Prove to me that Bel really eats it, and I
9 will have Daniel put to death for blaspheming him.' ·Daniel said to the king, 'Let
it be as you say.'
10 There were seventy of these priests, to say nothing of their wives and children.
11 The king went to the temple of Bel, taking Daniel with him.[f] ·The priests of Bel
said to him, 'We shall now go out, and you, Your Majesty, will lay out the meal
and mix the wine and set it out. Then, lock the door and seal it with your personal
seal. If, when you return in the morning, you do not find that everything has been
12 eaten by Bel, let us be put to death; otherwise let Daniel, that slanderer!' ·They
were thinking—hence their confidence—of a secret entrance which they had made
under the table, and by which they came in regularly and took the offerings away.
13, 14 When the priests had gone and the king had set out the food for Bel, ·Daniel
made his servants bring ashes and spread them all over the temple floor, with no
other witness than the king. They then left the building, shut the door and, sealing
15 it with the king's seal, went away. ·That night, as usual, the priests came with their
wives and children; they ate and drank everything.
16, 17 The king was up very early next morning, and Daniel with him. ·'Daniel,' said
18 the king, 'are the seals intact?' 'They are intact, Your Majesty,' he replied. ·The
king then opened the door and, taking one look at the table, exclaimed, 'You are
19 great, O Bel! There is no deception in you!' ·But Daniel laughed; and, restraining
the king from going in any further, he said, 'Look at the floor and take note whose

c. Adultery incurred the death penalty, *see* Lv 20:10; Dt 22:22; *see also* Jn 8:4-5.

d. Stoning, preceded by the laying on of hands, was a communal act.

e. Here and in vv. 58-59, the Gk has a play on words, the names of the trees sounding somewhat like the corresponding punishment, '*schinos*' and '*schisei*'; '*prinos*' and '*kataprisai*'.

14 a. These two narratives are a polemic against idolatry in the manner of Ws 15 and 16. The LXX text is completely independent of the text (Theod.) translated here, and we indicate its more notable variants.

b. LXX has the title 'From the prophecy of Habakkuk son of Joshua of the tribe of Levi', cf. v. 33.

c. LXX 'There was a certain man, a priest called Daniel son of Abal, a friend of the king of Babylon'.

d. One of the names of Marduk, tutelary deity of Babylon, *see* Is 46:1; Jr 50:2; 51:44.

e. In LXX Daniel himself suggests his own punishment.

f. What follows is told only summarily in LXX.

footmarks these are!' ·'I can see the footmarks of men, of women and of children,' 20
said the king, ·and angrily ordered the priests to be arrested, with their wives and 21
children. They then showed him the secret door through which they used to come
and take what was on the table. ·The king had them put to death and handed Bel 22
over to Daniel who destroyed both the idol and its temple.

Daniel kills the dragon

There was a great dragon which the Babylonians worshipped too.[g] ·The king said 23, 24
to Daniel, 'Are you going to tell me that this is made of bronze? Look, it is alive; it
eats and drinks; you cannot deny that this is a living god; worship it, then.' ·Daniel 25
replied, 'I will worship the Lord my God; he is the living God. With your permis-
sion, Your Majesty, without using either sword or club, I shall kill this dragon.'
'You have my permission,' said the king. ·Whereupon, Daniel took some pitch, 26, 27
some fat and some hair and boiled them up together, rolled the mixture into balls
and fed them to the dragon; the dragon swallowed them and burst. Daniel said,
'Now look at the sort of thing you worship!' ·The Babylonians were furious when 28
they heard about this and rose against the king. 'The king has turned Jew,' they
said, 'he has allowed Bel to be overthrown, and the dragon to be killed, and he has
put the priests to death.' ·So they went to the king and said, 'Hand Daniel over to 29
us or else we shall kill you and your family.' ·They pressed him so hard that the 30
king found himself forced to hand Daniel over to them.

Daniel in the lion pit[h]

They threw Daniel into the lion pit, and there he stayed for six days. ·In the pit 31, 32
were seven lions, which were given two human bodies and two sheep every day;
but for this period they were not given anything, to make sure they would
eat Daniel.

Now, the prophet Habakkuk was in Judaea: he had been making a stew and 33
breaking up bread into a basket. He was on his way to the fields, taking this to the
harvesters, ·when the angel of the Lord spoke to him, 'Take the meal you are 34
carrying to Babylon, and give it to Daniel in the lion pit,' ·'Lord,' replied Habak- 35
kuk, 'I have not even seen Babylon and know nothing about this pit.' ·The angel 36
of the Lord took hold of his head and carried him off by the hair to Babylon where,
with a great blast of his breath, he set Habakkuk down on the edge of the pit.
'Daniel, Daniel,' Habakkuk shouted, 'take the meal that God has sent you.' 37
And Daniel said, 'You have kept me in mind, O God; you have not deserted 38
those who love you.' ·Rising to his feet, he ate the meal, while the angel of God 39
carried Habakkuk back in a moment to his own country.

On the seventh day, the king came to lament over Daniel; on reaching the pit he 40
looked inside, and there sat Daniel. ·'You are great, O Lord, God of Daniel,' he 41
exclaimed, 'there is no god but you!' ·He then had Daniel released from the pit 42
and the plotters of Daniel's ruin thrown in instead, where they were instantly eaten
before his eyes.

g. Nothing is known of a dragon-god in ancient Babylon. This story was familiar to early Jewish writers who refer to it when commenting on Jr 51:44.

h. A parallel narrative to that of ch. 6. The means of Habakkuk's transportation may have been suggested by Ezk 8:3.

HOSEA

Title

1 **1** The word of Yahweh which came to Hosea son of Beeri during the reigns of
Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah kings of Judah, and of Jeroboam son of
Joash, king of Israel. [a]

I: THE MARRIAGE OF HOSEA AND ITS SYMBOLISM [b]

Hosea's marriage: his three children

2 The beginning of what Yahweh said through Hosea:
Yahweh said to Hosea, 'Go, marry a whore, [c] and get children with a whore; [d]
for the country itself has become nothing but a whore by abandoning Yahweh.'
3 So he went and married Gomer daughter of Diblaim, who conceived and bore
4 him a son. ·Yahweh then said to him, 'Call him [e] Jezreel, for in a little while I shall 1 K 18:45r
punish the House of Jehu for the bloodshed at Jezreel [f] and put an end to the 2 K 9:1–10; 10:1–17; 17:2–6
5 sovereignty of the House of Israel. ·When that day comes, I shall break the bow of
Israel in the Valley of Jezreel.' [g]
6 She conceived a second time and gave birth to a daughter. Yahweh then said to
him, 'Call her Lo-Ruhamah, for I shall show no more pity for the House of Israel, 1 P 2:10
7 I shall never forgive them again. [h] ·(Instead, I shall take pity on the House of Judah 14:4
and shall save them, not by bow or sword or force of arms, not by horses or Ps 20:7
horsemen, but by Yahweh their God.)' [i] Pr 21:31
Is 30:16; 31:1
Mi 5:9
Zc 4:6

1 **a.** And under Jeroboam II's successors until the Northern Kingdom came to an end.

b. The prophets often performed symbolic actions, Jr 18:1a, but here Hosea's very life is symbolic of God's mysterious designs. Hosea has loved and still loves a wife whose only response has been to betray him. Similarly, Yahweh still loves his faithless wife Israel and, having disciplined her, will love her as before and make her own love constant and unshakeable, ch. 1–3. The fertility religion of the Canaanites, on account of its attendant custom of sacred prostitution, was probably known pejoratively as 'prostitution' long before the days of Hosea, Ex 34:15; by imitating Canaanite practices, Israel was said to have committed prostitution, Ex 34:16. Hosea, however, is the first to use the imagery of a marriage to describe Yahweh's relationship with his people since the covenant on Sinai, and to call Israel's lapses into idolatry not only prostitution but adultery. The theme is then taken up by other prophets, Is 1:21; Jr 2:2; 3:1; 3:6–12. Ezekiel elaborates the theme in two great allegories, ch. 16 and 23. Second Isaiah presents the restoration of Israel as the reconciliation of an unfaithful wife, Is 50:1; 54:6–7, cf. 62:4–5. Perhaps we should see the relationship of Yahweh to Israel in the marriage imagery of the Song of Songs and Ps 45. In the NT, Jesus represents the messianic age as a wedding, Mt 22:1–14; 25:1–13 and speaks of himself as the bridegroom, Mt 9:15, cf. Jn 3:29, thus teaching that the marriage alliance between Yahweh and his people is fulfilled in his own person. Paul also treats of this theme, 2 Co 11:2; Ep 5:25–33; *see also* 1 Co 6:15–17, and so, finally, does the Book of Revelation, 21:2. • Ch. 1–3 form a complete entity composed of three sections, each concerned in part with Hosea's own time, when God reprimands Israel for infidelity, and in part with predictions of reconciliation and salvation, **1** 1:2–9; 2:1–3. **2** 2:4–15; 2:16–25. **3** 3:1–4;3:5.

c. lit. 'a wife of prostitution', cf. 4:12; 5:4; either because Gomer was known as such from the beginning or because she showed herself to be one later.

d. Not that the children are to be born of an adulterous union but that they take after their unfaithful mother: like mother, like children, Ezk 16:44; Si 41:5.

e. The names of Hosea's children are prophetic, *see* Is 1:26n.

f. Jezreel ('God sows', *see* 2:24–26) was one of the residences of the kings of Israel. There Jehu massacred the wife and children of Ahab, 2 K 9:15–10:14. Unlike the author of 2 K 10:30, Hosea condemns this action.

g. The Valley of Jezreel and in particular Megiddo, where the valley broadens out after leaving the coast, lay on the normal route between Egypt and Assyria and was the principal battle-ground of the Holy Land, *see* Jg 4:12–16; 6:33; 1 S 28:4; 2 K 23:29. It figures as the eschatological battle-ground in Zc 12:11; Rv 16:16. At the same time, its very name ('God sows') indicates its fertility and evokes the promises of the birth of a new people, 2:24–25. Hence 'the Day of Jezreel', 2:2.

h. Or 'I shall remove them completely.' • The name Lo-Ruhamah means 'Unpitied'.

i. The v. was probably added by disciples of Hosea who had taken refuge in Judah after the fall of Samaria, to suit the message to their adoptive homeland.

After weaning Lo-Ruhamah, she conceived and gave birth to a son. •Yahweh 8, 9
said, 'Call him Lo-Ammi,[j] for you are not my people and I do not exist for you.'[k]

Hope for the future

Gn 22:17; 32:13 ↗Rm 9:27 ↗Rm 9:26
2 But the Israelites will become as numerous as the sands of the sea,[a] which 1 1:10
cannot be measured or counted. In the very place[b] where they were told, 'You
are not my people,'

Jn 1:12 they will be told they are 'Children of the living God'.
Jr 3:18h The Judaeans and Israelites will be reunited 2 11
and will choose themselves a single head,
and will spread far beyond their country,[c]
1:5g for great will be the Day of Jezreel!
Then call your brothers, 'My people', 3 2:1
2:24–25,25y and your sisters, 'You have been pitied'.[d]

Yahweh and his unfaithful wife[e]

Is 50:1b To court, take your mother to court![f] 4 2
For she is no longer my wife
nor am I her husband.[g]
She must either remove her whoring ways from her face
and her adulteries from between her breasts,[h]
or I shall strip her and expose her[i] 5 3
naked as the day she was born;
Jr 6:8;9:11 I shall make her as bare as the desert,[j]
I shall make her as dry as arid country,
and let her die of thirst.
And I shall feel no pity for her children 6 4
1:2d since they are the children of her whorings.
Yes, their mother has played the whore, 7 5
she who conceived them has disgraced herself
Jr 2:25;3:13; 44:17 Am 2:4 by saying, 'I shall chase after my lovers;[k]
they will assure me my keep,
my wool, my flax, my oil and my drinks.'

This is why I shall block her way with thorns, 8 6
Jr 2:23 and wall her in to stop her in her tracks;[l]
then if she chases her lovers she will not catch them, 9 7
if she looks for them she will not find them,
6:1–3 Jr 3:22 Lk 15:17–18 and then she will say, 'I shall go back to my first husband,
I was better off then than I am now;'
she had never realised before 10 8
that I was the one who was giving her
the grain, new wine and oil,
Dt 7:13;8; 11–18 Ps 144:12seq. giving her more and more silver and gold
which they have spent on Baal![m]

This is why I shall take back my grain when it is due 11 9
and my new wine, when the season for it comes.
I shall withdraw my wool and my flax
which were to cover her naked body,
Ezk 16:37 and then display her infamy before her lovers' eyes— 12 10
Jn 10:29 no one will take her from me then!
Is 1:13–14 Jr 7:34 Am 5:21–23 I shall put an end to all her merrymaking, 13 11
her festivals, her New Moons and her Sabbaths
and all her solemn feasts.

12 14 I shall make her vines and fig trees derelict [n]
of which she used to say,
'These are the pay my lovers gave me.'
I shall turn them into a jungle: Ps 80:12–13 Is 5:5–6
wild animals will feed on them.
13 15 I mean to make her pay for the feast-days
on which she burnt incense to the Baals,
when she tricked herself out in her earrings and necklaces
to chase after her lovers,
and forget me! Jr 2:32
—declares Yahweh.

Reconciliation

14 16 But look, I am going to seduce her [o]
and lead her into the desert [p]
and speak to her heart.
15 17 There I shall give her back her vineyards,
and make the Vale of Achor [q] a gateway of hope. Jos 7:24–26 Is 65:10
There she will respond as when she was young, Jr 2:2
as on the day when she came up from Egypt. Ex 13:17d

16 18 When that day comes—declares Yahweh—
you will call me, 'My husband',
no more will you call me, 'My Baal'. [r]
17 19 I shall banish the names of the Baals from her lips
and their name will be mentioned no more.

18 20 When that day comes I shall make a treaty for them with the wild animals, Gn 9:8seq, Ez 34:25 Jb 5:23

j. The name means 'Not-my-people'. The three children are named in ascending order of Yahweh's severity. With the last, Yahweh's rejection is complete.

k. lit. 'And I, not "I am" for you', allusion to the meaning of Yahweh's name, Ex 3:14. Hosea evidently understands the divine name to imply the protective and benevolent presence of the God of the covenant.

2 a. Repetition of the ancient promise attested by Elohistic, Gn 22:17, and Yahwistic, Gn 32:13, traditions.

b. Jezreel, the symbolic location of the Day of Yahweh, *see* Am 5:18m, here deliberately called the Day of Jezreel (v. 2), *see* 1:5.

c. Sense not clear. Others understand 'they will overrun the country', 'they will come from their countries' (of exile).

d. New symbolic names in contrast to those of 1:6,9. No name is substituted for Jezreel, Hosea's eldest son, since the name is both inauspicious and auspicious, *see* 1:5g.

e. Yahweh speaks as a wronged husband seeking to bring his unfaithful wife back to him, if necessary by severe correction; if he succeeds, he will test her repentance and then welcome her with all the fervour of his first love and shower gifts on her.

f. The divine lawsuit is a common literary theme in the OT, *see* 4:1; Ps 50; Is 3:13; Jr 2:9; Mi 6:1, in which God himself presents the evidence against his unfaithful people. Here, however, the children, who are as guilty as their mother, 1:2; 2:6, are urged to give evidence against her and thus dissociate themselves from her wickedness.

g. A divorce formula presumably used in Israel and certainly attested in Mesopotamia.

h. By 'whorings' and 'adulteries' should probably be understood the amulets, tattooings and other signs distinctive of the prostitute, *see* Gn 38:15; Pr 7:10.

i. The legal penalty of stripping a guilty wife, *see* Is 47:2–3; Jr 13:22; Ezk 16:37–39; Na 3:5; Rv 17:16, is attested elsewhere in the Middle East.

j. Transition from the wife to the country. The agricultural wealth of Canaan which has seduced Israel into worshipping Baal, 10:1; 13:6, is to be suppressed, 4:3; 5:7; 9:6; 13:15.

k. i.e. the various fertility gods of Canaan, local manifestations of Baal, vv. 15,19.

l. 'her way' Gk and Syr.; 'your way' Hebr.

m. To make objects for the cult of Baal.

n. Vine and fig tree are traditional symbols for the peace and comfort characterising the reign of Solomon, 1 K 5:5, and the messianic age, Mi 4:4; Zc 3:10. Here this very prosperity has seduced the nation from Yahweh, *see* Dt 8:11–20, and encouraged them to worship the fertility gods whom they mistakenly suppose to be responsible for it, vv. 7–14.

o. The word is a strong one, meaning to seduce someone from the course which he ought to have followed, cf. Jg 14:15. The same word is used of a man who seduces a virgin, Ex 22:15.

p. For Hosea, 12:10, as for Amos, Am 5:25, the desert life of the Exodus represents a lost ideal; Israel was still a child, 11:1–4, knew nothing about foreign gods and followed Yahweh faithfully, 2:16–17. On the theme of the Exodus in the Prophets, *see* Is 40:3e.

q. A valley near Jericho giving access to the interior of the country and traditionally the scene of an act of disloyalty severely punished by Yahweh, Jos 7:24–26. The name means valley of misfortune, according to Jos 7:26j. It will become the gateway of hope, giving access to a land restored to favour.

r. The name *baal* ('master') was also used of husbands. From ancient times it had formed an element in many proper names, *see* 1 S 14:49v; 2 S 2:8; 1 Ch 8:33; 9:39,40, without any idolatrous significance. Yahweh being the 'master' to whom the bearer of the name was thus dedicated. Later, however, the association of the word with the Canaanite divinities made its use disreputable; hence Hosea forbids it, v. 19. The transition from 'my master' to 'my husband' hints that the emphasis will henceforth be on marital intimacy rather than on the subordination of wife to husband, cf. Jn 15:15.

with the birds of heaven and the creeping things of the earth;
1:7 Is 2:4 I shall break the bow and the sword
and warfare, and banish them from the country,
and I will let them sleep secure. [s]
I shall betroth [t] you to myself for ever, 21 19
I shall betroth you in uprightness and justice,
and faithful love [u] and tenderness.
Yes, I shall betroth you to myself in loyalty 22 20
and in the knowledge of Yahweh. [v]
When that day comes, I shall respond 23 21
—declares Yahweh—
I shall respond to the heavens
and they will respond to the earth
and the earth will respond to the grain, the new wine and oil, 24 22
1:4–9 and they will respond [w] to Jezreel.
I shall sow her in the country to be mine, [x] 25 23
I shall take pity on Lo-Ruhamah,
Is 62:4c ↗Rm 9:25 ↗1 P 2:10 I shall tell Lo-Ammi, 'You are my people,'
and he will say, 'You are my God.' [y]

Second account of Hosea's marriage

3 Yahweh said to me, 'Go again, love a woman who loves [a] another man, an 1
adulteress, and love her as Yahweh loves the Israelites although they turn to
Jr 7:18 other gods and love raisin cakes.' [b] •So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver, a 2
homer of barley and a skin of wine, [c] •and I said to her, 'You will have to spend a 3
long time waiting for me [d] without playing the whore and without giving yourself to
any man, and I will behave in the same way towards you.'

The explanation

Dn 3:38 For the Israelites will have to spend a long time without king or leader, without 4
2:9;6:1;14:2 Ex 23:24k;28:6a 1 S 15:22d Jr 30:9 sacrifice or sacred pillar, without *ephod* or domestic images; •but after that, the 5
Israelites will return and again seek Yahweh their God and David their king, [e] and
turn trembling to Yahweh for his bounty in the final days.

II: THE CRIMES AND PUNISHMENT OF ISRAEL

General corruption

4 Israelites, hear what Yahweh says, 1
2:4f Is 3:13–15 Jr 25:31 Mi 6:1–5; 2:21–22, 22v Jr 7:9 for Yahweh indicts the citizens of the country:
there is no loyalty, no faithful love,
no knowledge of God in the country,
only perjury and lying, murder, theft, 2
adultery and violence,
bloodshed after bloodshed.
Is 24:4 Jr 4:28; 12:4 Zp 1:3 This is why the country is in mourning 3
and all its citizens pining away,
the wild animals also and birds of the sky,
even the fish in the sea will disappear. [a]

Against the priests

But let no one denounce, no one rebuke; 4
it is you, priest, that I denounce. [b]
Priest, you will stumble in broad daylight, 5

and the prophet will stumble with you in the dark,
and I will make your mother perish. [c]
6 My people perish for want of knowledge. Jr 5:4
Since you yourself have rejected knowledge, [d]
so I shall reject you from my priesthood; Mi 2:1–9
since you have forgotten the teaching of your God,
I in my turn shall forget your children.

7 The more of them there have been,
the more they have sinned against me;
they have bartered their Glory for Shame. [e] Jr 2:11g
8 They feed on the sin of my people,
they are greedy for their iniquity. [f]
9 But as with the people, so with the priest,
I shall punish them for their conduct,
I shall pay them back for their deeds.
10 They will eat but never be satisfied, Mi 6:14
they will play the whore but not grow more prolific, [g]
since they have deserted Yahweh
11 to give themselves up ·to whoring.

s. Once the faithless country comes to its senses, Yahweh will show that he and not Baal is the true provider and protector of Israel, vv. 20–25. God will then come back to dwell among his people and shower his blessings on them, cf. Lv 26:3–13; Dt 28:1–14. The sky will give rain in due time and the earth its fruit in plenty, Is 30:23–26; 49:10; Jr 31:12,14; Ezk 34:26–27,29; 36:29–30; Ho 2 23–24; 14:8–9; Jl 2:19,22–24; 4:18; Am 9:13; Zc 8:12. There will be no fear of others' gaining possession of the country, Is 32:17–18; Jr 46:27; Jl 2:20; Mi 5:4, *see* Is 4:5–6 (explained by 25:4–5); God will make a pact for it with the wild beasts, Ezk 34:25,28; Ho 2:20. Peace will spread to all peoples, Is 2:4 = Mi 4:3, *see* Is 11:6–8e; 65:25, under the guidance of the royal Messiah, Is 9:5–6; Zc 9:10. Death itself will disappear, Is 25:7–8, and joy will replace suffering and tears, Is 65:18–19; Jr 31:13; Ba 4:23,29, cf. Rv 21:4.

t. This verb is used in the Bible only with reference to a young virgin. Thus God abolishes Israel's adulterous past. His new marriage is, as it were, with a new creature whose dispositions are as constant as his own, a theme to be developed by Jeremiah and Ezekiel: the new, eternal covenant, the law inscribed in the heart, the new heart, the new spirit, Jr 31:31–34; Ezk 36:26–27f.

u. The primary meaning of this expression (*hesed*) is that of a bond, or contract. When used of human relationships it comes to mean friendship, union, loyalty, especially when these are the outcome of a treaty. Used of God, the term means his faithfulness to his covenant and the kindness he therefore shows his chosen people (in Ex 34:6). Used by Hosea in the context of married love, the word assumes and from then on retains a still warmer significance: it means the tender love God has for his people, Ps 136; Jr 31:3, etc., and the benefits deriving from it, Ex 20:6; Dt 5:10; 2 S 22:51; Ps 18:50; Jr 32:18. But this divine *hesed* calls for corresponding *hesed* among human beings, 6:6, consisting of self-giving, loving trust, abandonment, deep affection, 'piety', a love (in short) which is a joyful submission to the will of God and an active charity to one's fellows, 6:6. This ideal, expressed in many of the Psalms, will later be that of the *hasidim*, or 'Hasidaeans', *see* 1 M 2:42i.

v. For Hosea, 'knowledge of Yahweh' and *hesed* go together 2:21–22; 4:2; 6:6; this 'knowledge' is therefore not merely intellectual, God 'makes himself known' to human beings when he engages himself to them by covenant and shows his love (*hesed*) for them by the benefits he confers; similarly, human beings 'know God' when they loyally observe God's covenant, show gratitude for God's gifts, and return love for love. Pr 2:5; Is 11:2; 58:2. In wisdom literature, 'knowledge' and 'wisdom' are practically synonymous.

w. Note the repetition of the word 'respond': God will respond to the waiting creation, and creation will respond to what people, in accordance with God's plan, expect from it. This reverses the present condition of disorder due to sin, *see* 4:3; Gn 3:17seq.; Is 11:6e; Rm 8:19j.

x. 'I shall sow' play on the meaning of Jezreel, *see* 1:5g. • 'her', Israel/dutiful wife—a poetic conceit.

y. The ominous names are abolished and the disasters which they presaged are averted by the mutual love of God and his people.

3 **a.** 'who loves' Gk, Syr.; 'loved by' Hebr. Surely Gomer again, whom Hosea loved and still loves, but who has been, and continues to be, unfaithful to him. The generosity of the prophet towards disloyalty is the symbol of the unflagging love of Yahweh for his people.

b. or 'other gods who love raisin-cakes', *see* Dn 14:5–8.

c. Hosea redeems Gomer from her master or from the sanctuary where she has become a sacred prostitute. The total price is about that for the redemption of a slave, Ex 21:32; Lv 27:4. One *homer* equals 12.5 bushels (99 gal, 450 litres) and for further information concerning ancient weights and measures *see* Tables of measures and money.

d. A period of trial, as v. 4 explains, before the covenant is renewed between Yahweh and Israel, cf. 2:8–9,16.

e. Jr 30:9; Ezk 34:23. • 'and David their king' is almost certainly a Judaean addition, *see* 1:7i.

4 **a.** Hosea contrasts the situation as it actually is with the ideal situation of the renewed people, 2:21–25; there is neither sincerity nor love nor knowledge of God, v. 1, compare 2:21seq. Instead of harmony between person and environment, 2:20, 23seq., there are corruption and death, 4:3, compare 2:24w.

b. Line emended: Hebr. 'Your people resemble those who denounce the priest.' The priesthood as a whole is attacked for ignorance, neglect, greed and even, 6:9, violence. For other attacks, *see* Jr 2:8; 6:13; Mi 3:11; Zp 3:4, and especially Ml 1:6–2:9.

c. The principle of individual responsibility will not emerge till a century later, *see* Gn 18:24f; Ezk 14:12d. On unworthy prophets, *see* Jr 23:13–22; Mi 3:5,11.

d. Knowledge of the Law in which the priests should have instructed the people, Dt 33:10; Ml 2:5–8.

e. 'they have bartered their Glory (i.e. Yahweh) for Shame (i.e. the Baals)' Targ. and Syr.; 'I will change their Glory into Shame' Hebr.

f. The priest received a substantial part of the victim offered at sin sacrifices, Lv 6:19–22, and at expiation sacrifices, Lv 7:7; in this way the people's sins were to his advantage, *see* 1 S 2:12–17.

g. Probably the sacred prostitution of the Canaanite fertility cults.

Worship in Israel is idolatrous and debauched

Old wine and new wine addle my people's wits, [h]
Jr 2:27 they consult their block of wood, 12
and their stick explains what they should do. [i]
1:2;2:6 For an urge to go whoring has led them astray
and whoring they go and desert their God;
Dt 12:2b they offer sacrifice on the mountain tops, 13
they burn incense on the hills,
under oak and poplar and terebinth,
for pleasant is their shade.
So, although your daughters play the whore
and your daughters-in-law commit adultery,
I shall not punish your daughters for playing the whore 14
nor your daughters-in-law for committing adultery, [j]
Dt 23:19f when the men themselves are wandering off with whores
and offering sacrifice with sacred prostitutes,
for a people with no understanding is doomed.

A warning to Judah and Israel

Though you, Israel, play the whore, 15
there is no need for Judah to sin too.
5:8 Do not go to Gilgal,
Jos 4:19b;7:2b
Am 4:4c;5:8 do not go up to Beth-Aven [k]
Am 8:14 do not swear oaths 'by Yahweh's life',
Jr 31:18 for Israel is as stubborn 16
as a stubborn heifer;
so is Yahweh likely to pasture him
like a lamb in a broad meadow?
14:9 Ephraim has made a pact with idols—let him alone! 17
Am 2:8;6:4–6 Their drunken orgy over, 18
they do nothing but play the whore,
4:7 preferring Shame to their Pride; [l]
Jr 4:11–13
Am 1:14 the wind with its wings will carry them off 19
and their sacrifices will bring them nothing but disgrace.

Against the priests and royal family

5 Hear this, you priests, 1
listen, House of Israel,
pay attention, royal House,
for it is you who have justice in your care,
but you have been a snare at Mizpah
and a net outspread on Tabor. [a]
They have dug the ditch deep at Shittim [b] 2
and so I am going to punish them all.

The effects of obduracy

Ephraim have I known, 3
Israel is not hidden from me;
and yet, Ephraim, you have played the whore,
Israel is befouled.
Jr 13:23+ Their deeds do not allow them to return to their God, 4
1:2 since an urge to play the whore possesses them
and they no longer know Yahweh.
Am 6:8 Israel's arrogance is his accuser, 5

the guilt of Israel and Ephraim is their undoing, 14:2
Judah too will be undone with them.
6 Though they go in search of Yahweh with their sheep and cattle, Pr 1:28; Is 55:6; Am 5:4c,8: 11–12; Jn 7:34;8:21
they will not find him;
he has withdrawn from them.
7 They have betrayed Yahweh
because they have fathered bastards; 2:6
now the new moon [e] will devour them and their fields.

Brother wars against brother [d]

8 Sound the horn in Gibeah,
the trumpet in Ramah, Jl 2:1b
raise the war cry in Beth-Aven, 4:15k
'We are behind you, [e] Benjamin!'
9 When the day of punishment comes, Ephraim will be a wasteland;
on the tribes of Israel I have pronounced certain doom. [f]
10 The rulers of Judah act like men who move the boundary stone; [g] Dt 19:14; 27:17
I shall pour my wrath out on them like a flood.
11 Ephraim is oppressed, crushed by the sentence, [h]
for having deliberately followed a Lie. [i]
12 Because of this, I shall be like ringworm for Ephraim Is 50:9+
and like gangrene for the House of Judah.

The folly of foreign alliances

13 Once Ephraim realised that he was sick 7:11;8:9; 12:2
and Judah that he had an ulcer, 2 K 15:19;16: 7–9
Ephraim then went to Assyria,
he sent messengers to the Great King; [j]
but he has no power to cure you
or to heal you of your sore;
14 for I shall be like a lion to Ephraim, 13:7; Is 5:29; Am 3:12
like a young lion to the House of Judah;
I myself shall rend them, then go my way,
shall carry them off, beyond hope of rescue. 2:12

15 I shall go back to my place
until they confess their guilt [k] and seek me, Dt 4:29–31,30h; Jr 29:13
6:1 seek me eagerly in their distress. Am 5:4c

h. Not a superficial statement about the effects of wine but a reproach to Israel for having an insensitive religious attitude in their desire for a good harvest, cf. 7:14.

i. Divination with the help of wooden objects.

j. Their guilt is less since they are given a bad example by their husbands and fathers.

k. Beth-Aven ('house of sin'), an insulting nickname for Bethel (Beth-el: 'house of God').

l. 'pride', i.e. Yahweh, conj.; vowel rearrangement of MT 'shields', cf. v. 7[b].

5 **a.** Several places so named are mentioned in the Bible, and it is difficult to know which is meant here. Like Tabor, Mizpah was probably a cult-place whose ministers had led the people astray by encouraging idolatry. Alternative translation: 'for sentence has been passed against you, but you have been . . .', but compare the parallel of Mi 3:1.

b. Text uncertain. On Shittim *see* Jos 2:1b. There is here perhaps an illusion to the episode of Baal-Peor, 9:10; *see* Nb 25.

c. Either the feast-day is turned into a day of punishment, or a warning to mark its imminence (at the next new moon) is given.

d. Vv. 8–14, and perhaps as far as 6:6, apparently refer to the Syro-Ephraimite War (735–734 BC), *see* 2 K 16:5b.

e. Word uncertain; perhaps it should be corrected according to the context to read 'On guard!'

f. i.e. exile, dismemberment of the kingdom, 2 K 15:29, the fall of Samaria and the loss of Israel's independence, 2 K 17:5–6.

g. Alluding to the advance of the Judaean army into Israelite territory, perhaps also to earlier encroachments by Judah, 1 K 15:16–22. The Deuteronomic Code, Dt 19:14, *see also* 27:17, condemns those who displace boundary marks. The boundaries of the tribal territories in the Holy Land were considered to be established on God's own instructions, Jos 13:6seq.

h. Following Hebr. but the implications are not clear. Gk reads 'Ephraim is an oppressor, he tramples on justice,' referring to the alliance with Damascus and the invasion of the related kingdom of Judah in the Syro-Ephraimite war.

i. 'a Lie' *shawe'* conj.; Hebr. *tzaw* unintelligible.

j. 'to the Great King' *'el melek* conj., as also at 10:6; Hebr. *'el melek yareb* 'to King Jareb' or 'to an avenging king'. Probably a reference to the pro-Assyrian kings of Israel, Menahem who paid tribute to Tiglath-Pileser III in 738, and Pekahiah who followed the same policy, and to Ahaz of Judah who appealed for help to the same Assyrian king in 735, *see* 2 K 16:7–9.

k. Or 'until they have expiated their guilt'.

The Israelites reply [a]

6 Come, let us return to Yahweh. 1
He has rent us and he will heal us;
he has struck us and he will bind up our wounds; 2
after two days he will revive us, 2 3
Ezk 37 on the third day he will raise us up [b]
and we shall live in his presence.
Let us know, let us strive to know Yahweh; 3
that he will come is as certain as the dawn.
Dt 11:14 Ps 63:1; 72:6;143:6 He will come to us like a shower,
like the rain of springtime to the earth.

What am I to do with you, Ephraim? 4
What am I to do with you, Judah?
=13:3 For your love is like morning mist,
like the dew that quickly disappears.
12:11 Jr 1:10;5:14 This is why I have hacked them to pieces by means of the prophets, [c] 5
why I have killed them with words from my mouth,
why my sentence will blaze forth like the dawn— [d]
2:21–22,21u 1 S 15:22 Am 5:21n ↗Mt 9:13;12:7 for faithful love is what pleases me, not sacrifice; 6
knowledge of God, not burnt offerings. [e]

Disorders in Israel

8:1 But they have broken the covenant at Adam, [f] 7
there they have betrayed me.
Gilead [g] is a city of evil-doers, 8
full of bloody footprints.
Like so many robbers in ambush, 9
a gang of priests commits murder on the road to Shechem—
what infamous behaviour!
At Bethel [h] I have seen a horrible thing; 10
there Ephraim plays the whore,
Israel is befouled.
For you too, Judah, a harvest is in store, [i] 11
when I restore my people's fortunes.

7 Whenever I would heal Israel, 1
I am confronted by the guilt of Ephraim
and the evil-doings of Samaria;
for deceit is their principle of behaviour;
the thief breaks into the house, [a]
marauders raid in the open;
and they never pause to consider 2
that I remember all their wicked deeds;
and now their own deeds hem them in
Ps 90:8 Mi 3:16 and stare me in the face.

Conspiracy the order of the day in Israel

They amuse the king with their wickedness 3
and the chief men with their lies. [b]
They are all adulterers, hot as an oven 4
which the baker need not stoke
from the time he has kneaded the dough until it rises.
At the holiday for our king, [c] 5
the ministers become inflamed with wine,
while he accepts the homage of people ·who laugh at him. 6
Their hearts are like an oven as they plot,

all night their passion slumbers,
then in the morning it bursts into flame;[d]
7 yes, all of them as hot as ovens,
they consume their rulers.
All their kings have fallen thus,
not one of them has ever called on me.

Israel ruined by relying on foreign powers

8 Ephraim mixes with the nations.
Ephraim is a half-baked cake.[e]
9 Foreigners have eaten his strength away
but he is unconscious of it;
even his hair is turning grey 5:12 Rv 3:17
but he is unconscious of it.
10 (Israel's arrogance is his own accuser;
but they do not come back to Yahweh their God Am 4:6–11,6f
or seek him, despite all this.)
11 Ephraim is like a silly,[f] witless pigeon
calling on Egypt, turning to Assyria. 5:13j
12 Wherever[g] they turn, I shall spread my net over them,
I shall bring them down like the birds of the sky,
I shall punish them for their perversity.[h]

The ingratitude and punishment of Israel

13 Woe to them for having fled from me!
Ruin seize them for having wronged me!
I have rescued them again and again
and they have only told lies about me. 7:1
14 Theirs is no heartfelt cry to me
when they lament on their beds;[i]
when they gash themselves over the grain and new wine,[j]
they are still rebelling against me.

6 **a.** The prophet imagines a penitential liturgy, perhaps borrowing terms from some expiation ceremony, 1 K 8:31–53; Ps 85; Jr 3:21–25; Jl 1–2. The people, frightened by the threat of punishment and abandonment by Yahweh, 5:14–15, call for a return to him, vv. 1–3. But the return is ephemeral and devoid of inner conversion, vv. 4–6.

b. The expression 'after two days . . . on the third day' (*see* Am 1:3f) means a short lapse of time; Christian tradition since Tertullian has applied this text to the resurrection of Christ on the third day. But it is never quoted in the NT, nor is the period Jonah spent in the belly of the fish (Jon 2:1 = Mt 12:40) thus used. But it is possible that the mention of the resurrection on the third day 'according to the scriptures' (1 Co 15:4, *see* Lk 24:46) in the early preaching and creeds refers to our text, interpreted according to the exegetical canons of the time.

c. The word of God transmitted by the prophets produces what it predicts (here, punishment).

d. Vowels rearranged in this line; 'your judgements, a light comes forth' MT.

e. Hosea asserts that the only valid sacrifice is a sincere conversion, *see* 2:21–22u,v; 1 S 15:22; Ps 40:6–8; Am 5:21p.

f. 'at Adam' conj.; 'like a man' or 'like Adam' Hebr. The allusion is enigmatic. Perhaps there was an idolatrous sanctuary at Adam (near the mouth of the Jabbok). Perhaps the text means that Israel's infidelity goes back to the very origins of the settlement in Palestine, cf. Jos 3:16. For this idea *see* 9:10. The alliance is that of Sinai.

g. Gilead on the plateau of the same name in Transjordan, *see* Gn 31:46–48.

h. 'At Bethel' conj.; Hebr. *bebet yisra'el* 'in the House of Israel'.

i. Probably a later addition, *see* 1:7i.

7 **a.** 'into the house' following Gk; Hebr. omits.

b. From the inception of the Northern Kingdom to the year 737 (assassination of Pekahiah) seven of its kings were murdered. The prophet here draws a picture of a conspiracy in which the traitors, after feigning loyalty, assassinate the king and chief men as they lie drunk after a night of revelling. Elah died thus, 1 K 16:9–10.

c. An annual celebration in the king's honour.

d. The beginning of v. 6 is attached to what precedes, to give some sense to an extremely difficult passage whose text seems to be corrupt. 'their passion' *'appehem* conj.; Hebr. *'aphehem* 'their baker'.

e. lit. 'a cake not turned', i.e. useless, because burnt on one side and underdone on the other.

f. 'silly', lit. 'allowing itself to be seduced' (same word as in 2:16*o*), i.e. here yielding to the seduction of foreign alliance, thinking thereby to escape the punishment which the prophet depicts as a fowler's net wielded by God.

g. Or 'However often' or 'Even if'.

h. 'for their perversity' *lera'atam*, following Gk; Hebr. *le'adatam* 'according to their assembly'. Before this word, *keshema'* 'according to hearsay' has been left untranslated. Perhaps it should be understood 'when I hear they have assembled', the comparison with birds continuing to the end of the v. In this case it would be a gloss, for the word *'edah* is late.

i. Either beds properly so called or rugs on which they prostrated themselves for prayer, cf. Ps 4:4; 149:5.

j. 'they gash themselves' *yitgodadu* conj.; Hebr. *yitgoraru* 'they live as strangers'. On these ritual self-mutilations *see* 1 K 18:28; Jr 16:6; 41:5. • 'They are rebelling' *yasoru* conj.; Hebr. *yasuru* 'they turn away'.

Though I supported and gave strength to their arms, 15
they plan how to hurt me.
They turn to what does not exist,[k] 16
Ps 78:57 they are like a faulty bow.
Their leaders will fall by the sword
because of their arrogant talk;
how they will be laughed at in Egypt!

An omen

5:8 Jl 2:1b 8 Put the trumpet to your lips! 1
Like an eagle, disaster is swooping on Yahweh's home![a]
6:7 Because they have violated my covenant
and been unfaithful to my Law,[b]
6:1–3 Jr 14:8–9 Mt 7:21–23 in vain will they cry, 'My God!' 2
In vain, 'We, Israel, know you!'
Israel has rejected the good, 3
the enemy[c] will pursue them.
1 S 8:1a; 11:12g They have set up kings, but without my consent, 4
and appointed princes, but without my knowledge.[d]
With their silver and gold, they have made themselves idols,
but only to be destroyed.
1 K 12:28,32 I spurn[e] your calf, Samaria! 5
My anger blazes against them!
How long will it be before they recover their innocence?
For it is the product of Israel— 6
Ex 20:4;34:17 a craftsman made the thing,
it is no god at all![f]
The calf of Samaria will be broken to pieces!
10:13 Jb 4:8 Pr 22:8 Ga 6:7 Since they sow the wind, they will reap the whirlwind; 7
stalk without ear, it will never yield flour—
or if it does, foreigners will swallow it.

Israel ruined by relying on foreign powers[g]

Israel has himself been swallowed; 8
now they are lost among the nations
like something no one wants,
5:13j for having made approaches to Assyria— 9
like a wild donkey, all alone.
Ezk 16:32–34 Ephraim has rented lovers[h]
and because he has rented them from the nations 10
I am now going to round them up;[i]
soon they will feel the weight of the king of princes![j]

Against the outward show of worship

Ephraim keeps building altars for his sins, 11
these very altars are themselves a sin.
However much of my Law I write for him, 12
Ephraim regards it as alien to him.
They offer sacrifices to me and eat the meat,[k] 13
6:6 Am 5:22 •=9:9 they do not win Yahweh's favour.
On the contrary, he will remember their guilt
and punish their sins;
they will have to go back to Egypt.
9:3;11:5 Dt 28:68c; 32:15,18+ Israel has forgotten his Maker 14
and has built palaces,
while Judah keeps on building fortified towns;

but I shall send fire down on his cities
to devour their citadels. Am 2:5

The sorrows of exile [a]

1 9 No merrymaking, Israel, for you,
no rejoicing [b] like other peoples,
for you have deserted your God to play the whore,
you have loved the fee of prostitution on every threshing-floor. [c]
2 The threshing-floor and wine-press will not feed them;
they will be disappointed of new wine. [d] 2:11
3 No more will they live in Yahweh's country;
Ephraim will have to go back to Egypt 8:13+
and eat polluted food in Assyria. [e]
4 No more will they pour libations of wine to Yahweh,
and their sacrifices will not win his favour
but will be like funeral fare for them: [f] Dt 26:14
whoever eats them will be polluted;
for their food will be for themselves alone,
not being offered in Yahweh's home. [g]
5 What will you do on the solemn feast-day,
on the day of Yahweh's festival? [h]
6 What a scene of devastastion they have left!
Egypt will round them up, Memphis will bury them,
nettles will inherit their fields
and thorn-bushes invade their homesteads.

Persecution, the prophet's reward for foretelling punishment

7 The days of punishment have come, [i] Am 3:2+
the days of retribution are here;
Israel knows it!
'The prophet is mad and the inspired man a fool!' Jn 10:20
Great has been your guilt—
all the greater then the hostility!
8 The watchman of Ephraim is with my God:
it is the prophet—

k. Follows Gk; '. . .not above' Hebr.

8 a. 'disaster is swooping' supplied for clarity. The eagle is a symbol of disaster, *see* Jr 48:40; 49:22. • Yahweh's home is here not the Temple but the Holy Land, Yahweh's property, cf. 9:15.

b. This strict, synonymous parallelism between covenant and Law is characteristic of the Elohistic (Ex 24:8), Deuteronomic (Dt 4:13) and 'Priestly' traditions (Lv 26:15). Hosea belonged to circles imbued with the Deuteronomic tradition.

c. Assyria.

d. Hosea is condemning the political anarchy of the kingdom in which rulers were assassinated and replaced without regard to religious considerations.

e. 'I spurn' conj.; 'he spurns' Hebr.

f. This attack on idols is followed by many another in the prophetic books, *see* Is 40:20m; 41:21i.

g. This passage seems to be later than the deportation following the Syro-Ephraimite war (734), 2 K 15:29. The alternation of singular and plural is a poetic device, *see* 2:8*l*.

h. Allusion to the tribute paid to the kings of Assyria, 5:13; 7:11, possibly also to gifts sent to Egypt, 12:2. Here the lovers are not the Canaanite gods of ch. 1–3 but foreign powers. Nonetheless, treaties with foreign powers are also regarded as adulterous in relation to the covenant, since they favour the cults of the foreigners in question and show a lack of faith in Yahweh as sole Saviour of Israel, *see* Is 30:1–5; 31:1–3.

i. To deport them.

j. The king of Assyria.

k. Uncertain translation of a difficult, possibly corrupt, text.

9 a. A group of sayings perhaps pronounced at the Autumn Festival.

b. 'no rejoicing' Gk; 'towards rejoicing' Hebr.

c. Since Israel thinks the harvest is to be given by Baal, the fruits of the earth may be termed the pay for prostitution, *see* 2:7,14n.

d. The following vv. explain why: they will not be there to enjoy them, having been deported; other people will get them, 8:7. • 'they' Gk, Syr., Targ.; 'he' Hebr.

e. Foreign countries are polluted by virtue of the idols in them, *see* 1 S 26:19; Am 7:17. In exile there will be no possibility of abstaining from polluted food.

f. Food prepared or eaten in the presence of the dead was considered polluted. In exile, the Israelites would be in permanent mourning.

g. Exile would make it impossible for them to offer the first-fruits in the shrines of the Holy Land.

h. The harvest festival or feast of Shelters, which could not be celebrated in exile, since it involved gathering at one of Yahweh's shrines, Ex 23:16seq.

i. Vv. 7–8 are very obscure and the trans. largely conjectural.

and a fowler's trap is placed on all his paths;
Jr 20:1–6 Am 7:10–17 and in the shrine of his God there is enmity towards him.[j]
They have become deeply corrupt 9
Jg 19 =8:13 as in the days of Gibeah;
he will remember their guilt,
he will punish their sins.

Punishment for the crime at Baal-Peor

2:16p Dt 32:10 It was like finding grapes in the desert when I found Israel, 10
like seeing early fruit on a fig tree when I saw your ancestors;
Nb 25:1–5 but when they reached Baal-Peor[k] they devoted themselves to Shame[l]
Jr 2:5c and became as loathsome as the thing they loved.
The glory of Ephraim will fly away like a bird: 11
Dt 28:18 no giving birth, no pregnancy, no conceiving.
9:16 Dt 32:25 If they rear their children, I shall take them away 12
before they grow up!
Woe to them indeed when I leave them!
Ephraim looked to me like Tyre, planted in a meadow,[m] 13
so Ephraim will present his children to the slaughterer.
Give them, Yahweh—what are you to give?— 14
Lk 23:29 give them wombs that miscarry and dried-up breasts.

Gilgal

4:15 Their wickedness appeared in full at Gilgal, 15
there I came to hate them.
Because of the wickedness of their deeds
8:1a I shall drive them from my home,
1:6 I shall love them no longer;
all their princes are rebels.[n]
Ephraim is blasted, 16
Am 2:9 Mt 21:19par. their root has dried out,
they will bear no more fruit.
9:12 And even if they do bear children
I shall slaughter the darlings of their womb.
Dt 28:64–65 Because they have not listened to him, my God will cast them off 17
Gn 4:14 and they will become wanderers among the nations.

The destruction of Israel's cultic objects

Is 5:1a **10** Israel was a luxuriant vine 1
yielding plenty of fruit.
Dt 32:15;2:7, 14;4:10seq. The more his fruit increased,
the more altars he built;
the richer his land became,
Ex 23:24k the richer he made the sacred pillars.
Theirs is a divided heart;[a] 2
now they will have to pay for it.
He himself will hack down their altars
and wreck their sacred pillars.
Then they will say, 3
'We have no king[b]
because we have not feared Yahweh,
but what could the king do for us?'
Speeches are made, oaths sworn to no purpose, 4
agreements concluded,
Am 6:12 and so-called justice spreads like a poisonous weed[c]
along the furrows of the fields!

Samaria's citizens will tremble
for the calf[d] of Beth-Aven; 4:15k;8:5
the people there will mourn for it,
so will its idol-priests,
as they exult in its glory
once it has been carried away! Rv 18:14
6 It will be carried off to Assyria
as tribute to the Great King.[e]
Ephraim will reap the shame,
and Israel blush for his intentions.
7 Samaria has had her day.
Her king is like a straw drifting on the water.
8 The high places of Aven, the sin of Israel, 4:13
will be destroyed; 2 K 23:15seq.
thorns and thistles will grow over their altars.
Then they will say to the mountains, 'Cover us!' Is 2:10
and to the hills, 'Fall on us!'[f] ↗Lk 23:30 ↗Rv 6:16

9 Since the days of Gibeah, Israel, you have sinned. 9:9+
There they have taken their stand,
and will not war overtake the guilty at Gibeah?[g]
10 I am coming[h] to punish them;
nations will muster against them
to punish them for their two crimes.[i]

Israel has disappointed Yahweh's hope[j]

11 Ephraim is a well-trained heifer 4:16
that loves to tread the grain.
But I have laid a yoke on her fine neck, Jr 2:20;5:5
I shall put Ephraim into harness, Mt 11:29–30
Judah will have to plough,
Jacob must draw the harrow.

12 Sow saving justice for yourselves,
reap a harvest of faithful love; 2:21–22,21u
break up your fallow ground: Jr 4:3
it is time to seek out Yahweh Mi 6:8
until he comes to rain saving justice down on you.

13 You have ploughed wickedness,
you have reaped iniquity,
you have eaten the fruit of falsehood.
Because you have trusted in your chariots,[k] Is 31:1

j. The text is very obscure, probably corrupt, but various proposed emendations have not been satisfactory.

k. The incident, related in Nb 25, had occurred on the plain east of the Jordan, *see* Nb 25:1; Jos 2:1a, at the very gates of the Promised Land, and had disfigured its history ever since.

l. Hebr. *boshet*, a disparaging name for Baal, *see* 2 S 4:4b.

m. A very difficult, probably corrupt v.; lit. 'Ephraim, as I see for Tyre, planted in a meadow'. Perhaps the prophet means to compare the splendour of Ephraim to that of Tyre, cf. Is 23:7seq.; Ezk 27, but the word is uncertain. The Gk read *tzaid* 'game' instead of *tzor* 'Tyre'.

n. Probably Saul's disobedience at Gilgal, 1 S 13:7–14; 15:12–33, prolonged by the rebellion of the leading men.

10 a. Divided between Yahweh and Baal.

b. Assyrian tutelage and the instability of the throne have brought effective government to a standstill.

c. Ironical; what prospers is the poisonous perversion of justice, cf. Am 6:12.

d. 'calf' Gk and Syr.; 'calves' Hebr.

e. 'Great King' conj.; 'King Jareb' or 'King Avenger' Hebr.; *see* 5:13j.

f. The scope of the disaster will be so terrible that they will lose all desire to live, cf. Lk 23:30; Rv 6:16.

g. Hosea sees a continuity between the crime at Gibeah in antiquity, *see* Jg 19, and the crimes of the present day. He predicts the same continuity of punishment.

h. 'I am coming' Gk; 'in my desire' Hebr.

i. Obscure: perhaps it means the monarchy (proclaimed near Gibeah, 1 S 10:23–24) and the crime of Jg 19; perhaps only the crime of Gibeah, double by its enormity.

j. Vv. 11–12 refer to the plan Yahweh had for Ephraim: a mission was given to him expressed in terms of the metaphor of sowing and reaping. But the reality is of a different order: to establish the rule of justice and love, and to seek Yahweh. In fact Ephraim did the reverse.

k. 'your chariots' Gk; 'your way' Hebr.

in your great numbers of warriors,
turmoil is going to break out among your people, 14
and all your fortresses will be laid waste.
As Shalman [l] laid Beth-Arbel waste
on the day of battle,
14:1 dashing mothers to pieces on their children, [m]
so it shall be done to you, Bethel, 15
because of your great wickedness;
at dawn, the king of Israel will be no more. [n]

God's love despised: his vengeance [a]

Jr 2:1-9
↗Mt 2:15 11 When Israel was a child I loved him, 1
and I called my son [b] out of Egypt.
But the more I called, the further they went away from me; [c] 2
they offered sacrifice to Baal
and burnt incense to idols.
Dt 1:31+ I myself taught Ephraim to walk, 3
I myself took them by the arm,
but they did not know that I was the one caring for them,
that I was leading them with human ties, 4
with leading-strings of love,
that, with them, I was like someone lifting an infant [d] to his cheek,
Dt 8:16 and that I bent down to feed him. [e]

8:13k He will not have to go back to Egypt, [f] 5
Assyria will be his king instead!
Since he has refused to come back to me,
the sword will rage through his cities, 6
destroying the bars of his gates,
devouring them because of their plots.

God's love stronger than his vengeance

My people are bent on disregarding me; 7
if they are summoned to come up,
not one of them makes a move. [g]

Ephraim, how could I part with you? 8
Israel, how could I give you up?
How could I make you like Admah
or treat you like Zeboiim? [h]
Dt 32:36
Is 54:8
Jr 31:20 My heart within me is overwhelmed, [i]
fever grips my inmost being.
I will not give rein to my fierce anger, 9
I will not destroy Ephraim again,
Nb 23:19+ for I am God, not man,
the Holy One in your midst, [j]
and I shall not come to you in anger.

The return from exile [k]

They will follow Yahweh; 10
Jr 25:30
Am 1:2+ he will roar like a lion,
and when he roars,
his children will come fluttering from the west,
fluttering like sparrows from Egypt, 11
like pigeons from Assyria,
and I shall settle them in their homes
—declares Yahweh.

Political and religious perversity of Israel [a]

11:12 1 **12** Ephraim besieges me with lying,
the House of Israel with duplicity.
(But Judah still is on God's side,
he is faithful to the Holy One.) [b]
12:1 2 Ephraim feeds himself on wind,
all day he chases the wind from the East, [c]
he heaps up cheating and violence;
they make a treaty with Assyria, 5:13j
at the same time sending oil to Egypt. Is 30:1seq.; 31:1seq.

Against Jacob and Ephraim

2 3 Yahweh has a case against Judah, [d] 4:1
he will punish Jacob as his conduct merits,
3 he will repay him as his deeds deserve.
4 In the very womb he overreached his brother, Gn 25:26g
in maturity he wrestled against God. [e] Is 43:27i
5 He wrestled with the angel and beat him, Gn 32:24–28
he wept and pleaded with him. [f]
He met him at Bethel Gn 28:10–22
and there God spoke to us— [g]
6 yes, Yahweh, God Sabaoth, Yahweh is his title! Am 4:13+
6 7 So turn back with God's help,
maintain faithful love and loyalty
7 and always put your trust in your God. [h]
8 Merchants use fraudulent scales. Dt 25:13+
To defraud is his delight. [i]

l. Possibly Salamanu, a Moabite prince and contemporary of Tiglath-Pileser III (745–727), on the occasion of a raid on Beth-Arbel (Irbid) in Gilead.

m. Or 'with their children'. Atrocities of this kind were usual when towns were captured, *see* 14:1; 2 K 8:12; Ps 137:9; Is 13:16; Na 3:10.

n. Dawn was usually the time chosen for a surprise attack, Jg 9:33–37; Ps 46:5; Is 17:14, hence the moment when God awarded victory or punished by defeat.

11 a. In subject-matter, this ch. is a pendant to ch. 1–3. After the allegory of conjugal love thwarted, we now have that of paternal love rejected. The children who figured in ch. 1–3 were closely associated with their mother. God's love for and frustrated rage with them have already been indicated at 2:1,6.

b. This is the first instance in the OT of the theme of God's love as *cause* of his choosing Israel to be his people, a doctrine much elaborated by the Deuteronomist, Dt 4:37; 7:7–9; 10:15. For Hosea, the history of Israel really begins with the Exodus. This whole passage describes the golden age of the desert journey, *see* 2:16*o*. Hosea seems only to have known, or to have remembered, the less creditable incidents of the patriarchal period, 12:4–5,13.

c. 'the more I . . . from me' Gk; 'they called them, so they went away from them' Hebr.

d. 'infant' *'ul* conj.; Hebr. *'ol* 'yoke'. • 'to feed him' conj.; 'him' (*lo*) must have disappeared by haplography before *lo'*, the first word of v. 5.

e. For the theme of Yahweh as educator of the infant Israel, *see* Dt 8:5–6.

f. But the situation will be the same. The contradiction of 8:13 is thus more apparent than real.

g. Line obscure; trans. conj.

h. Admah and Zeboiim were two of the five towns of the Pentapolis, Gn 10:19; 14:2,8; Dt 29:22: in the Elohistic tradition they presumably took the place of the Sodom and Gomorrah of the Yahwistic tradition, Is 1:9–10.

i. 'overwhelmed', a very strong word, used also of the destruction of the wicked cities, Gn 19:25; Dt 29:22. Hosea sees the threatened punishment as already experienced in God's heart. • Cf. David's lament over the death of Absalom, 2 S 19:1.

j. God's transcendence is strongly emphasised. But unlike other more ancient texts (Ex 19:2b; 2 S 6:6–8) or more recent ones (Is 6:3g), here it is divested of all terrifying aspects and is expressed in terms of love. God's holiness manifests itself in compassion and forgiveness, whereas it is human to give free rein to anger.

k. Vv. 10–11, elaborating on the ideas in vv. 8–9, are probably a later addition dating from the Babylonian captivity.

12 a. A difficult chapter in which are intermingled references to contemporary events and to episodes in the life of the patriarchs. For the prophet and his contemporaries all generations sprung from the patriarchs formed a single whole. The patriarch in some way lived on in his descendants, and they were already present in him, *see* Heb 7:9.

b. A later addition or adaptation, *see* 1:7i. • After 'still', Hebr. reads 'roams with God' but the sense of this is not clear. Perhaps the Gk should be followed: 'But Judah is still known to God.'

c. The scorching wind from the desert, here symbolising Assyria, cf. 13:15; Jr 18:17; Ezk 17:10.

d. Instead of 'Judah' the primitive reading was surely 'Israel'. The change is the result of a desire to apply the prophecy of Hosea in the Southern Kingdom, *see* 1:7i.

e. Ambition and arrogance innate and persistent. Hosea interprets these episodes unfavourably, *see* vv. 13–14. A sinner from his mother's womb, Jacob so continued in later life.

f. Gn 32:24–28 does not speak of tears and entreaties: Hosea is probably hinting at some trick on Jacob's part.

g. 'to us' Hebr. is sometimes unjustifiably emended to 'to him' in line with Gn 35:15; Hosea makes what was said to Jacob apply to himself and his contemporaries, the descendants of Jacob, cf. v. 7.

h. Still the same perspective: these words of God to Jacob are addressed also to all his descendants.

i. Canaan was cursed by Yahweh, Gn 9:25. The name came to be synonymous for merchant, Is 23:8; Ezk 17:4; Zc 14:21, owing to Canaanite skill at commerce.

Lk 12:16–21
↗Rv 3:17–18
'How rich I have become!' says Ephraim, 9
'I have made a fortune.'
But of all his gains he will keep nothing
because of the sin of which he is guilty.[j]

Reconciliation

2:16p; =13:4
Ex 20:2
But I have been Yahweh your God since your days in Egypt 10
and will make you live in tents again
as in the days of Meeting.[k]
I will speak through prophets, 11 10
I will give vision after vision
6:5 and through the ministry of prophets
will speak in parables.[l]

New threats

6:8 Is Gilead a sink of iniquity? 12
Yes, they are a worthless lot!
4:15;9:15 At Gilgal they sacrifice to bulls,[m]
that is why their altars are like heaps of stones
in a ploughed field.
Jacob fled to the countryside of Aram, 13 12
Gn 29 Israel slaved to win a wife,
to win a wife he looked after sheep.
11:1b
Ex 3:7–10
Dt 18:15,18
Ps 77:20
By a prophet Yahweh brought Israel out of Egypt 14
and by a prophet Israel was preserved.
Ephraim gave bitter provocation— 15 14
Yahweh will bring his bloodshed down on him,
his Lord will repay him for his insult.

Idolatry punished

13 When Ephraim used to speak, all trembled; 1
he was a power in Israel;[a]
but once he had incurred guilt with Baal, he died.
And now they compound their sins 2
by casting images for themselves out of their silver,
idols of their own invention,
the work of craftsmen, all of it!
1 K 12:27,32 'Sacrifice to them,' they say![b]
1 K 19:18 Men bestow kisses to calves![c]
That is why they will be like morning mist, 3
=6:4 like the dew that quickly disappears,
Ps 1:4
Is 17:13;41:16
Zp 2:2
like the chaff whirled from the threshing-floor,
like smoke escaping through the window.

The punishment for ingratitude

=12:10 But I have been Yahweh your God since your days in Egypt[d] 4
Ex 20:2seq.
Dt 5:6seq.
Is 43:11+
when you knew no god but me,
since you had no one else to save you.
I cared for you in the desert, 5
in the land of dreadful drought.
I pastured them,[e] and they were satisfied; 6
once satisfied, their hearts grew proud,
Dt 32:15+ and therefore they forgot me.
5:14+ So now I shall be like a lion to them, 7
like a leopard I shall lurk beside the road,
2 S 17:8
Pr 17:12
like a bear robbed of her cubs I shall meet them 8

and rend the membrane of their heart,
and there like a lioness I shall eat them,
like a wild beast tear them to shreds.

The end of the monarchy

9 Israel, you have destroyed yourself
though in me lies your help.[f]
10 Your king, where is he now, to save you,[g]
or the governors in all your cities?—
whom you once pleaded for, saying,
'Give me a king and princes!' 1 S 8:5
11 In my anger I gave you a king 1 S 8:7,22
and in my wrath I have taken him away. 10:15

The inevitability of ruin

12 Ephraim's guilt is packed away, Dt 32:34–35
his sin is locked up.
13 Pangs as of childbirth overtake him, Is 26:17–18
and a stupid child he is;
his time is due, but he does not leave the womb.[h] Is 37:3
14 Shall I save them from the clutches of Sheol?
Shall I buy them back from Death?
Where are your plagues, Death? 6:2
Where are your scourges, Sheol?[i] Ezk 37:1–14,10d
Compassion will be banished from my sight! Is 25:8+
↗1 Co 15:55
15 Though Ephraim bears more fruit than his brothers,[j]
the wind from the East[k] will come, 12:2c
Yahweh's breath blowing up from the desert
to dry his spring, to dry up his fountain,
to strip his treasury
of everything worth having.
1 **14** Samaria will pay the penalty
for having rebelled against her God. 7:1
They will fall by the sword,
their little children will be dashed to pieces
and their pregnant women disembowelled. 10:14m
Am 1:13+

j. Following Gk; Hebr. obscure, lit. 'all my gains, guilt for sin will not be found in me (?)'.

k. Here the reference is either to 'the tent of Meeting', Ex 33:7, or to the stay at Sinai where God had fixed a meeting with his people, Ex 3:12.

l. Further signs of Yahweh's patient solicitude, cf. v. 14; their absence is a sign of God's disfavour, Ps 74:9; Lm 2:9.

m. 'to bulls' conj.; 'bulls' Hebr.

13 a. On the ancient political importance of Ephraim *see* Jos 24:30; Jg 8:1–3; 12:1–6.

b. 'sacrifice to them' conj.; 'those who sacrifice' Hebr.

c. An act of homage, *see* 1 K 19:18.

d. For this line the Greek has 'I am the Lord your God who set the heavens firm and keep the earth steady; my hands have created the whole array of heaven, but I have not shown these to you for you to follow them. I it was who brought you up out of Egypt.' • When the calf-idols of Dan and Bethel were installed, Jeroboam said, 'Here are your gods, Israel, these brought you up out of Egypt,' 1 K 12:28.

e. 'I pastured them' conj.; 'according to their pasture' Hebr.

f. Translation uncertain; lit. 'your destruction, Israel; for (or, but) in me for 'your help'.

g. Perhaps an ironical allusion to King Hosea (732–724) whose name means 'Yahweh saves'.

h. The metaphor of the pangs of childbirth is here used for the first time to describe the catastrophe hanging over the nation, cf. Is 26:17; 66:6–7; Jr 6:24. Here the metaphor implies that the catastrophe is designed by God to produce conversion and hence be the source of new life, i.e. the birth of the child. Ephraim, however, refuses to be born and is therefore doomed.

i. The context demands that v. 14 be interpreted as a threat. The two first questions expect a negative answer, and the next two are an invitation to death and Sheol to send their scourges on a rebellious people. Paul quotes this text to proclaim that death is conquered, 1 Co 15:55; but he interprets it according to the current practice by which it was perfectly acceptable to take a phrase entirely out of its context.

j. 'Ephraim' is not in the text, which has simply 'he'. But it is hinted at by 'bear fruit' (*yapheri*') which corresponds to the explanation of the name given in Gn 41:52.

k. The east wind stands for Assyria.

III: THE REPENTANCE AND RECONCILIATION OF ISRAEL [a]

The sincere conversion of Israel to Yahweh

Israel, come back to Yahweh your God 2
5:5 your guilt was the cause of your downfall.
Provide yourself with words [b] 3
and come back to Yahweh.
Say to him, 'Take all guilt away
Ps 32:1+;50:14+ and give us what is good,
Heb 13:15 instead of bulls we will dedicate to you our lips.
7:11;12:2 Is 31:1 Assyria cannot save us, 4
we will not ride horses any more,
2:18–19 or say, "Our God!" to our own handiwork, [c]
for you are the one in whom orphans find compassion.'

I shall cure them of their disloyalty, 5
1:6;9:15;2:16–25 I shall love them with all my heart,
for my anger has turned away from them.
Is 26:19 I shall fall like dew on Israel, 6
he will bloom like the lily
and thrust out roots like the cedar of Lebanon; [d]
Is 27:6 he will put out new shoots, 7
he will have the beauty of the olive tree
and the fragrance of Lebanon.
They will come back to live in my shade; [e] 8
they will grow wheat again,
they will make the vine flourish,
their wine will be as famous as Lebanon's.
4:17 2 Co 6:16 What has Ephraim to do with idols any more [f] 9
when I hear him and watch over him?
I am like an evergreen cypress,
you owe your fruitfulness to me. [g]

Concluding admonition [h]

Ps 107:43 Pr 4:7 Let the wise understand these words, 10
let the intelligent grasp their meaning,
Dt 32:4 for Yahweh's ways are straight
and the upright will walk in them,
but sinners will stumble.

14 **a.** The prophecy ends on a note of hope, already heard in 2:16–25; 3:5; 11:8–11; 12:10. A liturgical prayer expressing sincere repentance, corresponding to 6:1–6, is followed by a firm promise of God's blessing.

b. With words of true repentance and not with sacrifices, *see* 6:6.

c. The rejection of idols also implies the rejection of those forms of idolatry inherent in trusting to foreign alliances (Assyria) and to military strength (horses, i.e. chariotry) rather than to Yahweh as sole Saviour, *see* 8:9h; Ps 20:7–8; Is 30:1–5; 31:1–3.

d. 'the cedar of' supplied; Hebr. omits.

e. 'my' conj.; 'They will come back and live in his shade' Gk; 'Those who live in his shade will come back' Hebr.

f. 'What has Ephraim to do' conj.; 'Ephraim, what have I to do' Hebr.

g. A second pun on the name Ephraim, *see* 13:15j. • The evergreen cypress is the symbol of life, of which Yahweh is the sole source. Having condemned fertility ceremonies held under sacred trees, 4:13, Yahweh makes it clear that he himself is the reality, of which fertility cults are a caricature.

h. Addition in the Wisdom style.

JOEL

Title

1 **1** The word of Yahweh that was addressed to Joel son of Pethuel.

I: THE PLAGUE OF LOCUSTS

A: LITURGY OF MOURNING AND ENTREATY

Lament over the ruin of the country

2 Listen to this, you elders;
everybody in the country, attend!
Has anything like this ever happened in your day,
or in your ancestors' days?
3 Tell your children about it
and let your children tell their children,
and their children the next generation!

4 What the nibbler has left, the grown locust has eaten, — Dt 28:38 Am 4:9;7:1seq. Ml 3:11
what the grown locust has left, the hopper has eaten,
and what the hopper has left, the shearer has eaten. [a] — Ps 105:34–35

5 Wake up, you drunkards, and weep! — Is 5:11+
All you wine-bibbers, lament
for the new wine: it has been snatched from your lips. — Dt 28:39
6 For a nation has invaded my country,
mighty and innumerable, — Jr 46:23
with teeth like a lion's teeth, — ↗Rv 9:8
with the fangs of a lioness.
7 It has reduced my vines to a desolation — Is 5:1+ Na 2:3
and my fig trees to splinters,
stripped them and broken them down, [b]
leaving their branches white.

8 Mourn, [c] as a virgin-bride in sackcloth — Jr 3:4
for the bridegroom of her youth! [d]
9 Cereal offering and libation [e]
are lost to Yahweh's Temple.
The priests, the ministers of Yahweh,
are in mourning.
10 The fields are ruined, — Ho 4:3a

1 **a.** An invasion of locusts has devastated the country. Of the four terms used here for the insect, *'arbeh*, or 'destroyer', (translated 'grown locust' here) is the commonest, indicating the species as a whole. The exact meanings of the other three are disputed. Either they designate various sub-species, or more probably successive stages of growth: *yeleq* ('hopper'), *hasil* ('shearer'), *gazam* ('nibbler').

b. Text corrected; Hebr. 'he will certainly strip them and break them down'.

c. The prophet is addressing the community.

d. 'sackcloth' to symbolise grief and repentance.

e. The daily oblation, *see* Lv 2, and libation were offerings from the produce of the soil: flour, wine and oil, *see* Ex 29:38–42; Nb 28:3–8.

the land is in mourning,
for the grain has been ruined,
the new wine has failed,
of olive oil only a trickle.

Stand dismayed, you farmers, 11
wail, you vinedressers,
for the wheat, for the barley!
The harvest of the fields has been lost!
The vine has withered, 12
the fig tree wilts away;
pomegranate, palm tree, apple tree,
Am 4:7–9 every tree in the countryside is dry,
Is 16:10 Jr 25:10 and for human beings
joy has run dry too.

A call to repentance and prayer

1:8d Priests, put on sackcloth and lament! 13
You ministers of the altar, wail!
Come here,[f] lie in sackcloth all night long,
you ministers of my God!
For the Temple of your God has been deprived
of cereal offering and libation.
2:15 Order[g] a fast, 14
proclaim a solemn assembly;
you elders, summon
everybody in the country
to the Temple of Yahweh your God.
Cry out to Yahweh:
Is 13:6 Ezk 30:2–3 'Alas for the day! 15
For the Day of Yahweh is near,
coming as destruction from Shaddai.'[h]

Has not the food disappeared 16
before our very eyes?
Have not joy and gladness vanished
from the Temple of our God?
The seeds shrivel 17
under their clods;[i]
the granaries are deserted,
the barns are in ruins,
because the harvest has dried out.
Loudly the cattle groan! 18
The herds of oxen are bewildered
because they have no pasture.
Ho 4:3a The flocks of sheep bear the punishment too.

Yahweh, to you I cry: 19
for fire[j] has devoured the desert pastures,
flame has burnt up all the trees in the countryside.
Even the wild animals pant loudly for you, 20
for the watercourses have run dry,
and fire has devoured the desert pastures.

Am 5:18m **A warning about the Day of Yahweh**[a]

2 Blow the ram's-horn[b] in Zion, 1
sound the alarm on my holy mountain!

Let everybody in the country tremble,
for the Day of Yahweh is coming,
yes, it is near. 1:15

2 Day of darkness and gloom, ‖Zp 1:15
Day of cloud and blackness.[c] Jn 8:12b
Like the dawn, across the mountains
spreads a vast and mighty people,[d] 1:6
such as has never been before,
such as will never be again
to the remotest ages.

The invasion of locusts

3 In their van a fire devours, 1:19
in their rear a flame consumes.
The country is like a garden of Eden ahead of them Gn 2:8
and a desert waste behind them.
Nothing escapes them.
4 They look like horses, ↗Rv 9:7,9
like chargers they gallop on,[e]
5 with a racket like that of chariots
they spring over the mountain tops,
with a crackling like a blazing fire
devouring the stubble,
a mighty army in battle array.

6 At the sight of them, people are appalled Is 13:8
and every face grows pale. Na 2:11
7 Like fighting men they press forward,
like warriors they scale the walls,
each marching straight ahead,
not turning from his path;[f]
8 they never jostle each other,
each marches straight ahead:
arrows fly, they still press forward,
never breaking ranks.
9 They hurl themselves at the city,
they leap on to the walls,
swarm up the houses,
getting in through the windows
like thieves.

f. Into the Temple, *see* 2:17.

g. lit. 'sanctify'. Similar exhortations to repentance and prayer recur in 2:12–13,15–17; *see also* Jon 3:5–9. The interest that Joel displays in formal observances and the liturgy, 1:9,13,16; 2:14, contrasts markedly with the attitude of Amos, Hosea, Micah, and Jeremiah, *see* Am 5:21n; but Joel, too, insists on the need for inward conversion, 2:13.

h. There is a play on the words *shod* (devastation) and Shaddai (a name of God, *see* Gn 17:1b). The plague of locusts heralds the 'Day of Yahweh', which is a day of terror, *see* 2:1–2,11; Am 5:18m, even though, in the context of Jl 3–4 (but *see* Ob 15), it brings the ultimate triumph of Israel.

i. Sense uncertain; three out of the four Hebr. words in the sentence occur here and nowhere else.

j. Fire, cf. 2:3, and flame are symbolic of the drought following the depredations of the locusts, *see* Am 7:4.

2 a. The invasion of locusts is described in vv. 1–11 as the attack of an irresistible army, this time as an aspect of the Day of Yahweh, 1:15.

b. A warning of imminent danger, Ezk 33:3,6; Ho 5:8; Am 3:6, the sound of trumpet or horn heralds the punishment of Israel, Is 18:3; Jr 4:5; 6:1; Ho 8:1, and the coming of the Day of retribution, 2:1; Zp 1:16, cf. Rv 8:6–9:21. It is also used to summon Israel to religious gatherings, 2:15; Nb 10:2–10; hence it is to be the signal for the gathering of all the elect on the last day, Is 27:13; 1 Th 4:16–17; 1 Co 15:52.

c. These images correspond to the approach of the cloud of locusts which darken the sky, cf. Rv 9:2. The comparison is either with the speed of the invasion of locusts or with the yellowish gleam of the sun on their bodies.

d. 'Like the dawn, . . . spreads' Gk; 'As the dawn spreads' Hebr.

e. The comparison of locusts with horses is not uncommon. Here, vv. 4–9, it is elaborated into a description of the advancing locusts in terms of an invading army; *see* Na 2:4–7,11; 3:2–3,15–17, where the context is apocalyptic.

f. 'turning from' Gk; 'entangling' Hebr.

A vision of the Day of Yahweh

4:15–16 As they come on, the earth quakes, 10
the skies tremble,
=4:15 sun and moon grow dark,
the stars lose their brilliance.[g]
Yahweh's voice rings out[h] 11
at the head of his troops!
For mighty indeed is his army,
strong, the enforcer of his orders,
3:4 for great is the Day of Yahweh,
Na 1:6
Ml 3:2,23
↗Rv 6:17 and very terrible—who can face it?

A call to repentance

'But now—declares Yahweh— 12
Dt 4:29–30 come back to me with all your heart,
fasting, weeping, mourning.'
Is 58:5–7 Tear your hearts and not your clothes, 13
Am 5:21n and come back to Yahweh your God,
Ex 34:6–7+ for he is gracious and compassionate,
slow to anger, rich in faithful love,
and he relents about inflicting disaster.
Am 5:14seq. Who knows if he will not come back, relent 14
Jon 3:9 and leave a blessing behind him,[i]
a cereal offering and a libation
to be presented to Yahweh your God?

2:1b Blow the ram's-horn in Zion! 15
1:14 Order a fast,
proclaim a solemn assembly,
call the people together, 16
summon the community,[j]
assemble the elders,
gather the children,
even infants at the breast!
Dt 24:5 Call the bridegroom from his bedroom
and the bride from her bower!
1 M 7:36–38 Let the priests, the ministers of Yahweh, 17
stand weeping between portico and altar,[k]
Ex 32:11–12,11e saying, 'Spare your people, Yahweh!
Do not expose your heritage to the contempt,
to the sarcasm of the nations!
Ps 42:3,10; 79:10 Why give the peoples cause to say,
Mi 7:10
Ml 2:17 "Where is their God?" '

B: YAHWEH'S ANSWER

Dt 4:24f Then, becoming jealous over his country, 18
Yahweh took pity on his people.

The plague stops

Yahweh said in answer to his people, 19
'Now I shall send you
Dt 11:14 wheat, wine and olive oil
until you have enough.

Never again will I expose you
to the contempt of the nations.
20 I shall take the northerner far away from you[g]
and drive him into an arid, desolate land,
his vanguard to the eastern sea,
his rearguard to the western sea.
He will give off a stench,
he will give off a foul stink — Is 34:3 Am 4:10
(for what he made bold to do).'

A vision of plenty

21 Land, do not be afraid;
be glad, rejoice,
for Yahweh has done great things. — Ps 126:2,3
22 Wild animals, do not be afraid;
the desert pastures are green again,
the trees bear fruit,
vine and fig tree yield their richness.

23 Sons of Zion, be glad,
rejoice in Yahweh your God;
for he has given you
autumn rain as justice[m] demands,
and he will send the rains down for you,
the autumn and spring rain as of old. — Dt 11:14
24 The threshing-floors will be full of grain,
the vats overflow with wine and oil.

25 'I will make up to you for the years
devoured by grown locust and hopper, — 1:4a
by shearer and young locust,
my great army
which I sent to invade you.

26 'You will eat to your heart's content,
and praise the name of Yahweh your God
who has treated you so wonderfully.
(My people will never be humiliated again!)

27 'And you will know that I am among you in Israel, — Ho 11:9
I, Yahweh your God, and no one else. — Is 42:8e; 44:6+
My people will never be humiliated again!'

g. Cosmic phenomena mark the Day of Yahweh, *see* Am 8:9h.

h. The thunder, *see* 4:16; Ex 19:16g; Jb 37:4,5; Ps 18:13; 29:3–9; Am 1:2. The locusts are the 'troops'.

i. Good harvests, *see* Dt 7:13–14; 16:10,15,17; Hg 2:15–19, making sacred offerings possible again, *see* Jl 1:9.

j. 'Order' and 'summon': lit. 'sanctify', *see* 1:14.

k. In the courtyard to the east of the sanctuary, *see* 1 K 6:3; Ezk 40:48–49, between the portico (*ulam*) and the altar of burnt offering, 1 K 8:64; 2 Ch 8:12. The priests pray facing the sanctuary.

l. The army of locusts, vv. 1–11, is now assimilated to the enemy coming from the north to execute Yahweh's judgements, a consistent theme in prophetic literature, Jr 1:13–15,13e; Ezk 26:7.

m. Meaning uncertain: 'as justice demands', lit. 'for justice', perhaps a gloss: Yahweh gives the repentant people rain 'according to his justice', that is his loyalty towards the people in view of the covenant; or 'in due measure' or again 'in view of justice', as a sign of the return of the people to uprightness. The Vulg. has given this text a messianic meaning by translating 'the teacher of uprightness', *see* Ho 10:12 Hebr., and Jr 23:6; 33:15. This title recurs to denote the principal personality of the Covenant Sect in the Qumran texts.

II: THE NEW AGE AND THE DAY OF YAHWEH

A: THE OUTPOURING OF THE SPIRIT[a]

3 'After this 1 2:28
Nb 11:25–30 I shall pour out my spirit on all humanity.
Is 32:15 Your sons and daughters shall prophesy,
Ezk 39:29 your old people shall dream dreams,
↗Ac 2:17–21 and your young people see visions.
Even on the slaves, men and women,[b] 2 29
1 Co 12:13 shall I pour out my spirit in those days.
I shall show portents in the sky and on earth,[c] 3 30
blood and fire and columns of smoke.'

The sun will be turned into darkness, 4 31
↗Rv 6:12 and the moon into blood,
2:10–11 before the Day comes,
that great and terrible Day.
↗Rm 10:13 All who call on the name of Yahweh will be saved, 5 32
Ob 17 for *on Mount Zion will be those who have escaped*,
Ac 2:39;4:12 as Yahweh has said,
Rv 14:1 and in Jerusalem a remnant whom Yahweh is calling.[d]

B: THE JUDGEMENT OF THE NATIONS[a]

The judgement announced

4 'For in those days and at that time, 1
Zc 12 when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem,[b]
Zc 14:2 I shall gather all the nations together 2
↗Rv 16:13–16 and take them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat;[c]
there I shall put them on trial
as regards Israel, my people and my heritage,[d]
for having scattered them among the nations
and having divided my land among themselves.[e]
They drew lots for my people, 3
bartering a boy for a whore
and selling a girl for wine to drink.

Am 1:6–10 **Charges against the Phoenicians and Philistines**[f]

'And what are you to me, Tyre and Sidon 4
and all you regions of Philistia?
Can you take revenge on me?
If you take revenge on me,
I shall quickly, instantly, make your revenge recoil on your own heads[g]
for having taken my silver and gold away 5
and carried off my valuable treasures to your temples,
Ezk 27:13 and for having sold 6
the children of Judah and Jerusalem to the Ionians,[h]
to be taken far away from their own frontiers.
Look, I shall rouse them from the places to which you have sold them; 7
I shall make your actions recoil on your own heads
by selling your sons and daughters 8
to the sons of Judah,
who in turn will sell them to the Sabaeans,[i]

to a nation far away—
Yahweh has spoken!' Is 22:25 Ob 18

A summons to the nations[j] Ezk 38–39 Zc 14:2

9 Proclaim this among the nations.
Prepare for war![k]
Rouse the champions!
All you troops, advance,
march!
10 Hammer your ploughshares into swords, Is 2:4 Mi 4:3
your bill-hooks into spears;[l]
let the weakling say, 'I am tough!'
11 Hurry and come,
all the nations around,
and assemble there!
(Yahweh, send down your champions!)[m]
12 'Let the nations rouse themselves and march
to the Valley of Jehoshaphat,
for there I shall sit in judgement
on all the nations around.
13 Ply the sickle, Is 17:5; 63:1–6 Mt 13:39 Mk 4:29 Jn 4:35*l* ↗Rv 14:14–20
for the harvest is ripe;
come and tread,
for the winepress is full;
the vats are overflowing,
so great is their wickedness!'
14 Multitude on multitude Is 17:12
in the Valley of Decision![n] 4:2c
For the Day of Yahweh is near
in the Valley of the Verdict!

3 **a.** We follow the traditional Hebrew chapter divisions. In the Gk OT, 3:1 = 2:28 and 4:1 = 3:1. The prophecy of vv. 1–3, the fulfilment of which is assigned by vv. 4–5 to the Day of Yahweh, promises an outpouring of the spirit when that day comes, *see* Ezk 36:27f. Peter's discourse in Ac 2:16–21, 17k identifies the miracle of Pentecost as the fulfilment of this prophecy.

b. God's spirit will be poured out on all, regardless of social standing, in accordance with Moses' prayer, Nb 11:29. It is both spirit of prophecy, characterised here by dreams and visions, *see* Nb 12:6, and cause of inward renewal, *see* Ezk 11:19–20; 36:26–27.

c. Heralding the final judgement on the Day of Yahweh, 1:15; 2:1–2,10; Am 8:9h.

d. 'in Jerusalem' transposed from the 2nd line of v. • 'a remnant' conj.; 'among the remnant' Hebr.

4 **a.** The restoration of Israel involves the punishment of the oppressor-nations, cf. Ob 15–21. The Day of Yahweh here becomes full of menace for the enemy nations. • As in previous chapters, the words of Yahweh, vv. 1–8,12–13,17 (21^{a}?), are intermingled with those of the prophet, 9–11,14–16,18–20,21^{b}.

b. Alternatively: 'when I bring back the captives of Judah and Jerusalem'.

c. *Jehoshaphat* (lit. 'Yahweh judges'), also v. 12, is the symbolic name for the place where Yahweh is to judge the nations, *see* Is 66:16; Jr 25:31, called 'the Valley of Decision' in v. 14. vv. 11 and 16 suggest that it is near Jerusalem, though it is unnecessary to identify it with the present 'Valley of Jehoshaphat' (the valley of the Kidron to the south east of the Temple), a name traceable only to the fourth century AD.

d. Here Israel is not the Northern Kingdom but all the people of Yahweh, cf. 2:23,27; 4:1.

e. Alluding to the deportations of 597 and 586, and to the treatment of the country and its capital by the Chaldaeans and Judah's neighbouring states, cf. Ezk 21:23–37; 25; Ob 11–14; Na 3:10.

f. Unlike the peoples in the previous prophecy, vv. 1–2, these two are mentioned by name and charged with plundering, v. 5, and for trafficking in Jewish slaves (possibly victims of the disasters of 597 and 586). *See* Am 1:6–10 (vv. probably dating from the Exile), where the same charges are brought against the same peoples.

g. In accordance with the *lex talionis* (Ex 21:25f) applied in vv. 5–8, cf. Ps 7:14–16; Ob 15.

h. The Greeks.

i. A mercantile people in the south of Arabia, *see* 1 K 10:1a; Jb 6:19; Jr 6:20.

j. Resumption of the theme of judgement, vv. 1–3. The nations may declare war on Yahweh and march on Zion, cf. Zc 12:3–4; 14:2, but there in the Valley of Decision, vv. 11–14, they will meet their judgement and final defeat, vv. 15–17.

k. lit. 'sanctify war'; war was regarded as a sacred undertaking, cf. 2:16; Is 13:3; Jr 6:4; 22:7.

l. Reversal of the paradisal conditions, Is 2:4; 11:6e, reinstituted after the judgement, vv. 18 and 21.

m. 'Hurry' *hushu* conj.; Hebr. *'ushu* unknown. • 'assemble' Gk; 'they will assemble' Hebr. The last line is probably a gloss. • The 'champions' or 'heroes' of the heavenly army are the angels (the 'holy ones' of Zc 14:5).

n. Verdict and decision that settle a matter. The word can also mean the sledge underset with sharp stones used for threshing, cf. Is 28:27; 41:15; Am 1:3; the figure is suggested by the 'harvest' in v. 13; in which case, 'Valley of the Sledge'.

The Day of Yahweh

=2:10 Sun and moon grow dark, 15
the stars lose their brilliance.
Jr 25:30 ||Am 1:2+ Yahweh roars from Zion, 16
he thunders from Jerusalem;
heaven and earth tremble.

Ps 46:1–2 But Yahweh will be a shelter for his people,
a stronghold for the Israelites.

2:27 Ezk 38:23 'Then you will know that I am Yahweh your God 17
residing on Zion, my holy mountain.
Jerusalem will then be a sanctuary, [o]
Rv 21:27 no foreigners will overrun it ever again.'

C: THE GLORIOUS FUTURE OF ISRAEL

When that Day comes, 18
Am 9:13 the mountains will run with new wine
and the hills will flow with milk,
and all the stream-beds of Judah
will run with water.
Is 30:25 Ezk 47:1a Zc 14:8 Jn 4:1a A fountain will spring from Yahweh's Temple
and water the Gorge of the Acacias. [p]
Egypt will become a desolation, 19
and Edom a desert waste
Ob 10n on account of the violence done to the children of Judah
whose innocent blood they shed in their country.
But Judah will be inhabited for ever, 20
Jr 17:25 Ezk 37:25 and Jerusalem from generation to generation!
'I shall avenge their blood and let none go unpunished,' [q] 21
and Yahweh will dwell in Zion.

o. Inviolable, *see* Is 51:23; 52:1; Jr 31:40; Ob 17; Na 2:1; Zc 9:8; 14:21.

p. Location uncertain in the apocalyptic context of a renewed Holy Land.

q. Following Gk and Syr.; 'I shall leave their blood unpunished'; 'I shall not leave unpunished' Hebr. • This verse is meant to be a gloss on the end of v. 19.

AMOS

Title

1 1 Words of Amos one of the shepherds of Tekoa. [a] The visions he had about
Israel, in the time of Uzziah king of Judah and Jeroboam [b] son of Joash, king of
Israel, two years before the earthquake. [c] 8:8;9:5 Zc 14:5

Introduction

2 He said:

Yahweh roars from Zion [d] 11:10 ‖Jr 25:30 ‖Jl 4:16
and makes himself heard from Jerusalem;
the shepherds' pastures mourn,
and the crown of Carmel dries up. Is 33:9 Na 1:4

I: JUDGEMENT ON THE NEIGHBOURING NATIONS AND ON ISRAEL ITSELF [e]

Damascus Is 17:1–3 Jr 49:23–27

3 Yahweh says this:

For the three crimes, the four crimes [f] of Damascus,
I have made my decree and will not relent: [g]
because they have threshed Gilead with iron threshing-sledges, [h] 2 K 8:12; 10:32–33;
4 I shall send fire down on the House of Hazael 13:3,7
to devour the palaces of Ben-Hadad; [i]
5 I shall break the gate-bar of Damascus,
I shall destroy the inhabitant of Bikath-Aven,
the holder of the sceptre in Beth-Eden, [j]
and the people of Aram will be deported to Kir, [k] 2 K 16:9
Yahweh says.

1 a. Sheep farmers, cf. 2 K 3:4, rather than a mere shepherd. • Tekoa is a village in Judah, about 5 miles (8 km) south east of Bethlehem.

b. Uzziah of Judah, 781–740; Jeroboam II of Israel, 783–743 BC.

c. The earthquake in question is possibly attested by archaeological excavations at Hazor in Upper Galilee; it seems to have occurred in the middle of the eighth century BC. As a result of it, *see* Zc 14:5 (LXX), valleys became blocked. This is not merely a method of dating; the editors responsible for the note almost certainly regarded the earthquake as a divine manifestation confirming Amos' prophecy, cf. 9:5; Ps 75:3; Mi 1:4.

d. Whether these are Amos' own words or a later Judaean adjustment, *see* Ho 1:7i, the passage asserts that despite the schism Jerusalem, where Yahweh resides, is the unifying centre of God's people.

e. This section assembles prophecies pronounced at various times against seven nations (an added prophecy against Judah is probably of later date). The structure of these prophecies is the same throughout and the same stereotyped formulae recur. They stress that Yahweh will leave no injustice unpunished among the nations. Israel is dealt with last, to show that the punishment it so little expects will strike Israel no less than other nations, and this will be the supreme manifestation of divine justice.

f. These two numbers together indicate an indefinite number, large or small according to context, cf. 4:8; Is 17:6; Jr 36:23 and the 'numerical proverbs', Pr 30:15e.

g. lit. 'I shall not reverse it', the pronoun 'it' standing for the divinely ordained penalty.

h. Weighted sledges used for threshing grain in the Middle East. The image is often used for the destruction of the vanquished, Is 21:10; 41:15; Mi 4:12seq., *see also* Elisha's prophecy, 2 K 8:12.

i. Hazael and his son Ben-Hadad III kings of Aram were bitter enemies of Israel.

j. Bikath-Aven ('Valley of Wickedness') and Beth-Eden ('House of Pleasure'), otherwise unidentified, are probably symbolic names for Damascus.

k. Back to their place of origin, according to 9:7. According to 2 K 16:9, the prophecy was fulfilled as a result of Tiglath-Pileser III's campaign in 733–732 BC. Kir is perhaps somewhere near Elam, Is 22:6.

Jos 13:2b Jr 47 Jl 4:4f Zp 2:4–7,4e
Gaza and Philistia

Yahweh says this: 6

For the three crimes, the four crimes of Gaza,
I have made my decree and will not relent:
2 Ch 21:16–17 because they have deported entire nations
as slaves to Edom,
I shall send fire down on the walls of Gaza 7
to devour its palaces;
2 Ch 26:6 I shall destroy the inhabitant of Ashdod, 8
the holder of the sceptre in Ashkelon;
I shall turn my hand against Ekron [l]
and the remnant [m] of the Philistines will perish,
says the Lord Yahweh.

Is 23 Ezk 26–28
Tyre and Phoenicia

Yahweh says this: 9

For the three crimes, the four crimes of Tyre,
I have made my decree and will not relent:
because they have handed hosts of captives over to Edom,
1 K 5:26; 9:11–14 heedless of a covenant of brotherhood, [n]
I shall send fire down on the walls of Tyre 10
to devour its palaces.

Dt 2:1b Is 34 Jr 49:7–22 Ezk 25:12–14;35
Edom

Yahweh says this: 11

For the three crimes, the four crimes of Edom,
I have made my decree and will not relent:
Gn 27:41 Nb 20:14–21 because he has pursued his brother [o] with the sword,
because he has stifled any sense of pity,
and perpetually nursed his anger [p]
and constantly cherished his rage,
I shall send fire down on Teman [q] 12
to devour the palaces of Bozrah.

Dt 2:19e Jr 49:1–6 Ezk 25:1–7 Zp 2:8–11
Ammon

Yahweh says this: 13

For the three crimes, the four crimes of the Ammonites,
I have made my decree and will not relent:
2 K 8:12; 15:16 Ho 14:1 because they have disembowelled the pregnant women of Gilead
in order to extend their own frontiers,
I shall light a fire against the walls of Rabbah [r] 14
to devour its palaces
amid war cries on the day of battle,
Is 28:2 in a whirlwind on the day of storm,
and their king shall go into captivity, 15
he and his chief men with him,
says Yahweh.

Nb 22:36h Is 15–16 Jr 48 Ezk 25:8–11 Zp 2:8–11
Moab

2 Yahweh says this: 1

For the three crimes, the four crimes of Moab,
I have made my decree and will not relent:

because they have burnt the bones of the king [a] of Edom to ash,
2 I shall send fire down into Moab
to devour the palaces of Kerioth,
and Moab will die in the tumult,
amid war cries and the blare of trumpets;
3 I shall destroy the ruler there
and slaughter all the chief men there with him,
says Yahweh. [b]

Judah [c]

4 Yahweh says this:

For the three crimes, the four crimes of Judah,
I have made my decree and will not relent:
because they have despised Yahweh's law — Lv 26:14–15 Is 5:24 Jr 7:28
and not kept his commandments,
since their Falsehoods, [d] which their ancestors followed,
have led them astray,
5 I shall send fire down on Judah — Jr 17:27 Ho 8:14
to devour the palaces of Jerusalem.

Israel [e]

6 Yahweh says this:

For the three crimes, the four crimes of Israel,
I have made my decree and will not relent:
because they have sold the upright for silver
and the poor for a pair of sandals, [f] — =8:6
7 because they have crushed the heads of the weak into the dust [g] — Is 3:15
and thrust the rights of the oppressed to one side,
father and son sleeping with the same girl [h] — Dt 27:20;23:19
and thus profaning my holy name,
8 lying down beside every altar — Dt 24:12–13
on clothes acquired as pledges,
and drinking the wine of the people they have fined
in the house of their god. [i]

l. Gath, the fifth Philistine town, is not mentioned; it had already been destroyed by Hazael, 2 K 12:18; cf. Am 6:2.

m. A word later to acquire strong theological overtones, *see* Is 4:3c but here used in its primary sense of the survivors of a group decimated by catastrophe.

n. This suggests that the victims of the slave-trade were Israelites captured during the campaigns of Hazael and Ben-Hadad III, notwithstanding the friendly relations existing between Tyre and Israel since the days of Solomon (1 K 5; 9:11–14) and reinforced by Ahab's marriage to Jezebel (1 K 16:31), daughter of Ethbaal king of Tyre and Sidon.

o. Israel, 'brother' of Edom, Gn 25:21–24,29–30.

p. 'nursing his anger' Syr.; 'his anger rends' Hebr.

q. A poetic name for Edom, *see* Jr 49:7,20; Ob 9.

r. Capital of Ammon, now Amman, *see* 2 S 11–12.

2 **a.** Incineration would prevent the dead man's happiness in the after-life, and was regarded by the Semites as a detestable crime.

b. Yahweh reproaches Moab for its conduct towards a gentile. Israel had no connection with this crime. We may deduce that in the other prophecies also criminal conduct is condemned as such, not because Israel is the victim. For Amos the moral law binds all humanity.

c. This prophecy in the style of Dt is probably a Judaean insertion, *see* Ho 1:7i. Many scholars think the prophecies against Tyre and Edom are also additional.

d. i.e. their idols.

e. Pronouncements against the nations are a normal element of prophetic preaching, Is 13–23; Jr 46–51; Ezk 25–32. By including Israel among these idolaters, Amos must have astounded and enraged his listeners.

f. The prophets often protest against legal corruption, 5:7; 6:12; Is 1:23; Mi 3:1–3,9–11; 7:1–3.

g. 'crushing' assumes that the root *sha'ap* is a form (in fact well attested) of the root *shup*, rather than of the more frequent root *sha'ap* 'eager for', 'panting for'. • Before 'the heads' Hebr. has 'with' or 'by', left untranslated. 'into the dust' is perhaps additional. The line is obscure. • On the greed of the mighty, another prophetic theme, *see* 8:5–6; Is 1:17.23; 3:14; Jr 2:34; Ezk 22:29; Mi 2:1–2,8–11; 3:9–11; 6:9–12; Zp 1:9.

h. This does not refer to a religious prostitute, but to a domestic servant used as an object of pleasure by both father and son. This is condemned less for its incestuous aspect than for the degradation inflicted on a human being. This outrage to human dignity is an outrage to God.

i. At the sacred banquets which followed the sacrifices. • 'their god': this is certainly Yahweh, but they debase him to the rank of an idol when honouring him by feasting on goods exacted from the unfortunate under an appearance of legality, whether by fine or, in the case of insolvency, confiscation, cf. Si 34:20. Clothes taken in pledge from the poor had to be returned by nightfall, Dt 24:12–13.

Dt 7:1a;9:1-2 Yet it was I who destroyed the Amorite before them, 9
he who was as tall as the cedars,
as strong as the oaks;
Jb 18:16 Ho 9:16 I who destroyed his fruit above ground
and his roots below.[j]
It was I who brought you up from Egypt 10
Dt 2:7 and for forty years led you through the desert
to take possession of the Amorite's country;
Dt 18:18e I who raised up prophets from your sons 11
Nb 6:1a and Nazirites from your young men.
Israelites, is this not true?
—declares Yahweh!

But you have made the Nazirite drink wine 12
7:12–13 1 K 22:8,27 Is 30:10 Jr 11:21 and given orders to the prophets,
'Do not prophesy.'[k]
Very well! Like a cart overloaded with sheaves 13
1:3h I shall crush you where you stand;
flight will be cut off for the swift, 14
the strong will have no chance to exert his strength
9:1 Ps 33:16 nor the warrior be able to save his life;
the archer will not stand his ground, 15
Jr 46:5 the swift of foot will not escape,
nor will the horseman save his life;
even the bravest of warriors 16
Mk 14:52; 3:18o will jettison his arms and run away, that day!
—declares Yahweh!

II: ISRAEL WARNED AND THREATENED

Election and punishment

3 Listen, Israelites, to this prophecy which Yahweh pronounces against you, 1
against the whole family which I brought up from Egypt:[a]

Dt 7:6b You alone have I intimately known[b] of all the families of earth, 2
Mt 11:20–24par. that is why I shall punish you for all your wrong-doings.

The prophetic call cannot be resisted[c]

Do two people travel together 3
unless they have agreed to do so?[d]
Does the lion roar in the forest 4
if it has no prey?
Does the young lion growl in his lair
if it has caught nothing?
Does a bird fall on the ground in a net 5
unless a trap[e] has been set for it?
Will the net spring up from the ground
without catching something?
Jl 2:1b Is 45:7 Does the trumpet sound in the city 6
without the people being alarmed?
Does misfortune come to a city
if Yahweh has not caused it?

No indeed, Lord Yahweh does nothing 7
Gn 18:17 Jr 7:25 without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets.[f]

8 The lion roars: who is not afraid?
Lord Yahweh has spoken: who will not prophesy? — Rv 10:3; 7:14–15; Jr 20:7–9; Ac 4:20; 1 Co 9:16

Samaria will perish for her corruption

9 From the palace roofs of Assyria
and from the palace roofs of Egypt,[g]
proclaim aloud,
'Assemble on the hills of Samaria — Zp 3:8
and observe the grave disorders inside her
and the acts of oppression there!' — 2:6–8
10 Little they know of right conduct
—declares Yahweh—
who cram their palaces with violence and extortion.
11 This is why—Lord Yahweh says this—
an enemy will soon besiege the land,[h] — 2 K 17:3–6
he will bring down your strength
and your palaces will be looted.

12 Yahweh says this:
As the shepherd rescues two legs or the tip of an ear — Gn 31:39; Ex 22:12
from the lion's mouth,
so will the children of Israel be salvaged[i]
who now loll in Samaria in the corners of their beds, on their
divans of Damascus.[j]

Against Bethel and domestic luxury

13 Listen and testify against the House of Jacob
—declares the Lord Yahweh, God Sabaoth— — 1 S 1:3c
14 the day when I punish Israel for his crimes
I shall also punish the altars of Bethel;[k] — 1 K 12:29–30,29e; 13:1–5 •Ex 27:2b
the horns of the altar will be hacked off
and will fall to the ground.
15 I shall blast winter house with summer house,
ivory houses[l] will be destroyed — 2 K 22:19
and many mansions cease to be
—declares Yahweh.

j. Metaphor of total destruction.

k. Throughout this saying of Yahweh, the Israelites' behaviour is condemned not only as a breach of the laws, but also and primarily as deliberate opposition to God's concern for them as his chosen people.

3 **a.** In the last part of the v. the prophet seems to be addressing the twelve tribes. This may be a Judaean adaptation intended, the Northern Kingdom having disappeared, to apply Amos' message to the kingdom of Judah, *see* 2:4seq.

b. 'known' in the biblical sense of chosen, loved: Gn 18:19; Dt 9:24; Ws 10:5; Jr 1:5; Ho 13:4. Israel's being chosen is not, in Amos' eyes, a privilege, 9:7g, but a responsibility which the nation has to discharge by faithfulness and right conduct.

c. In all this passage the prophet is justifying his intervention. There is neither effect without cause, vv. 3–5[b], nor cause without effect, vv. 5[c]–6,8[a]. If the prophet exercises his office, it is because Yahweh has spoken; if God speaks, the prophet cannot but prophesy, vv. 7–8[b]. The images chosen suggest that the message will be one of disaster.

d. Or 'without having met'; Gk 'without knowing each other'.

e. Or 'bait', or 'sling'.

f. A prose gloss.

g. 'Assyria' Gk; 'Ashdod' Hebr. • Israel's two great hostile neighbours are summoned as witnesses to her crimes, as heaven and earth are summoned in Is 1:2, cf. Dt 30:19.

h. *Yesobeb* conj.; Hebr. *usebib* 'all around'. • Though never specified, the enemy is Assyria, the threat of which pervades Amos' entire prophecy.

i. The shepherd discharged his liability for a missing sheep by producing the fragments left by a predator. Far from promising that an Israelite remnant will survive, Amos prophesies that nothing but scraps will be salvaged to attest the honesty of the shepherd, that is Yahweh, and his prophet, *see* Ex 22:12.

j. lit. 'on the Damascus of a divan'. The word 'Damascus' perhaps designated a luxurious material as the derived English word 'damask' does today.

k. On Bethel, *see* 4:4c.

l. Houses in which the furniture or walls were overlaid with ivory. Such decorations have been discovered in the course of excavation in Samaria.

Is 3:16–24; 32:9–14

Against the women of Samaria

4 Listen to this saying, you cows of Bashan [a] 1
living on the hill of Samaria,
exploiting the weak and ill-treating the poor,
saying to your husbands, 'Bring us something to drink!'
Lv 17:1a Ps 89:35 The Lord God has sworn by his holiness: 2
Look, the days will soon be on you
when he will use hooks to drag you away
Is 5:11–12+ and fish-hooks for the very last of you;
through the breaches in the wall you will leave, 3
each one straight ahead,
and be herded away towards Hermon [b]
—declares Yahweh.

The self-deception, obstinacy and punishment of Israel

Go to Bethel, and sin, 4
2 K 2:1a to Gilgal, and sin even harder! [c]
Bring your sacrifices each morning,
your tithes every third day, [d]
burn your thank-offering of leaven 5
Lv 7:11a Mt 6:2;23:5par. and widely publicise your free-will offerings,
for this, children of Israel, is what makes you happy [e]
—declares the Lord Yahweh.

Lv 26:14–39 Ws 12:2,10 I even [f] gave you clean teeth [g] in all your towns 6
and a shortage of food in all your villages
and still you would not come back to me
—declares Yahweh.

Jr 14:1–6 Jl 1:12 I even withheld the rain from you 7
full three months before harvest-time;
I caused rain to fall in one town
and caused no rain to fall in another;
one field was rained on
and the next for want of rain dried up;
two towns, three towns went tottering 8
to one town for water to drink
but went unsatisfied,
and still you would not come back to me
—declares Yahweh.

Dt 28:22 1 K 8:37 I struck you with blight and mildew, 9
I dried up [h] your gardens and vineyards;
the locust devoured your fig trees and olive trees
and still you would not come back to me
—declares Yahweh.

Ex 9:1–7 Dt 7:15 I sent plague on you like Egypt's plague, 10
I slaughtered your young men with the sword
and at the same time your horses were captured;
Is 34:2–3 I filled your nostrils with the stench of your camps
and still you would not come back to me
—declares Yahweh.

Gn 19:1a Zc 3:2 I overturned you as God overturned Sodom and Gomorrah; [i] 11
you were like a brand snatched from the blaze
and still you would not come back to me
—declares Yahweh.

12 So this, Israel, is what I plan to do to you.
Because I am going to do this to you,
Israel, prepare to meet your God![j] Mi 3:1-2

Doxology[k]

13 For look, he it is who forges the mountains, creates the wind,
who reveals his mind to humankind,[l] 3:7
changes the dawn into darkness[m]
and strides on the heights of the world:[n]
Yahweh, God Sabaoth, is his name. 5:8,27;9:6 Jr 32:18 Ho 12:6

Lament for Israel

1 5 Listen to this word which I utter against you,
it is a dirge, House of Israel:
2 She has fallen down, never to rise again,
the virgin Israel.[a]
There she lies on her own soil,
with no one to lift her up.

3 For Lord Yahweh says this:
The town which used to put a thousand in the field
will be left with a hundred,
and the one which used to put a hundred
will be left with ten, to fight for the House of Israel.[b]

No salvation without repentance

4 For Yahweh says this to the House of Israel:
Seek me out and you will survive,[c] 2 Ch 15:2 Ho 5:6+;10:12
5 but do not seek out Bethel,
do not go to Gilgal,

4 **a.** Bashan in Transjordan was famous for its pasture lands and cattle. In Ps 22:12 'bulls of Bashan' symbolise frightening power; here the 'cows' symbolise the reckless luxury of the women of Samaria.

b. 'be herded' Gk; 'herd' Hebr. • 'Towards Hermon', i.e. towards Assyria.

c. The sin does not consist simply in frequenting shrines where true religion is contaminated by idolatrous practices but in deliberately disobeying God while showing such enthusiasm in public worship, 5:21n. • On Bethel, *see* Gn 12:8; 1 K 12:28–13:10. On Gilgal, *see* Jos 4:19b.

d. The prophet is sarcastically exaggerating about the rites performed. Alternative trans.: 'on the third day' (after the worshipper's arrival at the shrine). The offering of tithe, Dt 14:22d, was a very ancient religious custom, at Bethel supposedly dating back to the patriarch Jacob, Gn 28:22.

e. The prophet's insistence on 'your' sacrifices, 'your' offerings, what makes 'you' happy, is to point out that the pilgrims to the shrine are more concerned with their own inclinations than they are with honouring God.

f. The following passage, vv. 6–12, is a short poem with a refrain indicating the lesson God wanted the people to learn from these events. As a father punishes his child, Dt 8:5a, so God wants to bring back his people to himself (here the seven strokes of his rod are listed in crescendo, vv. 6–11; Lv 26:14–39; Dt 28:15–68); but all in vain, Is 9:12; 42:25; Jr 2:30; 5:3; Ho 7:10; Zp 3:2,7; Hg 2:17, cf. Ex 7–11; Rv 9:20–21; 16:9–11. Israel is hardened in sin and God is about to take vengeance.

g. Metaphor for having nothing to eat, e.g. famine conditions.

h. 'I dried up' *heherabeti* conj.; Hebr. *harebbot* 'to increase'.

i. Probably alluding to an earthquake, *see* 1:1, affecting only part of the country.

j. Enigmatic announcement of the final punishment. 'Because . . . you' is perhaps a gloss.

k. A hymnal fragment, cf. 5:8–9; 9:5–6, added later, probably for liturgical use. In its present context it makes the threat more impressive by emphasising God's power over the elements, hence over all life.

l. Or 'who reveals the thoughts of humankind', cf. 2 K 5:25–26; Ps 94:11; Jr 11:20.

m. An allusion either to eclipse or to morning thunderclouds, unless the Greek text should be followed, 'who makes dawn and darkness'.

n. Either an allusion to the storm, Ps 18:7–15 or, more likely, an expression symbolising the omnipotence of God, Dt 32:13; Jb 9:8; Ps 18:33; Is 58:14; Mi 1:3–6.

5 **a.** The nation is compared to a girl carried off by death in the flower of youth before fulfilling herself by marriage and child-bearing, cf. Jg 11:39.

b. 'to fight' supplied. The disaster will be great. If a remnant survives, it indicates the scope of the disaster, *see* 1:8m; 3:12i, rather than the hope of rescue, *see* Is 4:3c, which is not envisaged here, *see* Am 5:2.

c. Visiting shrines may indeed be called 'resorting to' or 'seeking out' God, cf. v. 5; Dt 12:5; 2 Ch 1:5. But Amos asserts that the only authentic quest for God is the one that seeks out good and flees evil. This is what ensures survival, v. 6. In other OT passages, people 'seek out' God or 'consult' him (verb *darash*) by questioning him, *see* 1 S 14:41r, through a man of God, Gn 25:22; Ex 18:15; 1 S 9:9; 1 K 22:8, or again by 'seeking out the word', 1 K 22:5; cf. 14:5, either in a book, Is 34:16, or through the mediation of a prophet, 1 K 22:7. A similar expression (the verb being normally *biqqesh*) means rather to seek the face, i.e. the presence, of Yahweh, 2 S 21:1; 1 Ch 16:11 (= Ps 105:4); Ps 24:6; 27:8; Ho 5:15 and (probably in the same sense) Ex 33:7e; Ho 3:5; Zp 1:6; etc. But the two expressions are related: someone seeks 'the face' of Yahweh in order to learn his will, whose presence is often manifested by way of prophecies. In the OT this 'seeking Yahweh' is an imperative necessity of religious life; in the NT the equivalent is to 'seek the kingdom', Mt 6:33.

4:4c;8:14 Ho 4:15 do not journey to Beersheba, [d]
for Gilgal is going into captivity
and Bethel will be brought to nothing. [e]
Seek out Yahweh and you will survive 6
or else he will sweep like fire upon the House of Joseph
and burn it down, with no one at Bethel able to quench the flames.
Mi 3:9 They turn justice into wormwood 7
and throw uprightness to the ground. [f]

4:13k **Doxology**

Jb 9:9;38:31 He it is who makes the Pleiades and Orion, 8
who turns shadow dark as death into morning
and day to darkest night,
=9:6 who summons the waters of the sea
and pours them over the surface of the land. [g]
Yahweh is his name.
He brings destruction on the strong 9
and ruin comes on the fortress. [h]

Threats

6:12 They hate the man who teaches justice at the city gate 10
and detest anyone who declares the truth.
For trampling on the poor man 11
and for extorting levies on his wheat:
Dt 28:30–33+ Zc 5:3–4 although you have built houses of dressed stone,
you will not live in them;
Mi 6:15 Zp 1:13 although you have planted pleasant vineyards,
you will not drink wine from them:
for I know how many your crimes are 12
and how outrageous your sins,
you oppressors of the upright, who hold people to ransom
and thrust the poor aside at the gates.
That is why anyone prudent keeps silent now, 13
‖Mi 2:3 since the time is evil. [i]

Exhortation

5:4c Ps 34:12–14; 37:27 Seek good and not evil 14
so that you may survive,
and Yahweh, God Sabaoth, be with you
as you claim [j] he is.
Hate evil, love good, 15
let justice reign at the city gate:
Jl 2:14 Jn 3:9 •Is 4:3c it may be that Yahweh, God Sabaoth,
will take pity on the remnant of Joseph. [k]

Impending punishment

Therefore Yahweh Sabaoth, the Lord, says this: 16
In every public square there will be lamentation,
in every street they will cry out, 'Alas! Alas!'
The farmer will be called on to mourn,
the professional mourners to lament, [l]
and there will be wailing in every vineyard, 17
4:12 Ex 12:12 Ml 3:1–2 for I mean to pass through among you,
Yahweh says.

The Day of Yahweh

18 Disaster for you who long for the Day of Yahweh! [m]
What will the Day of Yahweh mean for you?
It will mean darkness, not light,
19 as when someone runs away from a lion,
only to meet a bear;
he goes into his house and puts his hand on the wall,
only for a snake to bite him.
20 Will not the Day of Yahweh be darkness, not light,
totally dark, without a ray of light?

Jr 13:16;14:19
Jl 2:1–2
Zp 1:14–18
•Jn 8:12b

Against formalism in religion

21 I hate, I scorn your festivals, [n]
I take no pleasure in your solemn assemblies.
22 When you bring me burnt offerings . . . [o]
your oblations, I do not accept them
and I do not look at your communion sacrifices of fat cattle.
23 Spare me the din of your chanting,
let me hear none of your strumming on lyres, [p]
24 but let justice flow like water,
and uprightness like a never-failing stream!
25 Did you bring me sacrifices and oblations
those forty years in the desert, House of Israel? [q]
26 Now you must shoulder Sakkuth your king
and the star of your God, Kaiwan,

4:4–5

Ps 50:9–13; 51:16
Is 1:11+
Ho 8:13
Lv 3:1

↗Ac 7:42–43

d. Renowned as a shrine used by the patriarchs, Gn 21:31–33; 26:23–25.

e. Alliteration links Gilgal and the fate in store for it ('is going into captivity' *galoh yigeleh*) and there is a play on words between Bethel (meaning 'house of God') and 'house of nothing', cf. Ho 4:15.

f. Perhaps the text should be corrected so that for 'They turn' it reads 'Disaster on those who turn', cf. 5:18 and 6:1. In any case the doxology of vv. 8–9 (added a little later, perhaps for a liturgical purpose, a fragment of a hymn like 4:13 and 9:5–6) awkwardly separates the originally consecutive vv. 7 and 10.

g. Either to flood the earth, Jb 12:15, and return it to its primitive condition, Ps 104:5–9, or to impart to it a fertile rain, Jb 36:27–28.

h. Text uncertain, but the theme of bringing low the powerful is clear, cf. 1 S 2:4, 7; Lk 1:51–52.

i. To avoid being persecuted by unscrupulous rulers. This verse is perhaps a scribal gloss.

j. Relying on its special place as the chosen people, Israel has been counting on Yahweh's unconditional protection, v. 18; 9:10; Mi 3:11.

k. i.e. on the Northern Kingdom depleted by successive punishments from Yahweh, 4:6–11, with more to come, 5:3. Though the first prophetic statement of the theme of the 'surviving remnant', *see* Is 4:3c, Amos' words are tentative, sarcastic and sceptical at best. For a more positive approach, *see* 9:8–9.

l. Word order confused in Hebr., lit. 'lamentations to the professional mourners'.

m. Confident in its privileged relationship with God, Dt 7:6b, Israel counts on his favourable intervention. To this expected 'Day of Yahweh' Amos opposes the prophetic concept of the Day of Yahweh as a day of retribution, Lm 2:22; Ezk 22:24; Zp 1:15, against an Israel hardened in sin; a day of darkness, tears, massacre, terror, 2:13–16; 5:18–20; 8:9–10,13; Is 2:6–21; Jr 30:5–7; Zp 1:4–18, *see also* Jl 1:15–20; 2:1–11. All these texts contain threats of a disastrous invasion (Assyrian or Chaldaean). During the Exile, the Day of Yahweh becomes an object of hope; the retribution of God will now turn against Israel's oppressors, Ob 15; Babylon, Is 13:6,9; Jr 50:27; 51:2; Egypt, Is 19:16; Jr 46:10,21; Ezk 30:4; Philistia, Jr 47:4; Edom, Is 34:6; 63:1. This Day, therefore, is to bring Israel's recovery, a sense found even in 9:11 and also in Is 11:11; 12:1; 30:26; *see also* Jl 3:4; 4:1. After the Exile, the 'Day of Yahweh' becomes more and more a day of 'judgement' ensuring the triumph of the virtuous and the destruction of sinners, Jb 21:30; Pr 11:4; Ml 3:19–23, with the whole world for its theatre, Is 26:20–27:1; 33:10–16. *See also* Mt 24:1a. • On the cosmic signs that are to accompany the Day of Yahweh, *see* 8:9h.

n. The prophets often inveigh against religious hypocrisy, and against the conviction that provided external forms like sacrifice and fasting are observed, all is well, even though the most elementary principles of social justice and neighbourly love are neglected, 1 S 15:22; Is 1:10–16; 29:13–14; 58:1–8; Jr 6:20; Ho 6:6; Jl 2:13; Mi 6:5–8; Zc 7:4–6; *see also* Ps 40:6–8; 50:5–15; 51:16–17. The Psalmists lay emphasis on the inner dispositions that must lie behind acceptable sacrifice: obedience, gratitude, contrition; the Chronicler, too, insists on the part played in sacrificial worship by the liturgical chant as an expression of inward sentiments; these authors all protest against a religion of mere form. The NT will formulate the distinction definitely, Mt 7:21; Lk 11:41–42; Jn 4:21–24.

o. Either a line is missing or the beginning of v. 22 is an incomplete gloss.

p. Religious ceremonies were accompanied by vocal and instrumental music, 1 S 10:5; 2 S 6:5,15.

q. Amos, like Hosea, Ho 2:16–17; 9:10, and Jeremiah, Jr 2:2–3, regarded the period in the desert as a time of perfect union between Yahweh and his people, *see* Ho 2:16p. The material circumstances and rudimentary laws of a nomadic people gave small opportunity for elaborate ritual, *see* Jr 7:22. Yahweh could therefore be pleased with worship which, though simple, was sincere.

those idols you made for yourselves; [r]
for I am about to drive you into captivity beyond Damascus, [s] 27
4:13+ Yahweh says—God Sabaoth is his name.

Against the self-indulgent and their false sense of security

Jr 5:12–13 Lk 6:24 6 Disaster for those so comfortable in Zion [a] 1
and for those so confident on the hill of Samaria,
the notables of this first of nations,
those to whom the House of Israel has recourse! [b]
Travel to Calneh and look, 2
go on from there to Hamath the great,
then go down to Gath in Philistia.
Are they more powerful than these kingdoms?
Is their territory larger than yours? [c]
Thinking to defer the evil day, 3
you are hastening the reign of violence. [d]

3:15 Lying on ivory beds 4
and sprawling on their divans,
they dine on lambs from the flock,
and stall-fattened veal;
1 Ch 23:5 Ne 12:36 they bawl [e] to the sound of the lyre 5
and, like David, they invent musical instruments;
they drink wine by the bowlful, 6
and lard themselves with the finest oils,
but for the ruin of Joseph [f] they care nothing.
That is why they will now go into captivity, 7
heading the column of captives.
Rv 18:14 The sprawlers' revelry is over.

The punishment: plague, earthquake, invasion

4:2 Lord Yahweh has sworn by his own self 8
—declares Yahweh, God Sabaoth:
Is 28:1 I detest the pride of Jacob,
I hate his palaces,
I shall hand over the city and all in it.
2:14–16 If ten people are left in a single house, 9
they will die
and a few will be left [g] to carry 10
the bones from the house,
and they will say to anyone deep inside the house,
'Any more there?' and he will answer, 'No.'
Hab 2:20 Zp 1:7 Zc 2:17 Then he will say, 'Hush!—
Yahweh's name must not be mentioned.' [h]
For look, Yahweh gives the command: 11
as he strikes, the great house falls to pieces
and the small house is in fragments.

Can horses gallop over rocks? 12
Can the sea be ploughed with oxen? [i]
Yet you have changed justice into poison,
5:7 and the fruit of uprightness into wormwood,
while rejoicing over Lo-Debar 13
Dt 8:17+ and saying, 'Wasn't it by our own strength
that we captured Karnaim?' [j]
But look, House of Israel, against you 14
—declares Yahweh, God Sabaoth—

I am raising a nation to oppress you [k]
from the Pass of Hamath to the Gorge of the Arabah. [l]

III: THE VISIONS

First vision: the locusts

1 7 This is what Lord Yahweh showed me:
there was a swarm of locusts
when the second crop was sprouting,
full-grown locusts, after the king's hay had been cut. [a]
2 When they had eaten all the grass in the land,
I said, 'Lord Yahweh, forgive, I beg you. [b]
How can Jacob survive, being so small?'
3 Then Yahweh relented; [c]
'It will not happen,' said Yahweh.

Dt 28:38
Jl 1:4–7;2:3–9

Second vision: the drought

4 This is what Lord Yahweh showed me:
Lord Yahweh summoning fire in punishment; [d]
it had devoured the great Abyss [e]
and was encroaching on the land,
5 when I said, 'Lord Yahweh, stop, I beg you.
How can Jacob survive, being so small?'
6 Then Yahweh relented;
'This will not happen either,' said the Lord Yahweh.

Third vision: the plumb-line

7 This is what he showed me:
the Lord standing by a wall,

r. 'Sakkuth' and 'Kaiwan' conj.; 'Sikkuth' and 'Kiyyun' Hebr., which also inserts 'the star of your god' after 'those idols'. It could be a maladroit gloss. The inhabitants of the kingdom will take with them into exile the statues of the gods which they have venerated, cf. Is 46:1; Jr 48:7; 49:3. Sakkuth and Kaiwan are probably Babylonian gods. As their worship does not seem to be attested for Israel in the eighth century, and, further, since Amos never accuses his listeners of idolatry, the text is perhaps an addition, sarcastically linking the cult of Israelites contemporary with Amos to that of the pagan nations installed in Samaria to replace them after 721, cf. 2 K 17:29–31.

s. i.e. to Assyria.

6 a. 'in Zion' is perhaps a Judaean adjustment to the text, *see* 3:1a; Ho 1:7i.

b. i.e. recourse by the people of Israel to their leaders for paying homage, seeking counsel, and asking for justice.

c. Interpreting the v. as spoken by the notables of Samaria to those who come to consult them: 'you are more powerful than these kingdoms and have nothing to fear.' But the text is uncertain, and the last two lines can be corrected to read 'Are you more powerful than these kingdoms? Is your territory larger than theirs?', so that the collapse of these kingdoms serves as a sign to Israel. But Calneh, cf. Is 10:9, north of Aleppo, was taken by the Assyrians only in 738, Hamath on the River Orontes in 720 and Gath in Philistia in 711.

d. i.e. of enemy occupation.

e. Meaning uncertain but probably pejorative.

f. The impending collapse of the kingdom of Israel.

g. Following the Gk; Hebr. unintelligible.

h. Out of religious respect, or perhaps from fear at the disaster for which Yahweh is responsible. The passage is obscure but the general sense is clear: it describes the catastrophe which descends on the city and the dead who choke the houses, and also the terror which grips the little group of survivors who have to deal with the corpses.

i. Text slightly corrected (separating the words differently and changing the vowels). MT: 'does one plough with oxen?' (plural instead of collective singular).

j. Play on words and place-names: Lo-Debar, 2 S 9:4, meaning 'nothing' and Karnaim, 1 M 5:26, meaning 'horns', a common metaphor for 'strength'. Both towns were in northern Transjordan and had probably been reconquered by Joash or his son Jeroboam II, *see* 2 K 13:23; 14:25.

k. Assyria.

l. i.e. the northern and southern frontiers of the Northern Kingdom as established by the conquests of Jeroboam II. The Gorge of the Arabah is to be differentiated from the torrent of Egypt, which designates the southern boundary of the Promised Land, 1 K 8:65. It is one of the gorges which open into the lower valley of the Jordan (the 'Arabah') near the Dead Sea.

7 a. 'a swarm' Gk; 'he was forming' Hebr. • 'full-grown locusts' Gk; 'the second growth' Hebr. • Presumably the king requisitioned part of the first growth for his cavalry.

b. Intercession was one of the functions appropriate to the prophetic office, Gn 20:7. *See also* 2 M 15:14; Jr 15:1,11; 18:20; Ezk 9:8; Dn 9:15–19; on the intercession of Moses, *see* Ex 32:11e. But when the people persist in their sin, God no longer accepts the prophet's intercession, cf. Jr 14:7–11. Here Amos intercedes only in the first two visions, in the last three he says nothing.

c. i.e. agreed not to carry out his intention.

d. 'summoning fire in punishment' conj.; 'calling in order to punish by fire' Hebr. The 'fire' is drought, 1:2; 4:6–8, that devours everything, cf. Jl 1:19–20; 2:3. Others translate 'he called for a judgement by fire', i.e. fire from heaven such as destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, Gn 19:24–25,28.

e. The subterranean ocean, from which the seas are supplied.

with a plumb-line in his hand.[f]
'What do you see, Amos?' Yahweh asked me. 8
'A plumb-line,' I said.
Then the Lord said,
'Look, I am going to put a plumb-line
in among my people Israel;
never again will I overlook their offences.[g]
Dt 12:2b The high places of Isaac will be ruined 9
and the sanctuaries of Israel laid waste,
2 K 15:8–10 and, sword in hand, I will attack the House of Jeroboam.'

Amaziah challenges Amos' right to prophesy[h]

Amaziah the priest of Bethel then sent word to Jeroboam king of Israel as follows, 10
'Amos is plotting against you in the heart of the House of Israel; the country cannot
tolerate his speeches. ·For this is what Amos says, "Jeroboam is going to die by the 11
5:27; 6:7; 7:9; 9:4 sword, and Israel will go into captivity far from its native land." ' ·To Amos 12
himself Amaziah said, 'Go away, seer,[i] take yourself off to Judah, earn your living
2:12k there, and there you can prophesy! ·But never again will you prophesy at 13
1 K 12:29 ·3:3–8,3c Bethel, for this is a royal sanctuary, a national temple.'[j] ·'I am not a prophet,' 14
2 S 7:8 Ps 78:70–71 Amos replied to Amaziah, 'nor do I belong to a prophetic brotherhood. I am
merely a herdsman and dresser of sycamore-figs.[k] ·But Yahweh took me as I 15
2:12+ followed the flock, and Yahweh said to me, "Go and prophesy to my people
Israel." ·So now listen to what Yahweh says: 16

"You say: Do not prophesy against Israel,
do not foretell doom on the House of Isaac!"
Very well, this is what Yahweh says, 17
"Your wife will become a prostitute in the streets,
your sons and daughters will fall by the sword,
Dt 28:30–33 2 K 17:24 Ho 9:3 your land will be parcelled out by measuring line,
and you yourself will die on polluted soil[l]
and Israel will go into captivity far from its own land!" '

Fourth vision:[a] the basket of ripe fruit

7:7–9 8 This is what Lord Yahweh showed me: 1
A basket of ripe fruit.
'What do you see, Amos?' he asked. 2
'A basket of ripe fruit,' I said.
Then Yahweh said,
Rv 14:15–18 'The time is ripe[b] for my people Israel;
I will not continue to overlook their offences.
That day, the palace songs will turn to howls, 3
—declares the Lord Yahweh—
the corpses will be many that are thrown down everywhere.
6:10h Keep silent!'[c]

2:6–8;4:1 **Against swindlers and exploiters[d]**

Listen to this, you who crush the needy 4
and reduce the oppressed to nothing,
you who say, 'When will New Moon be over[e] 5
so that we can sell our corn,
and Sabbath, so that we can market our wheat?
Dt 25:13+ Ho 12:8 Then, we can make the bushel-measure smaller
Mi 6:10–11 and the shekel-weight bigger
by fraudulently tampering with the scales.

6 We can buy up the weak for silver
and the poor for a pair of sandals,
and even get a price for the sweepings of the wheat.' =2:6
7 Yahweh has sworn by the pride of Jacob,[f]
'Never will I forget anything they have done.'

8 Will not the earth tremble for this 1:1
and all who live on it lament, =9:5
as it all rises together like the Nile in Egypt,
it swells and then subsides like the Egyptian Nile?[g]

Prediction of punishment: darkness and mourning

9 'On that Day—declares the Lord Yahweh—
I shall make the sun go down at noon
and darken the earth in broad daylight.[h]
10 I shall turn your festivals into mourning ↗Tb 2:6
and all your singing into lamentation; 1 M 9:41
I shall make you all wear sacking round your waists Is 3:24
and have all your heads shaved.[i] Ho 2:13
I shall make it like the mourning for an only child, Jr 26
and it will end like the bitterest of days. Zc 12:10

Famine and drought of the word of God

11 'The days are coming—declares the Lord Yahweh— 4:2
when I shall send a famine on the country,
not hunger for food, not thirst for water, Dt 8:3b
but famine for hearing Yahweh's word.[j] Mt 5:6
12 People will stagger from sea to sea,
will wander from the north to the east,
searching for Yahweh's word, Ho 5:6+
but will not find it.

f. After 'wall', Hebr. adds 'of a plumb-line'. This is the only occurrence of the word *'anak* (trans. 'plumb-line') in the Bible and although the word from the same root in Accadian, Syriac and Arabic means 'tin' or 'lead', the exact meaning here is uncertain. A plumb-line establishes a vertical or (with a set-square) a horizontal position. The latter operation seems to be meant here: Yahweh intends to rase everything to the ground, cf. 2 K 21:13; Is 34:11; Lm 2:8. But the sense of the vision is still uncertain.

g. 'offences' supplied, cf. Mi 7:18. This new refrain, cf. 8:2, replacing the one of the first two visions, 7:3,6, implies a hardening in sin not stated explicitly in the text.

h. This prose passage, originating with the prophet's disciples and inserted between the third and fourth vision, immediately follows the prophecy against the royal house, 7:9, and describes the reactions to which it gave rise.

i. Here the term is possibly contemptuous ('visionary').

j. Amaziah speaks as if Amos were one of the professional prophets for whom prophecy was a livelihood, *see* 1 S 9:7d, but he does not accuse him of being a false prophet. On the contrary, by intervening and accusing him of conspiracy (v. 10), he shows his alarm at the possible consequences of his prediction, this being regarded as the efficacious and direct cause of the disasters which it foretells.

k. On prophetic brotherhoods, *see* 2 K 2:3c. • 'herdsman', rare word but unusually meaning someone who looks after large animals rather than sheep, *see* 1:1 (where a different term is used). • Dressing sycamore-figs involved pinching thin stalks, which helped them to ripen.

l. All foreign countries are polluted on account of their idols, Ho 9:3–4; the land of Israel where Yahweh resides, Jr 12:7; Ho 8:1; Zc 9:8, is pure, 2 K 5:17, and 'holy', Ex 19:12e; 2 M 1:7; Zc 2:16.

8 a. Despite the interruption of the Bethel episode, 7:10–17, this fourth vision is connected with the third, 7:7–9, to which it is similar in structure and idea.

b. lit. 'the end has come'. Hebr. contains a play on the words, *qaitz* ripe fruit, lit. 'summer fruit' and *qetz* (end).

c. The implications of the end of the v. are not clear.

d. The following sayings explain, justify and elaborate the prophecy of the end contained in the fourth vision and increase the dramatic tension before the climactic fifth.

e. The New Moon, Lv 23:24d, like the Sabbath, Ex 20:8f, halted business.

f. From the context, *see* 4:2; 6:8a, here 'the Pride of Jacob' could be a divine title, cf. 1 S 15:29; or, as in 6:8, the arrogance of Israel, so firm that it can be used as a basis for an oath, or again the land of Yahweh, Palestine, Ps 47:5.

g. The prophet compares the trembling of the earth, *see* 1:1c, to the rise and fall of the Nile. In this comparison and description there is more poetic imagination than observation, 'like the Nile' versions: 'like a light' Hebr, cf. 9:5.

h. The Day of Yahweh, 5:18m, is accompanied by cosmic signs; earthquake, 8:8; Is 2:10; Jr 4:24, solar eclipse, 8:9; Jr 4:23: Later prophets enlarge on this, using conventional imagery which should not be taken literally, Is 13:10,13; 34:4; Ezk 32:7–8; Jl 2:10–11; 3:3–4; 4:15–16; Hab 3:6; Zp 1:15; cf. Mt 24:29; Rv 6:12–14, and *see* Mt 24:1a.

i. Sign of affliction and mourning throughout the ancient Middle East, Is 15:2; Jr 7:29; Mi 1:16.

j. 'word' Gk; 'words' Hebr. • The prophet is not predicting a conversion as a result of which people are hungry to hear God's word so that they can obey him, but a punishment. Tired of speaking without being listened to, God says nothing and sends no more prophets.

Fresh prediction of punishment

Zc 9:17 'That Day, fine girls and stalwart youths 13
will faint from thirst.
The people who swear by the Sin of Samaria, [k] 14
who say, "Long live your god, Dan!" [l]
and "Hurrah for the pilgrimage to Beersheba!"
will all fall, never to rise again.'

Fifth vision: the fall of the sanctuary [a]

9 I saw the Lord standing by the altar, [b] and he said, 1
'Strike the top of the pillar so that the thresholds shake!
Smash their heads in, one and all! [c]
And I shall put any survivors to the sword;
2:13–16; 6:9–10 whoever runs away will not run far,
whoever escapes will not make good his escape.
Jb 14:13 Ps 139:7–12 Jr 23.23–24 Should they burrow into Sheol, 2
my hand will haul them out;
Jb 20:6a Mt 11:23 should they climb to heaven,
I shall bring them down.
Should they hide on the top of Carmel, 3
I shall track them down and catch them;
Ps 135:6 should they hide from me on the sea bed,
Jb 3:8e; 7:12f I shall order the Serpent there to bite them;
if their enemies herd them into captivity, 4
I shall order the sword to kill them there,
and I shall fix my eyes on them
for evil and not for good.'

4:13;5:8 **Doxology**

Lord Yahweh Sabaoth— [d] 5
he touches the earth and it melts,
=8:8 and all living things on it lament,
as all rises together like the Nile in Egypt
and then subsides like the Egyptian Nile.
Ps 104:3 He who builds his mansions in the heavens, [e] 6
supporting his vault on the earth;
=5:8 who summons the waters of the sea
and pours them over the surface of the land:
4:13+ Yahweh is his name.

Sinners will all perish

Are not you and the Cushites [f] all the same to me, 7
children of Israel?—declares Yahweh.
Did I not bring Israel up from Egypt
Jos 13:2b and the Philistines from Caphtor, and the Aramaeans from Kir? [g]
Look, Lord Yahweh's eyes are on the sinful kingdom, 8
I shall wipe it off the face of the earth,
3:12i Is 4:3c although I shall not destroy the House of Jacob completely
—declares Yahweh. [h]
For look, I shall give the command 9
and shall shake out the House of Israel among all nations [i]
Lk 22:31 as a sieve is shaken out
without one grain [j] falling on the ground.
6:1–6 Is 28:15 Jr 5:12 All the sinners of my people will perish by the sword, [k] who say, 10
'Disaster will never approach or overtake us.' [l]

IV: PROSPECTS OF RESTORATION AND OF IDYLLIC PROSPERITY[m]

11 On that Day, I shall rebuild the tottering hut of David, ↗Ac 15:16–17
make good the gaps in it, restore its ruins
and rebuild it as it was in the days of old,
12 for them to be master of what is left of Edom Gn 22:17 Nb 24:18
and of all the nations once called mine[n] Ob 19
—Yahweh declares, and he will perform it.

13 The days are coming—declares Yahweh— 5:11 Lv 26:5
when the ploughman will tread on the heels of the reaper,
and the treader of grapes on the heels of the sower of seed,
and the mountains will run with new wine
and the hills all flow with it. ↗Jl 4:18
14 I shall restore the fortunes of my people Israel;[o] 5:11 Is 65:21–22 Jr 31:5 Ho 14:8
they will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them,
they will plant vineyards and drink their wine,
they will lay out gardens and eat their produce.
15 And I shall plant them in their own soil
and they will never be uprooted again
from the country which I have given them,
declares Yahweh, your God.

k. Seemingly a play on words between 'Ashimah', the name of a goddess, 2 K 17:30, possibly worshipped in Samaria as Yahweh's consort, and *'ashema* ('sin'), *see* Dt 9:21, where Aaron calls the golden calf 'your sin'.

l. Where one of Jeroboam's two golden calves was, 1 K 12:30.

9 **a.** Probably the shrine at Bethel, but the absence of any precise indication shows that Amos has the other shrines of the kingdom in mind as well.

b. Or 'on the altar'.

c. Perhaps the order is given to an angel.

d. V. 5a (the first three words) of the hymnal fragment, *see* 4:13*l*, is apparently a gloss defining the subject of the sentence.

e. 'mansions' *'alliyyataw* conj.; Hebr. *ketib ma'aloto* 'his staircase'; Hebr. *qere ma'alotaw* 'his staircases'.

f. The people of Ethiopia, remote and exotic. Israel is wrong to consider itself as the 'first of nations', 6:1.

g. The Israelites are not to presume on their position as the chosen people, *see* Dt 7:6b. It is not a privilege but a responsibility, 3:2b, and God is concerned equally for the welfare of other nations, cf. Is 19:22–25.

h. The survival of a 'remnant' is explicitly promised here, though previously hinted at in 5:15.

i. This prophecy possibly dates from the time of the first Israelite deportation in 734 BC; *see* 2 K 15:29.

j. The grains of corn (the upright) are left in the sieve while the dust of the chaff falls through. Or perhaps the sieve keeps the pebbles (sinners) and lets the grain (the upright) through.

k. Amos positively asserts that the sinners will be punished and the upright saved. The subsequent catastrophe in fact spared neither group and proved him over-optimistic. Six centuries later this played its part in arousing a belief in retribution after death, *see* Dn 12:2–3.

l. We follow Gk; 'you will not hasten the disaster or make it affect us' Hebr.

m. These promises include the restoration of the Davidic kingdom, vv. 11–12; material prosperity, vv. 13–14; the homeland recovered for ever, v. 15. On the happiness of messianic days, *see* Ho 2:20*s*. This passage is apparently of a later date, *see* p. 1180, it pre-supposes that the Davidic kings have ceased to reign (587 BC) and was perhaps added in the times of Zerubbabel, 520–515 BC, when hopes of a Davidic restoration ran high.

n. lit. 'over whom my name has been pronounced', as in 2 S 12:28, evidently those nations once forming part of the Davidic empire. LXX interprets the words in a more universal sense, hence the version quoted in Ac 15:16–17.

o. Or 'I mean to bring back those of my people Israel who have been held captive.'

OBADIAH

Title

Dt 2:1a Vision of Obadiah: about Edom. [a] 1

Prologue

‖Jr 49:14 I have received a message [b] from Yahweh, 1c
a herald has been sent throughout the nations: [c]
'Up! Let us march against this people.
Into battle!'

Sentence pronounced on Edom [d]

The Lord Yahweh says this: 1b
‖Jr 49:15–16 Look, I have reduced you to the smallest of nations, 2
you are now beneath contempt.

Is 14:13seq. Your proud heart has misled you, 3
you whose home is in the crannies of the Rock, [e]
who make the heights [f] your dwelling,
who think to yourself,
'Who can bring me down to earth?'
Though you soar like an eagle, 4
Hab 2:9 though you set [g] your nest among the stars,
I shall bring you down from there!—declares Yahweh.

The annihilation of Edom

If thieves were to come to you 5
(or robbers during the night)
surely they would steal only as much as they wanted?
‖Jr 49:9 If grape-pickers were to come to you,
surely they would leave a few gleanings?

But how you have been pillaged! [h]
‖Jr 49:10 How Esau has been looted, 6
his hidden treasures routed out!
Your allies all pursued you right to the frontier, 7
Jr 38:22 your confederates kept you in suspense, then got the better of you,
Ps 41:9 your own guests laid a trap for you,
'He has quite lost his wits.' [i]

When that day comes [j]—declares Yahweh— 8
Is 19:11–15; 29:14 shall I not eliminate sages from Edom
Jr 8:8–9;49:7 and intelligence from Mount Esau? [k]

‖Jr 49:22 Your warriors, Teman, will be so demoralised [l] 9
that the people of Mount Esau will be massacred
to the last one.

The guilt of Edom [m]

10 For the slaughter, ·for the violence — Am 1:11-12
done to your brother Jacob,[n] — Jl 4:19
shame will cover you
and you will be annihilated for ever.

11 On the day,[o] when you stood aloof
while strangers carried off his riches,
while foreigners passed through his gate
and cast lots for Jerusalem,
you were as bad as the rest of them. — Ps 137:7

12 Do not feast your eyes on your brother[p]
on the day of his misfortune.
Do not gloat over the children of Judah
on the day of their ruin.
Do not play the braggart
on the day of distress.

13 Do not enter my people's gate
on their day of calamity.
Do not, you especially, feast your eyes on their suffering
on their day of calamity.
Do not touch their possessions
on their day of calamity.

14 Do not wait at the crossroads
to annihilate their fugitives.
Do not hand over their survivors
on the day of distress.

15 For the Day of Yahweh is near
for all the nations.
As you have done, so will it be done to you:
your deeds will recoil on your own head.[q]

a. v. 1[b] has been transposed to the beginning of v. 2 where the words of Yahweh begin.

b. lit. 'I have heard (Gk and Jr 49:14; 'We have heard' Hebr.) what is heard.'

c. Metaphorical description of a confederacy in process of formation against Edom; cf. Jr 4:5; 50:2.

d. The time will come when Edom in turn will be despised, vv. 2 and 10, for having gloated over Israel, v. 12; collapse will be the punishment for arrogance. On this doctrine of pride and fall, *see* Pr 16:18; 29:23 and (applied to nations) Is 14; Jr 50–51; Ezk 26–28; 29–32; Zc 10:11.

e. The 'rock' (*sela'*) in which Edom is ensconced is a term probably chosen to suggest the name of the capital of Edom, Ha-Sela, 'The Rock', *see* 2 K 14:7; Petra, the Greek name for it, preserves the same sense.

f. 'heights' versions; 'height' Hebr.

g. 'you set' Gk; 'to set (?)' Hebr.

h. This is explained by vv. 6–7: Edom has been despoiled more thoroughly than by common brigands, who would leave something behind, or by 'grape-pickers' who would leave a few grapes for the gleaner, *see* Dt 24:21. In Hebr. this line follows 'or robbers during the night'; a gloss to harmonise the v. with Jr 49:9.

i. Although the Edomites were proverbial for their wisdom, their false friends make this sarcastic comment after Edom's military disaster. • 'Your own guests' (lit. 'those who ate your bread') is absent from the Heb. but is inserted, in line with Ps 41:9. • 'Trap', an uncertain translation of a rare word (*mazor*) that occurs only here. Some emend to another Heb. word meaning a (hunter's) snare (*matzod*).

j. The day of judgement for Edom, as one aspect of the Day of Yahweh, v. 15, *see* Am 5:18m, when God will punish Edom and the other nations, vv. 16–17, but rescues and restores Israel, vv. 17–21.

k. Here and in vv. 9,19,21, a term for the mountainous country of Edom, also called 'Mount Seir', cf. Gn 32:4; 33:14,16; 36:8–9; Dt 2:4,5,12. The territory referred to is south Transjordan.

l. The northern part of Edom, but here and elsewhere designating the whole country.

m. The behaviour of Edom at the time of the fall of Jerusalem rankled deeply in biblical tradition, Ps 137:7; Lm 4:21–22; Ezk 25:12–14. From Ezk 35:5–12 and 36:2,5 it would seem that at that time Edom occupied Judah, at least partially. For similar complaints against the Ammonites *see* Ezk 25:1–7, cf. 21:23–27, and against the Philistines *see* Ezk 25:15–17.

n. On the relationship and discord between Edom and Israel *see* Gn 25:22–28; 27:27–29; 32:4–33:16; Nb 20:22f,23; Dt 23:8. 'Jacob' designates the land of Judah, *see* v. 18u; Jl 4:19.

o. The 'day of Jerusalem', Ps 137:7, was that on which the Chaldaeans entered the city, 2 K 25:3–4, or else that of the burning of the Temple, 2 K 25:8–9, in 587 BC.

p. 'your brother' conj.; 'the day of your brother' Hebr.

q. The *lex talionis*, Ex 21:25f, is applied here to Edom. The same retribution is called down on Babylon, Jr 50:15,29, cf. Rv 18:6–7, on the enemies of Jerusalem, Lm 3:64, and on Tyre, Sidon and the Philistines, Jl 4:4,7.

The Day of Yahweh. Israel revenged on Edom [r]

Just as you have drunk on my holy mountain, 16
Lm 4:21 so will all the nations drink continually, [s]
they will drink, will drink greedily,
but they will be as though they had never been!

↗Jl 3:5 But on Mount Zion will be those who have escaped [t] 17
—it will be a sanctuary—
and the House of Jacob will recover
what is rightfully theirs.

Zc 12:6 Then the House of Jacob will be a fire, 18
the House of Joseph [u] a flame,
and the House of Esau like stubble.
They will set it alight and burn it up,
and no one of the House of Esau will survive.
Yahweh has spoken.

The new Israel

Am 9:12 People from the Negeb will occupy the Mount of Esau, 19
people from the lowlands the country of the Philistines; [v]
they will occupy Ephraim and Samaria,
and Benjamin will occupy Gilead.
The exiles of this army, the sons of Israel, 20
will have the Canaanites' land [w] as far as Zarephthah,
while the exiles from Jerusalem now in Sepharad
will have the cities of the Negeb.

Mi 4:7 Victorious, [x] they will climb Mount Zion 21
to rule over Mount Esau,
‖Ps 22:28 and sovereignty will be Yahweh's! [y]

r. The perspective broadens: on 'the Day of Yahweh' who will judge all the nations, *see* Am 5:18m, Zion hitherto oppressed will become the place of salvation and centre of political power. The hostile nations will be defeated and among them Edom will be ruined for ever. From now on, the prophet addresses the Israelites.

s. From the cup of the wrath of God, *see* Is 51:17h. • 'drink greedily' sense uncertain; others emend to 'totter', cf. Is 24:20; 29:9.

t. Text cited in Jl 3:5 as a 'word of Yahweh'. For the preserved 'remnant' of Judah, *see* Is 4:3c, the Day of Yahweh no longer holds any terror, but gives assurance of salvation on Mount Zion, an inviolable sanctuary through which 'no alien will ever pass again', Jl 4:17.

u. The 'House of Jacob', *see* v. 10n, is Judah, 'the House of Joseph' the Northern Kingdom, *see* Am 5:6; Zc 10:6, associated with Judah at the time of final salvation, *see* Jr 3:18h. The two kingdoms are to reconquer, vv. 19–20, the empire of David, here defined in ideal rather than geographical terms, cf. 1 K 8:65; 2 K 14:25.

v. Translation supported by the Gk; Hebr. could also be understood: 'They will take possession of the Negeb, Mount Esau and the Philistine lowlands.'

w. 'will have' *yireshu* conj.; cf. the rest of the v. Hebr. *'asher* 'who'. • 'the Canaanites' land', lit. 'the Canaanites', i.e. Phoenicia; Zarephthah, between Tyre and Sidon, is to mark the northern frontier of the new kingdom. Sepharad is unknown.

x. 'Victorious', lit. 'The saved' conj.; 'The saviours' Hebr.

y. The triumphal slogan of Israelite eschatology, Ps 22:27; 103:19; 145:11–13; cf. Ps 10:16; 47:7; 93:1; 97:1; 99:1. The rule of Israel is the rule of Yahweh and the fulfilment of history.

JONAH

Jonah rebels against his mission

1, 2 **1** The word of Yahweh was addressed to Jonah son of Amittai: ·'Up!' he said,
'Go to Nineveh, the great city, and proclaim to them that their wickedness has
3 forced itself upon me.' ·Jonah set about running away from Yahweh, and going to Ps 139:7seq.
Tarshish. [a] He went down to Jaffa and found a ship bound for Tarshish; he paid his
4 fare and boarded it, to go with them to Tarshish, to get away from Yahweh. ·But
Yahweh threw a hurricane at the sea, and there was such a great storm at sea that Ps 107:23–30
5 the ship threatened to break up. ·The sailors took fright, and each of them called
on his own god, [b] and to lighten the ship they threw the cargo overboard. Jonah, Ac 27:18
6 however, had gone below, had lain down in the hold and was fast asleep, ·when Mt 8:24–25par.
the boatswain went up to him and said, 'What do you mean by sleeping? Get up!
Call on your god! Perhaps he will spare us a thought and not leave us to die.'
7 Then they said to each other, 'Come on, let us draw lots to find out who is to
blame for bringing us this bad luck.' So they cast lots, and the lot pointed to Jonah. [c]
8 Then they said to him, 'Tell us, [d] what is your business? Where do you come
9 from? What is your country? What is your nationality?' ·He replied, 'I am a
Hebrew, and I worship Yahweh, God of Heaven, who made both sea and dry
10 land.' ·The sailors were seized with terror at this and said, 'Why ever did you do
this?' since they knew that he was trying to escape from Yahweh, because he had 1:3
11 told them so. ·They then said, 'What are we to do with you, to make the sea calm
12 down for us?' For the sea was growing rougher and rougher. ·He replied, 'Take me
and throw me into the sea, and then it will calm down for you. I know it is my fault
13 that this great storm has struck you.' ·The sailors rowed hard in an effort to reach
14 the shore, but in vain, since the sea was growing rougher and rougher. ·So at last
they called on Yahweh and said, 'O, Yahweh, do not let us perish for the sake of
this man's life, and do not hold us responsible for causing an innocent man's death; Jr 26:15
15 for you, Yahweh, have acted as you saw fit.' ·And taking hold of Jonah they
16 threw him into the sea; and the sea stopped raging. ·At this, the men
were seized with dread of Yahweh; they offered a sacrifice to Yahweh and made
vows to him. [e]

Jonah is saved

1 **2** Now Yahweh ordained that a great fish should swallow Jonah; and Jonah
2 remained in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights. [a] ·From the ↗Mt 12:40;16:4
belly of the fish, Jonah prayed to Yahweh, his God; he said: [b]

1 **a.** Tarshish, *see* 1 K 10:1a; Ps 48:7c, stood for the Hebrews for the furthest end of the world.

b. The sailors are from different countries: each has his own god but believes in the power of other gods as well.

c. The belief that a ship was endangered by having a guilty person on board is found elsewhere in antiquity.

d. After 'Tell us', Hebr. adds 'who is to blame for bringing us this bad luck', a gloss taken from the previous v. Gk omits. • 'your business', i.e. 'your job' or 'the purpose of your journey'.

e. The author emphasises the piety of the gentile sailors: they are shocked that Jonah should have disobeyed Yahweh, v. 10. They are equally anxious not to incur Yahweh's anger either by protecting Jonah or by throwing him to the waves, v. 14, and offer sacrifice to Jonah's God whose power they recognise, v. 16.

2 **a.** On this fish and the other prodigies, of which the author is fond, *see* pp. 1188–9.

b. This poem is a mosaic of Psalm-texts and is constructed on the conventional pattern of thanksgiving psalms: description of sufferings undergone, account of deliverance from them. For the psalmists, grave danger is a 'death' and deliverance a 'resurrection'; *see* here vv. 6,7,8. The sea,

Ps 120:1;130:1 Out of my distress I cried to Yahweh 3
and he answered me,
Lm 3:55 from the belly of Sheol I cried out;
you heard my voice!

For you threw me into the deep, 4
into the heart of the seas,
and the floods closed round me.
||Ps 42:7 All your waves and billows passed over me;
Ps 31:22 then I thought, 'I am banished from your sight; 5
Ps 5:7 how shall I ever see your holy Temple again?' [c]

Ps 69:1 The waters round me rose to my neck, 6
the deep was closing round me,
seaweed twining round my head.
To the roots of the mountains, [d] 7
I sank into the underworld,
and its bars closed round me for ever.

Ps 30:3;16:10 But you raised my life from the Pit,
Yahweh my God!
When my soul was growing ever weaker, 8
Yahweh, I remembered you,
and my prayer reached you
in your holy Temple.

Some abandon their faithful love 9
by worshipping false gods,
but I shall sacrifice to you 10
with songs of praise.
Ps 22:25 The vow I have made I shall fulfil!
||Ps 3:8 Salvation comes from Yahweh!

Yahweh spoke to the fish, which then vomited Jonah onto the dry land. 11

The conversion of Nineveh and God's pardon

3 The word of Yahweh was addressed to Jonah a second time. •'Up!' he said, 1, 2
'Go to Nineveh, the great city, and preach to it as I shall tell you.' •Jonah set 3
out and went to Nineveh in obedience to the word of Yahweh. Now Nineveh was
a city great beyond compare; [a] to cross it took three days. •Jonah began by going a 4
day's journey into the city and then proclaimed, 'Only forty days more [b] and
↗Mt 12:41 ↗Lk 11:30,32 Nineveh will be overthrown.' •And the people of Nineveh believed in God; they 5
Ezk 26:16 proclaimed a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least. [c] •When the 6
news reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, took off his robe, put
on sackcloth and sat down in ashes. [d] •He then had it proclaimed throughout 7
Nineveh, by decree of the king and his nobles, as follows: 'No person or animal,
herd or flock, may eat anything; they may not graze, they may not drink any water.
Jdt 4:10 Ezk 27:30–31 •All [e] must put on sackcloth and call on God with all their might; and let everyone 8
renounce his evil ways and violent behaviour. •Who knows? Perhaps God will 9
Jl 2:14 Am 5:15 change his mind and relent and renounce his burning wrath, so that we shall not
perish.' •God saw their efforts to renounce their evil ways. And God relented 10
Gn 6:6d Jr 26:3 about the disaster which he had threatened to bring on them, and did not bring it.

The grievance of the prophet and God's answer

Lk 15:28 4 This made Jonah very indignant; he fell into a rage. •He prayed to Yahweh and 1, 2
said, 'Please, Yahweh, isn't this what I said would happen when I was still in
1:3 my own country? That was why I first tried to flee to Tarshish, since I knew you
Ex 34:6–7+ were a tender, compassionate God, slow to anger, rich in faithful love, who relents

about inflicting disaster. •So now Yahweh, please take my life, for I might as well 1 K 19:4
be dead as go on living.' •Yahweh replied, 'Are you right to be angry?'
Jonah then left the city and sat down to the east of the city. There he made himself a shelter and sat under it in the shade, to see what would happen to the city. •Yahweh God then ordained that a castor-oil plant should grow up over Jonah to give shade for his head and soothe his ill-humour; Jonah was delighted with the castor-oil plant. •But at dawn the next day, God ordained that a worm should attack the castor-oil plant—and it withered. •Next, when the sun rose, God ordained that there should be a scorching east wind; [a] the sun beat down so hard on Jonah's head that he was overcome and begged for death, saying, 'I might as well be dead as go on living.' •God said to Jonah, 'Are you right to be angry about the castor-oil plant?' He replied, 'I have every right to be angry, mortally angry!' Yahweh replied, 'You are concerned for the castor-oil plant which has not cost you any effort and which you did not grow, which came up in a night and has perished in a night. •So why should I not be concerned for Nineveh, the great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left, to say nothing of all the animals?' [b]

God's primordial 'enemy', *see* Jb 7:12f, is seen either as the kingdom of death itself or at least as the way leading to it. Hence the dramatic quality of the poem, and why Jonah's adventure was used by Jesus, Mt 12:40; Lk 11:30, as a figure of his own three-days' stay 'in the heart of the earth' (Sheol rather than the tomb, cf. Jon 2:2–3). The kingdom of death is depicted as a greedy monster which cannot hold Jesus and has to let him go (the resurrection). The analogy between Christian baptism and the resurrection of Christ has led to the use of the figure of Jonah in baptismal typology.

c. 'How shall I ever see . . .' conj.; 'yet I shall see . . .' Hebr.

d. The 'roots of the' mountains presumably denote the bottom of the sea (on which the earth was thought to rest).

3 **a.** lit. 'great before God', the strongest form of the superlative in Hebr.; there is a similar hyperbole in the 'it took three days to cross it', to evoke the fabulous size of Nineveh.

b. The 'forty days' suggest the 40 days of the Flood or the 40 years of Israel in the desert; *see also* 1 K 19:8. Gk reads 'Only three days more', cf. 2:1.

c. The exemplary conversion of the Ninevites was to be recalled in the gospels, Mt 12:41; Lk 11:32. Here, as in the gospels, this is contrasted with the incredulity of the Jews.

d. This whole description of repentance and conversion is the antithesis of Jr 36, *see* pp. 1188–9; it is furthermore full of phrases characteristic of Jeremiah.

e. This omits 'person and animal', which is strictly in the Hebr. but is to be regarded as repeated in error from the previous verse.

4 **a.** 'scorching' Gk; Hebr. uncertain.

b. Ch. 4 underlines the universality of God's compassion. God takes pity on Jonah in the sea, 2:7, on repentant Nineveh, 3:10, on the prophet in his self-pity, 4:6. And finally, 4:10–11, he explains with gentle irony how his solicitude extends even to the animals; how much more then to men, women and children, 'who cannot tell their right hand from their left'. The whole book thus prepares the way for the gospel revelation: God is love.

MICAH

Is 1:1 1 The word of Yahweh which came to Micah of Moresheth during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah kings of Judah. His visions about Samaria and Jerusalem. 1

I: ISRAEL ON TRIAL

THREAT AND CONDEMNATION

Is 28:1–4 **The judgement of Samaria** [a]

Ps 49:1
Is 1:2 Listen, all you peoples, 2
attend, earth and everyone on it!
Yahweh [b] intends to give evidence against you,
the Lord, from his holy temple.

Is 26:21 For look, Yahweh is leaving his home, 3
Am 4:13 down he comes, he treads the heights of earth.

Ps 97:5
Zc 14:4 Beneath him, the mountains melt, 4
and valleys are torn open,
like wax near a fire,
like water pouring down a slope.

All this is because of the crime of Jacob, 5
the sin of the House of Israel.
What is the crime of Jacob?
Is it not Samaria?
What is the sin of the House of Judah? [c]
Is it not Jerusalem?

3:12 So I shall make Samaria a ruin in the open country, 6
a place for planting vines.
I shall send her stones rolling into the valley,
until I have laid her foundations bare.
All her images will be shattered, 7
all her earnings [d] consumed by fire.
I shall leave all her idols derelict—
they were amassed [e] out of prostitutes' earnings
and prostitutes' earnings once more they will be.

Lament for Jerusalem and the lowland towns [f]

This is why I shall howl and wail, 8
2 S 15:30
Is 20:2–4
Ezk 24:17–23 why I shall go barefoot and naked,
why I shall howl like the jackals,
why I shall shriek like the owls;
for there is no cure for the wounds that Yahweh inflicts: 9
the blow falls on Judah,

it falls on the gateway of my people, [g]
on Jerusalem itself.
10 *Do not announce it in Gath,* [h] 2 S 1:20
in . . . shed no tears!
In Beth-Leaphrah
roll in the dust! Jr 25:34
11 Sound the horn,
inhabitant of Shaphir!
She has not left her city,
she who lives in Zaanan. Jos 15:37
Beth-Ezel is torn from its foundations,
from its strong supports. [i]
12 What hope has she of happiness, [j]
she who lives in Maroth? Rt 1:20
Instead Yahweh sent down disaster
on the gateway of Jerusalem itself!
13 Harness the horse to the chariot,
you inhabitant of Lachish! Jos 15:39
That is where the sin of the daughter of Zion began; 2 K 14:19
the crimes of Israel can be traced to you!
14 And so you must provide a dowry
for Moresheth-Gath.
Beth-Achzib [k] will prove a disappointment Jos 15:44
for the kings of Israel.
15 The plunderer will come [l] to you again,
you citizen of Mareshah! Jos 15:44
And into Adullam will vanish 1 S 22:1
the glory of Israel. [m] 2 S 23:13

16 Off with your hair, shave your head, Jr 7:29
for the children that were your joy.
Make yourselves bald like the vulture, Is 22:12
for they have left you for exile.

Against land-grabbers

1 2 Disaster for those who plot evil, Ps 36:4
who lie in bed planning mischief!
No sooner is it dawn than they do it,
since they have the power to do so.

1 **a.** This prophecy against Samaria, uttered before the fall of the city in 721, has been subsequently applied to Jerusalem.

b. 'Yahweh' some Gk MSS; 'the Lord Yahweh' Hebr.

c. 'the sin of the House of Judah' Gk, Targ.; 'the high places of Judah' Hebr.

d. The earnings of sacred prostitutes attached to the cult of Samaria, Ho 4:14; Am 2:7–8; *see* Dt 23:19f; for Micah the whole of Samaria is a prostitute, as Israel is for Hosea, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, *see* Ho 1:2b.

e. 'they were amassed' Gk, Syr.; 'she amassed' Hebr.

f. Foretelling disaster for twelve towns in Philistia and south-western Judah. Seven of these are known: Gath, Moresheth-Gath, Zaanan, Lachish, Achzib, Mareshah, Adullam, cf. Jos 15:35–44; the name of one town has been lost, v. 10; the remaining four must have been in the same region. The general meaning is clear: an invasion affecting the prophet's native place serves here as a warning for Jerusalem. The reference is evidently to Sennacherib's invasion of Philistia and Judah in 701.

g. 'the wounds Yahweh inflicts' conj.; Hebr. 'her wounds'.

h. As in Is 10:28–32, the text plays on the names of the twelve towns. The assonances are: Gath and *tagiddu* 'announce', Beth-Leaphrah and *'aphar* 'dust', (possibly Shaphir and *shophar* 'horn'), Zaanan and *yatzeah* 'she has left', Lachish and *rekesh* 'steed'. Maroth means 'bitterness'. The name Moresheth (the prophet's home, v. 1) suggests the betrothed, *me'orashah*: the town with its marriage gifts is to be handed over to its new master. Achzib plays on *'akzib* 'disappointment'; Mareshah on *yoresh* 'he who takes possession'. • The second line is defective: only one letter of the original place-name remains.

i. 'sound the horn' *shophar he'ebiru* conj. (adding *shophar* as alliteration with Shaphir); Hebr. *'ibri lakem* 'pass for you(?)'. • 'her town' *me'irah* conj.; *see* Gk; Hebr. *'eryah boshet* 'nakedness, shame'. • 'is torn' Gk, Targ.; Hebr. 'will tear'. • 'from its foundations' *misodo* conj.; Hebr. *mispad* 'mourning'. • 'from its supports' *mimmekon* conj.; Hebr. *mikkem* 'from you'.

j. lit 'could she hope?' *ki yihaleh* conj.; cf. Targ.; Hebr. *ki halah* 'for she is tortured with desire'.

k. 'Beth-Achzib' conj.; Hebr. *batte 'akzib* 'The houses of Achzib'.

l. 'will come again' conj.; 'I shall bring (?)' Hebr.

m. David took refuge in Adullam, 1 S 22:1. An emendation would give the reading 'For ever from Adullam the glory of Israel will depart,' i.e. Yahweh will abandon the very place that saw the beginnings of the Davidic dynasty.

Is 5:8 Seizing the fields that they covet, 2
they take over houses as well,
owner and house they seize alike,
the man himself as well as his inheritance. [a]
So Yahweh says this: 3
Look, I am now plotting
a disaster for this breed
from which you will not extricate your necks;
you will not hold your heads up then,
‖Am 5:13 for the times will be disastrous indeed.
That day they will make a satire on you, 4
they will strike up a dirge and say,
Dt 28:30–33 'We have been stripped of everything;
my people's land has been divided up,
no one else can restore it to them,
our fields have been awarded to our despoiler.' [b]

Because of this, you will have no one 5
to measure out a share
in Yahweh's community. [c]

The prophet of misfortune [d]

Is 30:10 Am 2:12 'Do not drivel,' they drivel, 6
'do not drivel like this!
Disgrace will not overtake us! [e]

'Can the House of Jacob be accursed? 7
Has Yahweh grown short-tempered?
Is that his way of going to work?
His prophecies can only be favourable
for his people Israel!' [f]
But you are the ones who play the enemy 8
to my people.
Dt 24:12–13 From the inoffensive man you snatch his cloak,
on those who feel safe you inflict the damage of war. [g]
My people's women you evict 9
from the homes they love
and deprive the children
2 K 4:1 of my glory for ever, [h]
saying, 'Up and off with you! You can't stay here!' 10
For a worthless thing you exact
Ex 22:25 an extortionate pledge. [i]
Jr 5:31 If a man of the spirit came and invented this lie, 11
'I prophesy wine and liquor for you,'
he would be the prophet for a people like this. [j]

Promises of restoration [k]

Jr 3:18h I shall assemble the whole of Jacob, 12
Is 4:3c I shall gather the remnant of Israel,
Ex 34:1a; 37:15–28 I shall gather them together like sheep in an enclosure.
And like a flock within their fold,
they will bleat far away from anyone,
their leader will break out first, 13
then all break out through the gate and escape,
Jn 10:4 with their king leading the way
and with Yahweh at their head.

Against the rulers who oppress the people

1 3 Then I said,
'Kindly listen, you leaders of the House of Jacob,[a]
you princes of the House of Israel.
Surely you are the ones who ought to know what is right,
2 and yet you hate what is good and love what is evil, Is 5:20,23
skinning people alive, pulling the flesh off their bones,
3 eating my people's flesh, stripping off their skin,
breaking up their bones, chopping them up small
like flesh[b] for the pot, like meat in the stew-pan?'
4 Then they will call to Yahweh, Jr 11:11+
but he will not answer them.
When the time comes he will hide his face from them Dt 31:17
because of the crimes they have committed.

Against venal prophets[c]

5 Yahweh says this against the prophets
who lead my people astray:
So long as they have something to eat
they cry 'Peace'. Jr 23:13,32 Ezk 13:10
But on anyone who puts nothing into their mouths
they declare war.
6 And so, for you, night will be without vision
and for you the darkness without divination.
The sun will set for the prophets,
the daylight will go black above them.
7 Then the seers will be covered with shame,
the diviners with confusion;
they will all put their hands over their mouths
because there is no answer from God.
8 Not so with me, I am full of strength
(full of Yahweh's spirit),
of the sense of right, of energy
to accuse Jacob of his crime
and Israel of his sin.

To the rulers: prophecy of the ruin of Zion

9 Kindly listen to this, you leaders of the House of Jacob,
you princes of the House of Israel,
who detest justice,

2 **a.** Confiscation for debt, of which the creditors take advantage to enlarge their estates.

b. Following Gk; Hebr. corrupt. • The punishment, inflicted by a foreign invader, affects the whole nation. • There is assonance between 'our fields' (*sadenu*), 'our despoiler' (*shobenu*), and 'we have been stripped' (*neshaddunu*).

c. The words are addressed to the land-grabbers, who will be excluded from the division of the land in the restored kingdom.

d. The prophet's listeners object, on the strength of the covenant, to his threats, vv. 6–7. Micah retorts, vv. 8–10, that this covenant has been violated by the very ones who hypocritically appeal to it and who ask their prophets to promise them material prosperity, v. 11.

e. The verb here rendered 'drivel', and, in v. 11, 'prophesy', means literally 'to cause to flow, to dribble', usually in a pejorative sense. • 'Disgrace will not overtake us!' conj.; Hebr. uncertain.

f. 'accursed' *'arur* conj.; Hebr. *'amur* 'said'. • 'his prophecies' Gk; Hebr. 'my prophecies'. • 'his people Israel' *'ammo yisra'el* conj.; Hebr. *holek* 'with a just person on the way'.

g. Reconstruction based on Gk. Hebr.: 'And yesterday my people played the enemy; from in front, you took the precious garment from those returned from battle who pass by trustingly.'

h. The honour of free status in Israel.

i. 'a worthless thing (a nothing) *meumah*' conj.; Hebr. *tameah* 'impurity'. • 'you exact a pledge' *tahbelu habol* conj.; Hebr. *tehabbel wehebel* 'you destroy and grief'.

j. The impostor's prophecy also plays on the double meaning of the verb: 'prophesy' and 'cause to flow', *see* v. 6e.

k. The attribution to Micah of these promises of reunion and deliverance is debated. They seem to date from the Exile and may have been added here to mitigate the terrible prophecies before and after them.

3 **a.** 'the house of Jacob' Gk and v. 9; 'Jacob' Hebr.

b. 'like flesh' Gk, Syr.; 'as' Hebr.

c. On gifts to prophets, *see* 1 S 9:7–8; 1 K 14:3; 2 K 4:42; 5:15,22; 8:8–9; Am 7:12. • Micah is not contesting their inspiration but accusing them of being mercenary.

Am 5:7 wresting it from its honest course, [d]
Hab 2:12 who build Zion with blood, [e] 10
and Jerusalem with iniquity!
Is 1:23 Her leaders give verdicts for presents, 11
1 S 9:7+ her priests take a fee for their rulings, [f]
her prophets divine for money
and yet they rely on Yahweh!
'Isn't Yahweh among us?' they say,
Jr 7:3–4 'No disaster is going to overtake us.'
That is why, thanks to you, 12
1:6 Zion will become ploughland,
↗Jr 26:18 Jerusalem a heap of rubble
and the Temple Mount a wooded height.

II: PROMISES TO ZION

The future reign of Yahweh in Zion

‖Is 2:2–4+ 4 But in days to come [a] 1
Yahweh's Temple Mountain
will tower above the mountains,
rise higher than the hills.
Then the peoples will stream to it, 2
then many nations will come and say,
'Come, we will go up to Yahweh's mountain,
to the Temple of the God of Jacob,
so that he may teach us his ways
and we may walk in his paths;
for the Law issues from Zion
and Yahweh's word from Jerusalem.'
He will judge between many peoples 3
and arbitrate between mighty nations. [b]
Jl 4:10 They will hammer their swords into ploughshares
and their spears into bill-hooks.
Nation will not lift sword against nation
or ever again be trained to make war.
But each man will sit under his vine and fig tree 4
with no one to trouble him.
‖Is 1:20 The mouth of Yahweh Sabaoth has spoken.

For all peoples go forward, each in the name of its god, 5
Is 2:5 while we go forward in the name of Yahweh our God
for ever and ever. [c]

The scattered flock is gathered to Zion [d]

That day—declares Yahweh— 6
Ezk 34:1a I shall gather in the lame
Zp 3:19 and bring together the strays
and those whom I have treated harshly.
Is 4:3c From the footsore I shall make a remnant, 7
and from the far-flung a mighty nation.
And Yahweh will reign over them on Mount Zion
thenceforth and for ever.

And to you, Tower of the Flock, 8
Ophel of the daughter of Zion, [e]

to you your former sovereignty will return,
the royal power of the daughter of Jerusalem.

The siege, exile and liberation of Zion[f]

9 Why are you crying out now?
Have you no king? Ps 2:6 Jr 8:19
Has your counsellor perished,
for pangs to grip you like those of a woman in labour?
10 Writhe in pain and cry aloud,[g]
daughter of Zion, like a woman in labour,
for now you must leave the city
and camp in the open country;
to Babylon you must go,
and there you will be rescued;
there Yahweh will ransom you
from the clutches of your enemies.

Her enemies to be crushed on the threshing-floor

11 Now many nations[h]
have mustered against you.
They say, 'Let us desecrate her,
let us gloat over Zion!'
12 But they do not know Yahweh's thoughts, Is 55:8–9
they do not understand his design:
he has collected them like sheaves on the threshing-floor.
13 Start your threshing, daughter of Zion,
for I shall make your horn like iron,
I shall make your hooves like bronze,
so that you can crush many peoples.
And you will devote what they have stolen to Yahweh,
their wealth to the Lord of the whole earth. Jos 3:11;6:19 Zc 4:14;6:5

The distress and glory of the Davidic dynasty[i]

5:1 14 Now look to your fortifications, Fortress![j]
They have laid siege to us;
the ruler of Israel will be struck
on the cheek with a rod.

d. 'wresting' conj.; Hebr. 'they wrest'.

e. '(you) who build' versions; 'build!' Hebr. •Faced with the imposing buildings of the capital, Micah's mind turns first to the underlying extortion which paid for their construction (*see also* Jr 22:13–15; Am 3:10,15; 5:11; 6:8).

f. Referring to the decisions of the priests (*torot*), cf. Ex 22:8; Dt 17:8–13; Jr 18:18; Ezk 7:26; Hg 2:11–14; Ml 2:7.

4 **a.** The origin of this prophecy, found also in Is 2:2–4, is uncertain. As Is 60, it describes the coming of converted nations to Jerusalem, *see* Is 45:14h. This theme is foreign to the thought of Micah, or at least to those sayings which are certainly his.

b. Hebr. adds 'far off', missing from Is 2:4.

c. A liturgical addition (as in Is 2:5).

d. Under the image of the good Shepherd, *see* Ezk 34:1a, a promise of the restoration of Israel in Zion, after punishment, vv. 6–7 are very similar to 2:12–13 and probably have the same origin.

e. 'Tower of the Flock', in Hebr. Migdal-Eder; this ancient place-name, cf. Gn 35:21, here indicates Jerusalem, comparing it to a sheepfold. Ophel was the palace quarter, 2 Ch 27:1–3; Is 32:14.

f. This prophecy predicts the deportation. The mention of Babylon in v. 10 envisages the Exile of 587.

g. 'cry aloud' *wehegi* conj.; Hebr. *wahogi* 'give birth'.

h. This prophecy, unlike the preceding one, describes the liberation of Zion itself, besieged by the nations. Isaiah, the prophet's contemporary, made similar prophecies, Is 10:24–27,32–34; 14:24–27; 29:1–8; 30:27–33; 31:4–9. In all these prophecies the reference is probably to Sennacherib's invasion in 701 and its mysterious failure. At a later date the nations' assault on Jerusalem (and their final defeat) becomes a notable feature of eschatological literature, Ezk 38–39; Jl 4; Zc 14.

i. The prophecy contrasts the king, 'the ruler of Israel', now humiliated (by Sennacherib: 2 K 18:13–16), with a future king whose birth will inaugurate a new era of glory and peace (as in Is 9:5). Micah represents this messiah in the way traditional to the prophets of Judah, as a king triumphing in Zion, thus Gn 49:10–12; Nb 24:15–19; Ps 110; Is 9:1–6; 11:1–9; 32:1.

j. 'look to your fortifications, Fortress' following Gk; 'gash yourself, daughter of the troop' Hebr. •'Fortress', Hebr. Beth-Gader (lit. 'house of the rampart'), applied to Zion, is a name similar to 'Tower of the Flock' in v. 8. The prophet contrasts the pride of the fortified capital with the humble state of Ephrathah from which salvation is to come.

↗Mt 2:6
↗Jn 7:42 **5** But you (Bethlehem) Ephrathah, 1 2
the least [a] of the clans of Judah,
from you will come for me
a future ruler of Israel
whose origins go back to the distant past,
to the days of old. [b]
Hence Yahweh [c] will abandon them 2 3
Is 7:14 only until she who is in labour gives birth, [d]
and then those who survive of his race
will be reunited to the Israelites.
Is 40:11 He will take his stand and he will shepherd them 3 4
with the power of Yahweh,
with the majesty of the name of his God,
and they will be secure, for his greatness will extend
henceforth to the most distant parts of the country.

The future conqueror of Assyria [e]

Jg 6:24
Ep 2:14 He himself will be peace! 4
Should the Assyrian invade our country,
should he set foot in our land, [f]
Am 1:3f we shall raise seven shepherds against him,
eight leaders of men;
Ps 2:9LXX they will shepherd Assyria with the sword, 5
the country of Nimrod with naked blade. [g]
He will save us from the Assyrian,
should he invade our country,
should he set foot inside our frontiers.

The future role of the remnant [h]

Is 4:3c Then what is left of Jacob, 6
surrounded by many peoples,
Ho 14:6 will be like a dew from Yahweh,
like showers on the grass,
which do not depend on human agency
and are beyond human control.

Then what is left of Jacob, [i] 7 8
surrounded by many peoples,
will be like a lion among the forest beasts,
like a fierce lion among flocks of sheep
trampling as he goes,
mangling his prey which no one takes from him.

Yahweh will destroy all temptations [j]

You will be victorious over your foes 8 9
and all your enemies will be torn to pieces.
When that day comes—declares Yahweh— 9 10
I shall tear your horses away from you,
Ho 14:4
Zc 9:10 I shall destroy your chariots;
I shall tear the cities from your country, 10 11
I shall overthrow all your fortresses;
I shall tear the spells out of your hands 11 12
and you will have no more soothsayers;
I shall tear away your images 12 13
and your sacred pillars from among you,

and no longer will you worship
things which your own hands have made!
13 I shall uproot your sacred poles — Ex 23:24k; 34:13a
and shall destroy your cities!

15 14 In furious anger I shall wreak vengeance
on the nations who have disobeyed me!

III: ISRAEL AGAIN ON TRIAL

REPROACHES AND THREATS

Yahweh's case against Israel [a]

1 **6** Now listen to what Yahweh says:
'Stand up, state your case to the mountains — Is 3:13–15; 5:3–4
and let the hills hear what you have to say!' [b] — Ho 4:1–5
2 Listen, mountains, to the case as Yahweh puts it,
give ear, you foundations of the earth, [c]
for Yahweh has a case against his people
and he will argue it with Israel.
3 'My people, what have I done to you,
how have I made you tired of me? Answer me!
4 For I brought you up from Egypt, [d] — Dt 5:6;7:8
I ransomed you from the place of slave-labour
and sent Moses, Aaron and Miriam — 1 S 12:6
to lead you.
5 My people, please remember:
what was Balak king of Moab's plan
and how did Balaam son of Beor answer him? — Nb 22–24
. . . from Shittim to Gilgal,
for you to know Yahweh's saving justice. [e]

6 'With what shall I enter Yahweh's presence
and bow down before God All-high?

5 **a.** 'the least' Gk; 'little' Hebr.

b. Ephrathah (to which Micah apparently attaches the etymological meaning of 'fruitful', connecting it with the birth of the liberator) originally indicated a clan related to Caleb, 1 Ch 2:19,24,50, and settled in the district of Bethlehem, Rt 1:2; 1 S 17:12; the name later came to be used of the town itself, Gn 35:19; 48:7; Jos 15:59; Rt 4:11, hence the gloss in the text. Micah is thinking of the ancient origin of the dynasty of David, Rt 4:11,17,18–22; 1 S 17:12. The evangelists later interpreted this passage as a prophecy of Christ's birthplace.

c. lit. 'he'.

d. Reference to the mother of the Messiah. Micah is perhaps thinking of the famous prophecy of the *'alma*, delivered by Isaiah some 30 years previously, Is 7:14g.

e. This fragment announces a future victory over Assyria. It is attributed to the descendant of David (beginning of v. 4, end of v. 5) and to the chieftains of Judah (vv. 4^b–5^a, an old fragment re-used).

f. 'in our land' Gk, Syr.; 'in our palaces' Hebr.

g. 'with naked blade' one Gk MS and Lat.; 'in its entrances' Hebr.

h. This saying, in two symmetrical strophes, announces the function of the 'remnant' in the salvation of the peoples (cf. vv. 1–4; 7:12) and in their punishment (4:13; 5:8,14). The first theme, occurring only at the end of the Exile, suggests a date later than Micah.

i. Hebr. adds 'among the nations'.

j. The prophecy of vv. 9–13 declares that Yahweh will tear (lit. 'cut off') from his people all their spurious human supports (cf. Is 2:7–8; 30:1–3,15–16; 31:1–3; Ho 3:4; 8:14; 14:4): military power, apparatus of divination and of the cult on the 'high places'. But the threat also implies an era of peace and of true faith. This prophecy is applied by vv. 8 and 14, to the nations, enemies of Yahweh; it is a subsequent adjustment.

6 **a.** After Yahweh's indictment in which he recalls his goodness to Israel, vv. 3–5, his repentant worshipper enquires what his God demands of him, vv. 6–7. The prophet replies, v. 8.

b. The mountains are God's favourite place of meeting with his people (Sinai, Nebo, Ebal and Gerizim, Zion, Carmel). They are changeless witnesses and often personified, Gn 49:26; 2 S 1:21; Ps 68:15–16; Ezk 35–36.

c. 'give ear' *weha'azinu* conj.; Hebr. *weha' etanim* 'you solid ones'.

d. 'have I been a burden to you' (*hele'etika*) and 'I brought you up' (*he'elitika*) are similar in sound. • In response to Israel's complaint that God has abandoned them, Yahweh recalls his past kindnesses.

e. There is a lacuna in the Hebr. text. The reference is to the crossing of the Jordan. • 'you to know' versions; 'knowledge of' Hebr. Yahweh's 'saving justice' are those great events of sacred history by which Yahweh demonstrated his loyalty to the covenantal promises. Since the covenant itself was the issue of a divine initiative, God's 'saving justice' is freely bestowed, not in any sense deserved.

Shall I enter with burnt offerings,
with calves one year old?
Will he be pleased with rams by the thousand, 7
with ten thousand streams of oil?
Lv 18:21g Shall I offer my eldest son for my wrong-doing,
the child of my own body for my sin?[f]

Am 5:21n 'You have already been told what is right[g] 8
and what Yahweh wants of you.
Am 5:24 Only this, to do what is right,
Ho 2:21–22+ to love loyalty
Is 7:9;30:15 and to walk humbly with your God.'

Against tricksters in the city

Yahweh's voice! He thunders to the city, 9
'Listen, tribe of assembled citizens![h]
Am 8:5+ Can I overlook the false measure,[i] 10
that abomination, the short bushel?
Can I connive[j] at rigged scales 11
and at the bag of fraudulent weights?
[k]For the rich there are steeped in violence, 12
and the citizens there are habitual liars.

'I myself have therefore begun[l] to strike you down, 13
to bring you to ruin for your sins.
Ho 4:10 You will eat but not be satisfied;[m] 14
you will store up but never keep safe;
what you do keep safe I shall hand over to the sword;
Dt 28:30–33+ Am 5:11 you will sow but will not reap, 15
press the olive but will not rub yourself with oil,
Zp 1:13 tread the grape but will not drink the wine.

The example of Samaria

'For you keep the laws of Omri; 16
what the House of Ahab did, you have done;
by modelling yourselves on their standards,
you force me to make an appalling example of you
and reduce your citizens to a laughing-stock;
hence you will endure the scorn of other peoples.'[n]

Universal injustice

7 How wretched I am, 1
a harvester in summer time,
like a gleaner at the vintage:
not a single cluster to eat,[a]
none of those early figs I love!
Ps 14:1–3 Jr 5:1 The faithful have vanished from the land: 2
there is no one honest left.
All of them are on the alert for blood,
every man hunting his brother with a net.
Jr 4:22 Their hands are adept at wrong-doing:[b] 3
the official makes his demands,
the judge gives judgement for a bribe,
the man in power pronounces as he pleases.[c]
The best of them is like a briar, 4
the most honest of them like a thorn-hedge.[d]
Now from the north their punishment approaches![e]

That will be when they are confounded!
5 Trust no neighbour, Jr 9:3;12:6
put no confidence in a friend;
do not open your mouth
to the wife who shares your bed.
6 For son insults father, Ezk 22:7
daughter rebels against mother, ↗Mt 10:35–36par.
daughter-in-law against mother-in-law;
a person's enemies come from within the household itself.

7 But I shall look to Yahweh,
my hope is in the God who will save me; Ps 130:5
my God will hear me.[f]

IV: HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

Zion insulted by enemies

8 Do not gloat over me, my enemy:[g]
though I have fallen, I shall rise;
though I live in darkness, Jn 8:12b
Yahweh is my light.
9 I must endure Yahweh's anger
for I have sinned against him,
until he takes up my cause
and rights my wrongs;
he will bring me out into the light,
and then I shall contemplate his saving justice. 6:5e
10 When my enemy sees this,
she will be covered with shame,
having sneered, 'Where is Yahweh your God?' Ps 42:3,10 Jl 2:17
This time, I shall be watching
as she is trampled underfoot
like mud in the streets.

A prophecy of restoration[h]

11 That will be the day for rebuilding your walls!
The day for expanding your frontiers!

f. In answer to Yahweh's complaint against his people, the worshipper now replies, revealing the personal nature of the prophet's religion. For offers of more and more drastic types of sacrifice, the prophet substitutes a religion of the spirit, the demands of which have already been made known namely, decent behaviour (Amos), love (Hosea), humility before God (Isaiah).

g. 'you have already been told' Gk; 'he has told you' Hebr.; 'I will tell you' Syr.

h. Before 'Listen', Hebr. reads 'success will see your name (?)'. • 'assembly of citizens' Gk and Targ.; Hebr. obscure.

i. 'Can I overlook false measure?' *ha'essah bat rasha'* conj.; Hebr. *ha'ish bet rasha' 'otzerot resha'*. 'Is there a house of the wicked, treasures of wickedness (?)'.

j. 'can I connive' Vulg.; 'will I be pure' Hebr.

k. Some transfer this v. after v. 9 to improve the continuity. The last line of the v. is perhaps a gloss.

l. 'begun' versions; 'made sick' Hebr.

m. Hebr. adds two words of which the former is unknown. Perhaps 'and hunger (or filth) will stay in you'.

n. 'you keep' versions; 'he keeps himself' Hebr. • 'your (citizens)' conj.; 'its' Hebr. • 'of peoples' Gk; 'of my people' Hebr. The reference is perhaps to Baal-worship, more probably to social injustice and the luxury of the upper classes.

7 **a.** 'a harvester' Gk; 'the harvest' Hebr. 'a gleaner' conj.; 'gleanings' Hebr. •'cluster' (*'eshkol*) and 'to eat' (*'ekol*); note the assonance.

b. Restored following Gk; 'Against evil, hands to prosper' Hebr.

c. 'gives judgement' conj.; Hebr. omits. • At end of v. Hebr. adds 'so they wrap it up', sense uncertain.

d. lit. 'the most honest like a hedge' Symm.; 'an honest man outside a hedge' Hebr. 'a thorn-hedge' (*mesukah*) and 'confounded' (*mebukah*) are similar in sound.

e. 'from the north' conj.; 'of your watchmen' Hebr. • Invaders from Mesopotamia approached Palestine from the north, Jr 1:13–14.

f. This verse, in which the prophet proclaims his confidence in God's power to save, may have been the conclusion of his book; it presented a suitable opportunity for the addition of the poems of hope that follow, vv. 8–12 probably dating from exilic times and vv. 14–17 from the return.

g. The identity of the enemy is not clear, though more probably Edom, Ps 137:7–9; Is 34:5–8; Ezk 25:12–14; 35; Ob 10–15, than Babylon.

h. This prophecy, which may be dated to the Persian era (after 538) announces the restoration of the ramparts of Jerusalem and the expansion of its boundaries to hold a great number of people, either Israelites of the Diaspora or convert gentiles.

The day when others come to you 12
all the way from Assyria, from Egypt,
from Tyre and all the way from the Euphrates,
from sea to sea, from the mountains to the mountains![i]
The earth will become a desert 13
by reason of its inhabitants, in return for what they have done.[j]

A prayer for the confusion of Zion's enemies

Ps 23:1–2,4; 95:7 Ezk 34:1a
With shepherd's crook lead your people to pasture, 14
the flock that is your heritage,
living confined in a forest
with meadow land all round.[k]
Let them graze in Bashan and Gilead
as in the days of old!
Is 40:3e
As in the days when you came out of Egypt, 15
grant us to see wonders![l]
Is 26:11
The nations will see and be confounded 16
in spite of all their power;
they will put their hands over their mouths,
their ears will be deafened.
They will lick the dust like snakes, 17
like reptiles that crawl on the earth.
They will creep trembling out of their lairs,[m]
in terror before you.

A plea for God's forgiveness[n]

Jr 50:20
What god can compare with you 18
for pardoning guilt
Ex 34:6–7 Ps 103:9
and for overlooking crime?[o]
He does not harbour anger for ever,
since he delights in showing faithful love.
Once more have pity on us, 19
tread down our faults;
throw all our sins[p]
to the bottom of the sea.
Is 38:17
Grant Jacob your faithfulness, 20
and Abraham your faithful love,
Gn 22:16–18; 28:13–15. ↗Lk 1:73
as you swore to our ancestors
from the days of long ago.[q]

i. Following Gk; Hebr. uncertain.

j. Originally, this v. may have been a threat aimed at Judah, but in its present context applies to the hostile nations, especially perhaps 'the people of the country' surrounding the Jews on their return from exile.

k. The nation is isolated on unproductive land—the situation of the Jews in the region of Jerusalem after their return from exile.

l. 'grant us to see' conj.; 'I shall grant him to see' Hebr.

m. The Hebr. adds 'to Yahweh our God'.

n. Another short psalm, of which similar examples occur in the prophetic books, Is 12; 25:1–5; 26:1–6,7–15,16–19; 63:7–64:11.

o. Hebr. adds 'for the remnant of your heritage', a gloss which limits the range of God's pardon.

p. In Hebr. the first two verbs of this verse are in the third person. • 'our sins' versions; 'their sins' Hebr.

q. The salvation of Israel is the fulfilment of the covenant and of the Promise, the foundations of hope and the focus of faith for the people of God.

NAHUM

1 **1** Prophecy about Nineveh. Book of the vision of Nahum of Elkosh.

PRELUDE

Psalm. The wrath of Yahweh [a]

2 *Aleph* Yahweh is a jealous and vengeful God,
Yahweh takes vengeance, he is rich in wrath; Ex 20:5–6 Dt 4:24f
Yahweh takes vengeance on his foes,
he stores up fury for his enemies.
3 Yahweh is slow to anger but great in power, Ex 34:6–7+
Yahweh never lets evil go unpunished. [b]
Bet In storm and whirlwind he takes his way,
the clouds are the dust stirred up by his feet.
4 *Gimel* He rebukes the sea, dries it up,
and makes all the rivers run dry. Ps 106:9 Is 50:2
Dalet . . . Bashan and Carmel wither, [c]
the greenery of the Lebanon withers too.
5 *He* The mountains tremble before him,
the hills reel; Jr 4:24
Waw the earth collapses before him,
the world and all who live in it. [d]
6 *Zain* His fury—who can withstand it?
Who can endure his burning wrath? ↗Rv 6:17
Het His anger pours out like fire
and the rocks break apart before him.
7 *Tet* Yahweh is better than a fortress
in time of distress;
Yod he recognises those who trust in him
8 even when the flood rushes on; [e] Gn 6:7seq.;8:1
Kaph he will make an end once and for all of those who defy him, [f]
and pursue his foes into darkness.

Prophetic judgement on Judah and Assyria

9 What are your thoughts about Yahweh? [g] 1 S 2:6
He it is who makes a final end:

1 **a.** This alphabetical psalm, *see* Pr 31:10e (cf. Ps 25,34,37, though here the alphabetic series is incomplete) develops the traditional theme of the wrath of Yahweh (Nb 11:33; 2 S 6:7; 21:14; Ps 2:12; 60:1; 79:5; 110:5) and is therefore an apt prelude to the prophecy against Nineveh.

b. The last four lines of this first section, which are not part of the alphabetic series, are apparently a later commentary on v. 2a, intended to forestall misunderstanding of the nature of God's anger.

c. The beginning of the verse is missing (*dalet*).

d. 'collapses' *wattasah* conj.; Hebr. *wattissa'* 'rises'. The psalm combines familiar themes from ancient cosmogonies (the creation, divine victory over the waters, Jb 7:12f) with those from sacred history (Crossing of the Sea and Sinai, Ps 114:3–8; Is 51:10; etc.)

e. Probably an allusion to the Flood (Noah was, like Nahum, a consoler, according to Gn 5:29). The wrath of God has a meaning, vv. 7–8; it is not unleashed blindly, but judges between believers and the impious.

f. 'those who defy him' Gk; 'her place' Hebr.

g. Alternative translations: 'What picture have you of Yahweh?' or 'How you should count on Yahweh!'

his adversaries will not rise up a second time;
like a thicket of tangled brambles, [h] 10
like dry straw, they will be burnt up completely.

To Assyria From you has emerged 11
someone plotting evil against Yahweh,
Dt 13:14b Ps 18:4 one of Belial's counsellors. [i]

To Judah Yahweh says this: 12
2 K 19:35–36 Unopposed and many though they be,
they will be cut down and pass away.
Though I have made you suffer,
I shall make you suffer no more,
Is 9:3 for now I shall break his yoke which presses hard on you 13
and snap your chains.

To the king of Nineveh As for you, this is Yahweh's decree: 14
You will have no heirs to your name,
from the temple of your gods I shall remove
carved image and cast image,
Is 14:19–21 Jr 8:1–2 and I shall devastate [j] your tomb, for you are accursed!

Is 52:7–10 2 *To Judah* See on the mountains the feet of the herald! 1 15
'Peace!' he proclaims.
Judah, celebrate your feasts,
carry out your vows,
1:11i for Belial will never pass through you again;
he has been utterly destroyed.

THE FALL OF NINEVEH

The assault

Is 5:26–30 Jr 5:15–17; 6:22–30 The destroyer has advanced on you, 2
guarding the siege-works, watching the road,
bracing himself, mustering great strength!
[a] (For Yahweh has restored the vine of Jacob, 3 2:2
Is 5:1a yes, the vine [b] of Israel,
although the plunderers had plundered them,
although they had snapped off their vine-shoots!)
The shields of his fighting men show red, 4 3
his warriors are dressed in scarlet;
the metal of the chariots sparkles
as he prepares for battle;
the horsemen are impatient for action; [c]
the chariots storm through the streets, 5 4
jostling one another in the squares;
they look like blazing flames,
like lightning they dash to and fro.
His captains are called out; [d] 6 5
stumbling as they go,
they speed towards the wall,
and the mantelet is put in position. [e]
The sluices of the River are opened, 7 6
and the palace melts in terror.
Beauty is taken captive, carried away, [f] 8 7

her slave-girls moaning like doves
8 9 and beating their breasts.
Nineveh is like a lake,
whose waters[g] are draining away.
'Stop! Stop!'
But no one turns back.
9 10 'Plunder the silver! Plunder the gold!'
There is no end to the treasure,
a mass of everything you could desire!
10 11 Ravaged, wrecked, ruined![h]
Heart fails and knees give way, Is 13:7–8 Jr 30:6;4:31+
anguish is in the loins of all,
and every face grows pale!

Sentence passed on the lion of Assyria

12 Where is the lions' den now,
the cave of the lion's whelps,[i] Jr 4:7 Ho 5:14
where the lion and lioness walked with their cubs Mi 5:7
and no one molested them,
12 13 where the lion would tear up food for his whelps
and strangle the kill for his mates,
where he filled his caverns with prey
and his lairs with spoil?
13 14 Look, I am against you!—declares Yahweh Sabaoth[j]— =3:5
I shall send your chariots up in smoke,
and the sword will devour your whelps;
I shall cut short your depredations on earth,
and the voices of your envoys will be heard no more.

Sentence passed on Nineveh the harlot

1 3 Disaster to the city of blood,
packed throughout with lies,
stuffed with booty,
where plundering has no end!
2 The crack of the whip!
The rumble of wheels!
Galloping horse,
jolting chariot,
3 charging cavalry,
flashing swords,
gleaming spears,
a mass of wounded,
hosts of dead, Ezk 39:11–16
countless corpses;
they stumble over corpses—

h. 'like a thicket' *keya'ar* conj.; Hebr. *ki'ad* 'for until'. Hebr. adds 'and like drunkards of their drink (?)', perhaps a distorted repetition of the two preceding words.

i. This sacrilegious personage, emerging from Nineveh, could be Sennacherib, *see* 2 K 18–19.

j. 'devastate' *'ashshim* conj.; Hebr. *'asim* 'place'.

2 a. This v., seemingly interrupting the sequence of ideas in vv. 2 and 4, is sometimes repositioned by critics after v. 1 on which it is an apt commentary. It alludes to the poem of Is 5:1–7.

b. 'vine' *gephen* conj.; Hebr. *ge'on* 'magnificence'.

c. 'horsemen' Gk; 'fir trees' Hebr.

d. 'are called out' Gk; 'are remembered' Hebr.

e. A shelter to protect the besiegers attacking the wall.

f. 'Beauty' *hatztzebi* conj.; Hebr. *wehutztzab* 'is placed'. • Either the statue of the goddess Ishtar, patroness of Nineveh, or perhaps the ornamental pedestal. The goddess was served by sacred prostitutes.

g. 'whose waters' Gk; 'since her day, and they' Hebr.

h. Assonance: *buqah, umebuqah, umebullaqah*.

i. 'cave' *me'arah* conj.; Hebr. *mire'eh* 'pasture'.

j. 'you' fem. sing., Nineveh. A new picture of Nineveh's ruin unfolds, with the judgement on the sins which have provoked it. Nahum is less concerned with Nineveh's idolatry (Nineveh, unlike Israel, is not Yahweh's wife) than with the greed and cunning with which she has established her power over all peoples to despoil them.

Rv 17–18 because of the countless whorings of the harlot, 4
the graceful beauty, the cunning witch,
who enslaved [a] nations by her harlotries
and tribes by her spells.

=2:14 Look, I am against you!—declares Yahweh Sabaoth— 5
I shall lift your skirts as high as your face
Ho 2:5i and show your nakedness to the nations,
your shame to the kingdoms.
I shall pelt you with filth, 6
I shall shame you and put you in the pillory. [b]
Then all who look at you 7
will shrink from you and say,
'Nineveh has been ruined!'
Is 51:19 Jr 15:5 Who will mourn for her?
Where would I find people to comfort you?

The lesson of Thebes

Are you better off than No-Amon [c] 8
situated among rivers,
her defences the seas,
her rampart the waters? [d]
In Ethiopia and Egypt 9
lay her strength, and it was boundless;
Jr 46:9c Put and the Libyans served in her [e] army.
But she too went into exile, 10
into captivity;
Ho 10:14m her little ones too were dashed to pieces
at every crossroad;
Jl 4:3 lots were drawn for her nobles,
all her great men were put in chains.

You too will become drunk, 11
you will go into hiding;
you too will have to search
for a refuge from the enemy.

Nineveh's preparations useless [f]

Your fortifications are all fig trees, 12
with early ripening figs:
as soon as they are shaken,
they fall into the mouth of the eater.
Look at your people: 13
Is 3:12;19:16 Jr 50:37;51:30 you are a nation of women!
The gates of your country
gape open to your enemies;
fire has devoured their bars!
Draw yourselves water for the siege, 14
strengthen your fortifications!
Into the mud with you, puddle the clay,
repair the brick-kiln!
There the fire will burn you up, 15
the sword will cut you down. [g]

The locusts fly away [h]

Make yourselves as numerous as locusts,
make yourselves as numerous as the hoppers,

16a let your commercial agents
outnumber the stars of heaven,[i]
17a your garrisons, like locusts,
and your marshals, like swarms of hoppers!
They settle on the walls
when the day is cold.
The sun appears,
16b the locusts spread their wings, they fly away,
17b away they fly, no one knows where.

A funeral lament

18 Alas,[j] •your shepherds are asleep,
king of Assyria,
your bravest men slumber;[k]
your people are scattered on the mountains 1 K 22:17
with no one to gather them.
19 There is no remedy for your wound,
your injury is past healing.
All who hear the news of you
clap their hands at your downfall.
For who has not felt
your unrelenting cruelty?

3 **a.** 'enslaved', lit. 'sold', the antithesis of 'buying back', meaning redemption or liberation.

b. Nineveh will be punished as an adulteress, Ezk 16:36–43; 23:25–30; Ho 2:5.

c. The 'city of Amon', Thebes in Upper Egypt; it was sacked by the armies of Ashurbanipal in 663.

d. 'her defences' 4Qp Nahum (commentary on Nahum discovered at Qumran); MT omits. • 'the waters' *mayim* 4Qp Nahum; MT *miyyam* 'the sea'. This poetic description of a moated city beside the Nile has been unimaginatively glossed 'surrounded by water'.

e. 'her' Gk, Syr.; 'your' Hebr.

f. This prophecy appears to allude to reverses already suffered by the Assyrian armies (capture of Tarbis and of Assur in 614?).

g. Hebr. adds 'it will devour you like the locust', a gloss inspired by what follows.

h. The Assyrians' swarming as traders, soldiers and officials, into the occupied countries is compared to that of myriads of locusts. The same image is used to prophesy their sudden and complete disappearance.

i. 'let outnumber' conj.; 'you outnumber' Hebr. v. 16^b is transposed to the middle of v. 17.

j. 'Alas' *'oy mah* conj. following Gk; Hebr. *'ayyam* 'Where are they?'

k. 'slumber' Gk, Syr.; 'remain' Hebr.

HABAKKUK

Title

1 The charge [a] that Habakkuk the prophet received in a vision. 1

I: DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE PROPHET AND HIS GOD

First complaint of the prophet: lawlessness prevails [b]

How long, Yahweh, am I to cry for help 2
while you will not listen;
Jb 19:7 to cry, 'Violence!' in your ear
Ps 18:41 Jr 14:9 while you will not save?

Why do you make me see wrong-doing, 3
Ps 55:9–11 Jr 6:7;9:2seq. Am 3:9–10 why do you countenance oppression?
Plundering and violence confront me,
contention and discord flourish.

And so the law loses its grip 4
and justice never emerges,
Is 59:14 Mi 7:2–3 since the wicked outwits the upright
and so justice comes out perverted.

First answer: the Chaldaeans as instrument of God's justice [c]

↗Ac 13:41 Is 29:9 Cast your eyes over the nations, look, 5
and be amazed, astounded.
For I am doing something in your own days [d]
which you will not believe if you are told of it.
For look, I am stirring up the Chaldaeans, 6
that fierce and fiery nation [e]
who march miles across country
to seize the homes of others.
They are dreadful and awesome, 7
a law and authority to themselves. [f]

Their horses are swifter than leopards, 8
Zp 3:3 fiercer than wolves at night;
their horsemen gallop on,
their horsemen advance from afar,
swooping like an eagle anxious to feed.

They are all bent on violence, 9
their faces scorching like an east wind; [g]
they scoop up prisoners like sand.

They scoff at kings, 10
they despise princes.

They make light of all fortresses:
they heap up earth and take them. [h]

11 Then the wind changes and is gone . . . [i]
Guilty is he who makes his strength his god. 1:7 Is 10:13

Second complaint of the prophet: the tyranny of the conqueror [j]

12 Surely you, Yahweh, are from ancient times, [k] Lv 17:1a Dt 33:27 Ps 90:1–2
my holy God, who never dies! [l]
Yahweh, you have appointed him to execute judgement;
O Rock, you have set him [m] firm to punish.

13 Your eyes are too pure to rest on evil, 1:3 Ps 5:4–5
you cannot look on at oppression.
Why do you look on at those who play the traitor,
why say nothing while the wicked swallows someone more Ps 35:22seq.
upright than himself?
14 Why treat people like fish of the sea, Jr 16:16 Ezk 12:13;17: 20;29:4seq.; 32:3
like gliding creatures who have no leader?
15 They haul them all up on their hook,
they catch them in their net,
they sweep them up in their dragnet
and then make merry and rejoice.

16 And so they offer a sacrifice to their net,
and burn incense to their dragnet,
for by these they get a rich living
and live off the fat of the land.

17 Are they to go on emptying their net unceasingly, [n]
slaughtering the nations without pity?

Second answer: the upright will live through faithfulness

1 2 I shall stand at my post, Nb 23:1–6
I shall station myself on my watch-tower,

1 a. lit. 'burden', cf. Is 13:1, etc., and Jr 23:33–40.

b. Speaking in the name of his people, cf. Is 59:9–14; Jr 10:23–25; 14:2–9,19–22, the prophet complains to Yahweh about the miseries they suffer. This passage, similar to the laments in Ps and in Jr, could refer, if taken by itself, to internal dissension; but there is no doubt that, given the context of vv. 12–17, it relates to the tyranny of the Chaldaeans. Why do the saving justice and kindness of Yahweh (and his holiness, v. 13) allow the wicked to triumph? After all, Judah, though sinful, is still on the side of 'uprightness' since knowing the true God; yet God permits the idolater to triumph. Yahweh must give an answer, *see* 2:1.

c. First answer. The Chaldaean scourge is the present instrument of God's justice, cf. Dt 28:47seq.; 2 K 24:2–4; Is 10:5–27; Jr 5:14–19; 25:1–13; 27:6–22; 51:20–23; Am 3:11. But cf. *also* Nebuchadnezzar, 'my servant', Jr 25:9; 27:6; 43:10.

d. Following Gk; Hebr. could also be translated '(a deed) is being done'.

e. The dramatic images in this description of invasion occur frequently in the prophetic books, *see* Is 5:26–29; 13:17–18; Jr 4:5–7,13,16–17; 5:15–17; 6:22–24; Ezk 23:22–26; 28:7–10; Na 3:2–3.

f. The Chaldaeans acknowledge no human or divine power as master; they attribute their victories to their own valour; *see* v. 11[b].

g. Text uncertain. 'their faces scorching' conj.; 'the scorching (or: eagerness) of their faces' Hebr. 'an east wind' with 1 QpHab (the commentary on Habakkuk discovered at Qumran in 1947) • 'to the east' MT. The scorching wind from the eastern desert sometimes symbolises invasions from the east, cf. Jr 18:17; Ezk 17:10seq.; Ho 12:2; 13:15.

h. Ramps or earthworks used in sieges.

i. The invasion comes like a storm and passes on, leaving ruin behind. Others interpret 'Then the spirit passes by and is gone' (referring to the passing of a period of prophetic inspiration), or 'Then he (the invader) changes his mind, having exceeded (his mission?)'.

j. This passage resumes the complaint of vv. 2–4; if it is true that the Chaldaean triumph is ultimately due to Yahweh, vv. 5–6, this only moves the problem back to Yahweh himself who must give the answer. How is it that a just and holy God, the custodian of justice, vv. 12[a.b], 13, can treat nations thus, v. 14, and the chosen people in particular? Will he allow the wicked to engulf the upright, v. 13, cf. v. 4 and vv.15–17?

k. Those of the Exodus, recalled in ch. 3. For Habakkuk this constitutes the grounds for hope.

l. 'who never dies' *lo'tamut* conj.; Hebr. *lo'namut* 'we shall not die', the result of a scribal correction.

m. 'him': the Chaldaeans, roused for a mission of justice beyond which they must not go, *see* 1:5c. Others interpret of Israel, who was to judge the peoples; or of Jehoiakim king of Judah, who was unfaithful to his mission; 1:2–4,12–17 and 2:6–19 would then be aimed at him.

n. 'unceasingly' 1 QpHab; 'unceasingly slaughtering' MT.

watching to see what he will say to me,
what answer he will make to my complaints. [a]

Then Yahweh answered me and said, 2
Is 8:1 'Write the vision down,
Jr 30:2 inscribe it on tablets
Rv 1:19 to be easily read.
For the vision is for its appointed time, [b] 3
it hastens towards its end and it will not lie; [c]
Nb 23:19 although it may take some time, wait for it,
2 P 3:4–10 for come it certainly will before too long.

'You see, anyone whose heart is not upright will succumb, [d] 4
↗Rm 1:17 but the upright will live through faithfulness.' [e]
↗Ga 3:11
↗Heb 10:38

II: CURSES ON THE OPPRESSOR

Prelude

Now, surely, wealth is treacherous! [f] 5
He is arrogant, for ever on the move,
Pr 27:20 with appetite as large as Sheol
Is 5:14 and as insatiable as Death,
gathering in all the nations,
and making a harvest of all peoples.
Is 14:4 Are not the peoples all bound to satirise 6
Mi 2:4 and make up cryptic riddles about him? [g]
As for instance:

Five imprecations

I

Is 5:8c Disaster to anyone who amasses goods not his [h]
Lk 6:24–26 (for how long?)
Rv 8:13+ and to anyone who weighs himself down with goods taken in pledge!

Will not your creditors suddenly stand up, 7
will not those who make you shiver wake up,
and you will fall a prey to them?

Is 33:1 Since you have plundered many nations, 8
all the nations that remain will plunder you,
=2:17 because of the bloodshed and violence done to the country,
to the city and to all who live in it.

II

Jr 22:13–17 Disaster to anyone who amasses ill-gotten gains for his house, [i] 9
Is 14:13+ so as to fix his nest on high
Jr 49:16 and so evade the reach of misfortune!
Ob 4

You have conspired to bring shame on your house: 10
1:17 by overthrowing many peoples [j]
Is 14:20 you have worked your own ruin.

Lk 19:40 For the very stone will protest from the wall, 11
and the beam will respond from the framework. [k]

III

12 Disaster to anyone who builds a town with bloodshed[l] Jr 22:13
and founds a city on wrong-doing! Mi 3:10

13 Is it not thanks to Yahweh Sabaoth
that the peoples' toil is fuel for the fire,[m] ‖Jr 51:58
and the nations' labour came to nothing? Si 14:19

14 *But the earth will be full of the knowledge of the glory of Yahweh* Nb 14:21+
as the waters cover the depths of the sea. Is 11:9

IV

15 Disaster to anyone who makes his neighbours drink,[n] Gn 9:20–25
pouring out his poison until they are drunk,[o]
so that he can see them naked!
16 You are full of shame, not glory!

Your turn now to drink and show your foreskin.[p] Lm 4:21
The cup in Yahweh's right hand comes round to you, Ps 75:8+
and disgrace will overshadow your glory. Is 51:17h

17 For the violence done to the Lebanon will overwhelm you
and the massacre of animals will terrify you,[q]
because of the bloodshed and violence done to the country, =2:8
to the city and to all who live in it.[r]

V

19 Disaster to anyone who says to the log, 'Wake up!',[s] Is 40:19–20+
to the dumb stone, 'On your feet!'
(This is the prophecy!)[t]

2 **a.** 'my watch-tower' 1 QpHab; 'the watch-tower' MT. • 'he will make' *yashib* conj.; following Peshitta; Hebr. *'ashib* 'I shall make' MT. • The prophet keeps watch like a sentry on behalf of his people, cf. Ps 5:3; Is 21:6–12; Jr 6:17; Ezk 3:17; 33:1–9; Ho 9:8.

b. Hence the command to write it down. The vision will be fulfilled 'at the appointed time', cf. Dn 8:19,26; 10:14; 11:27,35; the written document pledges Yahweh's word to fulfil it at this appointed time, cf. 2 P 3:2, and will later stand as a witness to its veracity; cf. Is 8:1,3; 30:8.

c. The vision has an energy of its own, since it is the expression of a divine word moving to fulfilment, cf. Is 55:10–11.

d. 'anyone whose heart is not upright will succumb' (reading *'ullaph zu*) conj.; Hebr. 'his soul within him is inflated (*'uppelah*), it is not upright'; Gk 'if he defects, my soul will not be pleased with him, but the upright will have life for his faith in me.'

e. This maxim, of universal application, *see* Is 3:10–11, here sums up the content of the vision. Being faithful to God (cf. Jr 5:1–3; 7:28; 9:2; Ho 2:22), i.e. to his word and to his will, is characteristic of the 'upright', and assures him security and life here on earth (cf. Ps 37:3; Pr 10:25; Is 33:6). The wicked, who does not have this 'uprightness', runs to ruin. The upright and the wicked in this context (1:2–4,12–17; 2:5–18) are respectively Judah and the Chaldaeans; the former will live, the others perish. In the LXX text, where 'faithfulness' is rendered 'faith', Paul finds the doctrine of justification by faith.

f. 'wealth is treacherous' 1 QpHab; 'wine is a traitor' Hebr.

g. 'make up cryptic riddles' *umelitzah yahudu* conj.; Hebr. *umelitzah hidot* 'and a cryptic riddle, a puzzle'. 'For instance', lit. 'they will say' 1 QpHab and Gk; 'he will say' MT. • The satire, *mashal*, is a mocking couplet using metaphor. The cryptic riddle, *melisah*, is one requiring interpretation. The two words describe the literary form of the five imprecations following, prophesying ruin to the oppressor in enigmatic terms.

h. An attack on the cupidity of the conqueror. There is an ironical change of situation: the Chaldaeans become debtors to the nations whom they have plundered and the prey of these same nations now their creditors—an application of the *lex talionis*, Ex 21:25f.

i. The conqueror's fate will be that of someone who gets rich by crime; he will end with nothing.

j. 'by overthrowing' versions; 'to overthrow' Hebr.

k. The Chaldaean dynasty or 'House' paid for by extortion: its stone and wood call down vengeance on the occupier.

l. These verses denounce rule by violence.

m. 'Is it not' versions; 'Behold' Hebr.; formula prefacing a quotation, cf. 2 Ch 25:26; here introducing a word of Yahweh in the following lines.

n. The cynicism of the conqueror is like that of someone who encourages others to get drunk, to degrade them; their shame will soon be his. Nineveh is said to do this in Na 3:4–7, and Babylon in Jr 51:7.

o. 'his neighbours' 1 QpHab; 'his neighbour' MT. • 'pouring' meaning uncertain. • 'his poison' (cf. Dt 32:24,33; Ps 58:4; 140:3; or 'his anger') QpHab, Symm.; 'your poison' MT.

p. The uncircumcised and debauched Chaldaean is himself made drunk and disgraced.

q. Lebanon despoiled, cf. Is 37:24; its cedars felled by Nebuchadnezzar for building purposes, cf. Is 14:8, may also symbolise Israel, cf. Is 33:9; Jr 21:14; 22:6,7,20–23.

r. We read v. 18 after v. 19, as the sense seems to require.

s. These verses denounce the conqueror's idolatry.

t. Possibly a gloss inspired by v. 18[b].

Look, he is encased in gold and silver,
—but not a breath of life inside it!

What use is a sculpted image that a sculptor should make it? 18
Ho 3:4 Zc 10:2 Ezk 21:26 —a metal image, a lying instructor!
And why does the image-maker put his trust in it,
that he should make dumb idols?

Ps 11:4 But Yahweh is in his holy Temple: [u] 20
Zp 1:7 Zc 2:17 Rv 8:1 let the whole earth be silent before him. [v]

III: PLEA TO YAHWEH FOR DELIVERANCE

Title

3 A prayer [a] of the prophet Habakkuk; [b] tone as for dirges. 1

Prayer

Dt 2:25 Ps 8:1,9;76:2 Yahweh, I have heard of your renown; [c] 2
your work, Yahweh, inspires me with dread. [d]
Is 51:9 Make it live again in our time,
Is 54:8 make it known in our time; [e]
in wrath remember mercy.

Theophany: Yahweh's approach

Eloah comes from Teman, 3
Dt 33:2 Jg 5:4 and the Holy One from Mount Paran. [f] *Pause*
His majesty covers the heavens,
Nb 14:21+ Ps 72:19 and his glory fills the earth.

His brightness is like the day, 4
rays flash from his hands, [g]
that is where his power lies hidden.

Rv 6:8 Pestilence goes before him 5
and Plague follows close behind. [h]

Ps 104:32 Ex 15:14–16 When he stands up, he makes the earth tremble, 6
with his glance he makes the nations quake.
And the eternal mountains are dislodged,
the everlasting hills sink down, [i]
his pathway from of old.

I saw the tents of Cushan in trouble, 7
the tent-curtains of Midian shuddering. [j]

Yahweh's battle

Yahweh, are you enraged with the rivers, [k] 8
are you angry with the sea, [l]
Dt 33:26+ Ps 68:17j that you should mount your chargers,
your rescuing chariots?

You uncover your bow, 9
and give the string its fill of arrows. [m] *Pause*

You trench the soil with torrents; [n]
the mountains see you and tremble, 10

great floods sweep by,
the abyss roars aloud,
lifting high its waves. [o]

11 Sun and moon stay inside their dwellings,
they flee at the light of your arrows,
at the flash of your lightning-spear.

12 In rage you stride across the land,
in anger you trample the nations.

13 You marched to save your people,
to save your anointed one; [p]
you wounded the head of the house of the wicked, 2:9–11
laid bare the foundation to the rock. *Pause*

14 With your shafts you pierced the leader of his warriors
who stormed out with shouts of joy to scatter us, [q]
as if they meant to devour some poor wretch in their lair. Ps 10:7–9; 17:12

15 With your horses you trampled through the sea, Ps 77:19
through the surging abyss! Is 43:16–17

Conclusion: human fear and faith in God

16 When I heard, I trembled to the core, [r] Jr 4:19
my lips quivered at the sound;
my bones became disjointed
and my legs gave way beneath me. [s]

u. The Temple in Jerusalem, but primarily the heavenly palace from which he will shortly emerge, cf. 3:3seq.

v. This silence preludes the theophany of 3:3–15, cf. Ps 76:8–9; Is 41:1.

3 **a.** As in many of the Psalms, this prayer combines supplication with a hymn to the omnipotence of God. The word 'Pause' and the final note of v. 19[d] show that it was used in the liturgy. • This entire chapter is absent from the Commentary on Hab discovered at Qumran, *see* p. 1184.

b. As in Ps, the inscription may indicate not the author of the prayer but the fact that it belongs to a collection, in this case Hab.

c. lit. 'what you make heard'.

d. All Yahweh's exploits in primeval (1:12) and Mosaic times, Dt 11:7; Jg 2:7; Ps 44:1–8; 77:11–12; 95:9.

e. 'in our time', lit. 'in the midst of years'. • For these last two lines, Gk reads, 'Between two animals you will make yourself known; when the years draw near, you will be recognised; when the time comes, you will appear', a text which, in conjunction with Is 1:3, gave rise to the tradition of the two animals by the crib at Bethlehem.

f. 'Eloah', an ancient name for God. Teman, a northern district of Edom, Paran, a mountain in Edom. • The theophany, *see* Ex 19:16g, now begins; it describes the coming, vv. 3–7, and battle, vv. 8–15, of Yahweh. Several details in this epic vision suggest the victorious march of Yahweh at the head of his people during the Exodus, a type, *see* Is 40:3d, of the deliverance to come. Yahweh ('the Holy One', cf. Dt 33:3; Is 6:3g) advances from Sinai, cf. Ex 24:9–11, towards Canaan, cf. Nb 20:14seq., through the region south-south-east of Palestine from which the storms also come. His coming is described, vv. 3seq.; in terms of an advancing storm cloud, cf. Ps 18:7seq.; 29. The expressions refer sometimes to the cloud, sometimes to Yahweh who is present in it.

g. 'His brightness' versions; 'The brightness' Hebr. 'rays', lit. 'horns', but cf. Ex 34:29–30,35.

h. *resheph*: the word is derived from the name of the Phoenician god of lightning and means thunderbolt, hailstone, calamity and, here (being parallel with 'pestilence', and cf. Dt 32:24) plague.

i. 'eternal mountains' and 'everlasting hills' have a cosmic sense here, cf. Jb 15:7; Ps 90:2; Pr 8:25; in Gn 49:26; Dt 33:15 they indicate the mythical home of the patriarchs.

j. Midian, *see* Ex 2:15e. Cushan is apparently an ancient name for the same region.

k. Hebr. adds 'or with the rivers', dittography.

l. As in Jg 5:4–5; Ps 77:16–19; 114:3–7, cosmic disturbances accompany an intervention of Yahweh, *see* Am 8:9h. (Use is perhaps made here of ancient traditions of the creation conceived as a struggle between God and the rebellious elements, the Abyss, the Sea, the River, etc.), *see* Jb 7:12f. Here the struggle ends in defeat for 'the head of the House of the Wicked' and his invading force, that is, the Chaldeans, vv. 13–14.

m. Text corrected, following a Gk MS; the Hebr. is unintelligible (lit. 'the oaths are arrows of the word'). The shafts are the flashes of lightning, vv. 4,11; Ps 29:7; 77:17. • For Yahweh as bowman, see Ezk 5:16; Dt 32:23. For the bow as symbol of strength, *see* Gn 49:24; Jb 29:20.

n. The torrential rain accompanying the storm, cf. Jg 5:4; Ps 77:16–18.

o. 'waves', lit. 'hands'. The abyss under the earth, the primordial ocean, which unites its waters with the rain from above.

p. Here indicates the people, cf. Ex 19:6; Ps 28:8, rather than the king. • 'to save' Gk; Hebr. 'the help'. • The remainder of the v. is very difficult and the translation uncertain: 'to the rock' *'ad tzur* conj.; Hebr. *'ad tzawwa'r* 'to the neck'.

q. Text uncertain. 'your shafts' conj.; 'his shafts' Hebr. • 'his warriors' Vulg.; 'princes' Gk; Hebr. has an unknown word. • 'scatter us' conj.; 'scatter me' Hebr.

r. *See* v. 2 and Is 21:3–4; Jr 23:9; Dn 8:18,27; 10:8. The supernatural awe and the anguish of the prophet, as he watches the battle of Yahweh and the concurrent calamities, vv. 16–17, are replaced by joy in the rescue and security coming from Yahweh, vv. 18–19 but cf. 16[c].

s. 'my legs gave way' conj. *yirgezu 'ashuri* following Gk; 'I give way who' *'ergaz 'asher* Hebr. • The end of the v. is uncertain; others translate 'to attack a people who assails it' or 'when they attack a people to assail it'.

Calmly I await the day of anguish
which is dawning on the people now attacking us.

Jr 5:17
Ho 9:2
(For the fig tree is not to blossom, 17
nor will the vines bear fruit,
the olive crop will disappoint
and the fields will yield no food;
the sheep will vanish from the fold;
no cattle in the stalls.)[t]

But I shall rejoice in Yahweh, 18
↗Lk 1:47
I shall exult in God my Saviour.

Yahweh my Lord is my strength, 19
Ps 18:33
he will make my feet as light as a doe's,
Dt 32:13
Is 58:14
and set my steps on the heights.[u]

For the choirmaster; on stringed instruments.[v]

t. This v. which, despite a context of cosmic struggle, paints a picture of agricultural depression, may well be a gloss (to emphasise the lesson of trust in Yahweh); possibly, however, it is meant to describe the effects of the war as felt in Judah.

u. 'the heights' Gk; 'my heights' Hebr.

v. 'on' conj.; 'my' Hebr. Indications of this kind usually appear at the beginning of Psalms.

ZEPHANIAH

1 The word of Yahweh which was addressed to Zephaniah son of Cushi, son of Gedaliah, son of Amariah, son of Hezekiah, in the days of Josiah son of Amon king of Judah.

I: THE DAY OF YAHWEH FOR JUDAH

Prelude: judgement on all creation

2 I shall sweep away everything
off the face of the earth,
declares Yahweh.
3 I shall sweep away humans and animals,
the birds of the air and the fish of the sea, Ho 4:3a
I shall topple the wicked [a]
and wipe all people off the face of the earth
—declares Yahweh.

Against the worshippers of alien gods

4 I shall raise my hand against Judah
and against all who live in Jerusalem,
and from this place I will wipe out Baal's remnant, 2 K 23:4seq.,12
the very name of his priests, [b]
5 and those who prostrate themselves on the roofs Dt 4:19
before the array of heaven, 2 K 21:3–5
and those who prostrate themselves [c] before Yahweh
but swear by Milcom, [d] 1 K 11:7,33
6 and those who have turned their back on Yahweh, 2 K 23:13
who do not seek Yahweh
and do not consult him.

7 Silence before Lord Yahweh, Hab 2:20
for the Day of Yahweh is near! Zc 2:17
Yahweh has prepared a sacrifice, Rv 8:1
he has consecrated his guests. [e]

Against the courtiers [f]

8 On the Day of Yahweh's sacrifice,

1 **a.** 'I shall topple' *wehikshalti* conj.; Hebr. *wehammakshelot* 'the stumbling-blocks'.

b. The word is used only of the priesthood of idols. Hebr. adds 'and the priests', a gloss.

c. Hebr. adds 'and who swear', dittography.

d. 'Milcom' some Gk MSS, Syr.; 'their king' Hebr. • Zephaniah denounces the vestiges of Canaanite religion, v. 4, the star worship of Assyria, and finally the combination of Yahwism with the worship of neighbouring gods (Milcom, god of the Ammonites).

e. 'Silence before Lord Yahweh' is a liturgical command, the Day of Yahweh being represented as a sacrificial banquet, Is 34:6; Jr 46:10; Ezk 39:17, at which the people of Judah are the victims. The guests are 'consecrated' for slaughter, as in Jr 12:3.

f. The prophecy seems to have been uttered during the early years of Josiah's reign when Judah was being governed by regents in the Assyrian interest. • 'Those who go up the Step' (clearly the steps of the throne) are those who approach the king.

Ex 3:16h I shall punish the courtiers,
the royal princes
and all who dress
in outlandish clothes.
On that day I shall punish 9
all who go up the Step
and fill the Temple of their lords,
with violence and deceit. [g]

Against the merchants of Jerusalem

On that Day—declares Yahweh— 10
Ne 3:3 uproar will be heard from the Fish Gate,
wailing from the New Quarter
and a great crash from the hills.
Wail, you who live in the Hollow, [h] 11
for it is all over with the merchants,
all the money-bags have been wiped out!

Against unbelievers

When that time comes 12
I shall search Jerusalem by lamplight
and punish the men
Jr 48:1 stagnating over the remains of their wine, [i]
who say in their hearts,
Ps 10:4;14:1 'Yahweh can do nothing,
Jr 5:12e either good or bad.'
For this, their wealth will be looted 13
and their houses laid in ruins;
Dt 28:30–33+ they will build houses but not live in them,
Am 5:11 •Mi 6:15 they will plant vineyards but not drink their wine.

The Day of Yahweh [j]

Am 5:18m The great Day of Yahweh is near, 14
near, and coming with great speed.
How bitter the sound of the Day of Yahweh,
Nb 10:5a the Day when the warrior shouts his cry of war. [k]
Is 42:13 That Day is a day of retribution, 15
a day of distress and tribulation,
a day of ruin and of devastation,
‖Jl 2:2 a day of darkness and gloom,
a day of cloud and thick fog,
Jl 2:1b a day of trumpet blast and battle cry 16
against fortified town
and high corner-tower.
I shall bring such distress on humanity 17
that they will grope their way like the blind
for having sinned against Yahweh.
Their blood will be poured out like mud,
Jr 9:21 yes, their corpses like dung;
Ezk 7:19 nor will their silver or gold 18
be able to save them.
On the Day of Yahweh's anger,
Dt 4:24f by the fire of his jealousy,
Am 8:9h the whole earth will be consumed.
For he will destroy, yes, annihilate
everyone living on earth.

Conclusion: a call to conversion [a]

2 1 Gather together, gather together, [b]
nations without shame,
2 before you are dispersed [c] like chaff — Ho 13:3
which disappears in a day;
before Yahweh's burning anger overtakes you
(before the Day of Yahweh's anger overtakes you).
3 Seek Yahweh, — Am 5:4c
all you humble of the earth, [d]
who obey his commands.
Seek uprightness,
seek humility: — Is 57:15
you may perhaps find shelter
on the Day of Yahweh's anger.

II: AGAINST THE NATIONS

The enemy to the west: the Philistines [e] — Jos 13:2b; Is 14:28–32; Jr 47; Ezk 25:15–17; Am 1:6–8

4 For Gaza will be abandoned
and Ashkelon reduced to ruins;
Ashdod will be driven out in broad daylight
and Ekron uprooted.
5 Disaster to the members of the coastal league,
to the nation of the Cherethites! — Dt 2:23; Jr 47:4; Am 9:7
This is the word of Yahweh against you:
I shall subdue you, land of the Philistines,
I shall destroy you till there are no inhabitants left;
6 and the coastal league will be reduced to pasture land,
to grazing grounds for shepherds
and folds for sheep;
7 and the league will belong
to the remnant of the House of Judah;
they will pasture their flocks there,
at night they will rest in the houses of Ashkelon;
for, when Yahweh their God has punished them,
he will restore their fortunes.

g. The word here translated 'punishment' can mean any special intervention of Yahweh, favourable as well as unfavourable.

h. The Hollow: an unidentified but presumably low-lying quarter of Jerusalem; *see* Pr 31:24; Is 23:8; Ho 12:8.

i. lit. 'congealing' like wine which is not drawn.

j. As with Isaiah, Is 2:6–22, and Amos, Am 5:18–20, 18m, the Day is a terrifying manifestation of the power of Yahweh. God is represented as a warrior (cf. Ex 15:3; 2 S 5:24; Ps 18:7–14), but here he fights against his own people. This poem inspired Joel, Jl 2:1–11, and the medieval author of the *Dies Irae*.

k. Or 'even the warrior cries out in terror'.

2 a. The threat of the Day of Yahweh does not preclude hope of conversion. Salvation is promised to the 'humble' (or the 'poor'), v. 3.

b. Rare verb, variously interpreted 'gather', 'return to yourselves', 'humble yourselves'. The similiarity with the word meaning 'straw' suggests the image of heaping straw on the threshing-floor, cf. v. 2.

c. 'you are dispersed *lo' tiddahqu* conj.; Hebr. *ledet hoq* 'birth of a decree' • 'chaff' Gk; Hebr. 'the flower'.

d. The 'humble' or 'afflicted', *'anawim* in Hebr. These play a large part in the Bible. Though wisdom literature sometimes looks on poverty, *resh*, as the result of idleness, Pr 10:4 (but cf. Pr 14:21; 18:12), the prophets are aware that the poor are usually the oppressed, *'aniyyim*; they demand justice for the weak and lowly, *dallim*, and for those in need, *'ebionim*, Is 10:2; Am 2:6seq.; cf. Jb 34:28seq.; Si 4:1seq.; Jm 2:2seq. The humane legislation of Dt 24:10seq., based on Ex 22:20–26; 23:6, shows the same attitude of mind. With Zephaniah, 'poverty' assumes a moral and eschatological significance. 3:11seq., but cf. Ps 22:26; 34:2seq.; 37:11seq.; 69:33; 74:19; 149:4; Is 49:13; 57:14–21; 66:2, and *see* Mt 5:3d; Lk 1:52; 6:20; 7:22. In short, the *'anawim* are those Israelites who submit to the will of God. In the LXX period, the word *'anaw* (or *'ani*) comes to mean becoming poor and humble for the sake of others, Zc 9:9; *see* Mt 11:29; 21:5, and the victim of oppression, Is 53:4.

e. The Philistine cities of the coastal league are listed with the exception of Gath (probably already in ruins). Following the precedent of Is 10:29–31 and Mi 1:10–15, Zephaniah plays on the names 'Gaza' and 'Ekron', making them omens of disaster.

Nb 22:36h Dt 2:19e Is 15–16 Jr 48:1–49:6 Ezk 25:1–11 Am 1:13–2:3

The enemies to the east: Moab and Ammon

I have heard the taunt of Moab 8
and the insults of the Ammonites,
as they taunted my people
and boasted of their own domains.
For this, as I live—declares Yahweh Sabaoth, 9
God of Israel—
Gn 19:1a Moab will become like Sodom
and the Ammonites like Gomorrah:[f]
a realm of nettles, a heap of salt,
a desolation for ever.
Is 14:2 Zc 2:13 What is left of my people will plunder them,
the survivors of my nation will take their heritage.
This will be the price of their pride 10
for having taunted and boasted
over the people of Yahweh Sabaoth.
Yahweh will be fearsome to them, 11
for he will scatter all the gods of the earth,
and they will bow down to him,
each from his own place—
all the islands of the nations.[g]

Is 18–20 Jr 46 Ezk 29–32

The enemy to the south: Ethiopia

You Ethiopians too[h] 12
will be run through by my sword.

The enemy to the north: Assyria[i]

He will raise his hand against the north 13
and bring Assyria down in ruins;
he will make Nineveh a waste,
as dry as a desert.
Flocks will rest inside there, 14
so will wild animals;
pelican and porcupine
will nest round her cornices at night;
the owl will hoot at the window
and the raven croak on the doorstep—
for the cedar has been torn down.[j]
This is what the city will be like, 15
once living happy and carefree
and thinking to itself,
||Is 47:8,10 'I have no rival—not I!'
And what will it be now? A ruin,
a lair for wild beasts to rest in,
and everyone who passes by
Jr 18:16; 19:8;49:17 will whistle and throw up his hands.

III: AGAINST JERUSALEM

Against the rulers of Judah

3 Disaster to the rebellious, the befouled, 1
the tyrannical city!
She has not listened to the call, 2
Am 4:6seq. she has not bowed to correction,

she has not trusted in Yahweh,
she has not drawn near to her God.
3 The rulers she has — Ezk 22:25–26
are roaring lions,
her judges are wolves of the wastelands
which leave nothing over for the morning,
4 her prophets are braggarts,
impostors,
her priests have profaned what is holy
and violated the Law.

5 Yahweh the Upright is in her, — Dt 32:4
he does no wrong;
morning by morning he gives judgement, — Ps 101:8d
each dawn unfailingly
(but the wrong-doer knows no shame).

The example of the nations

6 I have exterminated the nations,
their corner-towers lie in ruins;
I have emptied their streets,
no one walks through them;
their cities have been destroyed
and are now deserted and unpeopled.
7 I thought, 'At least you will fear me,
at least you will bow to correction,' — Am 4:6seq.
and none of the punishments I brought on them
will disappear from their view. [a]
But no, it only made them more anxious
to do whatever was corrupt.

8 So wait for me—declares Yahweh—
for the day when I rise as accuser,
for I am determined to gather the nations, — Jl 4:2
to assemble the kingdoms,
and on you to vent my fury,
the whole heat of my anger
(for the whole earth will be devoured
by the fire of my jealousy [b]).

IV: PROMISES

Conversion of the nations

9 Yes, then I shall purge
the lips of the peoples,
so that all may invoke the name of Yahweh — Ml 1:11
and serve him shoulder to shoulder.

f. According to Gn 19:30–38, Lot became father of Ammon and Moab after his escape from Sodom.

g. This promise of the conversion of the 'islands', which does not include Moab or Ammon, is likely to be an addition which seems to depend on Is 41:1,5; 42:4,10; 49:1; 51:5.

h. Ethiopia here denotes Egypt, where an Ethiopian dynasty was in power shortly before Zephaniah (XXV Dynasty, 715–663). The saying seems incomplete.

i. The great enemy and oppressor of Judah for nearly a century.

j. 'the owl' *kos* conj.; Hebr. *qol* 'a voice'. • 'the raven' Gk; 'ruin' Hebr. • the cedar has been torn down' conj.; 'he has torn down the cedar' Hebr.

3 **a.** 'their view' Gk, Syr.; 'their home' Hebr.

b. 'as accuser' Gk, Syr.; 'for plunder' (or 'for ever') Hebr. • 'on you' conj.; 'on them' Hebr. • The original text seems to have ended vv. 6–7 by announcing punishment for Judah at the hands of the nations, as in Am 3:9–11. As it now stands, the Hebr. text predicts the punishment of the nations themselves. The end of v. 8 adapts 1:18 as an introduction to vv. 9–20.

Ps 68:31
Is 18:7
From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia, 10
my suppliants will bring me tribute. [c]

2:3d **The humble remnant of Israel** [d]

When that Day comes 11
you will never again be ashamed of all the deeds
with which you once rebelled against me,
for I shall rid you
of those who exult in your pride;
never again will you strut
on my holy mountain.
But in you I shall leave surviving 12
a humble and lowly people,
and those who are left in Israel 13
will take refuge in the name of Yahweh.
They will do no wrong,
Is 53:9
↗Rv 14:5
will tell no lies;
nor will a deceitful tongue
be found in their mouths.
But they will be able to graze and rest
with no one to alarm them.

Psalms of joy in Zion [e]

Is 12:6;54:1
Zc 2:14;9:9
Shout for joy, daughter of Zion, 14
Israel, shout aloud!
Rejoice, exult with all your heart,
daughter of Jerusalem!
Is 40:2
Yahweh has repealed your sentence; 15
he has turned your enemy away.
Yahweh is king among you, Israel,
you have nothing more to fear.

When that Day comes, the message for Jerusalem will be: 16
Zion, have no fear,
do not let your hands fall limp.
Yahweh your God is there with you, 17
the warrior-Saviour.
Is 62:5
He will rejoice over you with happy song,
he will renew you [f] by his love,
he will dance with shouts of joy for you,
as on a day of festival [g] 18

Return of the exiles [h]

I have taken away your misfortune,
no longer need you bear the disgrace of it. [i]
I am taking action here and now 19
against your oppressors.
When that time comes I will rescue the lame,
and gather the strays,
and I will win them praise and renown
when I restore their fortunes. [j]

At that time I shall be your guide, 20
Mi 4:6–7
at the time when I gather you in,
I shall give you praise and renown
among all the peoples of the earth
when I restore your fortunes under your own eyes,
declares Yahweh.

c. After 'my suppliants', Hebr., adds 'my Dispersion'. This promise of the conversion of Ethiopia, cf. Is 18:7; 19:18–25; 45:14, is probably not authentic but post-exilic. The gloss turns it into a promise to the Jews in exile.

d. This pronouncement prophesies that the ideal proposed in 2:3 will become a reality, and is one of the most perfect descriptions of 'the spirit of poverty' in the OT.

e. These two psalms (vv. 14–18[a]), or at least the second, were probably added to form the conclusion of the book.

f. 'renew you' Gk, Syr.; 'he will be silent' Hebr.

g. 'as on a day of festival' Gk, Syr.; Hebr. 'afflicted from a festival'.

h. v. 20 is a variant of v. 19, the latter being based on Mi 4:6. These prophecies probably date from the exilic period.

i. 'misfortune' *hawwah* conj.; Hebr. *hayu* 'they were'. • 'no longer need you bear' following Gk, Syr., Targ.; 'a burden on her' Hebr.

j. 'when I restore their fortunes' *beshub 'et shebutehem* corr.; Hebr. *boshetam* 'their shame'.

HAGGAI

The summons to rebuild the Temple

1 In the second year of King Darius, on the first day of the sixth month,[a] the
Zc 4:6–10 word of Yahweh was addressed through the prophet Haggai to Zerubbabel son
Zc 3:1–9 of Shealtiel governor of Judah and to Joshua son of Jehozadak the high priest as
follows, ·'Yahweh Sabaoth says this, "This people says: The time has not yet
come[b] to rebuild the Temple of Yahweh." ' ·(And the word of Yahweh was
2 S 7:2 addressed through the prophet Haggai, as follows,) ·'Is this a time for you to live in
your panelled houses, when this House lies in ruins? ·So now, Yahweh Sabaoth
says this, "Think carefully about your behaviour. ·You have sown much and
Ho 4:10 harvested little; you eat but never have enough, drink but never have your fill, put
on clothes but feel no warmth. The wage-earner gets his wages only to put them in
a bag with a hole in it." ·Yahweh Sabaoth says this, "Think carefully about your
behaviour.[c] ·Go up into the hills,[d] fetch timber and rebuild the House; and I shall
take pleasure in it and manifest my glory there—Yahweh says. ·The abundance
you expected proved to be little. When you brought the harvest in, I blasted it.
And why?—Yahweh Sabaoth declares. Because while my House lies in ruins, each
Lv 26:19–20 of you is busy with his own house. ·That is why the sky has withheld the rain[e] and
the earth withheld its yield. ·I have called down drought on land and hills, on grain,
on new wine, on olive oil and on all the produce of the ground, on humans and
animals and all your labours." '

Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, Joshua son of Jehozadak the high priest and the
entire remnant[f] of the people, paid attention to the voice of Yahweh their God
and to the words of the prophet Haggai, which Yahweh their God had sent him to
deliver. And the people were filled with fear before Yahweh. ·Haggai, the messen-
ger of Yahweh, then passed on Yahweh's message to the people, 'I am with you—
Ezr 1:5 declares Yahweh.' ·And Yahweh roused the spirit of Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel
governor of Judah, the spirit of Joshua son of Jehozadak the high priest and the
spirit of the entire remnant of the people; they came and set to work in the Temple
of Yahweh Sabaoth, their God. ·This was on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth
month.

The future glory of the Temple

In the second year of King Darius,

2 on the twenty-first day of the seventh month,[a] the word of Yahweh was
addressed through the prophet Haggai, as follows, ·'You are to speak to
Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel governor of Judah, to Joshua son of Jehozadak the
Ezr 3:10–13 high priest and to the remnant of the people. Say this, ·"Is there anyone left among
you who saw this Temple in its former glory? And how does it look to you now?
Does it not seem as though there is nothing there? ·But take courage now,
Zerubbabel!—Yahweh declares. Courage, Joshua son of Jehozadak high priest!
Courage, all you people of the country!—Yahweh declares. To work! I am with
you—Yahweh Sabaoth declares—·[b] and my spirit is present among you. Do not be
↗Heb 12:26 afraid! ·For Yahweh Sabaoth says this: A little while now, and I shall shake the
heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land.[c] ·I shall shake all the nations, and

the treasures of all the nations will flow in,[d] and I shall fill this Temple with glory, Is 60:7–11
8 says Yahweh Sabaoth. ·Mine is the silver, mine the gold!—Yahweh Sabaoth
9 declares. ·The glory of this new Temple will surpass that of the old, says Yahweh 1 K 8:11
Sabaoth, and in this place I shall give peace—Yahweh Sabaoth declares." '[e]

Haggai consults the priests

10 On the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius,[f] the
11 word of Yahweh was addressed to the prophet Haggai as follows, ·'Yahweh
12 Sabaoth says this, "Ask the priests to give a ruling on this: ·If someone is carrying consecrated meat in the fold of his gown and allows the fold to touch bread, broth, wine, oil or food of any kind, will that become holy?" ' The priests replied, 'No.'
13 Haggai then said, 'If anyone rendered unclean by contact with a corpse touches any of these things, will that become unclean?' The priests replied, 'It will become
14 unclean.'[g] ·Haggai then spoke out. 'It is the same with this people,' he said, 'the Lv 22:4–7
same with this nation, in my view—Yahweh declares—the same with everything they turn their hands to;[h] and whatever they offer here is unclean.[i]

A promise of agricultural prosperity[j]

15 'So now think carefully, today and henceforth: before one stone had been laid on
16 another in the sanctuary of Yahweh, ·what state were you in? You would come to a twenty-measure heap and find only ten; you would come to a vat to draw fifty Ho 4:3a
17 measures and find only twenty.[k] ·Everything you turned your hands to, I struck[l] with wind-blast, mildew and hail, and still you would not return to me—Yahweh
18 declares. ·So think carefully, today and henceforth (from the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, from the day the foundation of the sanctuary of Yahweh was laid,
19 think carefully)[m] ·if seed-corn is still short in the barn, and if vine and fig tree, pomegranate and olive tree still bear no fruit.[n]

'From today onwards I intend to bless you.'

The promise to Zerubbabel

20 On the twenty-fourth day of the month the word of Yahweh was addressed a
21 second time to Haggai, as follows, ·'Speak to Zerubbabel governor of Judah. Say
22 this, "I am going to shake the heavens and the earth. ·I shall overturn the thrones of kingdoms and destroy the power of the kings[o] of the nations. I shall overthrow the chariots and their crews; horses and their riders will fall, every one to the sword

1 **a.** August 520.
b. 'has not yet come' Gk; Hebr. corrupt.
c. This v. is perhaps misplaced. vv. 1–11 possibly contain two distinct units, both authentic; vv. 1–6,8 and vv. 7,9–11.
d. Presumably the hill country of Judah.
e. 'the rain' Targ.; 'the dew' Hebr., which adds 'on you'.
f. In Hg and Zc 'the remnant of the people' means the faithful grouped round Jerusalem. *See* Is 4:3c.

2 **a.** October 520, the last day of the feast of Shelters.
b. Hebr. here inserts a gloss, absent from Gk: 'This is the covenant (reading *berit* instead of *dabar* 'word') which I made with you when you came out of Egypt.'
c. For Haggai, God is the sole master of history. While the prophet is foretelling the disaster, *see* Am 5:18m; 8:9h, which is to introduce the new era, the world is at peace under the rule of Darius. The imminent worldwide catastrophe and the rebuilding of the Temple will herald the messianic age.
d. 'treasures', lit. 'what is precious', 'what is desired' (sing. in collective sense).
e. The Temple, *see* 2 S 7:14e, has become a focal point of the messianic hope, as for Ezekiel. And in fact it was in this second Temple, restored by Herod, that Christ taught. • Gk adds 'and peace of soul, to save all those who laid the foundations for the rebuilding of this Temple'.
f. December 520.
g. 'Uncleanness' is more contagious than 'holiness'—a ritualistic view.
h. i.e. the harvests, cf. Dt 24:19; 28:12; 30:9, where the same phrase about the work of human hands is used.
i. Worship continued on the site of the Temple, where the altar of burnt offerings had been rebuilt since 538. Haggai points the lesson from the ruling of v. 13: the nation is unclean, and its sacrificial offerings are too. This accusation, contrasting with 2:1–9 in its severity, may possibly be directed against the Samaritans, cf. Ezr 4:1–5. • Gk adds: 'because of their quickly won gains, they will suffer for their labours, and you hated those dispensing justice at the city gate.'
j. This passage, completing 1:1–15, should perhaps be read after 1:15[a].
k. 'what state were you in' Gk; 'of your existence' Hebr. • 'you would come' (indefinite) Gk; 'he would come' Hebr. • After 'vat' Hebr. adds 'press', a gloss on 'vat', absent from Gk.
l. 'I struck' conj.; 'I struck you' Hebr., cf. Am 4:6.
m. A partly inaccurate gloss.
n. 'is short' conj.; Hebr. omits. • 'and if still' Gk; 'and until' Hebr. • 'fruit' Gk; Hebr. omits.
o. 'kings' Gk; 'kingdoms' Hebr.

Si 49:11
Zc 6:12–13

of his comrade. ·When that day comes—Yahweh Sabaoth declares—I shall take[p] 23
you, Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel my servant—Yahweh declares—and make you
like a signet ring.[q] For I have chosen you—Yahweh Sabaoth declares." '

p. The expression implies election to a notable function in the history of salvation. Thus Yahweh 'takes' Abraham, Jos 24:3, the Levites, Nb 3:12, David, 2 S 7:8. Zerubbabel, a successor of David, is now associated with traditional royal messianism, *see* 2 S 7:1a; Is 7:14f, and the messianic expectation takes shape about his person, *see* Zc 6:12.

q. The signet ring, used for the sealing of documents or letters, 1 K 21:8, was kept carefully hung from the neck, Gn 38:18, or worn on the finger, Jr 22:24, where King Jehoiachin is compared to a discarded signet ring.

ZECHARIAH

FIRST PART

A summons to conversion

1 In the second year of Darius, in the eighth month,[a] the word of Yahweh was addressed to the prophet Zechariah (son of Berechiah),[b] son of Iddo, as
2, 3 follows, •"Yahweh was deeply angry with your ancestors. •So say this to them, "Yahweh Sabaoth says this: Return to me—Yahweh Sabaoth declares—and I will ‖Ml 3:7
4 return to you, says Yahweh Sabaoth. •Do not be like your ancestors when the prophets in the past cried to them: Yahweh Sabaoth says this: Turn back from your Is 55:7
evil ways and evil deeds—they would not listen or pay attention to me—Yahweh Lk 15:20
5 declares. •Where are your ancestors now? And the prophets, do they live for ever?
6 But did not my words and statutes, with which I had charged my servants the 7:7–14
prophets, overtake your ancestors just the same?" '[c]

So they repented and said, 'Yahweh Sabaoth has treated us as he resolved to do, and as our ways and deeds deserved.'

First vision: the horsemen

6:1–7
Rv 6:1–9

7 On the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month (the month of Shebat), in the second year of Darius,[d] the word of Yahweh was addressed to the prophet Zechar-
8 iah (son of Berechiah), son of Iddo, as follows, •"I had a vision during the night. There was a man riding a red horse standing among the deep-rooted myrtles;
9 behind him were other horses—red, chestnut and white.[e] •I said, "What are these, my lord?" And the angel who was talking to me said, "I will show you what they
10 are." •The man standing among the myrtles then replied, "Those are they whom
11 Yahweh has sent to patrol the world." •They reported to the angel of Yahweh[f] as ↗Rv 5:6
he stood among the myrtles, "We have been patrolling the world, and indeed the
12 whole world is still and at peace."[g] •The angel of Yahweh then spoke and said, "Yahweh Sabaoth, how long will you wait before taking pity on Jerusalem and the Rv 6:10
cities of Judah, on which you have inflicted your anger for the past seventy years?"
13 Yahweh then replied with kind and comforting words to the angel who was talking
14 to me. •The angel who was talking to me then said to me, "Make this proclamation: Yahweh Sabaoth says this: I am burning with jealousy for Jerusalem and Zion 8:2
15 but am deeply angry with the nations now at ease; before, I was only mildly angry, Is 47:6
16 but they contributed to the disaster.[h] •So now Yahweh says this: In compassion I
have returned to Jerusalem; my Temple will be rebuilt there—Yahweh Sabaoth Is 54:6–10

1 **a.** October–November 520, two months after the first prophecy of Haggai.

b. A gloss suggested by Is 8:2. According to Ezr 5:1; 6:14; Ne 12:16, Zechariah was the son of Iddo.

c. Human beings die but the word of God remains (here personified as in Ps 147:15; Ws 18:14–15; Is 55:11), cf. Is 40:7–8.

d. The middle of February 519.

e. The vision uses certain mythological elements. The myrtle trees appear to have their roots in the depths of the abyss. The standing man is the angel of Yahweh. The horses, a symbol representing the angels who have the world under their surveillance, probably from four groups, *see* 6:2seq. (perhaps 'black' should be added to the list, following Gk), associated with the four points of the compass or the four winds; according to v. 11, they have riders.

f. In the ancient texts, *see* Gn 16:7c, the 'angel of Yahweh' was Yahweh himself in visible form; subsequently this 'angel' became, as here, a separate individual to whom humans and angels must have recourse for access to God.

g. In February 519, under the rule of Darius, there was worldwide peace. Israel found this peace disquieting since great disturbances, *see* Hg 2:6c, were expected to announce the new age.

h. The nations concerned were principally Israel's neighbours.

2:5-9 declares—and the measuring line will be stretched over Jerusalem. ·Make this 17
proclamation too: Yahweh Sabaoth says this: My cities are once more to be very
prosperous. Yahweh will comfort Zion once again, and again make Jerusalem
2:15;13:9 his choice." '

Second vision: the horns and the smiths

2 Then, raising my eyes, I had a vision. It was this: There were four horns.[a] ·I 1, 2
said to the angel who was talking to me, 'What are these?' He said to me,
Dt 33:17 'These are the horns which scattered Judah (Israel) and Jerusalem.'[b] ·Yahweh 3
Dn 7:8 then showed me four smiths.[c] ·And I said, 'What are these coming to do?' He said 4
to me, '(Those horns scattered Judah so completely that no one dared to raise his
Jr 48:25 head; but) these have come to terrify them, to throw down the horns of the nations
who raised their horns over the land of Judah to scatter it.'

Third vision: the measurer

Jr 31:38–39 Then, raising my eyes, I had a vision. There was a man with a measuring line in his 5 2:1
Ezk 41:13
Rv 11:1;21:15 hand. ·I asked him, 'Where are you going?' He said, 'To measure Jerusalem, to 6
calculate her width and length.'[d] ·And then, while the angel who was talking to me 7 3
walked away, another angel came out to meet him. ·He said to him, 'Run, and tell 8 4
Is 49:19–20; 54:2–3 that young man[e] this, "Jerusalem is to remain unwalled, because of the great
Jr 31:27 number of men and cattle inside. ·For I—Yahweh declares—shall be a wall of fire 9 5
Rv 21:23;22:3 all round her and I shall be the Glory within her." '[f]

Two exhortations to the exiles

6:5 Look out! Look out! Flee from the land of the north 10
Is 48:20
Jr 50:8;51:6 —Yahweh declares—
for I have scattered you to the four winds of heaven
—Yahweh declares.
Look out! Make your escape, Zion,[g] 11 7
now living with the daughter of Babylon!
For Yahweh Sabaoth says this, 12 8
since the Glory commissioned me,
about the nations who plundered you,
Dt 32:10 'Whoever touches you touches the apple of my eye.[h]
Ps 17:8
Now look, I shall wave my hand over them 13 9
Is 14:2 and they will be plundered by those whom they have enslaved.'
Zp 2:9
Then you will know that Yahweh Sabaoth has sent me!

Zp 3:14 Sing, rejoice, daughter of Zion, 14
for now I am coming
to live among you
—Yahweh declares!

Is 45:22 And on that day many nations 15
will be converted to Yahweh.
Yes, they will become his people,[i]
and they will live among you.
Then you will know that Yahweh Sabaoth has sent me to you!
1:17 Yahweh will take possession of Judah, 16
his portion in the Holy Land,[j]
and again make Jerusalem his choice.
Hab 2:20 Let all people be silent before Yahweh, 17
Zp 1:7
Rv 8:1a now that he is stirring from his holy Dwelling!

Fourth vision: the investiture of Joshua

3 He[a] then showed me the high priest Joshua, standing before the angel 1
Jb 1:6g of Yahweh, with Satan standing on his right to accuse him.[b] ·The angel of 2

Yahweh[c] said to Satan, 'May Yahweh rebuke you, Satan! May Yahweh rebuke you, since he has made Jerusalem his choice. Is not this man a brand snatched from
3 the fire?'[d] ·Now Joshua was dressed in dirty clothes[e] as he stood before the angel.
4a The latter then spoke as follows to those who were standing before him, 'Take off
4c, 5 his dirty clothes ·and dress him[f] in splendid robes ·and put a clean turban on his head.' So they put a clean turban on his head and dressed him in clean clothes,[g]
4b while the angel of Yahweh stood by ·and said, 'You see, I have taken your guilt
7 away.' ·The angel of Yahweh then made this declaration to Joshua, ·'Yahweh Sabaoth says this, "If you walk in my ways and keep my ordinances, you shall govern my house, you shall watch over my courts, and I will give you free access
9a among those in attendance here.[h] ·For this is the stone which I have put before Joshua, a stone on which are seven eyes; and I myself shall cut the inscription on it—Yahweh Sabaoth declares."[i]

↗Jude 9
Am 4:11
Lk 15:22
Rv 19:8
Is 6:7
Jr 31:34
Ezk 36:33
Ml 2:7
Is 28:16
↗Rv 5:6

The coming of the 'Branch'

8 'So listen, High Priest Joshua, you and the colleagues over whom you preside—for they are an omen of things to come—for now I shall bring in my servant the
9b, 10 Branch,[j] ·and I shall remove this country's guilt in a single day. ·On that day—Yahweh Sabaoth declares—invite each other to come under your vine and your fig tree." '

Is 8:18
6:12
Is 4:2b
Jr 23:5a
1 K 5:5

Fifth vision: the lamp-stand and the olive trees

1 4 The angel who was talking to me came back and roused me as though rousing
2 someone who was asleep. ·And he asked me, 'What do you see?' I replied,[a] 'As I look, there is a lamp-stand entirely of gold with a bowl at the top of it; it holds
3 seven lamps, with seven openings for the lamps on it. ·By it are two olive trees, one
4 to the right[b] and the other to the left.' ·I then said to the angel who was talking to
5 me, 'What are those things, my lord?' ·The angel who was talking to me replied,
6a 'Do you not know what they are?' I said, 'No, my lord.' ·He then gave me this
10b answer,[c] ·'These seven are the eyes of Yahweh,[d] which range over the whole
11 world.' ·Then I went on to ask him, 'What is the meaning of these two olive trees,
12 to right and left of the lamp-stand?' ·(And I went on to ask him further, 'What is the meaning of the two olive branches discharging oil[e] through the two golden
13 openings?') ·He replied, 'Do you not know what they are?' I said, 'No, my lord.'

Ex 25:31–40
Rv 11:4d
3:9
Tb 12:15d
↗Rv 5:6

2 **a.** The horns, symbolic of strength, Ps 75:4c, are the nations hostile to Judah. The number four symbolises their universality.
b. 'Israel' seems to be an addition, cf. v. 4.
c. Symbolising the angelic powers.
d. As in Ezk 41:13, the measurements are taken with a view to rebuilding. The measurer is an angel.
e. The angel with the measuring line.
f. The messianic Jerusalem will be defended by Yahweh himself, having returned to his Temple, *see* Ezk 43:1seq.
g. Zion here means the exiles, as in Is 51:16.
h. Hebr. reads 'his eye', a scribal correction to eliminate the anthropomorphism of the original text, here restored.
i. 'his' Gk; 'my' Hebr. 'they will' Gk; 'I shall' Hebr. • Here the covenant is extended to all the nations: Jerusalem is to be the religious centre of the whole world, *see* Is 45:14h.
j. The first occurrence of this expression in biblical literature, cf. 2 M 1:7.

3 **a.** Yahweh.
b. At the gate of heaven the angel of Yahweh presides over a court of justice. At the right hand of the High Priest Joshua stands a malevolent angel, Satan (lit. 'the *satan*', i.e. 'the accuser'), who is the enemy of humanity, *see* Jb 1:6g.
c. 'The angel of Yahweh' Syr.; 'Yahweh' Hebr.
d. Joshua represents the Jewish people.
e. A sign of mourning, either for one dead or for a national calamity; in the latter case it implies admission of guilt, *see* v. 4[b].
f. 'dress him' Gk; 'I shall dress you' Hebr. The text is confused; we restore the logical order.
g. With Gk, omitting 'And I said to you' from beginning of v. • 'clean clothes' Syr.; 'clothes' Hebr. • The period of national mourning, lasting from 587 BC is now over.
h. Here Joshua is no longer addressed as the representative of the people: the promise is made to Joshua personally and to a future priesthood which he portends, *see* 3:8, and which will share in the mediating function of the angels, cf. Ml 2:7. • v. 8 is repositioned between v. 9[a] and 9[b].
i. This stone presumably stands for the Temple. The seven eyes are symbolic of the watchful presence of Yahweh, 4:10. The inscription, perhaps 'Sacred to Yahweh', cf. 14:21–22, has not yet been cut: the building is not finished.
j. This messianic title, *see* Jr 23:5a, does not yet seem to be applied to Zerubbabel, as it is in Zc 6:12. • For 'Branch', Gk reads 'rising Sun', cf. Lk 1:78.

4 **a.** 'I replied' Gk and *qere*; 'he replied' *ketib*.
b. Hebr. adds 'of the bowl'.
c. Vv. 6[b]–10[a] are read after v. 14.
d. Symbol of the omniscience and watchfulness of God.
e. 'oil' conj.; 'gold' Hebr.

↗Rv 11:4 •6:5 Jos 3:11 Mi 4:13 He said, 'These are the two anointed ones in attendance on the Lord of the whole world.[f] 14

Three sayings about Zerubbabel

Ho 1:7+ This is the word of Yahweh with regard to Zerubbabel, 'Not by might and not by power, but by my spirit'—says Yahweh Sabaoth. 6b

'What are you, great mountain?[g] Beside Zerubbabel you shall become a plain! He will bring out the keystone while it is cheered with Hurrah! Hurrah!' 7

The word of Yahweh was addressed to me as follows, •'The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this Temple; his hands will finish it. (Then you will know that Yahweh Sabaoth has sent me to you.) •A day of little things, no doubt, but who would dare despise it?[h] How they will rejoice when they see the chosen stone[i] in the hands of Zerubbabel!' 8, 9 10a

Sixth vision: the flying scroll

5 Again raising my eyes, I had a vision. There was a flying scroll. •The angel who was talking to me[a] said, 'What do you see?' I replied, 'I see a flying scroll; it is twenty cubits long and ten cubits wide.'[b] •He then said to me, 'This is God's curse sweeping across the face of the whole country; for, according to what it says on one side, every thief will be banished and, according to what it says on the other, everyone who commits perjury in my name will be banished from it.[c] •I am going to release it[d]—Yahweh Sabaoth declares—for it to enter the house of the thief and of anyone who commits perjury in my name, for it to settle deep within his house and consume it, timber, stone and all.' 1, 2 3 4

Ezk 2:9–10 Rv 10:9–11 Ex 20:15 Ex 20:7

Seventh vision: the woman in the bushel measure

The angel who was talking to me appeared and said to me, 'Raise your eyes, and see what this is, going along.' •I said, 'What is it?' He said, 'It is a bushel[e] measure going along.' He went on, 'This is their guilt[f] throughout the country.' •At this, a disc of lead was raised, and I saw a woman sitting inside the barrel. •He said, 'This is Wickedness.' And he rammed her back into the barrel and jammed its mouth shut with the mass of lead. •I raised my eyes, and there were two women appearing. The wind caught their wings—they had wings like a stork's; they raised the barrel midway between earth and heaven. •I then said to the angel who was talking to me, 'Where are they taking the barrel?' •He replied, 'To build a temple for it in the land of Shinar and make a pedestal on which to put it.'[g] 5 6 7 8 9 10 11

↗Rv 6:2–8 **Eighth vision: the chariots**

6 Again I raised my eyes, and this is what I saw: four chariots coming out between two mountains, and the mountains were mountains of bronze.[a] •The first chariot had red horses, the second chariot had black horses, •the third chariot had white horses and the fourth chariot had vigorous, piebald horses. •I asked the angel who was talking to me, 'What are these, my lord?' •The angel replied, 'They are the four winds of heaven now leaving, after attending the Lord of the whole world. •The black horses are leaving for the land of the north; the white are following them, and the piebald are leaving for the land of the south.'[b] •They came out vigorously, eager to patrol the world. He said to them, 'Go and patrol the world.' And they patrolled the world. •He called to me and said, 'Look, the ones going to the land of the north brought my spirit[c] to rest on the land of the north.'[d] 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

1:8c Rv 7:1

The votive crown

Then the word of Yahweh was addressed to me as follows, •'Collect silver and gold from the exiles, from Heldai, Tobijah and Jedaiah, then (you yourself go the same day) go to the house of Josiah son of Zephaniah, who has arrived from Babylon.[e] Then, taking the silver and gold, make a crown[f] and place it on the head of the high priest Joshua son of Jehozadak. •And say this to him, "Yahweh Sabaoth says 9, 10 11 12

this: Here is a man whose name is Branch; where he is, there will be a branching 3:8j
13 out [g] (and he will rebuild Yahweh's sanctuary). •Yes, he is the one who will rebuild Jr 23:5a
Yahweh's sanctuary; he will wear the royal insignia and sit on his throne and
govern, with a priest on his right. [h] Perfect peace will reign between these two. 4:14f
14 And the crown will serve Heldai, Tobijah, Jedaiah and the son of Zephaniah as a
15 memorial of favour in Yahweh's sanctuary. [i] •And those now far away will come
and work on the building of Yahweh's sanctuary."

'Then you will know that Yahweh Sabaoth has sent me to you. It will happen if
you diligently obey the voice of Yahweh your God.' Dt 28:1

A question about fasting

1 7 In the fourth year of King Darius, the word of Yahweh was addressed to
Zechariah on the fourth day of the ninth month, the month of Chislev. [a]
2, 3 Bethel sent Sharezer with a deputation [b] to entreat Yahweh's favour •and to ask
the priests in the Temple of Yahweh Sabaoth and the prophets, 'Ought I to go
on mourning and fasting in the fifth month as I have been doing for so many
years past?' [c]

A survey of the nation's past [d]

4, 5 Then the word of Yahweh Sabaoth was addressed to me as follows, •'Say to all the
people of the country and to the priests, "While you have been fasting and
mourning in the fifth and seventh months for the past seventy years, have you
6 really been fasting for my sake? •And when you were eating and drinking, were Am 5:21n
7 you not eating and drinking for your own sake? [e] •Do you not know the words
which Yahweh proclaimed through the prophets in the past, when Jerusalem was
inhabited and secure, as were her surrounding towns, and when the Negeb and the
8 lowlands were inhabited?" ' (•The word of Yahweh was addressed to Zechariah as
9 follows, •'Yahweh Sabaoth says this.) He said, "Apply the law fairly, and show Is 1:17

f. Human beings are frequently compared to trees, Jb 29:19; Ps 1:3; Jr 11:19; Ezk 31. The two anointed ones (lit. 'sons of the oil') are Joshua and Zerubbabel, representing the spiritual and temporal power respectively. Joshua is anointed to the priesthood, Lv 4:3,5,16, and Zerubbabel, it is hoped, will be anointed king. This will fulfil Jr 33:14–18: the spiritual and the temporal power are to be closely associated in the messianic age.

g. Possibly the mountain of debris from which the keystone of the old Temple was to be recovered, *see* vv. 9–10.

h. The day Zerubbabel re-lays the foundations, Hg 2:3, Zerubbabel will also complete the building by placing the stone of Zc 4:7.

i. 'chosen', *hammabedil* lit. 'separated', conj.; Hebr. *habbedil* 'the lead'. Some interpret this as meaning the plummet.

5 **a.** 'The angel who was talking to me' conj., cf. 4:1,5; 5:5; Hebr. omits.

b. The scroll is of immense size: its measurements are those of the portico of Solomon's Temple, 1 K 6:3.

c. 'perjures . . . name' expanded in line with v. 4; 'swears' Hebr. The curse is conceived as having a force of its own. It overtakes all sinners, of whom the Holy Land will be free in the messianic age.

d. 'going to release' Gk; 'have released' Hebr.

e. lit. 'an *ephah*'. But here it is much larger than the common *ephah*. *See* Table of measures and money.

f. 'guilt' Gk; 'eyes' Hebr.

g. Following Gk; Hebr. 'once that is ready, to put it on a pedestal there'. • In the messianic age the Holy Land will be rid of Wickedness (impiety personified). Wickedness now becomes a false goddess for whom a temple is built in Shinar (Babylon), which here symbolises the centre of the gentile world.

6 **a.** The image is borrowed from Babylonian mythology; these mountains flanked the approach to the abode of the gods.

b. It is tempting to read 'are leaving for the land of the west' instead of Hebr. 'following them', and to add 'and the red horses are leaving for the land of the east', thus completing the picture of 'the four winds of heaven', but no version bears this out.

c. Yahweh himself is speaking.

d. Where the exiles are. Impelled by the spirit of Yahweh, these will return and rebuild the Temple, *see* v. 15, which some translators prefer to reposition here.

e. 'has arrived' Gk; 'have arrived' Hebr. • These people are otherwise unknown.

f. 'a crown' conj.; 'crowns' Hebr., but what follows is in the sing., as in v. 14. • It is evident from vv. 12–13 that the original text read 'Zerubbabel', and 'the high priest Joshua son of Jehozadak' was substituted at a later period when the high priest had become head of the community.

g. Playing on the messianic title, 'Branch', Jr 23:5a, and promising successors to Zerubbabel who is now associated with the dynastic messianism of 2 S 7, but *see* Hg 2:23p. The prophet foresees the future of the Royal House and presumably of the Temple.

h. 'on his right' Gk; 'on his throne' Hebr.

i. 'crown' Gk; 'crowns' Hebr. • 'Heldai' Syr., *see* v. 10; 'Helem' Hebr. 'son of . . . favour' conj.; Hebr. ambiguous.

7 **a.** November 518.

b. After 'Sharezer' 'Regem-Melech' (which could indicate the official's title) is omitted.

c. The destruction of Jerusalem and of the Temple in June–July 587 was commemorated by a fast in the month of July. Now that the rebuilding has begun fasting seems out of place, hence the question put to the authorities in Jerusalem. The answer is apparently not given until 8:18–19.

d. This prophecy has been arbitrarily attached to the incident of the deputation because of the mention of fasting, v. 5. The September fast commemorated the murder of Gedaliah, 2 K 25:25; Jr 41:1seq.

e. Whether fasting or feasting they were motivated by self-interest.

Ex 22:20–21+ Mi 2:1 Ex 32:9+ Is 48:4 Ezk 11:19 Dt 4:27

faithful love and compassion towards one another. ·Do not oppress the widow and the orphan, the foreigner and the poor, and do not secretly plan evil against one another." ·But they would not listen; they turned a rebellious shoulder; they stopped their ears rather than hear; ·they made their hearts adamant rather than listen to the teaching and the words that Yahweh Sabaoth had sent—by his spirit—through the prophets in the past; and consequently the fury of Yahweh Sabaoth overtook them. ·And so, since when he called they would not listen, "I would not listen when they called", says Yahweh Sabaoth, ·"but scattered them among all the nations unknown to them. Hence, after they had gone, the country was deserted, and no one came or went. They had turned a land of delights into a desert." '

10 11 12 13 14

A prospect of salvation [a]

8 The word of Yahweh Sabaoth came as follows:

1

Yahweh Sabaoth says this:
I have been burning with jealousy for Zion,
with furious jealousy for her sake.

2

1:14

Yahweh says this:
I am coming back to Zion
and shall live in the heart of Jerusalem.
Jerusalem will be called Faithful City
and the mountain of Yahweh Sabaoth, the Holy Mountain.

3

Is 1:26n

Yahweh Sabaoth says this:
Aged men and women once again will sit
in the squares of Jerusalem,
each with a stick to lean on
because of their great age.
And the squares of the city will be full
of boys and girls
playing there.

4

Dt 4:40 Is 65:20

5

Yahweh Sabaoth says this:
If this seems a miracle
to the remnant of this people (in those days),
will it seem one to me?
declares Yahweh.

6

Jr 32:27

Yahweh Sabaoth says this:
Look, I shall rescue my people
from the countries of the east
and from the countries of the west.
I shall bring them back
to live in the heart of Jerusalem,
and they will be my people
and I shall be their God,
faithful and just. [b]

7

8

13:9 Jr 31:31*f*

'Yahweh Sabaoth says this, "Take heart, you who today hear these promises uttered by the prophets since the day [c] when the foundations of the Temple of Yahweh Sabaoth were laid, that the sanctuary would indeed be rebuilt. ·For up to now, men were not paid their wages and nothing was paid for the animals either; and it has not been safe for anyone to come and go, because of the enemy, since I had set [d] each one against everyone else. ·But from now on, I shall not treat the remnant of this people as I have treated them in time past—declares Yahweh Sabaoth. ·Now they will sow in peace; the vine will give its fruit, the soil will give its produce and heaven will give its dew. I shall bestow all these on the remnant of

9 Hg 1:14 10 11 12

13 this people. •Just as once you were a curse among the nations, House of Judah and
House of Israel, so now I shall save you, and you will be a blessing. Do not be Gn 12:3b Ps 72:17
afraid. Take heart!"
14 'For Yahweh Sabaoth says this, "Just as I resolved to ill-treat you when your
15 ancestors provoked me to anger and did not relent—says Yahweh Sabaoth—•so
now I have changed my mind and intend to treat Jerusalem and the House of Judah
well. Do not be afraid!
16 "These are the things that you must do. Speak the truth to one another; at your Ep 4:25
17 gates, administer fair judgement conducive to peace; •do not secretly plot evil Mt 5:9
against one another; do not love perjury; since I hate all this—Yahweh declares." '

The answer to the question on fasting 7:1–3

18 The word of Yahweh Sabaoth was addressed to me as follows:
19 'Yahweh Sabaoth says this, "The fast of the fourth month, the fast of the fifth,
the fast of the seventh and the fast of the tenth are to become glad, joyful, happy Is 35:10 Jr 31:13
festivals for the House of Judah. [e] So love truth and peace!" ' Mt 9:14–15

A prospect of salvation

20 'Yahweh Sabaoth says this, "In the future, peoples and citizens of many cities will 1 K 8:43
21 come; •and citizens of one city will go to the next and say: We must certainly go to
entreat Yahweh's favour and seek out Yahweh Sabaoth; I am going myself.
22 Yes, many peoples and great nations will seek out Yahweh Sabaoth in Jerusalem
and entreat Yahweh's favour."
23 'Yahweh Sabaoth says this, "In those days, ten men from nations of every Tb 13:11+
language will take a Jew by the sleeve and say: We want to go with you, since we
have learnt that God is with you." '

SECOND PART

1 **9** A proclamation.

The new promised land [a]

The word of Yahweh is against Hadrach,
it has come to rest on Damascus,
for the source of Aram [b] belongs to Yahweh
no less than all the tribes of Israel;
2 on Hamath too, which borders on it,
and on (Tyre and) Sidon, despite her acumen.
3 Tyre has built herself a fortress,
has heaped up silver like dust
and gold like the dirt of the streets.
4 And now the Lord is going to dispossess her;
at sea he will break her power,
and she herself will go up in flames.
5 Seeing this, Ashkelon will be terrified,

8 **a.** This ch. is a collection of short independent prophecies. With the exception of vv. 16–17, an instruction, they all deal with the messianic age, described as an age of simple, peaceful happiness under the blessing of Yahweh, present in Zion. The perspective becomes universal in vv. 20seq.

b. Not, as in 2:10seq., the exiles from Babylon only, but the Jews scattered throughout the world. Their return will be followed by a renewal of the covenant, *see* Jr 31:31*ll*.

c. 'since the day' Gk; 'on the day' Hebr.

d. 'had set' conj.; 'shall set' Hebr.

e. To the fasts of the 5th and 7th months, *see* 7:3,5, there are here added those of the 4th and 10th which commemorated the breaching of the walls of Jerusalem, 2 K 25:1,4, and the beginning of the siege.

9 **a.** The Promised Land will embrace not only Israelite territory, *see* Jg 20:1a, but Aramaean, Phoenician and Philistine cities. The prophecy alludes to a conquering advance, interpreted as an act of Yahweh, heralding the messianic age. Alexander's activities after the Battle of Issus (333 BC) seem to have inspired this passage.

b. 'source of Aram' *'en 'aram* conj.; Hebr. *'en 'adam* 'the eye of man'. It could perhaps also mean 'Yahweh has his eye on men', cf. v. 8 and 12:4.

Gaza too, and writhe with grief,
Ekron too, at the ruin of her prospects;
the king will vanish from Gaza
and Ashkelon be unpeopled,
while a half-breed will live in Ashdod! [c] 6
Yes, I shall destroy the pride of the Philistine;
I shall snatch his blood from his mouth, [d] 7
his abominations from between his teeth.
Is 4:3c But his remnant too will belong to our God,
becoming like a clan in Judah,
and Ekron will become like a Jebusite. [e]
I shall stand guard before my home 8
to defend it [f] against all comers,
and no oppressor will overrun them ever again,
for now I am on the alert.

The Royal Saviour

Rejoice heart and soul, daughter of Zion! 9
Shout for joy, daughter of Jerusalem!
Look, your king is approaching,
Is 9:5b he is vindicated [g] and victorious,
↗Mt 21:5 humble and riding on a donkey,
Mt 11:29 on a colt, the foal of a donkey. [h]
Mi 5:9 He will banish chariots from Ephraim [i] 10
and horses from Jerusalem;
Is 2:4; 11:6b the bow of war will be banished.'
Ho 2:20
Ep 2:17 He will proclaim peace to the nations,
•Ps 85:13 his empire will stretch from sea to sea,
Ps 72:8 from the River to the limits of the earth. [j]

The restoration of Israel

Ex 24:4–8 As for you, because of the blood of your covenant [k] 11
Mt 26:28
Heb 13:20 I have released your prisoners from the pit
in which there is no water. [l]
Come back to the fortress, 12
you prisoners waiting in hope.
This very day, I vow,
I shall make it up to you twice over.
For I have strung Judah as a bow for myself, 13
laid Ephraim on the string as an arrow,
have roused your sons, Zion,
against your sons, Javan, [m]
and have made you like a warrior's sword.
Dt 33:2 Then Yahweh will appear above them 14
Ps 18:14
Hab 3:4 and his arrow will flash out like lightning.
(The Lord) Yahweh will sound the trumpet
and advance in the storm-winds of the south.
Yahweh Sabaoth will protect them! 15
They will devour, will trample on the sling-stones,
they will drink blood like wine, [n]
Ex 27:2b awash like bowls, like the corners of the altar.
Yahweh their God will give them victory 16
when that day comes,
Ezk 34:1a like the sheep who are his people;
yes, the stones of a diadem
will sparkle over his country. [o]

17 How fine, how splendid that will be,
with wheat to make the young men flourish, Jr 31:12–13
and new wine the maidens!

Faithfulness to Yahweh

1 **10** Ask Yahweh for rain in autumn Dt 11:14
and at the time of the spring rains.
Yahweh is the one to make the storm-clouds. Ps 135:7
He will give them showers of rain;
to each, grass in his field.
2 Since the domestic idols have talked nonsense, 1 S 15:22d
and the diviners have seen false signs, [a]
and dreams have purveyed delusions,
affording empty comfort,
that is why they have strayed like sheep, Ezk 34:5 Mt 9:36
in distress for want of a shepherd.

Israel's deliverance and return [b]

3 My anger has been roused by the shepherds, Ezk 34:2
and I shall vent it on the he-goats. [c]

When Yahweh Sabaoth comes to visit his flock,
the House of Judah,
he will make it his royal war-horse.
4 From it will emerge Cornerstone and Tent-peg,
from it, Bow-ready-for-Battle, [d]
from it, every type of leader.
5 Together they will be like warriors
trampling the dirt of the streets in battle;
when they fight, because Yahweh is with them,
they will put mounted men to rout.

6 Then I shall make the House of Judah mighty 10:12;12:5
and the House of Joseph victorious.
I shall restore them, because I have taken pity on them,
and they will be as though I had never cast them off,
for I am Yahweh their God and shall answer their prayer. Is 41:17

c. A mixed population resulting from forced colonisation.

d. An allusion to the non-Jewish usage of eating meat with blood in it, *see* Lv 1:5, and of eating forbidden meat such as pork, cf. Is 65:4; 66:17.

e. i.e. incorporated into Israel like the Jebusites of antiquity.

f. 'home', lit. 'house', but here meaning the whole country, cf. 14:20; Jr 12:7seq.; Ho 8:1; 9:15. • 'I shall stand guard' lit. 'like a post' *matztzebah* conj.; Hebr. *mitztzabah* 'before an army'.

g. 'vindicated', lit. 'upright' or 'just', not in the sense that he dispenses justice, *see* Is 11:3–5, but that he is the recipient of God's saving justice, that is, his vindication and powerful protection, *see* Is 45:21–25.

h. The Messiah is to be 'humble' (*'ani*), a characteristic attributed in Zp 3:12 to the future people of God, *see* Zp 2:3d. Renouncing the panoply of the historic kings, Jr 17:25; 22:4, the messianic king will ride the traditional mount of princes, Gn 49:11; Jg 5:10; 10:4; 12:14. Compare also 1 K 1:38 with 1 K 1:5. Jesus fulfilled this prophecy when he entered Jerusalem riding on a donkey.

i. 'he will' Gk; 'I shall' Hebr. The northern tribes will be reunited to Judah in the messianic kingdom, *see* Jr 3:18h.

j. i.e. from the Mediterranean to the Gulf of Aqaba and from the Euphrates indefinitely eastwards, but *see* Ps 72:8g.

k. Allusion either to the ceremony at Sinai, Ex 24:5seq., or to the sacrifices offered in the temple.

l. A dry storage-well serves as a gaol; here it is a symbol of Babylon.

m. The Greeks. The Persian Empire was then crumbling under the blows of Alexander.

n. 'blood' *dam* Gk. MSS; Hebr. *hamu* 'they will make a noise'. It can also be understood, 'they will drink and will make a noise as though (under the influence) of drink,' which might suggest the sound of a flock, cf. Ezk 34:36–38; Mi 2:12.

o. Text obscure; trans. conj.

10 a. The domestic idols and diviners also occur in juxtaposition in 1 S 15:23. Here the idols are instruments of divination, cf. Ezk 21:26. For the practice of divination after the Exile, *see* Ml 3:5, compare Lv 19:31; 20:6.

b. This difficult passage joins together in a strange fashion passages where Yahweh is speaking (3[a],6,8–11) and others where he is spoken of in the third person (3[b]–5,7,12,11:1–3).

c. 'vent it on' or 'visit' (*paqad*), as in the next line, where the visit will be a favourable one. Foreign monarchs are ruling Yahweh's people. The term 'shepherd' is applied to them in Jr 25:34seq.; Na 3:18 (*see also* Is 44:28); similarly 'he-goat' in Dn 8:5seq. The first visit is punitive, the second favourable.

d. Symbolic epithets for the leaders who will eventually rise from the people.

Ephraim will be like a warrior. 7
Ps 104:15 Their hearts will be cheered as though by wine.
Their children will see this and rejoice,
their hearts will exult in Yahweh.

I shall whistle to them and gather them in, 8
for I have redeemed them;
they will be as numerous as they used to be.
I shall scatter them among the peoples 9
but in distant countries they will remember me,
Dt 30:1–3 they will instruct their children and then return. [e]
Ba 2:30–32
Lk 15:17 I shall bring them home from Egypt 10
and gather them back from Assyria;
I shall lead them into Gilead and the Lebanon,
and even that will not be large enough for them. [f]

They will cross the sea of Egypt [g] 11
(and the waves of the sea will be struck);
all the depths of the River will be dried up.
The arrogance of Assyria will be cast down
and the sceptre of Egypt taken away.
10:6;12:5 I shall make them mighty in Yahweh, 12
and they will march in my name
—Yahweh declares.

A taunt against enemies

11 Open your gateways, Lebanon, 1
and the fire shall burn down your cedar trees! [a]
Wail, juniper, 2
for the cedar tree has fallen,
the majestic ones have been ravaged!
Wail, oaks of Bashan,
for the impenetrable forest has been felled!
The sound of the wailing of shepherds! 3
Their majesty has been ravaged.
The sound of the roaring of young lions!
The pride of the Jordan has been ravaged.

Ezk 34:1a **The two shepherds** [b]

Jr 12:3 Yahweh my God says this, 'Pasture the sheep for slaughter, •whose buyers kill 4, 5
them and go unpunished, whose sellers say of them, "Blessed be Yahweh; now I
am rich!" and whose own shepherds show them no pity. [c] •For I shall show no 6
further pity for the inhabitants of the country—Yahweh declares! Instead, I shall
put everyone into the clutches of a neighbour, into the clutches of the king. They
will crush the country and I shall not rescue anyone from their clutches.' [d]

Then I pastured for slaughter the sheep belonging to the sheep-dealers. [e] I took 7
two staves: the one I called 'Goodwill', the other 'Couplers'; and I pastured the
sheep myself, •getting rid of three shepherds in one month. [f] But I lost patience 8
with them, and they equally detested me. •I then said, 'I am not going to pasture 9
you any more; the one doomed to die can die; the one doomed to perish can perish;
and the rest can devour one another.' •I then took my staff, 'Goodwill', and broke 10
it in half, to break my covenant, which I had made with all the peoples. •When it 11
was broken, that day the sheep-dealers, who were watching me, realised that this
had been a word of Yahweh. •I then said to them, 'If you see fit, give me my wages; 12
Mt 27:3–10 if not, never mind.' So they weighed out my wages: thirty shekels of silver. [g]
Yahweh said to me, 'Throw it to the smelter, this princely sum at which they have 13
valued me!' Taking the thirty shekels of silver, I threw them into the Temple of

14 Yahweh, for the smelter. •I then broke my second staff, 'Couplers,' in half, to rupture the brotherly relationship between Judah and Israel. [h] 2 K 12:11;22:4
15 Next, Yahweh said to me, 'This time, take the gear of a good-for-nothing Ezk 34:2–4
16 shepherd. •For I am now going to raise a shepherd in this country, who will not bother about the lost, who will not go in search of the stray, who will not heal the injured, who will not support the swollen, [i] but who will eat the meat of the fat ones, tearing off their very hoofs. Is 42:3 Mt 12:20

17 Disaster to the shepherd Jr 23:1 ↗Jn 10:12–13
who deserts his flock!
May the sword attack his arm
and his right eye!
May his arm shrivel completely
and his right eye be totally blinded!'

The deliverance and restoration of Jerusalem

1 **12** A proclamation.
2b The word of Yahweh about Israel (•and also about Judah [a]). Yahweh, who spread out the heaven and founded the earth and formed the human spirit within, declares: [b] Gn 2:7 Is 42:5
2a 'Look, I shall make Jerusalem a cup to set all the surrounding peoples reeling. Is 51:17h
(That will be at the time of the siege of Jerusalem.)
3 'When that day comes, I shall make Jerusalem a stone too heavy for all the peoples to lift; all those who try to lift it will hurt themselves severely, although all
4 the nations of the world will be massed against her. •When that day comes—declares Yahweh—I shall strike all the horses with panic and their riders with madness. And I shall strike all the peoples with blindness. (But I shall keep watch
5 over Judah.) [c] •Then the rulers of Judah will say to themselves, "The strength of 10:6,12
6 the inhabitants of Jerusalem lies in Yahweh Sabaoth their God." [d] •When that day comes, I shall make the rulers of Judah like a brazier burning in a pile of wood, like a torch flaming in a sheaf; and they will devour all the peoples round them to right

e. 'instruct' *wehawwu* conj.; Hebr. *wehayu* 'live (with)'; Gk suggests *wehiyyu* 'rear'.

f. Assyria and Egypt here represent oppressors in general. Gilead was the first territory to be conquered after the Exodus, *see* Is 40:3e. The Lebanon was to supplement the original territory; the envisaged expansion did not, however, occur.

g. 'they will cross' Gk; Hebr. 'he will cross'. • 'of Egypt' *mitzrayim* conj.; using the rest of the v.; Hebr. *tzarah* 'of distress'.

11 a. Symbols of the great powers, cf. Is 10:33seq.; Ezk 31, or of their kings. The junipers of v. 2 represent the smaller fry in power politics.

b. This section on the shepherds, *see* Ezk 34:1a, ends with a messianic prophecy, in Zc 13:7–9. Here, in vv. 4–14, recent events are reviewed allegorically and Providence is vindicated. The prophet acts the part of Yahweh, whose sovereign pastoral charge he has, as it were, taken on himself. But Israel has not understood the benefits God wanted to confer; Yahweh will therefore impose a wicked shepherd, whom the prophet is ordered to mime, vv. 15–17, prefiguring the return to former infidelities.

c. 'say', 'show pity' conj.; Hebr. reads the singular. The buyers and sellers are the Jewish ruling classes; money and intrigue give them control over the 'shepherds' of the people.

d. v. 6 is often regarded as a gloss inspired by the words 'show pity' in vv. 4–5 but alien to the context. Some, however, see it as an allusion to events recorded in 1 K 12:19 and 24, the whole passage alluding to the early days of the monarchy, and the three rejected shepherds of v. 8 representing Solomon, guilty of idolatry, Rehoboam who provoked the schism, and Jeroboam who instituted a heterodox cult. But *see* v. 8f.

e. 'dealers', lit. 'Canaanites', Gk; 'the poorest' Hebr., as also in v. 11.

f. As an alternative to three guilty kings, *see* v. 6c, the 'shepherds' may perhaps be a succession of high priests whom Yahweh, in the person of his prophet, expelled from office. Not long after the Exile, the priests became the rulers of the Jewish community. • The 'month' symbolises the time of God's favour, of which the people have failed to take advantage.

g. A ruler has a right to remuneration, *see* Ne 5:15. In this allegory the wages given by the ruling classes to the prophet (who represents Yahweh) are insultingly small—the price of a slave, Ex 21:32. In brief, they are laughing at Yahweh. • Mt 27:3–10 applies Zc 11:12–13 to Jesus, whom the prophet (playing the part of Yahweh) seems to prefigure.

h. This passage may be the earliest evidence we have of the Samaritan schism. According to Josephus, it was in about the year 328 that the Samaritans built a rival temple on Mount Gerizim. If so, the breaking of the staves symbolises the recrudescence of foreign oppression (v. 10) and the definitive schism at home.

i. 'the stray', meaning of Hebr. word uncertain, though possibly connected with 'bleating (for help)'. 'swollen', from the root *tzabah* in Nb 5:22,27. Alternative trans.: 'he will not bother about the one in good health (lit. on its feet).'

12 a. Gloss, better read here than after 'all the surrounding peoples', where it makes no sense. • The end of v. 2 is also very probably a gloss.

b. Title similar to that in Ml 1:1 and imitating Is 42:5.

c. We invert the last two phrases, as the sense seems to require, and omit 'the horses' before 'the peoples'. • The end of the v. may be a gloss.

d. 'of the inhabitants' conj.; 'of me, the inhabitants' Hebr.

=14:10 and left. And Jerusalem will be full of people as before, where she stands (in Jerusalem). •Yahweh will first save the tents of Judah, so that the glory of the 7
House of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem do not increase at Judah's expense. •When that day comes, Yahweh will protect the inhabitants of 8
Jerusalem; and the frailest of them will be like David when that day comes, and the House of David will be like God, like the angel of Yahweh, at their head. [e]
14:3 'When that day comes, I shall set about destroying all the nations who advance 9
against Jerusalem. •But over the House of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem 10
Am 8:10 Jn 3:14i,16; 19:37 I shall pour out a spirit of grace and prayer, and they will look to me. They will
mourn for the one whom they have pierced[f] as though for an only child, and weep
Col 1:15,18 ↗Rv 1:7 for him as people weep for a first-born child. •When that day comes, the mourning 11
in Jerusalem will be as great as the mourning for Hadad Rimmon in the Plain of Megiddo. •And the country will mourn clan by clan: 12

The clan of the House of David by itself,
and their women by themselves;
the clan of the House of Nathan by itself,[g]
and their women by themselves;
the clan of the House of Levi by itself, 13
and their women by themselves;
the clan of the House of Shimei by itself,[h]
and their women by themselves;
all the rest of the clans, every clan by itself, 14
and their women by themselves.'

Ezk 47:1a; 36:25 Jn 7:38seq., 19:34 13 'When that day comes, a fountain will be opened for the House of David 1
and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to wash sin and impurity away. [a]
'When that day comes—Yahweh declares—I shall cut off the names of the idols 2
from the country, and they will never be remembered again; I shall also rid the country of the prophets,[b] and of the spirit of impurity. •Then, if anyone still goes 3
on prophesying, his parents, his own father and mother will say to him, "You shall not live, since you utter lies in Yahweh's name." And even while he is prophesying, his parents, his own father and mother will pierce him through. •When that day 4
comes, the prophets will all be ashamed to relate their visions when they prophesy
2 K 1:8c Mt 3:4 and no longer put on their hair cloaks with intent to deceive. •Instead, they will 5
Am 7:14 say, "I am no prophet. I am a man who tills the soil, for the land has been my living
1 K 18:28 since I was a boy."[c] •And if anyone asks him, "What are those gashes on your 6
chest?" he will reply, "I got them when I was with my friends." '[d]

Invocation to the sword; the new people[e]

Awake, sword, against my shepherd, 7
against the man who is close to me—
declares Yahweh Sabaoth!
Ezk 34:1a ↗Mt 26:31 Strike the shepherd, scatter the sheep!
And I shall turn my hand against the young!
So it will be, throughout the country— 8
declares Yahweh Sabaoth—
two-thirds in it will be cut off (be killed)
and the other third will be left.
I shall pass this third through the fire, 9
Is 1:25;48:10 Ml 3:2–3 refine them as silver is refined,
test them as gold is tested.
Ps 91:15 Is 65:24 He will call on my name
and I shall answer him;
8:8 Jr 31:31*l* I shall say,[f] 'He is my people,'
and he will say, 'Yahweh is my God!'

The eschatological battle; the splendour of Jerusalem [a]

1 **14** Look, the Day of Yahweh is coming, when the spoils taken from you will be
2 shared out among you. ·For I shall gather all the nations to Jerusalem for Jl 4:2.12
battle. The city will be taken, the houses plundered, the women ravished. Half the
city will go into exile, but the rest of the people will not be ejected from the city.
3 Then Yahweh will sally out and fight those nations as once he fought on the day Is 31:4
4 of battle. ·When that day comes, his feet will rest on the Mount of Olives, which Ac 1:11
faces Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives will be split in half from east Mi 1:4
to west, forming a huge valley; half the Mount will recede northwards, the other
5 half southwards. ·The valley between the hills will be filled in, yes, it will be
blocked as far as Jasol, it will be filled in as it was [b] by the earthquake in the days of Am 1:1
Uzziah king of Judah. And Yahweh my God will come, and all the holy ones Dt 33:2–3,5
with him. [c] Mt 16:27par.
1 Th 3:13e
6, 7 That Day, there will be no light, but only cold and frost. [d] ·And it will be one
continuous day—Yahweh knows—there will be no more day and night, and it will
8 remain light right into the time of evening. ·When that Day comes, living waters Ezk 47:1a
will issue from Jerusalem, half towards the eastern sea, half towards the western Jn 4:1a
9 sea; they will flow summer and winter. ·Then Yahweh will become king of the Rv 21:23
whole world. When that Day comes, Yahweh will be the one and only and his Rv 11:15
10 name the one name. [e] ·The entire country will be transformed into plain, from Dt 33:26+
Geba to Rimmon in the Negeb, but Jerusalem will stand high in her place and be
full of people from the Benjamin Gate to the site of the earlier gate, to the Corner =12:6
11 Gate, and from the Tower of Hananel to the king's wine-presses. [f] ·People will
make their homes there. The curse of destruction will be lifted; Jerusalem will be Dt 33:28
safe to live in. Jr 31:40
↗Rv 22:3
12 And this is the plague with which Yahweh will strike all the nations who have
fought against Jerusalem; their flesh will rot while they are still standing on their Is 66:24m
feet; their eyes will rot in their sockets; their tongues will rot in their mouths. [g]
15 And the plague afflicting the horses, mules, camels, donkeys and all the other

e. In the messianic age the Davidic dynasty will be restored.

f. We preserve the MT reading by making a clear break after 'to me'. Theodotion understood 'to the one whom they have pierced', and this reading is followed by John (Jn 19:37). The death of the Pierced One occurs in an eschatological context: the raising of the siege of Jerusalem, national mourning, vv. 10–14, the opening of a fountain of salvation, 13:1. The messianic age thus depends on a passion and a mysterious death, parallel, though in reduced and nationalistic terms, to the fate of the servant in Is 52:13–53:12; *see also* Ps 69:26; Ezk 37. Jn 19:37 interprets the passage as a prophecy of Jesus' passion.

g. i.e. Nathan son of David, 2 S 5:14seq.

h. i.e. Shimei, a descendant of Gershon son of Levi, Nb 3:21.

13 a. 'to wash away' supplied for clarity. On the fountain or spring which will water Jerusalem in the messianic age, *see* Is 12:3; Ezk 47:1. Here, unlike 14:8, its purpose is to purify the people, *see* Ezk 36:25.

b. Prophecy as an institution is to cease, the false prophets having discredited it by their abuses, *see* Jr 23:9seq.; Ezk 13.

c. 'the land has been my living' *'adamah qinyani* conj.: Hebr. *'adam hiqnani* 'a man has bought me'.

d. 'on your chest', lit. 'between your hands'. The prophets of antiquity used to gash their bodies, cf. 1 K 18:28; the man who bears such scars is accused of being a prophet; he defends himself by claiming that the wounds were inflicted in a brawl with friends.

e. A messianic poem, possibly independent. The 'shepherd' here is neither the good shepherd of 11:4–14 nor the bad one of 11:15–16, but, without further definition, the leader of the people, the viceregent of Yahweh. The sword which is about to strike him will hand the whole nation over to the final ordeal which must precede the messianic age. This ordeal is described in the traditional imagery of the sheep without a shepherd, Ezk 34:5, the 'remnant', Is 4:3c, the 'one-third', Ezk 5:1–4, the refining fire, Jr 6:29–30. The nation will then be ready for the new covenant, *see* Jr 31:31*l*.

f. 'I shall say' Gk; 'I said' Hebr.

14 a. Ch. 14 foretells the cosmic repercussions which monotheism will produce, by unifying times (one continuous day) and transforming places (levelling of the Holy Land), by abolishing the occasions for and even the memory of idolatry and divination (stars and seasons, Gehenna and Tophet, Mount of Scandal, etc.), and also by unifying religion and its Israelite and foreign devotees: God will be all in all. The descriptions of the eschatological battle (vv. 1–5,12–15) are interrupted or complemented by descriptions of the new state of things which will succeed it.

b. Following Gk; Hebr. obscure, lit.: 'You will flee from the valley of my mountain, for the valley of my mountain will reach Asel; you will flee as you have fled.' Jasul, possibly on the Wadi Jasul, a tributary of the Kidron. Am 1:1 also refers to the earthquake in the time of Uzziah (mentioned by Flavius Josephus).

c. 'with him' Gk; 'with me' Hebr.

d. 'cold and frost' versions; Hebr. obscure.

e. Repetition for the sake of solemnity: the 'name' of Yahweh is Yahweh himself. The adoption of monotheism by all the nations of the world is one of the characteristics of the messianic age, cf. Ml 1:11.

f. 'to Rimmon in the Negeb, but Jerusalem will stand high' conj.; 'to Rimmon, to the Negeb (south) of Jerusalem, but she will stand high' Hebr. • 'and from the Tower' conj.; 'of the Tower' Hebr. Geba lay on the northern frontier of the kingdom of Judah, in Benjaminite territory. Rimmon is presumably Um er-Rammamin, 9 miles (about 15 km) northeast of Beersheba.

g. v. 15 is placed after v. 12, as the sense seems to require.

animals in those armies will be the same. •When that Day comes, a great terror will 13
Ezk 38:21 fall on them from Yahweh; each man will grab his neighbour's hand and they will
fall to fighting among themselves. •Even Judah will fight against Jerusalem. The 14
wealth of all the surrounding nations will be heaped together: gold, silver, clothing,
in vast quantity.

After this, all the survivors of all the nations which have attacked Jerusalem will 16
come up year after year to worship the King, Yahweh Sabaoth, and to keep the
Ex 23:14d feast of Shelters.[h] •Should one of the races of the world fail to come up to Jerusalem 17
Jn 2:16 to worship the King, Yahweh Sabaoth, there will be no rain for that one. •Should 18
the race of Egypt fail to come up and pay its visit, on it will[i] fall the plague which
Yahweh will inflict on each of those nations which fail to come up to keep the feast
of Shelters. •Such will be the punishment for Egypt and the punishment for all the 19
nations which fail to come up to keep the feast of Shelters.

When that Day comes, the very bells on the horses will be inscribed with the 20
words, 'Sacred to Yahweh', and the cooking pots of the house of Yahweh will be as
holy as the sprinkling bowls before the altar. •Yes, every cooking pot in Jerusalem 21
and in Judah shall be sacred to Yahweh Sabaoth, and all who come to offer sacrifice
will help themselves and do their cooking in them, and there will be no more
traders in the Temple of Yahweh Sabaoth, when that Day comes.[j]

h. The feast of Shelters was presumably chosen because it celebrated Yahweh's sovereignty.

i. 'will' Gk; 'will not' Hebr.

j. The author, remembering Ezekiel, foresees the sanctification of everything in Israel in the messianic age.

MALACHI

1 A message.
1 The word of Yahweh to Israel through Malachi. [a]

The love of Yahweh for Israel

2 'I have loved you, says Yahweh. But you ask, "How have you shown your love?" Dt 4:37;7:7seq. Is 54:8c Ezk 16 Ho 11:1
3 Was not Esau [b] Jacob's brother? declares Yahweh; even so, I loved Jacob ·but I hated Esau. I turned his mountains into a desert and his heritage into dwellings in ·Gn 25:23
4 the wastelands. ·If Edom says, "We have been struck down but we shall rebuild ↗Rm 9:13
our ruins," Yahweh Sabaoth says this, "Let them build, but I shall pull down! They will be known as Land of Wickedness and Nation-with-which-Yahweh-is-angry-
5 for-ever. ·You will see this yourselves and you will say: Yahweh is mighty beyond the borders of Israel."

An indictment of the priests

6 'The son honours his father, the slave stands in awe of his master. [c] But if I am Ex 4:22;20:12 ·Dt 1:31;32:6
indeed father, where is the honour due to me? And if I am indeed master, where is Is 29:13
the awe due to me? says Yahweh Sabaoth to you priests who despise my name.
7 You ask, "How have we despised your name?" ·By putting polluted food on my
altar. You ask, "How have we polluted you?" By saying, "The table of Yahweh
8 deserves no respect." ·When you bring blind animals for sacrifice, is this not Lv 22:18–25
wrong? When you bring the lame and the diseased, is this not wrong? If you offer
them to your governor, see if he is pleased with them [d] or receives you graciously,
9 says Yahweh Sabaoth. ·In that case, try pleading with God to take pity on us (that
10 is what you have done), and will he take any notice? says Yahweh Sabaoth. ·Why
does one of you not close the doors and so stop the pointless lighting of fires on my
altar? I am not pleased with you, says Yahweh Sabaoth; from your hands I find no
11 offerings acceptable. ·But from farthest east to farthest west my name is great Jr 6:20 Am 5:21n
among the nations, and everywhere incense and a pure gift are offered to my
name, [e] since my name is great among the nations, says Yahweh Sabaoth. Zp 3:9
12 'But you have profaned it [f] by saying, "The table of the Lord is polluted, hence
13 the food offered on it deserves no respect." ·You say, "How tiresome it all is!" and
sniff disdainfully at me, says Yahweh Sabaoth. You bring a stolen, lame or diseased Lv 22:18–25
animal, you bring that as an offering! [g] Am I to accept this from you? says Yahweh
14 Sabaoth. ·Cursed be the rogue who has a male in his flock but pays his vow by
sacrificing a blemished animal to me! [h] For I am a great king, says Yahweh Sabaoth, Ps 47:2
and among the nations my name inspires awe.'

1 **a.** 'Malachi' means 'my messenger', *see* 3:1, which is how the Gk translates it, adding, 'Lay (this) therefore to your hearts.' Targ. reads: 'my messenger, whose name is Ezra the scribe'.

b. Esau is the eponymous ancestor of Edom, *see* Gn 36:1; Dt 2:1a,5c.

c. 'stands in awe of' Gk; Hebr. omits.

d. 'them' Gk; 'you' Hebr.

e. The form of worship of which the prophet speaks here as addressed to Yahweh is not so much the widespread cult in the Persian empire (*see* Ezr 1:2c) of the 'God of heaven' (Ezr 1:2; 5:11seq.; 6:9seq.; 7:12,21,23; Ne 1:4seq.; 2:4,20; Dn 2:18; 4:34; 5:23), as the perfect sacrifice of the messianic age.

f. Instead of 'you have profaned it', the original text probably read 'you have profaned me', later corrected by the scribes out of respect for God's majesty; similarly in v. 13 where we restore 'at me', where Hebr. now reads 'at it'. For another example of scribal correction (*tiqqun sopherim*), *see* Zc 2:12h. After 'food', we omit 'and its produce'.

g. 'bring that as an offering' conj.; 'bring the offering' Hebr. • 'Sabaoth' Gk; Hebr. omits.

h. 'me' conj.; 'the Lord' Hebr.

2 'And now, priests, this commandment is for you. ·If you will not listen, if you 1.2
Ps 102:15 will not sincerely resolve to glorify my name, says Yahweh Sabaoth, I shall
Dt 28:15 certainly lay a curse on you and I shall curse your blessing. [a] Indeed I will lay a
curse, for none of you makes this resolve. ·Now, I am going to break your arm and 3
throw offal in your faces—the offal of your solemn feasts—and sweep you away
Dt 18:1–18; 33:8–11 with it. [b] ·Then you will know that I sent this commandment to you, to affirm my 4
Nb 25:12seq. intention to maintain my covenant with Levi, [c] says Yahweh Sabaoth. ·My coven- 5
ant was with him—a covenant of life and peace, and these were what I gave him—
a covenant of respect, and he respected me and held my name in awe. ·The law of 6
truth was in his mouth and guilt was not found on his lips; he walked in peace and
Dt 21:5 Mt 23:13,15 justice with me and he converted many from sinning. ·The priest's lips ought to 7
safeguard knowledge; his mouth is where the law should be sought, since he is
Yahweh Sabaoth's messenger. ·But you yourselves have turned aside from the 8
way; you have caused many to lapse by your teaching. Since you have destroyed
the covenant of Levi, says Yahweh Sabaoth, ·so I in my turn have made you 9
contemptible and vile to the whole people, for not having kept my ways and for
being partial in applying the law.

Mixed marriage and divorce

Dt 1:31+ 1 Co 8:6+ 'Is there not one Father of us all? Did not one God create us? Why, then, do we 10
break faith with one another, profaning the covenant of our ancestors? ·Judah has 11
broken faith; a detestable thing has been done in Israel and in Jerusalem. For
Judah has profaned Yahweh's beloved sanctuary; [d] he has married the daughter of
an alien god. [e] ·May Yahweh deprive such an offender of witness and advocate in 12
the tents of Jacob among those who present offerings to Yahweh Sabaoth! [f]

'And here is something else you do: you cover the altar of Yahweh with tears, 13
with weeping and wailing, because he now refuses to consider the offering or to
accept it from you. ·And you ask, "Why?" Because Yahweh stands as witness 14
between you and the wife of your youth, with whom you have broken faith, even
though she was your partner and your wife by covenant. ·Did he not create a single 15
Gn 2:24 Mt 5:31–32par; 19:4–5 Ep 5:24–32 being, having flesh and the breath of life? And what does this single being seek?
God-given offspring! Have respect for your own life then, and do not break faith
with the wife of your youth. [g] ·For I hate divorce, says Yahweh, God of Israel, and 16
people concealing their cruelty under a cloak, says Yahweh Sabaoth. [h] Have
respect for your own life then, and do not break faith.

The Day of Yahweh

'You have wearied Yahweh with your talk. You ask, "How have we wearied him?" 17
Jb 21:7–8 When you say, "Any evil-doer is good as far as Yahweh is concerned; indeed he is
delighted with them"; or when you say, "Where is the God of fair judgement
now?"

Is 40:3c ↗Mt 11:10+ Mk 1:2 3 'Look, I shall send my messenger to clear a way before me. [a] And suddenly the 1
Lord whom you seek will come to his Temple; yes, the angel of the covenant [b],
Lk 1:17–76 Ac 13:24–25 Rv 6:17 for whom you long, is on his way, says Yahweh Sabaoth. ·Who will be able to resist 2
the day of his coming? Who will remain standing when he appears? For he will be
Jl 2:11 Na 1:6 •Jr 6:29k like a refiner's fire, like fullers' alkali. ·He will take his seat as refiner and purifier; [c] 3
he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, so that they can
make the offering to Yahweh with uprightness. ·The offering of Judah and Jeru- 4
salem will then be acceptable to Yahweh as in former days, as in the years of old. ·I 5
am coming to put you on trial and I shall be a ready witness against sorcerers,
Ex 22:20–21+ Lv 19:13 adulterers, perjurers, and against those who oppress the wage-earner, the widow
and the orphan, and who rob the foreigner of his rights and do not respect me, says
Yahweh Sabaoth.

Temple tithes [d]

Nb 23:19+ 'No; I, Yahweh, do not change; and you have not ceased to be children of Jacob! [e] 6

7 Ever since the days of your ancestors, you have evaded my statutes and not observed them. Return to me and I will return to you, says Yahweh Sabaoth. You ‖Zc 1:3
8 ask, "How are we to return? ·Can a human being cheat God?" Yet you try to cheat
9 me! You ask, "How do we try to cheat you?" [f] Over tithes and contributions. [g] ·A
10 curse lies on you because you, this whole nation, try to cheat me. ·Bring the tithes Dt 28:15 ·Pr 3:9–10
in full to the treasury, so that there is food in my house; put me to the test now like this, says Yahweh Sabaoth, and see if I do not open the floodgates of heaven for Dt 28:8,12
11 you and pour out an abundant blessing for you. ·For your sakes, I shall forbid the locust to destroy the produce of your soil or prevent the vine from bearing fruit in
12 your field, says Yahweh Sabaoth, ·and all the nations will call you blessed, for you Is 61:9
will be a land of delights, says Yahweh Sabaoth.

The triumph of the upright on the Day of Yahweh

13 'You have said harsh things about me, says Yahweh. And yet you say, "What have
14 we said against you?" ·You have said, "It is useless to serve God; what is the Jb 21:14–15 Is 58:3
good of keeping his commands or of walking mournfully before Yahweh Sabaoth?
15 In fact, we now call the proud the happy ones; the evil-doers are the ones who prosper; they put God to the test, yet come to no harm!" '
16 Then those who feared Yahweh talked to one another about this, and Yahweh took note and listened; and a book of remembrance was written in his presence Dn 7:10
17 recording those who feared him and kept his name in mind. ·'On the day when I act, says Yahweh Sabaoth, they will be my most prized possession, and I shall Ex 19:5
18 spare them in the way a man spares the son who serves him. ·Then once again you Ps 103:13
will see the difference between the upright person and the wicked one, between the one who serves God and the one who does not serve him.
19 'For look, the Day is coming, glowing like a furnace. All the proud and all the evil-doers will be the stubble, and the Day, when it comes, will set them ablaze, Am 5:18m Mt 3:19par.,19j
20 says Yahweh Sabaoth, leaving them neither root nor branch. [h] ·But for you who fear my name, the Sun of justice [i] will rise with healing in his rays, [j] and you will ↗Lk 1:78 Jn 8:12b
21 come out leaping like calves from the stall, ·and trample on the wicked, who will be like ashes under the soles of your feet on the day when I act, says Yahweh Sabaoth.

Appendices

22 'Remember the Law of my servant Moses to whom at Horeb I prescribed decrees and rulings for all Israel.

2 **a.** 'blessing' Gk; cf. what follows in the second half of the v. 'blessings' Hebr. ·What is at issue is the material goods allotted to the Levites.

b. 'break your arm' Gk; 'rebuke your descendants' Hebr. • '(I shall) sweep you away with it' Syr.; 'he will sweep you away to him' Hebr.

c. A distinction is possibly being drawn between the unsatisfactory priests of vv. 1–3,7–9, and the more conscientious Levites of vv. 5–6, a clue perhaps to the prophet's own affiliations.

d. The sins of the people defile the Temple.

e. 'Judah', hitherto understood collectively, is now used in the distributive sense: individual members of Judah marry the 'daughters' of an alien god, i.e. idolatresses.

f. 'witness' *'ed* conj.; Hebr. *'er* unintelligible. • 'those who present' Gk; 'him who presents' Hebr.

g. 'Did he not create' Vulg.; 'He did not create' Hebr. • 'flesh and breath' *she'er weruah* conj.; Hebr. *she'ar ruah* 'residue of breath'. • 'do not break faith' Vulg.; 'let him not break faith' Hebr.

h. 'I hate' conj.; 'he hates' Hebr. • 'and that . . . cloak', i.e. with a cloak of legality, conj.; 'he has covered his cloak with cruelty' Hebr.

i. On the problem set by the prosperity of the wicked at a time when only earthly sanctions were envisaged, *see* Jb, Ps 37 and 73, and pp. 750–1.

3 **a.** The precursor of Yahweh, already spoken of in Is 40:3, will be identified with Elijah, 3:23. Mt 11:10 applies this text to John the Baptist, the new Elijah, Mt 11:14g; Mk 1:2; Lk 1:17,76.

b. The angel of the new covenant is not the precursor spoken of above, since his arrival at the Temple is simultaneous with that of Yahweh. It is most probably an enigmatic designation of Yahweh himself, derived from Ex 3:2; 23:20, *see* Gn 16:7c. Mt 11:10 implies its application to Jesus.

c. Hebr. adds 'of silver', probably a gloss.

d. This passage should perhaps be linked with 1:2–5, in which case it would provide the answer to the sceptical question of 1:2.

e. True to their ancestor who supplanted and cheated his brother, see v. 8.

f. 'cheat' (three times and v. 9), Gk, preserving the original reading of the text, *'aqab*, a play on the name Jacob. Scribal correction (1:12f), this time out of deference to the patriarch, transposed the consonants to read *qaba'* 'rob' in MT, thus suppressing the allusion.

g. On tithes *see* Dt 14:22d. According to the Priestly writings, Lv 27:30seq.; Nb 18:21–31, they were a tax imposed for the upkeep of the clergy centralised at the unique sanctuary; *see also* Ne 10:36seq.; 12:44.

h. For the fire on the Day of Yahweh, *see* Is 10:16seq.; 30:27; Jr 21:14; Zp 1:18; 3:8.

i. 'justice' here implies power and triumph as in Is 41:2b.

j. lit. 'wings'.

Mt 17:10–13par.
•↗Si 48:10
↗Lk 1:17
Jos 6:17+

'Look, I shall send you the prophet Elijah before the great and awesome Day of 23
Yahweh comes. •He will reconcile parents to their children and children to their 24
parents, to forestall my putting the country under the curse of destruction.'[k]

k. Elijah, taken up to heaven, 2 K 2:11–13, will return. This return, predicted in this passage, was to remain an important feature of Jewish eschatology, *see* the *Book of Enoch*. Jesus explained that Elijah had indeed come—in the person of John the Baptist, Mt 11:14; 17:10–13e; Mk 9:11–13.

THE
NEW TESTAMENT

THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

INTRODUCTION TO
THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

§1 Of the four canonical books that record the 'good news' (*evangelium*, gospel) brought by Jesus Christ, the first three are so alike that they can, in many passages, be placed side by side and viewed as it were at a glance: for this reason they are called 'synoptic' ('at one glance').

Tradition dating from the second century assigns them respectively to St Matthew, St Mark and St Luke. According to the same ecclesiastical tradition Matthew the tax collector, himself one of the apostles (Mt 9:9; 10:3), was the first to write; he wrote his Gospel in Palestine for Christians converted from Judaism. His work, composed in 'the Hebrew idiom', which probably means in Aramaic, was then translated into Greek. John Mark, a disciple from Jerusalem (Ac 12:12) who assisted Paul in his apostolic work (Ac 12:25; 13:5,13; Phm 24; 2 Tm 4:11), and Barnabas his cousin (Ac 15:37,39; Col 4:10) and Peter (1 P 5:13), whose 'interpreter' he was, put Peter's preaching down in writing at Rome. Another disciple, Luke, a medical man (Col 4:14) and, unlike Matthew and Mark, of gentile origin (Col 4:10–14), born at Antioch according to some authorities, accompanied Paul on the latter's second (Ac 16:10seq.) and third (Ac 20:5seq.) missionary journeys and was with him during his two Roman captivities (Ac 27:1seq.; 2 Tm 4:11). For this reason his Gospel, the third to be written, could claim the authority of Paul (*see* perhaps 2 Co 8:18) as that of Mark could claim the authority of Peter. Luke composed also a second work—the 'Acts of the Apostles'. The original language of the second and third Gospels is Greek.

These traditions, though hallowed by age, are not in any way definitive. Their accuracy is disputed by a number of scholars, both Protestant and Catholic. Acceptance of the gospels as authoritative documents, inspired by the Holy Spirit, is not dependent on acceptance that these particular writers were primarily responsible for them. Many would hold that Matthew the tax collector did not write the gospel which bears his name, though he may well have played some part in the formation of the traditions which it incorporates. It is also widely maintained that the tradition radically oversimplifies the relationship of Mark's Gospel to Peter's preaching; at most the connection is remote and tenuous. A third point of doubt is whether the author of the third Gospel and of the Acts of the Apostles was in fact a companion of Paul. But before going on with this, it is necessary to say something about the problem of the literary relations between these gospels, i.e. the 'Synoptic Problem'.

§2 All the many solutions offered so far prove inadequate if taken separately, though each contributes an element of truth to the complete solution. A common oral tradition is inherently probable, if not certain; it would have been written down independently, and consequently with variations, by each of the three Synoptists. But by itself this tradition would never have been able to account for the many striking similarities which exist not only between details in the text but also in the sequence of passages, resemblances which cannot be explained even by the extraordinary memory of people in the ancient Middle East. A *written tradition*, in one or many forms, would be a better explanation. But the theory that the three evangelists merely drew independently on some such written source or sources could never explain passages where these likenesses and divergencies show that the evangelists were aware of one another, as is obvious from the fact that at times they copy or correct one another. There must have been some direct interdependence and it is clear that Luke depends on Mark for most of his direct narrative. But it is much less obvious that, as has long been held, Mark depends on Matthew, for many indications point in the opposite direction. As for the relationship between Matthew and Luke, no direct dependence in either direction can be considered probable, and the non-Markan passages common to these two probably have their common source or sources outside the second Gospel.

Starting from these textual considerations critics have worked out a '*Two-Source Theory*' according to which these sources are: **1** Mark, on whom Matthew and Luke depend for their narrative sections. **2** A source, the existence of which is inferred purely from the textual evidence, and which is called 'Q' (initial of the German word *Quelle*, source). From Q, both the first and third Gospels draw the 'Sayings' or discourses of Jesus ('Logia'), which in Mark are barely represented. In spite of its simplicity, or rather because of it, this very widely accepted theory fails to resolve all problems. Neither Mark in its present form, nor Q as it is commonly reconstructed, can suffice to play the part which is attributed to it.

It is true that Mark generally appears to be more primitive than Matthew and Luke. But contrary instances can be found. Mark sometimes betrays comparatively late traits, such as Paulinisms and adaptations to readers of the Graeco-Roman world, while Matthew and Luke retain some more archaic features such as Semitisms and details of Palestinian origin. The suggestion has been made that Matthew and Luke may have drawn their material from a Mark in an earlier state.

This suggestion is strengthened by another factor. In some places Matthew and Luke present points of agreement against Mark in a way which argues against their common dependence on that Gospel. These agreements are frequent and sometimes striking. Attempts have been made to account for them in a way which leaves the basic theory intact, either as harmonisations by copyists which should be removed by textual criticism, or as corrections by the evangelists themselves who spontaneously and independently refashioned passages of Mark which they considered unsatisfactory. Acceptable as these explanations may be for certain cases, they will not suffice to explain the phenomenon as a whole. All in all the explanation already suggested above is preferable, namely that Matthew and Luke knew and used an earlier

version of the Gospel of Mark. The last revision of Mark must have been made after they had already made use of it. This would account for the features which appear late and the cases where Matthew and Luke agree against Mark: they would both reflect an earlier version of his text.

No more satisfactory, at least in the form commonly proposed, is the hypothesis of the source Q. The document suggested is reconstructed by different scholars in ways too diverse for it to have any definable or even intelligible form. Even the idea that it is a single source is disputed. In fact the sayings from which it is made up occur in Matthew and Luke in a way which suggests two sources rather than one, those in the middle (often called 'Peraean') section of Luke (9:51–18:14) contrasting with the other sayings in his Gospel. Although both have equivalents in Matthew, those in the latter category occur in the two gospels in series largely parallel, while those in the former category are grouped in Luke and scattered in Matthew. Everything indicates that Matthew and Luke drew the sayings from two different sources: **1** A collection, called S(ource) by some which Luke has substantially adopted for his Peraean section, while Matthew scattered the elements throughout his discourses, and **2** The Gospel of Matthew in an earlier form.

It seems, indeed, necessary to postulate for Matthew and even for Luke, no less than for Mark, an earlier form than those we now have. Analyses which cannot be reproduced here suggest three stages, at least for Mark and Matthew: a basic document, a first revision and a final revision, which is what we now have. Between these different stages there were interactions in various directions, bringing with them the literary relationships of similarity and difference which we now find in the gospels. Thus, for example, the first revision of Mark will have been influenced by the document which is at the source of Matthew, but in its turn will have exerted an influence on the final revision of Matthew. This lattice-work of interlocking influences, complex though it may seem, is the only solution which adequately explains a complex situation. Any claim to a simple solution of the synoptic problem is illusory.

It is now possible to describe the steps in *the formation of the first three gospels*, although profound differences remain between scholars on many points. The present hypothesis claims only to be one likely solution to the problem.

At the heart of the oral preaching of the apostles lies the *kerygma* proclaiming the redemptive death and resurrection of the Lord. Peter's discourses in the Acts of the Apostles provide us with typical summaries of this apostolic preaching which would in practice have included more detailed narratives: principally the story of the Passion which must have assumed its stereotyped pattern very early, as the close similarity of the four gospel accounts shows, but also many anecdotes taken from the Master's life, and throwing light on his person, his mission and his power, or else illustrating his teaching by means of some well-remembered episode, saying, miracle, pronouncement or parable etc. In addition to the apostles themselves there were professional narrators like the evangelists (those who enjoyed a special *charisma* not limited to the writers of our four gospels; *see* Ac 21:8; Ep 4:11; 2 Tm 4:5), who tended to stereotype the anecdotes by constant repetition. Soon, and particularly when the witnesses who had been in touch with the events themselves began to disappear, measures would have been taken to

commit this oral tradition to writing. Episodes originally narrated separately and independently of one another would naturally be grouped together either chronologically (e.g. Mk 1:16–39, the Day at Capernaum) or logically (e.g. Mk 2:1–3:6, the Five Disputes); the groupings would be small at first, but would later grow into more extensive collections. This was the stage at which an author intervened who, according to tradition which there is no reason to doubt, was Matthew the apostle. He was the first to compose a 'gospel' which drew together Christ's deeds and words into a continuous narrative covering the earthly ministry of Jesus from baptism to resurrection. Shortly afterwards a 'Collection', S, of unknown authorship, appeared side by side with this early gospel; its purpose was to preserve other sayings of the Lord, or the same sayings in a different form. This early gospel and this Collection, both written in Aramaic, were soon put into Greek, and eventually various forms of these translations came to exist.

The needs of adaptation to Christians of gentile origin will have led to a new form of that very first Gospel which we have just attributed to Matthew, and this new form constituted a new document on which the Markan tradition was based. Add to these two primitive forms of the Gospel derived respectively from Matthew and the Collection S, another ancient gospel, which can be divined as the source of the accounts of the Passion and Resurrection in Luke and John, and we have four basic documents for the first of the three stages which have already been suggested.

At a second stage these documents were taken up and combined in various ways. From the primitive Matthaean Gospel and its various adaptations, especially the one addressed to Christians of gentile origin, the Markan tradition made a more organised and more complete revision, which was not, however, the final version which we know today. It is this intermediate form of Mark which was known and used by the editors of the canonical Gospels of Matthew and Luke. The Matthaean tradition, for its part, combined the primitive Gospel of Matthew with the Collection S to produce a new revision.

The editor who achieved this combination did so with great delicacy, dividing up the sayings grouped in S to distribute them in the Gospel and thus construct the great discourses. Soon afterwards, an editor of the Gospel of Luke began his work. Having sought out diligently everything which had been written before him (Lk 1:1–4), he used, in a first stage of his work which may be called Proto-Luke, both the document with gentile-Christian tendencies which had formed a basis for Mark and the Gospel of Matthew into which S had already been incorporated; but he also knew S at first hand, and preferred to insert the sayings in large blocks into his middle section, instead of following Matthew who had divided them up. Finally he used, especially in the accounts of the Passion and resurrection, an ancient document used also by the fourth Gospel. This accounts for the numerous contacts of Luke and John against Matthew and Mark in this part of the Gospel. Proto-Luke had no knowledge of Mark, even in its intermediary form; it was only later that he utilised it to complete his Gospel. This brings us to the third stage.

In this final stage the Gospel of the Matthaean tradition was thoroughly remoulded with the help of Mark, though this Mark was not of course in the

final state in which we know it, but in the more primitive form which we have assigned to the second stage of the evolution. By a curious criss-crossing, the Gospel of Mark was itself revised in view of the intermediate form of Matthew and perhaps also of Proto-Luke, not without some Pauline influence. As for Luke, this found its final form by the use of Mark in its intermediate form, in the same way as Matthew. Into the course of its first edition (Proto-Luke) were inserted three 'Markan sections' (4:31–6:19; 8:4–9:50; 18:15–21:38). That these insertions occurred only at a late stage of the work is proved by the omission of those Markan elements which he had already adopted in a different literary form from the sources Matthew or S. These latter had been used earlier. It should also be noted that Luke, in the same way as Matthew but to a greater extent, had recourse to special sources discovered by his diligent research (1:3). To these he owes not only his Gospel of the infancy but also many of the fine passages which make his Gospel the indispensable complement of the other two (the good Samaritan, Martha and Mary, the prodigal son, the Pharisee and the tax collector).

§3 The literary process just outlined respects and makes use of the broad data from tradition but is able to fill in details. It does not, however, make it possible, any more than tradition does, to assign an exact *date* to each of the Synoptics with complete certainty: at a guess, though, the interval required for the development of the oral tradition would make it probable that the primitive Gospel and later the Collection S were composed between the years 40 and 50. This early date would be definite if it could be proved that Paul's Letters to the Thessalonians, written about 51–2, made use of the first Gospel's Apocalyptic Discourse. If Mark wrote towards the end of Peter's life (as Clement of Alexandria says) or shortly after Peter's death (as Irenaeus says) the date of his Gospel would be *c.* 64; in any case it should be dated before 70 as it does not seem from this Gospel that Jerusalem has yet been destroyed. Greek Matthew and Luke are later than Mark but their precise date is more difficult to determine. The existence of Luke's Gospel is presupposed by Acts (Ac 1:1) but the date of Acts itself uncertain (*see* p. 1794) can provide no criterion. It is true that neither Greek Matthew nor Luke suggests that the destruction of Jerusalem has already taken place (not even Lk 19:42–44; 21:20–24 which employ clichés from the prophetic books to describe an event that cannot have been hard to foresee) but this is not decisive. If neither of them knew of the destruction, then they would have to be put before 70, but if they deliberately aimed at scrupulously preserving the archaic quality of their respective literary sources, then their works might quite well have been composed after the destruction, say about AD 80.

In any case, the apostolic origin, direct or indirect, together with their involved literary formation confirm the *historical value* of the Synoptics, and not only that but at the same time help us to understand the nature of that historical value; since the gospels stem from an oral preaching that goes back to the beginnings of the primitive community, their guarantee in this way would ultimately rest on eye-witness. Neither the apostles themselves, however, nor any of the other preachers of the gospel message and tellers of the gospel story ever aimed at writing or teaching history in the modern technical sense of that word; their concern was missionary and theological: they

preached to convert and edify, to infuse faith, to enlighten it and defend it against its opponents. For this purpose they could and did appeal to solid evidence that could be checked, and this appeal was demanded quite as much by their own sincerity as by their anxiety not to leave any loopholes for hostile argument. Those who finally composed the gospels, collecting the evidence and putting it into writing, had the same objective fidelity and equal respect for their sources of information; this is clear from the simple and archaic quality of their work. In this there are no theological developments characteristic of subsequent decades (compare Paul for example); much less is there any trace of the sort of extravagant legends that are frequent in the apocryphal gospels. The three Synoptics may not be history books, but they do set out to give us historical fact.

This does not mean that each of the events or discourses which they record corresponds exactly to what in fact took place. The laws governing witnesses and the spread of evidence warn us against looking for that material sort of precision. Obvious examples can be found in the gospels themselves, where the same events or the same discourses are sometimes recorded in different ways. This is not only true of the content of some episodes, but it is even truer of the order in which these episodes are arranged, which is not the same order in each gospel. This is only to be expected in view of their complex origins. Their component parts, which at first existed separately, were only gradually collected together into groups; and these groups were later joined together or split up, more for reasons of logic or neatness than for anything to do with chronology. In this way many of the gospel events or sayings have been shifted from their original time or place. For this reason it is often impossible to take editorial connective phrases like 'then', 'after this', 'on that day', 'at that time', etc. at their face value.

§4 This process of editing itself took place under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, who directed the community and its spokesmen both in the preservation and in the selection and arrangement of the material. The evangelists are genuine human authors, and the guidance of the Spirit did not override but rather heightened their theological and literary abilities, enabling each to stress different aspects of the rich tradition of the message of Jesus.

§5 The Gospel according to Mark

The *plan* Mark follows is the least complex of the Synoptics. The preaching of John the Baptist plus the baptism and temptation of Jesus make up his prelude (1:1–13); next comes a period of ministry which, according to occasional hints, took place in Galilee (1:14–7:23), then a journey by Jesus and his apostles to the district of Tyre and Sidon, the Decapolis, the neighbourhood of Caesarea Philippi and back to Galilee (7:24–9:50); then the Transfiguration (9:2–8) and the final journey through Peraea and Jericho to Jerusalem where the Passion and Resurrection take place (10:1–16:8). Apart from individual sequences of fact, this broad outline itself is possibly artificial since it is likely, and to judge by the fourth Gospel fairly certain, that Jesus visited Jerusalem several times before the last Passover of his life. All the same, this outline, broad as it is, does trace for us an important development which

is both factually and theologically significant. The general public received Jesus warmly at first but their enthusiasm waned as they found that his gentle and other-worldly conception of the Messiah did not fulfil their hopes. As a result, Jesus left Galilee to devote himself to the instruction of a small group of faithful followers, and the profession of faith at Caesarea Philippi showed that he had secured their faith. This was a decisive turning-point: after it Jerusalem became the focus of attention, and it was there that further opposition continued mounting, only to end in the drama of the Passion and in the final triumph of the resurrection.

This paradox provides the central interest of this Gospel, i.e. how Jesus, while remaining misunderstood and rejected was at the same time God's triumphant envoy. The Gospel is not particularly concerned with elaborating the Master's teaching, and it records few of his sayings: the real point of its message is the *manifestation of the crucified Messiah*. On the one hand Jesus is the Son of God, acknowledged as such by the Father (1:11; 9:7), by evil spirits (1:24; 3:11; 5:7) and even by men (15:39); he is the Messiah claiming divine rank (14:62), higher than the angels (13:32), taking on himself the forgiveness of sin (2:10), vindicating his power and his mission by miracle (1:31; 4:41; etc.) and by exorcism (1:27; 3:23seq.). On the other hand the Gospel puts great emphasis on his apparent frustration at the hands of many: the mockery or refusal of the public (5:40; 6:2seq.), the antagonism of the religious leaders (2:1–3:6), the lack of understanding even on his disciples' part (4:13b)—all the hostile activities that were to lead to the shame of the cross. It is this 'scandal', this refusal, that the Gospel is intent on explaining. It does this not merely by contrasting the cross with the crowning triumph of the resurrection but also by showing that the hostility was itself an integral part of God's mysterious plan. It was necessary that Christ should suffer and so redeem the human race (10:45; 14:24), since this had been foretold by the scriptures (9:12; 14:21,49). Both for himself (8:31; 9:31; 10:33seq.) and for his own followers (8:34seq.; 9:35; 10:15,24seq., 29seq., 39; 13:9–13) Jesus laid down a way of humility and submission; but the Jews, expecting a victorious warrior-Messiah, were ill-prepared for this answer to their hope; the reason why Jesus wanted silence about his miracles (5:43) and his identity (7:24; 9:30) was to avoid an enthusiasm which would have been as ill-advised as it would have been mistaken. Rather than call himself Messiah, 8:29seq., he used the modest and mysterious expression 'Son of man' (2:10; compare Mt 8:20h). This cautionary measure is what is called 'the messianic secret' (1:34m) and is a basic idea of Mark's Gospel. It was not something Mark invented; it corresponded to that underlying reality in Christ's life of suffering which, in the light of a faith finally and fully established by the Easter event, the evangelist was able to perceive and to place before us for our understanding.

§6 The Gospel according to Matthew

The same light of faith and the same broad outline of Christ's life naturally occur in Matthew as well as in Mark, but with quite a different emphasis. To begin with, the *plan* is not the same and is much more elaborate: Matthew is divided into five books, each consisting of a discourse introduced and

prepared by narrative matter; these five books, plus the stories of the infancy and of the Passion, are combined to form a well-knit whole of seven sections. It is possible that this arrangement, which is so clear in Matthew, goes back to the Aramaic gospel; in any case, in Greek Matthew it is unmistakable. As we have already seen, Matthew used his sources with great freedom in order to achieve his carefully mapped-out ensemble. The fact that this Gospel also reports Christ's teaching much more fully than Mark's, and stresses especially the theme of the kingdom of Heaven (4:17f), makes it a *dramatic account in seven acts of the coming of the kingdom of Heaven*. These acts are as follows: **1** The preparation of the kingdom in the person of the child-Messiah, ch. 1–2. **2** The formal proclamation of the charter of the kingdom to the disciples and the public, i.e. the Sermon on the Mount, ch. 5–8. **3** The preaching of the kingdom by missionaries whose credentials (the 'signs', which are to confirm the word) are now hinted at by several miracles done by Jesus himself; the missionaries receive their instructions, ch. 8–10. **4** The obstacles which the kingdom will meet, and which are part of God's design that the kingdom should come without show, as illustrated in the parables of the concluding instruction, 11:1–13:52. **5** Its embryonic existence in the group of disciples with Peter at their head; the rules for this Church in the making are outlined in the concluding instruction on the community, 13:53–18:35. **6** The crisis, provoked by the increasing hostility of the Jewish leaders, which is to prepare the way for the definitive coming of the kingdom and which is the subject of the concluding eschatological instruction, ch. 19–25. **7** Lastly, the coming itself, a coming effected through suffering and triumph, through the Passion and Resurrection, ch. 26–28.

The kingdom of God (of 'the Heavens' in Matthew) is the reassertion that the Law and prophets are 'fulfilled'—a phrase which means that their hopes have been not only realised but also perfected. Matthew applies this to the person of Jesus: he appeals to Old Testament texts for his Davidic descent (1:1–17), for his virgin birth (1:23) at Bethlehem (2:6), for his stay in Egypt and his settling at Capernaum (4:14–16), for his messianic progress into Jerusalem (21:5,16); Matthew applies it also to the work of Jesus: he appeals to Old Testament texts to explain Jesus' cures (11:4–5); and finally he applies it to the teaching of Jesus: this 'fulfils' the Law (5:17) while raising it to further heights (5:21–48; 19:3–9,16–21). Matthew asserts equally strongly that the scriptures are fulfilled also in the lowliness of Jesus' person and in what humanly seems to be the frustration of his work. In this way God's plan contains, and the Old Testament foretells: the massacre of the Innocents (2:17seq.), the hidden life at Nazareth (2:23), the gentle compassion of the 'servant of God' (12:17–21; cf. 8:17; 11:29; 12:7), the disciples' desertion (26:31), the paltry price of betrayal (27:9–10), the arrest (26:54) and the three days' burial (12:40); in this way too the Old Testament foretold the unbelief of the Jews (13:13–15), too tenacious of their man-made traditions (15:7–9), who could be approached only by teaching through the veil of parables (13:14–15,35); Matthew is not the only one of the three Synoptists to make use of arguments from the Old Testament, but he relies so heavily on this argument that he has made it one of the chief characteristics of his Gospel. Matthew's is the most semitic of the gospels: not only does it show great interest in and often refers to the details of Jewish observance, with its

Sabbath, phylacteries, tithes and purifications, but also it frequently makes use of the Jewish technique of midrash and other rabbinic methods of argument. Characteristically Jewish also is the preoccupation with the final judgement and retribution and its apocalyptic scenario. This Jewishness accounts for Matthew's concern to show that the new Law of Christ fulfils the old and that the new people of God form the successors to the Israel of the old covenant who were first invited to the messianic feast but refused the invitation (23:34–38, compare 10:5–6, 23; 15:24). In keeping with his concern with fulfilment Matthew often represents Jesus as the new Moses, repeating in his life the story of Moses and the lawgiver of the new covenant. But beyond this, Jesus is somehow endowed with majesty even in his earthly life; he is recognised as God's Son (14:33; 16:16; 22:2; 27:40,43) as well as son of David. From the first announcement of his conception he is known as 'God-with-us'. Another dimension of Matthew's Gospel is that of the community, for one of the discourse chapters (18) is devoted to behaviour within the community, and Matthew stresses the importance of Peter as the foundation-stone of the new Israel (16:18), and of the disciples, consistently toning down or omitting the rebukes to them from Jesus reported by Mark.

§7 The Gospel according to Luke

The third Gospel's distinguishing quality results from the attractive personality of its author which shines through all his work. Luke is at once a most gifted writer and a man of marked sensibility. He set to work in his own way with an eye to exact information and orderly narrative (1:3), but respect for his sources, together with his method of editing them did not lead Luke, any more than Matthew or Mark, to follow a chronological plan. He follows Mark, with some alterations (3:19–20; 4:16–30; 5:1–11; 6:12–19; 22:31–34). Some of these are made in the interests of clarity and logical sequence, some under the influence of other streams of tradition including a tradition traceable also in the fourth Gospel. Other episodes are omitted altogether for various reasons: they were not interesting for Luke's non-Jewish readers (Mk 9:11–13), or they were already to be found in the Collection S (Mk 12:28–34; *see* Lk 10:25–28), or above all (as in the case of Luke's great omission of Mk 6:45–8:26) because Luke regarded it as unnecessarily repetitive. Luke's most obvious difference from Mark is his great intercalation (*see* 9:51–18:14) which, as has been seen, combines Logia or Sayings from the Collection S with information he had found out for himself. This central section uses a journey to Jerusalem for its framework (*see* the reiterated indications, elaborating the datum of Mk 10:1, in Lk 9:51; 13:22; 17:11). But it is not a reminiscence of an actual journey; it is rather a device by which Luke is able to bring out one of his chief theological notions: namely that the Holy City is the predestined stage for the drama of salvation (9:31; 13:33; 18:31; 19:11). Because it is from Jerusalem that the evangelisation of the world must begin (24:47; Ac 1:8), his Gospel had to start there (1:5seq.) and there he will have to bring it to a close (24:52seq.)—the post-resurrection appearances and conversations recorded by Luke do not take place in Galilee (*see* 24:13–51 and compare 24:6 with Mk 16:7; Mt 28:7,16–20).

§8 From a comparison of Luke with his two sources, (a) Mark, the best known, and (b) the sources behind the Matthean passages which are paralleled in Luke, it becomes apparent that Luke has carefully moulded the material he has received. His changes are slight, but through them he gives his work a character peculiarly his own. He avoids or whittles down anything his readers might find offensive (8:43, compare Mk 5:26; he omits Mk 9:43–48; 13:32) or anything they could not be expected to understand (he omits Mt 5:21seq.,33seq.; Mk 15:34; etc.). He omits anything derogatory to the dignity of the apostles (Mk 4:13; 8:32seq.; 9:28seq.; 14:50) and makes excuses for them (Lk 9:45; 18:34; 22:45). He explains obscure phrases (6:15) and clears up points of topography (4:31; 19:28seq.,37; 23:51), etc. One of the most attractive features of Luke is his picture of the gentleness of Christ. He is anxious to stress his Master's love of sinners (15:1seq.,7,10); to record his acts of forgiveness (7:36–50; 15:11–32; 19:1–10; 23:34,39–43); and to contrast his tenderness for the lowly and the poor with his severity towards the proud and towards those who abuse their wealth (1:51–53; 6:20–26; 12:13–21; 14:7–11; 16:15,19–31; 18:9–14). But in spite of this severity, the wicked, however deserving of punishment, will not be condemned till the period set aside for mercy has come to an end (13:6–9; cf. Mk 11:12–14). The one thing necessary is repentance, abdication of self, and on this the gentle, tolerant Luke takes a firm stand, insisting on unflinching and complete detachment (14:25–34), especially from riches (6:34seq.; 12:33; 14:12–14; 16:9–13). Another group of passages which are also found only in the third Gospel is on the necessity of prayer (11:1–8; 18:1–8), of which Jesus sets the example (3:21; 5:16; 6:12; 9:28). Finally, Luke is the only one of the Synoptists to give the Holy Spirit the prominence we find in Paul and in Acts (Lk 1:15,35,41,67; 2:25–27; 4:1,14,18; 10:21; 11:13; 24:49). These qualities, combined with that joy in God and that gratitude to him for his gifts which fill the third Gospel (2:14; 5:26; 10:17; 13:17; 18:43; 19:37; 24:51seq.), are the ones that go to make Luke's achievement such a warm and human work.

§9 Style

Mark's Greek is rough, strongly redolent of Aramaic, and often faulty; but it is fresh, lively and appealing. Matthew's Greek is also rather marked by Aramaic but smoother than Mark's as well as less picturesque and more correct. Luke's is mixed: when writing independently, his Greek is excellent, but out of respect for his sources he incorporates their imperfections—after polishing them a little. Occasionally he goes out of his way to give a good imitation of Septuagint Greek.

§10 This translation

As far as possible this translation preserves stylistic nuances and aims at reproducing the detailed similarities and differences between the three Synoptics, which betray their literary relationships.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO

MATTHEW

I: THE BIRTH AND INFANCY OF JESUS

The ancestry of Jesus

||Lk 3:23–38

9:27m
Gn 2:4;5:1
Ga 3:16g

1 **1** Roll of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, son of David, son of Abraham: [a]

2 Abraham fathered Isaac,
Isaac fathered Jacob,
Jacob fathered Judah and his brothers,
3 Judah fathered Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar,
Perez fathered Hezron,
Hezron fathered Ram,
4 Ram fathered Amminadab,
Amminadab fathered Nahshon,
Nahshon fathered Salmon,
5 Salmon fathered Boaz, whose mother was Rahab,
Boaz fathered Obed, whose mother was Ruth,
Obed fathered Jesse;
6 and Jesse fathered King David.

David fathered Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife,
7 Solomon fathered Rehoboam,
Rehoboam fathered Abijah,
Abijah fathered Asa, [b]
8 Asa fathered Jehoshaphat,
Jehoshaphat fathered Joram,
Joram fathered Uzziah,
9 Uzziah fathered Jotham,
Jotham fathered Ahaz,
Ahaz fathered Hezekiah,
10 Hezekiah fathered Manasseh,
Manasseh fathered Amon, [c]
Amon fathered Josiah;

1 **a.** Matthew, though stressing the foreign element on the female side, vv. 3,5,6, limits his genealogy to Jesus' Israelitic descent. Its aim is to show how Jesus is connected with the leading recipients of the messianic promises, i.e. with Abraham and David and with the latter's royal line. Luke's genealogy is universal in scope and goes back to Adam, head of the human race. The two lists, from David down to Joseph, have only two names in common. In Mt, moreover, the schematic nature of the genealogy is brought out by the division of Jesus' ancestors into three series of 2 × 7 names (*see* 6:9d), a device which forces the omission of three kings between Joram and Uzziah. It also compels the double reckoning of Jechoniah (vv. 11–12); this is made possible by the fact that the same Greek name can translate the two similar Hebr. names Jehoiakim and Jehoiachin. The lists of both Mt and Lk end with Joseph who was Jesus' legal father only; the reason is that according to ancient mentality legal paternity (adoption, levirate etc.) is sufficient, by itself, to confer all hereditary rights; the rights here are those of the messianic line. The main purpose of this first incident in Mt is to show how Jesus came to be a member of the royal line of David, namely through adoption by Joseph at the prompting of the angel's message.

b. var. 'Asaph'.

c. var. 'Amos'.

and Josiah fathered Jechoniah and his brothers. 11
Then the deportation to Babylon took place.

After the deportation to Babylon: 12
Jechoniah fathered Shealtiel,
Shealtiel fathered Zerubbabel,
Zerubbabel fathered Abiud, 13
Abiud fathered Eliakim,
Eliakim fathered Azor,
Azor fathered Zadok, 14
Zadok fathered Achim,
Achim fathered Eliud,
Eliud fathered Eleazar, 15
Eleazar fathered Matthan,
Matthan fathered Jacob;
and Jacob fathered Joseph the husband of Mary; 16
of her was born Jesus [d] who is called Christ.

The sum of generations is therefore: fourteen from Abraham to David; fourteen 17
from David to the Babylonian deportation; and fourteen from the Babylonian
deportation to Christ.

Joseph adopts Jesus as his son

Lk 1:27;2:5 This is how Jesus Christ came to be born. His mother Mary was betrothed to 18
Joseph; [e] but before they came to live together she was found to be with child
through the Holy Spirit. ·Her husband Joseph, being an upright man and wanting 19
to spare her disgrace, decided to divorce her informally. [f] ·He had made up his 20
Gn 16:7c Ac 7:38k mind to do this when suddenly the angel of the Lord [g] appeared to him in a dream [h]
and said, 'Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife,
Lk 1:35 because she has conceived what is in her by the Holy Spirit. ·She will give birth to 21
Ps 130:8 Si 46:1 Lk 1:31 a son and you must name him Jesus, because he is the one who is to save [i] his people
from their sins.' ·Now all this took place to fulfil what the Lord had spoken through 22
Ac 3:16*l*;4:12 the prophet: [j]

Is 7:14 *Look! the virgin is with child and will give birth to a son* 23
whom they will call Immanuel,

a name which means 'God-is-with-us'. ·When Joseph woke up he did what the 24
angel of the Lord had told him to do: he took his wife to his home; ·he had not had 25
Lk 2:7 intercourse with her when she gave birth [k] to a son; and he named him Jesus.

The visit of the Magi

Lk 2:1–7 2 [a] After Jesus had been born at Bethlehem in Judaea during the reign of King 1
Herod, [b] suddenly some wise men came to Jerusalem from the east [c] ·asking, 2
Nb 24:17 'Where is the infant king of the Jews? We saw his star as it rose and have come to
do him homage.' ·When King Herod heard this he was perturbed, and so was the 3
whole of Jerusalem. ·He called together all the chief priests and the scribes of the 4
people, [d] and enquired of them where the Christ was to be born. ·They told him, 5
Jn 7:42 'At Bethlehem in Judaea, for this is what the prophet wrote:

Mi 5:1 *And you, Bethlehem*, in the land of Judah, 6
you are by no means the *least among the leaders of Judah*,
for *from you will come a leader*
who will *shepherd* my people Israel.'

Then Herod summoned the wise men to see him privately. He asked them the 7
exact date on which the star had appeared ·and sent them on to Bethlehem with 8
the words, 'Go and find out all about the child, and when you have found him, let

me know, so that I too may go and do him homage.' 9 •Having listened to what the
king had to say, they set out. And suddenly the star they had seen rising went
forward and halted over the place where the child was. [e] 10 •The sight of the star filled
them with delight, 11 •and going into the house they saw the child with his mother
Mary, and falling to their knees they did him homage. Then, opening their trea- Ps 72:10–11,15
sures, they offered him gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh. [f] 12 •But they were Is 49:23; 60:5seq.
given a warning in a dream not to go back to Herod, and returned to their own
country by a different way. 1 K 13:9seq.

The flight into Egypt. The massacre of the Innocents

After they had left, suddenly the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream 1:20i
and said, 'Get up, take the child and his mother with you, and escape into Egypt, 1 K 11:17,40
and stay there until I tell you, because Herod intends to search for the child and do 2 K 25:26
away with him.' 14 •So Joseph got up and, taking the child and his mother with him, Jr 26:21;43
left that night for Egypt, 15 •where he stayed until Herod was dead. This was to fulfil
what the Lord had spoken through the prophet:

I called my son out of Egypt. [g] Nb 23:22
Ho 11:1

Herod was furious on realising that he had been fooled by the wise men, [h] and in
Bethlehem and its surrounding district he had all the male children killed who were
two years old or less, reckoning by the date he had been careful to ask the wise
men. 17 •Then were fulfilled the words spoken through the prophet Jeremiah: [i]

d. Several Gk and Lat. authorities, more explicitly, 'Joseph, to whom was betrothed the Virgin Mary who gave birth to Jesus'. It is probably as a result of a misunderstanding of this reading that Syr. Sin. has this text 'Joseph, to whom was betrothed the Virgin Mary, fathered Jesus.'

e. The force of Jewish betrothal was such that the fiancé was already called 'husband' and could release himself from the engagement only by an act of repudiation, v. 19.

f. lit. 'to put her away from him privately'. It is perhaps because Joseph is upright that he does not want to name as his own a child of an unknown father. Another explanation is that he is deterred from proceeding with the marriage by reverence for the mystery of Mary's motherhood and has to be persuaded by means of the angelic message that it is still God's will that he should take her to wife.

g. The 'angel of the Lord' in the early texts (Gn 16:7c) means Yahweh himself. With the development of the doctrine of angels (*see* Tb 5:4b) their distinction from God becomes clearer; they retain their function as heavenly messengers and often appear as such in the narratives of the infancy (Mt 1:20,24; 2:13,19; Lk 1:11; 2:9; *see also* Mt 28:2; Jn 5:4; Ac 5:19; 8:26; 12:7,23).

h. As in the OT, Si 34:1a, God makes his intention known in a dream: Mt 2:12,13,19,22; 27:19; cf. Ac 16:9; 18:9; 23:11; 27:23; and the parallel visions of Ac 9:10seq.; 10:3seq., 11seq.

i. 'Jesus' (Hebr. Jehoshua) means 'Yahweh saves'.

j. This and similar formulae will be frequent in Mt: 2:15,17,23; 8:17; 12:17; 13:35; 21:4; 26:54,56; 27:9; *see also* 3:3; 11:10; 13:14. Already in the OT one of the criteria of a true prophet was that his words were fulfilled, Dt 18:20–22f. In Jesus' view and that of his disciples God had announced his plan either by words or by deeds, and in accordance with the principles of Jewish exegesis of the time, the NT seeks to show that God's plan is fulfilled in Jesus, by pointing out minute and literal correspondence between the life of Jesus and the text of the OT, Jn 2:22; 20:9; Ac 2:23*o*, 31,34–35; 3:24*s*; Rm 15:4; 1 Co 10:11; 15:3–4; 2 Co 1:20; 3:14–16.

k. The text is not concerned with the period that followed and, taken by itself, does not assert Mary's perpetual virginity. This is assumed by the remainder of the Gospel and by the tradition of the Church. By naming the child, Joseph accepts it as his own. On the 'brothers' of Jesus, *see* 12:46*o*.

2 a. In Ch. 1 Mt introduced the person of Jesus, son of David and son of God; now in Ch. 2 he gives a foretaste of his mission to offer salvation to the gentiles, whose wise men are attracted to his light, vv. 1–12, and to re-live in his own person the suffering undergone by his people: the first exile in Egypt, vv. 13–15, the second captivity, vv. 16–18, the humble return of the little Remnant, vv. 19–23 (*see* v. 23*l*). These midrashic stories, in which the events of Jesus' infancy are recounted in terms which recall the infancy of Moses, use events to teach what Lk teaches by means of the prophetic words of Simeon, *see* Lk 2:34*l*.

b. About 5 or 4 BC. Herod was king of Judaea, Idumaea and Samaria from 37 to 4 BC, *see* Lk 2:2b.

c. A story of this kind demands that the term be left vague and general—the prime place of origin of wise astrologers such as these wise men.

d. Also called 'doctors of the Law', Lk 5:17; Ac 5:34, or 'lawyers', Lk 7:30; 10:25; etc., their function was to interpret the scriptures, especially the Law of Moses, to draw out of it the rules of conduct for Jewish life, *see* Ezr 7:6c; Si 39:2b. This role gained them prestige and influence among the people. Their numbers were drawn primarily but not exclusively from the Pharisees, 3:7f. With the high priests and the elders they constituted the Great Sanhedrin.

e. Obviously the evangelist is thinking of a miraculous star; it is futile to look for a natural explanation, cf. Nb 24:17. The appearance of a star is recorded also at the birth of other great men.

f. The wealth and perfumes of Arabia (Jr 6:20; Ezk 27:22). The Fathers see in them symbols of the royalty (gold), divinity (incense), Passion (myrrh) of Jesus. The adoration of the Magi fulfils the prophecies of the homage paid by the nations to the God of Israel, cf. Nb 24:17; Ps 72:10–15; Is 49:23; 60:5seq., which were accepted as messianic. This recognition of the Messiah by the gentiles stands in contrast to his rejection by the Jews in the person of Herod.

g. Israel, therefore, the 'son' of the prophet's text, prefigured the Messiah.

h. There is an earlier parallel to this story told about Moses in rabbinic literature: after the news of the birth of the child is received, either from visions or from magicians, the Pharaoh has all the new-born male children killed.

i. In its original setting this text means that Rachel, their ancestress, weeps for the people of Ephraim, Manasseh and Benjamin, massacred or deported by the Assyrians. Matthew's application was perhaps suggested to him by a tradition which localised Rachel's tomb in the neighbourhood of Bethlehem (Gn 35:19seq.).

Jr 31:15

A voice is heard in Ramah, 18
lamenting and weeping bitterly:
it is Rachel weeping for her children,
refusing to be comforted
because they are no more.

From Egypt to Nazareth

1:20i
Ex 4:19–20

After Herod's death, suddenly the angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph 19
in Egypt •and said, 'Get up, take the child and his mother with you and go back to 20
the land of Israel, for those who wanted to kill the child are dead.' •So Joseph got 21
up and, taking the child and his mother with him, went back to the land of Israel.
But when he learnt that Archelaus[j] had succeeded his father Herod as ruler of 22
Judaea he was afraid to go there, and being warned in a dream he withdrew to the
region of Galilee.[k] •There he settled in a town called Nazareth. In this way the 23
words spoken through the prophets were to be fulfilled:

He will be called a Nazarene.[l]

II: THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN ANNOUNCED

A: NARRATIVE SECTION

‖Mk 1:1–8
‖Lk 3:1–18

The proclamation of John the Baptist

3 In due course[a] John the Baptist appeared; he proclaimed this message in the 1
4:17f;10:7
Ac 2:38x
desert of Judaea,[b] •'Repent,[c] for the kingdom of Heaven[d] is close at hand.' 2
This was the man spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said: 3

Is 40:3+
Jn 1:23

A voice of one that cries in the desert,
'Prepare a way for the Lord,
make his *paths straight.'*

11:8–9
2 K 1:8c
11:7

This man John wore a garment made of camel-hair with a leather loin-cloth round 4
his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. •Then Jerusalem and all Judaea 5
and the whole Jordan district made their way to him, •and as they were baptised by 6
him in the river Jordan they confessed their sins.[e] •But when he saw a number of 7
21:25,32
Jn 5:35;23,33;
12:34
•Am 5:18m
•Jn 8:33–40
•Rm 9:7–8
Ga 4:21–31
•=7:19par.
•Jn 15:2,6b
•Jn 1:26,33
Pharisees[f] and Sadducees[g] coming for baptism he said to them, 'Brood of vipers,
who warned you to flee from the coming retribution?[h] •Produce fruit in keeping 8
with repentance, •and do not presume to tell yourselves, "We have Abraham as 9
our father," because, I tell you, God can raise children for Abraham from these
stones. •Even now the axe is being laid to the root of the trees, so that any tree 10
failing to produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown on the fire. •I baptise you 11
in water for repentance, but the one who comes after me is more powerful than I,
and I am not fit to carry his sandals; he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and
fire.[i] •His winnowing-fan is in his hand; he will clear his threshing-floor and gather 12
Jn 1:27,33
•Ac 1:5f
•Is 41:16
Jr 15:7
Ws 5:14,23;
13:42,50
his wheat into his barn; but the chaff he will burn in a fire that will never go out.'[j]

‖Mk 1:9–11
‖Lk 3:21–22
•2 K 5:1–14
•Jn 13:6

Jesus is baptised

Then Jesus appeared: he came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptised by John. 13
John tried to dissuade him, with the words, 'It is I who need baptism from you, and 14
yet you come to me!' •But Jesus replied, 'Leave it like this for the time being; it is 15
fitting that we should, in this way, do all that uprightness demands.'[k] Then John
gave in to him.

And when Jesus had been baptised he at once came up from the water, and 16
Is 11:2c
Jn 1:32–34
suddenly the heavens opened[l] and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove
and coming down on him.[m] •And suddenly there was a voice from heaven, 'This is 17
12:18;17:5
Is 42:1
my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on him.'[n]

Testing in the desert [a]

||Mk 1:12–13
||Lk 4:1–13

1 4 Then Jesus was led by the Spirit [b] out into the desert to be put to the test by the
2 devil. [c] •He fasted for forty days and forty nights, after which he was hungry,

Dt 8:2
•Heb 2:18
Ex 24:18;34:28
1 K 19:8

j. Son of Herod by Malthace (like Herod Antipas); ethnarch of Judaea from 4 BC to AD 6.

k. Territory of Herod Antipas, *see* Lk 3:1c.

l. Nazoraios: this is the form used by Mt, Jn and Ac (translated 'Nazarene' throughout this version). Nazarenos ('of Nazareth' in this version) is used by Mk. Lk uses both forms. These two synonyms were current transcriptions of an Aramaic adjective (*nasraya*) itself derived from the name of the town 'Nazareth' (Nasrat). Applied to Jesus, whose origin it indicated (26:69.71), and later to his followers (Ac 24:5), the term became common in the semitic world for the disciples of Jesus; the name 'Christian' (Ac 11:26) prevailed in the Graeco-Roman world. • It is not clear which prophecies Mt alludes to; possibly to the *nazir* of Jg 13:5,7.

3 **a.** lit. 'in those days'. Stereotyped expression, merely a formula of transition.

b. A desolate hilly region stretching from the central ridge of Palestine to the Jordan Valley and the Red Sea.

c. *Metanoia* or change of heart means a renunciation of sin, repentance. This regret for past conduct is normally accompanied by a 'conversion' by which a person turns back to God and enters upon a new life. The words used for these two complementary aspects of the same movement of heart are often the same, *see* Ac 2:38x; 3:19n. Repentance and conversion are the necessary condition for receiving the salvation which the kingdom of God brings. John the Baptist's call to repentance, cf. Ac 13:24; 19:4, will be taken up by Jesus, Mt 4:17 and par.; Lk 5:32; 13:3,5, by his disciples, Mk 6:12; Lk 24:47, and by Paul, Ac 20:21; 26:20.

d. Instead of 'kingdom of God', *see* 4:17f. The phrase is proper to Mt and reflects the Jewish scruple which substituted metaphor for the divine name.

e. The rite of immersion, symbolic of purification or of renewal, was familiar to ancient religions and to Judaism (baptism of proselytes, Essene purifications). John's baptism, though suggested by these practices, is distinct from them for three main reasons: it is directed to moral, not ritual, purification (3:2,6,8,11; Lk 3:10–14); it takes place once only and for this reason appears as a ceremony of initiation; it has an eschatological value in so far as it enrols its recipients among the number of those who professedly and actively prepare themselves for the imminent coming of the Messiah and who are, therefore, the messianic community in anticipation (3:2,11; Jn 1:19–34). Jesus alone, and not John, will baptise 'in the Holy Spirit' (3:7,10–12). John's baptism continued to be administered by the disciples of Jesus (Jn 4:1–2) until it was absorbed by the new rite which he had instituted (Mt 28:19; Ac 1:5f; Rm 6:4a).

f. A Jewish sect, rigid observers of the Law; but their undue attachment to the oral tradition of their teachers could lead to a conscientious but over-elaborate casuistry. Jesus' independent attitude with regard to the Law and his association with sinners inevitably provoked their opposition, and there are numerous echoes of this in the gospels, especially Mt; *see* 9:11 and par.; 12:2 and par., 14 and par., 24; 15:1 and par.; 16:1 and par., 6 and par.; 19:3 and par.; 21:45; 22:15 and par., 34,41; 23 and par.; Lk 5:21; 6:7; 15:2; 16:14seq.; 18:10seq.; Jn 7:32; 8:13; 9:13seq.; 11:47seq. Nevertheless with certain individuals among them Jesus had friendly relationships, Lk 7:36f; Jn 3:1. His disciples found in them allies against the Sadducees, Ac 23:6–10. It is impossible to deny their zeal, cf. Rm 10:2, or even their uprightness, Ac 5:34seq. Paul himself is proud of his former life as a Pharisee, Ac 23:6; 26:5; Ph 3:5.

g. In opposition to the outlook of the Pharisees, these rejected all tradition not contained in the written Law, *see* Ac 23:8c. They came for the most part from the great priestly families. They were less devout than the Pharisees and more politically minded. They too came into conflict with Jesus, 16:1,6; 22:23seq., and his disciples, Ac 4:1a; 5:17.

h. The retribution of the Day of Yahweh (Am 5:18m), which was to inaugurate the messianic era.

i. In the OT fire, a purifying element more refined and efficacious than water, was already a symbol of God's supreme intervention in history and of his Spirit which comes to purify hearts, *see* Si 2:5; Is 1:25; Zc 13:9; Ml 3:2–3.

j. The fire of Gehenna which for ever goes on consuming what has defied purification (Jdt 16:17; Ps 21:9; Si 7:17; Is 66:24; Zp 1:18).

k. The Baptist's question shows that Jesus' baptism was problematical for the first Christians, because in it the superior is seen to submit himself to the inferior. Jesus' answer shows that it was necessary in order to fulfil God's saving justice, perhaps because by it the Messiah himself enters into the eschatological community, *see* 1:22j; 3:6e.

l. add. 'for him', i.e. before his eyes.

m. The spirit which hovered over the waters at the first creation (Gn 1:2) now appears at the beginning of the new creation. It anoints Jesus for his messianic mission (Ac 10:38) which it is to guide (Mt 4:1seq.; 12:18,28; Lk 4:14,18; 10:21). While in Mk the vision of the dove and the voice from heaven can be understood as an interior personal experience of Jesus, in Mt it must be understood as a public scene: the voice is addressed to the bystanders.

n. The immediate purpose of this sentence is to declare that Jesus is in truth the servant foretold by Isaiah, but the substitution of 'Son' for 'servant' (made possible by the double sense of the Greek word *pais*) underlines the relationship of Jesus with the Father which is that of anointed Son, *see* 4:3d. In Jewish literature a voice from heaven is a means of showing the God-given authority of a teacher.

4 **a.** Jesus is led into the desert to be put to the test here for forty days, as Israel was for forty years, Dt 8:2,4; *see also* Nb 14:34. There, as the quotations show, he undergoes three similar temptations: seeking nourishment apart from God, Dt 8:3; cf. Ex 16; testing God for the sake of self-indulgence, Dt 6:16; cf. Ex 17:1–7; denying God to follow false gods who serve the powers of this world, Dt 6:13; cf. Dt 6:10–15; Ex 23:23–33. As did Moses, Jesus fasts for forty days and nights, Dt 9:18; *see* Ex 34:28; Dt 9:9. As did Moses, he sees 'all the earth' from a high mountain, Dt 34:1–4. God helps him through his angels, v. 11, as he promised the upright, Ps 91:11–12, and, according to Mk 1:13, protects him from wild beasts, as he does the upright, Ps 91:13, and Israel, Dt 8:15. By means of these biblical allusions Jesus is seen as the new Moses (*see* already 2:16g, 20 and Ex 4:19), who leads the new Exodus, cf. Heb 3:1–4:11; that is the Messiah, as the devil here hints ('if you are the Son of God . . .'), who opens the true way of salvation, not of self-reliance and ease but of obedience to God and self-denial. But in spite of the biblical manner of presentation the episode can have a historical background. Even though free from sin, Jesus can have known external temptations, *see* 16:23. It was necessary that he should be put to the test in order to become our leader, *see* 26:36–46 and par; Heb 2:10,17–18; 4:15; 5:2,7–9. He had to give up the thought of a glorious, political role as Messiah in favour of a spiritual role in total obedience to God, *see* Heb 12:2.

b. The Holy Spirit, 'breath' and creative energy of God, who guided the prophets, Is 11:2c, will guide Jesus himself in the fulfilment of his mission, *see* 3:16n; Lk 4:1b, as he will later guide the beginning and development of the Church, Ac 1:8j.

c. This name, which means Accuser, Calumniator, since his task is to put human beings in the wrong, sometimes translates the Hebr. *satan* (Adversary), Jb 1:6g; *see* Ws 2:24t. The bearer of this name is held responsible for everything which cuts across the work of God and of Christ, 13:39seq.; Jn 8:44; 13:2; Ac 10:38; Ep 6:11; 1 Jn 3:8. His defeat will be the sign of the final victory of God, 25:41; Heb 2:14; Rv 12:9,12; 20:2,10.

and the tester came and said to him, 'If you are Son of God,[d] tell these stones to 3
turn into loaves.' ·But he replied, 'Scripture says: 4

Dt 8:3 *Human beings live not on bread alone*
but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'

The devil then took him to the holy city and set him on the parapet of the Temple. 5
'If you are Son of God,' he said, 'throw yourself down; for scripture says: 6

Ps 91:10–12 *He has given his angels orders about you,*
and *they will carry you in their arms*
in case you trip over a stone.'

Jesus said to him, 'Scripture also says: 7

Dt 6:16 *Do not put the Lord your God to the test.*'

Dt 34:1–4 Next, taking him to a very high mountain, the devil showed him all the kingdoms 8
of the world and their splendour. ·And he said to him, 'I will give you all these, if 9
16:23 you fall at my feet and do me homage.' ·Then Jesus replied, 'Away with you, 10
Satan! For scripture says:

Dt 6:13 *The Lord your God is the one to whom you must do homage,*
him alone you must serve.'

Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels appeared and looked after him. 11

‖Mk 1:14–15 ‖Lk 4:14 **Return to Galilee**

13:53seq. Hearing that John had been arrested he withdrew to Galilee, ·and leaving Nazara[e] 12, 13
he went and settled in Capernaum, beside the lake, on the borders of Zebulun and
Naphtali. ·This was to fulfil what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: 14

Is 8:23–9:1 *Land of Zebulun! Land of Naphtali!* 15
Way of the sea beyond Jordan.
Galilee of the nations!
Jn 8:12b *The people that lived in darkness* 16
have seen a great light;
on those who lived in a country of shadow dark as death
a light has dawned.

3:2c From then onwards Jesus began his proclamation with the message, 'Repent, for 17
the kingdom of Heaven[f] is close at hand.'

‖Mk 1:16–20 ‖Lk 5:1–11 **The first four disciples are called**

Jn 1:35–42 As he was walking by the Lake of Galilee he saw two brothers, Simon, who was 18
called Peter, and his brother Andrew; they were making a cast into the lake with
Jn 21:3 their net, for they were fishermen. ·And he said to them, 'Come after me and I will 19
13:47–50 8:19–22;19:27 make you fishers of people.' ·And at once they left their nets and followed him. 20

Going on from there he saw another pair of brothers, James son of Zebedee and 21
his brother John; they were in their boat with their father Zebedee, mending their
nets, and he called them. ·And at once, leaving the boat and their father, they 22
followed him.

=9:35 ‖Mk 1:39;3:7–8 ‖Lk 4:14–15,44; 6:17–18 **Jesus proclaims the message and heals the sick**

He went round the whole of Galilee teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the 23
good news of the kingdom and curing all kinds of disease and illness among the
people.[g] ·His fame spread throughout Syria,[h] and those who were suffering from 24
diseases and painful complaints of one kind or another, the possessed, epileptics,
the paralysed, were all brought to him, and he cured them. ·Large crowds followed 25
him, coming from Galilee, the Decapolis,[i] Jerusalem, Judaea and Transjordan.

B: THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT [a]

The Beatitudes

‖Lk 6:20–23

1 5 Seeing the crowds, he went onto the mountain. [b] And when he was seated his
2 disciples came to him. ·Then he began to speak. This is what he taught them:

3 How blessed [c] are the poor in spirit: [d]
the kingdom of Heaven is theirs.

d. The biblical title 'Son of God' does not necessarily mean natural sonship but may imply a sonship which is merely adoptive, i.e. which as a result of God's deliberate choice sets up a very intimate relationship between God and his creature. In this sense the title is given to angels (Jb 1:6), to the chosen people (Ex 4:22; Ws 18:13), to individual Israelites (Dt 14:1; Ho 2:1; cf. Mt 5:9,45), to their leaders (Ps 2:7). Where, therefore, it is attributed to the royal Messiah (1 Ch 17:13; Ps 2:7; 89:26) it does not necessarily imply that he is more than human; nor need we suppose that it has any deeper significance when used by Satan (4:3,6) or by the possessed (Mk 3:11; 5:7–8; Lk 4:41), still less when used by the centurion (Mk 15:39; cf. Lk 23:47). By itself the sentence at the baptism (3:17) and at the transfiguration (17:5) suggests no more than the divine predilection for the Messiah-servant, and in all probability the high priest's question (26:63) concerns messiahship only. Nevertheless the title 'Son of God' can bear a further, more profound meaning of sonship. Jesus clearly insinuated this meaning when he spoke of himself as 'the Son' (21:37), ranked above the angels (24:36), having God for his 'Father' in a way others had not (Jn 20:17, and compare 'my Father' in Mt 7:21), enjoying with the Father an altogether singular relationship of knowledge and love (Mt 11:27). These assertions coupled with others that speak of the Messiah's divine rank (22:42–46), of the heavenly origin of the 'Son of man' (8:20h), assertions finally confirmed by the triumph of the resurrection, have endowed the expression 'Son of God' with that strictly divine significance which will later be found, e.g. in Paul (Rm 9:5d). During the lifetime of Jesus, it is true, his disciples had no clear conception of his divinity—the texts of 14:33 and 16:16 which add the title 'Son of God' to the more primitive text of Mk reflect, in all probability, a later stage in the faith's development. The faith that they acquired by the help of the Holy Spirit after Pentecost nevertheless rests on the historical words of the Master, who expressed his consciousness of being the unique Son of the Father.

e. *nazara.* A very rare form attested by excellent authorities, B. Z. Origen k, *see* Lk 4:16; the great majority of witnesses fall back on the common form 'Nazareth'.

f. The sovereignty of God over the chosen people, and through them over the world, is at the heart of Jesus' preaching as it was of the theocratic ideal of the OT. It implies a kingdom of 'saints' where God will be truly King because they will acknowledge his royal rights by knowing and loving him. This sovereignty, jeopardised by rebellious sin, is to be reasserted by an act of supreme intervention on the part of God and of his Messiah (Dn 2:28h). This is the intervention which Jesus, following John the Baptist (3:2), declares imminent (4:17,23; Lk 4:43). It is to take the form not, as was commonly expected, of a successful nationalist rising (Mk 11:10; Lk 19:11; Ac 1:6) but of a purely spiritual movement (Mk 1:34m; Jn 18:36). The redemptive work of Jesus as 'Son of man' (8:20h) and as 'servant' (8:17f; 20:28g; 26:28i) sets human beings free from Satan's rule which opposes God's (4:8; 8:29k; 12:25–26). Before it achieves its final eschatological realisation when the elect will be with the Father in the joy of the heavenly banquet (8:11c; 13:43; 26:29), the kingdom makes an unimpressive entrance (13:31–33). Its modest beginning is mysterious (13:11) and arouses opposition (13:24–30), it has come unnoticed (12:28; Lk 17:20–21); the development of the kingdom on earth is slow (Mk 4:26–29) and is effected through the community founded by Jesus (Mt 16:18g). By the judgement of God that falls on Jerusalem it is established with power as the kingdom of Christ (16:28; Lk 21:31) and is preached throughout the world by apostolic missionaries (Mt 10:7; 24:14; Ac 1:3d). When the time comes for the final Judgement (13:37–43,47–50; 25:31–46) the return of Christ in glory (16:27; 25:31) will be the final act that establishes the kingdom which Christ will then present to the Father (1 Co 15:24). Until that time the kingdom appears as a free gift of God (20:1–16; 22:9–10; Lk 12:32) accepted by the humble (Mt 5:3; 18:3–4; 19:14,23–24) and the generous (13:44–46; 19:12; Mk 9:47; Lk 9:62; 18:29seq.), refused by the proud and selfish (Mt 21:31–32,43; 22:2–8; 23:13). There is no entering it without the wedding garment which is the new life (22:11–13; Jn 3:3,5) and not everyone is admitted (Mt 8:12; 1 Co 6:9–10; Ga 5:21). One must stay awake so as to be ready when it comes unexpectedly (25:1–13). On Matthew's treatment of the kingdom as the guiding idea of his arrangement, *see* p. 1606.

g. Miraculous cures are the distinctive sign that the messianic age has dawned, *see* 10:1,7seq.; 11:4seq.

h. The word is not used here in a precise sense and in fact means Galilee with its surrounding districts, cf. Mk 1:28.

i. The Decapolis was a loose federation of ten free towns with their surrounding territories, scattered for the most part on the east side of Jordan and far enough north-east to include Damascus.

5 a. The new spirit of the kingdom of God, 4:17f, is explained in an inaugural sermon absent from Mk. Lk has a different inaugural sermon, 6:20–49, which does not contain the elements concerning Jewish laws and practices, Mt 5:17–6:18, which would be of less interest to his readers. Mt has joined together sayings pronounced on various occasions in order to make a complete picture. In the resulting composite discourse five principal subjects are handled: **1** The spirit in which the children of the kingdom should live, 5:3–48. **2** The way in which they should 'fulfil' the laws and practices of Judaism, 6:1–18. **3** Detachment from wealth, 6:19–34. **4** Attitudes to the neighbour, 7:1–12. **5** Entry to the kingdom by means of a firm decision expressed in action, 7:13–27.

b. One of the hills near Capernaum.

c. The OT employed formulas of congratulation like these occasionally in relation to piety, wisdom, prosperity, Ps 1:1–2; 33:12; 127:5–6; Pr 3:3; Si 31:8. In the spirit of the prophets Jesus here recalls that the poor, too, have a share in these blessings. The first three beatitudes, 5:3–5; Lk 6:20–21, declare that people normally considered wretched and unfortunate are fortunate, since they are fit to receive the blessing of the kingdom. The subsequent beatitudes are concerned more directly with moral attitudes. There are other gospel beatitudes in. 11:6; 13:16; 24:46; Lk 11:27–28. *See also* Lk 1:45; Rv 1:3; 14:13.

d. The word 'poor' is used with the moral connotations already found in Zephaniah, *see* Zp 2:3d, made explicit by 'in spirit', which is lacking in Lk. Defenceless and oppressed, the 'poor' or the 'lowly' are open to the kingdom, and such is the theme of Mt's beatitudes, cf. Lk 4:18; 7:22 = Mt 11:5; Lk 14:13; Jm 2:5. 'Poverty' goes hand in hand with 'spiritual childhood' required for entrance into the kingdom, 18:1f = Mk 9:33seq.; cf. Mt 11:25seq., and par.; 19:13seq., and par.; Lk 9:46seq.—the mystery revealed to 'little ones', *nepioi*, cf. Lk 12:32; 1 Co 1:26seq. They are the 'poor', *ptochoi*, the 'lowly', *tapeinoi* (18:4; 23:12; Lk 1:48,52; 14:11; 18:14) and both are the 'last' as opposed to the 'first' (Mk 9:35), the 'little ones' as opposed to the 'great' (Lk 9:48; *see* Mt 19:30 and par.; 20:26 and par.; Lk 17:10). Although the formula of 5:3 stresses the spirit of poverty for the rich as for the poor, Jesus usually has in mind actual poverty, especially for his disciples (6:19seq.; cf. 4:18seq., and par.; 6:25 and par.; Lk 12:33seq.; cf. Lk 5:1seq.) Mt 9:9 and par.; 19:21 and par., 27; cf. Mk 10:28 and par.; *see also* Ac 2:44seq.; 4:32seq. He himself

Ps 37:11 Blessed are *the gentle:* [e] 4
Gn 13:15 *they shall have the earth as inheritance.*
Ps 126:5 Is 61:2–3 Blessed are those who mourn: 5
they shall be comforted.
Is 51:1 Am 8:11–12 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for uprightness: 6
Pr 9:5 they shall have their fill.
Si 24:21 Lk 6:36 Blessed are the merciful: 7
they shall have mercy shown them.
Ex 33:20c Ps 11:7;24:3–4 Blessed are the pure in heart: 8
Pr 12:20 they shall see God.
Heb 12:14 1 Jn 3:3 Blessed are the peacemakers: 9
they shall be recognised as children of God.
↗1 P 3:14 Blessed are those who are persecuted in the cause of uprightness: 10
the kingdom of Heaven is theirs.

Ac 5:41 Ph 1:29 Col 1:24 Heb 10:34 Jm 1:2 •Si 2:8 •23:34 'Blessed are you when people abuse you and persecute you and speak all kinds of 11
calumny against you falsely on my account. •Rejoice and be glad, for your reward 12
will be great in heaven; this is how they persecuted the prophets before you. [f]

Salt for the earth and light for the world

‖Mk 9:50 ‖Lk 14:34–35 Lv 2:13 Nb 18:19 Col 4:6 'You are salt for the earth. But if salt loses its taste, what can make it salty 13
again? It is good for nothing, and can only be thrown out to be trampled under
people's feet.

Jn 8:12b 'You are light for the world. A city built on a hill-top cannot be hidden. •No one 14, 15
‖Mk 4:21 ‖Lk 8:16;11:33 Jn 3:21;15:8 1 Co 10:31 lights a lamp to put it under a tub; [g] they put it on the lamp-stand where it shines for
everyone in the house. •In the same way your light must shine in people's sight, so 16
that, seeing your good works, they may give praise to your Father in heaven.

The fulfilment of the Law

'Do not imagine that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I have come 17
Rm 3:31;10:4; 13:8–10 ‖Lk 16:17 Jm 2:10 not to abolish but to complete them. [h] •In truth I tell you, [i] till heaven and earth 18
disappear, not one dot, not one little stroke, is to disappear from the Law until all
its purpose is achieved. •Therefore, anyone who infringes even one of the least of 19
these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be considered the
least in the kingdom of Heaven; but the person who keeps them and teaches them
will be considered great in the kingdom of Heaven.

The new standard higher than the old

Lv 19:15seq. Rm 10:3 Ph 3:9 'For I tell you, if your uprightness does not surpass that of the scribes and Pharisees, 20
you will never get into the kingdom of Heaven.

Ex 20:13 'You have heard [j] how it was said to our ancestors, *You shall not kill*; and if 21
anyone does kill he must answer for it before the court. •But I say this to you, 22
Ep 4:26 Jm 1:19–20 anyone who is angry with a brother will answer for it before the court; anyone who
calls a brother "Fool" [k] will answer for it before the Sanhedrin; [l] and anyone who
3:12j •Mk 11:25 calls him "Traitor" [m] will answer for it in hell fire. •So then, if you are bringing your 23
offering to the altar and there remember that your brother has something against
you, •leave your offering there before the altar, go and be reconciled with your 24
‖Lk 12:58–59 brother first, and then come back and present your offering. •Come to terms with 25
your opponent in good time while you are still on the way to the court with him, or
he may hand you over to the judge and the judge to the officer, and you will be
thrown into prison. •In truth I tell you, you will not get out till you have paid the 26
last penny.

Ex 20:14 'You have heard how it was said, *You shall not commit adultery*. •But I say this 27, 28
to you, if a man looks at a woman lustfully, he has already committed adultery with
=18:8–9 her in his heart. •If your right eye should be your downfall, tear it out and throw it 29
away; for it will do you less harm to lose one part of yourself than to have your

30 whole body thrown into hell. •And if your right hand should be your downfall, cut
it off and throw it away; for it will do you less harm to lose one part of yourself than
to have your whole body go to hell.
31 'It has also been said, *Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a writ of* Dt 24:1
32 *dismissal.* •But I say this to you, everyone who divorces his wife, except for the Mt 2:14–16
case of an illicit marriage,[n] makes her an adulteress; and anyone who marries a •=19:9
divorced woman commits adultery. ‖Mk 10:11–12
‖Lk 16:18
1 Co 7:10–11
33 'Again, you have heard how it was said to our ancestors, *You must not break* Ex 20:7
34 *your oath, but must fulfil your oaths to the Lord.* •But I say this to you, do not swear Nb 30:3
35 at all, either by *heaven*, since that is *God's throne*; •or by *earth*, since that is *his* Dt 23:22
36 footstool; or by Jerusalem, since that is *the city of the great King.* •Do not swear by Jm 5:12
37 your own head either, since you cannot turn a single hair white or black. •All you •Is 66:1
need say is "Yes" if you mean yes, "No" if you mean no;[o] anything more than this Ps 48:2
comes from the Evil One. 2 Co 1:17–19
38, 39 'You have heard how it was said: *Eye for eye and tooth for tooth.* •But I say this Jm 5:12
to you: offer no resistance to the wicked.[p] On the contrary, if anyone hits you on Ex 21:24+
40 the right cheek, offer him the other as well; •if someone wishes to go to law with ‖Lk 6:29
41 you to get your tunic,[q] let him have your cloak as well. •And if anyone requires you Rm 12:19,21
42 to go one mile, go two miles with him. •Give to anyone who asks you, and if anyone •Lk 6:30
wants to borrow, do not turn away.
43 'You have heard how it was said, *You will love your neighbour* and hate your Lv 19:18
44 enemy.[r] •But I say this to you, love your enemies[s] and pray for those who persecute Si 4:10
45 you;[t] •so that you may be children of your Father in heaven, for he causes his sun ‖Lk 6:27–36;
to rise on the bad as well as the good, and sends down rain to fall on the upright 23:24
46 and the wicked alike. •For if you love those who love you, what reward will you Ac 7:60
47 get? Do not even the tax collectors[u] do as much? •And if you save your greetings Rm 12:20
48 for your brothers, are you doing anything exceptional? •Do not even the gentiles
do as much? You must therefore set no bounds to your love, just as your heavenly 19:21
Father sets none to his.' Lv 19:2+;11:44
Jm 1:4
1 P 1:16

sets the example of poverty (8:20 and par.; Lk 2:7) and of lowliness (Mt 11:29; 20:28 and par.; 21:5; Jn 13:12seq.; cf. 2 Co 8:9; Ph 2:7seq.). He identifies himself with the little ones and the wretched (25:45; cf. 18:5seq., and par.).

e. Or 'the afflicted'; the word is taken from the LXX version of Psalm 37 and the sense is 'unassuming, undemanding'. v. 4 is possibly only a gloss on v. 3; its omission would reduce the number of 'beatitudes' to 7. *see* 6:9d.

f. The disciples are the successors of the prophets, cf. 10:41; 13:17; 23:34.

g. lit. 'bushel measure'. In the ancient world a measure was a small receptacle on legs. So it is a question here of hiding the lamp under this receptacle, rather like the bed of Mk 4:21seq., not of extinguishing it by putting the lid on.

h. Jesus comes neither to destroy the Law, Dt 4:8, nor to consecrate it as untouchable, but by his teaching and way of acting to give it a new and definitive form, by which the goal of the Law is fully realised. *see* Mt 1:22j; Mk 1:15e. This is especially true of uprightness, v. 20, cf. 3:15; Lv 19:15; Rm 1:16i, of which vv. Mt 5:21–48 give several characteristic examples. The old command becomes interior and penetrates right to the secret desires, cf 12:34; 23:25–28. No detail of the Law may be omitted unless it has been brought to fulfilment in this way, vv. 18–19; cf. 13:52. It is less a question of making it lighter than of making it deeper, 11:28. Love, in which the old Law was already summed up, 7:12; 22:34–40 and par., becomes Jesus' new commandment, Jn 13:34, and fulfils the whole Law, Rm 13:8–10; Ga 5:14; cf. Col 3:14.

i. The *amen* which introduces certain sayings, Ps 41:13f; Rm 1:25p, underlines their authority: Mt 6:2,5,16; Jn 1:51.

j. The tradition was taught orally, especially in the synagogues.

k. The Aramaic word *raqa*, transliterated in Mt, translated here, means: 'empty-head', 'nitwit'.

l. Here the Great Sanhedrin which met in Jerusalem, as opposed to the minor courts (vv. 21–22) of the country districts.

m. To the first meaning ('worthless person') of the Greek word, Jewish usage added the much more contemptuous one of 'apostate'.

n. Marriage within the prohibited degrees. *See* 19:9b.

o. This seemingly well-known formula, *see* 2 Co 1:17; Jm 5:12, can be understood in various ways: **1** Truthfulness: if something is the case, say it is; if it is not, say it is not. **2** Sincerity: let yes (or no) on the lips correspond to yes (or no) in the heart. **3** Solemnity: the repetition of 'yes' or 'no' as a solemn affirmation or negation so strong that it avoids an oath which invokes the divinity.

p. The examples of vv. 39–40 show that it is harm done to oneself which is at issue. Resistance by way of vengeance (the Jewish law of retribution, v. 38; cf. Ex 21:25; Ps 5:10c) is excluded. The gospel does not forbid reasonable defence against unjust aggression, *see* Jn 18:22seq., still less opposition to evil in the world.

q. As a surety, cf. Ex 22:25seq.; Dt 24:12seq. It is clear that the sentence is deliberately hyperbolic, cf. 19:24.

r. The second part of this commandment is not found in the law. It is the brusque expression of a language (the original Aramaic) which has few half-tones and is equivalent to, 'There is no obligation to love one's enemy,' cf. Lk 14:26 with its parallel Mt 10:37. Incidentally Si 12:4–7 and the scrolls from Qumran (1 QS 1:10) show a detestation of sinners not far removed from hate, and perhaps Jesus was thinking of this.

s. add. 'do good to those who hate you'.

t. add. 'and for those who treat you badly', cf. Lk 6:27seq.

u. They were employed by the occupying power, and this earned them popular contempt, cf. 9:10.

Almsgiving in secret

23:5
Lk 16:14–15
Jn 5:44;12:43
Am 4:5
Mt 15:7;22:18;
23:13–15
Ps 139:1–3

6 'Be careful not to parade your uprightness[a] in public to attract attention; 1
otherwise you will lose all reward from your Father in heaven. ·So when you 2
give alms, do not have it trumpeted before you; this is what the hypocrites[b] do in
the synagogues and in the streets to win human admiration. In truth I tell you, they
have had their reward. ·But when you give alms, your left hand must not know 3
what your right is doing; ·your almsgiving must be secret, and your Father who 4
sees all that is done in secret will reward you.

Prayer in secret

2 K 4:33
Is 26:20
Dn 6:11

'And when you pray,[c] do not imitate the hypocrites: they love to say their prayers 5
standing up in the synagogues and at the street corners for people to see them. In
truth I tell you, they have had their reward. ·But when you pray, *go to your private* 6
room, shut yourself in, and so pray to your Father who is in that secret place, and
your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you.

How to pray. The Lord's Prayer

Qo 5:1
Si 7:14
Rm 8:26–
27.27m
‖Lk 11:2–4
Ezk 36:23
Jn 17:6.26
26:39,42par.
Dn 4:32
Pr 30:8–9
Jn 6:32.35
18:21–35
Ep 4:32
26:41par.
Jn 17:11.15
2 Th 3:2
1 Jn 2:14+
5:7
Si 28:1–5
‖Mk 11:25
•Ep 4:32
Col 3:13
Jm 2:13

'In your prayers do not babble as the gentiles do, for they think that by using many 7
words they will make themselves heard. ·Do not be like them; your Father knows 8
what you need before you ask him. ·So you should pray like this:[d] 9

Our Father in heaven,
may your name be held holy,
your kingdom come, 10
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily[e] bread. 11
And forgive us our debts, 12
as we have forgiven those who are in debt to us.
And do not put us to the test, 13
but save us from the Evil One.[f]

'Yes, if you forgive others their failings, your heavenly Father will forgive you 14
yours; ·but if you do not forgive others, your Father will not forgive your failings 15
either.

Fasting in secret

Jdt 10:3
Is 58:3

'When you are fasting, do not put on a gloomy look as the hypocrites do: they go 16
about looking unsightly to let people know they are fasting. In truth I tell you, they
have had their reward. ·But when you fast, put scent on your head and wash your 17
face, ·so that no one will know you are fasting except your Father who sees all that 18
is done in secret; and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward
you.

19:21
Jb 22:24–26
‖Lk 12:33–34
Jm 5:2–3

True treasures

'Do not store up treasures for yourselves on earth, where moth and woodworm 19
destroy them and thieves can break in and steal. ·But store up treasures for 20
yourselves in heaven, where neither moth nor woodworm destroys them and
thieves cannot break in and steal. ·For wherever your treasure is, there will your 21
heart be too.

‖Lk 11:34–35

The eye, the lamp of the body

'The lamp of the body is the eye. It follows that if your eye is clear, your whole 22
body will be filled with light. ·But if your eye is diseased, your whole body will be 23
darkness. If then, the light inside you is darkened, what darkness that will be![g]

God and money

5:3–4;19:21–26
‖Lk 16:13

24 'No one can be the slave of two masters: he will either hate the first and love the second, or be attached to the first and despise the second. You cannot be the slave both of God and of money.

Trust in Providence

Ps 127
‖Lk 12:22–31

25 'That is why I am telling you not to worry about your life and what you are to eat, nor about your body and what you are to wear. Surely life is more than food,
26 and the body more than clothing! ·Look at the birds in the sky. They do not sow or reap or gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not
27 worth much more than they are? ·Can any of you, however much you worry, add
28 one single cubit to your span of life? ·And why worry about clothing? Think of
29 the flowers growing in the fields; they never have to work or spin; ·yet I assure you that not even Solomon in all his royal robes was clothed like one of these. 1 K 10:1–29
30 Now if that is how God clothes the wild flowers growing in the field which are there today and thrown into the furnace tomorrow, will he not much more look
31 after you, you who have so little faith? ·So do not worry; do not say, "What are
32 we to eat? What are we to drink? What are we to wear?" ·It is the gentiles who set Is 51:1 their hearts on all these things. Your heavenly Father knows you need them all.
33 Set your hearts on his kingdom first, and on God's saving justice, and all these
34 other things will be given you as well. ·So do not worry about tomorrow: tomorrow Jm 4:13–14 will take care of itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.'

Do not judge

‖Lk 6:37–42
Rm 2:1–2
1 Co 4:5

1, 2 7 'Do not judge, and you will not be judged; [a] ·because the judgements you give are the judgements you will get, and the standard you use will be the standard ‖Mk 4:24
3 used for you. ·Why do you observe the splinter in your brother's eye and never
4 notice the great log in your own? ·And how dare you say to your brother, "Let me Jn 8:7 take that splinter out of your eye," when, look, there is a great log in your own?
5 Hypocrite! Take the log out of your own eye first, and then you will see clearly enough to take the splinter out of your brother's eye.

Do not profane sacred things

6 'Do not give dogs what is holy; [b] and do not throw your pearls in front of pigs, or Pr 23:9
Si 22:9–10 they may trample them and then turn on you and tear you to pieces.

6 **a.** lit. 'perform your uprightness' (var. 'perform almsgiving'), i.e. perform good works which make someone upright in the sight of God. For the Jews these works were principally: almsgiving (vv. 2–4), prayer (vv. 5–6), fasting (vv. 16–18).

b. This epithet suggests the false devotees of an artificial and showy piety; in the gospels it applies especially to the Pharisees, cf. 15:7; 22:18; 23:13–15.

c. By his example, 14:23, as well as his introduction Jesus taught his disciples the duty and manner of praying. Prayer should be humble before God, Lk 18:10–14, and before people, Mt 6:5–6; Mk 12:40 and par. It should come from the heart rather than the lips, 6:7, trusting in God's goodness, 6:8; 7:7–11 and par., and insistent to the point of perseverance, Lk 11:5,8; 18:1–8. Prayer is heard if it is made with faith, 21:22 and par., in the name of Jesus, 18:19–20; Jn 14:13–14; 15:7,16; 16:23–27, asks what is good, 7:11, for instance the Holy Spirit, Lk 11:13, forgiveness, Mk 11:25, the good of persecutors, 5:44 and par.; cf. Lk 23:34, and above all the coming of the kingdom of God and deliverance at the time of the final crisis, 24:20 and par.; 26:41 and par.; Lk 21:36; *see* Lk 22:31–32; this is the substance of the model prayer taught by Jesus himself, Mt 6:9–15 and par.

d. The Lord's Prayer in its Matthaean form has 7 petitions. The number is a favourite of Matthew's: 2 × 7 generations in the Genealogy (1:17), 7 beatitudes (5:4e), 7 parables (13:3b), forgiveness not 7 but 77 times (18:22), 7 diatribes against the Pharisees (23:13h), 7 sections into which the Gospel is divided (*see* pp. 1605–6).

e. The Greek word is obscure; this traditional rendering is a probable one. Other possibilities: 'necessary for subsistence' or 'for tomorrow'. Whatever the exact translation, the sense is that we must ask God for the sustenance we need in this life but for no more—not for wealth or luxury.

f. Or 'from evil'. • Add. 'For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory for ever. Amen' (a reading introduced into the text through liturgical influence).

g. According as the eye is clear or diseased it gives or refuses material light; to this light the spiritual light is compared; if this light is itself dimmed the blindness is much worse than physical.

7 **a.** Do not judge others, in order that you may not be judged by God. Similarly in the next verse, cf. Jm 4:12.

b. Consecrated meat from animals sacrificed in the Temple, *see* Ex 22:30; Lv 22:14. Similarly the precious teaching of the kingdom must not be set before those who, incapable of receiving it with profit, may even abuse it. The text does not detail who they are: hostile Jews or gentiles (cf. 15:26)?

18:19
Dt 4:29+
Mk 11:24
‖Lk 11:9–13;
18:1–8
Jn 14:13
Jm 1:5d

Effective prayer

'Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will 7
be opened to you. •Everyone who asks receives; everyone who searches finds; 8
everyone who knocks will have the door opened. •Is there anyone among you who 9
would hand his son a stone when he asked for bread? •Or would hand him a snake 10
when he asked for a fish? •If you, then, evil as you are, know how to give your 11
children what is good, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things
to those who ask him!

Jm 1:5,17
1 Jn 3:22;5:
14–15

‖Lk 6:31

The golden rule [c]

'So always treat others as you would like them to treat you; that is the Law and 12
the Prophets.

Tb 4:15
Rm 13:8–10

Dt 30:15+
Ps 1:1a
‖Lk 13:24

The two ways [d]

'Enter by the narrow gate, since the road that leads to destruction is wide and 13
spacious, [e] and many take it; •but it is a narrow gate and a hard road that leads to 14
life, and only a few find it.

19:24par.
Jn 10:9–10

24:11,24
Dt 13:2–6;
18:9–22
2 P 2:1–3
Rv 13:11;19:20
•Si 27:6
‖Lk 6:43–44
Jm 3:12
=12:33
Ga 5:19–24
•=3:10par.
•Jn 15:6
•Is 29:13

False prophets

'Beware of false prophets [f] who come to you disguised as sheep but underneath are 15
ravenous wolves. •You will be able to tell them by their fruits. Can people pick 16
grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles? •In the same way, a sound tree produces 17
good fruit but a rotten tree bad fruit. •A sound tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor a 18
rotten tree bear good fruit. •Any tree that does not produce good fruit is cut down 19
and thrown on the fire. •I repeat, you will be able to tell them by their fruits. 20

Am 5:21n
‖Lk 6:46

The true disciple

'It is not anyone who says to me, "Lord, Lord," who will enter the kingdom of 21
Heaven, but the person who does the will of my Father in heaven. •When the day 22
comes [g] many will say to me, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, drive
out demons in your name, work many miracles in your name?" •Then I shall tell 23
them to their faces: I have never known you; *away from me, all evil doers!*

25:11–12
‖Lk 13:26–27
Rm 2:13
1 Jn 3:18
Ps 6:8

'Therefore, everyone who listens to these words of mine and acts on them will be 24
like a sensible man who built his house on rock. •Rain came down, floods rose, 25
gales blew and hurled themselves against that house, and it did not fall: it was
founded on rock. •But everyone who listens to these words of mine and does 26
not act on them will be like a stupid man who built his house on sand. •Rain 27
came down, floods rose, gales blew and struck that house, and it fell; and what a
fall it had!'

‖Lk 6:47–49
Pr 10:25;12:3–7
1 Jn 2:17

Jb 8:15
Ezk 13:10–14

The amazement of the crowds

‖Lk 7:1;
‖4:22
‖Mk 1:22

Jesus had now finished what he wanted to say, and his teaching made a deep 28
impression on the people •because he taught them with authority, unlike their own 29
scribes. [h]

III: THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS PROCLAIMED

A: NARRATIVE SECTION: TEN MIRACLES

‖Mk 1:40–45
‖Lk 5:12–16

Cure of a man with skin-disease

8 After he had come down from the mountain large crowds followed him. 1
Suddenly a man with a virulent skin-disease came up and bowed low in front 2
of him, saying, 'Lord, if you are willing, you can cleanse me.' •Jesus stretched out 3
his hand and touched him saying, 'I am willing. Be cleansed.' And his skin-disease

4 was cleansed at once.[a] •Then Jesus said to him, 'Mind you tell no one, but go and show yourself to the priest and make the offering prescribed by Moses, as evidence to them.' Mk 1:34m Lv 14:1–32

Cure of the centurion's servant

‖Lk 7:1–10 ‖Jn 4:46–53

5, 6 When he went into Capernaum a centurion came up and pleaded with him. •'Sir,'
7 he said, 'my servant is lying at home paralysed and in great pain.' •Jesus said to
8 him, 'I will come myself and cure him.' •The centurion replied, 'Sir, I am not worthy to have you under my roof; just give the word and my servant will be cured. Lk 5:8 Ps 33:9;107:20
9 For I am under authority myself and have soldiers under me; and I say to one man, "Go," and he goes; to another, "Come here," and he comes; to my servant,
10 "Do this," and he does it.' •When Jesus heard this he was astonished and said to those following him, 'In truth I tell you, in no one in Israel have I found faith[b] as
11 great as this. •And I tell you that many will come from east and west and sit down
12 with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob at the feast[c] in the kingdom of Heaven; •but the children of the kingdom[d] will be thrown out into the darkness outside, where
13 there will be weeping and grinding of teeth.'[e] •And to the centurion Jesus said, 'Go back, then; let this be done for you, as your faith demands.' And the servant was cured at that moment. Ba 3:33–35 ‖Lk 13:28–29 Rm 11:11 Jn 8:12b 13:42,50; 22:13;24:51; 25:30

Cure of Peter's mother-in-law

‖Mk 1:29–31 ‖Lk 4:38–39

14 And going into Peter's house Jesus found Peter's mother-in-law in bed and
15 feverish. •He touched her hand and the fever left her, and she got up and began to serve him. 9:25par. Mk 9:27 Ac 3:7

c. This maxim was well known in the ancient world, especially among the Jews, *see* Tb 4:15, but in a negative form: Do not to another what you would not have done to yourself. The positive form in which Jesus, and after him Christian literature, puts it, is considerably more demanding.

d. The doctrine of the two ways, good and bad, between which people must choose, is a theme old and widespread in Judaism, *see* Dt 30:15–20; Ps 1; Pr 4:18–19; 12:28; 15:24; Si 15:17; 33:14. It is expressed in a little treatise on morals which has come down to us via the *Didache* and its Latin translation the *Doctrina Apostolorum*. Its influence has been discerned in 5:14–18; 7:12–14; 19:16–26; 22:34–40 and Rm 12:16–21; 13:8–12.

e. var. 'the gate that leads to perdition is wide, and the road spacious.'

f. Lying teachers who charm the public by their show of piety while pursuing their own selfish ends, *see* 24:4seq., 24.

g. The Day of Judgement.

h. These always sought support for their teaching in the 'tradition' of the ancients. Add. 'and the Pharisees'.

8 **a.** By his miracles Jesus shows his power over nature (8:23–27; 14:22–33 and par.), especially over sickness (8:1–4,5–13,14–15; 9:1–8,20–22,27–31; 14:14,36; 15:30; 20:29–34 and par.; Mk 7:32–37; 8:22–26; Lk 14:1–6; 17:11–19; Jn 5:1–16; 9:1–41), over death (Mt 9:23–26 and par.; Lk 7:11–17; Jn 11:1–44), over devils (Mt 8:29k). Jesus' miracles are not elaborate: in this they differ from the fantastic prodigies reported of the hellenistic world and from those attributed to the Jewish rabbis, but they are different most notably by reason of the spiritual and symbolic significance that Jesus attaches to them. They declare the judgements of the messianic age (21:18–22 and par.) as also the privileges it brings (11:5d; 14:13–21; 15:32–39 and par.; Lk 5:4–11; Jn 2:1–11; 21:4–14); they are the first signs of the triumph of the Spirit over Satan's empire (8:29k) and over all the powers of evil, whether sin (9:2b) or disease (8:17f). The motive is sometimes compassion (20:34; Mk 1:41; Lk 7:13) but they are directed principally to the rousing and strengthening of faith (Mt 8:10b; Jn 2:11f). Thus it is only with great deliberation that Jesus works any miracles at all, demanding secrecy for any he does agree to work (Mk 1:34m), and leaving the arousing of faith to be done by his Father in heaven and not by 'flesh and blood' (Mt 16:17). When he sent his apostles to preach the kingdom he gave them his own healing power (10:1,8 and par.) and for this reason Matthew recounts before the Missionary Discourse (ch. 10) a series of ten miracles (ch. 8–9) as signs accrediting the missionary (Mk 16:17seq.; Ac 2:22; *see* 1:8j).

b. The faith that Jesus asks for from the outset of his public life (Mk 1:15) and throughout his subsequent career, is that act of trust and of self-abandonment by which people no longer rely on their own strength and policies but commit themselves to the power and guiding word of him in whom they believe (21:25p,32; Lk 1:20,45). Jesus asks for this faith especially when he works his miracles (8:13; 9:2 and par., 22 and par., 28–29; 15–28; Mk 5:36 and par.; 10:52 and par.; Lk 17:19) which are not merely acts of mercy but also signs attesting his mission and witnessing to the kingdom (Mt 8:3a, *see* Jn 2:11f); hence he cannot work miracles unless he finds the faith without which the miracles lose their true significance (Mt 12:38–39; 13:58 and par.; 16:1–4). Since faith demands the sacrifice of the whole person, mind and heart, it is not an easy act of humility to perform; many decline it, particularly in Israel (8:10 and par.; 15:28; 27:42 and par.; Lk 18:8), or are half-hearted (Mk 9:24; Lk 8:13). Even the disciples are slow to believe (8:26 and par.; 14:31; 16:8; 17:20 and par.) and are still reluctant after the resurrection (28:17; Mk 16:11–14; Lk 24:11,25,41). When faith is strong it works wonders (17:20 and par.; 21:21 and par.; Mk 16:17) and its appeal is never refused (21:22 and par.; Mk 9:23) especially when it asks for forgiveness of sin (9:2 and par.; Lk 7:50) and for that salvation of which it is the necessary condition (Mk 16:16; Lk 8:12, *see* Ac 3:16*l*).

c. Basing their idea on Is 25:6, the Jews often described the joyous messianic era as a banquet (*see* Mt 22:2–14; 26:29 and par.; Lk 14:15; Rv 3:20; 19:9).

d. That is to say the Jews, natural heirs of the promises. Their place will be taken by the gentiles, who are more worthy.

e. Scriptural image for the dismay and frustration of the wicked at seeing the virtuous rewarded, *see* Jb 16:9; Ps 37:12; 112:10. In Mt it is used as a description of damnation.

‖Mk 1:32–34 ‖Lk 4:40–41
A number of cures

That evening they brought him many who were possessed by devils. He drove out 16
the spirits with a command and cured all who were sick. ·This was to fulfil what was 17
spoken by the prophet Isaiah:

Is 53:4 Jn 1:29
He himself bore our sicknesses away and carried our diseases.[f]

‖Lk 9:57–60
Unconditional commitment

When Jesus saw the crowd all about him he gave orders to leave for the other side.[g] 18
One of the scribes then came up and said to him, 'Master, I will follow you 19
Ps 84:3 wherever you go.' ·Jesus said, 'Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, 20
2 Co 8:9 but the Son of man[h] has nowhere to lay his head.'
Gn 50:5 Tb 4:3 ·4:20,22; 10:37par. Another man, one of the disciples, said to him, 'Lord, let me go and bury my 21
father first.' ·But Jesus said, 'Follow me, and leave the dead to bury their dead.' 22

‖Mk 4:35–41 ‖Lk 8:22–25
The calming of the storm

Jon 1:4seq. Then he got into the boat followed by his disciples. ·Suddenly a storm broke over 23, 24
the lake, so violent that the boat was being swamped by the waves. But he was
asleep. ·So they went to him and woke him saying, 'Save us, Lord, we are lost!' 25
6:30;8:10b And he said to them, 'Why are you so frightened, you who have so little faith?' 26
Ps 65:7+ And then he stood up and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great
calm. ·They were astounded and said, 'Whatever kind of man is this, that even the 27
winds and the sea obey him?'

‖Mk 5:1–20 ‖Lk 8:26–29
The demoniacs of Gadara

When he reached the territory of the Gadarenes[i] on the other side, two demoniacs 28
came[j] towards him out of the tombs—they were so dangerously violent that
nobody could use that path. ·Suddenly they shouted, 'What do you want with us, 29
4:3d Son of God? Have you come here to torture us before the time?'[k] ·Now some 30
distance away there was a large herd of pigs feeding, ·and the devils pleaded with 31
Jesus, 'If you drive us out, send us into the herd of pigs.' ·And he said to them, 'Go 32
then,' and they came out and made for the pigs; and at that the whole herd charged
down the cliff into the lake and perished in the water. ·The herdsmen ran off and 33
made for the city, where they told the whole story, including what had happened to
the demoniacs. ·Suddenly the whole city set out to meet Jesus; and as soon as they 34
saw him they implored him to leave their neighbourhood.

‖Mk 2:1–12 ‖Lk 5:17–26
Cure of a paralytic

9 He got back in the boat, crossed the water and came to his home town.[a] ·And 1, 2
suddenly some people brought him a paralytic stretched out on a bed. Seeing
8:10b; ·Lk 7:48 their faith, Jesus said to the paralytic, 'Take comfort, my child, your sins are
Jn 10:33–36 forgiven.'[b] ·And now some scribes said to themselves, 'This man is being blas- 3
12:25 Lk 6:8 phemous.' ·Knowing what was in their minds Jesus said, 'Why do you have such 4
Jn 1:48dd wicked thoughts in your hearts? ·Now, which of these is easier: to say, "Your sins 5
Dn 7:14 Jn 5:27 are forgiven," or to say, "Get up and walk"? ·But to prove to you that the Son of 6
Jn 5:8 man has authority on earth to forgive sins,'—then he said to the paralytic—'get up,
pick up your bed and go off home.' ·And the man got up and went home. ·A 7, 8
8:3a feeling of awe came over the crowd when they saw this, and they praised God for
having given such authority to human beings.[c]

‖Mk 2:13–14 ‖Lk 5:27–28
The call of Matthew

As Jesus was walking on from there he saw a man named Matthew[d] sitting at the 9
4:19 tax office, and he said to him, 'Follow me.' And he got up and followed him.

‖Mk 2:15–17 ‖Lk 5:29–32
Eating with sinners

Lk 15:1–2; 19:1–10 Now while he was at table in the house it happened that a number of tax collectors 10

11 and sinners[e] came to sit at the table with Jesus and his disciples. ·When the
Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, 'Why does your master eat with tax 3:7+
12 collectors and sinners?' ·When he heard this he replied, 'It is not the healthy who 1 Tm 1:15
13 need the doctor, but the sick. ·Go and learn the meaning of the words: *Mercy is* =12:7
what pleases me, not sacrifice.[f] And indeed I came to call not the upright, but Ho 6:6
sinners.' Lk 19:10

A discussion on fasting

‖Mk 2:18–22
‖Lk 5:33–39

14 Then John's[g] disciples came to him and said, 'Why is it that we and the Pharisees
15 fast, but your disciples do not?' ·Jesus replied, 'Surely the bridegroom's attendants Jn 3:29p
cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom[h] is still with them? But the time will come
16 when the bridegroom is taken away[i] from them, and then they will fast. ·No one
puts a piece of unshrunken cloth onto an old cloak, because the patch pulls away 2 Co 5:17
17 from the cloak and the tear gets worse. ·Nor do people put new wine into old Ga 4:9
wineskins; otherwise, the skins burst, the wine runs out, and the skins are lost. No; Jb 32:19
they put new wine in fresh skins and both are preserved.'[j]

Cure of the woman with a haemorrhage. The official's daughter raised to life

‖Mk 5:21–43
‖Lk 8:40–56

18 While he was speaking to them, suddenly one of the officials came up,[k] who bowed
low in front of him and said, 'My daughter has just died, but come and lay your 1 Tm 4:14e
19 hand on her and her life will be saved.' ·Jesus rose and, with his disciples, followed
him.
20 Then suddenly from behind him came a woman, who had been suffering from a
21 haemorrhage for twelve years, and she touched the fringe of his cloak, ·for she was 23:5b
22 thinking, 'If only I can touch his cloak I shall be saved.' ·Jesus turned round and 14:36
Ac 19:12

f. As described by Is, the servant 'took' our sorrows on himself in the sense that his own suffering was expiatory. Matthew takes the phrase to mean that Jesus 'took away' these sorrows by his healing miracles. This interpretation, at first sight forced, is in fact profoundly theological. It was to take on himself the expiation of sin that Jesus, the 'servant', came on earth; that is why he could take away the bodily ills which are the consequence and the penalty of sin.

g. The east bank of Lake Tiberias.

h. With the exception of Ac 7:56; Rv 1:13; 14:14 this expression appears in the NT only in the gospels. There is no doubt that Jesus used it as his favourite self-designation. The Aramaic phrase which lies behind it originally meant 'man', compare Ezk 2:1b, but it seems that at the time of Jesus it was frequently used by a speaker to indicate himself, especially to soften a statement which might otherwise seem extravagant or shocking. But in Dn 7:13k the expression is used of a glorious figure who was to receive from God the eschatological kingdom, and this usage occurs also later in the apocalyptic *Book of Enoch*. The evangelists seem to have understood the expression as a title in this sense, 26:64u.

i. The district got its name from the town of Gadara to the southeast of the lake. The var. 'Gerasenes' (Mk, Lk and Vulg. Mt) derives from the name of another town (Gerasa or possibly Chorsia); the var. 'Gergesenes' is the result of a conjecture of Origen, made because both Gadara and Gerasa are several miles from the lake.

j. In accounts of miracles and cures, the doubling of persons appears to be characteristic of Mt's style: two demoniacs here, where the parallels in Mk and Lk have one; two blind men at Jericho, 20:30; two blind men at Bethsaida, in an incident which appears to be a doublet, 9:27.

k. By his power over demons Jesus destroys the empire of Satan, 12:28 and par.; Lk 10:17–19; cf. Lk 4:6; Jn 12:31i, and inaugurates the messianic kingdom characterised by the Holy Spirit, Is 11:2c; Jl 3:1seq. Demonic possession, 12:43–45,43n, is often accompanied by illness, further evidence of Satan's power, 9:2b, Lk 13:16. Thus the exorcisms of the gospels, which as here often occur as pure exorcisms, *see* 15:21–28 and par.; Mk 1:23–28 and par.; Lk 8:2, appear frequently also as cures, Mt 9:32–34; 12:22–24 and par.; 17:14–18; Lk 13:10,17. Even if Israel refuses to recognise Jesus, 12:24–32, demons have no doubt about him, here and Mk 1:24 and par.; 3:11 and par.; Lk 4:41; Ac 16:17; 19:15. This power of exorcism is communicated by Jesus to his disciples at the same time as the power of miraculous cures, 10:1,8 and par., which is linked to it, 8:3a; 4:24; 8:16 and par.; Lk 13:32.

9 **a.** Capernaum, *see* 4:13.

b. Jesus envisages primarily spiritual healing and effects physical healing only with this in view. Nevertheless his words in this verse contain a promise of physical healing since sickness was regarded as the result of a sin committed either by the sufferer or by his parents, *see* 8:29k; Jn 5:14; 9:2.

c. The power to forgive sins is entrusted to the community, *see* 18:18, but the plural here may indicate that Matthew is thinking of the ministers who exercise this power.

d. Called Levi by Mk and Lk.

e. Those whose moral conduct or disreputable profession, *see* 5:46u, rendered them 'unclean' and socially outcast. They were particularly suspect for not observing the numerous culinary laws, whence the problems about eating together, Mk 7:3–4,14–23seq.; Ac 10:15e; 15:20t; Ga 2:12; *see also* Rm 14; 1 Co 8–9.

f. To the exact performance of the Law's external demands God prefers the inward quality of genuine compassion. It is a favourite theme of the prophets, Am 5:21n.

g. John the Baptist. Like the Pharisees, John's disciples used to observe fasts not prescribed by the Law in the hope that their devotion would hasten the coming of the Day of the Lord.

h. The bridegroom is Jesus. His companions cannot fast because, with his coming, the messianic age has dawned.

i. Jesus' death clearly foretold.

j. The old garment and the old wineskins stand for the elements in Judaism which are to pass away. The new cloth and the new wine represent the new spirit of the kingdom of God. The additional devotional practices of John's disciples and of the Pharisees, intended to give new life to the old order, in fact are only leading to its downfall. Jesus declines either to add or to patch: his purpose is to produce something quite new—even the spirit of the Law is to be raised to a new plane.

k. The head of the synagogue; called Jairus in Mk and Lk.

8:10b saw her; and he said to her, 'Courage, my daughter, your faith has saved you.' And
from that moment the woman was saved.
When Jesus reached the official's house and saw the flute-players, with the crowd 23
Jn 11:11–13 making a commotion, [l] he said, •'Get out of here; the little girl is not dead; she is 24
asleep.' And they ridiculed him. •But when the people had been turned out he 25
8:15+;8:3a went inside and took her by the hand; and she stood up. •And the news of this 26
spread all round the countryside.

20:29–34 **Cure of two blind men**

As Jesus went on his way two blind men followed him shouting, 'Take pity on us, 27
son of David.' [m] •And when Jesus reached the house the blind men came up with 28
8:10b him and he said to them, 'Do you believe I can do this?' They said, 'Lord, we do.'
Then he touched their eyes saying, 'According to your faith, let it be done to 29
you.' •And their sight returned. Then Jesus sternly warned them, 'Take care that 30
Mk 1:34m no one learns about this.' •But when they had gone away, they talked about him all 31
over the countryside.

=12:22–24 ‖Lk 11:14–15 **Cure of a dumb demoniac**

They had only just left when suddenly a man was brought to him, a dumb 32
8:29k demoniac. •And when the devil was driven out, the dumb man spoke and the 33
people were amazed and said, 'Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel.'
10:25 But the Pharisees said, 'It is through the prince of devils that he drives out devils.' [n] 34

The distress of the crowds

=4:23 Jesus made a tour through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, 35
Mk 1:1a proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing all kinds of disease and all
kinds of illness.
Mk 6:34 And when he saw the crowds he felt sorry for them because they were harassed 36
and dejected, like sheep without a shepherd. [o] •Then he said to his disciples, 'The 37
‖Lk 10:2 Jn 4:35–38 harvest is rich but the labourers are few, so ask the Lord of the harvest to send out
labourers to his harvest.'

B: INSTRUCTION FOR APOSTLES

The mission of the Twelve

‖Mk 3:14–15; 6:7 ‖Lk 9:1 •8:29k 10 He summoned his twelve disciples [a] and gave them authority over unclean 1
spirits with power to drive them out and to cure all kinds of disease and all
kinds of illness.
‖Mk 3:16–19 ‖Lk 6:13–16 Ac 1:13 These are the names of the twelve apostles: [b] first, Simon who is known as Peter, 2
and his brother Andrew; James the son of Zebedee, and his brother John; •Philip 3
and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of
Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; •Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who was also his 4
betrayer. •These twelve Jesus sent out, instructing them as follows: 5
Lk 9:52–53 Jn 4:9,40 'Do not make your way to gentile territory, and do not enter any Samaritan
town; •go instead to the lost sheep of the House of Israel. [c] •And as you go, 6, 7
3:2d;4:17f •Lk 10:9,11 proclaim that the kingdom of Heaven is close at hand. •Cure the sick, raise the 8
dead, cleanse those suffering from virulent skin-diseases, drive out devils. You
Is 55:1 Ac 8:20 received without charge, give without charge. •Provide yourselves with no gold or 9
•‖Mk 6:8–9 ‖Lk 9:3;10:4 silver, not even with coppers for your purses, •with no haversack for the journey or 10
‖Lk 10:7 spare tunic or footwear or a staff, for the labourer deserves his keep.
↗1 Co 9:14 1 Tm 5:18 'Whatever town or village you go into, seek out someone worthy and stay with 11
‖Mk 6:10–11 ‖Lk 9:4–5; 10:5–12 him until you leave. •As you enter his house, salute it, [d] •and if the house deserves 12, 13
it, may your peace come upon it; if it does not, may your peace come back to you.
And if anyone does not welcome you or listen to what you have to say, as you 14
Ac 13:51;18:6 walk out of the house or town shake the dust from your feet. [e] •In truth I tell you, 15

on the Day of Judgement it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah than
16 for that town. •Look, I am sending you out like sheep among wolves; so be cunning as snakes and yet innocent as doves.

=11:24
Gn 13:13; 18:16–19:29
‖Lk 10:3;7:15
1 Co 14:20

Missionaries will be persecuted *f*

‖Mk 13:9–13
‖Lk 21:12–19

17 'Be prepared for people to hand you over to sanhedrins *g* and scourge you in their
18 synagogues. •You will be brought before governors and kings for my sake, as
19 evidence to them and to the gentiles. •But when you are handed over, do not worry about how to speak or what to say; what you are to say will be given to you when
20 the time comes, •because it is not you who will be speaking; the Spirit of your Father will be speaking in you.

Jn 16:1–4
Jn 15:27
•‖Lk 12:11–12
Ex 4:10–12
Jr 1:6–10
Jn 15:26
Ac 4:8,31

21 'Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will come
22 forward against their parents and have them put to death. •You will be universally hated on account of my name; but anyone who stands firm to the end will be saved.
23 If they persecute you in one town, take refuge in the next; and if they persecute you in that, take refuge in another. *h* In truth I tell you, you will not have gone the round of the towns of Israel before the Son of man comes. *i*

=24:9
Jn 15:18–19,25
=24:13
16:28;24:34
24:30;26:64

24, 25 'Disciple is not superior to teacher, nor slave to master. •It is enough for disciple to grow to be like teacher, and slave like master. If they have called the master of the house "Beelzebul", how much more the members of his household?

‖Lk 6:40
‖Jn 13:16;15:20
9:34;12:24

Open and fearless speech

‖Lk 12:2–9

26 'So do not be afraid of them. Everything now covered up will be uncovered, and
27 everything now hidden will be made clear. •What I say to you in the dark, tell in the daylight; what you hear in whispers, proclaim from the housetops. *j*

‖Mk 4:22
Lk 8:17
1 Tm 5:25

28 'Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; fear him
29 rather who can destroy both body and soul in hell. •Can you not buy two sparrows for a penny? And yet not one falls to the ground without your Father knowing.
30, 31 Why, every hair on your head has been counted. •So there is no need to be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

1 P 3:14
Rv 2:10
Lk 21:18
Ac 27:34
6:26

l. The loud wailing of the oriental mourner.

m. Messianic title, 2 S 7:1a; cf. Lk 1:32; Ac 2:30; Rm 1:3. It was familiar as such to the Jews, Mk 12:35; Jn 7:42, and Matthew in particular emphasises its application to Jesus (Mt 1:1; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30 and par.; 21:9,15) who was hesitant towards the title because it involved a purely human notion of the Messiah, 22:41–46; *see also* Mk 1:34m. He preferred the more obscure expression 'Son of man', 8:20h.

n. Verse omitted by representatives of the Western Text.

o. Familiar biblical metaphor: Nb 27:17; 1 K 22:17; Jdt 11:19; Ezk 34:5.

10 **a.** Matthew supposes that the reader already knows about the choice of the Twelve; Mark and Luke mention it expressly and distinguish the choice from the mission.

b. The list of the twelve apostles is found in four versions, in Mk, Lk, Mt and Ac. It is normally three groups of four names each, and the groups are headed respectively by Peter, Philip and James the son of Alphaeus. Inside each group, the order varies. In the first group, of the disciples closest to Jesus, Mt and Lk have the order: Peter, Andrew, James, John; but in Mk and Ac, Andrew is given the fourth place as Peter, James and John are seen as equally the intimates of the Lord, *see* Mk 5:37d. Still later, in Ac, James son of Zebedee is put after his younger brother John who has become more important, *see* Ac 1:13; 12:2, and already Lk 8:51f; 9:28. In the second group, which seems to have special links with non-Jews, Matthew sinks to last place in the lists of Mt and Ac; only in Mt is he called 'the tax collector'. In the third group, those who are the most tenacious of Jewish customs, if Thaddaeus (var. Lebbaeus) in Mt and Mk is the same as Jude (son) of James in Lk and Ac, he moves down in the latter texts from second to third place. Simon the Zealot of Lk and Ac is simply the Gk translation of the Aramaic Simon *qan'ana* of Mt and Mk. Judas Iscariot the traitor figures always in last place. His name is often interpreted as 'man of Kerioth', cf. Jos 15:25, but it could also derive from the Aramaic *sheqarya*, 'liar, hypocrite'.

c. Hebraism common in the Bible: the people of Israel. As heirs to the Choice and the Promise, the Jews are to be the first to receive the offer of the Messiah's saving work; but *see* Ac 8:5; 13:5e.

d. The oriental greeting is a wish of peace. In v. 13 this wish is treated in concrete fashion as an entity which, if it fails to secure its effect, nevertheless remains in being and returns to its original owner.

e. The phrase is Jewish in origin. The dust of any country other than the Holy Land is reckoned unclean; in this passage the impurity attaches to any place that refuses the Word.

f. The instructions of vv. 17–39 clearly suppose a horizon wider than that of this first mission of the Twelve: they must originate at a later date (note their situation in Mk and Lk). Matthew puts them here to complete his missionary's handbook.

g. The small provincial sanhedrins and also the Great Sanhedrin of Jerusalem; cf. 5:21–22.

h. om. 'and if . . . another'.

i. The coming foretold here is not concerned with the world at large but with Israel: it took place at the moment •when God 'visited' his now unfaithful people and brought the OT era to an end by the destruction of Jerusalem and of its Temple in *c.* AD 70, *see* 24:1a.

j. Jesus' instruction to the crowds was not successful and he turned to instructing his disciples in private. Later on it will be the duty of his disciples to deliver the message in its entirety and without fear. These same words are found in Lk but with an entirely different meaning: the disciples are not to imitate Pharisaic hypocrisy; whatever they may try to hide will certainly come to light eventually; they must therefore speak openly.

‖Lk 12:8–9 Rv 3:5 'So if anyone declares himself for me in the presence of human beings, I will 32
declare myself for him in the presence of my Father in heaven. [k] •But the one who 33
‖Mk 8:38 ‖Lk 9:26 2 Tm 2:12 disowns me in the presence of human beings, I will disown in the presence of my
Father in heaven.

‖Lk 12:51–53 **Jesus, the cause of dissension** [l]

'Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth: it is not peace I have 34
Lk 2:34;22:36 •Mi 7:6 come to bring, but a sword. •For I have come to set son against *father, daughter* 35
against mother, daughter-in-law against mother-in-law; •*a person's enemies will be* 36
the members of his own household.

Renouncing self to follow Jesus

Dt 33:9 ‖Lk 14:26–27 16:24–25 ‖Mk 8:34–35 ‖Lk 9:23–24; 17:33 Jn 12:25 'No one who prefers father or mother to me is worthy of me. No one who prefers 37
son or daughter to me is worthy of me. •Anyone who does not take his cross and 38
follow in my footsteps is not worthy of me. •Anyone who finds his life will lose it; 39
anyone who loses his life for my sake will find it. [m]

Conclusion of the Instruction

=18:5 ‖Mk 9:37 ‖Lk 9:48;‖10:16 ‖Jn 12:44–45; 13:20 'Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me; and anyone who welcomes me wel- 40
comes the one who sent me.

Ga 4:14 25:40,45 'Anyone who welcomes a prophet because he is a prophet will have a prophet's 41
reward; and anyone who welcomes an upright person because he is upright will
have the reward of an upright person. [n]

‖Mk 9:41 'If anyone gives so much as a cup of cold water to one of these little ones [o] 42
because he is a disciple, then in truth I tell you, he will most certainly not go
without his reward.'

IV: THE MYSTERY OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

A: NARRATIVE SECTION

11 When Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples he moved on from 1
there to teach and preach in their towns. [a]

‖Lk 7:18–28 **The Baptist's question. Jesus commends him**

Now John had heard in prison what Christ was doing and he sent his disciples [b] to 2
Dt 18:15 Jn 1:21t ask him, •'Are you the one who is to come, or are we to expect someone else?' [c] 3
8:3a Is 26:19;29:18 seq.;35:5seq.; 61:1 13:57 Jn 6:61 Jesus answered, 'Go back and tell John what you hear and see; •the blind see 4, 5
again, and the lame walk, those suffering from virulent skin-diseases are cleansed,
and the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life and the good news is proclaimed to
the poor; [d] •and blessed is anyone who does not find me a cause of falling.' 6

3:1,5–6 As the men were leaving, Jesus began to talk to the people about John, 'What 7
did you go out into the desert to see? A reed swaying in the breeze? No? •Then 8
what did you go out to see? A man wearing fine clothes? Look, those who wear
fine clothes are to be found in palaces. •Then what did you go out for? To see a 9
16:14c Lk 1:76–79 prophet? Yes, I tell you, and much more than a prophet: •he is the one of whom 10
scripture says:

Ml 3:1 Ac 13:24–25

> *Look, I am going to send my messenger in front of you*
> *to prepare* your *way before* you.

'In truth I tell you, of all the children born to women, there has never been 11
anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of Heaven is
‖Lk 16:16 greater than he. [e] •Since John the Baptist came, up to this present time, the 12
kingdom of Heaven has been subjected to violence and the violent are taking it by

13 storm.[f] •Because it was towards John that all the prophecies of the prophets and of
14 the Law were leading; •and he, if you will believe me, is the Elijah who was to 17:11–13 Ml 3:23
15 return.[g] •Anyone who has ears should listen!

Jesus condemns his contemporaries Lk 7:31–35

16 'What comparison can I find for this generation? It is like children shouting to each other as they sit in the market place:

17 We played the pipes for you,
and you wouldn't dance;
we sang dirges,
and you wouldn't be mourners.

18 'For John came, neither eating nor drinking, and they say, "He is possessed." 3:4 Lk 1:15
19 The Son of man came, eating and drinking, and they say, "Look, a glutton and a 8:20h drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners." Yet wisdom is justified by her 9:10–11 Jn 6:35k deeds.'[h]

Lament over the lake-towns ‖Lk 10:13–15

20 Then he began to reproach the towns in which most of his miracles had been 13:58 Jn 15:24;12:37 worked, because they refused to repent.

21 'Alas for you, Chorazin! Alas for you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon,[i] they would have repented long ago in sackcloth Dn 9:3 Jon 3:6
22 and ashes. •Still, I tell you that it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on
23 Judgement Day than for you. •And as for you, Capernaum, did you want to be *raised as high as heaven? You shall be flung down to hell.* For if the miracles done in Is 14:13,15
24 you had been done in Sodom, it would have been standing yet. •Still, I tell you that it will be more bearable for Sodom on Judgement Day than for you.' =10:15

The good news revealed to the simple. The Father and the Son ‖Lk 10:21–22

25 At that time Jesus exclaimed, 'I bless you, Father, Lord of heaven and of earth, for hiding these things[j] from the learned and the clever and revealing them to little 13:11 Jn 7:48–49
26, 27 children. •Yes, Father, for that is what it pleased you to do. •Everything has been 1 Co 1:26–29

k. At the Last Judgement, when the Son will hand over the elect to his Father, *see* 25:34.

l. Jesus is a 'sign that is rejected', Lk 2:34; his aim is not to provoke dissension, but this becomes inevitable as a result of the demands of the decision he provokes.

m. In Mt this dictum is given in a more archaic form than in Mk or Lk: 'find' covers the idea of 'winning', 'securing for oneself', cf. Gn 26:12; Pr 3:13; 21:21; Ho 12:9. *See also* 16:25*l*.

n. 'Prophet' and 'holy (or 'upright') person', *see also* 13:17 and 23:29, are a familiar biblical pair; here they serve to indicate the missionary and the ordinary Christian.

o. The apostles whom Jesus is sending on their mission, cf. 18:1–6,10,14 and Mk 9:41.

11 **a.** 'their', i.e. the Jews'.

b. var. 'two of his disciples'.

c. John has been expecting a Messiah who will be the agent of God's 'wrath' or retribution, 3:8,10,12.

d. By this allusion to the prophecies of Isaiah, Jesus shows John that his works do indeed inaugurate the messianic era, but by way of beneficent and saving miracles, not violence and retribution, cf. Lk 4:17–21.

e. Simply because he is a member of the kingdom, whereas John, as the Forerunner, remains at its gates. The sentence contrasts epochs rather than persons. There is no personal slight to John; it is simply that the epoch of the kingdom wholly transcends that which preceded it.

f. Various interpretations have been offered. The 'violence' may be: **1** The praiseworthy violence, the bitter self-sacrifice, of those who would take possession of the kingdom. **2** The misguided violence of those who would establish the kingdom by force (the Zealots). **3** The tyrannical violence of the powers of evil, or of their agents on earth, who seek to maintain their dominion in this world and to thwart the advance of the kingdom of God. **4** A possible translation 'the kingdom of Heaven clears a way for itself by violence,' i.e. is powerfully establishing itself despite all obstacles.

g. John brings the OT era to its close: he carries on where Malachi, the last of the prophets, left off, and fulfils Malachi's last prediction, Ml 3;23.

h. var. 'by her children', *see* Lk 7:35. Like petulant children who will play none of the games suggested (in this case weddings and funerals) the Jewish leaders reject all God's advances, whether made through the stern penance of John or through the gentle courtesy of Jesus. The different approaches are explained by the different relationships of John and Jesus to the messianic era, cf. 9:14–15; 11:11–13. In spite of human lack of goodwill, God's wise design is justified by the conduct of the Baptist and Jesus. Jesus' 'works' especially, that is, his miracles, either convince or condemn, vv. 6 and 20–24. Jesus is compared to Wisdom also in 11:28–30; 12:42; 23:24 and par.; Jn 6:35k; 1 Co 1:24. Others see here only a proverb which proclaims that the false wisdom of unbelievers, cf. v. 25, will reap its fruit of divine punishment, vv. 20–24.

i. The threats of the prophets had made these towns archetypes of impiety, Is 23; Ezk 26–28; Am 1:9–10; Zc 9:2–4.

j. Vv. 25–27 are not closely connected with the context in which Matthew has placed the passage (compare its different position in Lk). Hence, 'these things' refers not to what precedes but to the 'mysteries of the kingdom', 13:11, which are revealed to the 'little ones'—i.e. to the disciples, cf. 10:42—but hidden from the 'wise'—i.e. from the members and teachers of the Pharisee group.

entrusted to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, just as
4:3d;16:17 Ws 2:13 Jn 1:18;3:11f; 3:35t;10:15 no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. [k]

The gentle mastery of Christ

Si 24:19; 51:23–30 Ho 10:11 'Come to me, all you who labour and are overburdened, [l] and I will give you rest. 28
Shoulder my yoke and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, [m] *and* 29
Pr 3:17 Ps 34:18 Jr 6:16 *you will find rest for your souls.* ·Yes, my yoke is easy and my burden light.' 30

Picking corn on the Sabbath

•Ac 15:10 Ga 5:1 •‖Mk 2:23–28 ‖Lk 6:1–5 Ex 20:8f Dt 23:26 12 At that time Jesus went through the cornfields one Sabbath day. His 1
disciples were hungry and began to pick ears of corn and eat them. ·The 2
Pharisees noticed it and said to him, 'Look, your disciples are doing something that
is forbidden on the Sabbath.' [a] ·But he said to them, 'Have you not read what 3
1 S 21:2–7 David did when he and his followers were hungry—·how he went into the house of 4
Ex 25:23j God and they ate the loaves of the offering although neither he nor his followers
were permitted to eat them, but only the priests? ·Or again, have you not read in 5
Nb 28:9 the Law that on the Sabbath day the Temple priests break the Sabbath without
12:41 committing any fault? [b] ·Now here, I tell you, is something greater than the 6
=9:13 •1 S 15:22 Ho 6:6 Temple. ·And if you had understood the meaning of the words: *Mercy is what* 7
pleases me, not sacrifice, you would not have condemned the blameless. ·For the 8
Jn 5:16–17 Son of man is master of the Sabbath.' [c]

Cure of the man with a withered hand

‖Mk 3:1–6 ‖Lk 6:6–11
He moved on from there and went to their synagogue; ·now a man was there with 9, 10
a withered hand. They asked him, 'Is it permitted to cure somebody on the Sabbath
Lk 20:20 Jn 8:6 day?' hoping for something to charge him with. ·But he said to them, 'If any one of 11
‖Lk 14:5 you here had only one sheep and it fell down a hole on the Sabbath day, would he
Qo 3:19 not get hold of it and lift it out? ·Now a man is far more important than a sheep, so 12
Ex 20:8f it follows that it is permitted on the Sabbath day to do good.' ·Then he said to the 13
man, 'Stretch out your hand.' He stretched it out and his hand was restored, as
Jn 5:18;11:53 sound as the other one. ·At this the Pharisees went out and began to plot against 14
him, discussing how to destroy him.

Jesus the 'servant of Yahweh'

Mk 3:7 Jesus knew this and withdrew from the district. Many followed him and he cured 15
Mk 1:34m;‖3:12 them all ·but warned them not to make him known. ·This [d] was to fulfil what was 16, 17
spoken by the prophet Isaiah:

Is 42:1–4
Look! My servant whom I have chosen, 18
my beloved, in whom my soul delights,
3:16m *I will send my Spirit upon him,*
and he will *present* judgement [e] to the nations;
he will not brawl or cry out, 19
his voice is not heard in the streets,
he will not break the crushed reed, 20
or snuff the faltering wick,
until he has made judgement victorious; 21
in him the nations will put their hope.

Jesus and Beelzebul

8:29k;=9:32–34 ‖Lk 11:14–15 Then they brought to him a blind and dumb demoniac; and he cured him, so that 22
the dumb man could speak and see. ·All the people were astounded and said, 'Can 23
9:27m this be the son of David?' ·But when the Pharisees heard this they said, 'The man 24
drives out devils only through Beelzebul, [f] the chief of the devils.'
‖Mk 3:23–30 ‖Lk 11:17–23 Knowing what was in their minds he said to them, 'Every kingdom divided 25

against itself is heading for ruin; and no town, no household divided against itself
26 can last. •Now if Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself; so how can Jb 1:6g
27 his kingdom last? •And if it is through Beelzebul that I drive devils out, through whom do your own experts[g] drive them out? They shall be your judges, then.
28 But if it is through the Spirit of God that I drive out devils, then be sure that the 3:16n;8:29k
kingdom of God has caught you unawares.
29 'Or again, how can anyone make his way into a strong man's house and plun- Is 49:25 Jn 12:31
der his property unless he has first tied up the strong man? Only then can he Tb 8:3
plunder his house.
30 'Anyone who is not with me is against me, and anyone who does not gather in Mk 9:40
31 with me throws away. •And so I tell you, every human sin and blasphemy will be
32 forgiven, but blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. •And anyone who 1 Jn 5:16
says a word against the Son of man will be forgiven; but no one who speaks against ‖Lk 12:10
the Holy Spirit will be forgiven either in this world or in the next.[h]

Words betray the heart =7:16–20 ‖Lk 6:43–45

33 'Make a tree sound and its fruit will be sound; make a tree rotten and its fruit will
34 be rotten. For the tree can be told by its fruit. •You brood of vipers, how can your 3:7;23:33
speech be good when you are evil? For words flow out of what fills the heart. Si 27:6
35 Good people draw good things from their store of goodness; bad people draw •15:11,18 •Pr 10:14
36 bad things from their store of badness. •So I tell you this, that for every unfounded[i]
37 word people utter they will answer on Judgement Day, •since it is by your words Jm 3:1–6
you will be justified, and by your words condemned.'

The sign of Jonah ‖Mk 8:11–12 ‖Lk 11:29–32

38 Then some of the scribes and Pharisees spoke up. 'Master,' they said, 'we should
39 like to see a sign[j] from you.' •He replied, 'It is an evil and unfaithful[k] generation =16:1–4 1 Co 1:22
that asks for a sign! The only sign it will be given is the sign of the prophet Jonah.[l]

k. The claim of an intimate connection with God, vv. 26–27, and the call to discipleship, vv. 28–30, recall a number of passages in the Wisdom literature, Pr 8:22–36; Ws 8:3–4; 9:9–18; Si 24:3–9,19–20. Jesus therefore claims the role of Wisdom, *see* 11:19h, no longer as a personification but as a person, 'the Son', *par excellence*, of 'the Father', cf. 4:3. With its Johannine flavour, *see* Jn 1:18; 3:11,35; 6:46; 10:15, this passage expresses, in the most primitive stratum of the synoptic tradition, the same clear awareness in Jesus of his divine sonship as is found in Jn.

l. The burden of the Law and of the additional Pharisaic observances. The 'yoke of the Law' is a current rabbinic metaphor; *see also* Si 51:26; Jr 2:20; 5:5; Lm 3:27; Zp 3:9 (LXX); cf. Is 14:25.

m. Classic descriptions of the 'Poor' of the OT, *see* Dn 3:87; Zp 2:3d. Jesus makes their religious attitude his own, and on these grounds claims to be their master in wisdom, as was prophesied of the 'servant', Is 61:1–2; Lk 4:18; *see also* Mt 12:18–21; 21:5. This attitude to poverty is expressed in the beatitudes and in many other passages of the gospels.

12 a. The disciples' offence is not picking someone else's corn while passing by (Dt 23:26 allowed it) but doing this on the Sabbath. Casuists saw in this a 'work' prohibited by the Law, Ex 34:21.

b. Far from stopping, the work of the priests actually increased on the Sabbath.

c. On this occasion and when he cures on the Sabbath, 12:9–14 and par.; Lk 13:10–17; 14:1–6; Jn 5:1–18; 7:19–24; 9, Jesus affirms that even a custom of divine institution has no absolute value, but must yield to the demands of necessity or love, and that he himself has the right to interpret the Law of Moses authoritatively, *see* 5:17h; 15:1–7 and par.; 19:1–9 and par. This right he has because he proclaims the messianic kingdom, 8:20h, whose new economy, 9:17f, he has the task of establishing already, 9:6. The rabbis did admit of dispensations from the Sabbath law, but only within very scrupulous limits.

d. i.e. his avoidance of publicity for his work of healing.

e. This gives a meaning of the Hebr. term *mishpat* (and of its LXX translation *krisis*), often rendered 'judgement', which signifies the divine statute governing the relationship of God with humanity in so far as it is known through revelation and the religion founded on it.

f. Canaanite divinity. The name means 'Baal the Prince' (not 'Baal of the dunghill' as is sometimes asserted), and so orthodox monotheism naturally interpreted it as 'Prince of devils'. The form 'Beelzebub' (Syr. and Vulg.) is a contemptuous play on words (already found in 2 K 1:2seq.) which makes the name mean 'Baal (Lord) of the flies'.

g. lit. 'your children', a semitism.

h. Not to recognise the Messiah may be excusable, since he is appearing as an ordinary 'son of man', 8:20h; but it is a positive perversity to witness the manifest good works of the Holy Spirit and declare them evil (as in v. 24). By doing this, a person is openly refusing to respond to God; he has 'closed his heart', and so put himself outside the range of forgiveness.

i. i.e. a calumny.

j. A miracle that would prove Jesus had authority and show what sort of authority it was, cf. Is 7:11seq.; Jn 2:11f. No other sign will be given but the decisive one which is the resurrection, here obscurely foretold.

k. lit. 'adulterous': a common figurative use in the OT, *see* Ho 1:2c.

l. In 16:4 Mt does not define, as he does in v. 40 here, the sense of this 'sign of Jonah', and Lk 11:29seq. understands it as being Jesus' preaching, which is a sign for his contemporaries just as Jonah's was for the men of Nineveh—a sense which lurks beneath v. 41 here. It is, however, less probable, for Jesus' preaching is already taking place and so cannot be announced as still in the future. Further, and more important, Jonah was known in the Jewish tradition for his miraculous deliverance rather than for his preaching to the gentiles, which was not well looked upon. Therefore even if Mt's interpretation in v. 40 is later than Lk's, it reflects Jesus' thought better, for it is a veiled prediction of his final triumph.

Jon 2:1 For as Jonah *remained in the belly of the sea-monster for three days and three* 40
nights, so will the Son of man be in the heart of the earth for three days and three
Ezk 3:6–7 Rm 2:27 nights. [m] ·On Judgement Day the men of Nineveh will appear against this genera- 41
Jon 3 tion and they will be its condemnation, because when Jonah preached they re-
pented; and look, there is something greater than Jonah here. ·On Judgement Day 42
Jn 6:35k the Queen of the South will appear against this generation and be its condemna-
1 K 10:1–10 tion, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon;
and look, there is something greater than Solomon here.

8:29k ‖Lk 11:24–26 **The return of the unclean spirit**

'When an unclean spirit goes out of someone it wanders through waterless country 43
looking for a place to rest, [n] and cannot find one. ·Then it says, "I will return to 44
the home I came from." But on arrival, finding it unoccupied, swept and tidied,
Mk 5:9 Lk 8:2 it then goes off and collects seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they 45
Jn 5:14 go in and set up house there, and so that person ends up worse off than before.
2 P 2:20 That is what will happen to this wicked generation.'

‖Mk 3:31–35 ‖Lk 8:19–21 Dt 33:9 Jn 7:3seq. **The true kinsfolk of Jesus**

He was still speaking to the crowds when suddenly his mother and his brothers [o] 46
were standing outside and were anxious to have a word with him. [p] ·But to the [47], 48
Lk 2:49–50 man who told him this Jesus replied, 'Who is my mother? Who are my brothers?'
And stretching out his hand towards his disciples he said, 'Here are my mother 49
and my brothers. ·Anyone who does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother 50
and sister and mother.' [q]

B: DISCOURSE OF PARABLES

‖Mk 4:1–2 ‖Lk 8:4 **Introduction**

13 That same day, [a] Jesus left the house and sat by the lakeside, ·but such large 1, 2
crowds gathered round him that he got into a boat and sat there. The people
all stood on the shore, ·and he told them many things in parables. [b] 3

‖Mk 4:3–9 ‖Lk 8:5–8 **Parable of the sower**

He said, 'Listen, a sower went out to sow. ·As he sowed, some seeds fell on the 4
edge of the path, and the birds came and ate them up. ·Others fell on patches of 5
rock where they found little soil and sprang up at once, because there was no depth
of earth; ·but as soon as the sun came up they were scorched and, not having any 6
roots, they withered away. ·Others fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and 7
Jn 15:8.16 choked them. ·Others fell on rich soil and produced their crop, some a hundred- 8
fold, some sixty, some thirty. ·Anyone who has ears [c] should listen!' 9

‖Mk 4:10–12,25 ‖Lk 8:9–10,18 **Why Jesus speaks in parables**

Then the disciples went up to him and asked, 'Why do you talk to them in 10
11:25 Rm 16:25*f* parables?' ·In answer, he said, 'Because to you is granted to understand the 11
mysteries of the kingdom of Heaven, but to them it is not granted. ·Anyone who 12
=25:29 ‖Lk 19:26 has will be given more and will have more than enough; but anyone who has not
will be deprived even of what he has. [d] ·The reason I talk to them in parables is that 13
Dt 29:1a,3 Jr 5:21 Ezk 12:2 they look without seeing and listen without hearing or understanding. [e] ·So in their 14
case what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah is being fulfilled:

Is 6:9–10,10k Jn 12:40 Ac 28:26seq.

Listen and listen, but never understand!
Look and look, but never perceive!
This people's heart has grown coarse, 15
their ears dulled, they have shut their eyes tight

to avoid using their eyes to see, their ears to hear,
their heart to understand,
changing their ways and being healed by me.

16, 17 'But blessed are your eyes because they see, your ears because they hear! •In truth I tell you, many prophets and upright people[f] longed to see what you see, and never saw it; to hear what you hear, and never heard it.

‖Lk 10:23–24
Jn 8:56
Lk 17:22
Ep 3:5
1 P 1:10–12

The parable of the sower explained

‖Mk 4:13–20
‖Lk 8:11–15

18, 19 'So pay attention to the parable of the sower. •When anyone hears the word of the kingdom without understanding, the Evil One comes and carries off what was
20 sown[g] in his heart: this is the seed sown on the edge of the path. •The seed sown on patches of rock is someone who hears the word and welcomes it at once with joy.
21 But such a person has no root deep down and does not last; should some trial
22 come, or some persecution on account of the word, at once he falls away. •The seed sown in thorns is someone who hears the word, but the worry of the world and
23 the lure of riches choke the word and so it produces nothing. •And the seed sown in rich soil is someone who hears the word and understands it; this is the one who yields a harvest and produces now a hundredfold, now sixty, now thirty.'

•Dt 30:14
1 Th 1:6
Jr 4:3–4
Jn 15:8,16
Ga 5:22

Parable of the darnel

24 He put another parable before them, 'The kingdom of Heaven may be compared
25 to a man who sowed good seed in his field. •While everybody was asleep his
26 enemy came, sowed darnel all among the wheat, and made off. •When the new
27 wheat sprouted and ripened, then the darnel appeared as well. •The owner's labourers went to him and said, "Sir, was it not good seed that you sowed in your
28 field? If so, where does the darnel come from?" •He said to them, "Some enemy has done this." And the labourers said, "Do you want us to go and weed it out?"
29 But he said, "No, because when you weed out the darnel you might pull up the
30 wheat with it. •Let them both grow till the harvest; and at harvest time I shall say to the reapers: First collect the darnel and tie it in bundles to be burnt, then gather the wheat into my barn." '

Jn 15:6
•3:12

Parable of the mustard seed

31 He put another parable before them, 'The kingdom of Heaven is like a mustard
32 seed which a man took and sowed in his field. •It is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the biggest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air can come and shelter in its branches.'

‖Mk 4:30–32
‖Lk 13:18–19
Ezk 17:23
Dn 4:9,18

m. A ready-made expression borrowed from Jon 2:1 and only approximately indicating the space of time between Jesus' death and resurrection.

n. The ancients thought of desert places as inhabited by demons, *see* 8:28; Lv 16:8b; 17:7d; Is 13:21; 34:14c; Ba 4:35; Rv 18:2. Nevertheless, the devils much prefer to live in human beings, 8:29k.

o. Not necessarily Mary's children but possibly near relations, cousins perhaps, which both Hebr. and Aramaic style 'brothers', *see* Gn 13:8; 14:16; 29:15; Lv 10:4; 1 Ch 23:22seq.

p. V. 47 ('Someone said to him: Your mother and brothers are standing outside and want to speak to you') is omitted by some important textual witnesses. It is probably a restatement of v. 46 modelled on Mk and Lk.

q. The ties of physical relationship yield to those of spiritual relationship, *see* 8:21seq.; 10:37; 19:29.

13 a. A merely transitional cliché of no chronological significance.

b. Making a total of seven, *see* 6:9d, Mt adds five parables to the two he shares with Mk.

c. add. 'to hear'. Similarly 11:15; 13:43.

d. For those of good will, what they have learnt from the old covenant will be added to and perfected by the new, cf. 5:17,20. The ill-disposed will lose even what they have, namely, that Jewish Law which, without the perfection Jesus brings to it, is destined to become obsolete.

e. A deliberate and culpable insensibility which is both the cause and the explanation of the withdrawal of grace. The preceding narratives, all of which throw light on this 'hardening', 11:16–19,20–24; 12:7,14,24–32,34,39,45, prepare the way for the parable discourse. By the use of symbols and images, therefore, Jesus challenges them to reflect and themselves seek to penetrate more deeply into the understanding of the kingdom.

f. The prophets and holy men of the OT. Paul speaks more than once of the time when the 'mystery' was not revealed: Rm 16:25; Ep 3:4–5; Col 1:26; *see also* 1 P 1:11–12.

g. This strange expression is the result of a certain ambiguity in the interpretation of the parable, which identifies human beings sometimes with the ground which receives the Word, sometimes with the seed itself.

‖Lk 13:20–21 **Parable of the yeast**

He told them another parable, 'The kingdom of Heaven is like the yeast a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour till it was leavened all through.' [h] 33

‖ Mk 4:33–34 **The people are taught only in parables**

In all this Jesus spoke to the crowds in parables; indeed, he would never speak to them except in parables. 34 ·This was to fulfil what was spoken by the prophet: 35

Ps 78:2 *I will speak to you in parables,*
unfold what has been hidden since the foundation of the world. [i]

The parable of the darnel explained

Then, leaving the crowds, he went to the house; and his disciples came to him and said, 'Explain to us the parable about the darnel in the field.' 36 ·He said in reply, 37 'The sower of the good seed is the Son of man. 38 ·The field is the world; the good seed is the subjects of the kingdom; the darnel, the subjects of the Evil One; [j] 39 ·the enemy who sowed it, the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; the reapers are the angels. 40 ·Well then, just as the darnel is gathered up and burnt in the fire, so it will be at the end of time. 41 ·The Son of man will send his angels and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of falling and all who do evil, 42 ·and throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth. 43 ·Then the upright will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. [k] Anyone who has ears should listen!

1 Jn 3:10
4:1c
Jl 4:13
Rv 14:15–16
·Zp 1:3
Rv 8:12e;21:8
Dn 12:3

Parables of the treasure and of the pearl [l]

'The kingdom of Heaven is like treasure hidden in a field which someone has found; he hides it again, goes off in his joy, sells everything he owns and buys the field. 44

19:21
Pr 4:7

'Again, the kingdom of Heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls; 45. 46 ·when he finds one of great value he goes and sells everything he owns and buys it.

Parable of the dragnet

'Again, the kingdom of Heaven is like a dragnet that is cast in the sea and brings in a haul of all kinds of fish. 47 ·When it is full, the fishermen haul it ashore; then, sitting down, they collect the good ones in baskets and throw away those that are no use. 48 This is how it will be at the end of time: the angels will appear and separate the wicked from the upright, 49 ·to throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth. 50

8:12e

Conclusion

Mk 4:13b 'Have you understood all these?' They said, 'Yes.' 51 ·And he said to them, 'Well then, every scribe who becomes a disciple of the kingdom of Heaven is like a householder who brings out from his storeroom new things as well as old.' [m] 51, 52

V: THE CHURCH, FIRST-FRUITS OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

A: NARRATIVE SECTION

‖Mk 6:1–6
‖Lk 4:16–30 **A visit to Nazareth**

When Jesus had finished these parables he left the district; 53, 54 ·and, coming to his home town, [n] he taught the people in their synagogue in such a way that they were astonished and said, 'Where did the man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers? 55 ·This is the carpenter's son, surely? Is not his mother the woman called

2:23

Lk 3:23
Jn 6:42

56 Mary, and his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Jude? ·His sisters, too, 12:46*o*;27:56
57 are they not all here with us? So where did the man get it all?' ·And they would not
accept him. But Jesus said to them, 'A prophet is despised only in his own country 16:14c
58 and in his own house,' ·and he did not work many miracles there because of their ‖Jn 4:44
lack of faith. 8:10b

Herod and Jesus

‖Mk 6:14–16
‖Lk 9:7–9
1, 2 **14** At that time Herod the tetrarch heard about the reputation of Jesus ·and 16:14c
said to his court, 'This is John the Baptist himself; he has risen from the Lk 3:1c;23:
dead, and that is why miraculous powers are at work in him.' 8–12

John the Baptist beheaded

3 Now it was Herod who had arrested John, chained him up and put him in prison ‖Mk 6:17–29
4 because of Herodias, his brother Philip's[a] wife. ·For John had told him, 'It is ‖Lk 3:19–20
5 against the Law for you to have her.' ·He had wanted to kill him but was afraid of Lv 18:16;20:21
6 the people, who regarded John as a prophet. ·Then, during the celebrations for 21:26
Herod's birthday, the daughter of Herodias[b] danced before the company and so
7 delighted Herod ·that he promised on oath to give her anything she asked.
8 Prompted by her mother she said, 'Give me John the Baptist's head, here, on a
9 dish.' ·The king was distressed but, thinking of the oaths he had sworn and of his
10 guests, he ordered it to be given her, ·and sent and had John beheaded in the
11 prison. ·The head was brought in on a dish and given to the girl, who took it to her
12 mother. ·John's disciples came and took the body and buried it; then they went off
to tell Jesus.

First miracle of the loaves[c]

15:32–38par.
‖Mk 6:31–44
‖Lk 9:10–17
13 When Jesus received this news he withdrew by boat to a lonely place where they ‖Jn 6:1–13
could be by themselves.[d] But the crowds heard of this and, leaving the towns, went 2 K 4:42–44
14 after him on foot.[e] ·So as he stepped ashore he saw a large crowd; and he took pity 8:3a;9:36;15:32
on them and healed their sick.
15 When evening came, the disciples went to him and said, 'This is a lonely place,
and time has slipped by; so send the people away, and they can go to the villages to
16 buy themselves some food.' ·Jesus replied, 'There is no need for them to go: give 2 K 4:42 (LXX)
17 them something to eat yourselves.' ·But they answered, 'All we have with us is
18, 19 five loaves and two fish.' ·So he said, 'Bring them here to me.' ·He gave orders
that the people were to sit down on the grass; then he took the five loaves and the

h. The kingdom, like the mustard seed and the leaven, is unpretentious in its beginnings but destined for enormous growth.

i. Several authorities omit 'of the world'.

j. lit. 'the children of the kingdom' and 'the children of the Evil One' (semitisms).

k. To the kingdom of the Son (the messianic kingdom) of v. 41 there succeeds the kingdom of the Father to whom the Son commits the elect whom he has saved, *see* 25:34; 1 Co 15:24.

l. No one who discovers the kingdom of Heaven can enter it without leaving all behind, *see* 19:21.

m. The Jewish teacher who becomes a disciple of Christ has at his disposal all the wealth of the Old Testament as well as its completion in the New, v. 12. This picture of a 'scribe who becomes a disciple' sums up the whole ideal of Matthew the evangelist and may well be a self-portrait.

n. Nazareth, where he lived as a child, *see* 2:23.

14 **a.** om. (Latin text) 'Philip'; the omission is due to the difficulty the name seemed to create. But in fact this Philip is not the tetrarch of Ituraea and Trachonitis, Lk 3:1; he is another son of Herod the Great by Mariamne II and therefore half-brother of Antipas; Josephus himself calls him Herod. Antipas' fault lay not so much in having married his niece as in having taken her from his brother who was still living; moreover, he had repudiated his first wife.

b. According to Josephus, the girl's name was Salome.

c. While Lk 9:10–17 and Jn 6:1–13 have only one multiplication of loaves, Mt 14:13–21; 15:32–39 and Mk 6:30–44; 8:1–10 have two. This duplication, certainly very ancient, *see* 16:9seq., presents the same incident according to two different traditions. The first, more ancient, and of Palestinian origin, seems to situate the incident on the western shore of the lake (see next note) and speaks of twelve baskets, the number of the tribes of Israel and of the apostles, *see* Mk 3:14c. The second, derived from Christians in a gentile milieu, situates it on the eastern, gentile, shore of the lake, *see* Mk 7:31, and speaks of seven baskets, the number of the gentile nations of Canaan, Ac 13:19, and of the hellenist deacons, Ac 6:5; 21:8. Both traditions depict the event in the light of OT precedents, especially the multiplication of oil and bread by Elisha, 2 K 4:1–7,42–44, and the episode of manna and quails, Ex 16; Nb 11. The act of Jesus repeats these gifts of heavenly nourishment with an even greater power. It was, as the earliest tradition already saw, a preparation for the eschatological nourishment of the Eucharist. This aspect is underlined by the literary presentation in the synoptics, *see* 14:19; 15:36 and 26:26, and the discourse on the bread of life, Jn 6.

d. This does not necessarily indicate the eastern shore of the lake. Jesus could have gone along the western shore from north to south or vice versa and so reach 'the other side', v. 22, of the curve made by this shore.

e. On shore the crowd hurried to the place the boat was making for.

Jn 11:41;17:1 two fish, raised his eyes to heaven and said the blessing. And breaking the loaves
Ps 78:29 he handed them to his disciples, who gave them to the crowds. ·They all ate as 20
much as they wanted, and they collected the scraps left over, twelve baskets full.
Now about five thousand men had eaten, to say nothing of women and children. 21

‖Mk 6:45–52 ‖Jn 6:16–21 **Jesus walks on the water and, with him, Peter**

And at once he made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other 22
side while he sent the crowds away. ·After sending the crowds away he went up 23
Jn 6:15 into the hills by himself to pray.[f] When evening came, he was there alone, ·while 24
the boat, by now some furlongs from land,[g] was hard pressed by rough waves, for
there was a head-wind. ·In the fourth watch of the night[h] he came towards them, 25
walking on the sea, ·and when the disciples saw him walking on the sea they were 26
terrified. 'It is a ghost,' they said, and cried out in fear. ·But at once Jesus called 27
out to them, saying, 'Courage! It's me! Don't be afraid.' ·It was Peter[i] who 28
answered. 'Lord,' he said, 'if it is you, tell me to come to you across the water.'
Jesus said, 'Come.' Then Peter got out of the boat and started walking towards 29
Jesus across the water, ·but then noticing the wind, he took fright and began to 30
8:25–26 sink. 'Lord,' he cried, 'save me!' ·Jesus put out his hand at once and held him. 31
8:10b 'You have so little faith,' he said, 'why did you doubt?' ·And as they got into the 32
boat the wind dropped. ·The men in the boat bowed down before him and said, 33
4:3d;16:16d 'Truly, you are the Son of God.'

‖Mk 6:53–56 **Cures at Gennesaret**

Having made the crossing, they came to land at Gennesaret. ·When the local 34, 35
people recognised him they spread the news through the whole neighbourhood
9:20–22 and took all that were sick to him, ·begging him just to let them touch the fringe of 36
8:3a his cloak. And all those who touched it were saved.

‖Mk 7:1–13 **The traditions of the Pharisees**

15 Then Pharisees and scribes from Jerusalem came to Jesus and said, ·'Why 1, 2
Lk 11:38 do your disciples break away from the tradition of the elders?[a] They eat
Ga 1:14 Col 2:8 without washing their hands.'[b] ·He answered, 'And why do you break away from 3
19:19 the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? ·For God said, *"Honour*[c] 4
Ex 20:12;21:17 Lv 20:9 Dt 5:16 *your father and your mother"* and *"Anyone who curses his father or mother will be*
Lk 18:20 *put to death."* ·But you say, "If anyone says to his father or mother: Anything I 5
might have used to help you is dedicated to God, ·he is rid of his 6
duty to father or mother."[d] In this way you have made God's word ineffective by
23:13seq. means of your tradition. ·Hypocrites! How rightly Isaiah prophesied about you 7
when he said:

Ps 78:36seq. Is 29:13
> *This people honours me only with lip-service,* 8
> *while their hearts are far from me.*
> *Their reverence of me is worthless;* 9
> *the lessons they teach are nothing but human commandments.*'

‖Mk 7:14–23 **On clean and unclean**[e]

He called the people to him and said, 'Listen, and understand. ·What goes into the 10, 11
12:34 mouth does not make anyone unclean; it is what comes out of the mouth that
makes someone unclean.'

Then the disciples came to him and said, 'Do you know that the Pharisees were 12
Jn 15:2b Ac 5:38 shocked when they heard what you said?' ·He replied, 'Any plant my heavenly 13
Father has not planted will be pulled up by the roots. ·Leave them alone. They are 14
23:16,19 ‖Lk 6:39 blind leaders of the blind; and if one blind person leads another, both will
fall into a pit.'

At this, Peter said to him, 'Explain the parable for us.' ·Jesus replied, 'Even 15, 16
Mk 4:13c you—don't you yet understand? ·Can't you see that whatever goes into the mouth 17

18 passes through the stomach and is discharged into the sewer? ·But whatever comes
out of the mouth comes from the heart, and it is this that makes someone unclean.
19 For from the heart come evil intentions: murder, adultery, fornication, theft, Ga 5:19–21
20 perjury, slander. ·These are the things that make a person unclean. But eating with
unwashed hands does not make anyone unclean.'

The daughter of the Canaanite woman healed ‖Mk 7:24–30

21, 22 Jesus left that place and withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. ·And suddenly
out came a Canaanite woman from that district[f] and started shouting, 'Lord, Son
23 of David, take pity on me. My daughter is tormented by a devil.' ·But he said not 9:27m ·8:29k
a word in answer to her. And his disciples went and pleaded with him, saying,
24 'Give her what she wants,[g] because she keeps shouting after us.' ·He said in reply, Lk 11:8
25 'I was sent only to the lost sheep of the House of Israel.' ·But the woman had 10:6
26 come up and was bowing low before him. 'Lord,' she said, 'help me.' ·He replied,
27 'It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to little dogs.'[h] ·She retorted, 7:6b
'Ah yes, Lord; but even little dogs eat the scraps that fall from their masters' table.'
28 Then Jesus answered her, 'Woman, you have great faith. Let your desire be 8:10b
granted.' And from that moment her daughter was well again.

Cures near the lake

29 Jesus went on from there and reached the shores of the Lake of Galilee, and he Mk 7:31
30 went up onto the mountain. He took his seat, ·and large crowds came to him
bringing the lame, the crippled, the blind, the dumb and many others; these they
31 put down at his feet, and he cured them. ·The crowds were astonished to see the 8:3a Mk 7:37
dumb speaking, the cripples whole again,[i] the lame walking and the blind with
their sight, and they praised the God of Israel.

Second miracle of the loaves 8:3a;14:13–21par.; ‖Mk 8:1–10

32 But Jesus called his disciples to him and said, 'I feel sorry for all these people; they
have been with me for three days now and have nothing to eat. I do not want to
33 send them off hungry, or they might collapse on the way.' ·The disciples said to
him, 'Where in a deserted place could we get sufficient bread for such a large crowd 2 K 4:43
34 to have enough to eat?' ·Jesus said to them, 'How many loaves have you?' They
35 said, 'Seven, and a few small fish.' ·Then he instructed the crowd to sit down on
36 the ground, ·and he took the seven loaves and the fish, and after giving thanks he
broke them and began handing them to the disciples, who gave them to the crowds.

f. The evangelists, especially Lk, often note that Jesus prays, in solitude or at night, 14:23 and par.; Mk 1:35; Lk 5:16, at mealtimes, Mt 14:19 and par.; 15:36 and par.; 26:26–27 and par., at the time of important events: at the Baptism, Lk 3:21, before the choice of the Twelve, Lk 6:12, the teaching of the Lord's Prayer, Lk 11:1, *see* Mt 6:5c, the profession of faith at Caesarea, Lk 9:18, the Transfiguration, Lk 9:28–29, in Gethsemane, Mt 26:36–44, on the cross, Mt 27:46 and par.; Lk 23:46. He prays for his executioners, Lk 23:34; for Peter, Lk 22:32, for his disciples and those who will come after them, Jn 17:9–24. He prays also for himself, 26:39 and par., cf. Jn 17:1–5; Heb 5:7. These prayers show that he is in permanent touch with the Father, 11:25–27 and par., who never leaves him on his own, Jn 8:29, and always hears his prayer, Jn 11:22,42; cf. Mt 26:53. Both by this example and by his teaching, Jesus bore in upon his disciples the need and the way to pray, 6:5c. Now in glory he continues to intercede for his own, Rm 8:34; Heb 7:25; 1 Jn 2:1, as he promised, Jn 14:16.

g. Cf. Jn 6:19; var. 'far out on the sea'; cf. Mk 6:47.

h. 3 to 6 am.

i. Matthew deliberately punctuates the narrative section of his 'ecclesiastical book' (13:53–18:35) with three episodes featuring Peter: this passage, 16:16–20 and 17:24–27.

15 a. Oral tradition which, to safeguard the observance of the written Law, made many additions to it. It was held by the rabbis that these additions, being implicit in the Law, were part of the tradition going back through 'the elders' to Moses himself.

b. lit. 'eat bread'.

c. Implying a reverence shown in practical ways.

d. Because property thus made over by vow assumes a sacred character which precludes all claims made by the parents. Such a vow was in fact only a legal fiction involving no sacrifice of ownership; it was no more than a despicable way of escaping the duty of filial piety. Though the rabbis acknowledged its impiety they sustained its validity.

e. The Pharisees had objected to eating with unpurified hands, v. 2, but Jesus passes to the larger question of the legal impurity of certain foods, Lv 11. Legal impurity, he teaches, is secondary to moral, which is the only impurity that really matters, Ac 10:9–16,28; Rm 14:14seq.

f. It is significant that the gentile has to leave gentile territory and come onto the soil of Israel for the cure.

g. Not 'send her away' simply: the Greek verb here means 'let her go with her request granted', as in 18:27; 27:15.

h. Jesus' vocation is primarily to bring salvation to the Jews, 'children' of God and of the promises, before caring for the gentiles who were in the eyes of the Jews, only 'dogs'. The conventional nature of this expression and the diminutive form used lessen the insult of it in Jesus' mouth.

i. om. 'the cripples whole again'.

Ps 78:29 They all ate as much as they wanted, and they collected what was left of the 37
scraps, seven baskets full. ·Now four thousand men had eaten, to say nothing of 38
women and children. ·And when he had sent the crowds away he got into the boat 39
and went to the territory of Magadan.

=12:38–39 ‖Mk 8:11–13 ‖Lk 11:16,29
The Pharisees ask for a sign from heaven

16 The Pharisees and Sadducees came, and to put him to the test they asked if 1
Jn 6:30–31 ‖Lk 12:54–56 he would show them a sign from heaven. ·He replied, 'In the evening you 2
say, "It will be fine; there's a red sky," ·and in the morning, "Stormy weather 3
today; the sky is red and overcast." You know how to read the face of the sky, but
Lk 19:44 you cannot read the signs of the times.[a] ·It is an evil and unfaithful generation 4
12:39*l* asking for a sign, and the only sign it will be given is the sign of Jonah.' And he left
8:10b them and went off.

‖Mk 8:14–21 ‖Lk 12:1
The yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees

The disciples, having crossed to the other side, had forgotten to take any food. 5
Jesus said to them, 'Keep your eyes open, and be on your guard against the yeast 6
of the Pharisees and Sadducees.' ·And they said among themselves, 'It is because 7
8:10b we have not brought any bread.' ·Jesus knew it, and he said, 'You have so little 8
Mk 4:13b faith, why are you talking among yourselves about having no bread? ·Do you still 9
14:21 not understand? Do you not remember the five loaves for the five thousand and
15:38 the number of baskets you collected? ·Or the seven loaves for the four thousand 10
and the number of baskets you collected? ·How could you fail to understand that I 11
was not talking about bread? What I said was: Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees
and Sadducees.' ·Then they understood that he was telling them to be on their 12
guard, not against yeast for making bread. but against the teaching of the Pharisees
and Sadducees.[b]

‖Mk 8:27–30 ‖Lk 9:18–21
Peter's profession of faith; his pre-eminence

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi he put this question to his 13
8:20h disciples, 'Who do people say the Son of man is?' ·And they said, 'Some say John 14
14:2 the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.'[c] ·'But 15
Jn 6:69 you,' he said, 'who do you say I am?' ·Then Simon Peter spoke up and said, 'You 16
14:28*i* are the Christ, the Son of the living God.'[d] ·Jesus replied, 'Simon son of Jonah, 17
4:3*d* you are a blessed man! Because it was no human agency[e] that revealed this to you
Rm 7:5c but my Father in heaven. ·So I now say to you: You are Peter[f] and on this rock I 18
Jb 38:17h will build my community.[g] And the gates of the underworld[h] can never overpower
Is 22:22 it. ·I will give you the keys of the kingdom of Heaven: whatever you bind on earth 19
Rv 3:7;=18:18 will be bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.'[i]
Mk 1:34+ Then he gave the disciples strict orders not to say to anyone that he was the 20
Christ.

‖Mk 8:31–33 ‖Lk 9:22
First prophecy of the Passion

From then onwards[j] Jesus began to make it clear to his disciples that he was 21
17:12,22–23; 20:17–19 destined to go to Jerusalem and suffer grievously at the hands of the elders and
Lk 2:38*o*;13:33 chief priests and scribes and to be put to death and to be raised up on the third day.
•Ac 10:40n Then, taking him aside, Peter started to rebuke him. 'Heaven preserve you, 22
Lord,' he said, 'this must not happen to you.' ·But he turned and said to Peter, 23
4:10 'Get behind me, Satan! You are an obstacle[k] in my path, because you are thinking
Mk 4:13b not as God thinks but as human beings do.'

‖Mk 8:34–9:1 ‖Lk 9:23–27
The condition of following Christ

•=10:38–39 ‖Lk 14:27 Then Jesus said to his disciples, 'If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him 24
2 Co 4:10–11 renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me. ·Anyone who wants to 25
•‖Lk 17:33 save his life will lose it; but anyone who loses his life for my sake will find it.[l]

26 What, then, will anyone gain by winning the whole world and forfeiting his life? Or what can anyone offer in exchange for his life? ▶‖Jn 12:25–26

27 'For the Son of man is going to come in the glory of his Father with his angels, 25:31seq.
28 and then he will reward each one according to his behaviour. [m] •In truth I tell you, 2 Th 1:7
there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of •Ps 62:12e
man coming with his kingdom.' [n] Ezk 18:21–32+
Rm 2:6b
•10:23;24:30,
34:26;64

The transfiguration [a]

‖Mk 9:2–8
‖Lk 9:28–36
2 P 1:16–18

1 17 Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John
2 and led them up a high mountain [b] by themselves. •There in their presence
he was transfigured: his face shone like the sun and his clothes became as dazzling 28:3
3 as light. [c] •And suddenly Moses and Elijah appeared to them; they were talking

16 a. om. 'In the evening . . . of the times'. The 'times' are the messianic age; the 'signs' are the miracles worked by Jesus; cf. 11:3–5; 12:38.

b. As leaven ferments the dough, 13:33, but can also make it go bad, cf. 1 Co 5:6; Ga 5:9, so the false doctrine of the Jewish leaders threatens to misguide those for whom they are responsible, cf. Mt 15:14.

c. Jesus claimed this title of 'prophet' only in a veiled and indirect way, 13:57 and par.; Lk 13:33, but the crowds gave it to him clearly, Mt 16:14 and par.; 21:11,46; Mk 6:15 and par.; Lk 7:16,39; 24:19; Jn 4:19; 9:17. The title had messianic overtones, for the spirit of prophecy, extinct since Malachi, was according to Jewish expectation to return as a sign of the messianic era, either in the person of Elijah, 17:10–11 and par., or in the form of a general outpouring of the Spirit, Ac 2:17–18,33. In fact in Jesus' time there were many (false) prophets, 24:11,24 and par. John the Baptist was truly a prophet, 11:9 and par.; 14:5; 21:26 and par.; Lk 1:76, but as a herald in the spirit of Elijah, Mt 11:10 and par., 14; 17:12 and par. He denied (Jn 1:21) that he was 'the Prophet' foretold by Moses, Dt 18:15, and it is in Jesus alone that Christian faith has recognised this Prophet, Jn 6:14; 7:40; Ac 3:22–26,26s. After Pentecost the spirit of prophecy spread throughout the Church, Ac 11:27m, and this title of Jesus soon yielded to other more specific christological titles.

d. In Mt Peter acknowledges not only that Jesus is the Messiah but also that he is Son of God; this second title is not found in Mk and Lk; compare 14:33 with Mk 6:51seq., *see* 4:3e.

e. lit. 'flesh and blood'. The expression indicates humanity, emphasising a material, limited nature as opposed to that of the spirit world, Si 14:18; Rm 7:5c; 1 Co 15:50; Ga 1:16; Ep 6:12; Heb 2:14; cf. Jn 1:13.

f. Neither the Greek word *petros* nor even, as it seems, its Aramaic equivalent *kepha* ('rock') was used as a personal name before Jesus conferred it on the apostles' leader to symbolise the part he was to play in the foundation of his community. This change of name had possibly been made earlier, *see* Mk 3:16; Lk 6:14; Jn 1:42.

g. The Hebr. *qahal* which the Gk renders *ekklesia* means 'an assembly called together'; it is used frequently in the OT to indicate the community of the chosen people, especially the community of the desert period, cf. Ac 7:38. Certain Jewish groups (among them the Essenes of Qumran) regarded themselves as the chosen remnant of Israel (Is 4:3c) which was to survive in 'the latter days'. These had also used the term that is now adopted to indicate the messianic community, the community of the 'new alliance' sealed with the blood of Jesus, 26:28f; Ep 5:25. By using the term 'community' side by side with that of 'kingdom of Heaven', 4:17f, Jesus shows that this eschatological community (community of the 'end-times') is to have its beginnings here on earth in the form of an organised society whose leader he now appoints; *see* Ac 5:11b; 1 Co 1:2a.

h. Gk: *Hades*; Hebrew: *sheol*, the dwelling-place of the dead, *see* Nb 16:33f. Here, its personified 'gates' suggest the powers of evil which first lead people into that death which is sin and then imprison them once for all in eternal death. The Church's task will be to rescue the elect from death's dominion, from the death of the body and above all from eternal death, so that it may lead them into the kingdom of Heaven, *see* 1 Co 15:26; Col 1:13; Rv 6:8; 20:13. In this the Church follows its Master who died, descended into the underworld, *see* 1 P 3:19h, and rose again, Ac 2:27,31.

i. The City of God, like the City of Death, has its gates too; they grant entrance only to those who are worthy of it. Peter has the keys. It is his function, therefore, to open or close to all who would come to the kingdom of Heaven through the Christian community. • 'bind' and 'loose' are technical rabbinic terms; primarily they have a disciplinary reference; one is 'bound' (condemned to) or 'loosed' (absolved from) excommunication. Their secondary usage is connected with doctrinal or juridical decisions: an opinion is 'bound' (forbidden) or 'loosed' (allowed). Of the household of God Peter is controller (the keys symbolise this, cf. Is 22:22). In that capacity he is to exercise the disciplinary power of admitting or excluding those he thinks fit; he will also, in his administration of the community, make necessary doctrinal and juridical decisions. The verdicts he delivers and the pronouncements he makes will be ratified by God in heaven. Catholic exegetes maintain that these enduring promises hold good not only for Peter himself but also for Peter's successors. This inference, not explicitly drawn in the text, is considered legitimate because Jesus plainly intends to provide for the future of his community by establishing a structure that will not collapse with Peter's death. • Two other texts, Lk 22:31seq. and Jn 21:15seq., on Peter's primacy emphasise that its operation is to be in the domain of faith; they also indicate that this makes him head not only of the Church after the death of Jesus but of the apostolic group then and there.

j. Jesus has just elicited from his disciples the first explicit profession of faith in him as Messiah. At this crucial moment he tells them for the first time of his coming Passion: he is not only the glorious Messiah, he is also the suffering servant. Within the next few days this teaching method will be pursued in a similar situation: the glorious transfiguration will be followed by an injunction to silence and a prediction of the Passion, 17:1–12. It is Jesus' way of bracing the disciples' faith for the approaching crisis of death and resurrection.

k. By blocking the Messiah's appointed way, Peter becomes an 'obstacle' (primary sense of the Greek *skandalon*) to Christ and becomes, though unwittingly, the tool of Satan, cf. 4:1–10.

l. Paradox. This dictum and those immediately following oscillate between two senses of human 'life': its present stage and its future. The Greek *psyche*, here equivalent to the Hebr. *nephesh*, contains all three senses of 'life', 'soul', 'person'.

m. 'his behaviour'; var. 'his works'.

n. In vv. 27–28 two sayings of Jesus, each dealing with a different event, have been joined together because they have a common reference to the coming of the kingdom of God: v. 27, the kingdom of the Father; v. 28, the kingdom of Christ, *see* 24:1a.

17 a. In Mt's presentation, which differs from those of Mk 9:2 and Lk 9:28f, Jesus appears in his transfiguration above all as the new Moses, *see* Mt 4:1a, meeting God on a new Sinai in the cloud, Mt 17:5; Ex 24:15–18, with his face shining, Mt 17:2; Ex 34:29–35, cf. 2 Co 3:7–4:6, accompanied by two personalities of the OT who received revelations on Sinai, Ex 19:33–34; 1 K 19:9–13, and personify the Law and the Prophets which Jesus came to bring to perfection, Mt 5:17. The heavenly voice commands that

with him. ·Then Peter spoke to Jesus. 'Lord,' he said, 'it is wonderful for us to be 4
here; if you want me to, I will make three shelters here,[d] one for you, one for
3:17;24:30q Moses and one for Elijah.' ·He was still speaking when suddenly a bright cloud 5
Ex 13:22h; 19:16g covered them with shadow, and suddenly from the cloud there came a voice which
2 P 1:17 said, 'This is my Son, the Beloved; he enjoys my favour. Listen to him.' ·When 6
Dt 18:15,19 Is 42:1 they heard this, the disciples fell on their faces, overcome with fear. ·But Jesus 7
came up and touched them, saying, 'Stand up, do not be afraid.' ·And when they 8
raised their eyes they saw no one but Jesus.

‖Mk 9:9–13 **The question about Elijah**

Mk 1:34m As they came down from the mountain Jesus gave them this order, 'Tell no one 9
8:20h about this vision until the Son of man has risen from the dead.' ·And the disciples 10
put this question to him, 'Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?'[e]
16:14c He replied, 'Elijah is indeed coming, and he will set everything right again; 11
Si 48:10
Ml 3:23–24 however, I tell you that Elijah has come already and they did not recognise him 12
11:10–14;16; 21;17:22–23; 20:17–19 but treated him as they pleased; and the Son of man will suffer similarly at their
hands.' ·Then the disciples understood that he was speaking of John the Baptist. 13

‖Mk 9:14–29 ‖Lk 9:37–43 **The epileptic demoniac**

As they were rejoining the crowd a man came up to him and went down on his 14
knees before him. ·'Lord,' he said, 'take pity on my son: he is demented and in a 15
wretched state; he is always falling into fire and into water. ·I took him to your 16
Dt 32:5 Ac 2:40 Ph 2:15 disciples and they were unable to cure him.' ·In reply, Jesus said, 'Faithless and 17
perverse generation! How much longer must I be with you? How much longer
must I put up with you? Bring him here to me.' ·And when Jesus rebuked it the 18
8:29k devil came out of the boy, who was cured from that moment.

Then the disciples came privately to Jesus. 'Why were we unable to drive it out?' 19
8:10b •=21:21 ‖Mk 11:22–23 ‖Lk 17:6 they asked. ·He answered, 'Because you have so little faith.[f] In truth I tell you, if 20
your faith is the size of a mustard seed you will say to this mountain, "Move from
here to there," and it will move; nothing will be impossible for you.'[21][g]

‖Mk 9:30–32 ‖Lk 9:44–45 **Second prophecy of the Passion**

8:20h When they were together in Galilee, Jesus said to them, 'The Son of man is going 22
16:21;17:12; 20:17–19 Ac 10:40n to be delivered into the power of men; ·they will put him to death, and on the third 23
day he will be raised up again.' And a great sadness came over them.

The Temple tax paid by Jesus and Peter

14:28i Ex 30:13 When they reached Capernaum, the collectors of the half-shekel[h] came to Peter 24
and said, 'Does your master not pay the half-shekel?' ·'Yes,' he replied, and went 25
into the house. But before he could speak, Jesus said, 'Simon, what is your
opinion? From whom do earthly kings take toll or tribute? From their sons[i] or
from foreigners?' ·And when he replied, 'From foreigners,' Jesus said, 'Well then, 26
the sons are exempt. ·However, so that we shall not be the downfall of others, go 27
to the lake and cast a hook; take the first fish that rises, open its mouth and there
you will find a shekel;[j] take it and give it to them for me and for yourself.'

B: THE DISCOURSE ON THE CHURCH

‖Mk 9:33–36 ‖Lk 9:46–48 **Who is the greatest?**

Lk 22:24 **18** At this time the disciples came to Jesus and said, 'Who is the greatest in the 1
kingdom of Heaven?' ·So he called a little child to him whom he set among 2
23:12 ‖Mk 10:15 ‖Lk 18:17 Jn 3:5 them. ·Then he said, 'In truth I tell you, unless you change and become like little 3
children you will never enter the kingdom of Heaven. ·And so, the one who makes 4
himself as little as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of Heaven.

On leading others astray

5, 6 'Anyone who welcomes one little child like this[a] in my name welcomes me. •But anyone who is the downfall of one of these little ones who have faith in me would be better drowned in the depths of the sea with a great millstone round his neck. =10:40 ‖Mk 9:37,42 ‖Lk 9:48;17:1–2

7 Alas for the world that there should be such causes of falling! Causes of falling indeed there must be, but alas for anyone who provides them!

8 'If your hand or your foot should be your downfall,[b] cut it off and throw it away: it is better for you to enter into life[c] crippled or lame, than to have two hands or =5:29–30 ‖Mk 9:43–47

9 two feet and be thrown into eternal fire. •And if your eye should be your downfall, tear it out and throw it away: it is better for you to enter into life with one eye, than to have two eyes and be thrown into the hell of fire.[d]

10 'See that you never despise any of these little ones, for I tell you that their angels in heaven are continually in the presence of[e] my Father in heaven.[11][f]

The lost sheep

Ezk 34:1a ‖Lk 15:3–7

12 'Tell me. Suppose a man has a hundred sheep and one of them strays; will he not

13 leave the ninety-nine on the hillside and go in search of the stray? •In truth I tell you, if he finds it, it gives him more joy than do the ninety-nine that did not stray at Ezk 34:4,16

14 all. •Similarly, it is never the will of your Father in heaven that one of these little ones should be lost. Jn 6:39

Brotherly correction

‖Lk 17:3

15 'If your brother does something wrong,[g] go and have it out with him alone, Lv 19:17

16 between your two selves. If he listens to you, you have won back your brother. •If he does not listen, take one or two others along with you: *whatever the misdemean-* Dt 19:15 Jn 8:17

17 *our, the evidence of two or three witnesses is required to sustain the charge.* •But if he refuses to listen to these, report it to the community;[h] and if he refuses to listen to the community, treat him like a gentile or a tax collector.[i] Rm 16:17 1 Co 5:11

18 'In truth I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.[j] 16:19i Jn 20:23

Prayer in common

19 'In truth I tell you once again, if two of you on earth agree to ask anything at all, it Jn 15:7,16

he should be listened to as the new Moses, Dt 18:15; *see also* Ac 3:20–26, and the disciples fall on their faces in reverence of the Master; cf. Mt 28:17. When the vision ends he remains alone, v. 8, for no one else is needed as perfect and definitive teacher of the Law. However, his glory is only transitory, for he is also the 'servant', v. 5; Is 42:1; *see* Mt 3:16–17,17*o*, who must suffer and die, Mt 16:21; 17:22–23, just like his precursor, Mt 17:9–13, before definitively entering into glory by the resurrection.

b. Tabor, according to the traditional opinion. Some favour Great Hermon.

c. var. 'as snow', *see* 28:3.

d. An alternative translation, 'It is a good thing for us to be here.'

e. The disciples know that the Messiah has already come, 16:16, and have seen him in his glory, 17:1–7; they are therefore surprised that Elijah has not played the part of Precursor assigned to him by Malachi. Jesus replies that Elijah has in fact performed that function, though unrecognised, in the person of the Baptist. *See* Lk 1:17*l*.

f. var. 'no faith'.

g. add. v. 21 'As for this kind (of devil), it is cast out only by prayer and fasting', cf. Mk 9:29.

h. A yearly tax levied on individuals for the upkeep of the Temple.

i. i.e. 'their subjects', cf. 13:38. Jesus makes a pun on this semitic metaphorical use of 'son' in order to indicate himself, who is the Son, cf. 3:17; 17:5 and 10:32seq.; 11:25–27, together with his disciples who are his brothers, 12:50, and sons of the same Father, 5:45; *see* 4:3d.

j. This miraculous find of a precious object in a fish's mouth, which is not essential to the episode, has several parallels in Jewish and Gk folk-lore.

18 a. That is to say, one who through the virtue of simplicity becomes a child again, cf. v. 4.

b. lit. 'a snare', according to the primary meaning of the Gk word ('an occasion of falling', *see* 16:23k). • Vv. 8–9 are introduced here by means of this verbal link although they break the sequence of thought. They are already used in 5:29–30.

c. Eternal life.

d. Hebr. Ge-Hinnom, a valley outside Jerusalem once polluted by infant sacrifice, Lv 18:21h. Later the name was used for the place of damnation and punishment of the wicked—what we call 'hell'.

e. An OT expression meaning that the courtier is in the king's presence, cf. 2 S 14:24; 2 K 25:19; Tb 12:15. Here the accent is on the familiarity of the intercourse of the angels with God.

f. add. v. 11 'For the Son of man has come to save what was lost,' cf. Lk 19:10.

g. Many authorities add the specifying phrase 'to you', but it is probably to be omitted. The fault in question is grave and notorious; it has not necessarily been committed against the one whose duty it is to correct it. In v. 21 the case is different.

h. The *ekklesia*, i.e. the *qahal* or gathering of the brethren.

i. Outcasts with whom the pious Jew could not communicate, *see* 5:46u and 9:10e. Compare the excommunication of 1 Co 5:11h.

j. One of the powers conferred on Peter, 16:19, is here conferred also on the community.

will be granted to you by my Father in heaven. ·For where two or three meet in my 20
28:20 name, I am there among them.'

6:12 ‖Lk 17:4 **Forgiveness of injuries** [k]

Gn 4:24 Lk 23:34 Then Peter went up to him and said, 'Lord, how often must I forgive my brother if 21
he wrongs me? As often as seven times?' ·Jesus answered, 'Not seven, I tell you, 22
but seventy-seven times. [l]

Parable of the unforgiving debtor

25:19 'And so the kingdom of Heaven may be compared to a king who decided to settle 23
his accounts with his servants. ·When the reckoning began, they brought him a 24
man who owed ten thousand talents; [m] ·he had no means of paying, so his master 25
gave orders that he should be sold, together with his wife and children and all his
possessions, to meet the debt. ·At this, the servant threw himself down at his 26
master's feet, with the words, "Be patient with me and I will pay the whole sum."
And the servant's master felt so sorry for him that he let him go and cancelled the 27
debt. ·Now as this servant went out, he happened to meet a fellow-servant who 28
owed him one hundred denarii; [n] and he seized him by the throat and began to
throttle him, saying, "Pay what you owe me." ·His fellow-servant fell at his feet 29
and appealed to him, saying, "Be patient with me and I will pay you." ·But the 30
other would not agree; on the contrary, he had him thrown into prison till he
should pay the debt. ·His fellow-servants were deeply distressed when they saw 31
what had happened, and they went to their master and reported the whole affair to
him. ·Then the master sent for the man and said to him, "You wicked servant, I 32
cancelled all that debt of yours when you appealed to me. ·Were you not bound, 33
then, to have pity on your fellow-servant just as I had pity on you?" ·And in his 34
anger the master handed him over to the torturers till he should pay all his debt.
6:12 Lk 23:34 Jm 2:13e And that is how my heavenly Father will deal with you unless you each forgive 35
your brother from your heart.'

VI: THE APPROACHING ADVENT OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

A: NARRATIVE SECTION

‖Mk 10:1–12 **The question about divorce**

Lk 9:51 19 Jesus had now finished what he wanted to say, and he left Galilee and came 1
into the territory of Judaea on the far side of the Jordan. ·Large crowds 2
followed him and he healed them there.

16:1 Lk 11:54 Jn 8:6 Some Pharisees approached him, and to put him to the test they said, 'Is it 3
against the Law for a man to divorce his wife on any pretext whatever?' ·He 4
Gn 1:27 answered, 'Have you not read that the Creator from the beginning *made them male*
Gn 2:24 Ep 5:31 *and female* ·and that he said: *This is why a man leaves his father and mother and* 5
becomes attached to his wife, and the two become one flesh? ·They are no longer 6
1 Co 6:16; 7:10–11 two, therefore, but one flesh. So then, what God has united, human beings must
not divide.' [o]

Dt 24:1 They said to him, 'Then why did Moses command that a writ of dismissal should 7
be given in cases of divorce?' ·He said to them, 'It was because you were so hard- 8
hearted, that Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but it was not like this from
the beginning. ·Now I say this to you: anyone who divorces his wife—I am not 9
=5:32 ‖Lk 16:18 speaking of an illicit marriage [p]—and marries another, is guilty of adultery.'

Continence

The disciples said to him, 'If that is how things are between husband and wife, it is 10

advisable not to marry.' 11 But he replied, 'It is not everyone who can accept what I
have said, but only those to whom it is granted. 12 There are eunuchs born so from
their mother's womb, there are eunuchs made so by human agency and there are
eunuchs who have made themselves so for the sake of the kingdom of Heaven.[c] 1 Co 7:1,7–8, 32–34
Let anyone accept this who can.'

Jesus and the children

‖Mk 10:13–16
‖Lk 9:47; ‖18:15–17
1 Tm 4:14e
18:3–4
1 P 2:1–2

Then people brought little children to him, for him to lay his hands on them and
pray. The disciples scolded them, 14 but Jesus said, 'Let the little children alone, and
do not stop them from coming to me; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of
Heaven belongs.' 15 Then he laid his hands on them and went on his way.

The rich young man

‖Mk 10:17–22
‖Lk 18:18–23
•Lk 10:25–28

And now a man came to him and asked, 'Master,[d] what good deed must I do to
possess eternal life?' 17 Jesus said to him, 'Why do you ask me about what is good?
There is one alone who is good.[e] But if you wish to enter into life, keep the
commandments.' 18 He said, 'Which ones?' Jesus replied, 'These: *You shall not kill.*
You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not give false witness.
19 *Honour your father and your mother. You shall love your neighbour as yourself.*'
20 The young man said to him, 'I have kept all these.[f] What more do I need to do?'
21 Jesus said, 'If you wish to be perfect,[g] go and sell your possessions and give the
money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.'
22 But when the young man heard these words he went away sad, for he was a man
of great wealth.

Ex 20:12–16
Dt 5:16–20
15:4c
•Lv 19:18
5:3c,d
6:19–21; 13:44–46

The danger of riches

‖Mk 10:23–27
‖Lk 18:24–27

Then Jesus said to his disciples, 'In truth I tell you, it is hard for someone rich to
enter the kingdom of Heaven. 24 Yes, I tell you again, it is easier for a camel to pass
through the eye of a needle than for someone rich to enter the kingdom of Heaven.'
25 When the disciples heard this they were astonished. 'Who can be saved, then?'
they said. 26 Jesus gazed at them. 'By human resources', he told them, 'this is
impossible; for God everything is possible.'

Gn 18:14
Jr 32:17,27
Lk 1:37

k. Imitating God and Jesus, Lk 23:34k, and following the example of the Israelites, Lv 19:18–19; *see* Ex 21:25f, Christians must forgive each other, 5:39; 6:12 and par. (cf. 7:2); 2 Co 2:7; Ep 4:32; Col 3:13. But the 'neighbour' includes everyone, even those to whom one must return good for evil, 5:44–45; Rm 12:17–21; 1 Th 5:15; 1 P 3:9; *see* Ps 5:10c. Love covers over a great number of sins, Pr 10:12, quoted by Jm 5:20; 1 P 4:8.

l. Others render 'seventy-times-seven times', *see* 6:9d. Mt illustrates the lesson by a parable. Many of the parables proper to Mt are concerned with human relationships, illustrated by contrasting characters, *see* 20:1a; 21:28; 22:1a; 24:45w; 25:1a, 31e; Lk 15:11a.

m. Over $60,000,000: the amount is deliberately fantastic.

n. Less than $200.

19 a. Uncompromising assertion of the indissolubility of marriage.

b. In view of the absolute prohibition of the parallel passages, Mk 10:11seq.; Lk 16:18 and 1 Co 7:10seq., it is unlikely that all three have omitted an exceptive clause by Jesus, and more probable that one of the last editors of Mt should have added it in response to a rabbinic problem (a discussion between Hillel and Shammai of the reasons which make divorce legitimate) suggested also by the context, v. 3, which could have concerned the Judaeo-Christian circles for which he was writing. In this case we would have here an ecclesiastical decision of temporary and local application, like the Decree of Jerusalem concerning the district of Antioch, Ac 15:23–29. The meaning of *porneia* points in the same direction. Some take it to mean fornication within marriage, that is adultery, and consider it permissible to divorce in such cases; thus Orthodox and Protestant Churches. But for this sense one would expect another term, *moicheia*. By contrast *porneia* in this context seems to have the technical sense which *zenut* or 'prostitution' has in the rabbinic writings when used of a union incestuous because within the degrees forbidden by the Law, Lv 18. Such unions contracted legally between gentiles or tolerated by the Jews themselves between proselytes must have made difficulties in legalistic Judaeo-Christian circles like that of Mt, when people were converted; hence the instruction to break off such irregular unions which were no true marriages. • Another solution envisages that the freedom granted by the exceptive clause is not to divorce but to separate without remarriage. Such a situation was unknown in Judaism, but on occasion the demands of Jesus did lead to new situations, and this one is clearly presupposed by 1 Co 7:11.

c. Christ invites to perpetual continence as an expression of total consecration to the kingdom of God.

d. var. 'Good Master', *see* Mk and Lk.

e. i.e. God (explicit in Mk and Lk and Vulg. Mt). Another reading, borrowed from Mk and Lk, is 'Why do you call me good? None is good but God alone.'

f. add. 'from my earliest days', *see* Mk and Lk.

g. Jesus is not founding a new order of 'perfect disciples', superior to ordinary Christians. The 'perfection' envisaged is that of the new dispensation, which surpasses the old by completing it, *see* 5:17h. All are called to it equally, *see* 5:48. But, in order to establish the kingdom, Jesus needs fellow-workers who are especially available; it is from these that he asks radical renunciation of the cares of family life, 18:12, and possessions, 8:19–20.

‖Mk 10:28–31
‖Lk 18:28–30
4:20,22

The reward of renunciation

Then Peter answered and said, 'Look, we have left everything and followed you. 27
What are we to have, then?' •Jesus said to them, 'In truth I tell you, when 28
everything is made new again [h] and the Son of man is seated on his throne of glory,
Dn 7:22
‖Lk 22:30
1 Co 6:2
Rv 3:21;20:4
you yourselves will sit on twelve thrones to judge [i] the twelve tribes of Israel. •And 29
everyone who has left houses, brothers, sisters, father, mother, children [j] or land
for the sake of my name will receive a hundred times as much, and also inherit
eternal life.

5:3c;20:16
‖Lk 13:30
'Many who are first will be last, and the last, first.' 30

Parable of the labourers in the vineyard [a]

20 'Now the kingdom of Heaven is like a landowner going out at daybreak to 1
hire workers for his vineyard. •He made an agreement with the workers for 2
one denarius a day and sent them to his vineyard. •Going out at about the third 3
hour he saw others standing idle in the market place •and said to them, "You go to 4
my vineyard too and I will give you a fair wage." •So they went. At about the sixth 5
hour and again at about the ninth hour, he went out and did the same. •Then at 6
about the eleventh hour he went out and found more men standing around, and he
said to them, "Why have you been standing here idle all day?" •"Because no one 7
has hired us," they answered. He said to them, "You go into my vineyard too."
Lv 19:13
Dt 24:14–15
In the evening, the owner of the vineyard said to his bailiff, "Call the workers and 8
pay them their wages, starting with the last arrivals and ending with the first." •So 9
those who were hired at about the eleventh hour came forward and received one
denarius each. •When the first came, they expected to get more, but they too 10
received one denarius each. •They took it, but grumbled at the landowner saying, 11
"The men who came last have done only one hour, and you have treated them 12
the same as us, though we have done a heavy day's work in all the heat." •He 13
answered one of them and said, "My friend, I am not being unjust to you; did we
not agree on one denarius? •Take your earnings and go. I choose to pay the 14
Rm 9:19–21
lastcomer as much as I pay you. •Have I no right to do what I like with my own? 15
Why should you be envious because I am generous?" •Thus the last will be first, 16
19:30
‖Lk 13:30
and the first, last.' [b]

‖Mk 10:32–34
‖Lk 18:31–33

Third prophecy of the Passion

Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, and on the road he took the Twelve aside by 17
themselves and said to them, •'Look, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of 18
16:21;17:12,
22–23
man is about to be handed over to the chief priests and scribes. They will condemn
him to death •and will hand him over to the gentiles to be mocked and scourged 19
Ac 10:40n
and crucified; and on the third day he will be raised up again.'

‖10:35–40

The mother of Zebedee's sons makes her request

Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came with her sons to make a request of him, 20
and bowed low; •and he said to her, 'What is it you want?' She said to him, 21
19:28
'Promise that these two sons of mine may sit one at your right hand and the other
Mk 4:13b
at your left in your kingdom.' [c] •Jesus answered, 'You do not know what you are 22
26:39
Jn 18:11
Ac 12:2
asking. Can you drink the cup [d] that I am going to drink?' They replied, 'We can.'
He said to them, 'Very well; you shall drink my cup, [e] but as for seats at my right 23
hand and my left, these are not mine to grant; they belong to those to whom they
have been allotted by my Father.' [f]

‖Mk 10:41–45
‖Lk 22:24–27

Leadership with service

When the other ten heard this they were indignant with the two brothers. •But 24, 25
Jesus called them to him and said, 'You know that among the gentiles the rulers
lord it over them, and great men make their authority felt. •Among you this is not 26
23:11
to happen. No; anyone who wants to become great among you must be your

27, 28 servant, •and anyone who wants to be first among you must be your slave, •just as the Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom[g] for many.'[h]

Mk 9:35▶ Jn 13:4–15▶ 2 Co 4:5 •8:20h;26:28 Rm 5:6–21 Ph 2:7 1 Tm 2:6

The two blind men of Jericho

29, 30 As they left Jericho a large crowd followed him. •And now there were two blind men sitting at the side of the road. When they heard that it was Jesus who was
31 passing by, they shouted, 'Lord! Have pity on us, son of David.' •And the crowd scolded them and told them to keep quiet, but they only shouted the louder, 'Lord!
32 Have pity on us, son of David.' •Jesus stopped, called them over and said, 'What
33 do you want me to do for you?' •They said to him, 'Lord, let us have our sight
34 back.' •Jesus felt pity for them and touched their eyes, and at once their sight returned and they followed him.

‖Mk 10:46–52 ‖Lk 18:35–43

9:27m

8:3a

The Messiah enters Jerusalem

‖Mk 11:1–11 ‖Lk 19:28–38 ‖Jn 12:12–16

1 2 **21** When they were near Jerusalem and had come to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, •saying to them, 'Go to the village facing you, and you will at once find a tethered donkey and a colt with her. Untie
3 them and bring them to me. •If anyone says anything to you, you are to say, "The
4 Master needs them and will send them back at once." ' •This was to fulfil what was spoken by the prophet:

5 *Say to the daughter of Zion:*
Look, your king is approaching,
humble and riding on a donkey
and on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.[a]

Is 62:11 Zc 9:9h 11:29 Gn 49:11

6, 7 So the disciples went and did as Jesus had told them. •They brought the donkey and the colt, then they laid their cloaks on their backs and he took his seat on them.
8 Great crowds of people spread their cloaks on the road, while others were cutting
9 branches from the trees and spreading them in his path. •The crowds who went in front of him and those who followed were all shouting:

1 K 1:33 2 K 9:13

Hosanna[b] to the son of David!
Blessed is he who is coming in the name of the Lord!
Hosanna in the highest heavens!

9:27m Ps 118:25–26 Ac 2:33t

h. The reference is to the messianic 'renewal of all things' which is to be revealed when the world ends but which, on the spiritual plane, will already have begun when Christ rises from the dead as *Kyrios* in the Church.

i. In the OT sense of 'governors'. The 'twelve tribes' may be regarded as the new Israel, the Church.

j. add. 'wife'.

20 a. The owner of the vineyard goes on into the evening hiring workmen and yet gives all a full day's pay. He is generous to some without being unjust to the others. So God acts. Into his kingdom he brings late-comers—sinners and gentiles. Those who were called first (the Jewish people who, from Abraham's time, had been privileged with the covenant) have no right to be offended.

b. add. 'For many are called, but few are chosen', probably borrowed from 22:14.

c. The apostles expect Jesus' kingdom to be manifested very shortly and in all its glory, but this is reserved for Christ's second coming, *see* 4:17f; Ac 1:6h.

d. Biblical metaphor for suffering, *see* Is 51:17, here referring to the approaching Passion.

e. James son of Zebedee was put to death by Herod Agrippa about the year 44, Ac 12:2. His brother John may not indeed have suffered martyrdom but he had no less a share in his Master's sufferings.

f. Jesus' mission on earth is not to apportion human rewards but to suffer for human salvation, *see* Jn 3:17; 12:47.

g. By sin human beings incur, as a debt to the divine justice, the punishment of death demanded by the Law, *see* Rm 8:3–4; 1 Co 15:56; 2 Co 3:7,9; Ga 3:13, with notes. To ransom them from this slavery of sin and death, Rm 3:24j, Jesus is to pay the ransom and discharge the debt with the price of his blood, 1 Co 6:20; 7:23; Ga 3:13; 4:5, with notes. By thus dying in place of the guilty, he fulfils the prophesied function of the 'servant of Yahweh' (Is 53). The Hebr. word translated 'many', Is 53:11seq., 11h, contrasts the enormous crowd of the redeemed with the one Redeemer: it does not imply that the number of redeemed is limited, Rm 5:6–21, *see also* Mt 26:28i.

h. At this point some authorities insert the following passage, derived probably from some apocryphal gospel 'But as for you, from littleness you seek to grow great and from greatness you make yourselves small. When you are invited to a banquet do not take one of the places of honour, because someone more important than you may arrive and then the steward will have to say, "Move down lower," and you would be covered with confusion. Take the lowest place, and then if someone less important than you comes in, the steward will say to you, "Move up higher," and that will be to your advantage.' Cf. Lk 14:8–10.

21 a. In thus describing the messianic king's humble mount the prophet had in mind the unpretentious, unwarlike nature of his rule. Jesus, by performing this action, deliberately took to himself both the words of the prophecy and their deeper meaning.

b. A word of Hebr. origin; its first meaning is 'Please, save' but it became a mere shout of acclamation.

And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil as people 10
16:14c asked, 'Who is this?' ·and the crowds answered, 'This is the prophet Jesus from 11
Nazareth in Galilee.'

‖Mk 11:11, 15–17 ‖Lk 19:45–46 ‖Jn 2:14–16 ·Ne 13:7seq. ·Is 56:7 ·Jr 7:11 2 S 5:8(LXX)

The expulsion of the dealers from the Temple

Jesus then went into the Temple and drove out all those who were selling and 12
buying there; he upset the tables of the money-changers and the seats of the dove-
sellers. [c] ·He said to them, 'According to scripture, *my house will be called a house* 13
of prayer; but you are turning it into a *bandits' den*.' ·There were also blind and 14
lame people who came to him in the Temple, and he cured them. ·At the sight of 15
the wonderful things he did and of the children shouting, 'Hosanna to the son of
Jn 12:19 David' in the Temple, the chief priests and the scribes were indignant and said to
him, ·'Do you hear what they are saying?' Jesus answered, 'Yes. Have you never 16
read this:

Ps 8:2(LXX)

By the mouths of children, babes in arms,
you have made sure of praise?'

Lk 21:37 With that he left them and went out of the city to Bethany, where he spent 17
the night.

‖Mk 11:12–14, 20–24

The barren fig tree withers. Faith and prayer

Lk 13:6–9 As he was returning to the city in the early morning, he felt hungry. ·Seeing a fig 18, 19
tree by the road, he went up to it and found nothing on it but leaves. And he said to
Ho 9:16 it, 'May you never bear fruit again,' and instantly the fig tree withered. [d] ·The 20
8:3a disciples were amazed when they saw it and said, 'How is it that the fig tree
=8:10b;17.20 withered instantly?' ·Jesus answered, 'In truth I tell you, if you have faith and do 21
‖Lk 17:6 Jm 1:6 not doubt at all, not only will you do what I have done to the fig tree, but even if
you say to this mountain, "Be pulled up and thrown into the sea," it will be done.
7:7–11 And if you have faith, everything you ask for in prayer, you will receive.' 22

‖Mk 11:27–33 ‖Lk 20:1–8

The authority of Jesus is questioned

He had gone into the Temple and was teaching, when the chief priests and the 23
28:18 Jn 2:18 elders of the people came to him and said, 'What authority have you for acting like
this? [e] And who gave you this authority?' ·In reply Jesus said to them, 'And I will 24
ask you a question, just one; if you tell me the answer to it, then I will tell you my
authority for acting like this. ·John's baptism, what was its origin, heavenly or 25
Jn 3:27 21:32 human?' And they argued this way among themselves, 'If we say heavenly, he will
retort to us, "Then why did you refuse to believe him?"; ·but if we say human, we 26
14:5;16:14c have the people to fear, for they all hold that John was a prophet.' ·So their reply 27
to Jesus was, 'We do not know.' And he retorted to them, 'Nor will I tell you my
authority for acting like this.

Parable of the two sons

'What is your opinion? A man had two sons. He went and said to the first, "My 28
boy, go and work in the vineyard today." ·He answered, "I will not go," but 29
afterwards thought better of it and went. ·The man then went and said the same 30
thing to the second who answered, "Certainly, sir," but did not go. ·Which of the 31
two did the father's will?' They said, 'The first.' Jesus said to them, 'In truth I tell
‖Lk 7:29–30; 18:9–14 you, tax collectors and prostitutes are making their way into the kingdom of God
before you. ·For John came to you, showing the way of uprightness, [f] but you did 32
8:10b Lk 7:37–50; 19:1–10 not believe him, and yet the tax collectors and prostitutes did. Even after seeing
that, you refused to think better of it and believe in him.

‖Mk 12:1–12 ‖Lk 20:9–19

Parable of the wicked tenants [g]

Is 5:1a 'Listen to another parable. There was a man, a landowner, who planted a vineyard; 33
he fenced it round, dug a winepress in it and built a tower; then he leased it to

34 tenants and went abroad. •When vintage time drew near he sent his servants to the 22:3
35 tenants to collect his produce. •But the tenants seized his servants, thrashed one, 22:6
36 killed another and stoned a third. •Next he sent some more servants, this time a
37 larger number, and they dealt with them in the same way. •Finally he sent his son Jn 3:16–17 1 Jn 4:9
38 to them thinking, "They will respect my son." •But when the tenants saw the son,
they said to each other, "This is the heir. Come on, let us kill him and take over his Ga 3:16;4:7 Heb 1:2;13:12
39 inheritance." •So they seized him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed
40 him. •Now when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those
41 tenants?' •They answered, 'He will bring those wretches to a wretched end and
lease the vineyard to other tenants who will deliver the produce to him at the
42 proper time.' •Jesus said to them, 'Have you never read in the scriptures:

The stone which the builders rejected Ps 118:22–23
has become the cornerstone; Is 28:16
this is the Lord's doing Ac 2:33t
and we marvel at it ? Ep 2:20
1 P 2:4–8

43 'I tell you, then, that the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a Ac 13:5e Rm 11:11
people who will produce its fruit.'[44] *h*
45 When they heard his parables, the chief priests and the scribes realised he was
46 speaking about them, •but though they would have liked to arrest him they were
afraid of the crowds, who looked on him as a prophet. 16:14c

Parable of the wedding feast *a* 8:11c Pr 9:1–6 ‖Lk 14:16–24

1, 2 22 Jesus began to speak to them in parables once again, •'The kingdom of Heaven may be compared to a king who gave a feast for his son's wedding. Ezk 16:1a
3 He sent his servants to call those who had been invited, but they would not come. 21:34
4 Next he sent some more servants with the words, "Tell those who have been
invited: Look, my banquet is all prepared, my oxen and fattened cattle have
5 been slaughtered, everything is ready. Come to the wedding." •But they were not
6 interested: one went off to his farm, another to his business, •and the rest seized
7 his servants, maltreated them and killed them. •The king was furious. He des- 21:35
8 patched his troops, destroyed those murderers and burnt their town. •Then he
said to his servants, "The wedding is ready; but as those who were invited proved Rv 19:7
9 to be unworthy, •go to the main crossroads and invite everyone you can find to
10 come to the wedding." •So these servants went out onto the roads and collected
together everyone they could find, bad and good alike; and the wedding hall was 13:38,47seq.
11 filled with guests. •When the king came in to look at the guests he noticed one
12 man who was not wearing a wedding garment, •and said to him, "How did you Rv 19:8
get in here, my friend, without a wedding garment?" And the man was silent.
13 Then the king said to the attendants, "Bind him hand and foot and throw him

c. They provided pilgrims with the coinage and sacrificial victims necessary for oblations: a practice which, however legitimate, lent itself to abuse. Or the expulsion of the traders may simply be seen as part of the messianic gesture of cleansing the Temple and insisting on the primitive purity of its worship.

d. 'It was not the season for figs,' Mk says. But Jesus meant to perform a symbolic action, *see* Jr 18:1a, in which the fig tree represents Israel punished for its fruitlessness.

e. The unusual events that Jesus has just allowed to take place in the very precincts of the Temple: the messianic ovation, expulsion of the merchants, miraculous cures.

f. An OT expression: John practised and preached that conformity to the will of God makes a person 'upright'.

g. More exactly an 'allegory' because every detail of the story has its own significance: the proprietor is God; the vineyard the chosen people, Israel, *see* Is 5:1a; the servants the prophets; the son Jesus, put to death outside the walls of Jerusalem; the murderous farmers the faithless Jews; the nation to which the vineyard will be entrusted, the gentiles. Not all these allegorical features are present in Mk's version (e.g. the son's body is thrown out only after his death), but Mt does need to allegorise.

h. add. v. 44 'Anyone who falls on this stone will be dashed to pieces; anyone it falls on will be crushed,' probably a gloss taken from Lk 20:18.

22 a. A parable with allegorical features; in this, as in the lesson it teaches, it resembles the one that precedes it. The king is God; the wedding feast is the happiness of the messianic age and the king's son the Messiah; those sent with invitations are the prophets and the apostles; the invited who ignore them or do them violence are the Jews; those called in from the street are the sinners and the gentiles; the burning of the city is the destruction of Jerusalem. At v. 11 the scene changes to that of the Last Judgement. Matthew, it seems, has combined two parables; one akin to Lk 14:16–24 and another whose concluding verses are found in vv. 11f; these verses explain that the man who accepted the invitation should have been dressed for the occasion—in other words, good works must go with faith, cf. 3:8; 5:20; 7:21seq.; 13:47seq.; 21:28seq.

8:12d into the darkness outside, where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth."
For many are invited but not all are chosen.' [b] 14

‖Mk 12:13–17
‖Lk 20:20–26
On tribute to Caesar

Lk 11:54 Then the Pharisees went away to work out between them how to trap him in what 15
he said. ·And they sent their disciples to him, together with some Herodians, [c] to 16
say, 'Master, we know that you are an honest man and teach the way of God in all
honesty, and that you are not afraid of anyone, because human rank means nothing
to you. ·Give us your opinion, then. Is it permissible to pay taxes to Caesar or not?' 17
·But Jesus was aware of their malice and replied, 'You hypocrites! Why are you 18
putting me to the test? ·Show me the money you pay the tax with.' They handed 19
him a denarius, ·and he said, 'Whose portrait is this? Whose title?' ·They replied, 20, 21
Rm 13:7 'Caesar's.' Then he said to them, 'Very well, pay Caesar what belongs to Caesar—
and God what belongs to God.' [d] ·When they heard this they were amazed; they 22
left him alone and went away.

‖Mk 12:18–27
‖Lk 20:27–40
The resurrection of the dead

That day some Sadducees—who deny that there is a resurrection [e]—approached 23
Gn 38:8
Dt 25:5a him and they put this question to him, ·'Master, Moses said that if a man dies 24
childless, his brother is to marry the widow, his sister-in-law, to raise children for
his brother. ·Now we had a case involving seven brothers; the first married and 25
then died without children, leaving his wife to his brother; ·the same thing 26
happened with the second and third and so on to the seventh, ·and then last of all 27
the woman herself died. ·Now at the resurrection, whose wife among the seven 28
will she be, since she had been married to them all?' ·Jesus answered them, 'You 29
are wrong, because you understand neither the scriptures nor the power of God.
Ws 5:5
Col 1:12c For at the resurrection men and women do not marry; no, they are like the angels 30
in heaven. ·And as for the resurrection of the dead, have you never read what 31
Ex 3:6 God himself said to you: ·*I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God* 32
of Jacob? He is God, not of the dead, but of the living.' [f] ·And his teaching made a 33
deep impression on the people who heard it.

‖Mk 12:28–31
‖Lk 10:25–28
The greatest commandment of all

Jn 13:34–35,34a But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees they got together 34
and, to put him to the test, one of them [g] put a further question, ·'Master, which 35, 36
Dt 6:5 is the greatest commandment of the Law?' ·Jesus said to him, '*You must love the* 37
Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.
Lv 19:18 This is the greatest and the first commandment. ·The second resembles it: *You* 38, 39
Rm 13:8–10
Ga 5:14 *must love your neighbour as yourself.* [h] ·On these two commandments hang the 40
whole Law, and the Prophets too.'

‖Mk 12:35–37
‖Lk 20:41–44
Christ not only son but also Lord of David

While the Pharisees were gathered round, Jesus put to them this question, ·'What 41, 42
9:27m
2 S 7:1a is your opinion about the Christ? Whose son is he?' They told him, 'David's.' ·He 43
said to them, 'Then how is it that David, moved by the Spirit, calls him Lord,
where he says:

Ps 110:1 *The Lord declared to my Lord,* 44
26:64par.
Ac 2:33t,34seq.
Heb 1:13 *take your seat at my right hand,*
till I have made your enemies
your footstool?

'If David calls him Lord, how then can he be his son?' ·No one could think of 45, 46
‖Mk 12:34
‖Lk 20:40 anything to say in reply, [i] and from that day no one dared to ask him any
further questions.

The scribes and Pharisees: their hypocrisy and vanity

1,2 **23** Then addressing the crowds and his disciples Jesus said, ·'The scribes and
3 the Pharisees occupy the chair of Moses. ·You must therefore do and
observe what they tell you;[a] but do not be guided by what they do, since they do Dt 17:10
4 not practise what they preach. ·They tie up heavy burdens and lay them on people's 11:28
5 shoulders, but will they lift a finger to move them? Not they! ·Everything they do ‖Lk 11:46 Rm 2:17-24
is done to attract attention, like wearing broader headbands and longer tassels,[b] 6:1-18 Am 4:5
6 like wanting to take the place of honour at banquets and the front seats in the ‖Mk 12:38-39
7 synagogues, ·being greeted respectfully in the market squares and having people ‖Lk 20:46; 11:43;14:7
call them Rabbi.[c]

8 'You, however,[d] must not allow yourselves to be called Rabbi, since you have Jn 13:13
9 only one Master, and you are all brothers. ·You must call no one on earth your
10 father,[e] since you have only one Father, and he is in heaven. ·Nor must you allow
11 yourselves to be called teachers,[f] for you have only one Teacher, the Christ. ·The
12 greatest among you must be your servant. ·Anyone who raises himself up will be =20:26 Lk 1:52-3;‖14: 11;18:14
humbled, and anyone who humbles himself will be raised up.

The sevenfold indictment of the scribes and Pharisees

6:9d Is 5:8-25 Jr 8:8 Ml 2:8

13 'Alas for you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut up the kingdom of ‖Lk 11:39-48,52
Heaven in people's faces, neither going in yourselves nor allowing others to go in[g]
who want to.[14][h]

15 'Alas for you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over sea and
land to make a single proselyte,[i] and anyone who becomes one you make twice as
fit for hell as you are. 18:9d

16 'Alas for you, blind guides! You say,[j] "If anyone swears by the Temple, it has no 15:14 Jn 9:38-41
17 force; but anyone who swears by the gold of the Temple is bound." ·Fools and Rm 2:19
blind! For which is of greater value, the gold or the Temple that makes the gold
18 sacred? ·Again, "If anyone swears by the altar it has no force; but anyone who

b. This sentence appears to refer to the first part of the parable rather than to the second. It is a question not of the elect as a whole but of the Jews, the first to be invited. The parable (of vv. 1–10) neither asserts nor denies that some (a 'few') of the Jewish people have accepted the invitation and are 'chosen', *see* 24:22k.

c. Supporters of the Herodian dynasty, Mk 3:6a, the most suitable people to report to the Roman authorities what they hoped to induce Jesus to say against Caesar.

d. In practice they acknowledge the authority and accept the benefits of Roman government of which this coin is a symbol. Hence it is permissible, indeed it is a duty, for them to pay to that government the tribute of their obedience and of their property so long as this does not encroach on what they owe to the overriding authority of God.

e. This sect, 3:7g, adhered rigidly to the written tradition, especially as contained in the Pentateuch; its members were confident that the doctrine of the resurrection of the body, *see* 2 M 7:9c, was not to be found in that tradition. On this point the Pharisees were opposed to the Sadducees. *See* Ac 4:1a; 23:8c.

f. When God adopts a person (or a people) into that relationship which is called becoming 'his' God, that relationship cannot be so incomplete or so transient that it will allow the person to fall away into nothingness. The necessarily eternal character of God's love was not understood in the earlier ages of the long revelation unfolded in the Bible and the belief continued in 'Sheol', an underworld of shades from which there was no resurrection, Is 38:10–20; Ps 6:5; 88:10–12. To this belief the conservative traditionalism of the Sadducees, Ac 23:8c, claimed to remain faithful. But the progress of Revelation gradually brought a deeper understanding, Ps 16:10–11; 49:15; 73:24, proclaiming a renewal of life, Ws 3:1–9, for everyone; salvation extends even to the body, 2 M 7:9seq.; 12:43–46; 14:46; Dn 12:2–3. It is this last stage of revelation which Jesus approves by showing that in God's plan it was already contained within the old formula of Ex 3:6.

g. add. 'a lawyer', probably borrowed from Lk 10:25.

h. These two commandments of love of God and the neighbour are also associated in the *Didache* 1:2, which could be drawing on a Jewish work on the Two Ways, *see* 7:13d.

i. The appropriate answer would have been that, though tracing his human origin back to David, *see* 1:1–17, there would be something divine about the Messiah to set him above David.

23 a. In so far, no doubt, as they hand on the traditional doctrine that goes back to Moses. Jesus in this does not speak of their own interpretations; he has shown elsewhere how these are to be assessed, *see* 15:1–20; 16:6; 19:3–9.

b. The phylactery is a small receptacle containing the most important words of the Law; the Jews attach it to arm or forehead, carrying out the injunction of Ex 13:9,16; Dt 6:8; 11:18 literally. The four tassels were sewn one at each corner of the cloak, *see* Nb 15:38c.

c. Aramaic word meaning 'my master', the usual title of the Jewish teacher. Jesus himself was thus addressed by his disciples, 26:25,49.

d. Vv. 8–12, addressed to the disciples only, probably did not belong originally to this discourse.

e. *Abba* in Aramaic; another title of honour.

f. Perhaps an allusion to the religious leader of the community of Qumran, the 'Teacher of Righteousness'.

g. The exacting casuistry of the rabbis made observance of the Law impossible.

h. add. v. 14 'Alas for you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You who devour the property of widows, though you make a show of lengthy prayers. The more severe will be the sentence you receive'—this is an interpolation taken from Mk 12:40; Lk 20:47 and making eight maledictions instead of the deliberate total of seven, *see* 6:9d.

i. A gentile convert to Judaism. Jewish propaganda was extremely active in the Graeco-Roman world.

j. To release people from injudicious oaths the rabbis used to invoke tortuous reasoning.

swears by the offering on the altar, is bound." ·You blind men! For which is of 19
Ex 29:37 greater worth, the offering or the altar that makes the offering sacred?
Therefore, someone who swears by the altar is swearing by that and by everything 20
5:33-37 on it. ·And someone who swears by the Temple is swearing by that and by the One 21
who dwells in it. ·And someone who swears by heaven is swearing by the throne of 22
God and by the One who is seated there.

Dt 14:22d Am 5:21n 'Alas for you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You pay your tithe of mint 23
and dill and cummin[k] and have neglected the weightier matters of the Law—
justice, mercy, good faith! These you should have practised, those not neglected.
You blind guides, straining out gnats and swallowing camels! 24

Mk 7:4 Lk 11:39-40 'Alas for you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of 25
cup and dish and leave the inside full[l] of extortion and intemperance. ·Blind 26
Pharisee! Clean the inside of cup and dish first so that it and the outside are
both clean.

Ac 23:3 'Alas for you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed 27
tombs that look handsome on the outside, but inside are full of the bones of the
dead and every kind of corruption. ·In just the same way, from the outside you 28
Lk 16:15 look upright, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

'Alas for you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You build the sepulchres of 29
the prophets and decorate the tombs of the upright, ·saying, "We would never 30
13:17 have joined in shedding the blood of the prophets, had we lived in our ancestors'
day." ·So! Your own evidence tells against you! You are the children of those who 31
Ac 7:52 murdered the prophets! ·Very well then, finish off the work that your ances- 32
tors began.[m]

Their crimes and approaching punishment

3:7;12:34 'You serpents, brood of vipers, how can you escape being condemned to hell? 33
5:12 ‖Lk 11:49-51 1 Th 2:14-16 ·Ac 22:19 ·27:25 Rv 16:6;18:24 This is why—look—I am sending you prophets and wise men and scribes;[n] some 34
you will slaughter and crucify, some you will scourge in your synagogues and hunt
from town to town; ·and so you will draw down on yourselves the blood of every 35
upright person that has been shed on earth, from the blood of Abel the holy to the
blood of Zechariah son of Barachiah[o] whom you murdered between the sanctuary
and the altar. ·In truth I tell you, it will all recoil on this generation. 36

‖Lk 13:34-35 ### Jerusalem admonished

21:35;22:6 'Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you that kill the prophets[p] and stone those who are sent to 37
you! How often[q] have I longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers
Jr 7:14;12:7; 26:4-6 Ezk 11:23 her chicks under her wings, and you refused! ·Look! Your house will be deserted,[r] 38
for, I promise, you shall not see me any more until you are saying: 39

Ps 118:26 Ac 2:33t *Blessed is he who is coming in the name of the Lord!*'[s]

‖Mk 13 ‖Lk 21:5-33

B: THE END AND THE SECOND COMING[a]

‖Mk 13:1-4 ‖Lk 21:5-7 ### Introduction

24 Jesus left the Temple, and as he was going away his disciples came up to 1
draw his attention to the Temple buildings. ·He said to them in reply, 'You 2
see all these? In truth I tell you, not a single stone here will be left on another:
everything will be pulled down.' ·And while he was sitting on the Mount of Olives 3
the disciples came and asked him when they were by themselves, 'Tell us, when is
13:39 this going to happen, and what sign will there be of your coming[b] and of the end of
the world?'

‖Mk 13:5-13 ‖Lk 21:8-19 ### The beginning of sorrows

And Jesus answered them, 'Take care that no one deceives you, ·because many 4, 5

will come using my name and saying, "I am the Christ,"[c] and they will deceive 1 Jn 2:18
6 many. •You will hear of wars and rumours of wars; see that you are not alarmed,
7 for this is something that must happen, but the end will not be yet. •For nation will Dn 2:28
fight against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines[d] and 2 Ch 15:6–7
8 earthquakes in various places.[e] •All this is only the beginning of the birthpangs.[f] Jn 16:21 Rm 8:22 1 Th 5:3 Rv 12:2
9 'Then you will be handed over to be tortured and put to death; and you will be =10:22
10 hated by all nations on account of my name. •And then many will fall away; people
11 will betray one another and hate one another. •Many false prophets will arise; they 10:21,35–36
12 will deceive many, •and with the increase of lawlessness, love in most people will 2 Th 2:3 Lk 18:8
13 grow cold; •but anyone who stands firm to the end will be saved. •=10:22
14 'This good news of the kingdom will be proclaimed to the whole world[g] as 26:13 Rm 10:18
evidence to the nations. And then the end[h] will come.

The great tribulation of Jerusalem ‖Mk 13:14–23 ‖Lk 21:20–24

15 'So when you see *the appalling abomination*, of which the prophet Daniel spoke, 1 M 1:54
16 set up in the holy place[i] (let the reader understand), •then those in Judaea must Dn 9:27;11:31; 12:11
17 escape to the mountains; •if anyone is on the housetop, he must not come down to 2 Th 2:3–4
18 collect his belongings from the house; •if anyone is in the fields, he must not turn •Lk 17:31
19 back to fetch his cloak. •Alas for those with child, or with babies at the breast,
20 when those days come! •Pray that you will not have to make your escape in winter
21 or on a Sabbath. •For then there will be *great distress, unparalleled since the world* Dn 12:1 Rv 7:14
22 began, and such as will never be again.[j] •And if that time had not been shortened, no human being would have survived; but shortened that time shall be, for the sake of those who are chosen.[k]
23 'If anyone says to you then, "Look, here is the Christ," or "Over here," do not

k. The Mosaic Law levied tithes on agricultural produce; the rabbis piously applied the precept to the most insignificant of garden herbs.

l. var. 'inside you are full'. • 'intemperance': var. 'iniquity', 'impurity', 'cupidity'.

m. Allusion to Jesus' own death soon to take place, cf. 21:38seq.

n. Terms of Jewish origin but here applied to Christian missionaries, cf. 10:41; 13:52.

o. The one referred to is probably the Zechariah of 2 Ch 24:20–22. His murder is the last one to be described in the Bible (2 Ch being the last book of the Jewish Canon) while Abel's, Gn 4:8, is the first. It is possible that 'son of Berechiah' is the result of confusion with another Zechariah, *see* Is 8:2 (LXX); Zc 1:1. Alternatively, the words may be a copyist's gloss.

p. *See* 1 K 19:10,14; 2 Ch 24:20–22; Jr 26:20–23; Ac 7:52; 1 Th 2:15; Heb 11:37; and Jewish apocryphal legends.

q. Allusion to repeated visits to Jerusalem on which the Synoptics are silent but which are reported by Jn.

r. In a little while Jesus will be with them no longer, he is to be rejected by his own people; so also will God abandon Jerusalem and its Temple.

s. In Lk 13:35 Jesus seems to mean that the Jews will not see him again until the entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday (Lk 19:28seq.). In Mt's context the words probably refer to a later coming than this, perhaps the triumphant coming at the end of time: the reconciled Jews will acclaim this return, cf. Rm 11:25seq.

24 **a.** According to the most probable interpretation, this eschatological discourse of Mt combines the announcement of the destruction of Jerusalem with that of the end of the world. Therefore the discourse of Mk, which is concerned only with the former event, is supplemented in three ways: **1** The addition of vv. 26–28,37–41, taken from a discourse on the Day of the Son of man, which Lk also uses, Lk 17:22–37. **2** Alterations which introduce the themes of the *parousia*, vv. 3,27,37,39 (never elsewhere in the gospels, *see* 24:3b; 1 Co 15:23n), of the 'End of the World', v. 3; cf. 13:39,40,49, and of the 'sign of the Son of man' which affects all nations of the world, v. 30. **3** The addition at the end of the discourse of several parables on watchfulness, 24:42–25:30, which prepare for the return of Jesus and the great final judgement, 25:31–46. Their fusion in this way is a theological expression of truth: though separated in time, these two are inseparable in the sense that the first is the inevitable forerunner and prefiguration of the second. The destruction of Jerusalem marks the end of the old covenant—Christ has thus manifestly returned to inaugurate his kingly rule. Such a decisive intervention in the history of salvation will not occur again until the end of time when God will judge the whole human race, now chosen in Christ, with the same judgement he pronounced (in AD 70) upon the first chosen people.

b. The Greek word is *parousia*; it means 'presence' and in the Graeco-Roman world was used for official visits by royalty. The Christian adopted it as a technical term for the glorious coming of Christ, *see* 1 Co 15:23n. It is not inevitably linked up with Christ's *final* coming; it can also refer to the power he will display when he comes to establish his messianic kingdom (the Church); *see* 16:27–28. In this passage Matthew clearly implies that he has combined the two themes.

c. Before the year 70 several impostors posed as messiahs.

d. add. 'plagues', cf. Lk 21:11.

e. Cf. 2 Ch 15:6; Is 8:21seq.; 13:13; 19:2; Jr 21:9; 34:17; Ezk 5:12; Am 4:6–11.

f. Cf. Is 13:8; 26:17; 66:7; Jr 6:24; 13:21; Ho 13:13; Mi 4:9–10. Jewish literature uses this metaphor to describe the coming of the messianic kingdom.

g. The 'inhabited world' (*oikoumene*), i.e. the Graeco-Roman world. All the Jews of the empire are destined to hear the good news before punishment comes to Israel, *see* Rm 10:18. The earliest 'witness' will be directed against those Jews who refuse to believe, cf. 10:18. Before AD 70 the gospel had already reached the main parts of the Roman empire, cf. Rm 1:5,8; Col 1:6,23; 1 Th 1:8.

h. The fall of Jerusalem.

i. Daniel probably refers to the statue of Zeus set up in Jerusalem by Antiochus Epiphanes (in 167 BC; *see* 1 M 1:54r). The prophecy is here applied to the siege and capture of the holy city by the gentile armies from Rome, cf. Lk 21:20.

j. Cf. Ex 10:14; 11:6; 1 M 9:27; Jr 30:7; Ba 2:2; Dn 12:1; Jl 2:2; Rv 16:18.

k. Those among the Jews who are called to enter the kingdom of God: the 'remnant', *see* Is 4:3c; Rm 11:5–7.

Dt 13:2–3
2 Th 2:3–4,9
Rv 13
believe it; •for false Christs and false prophets will arise and provide great signs 24
and portents, enough to deceive even the elect, if that were possible. •Look! I have 25
given you warning.

||Lk 17:23–24 **The coming of the Son of man**

'If, then, they say to you, "Look, he is in the desert," do not go there; "Look, he is 26
in some hiding place," do not believe it; •because the coming of the Son of man 27
Jn 7:27 will be like lightning striking in the east and flashing far into the west.[l] •Wherever 28
Jb 39:30
Is 34:15
||Lk 17:37 the corpse is, that is where the vultures will gather.[m]

Is 13:9–10;34:4
Am 8:9h
||Mk 13:24–27
||Lk 21:25–27 **The universal significance of this coming**

'Immediately after the distress of those days[n] the sun will be darkened, the moon 29
will not give its light, the stars will fall from the sky and the powers of the heavens
will be shaken.[o] •And then the sign of the Son of man will appear in heaven;[p] then, 30
Zc 12:10–12
Rv 1:7
8:20h;26:64
Dn 7:13–14 too, all the peoples of the earth will beat their breasts; and they will see the *Son of*
man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.[q] •'And he will 31
Dt 30:3seq.
1 Co 15:52
1 Th 4:16 send his angels with a loud trumpet[r] to gather his elect from the four winds, from
one end of heaven to the other.[s]

||Mk 13:28–32
||Lk 21:29–33 **The time of this coming**

'Take the fig tree as a parable: as soon as its twigs grow supple and its leaves come 32
out, you know that summer is near. •So with you when you see all these things: 33
10:23;16:28 know that he[t] is near, right at the gates. •In truth I tell you, before this generation 34
Ps 119:89
Is 51:6 has passed away, all these things will have taken place.[u] •Sky and earth will pass 35
Ac 1:7 away, but my words will never pass away. •But as for that day and hour, nobody 36
knows it, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son,[v] no one but the Father alone.

||Lk 17:26–27,34–35 **Be on the alert**

'As it was in Noah's day, so will it be when the Son of man comes. •For in those 37, 38
days before the Flood people were eating, drinking, taking wives, taking husbands,
Gn 7:11–23 right up to the day Noah went into the ark, •and they suspected nothing till the 39
1 Th 5:3 Flood came and swept them all away. This is what it will be like when the Son of
man comes. •Then of two men in the fields, one is taken, one left; •of two women 40, 41
grinding at the mill, one is taken, one left.

25:13
•1 Th 5:1a
||Lk 12:39–40
1 Th 5:2–6 'So stay awake, because you do not know the day when your master is coming. 42
You may be quite sure of this, that if the householder had known at what time of 43
the night the burglar would come, he would have stayed awake and would not have
allowed anyone to break through the wall of his house. •Therefore, you too must 44
stand ready because the Son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

||Lk 12:42–46 **Parable of the conscientious steward**[w]

Ps 105:21 'Who, then, is the wise and trustworthy servant whom the master placed over his 45
Ps 104:27–28 household to give them their food at the proper time? •Blessed that servant if his 46
master's arrival finds him doing exactly that. •In truth I tell you, he will put him in 47
19:28;25:21 charge of everything he owns. •But if the servant is dishonest and says to himself, 48
"My master is taking his time," •and sets about beating his fellow-servants and 49
eating and drinking with drunkards, •his master will come on a day he does not 50
expect and at an hour he does not know. •The master will cut him off[x] and send 51
8:12e him to the same fate as the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and grinding of
teeth.'

Lk 12:35–38 **Parable of the ten wedding attendants**[a]

25 'Then the kingdom of Heaven will be like this: Ten wedding attendants took 1
their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom.[b] •Five of them were foolish 2
and five were sensible: •the foolish ones, though they took their lamps, took no oil 3
with them, •whereas the sensible ones took flasks of oil as well as their lamps. 4

5. 6 The bridegroom was late, and they all grew drowsy and fell asleep. ·But at
7 midnight there was a cry, "Look! The bridegroom! Go out and meet him." ·Then
8 all those wedding attendants woke up and trimmed their lamps, ·and the foolish
ones said to the sensible ones, "Give us some of your oil: our lamps are going out."
9 But they replied, "There may not be enough for us and for you; you had better go
10 to those who sell it and buy some for yourselves." ·They had gone off to buy it
when the bridegroom arrived. Those who were ready went in with him to the
11 wedding hall and the door was closed. ·The other attendants arrived later. "Lord, Lk 13:25
12 Lord," they said, "open the door for us." ·But he replied, "In truth I tell you, I
13 do not know you." ·So stay awake, because you do not know either the day or 24:42 Mk 13:33
the hour.

Parable of the talents [c] Lk 19:12–27

14 'It is like a man about to go abroad who summoned his servants and entrusted his Mk 13:34
15 property to them. ·To one he gave five talents, to another two, to a third one, each
16 in proportion to his ability. Then he set out on his journey. ·The man who had
received the five talents promptly went and traded with them and made five more.
17. 18 The man who had received two made two more in the same way. ·But the man who
had received one went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.
19 Now a long time afterwards, the master of those servants came back and went
20 through his accounts with them. ·The man who had received the five talents came
forward bringing five more. "Sir," he said, "you entrusted me with five talents;
21 here are five more that I have made." ·His master said to him, "Well done, good
and trustworthy servant; you have shown you are trustworthy in small things; I will
22 trust you with greater; come and join in your master's happiness." [d] ·Next the man
with the two talents came forward. "Sir," he said, "you entrusted me with two
23 talents; here are two more that I have made." ·His master said to him, "Well done,
good and trustworthy servant; you have shown you are trustworthy in small things;
24 I will trust you with greater; come and join in your master's happiness." ·Last came 19:28:24:47 Lk 16:10
forward the man who had the single talent. "Sir," said he, "I had heard you were

l. The coming of the Messiah will be as unmistakable as lightning. Lightning is a characteristic phenomenon that goes with divine judgement, *see* Ps 97:4; Is 29:6; 30:30; Zc 9:14.

m. Perhaps a proverb expressing the same idea of unmistakable manifestation: a corpse, even hidden in the desert, is immediately indicated by the circling vultures.

n. Join with v. 25; vv. 26–28 are a digression.

o. Cf. Jr 4:23–26; Ezk 32:7seq.; Jl 2:10; 3:4; 4:15; Am 8:9; Mi 1:3–4 and especially Is 13:9–10; 34:4; the text repeats the phrases of the last two references. The 'powers of heaven' are the stars and all the other celestial forces.

p. It would be a mistake to look for too exact an interpretation of this sign. The whole passage expresses in highly allusive apocalyptic imagery the certainty that the kingdom will reach its goal in spite of all persecutions and adversity.

q. In these words Daniel foretold the establishment of the messianic kingdom by a Son of man coming on the clouds. The cloud is the usual accompaniment of both OT and NT theophanies: Ex 13:22h; 19:16g; 34:5; Lv 16:2; 1 K 8:10–11; 2 M 2:8; Ps 18:11; 97:2; 104:3; Is 19:1; Jr 4:13; Ezk 1:4; 10:3seq. For NT *see* 17:5; Ac 1:9.11; 1 Th 4:17; Rv 1:7; 14:14.

r. add. 'and a voice'.

s. lit. 'from the four winds, from the ends of the heavens to their ends', a composite formula from Dt 30:4 and Zc 2:10, texts which treat of the reunion of scattered Israel, cf. Ne 1:9 and Ezk 37:9. *See also* Is 27:13. Here, therefore, as in vv. 22 and 24, the 'chosen' are those Jews that Yahweh will rescue from the ruin of their nation in order to admit them, along with the gentiles, into his kingdom, v. 30.

t. The Son of man coming to establish his kingdom.

u. This statement refers to the destruction of Jerusalem and not to the end of the world. In the course of his preaching Jesus probably made the distinction between these two things clearer, *see* 16:28n and 24:1a.

v. om. (many MSS) 'nor the Son'; no doubt for the sake of theological scruples. As man Jesus had no clear knowledge of the details of future history. The evangelists often read back into the lifetime of Jesus the knowledge and understanding of his significance which the disciples later received by the full light of the Holy Spirit, *see* Jn 1:48dd; Mt 8:20h; 16:16d, and this shows itself in a tendency to make more explicit the details of his predictions of the future, cf. the three formal and detailed prophecies of the Passion and Resurrection, Mk 8:31; 9:31–32; 10:32–34 par., which show a state of knowledge which makes both Jesus' own agony at his approaching Passion, Mk 14:33 par., and the disciples' fear and desertion, Mk 14:50 par.; Mt 26:31*l*, difficult to understand. Nevertheless the full humanity of Jesus, Ph 2:7g, included the human experiences of learning, Lk 2:52, and of ignorance, compare 26:39*o*.

w. After the discourse foretelling the destruction of Jerusalem and the visible coming of the messianic reign, Matthew adds three parables dealing with the ultimate fate of individuals. The first presents one of Christ's servants who, like the apostles, is given a task to perform; he is judged on the way he performs it.

x. A word of uncertain meaning; probably to be taken metaphorically: 'he will cut him off', a sort of 'excommunication', cf. 18:17.

25 a. The wedding attendants (lit. 'virgins') represent Christians waiting for Christ. Even if he is slow to come, they must be watchful, i.e. keep their lamps ready.

b. add. 'and the bride'.

c. Christians are servants expected by Jesus, their master, to make full use of any gifts he has given them so that his kingdom may grow on earth; they must give an account of this administration. The parable of the pounds, Lk 19:12–27, has a similar form but a rather different moral.

d. The happiness of the heavenly banquet, 8:11c. • 'I will trust you with greater things' implies an active sharing with Christ in his reign.

a hard man, reaping where you had not sown and gathering where you had not scattered; •so I was afraid, and I went off and hid your talent in the ground. Here it 25
is; it was yours, you have it back." •But his master answered him, "You wicked 26
and lazy servant! So you knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where
I have not scattered? •Well then, you should have deposited my money with the 27
bankers, and on my return I would have got my money back with interest. •So now, 28
take the talent from him and give it to the man who has the ten talents. •For to 29
=13:12d Lk 8:18 everyone who has will be given more, and he will have more than enough; but
anyone who has not, will be deprived even of what he has. •As for this good-for- 30
8:12e nothing servant, throw him into the darkness outside, where there will be weeping
and grinding of teeth."

The Last Judgement

8:20h 'When the Son of man comes in his glory,[e] escorted by all the angels, then he will 31
take his seat on his throne of glory. •All nations[f] will be assembled before him and 32
Ezk 34:17 he will separate people one from another as the shepherd separates sheep from
goats. •He will place the sheep on his right hand and the goats on his left. •Then the 33, 34
King will say to those on his right hand, "Come, you whom my Father has blessed,
Rm 8:17 •Ep 1:4 take as your heritage the kingdom prepared for you since the foundation of the
Is 58:6–8 Jb 31:32 Tb 4:16 Ezk 18:7 world.[g] •For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me 35
drink, I was a stranger and you made me welcome, •lacking clothes and you clothed 36
me, sick and you visited me, in prison and you came to see me."[h] •Then the upright 37
will say to him in reply, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty
and give you drink? •When did we see you a stranger and make you welcome, 38
lacking clothes and clothe you? •When did we find you sick or in prison and go to 39
10:40;18:5 Lk 10:16 Jn 13:33–35 Ac 9:5 see you?" •And the King will answer, "In truth I tell you, in so far as you did this to 40
one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me." •Then he will say to 41
those on his left hand, "Go away from me, with your curse upon you, to the eternal
Jb 22:6–9 fire prepared for the devil and his angels. •For I was hungry and you never gave me 42
food, I was thirsty and you never gave me anything to drink, •I was a stranger and 43
you never made me welcome, lacking clothes and you never clothed me, sick and
in prison and you never visited me." •Then it will be their turn to ask, "Lord, when 44
did we see you hungry or thirsty, a stranger or lacking clothes, sick or in prison,
and did not come to your help?" •Then he will answer, "In truth I tell you, in 45
so far as you neglected to do this to one of the least of these, you neglected to do
Dn 12:2 Jn 5:29 it to me." •And they will go away to eternal punishment, and the upright to eternal 46
life.'

VII: PASSION AND RESURRECTION

‖Mk 14:1–2 ‖Lk 22:1–2 ### The conspiracy against Jesus

26 Jesus had now finished all he wanted to say, and he told his disciples, •'It 1, 2
will be Passover, as you know, in two days' time, and the Son of man will be
handed over to be crucified.'

Ps 2:1–2;31:13 Jn 11:47–53 Ac 4:25–27 Then the chief priests and the elders of the people assembled in the palace of the 3
high priest, whose name was Caiaphas, •and made plans to arrest Jesus by some 4
trick and have him put to death. •They said, however, 'It must not be during the 5
festivities; there must be no disturbance among the people.'

‖Mk 14:3–9 ‖Jn 12:1–8 ### The anointing at Bethany[a]

Jesus was at Bethany in the house of Simon, a man who had suffered from a 6
virulent skin-disease, when •a woman came to him with an alabaster jar of very 7
expensive ointment, and poured it on his head as he was at table. •When they saw 8
this, the disciples said indignantly, 'Why this waste? •This could have been sold 9
for a high price and the money given the poor.' •But Jesus noticed this and said, 10

'Why are you upsetting the woman? What she has done for me is indeed a good
11 work![b] ·You have the poor with you always, but you will not always have me. Dt 15:11
12 When she poured this ointment on my body, she did it to prepare me for burial.
13 In truth I tell you, wherever in all the world this gospel is proclaimed, what she
has done will be told as well, in remembrance of her.'

Judas betrays Jesus

‖Mk 14:10–11
‖Lk 22:3–6

14 Then one of the Twelve, the man called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests
15 and said, 'What are you prepared to give me if I hand him over to you?' They
16 paid him thirty silver pieces,[c] ·and from then onwards he began to look for an 27:3seq.
Gn 37:28
Zc 11:12
opportunity to betray him.

Preparations for the Passover supper

‖Mk 14:12–16
Lk 22:7–13

17 Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread[d] the disciples came to Jesus to say,
18 'Where do you want us to make the preparations for you to eat the Passover?' ·He
said, 'Go to a certain man in the city and say to him, "The Master says: My time is Jn 2:4c
19 near. It is at your house that I am keeping Passover with my disciples." ' ·The
disciples did what Jesus told them and prepared the Passover.

The treachery of Judas foretold

‖Mk 14:17–21
‖Lk 22:14.21–23
‖Jn 13:21–30

20. 21 When evening came he was at table with the Twelve. ·And while they were eating[e]
22 he said, 'In truth I tell you, one of you is about to betray me.' ·They were greatly
23 distressed and started asking him in turn, 'Not me, Lord, surely?' ·He answered,
24 'Someone who has dipped his hand into the dish with me will betray me. ·The Son Ps 41:9
Jn 13:18
of man is going to his fate, as the scriptures say he will, but alas for that man by Mk 9:12
whom the Son of man is betrayed! Better for that man if he had never been born!' Lk 18:31;24
25–27.46
25 Judas, who was to betray him, asked in his turn, 'Not me, Rabbi, surely?' Jesus Jn 17:12
Ac 17:2–3;
answered, 'It is you who say it.' 26:22–23
1 Co 15:3
1 P 1:10–11

The institution of the Eucharist

•‖Mk 14:22–25
‖Lk 22:19–20
Jn 6:51–58
‖1 Co 11:23–25

26 Now as they were eating,[f] Jesus took bread, and when he had said the blessing he
broke it and gave it to the disciples. 'Take it and eat,' he said, 'this is my body.'
27 Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks[g] he handed it to them saying, 1 Co 10:16
28 'Drink from this, all of you, ·for this is my blood, the blood of the[h] covenant, Ex 24:8

e. The perspective changes: it is now a question of Christ's last coming at the end of the world.

f. Every human being of every period of history. The resurrection of the dead does not need to be mentioned, cf. 10:15; 11:22,24; 12:41seq.

g. Christ, the Messiah-King, ushers the elect from his own kingdom into that of his Father, 13:43k.

h. People are judged by their works of mercy (here described in OT terms, cf. Jb 22:6seq.; Si 7:32seq.; Is 58:7) not by their occasional exploits, cf. 7:22seq. In addition to these meritorious acts we find in 10:32seq. the profession of faith.

26 **a.** In Jn, the woman of this episode is named as Mary, the sister of Lazarus; the event described in Lk 7:36–50 is not the same.

b. The Jews divided 'good works' into 'almsgiving' and 'charitable deeds'; the latter were reckoned superior and included, among other pious acts, the burial of the dead. The woman, therefore, by making provision for Jesus' burial, has performed a 'work' greater than almsgiving. Jesus seems to suggest, v. 12, that some loving instinct has given her a presentiment of the real significance of her action.

c. Thirty shekels—and not thirty denarii as is commonly said. It was the price the Law fixed for a slave's life, Ex 21:32.

d. The 'first day' of the week during which unleavened loaves (azymes) were eaten, *see* Ex 12:1a; 23:14d, was normally that which followed the Passover supper, i.e. the 15th of Nisan; the Synoptics, however, give this title to the preceding day, thus attesting a wider use of the term. Further, if we take account of Jn 18:28 and of other details connected with the Passion, it seems fairly certain that in this particular year the Passover supper was celebrated on the evening of the Friday (or 'Preparation Day', 27:62; *see* Jn 19:14,31,42). Christ's Last Supper, which the Synoptics put on the day before, i.e. on the Thursday evening, must therefore be explained in one of two ways: either a whole section of the Jewish people thus anticipated the rite, or (and this is preferable) Christ anticipated it on his own initiative. In this second hypothesis Jesus, unable to celebrate the Passover on the Friday (though, indeed, he celebrated it in his own person on the cross, Jn 19:36u; 1 Co 5:7), instituted his new rite in the course of a supper which, in consequence, became endowed with the characteristics of the old Passover. Nisan 14th (the day of the Passover supper) fell on a Friday in AD 30 and 33; interpreters therefore take one or other of these years as the date of Christ's death according as they assign his baptism to 28 or to 29 and reckon a longer or shorter public ministry.

e. The first course; it preceded the Passover supper properly so called.

f. They have come to the Passover supper itself. The rubrics for this solemn blessing of bread and wine are laid down exactly; onto this ceremony Jesus grafts the sacramental rites of the new religious order of things which he institutes.

g. 'Returned thanks' represents the Greek verb *eucharisto*, the noun from which has been adopted as a name for the whole action which re-creates the Last Supper.

h. add. (some MSS and versions) 'new', cf. Lk 22:20; 1 Co 11:25.

20:28g Is 53:12 poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.[i] ·From now on, I tell you, I shall 29
8:11c never again drink wine until the day I drink the new wine with you in the kingdom of my Father.'[j]

‖Mk 14:26–31 ‖Lk 22:31–34,39 ‖Jn 13:36–38; 16:32 **Peter's denial foretold**

After the psalms had been sung[k] they left for the Mount of Olives. ·Then Jesus 30, 31
Zc 13:7 said to them, 'You will all fall away from me tonight,[l] for the scripture says: *I shall*
strike the shepherd and the sheep of the flock will be scattered, ·but after my 32
28:7 resurrection I shall go ahead of you to Galilee.' ·At this, Peter said to him, 'Even if 33
all fall away from you, I will never fall away.' ·Jesus answered him, 'In truth I tell 34
26:69–75 you, this very night, before the cock crows, you will have disowned me three
times.' ·Peter said to him, 'Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you.' 35
And all the disciples said the same.

‖Mk 14:32–42 ‖Lk 22:40–46 Jn 12:27–30;18:1 Heb 5:7–10 **Gethsemane**

Then Jesus came with them to a plot of land called Gethsemane;[m] and he said to 36
his disciples, 'Stay here while I go over there to pray.' ·He took Peter and the two 37
sons of Zebedee with him. And he began to feel sadness and anguish.

Then he said to them, 'My soul is sorrowful to the point of death.[n] Wait here and 38
stay awake with me.' ·And going on a little further he fell on his face and prayed. 39
'My Father,' he said, 'if it is possible, let this cup pass me by. Nevertheless, let it be
6:10 Jn 4:34;6:38 Rm 5:19 Ph 2:8 as you, not I, would have it.'[o] ·He came back to the disciples and found them 40
sleeping, and he said to Peter, 'So you had not the strength to stay awake with me
6:13 for one hour? ·Stay awake, and pray not to be put to the test. The spirit is willing 41
Rm 7:5c enough, but human nature is weak.' ·Again, a second time, he went away and 42
prayed: 'My Father,' he said, 'if this cup cannot pass by, but I must drink it, your
6:10 Heb 10:9 will be done!' ·And he came back again and found them sleeping, their eyes were 43
so heavy. ·Leaving them there, he went away again and prayed for the third time, 44
repeating the same words. ·Then he came back to the disciples and said to them, 45
'You can sleep on now and have your rest.[p] Look, the hour has come when the Son
Jn 14:30–31 of man is to be betrayed into the hands of sinners. ·Get up! Let us go! Look, my 46
betrayer is not far away.'

‖Mk 14:43–50 ‖Lk 22:47–53 ‖Jn 18:2–11 **The arrest**

And suddenly while he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, appeared, and 47
with him a large number of men armed with swords and clubs, sent by the chief
priests and elders of the people. ·Now the traitor had arranged a sign with them 48
saying, 'The one I kiss, he is the man. Arrest him.' ·So he went up to Jesus at once 49
26:23 and said, 'Greetings, Rabbi,' and kissed him. ·Jesus said to him, 'My friend, do 50
what you are here for.'[q] Then they came forward, seized Jesus and arrested him.
And suddenly, one of the followers of Jesus grasped his sword and drew it; he 51
struck the high priest's servant and cut off his ear. ·Jesus then said, 'Put your 52
Jn 18:36 sword back, for all who draw the sword will die by the sword. ·Or do you think 53
that I cannot appeal to my Father, who would promptly send more than twelve
Lk 24:26–27 legions of angels to my defence? ·But then, how would the scriptures be fulfilled 54
that say this is the way it must be?' ·It was at this time that Jesus said to the 55
crowds, 'Am I a bandit, that you had to set out to capture me with swords and
Jn 18:20 clubs? I sat teaching in the Temple day after day and you never laid a hand on me.'
Now all this happened to fulfil the prophecies in scripture. Then all the disciples 56
deserted him and ran away.

‖Mk 14:53–65 ‖Lk 22:54–55;66–71 ‖Jn 18:24 ‖Jn 18:15–16,18 Ps 35:11 **Jesus before the Sanhedrin**[r]

The men who had arrested Jesus led him off to the house of Caiaphas the high 57
priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled. ·Peter followed him at a 58
distance right to the high priest's palace, and he went in and sat down with the
attendants to see what the end would be.

59 The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for evidence against
60 Jesus, however false, on which they might have him executed. ·But they could
not find any, though several lying witnesses came forward. Eventually two came
61 forward ·and made a statement, 'This man said, "I have power to destroy the
62 Temple of God and in three days build it up." '[s] ·The high priest then rose and Jn 2:19 Ac 6:14
said to him, 'Have you no answer to that? What is this evidence these men are
63 bringing against you?'[t] ·But Jesus was silent. And the high priest said to him, 'I Is 53:7
put you on oath by the living God to tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.' 4:3d
64 Jesus answered him, 'It is you who say it. But, I tell you that from this time
onward you will see the *Son of man seated at the right hand of the Power* and 8:20h;24:30 Ps 110:1
65 *coming on the clouds of heaven*.'[u] ·Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, Dn 7:13 Ac 2:33t
'He has blasphemed.[v] What need of witnesses have we now? There! You have just Jr 26:11
66 heard the blasphemy. ·What is your opinion?' They answered, 'He deserves to
die.'
67 Then they spat in his face and hit him with their fists; others said as they struck Is 50:6;52:14 Mk 10:34 ‖Lk 22:63–65
68 him, ·'Prophesy to us, Christ! Who hit you then?'[w]

Peter's denials

‖Mk 14:66–72 ‖Lk 22:55–62 ‖Jn 18:16–18,25–27

69 Meanwhile Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard, and a servant-girl came up to
70 him saying, 'You, too, were with Jesus the Galilean.' ·But he denied it in front of 8:10b
71 them all. 'I do not know what you are talking about,' he said. ·When he went out
to the gateway another servant-girl saw him and said to the people there, 'This
72 man was with Jesus the Nazarene.'[x] ·And again, with an oath, he denied it, 'I do 2:23*l*
73 not know the man.' ·A little later the bystanders came up and said to Peter, 'You
74 are certainly one of them too! Why, your accent[y] gives you away.' ·Then he started Jg 12:6c
75 cursing and swearing, 'I do not know the man.' And at once the cock crowed, ·and

i. As at Sinai, the blood of victims sealed the covenant of Yahweh with his people, Ex 24:4–8c, so on the cross the blood of Jesus, the perfect victim, is about to seal the 'new' covenant, cf. Lk 22:20, between God and humanity—the covenant foretold by the prophets, Jr 31:31l. Jesus takes on himself the task of universal redemption that Isaiah assigns to the 'servant of Yahweh', Is 42:6; 49:6; 53:12, *see* 41:8f; cf. Heb 8:8; 9:15; 12:24. The idea of a new covenant comes also in Paul in a number of contexts quite apart from 1 Co 11:25, which shows its great importance, 2 Co 3:4–6; Ga 3:15–20; 4:24.

j. Allusion to the eschatological banquet, cf. 8:11; 22:1seq. Jesus and his disciples will never meet at table again.

k. The psalms of the Hallel, Ps 113–18, with which the Passover meal closed.

l. lit. 'be brought down'; it will be an obstacle for their faith when they see the one they believe to be Messiah, 16:16, and whose approaching triumph they expect, 20:21seq., passively yield to his enemies. For a time it will make them lose courage and even faith, cf. Lk 22:31–32.

m. The name means 'oilpress'. It lies in the Kidron valley at the foot of the Mt of Olives.

n. The turn of phrase recalls Ps 42:5 and Jon 4:9.

o. Jesus feels the full force of the human fear of death; he feels the instinctive urge to escape, gives expression to it and then stifles it by his acceptance of the Father's will, *see* 4:1a.

p. Gently ironical reproach: The hour you should have stayed awake with me has slipped by. Now the testing-time has begun and Jesus must go through it alone; the disciples may go on sleeping if they wish.

q. lit. 'Friend, for what you are here.' Instead of a question ('Why are you here?') or a reproach ('For what purpose are you here!') one may prefer to see in this a stereotyped phrase meaning 'do what you are here for', 'to your work!' Jesus cuts short the empty show of greeting: it is time for action, cf. Jn 13:27.

r. The accounts of Luke and of John enable us to distinguish: a preliminary hearing before Annas, at night time, and a solemn session of the Sanhedrin on the following morning, 27:1. Matthew and Mark describe the night episode in terms of the morning one which was the only formal and decisive meeting. But for an alternative chronology, *see* 26:17d.

s. Central to Jesus' message was the provisional nature of the Jewish cult, which was to be perfected by his own new covenant. As Jn 2:22*i* makes clear, the full significance of his statement became clear only after his resurrection. A new Temple was to be substituted for the old one, and this was to be, in the first place, his own body risen after three days, 16:21; 17:23; 20:19; Jn 2:19–22, but beyond that, it was to be the Church, Mt 16:18.

t. var. Some versions present this as one question 'Do you make no answer to the evidence these men are bringing against you?'

u. 'The Power' is equivalent to 'Yahweh', *see* 3:2d. The Gospel shows Jesus at this critical moment abandoning his policy of the messianic secret, *see* Mk 1:34m, and unequivocally accepting the title of Messiah, although making clear that he is Messiah not in the traditional sense of a political liberator, but in the sense of the glorious personage whom Daniel had seen in vision, Dn 7:13k. With this allusion to Dn is combined reference to Ps 110:1, which features so largely in the apostolic preaching, *see* Ac 2:33t. Since this understanding of the expression 'Son of man' stems probably from the evangelists rather than from Jesus himself, *see* 8:20h, it is probable also that the evangelists are responsible for this underlining of the significance of this scene: Jesus was rejected and condemned as a messianic claimant although he in fact avoided the title because of its political overtones. It is only in the apostolic preaching after Pentecost that Jesus' disciples explicitly acknowledge him as Messiah.

v. It is difficult to decide precisely what the blasphemy was: not the claim to be Messiah; perhaps the claim to be Son of God though under arrest.

w. Mt's editing is awkward, for, not being blindfolded as in Lk 22:63, Jesus can easily indicate who hit him. The central point is that he is mocked as 'prophet' because of his saying about the Temple, and perhaps more precisely as 'Prophet-Messiah' (this address to Jesus as 'Christ' is unique in the gospel), that is as claimant to be the eschatological High Priest who proposes to found a new Temple.

x. Nazoraios; var. Nazarenos.

y. The Galilean accent.

26:34 Peter remembered what Jesus had said, 'Before the cock crows you will have disowned me three times.' And he went outside and wept bitterly.

26:57r ‖Mk 15:1 ‖Lk 22:66;23:1 Jn 18:28 Lk 3:1b
Jesus is taken before Pilate

27 When morning came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people met in council to bring about the death of Jesus. •They had him bound and led him away to hand him over to Pilate,[a] the governor.

Ac 1:18–19
The death of Judas

When he found that Jesus had been condemned, then Judas, his betrayer, was filled with remorse and took the thirty silver pieces back to the chief priests and elders •saying, 'I have sinned. I have betrayed innocent blood.'[b] They replied, 'What is that to us? That is your concern.' •And flinging down the silver pieces in the sanctuary he made off, and went and hanged himself. •The chief priests picked up the silver pieces and said, 'It is against the Law to put this into the treasury; it is blood-money.' •So they discussed the matter and with it bought the potter's field as a graveyard for foreigners, •and this is why the field is still called the Field of Blood.[c] •The word spoken through the prophet Jeremiah[d] was then fulfilled: *And they took the thirty silver pieces, the sum at which the precious One was priced by the children of Israel, •and they gave them for the potter's field, just as the Lord directed me.*[e]

26:15 Zc 11:12–13

‖Mk 15:2–15 ‖Lk 23:2–5, 13–25 ‖Jn 18:28–19:1; 19:4–16
Jesus before Pilate

Jesus, then, was brought before the governor, and the governor put to him this question, 'Are you the king of the Jews?' Jesus replied, 'It is you who say it.'[f] •But when he was accused by the chief priests and the elders he refused to answer at all. Pilate then said to him, 'Do you not hear how many charges they have made against you?' •But to the governor's amazement, he offered not a word in answer to any of the charges.

26:63 Is 53:7

Jn 18:39 At festival time it was the governor's practice to release a prisoner for the people, anyone they chose. •Now there was then a notorious prisoner whose name was Barabbas.[g] •So when the crowd gathered, Pilate said to them, 'Which do you want me to release for you: Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?' •For Pilate knew it was out of jealousy that they had handed him over.

Now as he was seated in the chair of judgement, his wife sent him a message, 'Have nothing to do with that upright man; I have been extremely upset today by a dream that I had about him.'

The chief priests and the elders, however, had persuaded the crowd to demand the release of Barabbas and the execution of Jesus. •So when the governor spoke and asked them, 'Which of the two do you want me to release for you?' they said, 'Barabbas.' •Pilate said to them, 'But in that case, what am I to do with Jesus who is called Christ?' They all said, 'Let him be crucified!' •He asked, 'But what harm has he done?' But they shouted all the louder, 'Let him be crucified!' •Then Pilate saw that he was making no impression, that in fact a riot was imminent. So he took some water, washed his hands[h] in front of the crowd and said, 'I am innocent of this man's blood.[i] It is your concern.' •And the people, every one of them, shouted back, 'Let his blood be on us and on our children!'[j] •Then he released Barabbas for them. After having Jesus scourged[k] he handed him over to be crucified.

Ac 18:6 Jr 26:15 Ac 5:28

‖Mk 15:16–20 ‖Jn 19:2–3
Jesus is crowned with thorns

Then the governor's soldiers took Jesus with them into the Praetorium[l] and collected the whole cohort round him. •And they stripped him and put a scarlet cloak round him,[m] •and having twisted some thorns into a crown they put this on his head and placed a reed in his right hand. To make fun of him they knelt to him saying, 'Hail, king of the Jews!'[n] •And they spat on him and took the reed and struck him on the head with it. •And when they had finished making fun of

27:11

him, they took off the cloak and dressed him in his own clothes and led him away to crucifixion.

The crucifixion

||Mk 15:21–27
||Lk 23:26–34,38
||Jn 19:17–24

32 On their way out, they came across a man from Cyrene, called Simon, and enlisted
33 him to carry his cross. ·When they had reached a place called Golgotha, [o] that is,
34 the place of the skull, ·they gave him wine to drink mixed with gall, [p] which he
35 tasted but refused to drink. ·When they had finished crucifying him they shared
36 out his clothing by casting lots, [q] ·and then sat down and stayed there keeping guard over him.

Ps 69:21
Ps 22:18

37 Above his head was placed the charge against him; it read: 'This is Jesus, the
38 King of the Jews.' ·Then two bandits were crucified with him, one on the right and one on the left.

Is 53:9,12
Lk 22:37

The crucified Jesus is mocked

||Mk 15:29–32
||Lk 23:35–37

39, 40 The passers-by jeered at him; they shook their heads ·and said, 'So you would
destroy the Temple and in three days rebuild it! Then save yourself if you are God's
41 son and come down from the cross!' ·The chief priests with the scribes and elders
42 mocked him in the same way, ·with the words, 'He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the king of Israel; let him come down from the cross now, and we
43 will believe in him. ·He has put his trust in God; now let God rescue him if he
44 wants him. For he did say, "I am God's son." ' ·Even the bandits who were crucified with him taunted him in the same way.

26:61
Ps 22:7
Jr 18:16
Si 12:18e;13:7

Ps 22:8
Ws 2:18–20
·4.3d
Lk 23:39–43

The death of Jesus

||Mk 15:33–41
||Lk 23:44–49

45 From the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. [r]
46 And about the ninth hour, Jesus cried out in a loud voice, *'Eli, eli, lama*
47 *sabachthani?'* that is, *'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'* [s] ·When some of those who stood there heard this, they said, 'The man is calling on Elijah,' [t]

Ps 22:1

27 **a.** var. 'Pontius Pilate', *see* Lk 3:1b. • In Judaea, as in all the provinces of the Empire, Rome reserved to itself power of life and death; the Jews had to approach this magistrate to gain any legal standing for the decision they had made; they themselves could not pronounce sentence.

b. var. 'upright' blood', cf. 23:35.

c. In Aramaic *hakeldama* (cf. Ac 1:19). A very ancient tradition locates it in the Valley of Gehinnom.

d. om. 'Jeremiah'. Actually this is a free quotation from Zc 11:12–13 combined with the idea of the purchase of a field, an idea suggested by Jr 32:6–15. This, plus the fact that Jeremiah speaks of potters (Jr 18:2seq.) who lived in the Hakeldama district (Jr 19:1seq.), explains how the whole text could by approximation be attributed to Jeremiah.

e. Yahweh complained that, in the person of his prophet Zechariah, he had received from the Israelites a wage that was nothing but an insult. The sale of Jesus for the same paltry sum appeals to Matthew as a fulfilment of this saying of the prophet.

f. By these words Jesus acknowledges as correct, at least in a sense, what he would never have said on his own initiative. *See* above 26:25,64; and cf. Jn 18:33–37.

g. Here and in v. 17, var. 'Jesus Barabbas', which would give peculiar point to Pilate's question but appears to have its origin in an apocryphal tradition.

h. The significance of this gesture must have been well understood by the Jews, *see* Dt 21:6seq.; Ps 26:6; 73:13.

i. var. 'of the blood of this righteous man'.

j. Traditional OT phrase, 2 S 1:16; 3:28–9, cf. Ac 18:6, by which they accept responsibility for the death they demand.

k. In Roman practice the normal prelude to crucifixion.

l. The Praetorium, or residence of the praetor, was probably the former palace of King Herod the Great in which the procurator used to reside whenever he went up from Caesarea to Jerusalem. This palace, situated in the west quarter of the city, was not the family residence of the Hasmonaeans: this was near the Temple and in it Herod Antipas probably received Jesus, sent to him by Pilate, Lk 23:7–12. Some commentators think that the Praetorium was in the fortress called Antonia, to the north of the Temple. But this accords neither with the custom of the procurators as it is known to us from the ancient texts, nor with the usage of the word 'praetorium' which cannot move around like this, nor with the movements of Pilate and the Jewish crowd in the gospel narratives of the Passion, especially that of Jn.

m. The Roman soldier's cloak (*sagum*); being red it suggested the imperial purple to the mocking soldiery.

n. The Jews had mocked Jesus as 'Prophet', 26:68seq.; the Romans mock him as 'King'. These two scenes well reflect the two aspects, religious and political, of the trial of Jesus.

o. Approximate transliteration of the Aramaic word *gulgoltha*, 'a place of the skull', in Lat. *Calvaria* (whence 'Calvary').

p. A narcotic which compassionate Jewish women used to offer the condemned to diminish their sufferings. The wine was mixed with 'myrrh' (cf. Mk 15:23) rather than with 'gall'. The 'gall' in Mt (like the correction of 'wine' to 'vinegar' in the Antiochene recension) is due to a reminiscence of Ps 69:21. Jesus refuses the palliative.

q. add. 'that the saying of the prophet might be fulfilled: they divided my garments between them and for my robe they cast lots' (Ps 22:18), a gloss taken from Jn 19:24.

r. From noon until three in the afternoon.

s. A cry of real distress but not of despair: this lament which Jesus takes from the scriptures is a prayer to God and is followed in the Psalm by an expression of joyful confidence in final victory.

t. Malicious play on words based on the expectation of Elijah as the Messiah's precursor, *see* 17:10–13e, or on the Jewish belief that he would come to help the upright in their hour of need.

Ps 69:21 ‖Lk 23:36 ‖Jn 19:29 and one of them quickly ran to get a sponge which he filled with vinegar[u] and, 48
putting it on a reed, gave it him to drink. ·But the rest of them said, 'Wait! And see 49
if Elijah will come to save him.' ·But Jesus, again crying out in a loud voice, yielded 50
up his spirit.

And suddenly, the veil of the Sanctuary[v] was torn in two from top to bottom, the 51
1 P 3:19h earth quaked, the rocks were split,[w] ·the tombs opened and the bodies of many 52
holy people rose from the dead, ·and these, after his resurrection, came out of the 53
tombs, entered the holy city and appeared to a number of people.[x] ·The centurion, 54
together with the others guarding Jesus, had seen the earthquake and all
that was taking place, and they were terrified and said, 'In truth this man was
4:3d Mk 15:39g Lk 8:2–3 Jn 19:25j 13:55 son of God.'

And many women were there, watching from a distance, the same women 55
who had followed Jesus from Galilee and looked after him. ·Among them were 56
Mary of Magdala, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of
Zebedee's sons.

‖Mk 15:42–47 ‖Lk 23:50–55 ‖Jn 19:38–42 **The burial**

When it was evening, there came a rich man of Arimathaea, called Joseph, who 57
had himself become a disciple of Jesus. ·This man went to Pilate and asked for the 58
body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered it to be handed over. ·So Joseph took the body, 59
Is 53:9f wrapped it in a clean shroud ·and put it in his own new[y] tomb which he had hewn 60
out of the rock. He then rolled a large stone across the entrance of the tomb and
went away. ·Now Mary of Magdala and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite 61
the sepulchre.

The guard at the tomb

Next day, that is, when Preparation Day[z] was over, the chief priests and the 62
Pharisees went in a body to Pilate ·and said to him, 'Your Excellency, we recall 63
16:21 Ac 10:40n that this impostor said, while he was still alive, "After three days I shall rise again."
Therefore give the order to have the sepulchre kept secure until the third day, 64
for fear his disciples come and steal him away and tell the people, "He has risen
from the dead." This last piece of fraud would be worse than what went before.'
Pilate said to them, 'You may have your guard;[aa] go and make all as secure as 65
you know how.' ·So they went and made the sepulchre secure, putting seals on the 66
stone and mounting a guard.

‖Mk 16:1–8 ‖Lk 24:1–10 Jn 20:1 **The empty tomb. The angel's message**

28 After the Sabbath,[a] and towards dawn on the first day of the week, Mary of 1
Magdala and the other Mary[b] went to visit the sepulchre.[c] ·And suddenly 2
27:54x 1:20g there was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven,
17:2 Dn 10:6 came and rolled away the stone and sat on it. ·His face was like lightning, his robe 3
white as snow. ·The guards were so shaken by fear of him that they were like dead 4
men. ·But the angel spoke; and he said to the women, 'There is no need for you to 5
be afraid. I know you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. ·He is not here, for 6
he has risen, as he said he would. Come and see the place where he[d] lay, ·then go 7
quickly and tell his disciples, "He has risen from the dead and now he is going
26:32 ahead of you to Galilee; that is where you will see him." Look! I have told you.'
Filled with awe and great joy the women came quickly away from the tomb[e] and 8
ran to tell his disciples.

Jn 20:14seq. **Appearance to the women**

And suddenly, coming to meet them, was Jesus. 'Greetings,' he said. And the 9
women came up to him and, clasping his feet, they did him homage. ·Then Jesus 10
said to them, 'Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers that they must leave for
Galilee; there they will see me.'[f]

Precautions taken by the leaders of the people

11 Now while they were on their way, some of the guards went off into the city to tell
12 the chief priests all that had happened. •These held a meeting with the elders and,
13 after some discussion, handed a considerable sum of money to the soldiers •with
these instructions, 'This is what you must say, "His disciples came during the night
14 and stole him away while we were asleep." •And should the governor come to hear
of this, we undertake to put things right with him ourselves and to see that you do
15 not get into trouble.' •So they took the money and carried out their instructions,
and to this day that is the story among the Jews.

Appearance in Galilee. The mission to the world

16 Meanwhile the eleven disciples set out for Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus
17 had arranged to meet them. •When they saw him they fell down before him, though
18 some hesitated.[g] •Jesus came up and spoke to them.[h] He said, 'All authority in
19 heaven and on earth has been given to me. •Go, therefore, make disciples of all
nations; baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy
20 Spirit,[i] •and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you. And look, I am
with you always; yes, to the end of time.'

8:10b •Dn 7:14 Jn 3:35t Mk 16:15–16 Lk 24:47 Ac 2:38y 1:8k Jn 14:18–21

u. Sour drink of the Roman soldier. Probably the gesture was sympathetic, cf. Jn 19:28seq.; the Synoptics regard it as malevolent (Lk 23:36) and describe it in terms that recall Ps 69:21.

v. Either the curtain which hung in front of the Holy Place or, more probably, the one which divided the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies, *see* Ex 26:31seq. Following Heb 9:12; 10:20, Christian tradition saw in this tearing of the veil the abrogation of the old Mosaic cult and the way opened up by Christ into the messianic sanctuary.

w. The evangelist deliberately describes the circumstances surrounding the crucifixion in terms drawn from prophetic descriptions of the 'Day of Yahweh', *see* Am 8:9h.

x. This resurrection of the upright is in the OT a sign of the eschatological era (Is 26:19; Ezk 37; Dn 12:2). Freed from Hades by the death of Jesus, *see* Mt 16:18h, they wait for his resurrection to enter with him the Holy City, that is the Heavenly Jerusalem (Rv 21:2,10; 22:19); this was how the early Fathers understood it. This is the first expression of faith in the liberation of the dead by Christ's descent into hell, *see* 1 P 3:19h.

y. The fact that the shroud was 'clean' and the tomb 'new' stress that the burial was an act of piety. The latter feature also shows how the burial was possible, for the corpse of an executed man could not be placed in a tomb already in use, where it would have defiled the bones of the upright.

z. Greek *paraskeue* ('preparation') meaning Friday, i.e. the day when preparations were made for the Sabbath.

aa. i.e. either 'Use your own guard', *see* Lk 22:4c, or 'I put a guard at your disposal', cf. Jn 18:3.

28 a. And not 'On the Sabbath evening (Vulg.). Since the Sabbath was the day of rest, the 'first day of the (Jewish) week' corresponds to our Sunday (Rv 1:10), *dies dominica*, or the 'day of the Lord' so named in memory of the resurrection. *See* Ac 20:7k; 1 Co 16:2.

b. 'Mary, mother of James', Mk 16:1; Lk 24:10; cf. Mt 27:56 and 61.

c. In Mt, the tomb is sealed and guarded; the women therefore have not come to anoint the body of Jesus, as in Mk and Lk, but only to 'visit' the tomb.

d. 'he'; var. 'the Lord'.

e. var. 'came quickly out of the tomb', *see* Mk 16:8.

f. Though they agree in recording the initial apparition of an angel (or angels) to the women (28:5–7; Mk 16:5–7; Lk 24:4–7; Jn 20:12–13), the four gospels show divergencies when it comes to the appearances of Christ. Setting Mark aside (his abrupt conclusion presents a special problem, *see* Mk 16:8b, and his 'longer ending' recapitulates the data of the other gospels) all the gospels make a clear distinction, both literary and doctrinal, between: **1** Appearances to individuals that help to prove the fact of the resurrection; to Mary Magdalen, either alone (Jn 20:14–17; cf. Mk 16:9), or accompanied (Mt 28:9–10); to the disciples on the road to Emmaus (Lk 24:13–32; cf. Mk 16:12); to Simon (Lk 24:34); to Thomas (Jn 20:26–29). **2** A collective appearance that is coupled with an apostolic mission (28:16–20; Lk 24:36–49; Jn 20:19–23; *see also* Mk 16:14–18). As well as this distinction there are two traditions as to where the appearances took place: **1** All in Galilee (28:10,16–20; Mk 16:7). **2** All in Judaea (Lk and Jn 20). By way of appendix, Jn 21 adds an appearance in Galilee which, though it bears the character of an appearance to individuals (it is for Peter and John predominantly), is nevertheless coupled with an apostolic mission (given to Peter). The primitive apostolic preaching that Paul reproduces in 1 Co 15:3–7 lists five appearances (apart from the appearance to Paul himself) which are not easily harmonised with the gospel accounts; in particular he mentions an appearance to James of which the *Gospel to the Hebrews* also speaks. All this gives the impression that different groups, which cannot now be easily identified, have given rise to different strands of tradition. But these very divergencies of tradition are far better witnesses than any artificial or contrived uniformity to the antiquity of the evidence and the historical quality of all these manifestations of the risen Christ.

g. An alternative translation with less grammatical support: 'those who had hesitated'. On the doubts Mt mentions here, cf. Mk 16:11,14; Lk 24:11,41; Jn 20:24–29.

h. In these last instructions of Jesus, with the ensuing promise, is contained the apostolic mission of the Church. The glorified Christ wields power on earth just as in heaven, 6:10; cf. Jn 17:2; Ph 2:10; Rv 12:10, limitless power, Mt 7:29; 9:6; 21:23, received from his Father, *see* Jn 3:35t. His disciples 'therefore' wield this power in his name by baptising and forming Christians. Their mission is universal: after having first been proclaimed to the people of Israel, 10:5f; 15:24, as the divine plan demanded, salvation must then be offered to all nations, 8:11; 21:41; 22:8–10; 24:14,30seq.; 25:32; 26:13; *see* Ac 1:8i; 13:5e; Rm 1:16h. In this work of universal conversion, however long and laborious, the risen Lord will be present and active with his own.

i. This formula is probably a reflection of the liturgical usage established later in the primitive community. It will be remembered that Ac speaks of baptising 'in the name of Jesus', *see* Ac 1:5f. The attachment of the baptised person to all three persons of the Trinity will have been made explicit only later. But whatever the variation in formula, the underlying reality remains the same. Baptism attaches a person to Jesus the Saviour; all his work of salvation proceeds from the Father's love and reaches its completion in the outpouring of the Spirit.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO
MARK

I: PRELUDE TO THE PUBLIC MINISTRY OF JESUS

‖Mt 3:1–12
‖Lk 3:1–18

The proclamation of John the Baptist

1 The beginning of the gospel [a] about Jesus Christ, the Son of God. [b] •It is written 1, 2
in the prophet Isaiah:

Ml 3:1 *Look, I am going to send my messenger in front of you*
to prepare your way before you.

Is 40:3
Jn 1:23 *A voice of one that cries in the desert:* 3
Prepare a way for the Lord,
make his *paths straight.*

Mt 3:6c John the Baptist was in the desert, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the 4
forgiveness of sins. •All Judaea and all the people of Jerusalem made their way to 5
him, and as they were baptised by him in the river Jordan they confessed their sins.
John wore a garment of camel-skin, [c] and he lived on locusts and wild honey. •In 6, 7
Jn 1:27 the course of his preaching he said, 'After me is coming someone who is more
powerful than me, and I am not fit to kneel down and undo the strap of
Jn 1:26,33
Ac 1:5;11:16 his sandals. •I have baptised you with water, but he will baptise you with the 8
Holy Spirit.'

‖Mt 3:13–17
‖Lk 3:21–22

Jesus is baptised

It was at this time that Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptised in the 9
Jordan by John. •And at once, as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the 10
Is 63:11,19
Jn 1:32–34 heavens torn apart and the Spirit, like a dove, descending on him. •And a voice 11
•9:7 came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on you.'
Ps 2:7
Is 42:1

•‖Mt 4:1–11
‖Lk 4:1–13

Testing in the desert [d]

And at once the Spirit drove him into the desert •and he remained there for forty 12, 13
Jb 1:6f days, and was put to the test by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and the angels
looked after him.

II: THE GALILEAN MINISTRY

‖Mt 4:12–17
‖Lk 4:14–15

Jesus begins to proclaim the message

After John had been arrested, Jesus went into Galilee. There he proclaimed the 14
Rm 1:1 gospel from God saying, •'The time is fulfilled, [e] and the kingdom of God is close at 15
•Dn 7:22
Mt 3:2c;8:10b hand. Repent, and believe the gospel.'

‖Mt 4:18–22
‖Lk 5:1–11

The first four disciples are called

As he was walking along by the Lake of Galilee he saw Simon and Simon's brother 16
Andrew casting a net in the lake—for they were fishermen. •And Jesus said to 17

18 them, 'Come after me[f] and I will make you into fishers of people.' ·And at once
they left their nets and followed him.
19 Going on a little further, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John;
20 they too were in their boat, mending the nets. ·At once he called them and,
leaving their father Zebedee in the boat with the men he employed, they went
after him.

Jesus teaches in Capernaum and cures a demoniac ‖Lk 4:31–37

21 They went as far as Capernaum, and at once on the Sabbath he went into the
22 synagogue and began to teach. ·And his teaching made a deep impression on them Mt 7:28seq.
because, unlike the scribes, he taught them with authority.
23 And at once in their synagogue there was a man with an unclean spirit,[g] and he Mt 8:29k
24 shouted, ·'What do you want with us,[h] Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come[i] to Mt 2:23*l*
25 destroy us? I know who you are: the Holy One of God.'[j] ·But Jesus rebuked it Ac 3:14i
26 saying, 'Be quiet! Come out of him!' ·And the unclean spirit threw the man into 1:34m
27 convulsions and with a loud cry went out of him. ·The people were so astonished
that they started asking one another what it all meant, saying, 'Here is a teaching
that is new, and with authority behind it: he gives orders even to unclean spirits[k] 4:41
28 and they obey him.' ·And his reputation at once spread everywhere, through all Mt 8:29k
the surrounding Galilean countryside.

Cure of Simon's mother-in-law ‖Mt 8:14–15
‖Lk 4:38–39

29 And at once on leaving the synagogue, he went[l] with James and John straight to
30 the house of Simon and Andrew. ·Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed and 13:3
31 feverish, and at once they told him about her. ·He went in to her, took her by the 5:41
hand and helped her up. And the fever left her and she began to serve them.

A number of cures ‖Mt 8:16
‖Lk 4:40–41

32 That evening, after sunset, they brought to him all who were sick and those who
33, 34 were possessed by devils. ·The whole town came crowding round the door, ·and he
cured many who were sick with diseases of one kind or another; he also drove out
many devils, but he would not allow them to speak, because they knew 3:12
who he was.[m]

1 a. lit. 'good news', Old English 'god-spel', Gk *euaggelion*, is the coming of the kingdom of God, *see* Mt 4:17f. It was prepared for in the OT, Is 40:9; 52:7; 61:1, and is announced by Jesus who 'proclaims' the good news, 1:14 and par.; Mt 4:23; 9:35; Lk 4:43; 8:1; cf. Mk 16:15, and calls for belief in it, Mk 1:15; *see* Mt 8:10b; Rm 1:16h. In his person this kingdom has come, Mt 11:5seq.; Lk 4:18,21. After him, his disciples will bring the good news to the whole world, 16:15; Mt 24:14seq.; 26:13seq.; Ac 5:42q; Ga 2:7. This good news was first proclaimed, then gradually written down, until it took a fixed form in our four canonical gospels, *see* pp. 1601–3. • The noun, which Lk does not use at all, has always in Mk (and in Mt 26:13) the force of a technical term, used in an absolute sense, and is best translated 'gospel'. Elsewhere in Mt and always in Lk, who uses the derived verb, Lk 1:19n, the translation 'good news' is preferable.

b. om. 'Son of God'.

c. var. 'John wore a garment of camel-hair with a leather belt round his waist,' cf. Mt 3:4.

d. Mark omits or ignores the detail of the three temptations which Matthew and Luke derive from some other source. The mention of the wild beasts evokes the messianic ideal, announced by the prophets, of a return to the heavenly peace, *see* Is 11:6–9, 6e, associated with the theme of the retreat into the desert, *see* Ho 2:16p. The ministration of the angels expresses the divine protection, cf. Ps 91:11–13, a text made use of by Mt 4:6 and par.

e. Fulfilment implies a continuity between the stages of God's plan, 1 K 8:24; Ws 8:8; Ac 1:7i. When the last of these stages begins, Rm 3:26m; Heb 1:2a, the time is 'fulfilled', Ga 4:4c; cf. 1 Co 10:11; God brings to completion not only the scriptures, Mt 1:22j, and the Law, Mt 5:17h, but also the whole purpose of the old covenant, Mt 9:17; 26:28h; Rm 10:4; 2 Co 3:14–15; Heb 10:1,14. At the end of this last period of history, 1 Co 10:11; 1 Tm 4:1; 1 P 1:5,20; 1 Jn 2:18, which is the 'end of the last age', Heb 9:26, will come another end, the 'end of time', Mt 13:40,49; 24:3; 28:20. This is the Day, 1 Co 15:23n, the Day when he is revealed, 1 Co 1:7c, the Day of his Judgement, Rm 2:6b.

f. Those whom Jesus calls to follow him, 1:20; 2:14seq.; Mt 19:21p, 27–28; Lk 9:57–62; *see also* Dt 13:3,5; 1 K 14:8; 19:20, in order to have a share with him must leave all, Mk 10:21,28 and par.; cf. Jn 12:24–26. For those disciples who will not know the earthly Jesus the same ideas are expressed in terms of 'fellowship', Ph 3:10; 1 Jn 1:3b, or of 'imitation', 2 Th 3:7.

g. This was the name given by Judaism, *see* Zc 13:2, to demons, foreign and even hostile to the religious and moral purity demanded by the service of God; *see also* 3:11,30; Mt 10:1; 12:43; Lk 4:33,36.

h. lit. 'What is there for us and for you?', *see* Jn 2:4d.

i. var. 'You have come'.

j. God is the unique 'Holy One', and all that belongs to him is holy, Lv 17:1a,44f; 19:2; Is 6:3; this is pre-eminently true of Jesus who is God's Son and his chosen Messiah, Mk 1:10seq., the appointed head of 'the nation of saints', Dn 7:18m, i.e. of the company of the elect, the Christian community, Ac 9:13g; cf. Lk 1:35; 4:34; Jn 6:69u; Ac 2:27; 3:14u; 4:17,30; Rv 3:7.

k. Or punctuate 'Here is a teaching that is new; with authority he gives orders even to unclean spirits.'

l. var. 'they went'.

m. Jesus forbids the news that he is the Messiah to be spread by the devils, 1;25,34;3:12, by those he cures, 1:44;

‖Lk 4:42–44 **Jesus quietly leaves Capernaum and travels through Galilee**

In the morning, long before dawn, he got up and left the house and went off to a 35
Mt 14:23par.; 26:36par. Lk 3:21j lonely place and prayed there. 36 Simon and his companions set out in search of him, 36
and when they found him they said, 'Everybody is looking for you.' 37, 38 He answered,
'Let us go elsewhere, to the neighbouring country towns, so that I can proclaim the
Jn 18:37 message there too, because that is why I came.' [n] 39 And he went all through Galilee,
preaching in their synagogues and driving out devils.

‖Mt 8:2–4 ‖Lk 5:12–16 **Cure of a man suffering from a virulent skin-disease**

A man suffering from a virulent skin-disease came to him and pleaded on his knees 40
saying, 'If you are willing, you can cleanse me.' 41 Feeling sorry for him, Jesus
5:30b stretched out his hand, touched him and said to him, 'I am willing. Be cleansed.'
And at once the skin-disease left him and he was cleansed. 42, 43 And at once Jesus
1:34m sternly sent him away and said to him, 44 'Mind you tell no one anything, but go and
Lv 14:1–32 show yourself to the priest, and make the offering for your cleansing prescribed by
Moses as evidence to them.' 45 The man went away, but then started freely proclaim-
ing and telling the story everywhere, so that Jesus could no longer go openly into
any town, but stayed outside in deserted places. Even so, people from all around
kept coming to him.

‖Mt 9:1–8 ‖Lk 5:17–26 **Cure of a paralytic**

2 When he returned to Capernaum, some time later word went round that he 1
3:20 was in the house; 2 and so many people collected that there was no room left,
even in front of the door. He was preaching the word to them 3 when some people
came bringing him a paralytic carried by four men, 4 but as they could not get the
man to him through the crowd, they stripped the roof over the place where Jesus
was; and when they had made an opening, they lowered the stretcher on which the
Mt 8:10b paralytic lay. 5 Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralytic, 'My child, your sins are
forgiven.' [o] 6 Now some scribes were sitting there, and they thought to themselves,
Ps 32:5 Is 43:25 7 'How can this man talk like that? He is being blasphemous. Who but God can
forgive sins?' 8 And at once, Jesus, inwardly aware that this is what they were
thinking, said to them, 'Why do you have these thoughts in your hearts? 9 Which of
these is easier to say to the paralytic, "Your sins are forgiven" or to say, "Get up,
pick up your stretcher and walk"? 10 But to prove to you that the Son of man has
authority to forgive sins on earth'—11 he said to the paralytic—'I order you: get up,
pick up your stretcher, and go off home.' 12 And the man got up, and at once picked
up his stretcher and walked out in front of everyone, so that they were all aston-
Mt 9:33 ished and praised God saying, 'We have never seen anything like this.'

‖Mt 9:9 ‖Lk 5:27–28 **The call of Levi**

He went out again to the shore of the lake; [p] and all the people came to him, and he 13
taught them. 14 As he was walking along he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at
the tax office, and he said to him, 'Follow me.' And he got up and followed him.

‖Mt 9:10–13 ‖Lk 5:29–32 **Eating with sinners**

When Jesus was at dinner in his house, a number of tax collectors and sinners were 15
also sitting at table with Jesus and his disciples; for there were many of them among
his followers. 16 When the scribes of the Pharisee party saw him eating with sinners
and tax collectors, they said to his disciples, 'Why does he eat with tax collectors
and sinners?' 17 When Jesus heard this he said to them, 'It is not the healthy who
need the doctor, but the sick. I came to call not the upright, but sinners.'

‖Mt 9:14–17 ‖Lk 5:33–39 **A discussion on fasting**

John's disciples and the Pharisees were keeping a fast, when some people came to 18
him and said to him, 'Why is it that John's disciples and the disciples of the

19 Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not?' ·Jesus replied, 'Surely the bridegroom's
attendants cannot fast while the bridegroom is still with them? As long as they have
20 the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. ·But the time will come when the
21 bridegroom is taken away from them, and then, on that day, they will fast. ·No one
sews a piece of unshrunken cloth on an old cloak; otherwise, the patch pulls away
22 from it, the new from the old, and the tear gets worse. ·And nobody puts new wine
into old wineskins; otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost and
the skins too. No! New wine into fresh skins!'

Picking corn on the Sabbath

‖Mt 12:1–8
‖Lk 6:1–5

23 It happened that one Sabbath day he was taking a walk through the cornfields, and
24 his disciples began to make a path by plucking ears of corn.[c] ·And the Pharisees Dt 23:26
said to him, 'Look, why are they doing something on the Sabbath day that is
25 forbidden?' ·And he replied, 'Have you never read what David did in his time of
26 need when he and his followers were hungry—·how he went into the house of God
when Abiathar[d] was high priest, and ate the loaves of the offering which only 1 S 21:2–7
the priests are allowed to eat, and how he also gave some to the men with him?' Ex 25:23j
27 And he said to them, 'The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath;[e] Dt 5:14
28 so the Son of man is master even of the Sabbath.'

Cure of the man with a withered hand

‖Mt 12:9–14
‖Lk 6:6–11

1 3 Another time he went into the synagogue, and there was a man present whose
2 hand was withered. ·And they were watching him to see if he would cure him
3 on the Sabbath day, hoping for something to charge him with. ·He said to the man
4 with the withered hand, 'Get up and stand in the middle!' ·Then he said to them,
'Is it permitted on the Sabbath day to do good, or to do evil; to save life, or to kill?'
5 But they said nothing. ·Then he looked angrily round at them, grieved to find them Lk 14:4
so obstinate, and said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand.' He stretched it out and Ep 4:18
6 his hand was restored. ·The Pharisees went out and began at once to plot with the
Herodians[a] against him, discussing how to destroy him.

The crowds follow Jesus

‖Mt 12:15–16

7 Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the lakeside, and great crowds from Galilee ‖Mt 4:25
8 followed him. From Judaea,[b] ·and from Jerusalem, and from Idumaea and Trans- ‖Lk 6:17–19
jordan and the region of Tyre and Sidon, great numbers who had heard of all he

5:43; 7:36; 8:26, even by the apostles, 8:30; 9:9. The silence is not to be broken until after his death, Mt 10:27j. Since the prevailing idea of the Messiah was nationalistic and warlike, in sharp contrast with his own ideal, Jesus had to be very careful, at least on Israelite soil, *see* 5:19, to avoid giving a false and dangerous impression of his mission, *see* Mt 13:13e; Jn 6:15. Some have claimed that this command of silence ('the messianic secret') is an invention of Mark. But it may well have been Jesus' own, to which Mark has given special prominence. With the exception of Mt 9:30, Mt and Lk record the injunction to silence only in passages which are parallel with Mk, frequently omitting it even in those cases.

n. lit. 'came out', i.e. from Capernaum, v. 35. This is the primary sense, but it is possible that another lies behind it, namely the 'coming forth' of Jesus from God, Jn 8:42; 13:3; 16:27seq., 30; cf. Lk 4:43.

2 **a.** Jesus here claims the divine power to forgive sins, Is 1:18j, which he will exercise frequently in the course of his ministry. He himself connects this power with his death, Mt 20:28g, and with the blood of the covenant, Mt 26:28h. The Christian communities will in their turn attribute this divine power to the risen Christ, e.g. Ac 2:38; 3:19; 10:43; 13:38; Rm 3:21–26,24i; 5:6–9; Ep 1:7; 4:32; Col 1:14; 3:13; Heb 9:26; 1 Jn 1:7; 2:12; Rv 1:5. But Jesus also entrusts this power to his disciples, promising that God will ratify their decisions, Mt 16:19; 18:18; Jn 20:23.

b. The Sea of Galilee ('Lake of Tiberias').

c. In Mt and Lk the disciples' fault is to pick ears of corn to appease their hunger, but in Mk it is to tear them up in order to make a path. This would have been more intelligible to readers unfamiliar with Jewish casuistry. While it was far from clear that picking ears of corn amounted to 'harvesting', it was obvious that one should not devastate a field in order to cross it! This version sits awkwardly to the rest of the story.

d. The high priest of 1 S 21:1–7 was in fact Ahimelech. Either his son Abiathar is named here because, as high priest in David's reign, 2 S 20:25, he was the better known, or else Mk is following a different tradition according to which Abiathar was Ahimelech's father (2 S 8:17 Hebr.).

e. This verse, lacking in Mt and Lk, must have been added by Mk when the new spirit of Christianity had already reduced the importance of the Sabbath obligation, *see* Lk 5:39f.

3 **a.** The term signifies not officials of the court of Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee, *see* Lk 3:1c, but politically minded Jews actively supporting his dynasty and enjoying his favour, cf. Mt 22:11c.

b. Punctuation uncertain. 'From Judaea . . . Sidon' may be read with what precedes or with what follows.

was doing came to him. ·And he asked his disciples to have a boat ready for him 9
because of the crowd, to keep him from being crushed. ·For he had cured so many 10
5:30b that all who were afflicted in any way were crowding forward to touch him. ·And 11
Mt 8:29k; 14:33+ ‖Lk 4:41 1:34m the unclean spirits, whenever they saw him, would fall down before him and shout,
'You are the Son of God!' ·But he warned them strongly not to make him known. 12

‖Mt 10:1–4 ‖Lk 6:12–16 **The appointment of the Twelve**

He now went up onto the mountain and summoned those he wanted. So they came 13
=6:7 to him ·and he appointed twelve; [c] they were to be his companions and to be sent 14
out to proclaim the message, ·with power to drive out devils. ·And so he appointed 15, 16
Mt 16:18f Jn 1:42 the Twelve, Simon to whom he gave the name Peter, ·James the son of Zebedee 17
and John the brother of James, to whom he gave the name Boanerges or 'Sons of
Lk 9:54 Thunder'; ·Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the son of 18
Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot ·and Judas Iscariot, the man who was to 19
betray him. [d]

His family are concerned about Jesus

2:2 6:31 Jn 7:5 He went home again, and once more such a crowd collected that they could not 20
Jn 10:20 even have a meal. ·When his relations heard of this, they set out to take charge of 21
him; they said, [e] 'He is out of his mind.'

‖Mt 12:24–32 ‖Lk 11:15–23; 12:10 **Allegations of the scribes**

The scribes who had come down from Jerusalem were saying, 'Beelzebul [f] is in 22
him,' and, 'It is through the prince of devils that he drives devils out.' ·So he called 23
them to him and spoke to them in parables, ·'How can Satan drive out Satan? If a 24
kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot last. ·And if a household is 25
divided against itself, that household can never last. ·Now if Satan has rebelled 26
against himself and is divided, he cannot last either—it is the end of him.
But no one can make his way into a strong man's house and plunder his property 27
unless he has first tied up the strong man. Only then can he plunder his house.
'In truth I tell you, all human sins will be forgiven, and all the blasphemies ever 28
uttered; ·but anyone who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be for- 29
given, but is guilty of an eternal sin.' ·This was because they were saying, 'There is 30
an unclean spirit in him.'

The true kinsmen of Jesus

‖Mt 12:46–50 ‖Lk 8:19–21 Now his mother and his brothers arrived and, standing outside, sent in a message 31
asking for him. ·A crowd was sitting round him at the time the message was passed 32
to him, 'Look, your mother and brothers and sisters are outside asking for you.'
He replied, 'Who are my mother and my brothers?' ·And looking at those sit- 33, 34
ting in a circle round him, he said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers.
Anyone who does the will of God, that person is my brother and sister and mother.' 35

Parable of the sower

‖Mt 13:1–9 ‖Lk 8:4–8 **4** Again he began to teach them by the lakeside, but such a huge crowd gathered 1
round him that he got into a boat on the water and sat there. The whole crowd
2:13 were at the lakeside on land. ·He taught them many things in parables, and in the 2
course of his teaching he said to them, ·'Listen! Imagine a sower going out to sow. 3
Now it happened that, as he sowed, some of the seed fell on the edge of the path, 4
and the birds came and ate it up. ·Some seed fell on rocky ground where it found 5
little soil and at once sprang up, because there was no depth of earth; ·and when 6
the sun came up it was scorched and, not having any roots, it withered away.
Some seed fell into thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it produced 7
no crop. ·And some seeds fell into rich soil, grew tall and strong, and produced a 8
good crop; the yield was thirty, sixty, even a hundredfold.' ·And he said, 'Anyone 9
who has ears for listening should listen!'

Why Jesus spoke in parables

||Mt 13:10–15
||Lk 8:9–10

10 When he was alone, the Twelve, together with the others who formed his company,
11 asked what the parables meant. ·He told them, 'To you is granted the secret of the kingdom of God, but to those who are outside everything comes in parables,

Rm 16:25*l*
Col 4:3
Col 4:5

12 so that [a] *they may look and look, but never perceive;*
listen and listen, but never understand;
to avoid changing their ways and being healed.'

Is 6:9–10,10k

The parable of the sower explained

||Mt 13:18–23
||Lk 8:11–15

13 He said to them, 'Do you not understand this parable? Then how will you under-
14, 15 stand any of the parables? [b] ·What the sower is sowing is the word. ·Those on the edge of the path where the word is sown are people who have no sooner heard it than Satan at once comes and carries away the word that was sown in them.
16 Similarly, those who are sown on patches of rock are people who, when first they
17 hear the word, welcome it at once with joy. ·But they have no root deep down and do not last; should some trial come, or some persecution on account of the
18 word, at once they fall away. ·Then there are others who are sown in thorns. Jr 4:3–4
19 These have heard the word, ·but the worries of the world, the lure of riches and all the other passions come in to choke the word, and so it produces nothing.
20 And there are those who have been sown in rich soil; they hear the word and accept it and yield a harvest, thirty and sixty and a hundredfold.'

Receiving and handing on the teaching of Jesus [c]

||Mt 5:15
||Lk 8:16; =11:33

21 He also said to them, 'Is a lamp brought in to be put under a tub or under the bed?
22 Surely to be put on the lamp-stand? ·For there is nothing hidden, but it must be ||Mt 10:26
23 disclosed, nothing kept secret except to be brought to light. ·Anyone who has ears ||Lk 8:17; =12:2 for listening should listen!'

Parable of the measure

24 He also said to them, 'Take notice of what you are hearing. The standard you use ||Lk 8:18[a]
25 will be used for you—and you will receive more besides; ·anyone who has, will be ||Mt 7:2
given more; anyone who has not, will be deprived even of what he has.' ||Lk 6:38
||Mt 25:29
||Lk 8:18[b]; 19:26

Parable of the seed growing by itself

26 He also said, 'This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the Jm 5:7
27 land. ·Night and day, while he sleeps, when he is awake, the seed is sprouting and
28 growing; how, he does not know. ·Of its own accord the land produces first the
29 shoot, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. ·And when the crop is ready, at once he starts to reap because the harvest has come.' [d]

Jl 4:13
Rv 14:15–16

c. The new leaders of the chosen people have to be twelve in number, as the tribes of Israel had been. This number is to be re-instituted after Judas' defection, Ac 1:26, to be preserved for ever in heaven, Mt 19:28 and par.; Rv 21:12–14j.

d. Mk has here no discourse like the one given at this point in Mt 5–7 and Lk 6:20–49. The details of Jesus' teaching in relation to the Jewish law would doubtless be seen as less necessary for the readers of the gospel than a record of what Jesus was and did. ..

e. lit. 'because they said'. Others translate 'because it was told (them)'.

f. To attribute to the Evil One what in fact is the work of the Holy Spirit amounts to shutting oneself off from divine grace and the forgiveness that flows from it. In its very nature such an attitude makes salvation impossible. But grace can change this attitude, so that a return to salvation remains possible, *see* 1:23g.

4 **a.** The conjunction (Mt avoids it) is equivalent to 'in order that the scripture might be fulfilled that says . . .'.

b. The apostles' incomprehension of Jesus' works and words is a recurrent theme of Mk: 6:52; 7:18; 8:17–18,21,33; 9:10,32; 10:38. With the exception of certain parallel places (Mt 15:16; 16:9,23; 20:22; Lk 9:45) and of Lk 18:34; 24:25,45, Mt and Lk often pass over such remarks in silence, or even amend them; compare Mt 14:33 with Mk 6:51–52, and cf. Mt 13:51, *see* Jn 14:26r.

c. Mk, followed by Lk, has collected here, vv. 21–25, four little parables which can be interpreted differently according to the contexts in which they are used; see the applications made by Lk's reduplications and Mt's parallels. In the present context they can all be understood of the teaching of Jesus, a light which must shine out, and for which the recipients are in some way responsible.

d. The kingdom will achieve its full development by virtue of its own hidden intrinsic power.

‖Mt 13:31–32 ‖Lk 13:18–19
Parable of the mustard seed

He also said, 'What can we say that the kingdom is like? What parable can we find 30
for it? ·It is like a mustard seed which, at the time of its sowing, is the smallest of all 31
the seeds on earth. ·Yet once it is sown it grows into the biggest shrub of them all 32
Dn 4:9,18 and puts out big branches so that the birds of the air can shelter in its shade.'

‖Mt 13:34–35
The use of parables

Using many parables like these, he spoke the word to them, so far as they were 33
capable of understanding it. ·He would not speak to them except in parables, but 34
he explained everything to his disciples when they were by themselves.

‖Mt 8:18,23–27 ‖Lk 8:22–25
The calming of the storm

With the coming of evening that same day, he said to them, 'Let us cross over to 35
the other side.' ·And leaving the crowd behind they took him, just as he was, in the 36
boat; and there were other boats with him. ·Then it began to blow a great gale and 37
the waves were breaking into the boat so that it was almost swamped. ·But he was 38
in the stern, his head on the cushion, asleep. ·They woke him and said to him, 39
'Master, do you not care? We are lost!' And he woke up and rebuked the wind and
said to the sea, 'Quiet now! Be calm!' And the wind dropped, and there followed
a great calm. ·Then he said to them, 'Why are you so frightened? Have you still no 40
Mt 8:10b faith?'[e] ·They were overcome with awe and said to one another, 'Who can this be? 41
1:27 Even the wind and the sea obey him.'

‖Mt 8:28–34 ‖Lk 8:26–39
The Gerasene demoniac

5 They reached the territory of the Gerasenes[a] on the other side of the lake, 1
and when he disembarked, a man with an unclean spirit at once came out 2
from the tombs towards him. ·The man lived in the tombs and no one could secure 3
him any more, even with a chain, ·because he had often been secured with fetters 4
and chains but had snapped the chains and broken the fetters, and no one had the
strength to control him. ·All night and all day, among the tombs and in the 5
mountains, he would howl and gash himself with stones. ·Catching sight of Jesus 6
from a distance, he ran up and fell at his feet ·and shouted at the top of his voice, 7
'What do you want with me, Jesus, son of the Most High God? In God's name do
not torture me!' ·For Jesus had been saying to him, 'Come out of the man, unclean 8
spirit.' ·Then he asked, 'What is your name?' He answered, 'My name is Legion, 9
Lk 8:2,11:26 for there are many of us.' ·And he begged him earnestly not to send them out of 10
the district. ·Now on the mountainside there was a great herd of pigs feeding, 11
and the unclean spirits begged him, 'Send us to the pigs, let us go into them.' 12
So he gave them leave. With that, the unclean spirits came out and went into the 13
pigs, and the herd of about two thousand pigs charged down the cliff into the lake,
and there they were drowned. ·The men looking after them ran off and told their 14
story in the city and in the country round about; and the people came to see what
had really happened. ·They came to Jesus and saw the demoniac sitting there—the 15
man who had had the legion in him—properly dressed and in his full senses, and
they were afraid. ·And those who had witnessed it reported what had happened to 16
the demoniac and what had become of the pigs. ·Then they began to implore Jesus 17
to leave their neighbourhood. ·As he was getting into the boat, the man who had 18
been possessed begged to be allowed to stay with him. ·Jesus would not let him but 19
1:34m said to him, 'Go home to your people and tell them all that the Lord in his mercy
Mt 4:25i has done for you.' ·So the man went off and proceeded to proclaim in the Decapolis 20
all that Jesus had done for him. And everyone was amazed.

‖Mt 9:18–26 ‖Lk 8:40–56
Cure of the woman with a haemorrhage. The daughter of Jairus raised to life

When Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a large crowd gathered 21
2:13 round him and he stayed by the lake. ·Then the president of the synagogue came 22

23 up, named Jairus, and seeing him, fell at his feet ·and begged him earnestly, saying,
'My little daughter is desperately sick. Do come and lay your hands on her that she
24 may be saved and may live.' ·Jesus went with him and a large crowd followed him;
they were pressing all round him.
25 Now there was a woman who had suffered from a haemorrhage for twelve years;
26 after long and painful treatment under various doctors, she had spent all she had
27 without being any the better for it; in fact, she was getting worse. ·She had heard Tb 2:10
about Jesus, and she came up through the crowd and touched his cloak from
28, 29 behind, thinking, ·'If I can just touch his clothes, I shall be saved.' ·And at once
the source of the bleeding dried up, and she felt in herself that she was cured of her
30 complaint. ·And at once aware of the power that had gone out from him, [b] Jesus
31 turned round in the crowd and said, 'Who touched my clothes?' ·His disciples
said to him, 'You see how the crowd is pressing round you; how can you ask, "Who
32 touched me?" ' ·But he continued to look all round to see who had done it.
33 Then the woman came forward, frightened and trembling [c] because she knew
what had happened to her, and she fell at his feet and told him the whole truth.
34 'My daughter,' he said, 'your faith has restored you to health; go in peace and be Mt 8:10b
free of your complaint.'
35 While he was still speaking some people arrived from the house of the president
of the synagogue to say, 'Your daughter is dead; why put the Master to any further
36 trouble?' ·But Jesus overheard what they said and he said to the president of the
37 synagogue, 'Do not be afraid; only have faith.' ·And he allowed no one to go with
38 him except Peter and James and John the brother of James. [d] ·So they came to the
house of the president of the synagogue, and Jesus noticed all the commotion, with
39 people weeping and wailing unrestrainedly. ·He went in and said to them, 'Why all
40 this commotion and crying? The child is not dead, but asleep.' ·But they ridiculed
him. So he turned them all out and, taking with him the child's father and mother Ac 9:40
41 and his own companions, he went into the place where the child lay. ·And taking 9:27
the child by the hand he said to her, *'Talitha kum!'* [e] which means, 'Little girl, I tell
42 you to get up.' ·The little girl got up at once and began to walk about, for she was
43 twelve years old. At once they were overcome with astonishment, ·and he gave
them strict orders not to let anyone know about it, and told them to give her 1:34m
something to eat.

A visit to Nazareth

‖Mt 13:53–58
‖Lk 4:16–30

1 6 Leaving that district, he went to his home town, and his disciples accompanied
2 him. ·With the coming of the Sabbath he began teaching in the synagogue, and
most of them were astonished when they heard him. They said, 'Where did the
man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been granted him, and these miracles
3 that are worked through him? ·This is the carpenter, [a] surely, the son of Mary, the
brother of James and Joset [b] and Jude and Simon? His sisters, too, are they not Mt 12:46o
4 here with us?' And they would not accept him. ·And Jesus said to them, 'A prophet
is despised only in his own country, among his own relations and in his own house';
5 and he could work no miracle there, except that he cured a few sick people by
6 laying his hands on them. ·He was amazed at their lack of faith. 7:32
1 Tm 4:14e
Mt 8:10b

The mission of the Twelve

‖Mt 10:1,9–14
‖Lk 9:1–6

7 He made a tour round the villages, teaching. ·Then he summoned the Twelve and
8 began to send them out in pairs, giving them authority over unclean spirits. ·And =3:14seq.

e. var. 'How is it that you have no faith?'

5 **a.** var. 'Gadarenes', cf. Mt, or 'Gergesenes'.
b. This power is regarded as a physical emanation that heals, cf. Lk 6:19, by contact; cf. Mk 1:41; 3:10; 6:56; 8:22.
c. Not only from a sense of shame but also because the complaint involved legal impurity, Lv 15:25.
d. These are to be privileged witnesses of the Transfiguration, 9:2, and of the agony, 14:33; cf. 1:29; 13:3.
e. Aramaic; Jesus' native tongue.

6 **a.** Not 'the carpenter's son', Mt 13:55; Mk's expression accords better with the virgin birth of Jesus.
b. var. 'Jose' or 'Joseph'.

he instructed them to take nothing for the journey except a staff[c]—no bread, no haversack, no coppers for their purses. ·They were to wear sandals but, he added, 9
'Don't take a spare tunic.' ·And he said to them, 'If you enter a house anywhere, 10
stay there until you leave the district. ·And if any place does not welcome you and 11
people refuse to listen to you, as you walk away shake off the dust under your feet
as evidence to them.' ·So they set off to proclaim repentance; ·and they cast out 12, 13
Jm 5:14seq. many devils, and anointed many sick people with oil and cured them.

‖Mt 14:1–2
‖Lk 9:7–9
Herod and Jesus

King Herod had heard about him, since by now his name was well known. Some 14
were saying,[d] 'John the Baptist has risen from the dead, and that is why miraculous
powers are at work in him.' ·Others said, 'He is Elijah,' others again, 'He is a 15
Mt 16:14c prophet, like the prophets we used to have.' ·But when Herod heard this he said, 16
'It is John whose head I cut off; he has risen from the dead.'

‖Mt 14:3–12
‖Lk 3:19–20
John the Baptist beheaded

Now it was this same Herod who had sent to have John arrested, and had had him 17
chained up in prison because of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife whom he had
Lv 18:16 married. ·For John had told Herod, 'It is against the law for you to have your 18
brother's wife.' ·As for Herodias, she was furious with him and wanted to kill him, 19
but she was not able to do so, ·because Herod was in awe of John, knowing him to 20
be a good and upright man, and gave him his protection. When he had heard him
speak he was greatly perplexed,[e] and yet he liked to listen to him.

An opportunity came on Herod's birthday when he gave a banquet for the 21
nobles of his court, for his army officers and for the leading figures in Galilee.
When the daughter of this same Herodias came in and danced, she delighted 22
Est 5:3+ Herod and his guests; so the king said to the girl, 'Ask me anything you like and I
will give it you.' ·And he swore her an oath, 'I will give you anything you ask, 23
even half my kingdom.' ·She went out and said to her mother, 'What shall I ask 24
for?' She replied, 'The head of John the Baptist.' ·The girl at once rushed back to 25
the king and made her request, 'I want you to give me John the Baptist's head,
immediately, on a dish.' ·The king was deeply distressed but, thinking of the 26
oaths he had sworn and of his guests, he was reluctant to break his word to her.
At once the king sent one of the bodyguard with orders to bring John's head. 27
The man went off and beheaded him in the prison; then he brought the head on 28
a dish and gave it to the girl, and the girl gave it to her mother. ·When John's 29
disciples heard about this, they came and took his body and laid it in a tomb.

‖8:1–10
‖Mt 14:13–21
‖Lk 9:10–17
‖Jn 6:1–13
First miracle of the loaves

The apostles rejoined Jesus and told him all they had done and taught. ·and he said 30, 31
to them, 'Come away to some lonely place all by yourselves and rest for a while';
2:2 for there were so many coming and going that there was no time for them even to
3:20 eat. ·So they went off in the boat to a lonely place where they could be by 32
themselves. ·But people saw them going, and many recognised them; and from 33
every town they all hurried to the place on foot and reached it before them. ·So as 34
Mt 9:36 he stepped ashore he saw a large crowd; and he took pity on them because they
were like sheep without a shepherd, and he set himself to teach them at some
length. ·By now it was getting very late, and his disciples came up to him and said, 35
'This is a lonely place and it is getting very late, ·so send them away, and they can 36
go to the farms and villages round about, to buy themselves something to eat.' ·He 37
replied, 'Give them something to eat yourselves.' They answered, 'Are we to go
and spend two hundred denarii on bread for them to eat?' ·He asked, 'How many 38
loaves have you? Go and see.' And when they had found out they said, 'Five, and
two fish.' ·Then he ordered them to get all the people to sit down in groups on the 39
green grass, ·and they sat down on the ground in squares of hundreds and fifties. 40
Then he took the five loaves and the two fish, raised his eyes to heaven and said the 41

blessing; then he broke the loaves and began handing them to his disciples to distribute among the people. He also shared out the two fish among them all.
42, 43 They all ate as much as they wanted. 43 They collected twelve basketfuls of scraps of
44 bread and pieces of fish. 44 Those who had eaten the loaves numbered five thousand men.

Jesus walks on the water

‖Mt 14:22–33
‖Jn 6:16–21

45 And at once he made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other
46 side near Bethsaida,[f] while he himself sent the crowd away. 46 After saying good-
47 bye to them he went off into the hills to pray. 47 When evening came, the boat was
48 far out on the sea, and he was alone on the land. 48 He could see that they were hard pressed in their rowing, for the wind was against them; and about the fourth watch of the night he came towards them, walking on the sea. He was going to pass them
49 by, 49 but when they saw him walking on the sea they thought it was a ghost and
50 cried out; 50 for they had all seen him and were terrified. But at once he spoke to
51 them and said, 'Courage! It's me! Don't be afraid.' 51 Then he got into the boat with them and the wind dropped. They were utterly and completely dumbfounded,
52 because they had not seen what the miracle of the loaves meant; their minds 4:13b were closed.

Cures at Gennesaret

‖Mt 14:34–36

53 Having made the crossing, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored there.
54, 55 When they disembarked people at once recognised him, 55 and started hurrying all through the countryside and brought the sick on stretchers to wherever they heard
56 he was. 56 And wherever he went, to village or town or farm, they laid down the sick 5:27–28 Ac 5:15 in the open spaces, begging him to let them touch even the fringe of his cloak. And all those who touched him were saved.

The traditions of the Pharisees

‖Mt 15:1–9

1 7 The Pharisees and some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered
2 round him, 2 and they noticed that some of his disciples were eating with
3 unclean hands, that is, without washing them. 3 For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, Lk 11:38 keep the tradition of the elders[a] and never eat without washing their arms as far as
4 the elbow; 4 and on returning from the market place they never eat without first sprinkling[b] themselves. There are also many other observances which have been handed down to them to keep, concerning the washing of cups and pots and bronze
5 dishes. 5 So the Pharisees and scribes asked him, 'Why do your disciples not respect
6 the tradition of the elders but eat their food with unclean hands?' 6 He answered, 'How rightly Isaiah prophesied about you hypocrites in the passage of scripture:

> *This people honours me only with lip-service,*
> *while their hearts are far from me.* Is 29:13
> 7 *Their reverence of me is worthless;*
> *the lessons they teach are nothing but human commandments.*

8, 9 You put aside the commandment of God to observe human traditions.' 9 And he said to them, 'How ingeniously you get round the commandment of God in order to
10 preserve your own tradition! 10 For Moses said: *Honour your father and your mother*,
11 and, *Anyone who curses father or mother must be put to death*. 11 But you say, "If a Ex 20:12 Dt 5:16 man says to his father or mother: Anything I have that I might have used to help Ex 21:17 Lv 20:9

c. In Mt and Lk the staff and sandals are forbidden, but the sense is the same: the complete detachment of the missioners.

d. var. 'He was saying'.

e. var. (Vulg.) 'he did many things'. Alternative, but less probable, translation '. . . gave him his protection. He heard him speak and asked him all kinds of questions and liked to listen to him.'

f. add. 'on the other side', *see* Mt 14:22.

7 a. The 'tradition of the elders' comprises the injunctions and practices added by the rabbis to the Mosaic Law.

b. var. 'bathing'. Or 'they never eat what comes from the market without having sprinkled it.'

you is Korban[e] (that is, dedicated to God)," ·then he is forbidden from that 12
moment to do anything for his father or mother. ·In this way you make God's word 13
ineffective for the sake of your tradition which you have handed down. And you
do many other things like this.'

‖Mt 15:10–20 **On clean and unclean**

He called the people to him again and said, 'Listen to me, all of you, and 14
understand. ·Nothing that goes into someone from outside can make that person 15
unclean; it is the things that come out of someone that make that person unclean.
Anyone who has ears for listening should listen!'[d] 16

4:10 When he had gone into the house, away from the crowd, his disciples questioned 17
4:13b him about the parable.[e] ·He said to them, 'Even you—don't you understand? 18
Can't you see that nothing that goes into someone from outside can make that
person unclean, ·because it goes not into the heart but into the stomach and 19
Ac 10:9–16 Rm 14 passes into the sewer?' (Thus he pronounced all foods clean.)[f] ·And he went on, 20
Col 2:16,21–22 Rm 1:29q 'It is what comes out of someone that makes that person unclean. ·For it is from 21
within, from the heart, that evil intentions emerge: fornication, theft, murder,
adultery, avarice, malice, deceit, indecency, envy, slander, pride, folly. ·All 22, 23
these evil things come from within and make a person unclean.'

III: JOURNEYS OUTSIDE GALILEE

‖Mt 15:21–28 **The daughter of the Syro-Phoenician woman healed**

1:29;2:15; 9:33;10:10 He left that place and set out for the territory of Tyre.[g] There he went into a house 24
and did not want anyone to know he was there; but he could not pass unrecognised.
At once a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit heard about him 25
and came and fell at his feet. ·Now this woman was a gentile,[h] by birth a Syro- 26
Mt 8:29k Phoenician, and she begged him to drive the devil out of her daughter. ·And 27
he said to her, 'The children should be fed first, because it is not fair to take the
Mt 7:6b children's food and throw it to the little dogs.' ·But she spoke up. 'Ah yes, sir,' she 28
replied, 'but little dogs under the table eat the scraps from the children.' ·And he 29
said to her, 'For saying this you may go home happy; the devil has gone out of your
daughter.' ·So she went off home and found the child lying on the bed and the devil 30
gone.

Healing of the deaf man

Returning from the territory of Tyre, he went by way of Sidon towards the Lake of 31
5:20 Galilee, right through the Decapolis territory. ·And they brought him a deaf man 32
who had an impediment in his speech; and they asked him to lay his hand on him.
6:5 1 Tm 4:14e He took him aside to be by themselves, away from the crowd, put his fingers into 33
the man's ears and touched his tongue with spittle. ·Then looking up to heaven he 34
sighed; and he said to him, '*Ephphatha*,' that is, 'Be opened.' ·And his ears were 35
Mt 8:3a opened, and at once the impediment of his tongue was loosened and he spoke
1:34m clearly. ·And Jesus ordered them to tell no one about it, but the more he insisted, 36
the more widely they proclaimed it. ·Their admiration was unbounded, and they 37
9:25 said, 'Everything he does is good, he makes the deaf hear and the dumb speak.'

‖Mt 15:32–39 **Second miracle of the loaves**

6:30–44 8 And now once again a great crowd had gathered, and they had nothing to eat. 1
So he called his disciples to him and said to them, ·'I feel sorry for all these 2
people; they have been with me for three days now and have nothing to eat. ·If I 3
send them off home hungry they will collapse on the way; some have come a great
distance.' ·His disciples replied, 'Where could anyone get these people enough 4
bread to eat in a deserted place?' ·He asked them, 'How many loaves have you?' 5

6 And they said to him, 'Seven.' ·Then he instructed the crowd to sit down on the
ground, and he took the seven loaves, and after giving thanks he broke them and
began handing them to his disciples to distribute; and they distributed them among
7 the crowd. ·They had a few small fishes as well, and over these he said a blessing
8 and ordered them to be distributed too. ·They ate as much as they wanted, and
9 they collected seven basketfuls of the scraps left over. ·Now there had been about
10 four thousand people. He sent them away ·and at once, getting into the boat with
his disciples, went to the region of Dalmanutha. [a]

The Pharisees ask for a sign from heaven ‖Mt 16:1–4

11 The Pharisees came up and started a discussion with him; they demanded of him a
12 sign from heaven, to put him to the test. ·And with a profound sigh he said, 'Why
does this generation demand a sign? In truth I tell you, no sign shall be given to this
13 generation.' [b] ·And, leaving them again, he re-embarked and went away to the
other side.

The yeast of the Pharisees and of Herod ‖Mt 16:5–12

14 The disciples had forgotten to take any bread and they had only one loaf with them
15 in the boat. ·Then he gave them this warning, 'Keep your eyes open; look out for
16 the yeast of the Pharisees and the yeast of Herod.' ·And they said to one another,
17 'It is because we have no bread.' ·And Jesus knew it, and he said to them, 'Why
are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not understand, still not 4:13b
18 realise? Are your minds closed? ·Have you *eyes and do not see, ears and do not* Jr 5:21
19 *hear?* Or do you not remember? ·When I broke the five loaves for the five Ezk 12:2
thousand, how many baskets full of scraps did you collect?' They answered, 6:43–44
20 'Twelve.' ·'And when I broke the seven loaves for the four thousand, how many
21 baskets full of scraps did you collect?' And they answered, 'Seven.' ·Then he said
to them, 'Do you still not realise?' [c] 4:13b

Cure of a blind man at Bethsaida

22 They came to Bethsaida, and some people brought to him a blind man whom they
23 begged him to touch. ·He took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the 5:30b
village. Then, putting spittle on his eyes and laying his hands on him, he asked, 7:33
Jn 9:6
24 'Can you see anything?' ·The man, who was beginning to see, [d] replied, 'I can see 1 Tm 4:14e
25 people; they look like trees as they walk around.' ·Then he laid his hands on the
man's eyes again and he saw clearly; he was cured, and he could see everything Mt 8:3a
26 plainly and distinctly. ·And Jesus sent him home, saying, 'Do not even go into the 1:34m
village.'

Peter's profession of faith ‖Mt 16:13–20
‖Lk 9:18–21

27 Jesus and his disciples left for the villages round Caesarea Philippi. On the way he
28 put this question to his disciples, 'Who do people say I am?' ·And they told him,
29 'John the Baptist, others Elijah, others again, one of the prophets.' ·'But you,' he
asked them, 'who do you say I am?' Peter spoke up and said to him, 'You are the
30 Christ.' ·And he gave them strict orders not to tell anyone about him. 1:34m

c. *qorban*, Aramaic word meaning an offering, especially to God. *See* Mt 15:6d.

d. Some versions omit v. 16.

e. 'Parable' in the Hebrew sense of *mashal* which includes even brief enigmatic sayings.

f. lit. 'making all foods clean'; the clause (possibly a gloss) is obscure and variously interpreted.

g. add. 'and Sidon', cf. Mt 15:21.

h. lit. 'a Greek', not racially, since she was a Syro-Phoenician, but culturally, that is to say, gentile in this context; cf. Jn 7:35; Ac 16:1.

8 **a.** Either a place-name, unidentified like the 'Magadan' of Mt 15:39, or possibly a transliteration of some Aramaic expression.

b. The refusal of any sign in Mk is often considered more primitive than the promise of 'the sign of Jonah' in Mt and Lk. It is, however, also possible that Mk has omitted a biblical allusion which would make no sense to his readers, and that in fact Jesus did promise this sign, in order to foretell the triumph of his final deliverance, as Mt has made explicit, *see* Mt 12:39*l*.

c. An invitation to the disciples to forget their materialistic preoccupation and to reflect upon Jesus' mission highlighted by his miracles.

d. Others translate 'raising his eyes'.

|Mt 16:21–23 ||Lk 9:22

First prophecy of the Passion

Then he began to teach them that the Son of man was destined to suffer grievously, 31
Mt 21:42 and to be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and to be put
9:9–10.31–32; 10:32–34 to death, and after three days to rise again; 32 and he said all this quite openly. Then, 32
taking him aside, Peter tried to rebuke him. 33 But, turning and seeing his disciples, 33
4:13b he rebuked Peter and said to him, 'Get behind me, Satan! You are thinking not as
God thinks, but as human beings do.'

|Mt 16:24–28 ||Lk 9:23–27

The condition of following Christ

He called the people and his disciples to him and said, 'If anyone wants to be a 34
follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me.
Anyone who wants to save his life will lose it; but anyone who loses his life for 35
my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. 36 What gain, then, is it for 36
anyone to win the whole world and forfeit his life? 37 And indeed what can anyone 37
Mt 10:33 offer in exchange for his life? 38 For if anyone in this sinful and adulterous generation 38
is ashamed of me and of my words, the Son of man will also be ashamed of him
when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.'

Rm 1:4 9 And he said to them, 'In truth I tell you, there are some standing here who will 1
not taste death before they see the kingdom of God come with power.'

|Mt 17:1–8 ||Lk 9:28–36

The Transfiguration [a]

5:37d Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John and led them up a 2
high mountain on their own by themselves. There in their presence he was trans-
16:5 Dn 7:9 figured: 3 his clothes became brilliantly white, whiter than any earthly bleacher 3
could make them. 4 Elijah appeared to them with Moses; and they were talking to 4
Jesus. 5 Then Peter spoke to Jesus, 'Rabbi,' he said, 'it is wonderful for us to be 5
here; so let us make three shelters, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.'
14:40 He did not know what to say; they were so frightened. 6 And a cloud came, 6, 7
1:11 covering them in shadow; and from the cloud there came a voice, 'This is my Son,
the Beloved. Listen to him.' 8 Then suddenly, when they looked round, they saw 8
no one with them any more but only Jesus.

|Mt 17:9–13

The question about Elijah

1:34m As they were coming down from the mountain he warned them to tell no one what 9
they had seen, until after the Son of man had risen from the dead. 10 They observed 10
4:13b the warning faithfully, though among themselves they discussed what 'rising from
the dead' could mean. 11 And they put this question to him, 'Why do the scribes say 11
Ml 3:23–24 that Elijah must come first?' 12 He said to them, 'Elijah is indeed first coming to set 12
everything right again; yet how is it that the scriptures say about the Son of man
that he must suffer grievously and be treated with contempt? 13 But I tell you that 13
1 K 19:2.10 Elijah has come and they have treated him as they pleased, just as the scriptures
say about him.'

|Mt 17:14–21 ||Lk 9:34–42

The epileptic demoniac

As they were rejoining the disciples they saw [b] a large crowd round them and some 14
scribes arguing with them. 15 At once, when they saw him, the whole crowd were 15
struck with amazement and ran to greet him. 16 And he asked them, 'What are you 16
arguing about with them?' 17 A man answered him from the crowd, 'Master, I have 17
Mt 8:29k brought my son to you; there is a spirit of dumbness in him, 18 and when it takes hold 18
of him it throws him to the ground, and he foams at the mouth and grinds his teeth
and goes rigid. And I asked your disciples to drive it out and they were unable to.'
In reply he said to them, 'Faithless generation, how much longer must I be among 19
you? How much longer must I put up with you? Bring him to me.' 20 They brought 20
the boy to him, and at once the spirit of dumbness threw the boy into convulsions,
and he fell to the ground and lay writhing there, foaming at the mouth. 21 Jesus 21

asked the father, 'How long has this been happening to him?' 'From childhood,' he
22 said, •'and it has often thrown him into fire and into water, in order to destroy him.
23, 24 But if you can do anything, have pity on us and help us.' ••'If you can?' retorted
Jesus. 'Everything is possible for one who has faith.' At once the father of the boy Mt 8:10b
25 cried out, 'I have faith. Help my lack of faith!' •And when Jesus saw that a crowd
was gathering, he rebuked the unclean spirit. 'Deaf and dumb spirit,' he said, 'I 7:37
26 command you: come out of him and never enter him again.' •Then it threw the boy
into violent convulsions and came out shouting, and the boy lay there so like a
27 corpse that most of them said, 'He is dead.' •But Jesus took him by the hand and 8:23
28 helped him up, and he was able to stand. •When he had gone indoors, his disciples Mt 8:15+
asked him when they were by themselves, 'Why were we unable to drive it out?'
29 He answered, 'This is the kind that can be driven out only by prayer.'[c]

Second prophecy of the Passion ||Mt 17:22–23 ||Lk 9:44–45

30 After leaving that place they made their way through Galilee; and he did not want Jn 7:1
31 anyone to know, •because he was instructing his disciples; he was telling them, 1:34m
'The Son of man will be delivered into the power of men; they will put him to 8:31e
32 death; and three days after he has been put to death he will rise again.' •But they
did not understand what he said and were afraid to ask him. 4:13b

Who is the greatest? ||Mt 18:1–5 ||Lk 9:46–48

33 They came to Capernaum, and when he got into the house he asked them, 'What 7:24g
34 were you arguing about on the road?' •They said nothing, because on the road they
35 had been arguing which of them was the greatest. •So he sat down, called the
Twelve to him and said, 'If anyone wants to be first, he must make himself last of
36 all and servant of all.' •He then took a little child whom he set among them and
37 embraced, and he said to them, ••'Anyone who welcomes a little child such as this
in my name, welcomes me; and anyone who welcomes me, welcomes not me but Mt 10:40+
the one who sent me.'

On using the name of Jesus ||Lk 9:49–50

38 John said to him, 'Master, we saw someone who is not one of us driving out devils
39 in your name, and because he was not one of us we tried to stop him.' •But Jesus Nb 11:28
said, 'You must not stop him; no one who works a miracle in my name could soon Ac 3:16*l*
40 afterwards speak evil of me. •Anyone who is not against us is for us. 1 Co 12:3 Mt 12:30par.

Generosity shown to Christ's disciples ||Mt 10:42

41 'If anyone gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ, then in 1 Co 3:23r
truth I tell you, he will most certainly not lose his reward.

On leading others astray ||Mt 18:6–9 ||Lk 17:1–2

42 'But anyone who is the downfall of one of these little ones who have faith,[d] would
43 be better thrown into the sea with a great millstone hung round his neck. •And if
your hand should be your downfall, cut it off; it is better for you to enter into life ||Mt 18:8–9
crippled, than to have two hands and go to hell, into the fire that can never be put
[44] 45 out.[e] ••And if your foot should be your downfall, cut it off; it is better for you to
[46] 47 enter into life lame, than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. •And if your eye
should be your downfall, tear it out; it is better for you to enter into the kingdom of

e. Peter's profession of faith is the turning point of the plan of Mk, *see* page 1604. His closest disciples have at last recognised that he is the Messiah; but they still have to learn how the work of the Messiah will be done in a completely unexpected way, cf. 9:32; 10:38.

9 a. While Mt presents the Transfiguration as a proclamation of Jesus as the new Moses, *see* Mt 17:1a, and Lk emphasises the approaching Passion, *see* Lk 9:28f, Mk, following the dominant theme of his Gospel, sees in it above all a glorious manifestation of the hidden Messiah. Briefly, the disciples experience the heavenly quality of Jesus, described by means of symbols whose meaning is clear from apocalyptic literature, e.g. Dn 10:5–10.

b. var. 'he rejoined . . . he saw'.

c. var. 'by prayer and fasting'.

d. add. 'in me'.

e. omitting, with the best MSS, vv. 44 and 46 (Vulg.), as repetitions of v. 48.

God with one eye, than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell ·where *their worm* 48
Is 66:24+ *will never die nor their fire be put out.* ·For everyone will be salted with fire.[f] ·Salt 49, 50
Lv 2:13+ ‖Mt 5:13 is a good thing, but if salt has become insipid, how can you make it salty again?
‖Lk 14:34 Have salt in yourselves and be at peace with one another.'
Col 4:6
Rm 12:18

‖Mt 19:1–9 **The question about divorce**

10 After leaving there, he came into the territory of Judaea and Transjordan. 1
And again crowds gathered round him, and again he taught them, as his
custom was. ·Some Pharisees approached him and asked, 'Is it lawful for a man to 2
divorce his wife?' They were putting him to the test. ·He answered them, 'What 3
Dt 24:1 did Moses command you?' ·They replied, 'Moses allowed us to draw up a writ of 4
dismissal in cases of divorce.' ·Then Jesus said to them, 'It was because you were 5
so hard hearted that he wrote this commandment for you. ·But from the beginning 6
Gn 1:27;2:24 of creation *he made them male and female.* ·*This is why a man leaves his father and* 7
mother,[a] ·*and the two become one flesh.* They are no longer two, therefore, but 8
one flesh. ·So then, what God has united, human beings must not divide.' ·Back in 9, 10
7:24g the house the disciples questioned him again about this, ·and he said to them, 11
‖Mt 5:32 'Whoever divorces his wife and marries another is guilty of adultery against her.
‖Lk 16:18 And if a woman divorces her husband[b] and marries another she is guilty of adultery 12
too.'

‖Mt 19:13–15 **Jesus and the children**
‖Lk 18:15–17
Lk 9:47 People were bringing little children to him, for him to touch them. The disciples 13
scolded them, ·but when Jesus saw this he was indignant and said to them, 'Let the 14
little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the
kingdom of God belongs. ·In truth I tell you, anyone who does not welcome 15
the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.' ·Then he embraced 16
them, laid his hands on them and gave them his blessing.

‖Mt 19:16–22 **The rich young man**
‖Lk 18:18–23
He was setting out on a journey when a man ran up, knelt before him and put this 17
question to him, 'Good master, what must I do to inherit eternal life?' ·Jesus said 18
to him, 'Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. ·You know the 19
Ex 20:12–16 Dt 5:16–20; 24:14 commandments: *You shall not kill; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not*
steal; You shall not give false witness; You shall not defraud; *Honour your father*
and mother.' ·And he said to him, 'Master, I have kept all these since my earliest 20
days.' ·Jesus looked steadily at him and he was filled with love for him, and he said, 21
Lk 12:33d 'You need to do one thing more. Go and sell what you own and give the money to
the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.' ·But his 22
face fell at these words and he went away sad, for he was a man of great wealth.

‖Mt 19:23–26 **The danger of riches**
‖Lk 18:24–27
Jesus looked round and said to his disciples, 'How hard it is for those who have 23
riches to enter the kingdom of God!' ·The disciples were astounded by these 24
words,[c] but Jesus insisted, 'My children,' he said to them, 'how hard it is to enter
the kingdom of God! ·It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle 25
than for someone rich to enter the kingdom of God.' ·They were more aston- 26
Zc 8:6–7 ished than ever, saying to one another, 'In that case, who can be saved?' ·Jesus 27
gazed at them and said, 'By human resources it is impossible, but not for God:
because for God everything is possible.'

‖Mt 19:27–30 **The reward of renunciation**
‖Lk 18:28–30
Peter took this up. 'Look,' he said to him, 'we have left everything and followed 28
you.' ·Jesus said, 'In truth I tell you, there is no one who has left house, brothers, 29
1:1a sisters, mother, father, children or land for my sake and for the sake of the gospel
who will not receive a hundred times as much, houses, brothers, sisters, mothers, 30

children and land—and persecutions too—now in this present time and, in the
31 world to come, eternal life. •Many who are first will be last, and the last, first.'

Third prophecy of the Passion

‖Mt 20:17–19
‖Lk 18:31–33

32 They were on the road, going up to Jerusalem; Jesus was walking on ahead of
them; they were in a daze, and those who followed were apprehensive. Once more
taking the Twelve aside he began to tell them what was going to happen to him,
33 'Now we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of man is about to be handed 8:31e
over to the chief priests and the scribes. They will condemn him to death and will
34 hand him over to the gentiles, •who will mock him and spit at him and scourge him
and put him to death; and after three days he will rise again.'

The sons of Zebedee make their request

35 James and John, the sons of Zebedee, approached him. 'Master,' they said to him, ‖Mt 20:20–23
36 'We want you to do us a favour.' •He said to them, 'What is it you want me to do
37 for you?' •They said to him, 'Allow us to sit one at your right hand and the other at
38 your left in your glory.'[d] •But Jesus said to them, 'You do not know what you are 4:13b
asking. Can you drink the cup that I shall drink, or be baptised with the baptism
39 with which I shall be baptised?'[e] •They replied, 'We can.' Jesus said to them, 'The
cup that I shall drink you shall drink, and with the baptism with which I shall be
40 baptised you shall be baptised, •but as for seats at my right hand or my left, these
are not mine to grant; they belong to those to whom they have been allotted.'

Leadership with service

‖Mt 20:24–28
‖Lk 22:24–27

41 When the other ten heard this they began to feel indignant with James and John,
42 so Jesus called them to him and said to them, 'You know that among the gentiles
those they call their rulers lord it over them, and their great men make their
43 authority felt. •Among you this is not to happen. No; anyone who wants to become
44 great among you must be your servant, •and anyone who wants to be first among
45 you must be slave to all. •For the Son of man himself came not to be served but to
serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.'

The blind man of Jericho

46 They reached Jericho; and as he left Jericho with his disciples and a great crowd,
Bartimaeus—that is, the son of Timaeus—a blind beggar, was sitting at the side of ‖Mt 20:29–34
47 the road. •When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout and cry ‖Lk 18:35–43
48 out, 'Son of David, Jesus, have pity on me.' •And many of them scolded him and
told him to keep quiet, but he only shouted all the louder, 'Son of David, have pity
49 on me.' •Jesus stopped and said, 'Call him here.' So they called the blind man over.
50 'Courage,' they said, 'get up; he is calling you.' •So throwing off his cloak, he
51 jumped up and went to Jesus. •Then Jesus spoke, 'What do you want me to do for
52 you?' The blind man said to him, 'Rabbuni,[f] let me see again.' •Jesus said to him, Mt 8:10b
'Go; your faith has saved you.' And at once his sight returned and he followed him Jn 20:16
along the road.

f. This 'seasoning' fire means either penalties by which the sinner is punished and at the same time preserved, or (preferably) the purifying fire of trials by which the faithful become sacrifices pleasing to God, *see* Lv 2:13 (to this alludes an add. 'and every victim must be salted with salt'). It appears that v. 50, cf. Mt 5:13, has been inserted here for no other reason than the recurrence of the word 'salt'.

10a. add. 'and clings to his wife', cf. Gn 2:24 and Mt 19:5.

b. This clause reflects Roman law, for Jewish law permitted only a husband, not a wife, to divorce.

c. Wealth and prosperity were considered signs of God's favour, *see* pp. 750–1.

d. When, as Messianic King, your triumph is assured.

e. To drink the cup, cf. 14:36, and to be baptised are symbols of the approaching Passion: Jesus is to be 'immersed' (Gk: *baptizein*) in suffering.

f. Aramaic 'My master' or 'Master'; cf. Jn 20:16.

IV: THE JERUSALEM MINISTRY

The Messiah enters Jerusalem

‖Mt 21:1–11 ‖Lk 19:28–38 ‖Jn 12:12–16

11 When they were approaching Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, close 1
by the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples ·and said to them, 'Go 2
to the village facing you, and as you enter it you will at once find a tethered colt
that no one has yet ridden. Untie it and bring it here. ·If anyone says to you, 3
"What are you doing?" say, "The Master needs it and will send it back here at
once." ' ·They went off and found a colt tethered near a door in the open street. 4
As they untied it, ·some men standing there said, 'What are you doing, untying 5
that colt?' ·They gave the answer Jesus had told them, and the men let them go. 6
Then they took the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on its back, and he 7
mounted it. ·Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others greenery 8
which they had cut in the fields. ·And those who went in front and those who 9
Ps 118:25–26 followed were all shouting, '*Hosanna! Blessed is he who is coming in the name of*
2 S 7:16 *the Lord!* ·Blessed is the coming kingdom of David our father! *Hosanna* in the 10
highest heavens!' ·He entered Jerusalem and went into the Temple; and when he 11
had surveyed it all, as it was late by now, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve.

The barren fig tree [a]

‖Mt 21:18–19

Next day as they were leaving Bethany, he felt hungry. ·Seeing a fig tree in leaf 12, 13
some distance away, he went to see if he could find any fruit on it, but when he
came up to it he found nothing but leaves; for it was not the season for figs. ·And 14
he addressed the fig tree, 'May no one ever eat fruit from you again.' And his
disciples heard him say this.

The expulsion of the dealers from the Temple

‖Mt 21:12–13,17 ‖Lk 19:45–48 ‖Jn 2:14–16

So they reached Jerusalem and he went into the Temple and began driving out the 15
men selling and buying there; he upset the tables of the money changers and
the seats of the dove sellers. ·Nor would he allow anyone to carry anything through 16
Is 56:7 the Temple. ·And he taught them and said, 'Does not scripture say: *My house will* 17
be called a house of prayer for all peoples? [b] But you have turned it into *a bandits'*
Jr 7:11 *den*.' ·This came to the ears of the chief priests and the scribes, and they tried to 18
find some way of doing away with him; they were afraid of him because the people
were carried away by his teaching. ·And when evening came he went out of the 19
city.

The fig tree withered. Faith and prayer

‖Mt 21:20–22

Next morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree withered to the roots. 20
Peter remembered. 'Look, Rabbi,' he said to Jesus, 'the fig tree that you cursed 21
Mt 8:10b has withered away.' ·Jesus answered, 'Have faith in God. ·In truth I tell you, if 22, 23
anyone says to this mountain, "Be pulled up and thrown into the sea," with no
Jn 11:22 doubt in his heart, but believing that what he says will happen, it will be done for
1 Co 13:2 Mt 7:7+ him. ·I tell you, therefore, everything you ask and pray for, believe that you have 24
Mt 6:14–15 it already, and it will be yours. ·And when you stand in prayer, forgive whatever 25
you have against anybody, so that your Father in heaven may forgive your failings
too.' [c][26]

The authority of Jesus is questioned

‖Mt 21:23–27 ‖Lk 20:1–8

They came to Jerusalem again, and as Jesus was walking in the Temple, the chief 27
Jn 2:18 priests and the scribes and the elders came to him, ·and they said to him, 'What 28
authority have you for acting like this? Or who gave you authority to act like this?'
Jesus said to them, 'And I will ask you a question, just one; answer me and I will 29
tell you my authority for acting like this. ·John's baptism, what was its origin, 30

31 heavenly or human? Answer me that.' ·And they argued this way among themselves, 'If we say heavenly, he will say, "Then why did you refuse to believe him?"
32 But dare we say human?'—they had the people to fear, for everyone held that
33 John had been a real prophet. ·So their reply to Jesus was, 'We do not know.' And Mt 16:14c
Jesus said to them, 'Nor will I tell you my authority for acting like this.'

Parable of the wicked tenants ‖Mt 21:33–46 ‖Lk 20:9–19

1 12 He went on to speak to them in parables, 'A man planted a vineyard; he Is 5:1a
fenced it round, dug out a trough for the winepress and built a tower; then
2 he leased it to tenants and went abroad. ·When the time came, he sent a servant to
3 the tenants to collect from them his share of the produce of the vineyard. ·But they
4 seized the man, thrashed him and sent him away empty handed. ·Next he sent
another servant to them; him they beat about the head and treated shamefully.
5 And he sent another and him they killed; then a number of others, and they
6 thrashed some and killed the rest. ·He had still someone left: his beloved son. He
7 sent him to them last of all, thinking, "They will respect my son." ·But those
tenants said to each other, "This is the heir. Come on, let us kill him, and the
8 inheritance will be ours." ·So they seized him and killed him and threw him out of
9 the vineyard. ·Now what will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and
10 make an end of the tenants and give the vineyard to others. ·Have you not read
this text of scripture:

The stone which the builders rejected Ps 118:22–23
has become the cornerstone;
11 *this is the Lord's doing,*
and we marvel at it?'

12 And they would have liked to arrest him, because they realised that the parable was aimed at them, but they were afraid of the crowds. So they left him alone and went away.

On tribute to Caesar ‖Mt 22:15–22 ‖Lk 20:20–26

13 Next they sent to him some Pharisees and some Herodians to catch him out in what 3:6a
14 he said. ·These came and said to him, 'Master, we know that you are an honest man, that you are not afraid of anyone, because human rank means nothing to you, and that you teach the way of God in all honesty. Is it permissible to pay taxes
15 to Caesar or not? Should we pay or not?' ·Recognising their hypocrisy he said to them, 'Why are you putting me to the test? Hand me a denarius and let me see it.'
16 They handed him one and he said to them, 'Whose portrait is this? Whose title?'
17 They said to him, 'Caesar's.' ·Jesus said to them, 'Pay Caesar what belongs to Caesar—and God what belongs to God.' And they were amazed at him.

The resurrection of the dead ‖Mt 22:23–33 ‖Lk 20:27–40

18 Then some Sadducees—who deny that there is a resurrection—came to him and
19 they put this question to him, ·'Master, Moses prescribed for us that if a man's Dt 25:5a
brother dies leaving a wife but no child, the man must marry the widow to raise up
20 children for his brother. ·Now there were seven brothers; the first married a wife

11 a. The Synoptic Gospels present here a different order which must be explained by the literary evolution of the tradition. On the one hand the entry into Jerusalem and the expulsion of the merchants from the Temple, given by Mt and Lk on the same day, are spread over two days by Mk, and separated by the incident of the cursing of the fig tree. On the other hand, the withered fig tree (and also its curse in Mt) are put by Mk between the expulsion of the merchants and the discussion of Jesus' authority, two incidents which must originally have come one after the other, *see* Jn 2:14–22. These divergencies are explained if the episode of the fig tree was introduced later into a primitive account (note that it is absent from Lk), and this in two stages: first the curse, then the withering, a later addition intended to draw out of the fulfilment of the curse a lesson on the efficacy of prayer with faith. In Mk alone has this lesson brought with it, by verbal association, a saying on forgiveness which Mt uses after the Lord's Prayer, Mt 6:14.

b. Of the synoptics only Mk quotes, no doubt deliberately, these last three words of Isaiah's text; they foretell the worldwide worship of the messianic age.

c. add. v. 26 'But if you do not forgive, your Father in heaven will not forgive your failings either,' cf. Mt 6:15.

and then died leaving no children. •The second married the widow, and he too died 21
leaving no children; with the third it was the same, •and none of the seven left 22
any children. Last of all the woman herself died. •Now at the resurrection, when 23
they rise again, whose wife will she be, since she had been married to
all seven?'

Jesus said to them, 'Surely the reason why you are wrong is that you understand 24
neither the scriptures nor the power of God. •For when they rise from the dead, 25
men and women do not marry; no, they are like the angels in heaven. •Now about 26
the dead rising again, have you never read in the Book of Moses, in the passage
Ex 3:6 about the bush,[a] how God spoke to him and said: *I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob*? •He is God, not of the dead, but of the living. 27
You are very much mistaken.'

‖Mt 22:34–40 ‖Lk 10:25–28 **The greatest commandment of all**

One of the scribes who had listened to them debating appreciated that Jesus had 28
given a good answer and put a further question to him, 'Which is the first of all the
Dt 6:4–5 commandments?' •Jesus replied, 'This is the first: *Listen, Israel, the Lord our God* 29
is the one, only Lord,[b] •*and you must love the Lord your God with all your heart,* 30
with all your soul, with all your mind *and with all your strength.* •The second is this: 31
Lv 19:18 *You must love your neighbour as yourself.* There is no commandment greater than
these.' •The scribe said to him, 'Well spoken, Master; what you have said is true, 32
Dt 6:4;4:35 that *he is one and there is no other.* •To *love him with all your heart, with all your* 33
1 S 15:22 Ps 40:6–8 Am 5:21n *understanding and strength*, and to *love your neighbour as yourself*, this is far more
important than any burnt offering or sacrifice.' •Jesus, seeing how wisely he had 34
spoken, said, 'You are not far from the kingdom of God.' And after that no one
‖Mt 22:46 ‖Lk 20:40 dared to question him any more.

‖Mt 22:41–46 ‖Lk 20:41–44 **Jesus not only son but also Lord of David**

While teaching in the Temple, Jesus said, 'How can the scribes maintain that the 35
Mt 9:27m Christ is the son of David? •David himself, moved by the Holy Spirit, said: 36

Ps 110:1

> *The Lord declared to my Lord,*
> *take your seat at my right hand*
> *till I have made your enemies*
> *your footstool.*

David himself calls him Lord; in what way then can he be his son?' And the great 37
crowd listened to him with delight.

‖Mt 23:6–7 ‖Lk 20:45–47; 11:43 **The scribes condemned by Jesus**

In his teaching he said, 'Beware of the scribes who like to walk about in long robes, 38
Lk 14:7,8 to be greeted respectfully in the market squares, •to take the front seats in the 39
synagogues and the places of honour at banquets; •these are the men who devour 40
the property of widows and for show offer long prayers. The more severe will be
the sentence they receive.'

‖Lk 21:1–4 **The widow's mite**

He sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the 41
treasury,[c] and many of the rich put in a great deal. •A poor widow came and put in 42
two small coins, the equivalent of a penny. •Then he called his disciples and said to 43
them, 'In truth I tell you, this poor widow has put more in than all who have
contributed to the treasury; •for they have all put in money they could spare, but 44
she in her poverty has put in everything she possessed, all she had to live on.'

‖Mt 24:1–3 ‖Lk 21:5–7 **The eschatological discourse: Introduction**[a]

13 As he was leaving the Temple one of his disciples said to him, 'Master, look 1
at the size of those stones! Look at the size of those buildings!' •And Jesus 2

said to him, 'You see these great buildings? Not a single stone will be left on another; everything will be pulled down.'

3 And while he was sitting on the Mount of Olives, facing the Temple, Peter, 1:29;5:37*o*
4 James, John and Andrew questioned him when they were by themselves, •'Tell us, when is this going to happen, and what sign will there be that it is all about to take place?'

The beginning of sorrows ‖Mt 24:4–14 ‖Lk 21:8–19

5, 6 Then Jesus began to tell them, 'Take care that no one deceives you. •Many will
7 come using my name and saying, "I am he," and they will deceive many. •When you hear of wars and rumours of wars, do not be alarmed; this is something that
8 must happen, but the end will not be yet. •For nation will fight against nation, and Dn 2:28
kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. This is the beginning of the birth-pangs.
9 'Be on your guard: you will be handed over to sanhedrins; you will be beaten in ‖Mt 10:17–22
synagogues; and you will be brought before governors and kings for my sake, as
10 evidence to them, •since the gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations.
11 'And when you are taken to be handed over, do not worry beforehand about ‖Lk 12:11–12
what to say; no, say whatever is given to you when the time comes, because it is not
12 you who will be speaking; it is the Holy Spirit. •Brother will betray brother to Mt 10:36
death, and a father his child; children will come forward against their parents and
13 have them put to death. •You will be universally hated on account of my name; but Jn 15:18–21,18f
anyone who stands firm to the end will be saved.

The great tribulation of Jerusalem ‖Mt 24:15–25 ‖Lk 21:20–24 1 M 1:54 Dn 9:27;11:31; 12:11

14 'When you see *the appalling abomination* set up where it ought not to be (let
15 the reader understand), then those in Judaea must escape to the mountains; •if a man is on the housetop, he must not come down or go inside to collect anything
16 from his house; •if a man is in the fields, he must not turn back to fetch his cloak.
17 Alas for those with child, or with babies at the breast, when those days come!
18, 19 Pray that this may not be in winter. •For in those days there will be *great distress,* Dn 12:1
20 *unparalleled since* God created the world, and such as will never be again. •And if the Lord had not shortened that time, no human being would have survived; but he did shorten the time, for the sake of the elect whom he chose.
21 'And if anyone says to you then, "Look, here is the Christ" or, "Look, he is
22 there," do not believe it; •for false Christs and false prophets will arise and produce
23 signs and portents to deceive the elect, if that were possible. •You, therefore, must be on your guard. I have given you full warning.

The coming of the Son of man [b] ‖Mt 24:29–31 ‖Lk 21:25–27

24 'But in those days, after that time of distress, the sun will be darkened, the moon
25 will not give its light, •the stars will come falling out of the sky and the powers in
26 the heavens will be shaken. •And then they will see the Son of man coming in the Dn 7:13–14
27 clouds with great power and glory. •And then he will send the angels to gather his Mt 8:20h Dt 30:3–4 Zc 2:10–17
elect from the four winds, from the ends of the world to the ends of the sky.

12 **a.** i.e. in which the burning bush incident is narrated.
b. Monotheism is as uncompromising in the NT as it is in Judaism. Here, on Jesus' lips, it is based on the *shema*, Dt 6:4–5b. Paul will exhort the gentiles to be converted to the one living God, Ac 14:15k; 1 Th 1:9; *see also* 1 Co 8:4–6c; 1 Tm 2:5. In his view all the work of Jesus Christ comes from God and leads to him, for he makes it contribute to his own glory, Rm 8:28–30; 16:27; 1 Co 1:30; 15:28,57; Ep 1:3–12; 3:11; Ph 2:11; 4:19–20; 1 Tm 2:3–5; 6:15–16; *see* Heb 1:1–13; 13:20–21. John's Gospel expresses it differently: Jesus comes from the Father, 3:17,31; 6:46, and goes to the Father, 7:33; 13:3; 14:6d.
c. Evidently the treasure chamber inside the Temple enclosure had an alms box outside.

13 **a.** By contrast with Mt, who adds the dimension of the end of the world to that of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, *see* Mt 24:1a, Mk's discourse is limited to the destruction of Jerusalem. Many scholars discern here a little Jewish apocalypse inspired by Daniel, vv. 7–8,14–20,24–27, filled out by sayings of Jesus, vv. 5–6, 9–13, 21–23,28–37. Nothing either in the sayings or in the underlying little Jewish apocalypse foretells anything more than the imminent messianic crisis and the awaited deliverance of the chosen people, which in fact occurred in the resurrection of Christ, his coming in the Church, and the destruction of Jerusalem.

‖Mt 24:32–36 ‖Lk 21:29–33 **The time of this coming**

'Take the fig tree as a parable: as soon as its twigs grow supple and its leaves come 28
out, you know that summer is near. ·So with you when you see these things 29
happening: know that he is near, right at the gates. ·In truth I tell you, before this 30
generation has passed away all these things will have taken place. ·Sky and earth 31
will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

1 Th 5:1a 'But as for that day or hour, nobody knows it, neither the angels in heaven, nor 32
the Son; no one but the Father.

‖Mt 24:42; 25:13–15 ‖Lk 19:12–13; 12:38,40 **Be on the alert**

'Be on your guard, stay awake, because you never know when the time will come. 33
It is like a man travelling abroad: he has gone from his home, and left his servants 34
in charge, each with his own work to do; and he has told the doorkeeper to stay
awake. ·So stay awake, because you do not know when the master of the house 35
is coming, evening, midnight, cockcrow or dawn;[c] ·if he comes unexpec- 36
tedly, he must not find you asleep. ·And what I am saying to you I say to all: Stay 37
awake!'

V: PASSION AND RESURRECTION

‖Mt 26:2–5 ‖Lk 22:1–2 **The conspiracy against Jesus**

Mt 26:17d 14 It was two days before the Passover and the feast of Unleavened Bread, and 1
the chief priests and the scribes were looking for a way to arrest Jesus by
some trick and have him put to death. ·For they said, 'It must not be during the 2
festivities, or there will be a disturbance among the people.'

‖Mt 26:6–13 ‖Jn 12:1–8 **The anointing at Bethany**

He was at Bethany in the house of Simon, a man who had suffered from a virulent 3
skin-disease; he was at table when a woman came in with an alabaster jar of very
costly ointment, pure nard.[a] She broke the jar and poured the ointment on his
head. ·Some who were there said to one another indignantly, 'Why this waste of 4
ointment? ·Ointment like this could have been sold for over three hundred denarii 5
and the money given to the poor'; and they were angry with her. ·But Jesus said, 6
'Leave her alone. Why are you upsetting her? What she has done for me is a good
Dt 15:11 work.[b] ·You have the poor with you always, and you can be kind to them whenever 7
you wish, but you will not always have me. ·She has done what she could: she has 8
anointed my body beforehand for its burial. ·In truth I tell you, wherever through- 9
out all the world the gospel is proclaimed, what she has done will be told as well, in
remembrance of her.'

‖Mt 26:14–16 ‖Lk 22:3–6 **Judas betrays Jesus**

Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve, approached the chief priests with an offer to 10
hand Jesus over to them. ·They were delighted to hear it, and promised to give him 11
money; and he began to look for a way of betraying him when the opportunity
should occur.

‖Mt 26:17–19 ‖Lk 22:7–13 **Preparations for the Passover supper**

On the first day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover lamb was sacrificed, his 12
disciples said to him, 'Where do you want us to go and make the preparations[c] for
you to eat the Passover?' ·So he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, 'Go into 13
1 S 10:2–5 the city and you will meet a man carrying a pitcher of water. Follow him, ·and say 14
to the owner of the house which he enters, "The Master says: Where is the room
for me to eat the Passover with my disciples?" ·He will show you a large upper 15
room furnished with couches, all prepared. Make the preparations for us there.'

16 The disciples set out and went to the city and found everything as he had told them,
and prepared the Passover.

The treachery of Judas foretold

‖Mt 26:20–25
‖Lk 22:14,21–23
‖Jn 13:21–30
•Mt 26:21+

17, 18 When evening came he arrived with the Twelve. •And while they were at table
eating, Jesus said, 'In truth I tell you, one of you is about to betray me, one of you
19 *eating with me*.' •They were distressed and said to him, one after another, 'Not me,
20 surely?' •He said to them, 'It is one of the Twelve, one who is dipping into the
21 same dish with me. •Yes, the Son of man is going to his fate, as the scriptures say
he will, but alas for that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! Better for that
man if he had never been born.'

The institution of the Eucharist

‖Mt 26:26–29,26f
‖Lk 22:15–20
‖1 Co 11:23–25

22 And as they were eating he took bread, and when he had said the blessing he broke
23 it and gave it to them. 'Take it,' he said, 'this is my body.' •Then he took a cup,
24 and when he had given thanks he handed it to them, and all drank from it, •and he
said to them, 'This is my blood, the blood of the covenant, poured out for many.
‖Mt 26:28*l*
25 In truth I tell you, I shall never drink wine any more until the day I drink the new
Mt 8:11c
wine in the kingdom of God.'

Peter's denial foretold

‖Mt 26:30–35,30k
‖Lk 22:31–34,39
‖Jn 13:36–38

26, 27 After the psalms had been sung they left for the Mount of Olives. •And Jesus said
to them, 'You will all fall away, for the scripture says: *I shall strike the shepherd*
28 *and the sheep will be scattered*; •however, after my resurrection I shall go before
Zc 13:7
29, 30 you into Galilee.' •Peter said, 'Even if all fall away, I will not.' •And Jesus said to
him, 'In truth I tell you, this day, this very night, before the cock crows twice, you
14:72
31 will have disowned me three times.' •But he repeated still more earnestly, 'If I have
to die with you, I will never disown you.' And they all said the same.

Gethsemane

‖Mt 26:36–46
‖Lk 22:40–46

32 They came to a plot of land called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, 'Stay
33, 34 here while I pray.' •Then he took Peter and James and John with him. •And he
5:37d
began to feel terror and anguish. And he said to them, 'My soul is sorrowful to the
35 point of death. Wait here, and stay awake.' •And going on a little further he threw
himself on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, this hour might pass him
36 by. •'*Abba*, Father!'[d] he said, 'For you everything is possible. Take this cup away
37 from me. But let it be as you, not I, would have it.' •He came back and found them
sleeping, and he said to Peter, 'Simon, are you asleep? Had you not the strength to
38 stay awake one hour? •Stay awake and pray not to be put to the test. The spirit is
Rm 7:5c
39 willing enough, but human nature is weak.' •Again he went away and prayed,
40 saying the same words. •And once more he came back and found them sleeping,
41 their eyes were so heavy; and they could find no answer for him. •He came back a
9:6
third time and said to them, 'You can sleep on now and have your rest. It is all

b. In the traditional language of the prophets (see marginal references here and to Mt 24:29–31) cosmic wonders are used to describe powerful interventions of God in history, and in this case the messianic crisis, followed by the final triumph of the chosen people and the Son of man at their head. There is no need to refer them to the end of the world, as is often done because of the context in which Mt has set them, *see* Mt 24:1a.

c. The night was divided into these four watches, each of which lasted three hours.

14 a. With Jn 12:3, Mk indicates the quality of the perfume, nard, the extract of an Indian aromatic plant. He alone notes that the woman breaks the jar in order to pour it more abundantly and quickly, a gesture of touching prodigality.

b. 'a good work' may possibly be in a Jewish technical sense, the works of compassion being ranked as superior to the duty of almsgiving; but it may also be meant in the general sense of 'a beautiful thing'.

c. According to Mt, Jesus sent a message to the man to whose house he invited himself; according to Mk a sign will lead the two appointed disciples to a room which they will find all prepared. Although sign and preparation could have been pre-arranged, their literary presentation, inspired by 1 S 10:2–5, lends a halo of supernatural foreknowledge to the scene. It will further be noted that the structure of the incident closely resembles the preparation for the messianic entry, Mk 11:1–6.

d. *Abba* is an Aramaic word which, on Jesus' lips, expresses the familiarity of Son with Father, cf. Mt 11:25–26 and par.; Jn 3:35; 5:19–20; 8:28–29. It will be placed on the lips of Christians, Rm 8:15; Ga 4:6, for the Spirit, Rm 5:5e makes them children of God, Mt 6:9; 17:25i; Lk 11:2.

over. The hour has come. Now the Son of man is to be betrayed into the hands of
Jn 14:31–32 sinners. ·Get up! Let us go! My betrayer is not far away.' 42

‖Mt 26:47–56
‖Lk 22:47–53
The arrest

‖Jn 18:2–11 And at once, while he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, came up and 43
with him a number of men armed with swords and clubs, sent by the chief priests
and the scribes and the elders. ·Now the traitor had arranged a signal with them 44
saying, 'The one I kiss, he is the man. Arrest him, and see he is well guarded when
you lead him away.' ·So when the traitor came, he went up to Jesus at once and 45
said, 'Rabbi!' and kissed him. ·The others seized him and arrested him. ·Then one 46, 47
of the bystanders drew his sword and struck out at the high priest's servant and cut
off his ear.

Then Jesus spoke. 'Am I a bandit,' he said, 'that you had to set out to capture 48
me with swords and clubs? ·I was among you teaching in the Temple day after 49
day and you never laid a hand on me. But this is to fulfil the scriptures.' ·And 50
they all deserted him and ran away. ·A young man followed with nothing on but 51
a linen cloth. They caught hold of him, ·but he left the cloth in their hands and 52
Am 2:16 ran away naked. [e]

‖Mt 26:57–68
‖Lk 22:54, 63–71
Jesus before the Sanhedrin

They led Jesus off to the high priest; and all the chief priests and the elders and the 53
‖Jn 18:15–16,18 scribes assembled there. ·Peter had followed him at a distance, right into the high 54
priest's palace, and was sitting with the attendants warming himself at the fire.

The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for evidence against 55
Jesus in order to have him executed. But they could not find any. ·Several, 56
indeed, brought false witness against him, but their evidence was conflicting.
Some stood up and submitted this false evidence against him, ·'We heard him 57, 58
say, "I am going to destroy this Temple made by human hands, and in three days
2 Co 5:1 build another, not made by human hands." ' ·But even on this point their evidence 59
was conflicting. ·The high priest then rose before the whole assembly and put this 60
question to Jesus, 'Have you no answer to that? What is this evidence these men
are bringing against you?' [f] ·But he was silent and made no answer at all. The high 61
priest put a second question to him saying, 'Are you the Christ, the Son of the
13:26+ Ps 110:1 Blessed One?' [g] ·'I am,' said Jesus, 'and you will see the *Son of man seated at the* 62
right hand of the Power and coming with the clouds of heaven.' ·The high priest 63
tore his robes and said, 'What need of witnesses have we now? ·You heard the 64
blasphemy. What is your finding?' Their verdict was unanimous: he deserved to die.

Some of them started spitting at his face, hitting him and saying, 'Play the 65
prophet!' [h] And the attendants struck him too.

‖Mt 26:69–75
‖Lk 22:55–62
Peter's denials

‖Jn 18:15–18, 25–27 While Peter was down below in the courtyard, one of the high priest's servant-girls 66
came up. ·She saw Peter warming himself there, looked closely at him and said, 67
Mt 2:23*l* 'You too were with Jesus, the man from Nazareth.' ·But he denied it. 'I do not 68
know, I do not understand what you are talking about,' he said. And he went out
into the forecourt, and a cock crowed. [i] ·The servant-girl saw him and again started 69
telling the bystanders, 'This man is one of them.' ·But again he denied it. A little 70
later the bystanders themselves said to Peter, 'You are certainly one of them! Why,
you are a Galilean.' ·But he started cursing and swearing, 'I do not know the man 71
you speak of.' ·And at once the cock crowed for the second time, and Peter 72
recalled what Jesus had said to him, 'Before the cock crows twice, you will have
disowned me three times.' And he burst into tears.

Jesus before Pilate

‖Mt 27:1–2, 11–26
‖Lk 22:66;23: 1–5,13–25
‖Jn 18:28–19:1; 19:4–16
•Mt 26:57r

15 1 First thing in the morning, the chief priests, together with the elders and
scribes and the rest of the Sanhedrin, had their plan ready. They had Jesus
bound and took him away and handed him over to Pilate.
2 Pilate put to him this question, 'Are you the king of the Jews?' He replied, 'It is
3 you who say it.' •And the chief priests brought many accusations against him.
4 Pilate questioned him again, 'Have you no reply at all? See how many accusations
5 they are bringing against you!' •But, to Pilate's surprise, Jesus made no further
reply.
6 At festival time Pilate used to release a prisoner for them, any one they asked
7 for. •Now a man called Barabbas was then in prison with the rebels who had
8 committed murder during the uprising. •When the crowd went up[a] and began to
9 ask Pilate the customary favour, •Pilate answered them, 'Do you want me to
10 release for you the king of the Jews?'[b] •For he realised it was out of jealousy that
11 the chief priests had handed Jesus over. •The chief priests, however, had incited
12 the crowd to demand that he should release Barabbas for them instead. •Then
Pilate spoke again, 'But in that case, what am I to do with the man you call king of
13, 14 the Jews?' •They shouted back, 'Crucify him!' •Pilate asked them, 'What harm has
15 he done?' But they shouted all the louder, 'Crucify him!' •So Pilate, anxious to
placate the crowd, released Barabbas for them and, after having Jesus scourged,
he handed him over to be crucified.

Jesus crowned with thorns

‖Mt 27:27–31
‖Jn 19:1–3

16 The soldiers led him away to the inner part of the palace, that is, the Praetorium,
17 and called the whole cohort together. •They dressed him up in purple, twisted
18 some thorns into a crown and put it on him. •And they began saluting him, 'Hail
19 king of the Jews!' •They struck his head with a reed and spat on him; and they went
20 down on their knees to do him homage. •And when they had finished making fun
of him, they took off the purple and dressed him in his own clothes.

The way of the cross

‖Mt 27:32–33
‖Lk 23:26
‖Jn 19:17

21 They led him out to crucify him. •They enlisted a passer-by, Simon of Cyrene,
father of Alexander and Rufus,[c] who was coming in from the country, to carry his
22 cross. •They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha, which means the place of
the skull.

The crucifixion

‖Mt 27:34–38
‖Lk 23:33–34
‖Jn 19:18–24
Ps 22:18

23, 24 They offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he refused it. •Then they crucified
25 him, and shared out his clothing, casting lots to decide what each should get. •It
26 was the third hour[d] when they crucified him. •The inscription giving the charge

e. Detail peculiar to Mk. Some commentators have seen in this young man the evangelist himself.

f. Here, and in Mt 26:62, some translate 'Do you make no reply to the charges these men are bringing against you?'

g. 'The Blessed One' (*see also* 'the Power', v. 62) is a substitute for the name 'Yahweh' which the Jews would not pronounce.

h. 'Spitting at his face', D *Vet Lat* (a f), Caesarean text, Peshitta; 'spitting at him and blindfolding him', the majority, by harmonisation with Lk 22:64. Add. 'Who is it who hit you then?', less good witnesses, by harmonisation with Mt 26:68 and Lk 22:64. If Mk mentions neither blindfold nor question, the scene loses its character of a guessing-game and shows only the outrages to the prophet foretold by Is 50:6.

i. The first cockcrow which does not shake Peter and the partial exit which goes with it are strange and suggest an original account which had only one denial with a cockcrow and exit. The combination of this with two parallel accounts, drawn from other traditions, has produced the traditional figure of three denials: 14:30 and par., 72 and par. *see* Jn 3:38; 21:15–17. This combination of texts, visible in Mk, has been smoothed over in Mt and Lk, who have removed the first cockcrow and diminished (or eliminated, Lk) the first partial exit; it is still discernible in the separation in Jn of the first denial, 18:17, from the other two, 18:25–27.

15 a. This indication implies that the Praetorium was on high ground, which is the case with the Western Hill, where stood the palace previously belonging to Herod the Great.

b. In Mk the crowd comes to the Praetorium to ask for the release of a prisoner without any thought of Jesus. It is Pilate who turns this request to good account by suggesting the release of Jesus in order to save himself from a tricky situation; but his manoeuvre is outplayed by the chief priests, who put forward the name of Barabbas. Mt 27:17 has lost these subtleties by making Pilate himself clumsily put forward the choice between Barabbas and Jesus.

c. Alexander and Rufus were doubtless known to the circle in which Mark wrote his Gospel, *see* Rm 16:13.

d. 9 am, or, more vaguely, sometime between 9 am and noon.

Is 53:12 Lk 22:37 against him read, 'The King of the Jews'. ·And they crucified two bandits with him, 27
one on his right and one on his left. [c][28]

‖Mt 27:39–44 ‖Lk 23:35–37 **The crucified Jesus is mocked**

The passers-by jeered at him; they shook their heads and said, 'Aha! So you would 29
14:58 destroy the Temple and rebuild it in three days! ·Then save yourself; come down 30
from the cross!' ·The chief priests and the scribes mocked him among themselves 31
in the same way with the words, 'He saved others, he cannot save himself. ·Let the 32
Jn 6:30 Christ, the king of Israel, come down from the cross now, for us to see it and
Lk 23:39–43 believe.' Even those who were crucified with him taunted him.

‖Mt 27:45–54 ‖Lk 23:44–47 ‖Jn 19:28–30 **The death of Jesus**

When the sixth hour came there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth 33
Ps 22:1 hour. ·And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, '*Eloi, eloi,* [d] *lama* 34
sabachthani?' which means, '*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*'
When some of those who stood by heard this, they said, 'Listen, he is calling on 35
Elijah.' ·Someone ran and soaked a sponge in vinegar and, putting it on a reed, 36
gave it to him to drink saying, 'Wait! And see if Elijah will come to take him down.'
But Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last. ·And the veil of the Sanctuary was 37,38
torn in two from top to bottom. ·The centurion, who was standing in front of him, 39
Mt 4:3d had seen how he had died, and he said, 'In truth this man was Son of God.' [e]

‖Mt 27:55–56 ‖Lk 23:49 ‖Jn 19:25 **The women on Calvary**

There were some women watching from a distance. Among them were Mary of 40
6:3 Magdala, Mary who was the mother of James the younger and Joset, and Salome. [h]
These used to follow him and look after him when he was in Galilee. And many 41
other women were there who had come up to Jerusalem with him.

‖Mt 27:57–61 ‖Lk 23:50–55 ‖Jn 19:38–42 **The burial**

It was now evening, and since it was Preparation Day—that is, the day before the 42
Mt 27:62z Sabbath—·there came Joseph of Arimathaea, a prominent member of the Coun- 43
cil, [i] who himself lived in the hope of seeing the kingdom of God, and he boldly
went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. ·Pilate, astonished that he should 44
have died so soon, summoned the centurion and enquired if he had been dead for
some time. [j] ·Having been assured of this by the centurion, he granted the corpse 45
to Joseph ·who bought a shroud, took Jesus down from the cross, wrapped him in 46
the shroud and laid him in a tomb which had been hewn out of the rock. He then
rolled a stone against the entrance to the tomb. ·Mary of Magdala and Mary the 47
mother of Joset took note of where he was laid.

‖Mt 28:1–8 ‖Lk 24:1–10 ‖Jn 20:1–2 **The empty tomb. The angel's message**

16 When the Sabbath was over, Mary of Magdala, Mary the mother of James, 1
and Salome, bought spices with which to go and anoint him. ·And very early 2
in the morning on the first day of the week they went to the tomb when the sun had
risen. [a]

They had been saying to one another, 'Who will roll away the stone for us from 3
the entrance to the tomb?' ·But when they looked they saw that the stone—which 4
was very big—had already been rolled back. ·On entering the tomb they saw a 5
Mt 9:3 young man in a white robe seated on the right-hand side, and they were struck with
amazement. ·But he said to them, 'There is no need to be so amazed. You are 6
Mt 2:23*l* looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified: he has risen, he is not here. See,
here is the place where they laid him. ·But you must go and tell his disciples and 7
Peter, "He is going ahead of you to Galilee; that is where you will see him, just as
he told you." ' ·And the women came out and ran away from the tomb because 8
they were frightened out of their wits; and they said nothing to anyone, [b] for they
were afraid.

Appearances of the risen Christ [c] ‖Mt 28:10f

9 Having risen in the morning on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Lk 8:2 ‖Jn 20:11–18
10 of Magdala from whom he had cast out seven devils. •She then went to those who Lk 24:10–11 Jn 20:18
had been his companions, and who were mourning and in tears, and told them.
11 But they did not believe her when they heard her say that he was alive and that Mt 8:10b
she had seen him.

12 After this, he showed himself under another form to two of them as they were ‖Lk 24:13–35
13 on their way into the country. •These went back and told the others, who did not believe them either.

14 Lastly, he showed himself to the Eleven themselves while they were at table. He ‖Lk 24:36–49 ‖Jn 20:19–23
reproached them for their incredulity and obstinacy, because they had refused to 1 Co 15:5
15 believe those who had seen him after he had risen. •And he said to them, 'Go out 13:10 ‖Mt 28:18–20
16 to the whole world; proclaim the gospel to all creation. •Whoever believes and is Col 1:23
17 baptised will be saved; whoever does not believe will be condemned. •These are
the signs that will be associated with believers: in my name they will cast out devils; Mt 10:1par. Ac 1:8k;2:4
18 they will have the gift of tongues; •they will pick up snakes in their hands and be Lk 10:19
unharmed should they drink deadly poison; they will lay their hands on the sick, Ac 28:3–6
who will recover.' 1 Tm 4:14e

19 And so the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven; ‖Lk 24:50–53 ‖Ac 1:3–14; 2:33t
20 there at the right hand of God he took his place, •while they, going out, preached
everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word by the signs that accompanied it.

e. add. v. 28 'And the text of scriptures was fulfilled that says, "He was taken for a criminal" ' (Is 53:12). cf. Lk 22:37.

f. This is the Aramaic form *elahi*, transliterated *eloi*, perhaps under the influence of the Hebr. *elohim*. The form *eli*, given by Mt is Hebr.; it is the original text of the Psalm, and better explains the pun of the soldiers.

g. For the Roman officer, this admission would not have its full Christian content, but Mk clearly sees in it an acknowledgement that Jesus was more than a man.

h. Probably the same woman who, in Mt 27:56, is called the mother of Zebedee's sons.

i. i.e. of the Sanhedrin.

j. var. 'if he was already dead'.

16 a. var. 'just as the sun was rising'.

b. According to Mt 28:8; Lk 24:10.22seq.; Jn 20:18, they did in fact tell the news. Mark, too, may have said so in a lost ending of his Gospel (*see* following note); alternatively, he may have deliberately refrained from speaking of it to avoid having to append an account of the appearances which he had made up his mind to omit.

c. The 'longer ending' of Mk, vv. 9–20, is included in the canonically accepted body of inspired scripture, although some important MSS (including Vat. and Sin.) omit it, and it does not seem to be by Mk. It is in a different style, and is little more than a summary of the appearances of the risen Christ, with other material, all of which could be derived from various NT writings. One MS gives instead a shorter ending after v. 8: 'They reported briefly to Peter's companions what they had been told. Then Jesus himself through their agency broadcast from east to west the sacred and incorruptible message of eternal salvation.' Four MSS give the shorter ending and add the longer to it. One MS has the longer ending with the following insertion between vv. 14 and 15: 'And they defended themselves thus, "This age of lawlessness and unbelief is under the sway of Satan, who does not allow those under the yoke of unclean spirits to understand God's truth and power. Now, therefore, reveal your uprightness." This is what they said to Christ, and Christ answered, "The number of years allowed for Satan's authority has been reached, but other terrible things draw near. I was handed over to be killed for those who have sinned, so that they might turn to the truth and sin no more, and so inherit the spiritual and incorruptible glory of uprightness which is in heaven . . ." '

One explanation of this diversity is that Mk's original ending was lost. More probably Mk intended to finish his Gospel at v. 8; but comparison with the other gospels made the first Christian generation feel that this ending was incomplete (and also stylistically somewhat harsh). This led them to add the 'longer ending'.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO
LUKE

Prologue [a]

1 Seeing that many others [b] have undertaken to draw up accounts of the events 1
that have reached their fulfilment among us, ·as these were handed down to us 2
Jn 15:27 Ac 1:8k ·Ep 3:7 by those who from the outset were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word, ·I in my 3
Ac 1:1 turn, after carefully going over the whole story from the beginning, have decided to write an ordered account for you, Theophilus, ·so that your Excellency may 4
learn how well founded the teaching is that you have received. [c]

I: THE BIRTH AND HIDDEN LIFE OF JOHN THE BAPTIST AND OF JESUS [d]

The birth of John the Baptist foretold

In the days of King Herod of Judaea there lived a priest called Zechariah who 5
1 Ch 24:10 belonged to the Abijah section of the priesthood, and he had a wife, Elizabeth by name, who was a descendant of Aaron. ·Both were upright in the sight of God 6
and impeccably carried out all the commandments and observances of the Lord.
Gn 18:11 Jg 13:2–5 1 S 1:5–6 But they were childless: Elizabeth was barren and they were both advanced in 7
years.

Now it happened that it was the turn of his section [e] to serve, and he was 8
exercising his priestly office before God ·when it fell to him by lot, as the priestly 9
custom was, to enter the Lord's sanctuary and burn incense there. [f] ·And at the 10
hour of incense all the people were outside, praying.

Mt 1:20g Then there appeared to him the angel of the Lord, standing on the right of the 11
altar of incense. ·The sight disturbed Zechariah and he was overcome with fear. [g] 12
But the angel said to him, 'Zechariah, do not be afraid, for your prayer has been 13
heard. Your wife Elizabeth is to bear you a son and you shall name him John. [h]
He will be your joy and delight and many will rejoice [i] at his birth, ·for he will be 14, 15
Nb 6:2–3 great in the sight of the Lord; he must drink no wine, no strong drink; [j] even from
1:41 Jr 1:5+ his mother's womb he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, [k] ·and he will bring back 16
many of the Israelites to the Lord their God. ·With the spirit and power of Elijah, [l] 17
Si 48:10–11 Ml 3:24–25 Mt 17:10–13e he will go before him *to reconcile fathers to their children* and the disobedient to the
good sense of the upright, preparing for the Lord a people fit for him.' ·Zechariah 18
Gn 15:8 said to the angel, '*How can I know this*? [m] I am an old man and my wife is getting on
Tb 12:15 Dn 8:16;9:21 in years.' ·The angel replied, 'I am Gabriel, who stand in God's presence, and I 19
Mk 1:1a have been sent to speak to you and bring you [n] this good news. ·Look! Since you 20
Mt 8:10e did not believe my words, which will come true at their appointed time, you will be
silenced and have no power of speech until this has happened.' ·Meanwhile the 21
people were waiting for Zechariah and were surprised that he stayed in the
sanctuary so long. ·When he came out he could not speak to them, and they 22

realised that he had seen a vision in the sanctuary. But he could only make signs to them [o] and remained dumb.

23, 24 When his time of service came to an end he returned home. •Some time later his wife Elizabeth conceived and for five months she kept to herself, saying,
25 'The Lord has done this for me, now that it has pleased him to take away the humiliation I suffered [p] in public.'

The annunciation [q]

26 In the sixth month [r] the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called
27 Nazareth, •to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the House of David; Mt 1:18
28 and the virgin's name was Mary. •He went in and said to her, 'Rejoice, [s] you who Rt 2:4
29 enjoy God's favour! The Lord is with you.' •She was deeply disturbed by these Zp 3:14–15 Zc 2:14
30 words and asked herself what this greeting could mean, •but the angel said to her,
31 'Mary, do not be afraid; you have won God's favour. •Look! You are to conceive Is 7:14f
32 in your womb and bear a son, and you must name him Jesus. •He will be great and Mt 1:21i
will be called Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his
33 ancestor David; •he will rule over the House of Jacob for ever and his reign will 2 S 7:1a Is 9:6
34 have no end.' [t] •Mary said to the angel, 'But how can this come about, since I have Dn 7:14 Mt 9:27m
35 no knowledge of man?' [u] •The angel answered, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon Mt 1:20
you, and the power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow. [v] And so the
36 child will be holy and will be called Son of God. •And I tell you this too: your Ac 3:14i Mt 1:24j
cousin Elizabeth also, in her old age, has conceived a son, and she whom people Mk 4:3d
37, 38 called barren is now in her sixth month, *•for nothing is impossible to God.*' •Mary Gn 18:14 Jr 32:27
said, 'You see before you the Lord's servant, let it happen to me as you have said.' Mt 19:26 Rm 4:21
And the angel left her.

The visitation

39 Mary set out at that time and went as quickly as she could into the hill country to a

1 **a.** This prologue uses a classical vocabulary and construction; it is similar to the formal prefaces of contemporary Greek historians.

b. Hyperbole: understand 'several'. For the narratives known and used by Lk, *see* pp. 1607–8.

c. Or possibly 'that has come to your knowledge', in which case Theophilus would be not a Christian to be confirmed in the faith but some distinguished official asking for information.

d. From here till ch. 3 Lk employs the semitising Greek of the Septuagint. Biblical allusions and reminiscences are frequent, and the whole has an archaic colouring. Lk re-creates the atmosphere of the circles of the 'Poor'. *see* Zp 2:3d. It was in this atmosphere that his characters lived, from here that he derived his information. Lk presents the stories in a series of carefully structured little dramatic episodes, each with its own entries on stage and exits. The stories of John the Baptist and those of Jesus are presented in parallel in order to compare and contrast the two figures, their mission and their importance.

e. Each section was responsible for a week's service, *see* 1 Ch 24:19; 2 Ch 23:8.

f. It was the priest's duty to keep the brazier burning that stood on the altar of incense in front of the Holy of Holies; he would also supply it with fresh incense, once before the morning sacrifice, again after the evening sacrifice; *see* Ex 30:6–8.

g. Lk is fond of mentioning religious fear and awe: 1:29–30,65; 2:9–10; 4:36; 5:8–10,26; 7:16; 8:25,33–37,56; 9:34,43; 24:37; Ac 2:43; 3:10; 5:5,11; 10:4; 19:17.

h. The name means 'Yahweh-is-gracious'.

i. Joy is the keynote of ch. 1–2: 1:28,46,58; 2:10. Cf. *also* 10:17,20seq.; 13:17; 15:7,32; 19:6,37; 24:41,52; Ac 2:46jj.

j. Several OT texts lie behind this remark, especially the law of the nazirite, *see* Nb 6:1a.

k. This expression here, and elsewhere in Lk, does not mean the fullness of sanctifying grace, but the prophetic gift of inspiration, cf. 1:41,67; Ac 2:4; 4:8,31; 7:55; 9:17; 13:9.

l. Ml 3:23 gave rise to the expectation that Elijah would return before the messianic era and pave the way for it. John the Baptist will be 'the Elijah who is to come', *see* 9:30; Mt 17:10–13.

m. Zechariah asks for a 'sign', cf. Gn 15:8; Jg 6:17; Is 7:11; 38:7. But he remains sceptical.

n. First occurrence of a verb beloved of Lk, ten times in the gospel, fifteen in Ac, most often of the good news or 'gospel' of the Kingdom, *see* Ga 1:6d; Mk 1:1a; Ac 5:42q.

o. To give the customary blessing.

p. Barrenness was considered a humiliation, Gn 30:23; 1 S 1:5–8, and even a punishment, 2 S 6:23; Ho 9:11.

q. The presentation of this incident is inspired by several OT passages, notably the angelic promise of a child to Samson's mother, Jg 13:2–7. The dignity of the child is described by means of allusions to OT promises, especially those made to the line of David, 2 S 7:1seq.

r. i.e. of John's conception.

s. 'Rejoice' rather than simply 'hail'. It is an invitation to the joy of the Messiah, an echo of the greetings to the Daughter of Zion, and similarly motivated by the coming of God to his people; cf. Is 12:6; Jl 2:21–27; Zp 3:14–15; Zc 2:14; 9:9. • 'who enjoy God's favour', lit. 'you who have been and remain filled with the divine favour'. Add. 'Of all women you are most blessed' under the influence of 1:42.

t. The angel's words recall several OT passages referring to the Messiah.

u. The virgin Mary is only 'betrothed' (v. 27) and does not have conjugal relations (a semitic sense of 'know'). The seeming opposition between this and the promise of vv. 31–33 calls forth the explanation of v. 35. Nothing in the text suggests a vow of virginity.

v. This expression is used of the bright cloud which is a sign of God's presence, *see* Ex 13:22h; 19:16g; 24:16f, or of the wings which symbolise God's protective, Ps 17:8; 57:1; 140:7, and creative presence, Gn 1:2, cf. 9:34seq. In the conception of Jesus the power of the Holy Spirit is the only cause.

town in Judah. [w] •She went into Zechariah's house and greeted Elizabeth. •Now it happened that as soon as Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leapt in her
1:15 womb and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. •She gave a loud cry and said,
Jg 5:24 Jdt 13:18 'Of all women you are the most blessed, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. Why should I be honoured with a visit from the mother of my Lord? [x] •Look, the moment your greeting reached my ears, the child in my womb leapt for joy. •Yes,
Jn 20:29 blessed is she who believed that the promise made her by the Lord would be fulfilled.' [y]

1 S 2:1–10 Is 29:19 **The Magnificat**

And Mary [z] said:

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord
1 S 2:1 Is 61:10 and my spirit *rejoices in God my Saviour*;
Hab 3:18 because *he has looked upon the humiliation of his servant.*
1 Tm 1:1b •1 S 1:11 •11:27 Yes, from now onwards all generations will call me blessed,
Gn 30:13 for the Almighty has done great things for me.
Ps 111:9 *Holy is his name*,
Ps 103:17 and *his faithful love extends age after age to those who fear him.*
Ps 89:10 He has used the power of his arm,
1 P 5:5+ he has routed the arrogant of heart.
Jb 5:11;12:19 *He has pulled down princes* from their thrones *and raised high the lowly.*
Ps 107:9 *He has filled the starving with good things*, sent the rich away empty.
Is 41:8–9 Ps 98:3 *He has come to the help of Israel his servant, mindful of his faithful love*
Gn 12:3;13:15; 22:18 —according to the promise he made to our ancestors—
of his mercy to Abraham and to his descendants for ever.

Mary stayed with her some three months and then went home. [aa]

The birth of John the Baptist and visit of the neighbours

The time came for Elizabeth to have her child, and she gave birth to a son; •and when her neighbours and relations heard that the Lord had lavished on her his
1:14i faithful love, they shared her joy.

The circumcision of John the Baptist

Gn 17:10d Lv 12:3 Now it happened that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child; they were going to call [bb] him Zechariah after his father, •but his mother spoke up. 'No,' she said, 'he is to be called John.' •They said to her, 'But no one in your family has that name,' •and made signs [cc] to his father to find out what he wanted
1:13 him called. •The father asked for a writing-tablet and wrote, 'His name is John.' And they were all astonished. •At that instant his power of speech returned and he
1:12g;2:20g spoke and praised God. •All their neighbours were filled with awe and the whole affair was talked about throughout the hill country of Judaea. •All those who heard of it treasured it in their hearts. 'What will this child turn out to be?' they wondered.
1:80mm And indeed the hand of the Lord was with him. [dd]

The Benedictus [ee]

His father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke this prophecy: [ff]

Ps 41:13;72:18; 106:48;111:9 *Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel*,
for he has visited [gg] his people, he has *set them free*,
and he has established for us a saving power [hh]
in the House of his servant David,
just as he proclaimed,
by the mouth of his holy prophets from ancient times,
that he would save us from our *enemies*
and *from the hands of* all *those who hate us*,

72 and show *faithful love to our ancestors*, Lv 26:42
and so *keep in mind his* holy *covenant*. Ps 105:8–9
Jr 11:5
73 This was the oath he swore Mi 7:20
to our father Abraham,
74 that he would grant us, free from fear,
to be delivered from the hands of our enemies, Gn 22:16–18
75 to serve him in holiness and uprightness
in his presence, all our days.
76 And you, little child,
you shall be called Prophet of the Most High, Mt 16:14c
for you will go before *the Lord* [ii] 1:16–17
to prepare a way for him, Is 40:3
Ml 3:1
77 to give his people knowledge of salvation
through the forgiveness of their sins, [jj]
78 because of the faithful love [kk] of our God
in which the rising Sun [ll] has come from on high to visit us, Zc 3:8
Ml 3:20i
79 to give light to *those who live* Is 9:1;42:7
in darkness and the shadow dark as death, Jn 8:12b
and to guide our feet
into *the way of peace*. Is 11:6e
Jr 6:1f

The hidden life of John the Baptist

80 Meanwhile the child grew up and his spirit grew strong. [mm] And he lived in the desert until the day he appeared openly to Israel. 3:1–18

The birth of Jesus and visit of the shepherds

1 2 Now it happened that at this time Caesar Augustus [a] issued a decree that a
2 census should be made of the whole inhabited world. 2 This census—the first [b]—
3 took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria, 3 and everyone went to be
4 registered, each to his own town. 4 So Joseph set out from the town of Nazareth in
Galilee for Judaea, to David's town called Bethlehem, since he was of David's 1 S 16:1–13
Jn 7:42

w. Commonly identified with Ain Karim, about 4 m (about 6.5 km) west of the Old City of Jerusalem.

x. Divine title of the risen Jesus, Ac 2:36w; Ph 2:11p, which Lk gives him already in his earthly life more often than Mt and Mk: 7:13; 10:1,39,41; 11:39.

y. 'the Lord', i.e. God. • Or 'And blessed are you who have believed, because what has been promised to you by the Lord will be fulfilled.'

z. Not 'Elizabeth', a var. with only slight MS support. • Mary's canticle is reminiscent of Hannah's, 1 S 2:1–10, and of many other OT passages, e.g. Ps 113:7–9. Apart from the main textual similarities noted in the margin there are two characteristic OT ideas: **1** God comes to the help not of the rich and powerful but of the poor and the simple, Zp 2:3d, compare Mt 5:3c. **2** Ever since Abraham received the promises, Gn 15:1a; 17:1a, Israel has been God's favoured one, *see* Dt 7:6b. Lk must have found this canticle in the circles of the 'Poor', where it was perhaps attributed to the Daughter of Zion. He found it suitable to bring into his prose narrative and put on the lips of Mary.

aa. It would be likely that Mary stayed with Elizabeth until John's birth and circumcision, but Lk's habit is to round off one episode before passing to the next, cf. 1:64 and 67; 3:19–20; 8:37–38.

bb. The name was normally given when the child was circumcised, *see* 2:21.

cc. Perhaps he is deaf as well as dumb; the same Greek word can be used for either condition.

dd. i.e. protected him: a biblical expression, Jr 26:24; Ac 11:21.

ee. Like the *Magnificat*, this canticle is a poem which Lk has drawn from elsewhere to put on Zechariah's lips, adding vv. 76–77 to adapt it to the context. He has added it after the prose account, v. 64, rather than in the course of it.

ff. In the full sense of the term, because Zechariah not only utters a hymn of thanksgiving (vv. 68–75) but also foresees the future (vv. 76–79).

gg. As often in the OT, Ex 3:16h, God's visitation is understood in the NT uniquely in a favourable sense, 1:78; 7:16; 19:44; 1 P 2:12.

hh. lit. 'a horn of', *see* Ps 75:4c.

ii. i.e. God, as in 1:16–17, not the Messiah.

jj. Lk depicts the function of the Precursor with the help of texts applied to him by tradition, *see* 3:4seq.; 7:27seq. He makes his message accord with that of the apostles in Acts, *see* Ac 2:38; 5:31; 10:43; 13:38; 26:18.

kk. 'faithful love', lit. 'bowels of mercy'. • 'will bring'; var. 'has brought'; 'has come'; var. 'will come'.

ll. Or 'star that heralds the day', cf. Nb 24:17; Is 60:1; Ml 3:20, and Shoot which springs from the stock of David, cf. Jr 23:5; 33:15; Zc 3:8; 6:12.

mm. A kind of refrain: 2:40,52; cf. 1:66.

2 a. Roman emperor from 30 BC to AD 14.

b. The first of a series. The translation sometimes given, 'This census preceded that which was held when Quirinius was governor of Syria' is difficult to justify grammatically. The historical circumstances are little known. Most scholars put the census of Quirinius in AD 6, but the only authority for this is Josephus who is doubtfully reliable in this matter, *see* Ac 5:37n. The most probable explanation is that the census, which was made with a view to taxation, began in Palestine even before Herod's death, as early as 8–6 BC as part of a general census of the empire, and that Quirinius concluded it in AD 6, as Josephus says. This census, which in fact took place over a considerable period, was then known by the name of this important personality. Jesus was born certainly before Herod's death (4 BC), possibly in 8–6 BC. The 'Christian era', established by Dionysius Exiguus (sixth century), is the result of a false calculation, *see* 3:1a.

House and line, ·in order to be registered together with Mary, his betrothed, who 5
was with child. ·Now it happened that, while they were there, the time came for 6
Mt 1:25 her to have her child, ·and she gave birth to a son, her first-born.[c] She wrapped 7
him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger because there was no room for
them in the living-space.[d] ·In the countryside close by there were shepherds out in 8
Ex 24:16f Tb 5:4b the fields keeping guard over their sheep during the watches of the night. ·An angel 9
Mt 1:20g of the Lord stood over them and the glory of the Lord shone round them. They
1:12g were terrified, ·but the angel said, 'Do not be afraid. Look, I bring you news of 10
1:14i great joy, a joy to be shared by the whole people. ·Today in the town of David a 11
Mt 1:21 Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.[e] ·And here is a sign for you: 12
·1:18m Is 9:5b you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.' ·And all 13
at once with the angel there was a great throng of the hosts of heaven, praising God
with the words:

Ezk 3:12 19:38 Glory to God in the highest heaven, 14
and on earth peace for those he favours.[f]

Now it happened that when the angels had gone from them into heaven, the 15
shepherds said to one another, 'Let us go to Bethlehem and see this event which
the Lord has made known to us.' ·So they hurried away and found Mary and 16
Is 1:3 Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. ·When they saw the child they repeated 17
what they had been told about him, ·and everyone who heard it was astonished at 18
2:51 what the shepherds said to them. ·As for Mary, she treasured all these things and 19
pondered them in her heart. ·And the shepherds went back glorifying and praising 20
God[g] for all they had heard and seen, just as they had been told.

1:59bb **The circumcision of Jesus**

When the eighth day came and the child was to be circumcised, they gave him the 21
1:31 Mt 1:21i name Jesus, the name the angel had given him before his conception.

Jesus is presented in the Temple

Lv 12:2–4 And when the day came for them to be purified[h] in keeping with the Law of Moses, 22
they took him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord—·observing what is 23
Ex 13:2;13:11b written in the Law of the Lord: *Every first-born male must be consecrated to the*
Lord—·and also to offer in sacrifice, in accordance with what is prescribed in the 24
Lv 5:7;12:8 Law of the Lord, *a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.*[i] ·Now in Jerusalem 25
there was a man named Simeon. He was an upright and devout man; he looked
Is 40:1a;Is 42:1 forward to the restoration of Israel and the Holy Spirit rested on him. ·It had been 26
revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death until he had set eyes
Ex 30:22d on the Christ of the Lord.[j] ·Prompted by the Spirit he came to the Temple; and 27
when the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the Law required,
2:20g he took him into his arms and blessed God; and he said: 28

The Nunc Dimittis

Now, Master, you are letting your servant go in peace 29
as you promised;
Is 52:10;46:13 for my eyes have seen the salvation 30
which you have made ready in the sight of the nations; 31
Is 42:6;49:6 Jn 8:12b a light of revelation for the gentiles 32
and glory for your people Israel.[k]

The prophecy of Simeon

As the child's father and mother were wondering at the things that were being said 33
about him, ·Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, 'Look, he is 34
7:23;12:51–53 destined for the fall and for the rise of many in Israel, destined to be a sign that is
Jr 15:10 Jn 3:19,9:39; 19:25–27 opposed[l]—·and a sword will pierce your soul too[m]—so that the secret thoughts of 35
many may be laid bare.'

The prophecy of Anna

36 There was a prophetess [n], too, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher.
She was well on in years. Her days of girlhood over, she had been married for
37 seven years ·before becoming a widow. She was now eighty-four years old and Jdt 8:4–5 1 Tm 5:5
38 never left the Temple, serving God night and day with fasting and prayer. ·She
came up just at that moment and began to praise God; and she spoke of the child 2:20g
to all who looked forward to the deliverance of Jerusalem. [o]

The hidden life of Jesus at Nazareth

39 When they had done everything the Law of the Lord required, they went back to
40 Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. ·And as the child grew to maturity, he was Mt 2:23 ·1:80mm
filled with wisdom; and God's favour was with him.

Jesus among the doctors of the Law

41 Every year his parents used to go to Jerusalem for the feast of the Passover. Ex 12:1a Dt 16:16
42, 43 When he was twelve years old, they went up for the feast as usual. ·When the days
of the feast were over and they set off home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in
44 Jerusalem without his parents knowing it. ·They assumed he was somewhere in the
party, and it was only after a day's journey that they went to look for him among
45 their relations and acquaintances. ·When they failed to find him they went back to
Jerusalem looking for him everywhere.
46 It happened that, three days later, [p] they found him in the Temple, sitting among
47 the teachers, listening to them, and asking them questions; ·and all those who
48 heard him were astounded at his intelligence and his replies. ·They were over- 4:22 Jn 7:15,16
come when they saw him, and his mother said to him, 'My child, why have you
done this to us? See how worried your father and I have been, looking for you.'
49 He replied, 'Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my
50 Father's house?' [q] ·But they did not understand what he meant. Jn 2:16;14:2 Mk 4:13c

The hidden life at Nazareth resumed

51 He went down with them then and came to Nazareth and lived under their

c. In biblical Greek, the term does not necessarily imply younger brothers but emphasises the dignity and rights of the child.

d. Rather than 'inn' (*pandocheion*, 10:34) the Greek word *kataluma* can mean a room, 22:11par.; 1 S 1:18; 9:22, where Joseph's family lived. If Joseph's home was at Bethlehem this would explain why he returned there with his pregnant young wife for the census. The manger where the animals ate was presumably fixed on a wall of the poor habitation, which was so crowded that there was no better place for the child. A pious legend has embellished this manger with two animals, *see* Is 1:3; Hab 3:2e.

e. So he is the Messiah awaited; but he will be 'Lord', a title which the OT meticulously reserved for God. A new era is about to begin, *see* 1:43x.

f. The traditional translation 'peace to men of good will', based on the Vulgate, among other versions, does not render the usual sense of the Greek term. Another version, also less probable is 'peace on earth and God's favour towards men'.

g. A favourite theme of Lk: 1:64; 2:28,38; 5:25–26; 7:16; 13:13; 17:15,18; 18:43; 19:37; 23:47; 24:53. Cf. Ac 2:47*ll*.

h. Only the mother needed to be purified; the child, however, had to be 'redeemed'. Lk is careful to note that the parents of Jesus, like the Baptist's, observed all that the Law required. The presentation of the child in the sanctuary was not prescribed but was possible, Nb 18:15, and must have seemed fitting to religious people, cf. 1 S 1:24–28. Lk centres his story on the first cultic act of Jesus, in the holy city to which he attaches great importance as the location of the Easter event and the starting-point of the Christian mission. *See* 2:38*o*; Ac 1:4e.

i. Offering of the poor.

j. 'the Christ of the Lord' is the one whom the Lord anoints, *see* Ex 30:22d, i.e. consecrates for a saving mission; the king of Israel, God's chosen prince, is thus consecrated and thus, pre-eminently, the Messiah who is to establish the kingdom of God.

k. Unlike *Magnificat* and *Benedictus* this canticle seems to have been written by Lk himself, using especially texts from Isaiah. After a first triplet about Simeon and his approaching death, a second triplet characterises the universal salvation brought by Jesus the Messiah: light brought to the gentile world which forms one element in the chosen people, and which will bring glory to the chosen people.

l. Jesus' mission of light to the gentile world will bring hostility and persecution from his own people, *see* Mt 2:1a.

m. As the true Daughter of Zion, Mary will herself bear the sorrowful destiny of her race. With her Son she will be at the centre of this contradiction, where secret thoughts will be laid bare, for or against Jesus. The symbol of the sword may be inspired by Ezk 14:17, or alternatively Zc 12:10.

n. A woman dedicated to God and the qualified interpreter of his intentions. Cf. Ex 15:20; Jg 4:4; 2 K 22:14.

o. The messianic deliverance of the chosen people, 1:68; 24:21, primarily affected their capital city: cf. Is 40:2; 52:9 (and *see* 2 S 5:9f). For Lk, Jerusalem is God's chosen centre from which will spread his salvation: 9:31,51,53; 13:22,33; 17:11; 18:31; 19:11; 24:47–49,52; Ac 1:8*l*.

p. For Lk, the 'finding' of Jesus 'after three days' 'in the house of his Father' may be intended as prefiguring the events of Easter.

q. Alternative translation 'be busy with my Father's affairs'. In either case Jesus affirms, in Joseph's presence, v. 48, that God is his Father, cf. 10:22; 22:29; Jn 20:17, and claims a relationship to him which surpasses human family ties, *see* Jn 2:4. This is the first manifestation of his consciousnesss of being 'the Son', *see* Mt 4:3d.

2:19 authority. His mother stored up all these things in her heart. ·And Jesus increased 52
·1:80mm in wisdom, in stature, and in favour with God and with people.
1 S 2:26
Pr 3:4

II: PRELUDE TO THE PUBLIC MINISTRY OF JESUS

The proclamation of John the Baptist

||Mt 3:1–12
||Mk 1:1–8

3 In the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar's reign,[a] when Pontius Pilate[b] was 1
governor of Judaea, Herod[c] tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip[d] tetrarch of
the territories of Ituraea and Trachonitis, Lysanias[e] tetrarch of Abilene, ·and while 2
Jr 1:2 the high-priesthood was held by Annas and Caiaphas,[f] the word of God came to
Ho 1:1
1:80 John the son of Zechariah, in the desert. ·He went through the whole Jordan area 3
Mt 3:2c proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, ·as it is written in 4
the book of the sayings of Isaiah the prophet:

Is 40:3–5 *A voice of one that cries in the desert:*
=Jn 1:23 *Prepare a way for the Lord,*
make his paths straight!
Let every valley be filled in, 5
every mountain and hill be levelled,
winding ways be straightened
and rough roads made smooth,
and all humanity will see the salvation of God.[g] 6

He said, therefore, to the crowds who came to be baptised by him, 'Brood of 7
vipers, who warned you to flee from the coming retribution? ·Produce fruit in 8
keeping with repentance, and do not start telling yourselves, "We have Abraham
Jn 8:39k as our father," because, I tell you, God can raise children for Abraham from these
stones. ·Yes, even now the axe is being laid to the root of the trees, so that any tree 9
failing to produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown on the fire.'

Ac 2:37 [h]When all the people asked him, 'What must we do, then?' ·he answered, 10. 11
12:33d 'Anyone who has two tunics must share with the one who has none, and anyone
Is 58:7
Mt 5:46u with something to eat must do the same.' ·There were tax collectors, too, who 12
came for baptism, and these said to him, 'Master, what must we do?' ·He said to 13
them, 'Exact no more than the appointed rate.' ·Some soldiers asked him in their 14
turn, 'What about us? What must we do?' He said to them, 'No intimidation! No
extortion! Be content with your pay!'

A feeling of expectancy had grown among the people, who were beginning to 15
Jn 1:19–20,26, 33;3:28 wonder whether John might be the Christ, ·so John declared before them all, 'I 16
Jn 1:26,27,33 baptise you with water, but someone is coming, who is more powerful than me,
Ac 1:5e;13:25 and I am not fit to undo the strap of his sandals; he will baptise you with the Holy
Spirit and fire. ·His winnowing-fan is in his hand, to clear his threshing-floor and to 17
gather the wheat into his barn; but the chaff he will burn in a fire that will never go
out.' ·And he proclaimed the good news to the people with many other exhorta- 18
tions too.

John the Baptist imprisoned

||Mt 14:3–12
||Mk 6:17–29

But Herod the tetrarch, censured by John for his relations with his brother's wife 19
Herodias and for all the other crimes he had committed, ·added a further crime to 20
all the rest by shutting John up in prison.

Jesus is baptised

||Mt 3:13–17
||Mk 1:9–11

Now it happened that when all the people had been baptised and while Jesus after 21
Jn 1:32–34 his own baptism was at prayer,[i] heaven opened ·and the Holy Spirit descended on 22
Ps 2:7 him in a physical form, like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, '*You are my Son; today have I fathered you.*'[k]

The ancestry of Jesus [l]

‖Mt 1:1–17

23 When he began, Jesus was about thirty years old, being the son, as it was thought,
24 of Joseph son of Heli, ·son of Matthat, son of Levi, son of Melchi, son of Jannai, Mt 13:55
25 son of Joseph, ·son of Mattathias, son of Amos, son of Nahum, son of Esli, son
26 of Naggai, ·son of Maath, son of Mattathias, son of Semein, son of Josech, son of
27 Joda, ·son of Joanan, son of Rhesa, son of Zerubbabel, son of Shealtiel, son of
28, 29 Neri, ·son of Melchi, son of Addi, son of Cosam, son of Elmadam, son of Er, ·son
30 of Jesus, son of Eliezer, son of Jorim, son of Matthat; son of Levi, ·son of Symeon,
31 son of Judah, son of Joseph, son of Jonam, son of Eliakim, ·son of Melea, son of
32 Menna, son of Mattatha, son of Nathan, son of David, ·son of Jesse, son of Obed,
33 son of Boaz, son of Sala, son of Nahshon, ·son of Amminadab, son of Admin, son
34, 35 of Arni, son of Hezron, son of Perez, son of Judah, ·son of Jacob, son of Isaac, son
of Abraham, son of Terah, son of Nahor, son of Serug, son of Reu, son of Peleg,
36 son of Eber, son of Shelah, ·son of Cainan, son of Arphaxad, son of Shem, son of
37 Noah, son of Lamech ·son of Methuselah, son of Enoch, son of Jared, son of
38 Mahalaleel, son of Cainan, ·son of Enos, son of Seth, son of Adam, son of God.

Testing in the desert [a]

‖Mt 4:1–11
‖Mk 1:12–13

1 4 Filled with the Holy Spirit, [b] Jesus left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into
2 the desert, ·for forty days being put to the test by the devil. During that time he
3 ate nothing and at the end he was hungry. ·Then the devil said to him, 'If you are
4 Son of God, tell this stone to turn into a loaf.' ·But Jesus replied, 'Scripture says: Dt 8:3

Human beings live not on bread alone.'

5 Then leading him to a height, the devil showed him in a moment of time all the
6 kingdoms of the world ·and said to him, 'I will give you all this power and their Rv 13:2,4
splendour, for it has been handed over to me, for me to give it to anyone I choose. [c] Jr 27:5
7, 8 Do homage, then, to me, and it shall all be yours.' ·But Jesus answered him,
'Scripture says: Dt 6:13

You must do homage to the Lord your God, him alone you must serve.'

3 **a.** Here, as in 1:5 and 2:1–3, Lk dates his narrative by secular events. Tiberius succeeded Augustus, 2:1, on 19 August AD 14. The 15th year, therefore, is from AD 19 August 28 to AD 18 August 29. Alternatively, if the Syrian method of calculating the year of a reign is being followed, the 15th year is from AD Sept.–Oct. 27 to AD Sept.–Oct. 28. At that time, Jesus was at least 33 years old, possibly 35 or 36. The indication of v. 23 is approximate, and perhaps it means only that Jesus was old enough to exercise a public ministry. The mistake in calculating the 'Christian era' results from taking the 'thirty years' of 3:23 as an exact figure: the 15th year of Tiberius was 782 'after the foundation of Rome'; Dionysius Exiguus subtracted 29 full years from this, thus arriving at 753 for the beginning of our era. Actually, it should have been 750 or even 746.

b. Procurator of Judaea (including Idumaea and Samaria) AD 26–36.

c. The Herod referred to is Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great and Malthace; he was tetrarch of Galilee and Peraea from 4 BC to AD 39.

d. Son of Herod the Great and Cleopatra, tetrarch from 4 BC to AD 34.

e. Known from two inscriptions. Abilene was in Anti-Lebanon.

f. The high priest in office was Joseph, called Caiaphas; he held this position from AD 18–36, and played a leading part in the plot against Jesus, *see* Mt 26:3; Jn 11:49; 18:14. His father-in-law, Annas, who had been high priest from AD 6 (?) to 15, is associated with him and even named first, *see* Jn 18:13,24 and Ac 4:6, as if his influence was such that he was high priest in all but name.

g. Mk, followed by Mt, ends the quotation from Is 40 at the end of the third line. Lk continues it to include the specific promise of universal salvation.

h. Vv. 10–14, which are in Lk alone, stress the positive human element in John's message. No profession is excluded from salvation, but justice and charity are essential.

i. Lk finishes with John's ministry before passing to that of Jesus, *see* 1:56aa. He makes no more than a brief allusion to John's death, 9:7–9.

j. Jesus at prayer is a favourite theme of Lk, *see* 5:16; 6:12; 9:18,28–29; 11:1; 22:41.

k. The var. 'You are my Son, the beloved; my favour rests on you' is probably a harmonisation with the text of Mk and Mt. The voice from heaven in Lk probably did not originally contain Mt's and Mk's reference to Is 42, but referred to Ps 2:7. Rather than seeing Jesus as the 'servant', it presents him as the King-Messiah of the Ps, enthroned at the Baptism to establish the rule of God in the world.

l. By tracing the ancestry of Jesus further back than Abraham, to Adam, Lk gives his genealogy a more universalist character than that of Mt. Descended from Adam and similarly without a human father, 1:35, Jesus inaugurates a new era for the human race. Lk perhaps follows Paul in thinking of the New Adam, Rm 5:12g. For the relation between the two very different genealogies, see Mt 1:1a.

4 **a.** Lk combines Mk's data (40 days of being put to the test) with Matthew's (three temptations at the end of 40 days' fast). He changes Mt's order so as to end with Jerusalem: *see* 2:38*o*. On the nature of this being put to the test, *see* Mt 4:1a.

b. Lk's interest in the Holy Spirit is evident not only from his first two chapters, 1:15,35,41,67,80; 2:25,26,27, but also from the remainder of the Gospel in which, on several occasions, he adds a mention of the Spirit to the other synoptic passages, 4:1,14,18; 10:21; 11:13. In Ac also Lk very frequently speaks of the Spirit, Ac 1:8j.

c. By bringing into the world sin and its consequence, death, Ws 2:24t; Rm 5:12h, Satan has made the human race his prisoner, Mt 8:29k; Ga 4:3b; Col 2:8d. He has extended over the world, of which he has become the 'Prince', Jn 12:31i, a dominion which Jesus came to overturn by his 'redemption', Mt 20:28g; Rm 3:24j; 6:15g; Col 1:13–14; 2:15m. *See also* Jn 3:35t; Ep 2:1–6; 6:12d; 1 Jn 2:14; Rv 13:1–8; 19:19–21.

Then he led him to Jerusalem and set him on the parapet of the Temple. 'If you 9
are Son of God,' he said to him, 'throw yourself down from here, ·for scripture 10
says:

Ps 91:11–12 *He has given his angels orders about you, to guard you*
and again:
They will carry you in their arms in case you trip over a stone.' 11

Dt 6:16 But Jesus answered him, 'Scripture says: 12
Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'

22:3,53 Jn 13:2,27 Having exhausted every way of putting him to the test,[d] the devil left him, until 13
the opportune moment.

III: THE GALILEAN MINISTRY

Mt 3:16n;4:12 17,23 ‖Mk 1:14–15,39 =4:44 **Jesus begins to preach**

Jesus, with the power of the Spirit in him, returned to Galilee; and his reputation 14
spread throughout the countryside.[e] ·He taught in their synagogues and everyone 15
glorified him.[f]

‖Mt 13:53–58 ‖Mk 6:1–6 2:39,51 **Jesus at Nazareth**

He came to Nazara,[g] where he had been brought up, and went into the synagogue 16
on the Sabbath day as he usually did. He stood up to read,[h] ·and they handed him 17
the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. Unrolling the scroll he found the place where it is
written:

Mt 3:16n Is 61:1–2 *The spirit of the Lord is on me,* 18
for he has anointed me
Zp 2:3d *to bring the good news to the afflicted.*[i]
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives,
sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim a year of favour from the Lord. 19

He then rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the assistant and sat down. And all 20
Ac 6:15 eyes in the synagogue were fixed on him. ·Then he began to speak to them, 'This 21
2:47;4:15f Jn 7:46 text is being fulfilled today even while you are listening.' ·And he won the approval 22
of all, and they were astonished by the gracious words that came from his lips.

They said, 'This is Joseph's son, surely?' ·But he replied, 'No doubt you will 23
quote me the saying, "Physician, heal yourself," and tell me, "We have heard all
that happened in Capernaum,[j] do the same here in your own country." ' ·And he 24
Jn 4:44 went on, 'In truth I tell you, no prophet is ever accepted in his own country.

1 K 17:1;18:1 Jm 5:17 'There were many widows in Israel, I can assure you, in Elijah's day, when 25
heaven remained shut for three years and six months and a great famine raged
throughout the land, ·but Elijah was not sent to any one of these: he was sent *to a* 26
1 K 17:9 *widow at Zarephath, a town in Sidonia.* ·And in the prophet Elisha's time there 27
were many suffering from virulent skin-diseases in Israel, but none of these was,
2 K 5:14 cured—only Naaman the Syrian.'

Ac 7:57seq. When they heard this everyone in the synagogue was enraged. ·They sprang to 28, 29
their feet and hustled him out of the town; and they took him up to the brow of the
Jn 8:59 hill their town was built on, intending to throw him off the cliff, ·but he passed 30
straight through the crowd and walked away.

‖Mk 1:21–28 **Jesus teaches in Capernaum and cures a demoniac**

He went down to Capernaum, a town in Galilee, and taught them on the Sabbath. 31
‖Mt 7:28–29 And his teaching made a deep impression on them because his word carried 32
authority.

Mt 8:29k In the synagogue there was a man possessed by the spirit of an unclean devil, 33
and he shouted at the top of his voice, ·'Ha! What do you want with us, Jesus of 34

Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are: the Holy One of Mt 2:23*f*
35 God.' •But Jesus rebuked it, saying, 'Be quiet! Come out of him!' And the devil, •Mk 1:24j Jn 6:69
throwing the man into the middle, went out of him without hurting him at all. Ac 3:14i
36 Astonishment seized them and they were all saying to one another, 'What is it in 1:12g
his words? He gives orders to unclean spirits with authority and power and they Mt 8:29k
37 come out.' •And the news of him travelled all through the surrounding countryside. 4:14h

Cure of Simon's mother-in-law ‖Mt 8:14–15 ‖Mk 1:29–31

38 Leaving the synagogue he went to Simon's house. Now Simon's mother-in-law was
39 in the grip of a high fever and they asked him to do something for her. •Standing
over her he rebuked the fever and it left her. And she immediately got up and ‖Mt 8:16–17 ‖Mk 1:32–34
began to serve them.

A number of cures 13:33 1 Tm 4:14e

40 At sunset all those who had friends suffering from diseases of one kind or another Mt 8:29k
41 brought them to him, and laying his hands on each he cured them. •Devils too Mt 4:3d Mk 1:34m
came out of many people, shouting, 'You are the Son of God.' But he warned them ‖Mk 1:35–39
and would not allow them to speak because they knew that he was the Christ.

Dawn departure from Capernaum and travels through Judaea

42 When daylight came he left the house and made his way to a lonely place. The
crowds went to look for him, and when they had caught up with him they wanted to Mk 1:38n
43 prevent him from leaving them, •but he answered, 'I must proclaim the good news
of the kingdom of God to the other towns too, because that is what I was sent to
44 do.' •And he continued his proclamation in the synagogues of Judaea. [k]

The first four disciples are called [a] ‖Mt 4:18–22 ‖Mk 1:16–20 Jn 1:40–42

1 5 Now it happened that he was standing one day by the Lake of Gennesaret,
2 with the crowd pressing round him listening to the word of God, •when he Mk 4:1
caught sight of two boats at the water's edge. The fishermen had got out of them Mk 1:16,19
3 and were washing their nets. •He got into one of the boats—it was Simon's [b]—and Mk 4:1–2
asked him to put out a little from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the
crowds from the boat.

4 When he had finished speaking he said to Simon, 'Put out into deep water and Jn 21:1–6
5 pay out your nets for a catch.' •Simon replied, 'Master, we worked hard all night 8:24,45; 9:33; 17:13
6 long and caught nothing, but if you say so, I will pay out the nets.' •And when they Mt 8:10b
had done this they netted such a huge number of fish that their nets began to tear, Mt 8:3a
7 so they signalled to their companions in the other boat to come and help them;
when these came, they filled both boats to sinking point.

8 When Simon Peter saw this he fell at the knees of Jesus saying, 'Leave me, Lord; Ex 33:20i
9 I am a sinful man.' •For he and all his companions were completely awestruck at 1:12g

d. Rather than 'finished all the temptations'.

e. One of Lk's recurrent motifs: 4:37; 5:15; 7:17; *see*, for similar examples, 1:80mm; Ac 2:41cc; 6:7.

f. Another favourite theme of Lk: the people admiring and praising Jesus: 4:22; 8:25; 9:43; 11:27; 13:17; 19:48, related to the previous refrain 4:14e, the theme of praise to God 2:20g, and of religious awe, 1:12g.

g. The crowd's sudden change from admiration, v. 22^a, to animosity, v. 22^b, 28seq., is astonishing. The anomaly is probably the product of its literary evolution. A first story recounted a visit to the synagogue at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, cf. Mk 1:21seq., at Nazareth, cf. Mt 4:13, using the form *Nazara*, as here in Lk 4:16; this was crowned with success. This story was later taken up again, added to and placed later in Jesus' life, Mt 13:53–58; Mk 6:1–6, to express the misunderstanding and rejection which followed the early acceptance by the people. From this complex text Lk has painted an admirable picture, restrained at the beginning of the ministry, of an inaugural scene in which, with symbolic foreshortening, he depicts Jesus' mission of grace and the rejection by his people.

h. The director of a synagogue could authorise any adult Jew to read and expound the scripture in public.

i. add. 'to heal the broken-hearted', *see* LXX.

j. i.e. the miracles of which Lk does not speak until after the visit to Nazareth, 4:33. *See* note g above.

k. Mk reads 'Galilee'. Lk uses 'Judaea' in the wide sense: the land of Israel. Also in 7:17; 23:5; Ac 10:37; 28:21.

5 **a.** In this narrative, Lk has combined: **1** A topographical note and an incident about Jesus' preaching, vv. 1–3; this section resembles Mk 1:16,19 and 4:1–2. **2** The episode of the miraculous catch, vv. 4–10^a, which is like that of Jn 21:1–6. **3.** The call of Simon, vv. 10^b–11, which is related to Mk 1:17,20. Lk's purpose in placing a period of teaching and miracles before the call of the first disciples was to make their unhesitating response less surprising.

b. In Lk 5:8 Simon does not receive the name Peter until 6:14. This is an anticipation, Johannine in character (as the miraculous catch of fish?), for, apart from this instance in Lk and Mt 16:16, the expression 'Simon Peter' occurs only in Jn—17 times.

the catch they had made; ·so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who 10
were Simon's partners. ᶜ But Jesus said to Simon, 'Do not be afraid; from now on it
Mk 1:17.20 Jn 21:15–17.19 is people you will be catching.' ·Then, bringing their boats back to land they left 11
·12:33d everything and followed him.

‖Mt 8:1–4 ‖Mk 1:40–45 **Cure of a man suffering from a virulent skin-disease**

Now it happened that Jesus was in one of the towns when suddenly a man 12
appeared, covered with a skin-disease. Seeing Jesus he fell on his face and implored
him saying, 'Sir, if you are willing you can cleanse me.' ·He stretched out his hand, 13
and touched him saying, 'I am willing. Be cleansed.' At once the skin-disease left
Mk 1:34m him. ·He ordered him to tell no one, 'But go and show yourself to the priest and 14
Lv 14:1–32 make the offering for your cleansing just as Moses prescribed, as evidence to
them.'

4:14e But the news of him kept spreading, and large crowds would gather to hear 15
him and to have their illnesses cured, ·but he would go off to some deserted place 16
3:21j and pray.

‖Mt 9:1–8 ‖Mk 2:1–12 **Cure of a paralytic**

Now it happened that he was teaching one day, and Pharisees and teachers of the 17
Law, who had come from every village in Galilee, from Judaea and from Jerusa-
lem, were sitting there. And the power of the Lord[d] was there so that he should
heal. ·And now some men appeared, bringing on a bed a paralysed man whom 18
they were trying to bring in and lay down in front of him. ·But as they could find no 19
way of getting the man through the crowd, they went up onto the top of the house
and lowered him and his stretcher down through the tiles[e] into the middle of the
Mt 8:10b gathering, in front of Jesus. ·Seeing their faith he said, 'My friend, your sins are 20
Mt 2:4d;3:7f forgiven you.' ·The scribes and the Pharisees began to think this over. 'Who is this 21
Jn 2:25 man, talking blasphemy? Who but God alone can forgive sins?' ·But Jesus, aware 22
of their thoughts, made them this reply, 'What are these thoughts you have in your
hearts? ·Which of these is easier: to say, "Your sins are forgiven you," or to say, 23
"Get up and walk"? ·But to prove to you that the Son of man has authority on 24
earth to forgive sins,'—he said to the paralysed man—'I order you: get up, and
pick up your stretcher and go home.' ·And immediately before their very eyes he 25
got up, picked up what he had been lying on and went home praising God.

2:20g 1:12g They were all astounded and praised God and were filled with awe, saying, 'We 26
have seen strange things today.'

‖Mt 9:9 ‖Mk 2:13–14 **The call of Levi**

When he went out after this, he noticed a tax collector, Levi by name, sitting at the 27
12:33d tax office, and said to him, 'Follow me.' ·And leaving everything Levi got up and 28
followed him.

‖Mt 9:10–12 ‖Mk 2:15–17 **Eating with sinners in Levi's house**

In his honour Levi held a great reception in his house, and with them at table was 29
Mt 5:46u a large gathering of tax collectors and others. ·The Pharisees and their scribes 30
Mt 2:4d;3:7f ·Mt 9:10e complained to his disciples and said, 'Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors
and sinners?' ·Jesus said to them in reply, 'It is not those that are well who need the 31
doctor, but the sick. ·I have come to call not the upright but sinners to repentance.' 32

Discussion on fasting

They then said to him, 'John's disciples are always fasting and saying prayers, and 33
the disciples of the Pharisees, too, but yours go on eating and drinking.' ·Jesus 34
replied, 'Surely you cannot make the bridegroom's attendants fast while the
bridegroom is still with them? ·But the time will come when the bridegroom is 35
taken away from them; then, in those days, they will fast.'

He also told them a parable, 'No one tears a piece from a new cloak to put it on 36

an old cloak; otherwise, not only will the new one be torn, but the piece taken from the new will not match the old.

37 'And nobody puts new wine in old wineskins; otherwise, the new wine will burst
38 the skins and run to waste, and the skins will be ruined. ·No; new wine must be put
39 in fresh skins. ·And nobody who has been drinking old wine wants new. "The old is good," he says.'[f] Jn 3:19 Jn 2:10

Picking corn on the Sabbath

‖Mt 12:1–8 ‖Mk 2:23–28

1 6 It happened that one Sabbath he was walking through the cornfields, and his disciples were picking ears of corn, rubbing them in their hands and eating
2 them. ·Some of the Pharisees said, 'Why are you doing something that is forbidden
3 on the Sabbath day?' ·Jesus answered them, 'So you have not read what David did
4 when he and his followers were hungry—·how he went into the house of God and took the loaves of the offering and ate them and gave them to his followers, loaves Ex 25:23j
5 which the priests alone are allowed to eat?' ·And he said to them, 'The Son of man is master of the Sabbath.'[a]

Cure of the man with a withered hand

‖Mt 12:9–16 ‖Mk 3:1–6 13:10–17;14:1–6

6 Now on another Sabbath he went into the synagogue and began to teach, and a
7 man was present, and his right hand was withered. ·The scribes and the Pharisees were watching him to see if he would cure somebody on the Sabbath, hoping to
8 find something to charge him with. ·But he knew their thoughts; and he said to the Jn 1:48dd man with the withered hand, 'Get up and stand out in the middle!' And he came
9 forward and stood there. ·Then Jesus said to them, 'I put it to you: is it permitted
10 on the Sabbath to do good, or to do evil; to save life, or to destroy it?' ·Then he looked round at them all and said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand.' He did so,
11 and his hand was restored. ·But they were furious and began to discuss the best 11:53p way of dealing with Jesus.

The choice of the Twelve

‖Mt 10:1–4 ‖Mk 3:13–19

12 Now it happened in those days that he went onto the mountain to pray; and he
13 spent the whole night in prayer to God. ·When day came he summoned his 3:21j
14 disciples and picked out twelve of them; he called them 'apostles':[b] ·Simon whom ‖Ac 1:13 he called Peter, and his brother Andrew; James, John, Philip, Bartholomew,
15, 16 Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Simon called the Zealot, ·Judas son of James,[c] and Judas Iscariot who became a traitor.

The crowds follow Jesus

‖Mt 4:24–25 ‖Mk 3:7–12

17 He then came down with them and stopped at a piece of level ground where there was a large gathering of his disciples, with a great crowd of people from all parts of
18 Judaea and Jerusalem and the coastal region of Tyre and Sidon ·who had come to hear him and to be cured of their diseases. People tormented by unclean spirits
19 were also cured, ·and everyone in the crowd was trying to touch him because power came out of him that cured them all. 5:17;8:46 Mk 5:30b

c. The 'companions' of v. 7. Andrew is not mentioned because he is in Simon's boat (note the plural pronouns in vv. 5,6,7) which is in the centre of Luke's picture.

d. i.e. God, cf. Ac 2:22; 10:38.

e. The Palestinian terrace of Mk 2:4 has become in Lk the roof of a Greco-Roman house.

f. The 'new wine' Jesus provides is not appreciated by those who have drunk the old wine of the Law. This last remark, which comes only in Lk, perhaps reflects the experience of Lk, the disciple of Paul, who knew the difficulties of the mission to the Jews, *see* Ac 13:5e.

6 **a.** One MS here adds an interesting, but probably spurious, dictum: 'On the same day, seeing a man working on the Sabbath day, he said to him: "Friend, if you know what you are doing, you are blessed; but if you do not know, you are accursed as a breaker of the Law."'

b. Apostle means 'someone sent'. The term, already known in the Jewish and Greek worlds, came in Christianity to mean missionaries 'sent', *see* Ac 22:21i, as witnesses of Christ, his life, death and resurrection, Ac 1:8k, primarily the Twelve, Mk 3:14c (in Acts the term is used only of them), but also of a wider circle of disciples, *see* Rm 1:1b, who are mentioned in the first place in the list of charisms, cf. 1 Co 12:28; Ep 4:11. Possibly the *name* of apostle was given to the missionaries only by the earliest community, though Jesus certainly sent his disciples on missions, first to the villages of Galilee, 9:6 and, after his resurrection, to the whole world, 24:47; Ac 1:8; *see also* Jn 3:11f; 4:34k.

c. lit. 'Judas of James', which could mean 'brother of James'. *See* Mt 10:2b.

Is 65:13–14 **The first sermon.** [d] **The Beatitudes** [e]

|Mt 5:1 Then fixing his eyes on his disciples he said: 20

|Mt 5:3 How blessed are you who are poor: the kingdom of God is yours.
|Mt 5:6 Blessed are you who are hungry now: you shall have your fill. 21
|Mt 5:5 Blessed are you who are weeping now: you shall laugh.

|Mt 5:11–12 'Blessed are you when people hate you, drive you out, abuse you, denounce 22
your name as criminal, on account of the Son of man. ·Rejoice when that day 23
comes and dance for joy, look!—your reward will be great in heaven. This was the
way their ancestors treated the prophets.

Is 5:8–25 Hab 2:6seq. **The curses**

But alas for you who are rich: you are having your consolation now. 24
Alas for you who have plenty to eat now: you shall go hungry. 25
Pr 14:13 Alas for you who are laughing now: you shall mourn and weep.

'Alas for you when everyone speaks well of you! This was the way their ancestors 26
treated the false prophets.

Love of enemies

Pr 25:21,22 |Mt 5:44 1 P 3:9 '|Mt 5:39–40 12:33d |Mt 5:42 Tb 4:15 |Mt 7:12 |Mt 5:46 14:12–14 Si 4:11 |Mt 5:45

'But I say this to you who are listening: Love your enemies, do good to those who 27
hate you, ·bless those who curse you, pray for those who treat you badly. ·To 28, 29
anyone who slaps you on one cheek, present the other cheek as well; to anyone
who takes your cloak from you, do not refuse your tunic. ·Give to everyone who 30
asks you, and do not ask for your property back from someone who takes it. ·Treat 31
others as you would like people to treat you. ·If you love those who love you, what 32
credit can you expect? Even sinners love those who love them. ·And if you do good 33
to those who do good to you, what credit can you expect? For even sinners do that
much. ·And if you lend to those from whom you hope to get money back, what 34
credit can you expect? Even sinners lend to sinners to get back the same amount.
Instead, love your enemies and do good to them, and lend without any hope of 35
return. [f] You will have a great reward, and you will be children of the Most High,
for he himself is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked.

Compassion and generosity

Ex 34:6–7 |Mt 7:1 |Mt 7:2 |Mk 4:24

'Be compassionate just as your Father is compassionate. ·Do not judge, and you 36, 37
will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and
you will be forgiven. ·Give, and there will be gifts for you: a full measure, pressed 38
down, shaken together, and overflowing, will be poured into your lap; [g] because
the standard you use will be the standard used for you.'

Integrity

|Mt 15:14 |Mt 10:24–25 Jn 13:16;15:20 |Mt 12:33–35 |Mt 7:16–18

He also told them a parable, 'Can one blind person guide another? Surely both will 39
fall into a pit? [h] ·Disciple is not superior to teacher; but fully trained disciple will 40
be like teacher. ·Why do you observe the splinter in your brother's eye and never 41
notice the great log in your own? ·How can you say to your brother, "Brother, let 42
me take out that splinter in your eye," when you cannot see the great log in your
own? Hypocrite! Take the log out of your own eye first, and then you will see
clearly enough to take [i] out the splinter in your brother's eye.

'There is no sound tree that produces rotten fruit, nor again a rotten tree that 43
produces sound fruit. ·Every tree can be told by its own fruit: people do not pick 44
figs from thorns, nor gather grapes from brambles. ·Good people draw what is 45
good from the store of goodness in their hearts; bad people draw what is bad from
the store of badness. For the words of the mouth flow out of what fills the heart.

The true disciple

46 'Why do you call me, "Lord, Lord" and not do what I say? ‖Mt 7:21
47 'Everyone who comes to me[j] and listens to my words and acts on them—I will ‖Mt 7:24–27
48 show you what such a person is like. ·Such a person is like the man who, when he built a house, dug, and dug deep, and laid the foundations on rock; when the river was in flood it bore down on that house but could not shake it, it was so well built.
49 But someone who listens and does nothing is like the man who built a house on soil, with no foundations; as soon as the river bore down on it, it collapsed; and what a ruin that house became!'

Cure of the centurion's servant

‖Mt 8:5–10,13
‖Jn 4:46–54?

1 When he had come to the end of all he wanted the people to hear, he went into
2 Capernaum. ·A centurion there had a servant, a favourite of his, who was sick
3 and near death. ·Having heard about Jesus he sent some Jewish elders[a] to him to
4 ask him to come and heal his servant. ·When they came to Jesus they pleaded
5 earnestly with him saying, 'He deserves this of you, ·because he is well disposed
6 towards our people;[b] he built us our synagogue himself.' ·So Jesus went with them, 12:33d
and was not very far from the house when the centurion sent word to him by some
friends to say to him, 'Sir, do not put yourself to any trouble because I am not
7 worthy to have you under my roof; ·and that is why I did not presume to come to
8 you myself; let my boy be cured by your giving the word.[c] ·For I am under
authority myself, and have soldiers under me; and I say to one man, "Go," and
he goes; to another, "Come here," and he comes; to my servant, "Do this," and he
9 does it.' ·When Jesus heard these words he was astonished at him and, turning
round, said to the crowd following him, 'I tell you, not even in Israel have I found
10 faith as great as this.' ·And when the messengers got back to the house they Mt 8:10b
found the servant in perfect health.

The son of the widow of Nain restored to life[d]

11 It happened that soon afterwards he went to a town called Nain, accompanied by
12 his disciples and a great number of people. ·Now when he was near the gate of the
town there was a dead man being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she
was a widow. And a considerable number of the townspeople was with her.
13, 14 When the Lord saw her he felt sorry for her and said to her, 'Don't cry.' ·Then he 1:43k
went up and touched the bier and the bearers stood still, and he said, 'Young man,
15 I tell you: get up.' ·And the dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus *gave him* Mt 8:3a
16 *to his mother.* ·Everyone was filled with awe and glorified God saying, 'A great 1 K 17:23 •1:12g;2:20g
17 prophet has risen up among us; God has visited his people.' ·And this view of him Mt 16:14c 1:68gg;4:14e
spread throughout Judaea and all over the countryside. 4:44k

The Baptist's question. Jesus commends him

‖Mt 11:2–15

18 The disciples of John gave him all this news, and John, summoning two of his
19 disciples, ·sent them to the Lord to ask, 'Are you the one who is to come, or are
20 we to expect someone else?' ·When the men reached Jesus they said, 'John the
Baptist has sent us to you to ask, "Are you the one who is to come or are we to

d. Luke's form is shorter than Matthew's because he has not filled out the discourse, as Mt has done, with additional sayings on allied subjects: and he has not included much material, notably about the Law, which would not interest non-Jewish readers, *see* Mt 5:1a.

e. Mt has eight beatitudes, Lk four, and four maledictions. Mt intends them as a pattern of the new life which will bring heavenly rewards; in Lk, the blessings and the curses both speak of material conditions in this life to be reversed in the next, e.g. in 16:25. In Mt, Jesus uses the third person, in Lk he directly addresses his audience.

f. The text is difficult and the translation conj. var. 'driving no one to despair' or 'despairing of no one' or 'not at all despairing'.

g. Folds in the tunic or cloak were used as a pocket or as a bag for provisions.

h. Addressed, in Lk, to the disciples; in Mt 15:14, to the Pharisees. The same applies to vv. 43–45.

i. Or 'and then you will see how to take'.

j. A Johannine expression, *see* Jn 6:35k.

7 **a.** Local worthies, not to be confused with the Jerusalem 'elders' who were members of the Sanhedrin.

b. Evidently a gentile in sympathy with Judaism, like Cornelius, Ac 10:1–2a.

c. var. 'and my boy will be cured'.

d. Lk only. The episode leads up to the reply of Jesus to John's disciples, 7:22.

expect someone else?" ' •At that very time he cured many people of diseases and 21
afflictions and of evil spirits, and gave the gift of sight to many who were blind.
Then he gave the messengers their answer, 'Go back and tell John what you have 22
Is 26:19;35; 5–6;42:7;61:1 seen and heard: the blind see again, the lame walk, those suffering from virulent
skin-diseases are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life, the good
news is proclaimed to the poor; •and blessed is anyone who does not find me a 23
2:34*l* cause of falling.'

When John's messengers had gone he began to talk to the people about John, 24
'What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed swaying in the breeze? No! 25
Then what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? Look, those who
go in magnificent clothes and live luxuriously are to be found at royal courts!
Then what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and much more 26
than a prophet: •he is the one of whom scripture says: 27

Ml 3:1 *Look, I am going to send my messenger in front of you*
to prepare your *way before you.*

'I tell you, of all the children born to women, there is no one greater than John; 28
yet the least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.' •All the people who heard 29
‖Mt 21:31–32 him, and the tax collectors too, acknowledged God's saving justice by accepting
baptism from John; •but by refusing baptism from him the Pharisees and the 30
lawyers thwarted God's plan for them.

‖Mt 11:16–19 **Jesus condemns his contemporaries**

'What comparison, then, can I find for the people of this generation? What are 31
they like? •They are like children shouting to one another while they sit in the 32
market place:

We played the pipes for you,
and you wouldn't dance;
we sang dirges,
and you wouldn't cry.

'For John the Baptist has come, not eating bread, not drinking wine, and you 33
say, "He is possessed." •The Son of man has come, eating and drinking, and you 34
say, "Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners." •Yet 35
Jn 6:35k wisdom is justified by all her children.'[e]

The woman who was a sinner[f]

11:37;14:1 One of the Pharisees invited him to a meal. When he arrived at the Pharisee's 36
house and took his place at table, •suddenly a woman came in, who had a bad name 37
in the town. She had heard he was dining with the Pharisee and had brought with
her an alabaster jar of ointment. •She waited behind him at his feet, weeping, and 38
her tears fell on his feet, and she wiped them away with her hair; then she covered
his feet with kisses and anointed them with the ointment.

When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, 'If this man 39
Mt 16:14c Jn 4:18–19 were a prophet, he would know who this woman is and what sort of person it is
who is touching him and what a bad name she has.' •Then Jesus took him up and 40
said, 'Simon, I have something to say to you.' He replied, 'Say on, Master.'
'There was once a creditor who had two men in his debt; one owed him five 41
hundred denarii, the other fifty. •They were unable to pay, so he let them both off. 42
Which of them will love him more?' •Simon answered, 'The one who was let off 43
more, I suppose.' Jesus said, 'You are right.'

Then he turned to the woman and said to Simon, 'You see this woman? I came 44
into your house, and you poured no water over my feet, but she has poured out her
tears over my feet and wiped them away with her hair. •You gave me no kiss, but 45
she has been covering my feet with kisses ever since I came in.[g] •You did not 46
Ps 23:5c anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. •For this 47

reason I tell you that her sins, many as they are, have been forgiven her, because she has shown such great love. [h] It is someone who is forgiven little who shows little Mt 21:31
48, 49 love.' •Then he said to her, 'Your sins are forgiven.' •Those who were with him at Mt 9:2b
50 table began to say to themselves, 'Who is this man, that even forgives sins?' •But he said to the woman, 'Your faith has saved you; go in peace.'

The women accompanying Jesus

1 8 Now it happened that after this he made his way through towns and villages 4:43–44
preaching and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. With him ‖Mt 4:23;9:35
‖Mk 1:39
2 went the Twelve, •as well as certain women who had been cured of evil spirits and Mt 8:29k
ailments: Mary surnamed the Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out,
3 Joanna the wife of Herod's steward Chuza, Susanna, and many others who 23:49;24:10
provided for them out of their own resources. Mt 27:55–56
Mk 15:40–41
Jn 19:25

Parable of the sower ‖Mt 13:1–9
‖Mk 4:1–9

4 With a large crowd gathering and people from every town finding their way to him,
he told this parable:
5 'A sower went out to sow his seed. Now as he sowed, some fell on the edge of the
6 path and was trampled on; and the birds of the air ate it up. •Some seed fell on
7 rock, and when it came up it withered away, having no moisture. •Some seed fell in
8 the middle of thorns and the thorns grew with it and choked it. •And some seed fell Jr 4:3–4
into good soil and grew and produced its crop a hundredfold.' Saying this he cried,
'Anyone who has ears for listening should listen!'

Why Jesus speaks in parables ‖Mt 13:10–11,13
9, 10 His disciples asked him what this parable might mean, •and he said, 'To you is ‖Mk 4:10–12
granted to understand the secrets of the kingdom of God; for the rest it remains in
parables, so that

they may look but not perceive,
listen but not understand. Is 6:9

The parable of the sower explained ‖Mt 13:18–23
‖Mk 4:14–20

11, 12 'This, then, is what the parable means: the seed is the word of God. •Those on the
edge of the path are people who have heard it, and then the devil comes and carries
13 away the word from their hearts in case they should believe and be saved. •Those Mt 8:10b
on the rock are people who, when they first hear it, welcome the word with joy.
But these have no root; they believe for a while, and in time of trial they give up.
14 As for the part that fell into thorns, this is people who have heard, but as they go
on their way they are choked by the worries and riches and pleasures of life and 21:34
15 never produce any crops. •As for the part in the rich soil, this is people with a noble
and generous heart who have heard the word and take it to themselves and yield a
harvest through their perseverance.

Parable of the lamp ‖Mk 4:21–22

16 'No one lights a lamp to cover it with a bowl or to put it under a bed. No, it is put on =11:33
17 a lamp-stand so that people may see the light when they come in. •For nothing is ‖Mt 5:15
Jn 8:12b
hidden but it will be made clear, nothing secret but it will be made known and =12:2
‖Mt 10:26

e. var. 'by her actions', *see* Mt 11:19h. The children of Wisdom, i.e., of the all-wise God, appreciate and welcome God's works.

f. Lk only. This episode is not the same as the anointing of the Lord's head at Bethany, Mt 26:6–13 and par., although versions of that incident may well have influenced some of the details of the narrative here. There is no reason to identify the sinful woman with Mary of Magdala, 8:2, and still less with Mary, sister of Martha, 10:39; Jn 11:1,2,5; 12:2–3.

g. var. 'ever since she came in'.

h. In the first part of this verse, love seems to be the cause of forgiveness, in the second its effect. This paradox reflects the composite nature of the pericope. In vv. 37–38, 44–46 the woman's actions express a great love which earns her forgiveness, whence the conclusion 47[a]. But in vv. 40–43 a parable has been inserted whose lesson is the opposite: greater forgiveness brings greater love, whence the conclusion 47[b].

=19:26 ‖Mt 13:12;25:29 ‖Mk 4:24–25
brought to light. ·So take care how you listen; anyone who has, will be given more; 18
anyone who has not, will be deprived even of what he thinks he has.'

‖Mt 12:46–50 ‖Mk 3:31–35
The true family of Jesus [a]

His mother and his brothers came looking for him, but they could not get to him 19
because of the crowd. ·He was told, 'Your mother and brothers are standing 20
11:27–28 outside and want to see you.' ·But he said in answer, 'My mother and my brothers 21
are those who hear the word of God and put it into practice.'

‖Mt 8:18,23–27 ‖Mk 4:35–41
The calming of the storm

It happened that one day he got into a boat with his disciples and said to them, 'Let 22
us cross over to the other side of the lake.' So they set out, ·and as they sailed he 23
fell asleep. When a squall of wind came down on the lake the boat started shipping
water and they found themselves in danger. ·So they went to rouse him saying, 24
5:5;8:45;9:33; 17:13 'Master! Master! We are lost!' Then he woke up and rebuked the wind and the
rough water; and they subsided and it was calm again. ·He said to them, 'Where is 25
Mt 8:10b 1:12g;4:15f your faith?' They were awestruck and astounded and said to one another, 'Who
can this be, that gives orders even to winds and waves and they obey him?'

‖Mt 8:28–34 ‖Mk 5:1–20
The Gerasene demoniac

They came to land in the territory of the Gerasenes, [b] which is opposite Galilee. 26
He was stepping ashore when a man from the city who was possessed by devils 27
came towards him; for a long time the man had been living with no clothes on, not
in a house, but in the tombs.

Catching sight of Jesus he gave a shout, fell at his feet and cried out at the top of 28
4:34 Mt 4:3a his voice, 'What do you want with me, Jesus, son of the Most High God? I implore
you, do not torture me.' ·For Jesus had been telling the unclean spirit to come out 29
of the man. It had seized on him a great many times, and then they used to secure
him with chains and fetters to restrain him, but he would always break the
fastenings, and the devil would drive him out into the wilds. ·Jesus asked him, 30
'What is your name?' He said, 'Legion'—because many devils had gone into him.
And these begged him not to order them to depart into the Abyss. [c] 31

Now there was a large herd of pigs feeding there on the mountain, and the devils 32
begged him to let them go into these. So he gave them leave. ·The devils came out 33
of the man and went into the pigs, and the herd charged down the cliff into the lake
and was drowned.

When the swineherds saw what had happened they ran off and told their story in 34
the city and in the country round about; ·and the people went out to see what had 35
happened. When they came to Jesus they found the man from whom the devils had
gone out sitting at the feet of Jesus, [d] wearing clothes and in his right mind; and
they were afraid. ·Those who had witnessed it told them how the man who had 36
been possessed came to be saved. ·The entire population of the Gerasene territory 37
1:12g was in great fear and asked Jesus to leave them. So he got into the boat and
went back.

The man from whom the devils had gone out asked to be allowed to stay with 38
him, but he sent him away saying, ·'Go back home and report all that God has 39
done for you.' So the man went off and proclaimed throughout the city all that
Jesus had done for him.

‖Mt 9:18–26 ‖Mk 5:21–43
Cure of the woman with a haemorrhage. Jairus' daughter raised to life

On his return Jesus was welcomed by the crowd, for they were all there waiting for 40
him. ·And suddenly there came a man named Jairus, who was president of the 41
synagogue. He fell at Jesus' feet and pleaded with him to come to his house,
because he had an only daughter about twelve years old, who was dying. And 42
the crowds were almost stifling Jesus as he went.

Now there was a woman suffering from a haemorrhage for the past twelve years, 43

whom no one had been able to cure.[e] •She came up behind him and touched the fringe of his cloak; and the haemorrhage stopped at that very moment. •Jesus said, 'Who was it that touched me?' When they all denied it, Peter said, 'Master, it is the crowds round you, pushing.' •But Jesus said, 'Somebody touched me. I felt that power had gone out from me.' •Seeing herself discovered, the woman came forward trembling, and falling at his feet explained in front of all the people why she had touched him and how she had been cured at that very moment. •'My daughter,' he said, 'your faith has saved you; go in peace.'

5:5;8:24;9:33; 17:13
6:19+

While he was still speaking, someone arrived from the house of the president of the synagogue to say, 'Your daughter has died. Do not trouble the Master any further.' •But Jesus heard this, and he spoke to the man, 'Do not be afraid, only have faith and she will be saved.' •When he came to the house he allowed no one to go in with him except Peter and John and James,[f] and the child's father and mother. •They were all crying and mourning for her, but Jesus said, 'Stop crying; she is not dead, but asleep.' •But they ridiculed him, knowing she was dead. •But taking her by the hand himself he spoke to her, 'Child, get up.' •And her spirit returned and she got up at that very moment. Then he told them to give her something to eat. •Her parents were astonished, but he ordered them not to tell anyone what had happened.

Mt 8:10b
1:12g
Mk 1:34m

The mission of the Twelve

‖Mt 10:1,5,8, 9–14
‖Mk 6:7–13

He called the Twelve[a] together and gave them power and authority over all devils and to cure diseases, •and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal. •He said to them, 'Take nothing for the journey: neither staff, nor haversack, nor bread, nor money; and do not have a spare tunic. •Whatever house you enter, stay there; and when you leave let your departure be from there. As for those who do not welcome you, when you leave their town shake the dust from your feet as evidence against them.' •So they set out and went from village to village proclaiming the good news and healing everywhere.

Mt 8:3a;8:29k
10:7
Ac 9:43;16:15; 17:7;18:3
Ac 13:51

Herod and Jesus[b]

‖Mt 14:1–2
‖Mk 6:14–16

Meanwhile Herod the tetrarch had heard about all that was going on; and he was puzzled, because some people were saying that John had risen from the dead, others that Elijah had reappeared, still others that one of the ancient prophets had come back to life. •But Herod said, 'John? I beheaded him. So who is this I hear such reports about?' And he was anxious to see him.

9:19
23:8–12

The return of the apostles. Miracle of the loaves[c]

‖Mt 14:13–21
‖Mk 6:30–44
‖Jn 6:1–13

On their return the apostles gave him an account of all they had done. Then he took them with him and withdrew towards a town called Bethsaida where they could be by themselves. •But the crowds got to know and they went after him. He

Mk 6:45

8 **a.** Lk has taken this passage out of its context in Mk 3:31–35 to serve as a conclusion to this small section on the parables; hence he modifies v. 21 (cf. Mk 3:35) to match v. 15.

b. var. 'Gergesenes', 'Gadarenes'.

c. In place of Mark's 'send them out of the district', Mk 5:10. The demons beseech Jesus not to send them back to the depths of the earth, their usual dwelling-place and ultimate home, Rv 9:1,2,11; 11:7; 17:8; 20:1,3.

d. As a disciple sits, *see* 10:39; Ac 22:3. Lk alone adds this detail.

e. var. 'a woman who, having spent all she had on doctors, could be cured by no one', cf. Mk 5:26.

f. *See* Mk 5:37d. Here, however, as in 9:28; Ac 1:13, John is named immediately after Peter. This coupling of John with Peter is common to Lk, 22:8; Ac 3:1,3,11; 4:13,19; 8:14, and the fourth gospel, Jn 13:23–26; 18:15–16; 20:3–9; 21:7,20–23.

9 **a.** add. 'apostles'.

b. Lk does not record the Baptist's death; instead, he prepares the reader ('he was anxious to see him') for the subsequent meeting of Herod with Jesus, 23:8–12.

c. Lk, as Jn, gives only one multiplication of loaves, while Mt and Mk have two. Possibly Lk has omitted or did not know the whole section Mk 6:45–8:26 which contains the second multiplication. But more probably he is avoiding a reduplication of Mk and Mt, where the two stories of the multiplication of loaves do indeed seem to be parallel versions of the same event, one issuing from a Palestinian milieu (western shore of the lake, *see* Mt 14:13d; twelve baskets, corresponding to the twelve tribes of Israel), the other issuing from a gentile milieu (eastern shore, *see* Mk 7:31; seven baskets, corresponding to the seven gentile nations of Canaan before the conquest, Dt 7:1; Ac 13:19); *see also* Mt 14:13c.

made them welcome and talked to them about the kingdom of God; and he cured those who were in need of healing.

It was late afternoon when the Twelve came up to him and said, 'Send the people 12
away, and they can go to the villages and farms round about to find lodging and
food; for we are in a lonely place here.' •He replied, 'Give them something to eat 13
yourselves.' But they said, 'We have no more than five loaves and two fish, unless
we are to go ourselves and buy food for all these people.' •For there were about 14
five thousand men. But he said to his disciples, 'Get them to sit down in parties of
about fifty.' •They did so and made them all sit down. •Then he took the five loaves 15, 16
Mk 7:34 and the two fish, raised his eyes to heaven, and said the blessing over them; then he
Jn 11:41;17:1+ broke them and handed them to his disciples to distribute among the crowd. •They 17
all ate as much as they wanted, and when the scraps left over were collected they
filled twelve baskets.

‖Mt 16:13–20 **Peter's profession of faith** [d]
‖Mk 8:27–30
Jn 6:67–69 Now it happened that he was praying alone, and his disciples came to him and he 18
3:21j put this question to them, 'Who do the crowds say I am?' •And they answered, 19
9:7–8 'Some say John the Baptist; others Elijah; others again one of the ancient prophets
come back to life.' •'But you,' he said to them, 'who do you say I am?' It was Peter 20
2:26j;23:35 who spoke up. 'The Christ of God,' he said. •But he gave them strict orders and 21
Mk 1:34m charged them not to say this to anyone.

‖Mt 16:21 **First prophecy of the Passion** [e]
‖Mk 8:31
He said, 'The Son of man is destined to suffer grievously, to be rejected by the 22
elders and chief priests and scribes and to be put to death, and to be raised up on
the third day.'

=14:27 **The condition of following Christ**
‖Mt 10:38;16:24–27
‖Mk 8:34–38 Then, speaking to all, he said, 'If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him 23
Jn 12:26 renounce himself and take up his cross every day and follow me. •Anyone who 24
=17:33 wants to save his life will lose it; but anyone who loses his life for my sake, will save
‖Mt 10:39 it. •What benefit is it to anyone to win the whole world and forfeit or lose his very 25
‖Jn 12:25 self? •For if anyone is ashamed of me and of my words, of him the Son of man will 26
=12:9 be ashamed when he comes in his own glory and in the glory of the Father and the
‖Mt 10:33 holy angels.

‖Mt 16:28n **The kingdom will come soon**
‖Mk 9:1
'I tell you truly, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they 27
see the kingdom of God.'

‖Mt 17:1–9 **The transfiguration** [f]
‖Mk 9:2–10
8:51 Now about eight days after this had been said, he took with him Peter, John and 28
3:21j James and went up the mountain to pray. •And it happened that, as he was 29
24:16d praying, the aspect of his face was changed and his clothing became sparkling
24:4 white. •And suddenly there were two men talking to him; they were Moses and 30
Ac 1:10 Jn 13:1b Elijah [g] •appearing in glory, and they were speaking of his passing which he was to 31
2:38o accomplish in Jerusalem. •Peter and his companions were heavy with sleep, but 32
22:45 they woke up [h] and saw his glory and the two men standing with him. •As these 33
•Jn 1:14n were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, 'Master, it is wonderful for us to be here; so
5:5;8:24,45;17:13 let us make three shelters, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.' He did
not know what he was saying. •As he was saying this, a cloud came and covered 34
1:12g,35v them with shadow; and when they went into the cloud the disciples were afraid.
Jn 1:34 And a voice came from the cloud saying, 'This is my Son, the Chosen 35
One. [i] Listen to him.' •And after the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. The 36
9:21 disciples kept silence and, at that time, told no one what they had seen.

The epileptic demoniac

‖Mt 17:14–18
‖Mk 9:14–27

37 Now it happened that on the following day when they were coming down from the
38 mountain a large crowd came to meet him. ·And suddenly a man in the crowd
cried out. 'Master,' he said, 'I implore you to look at my son: he is my only child.
39 A spirit will suddenly take hold of him, and all at once it gives a sudden cry and
throws the boy into convulsions with foaming at the mouth; it is slow to leave him,
40 but when it does, it leaves the boy worn out. ·I begged your disciples to drive it
41 out, and they could not.' ·In reply Jesus said, 'Faithless and perverse generation! Ac 2:40
How much longer must I be among you and put up with you? Bring your son here.'
42 Even while the boy was coming, the devil threw him to the ground in convulsions.
But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit and cured the boy and gave him back to his 7:15
43 father, ·and everyone was awestruck by the greatness of God. 4:15f

Second prophecy of the Passion

‖Mt 17:22
‖Mk 9:30–32
·4:15f

But while everyone was full of admiration for all he did, he said to his disciples,
44 'For your part, you must have these words constantly in mind: The Son of man is 9:22e
45 going to be delivered into the power of men.' ·But they did not understand what he Mk 4:13b
said; it was hidden from them so that they should not see the meaning of it, and
they were afraid to ask him about it.

Who is the greatest?[j]

=Lk 22:24
‖Mt 18:1–5
‖Mk 9:33–37

46, 47 An argument started between them about which of them was the greatest. ·Jesus
knew what thoughts were going through their minds, and he took a little child
48 whom he set by his side ·and then he said to them, 'Anyone who welcomes this =10:16
little child in my name welcomes me; and anyone who welcomes me, welcomes the ‖Mt 10:40
one who sent me. The least among you all is the one who is the greatest.' ‖Jn 13:20
14:11:22:26

On using the name of Jesus

‖Mk 9:38–40

49 John spoke up. 'Master,' he said, 'we saw someone driving out devils in your name, Ac 3:16*l*
50 and because he is not with us we tried to stop him.'[k] ·But Jesus said to him, 'You
must not stop him: anyone who is not against you is for you.' Mt 12:30p

IV: THE JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM[l]

A Samaritan village is inhospitable

51 Now it happened that as the time drew near for him to be taken up,[m] he resolutely Mt 19:1
Mk 10:1
2:38*o*;22:8

d. Even without the Matthaean addition, 'son of God', *see* Mt 16:16d, this confession of Peter, speaking in the name of the apostles, is of crucial significance as a turning-point in the earthly career of Jesus. While the crowd cannot grasp his significance and becomes progressively alienated, his disciples recognise for the first time explicitly that he is Messiah, *see* 2:26j. Henceforth Jesus is going to concentrate on forming this little nucleus of believers and on purifying their faith.

e. This prophecy is to be followed by several others, 9:44; 12:50; 17:25; 18:31–33. Cf. 24:7,25–27. • Lk omits Peter's protest and his rebuke by Jesus, Mk 8:32seq.

f. Certain of the details in this account of the Transfiguration are peculiar to Lk and not found in Mk or Mt. Whereas in Mk it is the revelation of the hidden Messiah as the consummation of the Law and the Prophets, and for Mt it is the manifestation of the new and greater Moses, for Lk the Transfiguration is also a personal experience of Jesus, in the course of earnest prayer, in which he clearly sees the 'passing' (exodus) which he is to accomplish in Jerusalem. These differences have led some commentators to suggest that Lk had a separate and additional tradition to draw on.

g. Since Moses and Elijah are named only to identify the 'two men' mentioned in the first place, it may be that in Lk's source these were two angels, cf. 24:4; Ac 1:10, who were sustaining and strengthening Jesus, cf. Lk 22:43. On the significance of Moses and Elijah in Mt's tradition, *see* Mt 17:1a.

h. Or 'kept awake'. This irresistible sleep of the disciples occurring only in Lk, recalls that of Gethsemane, 22:45, which is more natural and from which it could be derived.

i. var. 'the Beloved', *see* Mt and Mk. • The titles 'Chosen One', cf. 23:35; Is 42:1, and 'Son of man' alternate in the *Parables of Enoch*.

j. The answer to this question is given in v. 48[b]. The saying which makes up 48[a], is apparently taken from another context, cf. Mt 10:40.

k. var. 'we stopped him'.

l. From 9:51–18:14, Lk deserts Mk. Assembling material he has found in the Collection (*see* Intro. to Synoptic Gospels, pp. 1601–2, 1607) which also served Mt, together with information from his own special source, Lk arranges all within the literary framework of a journey to Jerusalem (9:53,57; 10:1; 13:22,33; 17:11; *see* 2:38*o*).

m. lit. 'for his taking up'. This 'assumption' of Jesus, cf. 2 K 2:9–11; Mk 16:19; Ac 1:2,10–11; 1 Tm 3:16, refers to the last days of his suffering life (Passion, death) and the beginning of his glory (resurrection, ascension). Jn, thinking more theologically, uses the word 'glorify' in connection with the whole of this period, Jn 7:39; 12:16,23; 13:31seq.; for him the crucifixion is a 'lifting up', Jn 12:32j.

turned his face towards Jerusalem ·and sent messengers ahead of him. These set 52
out, and they went into a Samaritan village to make preparations for him, ·but the 53
people would not receive him because he was making for Jerusalem. [n] ·Seeing this, 54
2 K 1:10 the disciples James and John said, 'Lord, do you want us to call down fire from
heaven to burn them up?' [o] ·But he turned and rebuked them, [p] ·and they went on 55, 56
to another village.

‖Mt 8:18–22 **Hardships of the apostolic calling**

As they travelled along they met a man on the road who said to him, 'I will follow 57
you wherever you go.' ·Jesus answered, 'Foxes have holes and the birds of the air 58
have nests, but the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head.'
14:26,33 Another to whom he said, 'Follow me,' replied, [q] 'Let me go and bury my father 59
first.' ·But he answered, 'Leave the dead to bury their dead; [r] your duty is to go 60
and spread the news of the kingdom of God.'
1 K 19:19–21 Another said, 'I will follow you, sir, but first let me go and say good-bye to my 61
people at home.' ·Jesus said to him, 'Once the hand is laid on the plough, no one 62
Ph 3:13 who looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.'

9:1–2 **The mission of the seventy-two disciples** [a]

Ex 24:1 10 After this the Lord appointed seventy-two [b] others and sent them out ahead 1
of him [c] in pairs, to all the towns and places he himself would be visiting.
‖Mt 9:37–38 And he said to them, 'The harvest is rich but the labourers are few, so ask the 2
Lord of the harvest to send labourers to do his harvesting. ·Start off now, but look, 3
‖Mt 10:16 I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. ·Take no purse with you, no 4
·=9:3–5
Mt 10:9–15 haversack, no sandals. Salute no one on the road. ·Whatever house you enter, let 5
‖Mk 6:8–11 your first words be, "Peace to this house!" ·And if a man of peace lives there, [d] 6
your peace will go and rest on him; if not, it will come back to you. ·Stay in the 7
1 Tm 5:18 same house, taking what food and drink they have to offer, for the labourer
deserves his wages; do not move from house to house. ·Whenever you go into a 8
‖Mt 3:2d;10:7seq. town where they make you welcome, eat what is put before you. ·Cure those in it 9
who are sick, and say, "The kingdom of God is very near to you." ·But whenever 10
you enter a town and they do not make you welcome, go out into its streets and
say, ·"We wipe off the very dust of your town that clings to our feet, and leave it 11
with you. Yet be sure of this: the kingdom of God is very near." ·I tell you, on the 12
great Day it will be more bearable for Sodom than for that town.
‖Mt 11:21–24 'Alas for you, Chorazin! Alas for you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles done in you 13
had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in
sackcloth and ashes. ·And still, it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon at the 14
Is 14:13–15 Judgement than for you. ·And as for you, Capernaum, did you want to be *raised* 15
high as heaven? You shall be flung down to hell.
=9:48 'Anyone who listens to you listens to me; anyone who rejects you rejects me, 16
‖Mt 10:40
‖Mk 9:37 and those who reject me reject the one who sent me.'
‖Jn 13:20

True cause for the apostles to rejoice

1:14i The seventy-two came back rejoicing. 'Lord,' they said, 'even the devils submit to 17
Mt 8:29k us when we use your name.' ·He said to them, 'I watched Satan fall like lightning 18
Ac 3:16l
Jn 12:31–32 from heaven. ·Look, I have given you power to tread down serpents and scorpions 19
Rv 12:9
·Ps 91:13 and the whole strength of the enemy; nothing shall ever hurt you. ·Yet do not 20
Ac 28:5 rejoice that the spirits submit to you; rejoice instead that your names are written
Mk 16:18
Rv 20:12i in heaven.'

‖Mt 11:25–27 **The good news revealed to the simple. The Father and the Son**

1:14i Just at this time, filled with joy by the Holy Spirit, he said, 'I bless you, Father, 21
4:1b Lord of heaven and of earth, for hiding these things from the learned and the clever
8:10 and revealing them to little children. Yes, Father, for that is what it has pleased
you to do. · [e] Everything has been entrusted to me by my Father; and no one knows 22

who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.'

The privilege of the disciples ‖Mt 13:16–17

23 Then turning to his disciples he spoke to them by themselves, 'Blessed are the eyes
24 that see what you see, ·for I tell you that many prophets and kings wanted to see what you see, and never saw it; to hear what you hear, and never heard it.'[f]

The great commandment ‖Mt 22:34–40 ‖Mk 12:28–31

25 And now a lawyer stood up and, to test him, asked, 'Master, what must I do to
26 inherit eternal life?' ·He said to him, 'What is written in the Law? What is your
27 reading of it?' ·He replied, '*You must love the Lord your God with all your heart,* Dt 6:5
with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, *and your neighbour* Lv 19:18
28 *as yourself*.' ·Jesus said to him, 'You have answered right, do this and life is yours.' Lv 18:5

Parable of the good Samaritan

29 But the man was anxious to justify himself[g] and said to Jesus, 'And who is my
30 neighbour?' ·In answer Jesus said, 'A man was once on his way down from 15:11a
Jerusalem to Jericho and fell into the hands of bandits; they stripped him, beat him
31 and then made off, leaving him half dead. ·Now a priest happened to be travelling
down the same road, but when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side.
32 In the same way a Levite who came to the place saw him, and passed by on the
33 other side. ·But a Samaritan[h] traveller who came on him was moved with compas-
34 sion when he saw him. ·He went up to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring oil
and wine on them. He then lifted him onto his own mount and took him to an inn 2 Ch 28:15
35 and looked after him. ·Next day, he took out two denarii and handed them to the
innkeeper and said, "Look after him, and on my way back I will make good any
36 extra expense you have." ·Which of these three, do you think, proved himself a
37 neighbour to the man who fell into the bandits' hands?' ·He replied, 'The one who showed pity towards him.' Jesus said to him, 'Go, and do the same yourself.'

Martha and Mary[i]

38 In the course of their journey he came to a village, and a woman named Martha
39 welcomed him into her house. ·She had a sister called Mary, who sat down at the
40 Lord's feet and listened to him speaking. ·Now Martha, who was distracted with 8:35d
all the serving, came to him and said, 'Lord, do you not care that my sister is 1 Co 7:35
41 leaving me to do the serving all by myself? Please tell her to help me.' ·But the 8:3+
Lord answered, 'Martha, Martha,' he said, 'you worry and fret about so many
42 things, ·and yet few are needed, indeed only one.[j] It is Mary who has chosen the Mt 6:33 Jn 6:27
better part, and it is not to be taken from her.'

n. The hatred of the Samaritans for the Jews, Jn 4:9e, would show itself particularly towards those on pilgrimage to Jerusalem; hence it was usual to bypass this territory, cf. Mt 10:5. Only Lk and Jn (4:1–42) mention Jesus' presence in this hostile territory, *see* 17:11,16. It was not long before the primitive Church imitated its Master, Ac 8:5–25.

o. add. 'as Elijah did'. • Allusion to 2 K 1:10–12. James and John are seen here as 'Sons of Thunder' indeed, Mk 3:17.

p. add. 'You do not know what spirit you are made of. The Son of man came not to destroy souls but to save them.'

q. add. 'Lord', cf. Mt 8:21.

r. A play on the two meanings of 'death': physical and spiritual.

10 a. The collection of sayings used by Mt and Lk contained a mission discourse parallel to that of Mk 6:8–11. While Mt has combined both versions in one discourse, 10:7–16, Lk has kept them separate in two discourses addressed respectively to the Twelve, the number of Israel, and to the seventy (or seventy-two) disciples, the traditional number of gentile nations. Compare the case of the two multiplications of loaves, *see* Mt 14:13c.

b. var. 'seventy'.

c. Not, as in 9:52, to arrange for lodgings but to prepare the people for his teaching.

d. lit. 'son of peace', a Hebraism for those who deserve 'peace', i.e. all the spiritual and temporal blessings the word implies. *See* Jn 14:27s.

e. add. 'and turning to his disciples he said'.

f. Paul emphasises the fact that the 'mystery' was long kept hidden; Rm 16:25*l*. *See also* 1 P 1:11–12.

g. For having put the question.

h. The contrast is between the element in Israel most strictly bound to the law of love, and the heretic and stranger, Jn 8:48, *see* Lk 9:53*n*., from whom normally only hate could be expected.

i. These two sisters also appear in the story of the raising of Lazarus, Jn 11:1–44.

j. var. 'but only one thing is needed', 'but only a few things are needed', readings which make free with the text and deform the sense. • In his remark Jesus rises from the material plane ('few things are needed', i.e. for the meal) to the 'one thing necessary', which is to listen to the word of God.

The Lord's prayer

3:21j **11** Now it happened that he was in a certain place praying, and when he had 1
finished one of his disciples said, 'Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his
disciples.' ·He said to them, 'When you pray, this is what to say: [a] 2

‖Mt 6:9–13
Father, may your name be held holy,
your kingdom come;
give us each day our daily bread, [b] 3
and forgive us our sins, [c]
for we ourselves forgive each one who is in debt to us. 4
And do not put us to the test.'

18:1–8 ### The importunate friend

He also said to them, 'Suppose one of you has a friend and goes to him in the 5
middle of the night to say, "My friend, lend me three loaves, ·because a friend of 6
mine on his travels has just arrived at my house and I have nothing to offer him;"
and the man answers from inside the house, "Do not bother me. The door is 7
bolted now, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot get up to give it to you."
·I tell you, if the man does not get up and give it him for friendship's sake, 8
persistence will make him get up and give his friend all he wants.

‖Mt 7:7–11
Jn 14:13–14+ ### Effective prayer

'So I say to you: Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, 9
and the door will be opened to you. ·For everyone who asks receives; everyone 10
who searches finds; everyone who knocks will have the door opened. ·What father 11
among you, if his son asked for a fish, would hand him a snake? [d] ·Or if he asked for 12
an egg, hand him a scorpion? ·If you then, evil as you are, know how to give your 13
children what is good, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy
‖Mt 12:22–29 Spirit [e] to those who ask him!'
‖Mk 3:22–27
Jn 14:13–16

Jesus and Beelzebul

He was driving out a devil and it was dumb; and it happened that when the devil 14
had gone out the dumb man spoke, and the people were amazed. ·But some of 15
them said, 'It is through Beelzebul, the prince of devils, that he drives devils out.'
=11:29 Others asked him, as a test, for a sign from heaven; ·but, knowing what they were 16, 17
‖Mt 16:1 thinking, he said to them, 'Any kingdom which is divided against itself is heading
‖Mk 8:11 for ruin, and house collapses against house. ·So, too, with Satan: if he is divided 18
against himself, how can his kingdom last?—since you claim that it is through
Beelzebul [f] that I drive devils out. ·Now if it is through Beelzebul that I drive devils 19
out, through whom do your own sons drive them out? They shall be your judges,
17:21 then. ·But if it is through the finger of God [g] that I drive devils out, then the 20
Ex 8:15
Mt 4:17f;8:29k; kingdom of God has indeed caught you unawares. ·So long as a strong man fully 21
12:28 armed guards his own home, his goods are undisturbed; ·but when someone 22
Is 49:25;53:12 stronger than himself attacks and defeats him, the stronger man takes away all the
weapons he relied on and shares out his spoil.

‖Mt 12:30 ### No compromise

9:50 'Anyone who is not with me is against me; and anyone who does not gather in with 23
me throws away.

‖Mt 12:43–45 ### Return of the unclean spirit

'When an unclean spirit goes out of someone it wanders through waterless country 24
looking for a place to rest, and not finding one it says, "I will go back to the home
I came from." ·But on arrival, finding it swept and tidied, ·it then goes off and 25, 26
brings seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and set up house
there, and so that person ends up worse off than before.'

The truly blessed

27 It happened that as he was speaking, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and
28 said, 'Blessed the womb that bore you and the breasts that fed you!' •But he 1:42,48;4:15f
replied, 'More blessed still are those who hear the word of God and keep it!' 8:21
Dt 30:14
Jn 13:17;14:23
Rv 1:3

The sign of Jonah

•‖Mt 12:38–42

29 The crowds got even bigger and he addressed them, 'This is an evil generation; it is
30 asking for a sign. [h] The only sign it will be given is the sign of Jonah. •For just as Jn 6:30–31
Jonah became a sign to the people of Nineveh, so will the Son of man be a sign to
31 this generation. [i] •On Judgement Day the Queen of the South will stand up against 1 K 10:1–10
the people of this generation and be their condemnation, because she came from
the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, look, there is something Jn 6:35k
32 greater than Solomon here. •On Judgement Day the men of Nineveh will appear
against this generation and be its condemnation, because when Jonah preached
they repented; and, look, there is something greater than Jonah here. Jon 3

The parable of the lamp repeated

=8:16
‖Mt 5:15
33 'No one lights a lamp and puts it in some hidden place or under a tub; they put it on ‖Mk 4:21
34 the lamp-stand so that people may see the light when they come in. •The lamp of ‖Mt 6:22–23
the body is your eye. When your eye is clear, your whole body, too, is filled with
35 light; but when it is diseased your body, too, will be darkened. •See to it then that
36 the light inside you is not darkness. •If, therefore, your whole body is filled with
light, and not darkened at all, it will be light entirely, as when the lamp shines on
you with its rays.' [j]

The Pharisees and the lawyers attacked

37 He had just finished speaking when a Pharisee invited him to dine at his house. He 7:36;14:1
38 went in and sat down at table. •The Pharisee saw this and was surprised that he had
39 not first washed before the meal. •But the Lord said to him, [k] 'You Pharisees! You Mt 15:2
Mk 7:2,5
clean the outside of cup and plate, while inside yourselves you are filled with ‖Mt 23:25–26
40 extortion and wickedness. •Fools! Did not he who made the outside make the
41 inside too? •Instead, give alms from what you have [l] and, look, everything will be 12:33d
42 clean for you. •But alas for you Pharisees, because you pay your tithe of mint and ‖Mt 23:23
rue and all sorts of garden herbs and neglect justice and the love of God! These you
43 should have practised, without neglecting the others. •Alas for you Pharisees, =20:46
‖Mt 23:6–7
because you like to take the seats of honour in the synagogues and to be ‖Mk 12:38–39
44 greeted respectfully in the market squares! •Alas for you, because you are like the ‖Mt 23:27
unmarked tombs that people walk on without knowing it!' [m]
45 A lawyer then spoke up. 'Master,' he said, 'when you speak like this you insult
46 us too.' •But he said, 'Alas for you lawyers as well, because you load on people Mt 11:28;‖23:4
burdens that are unendurable, burdens that you yourselves do not touch with your
fingertips.
47 'Alas for you because you build tombs for the prophets, the people your ‖Mt 23:29–31

11 **a.** Mt's text has seven petitions, Lk's five. *See* Mt 6:9d.
b. var. (borrowed, perhaps, from a baptismal liturgy) 'may your Holy Spirit come down on us and cleanse us'.
c. 'Debts' in Mt. Lk is more explicit and less juridical, but he retains 'debts' in the balancing clause that follows.
d. add. 'for bread would hand him a stone', a harmonisation with Mt 7:9.
e. Instead of the 'good things' of Mt 7:11. The Holy Spirit is the best of all 'good things'.
f. var. 'Beezebul' and 'Beelzebub'.
g. On this phrase, *see* Ex 8:15 and Ps 8:3. This passage and its parallel, Mt 12:28, have combined to provide the title 'finger of God's right hand' for the Holy Spirit.
h. i.e. a miracle as evidence and vindication of Christ's authority, *see* Jn 2:11f.
i. This interpretation of the 'sign of Jonah' is less probable than that of Mt 12:40, *see* Mt 12:39*l*. It is moreover merely the result of the artificial association of originally distinct sayings, 11:29 and par.; Mt 12:38–39 and Lk 11:30–32 and par.; Mt 12:41–42.
j. The textual tradition of vv. 35–36 is confused, and the text is probably corrupt. But the general meaning is clear: Jesus addresses his message to all, and if the mind is 'healthy', i.e. unclouded by selfish prejudice, cf. Jn 3:19–21, it can be understood by all.
k. Lk depends here on the source he shares with Mt; in 20:45–47 he returns to the same theme, this time depending on Mk. Mt has combined both sources in one discourse (ch. 23); *see* Lk 10:1a; 17:22g.
l. Interpretation difficult. Others translate, 'Instead give alms from what is inside'.
m. Thus contracting ritual impurity, Nb 19:16.

ancestors killed! ·In this way you both witness to what your ancestors did and 48
approve it; they did the killing, you do the building. "
‖Mt 23:34–36 1 Co 1:24 'And that is why the Wisdom of God° said, "I will send them prophets and 49
apostles; some they will slaughter and persecute, ·so that this generation will have 50
to answer for every prophet's blood that has been shed since the foundation of the
world, ·from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who perished between 51
the altar and the Temple." Yes, I tell you, this generation will have to answer
for it all.
‖Mt 23:13 'Alas for you lawyers who have taken away the key of knowledge! You have not 52
gone in yourselves and have prevented others from going in who wanted to.'
When he left there, the scribes and the Pharisees began a furious attack on him[p] 53
Mk 12:13 and tried to force answers from him on innumerable questions, ·lying in wait to 54
catch him out in something he might say.

Open and fearless speech

12 Meanwhile the people had gathered in their thousands so that they were 1
treading on one another. And he began to speak, first of all to his disciples. [q]
‖Mt 16:6,12 ‖Mk 8:15 =8:17 'Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees—their hypocrisy. ·Everything 2
now covered up will be uncovered, and everything now hidden will be made clear.
‖Mt 10:26–27 ‖Mk 4:22 For this reason, whatever you have said in the dark will be heard in the daylight, 3
and what you have whispered in hidden places will be proclaimed from the
housetops.
‖Mt 10:28–31 Jn 15:15 'To you my friends I say: Do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after 4
Jm 4:12 Mt 3:12j;18:9d that can do no more. ·I will tell you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, 5
has the power to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, he is the one to fear. ·Can you not 6
buy five sparrows for two pennies? And yet not one is forgotten in God's sight.
21:18 Why, every hair on your head has been counted. There is no need to be 7
Mt 10:32+ afraid: you are worth more than many sparrows.
‖Mt 10:32–33 'I tell you, if anyone openly declares himself for me in the presence of human 8
beings, the Son of man will declare himself for him in the presence of God's angels.
=9:26 ‖Mk 8:38 But anyone who disowns me in the presence of human beings will be disowned in 9
the presence of God's angels.
‖Mt 12:32 ‖Mk 3:29 'Everyone who says a word against the Son of man will be forgiven, but no one 10
who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will be forgiven.
=21:12–15 ‖Mt 10:17–20 'When they take you before synagogues and magistrates and authorities, do not 11
‖Mk 13:11 Jn 14:26r worry about how to defend yourselves or what to say, ·because when the time 12
comes, the Holy Spirit will teach you what you should say.'

On hoarding possessions

A man in the crowd said to him, 'Master, tell my brother to give me a share of our 13
inheritance.' ·He said to him, 'My friend, who appointed me your judge, or the 14
arbitrator of your claims?' ·Then he said to them, 'Watch, and be on your guard 15
against avarice of any kind, for life does not consist in possessions, even when
someone has more than he needs.'
15:11 Then he told them a parable, 'There was once a rich man who, having had a 16
good harvest from his land, ·thought to himself, "What am I to do? I have not 17
enough room to store my crops." ·Then he said, "This is what I will do: I will pull 18
down my barns and build bigger ones, and store all my grain and my goods in them,
Pr 27:1 Jm 4:13–15 and I will say to my soul: My soul, you have plenty of good things laid by for 19
Si 11:19 1 Co 15:32 many years to come; take things easy, eat, drink, have a good time." ·But God 20
said to him, "Fool! This very night the demand will be made for your soul; and this
Ps 39:6 ·Qo 2:17–23; 5:17–6:2 Mt 6:19–21 Rv 3:17–18 hoard of yours, whose will it be then?" ·So it is when someone stores up treasure 21
for himself instead of becoming rich in the sight of God.'

Trust in Providence

‖Mt 6:25–34 Then he said to his disciples, 'That is why I am telling you not to worry about your 22

life and what you are to eat, nor about your body and how you are to clothe it.
23, 24 For life[b] is more than food, and the body more than clothing. ·Think of the
ravens. They do not sow or reap; they have no storehouses and no barns; yet God
25 feeds them. And how much more you are worth than the birds! ·Can any of you,
26 however much you worry, add a single cubit to your span of life? ·If a very small
27 thing is beyond your powers, why worry about the rest? ·Think how the flowers
grow; they never have to spin or weave;[c] yet, I assure you, not even Solomon in all
28 his royal robes was clothed like one of them. ·Now if that is how God clothes a
flower which is growing wild today and is thrown into the furnace tomorrow, how
29 much more will he look after you, who have so little faith! ·But you must not set
30 your hearts on things to eat and things to drink; nor must you worry. ·It is the
gentiles of this world who set their hearts on all these things. Your Father well
31 knows you need them. ·No; set your hearts on his kingdom, and these other things
will be given you as well.

32 'There is no need to be afraid, little flock, for it has pleased your Father to give Jn 10:21:15–17
you the kingdom.

On almsgiving[d]

33 'Sell your possessions and give to those in need. Get yourselves purses that do not Pr 13:7 Ac 4:34
wear out, treasure that will not fail you, in heaven where no thief can reach it and ‖Mt 6:20–21
34 no moth destroy it. ·For wherever your treasure is, that is where your heart
will be too.

On being ready for the Master's return

35, 36 'See that you have your belts done up[e] and your lamps lit. ·Be like people waiting Ep 6:14 1 P 1:13
for their master to return from the wedding feast, ready to open the door as soon as Mt 25:1–13
37 he comes and knocks. ·Blessed those servants whom the master finds awake when
he comes. In truth I tell you, he will do up his belt, sit them down at table and wait 22:27 Jn 13:4–5
38 on them. ·It may be in the second watch that he comes, or in the third, but blessed ‖Mk 13:35
39 are those servants if he finds them ready. ·You may be quite sure of this, that if the ‖Mt 24:43–44
householder had known at what time the burglar would come, he would not have
40 let anyone break through the wall of his house. ·You too must stand ready, because
the Son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect.'

41, 42 Peter said, 'Lord, do you mean this parable for us, or for everyone?' ·The Lord
replied, 'Who, then, is the wise and trustworthy steward[f] whom the master will ‖Mt 24:45–51 1 Co 4:1seq.
place over his household to give them at the proper time their allowance of food?
43, 44 Blessed that servant if his master's arrival finds him doing exactly that. ·I tell you
45 truly, he will put him in charge of everything that he owns. ·But if the servant says
to himself, "My master is taking his time coming," and sets about beating the
46 menservants and the servant-girls, and eating and drinking and getting drunk, ·his
master will come on a day he does not expect and at an hour he does not know.
The master will cut him off and send him to the same fate as the unfaithful.

47 'The servant who knows what his master wants, but has got nothing ready and
done nothing in accord with those wishes, will be given a great many strokes of the
48 lash. ·The one who did not know, but has acted in such a way that he deserves a
beating, will be given fewer strokes. When someone is given a great deal, a great
deal will be demanded of that person; when someone is entrusted with a great deal,
of that person even more will be expected.

n. Irony. By building the tombs of the prophets they hoped to make amends for their ancestors' sins—yet they have exactly the same mentality as these ancestors.

o. i.e the divine intention as interpreted by Jesus.

p. The attitude of Jesus' enemies continued to harden; Lk traces the process in more detail than Mk; Lk 6:11; 11:53–54; 19:48; 20:19–20; 22:2.

12 a. Or else 'began to say to his disciples: First of all, be on your guard . . .'

b. lit. 'the soul' in the biblical sense, as in v. 19.

c. var. 'work or spin', compare Mt 6:28.

d. That riches are a danger and should be given away in alms is characteristic teaching of Lk: *see* 3:11; 6:30; 7:5; 11:41; 12:33–34; 14:13–14; 16:9; 18:22; 19:8; Ac 9:36; 10:2,4,31.

e. lit. 'Keep your loins girded'; not by putting on an additional garment, but by tucking up the long skirt which would hinder running.

f. A steward with authority over other servants; Jesus, therefore, is speaking of the apostles (the 'us' of Peter's question).

Jesus and his Passion

Mt 3:11i 'I have come to bring fire[g] to the earth, and how I wish it were blazing already! 49
9:22h Mk 10:38e There is a baptism I must still receive, and what constraint I am under until it is 50
completed!

‖Mt 10:34–36 ### Jesus the cause of dissension

'Do you suppose that I am here to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather 51
2:34;21:16 division. ·For from now on, a household of five will be divided: three against two 52
Mi 7:6 and two against three; ·*father opposed to son*, son to father, mother to daughter, 53
daughter to mother, mother-in-law to daughter-in-law, *daughter-in-law to mother-in-law*.'

On reading the signs of the times[h]

‖Mt 16:2–3 He said again to the crowds, 'When you see a cloud looming up in the west you say 54
at once that rain is coming, and so it does. ·And when the wind is from the south 55
you say it's going to be hot, and it is. ·Hypocrites! You know how to interpret 56
the face of the earth and the sky. How is it you do not know how to interpret
these times?

Mt 5:25–26 'Why not judge for yourselves what is upright? ·For example: when you are 57, 58
going to court with your opponent, make an effort to settle with him on the way, or
he may drag you before the judge and the judge hand you over to the officer and
the officer have you thrown into prison. ·I tell you, you will not get out till you 59
have paid the very last penny.'[i]

Examples inviting repentance

13 It was just about this time that some people arrived and told him about the 1
Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with that of their sacrifices.[a] At
Jn 9:3 this he said to them, ·'Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than 2
any others, that this should have happened to them? ·They were not, I tell you. 3
No; but unless you repent you will all perish as they did. ·Or those eighteen on 4
whom the tower at Siloam fell, killing them all? Do you suppose that they were
more guilty than all the other people living in Jerusalem? ·They were not, I tell 5
Jn 8:24 you. No; but unless you repent you will all perish as they did.'

Parable of the barren fig tree[b]

Mt 21:19seq. He told this parable, 'A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came 6
looking for fruit on it but found none. ·He said to his vinedresser, "For three 7
years[c] now I have been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and finding none.
Cut it down: why should it be taking up the ground?" ·"Sir," the man replied, 8
"leave it one more year and give me time to dig round it and manure it: ·it may 9
Jn 15:2b bear fruit next year; if not, then you can cut it down." '

6:6–11;14:1–6 ### Healing of a crippled woman on the Sabbath

One Sabbath day he was teaching in one of the synagogues, ·and there before him 10, 11
Mt 8:29k was a woman who for eighteen years had been possessed by a spirit that crippled
her; she was bent double and quite unable to stand upright.[d] ·When Jesus saw her 12
he called her over and said, 'Woman, you are freed from your disability,' ·and he 13
4:40+ 2:20g laid his hands on her. And at once she straightened up, and she glorified God.

But the president of the synagogue was indignant because Jesus had healed on 14
the Sabbath,[e] and he addressed all those present saying, 'There are six days when
work is to be done. Come and be healed on one of those days and not on the
14:5 Mt 12:11 Sabbath.' ·But the Lord answered him and said, 'Hypocrites! Is there one of you 15
who does not untie his ox or his donkey from the manger on the Sabbath and take
Mt 8:29k it out for watering? ·And this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan has 16
held bound these eighteen years—was it not right to untie this bond on the Sabbath

17 day?' ·When he said this, all his adversaries were covered with confusion, and all the people were overjoyed at all the wonders he worked. 1:14i;4:15f

Parable of the mustard seed ‖Mt 13:31–32 ‖Mk 4:30–32

18 He went on to say, 'What is the kingdom of God like? What shall I compare it
19 with? ·It is like a mustard seed which a man took and threw into his garden: it grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air sheltered in its branches.' Ezk 17:23 Dn 4:9,18

Parable of the yeast ‖Mt 13:33

20, 21 Again he said, 'What shall I compare the kingdom of God with? ·It is like the yeast a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour till it was leavened all through.'

The narrow door; rejection of the Jews, call of the gentiles[f]

22 Through towns and villages he went teaching, making his way to Jerusalem. 2:38o;9:51m
23 Someone said to him, 'Sir, will there be only a few saved?' He said to them,
24 'Try your hardest to enter by the narrow door, because, I tell you, many will try ‖Mt 7:13–14 to enter and will not succeed.
25 'Once the master of the house has got up and locked the door, you may find ‖Mt 25:10–12 yourself standing outside knocking on the door, saying, "Lord, open to us," but he
26 will answer, "I do not know where you come from." ·Then you will start saying, ‖Mt 7:22–23
27 "We once ate and drank in your company; you taught in our streets," ·but he will reply, "I do not know where you come from; *away from me, all evil doers!*" Ps 6:8
28 'Then there will be weeping and grinding of teeth, when you see Abraham and ‖Mt 8:12e Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrown
29 out. ·And people from east and west, from north and south, will come and sit down at the feast in the kingdom of God.
30 'Look, there are those now last who will be first, and those now first who ‖Mt 19:30+; 20:16 will be last.' ‖Mk 10:31

Herod the fox

31 Just at this time some Pharisees came up. 'Go away,' they said. 'Leave this place,
32 because Herod[g] means to kill you.' ·He replied, 'You may go and give that fox this message: Look! Today and tomorrow I drive out devils and heal, and on the third
33 day[h] I attain my end.[i] ·But for today and tomorrow and the next day I must go on, since it would not be right for a prophet to die outside Jerusalem.[j] 2:38o Mt 16:14c

g. This fire, obviously symbolic, can bear different meanings according to the context: the Holy Spirit, or the fire which will purify hearts and must be lit on the cross. v. 50 points to the latter interpretation, but vv. 51–53 suggest rather the state of spiritual conflict stirred up by Jesus' appearing.

h. The messianic era has arrived, and it is high time to realise this, for judgement is near, vv. 57–59.

i. lit. '*lepton*', a Greek coin of very small value. • In Mt 5:25–26 the context gave this saying a community application: how the brethren of the community should be reconciled and settle their differences. In Lk it has an eschatological sense: the judgement of God is near, and putting oneself in order is an urgent necessity.

13 a. There is no other evidence for this incident or for that mentioned in v. 4. The meaning of both is clear: sin is not the immediate cause of this or that calamity (cf. Jn 9:3), but such disasters as these are providential invitations to repentance.

b. The episode of the withered fig tree in Mk 11 may be thought to show Jesus in a hard light; Lk prefers to substitute this parable of his patience.

c. Some have seen this as an allusion to the length of Christ's ministry as described in the fourth gospel.

d. Or 'unable to hold her head erect'.

e. He takes this act of healing for a 'work' forbidden by the Law.

f. The source used by Lk and Mt has here grouped some sayings which Mt has elsewhere separated in his Gospel, *see* 9:51*l*. The main idea of this grouping, maintained by Lk, seems to have been the rejection of Israel and the call of the gentiles to salvation. For Israel ties of blood with Jesus will not save them from the exclusion which their conduct deserves, vv. 25–27, cf. 3:7–9 and par.; Jn 8:33seq. So little will they be able to find the way of salvation, vv. 23–24, that the first shall be last, v. 30; cf. Mt 20:16, and will see the gentiles take their place at the banquet of the Messiah, vv. 28–29.

g. Herod Antipas, *see* 3:1c. If, as is possible, he made this threat to rid himself of Jesus, the term 'fox' refers to that sly trick.

h. The expression signifies a short period of time.

i. A word full of meaning, including both his death and the achievement of his perfection: Jesus was made 'perfect' by his suffering and death, Heb 2:10; 5:9. Cf. Jn 19:30.

j. Meaning apparently 'My work will soon be over, but not yet. I have not finished my work of exorcising and healing; this I shall contrive to do on my way to Jerusalem where my destiny lies,' *see* 2:38*o*. Similarly, in Jn 7:30; 8:20 (cf. 8:59; 10:39; 11:54) the enemies of Jesus have no power over him so long as 'his hour has not yet come'.

19:41–44 ‖Mt 23:37–39 **Jerusalem admonished**

'Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you that kill the prophets and stone those who are sent to 34
you! How often have I longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers
her brood under her wings, and you refused! ·Look! Your house will be left to you. 35
Mt 23:39s Yes, I promise you, you shall not see me till the time comes when you are saying:

Ps 118:26 *Blessed is he who is coming in the name of the Lord!*'

6:6–11; 7:36; 11:37;13:10–17 **Healing of a dropsical man on the Sabbath**

14 Now it happened that on a Sabbath day he had gone to share a meal in the 1
house of one of the leading Pharisees; and they watched him closely. ·Now 2
there in front of him was a man with dropsy, ·and Jesus addressed the lawyers and 3
Mt 8:3a Mk 3:4 Pharisees with the words, 'Is it against the law to cure someone on the Sabbath, or
not?' ·But they remained silent, so he took the man and cured him and sent him 4
13:15 ‖Mt 12:11 away. ·Then he said to them, 'Which of you here, if his son[a] falls into a well, or his 5
ox, will not pull him out on a Sabbath day without any hesitation?' ·And to this 6
they could find no answer.

On choosing places at table

He then told the guests a parable, because he had noticed how they picked the 7
places of honour. He said this, ·'When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do 8
11:43;20:46 Pr 25:6–7 Mt 23:6 not take your seat in the place of honour. A more distinguished person than you
may have been invited, ·and the person who invited you both may come and say, 9
"Give up your place to this man." And then, to your embarrassment, you will have
to go and take the lowest place. ·No; when you are a guest, make your way to the 10
lowest place and sit there, so that, when your host comes, he may say, "My friend,
move up higher." Then, everyone with you at the table will see you honoured.
=18:14 Ezk 22:32 Mt 23:12 For everyone who raises himself up will be humbled, and the one who humbles 11
himself will be raised up.'

On choosing guests to be invited

Then he said to his host, 'When you give a lunch or a dinner, do not invite your 12
friends or your brothers or your relations or rich neighbours, in case they invite
12:33d you back and so repay you. ·No; when you have a party, invite the poor, the 13
6:35 crippled, the lame, the blind; ·then you will be blessed, for they have no means to 14
repay you and so you will be repaid when the upright rise again.'

The invited guests who made excuses

On hearing this, one of those gathered round the table said to him, 'Blessed is 15
Mt 8:11c anyone who will share the meal in the kingdom of God!' ·But he said to him, 16
‖Mt 22:2–10 'There was a man who gave a great banquet, and he invited a large number of
people. ·When the time for the banquet came, he sent his servant to say to those 17
who had been invited, "Come along: everything is ready now." ·But all alike 18
started to make excuses. The first said, "I have bought a piece of land and must go
and see it. Please accept my apologies." ·Another said, "I have bought five yoke of 19
oxen and am on my way to try them out. Please accept my apologies." ·Yet another 20
Dt 24:5 said, "I have just got married and so am unable to come."

'The servant returned and reported this to his master. Then the householder, in 21
a rage, said to his servant, "Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town
and bring in here the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame."[b] ·"Sir," said the 22
servant, "your orders have been carried out and there is still room." ·Then the 23
master said to his servant, "Go to the open roads and the hedgerows[c] and press
people to come in, to make sure my house is full; ·because, I tell you, not one of 24
those who were invited shall have a taste of my banquet." '

Renouncing all that one holds dear

25 Great crowds accompanied him on his way and he turned and spoke to them.
26 'Anyone who comes to me without hating[d] father, mother, wife,[e] children, broth- Mt 10:37;19:29 =9:23
27 ers, sisters, yes and his own life too, cannot be my disciple. ·No one who does not ‖Mt 10:38;16:24 ‖Mk 8:34 Jn 12:26
carry his cross and come after me can be my disciple.

Renouncing possessions

28 'And indeed, which of you here, intending to build a tower, would not first sit down
29 and work out the cost to see if he had enough to complete it? ·Otherwise, if he laid the foundation and then found himself unable to finish the work, anyone who saw
30 it would start making fun of him and saying, ·"Here is someone who started to
31 build and was unable to finish." ·Or again, what king marching to war against another king would not first sit down and consider whether with ten thousand men he could stand up to the other who was advancing against him with twenty
32 thousand? ·If not, then while the other king was still a long way off, he would send
33 envoys to sue for peace. ·So in the same way, none of you can be my disciple without giving up all that he owns.[f] 12:33d

On loss of enthusiasm in a disciple

‖Mt 5:13 ‖Mk 9:50

34 'Salt is a good thing. But if salt itself loses its taste, what can make it salty again?
35 It is good for neither soil nor manure heap. People throw it away. Anyone who has ears for listening should listen!'

The three parables of God's mercy

6:36 Ex 34:6c Ho 2:21u 11:8–9

1 **15** The tax collectors and sinners, however, were all crowding round to listen
2 to him, ·and the Pharisees and scribes complained saying, 'This man wel-
3 comes sinners and eats with them.' ·So he told them this parable: Mt 9:10–13

The lost sheep

Ezk 34:1a ‖Mt 18:12–14

4 'Which one of you with a hundred sheep, if he lost one, would fail to leave the
5 ninety-nine in the desert and go after the missing one till he found it? ·And when Ezk 34:4,16
6 he found it, would he not joyfully take it on his shoulders ·and then, when he got Is 40:11
home, call together his friends and neighbours saying to them, " Rejoice with me,
7 I have found my sheep that was lost." ·In the same way, I tell you, there will be 19:10
more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner repenting than over ninety-nine upright 1:14i
people who have no need of repentance.

The lost drachma

8 'Or again, what woman with ten drachmas would not, if she lost one, light a lamp
9 and sweep out the house and search thoroughly till she found it? ·And then, when she had found it, call together her friends and neighbours, saying to them, "Rejoice
10 with me, I have found the drachma I lost." ·In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing among the angels of God over one repentant sinner.'

The lost son (the 'prodigal') and the dutiful son[a]

11, 12 Then he said, 'There was a man who had two sons. ·The younger one said to his father, "Father, let me have the share of the estate that will come to me." So the

14 **a.** 'his son'; var. 'his donkey'.

b. In the scrolls of Qumran, the lame and the blind and cripples are excluded from the eschatological warfare and the banquet which follows it.

c. After the 'streets and alleys of the town' of v. 21, the 'open roads and hedgerows' of v. 23 seem to be outside the town. There appear to be two different categories, on the one hand the poor and 'unclean' of Israel, on the other the gentiles. The 'compulsion' employed to bring in these underprivileged is meant to express only the triumph of grace over their lack of preparation, not violence done to their consciences. But the abuses of such 'compulsion to enter' in the course of history are only too well known.

d. Hebraism. Jesus asks, not for hate, but for total detachment now, cf. 9:57–62.

e. 'wife', peculiar to Lk, illustrating his leaning to asceticism, cf. 1 Co 7. So Lk also, 18:29.

f. Applicable to all disciples—Lk seems to make no distinction; *see* Mk 1:17f.

15 **a.** Lk has several long parables peculiar to his Gospel. Mk's parables provide teaching on the nature and coming

father divided the property between them. •A few days later, the younger son got 13
together everything he had and left for a distant country where he squandered his
money on a life of debauchery.

'When he had spent it all, that country experienced a severe famine, and now he 14
began to feel the pinch; •so he hired himself out to one of the local inhabitants 15
who put him on his farm to feed the pigs. •And he would willingly have filled 16
himself with the husks the pigs were eating but no one would let him have them.
Then he came to his senses and said, "How many of my father's hired men have 17
all the food they want and more, and here am I dying of hunger! •I will leave this 18
place and go to my father and say: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against
you; •I no longer deserve to be called your son; treat me as one of your hired men." 19
Is 55:7 Jr 3:12seq. So he left the place and went back to his father. 20

Is 49:14–16 Jr 31:20 'While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was moved with pity.
He ran to the boy, clasped him in his arms and kissed him. •Then his son said, 21
"Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be
Zc 3:4 called your son." •But the father said to his servants, "Quick! Bring out the best 22
robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. •Bring the 23
calf we have been fattening, and kill it; we will celebrate by having a feast,
Ep 2:1 because this son of mine was dead and has come back to life; he was lost and is 24
found." And they began to celebrate.

'Now the elder son[b] was out in the fields, and on his way back, as he drew near 25
the house, he could hear music and dancing. •Calling one of the servants he asked 26
what it was all about. •The servant told him, "Your brother has come, and your 27
father has killed the calf we had been fattening because he has got him back safe
and sound." •He was angry then and refused to go in, and his father came out and 28
began to urge him to come in; •but he retorted to his father, "All these years I have 29
slaved for you and never once disobeyed any orders of yours, yet you never offered
me so much as a kid for me to celebrate with my friends. •But, for this son of yours, 30
when he comes back after swallowing up your property—he and his loose women—
you kill the calf we had been fattening."

Jn 17:10 'The father said, "My son, you are with me always and all I have is yours. •But 31, 32
1:14i it was only right we should celebrate and rejoice, because your brother here was
dead and has come to life; he was lost and is found." '

The crafty steward

15:11 **16** [a]He also said to his disciples, 'There was a rich man and he had a steward 1
who was denounced to him for being wasteful with his property. •He called 2
for the man and said, "What is this I hear about you? Draw me up an account of
your stewardship because you are not to be my steward any longer." •Then the 3
steward said to himself, "Now that my master is taking the stewardship from me,
what am I to do? Dig? I am not strong enough. Go begging? I should be too
ashamed. •Ah, I know what I will do to make sure that when I am dismissed from 4
office there will be some to welcome me into their homes."

'Then he called his master's debtors one by one. To the first he said, "How much 5
do you owe my master?" •"One hundred measures of oil," he said. The steward 6
said, "Here, take your bond; sit down and quickly write fifty." •To another he said, 7
"And you, sir, how much do you owe?" "One hundred measures of wheat," he
said. The steward said, "Here, take your bond and write eighty."

20:34b 'The master praised the dishonest steward for his astuteness.[b] For the children 8
of this world are more astute in dealing with their own kind than are the chil-
Jn 8:12b dren of light.'

The right use of money

6:24;12:33d Tb 4:9–10 'And so I tell you this: use money, tainted as it is,[c] to win you friends, and thus 9
make sure that when it fails you, they will welcome you into eternal dwellings.

10 Anyone who is trustworthy in little things is trustworthy in great; anyone who is ‖19:17 ‖Mt 25:21
11 dishonest in little things is dishonest in great. ·If then you are not trustworthy with
12 money, that tainted thing, who will trust you with genuine riches? ·And if you are not trustworthy with what is not yours, [d] who will give you what is your very own? [e]
13 'No servant can be the slave of two masters: he will either hate the first and love ‖Mt 6:24
the second, or be attached to the first and despise the second. You cannot be the slave both of God and of money.'

Against the Pharisees and their love of money

14, 15 The Pharisees, who loved money, heard all this and jeered at him. ·He said to them, 'You are the very ones who pass yourselves off as upright in people's sight, 18:9 Jr 11:20+ but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed in human eyes is loath- Mt 6:1;23:28
some in the sight of God.

The kingdom stormed ‖Mt 11:12–13

16 'Up to the time of John it was the Law and the Prophets; from then onwards, the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is forcing their way into it.

The Law remains

17 'It is easier for heaven and earth to disappear than for one little stroke to drop out of the Law. ‖Mt 5:18

Marriage indissoluble ‖Mt 5:32;19:9

18 'Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another is guilty of adultery, and the man who marries a woman divorced by her husband commits adultery.

The parable of the rich man and Lazarus [f]

19 'There was a rich man who used to dress in purple and fine linen and feast 15:11
20 magnificently every day. ·And at his gate there used to lie a poor man called
21 Lazarus, covered with sores, ·who longed to fill himself with what fell from the rich
22 man's table. [g] Even dogs came and licked his sores. ·Now it happened that the poor man died and was carried away by the angels into Abraham's embrace. [h] The rich man also died and was buried.
23 'In his torment in Hades he looked up and saw Abraham a long way off with
24 Lazarus in his embrace. ·So he cried out, "Father Abraham, pity me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in agony in
25 these flames." ·Abraham said, "My son, remember that during your life you had 6:24–25
your fill of good things, just as Lazarus his fill of bad. Now he is being comforted
26 here while you are in agony. ·But that is not all: between us and you a great gulf [i]

of the kingdom. Many of Mt's proper parables teach a warning about the final judgement, and others are concerned with human relationships. These Lukan parables concern individuals and teach individual morality, often featuring an anti-hero, whose soliloquy is the turning-point of the story, *see* 12:17; 16:3, 24; 18:4,11; Mt 18:22*l*.

b. To the forgiving attitude of the father, symbol of God's forgiveness, is opposed in the elder son the attitude of the Pharisees and scribes who pride themselves on being 'upright' because they do not break any commandments of the Law, v. 29; cf. 18:9seq.

16 a. This chapter is a compilation of two parables and several *logia* of Jesus on the right and wrong use of money. vv. 16,17,18, each with a different theme, interrupt the literary scheme of the chapter.

b. It was the custom for a steward, or responsible servant, to take commission on all sales of his master's goods; this was his only means of making a salary. In the present case the original loan was presumably fifty measures of oil and eighty measures of wheat. In reducing the debtors' bills, he is not depriving his master of anything, but only sacrificing his own immediate interests by forgoing his legitimate commission. It is for this that he is praised as 'astute'; any 'dishonesty' (v. 8) was in his earlier actions for which he is under notice.

c. Money is here called 'tainted' not only because its owner is here presumed to have gained it dishonestly, but because great wealth is rarely acquired without some sharp practice.

d. lit. 'what is outside', i.e. wealth, which is external.

e. 'your very own'; var. 'our very own'. Jesus is speaking of the most intimate possessions anyone can have; these are spiritual.

f. A parable-story without any historical basis.

g. add. 'but no one offered him a thing', cf. 15:16.

h. Jewish figure of speech, the equivalent of the old biblical phrase 'gathered to his fathers', i.e. to the patriarchs, Jg 2:10; cf. Gn 15:15; 47:30; Dt 31:16. 'In the embrace of . . .' implies close intimacy, Jn 1:18, and evokes a picture of the messianic banquet where Lazarus reclines next to Abraham, *see* Mt 8:11c; Jn 13:23.

i. The 'gulf' is a symbol: the destiny of saved and lost is unalterable.

has been fixed, to prevent those who want to cross from our side to yours or from your side to ours."

'So he said, "Father, I beg you then to send Lazarus to my father's house, ·since 27, 28
I have five brothers, to give them warning so that they do not come to this place of
24:44 torment too." ·Abraham said, "They have Moses and the prophets, let them listen 29
to them." ·The rich man replied, "Ah no, father Abraham, but if someone comes 30
to them from the dead, they will repent." ·Then Abraham said to him, "If they will 31
not listen either to Moses or to the prophets, they will not be convinced even if
someone should rise from the dead." '

‖Mt 18:6–7 ‖Mk 9:42 **On leading others astray**

17 He said to his disciples, 'Causes of falling are sure to come, but alas for the 1
one through whom they occur! ·It would be better for him to be thrown into 2
1 Co 8:12 the sea with a millstone round the neck than to be the downfall of a single one of
these little ones. ·Keep watch on yourselves! 3

‖Mt 18:15,21–22 **Brotherly correction** [a]

'If your brother does something wrong, rebuke him and, if he is sorry, forgive him.
And if he wrongs you seven times a day and seven times comes back to you and 4
says, "I am sorry," you must forgive him.'

Mt 8:10b **The power of faith**

‖Mt 17:20;21:21 ‖Mk 11:23 The apostles said to the Lord, 'Increase our faith.' ·The Lord replied, 'If you had 5, 6
faith like a mustard seed you could say to this mulberry tree, "Be uprooted and
planted in the sea," and it would obey you.

Jn 13:4–5 **Humble service**

'Which of you, with a servant ploughing or minding sheep, would say to him when 7
he returned from the fields, "Come and have your meal at once"? [b] ·Would he not 8
be more likely to say, "Get my supper ready; fasten your belt and wait on me while
I eat and drink. You yourself can eat and drink afterwards"? ·Must he be grateful 9
to the servant for doing what he was told? ·So with you: when you have done all 10
Jb 22:3;35:7 you have been told to do, say, "We are useless [c] servants: we have done no more
than our duty." '

The ten victims of skin-disease

Now it happened that on the way to Jerusalem he was travelling in the borderlands 11
of Samaria and Galilee. [d] ·As he entered one of the villages, ten men suffering from 12
9:51i a virulent skin-disease came to meet him. They stood some way off ·and called to 13
Lv 13:45–46 5:5;8:24,45; 9:33 ·5:14 him, 'Jesus! Master! Take pity on us.' ·When he saw them he said, 'Go and show 14
yourselves to the priests.' Now as they were going away they were cleansed.
Lv 14:1–32 Mt 8:4 Finding himself cured, one of them turned back praising God at the top of his 15
Mk 1:44 voice ·and threw himself prostrate at the feet of Jesus and thanked him. The man 16
·2:20g ·9:53m;10:33h was a Samaritan. ·This led Jesus to say, 'Were not all ten made clean? The other 17
nine, where are they? ·It seems that no one has come back to give praise to God, 18
except this foreigner.' ·And he said to the man, 'Stand up and go on your way. 19
Mt 8:10b Your faith has saved you.'

The coming of the kingdom of God

Asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God was to come, he gave them this 20
Mt 4:17f answer, 'The coming of the kingdom of God does not admit of observation ·and 21
there will be no one to say, "Look, it is here! Look, it is there!" For look, the
11:20+ Mt 3:2 kingdom of God is among you.' [e]

The Day of the Son of man [f]

Mt 13:17f He said to the disciples, 'A time will come when you will long to see one of the days 22

23 of the Son of man[g] and will not see it. •They will say to you, "Look, it is there!" Mt 8:20b▶ Jn 8:56f▶
24 or, "Look, it is here!" Make no move; do not set off in pursuit; •for as the lightning •Mt 8:20b
flashing from one part of heaven lights up the other, so will be the Son of man ‖Mt 24:23, 26–27
25 when his Day comes. •But first he is destined to suffer grievously and be rejected ‖Mk 13:21 •9:22e
by this generation.

26 'As it was in Noah's day, so will it also be in the days of the Son of man.[h] Gn 6–8
27 People were eating and drinking, marrying wives and husbands, right up to the ‖Mt 24:37–39
28 day Noah went into the ark, and the Flood came and destroyed them all. •It will be
the same as it was in Lot's day: people were eating and drinking, buying and Gn 19:1–29
29 selling, planting and building, •but the day Lot left Sodom, it rained fire and
30 brimstone from heaven and it destroyed them all. •It will be the same when the day
comes for the Son of man to be revealed.

31 'When that Day comes, no one on the housetop, with his possessions in the 21:21 ‖Mt 24:17–18
house, must come down to collect them, nor must anyone in the fields turn back. ‖Mk 13:15–16
32, 33 Remember Lot's wife. •Anyone who tries to preserve his life will lose it; and Gn 19:26 •9:24
34 anyone who loses it will keep it safe. •I tell you, on that night, when two are in one ‖Mt 10:39;24:40–41
35 bed, one will be taken, the other left; •when two women are grinding corn together, ‖Jn 12:25
[36], 37 one will be taken, the other left.'[i] •The disciples spoke up and asked, 'Where, ‖Mt 24:28
Lord?' He said, 'Where the body is, there too will the vultures gather.'

The unscrupulous judge and the importunate widow

1 **18** Then he told them a parable about the need to pray continually and never •11:9+
2 lose heart.[a] •'There was a judge in a certain town,' he said, 'who had neither 1 Th 5:17f
3 fear of God nor respect for anyone. •In the same town there was also a widow who 11:5–8 Pr 25:15
kept on coming to him and saying, "I want justice from you against my enemy!"
4 For a long time he refused, but at last he said to himself, "Even though I have
5 neither fear of God nor respect for any human person, •I must give this widow her
just rights since she keeps pestering me, or she will come and slap me in the face." '
6, 7 And the Lord said, 'You notice what the unjust judge has to say? •Now, will not
God see justice done to his elect if they keep calling to him day and night even Si 35:19 Rv 6:9–11
8 though he still delays to help them?[b] •I promise you, he will see justice done to
them, and done speedily. But when the Son of man comes, will he find any faith Mt 8:10b;24:12
on earth?'

The Pharisee and the tax collector

9 He spoke the following parable to some people who prided themselves on being 15:11 •16:15
10 upright and despised everyone else, •'Two men went up to the Temple to pray, one Mt 6:1;23:28
11 a Pharisee, the other a tax collector. •The Pharisee stood there and said this prayer
to himself, "I thank you, God, that I am not grasping, unjust, adulterous like
12 everyone else, and particularly that I am not like this tax collector here. •I fast

17 **a.** Lk, apparently, is thinking of a matter that concerns only two of the community; in Mt the offence is more public. Lk does not mention appealing to the community.

b. Contrast this human rule with the gospel paradox 12:37; 22:27; Jn 13:1–6.

c. This adjective hardly fits the context, since the accent is on the state of service itself, *see* the end of the v.; but it is the literal (and traditional) translation of the Greek.

d. Making for the Jordan valley and so down to Jericho, 18:35; from there he goes up to Jerusalem.

e. As something already present and active. The alternative translation, 'within your grasp', is attractive; a third possibility, 'within you', would not furnish as direct an answer to the Pharisees' question.

f. The discourse is proper to Lk, who makes a clear distinction between Jesus prophesying the destruction of Jerusalem, 21:6–24, and Christ's coming in glory at the end of time, 17:22–37. • Some of the passages in this discourse are found in the great eschatological discourse of Mt 24:5–41; there, as elsewhere (*see* Lk 10:1a; 11:39k), Mt has joined together two sources which Lk leaves separate; *see* Mt 24:1a. • 'The Day' of the Lord, adopted by Lk, is a more familiar OT expression than Mt's *parousia* (coming), a term borrowed from the hellenistic world, *see* 1 Co 1:8e.

g. Not to experience again one day of the earthly life of Jesus, nor to see the first day of his glorious coming, but to have the joy of even one of the days that are to follow that coming.

h. i.e. at the time of the coming.

i. add. v. 36 'There will be two men in the fields; one will be taken, the other left,' cf. Mt 24:40.

18 **a.** A lesson frequently found in Paul's letters: *see* Rm 1:10; 12:12; Ep 6:18; Col 1:3; 1 Th 5:17; 2 Th 1:11 and 2 Co 4:1,16; Ga 6:9; Ep 3:13; 2 Th 3:13.

b. In Si 35:18–19, which seems to have inspired this verse, God will not delay to give their due to the oppressed poor; here, however, he does delay. Perhaps this adaptation reflects concern to explain the delay of the *parousia*. Compare a similar attitude in 2 P 3:9; Rv 6:9–11.

twice a week; I pay tithes on all I get." ·The tax collector stood some distance 13
away, not daring even to raise his eyes to heaven; but he beat his breast and said,
"God, be merciful to me, a sinner." ·This man, I tell you, went home again 14
=14:11 ‖Mt 23:12 justified; the other did not. For everyone who raises himself up will be humbled,
but anyone who humbles himself will be raised up.'

9:47 Mt 19:13–15 Mk 10:13–16 **Jesus and the children** [c]

People even brought babies to him, for him to touch them; but when the disciples 15
saw this they scolded them. ·But Jesus called the children to him and said, 'Let the 16
little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these
that the kingdom of God belongs. ·In truth I tell you, anyone who does not 17
welcome the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.'

‖Mt 19.16–22 ‖Mk 10:17–22 **The rich aristocrat**

One of the rulers put this question to him, 'Good Master, what shall I do to inherit 18
10:25–28 eternal life?' ·Jesus said to him, 'Why do you call me good? No one is good but 19
God alone. ·You know the commandments: *You shall not commit adultery; You* 20
Ex 20:12–16 Dt 5:16–20 *shall not kill; You shall not steal; You shall not give false witness; Honour your*
father and your mother.' ·He replied, 'I have kept all these since my earliest days.' 21
And when Jesus heard this he said, 'There is still one thing you lack. Sell 22
12:33d everything you own and distribute the money to the poor, and you will have
treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.' ·But when he heard this he was 23
overcome with sadness, for he was very rich.

‖Mt 19:23–26 ‖Mk 10:23–27 **The danger of riches**

Jesus looked at him and said, 'How hard it is for those who have riches to make 24
their way into the kingdom of God! ·Yes, it is easier for a camel to pass through the 25
eye of a needle than for someone rich to enter the kingdom of God.' ·Those who 26
were listening said, 'In that case, who can be saved?' ·He replied, 'Things that are 27
impossible by human resources, are possible for God.'

‖Mt 19:27–29 ‖Mk 10:28–30 **The reward of renunciation**

But Peter said, 'Look, we left all we had to follow you.' ·He said to them, 'In truth 28, 29
14:26e I tell you, there is no one who has left house, wife, brothers, parents or children for
the sake of the kingdom of God ·who will not receive [d] many times as much in this 30
present age and, in the world to come, eternal life.'

‖Mt 20:17–19 ‖Mk 10:32–34 **Third prophecy of the Passion**

2:38*o*:9:51i Then taking the Twelve aside he said to them, 'Look, we are going up to Jerusalem, 31
and everything that is written by the prophets [e] about the Son of man is to come
9:22e true. ·For he will be handed over to the gentiles and will be mocked, maltreated 32
and spat on, ·and when they have scourged him they will put him to death; and on 33
Mk 4:13b the third day he will rise again.' ·But they could make nothing of this; what he said 34
was quite obscure to them, they did not understand what he was telling them.

‖Mt 20:29–34 ‖Mk 10:46–52 **Entering Jericho: the blind man**

Now it happened that as he drew near to Jericho there was a blind man sitting at 35
the side of the road begging. ·When he heard the crowd going past he asked what 36
Mt 2:23*l* it was all about, ·and they told him that Jesus the Nazarene was passing by. ·So he 37, 38
called out, 'Jesus, Son of David, have pity on me.' ·The people in front scolded 39
Mt 9:27m him and told him to keep quiet, but he only shouted all the louder, 'Son of David,
have pity on me.' ·Jesus stopped and ordered them to bring the man to him, and 40
when he came up, asked him, ·'What do you want me to do for you?' 'Sir,' he 41
Mt 8:10b replied, 'let me see again.' ·Jesus said to him, 'Receive your sight. Your faith has 42
2:20g saved you.' ·And instantly his sight returned and he followed him praising God, 43
and all the people who saw it gave praise to God.

Zacchaeus

1, 2 **19** He entered Jericho and was going through the town •and suddenly a man
whose name was Zacchaeus made his appearance; he was one of the senior
3 tax collectors and a wealthy man. •He kept trying to see which Jesus was, but he Mt 5:46u
4 was too short and could not see him for the crowd; •so he ran ahead and climbed a
5 sycamore tree to catch a glimpse of Jesus who was to pass that way. •When Jesus
reached the spot he looked up and spoke to him, 'Zacchaeus, come down. Hurry,
6 because I am to stay at your house today.' •And he hurried down and welcomed
7 him joyfully. •They all complained when they saw what was happening. 'He has 1:14i
8 gone to stay at a sinner's house,' they said. •But Zacchaeus stood his ground and 5:30;15:2
said to the Lord, 'Look, sir, I am going to give half my property to the poor, and if 12:33d
9 I have cheated anybody I will pay him back four times the amount.'[a] •And Jesus 2 S 12:6
said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house, because this man too is a son Mt 21:31
10 of Abraham;[b] •for the Son of man has come to seek out and save what was lost.' 15:6,9,24,32

Parable of the pounds[c]

11 While the people were listening to this he went on to tell a parable, because he was Mt 25:14–30
near Jerusalem and they thought that the kingdom of God was going to show itself 2:38o
12 then and there. •Accordingly he said, 'A man of noble birth went to a distant Mk 13:34
13 country to be appointed king and then return.[d] •He summoned ten of his servants
and gave them ten pounds, telling them, "Trade with these, until I get back."
14 But his compatriots detested him and sent a delegation to follow him with this
message, "We do not want this man to be our king." Ps 2:2seq.,
Jn 19:15,21
15 'Now it happened that on his return, having received his appointment as king,
he sent for those servants to whom he had given the money, to find out what profit
16 each had made by trading. •The first came in, "Sir," he said, "your one pound has
17 brought in ten." •He replied, "Well done, my good servant! Since you have proved
yourself trustworthy in a very small thing, you shall have the government of ten 16:10
18 cities." •Then came the second, "Sir," he said, "your one pound has made five."
19, 20 To this one also he said, "And you shall be in charge of five cities." •Next came the
other, "Sir," he said, "here is your pound. I put it away safely wrapped up in a
21 cloth •because I was afraid of you; for you are an exacting man: you gather in what
22 you have not laid out and reap what you have not sown." •He said to him, "You
wicked servant! Out of your own mouth I condemn you. So you knew that I was an
exacting man, gathering in what I have not laid out and reaping what I have not
23 sown? •Then why did you not put my money in the bank? On my return I could
24 have drawn it out with interest." •And he said to those standing by, "Take the
25 pound from him and give it to the man who has ten pounds." •And they said to 20:16
26 him, "But, sir, he has ten pounds . . ." •"I tell you, to everyone who has will be =8:18
given more; but anyone who has not will be deprived even of what he has. ‖Mt 13:12
‖Mk 4:25
27 "As for my enemies who did not want me for their king, bring them here and
execute them in my presence." ' 20:16
Ps 2:9

c. Lk here rejoins Mark's narrative which he deserted in 9:50. Cf. 9:51*l*.

d. add. 'in return'.

e. Lk often stresses that the Passion was foretold by the prophets: 24:25,27,44; Ac 2:23*o*; 3:18,24*s*; 8:32–35; 13:27; 26:22seq. and par.

19 a. Fourfold restitution was imposed by Jewish law (Ex 21:37) for one case only; Roman law demanded it of all convicted thieves. Zacchaeus goes further: he acknowledges the obligation in the case of any injustice for which he may have been responsible.

b. Nothwithstanding his despised profession. No social rank excludes 'salvation', cf. 3:12–14. All the Jewish privileges follow from 'sonship of Abraham', cf. 3:8; Rm 4:11seq.; Ga 3:7seq.

c. The parable of the talents, Mt 25:14–30, shows some wide differences, but the two are thought to be based on the same original, treated with great freedom by both the evangelists. Moreover, it seems that in Lk we must distinguish two parables which have been fused into one: that of the pounds, vv. 12–13,15–26, and that of the royal claimant, vv. 12,14,17,19,27.

d. Probably alluding to the journey of Archelaus to Rome in 4 BC to have the will of Herod the Great confirmed in his favour. A deputation of Jews followed him there to thwart the attempt, cf. v. 14.

V: TEACHING IN JERUSALEM

The Messiah enters Jerusalem

||Mt 21:1–11
||Mk 11:1–11
||Jn 12:12–16
2:38*o*;9:51

When he had said this he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. 28, 29
•Now it happened that when he was near Bethphage and Bethany, close by the Mount of Olives as it is called, he sent two of the disciples, saying, 30
•'Go to the village opposite, and as you enter it you will find a tethered colt that no one has ever yet ridden. Untie it and bring it here. 31
•If anyone asks you, "Why are you untying it?" you are to say this, "The Master needs it." ' 32
•The messengers went off and found everything just as he had told them. 33
•As they were untying the colt, its owners said, 'Why are you untying it?' 34
•and they answered, 'The Master needs it.'

So they took the colt to Jesus and, throwing their cloaks on its back, they lifted 35
Jesus on to it. 36, 37
•As he moved off, they spread their cloaks in the road,
•and now, as he was approaching the downward slope of the Mount of Olives, the whole group
1:14*i* •2:20*g*;4:15*f* Jn 12:18 of disciples joyfully began to praise God at the top of their voices for all the miracles they had seen. 38
•They cried out:

Ps 118:26 *Blessed is he who is coming*
as King *in the name of the Lord!*
2:14 Peace in heaven
and glory in the highest heavens!

Jesus defends his disciples for acclaiming him

Mt 21:14–16 Some Pharisees in the crowd said to him, 'Master, reprove your disciples,' 39, 40
Hab 2:11 •but he answered, 'I tell you, if these keep silence, the stones will cry out.'

Lament for Jerusalem

13:34–35 Jr 26 As he drew near and came in sight of the city he shed tears over it 41, 42
•and said, 'If you too had only recognised on this day the way to peace! *e* But in fact it is hidden from your eyes! 43
•Yes, a time is coming when your enemies will raise fortifications all round you, when they will encircle you and hem you in on every side; 44
•they will dash you and the children inside your walls to the ground; they will leave not one
12:54–56 stone standing on another within you, because you did not recognise the moment
1:68 of your visitation.' *f*

The expulsion of the dealers from the Temple

||Mt 21:12–13
||Mk 11:15–17
||Jn 2:14–16 Then he went into the Temple and began driving out those who were busy trading, 45
Is 56:7 saying to them, 46
•'According to scripture, *my house shall be a house of prayer* but
Jr 7:11 you have turned it into *a bandits' den*.'

Jesus teaches in the Temple

11:53*p*;21:37; 22:53 He taught in the Temple every day. The chief priests and the scribes, in company 47
||Mk 11:18 Jn 18:20 4:15*f* with the leading citizens, tried to do away with him, 48
•but they could not find a way to carry this out because the whole people hung on his words.

The Jews question the authority of Jesus

||Mt 21:23–27
||Mk 11:27–33

20 *a*Now it happened that one day while he was teaching the people in the 1
Temple and proclaiming the good news, the chief priests and the scribes came up, together with the elders, 2
•and spoke to him. 'Tell us,' they said, 'what authority have you for acting like this? Or who gives you this authority?' 3
•In reply he said to them, 'And I will ask you a question, just one. Tell me: 4
•John's baptism: what was its origin, heavenly or human?' 5
•And they debated this way among themselves, 'If we say heavenly, he will retort, "Why did you refuse to believe him?"; 6
•and if we say human, the whole people will stone us, for they are convinced

that John was a prophet.' ·So their reply was that they did not know where it came
from. ·And Jesus said to them, 'Nor will I tell you my authority for acting like this.'

Parable of the wicked tenants

||Mt 21:33–46
||Mk 12:1–12

And he went on to tell the people this parable, 'A man planted a vineyard and Is 5:1a
leased it to tenants, and went abroad for a long while. ·When the right time came,
he sent a servant to the tenants to get his share of the produce of the vineyard. But
the tenants thrashed him, and sent him away empty-handed. ·But he went on to
send a second servant; they thrashed him too and treated him shamefully and sent
him away empty-handed. ·He still went on to send a third; they wounded this one
too, and threw him out. ·Then the owner of the vineyard thought, "What am I to
do? I will send them my own beloved son. Perhaps they will respect him." ·But
when the tenants saw him they put their heads together saying, "This is the heir,
let us kill him so that the inheritance will be ours." ·So they threw him out of the
vineyard and killed him.

'Now what will the owner of the vineyard do to them? ·He will come and make
an end of these tenants and give the vineyard to others.' Hearing this they said,
'God forbid!' ·But he looked hard at them and said, 'Then what does this text in
the scriptures mean:

> *The stone which the builders rejected*
> *has become the cornerstone?* Ps 118:22

Anyone who falls on that stone will be dashed to pieces; anyone it falls on
will be crushed.'

And the scribes and the chief priests would have liked to lay hands on him that 11:53p
very moment, because they realised that this parable was aimed at them, but they
were afraid of the people.

On tribute to Caesar

||Mt 22:15–22
||Mk 12:13–17
23:2

So they awaited their opportunity and sent agents to pose as upright men, and to
catch him out in something he might say and so enable them to hand him over to
the jurisdiction and authority of the governor. ·They put to him this question,
'Master, we know that you say and teach what is right; you favour no one, but
teach the way of God in all honesty. ·Is it permissible for us to pay taxes to Caesar
or not?' ·But he was aware of their cunning and said, ·'Show me a denarius. Whose
portrait and title are on it?' They said, 'Caesar's.' · He said to them, 'Well then,
pay Caesar what belongs to Caesar—and God what belongs to God.'

They were unable to catch him out in anything he had to say in public; they were
amazed at his answer and were silenced.

The resurrection of the dead

||Mt 22:23–33
||Mk 12:18–27

Some Sadducees—those who argue that there is no resurrection—approached him
and they put this question to him, ·'Master, Moses prescribed for us, if a man's Dt 25:5a
married brother dies childless, the man must marry the widow to raise up children
for his brother. ·Well then, there were seven brothers; the first, having married a
wife, died childless. ·The second ·and then the third married the widow. And the
same with all seven, they died leaving no children. ·Finally the woman herself died.

e. The peace of the messianic age, *see* Is 11:6e; Ho 2:20s.

f. This whole prophecy is made up of OT references (especially noticeable in the Greek text for v. 43, *see* Is 29:3; 37:33; Jr 52: 4–5; Ezk 4:1–3; 21:27 (22); for v. 44; *see* Ps 137:9; Ho 10:14; 14:1; Na 3:10) and suggests the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BC as much as, and more than, that of AD 70 of whose distinctive features it says nothing. It cannot, therefore, be concluded from this text that the destruction of AD 70 had already taken place, *see* 17:22f; 21:20c.

20 a. From 20:1 to 21:5 Lk follows Mk very closely. He omits the symbolic episode of the withered fig tree, Mk 11:12–14,20–25, for which he substitutes the parable of the barren fig tree, Lk 13:6–9; he also omits here the discussion on the first commandment of the Law, Mk 12:28–34, which he has already used, possibly taking it from another source, Lk 10:25–28.

Now, at the resurrection, whose wife will she be, since she had been married to all seven?' 33

Jesus replied, 'The children of this world[b] take wives and husbands, ·but those who are judged worthy of a place in the other world and in the resurrection from the dead[c] do not marry ·because they can no longer die,[d] for they are the same as the angels, and being children of the resurrection[e] they are children of God. ·And Moses himself implies that the dead rise again, in the passage about the bush where he calls the Lord *the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.* Now he is God, not of the dead, but of the living; for to him everyone is alive.' 34, 35 Ph 3:11 36 37 Ex 3:6 Rm 6:10–11 Ga 2:19 38

Some scribes[f] then spoke up. They said, 'Well put, Master.' ·They did not dare to ask him any more questions. 39, 40 ‖Mt 22:46 ‖Mk 12:34

‖Mt 22:41–45 ‖Mk 12:35–37 **Christ not only son but also Lord of David**

He then said to them, 'How can people maintain that the Christ is son of David? Why, David himself says in the Book of Psalms: 41 42

> *The Lord declared to my Lord,*
> *take your seat at my right hand,*
> *till I have made your enemies*
> *your footstool.* 43 Ps 110:1

David here calls him Lord; how then can he be his son?' 44

‖Mt 23:6–7 ‖Mk 12:38–40 **The scribes condemned by Jesus**

While all the people were listening he said to the disciples, ·'Beware of the scribes who like to walk about in long robes and love to be greeted respectfully in the market squares, to take the front seats in the synagogues and the places of honour at banquets, ·who devour the property of widows, and for show offer long prayers. The more severe will be the sentence they receive.' 45, 46 =11:43 47

‖Mk 12:41–44 **The widow's mite**

21 Looking up, he saw rich people putting their offerings into the treasury; and he noticed a poverty-stricken widow putting in two small coins, ·and he said, 'I tell you truly, this poor widow has put in more than any of them; ·for these have all put in money they could spare, but she in her poverty has put in all she had to live on.' 1 2, 3 4

‖Mt 24:1–3 ‖Mk 13:1–4 **Discourse on the destruction of Jerusalem:[a] Introduction**

When some were talking about the Temple, remarking how it was adorned with fine stonework and votive offerings, he said, ·'All these things you are staring at now—the time will come when not a single stone will be left on another; everything will be destroyed.' ·And they put to him this question, 'Master,' they said, 'when will this happen, then, and what sign will there be that it is about to take place?' 5 6 7

‖Mt 24:4–14 ‖Mk 13:5–13 **The warning signs**

But he said, 'Take care not to be deceived, because many will come using my name and saying, "I am the one" and "The time is near at hand." Refuse to join them. And when you hear of wars and revolutions, do not be terrified, for this is something that must happen first, but the end will not come at once.' ·Then he said to them, 'Nation will fight against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be great earthquakes and plagues and famines in various places; there will be terrifying events and great signs from heaven. 8 9 Dn 2:28 10 2 Ch 15:6 Is 19:2 11

‖Mt 10:17–22 Jn 15:20;16:1–2 'But before all this happens, you will be seized and persecuted; you will be handed over to the synagogues and to imprisonment, and brought before kings and governors for the sake of my name ·—and that will be your opportunity to bear witness. ·Make up your minds not to prepare your defence, ·because I myself[b] shall give you an eloquence and a wisdom that none of your opponents will be able 12 13 12:11seq. 14, 15 Ac 6:10

16 to resist or contradict. ·You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, 12:52–53
17 relations and friends; and some of you will be put to death. ·You will be hated
18 universally on account of my name, but not a hair of your head will be lost. 12:7 Mt 10:30 Heb 10:36,39
19 ·Your perseverance will win you your lives.

The siege ‖Mt 24:15–20 ‖Mk 13:14–18

20 'When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies,[c] then you must realise that it will
21 soon be laid desolate. ·Then those in Judaea must escape to the mountains, those
inside the city must leave it, and those in country districts must not take refuge in
22 it. ·For this is the time of retribution when all that scripture says[d] must be fulfilled. Ho 9:7
23 Alas for those with child, or with babies at the breast, when those days come!

The disaster and the age of the gentiles ‖Mt 24:21 ‖Mk 13:19

24 'For great misery will descend on the land and retribution on this people. ·They Rm 1:18m
will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive to every gentile country; and Dt 28:64
Jerusalem will be trampled down by the gentiles until their time[e] is complete. Dn 8:10 Rv 11:2

Cosmic disasters and the glorious appearing of the Son of man ‖Mt 24:29–30 ‖Mk 13:24–26

25 'There will be signs in the sun and moon and stars; on earth nations in agony,
26 bewildered by the turmoil of the ocean and its waves; ·men fainting away with Ps 65:7seq.
terror and fear at what menaces the world, for the powers of heaven will be shaken.
27 And then they will see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great Dn 7:13–14
28 glory. ·When these things begin to take place, stand erect, hold your heads high,
because your liberation is near at hand.' Heb 10:37

The time of this coming ‖Mt 24:32–35 ‖Mk 13:28–31

29, 30 And he told them a parable, 'Look at the fig tree and indeed every tree. ·As soon
31 as you see them bud, you can see for yourselves that summer is now near. ·So with
you when you see these things happening: know that the kingdom of God is near.[f]
32 In truth I tell you, before this generation has passed away all will have taken place. 9:27 Is 40:8 Mt 16:28 Mk 9:1
33 Sky and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

Be on the alert

34 'Watch yourselves, or your hearts will be coarsened by debauchery and drunken- 17:26–30 8:14
35 ness and the cares of life, and that day will come upon you unexpectedly, ·like a
36 trap. For it will come down[g] on all those living on the face of the earth. ·Stay Qo 9:12 Is 24:17seq. 1 Th 5:3 Ep 6:18 Rv 6:17
awake, praying at all times for the strength to survive all that is going to happen,
and to hold your ground before the Son of man.'

The last days of Jesus

37 All day long he would be in the Temple teaching, but would spend the night in the 19:47+
38 open on the hill called the Mount of Olives. ·And from early morning the people Mt 21:17 Mk 11:11,19 Jn 8:2
thronged to him in the Temple to listen to him.[h]

b. 'children': a semitism for 'those who belong to . . .' Cf. 16:8.

c. Only the resurrection of the just is considered here. *See* Ph 3:11h.

d. var. 'they have not to die'.

e. Semitism for those who are actually raised up.

f. The scribes, being Pharisees for the most part, believed in the resurrection of the dead, *see* Ac 23:6–9.

21 a. In 17:22–37 Lk, following one of his sources, speaks of the coming of Jesus in glory at the end of time. Here he follows Mk where two perspectives merge: that of the final coming and that of the destruction of Jerusalem: *see* 19:44f; Mt 24:1a.

b. Lk, in this place, assigns to Jesus the role reserved by 12:12; Mt 10:20; Mk 13:11 to the Spirit of the Father (Mt), the Holy Spirit (Mk and Lk), Ac 6:10. Cf. Jn 16:13–15.

c. As in 19:43–44, the expressions are biblical and contain no hint of a description written after the event, *see* 19:44f.

d. Possibly alluding to Dn 9:26,27.

e. i.e. the period during which the gentiles will take the place of the unfaithful Jewish nation; according to Paul, Rm 11:11–32, this period will end with the conversion of all Israel. Thus a period of indeterminate length is introduced between the ruin of Jerusalem and the end of time.

f. The kingdom has already been inaugurated, 17:21, but this present verse refers to the period of its triumphant progress which begins with the destruction of Jerusalem; cf. 9:27.

g. var. 'for it will come down on you like a snare'.

h. The literary relationship with Jn 8:1–2 is unmistakable. The incident of the adulterous woman, Jn 7:53–8:11, which so many grounds combine to attribute to Lk, would fit admirably into this context.

VI: THE PASSION [a]

The conspiracy against Jesus: Judas betrays him

22 The feast of Unleavened Bread, called the Passover, was now drawing near, and the chief priests and the scribes were looking for some way of doing away with him, because they were afraid of the people. [b]

Then Satan entered into Judas, surnamed Iscariot, who was one of the Twelve. He approached the chief priests and the officers of the guard [c] to discuss some way of handing Jesus over to them. They were delighted and agreed to give him money. He accepted and began to look for an opportunity to betray him to them without people knowing about it.

Preparation for the Passover supper

The day of Unleavened Bread came round, on which the Passover had to be sacrificed, and he sent Peter and John, saying, 'Go and make the preparations for us to eat the Passover.' They asked him, 'Where do you want us to prepare it?' He said to them, 'Look, as you go into the city you will meet a man carrying a pitcher of water. Follow him into the house he enters and tell the owner of the house, "The Master says this to you: Where is the room for me to eat the Passover with my disciples?" The man will show you a large upper room furnished with couches. Make the preparations there.' They set off and found everything as he had told them and prepared the Passover.

The supper

When the time came he took his place at table, and the apostles with him. And he said to them, [d] 'I have ardently longed to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; because, I tell you, I shall not eat it until it is fulfilled [e] in the kingdom of God.'

Then, taking a cup, [f] he gave thanks and said, 'Take this and share it among you, because from now on, I tell you, I shall never again drink wine until the kingdom of God comes.'

The institution of the Eucharist [g]

Then he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.' He did the same with the cup after supper, and said, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood poured out for you. [h]

The treachery of Judas foretold

'But look, here with me on the table is the hand of the man who is betraying me. The Son of man is indeed on the path which was decreed, but alas for that man by whom he is betrayed!' And they began to ask one another which of them it could be who was to do this.

Who is the greatest? [i]

An argument also began between them about who should be reckoned the greatest; but he said to them, 'Among the gentiles it is the kings who lord it over them, and those who have authority over them are given the title Benefactor. With you this must not happen. No; the greatest among you must behave as if he were the youngest, the leader as if he were the one who serves. For who is the greater: the one at table or the one who serves? The one at table, surely? Yet here am I among you as one who serves!

The reward promised to the apostles

28, 29 'You are the men who have stood by me faithfully in my trials; ·and now I confer a
30 kingdom on you, just as my Father conferred one on me: ·you will eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and you will sit on thrones to judge the twelve tribes of Israel.

Jn 6:66–68; 15:27
Rv 2:26–28
Rv 3:20–21
‖Mt 19:28

Peter's denial and repentance foretold

31, 32 [j]'Simon, Simon! Look, Satan has got his wish to sift you all like wheat; ·but I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail, and once you have recovered,
33 you in your turn must strengthen your brothers.'[k] ·'Lord,' he answered, 'I would
34 be ready to go to prison with you, and to death.' ·Jesus replied, 'I tell you, Peter, by the time the cock crows today you will have denied three times that you know me.'

Jb 1:6g
Am 9:9
Mt 8:10b
Mt 16:19i
Jn 21:15–17
2 S 15:20–21
Ac 21:13
‖Mt 26:31–35
‖Mk 14:27–31
‖Jn 13:36–38

A time of crisis

35 He said to them, 'When I sent you out without purse or haversack or sandals, were
36 you short of anything?' ·'No, nothing,' they said. He said to them, 'But now if you have a purse, take it, and the same with a haversack; if you have no sword, sell
37 your cloak and buy one,[l] ·because I tell you these words of scripture are destined to be fulfilled in me: *He was counted as one of the rebellious*. Yes, what it says about
38 me is even now reaching its fulfilment.' ·They said, 'Lord, here are two swords.' He said to them, 'That is enough!'

10:4
12:51
Mt 10:34
23:32
Is 53:12

The Mount of Olives[m]

39 He then left to make his way as usual to the Mount of Olives, with the disciples
40 following. ·When he reached the place he said to them, 'Pray not to be put to the test.'

‖Mt 26:30, 36–46
‖Mk 14:26, 32–42

41 Then he withdrew from them, about a stone's throw away, and knelt down[n] and
42 prayed. ·'Father,' he said, 'if you are willing, take this cup away from me. Never-
43 theless, let your will be done, not mine.' ·Then an angel appeared to him, coming
44 from heaven to give him strength. ·In his anguish he prayed even more earnestly, and his sweat fell to the ground like great drops of blood.[o]

21:37
Jn 18:2
3:21j
Jn 12:27–29
Mk 10:38
Ac 21:14

45 When he rose from prayer he went to the disciples and found them sleeping for

22 a. Throughout the Passion narrative, Lk shows himself considerably less dependent on Mk than hitherto; on the other hand, there are many points of contact with Jn. They probably shared a common source.

b. Lk does not record the anointing at Bethany; he has already described a similar incident in 7:36–50.

c. Officers of the Temple police. All of these were Levites; cf. Ac 4:1.

d. In Lk, Christ's discourses at the supper play a more important part than in Mk and Mt, preparing us for those of Jn 13:31–17:26. Lk adopts the hellenistic convention of gathering together at a final meal teachings of the Master about the future of his disciples. He seems to have thought of these discourses in the light of the primitive eucharistic assemblies.

e. The first stage of fulfilment is the Eucharist itself, the centre of spiritual life in the kingdom founded by Jesus; the final stage will be at the end of time when the Passover is to be fulfilled perfectly and in a fashion no longer veiled.

f. Lk distinguishes the Passover and the cup of vv. 15–18 from the bread and the cup of vv. 19–20 in order to draw a parallel between the ancient rite of the Jewish Passover and the new rite of the Christian Eucharist. Some ancient authorities (including important representatives of the Latin/Western text), evidently failing to understand this theological device and, disturbed to find two cups mentioned, quite mistakenly omitted v. 20, or even v. 20 with the second part of v. 19 (i.e. 'which will be given . . . of me').

g. Note the affinity between Lk's text and Paul's, 1 Co 11:23–25.

h. Or alternatively 'which has to be given' and 'which has to be poured out'.

i. By transposing this argument from its place in Mt 20:25; Mk 10:42, into the context of the institution of the Eucharist Lk relates it to the dissensions in the early Church. *See* Ac 6:1; 1 Co 11:17–19; Jm 2:2–4.

j. add. 'And the Lord said'.

k. This saying gives Peter a function in directing faith with regard to the other apostles. His primacy within the apostolic college is affirmed more clearly than in Mt 16:17–19, where he could simply be the spokesman and representative of the Twelve. *See also* Jn 21:15–17, where the 'lambs' or 'sheep' whom he is to feed surely include 'these others' whom he surpasses in love.

l. The world which was once sympathetic is now hostile: the purse and the haversack will be needed, to buy and to husband the necessities of life which were once freely provided; the sword will be needed for protection.

m. Lk's account of Jesus' ordeal is far more succinct than that of Mt and Mk: there is only one prayer. The accent (vv. 40, 46) is on the need of the disciples to follow their Master in prayer when they are put to the test.

n. It was normal to stand in prayer, *see* 18:11; 1 K 8:22; Mt 6:5, but also to kneel when prayer was especially intent or humble, *see* Ps 95:6; Is 45:23; Dn 6:11; Ac 7:60; 9:40; 20:36; 21:5.

o. Although some good and widely diverse witnesses omit them, vv. 43–44 should be retained. They are attested by many witnesses from as early as the second century, and represent the style and manner of Lk. Their omission is explained by concern to avoid a humiliation of Jesus which seemed too human.

sheer grief. ·And he said to them, 'Why are you asleep? Get up and pray not to be 46
put to the test.'

‖Mt 26:47–56 ‖Mk 14:43–52 ‖Jn 18:3–11 Ac 1:16
The arrest

Suddenly, while he was still speaking, a number of men appeared, and at the head 47
of them the man called Judas, one of the Twelve, who went up to Jesus to kiss him.
Jesus said, 'Judas, are you betraying the Son of man with a kiss?' ·His followers, 48, 49
seeing what was about to happen, said, 'Lord, shall we use our swords?' ·And one 50
of them struck the high priest's servant and cut off his right ear. ·But at this Jesus 51
said, 'That is enough.' And touching the man's ear he healed him.

Then Jesus said to the chief priests and captains of the Temple guard and elders 52
who had come for him, 'Am I a bandit, that you had to set out with swords and
19:47;21:37 clubs? ·When I was among you in the Temple day after day you never made a move 53
4:13d Jn 8:12b to lay hands on me. But this is your hour; this is the reign of darkness.'

‖Mt 26:69–75 ‖Mk 14:53–54, 66–72 ‖Jn 18:15–18, 25–27
Peter's denials

They seized him then[p] and led him away, and they took him to the high priest's 54
house. Peter followed at a distance. ·They had lit a fire in the middle of the 55
courtyard and Peter sat down among them, ·and as he was sitting there by the 56
blaze a servant-girl saw him, peered at him, and said, 'This man was with him too.'
But he denied it, 'Woman, I do not know him,' he said. ·Shortly afterwards 57, 58
someone else saw him and said, 'You are one of them too.' But Peter replied, 'I am
not, my friend.'[q] ·About an hour later another man insisted, saying, 'This fellow 59
was certainly with him. Why, he is a Galilean.' ·Peter said, 'My friend, I do not 60
know what you are talking about.' At that instant, while he was still speaking, the
cock crowed, ·and the Lord turned and looked straight at Peter, and Peter remem- 61
22:34 bered the Lord's words when he had said to him, 'Before the cock
crows today, you will have disowned me three times.' ·And he went outside and 62
wept bitterly.

‖Mt 26:67–68 ‖Mk 14:65
Jesus mocked by the guards[r]

Meanwhile the men who guarded Jesus were mocking and beating him. ·They 63, 64
blindfolded him and questioned him, saying, 'Prophesy! Who hit you then?' ·And 65
they heaped many other insults on him.

‖Mt 26:57–66;27:2 ‖Mk 14:53–64;15:1 Jn 10:24–25 Ps 110:1 Mt 4:3d Jn 10:30–33
Jesus before the Sanhedrin[s]

When day broke there was a meeting of the elders of the people,[t] the chief priests 66
and scribes. He was brought before their council, ·and they said to him, 'If you are 67
the Christ, tell us.' He replied, 'If I tell you, you will not believe, ·and if I question 68
you, you will not answer. ·But from now on, the *Son of man* will be[u] *seated at the* 69
right hand of the Power *of God*.' ·They all said, 'So you are the Son of God 70
then?'[v] He answered, 'It is you who say I am.' ·Then they said, 'Why do we need 71
any evidence? We have heard it for ourselves from his own lips.'[w]

Mt 27:1–2 Jn 18:28
23 The whole assembly then rose, and they brought him before Pilate. 1

‖Mt 27:11–14 ‖Mk 15:2–5 ‖Jn 18:29–38[a] 20:20–26 4:44k
Jesus before Pilate[a]

They began their accusation by saying, 'We found this man inciting our people to 2
revolt, opposing payment of the tribute to Caesar, and claiming to be Christ, a
king.' ·Pilate put to him this question, 'Are you the king of the Jews?' He replied, 3
'It is you who say it.' ·Pilate then said to the chief priests and the crowd, 'I find no 4
case against this man.' ·But they persisted, 'He is inflaming the people with his 5
teaching all over Judaea and all the way from Galilee, where he started, down to
here.' ·When Pilate heard this, he asked if the man were a Galilean; ·and finding 6, 7
that he came under Herod's jurisdiction, he passed him over to Herod, who was
also in Jerusalem at that time.

Jesus before Herod [b]

8 Herod was delighted to see Jesus; he had heard about him and had been wanting for a long time to set eyes on him; moreover, he was hoping to see some miracle
9 worked by him. ·So he questioned him at some length, but without getting any
10 reply. ·Meanwhile the chief priests and the scribes were there, vigorously pressing
11 their accusations. ·Then Herod, together with his guards, treated him with contempt and made fun of him; he put a rich cloak [c] on him and sent him back to Pilate.
12 And though Herod and Pilate had been enemies before, they were reconciled that same day.

9:9
Mt 14:1–2
Ac 4:27

Jesus before Pilate again

‖Mt 27:15–26
‖Mk 15:6–15
‖Jn 18:38[b]–19:16

13, 14 Pilate then summoned the chief priests and the leading men and the people. ·He said to them, 'You brought this man before me as a popular agitator. Now I have gone into the matter myself in your presence and found no grounds in the man for
15 any of the charges you bring against him. ·Nor has Herod either, since he has sent
16 him back to us. As you can see, the man has done nothing that deserves death, ·so
18 I shall have him flogged and then let him go.' [d][17] ·But as one man they howled,
19 'Away with him! Give us Barabbas!' ·(This man had been thrown into prison because of a riot in the city and murder.)

Ac 21:35

20, 21 In his desire to set Jesus free, Pilate addressed them again, ·but they shouted
22 back, 'Crucify him! Crucify him!' ·And for the third time [e] he spoke to them, 'But what harm has this man done? I have found no case against him that deserves
23 death, so I shall have him flogged and then let him go.' [f] ·But they kept on shouting at the top of their voices, demanding that he should be crucified. And their shouts kept growing louder.

24, 25 Pilate then gave his verdict: their demand was to be granted. ·He released the man they asked for, who had been imprisoned because of rioting and murder, and handed Jesus over to them to deal with as they pleased.

The way to Calvary

‖Mt 27:31[b]–32
‖Mk 15:20[b]–22
‖Jn 19:17

26 As they were leading him away they seized on a man, Simon from Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, and made him shoulder the cross and carry it
27 behind Jesus. ·Large numbers of people followed him, and women too, [g] who
28 mourned and lamented for him. ·But Jesus turned to them and said, 'Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep rather for yourselves and for your children.

14:27

p. In Mt and Mk, Jesus is seized immediately after Judas' greeting; the sword episode follows, and finally the discourse by Jesus. Lk makes the arrest follow the discourse, thus emphasising the control Jesus has over what takes place. *See* for the same emphasis, Jn 10:18j; 18:4–6.

q. lit. 'man'.

r. Occurring during the night's wait, before the session of the Sanhedrin, and not after it as in Mt and Mk, this mockery in Lk is the work not of the members of the Sanhedrin but of the retainers. On all these points Lk's account may well be more historical than those of Mt and Mk. Further, in contrast to Mt 26:68; Mk 14:65 (*see* notes) Jesus is blindfolded, so that the mockery becomes a guessing-game as well known in the ancient world as in any age.

s. Whereas Mk and Mt have two hearings, Lk has only one, and that in the morning, probably held in the 'Tribunal', a building adjacent to the Temple; *see* Mt 26:57r.

t. 'elders' here means the whole Sanhedrin, not merely one of its three component bodies (the elders); of these, Lk names the two most influential (chief priests and scribes).

u. Lk omits the 'you will see' of Mk and Mt and also the allusion to Dn. Perhaps he wanted to avoid the suggestion of a *parousia* soon to come which could arise from a misunderstanding of this saying.

v. Lk distinguishes more clearly than Mt and Mk the two titles 'Christ', v. 67, and 'son of God', v. 70. Cf. Jn 10:24–39.

w. Lk has neither false witnesses (but cf. Ac 6:11–14) nor explicit sentence of death. He certainly seems to use a different source from Mt and Mk.

23 a. Lk's account lies half-way between the less detailed and less dramatic accounts of Mk and Mt, and the prolonged interview in Jn.

b. Lk only. His information might have come from Manaen, 'who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch', Ac 13:1. It was legally acceptable for a Roman magistrate to refer a prisoner to the ruler of the territory of his origin, in this case Herod Antipas, as tetrarch of Galilee.

c. The ceremonial dress of princes; Herod's gibe at the royal claim of Jesus, v. 3.

d. add. v. 17 'He was under obligation to release one man for them every feast day'; this seems to be an explanatory gloss, cf. Mt 27:15 and par.

e. Lk, like Jn, emphasises Pilate's wish to let Jesus go free, and mentions the procurator's declaration of Christ's innocence three times, cf. Jn 18:38; 19:4,6.

f. Cf. v. 16. Lk does not say what the punishment was; in Mt 27:26–31 and par. it is scourging. Unlike Mk and Mt, but like Jn, Lk regards the punishment as a conciliatory measure designed to avert a sentence not yet pronounced.

g. The Talmud records that noblewomen of Jerusalem were accustomed to give sedative drinks to condemned criminals.

For look, the days are surely coming when people will say, "Blessed are those 29
11:27 who are barren, the wombs that have never borne children, the breasts that have
Ho 9:14
Ho 10:8 never suckled!" ·Then they will begin to *say to the mountains, "Fall on us!"; to the* 30
Ezk 21:3,8; *hills, "Cover us!"* ·For if this is what is done to green wood, what will be done 31
23:31
22:37 when the wood is dry?'[h] ·Now they were also leading out two others, criminals, to 32
Is 53:12 be executed with him.

‖Mt 27:35–38 **The crucifixion**[i]
‖Mk 15:24–28
‖Jn 19:17–24 When they reached the place called The Skull, there they crucified him and the two 33
Mt 18:21seq.,35 criminals, one on his right, the other on his left. ·[j]Jesus said, 'Father, forgive 34
Ac 7:60
Ps 22:18 them; they do not know what they are doing.'[k] Then they cast lots to share out his clothing.

‖Mt 27:39–43 **The crucified Christ is mocked**
‖Mk 15:29–32[a]
The people stayed there watching. As for the leaders, they jeered at him with the 35
2:26j words, 'He saved others, let him save himself if he is the Christ of God, the Chosen
•9:35i
Mt 27:48 One.' ·The soldiers mocked him too, coming up to him, offering him vinegar, 36
and saying, 'If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself.' ·Above him there was 37, 38
Jn 19:19 an inscription: 'This is the King of the Jews'.

The good thief

Mt 27:44 One of the criminals hanging there abused him: 'Are you not the Christ?[l] Save 39
Mk 15:32[b] yourself and us as well.' ·But the other spoke up and rebuked him. 'Have you no 40
fear of God at all?' he said. 'You got the same sentence as he did, ·but in our case 41
we deserved it: we are paying for what we did. But this man has done nothing
wrong.' ·Then he said, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.'[m] 42
2 Co 12:4 He answered him, 'In truth I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.' 43
Rv 2:7

‖Mt 27:45–50 **The death of Jesus**
‖Mk 15:33–37
‖Jn 19:25–30 It was now about the sixth hour and the sun's light failed, so that darkness came 44
over the whole land until the ninth hour.[n] ·The veil of the Sanctuary was torn 45
Ps 31:5 right down the middle. ·Jesus cried out in a loud voice saying, 'Father, *into your* 46
hands I commit my spirit.' With these words he breathed his last.

Mt 27:51–56 **After the death**
‖Mk 15:38–41
‖Jn 19:31–37 When the centurion saw what had taken place, he gave praise to God and said, 47
Ac 3:14i 'Truly, this was an upright man.' ·And when all the crowds who had gathered for 48
the spectacle saw what had happened, they went home beating their breasts.
Ps 38:11 All his friends stood at a distance; so also did the women who had accompanied 49
8:2–3;24:10 him from Galilee and saw all this happen.

‖Mt 27:57–61 **The burial**
‖Mk 15:42–47
‖Jn 19:38–42 And now a member of the Council arrived, a good and upright man named Joseph. 50
He had not consented to what the others had planned and carried out. He came 51
from Arimathaea, a Jewish town, and he lived in the hope of seeing the kingdom
of God. ·This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. ·He then took it 52, 53
down, wrapped it in a shroud and put it in a tomb which was hewn in stone and
which had never held a body. ·It was Preparation day and the Sabbath was 54
beginning to grow light.[o]
Meanwhile the women who had come from Galilee with Jesus were following 55
behind. They took note of the tomb and how the body had been laid.
Mk 16:1 Then they returned and prepared spices and ointments. And on the Sabbath day 56
they rested, as the Law required.

VII: AFTER THE RESURRECTION

Mt 28:10f

The empty tomb. The angel's message

‖Mt 28:1–8
‖Mk 16:1–8
‖Jn 20:1–2

24 On the first day of the week, at the first sign of dawn, they went to the tomb with the spices they had prepared. ·They found that the stone had been rolled away from the tomb, ·but on entering they could not find the body of the Lord Jesus. ·As they stood there puzzled about this, two men in brilliant clothes suddenly appeared at their side. ·Terrified, the women bowed their heads to the ground. But the two said to them, 'Why look among the dead for someone who is alive? ·He is not here; he has risen. Remember what he told you when he was still in Galilee: [a] ·that the Son of man was destined to be handed over into the power of sinful men and be crucified, and rise again on the third day.' ·And they remembered his words.

9:30g

9:22e

The apostles refuse to believe the women

‖Mt 28:10,17
‖Mk 16:10–11,14
‖Jn 20:18,25,29

8:2–3

And they returned from the tomb and told all this to the Eleven and to all the others. ·The women were Mary of Magdala, Joanna, and Mary the mother of James. And the other women with them also told the apostles, ·but this story of theirs seemed pure nonsense, and they did not believe them.

Peter at the tomb

‖Jn 20:3–10

[b]Peter, however, went off to the tomb, running. He bent down and looked in and saw the linen cloths but nothing else; he then went back home, amazed at what had happened.

24:24

The road to Emmaus

‖Mk 16:12–13

Now that very same day, two of them were on their way to a village called Emmaus, seven miles [c] from Jerusalem, ·and they were talking together about all that had happened. ·And it happened that as they were talking together and discussing it, Jesus himself came up and walked by their side; ·but their eyes were prevented from recognising him. [d] ·He said to them, 'What are all these things that you are discussing as you walk along?' They stopped, their faces downcast. [e]

Then one of them, called Cleopas, answered him, 'You must be the only person staying in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have been happening there

h. If green wood is burnt that is not meant for burning (allusion to Christ's condemnation), what is to happen to dry wood (the truly guilty)?

i. A comparison with Mk and Mt shows how Lk has softened the harshness of the crucifixion: Luke's crowd, vv. 27,35,48, is more inquisitive than hostile, and repents in the end, v. 48; Jesus does not utter the seemingly despairing cry, 'My God, my God, why have you deserted me?'; his ministry of forgiveness goes on to the last, vv. 34,39–43; he dies committing his spirit into the hands of his Father, v. 46.

j. This verse is retained despite its omission by some good and diverse ancient authorities.

k. These words of Jesus recall Is 53:12. The same view of the causes of his death will be repeated, Ac 3:17; 13:27; 1 Co 2:8. Stephen the deacon will pray in the same spirit, Ac 7:60, following the example left by the Master to all his disciples, 1 P 2:23; *see* Mt 18:21–22k.

l. In the persons of the 'bad thief' and the 'good thief', Jesus is given recognition as Christ, v. 39, and King, v. 42: the titles which were respectively the formal charges in the trial before the Jews and the trial before Pilate.

m. Or else 'in your kingly power', i.e. to establish your kingdom. var. 'when you come with (i.e. in possession of) your kingdom'.

n. Cosmic phemomena which characterise the Day of the Lord, *see* Mt 27:51–53x.

o. Or possibly 'was shining'. The Gk word could indicate either sunlight or lamplight.

24 a. Lk does not intend to speak of the Galilean apparitions; he therefore modifies Mk 16:7, just as earlier he omitted Mk 14:28.

b. In spite of its omission by several witnesses, this v. is to be retained. In style both Lukan and Johannine, it represents a tradition common to the third and fourth gospels. This is echoed in 24:24 and plainly implies that Peter was not alone in his visit.

c. lit. 'sixty *stadia*' (furlongs); var. (with less support) 'one hundred and sixty'. • The identity of the village is disputed. The story that follows is of a stamp different from the other resurrection appearances, bearing many similarities to the story of Philip and the eunuch in Ac 8:26–40; in each case initial bewilderment is dispersed by instruction, and the stories conclude respectively with a eucharist and a baptism.

d. In the appearances described by Lk and Jn, the disciples do not at first recognise the Lord: they need a word or a sign, 24:30f,35,37,39–43; Jn 20:14,16,20; 21:4,6–7; cf. Mt 28:17. While maintaining its identity, the body of the Risen One is in a new state which modifies its exterior form, Mk 16:12, and transcends the physical limitations of this world, Jn 20:19. On the condition of the risen body, *see* 1 Co 15:44w.

e. var. 'What are these things that you are discussing as you walk along and look sad'.

these last few days.' •He asked, 'What things?' They answered, 'All about Jesus of 19
Mt 2:23*l* Nazareth,[*l*] who showed himself a prophet powerful in action and speech before
Mt 16:14c Ac 7:22 God and the whole people; •and how our chief priests and our leaders handed him 20
over to be sentenced to death, and had him crucified. •Our own hope had been 21
1:54,68;2:38 that he would be the one to set Israel free. And this is not all: two whole days have
now gone by since it all happened; •and some women from our group have 22
astounded us: they went to the tomb in the early morning, •and when they could 23
24:9seq. not find the body, they came back to tell us they had seen a vision of angels who
declared he was alive. •Some of our friends[*g*] went to the tomb and found everything 24
exactly as the women had reported, but of him they saw nothing.'

Mk 4:13b 9:22e;16:29,31; 18:31e Mt 8:10b Ac 3:24s 1 P 1:11 Then he said to them, 'You foolish men! So slow to believe all that the prophets 25
have said! •Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer before entering into 26
his glory?' •Then, starting with Moses and going through all the prophets, he 27
explained to them the passages throughout the scriptures that were about himself.

When they drew near to the village to which they were going, he made as if to go 28
on; •but they pressed him to stay with them saying, 'It is nearly evening, and the 29
day is almost over.' So he went in to stay with them. •Now while he was with them 30
at table, he took the bread and said the blessing; then he broke it and handed it to
24:16d them. •And their eyes were opened and they recognised him; but he had vanished 31
from their sight. •Then they said to each other, 'Did not our hearts burn within us 32
as he talked to us on the road and explained the scriptures to us?'

They set out that instant and returned to Jerusalem. There they found the 33
Eleven assembled together with their companions, •who said to them, 'The Lord 34
1 Co 15:5 has indeed risen and has appeared to Simon.' •Then they told their story of 35
24:16d what had happened on the road and how they had recognised him at the breaking
of bread.[*h*]

Jn 20:19–23 **Jesus appears to the apostles**

They were still talking about all this when he himself stood among them and said to 36
1:12g;24:16d them, 'Peace be with you!' •In a state of alarm and fright, they thought they were 37
seeing a ghost. •But he said, 'Why are you so agitated, and why are these doubts 38
stirring in your hearts? •See by my hands and my feet that it is I myself. Touch 39
me and see for yourselves; a ghost has no flesh and bones as you can see I have.'
1:14i [*i*]And as he said this he showed them his hands and his feet.[*j*] •Their joy was so great 40, 41
Mt 8:10b that they still could not believe it, as they were dumbfounded; so he said to them,
Jn 21:5 'Have you anything here to eat?' •And they offered him a piece of grilled fish, 42
Jn 21:9–10,13 which he took and ate before their eyes. 43

Last instructions to the apostles

Then[*k*] he told them, 'This is what I meant when I said, while I was still with you, 44
9:22e;24:25–27 that everything written about me in the Law of Moses, in the Prophets and in the
Mk 4:13b Psalms, was destined to be fulfilled.' •He then opened their minds to understand 45
Ac 2:23*o* the scriptures, •and he said to them, 'So it is written that the Christ would suffer 46
Ho 6:2 and on the third day rise from the dead, •and that, in his name, repentance for the 47
Ac 10:40n Mt 3:2 forgiveness of sins would be preached to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.
2:38*o* Mt 28:19–20 Mk 16:15–16 Jn 14:26r ‖Ac 1:4,8k; 2:33u Ga 3:14 Ep 1:13 You are witnesses to this. 48
'And now I am sending upon you what the Father has promised.[*l*] Stay in the 49
city, then, until you are clothed with the power from on high.'

The ascension

‖Mk 16:19 ‖Ac 1:9,12 Lv 9:22 Si 50:20 9:51m 1:14i 2:20g Then he took them out as far as the outskirts of Bethany, and raising his hands he 50
blessed them. •Now as he blessed them, he withdrew from them and was carried 51
up to heaven.[*m*] •They worshipped him and[*n*] then went back to Jerusalem full of 52
joy; •and they were continually in the Temple praising God.[*o*] 53

f. var. 'the Nazarene'. *See* Mt 2:23*l*.

g. Either, 'Peter' of v. 12 stands for 'the leading apostles'; or else Lk is following the same tradition as Jn 20:3–10 of a visit to the tomb by Peter and the Beloved Disciple.

h. In Ac (2:42gg) Lk uses this as a technical term for the Eucharist; probably it means the same here.

i. In spite of its omission by some good witnesses, this v. should be retained.

j. Writing for Greeks who scoffed at the idea of bodily resurrection, Lk underlines the physical reality of Christ's risen body, cf. v. 43.

k. The impression given is that all these events took place on the same day, the day of resurrection. *See* Mt 28:10f. But Ac 1:1–8 presupposes a period of forty days.

l. That is, the Holy Spirit, *see* Jn 1:33x; Ac 1:1–8; 2:33,39; Ga 3:14,22; 4:6; Ep 1:13.

m. om. 'and was carried up to heaven'. This omission is made by good authorities in the Latin/Western text and in other types of text, but is probably an attempt to avoid an Ascension on the day of Resurrection itself, which seems to clash with that of Ac 1:3,9 forty days later.

n. om. 'They worshipped him, and'.

o. Lk's Gospel ends where it began, in the Temple; its last word is of joy and praise.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO

JOHN

INTRODUCTION TO THE GOSPEL AND LETTERS OF JOHN

The Gospel

The first ending to the fourth Gospel (20:31) specifies the book's literary form. It is a 'gospel', just as the preaching of the earlier Church was a 'gospel'; i.e. it proclaims that Jesus is Messiah and Son of God, and its teaching, based on 'signs' that Jesus gave, is to bring the reader to believe in the Messiah and so to attain life. The fourth Gospel, therefore, in spite of all indications of its late composition, is not unrelated to the most primitive Christian *kerygma*, or message, and it preserves both the structure and the chief points of this message, e.g. the Holy Spirit descends, as the Baptist testifies, to point out Jesus as Messiah, 1:31–34; Christ's 'glory' is manifested in his work and word, 1:35–12:50; his death, resurrection and subsequent apparitions are described, 13:1–20:20; the apostles are sent out with the gift of the Spirit and the power to forgive sins, 20:21–29. The book claims, moreover, to fulfil the condition that (*see* Ac 1:8k) qualifies a witness as 'apostolic': i.e. it offers an (unnamed) eyewitness for its guarantor, 'the disciple Jesus loved', who took part in the events of the Passion, *see* Jn 13:23; 19:26,35; compare 18:15seq., saw the empty tomb, 20:2seq., and the risen Christ, 21:7,20–24, and was perhaps one of the first two disciples of Jesus, 1:35seq.

There are some features peculiar to the fourth Gospel that mark it off sharply from the Synoptics. In the first place, it is far more concerned than the Synoptics to bring out the *significance* of the events of Christ's life and of all that he did and said. The things Christ did were 'signs': their meaning, hidden at first, could be fully understood only after his glorification, 2:22; 12:16; 13:17. The things he said had a deeper meaning not perceived at the time, *see* 2:20g; it was the business of the Spirit who spoke in the name of the risen Christ, to remind the disciples of what Jesus had said, to deepen their understanding of it, and to 'lead' them 'into the whole truth', *see* 14:26r. The Gospel according to John looks back on the earthly life of Jesus in the light of this completed understanding.

In the second place, the author seems to have been influenced to a considerable extent by ideas current in certain sections of Judaism, ideas that are reflected in the Essene documents of Qumran. In this school of thought the great emphasis laid on 'knowledge' has given its vocabulary the sort of tinge to be found in later Gnostic literature: e.g. the contrasting pairs 'light/

darkness', 'truth/lies', 'angel of light/angel of darkness (Beliar)' which all have a dualist flavour. At Qumran—in view of its expectation of an imminent coming of God—a particular stress was laid both on the need for unity and on the necessity for mutual love. All these ideas which recur in the fourth Gospel are characteristic of the Judaeo-Christian *milieu* in which it must have originated.

Moreover, this Gospel is far more interested than the Synoptics in worship and sacraments. It relates the life of Jesus to the Jewish liturgical year and associates his miracles with the principal feasts; the Temple is often given as the setting both for them and for Christ's discourses. Jesus asserts that he himself is the focus of a religion, restored 'in spirit and in truth', 4:24, but a religion also which is expressed and realised in the sacraments. The dialogue with Nicodemus includes all the essentials of a baptismal instruction, 3:1–21, and the narratives of the man born blind and of the paralytic seem to presuppose the ideas of baptism as light, 9:1–39, and new life 5:1–14; 5:21–24. Ch. 6 by itself is a complete collection of teachings on the Eucharist, but the entire Gospel is pervaded by the concept of the Christian Passover, replacing the Jewish Passover, 1:29,36; 2:13; 6:4; 19:36u. Jewish purificatory rites, 2:6; 3:25, give way to a purification of the soul by Word, 15:3, and Spirit, 20:22seq. In this way the life of Christ is seen as directly related to a living liturgical and sacramental Christianity.

The fourth Gospel is a complex work; it is related to the earliest Christian preaching, and yet at the same time it gives us the results of a quest, completed under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, for a deeper and more rewarding apprehension of the mystery of Jesus.

Each of the evangelists has his own approach to Christ's person and mission. For John he is the Word made flesh, come to give life, 1:14, and this, the mystery of the Incarnation, dominates the whole of John's thought. He expresses its theology in concrete terms: Jesus is sent; Jesus bears witness. Christ is God's message, he is the Word sent down to earth by God, to whom he must return when his task is complete, *see* 1:1a. This task of the Word is to declare the hidden things of God; and to be witness to all that he has seen and heard from the Father himself, *see* 3:11e. As credentials God has given him certain works or 'signs' to perform; these demand more than human power and prove that he has been sent by the God who is active in him, *see* 2:11f; through them is glimpsed his glory which will not be revealed fully till the day of his resurrection, *see* 1:14n, when the Son of man is to be 'lifted up' as Isaiah foretold, Is 53:12 (LXX), to return to the Father by way of the cross, *see* Jn 12:32j, and to resume the glory he had with God 'before the world was made', 17:5f,24. This is the glory about which the prophets learned through revelation (*see* 5:27; 12:41; 19:37 and references), and the revealing of this glory is a theophany, or divine self-revelation, that is at once both the culmination and final eclipse of all those other theophanies that had taken place already, whether that given in the act of creation, 1:1, or those given to Moses, 1:17, Jacob, 1:51, Abraham, 8:56, or the prophets. The glory of the 'Day of Yahweh', *see* Am 5:18m, is identified with the 'Day' of Jesus, Jn 8:56, and more particularly with his Hour, 2:4e, which is the hour of his 'lifting up' and of his glorification. In that hour is revealed the super-human majesty of him who was 'sent', 8:24g, the majesty of one who came

to the world to give life, 3:35t, to all those whose hearts were opened by faith to the saving message he brought, 3:11e. For this 'salvation' and for this alone the Son was 'sent', and in this way his 'sending' was the supreme manifestation of the Father's love for the world, 17:6g.

In the Synoptic Gospels the revelation of Christ's glory is associated primarily with his eschatological 'coming', his return at the end of time, Mt 16:27seq. The basic elements of traditional eschatology: the expectation of the 'Last Day', Jn 6:39seq.; 11:24; 12:48, of the 'coming' of Jesus, 14:3; 21:22seq., of the resurrection of the dead, 5:28seq.; 11:24, and of the last judgement, 3:36; 5:29, are all found in the fourth Gospel, but in it this eschatology receives a new and double emphasis: not only is the End here and now—it is also an inner principle and not an external event. In this way, the 'coming' of the Son of man is interpreted primarily as the 'coming' of Jesus to this world through his Incarnation, his 'lifting up' on the cross, and his return to his own disciples through the Holy Spirit. In the same way the 'judgement' is presented as something already taking place in human hearts, and eternal life (John's counterpart of the synoptic 'kingdom') is made to be something actually present, already in the possession of those who have faith. That these 'last things' should be seen as present is not surprising, since salvation throughout history centres on Christ's historical life and death and resurrection. Beyond the Jews who rejected Jesus looms something more fundamental—the 'world', *see* 1:9,10,10g, the 'darkness', *see* 8:12b, which is controlled by Satan, the 'prince of this world', *see* 1 Jn 2:13seq.; who challenges God and his Anointed. There is no one who is not involved in this dramatic conflict of the spirit: the world, face to face with the Word, suffers its 'judgement', 12:31–32, receives its verdict, and admits defeat, 16:7–11,33. Christ gives his life, *see* 10:18j, he is 'lifted up' on the cross, but willingly, and only in order to enter into his glory, *see* 12:32j, a glory that is made visible even in this world to the confusion of unbelievers and ending in the defeat of Satan once and for all. God's victory over evil, his salvation of the world, is already guaranteed by Christ's resurrection in glory; the return of Jesus at the Last Day will be nothing but its confirmation.

It is difficult to determine the precise scheme adopted by John for this great theme. In the first place, the arrangement of the Gospel is not always easy to explain: the sequence of ch. 4, 5, 6, 7:1–24 is awkward; ch. 15–17 are placed after the farewell of 14:31; passages like 3:31–36 and 12:44–50 break into their context. The way the Gospel was both written and edited may be responsible for this. It would seem that we have only the end-stage of a slow process that has brought together not only component parts of different ages, but also corrections, additions and sometimes even more than one revision of the same discourse. Finally all this was published not by the eyewitness himself but by disciples after his death, 21:24. It seems that these disciples had a number of Johannine fragments which they were reluctant to abandon; though uncertain of their place, they worked them into the primitive gospel.

Many ways of dividing the Gospel have been suggested. These all satisfy some of the data but are frequently far too rigidly systematic. It is best to follow such clear indications as are given by the evangelist himself. In the first place there is no doubt that he attaches special importance to the Jewish liturgical feasts which he uses to punctuate his narrative. These are: three

feasts of Passover, 2:13; 6:4; 11:55, one unnamed feast, 5:1, one feast of Shelters, 7:2, and one feast of Dedication, 10:22. Secondly, the evangelist on several occasions very deliberately calculates the number of days with a view to dividing the life of Jesus into set periods. Thus we have the first week of Christ's ministry, 1:19–2:11, the week of the feast of Shelters, 7:2, 14, 37, and the week of the Passion, 12:1,12; 19:31,42, which latter is unified by the symbolic burial that begins it, 12:7, and the actual burial with which it ends, 19:38seq; in the same way, 4:45 harks back to the first Passover, *see* 2:13–25, and in this way brackets together a whole section. With the above two points in mind, the following division may be suggested:

A *Prologue,* 1:1–18; 'In the beginning . . .'

B *Jesus' ministry*
1 Proclamation of the new order, 1:19–4:54; the inaugural week; the events of the first Passover
2 The second feast: a Sabbath in Jerusalem; the first opposition, 5:1–47
3 The second Passover, in Galilee; new opposition, 6:1–71
4 The feast of Shelters: the great messianic revelation; the great rejection, 7:1–10:21
5 The feast of the Dedication: decision to kill Jesus, 10:22–10:42
6 Jesus moves towards his death, 11:1–12:50

C *Jesus' Hour. The Passover of the Lamb of God, 13:1–20:31*
1 Jesus' last meal with the disciples, 13:1–17:26
2 The Passion, 18–19
3 The resurrection; commissioning of the disciples, 20:1–29
4 First ending of the Gospel, 20:30, 31

D *Epilogue,* 21:1–25. The risen Lord teaches the church

The plan of this Gospel thus implies that Jesus fulfilled the institutions of the Jewish religion and in so doing brought them to an end.

Is the fourth Gospel a source of information independent of the three Synoptics? On this problem, and with due caution, the following observations may be made. There are several indications that John was familiar with the traditions embodied in the Synoptics. At times his omissions would be incomprehensible unless he was presuming that the facts would be known from some other source, but there are also times when he seems anxious to fill out the synoptic tradition and add another emphasis. Nevertheless, modern studies continue to provide more and more evidence for the originality and independence of the Johannine tradition. Even when narrating episodes found in the Synoptic Gospels, John remains so much himself that direct literary dependence becomes impossible: the facts must have reached the author by some other route and he must always be considered a source in his own right, an independent witness to the primitive tradition. Between John and Luke the relationship is much closer, close enough to make it possible that when Luke wrote his Gospel he made use not perhaps of the fourth Gospel as it stands but of the traditions that went to its making. This applies especially to the Passion and Resurrection narratives, but the contrary

is also possible, namely, that the final editor of the fourth Gospel was influenced by the third.

What then is the historical value of John's Gospel? With the growing scholarly appreciation of the independence of the Johannine tradition there has grown also a recognition of its historical significance. On many points, for example, that have to do with Christ's ministry, John is more precise than the Synoptics; the duration of the ministry and the chronology of the Passion seem to be more exactly defined. Indeed, one of the most exact chronological indications in any of the gospels is to be found in John 2:20, and it is supported by Lk 3:1. Topography in the fourth Gospel is also much more detailed than it is in the Synoptics, and this information has been confirmed more than once by recent discoveries (e.g. the pool with five porticos, 5:2). Moreover, throughout the Gospel we meet with factual detail that displays the author's close familiarity with the Jewish religious practice as also with the rabbinic mind and with the casuistry of the doctors of the law. The portrait of Jesus himself as painted by the evangelist represents him as transcending this world but nevertheless as someone real and entirely human: simple and humble even in his risen glory. Finally it may be remarked that if John had not been convinced of the historical truth of all he wrote, his Gospel would remain an insoluble enigma.

But it is important to realise that 'history' in this context is very different from the concept of modern historians. The absorbing concern of the evangelist is the *meaning* of those historical events which were at once both divine and human, events which were at one and the same time both historical and theological; events which flowered in time but were rooted in eternity. The aim of the evangelist is to make his account a faithful one, something which he intends should be believed; his theme is a supernatural event, played out in human history by Jesus Christ, the Word who became incarnate for the salvation of the human race. With this in mind, the evangelist has selected his material, carefully choosing events which, it seemed to him, could be presented symbolically. In this way he has deepened their meaning and given them new overtones. The miracles he describes are 'signs': they not only manifest Christ's glory, they are also symbolic of the gifts (the new purification, the living bread, light and life) he has brought to the world; even non-miraculous events can be presented in a way that brings out their spiritual meaning, a way that makes them vehicles of the divine mysteries (*see* 2:19–21; 9:7; 11:51seq.; 13:30; 19:31–37 with notes). John can see spiritual depths even in the most material elements of history: when Jesus comes, it is as the light of the world that he comes: his whole life is a battle against darkness; his death is a judgement on the entire world; and in him are realised the types of the Old Testament—he is the lamb of God, 1:29, the new Temple, 2:21, the healing serpent of Moses, 3:14, the bread of life prefigured by manna, 6:35, the perfect shepherd, 10:11, the true vine, 15:1. In John's portrait of him Jesus is presented as divine but it is a portrait filled with the details of Jesus' true humanity: it records the Jesus of history, but Jesus as seen in all his depths as Saviour of the world: John's symbolism, therefore, does not compromise history but presupposes it; for him there is no tension between the symbolic and the factual: his symbols are the real events of history, and his symbolism is inherent in these events; it not only explains

the inner meaning of these historic events, but to John, the privileged witness of the incarnate Word, all this symbolism would be useless if these events had not taken place.

As for the *author* of this highly rewarding and complex Gospel, tradition almost unanimously makes him John the apostle, the son of Zebedee. Before 150 AD the fourth Gospel was known and used by Ignatius of Antioch, by the author of the *Odes of Solomon,* by Papias, by Justin, and probably by Clement of Rome, which makes it clear that the work was already considered to have apostolic authority. The first explicit testimony is that of Irenaeus, *c.* 180: 'Last of all John, too, the disciple of the Lord who leant against his breast, himself brought out a gospel while he was in Ephesus.' At about the same time, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian and the Muratorian Canon expressly attribute the fourth Gospel to John the apostle, though this authorship was denied in about AD 200 by some opponents of the Montanists. These last had used the fourth Gospel to bolster their doctrine of the Spirit, but their opponents' reaction, prompted by theological considerations, has no supporting evidence from tradition.

The matter is, however, not as simple as this. It is today freely accepted that the fourth Gospel underwent a complex development before it reached its final form. Some commentators hold that the evangelist used a variety of sources which he reshaped and expanded to adapt them to his own theology. One has, for example, isolated a 'Sign Source' containing the miracles related in the fourth Gospel, a collection of 'sayings' attributed to Christ, and finally an account of the Passion and Resurrection distinct from that of the Synoptic Gospels. Following him, several authors have taken steps to work out the nature and scope of this presumed Sign Source. On this hypothesis the attribution of the gospel to the apostle John would become most unlikely: could an eyewitness have used sources to recount his own memories? At best one could suppose that one of the presumed sources was derived from an eyewitness. Other commentators prefer to invoke the hypothesis of a primitive gospel, much simpler than the present one, amplified and developed in several stages during the second half of the first century AD. This hypothesis can appeal for support to the numerous doublets which occur, indications that a single tradition can have evolved along different lines which finally converged in the Gospel as we have it. On this view it is possible to attribute to the apostle John, if not the final editing of the Gospel (which must be the work of his disciples—Jn 21:24), at least the genesis of the primitive gospel. Other indications of this are the topographical and chronological details, which are striking by their precision and coherence.

Must any connection be maintained between the fourth Gospel in whatever form and the apostle John? According to Jn 21:24 it was written by 'the disciple Jesus loved'; should this disciple be identified with the apostle John? An indication that he should is provided by his special friendship with Peter, according to Jn 13:23seq.; 18:15; 20:3–10; 21:20–23. Luke tells us that this was in fact the case with the apostle John (Lk 22:8; Ac 3:1–4; 4:13; 8:14). Nevertheless the argument is not conclusive nor without its difficulties: the apostle John was a fisherman at the Lake of Tiberias; by contrast the 'disciple Jesus loved' lived in or around Jerusalem, since he appears for the first time at Jesus' last supper at Jerusalem (Jn 13:23) and is known to the High Priest

(Jn 18:16). In any case, the possibility remains that the attribution of the genesis of the gospel to the apostle John could be the result of a confusion between this John and a certain John the Elder, mentioned by Papias, Bishop of Hierapolis, who was writing *c.* 135 AD. According to Eusebius of Caesarea, this confusion was already made by Irenaeus, *c.* 180 AD.

The Letters

The three letters we have, and which by tradition bear John's name, are so like the gospel in style and doctrine that it is difficult not to accept that they issue from the same school.

For a time the Johannine authorship of the second and third letters was in doubt, and traces of this uncertainity are to be found in Origen, Eusebius of Caesarea and Jerome, while the church of Antioch and the Syrian churches in general refused for a long time to accept them; however, these brief, incidental letters are of little doctrinal import, and it is hard to see how they could have forced their way into the canon had they not in fact been closely related to the Gospel of John.

The third letter was probably written first: it is an attempt to settle the dispute on jurisdiction which had arisen in one of the churches acknowledging the author's jurisdiction; the second letter was written to another church in answer to those who publicly denied the reality of the Incarnation. The first letter, however, is by far the most important: its form is that of an encyclical letter to the Christian communities of Asia, threatened with disintegration under the impact of the early heresies. In this letter the author summarises the entire content of his religious experience. He successively develops the parallel themes of light, 1:5seq.; uprightness, 2:29seq.; love, 4:7–8seq.; and truth, 5:6seq.; and then, taking these as a basis, he goes on to show how we as children of God must necessarily live the life of integrity which, for John, is the only thing which fulfils the twin commandments: faith in Jesus Christ, the son of God, and love of the brethren (*see* notes to 1:3,7). Of the three Johannine letters this is the closest to his Gospel both in style and doctrine; it must have been written about the same time, but whether before or after the Gospel is something that cannot now be determined.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO
JOHN

A: PROLOGUE

Jn 8:24k;10:30p Gn 1:1–5 Ph 2:6 1 Jn 1:1–2

1 In the beginning was the Word: [a]
the Word was with God
and the Word was God.
He was with God in the beginning.

1 Co 8:6 Col 1:15–20 Heb 1:1–3

Through him all things came into being,
not one thing came into being except through him.

3:35t 3:11f

What has come into being [b] in him was life, [c]
life that was the light of men;

8:12b 1 Jn 2:8

and light shines in darkness,
and darkness could not overpower it. [d]

A man came, sent by God.
His name was John. [e]

1:19–34

He came as a witness,
to bear witness to the light,
so that everyone might believe through him.
He was not the light,
he was to bear witness to the light.

3:19;8:12b; 12:46 Ws 7:26

The Word was the real light
that gives light to everyone;
he was coming into the world. [f]
He was in the world
that had come into being through him,
and the world did not recognise him. [g]
He came to his own
and his own people [h] did not accept him.

3:11e;10:35 Ho 2:1 Ga 3:26 Jm 1:18,21

But to those who did accept him
he gave power to become [i] children of God,

1 Jn 3:2;5:13

to those who believed in his name [j]
who were born not from human stock
or human desire

1 Jn 5:18

or human will
but from God himself. [k]
The Word became flesh, [l]
he lived among us, [m]

17:5g Ex 25:8d;34:6c Lv 26:11–12 Dt 4:7b Is 40:5 Ho 2:22 1 Jn 1:1–3

and we saw his glory, [n]
the glory that he has from the Father as only Son of the Father,
full of grace and truth. [o]

John witnesses to him. He proclaims:

=1:30

'This is the one of whom I said:

He who comes after me
has passed ahead of me
because he existed before me.'

16 Indeed, from his fullness we have, all of us, received— Col 1:19f;2:9–10
one gift replacing another,[p]
17 for the Law was given through Moses, 1:21t
grace and truth have come through Jesus Christ.
18 No one has ever seen God; 3:11e,f;6:46; 17:6g Ex 33:20i Si 43:31 Col 1:15 1 Jn 4:12
it is the only Son,[q] who is close to the Father's heart,
who has made him known.

B: JESUS' MINISTRY

I: PROCLAMATION OF THE NEW ORDER

THE MINISTRY OF JESUS

A: THE OPENING WEEK

The witness of John 1:7–8,15

19 This was the witness of John, when the Jews[r] sent to him priests and Levites from 5:33
20 Jerusalem to ask him, 'Who are you?' ·He declared, he did not deny but declared, Lk 3:15 Ac 13:25

1 a. The OT speaks of the Word of God, and of his Wisdom, present with God before the world was made, *see* Pr 8:22e; Ws 7:22i; by it all things were created; it is sent to earth to reveal the hidden designs of God; it returns to him with its work done, Pr 8:22–36; Ws 9:9–12; Si 24:3–22; Is 55:10–11. On its creative role, *see also* Gn 1:3,6; Jdt 16:14; Ps 33:6; Si 42:15; Is 40:8,26; 44:24–28; 48:13; on its mission, *see* Ps 107:20; 147:15–18; Ws 18:14–16. For John, too, 13:3; 16:28, the Word existed before the world in God, vv. 1,2; 8:24g; 10:30p; it has come on earth, vv. 9–14; 3:19; 9:39; 12:46, *see* Mk 1:38n, being sent by the Father, 3:17,34; 5:36,43; 6:29; 7:29; 8:42; 9:7; 10:36; 11:42; 17:3,25, cf. Lk 4:43, to perform a task, Jn 4:34k, namely, to deliver a message of salvation to the world, Jn 1:33x; 3:11e; with its mission accomplished it returns to the Father, Jn 1:18; 7:33; 8:21; 12:35; 13:3; 16:5; 17:11,13; 20:17. The Incarnation enabled the NT, and especially John, to see this separately and eternally existent Word-Wisdom as a person, but this personification is present also in other passages, such as Heb 1:1–2; 1 Jn 1:1–2; Rv 19:13.

b. Alternatively, these words may be joined with what precedes, to give 'and of all that has come to be not one thing had its being except through him'. In that case v. 4 would begin 'In him was life and that life . . .'

c. var. 'is life in him'.

d. The Light (Goodness; the Word) cannot be imprisoned by Darkness (Evil; the powers of evil), cf. 7:33seq.; 8:21; 12:31,32; 14:30; 1 Jn 2:8,14; 4:4; 5:18. Others translate 'could not understand'.

e. Vv. 6–8 form a parenthesis on the mission of John the Baptist. Similarly v. 15; *see* Mt 3:1 and par.

f. Other possible translations: 'The true light, that which enlightens every man, was coming into the world,' or 'He (the Word) was the real light that enlightens every man who comes into the world.'

g. The 'world' variously means: the cosmos or this earth, the human race, those hostile to God who hate Christ and his disciples, 7:7; 15:18,19; 17:14. This last sense coincides with the contemporary Jewish distinction between 'this world', 8:23 and *passim*, dominated by Satan, 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; 1 Jn 5:19, and 'the world to come' which possibly corresponds to John's 'eternal life', 12:25. The disciples are to remain *in* this world for the present, though not *of* it, 17:11,14seq., compare the pejorative sense of 'earth' in Rv 6:15; 13:3,8; 14:3; 17:2,5,8; *see also* Rm 8:16j.

h. Probably the Jews.

i. var. 'to be called'.

j. 'to those who believed in his name' omitted by many of the Fathers. Those who believe in the Son of God, 3:15j, themselves become children of God, Mt 5:9; 6:9; Rm 8:14; Ga 3:26*o*; 4:5d; Jm 1:27p; 1 Jn 3:1.

k. The same terms are used in the *Book of Enoch*, 15:4, to describe the birth of the giants, the product of the union of angels with the daughters of men. The original reading may be a shorter one, 'not from human stock or human desire'. • There are strong arguments for reading the verb in the singular, 'who was born', in which case the v. refers to Jesus' divine origin, not to the virgin birth.

l. Even though it is the place of revelation, the 'flesh' considered as frail and mortal denotes humanity, *see* 3:6; 17:2; Gn 6:3; Ps 56:5; Is 40:6. The use of this term, *see* Rm 7:5c, stresses the reality of the coming of Christ in human nature, which Jn constantly brings out. Later the term 'Incarnation' will come into use, *see* 1 Jn 4:2; 2 Jn 7; and in Paul Rm 1:3; Ga 4:4; Ph 2:7; Col 1:19.

m. The Incarnation of the Word makes God personally and visibly present; it is no longer a presence unseen and awe-inspiring as in the Tent and Temple of the old régime, Ex 25:8d; cf. Nb 35:34, nor merely the presence of divine Wisdom enshrined in Israel's Mosaic Law, Si 24:7–22; Ba 3:36–4:4.

n. The 'glory' is the manifestation of God's presence, Ex 24:16f. No one could see its brilliance and live, Ex 33:20i, but the human nature of the Word now screens this glory as the cloud once did. Yet at times it pierces the veil, at the transfiguration, for instance, cf. Lk 9:32,35 (alluded to in Jn 1:14?), and when Jesus works miracles—'signs' that God is active in him, Jn 2:11f; 11:40; cf. 14:24–27 and 15:7; 16:7seq. The resurrection will reveal the glory fully, *see* 17:5f.

o. 'Grace and truth' recalls the 'grace' (or 'love') and 'faithfulness' of God's self-revelation to Moses, Ex 34:6c, *see* Ho 2:16–22, with whom the Word is contrasted, *see* 2:11f; 6:31i.

p. An alternative translation is 'grace upon grace'.

q. var. 'God the only Son'. Jesus is the only Son, vv. 14,18; 3:16–18, beloved of the Father, 15:9; 17:23, in complete reciprocal intimacy with him, 10:30–38p; 14:10–11; 17:21, in knowledge and love, 5:20,30; 10:15; 14:31; cf. Mt 11:27 and par.

r. In Jn this usually indicates the Jewish religious authorities hostile to Jesus, *see* 2:18; 5:10; 7:13; 9:22; 18:12; 19:38; 20:19, but occasionally the Jews as a whole. Cf. v. 11h.

Mt 17:10–13.10c Mt 16:14c
'I am not the Christ.' ·So they asked, 'Then are you Elijah?' ' He replied, 'I am not.' 'Are you the Prophet?' ' He answered, 'No.' ·So they said to him, 'Who are you? We must take back an answer to those who sent us. What have you to say about yourself?' ·So he said, 'I am, as Isaiah prophesied: 21 22 23

Is 40:3 |Mt 3:3+
A voice of one that cries in the desert:
Prepare a way for the Lord.
Make his *paths straight!'*

Now those who had been sent were Pharisees, ·and they put this question to him, 24. 25
'Why are you baptising if you are not the Christ, and not Elijah, and not the Mt 3:6e;3:11par. 7:27j Mk 1:7 par. ·10:40 Prophet?' ·John answered them, 'I baptise with water; but standing among you— 26
unknown to you—·is the one who is coming after me; and I am not fit to undo the 27
strap of his sandal.' ·This happened at Bethany, on the far side of the Jordan,[u] 28
where John was baptising.

The next day, he saw Jesus coming towards him and said, 'Look, there is the 29
4:42+ Ex 12:1a Is 53:7.12 lamb of God[v] that takes away the sin of the world. ·It was of him that I said, 30
"Behind me comes one who has passed ahead of me because he existed before
1:1a;8:58 me." ·I did not know him myself, and yet my purpose in coming to baptise with 31
water was so that he might be revealed to Israel.' ·And John declared, 'I saw the 32
3:34 Is 11:2;61:1 Mt 3:16par. 1 S 9:17 3:5 Mt 3:11i Is 42:1 Lk 9:35;23:35 Spirit come down on him like a dove[w] from heaven and rest on him. ·I did not 33
know him myself, but he who sent me to baptise with water had said to me, "The
man on whom you see the Spirit come down and rest is the one who is to baptise
with the Holy Spirit."[x] ·I have seen and I testify that he is the Chosen One of 34
God.'[y]

Mt 4:18–20par. **The first disciples**

The next day as John stood there again with two of his disciples, Jesus went past, 35
and John looked towards him and said, 'Look, there is the lamb of God.' ·And the 36. 37
two disciples heard what he said and followed Jesus. ·Jesus turned round, saw 38
them following and said, 'What do you want?' They answered, 'Rabbi'—which
means Teacher—'where do you live?' ·He replied, 'Come and see;' so they went 39
and saw where he lived, and stayed with him that day. It was about the tenth hour.[z]

One of these two who became followers of Jesus after hearing what John had 40
said was Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter. ·The first thing[aa] Andrew did was to 41
find his brother and say to him, 'We have found the Messiah'—which means the
Mt 16:18–19.18g Mk 3:16 Christ—·and he took Simon to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, 'You are Simon 42
son of John; you are to be called Cephas'—which means Rock.

6:5;14:8 Mt 10:3 12:21 Mt 9:9 The next day, after Jesus had decided to leave for Galilee, he met Philip and 43
said, 'Follow me.' ·Philip came from the same town, Bethsaida, as Andrew and 44
Peter. ·Philip found Nathanael[bb] and said to him, 'We have found him of whom 45
1:21t;5:39q Dt 18:18e Ac 26:22+ ·7:41,42,52 Mt 13:54seq. Moses in the Law and the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph, from Nazareth.'
Nathanael said to him, 'From Nazareth? Can anything good come from that 46
place?' Philip replied, 'Come and see.' ·When Jesus saw Nathanael coming he 47
Ps 32:2 Rm 2:29 said of him,[cc] 'There, truly, is an Israelite in whom there is no deception.'
Nathanael asked, 'How do you know me?' Jesus replied, 'Before Philip came to 48
call you, I saw you under the fig tree.'[dd] ·Nathanael answered, 'Rabbi, you are the 49
6:15;12:13 Son of God,[ee] you are the king of Israel.' ·Jesus replied, 'You believe that just 50
because I said: I saw you under the fig tree. You are going to see greater things
Gn 28:10;17 Ezk 1:1 Mt 8:20h than that.' ·And then he added, 'In all truth I tell you, you will see heaven open 51
and the angels of God ascending and descending over the Son of man.'[ff]

21:2 **The wedding at Cana**

2 On the third day[a] there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee. The mother of Jesus 1
was there,[b] ·and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited. ·And they ran 2. 3
out of wine, since the wine provided for the feast had all been used, and the mother
of Jesus said to him, 'They have no wine.' ·Jesus said, 'Woman,[c] what do you want 4

from me?[d] My hour[e] has not come yet.' ·His mother said to the servants, '*Do whatever he tells you.*' ·There were six stone water jars standing there, meant for the ablutions that are customary among the Jews: each could hold twenty or thirty gallons. ·Jesus said to the servants, 'Fill the jars with water,' and they filled them to the brim. ·Then he said to them, 'Draw some out now and take it to the president of the feast.' ·They did this; the president tasted the water, and it had turned into wine. Having no idea where it came from—though the servants who had drawn the water knew—the president of the feast called the bridegroom ·and said, 'Everyone serves good wine first and the worse wine when the guests are well wined; but you have kept the best wine till now.'

Gn 41:55

Mk 7:3–4

This was the first of Jesus' signs:[f] it was at Cana in Galilee. He revealed his glory, and his disciples believed in him. ·After this he went down to Capernaum with his mother and his brothers and his disciples, but they stayed there only a few days.

Mt 26:29par
Lk 5:37par
•1:14n;4:54
Ex 4:30–31
Mt 4:13
20:17
Mt 12:46*o*
Ac 1:15s

B: THE PASSOVER

The cleansing of the Temple

When the time of the Jewish Passover was near Jesus went up to Jerusalem, ·and in the Temple he found people selling cattle and sheep and doves, and the money changers sitting there. ·Making a whip out of cord, he drove them all out of the Temple, sheep and cattle as well, scattered the money changers' coins, knocked their tables over ·and said to the dove sellers, 'Take all this out of here and stop using my Father's house as a market.' ·Then his disciples remembered the words of scripture: *I am eaten up with zeal for your house.* ·The Jews intervened and said, 'What sign can you show us that you should act like this?' ·Jesus answered,

‖Mt 21:12–13
‖Mk 11:11, 15–17
‖Lk 19:45–46
•Ne 13:7seq.
Mt 3:1–4

1:18+
Zc 14:21
Ps 69:9
4:48;6:30

s. On the expected return of Elijah, *see* Ml 3:23–24 and Mk 9:12.

t. From Dt 18:15,18e the Jews argued that the expected Messiah would be another Moses (the prophet *par excellence*, *see* Nb 12:7d) who would repeat on a grand scale the prodigies of the Exodus; *see* Jn 3:14; 6:14,30–31; 7:40,52; 13:1a; Ac 3:22–23; 7:20–44; Heb 3:1–11. *See also* Mt 16:14c.

u. Not the Bethany near Jerusalem, 11:18.

v. One of the most significant of John's symbols of Christ, cf. Rv 5:6,12; etc. It blends the idea of the 'servant' (Is 53), who takes all sin on himself and offers himself as a 'lamb of expiation' (Lv 14), with that of the Passover lamb (Ex 12:1a; *see also* Jn 19:36) in the ritual which symbolises Israel's redemption; cf. Ac 8:31–35; 1 Co 5:7; 1 P 1:18–20.

w. om. 'like a dove'.

x. This phrase sums up the whole purpose of the Messiah's coming, *see* v. 1a, namely, that humanity might be born again in the Spirit; the OT had already foretold it, *see* Ac 2:33u. The Spirit rests on him, 1:33; Is 11:2; 42:1; and so he can confer it on others (baptism in the Spirit, *see* here and Ac 1:5f), but only after his resurrection, 7:39; 16:7,8; 20:22; Ac 2. For Jesus 'came in the flesh', 1 Jn 4:2; 2 Jn 7, flesh that was corruptible, v. 14*l*, and it is only when he is 'lifted up' and has gone to the Father that his body, glorified now, is fully endowed with divine, life-giving power. Thenceforward the Spirit flows freely to the world from this body as from an inexhaustible spring: 7:37–39; 19:34r; *see* Rm 5:5e. For the water symbolism, *see* 4:1a.

y. var. 'the Son of God'.

z. About 4 pm. Throughout this first week the days are carefully noted: vv. 29, 35, 41, 43; 2:1a.

aa. var. 'early in the morning'.

bb. Perhaps the Bartholomew of the Synoptics, Mt 10:3 and par.; cf. Jn 21:2.

cc. 'of him'; var. 'of Nathanael' or 'to him'.

dd. Jesus' supernatural knowledge of persons and things is one of the features of Jn's portrait of him, *see* 2:24seq.; 4:17–19,29; 6:61,64,71; 13:1,11,27,28; 16:19,30; 18:4; 21:17.

ee. In this passage the phrase implies only that he is Messiah (like 'king of Israel'); *see* Mt 4:3d.

ff. Jacob's dream, Gn 28:10–17, will be fulfilled when the Son of man is 'lifted up', Jn 3:14i.

2 **a.** i.e. three days after the meeting with Philip and Nathanael. The opening events of the Gospel, therefore, are contained within one week of which almost every day is noticed, *see* 1:39z; it culminates in the manifestation of Christ's glory.

b. Mary is present when Jesus first manifests his glory; she is there again at the cross, 19:25–27. The two descriptions have several details in common, evidently of set purpose.

c. Unusual address from son to mother; the term is used again in 19:26, where its meaning becomes clear as an allusion to Gn 3:15,20; Mary is the new Eve, 'mother of the living'.

d. lit. 'What to me and to thee', a Semitic formula not infrequent in OT, Jg 11:12; 2 S 16:10; 19:23; 1 K 17:18; etc., and in NT, Mt 8:29; Mk 1:24; 5:7; Lk 4:34; 8:28. It is used to deprecate interference or, more strongly, to reject overtures of any kind. The shade of meaning can be deduced only from the context. Here, Jesus objects that his hour has not yet come.

e. The 'hour' of his glorification and of his return to the Father's right hand. Its approach is noted by the evangelist, 7:30; 8:20; 12:23,27; 13:1; 17:1; 19:27. This 'hour' is determined by the Father and cannot be anticipated, though the miracle worked through Mary's intervention is a prophetic symbol of it.

f. For credentials, every true prophet must have 'signs', or wonders worked in God's name, Is 7:11; *see* Jn 3:2; 6:29,30; 7:3,31; 9:16,33; of the Messiah it was expected that he would repeat the Mosaic miracles, Jn 1:21t. Jesus, therefore, works 'signs' in order to stimulate faith in his divine mission, vv. 11,23; 4:48–54; 11:15,42; 12:37; *see also* 3:11e. And indeed his 'works' show that God has sent him, 5:36; 10:25,37, that the Father is within him, 10:30p, manifesting the divine glory in power, 1:14n; it is the Father himself who does the works, 10:38; 14:10. But many refuse to believe, 3:12; 5:38–47; 6:36,64; 7:5; 8:45; 10:25; 12:37, and their sin remains, 9:41; 15:24.

Mt 26:61s 'Destroy this Temple, and in three days I will raise it up.'[g] •The Jews replied, 'It 20
1:14m has taken forty-six years to build this Temple: [h] are you going to raise it up again in
three days?' •But he was speaking of the Temple that was his body,[i] •and when 21, 22
5:39q;14:26r; 20:9c Jesus rose from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they
believed the scripture and what he had said.

Jesus in Jerusalem

During his stay in Jerusalem for the feast of the Passover many believed in his 23
1:48dd name when they saw the signs that he did, •but Jesus knew all people and did not 24
trust himself to them; •he never needed evidence about anyone; he could tell what 25
someone had in him.

The conversation with Nicodemus

7:48,50–52;12: 42–43;19:39 **3** There was one of the Pharisees called Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews, •who 1, 2
came to Jesus by night and said, 'Rabbi, we know that you have come from
2:11f God as a teacher; for no one could perform the signs that you do unless God were
with him.' •Jesus answered: 3

In all truth I tell you,
no one can see the kingdom of God[a]
Mt 18:3 Jm 1:18 1 P 1:23 without being born from above.[b]

2:19g Nicodemus said, 'How can anyone who is already old be born? Is it possible to go 4
back into the womb again and be born?' •Jesus replied: 5

In all truth I tell you,
no one can enter the kingdom of God
1:33x Mt 3:5 Tt 3:5 without being born through water and the Spirit;[c]
•Gn 6:3 •6:63 what is born of human nature is human; 6
what is born of the Spirit is spirit.
1 Co 15:44–50 Do not be surprised when I say: 7
You must be born from above.
Qo 11:5 The wind[d] blows where it pleases; 8
you can hear its sound,
but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going.
So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.

'How is that possible?' asked Nicodemus. •Jesus replied, 'You are the Teacher 9, 10
of Israel, and you do not know these things!

'In all truth I tell you, 11
3:32 we speak only about what we know[e]
and witness only to what we have seen
and yet you people reject our evidence.[f]
6:60–62 Ws 9:16–17 Ph 3:19seq. If you do not believe me 12
when I speak to you about earthly things,
how will you believe me
when I speak to you about heavenly things?[g]
1:18;20:17h Pr 30:4 Rm 10:6 Ep 4:8–9 No one has gone up to heaven[h] 13
except the one who came down from heaven,
the Son of man;
1:21t;12:32j Nb 21:4–9 Ws 16:5–7 as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, 14
so must the Son of man[i] be lifted up
so that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.[j] 15
For this is how God loved the world: 16
Gn 22 Mt 21:37par. Rm 5:8;8:32 Ep 2:4 1 Jn 4:9 he gave his only Son,
so that everyone who believes in him may not perish
but may have eternal life.

17 For God sent his Son into the world 1:1a;4:34+
not to judge the world,
but so that through him the world might be saved. 2 Co 5:19
18 No one who believes in him will be judged; 4:42n;12:47
but whoever does not believe is judged already, Ac 4:12
because that person does not believe
in the Name of God's only Son. *k*
19 And the judgement is this:
though the light has come into the world 8:12b
people have preferred
darkness to the light
because their deeds were evil.
20 And indeed, everybody who does wrong Jb 24:13–17
hates the light and avoids it,
to prevent his actions from being shown up; Ep 5:13
21 but whoever does the truth *l*
comes out into the light, Mt 5:14–16
so that what he is doing may plainly appear as done in God.'

Jesus' ministry in Judaea
John bears witness for the last time

22 After this, Jesus went with his disciples into the Judaean countryside and stayed

g. In the fourth Gospel, Jesus frequently uses terms which, in addition to their obvious meaning appreciated by the audience, possess a metaphorical and higher sense; *see* v. 20 (Temple); 3:4 (new birth); 4:15 (living water); 6:34 (bread of life); 7:35 (to depart); 11:11 (to awaken); 12:34 (to lift up); 13:9 (to wash); 13:36seq. (to depart); 14:22 (to show oneself). Consequent misapprehensions provide an opportunity for explanatory developments, *see* 3:11e.

h. Reconstruction work on the Temple began in 19 BC. This, therefore, is the Passover of AD 28 or later.

i. One of the great Johannine symbols, *see* Rv 21:22; *see also* Paul, 1 Co 12:12b. The body of the risen Christ is to be the focus of worship in spirit and truth, 4:21seq., the shrine of the Presence, 1:14, the spiritual temple from which living waters flow, 7:37–39; 19:34.

3 **a.** A phrase common in the Synoptics, Mt 4:17f, but occurring only here (and v. 5) in Jn; its Johannine equivalent is 'life' or 'eternal life'.

b. Here preferred to 'again'

c. Allusion to baptism and its necessity, *see* Rm 6:4a.

d. In Greek, as in Hebr., one word serves for both 'wind' and 'spirit'.

e. Jesus does not speak on his own initiative, 7:17–18; he declares what he has seen 'with the Father', 1:18; 3:11; 8:38; *see* 8:24g; it is the Father's words and teaching that he hands on to us, 3:34; 8:28; 12:49,50; 14:24; 17:8,14; he is himself the Word, 1:1,14. This Word is not idle: it calls all things from nothing, 1:1a, it calls the dead from the tomb, 5:28–29; 11:43,44; it gives life to the soul, 5:24; 6:63; 8:51; it confers the Spirit, the source of immortality, 1:33x; 20:22, and so makes people children of God, 1:12; 10:35. It is required only that someone should have faith in the Word, 1:12, 'dwell' in it, *see* 8:31, 'keep' it, 8:51,55; 12:47; 14:23; 15:20; 17:6, obey its command which is love, 13:34u. Nevertheless, the Word is enigmatic, 2:19g, and difficult, *see* 6:60; 7:36; it makes its way only into humble hearts. Those who hear it, therefore, respond differently, 7:43; 10:19; some believe, 4:41; 7:40seq., 46; 8:30, others go away disappointed, 6:66, in spite of the 'signs', 2:11f; this same rejected Word will judge them at the last day, 12:48.

f. The constant recourse to evidence gives Jn the form of a vast trial, *see* 5:22i. Heralded by the witness of John the Baptist, 1:7–8,15,19; 3:26; 5:33; 10:41, Jesus witnesses to the truth, 18:37, against the world, 7:7, to the Father and to himself as the messenger of the Father, 3:11,31–32; 5:26; 10:25; cf. 1 Tm 6:13; Rv 1:5; 3:14. The climax of the trial comes at Jesus' own trial before Pilate, *see* 18:28d. The Father in his turn bears witness to the Son, 5:31–37; 8:18; and also the Spirit, 15:26; *see* 14:26; Rm 8:16; 1 Jn 5:6–12. To this group of witnesses the apostles, *see* 17:20, join their witness, 15:27; 19:35; Ac 1:8k.

g. 'Believing', *see* Mt 8:10b; Rm 1:16h, consists in Jn in 'accepting' Jesus, 1:12; 5:43, in 'knowing' him, and the Father with him, 10:38; 14:7, in recognising him as the messenger and the Son, 3:16–18; 14:1,10; 17:8,21–25; 20:31, in coming to him, 6:35, in 'seeing' him, 6:36,40; 11:40; 20:8,29. Aroused by signs, 2:11f; 4:53; 20:31, and based on evidence, 3:11f; 10:25, it leads to eternal life, 3:15j; 5:25; 10:26–28m. It is expressed in the love which keeps God's word and commandments. This fundamental attitude towards himself is the criterion on which Jesus judges, 3:17–18, 36; 5:29,44–47.

h. Possibly a denial that any of the revealers renowned in contemporary Jewish literature had in fact ascended into heaven; the only true source of revelation is Jesus who descended from heaven. Possibly an allusion to the ascension, which will both show that Jesus really came from heaven and also establish the Son of man on his glorious throne.

i. The Son of man, *see* Dn 7:13k; Mt 8:20h; 12:32; 24:30, must be lifted up, at the same time on the cross and back into the glory of the Father, 1:51; 8:28; 12:32–34,32j; 13:31–32. To be saved one must 'look on' him 'lifted up' on the cross, 19:37v; Nb 21:8; Zc 12:10f, that is, believe that he is the only Son, Jn 3:18. One will then be cleansed by the water from his pierced side, 19:34; Zc 13:1. In Jn the title shows an insistence on the humanity of Jesus, although his divine origin, stressed in v. 13; 16:62, occasions actions where he anticipates eschatological prerogatives, 5:26–29; 6:27,53; 9:35.

j. var. 'so that everyone who believes in him may receive eternal life'. God, absolute master of life, Gn 9:4–5; Dt 32:39; Ps 36:10, has passed on this mastery to the Son, Jn 5:21; 10:18j; 17:2. The Son is himself life, 11:25; 14:6. He has life in himself and gives life, 5:26, to those who believe in him, 1:4,12; 4:14; 5:24; 6:35; 20:31. This life is signified by water, 4:1a, and nourished by the word, 6:35k. It is often called 'eternal', a word which denotes a quality properly divine which puts this life beyond what is corporeal, beyond time and beyond measure, cf. Gn 21:33; Ps 90:2; Ws 5:15–16; Is 40:28. It is promised to believers, *see also* 2 Co 4:18, but already given to them, Jn 3:36; 5:24; 6:40, 68; 1 Jn 2:25; it will be completed by the resurrection, 6:39–40,54; 11:25–26; *see also* 7:14; 18:8; 19:16.

k. Semitism: the 'name' is the person.

l. *See* 1 Jn 3:19g.

4:1–2 with them there and baptised. [m] ·John also was baptising at Aenon [n] near Salim, 23
where there was plenty of water, and people were going there and were being
Mt 3:6e baptised. ·For John had not yet been put in prison. 24
Lk 3:20 Now a discussion arose between some of John's disciples and a Jew about 25
purification, [o] ·so they went to John and said, 'Rabbi, the man who was with you on 26
the far side of the Jordan, the man to whom you bore witness, is baptising now,
and everyone is going to him.' ·John replied: 27

19:11 'No one can have anything
1 Co 4:7 except what is given him from heaven.
Jm 1:17

1:19–27 'You yourselves can bear me out. I said, "I am not the Christ; I am the one who has 28
Ml 3:1 been sent to go in front of him."

Mt 9:15h 'It is the bridegroom who has the bride; [p] 29
and yet the bridegroom's friend,
who stands there and listens to him,
is filled with joy at the bridegroom's voice.
This is the joy I feel, and it is complete.
He must grow greater, 30
I must grow less.
8:23 He who comes from above 31
is above all others; [q]
he who is of the earth
1 Jn 4:5 is earthly himself and speaks in an earthly way.
He who comes from heaven [r]
3:11 bears witness to the things he has seen and heard, 32
but his testimony is not accepted by anybody;
1 Jn 5:10 though anyone who does accept his testimony 33
7:28;8:26 is attesting that God is true,
1:1a since he whom God has sent 34
3:11e,f speaks God's own words,
1:32 for God gives him the Spirit without reserve. [s]
The Father loves the Son 35
and has entrusted everything to his hands. [t]
6:40 Anyone who believes in the Son has eternal life, 36
but anyone who refuses to believe in the Son will never see life:
Mt 3:7h God's retribution hangs over him.'

Jesus among the Samaritans [a]

4 When Jesus [b] heard that the Pharisees had found out that he was making and 1
baptising more disciples than John—·though in fact it was his disciples who 2
Mt 3:6e baptised, not Jesus himself—·he left Judaea and went back to Galilee. ·He had to 3, 4
Lk 9:52–55 pass through Samaria. ·On the way he came to the Samaritan town called Sychar [c] 5
Gn 33:18–20; 48:21–22g near the land that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. ·Jacob's well was there and Jesus, 6
Jos 24:32 tired by the journey, sat down by the well. It was about the sixth hour. [d] ·When a 7
19:28 Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, 'Give me something to
Lk 10:29–37; 17:11–19 drink.' ·His disciples had gone into the town to buy food. ·The Samaritan woman 8, 9
said to him, 'You are a Jew. How is it that you ask me, a Samaritan, for something
to drink?'—Jews, of course, do not associate with Samaritans. [e] ·Jesus replied to 10
her:

3:16 If you only knew what God is offering
Ac 8:20g and who it is that is saying to you,
'Give me something to drink,'
you would have been the one to ask,
and he would have given you living water.

'You have no bucket, sir,' she answered, 'and the well is deep: how do you get this living water? ·Are you a greater man than our father Jacob, who gave us this well and drank from it himself with his sons and his cattle?' ·Jesus replied: 6:31–32 8:53

> Whoever drinks this water
> will be thirsty again;
> but no one who drinks the water that I shall give him
> will ever be thirsty again: 6:35;7:37–39
> the water that I shall give him
> will become in him a spring of water, welling up for eternal life. Is 58:11

'Sir,' said the woman, 'give me some of that water, so that I may never be thirsty or come here again to draw water.' ·'Go and call your husband,' said Jesus to her, 'and come back here.' ·The woman answered, 'I have no husband.' Jesus said to her, 'You are right to say, "I have no husband"; ·for although you have had five, the one you now have is not your husband. You spoke the truth there.' ·'I see you are a prophet, sir,' said the woman. ·'Our fathers worshipped on this mountain,[f] though you say that Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship.'[g] ·Jesus said: 2:19g; 6:34 1:48dd Mt 16:14c Dt 12:5+ Jos 8:33i

> Believe me, woman, the hour is coming
> when you will worship the Father
> neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.
> You worship what you do not know; 2 K 17:27–33 Is 2:3
> we worship what we do know;
> for salvation comes from the Jews. Rm 9:4–5
> But the hour is coming—indeed is already here—
> when true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth:[h] 2:21i
> that is the kind of worshipper
> the Father seeks.
> God is spirit,
> and those who worship[i]
> must worship in spirit and truth.

The woman said to him, 'I know that Messiah—that is, Christ—is coming; and when he comes he will explain everything.' ·Jesus said, 'That is who I am, I who speak to you.' Dt 18:18–22 8:24g;9:37 Is 52:6

m. Presumably a baptism of the same nature as the Baptist's; a baptism of repentance in preparation for the coming of the kingdom.

n. A tradition locates Aenon ('the Springs') in the Jordan valley about 7 miles (12km) south of Scythopolis. Ain Farah is also a possibility.

o. About baptism probably. • a Jew'; var. 'Jews'. The text is corrupt. The reading may have been 'Jesus' or 'the disciples of Jesus'.

p. The OT uses the marriage metaphor to express the relationship between God and Israel, Ho 1:2b. Jesus applies it to himself, Mt 9:15 and par.; 22:1seq.; 25:1seq.; *see also* Paul in 2 Co 11:2; Ep 5:22seq. The Messiah's coming has brought joy to the world, v. 29, cf. 1:29,36–39; 2:1–11, consequently the marriage feast of the Lamb, Rv 19:7; 21:2, has already begun.

q. Or perhaps 'everything'.

r. add. 'is above everything'.

s. Or 'and gives the Spirit without reserve'.

t. By the Father's decree, all things are 'in the hands' (or 'power') of the Son, v. 35; 10:28,29; 13:3; 17:2; cf. 6:37–39; Mt 11:27; 28:18; on this is based the sovereignty, Jn 12:13–15; 18:36–37, that he will assume on the day of his 'lifting up', Jn 12:32j; 19:19; Ac 2:33; Ep 4:8; and on that day, the 'prince of this world' will forfeit his kingdom, Jn 12:31.

4 **a.** Meetings at a well are a feature of the patriarchal narratives: Gn 25:10seq.; 29:1seq.; Ex 2:15seq. Wells and springs play a significant part in the life and religion of the patriarchal and Exodus periods: Gn 26:14–22; Ex 15:22–27; 17:1–7. In the OT, spring water symbolises the life that God gives, especially that of the messianic age: Ps 36:8–9; Is 12:3–4; 55:1; Jr 2:13; Ezk 47:1seq. (cf. Ps 46:4 and Zc 14:8 and in the NT: Rv 7:16–17; 22:17); it symbolises also the life imparted by divine Wisdom and by the Law, Pr 13:14; Si 15:3; 24:23–29. This symbolism is carried further in the gospel narrative: living (i.e. spring) water signifies the Spirit, *see* 1:33x; 7:37–39.

b. var. 'the Lord'.

c. Either the ancient Shechem (Sichara in Aramaic) or the present village of Askar at the foot of Mt Ebal, about .75 mile (1km) from 'Jacob's Well'. The well is not mentioned in Gn.

d. Noon.

e. Some authorities omit this parenthesis. • The Jews hated the Samaritans, 8:48; Si 50:25–26; Lk 9:52–55, cf. Mt 10:5; Lk 10:33; 17:16, and attributed their origin to the importation of five gentile groups, 2 K 17:24–41, who retained some of their loyalty to their old gods; these may be symbolised by the 'five husbands' of v. 18.

f. i.e. Gerizim; on this mountain the Samaritans had built a rival to the Jerusalem Temple; it was destroyed by John Hyrcanus in 129 BC.

g. var. 'is where one ought to worship'.

h. The Spirit, 14:26r, who makes a person a new creature, 3:5, is also the inspiring principle of the new worship of God. This worship is 'in truth' because it is the only worship that meets the conditions revealed by God through Jesus.

i. var. 'those who worship him', *see* 12:20.

At this point his disciples returned and were surprised to find him speaking to a 27
woman, though none of them asked, 'What do you want from her?' or, 'What are
you talking to her about?' ·The woman put down her water jar and hurried back[j] 28
to the town to tell the people, ·'Come and see a man who has told me everything I 29
have done; could this be the Christ?' ·This brought people out of the town and 30
they made their way towards him.

Meanwhile, the disciples were urging him, 'Rabbi, do have something to eat'; 31
but he said, 'I have food to eat that you do not know about.' ·So the disciples said 32, 33
to one another, 'Has someone brought him food?' ·But Jesus said: 34

Dt 8:3b My food
1:1a;6:38–40; 17:4;19:30 is to do the will of the one who sent me,[k]
and to complete his work.
Do you not have a saying: 35
Four months and then the harvest?
Well, I tell you,
look around you, look at the fields;
Mt 9:37–38 Lk 10:2 already they are white, ready for harvest![l]
Rv 14:15 Already ·the reaper is being paid his wages, 36
already he is bringing in the grain for eternal life,
Ps 126:5–6 so that sower and reaper can rejoice together.
For here the proverb holds true: 37
one sows, another reaps;
17:18;20:21 Ac 8:14–17 I sent you to reap 38
a harvest you have not laboured for.
Others have laboured for it;
and you have come into the rewards of their labour.[m]

Many Samaritans of that town believed in him on the strength of the woman's 39
words of testimony , 'He told me everything I have done.' ·So, when the Samari- 40
tans came up to him, they begged him to stay with them. He stayed for two days,
and ·many more came to believe on the strength of the words he spoke to them; 41
and they said to the woman, 'Now we believe no longer because of what you 42
told us; we have heard him ourselves and we know that he is indeed the Saviour of
1:9–10g the world.'[n]

Jesus in Galilee

When the two days were over Jesus left for Galilee. ·He himself had declared that 43, 44
Mt 13:57par.; 16:14c 2:23 a prophet is not honoured in his own home town. ·On his arrival the Galileans 45
received him well, having seen all that he had done at Jerusalem during the festival
which they too had attended.

‖Mt 8:5–13? ‖Lk 7:1–10? **Second sign at Cana**
The cure of a royal official's son

2:1–11 He went again to Cana in Galilee, where he had changed the water into wine. And 46
there was a court official whose son was ill at Capernaum; ·hearing that Jesus had 47
arrived in Galilee from Judaea, he went and asked him to come and cure his son, as
6:30;20:29 Mt 12:38seq., par. Mt 8:10b he was at the point of death. ·Jesus said to him, 'Unless you see signs and portents 48
you will not believe!' ·'Sir,' answered the official, 'come down before my child 49
dies.' ·'Go home,' said Jesus, 'your son will live.' The man believed what Jesus 50
had said and went on his way home; ·and while he was still on the way his servants 51
met him with the news that his boy was alive. ·He asked them when the boy had 52
begun to recover. They replied, 'The fever left him yesterday at the seventh hour.'
The father realised that this was exactly the time when Jesus had said, 'Your son 53
will live'; and he and all his household believed.

2:11f This new sign, the second, Jesus performed on his return from Judaea to Galilee. 54

II: THE SECOND FEAST AT JERUSALEM
FIRST OPPOSITION TO REVELATION

The cure of a sick man at the Pool of Bethesda

1, 2 5 After this there was a Jewish festival, [a] and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ·Now
3 in Jerusalem next to the Sheep Pool there is a pool called Bethesda [b] in Hebrew,
which has five porticos; ·and under these were crowds of sick people, blind, lame,
5 paralysed. [c] ·One man there had an illness which had lasted thirty-eight years, Dt 2:14
6 and when Jesus saw him lying there and knew he had been in that condition for a
7 long time, he said, 'Do you want to be well again?' ·'Sir,' replied the sick man. 'I
have no one to put me into the pool when the water is disturbed; and while I am
8 still on the way, someone else gets down there before me.' ·Jesus said, 'Get up, Mt 9:6
9 pick up your sleeping-mat and walk around.' ·The man was cured at once, and he
picked up his mat and started to walk around.

10 Now that day happened to be the Sabbath, ·so the Jews said to the man who 9:14
had been cured, 'It is the Sabbath; you are not allowed to carry your sleeping-mat.' Ex 20:8f
11 He replied, 'But the man who cured me told me, "Pick up your mat and walk Jr 17:21–27
12 around." ' ·They asked, 'Who is the man who said to you, "Pick up your mat and
13 walk around"? ' ·The man had no idea who it was, since Jesus had disappeared,
14 as the place was crowded. ·After a while Jesus met him in the Temple and said,
'Now you are well again, do not sin any more, or something worse may happen to 8:11
15 you.' [d] ·The man went back and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had cured him. Mt 9:2b
16 It was because he did things like this on the Sabbath that the Jews began to harass 7:23;9:4
17 Jesus. [e] ·His answer to them was, 'My Father still goes on working, and I am at
18 work, too.' [f] ·But that only made the Jews even more intent on killing him, because 7:1,19,25; 11:53
not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he spoke of God as his own Father and ·2:16
so made himself God's equal. Ws 2:16 10:33
19 To this Jesus replied: [g] Ph 2:6

> In all truth I tell you,
> by himself the Son can do nothing; 8:28–29
> he can do only what he sees the Father doing:
> and whatever the Father does the Son does too.
20 For the Father loves the Son 3:35;10:17

j. Alternatively 'went away'.

k. That Jesus was sent by the Father was taught by Paul and the writers of the Synoptic Gospels, but John stresses this repeatedly, to the point of insistence, 3:17; 5:24,36–38; 8:42; 9:7; 11:42; 17:8,21–25. Jesus has his origin in the Father, 3:31; 6:46; 7:29; 8:42, comes down from the Father, 3:13; 6:38,42. He speaks the words of the Father, 3:34; 7:16; 8:26–28; 12:49–50; 14:24; 17:8,14, he does the will of the Father, 9:4; 10:32,37; 14:10. Faith, 3:12g, consists in recognising him as the envoy of the Father, 7:28–29; 17:21,25; 19:9b. Later the apostles will be similarly sent, 13:20; 17:18; 20:21, *see* 17:20n; Ac 1:26; 22:21i; Rm 1:1b.

l. A harvest of souls: the Samaritans who are coming to Jesus, v. 30, are its first-fruits.

m. The reapers are the disciples, the sowers those who have laboured before them, especially Jesus.

n. Not merely 'King of Israel' as in 1:49. This world-perspective is typical of John, *see* 1:29; 3:16; 11:52; 1 Jn 2:2. Nevertheless, 'salvation comes from the Jews', v. 22.

5 **a.** var. 'the festival'. Possibly Pentecost.

b. var. 'Bethzatha', 'Bethsaida', 'Belsetha', 'Bethesda' means 'house of mercy'. • The fifth portico divided the rectangle into two pools; here the water gathered, to be used afterwards in the Temple. Besides these two reservoirs there were other smaller pools attached to a pagan healing sanctuary.

c. Some witnesses add: 'waiting for the water to move;[4] for at intervals the angel of the Lord came down into the pool, and the water was disturbed, and the first person to enter the water after this disturbance was cured of any ailment from which he was suffering.

d. Jesus does not say that the disease was the result of sin, cf. 9:2seq. He warns the man that his cure is a divine favour that must be acknowledged by conversion, cf. Mt 9:2–8; to forget this is to risk something worse than the disease. The miracle is therefore a 'sign' of spiritual resurrection, v. 24.

e. The episode is concluded in 7:19–24. Jesus identifies his own activity with that of the sovereign Judge. Hence the anger of the Jews and the discourse by which Jesus justifies his claim, cf. Lk 6:5, and especially Mt 12:1–8.

f. Jewish theologians reconciled the fact that God 'rested' after the work of creation (the Sabbath was the human counterpart of this 'rest', Gn 2:2seq.) with his unceasing, active government of the world, by distinguishing between God's activity as Creator, which is now at an end, and his activity as judge (or 'governor'), which never ends.

g. The discourse of vv. 19–47 is one of the fullest explanations in Jn of the relationship between Son and Father, and shows in dynamic terms the divine powers of the Son. It falls into two parts: **1** The Father commits lifegiving power to the Son, vv. 19–30. **2** The Father bears witness to the Son: *a* through the Baptist, *b* through the works that the Father does through Jesus, *c* through the scriptures (Moses), vv. 31–47.

and shows him everything he himself does,
and he will show him even greater things than these,
works that will astonish you.
3:35t;11:28 Dt 32:39 1 S 2:6 2 K 5:7 Rm 4:17 — Thus, as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, 21
so the Son gives life to anyone he chooses;
for the Father judges [k] no one; 22
5:27 Ac 10:42q — he has entrusted all judgement to the Son, [i]
so that all may honour the Son 23
as they honour the Father.
Whoever refuses honour to the Son
17:6g — refuses honour to the Father who sent him.
In all truth I tell you, 24
3:11e,18;6:40 10:27;18:37 1 Jn 3:14 — whoever listens to my words,
and believes in the one who sent me,
has eternal life;
without being brought to judgement
such a person has passed from death to life.
In all truth I tell you, 25
the hour is coming—indeed it is already here—
11:25–26 — when the dead [j] will hear the voice of the Son of God,
and all who hear it will live.
For as the Father has life in himself, 26
3:35t — so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself;
Dn 7:13,22 Mt 8:20h — and, because he is the Son of man, 27
has granted him power to give judgement.
Do not be surprised at this, 28
for the hour is coming
when the dead will leave their graves
3:11e;11:43–44 — at the sound of his voice:
those who did good 29
Dn 12:2 Mt 16:27;25:46 Ac 24:15 — will come forth [k] to life;
and those who did evil will come forth to judgement.
By myself I can do nothing; 30
I can judge only as I am told to judge, [l]
and my judging is just,
4:34;6:38 — because I seek to do not my own will
but the will of him who sent me.
8:13–14 — Were I to testify on my own behalf, 31
my testimony would not be true;
but there is another witness [m] who speaks on my behalf, 32
and I know [n] that his testimony is true.
1:19–28 — You sent messengers to John, 33
Mt 11:7–11par. 8:18 — and he gave his testimony to the truth—
1:8 Si 48:1 — not that I depend on human testimony; 34
no, it is for your salvation that I mention it.
John was a lamp lit and shining 35
and for a time you were content to enjoy the light that he gave.
But my testimony is greater than John's: 36
the deeds my Father has given me to perform,
these same deeds of mine
1:1a — testify that the Father has sent me.
Besides, the Father who sent me 37
2:11f;6:44–45 — bears witness to me himself.
You have never heard his voice,
you have never seen his shape,
8:37 1 Jn 2:14 — and his word finds no home in you 38

because you do not believe
in the one whom he has sent.

39 You pore over[o] the scriptures,
believing that in them you can find eternal life;[p]
it is these scriptures that testify to me,[q] Lk 24:27
40 and yet you refuse to come to me to receive life!
41 Human glory means nothing to me. 1:14
42 Besides, I know you too well:
you have no love of God in you. 1 Jn 2:15
43 I have come in the name of my Father
and you refuse to accept me;
if someone else should come in my own name Mt 24:5;24+
you would accept him.
44 How can you believe,
since you look to each other for glory 12:43
and are not concerned Rm 2:29
with the glory that comes from the one God?[r] 1 Co 4:5
45 Do not imagine that I am going to accuse you before the Father:
you have placed your hopes on Moses,
and Moses will be the one who accuses you. Dt 31:26
46 If you really believed him 5:39q
you would believe me too, Mt 8:10b
since it was about me that he was writing; Dt 18:15
47 but if you will not believe what he wrote,
how can you believe what I say?

III: THE PASSOVER OF THE BREAD OF LIFE

FURTHER OPPOSITION TO REVELATION

The miracle of the loaves

‖Mt 14:13–21
‖Mk 6:32–44
‖Lk 9:10–17

1, 2 6 After this, Jesus crossed the Sea of Galilee—or of Tiberias— ·and a large
crowd followed him, impressed by the signs he had done in curing the sick.
3, 4 Jesus climbed the hillside and sat down there with his disciples. ·The time of the
Jewish Passover[a] was near.
5 Looking up, Jesus saw the crowds approaching and said to Philip, 'Where can Nb 11:13
6 we buy some bread for these people to eat?' ·He said this only to put Philip to the
7 test; he himself knew exactly what he was going to do. ·Philip answered, 'Two
8 hundred denarii would not buy enough to give them a little piece each.' ·One of his Nb 11:22
9 disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said, ·'Here is a small boy with five 2 K 4:42–44
10 barley loaves and two fish; but what is that among so many?' ·Jesus said to them,
'Make the people sit down.' There was plenty of grass there, and as many as five
11 thousand men sat down. ·Then Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed

h. Power over life and death is the supreme power of the judge, *see* v. 21.

i. Jesus will be the supreme judge at the Last Day, vv. 26–30; 12:48; *see* Mt 25:31–46; Rm 2:6b. This judgement will reveal the outcome of the trial, *see* 3:11f, which began with the coming of the Son, v. 25; 12:31. All people will be judged by faith, 3:12g, given or refused to Jesus, 3:18–21; 16:8–11, Saviour of all who do not reject him, 3:18; 8:15; 12:47. In fact the texts about judgement belong to different phases of editing, the eschatological judgement on the Last Day, and the judgement which has already taken place.

j. Those who are spiritually dead, though *see* vv. 28 and 29.

k. The reference is to the resurrection of the dead at the Last Day, cf. Mt 22:29–32.

l. Jesus listens to the Father.

m. The Father.

n. var. 'you know', wrongly making this verse refer to the Baptist's testimony, v. 33.

o. Alternative translation 'pore over', imperative.

p. The scriptures are the source of life because they transmit to us God's word, *see* Dt 4:1; 8:1,3; 30:15–20; 32:46seq.; Ps 119; Ba 4:1.

q. The scriptures converge on Jesus who is their fulfilment, *see* 1:45; 2:22; 5:39,46; 12:16,41; 19:28; 20:9.

r. var. 'from the Only One'.

6 **a.** The bread Jesus gives is to be the new Passover.

them to those who were sitting there; he then did the same with the fish, distributing as much as they wanted. ·When they had eaten enough he said to the disciples, 12
'Pick up the pieces left over, so that nothing is wasted.' ·So they picked them up 13
and filled twelve large baskets with scraps left over from the meal of five barley loaves. ·Seeing the sign that he had done, the people said, 'This is indeed the 14
1:21t prophet who is to come into the world.' ·Jesus, as he realised they were about to 15
18:36 come and take him by force and make him king, fled[b] back to the hills alone.
Mk 1:34m

‖Mt 14:22–23 ‖Mk 6:45–52

Jesus comes to his disciples walking on the waters

That evening the disciples went down to the shore of the sea ·and got into a boat to 16, 17
make for Capernaum on the other side of the sea. It was getting dark by now and Jesus had still not rejoined them. ·The wind was strong, and the sea was getting 18
rough. ·They had rowed three or four miles when they saw Jesus walking on the 19
sea and coming towards the boat. They were afraid, ·but he said, 'It's me. Don't be 20
afraid.'[c] ·They were ready to take him into the boat, and immediately it reached 21
the shore at the place they were making for.

The discourse in the synagogue at Capernaum[d]

Next day, the crowd that had stayed on the other side saw that only one boat had 22
been there, and that Jesus had not got into the boat with his disciples, but that the disciples had set off by themselves. ·Other boats, however, had put in from 23
Tiberias, near the place where the bread had been eaten.[e] ·When the people saw 24
that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into those boats and crossed to Capernaum to look for Jesus. ·When they found him on the other side, they said 25
to him, 'Rabbi, when did you come here?' ·Jesus answered: 26

In all truth I tell you,
you are looking for me
2:11f not because you have seen the signs
but because you had all the bread you wanted to eat.
Ex 16:20 Is 55:2 Do not work for food that goes bad, 27
but work for food that endures for eternal life,
Mt 8:20h which the Son of man will give[f] you,
for on him the Father, God himself, has set his seal.[g]

Then they said to him, 'What must we do if we are to carry out God's work?' 28
Mt 8:10b Jesus gave them this answer, 'This is carrying out God's work:[h] you must believe 29
1:21t;2:11f in the one he has sent.' ·So they said, 'What sign will you yourself do, the sight of 30
Mt 16:1–4 Mk 15:32 Lk 11:29–32 which will make us believe in you? What work will you do? ·Our fathers ate manna[i] 31
·Ex 16:1a. 4seq.,15d in the desert; as scripture says: *He gave them bread from heaven to eat.*'
Nb 11:7–9 Ps 78:24 Jesus answered them: 32

In all truth I tell you,
it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven,
it is my Father who gives you the bread from heaven,
the true bread;
for the bread of God 33
is the bread which comes down from heaven
and gives life to the world.

2:19g 'Sir,' they said, 'give us that bread always.' ·Jesus answered them: 34, 35

Pr 9:1–6 Si 24:19–22 Is 55:1–3 Jn 4:10+.14 I am[j] the bread of life.
No one who comes to me will ever hunger;
no one who believes in me will ever thirst.[k]
But, as I have told you, 36
2:11f you can see me and still you do not believe.
Everyone whom the Father gives me will come to me; 37

I will certainly not reject
anyone who comes to me,[l]
38 because I have come from heaven,
not to do my own will, 4:34;5:30; 12:27f;14:31
but to do the will of him who sent me.
39 Now the will of him who sent me 3:35t;10:28–29;17:12
is that I should lose nothing •Mt 18:14
of all that he has given to me,
but that I should raise it up on the last day.
40 It is my Father's will
that whoever sees the Son[m] and believes in him
should have eternal life, 3:16,36;5:24; 1 Jn 5:12–13
and that I should raise that person up on the last day.

41 Meanwhile the Jews were complaining[n] to each other about him, because he had
42 said, 'I am the bread that has come down from heaven.' •They were saying, 'Surely Mt 13:54–57; Mk 6:1–6
this is Jesus son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know. How can he now
43 say, "I have come down from heaven?" ' •Jesus said in reply to them, 'Stop
complaining to each other.

44 'No one can come to me
unless drawn by the Father who sent me, Mt 16:17
and I will raise that person up on the last day.
45 It is written in the prophets:
They will all be taught by God; Is 54:13; Jr 31:33seq.; 1 Jn 2:20,27
everyone who has listened to the Father,
and learnt from him,
comes to me.
46 Not that anybody has seen the Father, Ex 33:20i; Jn 1:18;7:29; 1 Jn 4:12
except him who has his being from God:
he has seen the Father.
47 In all truth I tell you,
everyone who believes has eternal life.
48 I am the bread of life.
49 Your fathers ate manna in the desert
and they are dead;

b. var. 'withdrew'.

c. om. 'Do not be afraid'.

d. Some interpreters hold that a discourse about the Eucharist (vv. 51–58: Jesus nourishing the soul with his flesh and blood, *see* vv. 51p) has been inserted into the narrative-discourse which may be summarised as follows: the Jews ask for a 'sign' like that of the manna, vv. 30–31; *see* 1:21t; Jesus tells them, 'The Father's message, which I pass on (*see* 3:11e) makes of me true bread, a nourishment that only those with faith can receive,' vv. 32seq.; the Jews do not understand, vv. 60–66; only Peter and the disciples believe, vv. 67–71. More probably vv. 31–58 may be understood as one integral sermon after the Jewish homiletic midrash tradition; v. 31 gives a scriptural text, of which the first part ('bread from heaven') is explained in vv. 32–48, and the second ('to eat') in vv. 49–58. (This doctrine is best understood in the light of Dt 8:3; Pr 8:22–24; 9:1–6; Si 24:3,17–21; Lk 11:29–32.)

e. add. 'after the Lord had given thanks'.

f. var. 'is giving'.

g. The 'seal' that Jesus received at his baptism, namely the Spirit, Mt 3:16n, who is the power of God operative in Christ's 'signs'. Cf. Mt 12:28; Ac 10:38; 2 Co 1:22; Ep 1:13; 4:30.

h. For 'works' in the Jewish sense Jesus substitutes faith in God's representative.

i. The manna of Ex 16, food given by God for the messianic people, Ps 78:23–24; 105:40, was seen by Christians as a figure of the Eucharist, 1 Co 10:3–4. Jesus uses it here as a sign of the true nourishment of faith, vv. 35–50, provided by his flesh and blood, source of eternal life, vv. 51–58; *see* Mt 4:4; 14:13–21.

j. The Greek phrase *ego eimi* recalls the name that God revealed to Moses, Ex 3:13g. *see* Jn 8:24g, but here (and frequently elsewhere) it also forms the prelude to the explanation of a parable. In this case the parable is not in words but in action: the gift of the manna and the multiplication of the loaves are explained as parables of Christ's gift of himself, the true bread. *See* vv. 41,48,51; 8:12; 10:7–11; 11:25; 15:1.

k. As Wisdom invites all people to her table, Pr 9:1seq., so does Jesus. Jn sees him as the Wisdom of God which, in the OT revelation, was already moving towards personification. *see* 1:1a; Lk 7:35; 1 Co 1:24. This perception springs from Jesus' own teaching already recorded in the Synoptics, Mt 11:19; Lk 11:31 and par., but is given here much more clearly by Jn. Thus, Jesus' origin is mysterious, 7:27–29; 8:14,19; cf. Jb 28:20–28; he alone knows the secrets of God and reveals them, Jn 3:11–12,31–32; cf. Ws 9:13–18; Ba 3:29–38; Mt 11:25–27 and par.; he is the living bread that supremely satisfies, Jn 6:35; cf. Pr 9:1–6; Si 24:19–22.

l. To 'come to' Jesus is to believe in him, as is plainly shown in Mk 2:5; 5:34; etc., where it is accepted as proof of faith without any declaration.

m. 'Seeing' the Son is recognising that he is in truth the Son sent by the Father, cf. 12:45; 14:9; 17:6g.

n. As their ancestors did in the desert, *see* Ex 16:2seq.; 17:3; Nb 11:1; 14:27; 1 Co 10:10.

but this is the bread which comes down from heaven, 50
so that a person may eat it and not die.
I am the living bread which has come down from heaven. 51
Anyone who eats this bread will live for ever;
Lk 22:19par. and the bread that I shall give
1 Co 11:24 is my flesh, [o] for the life of the world.' [p]

Then the Jews started arguing among themselves, 'How can this man give us his 52
flesh to eat?' ·Jesus replied to them: 53

In all truth I tell you,
1:14l Mt 8:20h if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of man
and drink his blood,
you have no life in you.
Anyone who does eat my flesh and drink my blood 54
has eternal life,
and I shall raise that person up on the last day.
For my flesh is real food 55
and my blood is real drink.
Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood 56
15:4–5 lives in me
and I live in that person. [q]
As the living Father sent me 57
and I draw life from the Father,
5:26 so whoever eats me will also draw life from me. [r]
This is the bread which has come down from heaven; 58
it is not like the bread our ancestors ate: [s]
they are dead,
but anyone who eats this bread will live for ever.

This is what he taught at Capernaum in the synagogue. ·After hearing it, many 59, 60
3:11e,f of his followers said, 'This is intolerable language. How could anyone accept it?'
1:48dd Jesus was aware that his followers were complaining about it and said, 'Does this 61
Mt 8:20h Jn 12:32j disturb you? ·What if you should see the Son of man ascend to where he was 62
before?

1:33x 2 Co 3:6 'It is the spirit that gives life, 63
the flesh has nothing to offer.
3:11e;12:49–50 The words I have spoken to you are spirit
and they are life. [t]

1:48dd 'But there are some of you who do not believe.' For Jesus knew from the outset 64
who did not believe and who was to betray him. ·He went on, 'This is why I told 65
you that no one could come to me except by the gift of the Father.' ·After this, 66
many of his disciples went away and accompanied him no more.

‖Mt 16:16par. **Peter's profession of faith**

Then Jesus said to the Twelve, 'What about you, do you want to go away too?' 67
1:21t Dt 8:3 Ac 7:38 Simon Peter answered, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the message of 68
eternal life, ·and we believe; we have come to know that you are the Holy One of 69
Ac 3:14i; 13:18;15:16,19 God.' [u] ·Jesus replied to them, 'Did I not choose the Twelve of you? Yet one 70
of you is a devil.' ·He meant Judas son of Simon Iscariot, since this was the man, 71
13:2,27 one of the Twelve, who was to betray him.

IV: THE FEAST OF SHELTERS

THE GREAT REJECTION

Jesus goes up to Jerusalem for the feast and teaches there

1 7 After this Jesus travelled round Galilee; he could not[a] travel round Judaea, 5:18
because the Jews were seeking to kill him. Mk 9:30par.

2, 3 As the Jewish feast of Shelters drew near, ·his brothers[b] said to him, 'Leave this Nb 29:12f
place and go to Judaea, so that your disciples,[c] too, can see the works you are Zc 14:16–19
4 doing; ·no one who wants to be publicly known acts in secret; if this is what you 2:11f
5 are doing, you should reveal yourself to the world.' ·Not even his brothers had Mt 5:15
6 faith in him. ·Jesus answered, 'For me the right time[d] has not come yet, but for 14:22
7 you any time is the right time. ·The world cannot hate you, but it does hate me, ·Mk 3:21
8 because I give evidence that its ways are evil ·Go up to the festival yourselves: I 2:4e
9 am not going[e] to this festival, because for me the time is not ripe yet.' ·Having Dn 7:22
said that, he stayed behind in Galilee. 1:10g
3:19;8:12b

10 However, after his brothers had left for the festival, he went up as well, not
11 publicly but secretly. ·At the festival the Jews were on the look-out for him:
12 'Where is he?' they said. ·There was a great deal[f] of talk about him in the crowds.
13 Some said, 'He is a good man'; others, 'No, he is leading the people astray.' ·Yet Mt 27:63
no one spoke about him openly, for fear of the Jews. 9:22;12:42; 19:38

14 When the festival was half over, Jesus went to the Temple and began to teach.[g]
15 The Jews were astonished and said, 'How did he learn to read? He has not been Mt 7:28;13: 54–57
16 educated.' ·Jesus answered them: Ac 4:13

'My teaching is not from myself: 3:11e
it comes from the one who sent me;
17 anyone who is prepared to do his will,
will know whether my teaching is from God
or whether I speak on my own account.
18 When someone speaks on his own account,
he is seeking honour for himself; 8:50
but when he is seeking the honour of the person who sent him,
then he is true Ps 92:15
and altogether without dishonesty.
19 Did not Moses give you the Law? 8:37–41
And yet not one of you keeps the Law! Rm 2:17–23

20 'Why do you want to kill me?' ·The crowd replied, 'You are mad! Who wants to 8:42,52;10:20
21, 22 kill you?' ·Jesus answered, 'One work I did, and you are all amazed at it. ·Moses Mt 12:24–27par.
5:1–9

o. add. 'that I shall give'; the phrase is, in any case, to be understood. This concise phrase recalls 1 Co 11:24, 'This is my Body which is for you,' cf. Lk 22:19. It is an allusion to the Passion.

p. Jesus is the true bread because he is God's Word, vv. 32seq., and also because he is a victim whose body and blood are offered in sacrifice for the life of the world, vv. 51–58, cf. vv. 22d. The word 'flesh' suggests a connection between Eucharist and Incarnation: the Word made flesh, 1:14, is real food.

q. 'To be in' and even more, 'to live in' are characteristic phrases of this Gospel. The relationship of interior presence thus expressed clearly depends on the nature of the persons or things at issue: one is always greater than the other, especially when it is a divine person. It is particularly remarkable if the relationship is reciprocal, as here, 10:38; 14:10,20; 15:4–7; 17:21–23; 1 Jn 2:24; 3:24; 4:12–16.

r. The life that the Father communicates to the Son passes to the faithful through the Eucharist.

s. add. 'the manna' or 'in the desert'.

t. Jesus' words about the bread from heaven reveal something divine of which only the Spirit, *see* 1:33x, can supply understanding, *see* 14:26r, and which is the source of life for all people.

u. i.e. the Messiah, God's chosen representative, consecrated and united in him uniquely, cf. 10:36; 17:19. var. 'you are the Christ, the Son of God' or 'the Son of the living God', cf. Mt 16:16.

7 **a.** var. 'he did not want to'.

b. In the wide sense: cousins, relations, *see* Mt 12:46*o*.

c. Those in Jerusalem and Judaea, cf. 2:23; 3:26; 4:1.

d. i.e. 'my hour', *see* 2:4e.

e. var. 'I am not going yet'.

f. om. 'a great deal of'.

g. 7:14–52 is made up of separate passages with a common theme—the uncertainty about Jesus' origin. **1** His human origin obscures his divine: he has never been a pupil of the rabbis, what is his knowledge worth? (vv. 14–18); the details of his childhood are known, how can he be the Messiah (vv. 25–30)? **2** His reputed birth at Nazareth shows that he is not the Christ (vv. 40–52). The theme of 'departure', too (vv. 33–36, *see* 8:21–23) is connected with that of divine origin: the man Jesus departs for the place where (in his divine nature, *see* vv. 29 and 34) he has always been. • Vv. 19–24 are the conclusion of 5:1–16 and are alien to the present context.

Gn 17:10d Ac 7:8 Rm 4:11 ordered you to practise circumcision—not that it began with him, it goes back to the patriarchs—and you circumcise on the Sabbath. ·Now if someone can be 23
Mt 12:1–5, 11–12 Lk 13:15;14:5 circumcised on the Sabbath so that the Law of Moses is not broken, why are you angry with me for making someone completely healthy on a Sabbath? [h] ·Do not 24
·Is 11:3 Zc 7:9 keep judging according to appearances; let your judgement be according to what is right.'

The people discuss the origin of the Messiah

Meanwhile some of the people of Jerusalem were saying, 'Isn't this the man they 25
want to kill? ·And here he is, speaking openly, and they have nothing to say to 26
him! Can it be true the authorities [i] have recognised that he is the Christ? ·Yet we 27
all know where he comes from, but when the Christ appears no one will know where he comes from.' [j]

Then, as Jesus was teaching in the Temple, he cried out: 28

6:42;8:19; 19:9+ Mt 11:27+ Heb 7:3 8:26 6:46;8:55 1:1a
You know me and you know where I came from.
Yet I have not come of my own accord:
but he who sent me is true; [k]
You do not know him,
but I know him 29
because I have my being from him [l]
and it was he who sent me.

7:44 Lk 4:29seq.; 2:4e;8:20 They wanted to arrest him then, but because his hour had not yet come no one 30
laid a hand on him.

Jesus foretells his approaching departure

There were many people in the crowds, however, who believed in him; they were 31
2:11f saying, 'When the Christ comes, will he give more signs than this man has?'
Hearing that talk like this about him was spreading among the people, the 32
Pharisees [m] sent the Temple guards to arrest him.

Then Jesus said: 33

1:1a;16:16k 8:21 Dt 4:29 Pr 1:28 Is 55:6 Ho 5:6+
For a short time I am with you still;
then I shall go back to the one who sent me.
You will look for me and will not find me; [n] 34
where I am
you cannot come.

So the Jews said to one another, 'Where is he intending to go that we shall not be 35
able to find him? Is he intending to go abroad to the people who are dispersed among the Greeks and to teach the Greeks? ·What does he mean when he says: 36

2:19g
"You will look for me and will not find me;
where I am
you cannot come?" '

The promise of living water

Pr 1:20d On the last day, the great day of the festival, [o] Jesus stood and cried out: 37

4:1a Is 55:1,3
'Let anyone who is thirsty come to me! [p]
Let anyone who believes in me come and drink! 38

2:21+;19:34 Is 44:3 1 Co 10:4+ 1:33x As scripture says, "From his heart [q] shall flow streams of living water." ' [r]
He was speaking of the Spirit which those who believed in him were to receive; 39
for there was no Spirit as yet [s] because Jesus had not yet been glorified.

Fresh discussions on the origin of the Messiah

1:21t Some of the crowd who had been listening said, 'He is indeed the prophet,' ·and 40, 41

some said, 'He is the Christ,' but others said, 'Would the Christ come from Galilee?
42 Does not scripture say that the Christ must be descended from David and come 2 S 7:1a Mi 5:1a
43 from Bethlehem,[j] the village where David was?' ·So the people could not agree Mt 2:5seq.; 9:27m
44 about him. ·Some wanted to arrest him, but no one actually laid a hand on him. Rm 1:3
45 The guards went back to the chief priests and Pharisees who said to them, 'Why ·3:11f
46 haven't you brought him?' ·The guards replied, 'No one has ever spoken like this ·7:30
47, 48 man.' ·'So,' the Pharisees answered, 'you, too, have been led astray? ·Have any of ·Mt 13:54–56
49 the authorities come to believe in him? Any of the Pharisees? ·This rabble knows
50 nothing about the Law—they are damned.' ·One of them, Nicodemus—the same 3:1+
51 man who had come to Jesus earlier—said to them, ·'But surely our Law does not Dt 1:16 seq.;17:4
allow us to pass judgement on anyone without first giving him a hearing and Ac 5:35
52 discovering what he is doing?' ·To this they answered, 'Are you a Galilean too?
Go into the matter, and see for yourself: prophets do not arise in Galilee.' 5:39 ·1:46 Mt 16:14c

The adulterous woman [a]

53 They all went home,
1 8 and Jesus went to the Mount of Olives.
2 At daybreak he appeared in the Temple again; and as all the people came to Lk 21:37–38
him, he sat down and began to teach them.
3 The scribes and Pharisees brought a woman along who had been caught commit- Lk 7:37–50
4 ting adultery; and making her stand there in the middle ·they said to Jesus, 'Master, ·Lv 20:10 Dt 22:22–24
5 this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery, ·and in the Law Ezk 16:38,40
Moses has ordered us to stone women of this kind. What have you got to say?'
6 They asked him this as a test, looking for an accusation to use against him. But Mt 12:10 Lk 20:20
7 Jesus bent down and started writing on the ground with his finger.[a] ·As they
persisted with their question, he straightened up and said, 'Let the one among you Dt 17:7 Mt 7:1–5
8 who is guiltless be the first to throw a stone at her.' ·Then he bent down and
9 continued writing on the ground. ·When they heard this they went away one by
one, beginning with the eldest, until the last one had gone and Jesus was left alone
10 with the woman, who remained in the middle. ·Jesus again straightened up and
11 said, 'Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?' ·'No one, sir,' she
replied. 'Neither do I condemn you,' said Jesus. 'Go away, and from this moment 5:14 Ps 103:8,13–14 Ezk 18:32;33:11 Ex 13:21 Ps 27:1;36:9f; 89:15 Ws 7:26j Is 9:1;49:6;60:19 1 Jn 1:5
sin no more.'

Jesus, the light of the world [b]

12 When Jesus spoke to the people again, he said:

h. The argument is rabbinic in type: circumcision was reckoned the 'healing' of one member; if this 'healing' of one member was allowed on the Sabbath, how much more the healing of the whole person?

i. var. 'the chief priests' or 'the elders' or 'they'.

j. They knew that the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem, v. 42; Mt 2:5seq., but it was commonly believed that he would stay hidden in some secret place, cf. Mt 24:26, (in heaven, according to some) until the day of his coming. This belief was vindicated, though his audience did not recognise it, by Jesus' heavenly origin.

k. lit. 'he who sent me is true' (var. 'truthful').

l. var. 'because I am at his side'.

m. var. 'Pharisees and chief priests', 'They and the chief priests', 'Chief priests and Pharisees'.

n. Jesus, like God himself, must be sought while there is still time to find him. But the Jews will let his 'time' slip by and instead of coming to them, salvation will come to the gentiles (the 'Greeks'), *see* 12:20–21,35m; 19:37v.

o. The day, the 7th or perhaps the 8th, celebrating the end of the festival.

p. om. 'to me'. • Jesus' invitation resembles that of divine Wisdom, *see* 6:35j.

q. From Jesus himself, according to the oldest tradition, though another tradition joins 'anyone who believes in me' with 'from his heart', making the 'streams' flow from the believer.

r. The liturgy of the feast of Shelters ('Tabernacles'), which formed the background of these words, included prayers for rain, the procession to Siloam and the gathering of 'living water', which was then carried back to the Temple for the lustrations. These rites commemorated the Mosaic water-miracle, Ex 17:1–7; cf. 1 Co 10:4, and included readings from biblical passages foretelling lifegiving water for Zion, Ezk 47:1seq.; Zc 14:8; *see* Jn 4:1a.

s. var. 'the Spirit had not yet been given'.

t. That Jesus was born at Bethlehem was known only to those nearest him.

u. The author of this passage, 7:53–8:11, is not John: it is omitted by the oldest witnesses (MSS, versions, Fathers) and found elsewhere in others; moreover, its style is that of the Synoptics and the author was possibly Luke, *see* Lk 21:38h. Nevertheless, the passage was accepted in the canon and there are no grounds for regarding it as unhistorical.

8 **a.** The significance of the gesture is debated.

b. The development in the NT of the light-darkness theme can be traced fairly clearly along three main lines: 1 Just as the sun lights people on their way, so anything that shows them the way to God is 'light': of old it was the Law, the Wisdom and Word of God, Ps 119:105; Pr 4:18–19; 6:23; Qo 2:13; cf. Rm 2:19; now it is Jesus, Jn 1:9; 9:1–39; 12:35; 1 Jn 2:8–11; *see also* 2 Co 4:6, who is compared with the bright cloud that led the Israelites, Jn 8:12; *see also* Ex 13:21seq.; Ws 18:3seq.; it is also his followers from whom

I am the light of the world;
anyone who follows me will not be walking in the dark
but will have the light of life.

A discussion on the testimony of Jesus to himself

At this the Pharisees said to him, 'You are testifying on your own behalf; your testimony is not true.' 13
•Jesus replied: 14

3:11f;5:31 Even though I am testifying on my own behalf,
my testimony is still true,
because I know
14:28 where I have come from and where I am going;
but you do not know
where I come from or where I am going. [c]
7:24 Rm 7:5 You judge by human standards; [d] 15
12:47 I judge [e] no one,
but if I judge, 16
5:30;8:29 my judgement will be true,
because I am not alone:
10:30p the one who sent me is with me;
Nb 35:30 Dt 17:6;19:15 and in your Law it is written 17
that the testimony of two witnesses is true.
I testify on my own behalf, 18
5:32,37 but the Father who sent me testifies on my behalf, too.

14:9 They asked him, 'Where is your Father then?' Jesus answered: 19

12:45 You do not know me, nor do you know my Father;
=14:7 if you did know me, you would know my Father as well.

Mk 12:41c •7:30 2:4e He spoke these words in the Treasury, while teaching in the Temple. No one arrested him, because his hour had not yet come. 20
Again he said to them: 21

7:34n I am going away; you will look for me
13:33,36 Dt 24:16 Ezk 18:20;33: 12–20 and you will die in your sin. [f]
Where I am going, you cannot come.

So the Jews said to one another, 'Is he going to kill himself, that he says, "Where I am going, you cannot come?" ' 22
•Jesus went on: 23

You are from below;
I am from above.
1:10g You are of this world;
3:31;17:14 I am not of this world.
I have told you already: You will die in your sins. 24
1:1a;6:35+; 8:28+ Ex 3:14+ Is 43:11 Yes, if you do not believe that I am He, [g]
you will die in your sins.

So they said to him, 'Who are you?' Jesus answered: 25

What I have told you from the outset. [h]
About you I have much to say 26
and much to judge;
7:28 but the one who sent me is true,
12:48–50 and what I declare to the world
I have learnt from him.

They did not recognise that he was talking to them about the Father. •So Jesus said: 27, 28

When you have lifted up the Son of man, 12:32j
then you will know that I am He[i] Mt 8:20h
and that I do nothing of my own accord. 8:24g
What I say
is what the Father has taught me; 3:11e
29 he who sent me is with me, 10:30p
and has not left me to myself, 16:32
for I always do what pleases him.

30 As he was saying this, many came to believe in him.

Jesus and Abraham

31 To the Jews who believed in him Jesus said:

If you make my word your home 3:11e
you will indeed be my disciples;
32 you will come to know the truth,[j]
and the truth will set you free. 2 Co 3:17

33 They answered, 'We are descended from Abraham and we have never been the
34 slaves of anyone; what do you mean, "You will be set free?" ' •Jesus replied:

In all truth I tell you,
everyone who commits sin is a slave.[k] 2:19g
Rm 6:17–19
35 Now a slave has no permanent standing in the household, 2 P 2:19j
but a son belongs to it for ever. •14:2–3
Gn 21:10
36 So if the Son sets you free, Jr 2:14seq.
you will indeed be free. Ga 4:30seq.
Heb 3:5–6
37 I know that you are descended from Abraham; Mt 21:33–46
but you want to kill me
because my word finds no place in you. 5:38

the light of God's own perfections shines out, Mt 5:14–16; Lk 8:16; Rv 21:24. **2** Light is symbolic of life, contentment, and joy, as darkness is of death, unhappiness, and misery, Jb 30:26; Is 45:7; hence, enslavement is darkness, the deliverance and salvation of the messianic age is light, Is 8:22–9:1; Mt 4:16; Lk 1:79; Rm 13:11–12. This light shines even on the gentile nations, Lk 2:32; Ac 13:47, through Jesus who is the Light, Jn (*see* texts just quoted); Ep 5:14; it is at its brightest in the kingdom of Heaven, Mt 8:12; 22:13; 25:30; Rv 22:5. **3** The 'light-darkness' contrast came to be used for the mutually hostile worlds of Good and Evil (*see also* the Essene texts of Qumran). Thus in the NT there are two 'empires', Christ the lord of one, Satan of the other, Ac 26:18; 2 Co 6:14–15; Col 1:12–13; 1 P 2:9, each striving for the mastery, Jn 13:29–30; Lk 22:53. People are either 'children of light' or 'children of darkness', 12:36; Lk 16:8; Ep 5:7–9; 1 Th 5:5, according as their life is ruled by the light (Christ) or by darkness (Satan), 1 Th 5:4seq.; 1 Jn 1:6–7; 2:9–10, and what they do shows which they are, Rm 13:12–14; Ep 5.8–11. The coming of the Light makes clear this distinction ('judgement') of one person from another, because this coming forces everyone to declare himself either for or against, 3:19–21; 7:7; 9:39; 12:46; *see* Ep 5:12–13. The perspective remains optimistic: darkness will one day disappear before light, 1:5; Rm 13:12; 1 Jn 2:8.

c. It is enough for the Son to be his own witness since he alone knows the mystery of his heavenly origin, cf. Mt 11:27 and par.

d. The Jews judge by what they can see: a man like themselves; 'in that flesh they fail to see the glory of God's Son shining' (St Augustine).

e. In the semitic sense of the word, i.e. 'condemn'.

f. By rejecting Jesus, the Jews are heading for irremediable loss; they are sinning against the truth, vv. 40,45seq. It is the sin against the Spirit, Mt 12:31 and par.; *see* Jn 7:34n.

g. 'I Am' or 'I am He' is the divine name revealed to Moses, Ex 3:13g, 14, it means that the God of Israel is unique, the true God, Dt 32:39. When Jesus appropriates this name, he is claiming to be the one incomparable Saviour, the goal of Israel's faith and hope; *see* vv. 28,58; 13:19 *and also* 6:35; 18:5,8.

h. A very obscure text; it is variously rendered 'Why, in the first place, am I speaking to you?'; 'Why should I speak to you at all?'; 'What I have been telling you from the beginning'; 'Precisely what I am telling you'. Our translation resembles this last but preserves the idea of temporal priority which leads up to the following 'then' of v. 28, thus: as it is, the Jews have the opportunity of knowing Jesus from his words; afterwards, when they know him as one 'lifted up' it will be too late.

i. In the OT the formula 'you shall know that I am', or 'that I am Yahweh', is a declaration of God's power, *see* v. 24g, or else heralds some notable intervention of God in history, *see* Ex 10:2; Is 43:10 (strikingly like John); Ezk 6:7,10,13seq. This verse foretells the glorification of Jesus through his 'lifting up' on the cross, 12:32h, which is to be the reply to the Jews' question (v. 25) but will be also the condemnation of their unbelief; *see* 19:37; Mt 26:64 and par.; 1 Co 2:8; Rv 1:7.

j. Jesus is Truth, the total reality of the gift of the Father and of his saving plan, 14:6; 17:17; *see* Rv 3:7; 19:11. In him the promises of the Law, 1:17, have been realised. He proclaims the words he has received from the Father who sent him, 3:11e; 8:26,40. Thus he reveals to us the Father whom he knows, 1:18, and invites us to believe in him, 3:12g; 8:45–47. He is the true light, 1:9, and can say 'I am the true bread,' etc., 6:35. After his glorification, 12:32j, the Spirit of truth, 14:17j, will guide believers to all truth, 16:13. The believer, who 'is of the truth', 18:37; 1 Jn 3:19g; *see also* 2 Th 2:10–12, is sanctified by the truth, 17:17–19; he remains in it, Jn 8:31; walks in it, 2 Jn 4; 3 Jn 4; accomplishes it; Jn 3:21; co-operates with it, 3 Jn 8. He adores the Father in spirit and in truth, 4:23–24. He is saved from lies, v. 44*o*.

k. add. 'of sin'.

What I speak of 38
3:11e is what I have seen at my Father's side,
and you too put into action
the lessons you have learnt from your father.

They repeated, 'Our father is Abraham.' Jesus said to them: 39

If you are Abraham's children,
do as Abraham did. [l]
As it is, you want to kill me, 40
a man who has told you the truth
as I have learnt it from God;
Gn 15:6;17:1 seq. that is not what Abraham did.
You are doing your father's work. 41

Ex 4:22 Dt 32:6 They replied, 'We were not born illegitimate, [m] the only father we have is God.' 42
•Jesus answered:

Mk 1:38n 1 Jn 5:1 If God were your father, you would love me,
since I have my origin in God and have come from him;
I did not come of my own accord,
1:1a but he sent me.
Why do you not understand what I say? 43
Because you cannot bear to listen to my words. [n]
Mt 4:1c 1 Jn 3:8–15 You are from your father, the devil, 44
and you prefer to do
what your father wants.
Gn 2:17;3:1 seq. Ws 1:13;2:24 Rm 5:12 He was a murderer from the start;
he was never grounded [o] in the truth;
there is no truth in him at all.
When he lies
he is speaking true to his nature,
because he is a liar, and the father of lies. [p]
But it is because I speak the truth 45
that you do not believe me.
Heb 9:14–28 1 P 1:19 1 Jn 3:5 Can any of you convict me of sin? [q] 46
If I speak the truth, why do you not believe me?
Whoever comes from God 47
listens to the words of God;
the reason why you do not listen
10:26m 1 Jn 4:6 is that you are not from God.

4:9e; 7:20+ The Jews replied, 'Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and possessed by a devil?' Jesus answered: 48

I am not possessed; 49
but I honour my Father,
and you deny me honour.
7:18 I do not seek my own glory; 50
there is someone who does seek it and is the judge of it.
In all truth I tell you, 51
whoever keeps my word
3:11f;5:25–28;11:25 will never see death.

7:20+ The Jews said, 'Now we know that you are possessed. Abraham is dead, and the 52
prophets are dead, and yet you say, "Whoever keeps my word will never know the
4:12 taste of death." •Are you greater than our father Abraham, who is dead? The 53
prophets are dead too. Who are you claiming to be?' •Jesus answered: 54

If I were to seek my own glory
my glory would be worth nothing;
in fact, my glory is conferred by the Father,
by the one of whom you say, 'He is our God,'
55 although you do not know him.
But I know him, 7:29
and if I were to say, 'I do not know him,'
I should be a liar, as you yourselves are.
But I do know him, and I keep his word.
56 Your father Abraham rejoiced 5:39q
to think that he would see my Day; *r* Gn 17:17
he saw it and was glad. *s* Mt 13:17seq.
Lk 17:22

57, 58 The Jews then said, 'You are not fifty yet, and you have seen Abraham!' ·Jesus replied:

In all truth I tell you,
before Abraham ever was, 1:1a
I am. 8:24g

59 At this they picked up stones to throw at him; *t* but Jesus hid himself and left the Temple. 10:31,39;11:8 Lk 4:29seq.

The cure of the man born blind

1, 2 9 As he went along, he saw a man who had been blind from birth. ·His disciples asked him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he should have 5:14e
3 been born blind?' ·'Neither he nor his parents sinned,' Jesus answered, 'he was Ex 20:5 Lk 13:2
born blind so that the works of God *a* might be revealed in him.

4 'As long as day lasts 4:34;11:9–10; 12:35–36
we must *b* carry out the work of the one who sent me;
the night will soon be here when no one can work. *c*
5 As long as I am in the world
I am the light of the world.' *d* 8:12b,23

6 Having said this, he spat on the ground, made a paste with the spittle, put this
7 over the eyes of the blind man, ·and said to him, 'Go and wash in the Pool of Siloam *e* (the name means 'one who has been sent'). So he went off and washed and Is 8:6
came back able to see.
8 His neighbours and the people who used to see him before (for he was a beggar)
9 said, 'Isn't this the man who used to sit and beg?' ·Some said, 'Yes, it is the same

l. var. 'If you were Abraham's children, you would'. Unlike Isaac, the Jews are not 'children' of Abraham because they do not believe; they are merely of his 'race' (like the slave-girl's son, Ishmael, who was cast out, *see* vv. 34–35). On this, *see* Ga 4:30seq. Nevertheless they are not in this sense children of God because they do not believe in Jesus, 1:12j; 3:7–9.

m. The prophets call religious infidelity 'prostitution', *see* Ho 1:2b; here, therefore, the Jews are objecting that they have been faithful to God's covenant.

n. Because they have the devil for master, and he is hostile to the truth. Cf. 18:37.

o. var. 'he has never taken his stand upon the truth'.

p. Or 'father of the liar'. Lying, the opposite of the Word, 1:1a, and of truth, v. 31, is linked to evil, cf. Rm 1:25; 2 Th 2:9–12. The Jews who refuse the truth of Jesus, v. 40, cf. 1 P 2:22, submit to the chief of all the enemies of this truth, *see* Jn 12:31f; 13:2e; 1 Jn 2:14.

q. i.e. of betraying the commission entrusted to him by God.

r. i.e. Jesus' coming. Another example of an expression reserved for God in the OT (the 'Day of Yahweh', *see* Am 5:18m) but adopted for himself by Jesus.

s. Abraham saw Jesus' 'Day' (as Isaiah 'saw his glory', 12:41), but 'from a distance', cf. Nb 24:17; Heb 11:13, because he saw it in the birth of the promised Isaac (at which Abraham 'laughed', Gn 17:17f) which was an event prophetic of Jesus' birth. Jesus claims to be the ultimate fulfilment of this promise made to Abraham; he is Isaac according to the spirit.

t. The claim of Jesus to live on the divine plane (v. 58) is, for the Jews, blasphemy, for which the penalty is stoning, Lv 24:16.

9 **a.** i.e. 'the signs', *see* 2:11f.

b. var. 'I must'.

c. The life of Jesus is compared to a day's work, 5:17, ending with the night of death, cf. Lk 13:32.

d. Before the miracle takes place its significance is pointed out, *see* v. 37.

e. The water drawn from here during the feast of Shelters ('Tabernacles') symbolised the blessings of the messianic age. Henceforth, the source of these blessings is Jesus himself. • 'The envoy', or 'the one sent', is one of Jn's favourite names for Jesus, *see* 3:17;4:34; 5:36; etc.

one.' Others said, 'No, but he looks just like him.' The man himself said, 'Yes, I am the one.' •So they said to him, 'Then how is it that your eyes were opened?' 10
He answered, 'The man called Jesus made a paste, daubed my eyes with it and 11
said to me, "Go off and wash at Siloam"; so I went, and when I washed I gained my sight.' •They asked, 'Where is he?' He answered, 'I don't know.' 12

They brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind. •It had been a 13, 14
Mt 12:10seq., par. Lk 13:10seq.; 14:1seq. Sabbath day when Jesus made the paste[e] and opened the man's eyes, •so when the 15
Pharisees asked him how he had gained his sight, he said, 'He put a paste on my eyes, and I washed, and I can see.' •Then some of the Pharisees said, 'That man 16
cannot be from God: he does not keep the Sabbath.' Others said, 'How can a
3:2 sinner produce signs like this?' And there was division among them. •So they spoke 17
to the blind man again, 'What have you to say about him yourself, now that he has
Mt 16:14c opened your eyes?' The man answered, 'He is a prophet.'

However, the Jews would not believe that the man had been blind[g] without first 18
sending for the parents of the man who had gained his sight and •asking them, 'Is 19
this man really the son of yours who you say was born blind? If so, how is it that he is now able to see?' •His parents answered, 'We know he is our son and we know 20
he was born blind, •but how he can see, we don't know, nor who opened his eyes. 21
Ask him.[h] He is old enough: let him speak for himself.' •His parents spoke like 22
7:13+ •16:2 this out of fear of the Jews, who had already agreed to ban from the synagogue anyone who should acknowledge Jesus as the Christ. •This was why his parents 23
said, 'He is old enough; ask him.'

So the Jews sent for the man again and said to him, 'Give glory to God![i] We are 24
satisfied that this man is a sinner.' •The man answered, 'Whether he is a sinner I 25
don't know; all I know is that I was blind and now I can see.' •They said to him, 26
'What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes? •He replied, 'I have told you 27
once and you wouldn't listen. Why do you want to hear it all again? Do you want to become his disciples yourselves?' •At this they hurled abuse at him, 'It is you who 28
are his disciple, we are disciples of Moses: •we know that God spoke to Moses, but 29
as for this man, we don't know where he comes from.' •The man replied, 'That is 30
just what is so amazing! You don't know where he comes from and he has opened
Ps 34:15–16 Pr 15:29 Is 1:15 my eyes! •We know that God doesn't listen to sinners, but God does listen to men 31
who are devout and do his will. •Ever since the world began it is unheard of for 32
anyone to open the eyes of a man who was born blind;[j] •if this man were not from 33
God, he wouldn't have been able to do anything.' •They retorted, 'Are you trying 34
3:2 7:49 to teach us, and you a sinner through and through ever since you were born!' And they ejected him.

Jesus heard they had ejected him, and when he found him he said to him, 'Do 35
Mt 8:20h you believe in the Son of man?' •'Sir,' the man replied, 'tell me who he is so that 36
4:26;9:5d I may believe in him.' •Jesus said, 'You have seen him; he is speaking to you.'[k] 37
Mt 8:10b The man said, 'Lord, I believe,' and worshipped him. 38

Jesus said: 39

8:12b 1:1a Mt 13:13
It is for judgement
that I have come into this world,
so that those without sight may see
and those with sight[l] may become blind.

Mt 15:14par. Hearing this, some Pharisees who were present said to him, 'So we are blind, are 40
we?' •Jesus replied: 41

3:36;12:48 Mt 23:16seq.
If you were blind,
you would not be guilty,
but since you say, 'We can see,'
your guilt remains.

The good shepherd

Jr 23:1–3
Ezk 34:1seq..1a

1 **10** 'In all truth I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold through the
2 gate, but climbs in some other way, is a thief and a bandit. ·He who enters
3 through the gate is the shepherd of the flock; ·the gatekeeper lets him in, the sheep
4 hear his voice, one by one [a] he calls his own sheep and leads them out. ·When he 21:16
has brought out all those that are his, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow Mi 2:13
5 because they know his voice. ·They will never follow a stranger, but will run away
from him because they do not recognise the voice of strangers.'
6 Jesus told them [b] this parable but they failed to understand what he was saying
to them.
7 So Jesus spoke to them again:

In all truth I tell you,
I am the gate of the sheepfold. [c]
8 All who have come [d] before me
are thieves and bandits,
but the sheep took no notice of them.
9 I am the gate.
Anyone who enters through me will be safe: 3:17
such a one will go in and out Ps 23:1–3
and will find pasture. Is 49:9–10
Ezk 34:14
10 The thief comes
only to steal and kill and destroy.
I have come
so that they may have life [e]
and have it to the full.
11 I am the good shepherd: [f] Ezk 34:1a
the good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep. Heb 13:20
1 P 5:4
12 The hired man, since he is not the shepherd Rv 7:17
and the sheep do not belong to him,
abandons the sheep Jr 23:1seq.
as soon as he sees a wolf coming, and runs away, Ezk 34:3–8
Zc 11:17
and then the wolf attacks and scatters the sheep;
13 he runs away because he is only a hired man
and has no concern for the sheep.
14 I am the good shepherd;
I know my own
and my own know me, [g]
15 just as the Father knows me 15:9
and I know the Father; Mt 11:25–27par.
and I lay down my life for my sheep.

f. This was work and forbidden on the Sabbath.

g. var. 'that the man had been blind and had gained his sight'.

h. om. 'ask him'.

i. A biblical phrase putting a person under oath to tell the truth and to make reparation for his insult to the divine majesty, *see* Jos 7:19; 1 S 6:5.

j. There are many points of resemblance between ch. 9 and 3:1–21, and it is probable that to the evangelist's mind the cure of the man born blind is a symbol of the new birth through water and the Spirit, 3:3–7.

k. om. all v. 38 and first two words of v. 39.

l. The complacent who trust to their own 'light', *see* vv. 24,29,34, as opposed to the humble, typified by the blind man, cf. Dt 29:3; Is 6:9seq; Jr 5:21; Ezk 12:2.

10 **a.** Or possibly 'each by its name'.

b. i.e. to the Pharisees, wilfully blind, 9:40. They fail to realise that the parable refers to them.

c. The gate that gives access to the sheep. Only those who 'go in' by Jesus have authority to guide the flock, 21:15–17.

d. om. 'before me'. The reference is probably to the Pharisees, cf. Mt 23:1–36; Lk 11:39–52 and Mt 9:36; Mk 6:34.

e. Eternal life. Jesus gives it. 3:16,36; 5:40; 6:33,35,48,51; 14:6; 20:31, with abounding generosity, *see* Mt 25:29; Lk 6:38; Rv 7:17.

f. God, himself the shepherd of his people, was to choose a shepherd for them in the messianic age, cf. Ezk 34:1a. Jesus' assertion that he is the good shepherd is a claim to messiahship.

g. In biblical language, *see* Ho 2:22v, 'knowledge' is not merely the conclusion of an intellectual process, but the fruit of an 'experience', a personal contact (*see* Jn 10:14–15 and 14:20; 17:21–22; cf. 14:17; 17:3; 2 Jn 1–2); when it matures, it is love, *see* Ho 6:6c and 1 Jn 1:3b.

5:25;11:52; 18:37;Is 56:8 Jr 23:3;31:10 Ezk 34:23; 37:22;Mi 2:13 Ep 2:14seq.; 4:4seq.

And there are other sheep I have 16
that are not of this fold,
and I must lead these too. [h]
They too will listen to my voice,
and there will be only one flock, [i]
one shepherd.

3:35;8:29 Ph 2:8–9 Heb 10:10

The Father loves me, 17
because I lay down my life
in order to take it up again.
No one takes it from me; 18
I lay it down of my own free will, [j]
and as I have power to lay it down,
so I have power to take it up again;
and this is the command I have received from my Father.

3:11f 7:20+ 3:2;9:30–33

These words caused a fresh division among the Jews. ·Many said, 'He is possessed, he is raving; why do you listen to him?' ·Others said, 'These are not the words of a man possessed by a devil: could a devil open the eyes of the blind?' 19, 20 21

V: THE FEAST OF DEDICATION
THE DECISION TO KILL JESUS

Jesus claims to be the Son of God

1 M 4:36h Ac 3:11d 8:25 Lk 22:67

It was the time of the feast of Dedication in Jerusalem. It was winter, ·and Jesus was in the Temple walking up and down in the Portico of Solomon. ·The Jews gathered round him and said, 'How much longer are you going to keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us openly.' [k] ·Jesus replied: 22, 23 24 25

2:11f;5:36

I have told you, [l] but you do not believe.
The works I do in my Father's name are my witness;
but you do not believe, 26
10:3–4,14 Pr 28:5

because you are no sheep of mine. [m]

1 Co 2:14

The sheep that belong to me listen to my voice; 27
I know them and they follow me.

10:10 Jr 23:4 Rm 8:33–39

I give them eternal life; 28
they will never be lost
and no one will ever steal them from my hand.

3:35t

The Father, for what he has given me, is greater than anyone, [n] 29

1:1 Dt 32:39;33:3 Is 43:13;51:16 Ws 3:1

and no one can steal [o] anything from the Father's hand.
The Father and I are one. [p] 30

8:59

The Jews fetched stones to stone him, ·so Jesus said to them, 'I have shown you many good works from my Father; for which of these are you stoning me?' ·The Jews answered him, 'We are stoning you, not for doing a good work, but for blasphemy; though you are only a man, you claim to be God.' ·Jesus answered: 31, 32 33 34

19:7 Lk 22:70–71 ·5:18 Rm 3:19f Ps 82:6

Is it not written in your Law:
I said, you are gods? [q]
So it uses the word 'gods' 35
1:12–13

of those people to whom the word of God was addressed
—and scripture cannot be set aside.

1:1a Jr 1:5

Yet to someone whom the Father has consecrated 36
and sent into the world you say,
'You are blaspheming'
because I said, 'I am Son of God.'

37 If I am not doing my Father's work,
there is no need to believe me;
38 but if I am doing it,
then even if you refuse to believe in me,
at least believe in the work I do; 2:11f
then you will know for certain
that the Father is in me and I am in the Father. 14:11;17:21

39 They again wanted[r] to arrest him then, but he eluded their clutches. 8:59

Jesus withdraws to the other side of the Jordan

40 He went back again to the far side of the Jordan to the district where John had 1:28
41 been baptising at first and he stayed there. ·Many people who came to him said, Mt 19:1 Mk 10:1
42 'John gave no signs, but all he said about this man was true'; ·and many of them believed in him.

VI: JESUS MOVES TOWARDS HIS DEATH

The resurrection of Lazarus

1 **11** There was a man named Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her 12:1–8
2 sister, Martha, and he was ill. ·It was the same Mary, the sister of the sick Lk 10:38seq.
man Lazarus, who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her
3, 4 hair.[a] ·The sisters sent this message to Jesus, 'Lord, the man you love is ill.' ·On
receiving the message, Jesus said, 'This sickness will not end in death, but it is for
God's glory so that through it the Son of God may be glorified.'[b] 2:11
5, 6 Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, ·yet when he heard that he was 1:14h 10:34q
7 ill he stayed where he was for two more days ·before saying to the disciples, 'Let us
8 go back to Judaea.'[c] ·The disciples said, 'Rabbi, it is not long since the Jews were
9 trying to stone you; are you going back there again?' ·Jesus replied: 8:59+;10:31

Are there not twelve hours in the day?
No one who walks in the daytime stumbles,
having the light of this world to see by; 8:12b;9:4;12:35
10 anyone who walks around at night stumbles,
having no light as a guide.

11 He said that and then added, 'Our friend Lazarus is at rest; I am going to wake 2:19g
12, 13 him.' ·The disciples said to him, 'Lord, if he is at rest he will be saved.' ·Jesus was Mt 9:24par.
speaking of the death of Lazarus, but they thought that by 'rest' he meant 'sleep';
14, 15 so Jesus put it plainly, 'Lazarus is dead; ·and for your sake I am glad I was not

h. Not to take them into the Jewish fold but to gather them into the flock that Jesus 'leads' to eternal life.

i. var. 'one fold' (Vulg.).

j. Jesus has life in himself, 3:35t, and no one can rob him of it, 7:30,44; 8:20; 10:39; he surrenders it of his own will, v. 18; 14:30; 19:11; hence his perfect control and majestic calm in the face of death, 12:27; 13:1–3; 17:19; 18:4–6; 19:28.

k. Not, as hitherto, in the oblique language of parable, *see* v. 6; 16:25,29. More urgently than before, 2:18; 6:30; 8:25, the Jews press Jesus to say if he is the Messiah. In the Synoptics, the question is put by the high priest before the Passion, Mk 14:61.

l. Jesus' previous statements, in this Gospel, had made it sufficiently clear that he spoke as God's envoy, cf. 2:19; 5:17seq., 39; 6:32seq.; 8:24,28seq., 56seq.; 9:37.

m. Faith in Jesus implies an inner sympathy with him: one must be 'from above', 8:23, 'of God', 8:47, 'of the truth', 18:37, of his flock, v. 14. Faith presupposes a mind open to truth, 3:17–21, *see* Ac 13:48jj; Rm 8:29seq.

n. var. 'As for my Father, that which he has given me is greater than all'.

o. var. 'Steal them'.

p. The Son's power is not other than the Father's. The context shows that this is the primary meaning, but the statement is deliberately undefined and hints at a more comprehensive and a profounder unity. The Jews do not miss the implication; they sense a claim to godhead, v. 33; cf. 1:1; 8:24,29; 10:38; 14:9–10; 17:11,21 and 2:11f.

q. The words were addressed to judges whose function made them, in a sense, 'gods' because 'judgement is God's', Ex 21:6; Dt 1:17; 19:17; Ps 58. Jesus' argument is a rabbinic *a fortiori*, the conclusion being that blasphemy is a surprising charge to bring when it is God's consecrated envoy who calls himself Son of God. On this title, 'Son of God', v. 36, cf. 5:25; 11:4,27; 20:17,31; Jesus' fate is henceforth to turn, *see* 19:7, *see also* Mt 4:3d.

r. om. 'again'.

11 a. It is unlikely that this is 'the woman who was a sinner' of Lk 7:37.

b. A double meaning here: Jesus will be glorified by the miracle itself, *see* 1:14n, but the miracle will bring about his death, vv. 46–54, by which also he will be glorified, 12:32h.

c. om. 'back'.

2:11f there because now you will believe. [d] But let us go to him.' ·Then Thomas—known 16
14:5;20:24–29 as the Twin—said to the other disciples, 'Let us also go to die with him.'
Mk 10:32 On arriving, Jesus found that Lazarus had been in the tomb for four days 17
11:45;12: already. ·Bethany is only about two miles from Jerusalem, ·and many Jews had 18, 19
9–11,17–19 come to Martha and Mary to comfort them about their brother. ·When Martha 20
Lk 10:39seq. heard that Jesus was coming she went to meet him. Mary remained sitting in the
11:32 house. ·Martha said to Jesus, 'Lord, if you had been here, [e] my brother would not 21
Mk 11:24par. have died, ·but even now I know that God will grant whatever you ask of him.' [f] 22
Jesus said to her, 'Your brother will rise again.' ·Martha said, 'I know he will 23, 24
2:19+ rise again at the resurrection on the last day.' ·Jesus said: 25

3:35t;8:51 I am the resurrection. [g]
Mt 22:23e Anyone who believes in me, even though that person dies, will live, [h]
5:24 and whoever lives and believes in me 26
1 Jn 3:14 will never die.
Do you believe this?

1:9–10,9f;10:34q 'Yes, Lord,' she said, 'I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, the one 27
who was to come into this world.'
When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary, saying in a low 28
voice, 'The Master is here and wants to see you.' ·Hearing this, Mary got up 29
quickly and went to him. ·Jesus had not yet come into the village; he was still at the 30
place where Martha had met him. ·When the Jews who were in the house comfort- 31
ing Mary saw her get up so quickly and go out, they followed her, thinking that she
was going to the tomb to weep there.
Mary went to Jesus, and as soon as she saw him she threw herself at his feet, 32
11:21 saying, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.' ·At the sight 33
of her tears, and those of the Jews who had come with her, Jesus was greatly
11:38;12:27; distressed, and with a profound sigh he said, ·'Where have you put him?' They 34
13:21 said, 'Lord, come and see.' ·Jesus wept; ·and the Jews said, 'See how much he loved 35, 36
him!' ·But there were some who remarked, 'He opened the eyes of the blind man. 37
Could he not have prevented this man's death?' ·Sighing again, Jesus reached the 38
tomb: it was a cave with a stone to close the opening. ·Jesus said, 'Take the stone 39
away.' Martha, [i] the dead man's sister, said to him, 'Lord, by now he will smell;
this is the fourth day since he died.' ·Jesus replied, 'Have I not told you that if you 40
1:14n;2:11f believe you will see the glory of God?' ·So they took the stone away. Then Jesus 41
17:1+ lifted up [j] his eyes and said:
Mt 14:19par.

Father, I thank you for hearing my prayer.
I myself knew that you hear me always, 42
but I speak
12:30 for the sake of all these who are standing around me,
1:1a so that they may believe it was you who sent me.

5:27–29 When he had said this, he cried in a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come out!' ·The dead 43, 44
Is 49:9 man came out, his feet and hands bound with strips of material, and a cloth over
19:40;20:5–7 his face. Jesus said to them, 'Unbind him, let him go free.'

The Jewish leaders decide on the death of Jesus

Many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what he did, believed 45
in him, ·but some of them went to the Pharisees to tell them what Jesus had done. 46
Mt 26:3–5par. Then the chief priests and Pharisees called a meeting. 'Here is this man working 47
all these signs,' they said, 'and what action are we taking? ·If we let him go on in 48
this way everybody will believe in him, and the Romans will come and suppress the
Lk 3:2f Holy Place [k] and our nation.' ·One of them, Caiaphas, the high priest that year, 49
18:13 said, 'You do not seem to have grasped the situation at all; ·you fail to see that it 50
is to your advantage [l] that one man should die for the people, rather than that the
whole nation should perish.' ·He did not speak in his own person, but as high 51

priest of that year[m] he was prophesying that Jesus was to die for the nation[n]—
52 and not for the nation only, but also to gather together into one the scattered
53 children of God. ·From that day onwards they were determined[o] to kill him. 4:42n;10:16 Dt 30:3 Is 49:6
54 So Jesus no longer went about openly among the Jews, but left the district for a town called Ephraim, in the country bordering on the desert, and stayed there with his disciples. ·5:18g.7:1 Mt 12:14par.

The Passover draws near

55 The Jewish Passover was drawing near,[p] and many of the country people who had 2:13;6:4
56 gone up to Jerusalem before the Passover[q] to purify themselves ·were looking out Nb 9:6–13
for Jesus, saying to one another as they stood about in the Temple, 'What do you 7:11
57 think? Will he come to the festival or not?' ·The chief priests and Pharisees had by now given their orders: anyone who knew where he was must inform them so that they could arrest him.

The anointing at Bethany

‖Mt 26:6–12
‖Mk 14:3–8

1 **12** Six days before the Passover,[a] Jesus went to Bethany, where Lazarus was,
2 whom he had raised from the dead. ·They gave a dinner for him there;
3 Martha waited on them and Lazarus was among those at table. ·Mary brought in 11:2+
a pound of very costly ointment, pure nard, and with it anointed the feet of Jesus, wiping them with her hair; the house was filled with the scent of the ointment.
4 Then Judas Iscariot—one of his disciples, the man who was to betray him—said,
5 'Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given
6 to the poor?' ·He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he was in charge of the common fund and used to help himself to the 13:29
7 contents. ·So Jesus said, 'Leave her alone; let her keep it for the day of my burial.[b]
8 You have the poor with you always, you will not always have me.'
9 Meanwhile a large number of Jews heard that he was there and came not only on
10 account of Jesus but also to see Lazarus whom he had raised from the dead. ·Then
11 the chief priests decided to kill Lazarus as well, ·since it was on his account that many of the Jews were leaving them and believing in Jesus. 11:45

The Messiah enters Jerusalem

‖Mt 21:4–9
‖Mk 11:7–10
‖Lk 19:35–38

12 The next day the great crowd of people who had come up for the festival heard that
13 Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. ·They took branches of palm and went out to 1 M 13:51 Rv 7:9
receive him, shouting:

> *'Hosanna!* Ps 118:25seq.
> *Blessed is he who is coming in the name of the Lord,*
> the king of Israel.'[c] 1:49;6:15

14 Jesus found a young donkey and mounted it—as scripture says:

15 *Do not be afraid, daughter of Zion;* Zc 9:9seq.

d. The significance of the death of Lazarus includes the strengthening of their faith by a miracle.
e. om. 'Lord'.
f. Martha has faith in Jesus but she stops short as if about to ask an impossibility.
g. add. 'and the life'.
h. The believer has triumphed over death for ever, a victory of which the resurrection of Lazarus is the sign, *see* 3:11e.
i. om. 'the dead man's sister'.
j. Or 'to heaven', 'up to heaven'.
k. lit. 'our Place'; Jerusalem, the Holy Land, or more probably the holiest of all places, the Temple.
l. var. 'it is better'.
m. om. 'of that year'.
n. Caiaphas means that Jesus must be executed to save the nation from political extinction. The higher, prophetic sense, is that the death of Jesus is necessary for the salvation of the world, *see* 1:29v.
o. var. 'they plotted'.
p. Jn repeatedly emphasises the connection between the Passover and Christ's death, 13:1; 18:28; 19:14,42.
q. om. 'before the Passover'.

12 **a.** This last week of Jesus' life is as carefully punctuated as the first, v. 12; 13:1; 18:28; 19:31; *see* 2:1a. Each of the two weeks culminates in the manifestation of his glory, but the time for 'signs' (*see* Cana, 2:4,11) is now over: 'the hour has come for the Son of man to be glorified', v. 23; 13:31seq.; 17:1,5.
b. Jesus sees Mary's act as a gesture of respect offered to his dead body before the time; it is a symbol of his actual burial, 19:38seq.
c. The Messiah-King.

look, your king is approaching,
riding on the foal of a donkey.

2:22;14:26r Mk 4:13b 5:39q At first his disciples did not understand this, but later, after Jesus had been 16
glorified, they remembered that this had been written about him and that this was
what had happened to him. ·The crowd who had been with him when he called 17
Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead kept bearing witness to it;
Lk 19:37 this was another reason why the crowd came out to receive him: they had heard 18
that he had given this sign. ·Then the Pharisees said to one another, 'You see, you 19
11:47–48 are making no progress; look, the whole world has gone after him!'

Jesus foretells his death and subsequent glorification

Ac 8:26seq. 1:44 Among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. [d] ·These 20, 21
approached Philip, who came from Bethsaida in Galilee, and put this request to
7:34n;12:32j him, 'Sir, we should like to see Jesus.' ·Philip went to tell Andrew, and Andrew 22
and Philip together went to tell Jesus.
Jesus replied to them: 23

2:4e 3:14i Mt 8:20h
Now the hour has come
for the Son of man to be glorified.
In all truth I tell you, 24
1 Co 15:36
unless a wheat grain falls into the earth and dies,
it remains only a single grain;
Is 53:10–12
but if it dies
it yields a rich harvest.
1:10g ‖Mt 16:24–25 ‖Mk 8:35 ‖Lk 9:24 Rv 12:11
Anyone who loves his life loses it; 25
anyone who hates his life in this world
will keep it for eternal life.
Whoever serves me, must follow me, 26
7:34;14:3; 17:24
and my servant will be with me wherever I am. [e]
If anyone serves me, my Father will honour him.
11:33;13:21 Heb 5:7–8
Now my soul is troubled. [f] 27
What shall I say:
18:11 Ps 22:19–23 Lk 22:40–46 par.
Father, save me from this hour?
But it is for this very reason that I have come to this hour.
Father, glorify your name! [g] 28

1:14n;2:11f; 17:5+ Mk 1:11par.; 9:7par. 11:42
A voice came from heaven, 'I have glorified it, and I will again glorify it.'
The crowd standing by, who heard this, said it was a clap of thunder; others said, 29
'It was an angel speaking to him.' ·Jesus answered, 'It was not for my sake that this 30
voice came, but for yours. [h]

1:10g;3:19
'Now sentence is being passed on this world; 31
Lk 10:18 Rv 12:9;20:1–6
now the prince of this world is to be driven out. [i]
And when I am lifted up from the earth, [j] 32
3:35t
I shall draw all people [k] to myself.' [l]

By these words he indicated the kind of death he would die. ·The crowd 33, 34
2:19g Rm 3:19f
answered, 'The Law has taught us that the Christ will remain for ever. So how can
•2 S 7:16 Ps 110:4 Is 9:6 •Mt 8:20
you say, "The Son of man must be lifted up"? Who is this Son of man?' ·Jesus 35
then said:
8:12b
The light will be with you only a little longer now.
Go on your way [m] while you have the light,
or darkness will overtake you,
and nobody who walks in the dark knows where he is going.
Jr 13:16
While you still have the light, 36
believe in the light
so that you may become children of light.

Having said this, Jesus left them and was hidden from their sight.

Conclusion: the unbelief of the Jews

37 Though they had been present when he gave so many signs, they did not believe in 2:11f Dt 29:1–3
38 him; ·this was to fulfil the words of the prophet Isaiah:

Lord, who has given credence to what they have heard from us, Is 53:1
and who has seen in it a revelation of the Lord's arm? Rm 10:16

39 Indeed, they were unable to believe because, as Isaiah says again: Mt 13:13e

40 *He has blinded their eyes,* Is 6:10k
he has hardened their heart,
to prevent them from using their eyes to see,
using their heart to understand,
changing their ways and being healed by me.

41 Isaiah said this because he saw his glory,[n] and his words referred to Jesus. 5:39q
42 And yet there were many who did believe in him, even among the leading men, 3:1;7:13
but they did not admit it, because of the Pharisees and for fear of being banned 5:44
43 from the synagogue: ·they put human glory before God's glory. 9:22
44 Jesus declared publicly:

Whoever believes in me
believes not in me
but in the one who sent me, 13:20
45 and whoever sees me, 14:7–9
sees the one who sent me.
46 I have come into the world as light, 1:1a;8:12b
to prevent anyone who believes in me
from staying in the dark any more.
47 If anyone hears my words and does not keep them faithfully, 3:11e
it is not I who shall judge such a person, Mt 13:18–23par.
since I have come not to judge the world, Lk 8:2;par.; 11:28
but to save the world: 3:17
48 anyone who rejects me and refuses my words Lk 20:16
has his judge already: 8:37,47
the word itself that I have spoken Dt 31:26–29
will be his judge on the last day. Heb 4:12seq.
49 For I have not spoken of my own accord; Dt 18:18–19
but the Father who sent me 1:1a
commanded me what to say and what to speak, 3:11e
50 and I know that his commands mean eternal life. 6:63
And therefore what the Father has told me
is what I speak.

d. Not Jews by birth but converts to the monotheism of Israel and adopting certain specific Mosaic observances; they are the 'God-fearers' of Ac 10:2b.

e. In the glory of the Father, cf. 14:3; 17:24.

f. This episode and Gethsemane, Mk 14:32–42, have many details in common: the anguish as the 'hour' draws near, the appeal to the Father's pity, the acceptance of death, the comfort from heaven (cf. Lk). But we should note also the differences: Jesus remains standing, and his cry for mercy remains at the level of a mental struggle (Jn); he 'kneels down' (Lk), 'falls prostrate' (Mt, Mk), *see* Jn 10:18j; 18:4–6.

g. var. 'your Son'. The Father's 'name' is his person. Jesus worked for the Father's glory; his death, now freely offered, is the completion of that work because it shows how great is the Father's love, 17:6g.

h. Jesus' coming death is thus divinely and publicly sanctioned.

i. Satan (*see* 14:30; 16:11; 2 Co 4:4; Ep 2:2; 6:12) was lord of the world. 1 Jn 5:19; Jesus' death breaks his dominion over humanity; *see* Jn 3:35t and Mt 8:29k; Lk 8:31c; Col 1:12–13.

j. om. 'from the earth'. • Allusion both to the 'lifting up' of Jesus on the cross (v. 34) and to his 'lifting up' to heaven, 3:13,14h; 8:28; cf. 6:62, on the day of his resurrection, 20:17h; the two events are two aspects of the same mystery, 13:1a. When Christ is raised to the Father's right hand in glory, v. 23; 17:5e, he will send the Spirit, 7:39, through whom his reign will spread over the world, 16:14; *see* 3:35t.

k. var. 'every man' or 'all things'.

l. The crucified Jesus will be set before the eyes of the world as its Saviour, cf. 19:37. This is the answer to the Greeks' request to 'see' Jesus, *see* 6:40m.

m. Jesus urges the Jews to believe in him before it is too late, *see* 7:34n.

n. var. 'when he saw'. • Alluding to Isaiah's vision in the Temple, Is 6:1–4 and notes. Jn interprets it as a prophetic vision of Christ's glory, *see* 8:56r.

C: JESUS' HOUR COMES

THE PASSOVER OF THE LAMB OF GOD

I: JESUS' LAST MEAL WITH HIS DISCIPLES

The washing of feet

1:48dd Mt 26:17d 1:10g;2:4d; 10:18j
13 Before the festival of the Passover, Jesus, knowing that his hour had come 1
to pass from this world to the Father, [a] having loved [b] those who were his in
the world, loved them to the end. [c]

Mt 26:20par. Mt 4:1c 3:35t 1:1a
They were at supper, [d] and the devil had already put it into the mind [e] of Judas 2
Iscariot son of Simon, to betray him. ·Jesus knew that the Father had put every- 3
thing into his hands, and that he had come from God and was returning to
God, and he got up from table, removed his outer garments and, taking a towel, 4

Lk 12:37;17:7–10
wrapped it round his waist; ·he then poured water into a basin and began to wash 5
the disciples' feet [f] and to wipe them with the towel he was wearing.

Mt 3:14
He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, 'Lord, are you going to wash my 6
feet?' ·Jesus answered, 'At the moment you do not know what I am doing, but 7

14:26r
later you will understand.' ·'Never!' said Peter, 'You shall never wash my feet.' 8

2:19g 1 Co 6:11 Ep 5:26
Jesus replied, 'If I do not wash you, you can have no share with me.' [g] Simon Peter
said, ·'Well then, Lord, not only my feet, but my hands and my head as well!' 9

15:3
Jesus said, 'No one who has had a bath needs washing, [h] such a person is clean all 10

1:48dd
over. [i] You too are clean, [j] though not all of you are.' ·He knew who was going to 11
betray him, and that was why he said, 'though not all of you are'.

When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments again he went 12
back to the table. 'Do you understand', he said, 'what I have done to you? ·You 13

Mt 23:8–12
call me Master and Lord, and rightly; so I am. ·If I, then, the Lord and Master, 14
have washed your feet, you must wash each other's feet. [k] ·I have given you an 15

13:34;15:12 Lk 22:24–27 Ep 5:2 Ph 2:5,8
example so that you may copy what I have done to you.

15:20 Mt 10:24 Lk 6:40
'In all truth I tell you, 16
no servant is greater than his master,
no messenger is greater than the one who sent him.

Is 56:2 Jm 1:25 6:70
'Now that you know this, blessed are you if you behave accordingly. ·I am not 17, 18
speaking about all of you: I know the ones I have chosen; but what scripture says
must be fulfilled:

Ps 41:9
'He who shares my table
takes advantage [l] of me.

14:29;16:4
I tell you this now, before it happens, 19
so that when it does happen

8:24g
you may believe that I am He. [m]
In all truth I tell you, 20

‖Mt 10:40 ‖Mk 9:37 ‖Lk 9:48
whoever welcomes the one I send, welcomes me,
and whoever welcomes me, welcomes the one who sent me.'

11:33 ‖Mt 26:21–25 ‖Mk 14:18–21 ‖Lk 22:21–23
The treachery of Judas foretold

Having said this, Jesus was deeply disturbed and declared, 'In all truth I tell you , 21
one of you is going to betray me.' ·The disciples looked at each other, wondering 22

19:26;20:2; 21:7,20 ·Lk 8:51f
whom he meant. ·The disciple Jesus loved was reclining next to Jesus; ·Simon 23, 24
Peter signed to him and said, 'Ask who it is he means,' ·so leaning back close to 25
Jesus' chest he said, 'Who is it, Lord?' ·Jesus answered, 'It is the one to whom I 26
give the piece of bread [n] that I dip in the dish.' And when he had dipped the piece
of bread he gave it to Judas son of Simon Iscariot. ·At that instant, after Judas 27

had taken the bread, Satan entered him. Jesus then said, 'What you are going to
28, 29 do, do quickly.' •None of the others at table understood why he said this. •Since
Judas had charge of the common fund, some of them thought Jesus was telling him,
'Buy what we need for the festival,' or telling him to give something to the poor.
30 As soon as Judas had taken the piece of bread he went out. It was night.

13:2e Lk 22:3
1:48dd
12:6
8:12b Lk 22:53

Farewell discourses [o]

31 When he had gone, Jesus said:

Now [p] has the Son of man been glorified,
and in him God has been glorified.
32 If God has been glorified in him, [q]
God will in turn glorify him in himself, [r]
and will glorify him very soon.
33 Little children,
I shall be with you only a little longer.
You will look for me,
and, as I told the Jews, [s]
where I am going,
you cannot come. [t]
34 I give you a new commandment: [u]
love one another;
you must love one another
just as I have loved you.
35 It is by your love for one another,
that everyone will recognise you
as my disciples.

14:13;17:1,4
Mt 8:20h
1:14n
8:21
1:1a
1 Jn 2:8
15:12,17
Lv 19:18
Mt 19:19;22:39
Lk 10:26seq.
Dt 28:9–10
Ac 4:32

36 Simon Peter said, 'Lord, where are you going?' Jesus replied, 'Now you cannot
37 follow me where I am going, but later you shall follow me.' [v] •Peter said to him, [w]
38 'Why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.' •'Lay down your

2:19g;8:21
21:18–19
•Lk 22:31–34

13 **a.** According to a Jewish tradition the word 'Passover' (*pesah*: *see* Ex 12:11f) meant 'a passing, or crossing over', with reference to the crossing of the Sea of Reeds (Red Sea), Ex 14. Jesus (and we with him) will pass from this world, which is enslaved by sin, to the Father's company, the true Promised Land, *see* 1:21t.

b. Here, for the first time, Jn clearly states that Jesus' life and death are an expression of his love for his disciples. The impression given is one of a secret kept for these final moments, v. 34; 15:9,13; 17:23; Rm 8:35; Ga 2:20; Ep 3:19; 5:2,25; 1 Jn 3:16.

c. lit. 'he loved them to the end', i.e. utterly.

d. var. 'Supper was over'.

e. var. 'the devil having already put in the (his?) heart that Judas Iscariot should betray him', or '. . . having already put in his heart (i.e. made up his mind) . . .', or 'Satan having already entered into the heart of Judas in order that he might betray him'. • Unseen forces are at work in Jesus' Passion: the human agents are tools of the devil; cf. 6:70seq.; 8:44; 12:31; 13:27; 16:11; Lk 22:3; 1 Co 2:8; Rv 12:4,17; 13:2.

f. The dress and duty are those of a slave, *see* 1 S 25:41.

g. A semitic phrase: Peter is cutting himself off from his Lord and from all share in his ministry and in his glory.

h. add. 'except for the feet'.

i. Peter has understood Jesus' answer, v. 8, superficially, as if a new rite of purification were being instituted. Jesus replies that his sacrifice has already achieved this purification, cf. 15:2–3; Heb 10:22; 1 Jn 1:7. He explains the meaning of his action in vv. 12–15.

j. The same Greek word is used for 'clean' and 'pure'.

k. i.e. serve one another lovingly with complete humility.

l. lit. 'has lifted up his heel against me'.

m. Because it demonstrates Jesus' superhuman knowledge and fulfils the scripture, Judas' betrayal and Christ's death will confirm the disciples' faith.

n. This particular 'morsel' is not the Holy Eucharist; nevertheless, a comparison of 13:2,18 with 6:64,70 seems to show that there was some connection between the institution and Judas' act of treachery, cf. Lk 22:21.

o. The washing of the feet and the exchange which accompanies it form the prelude to a long talk of Jesus with his disciples, compare Lk 22:14d. In their present form ch. 13–17 certainly include teaching given on other occasions. The complex ch. 16 could be another version of Jesus' words in ch. 14. By putting them here John means to show the deepest meaning of the whole of Jesus' life at that moment when he passes from his earthly to his heavenly existence.

p. The Passion has already begun, since Judas has just gone out to do Satan's work: Jesus speaks of his victory as already won, cf. 16:33.

q. om. 'If God has been glorified in him'.

r. 'himself' refers to God the Father who will glorify the Son of man by taking him to himself in glory, cf. 17:5,22,24.

s. Jesus' 'departure' and his glorification are intimately connected. The separation will be, for 'the Jews', final, 8:21; for the disciples, only for a time, 14:2–3.

t. Except by dying, cf. v. 36; 21:19,22seq.

u. Cf. Mt 25:31–46. The reference to Jesus' 'departure', v. 33 (which leads up to the prophecy of Peter's denial, vv. 36–38), makes this command, vv. 34–35, a solemn legacy from him. Though enunciated in the Mosaic Law, this precept of love is 'new' because Jesus sets the standard so high by telling his followers to love one another as he himself loved them, and because love is to be the distinguishing mark of the 'new' era which the death of Jesus inaugurates and proclaims to the world.

v. A veiled prediction of Peter's martyrdom.

w. add. 'Lord'.

‖Mt 26:33–35 ‖Mk 14:29–31 life for me?' answered Jesus. 'In all truth I tell you, before the cock crows you will have disowned me three times.'

14:27 Dt 1:21 16:33 **14** Do not let your hearts be troubled. [a] 1
You trust in God, trust also in me.
In my Father's house there are many places to live in; 2
otherwise I would have told you. [b]
8:35 Dt 1:33 Mt 25:34 I am going now to prepare a place for you,
and after I have gone and prepared you a place, 3
Heb 6:19–20 I shall return to take you to myself, [c]
so that you may be with me
7:34;12:26; 17:24 where I am.
You know the way to the place where I am going. 4

11:16;20:24–29 13:36 Thomas said, 'Lord, we do not know where you are going, so how can we know 5
the way?' ·Jesus said: 6

1:4 Ep 2:18 Heb 10:19–20 1 Tm 2:5 8:19;12:45 2 Co 4:4 Ex 33:18g I am the Way; I am Truth and Life. [d]
No one can come to the Father except through me.
If you know me, [e] you will know my Father too. 7
From this moment you know him and have seen him.

Philip said, 'Lord, show us the Father and then we shall be satisfied.' Jesus said 8
to him, ·'Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? 9

1:18;17:6g 'Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father,
so how can you say, "Show us the Father"?
Do you not believe [f] 10
10:30p that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?
1:1a;12:49 What I say to you I do not speak of my own accord:
2:11f it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his works.
You must believe me when I say 11
that I am in the Father and the Father is in me;
10:38 or at least believe it on the evidence of these works.
In all truth I tell you, 12
Mt 8:10b whoever believes in me
will perform the same works as I do myself,
Mt 21:21 and will perform even greater works,
because I am going to the Father. [g]
15:16;16:24,26 Mt 7:7–11 Whatever you ask for in my name I will do, 13
so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.
Ac 3:16*l* If you ask me for anything in my name, 14
I will do it.
15:10 Dt 6:4–9; 7:11;11:1 Ws 6:18 1 Jn 2:3;5:3 If you love me you will keep my commandments. [h] 15
I shall ask the Father, 16
and he will give you another Paraclete [i]
to be with you for ever,
14:26r the Spirit of truth 17
1:10g 1 Co 2:12–14 whom the world can never accept
since it neither sees nor knows him;
but you know him,
2 Jn 1–2 because he is with you, he is in you. [j]
I shall not leave you orphans; 18
Mt 28:20 I shall come to you.
7:34;8:21 In a short time the world will no longer see me; 19
16:16 but you will see that I live
6:57 and you also will live. [k]
On that day [l] 20

you will know that I am in my Father
and you in me and I in you. [m] 10:30p 17:11,21–22

21 Whoever holds to my commandments and keeps them
is the one who loves me;
and whoever loves me will be loved by my Father,
and I shall love him and reveal myself to him.' [n] Dt 7:12–13 Pr 8:17 Ws 6:12,18 16:27;17:26 Si 4:14

22 Judas [o]—not Judas Iscariot—said to him, 'Lord, what has happened, that you
23 intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?' ·Jesus replied: 2:19g;7:4

Anyone who loves me will keep my word, [p] 3:11c Rv 3:20
and my Father will love him,
and we shall come to him
and make a home in him.

24 Anyone who does not love me does not keep my words.
And the word that you hear [q] is not my own:
it is the word of the Father who sent me. 1:1a

25 I have said these things to you
while still with you;

26 but the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, 16:13–15
whom the Father will send in my name,
will teach you everything
and remind you of all I have said to you. [r]

27 Peace [s] I bequeath to you, 20:19 Rm 5:1 Ep 2:14–18 Ph 4:7 2 Th 3:16 14:1–3
my own peace I give you,
a peace which the world cannot give, this is my gift to you.
Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid.

28 You heard me say:
I am going away and shall return.
If you loved me you would be glad that I am going to the Father,
for the Father is greater than I. [t]

29 I have told you this now, before it happens, 13:19;16:4
so that when it does happen you may believe.

14 a. The apostles are perturbed by the predictions of betrayal, of Jesus' departure, and of Peter's denial. Jesus wants to strengthen their faith: this purpose pervades ch. 14.

b. Others translate 'otherwise I would have told you (where I am going)'.

c. This promise keeps the Church's hope alive, cf. 1 Co 4:5;11:26;16:22;1 Th 4:16seq.;1 Jn 2:28;Rv 22:17,20.

d. Jesus is the Way because he reveals the Father, 12:45; 14:9; he shows us the way to the Father, Ac 9:2b; he alone gives access to the Father, Jn 1:18; 14.4–7. He comes from the Father and returns to the Father, 7:29, 33; 13:3; 16:28, and is one with him, 10:30; 12:45; 14:9; 17:22. He is Truth, 8:32j, and Life 3:15j.

e. var. 'If you had known me, you would have . . .'

f. When Philip asks for some marvellous manifestation of the Father, he is falling short of that faith by which alone the Father is seen to be in the Son and the Son in the Father.

g. Jesus brought revelation and salvation; his miracles were 'signs' of these things. 2:11f. The 'works' of the disciples will continue this ministry. The Spirit, from whom mighty works will proceed, is to be sent by Jesus seated in glory at the Father's right hand, 7:39; 16:7.

h. var. om. 'you will'. Jesus, like God himself, asserts his right to love and obedience.

i. The title 'Paraclete' used in our translation is a transliteration of the Gk word *parakletos*; in English it is difficult to choose between the various meanings: 'advocate', 'intercessor', 'counsellor', 'protector', 'support'. • The parallel between the Spirit's work for the disciples and Jesus' brings out powerfully the personal character of the Spirit. *see* vv. 26r; 1 Jn 2:1.

j. var. 'will be in you'.

k. The world has seen its last of Jesus, cf. 7:34; 8:21. The disciples, however, will see him in his risen life, not merely with their eyes but with the inward vision of faith, 20:29.

l. Phrase used by the prophets for the occasions when God intervenes notably in human history, *see* Is 2:17; 4:1seq. The 'day' may indicate a whole epoch; here, it is the post-resurrection era.

m. The relationship between Jesus and his disciples is analogous to that between him and his Father, 6:57; 10:14–15; 15:9.

n. By coming, with the Father, to dwell in him.

o. The 'Judas, brother of James' of Lk 6:16 and Ac 1:13; the Thaddaeus of Mt 10:3 and Mk 3:18.

p. As the world does not: 8:37,43,47.

q. var. 'my word'.

r. In place of the departed Jesus, the faithful will have the Spirit, vv. 16,17; 16:7; *see* 1:33x. He is the *parakletos*, who intercedes with the Father, cf. 1 Jn 2:1, and whose voice is heard in human courts, 15:26,27; cf. Mt 10:19–20 and par.; Lk 12:11–12; Ac 5:32. He is the Spirit of truth, leading humanity to the very fullness of truth, 16:13, teaching them to understand the mystery of Christ—his fulfilment of the scriptures, 5:39r, the meaning of his words, 2:19g, of his actions, and of his 'signs', v. 16; 16:13; 1 Jn 2:20seq.,27, all hitherto obscure to the disciples, Jn 2:22; 12:16; 13:7; 20:9. In this way the Spirit is to bear witness to Christ, 15:26; 1 Jn 5:6,7, and shame the unbelieving world, Jn 16:8–11.

s. The customary Jewish greeting and farewell, *see* Lk 10:5 and par.; it means soundness of body but came to be used of the perfect happiness and the deliverance which the Messiah would bring, 2 Th 3:16.

t. Though the Son is the Father's equal, 8:24g; 10:30p, his glory is for the moment veiled, 1:14; his return to the Father will reveal it again, 17:5f, cf. Ph 2:6–9; Heb 1:3.

I shall not talk to you much longer, [a] 30
1:10g;10:18j; 12:31i;13:2e because the prince of this world is on his way.
He has no power over me,
but the world must recognise that I love the Father 31
6:38+ and that I act just as the Father commanded.
Mt 26:46par. Come now, let us go.

The true vine

Is 5:1a **15** I am the true vine, [a] 1
and my Father is the vinedresser.
Every branch in me that bears no fruit [b] 2
Mt 15:13 he cuts away,
Is 18:5 and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes
to make it bear even more.
13:10 You are clean [c] already, 3
3:11e by means of the word that I have spoken to you.
6:56–57 Remain in me, as I in you. 4
As a branch cannot bear fruit all by itself,
unless it remains part of the vine,
neither can you unless you remain in me.
I am the vine, 5
you are the branches.
Whoever remains in me, with me in him,
bears fruit in plenty;
15:16 for cut off from me you can do nothing.
1:3 Anyone who does not remain in me 6
is thrown away like a branch
—and withers;
these branches are collected and thrown on the fire
Ezk 15:1–8 and are burnt.
Mt 3:10par.; 13:30,40 If you remain in me 7
and my words remain in you,
you may ask for whatever you please
14:13+ and you will get it.
1 Jn 5:14
It is to the glory of my Father that you should bear much fruit 8
Mt 5:16 Rm 7:4 and be my disciples. [d]
I have loved you 9
3:35t;10:14–15, 14g;13:1b;17:23 just as the Father has loved me.
Remain in my love.
If you keep my commandments 10
you will remain in my love,
6:38+;8:29 just as I have kept my Father's commandments
and remain in his love.
I have told you this 11
so that my own joy [e] may be in you
3:29;16:21,22; 17:13 and your joy be complete.
1 Jn 1:4 This is my commandment: 12
13:34 love one another,
as I have loved you.
Rm 5:6–8 Eph 5:2 No one can have greater love 13
1 Jn 3:16 than to lay down his life for his friends.
Ex 33:11 Lk 12:4 Rm 8:15 You are my friends, 14
if you do what I command you.
I shall no longer call you servants, 15
because a servant does not know
his master's business;

I call you friends,
because I have made known to you
everything I have learnt from my Father.
16 You did not choose me,
no, I chose you; 13:18 Dt 7:6b 1 Jn 4:10
and I commissioned you
to go out and to bear fruit, 15:2b Rm 6:20–23
fruit that will last;
so that the Father will give you
anything you ask him in my name. 14:13+
17 My command to you
is to love one another. 13:34 1 Jn 3:23

The disciples and the world[f]

18 If the world hates you, Mt 10:22 1 Jn 3:12–13
you must realise that it hated me before it hated you.
19 If you belonged to the world,
the world would love you as its own;
but because you do not belong to the world, 1:10g;17:14–16
because my choice of you has drawn you out of the world,
that is why the world hates you.
20 Remember the words I said to you:
A servant is not greater than his master. 13:16 Mt 10:24–25
If they persecuted me, 1 Th 2:14f 2 Tm 2:12
they will persecute you too; Rv 2:3d
if they kept my word,
they will keep yours as well.
21 But it will be on my account that they will do all this to you, Ac 5:41
because they do not know the one who sent me. 8:19
22 If I had not come,
if I had not spoken to them,
they would have been blameless;
but as it is they have no excuse for their sin. 8:21–24.21f.; 16:9
23 Anyone who hates me hates my Father. 10:30p
24 If I had not performed such works among them
as no one else has ever done, Mt 12:24–28
they would be blameless;
but as it is, in spite of what they have seen, 2:11f;6:36
they hate both me and my Father.
25 But all this was only to fulfil the words written in their Law: Rm 3:19f
They hated me without reason. Ps 35:19;69:4
26 When the Paraclete comes,
whom I shall send to you from the Father,
the Spirit of truth who issues from[g] the Father, 14:26r Ac 2:33u
he will be my witness. Mt 10:18–20 Lk 1:2
27 And you too will be witnesses, Ac 1:8k;5:32
because you have been with me from the beginning.

u. var. 'I will not have much more speech with you.'

15 a. On the vine image, *see* Is 5:1a; Jr 2:21. In the Synoptics, Jesus uses the vine as a symbol of the kingdom of God, Mt 20:1–8; 21:28–31.33–41 and par., and 'the fruit of the vine' becomes the eucharistic sacrament of the new covenant, Mt 26:29 and par. Here he calls himself the true vine whose fruit, the true Israel, will not disappoint God's expectation.

b. The 'fruit' is that of a life of obedience to the commandments, especially that of love, vv. 12–17, cf. Is 5:7; Jr 2:21.

c. Or 'have been pruned'. The same root denotes in Gk 'pruning' and 'cleansing', cf. 13:10.

d. var. 'and so prove to be my disciples'. In this way the Father is 'glorified in the Son', 14:13, cf. 21:19.

e. The perfect happiness of the messianic era which is communicated by the Son of God.

f. Jesus contrasts the disciples' love for one another with the world's hatred of them. It will be with them as with their Master, and when the world persecutes them, it persecutes Jesus himself, cf. Ac 9:5; Col 1:24.

g. The sending of the Spirit into the world rather than the 'eternal' proceeding from the Father within the Trinity.

16 I have told you all this so that you may not fall away. [a] 1

9:22 Mt 10:17 They will expel you from the synagogues, 2
and indeed the time is coming
Ac 26:9–11 when anyone who kills you will think he is doing a holy service to God.
They will do these things 3
8:19;15:21 because they have never known either the Father or me.
13:19;14:29 Mk 13:23 But I have told you all this, 4
so that when the time for it comes
you may remember that I told you.

The coming of the Paraclete

I did not tell you this from the beginning,
because I was with you;
1:1a but now I am going to the one who sent me. 5
13:36;14:5 Not one of you asks, 'Where are you going?'
14:1 Yet you are sad at heart because I have told you this. 6
Still, I am telling you the truth: 7
it is for your own good that I am going,
because unless I go,
the Paraclete will not come to you;
1:33x;14:26r but if I go,
I will send him to you.
And when he comes, 8
1:10g he will show the world how wrong it was, [b]
about sin,
and about who was in the right,
and about judgement:
8:21–24;15:22 about sin: 9
in that they refuse to believe in me; [c]
about who was in the right: 10
13:33 in that I am going to the Father
and you will see me no more; [d]
about judgement: 11
12:31i in that the prince of this world is already condemned. [e]
I still have many things to say to you 12
but they would be too much for you to bear now.
14:26+ Ps 25:5;86:11 However, when the Spirit of truth comes 13
he will lead you to the complete truth,
since he will not be speaking of his own accord,
but will say only what he has been told;
and he will reveal to you the things to come. [f]
He will glorify me, 14
since all he reveals to you
will be taken from what is mine.
17:10 Lk 15:31 Everything the Father has is mine; 15
that is why I said:
all he reveals to you
will be taken from what is mine. [g]

Jesus to return very soon

7:33;14:19 In a short time you will no longer see me, 16
and then a short time later you will see me again. [h]

Then some of his disciples said to one another, 'What does he mean, "In a short 17
time you will no longer see me, and then a short time later you will see me again,"

18 and, "I am going to the Father"? •What is this "short time"?[i] We don't know
19 what he means.' •Jesus knew that they wanted to question him, so he said, 'You 1:48dd
are asking one another what I meant by saying, "In a short time you will no longer
see me, and then a short time later you will see me again."

20 'In all truth I tell you,
you will be weeping and wailing Jr 31:13
while the world will rejoice; Lk 6:21
you will be sorrowful, Rv 11:10
but your sorrow will turn to joy.[j]
21 A woman in childbirth suffers, Is 26:17–18;
because her time has come;[k] 66:7–14
but when she has given birth to the child she forgets the suffering Mi 4:9–10
in her joy that a human being has been born into the world.
22 So it is with you: you are sad now,
but I shall see you again, and your hearts will be full of joy, 14:19;15:11;
and that joy no one shall take from you. 20:20
Is 66:14
23 When that day comes,
you will not ask me any questions.
In all truth I tell you,
anything you ask from the Father 14:13+
he will grant in my name. Mt 7:7
24 Until now you have not asked anything in my name.[l]
Ask and you will receive,
and so your joy will be complete.
25 I have been telling you these things in veiled language.
The hour is coming Mt 13:34–
when I shall no longer speak to you in veiled language 35par.
but tell you about the Father in plain words.[m]
26 When that day comes
you will ask in my name;
and I do not say that I shall pray to the Father[n] for you,
27 because the Father himself loves you 14:23
for loving me
and believing that I came from God.
28 I came from the Father and have come into the world 1:1a
and now I am leaving the world to go to the Father.'

29 His disciples said, 'Now you are speaking plainly and not using veiled language.
30 Now we see that you know everything and need not wait for questions to be 1:48dd;16:19
31 put into words; because of this we believe that you came from God.' •Jesus
answered them:

16 **a.** lit. 'so that you may not be tripped'. To preserve their faith from shock, Jesus forewarns the apostles of coming trials, cf. 13:19.

b. The Holy Spirit sent by Jesus will reinforce his witness, 3:11e, so that the rightness of the Saviour's cause stands out in the sight of believers.

c. The world's sin is unbelief, 8:21,24,46; 15:22; the Spirit will expose it.

d. The Spirit will demonstrate the right of Jesus to the title 'Son of God', cf. 10:33; 19:7. The 'passing' of Jesus to the Father will prove that he is God's Son, 13:1; 20:17, because it shows that heaven is his true home, 6:62.

e. The Spirit will reveal the significance of Jesus' death: it is the final sentence pronounced on the prince of this world.

f. The new order of things that is to result from Jesus' death and resurrection.

g. By revealing the hidden depths of the mystery of Jesus, the Spirit makes his glory known. Jesus, in his turn, manifests the glory of the Father, 17:4seq., from whom comes everything he possesses, 3:35; 5:22,26; 13:3; 17:2.

h. A veiled reference to his approaching death and resurrection. • add. 'because I am going to the Father'.

i. add. 'he speaks of'.

j. The happiness of seeing the risen Christ after the sad days of his Passion, cf. 20:20.

k. Traditional biblical metaphor for the sufferings which will herald the new, messianic age, *see* Mt 24:8f.

l. Because Jesus was not yet glorified, cf. 14:13seq.

m. The resurrection and the coming of the Spirit inaugurate the period of more perfect instruction which is to end in the vision of God 'as he is', 1 Jn 3:2.

n. var. 'and I shall not pray to the Father'. Jesus is still the only mediator, cf. 10:9; 14:6; 15:5; Heb 8:6, but the disciples' faith and love make them one with him and therefore dear to the Father: mediation could not be more perfect.

Do you believe at last?
Listen; the time will come—indeed it has come already— 32
Zc 13:7 Mt 26:31par. when you are going to be scattered, each going his own way
and leaving me alone.
8:29 And yet I am not alone,
because the Father is with me.
I have told you all this 33
14:27s so that you may find peace in me.
1:10g In the world you will have hardship,
but be courageous:
12:31;14:30 1 Jn 2:14+ I have conquered the world.

The prayer of Jesus [a]

11:41 Mk 7:34 Lk 9:16 17 After saying this, Jesus raised his eyes to heaven and said: 1
2:4e Father, the hour has come:
glorify your Son
so that your Son may glorify you; [b]
3:35t;18:9 so that, just as you have given him power over all humanity, 2
he may give eternal life to all those you have entrusted to him.
14:7–9 Ws 15:3 Jr 24:7;31:31–34 Ezk 36:25–28 Ho 2:22v 1 Jn 5:20–21 1:1a And eternal life is this: 3
to know [c] you,
the only true God,
and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. [d]
I have glorified you on earth 4
4:34k by finishing the work
that you gave me to do.
Ph 2:6–11 1:14n;17:24 Now, Father, glorify me 5
with that glory I had with you [e]
before ever the world existed. [f]
17:26 Ex 3:13 I have revealed your name [g] 6
to those whom you took from the world to give me.
3:35t They were yours and you gave them to me,
3:11e and they have kept your word.
Now at last they have recognised 7
that all you have given me comes from you
for I have given them 8
Dt 18:18 the teaching you gave to me,
and they have indeed accepted it
and know for certain [h] that I came from you,
and have believed that it was you who sent me.
It is for them that I pray. 9
1:10g Lk 22:32 I am not praying for the world
but for those you have given me,
because they belong to you.
16:15 Lk 15:31 All I have is yours 10
and all you have is mine,
2 Th 1:10 and in them I am glorified.
1:10g;10:30p Ga 3:28 I am no longer in the world, 11
but they are in the world,
and I am coming to you.
Holy Father,
3:35t Nb 6:24 keep those you have given me true to your name, [i]
so that they may be one like us.
While I was with them, 12
I kept those you had given me true to your name.

I have watched over them and not one is lost — 6:39;10:28
except one who was destined to be lost,[j] — 13:18–19+ Ps 41:9
and this was to fulfil the scriptures. — Ac 1:16,20
13 But now I am coming to you
and I say these things in the world
to share my joy with them to the full. — 15:11e
14 I passed your word on to them, — 3:11e
and the world hated them, — 15:19 Lk 6:22
because they belong to the world
no more than I belong to the world.
15 I am not asking you to remove them from the world,
but to protect them from the Evil One.[k] — 1 Jn 2:14+
16 They do not belong to the world — 8:23
any more than I belong to the world.
17 Consecrate[l] them in the truth; — 10:36;20:21 Lv 17:1a Ac 9:13g 1 P 1:22
your word is truth.
18 As you sent me into the world,
I have sent them into the world,
19 and for their sake I consecrate myself[m] — 4:23h;10:18j Ex 28:36,38 Heb 10:10–14
so that they too may be consecrated in truth.
20 I pray not only for these
but also for those
who through their teaching will come to believe in me.[n]
21 May they all be one,
just as, Father, you are in me and I am in you, — 10:30p
so that they also may be in us,
so that the world may believe it was you who sent me.
22 I have given them the glory you gave to me, — 1:14;17:5g Rm 8:30
that they may be one as we are one.
23 With me in them and you in me,
may they be so perfected in unity
that the world will recognise that it was you who sent me
and that you have loved them[o] as you have loved me. — 15:9 Rm 8:10 2 Co 13:5
24 Father,
I want those you have given me
to be with me where I am, — 12:26e;14:3
so that they may always see my glory — 17:5f
which you have given me
because you loved me
before the foundation of the world. — Ep 1:4

17 **a.** The time for the sacrifice draws near: in this prayer Jesus offers himself and intercedes for his disciples.

b. When Jesus asks to be 'glorified' (i.e. shown in glory), it is not for his own sake, cf. 7:18; 8:50, but the glory of the Son and of the Father are one, cf. 12:28; 13:31.

c. Knowledge in its biblical sense, *see* 10:14g.

d. Hitherto the Mosaic Law had been the instrument of revelation which now comes to all people through Christ.

e. var. 'the glory which was with you' or 'the glory with which I was' or 'the glory with you'.

f. Either the glory he enjoyed as the pre-incarnate Son, or else the glory predestined for him from eternity by the Father, 1:14n.

g. It was Jesus' mission to reveal the 'Name', i.e. the person, of the Father, vv. 3–6,26; 12:28g; 14:7–11; *see* 3:11e; now love for all people is characteristic of the Father, 1 Jn 4:8,16, and he proves this love by delivering up his only Son, Jn 3:16–18; 1 Jn 4:9,10,14,16; *see also* Rm 8:32; it follows that all people must believe that Jesus is the Son, Jn 3:18, if they are to appreciate this love, cf. Jn 20:31; 1 Jn 2:23; and thus 'know' the Father.

h. Also translated 'they have given them (the teachings) true welcome because I came from you.'

i. var. 'Keep those in your name whom (var. which) you have given me'. So also in v. 12.

j. This Hebr. expression has either the meaning given in the text, or 'the one who has willingly submitted himself to the power of evil'.

k. Or 'from evil', cf. Mt 6:13.

l. The verb means literally: to set aside for, dedicate to, God; to 'consecrate' (in the original sense of 'dedicate to God'), *see* Ac 9:13g.

m. Jesus consecrates himself by presenting himself to the Father to be one with him, and to all people as the perfect revelation. He prays that the disciples may live in God's truth, sanctified by faith in the Father he has revealed to them.

n. Finally, vv. 20–26, Jesus prays for the Church of believers gathered by the witness of the apostles, 3:11e; 15:27; *see* Rm 1:1b, that their unity may foster faith in the mission of Jesus, cf. 1 Jn 1:1–3; 2:24.

o. var. 'that I have loved them'.

Father, Upright One, 25
1:10g the world has not known you,
but I have known you,
and these have known
1:1a that you have sent me.
17:6g I have made your name known to them 26
Ex 3:13 and will continue to make it known,
so that the love with which you loved me may be in them,
and so that I may be in them.

II: THE PASSION

The arrest of Jesus

‖Mt 26:30,36 ‖Mk 14:26,32 ‖Lk 22:39 **18** After he had said all this, Jesus left with his disciples and crossed the Kidron 1
valley where there was a garden into which he went with his disciples. ·Judas 2
‖Mt 26:47–56 ‖Mk 14:43–50 ‖Lk 22:47–53 the traitor knew the place also, since Jesus had often met his disciples there, ·so 3
Judas brought the cohort[a] to this place together with guards sent by the chief
1:48dd 12:27f priests and the Pharisees, all with lanterns and torches and weapons. ·Knowing 4
everything that was to happen to him, Jesus came forward and said, 'Who are you
8:24g looking for?' ·They answered, 'Jesus the Nazarene.' He said, 'I am he.' Now Judas 5
the traitor was standing among them. ·When Jesus said to them, 'I am he,' they 6
Ps 27:2;35:4 moved back and fell on the ground. ·He asked them a second time, 'Who are you 7
looking for?' They said, 'Jesus the Nazarene.' ·Jesus replied, 'I have told you that 8
I am he. If I am the one you are looking for, let these others go.' ·This was to fulfil 9
6:39;10:28; 17:12 the words he had spoken, 'Not one of those you gave me have I lost.'

Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant, 10
cutting off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus. ·Jesus said to Peter, 'Put 11
Mt 26:39par. your sword back in its scabbard; am I not to drink the cup that the Father has
given me?'

Jesus before Annas and Caiaphas. Peter disowns him

‖Mt 26:57 ‖Mk 14:53 ‖Lk 22:54 The cohort and its tribune and the Jewish guards seized Jesus and bound him. 12
They took him first to Annas, because Annas was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, 13
Lk 3:2 11:50 who was high priest that year. ·It was Caiaphas who had counselled the Jews, 'It is 14
better for one man to die for the people.'

‖Mt 26:58,69–75 ‖Mk 14:54, 66–72 ‖Lk 22:54–62 Simon Peter, with another disciple,[b] followed Jesus. This disciple, who was 15
known to the high priest, went with Jesus into the high priest's palace, ·but Peter 16
stayed outside the door. So the other disciple, the one known to the high priest,
went out, spoke to the door-keeper and brought Peter in. ·The girl on duty at the 17
door said to Peter, 'Aren't you another of that man's disciples?' He answered, 'I
am not.' ·Now it was cold, and the servants and guards had lit a charcoal fire and 18
were standing there warming themselves; so Peter stood there too, warming
himself with the others.

The high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching. ·Jesus 19, 20
Is 45:19;48:16 Lk 22:53 answered, 'I have spoken openly for all the world to hear; I have always taught in
the synagogue and in the Temple where all the Jews meet together; I have said
nothing in secret. ·Why ask me? Ask my hearers what I taught; they know what I 21
Ac 23:2 said.' ·At these words, one of the guards standing by gave Jesus a slap in the face, 22
saying, 'Is that the way you answer the high priest?' ·Jesus replied, 'If there is some 23
offence in what I said, point it out; but if not, why do you strike me?' ·Then Annas 24
sent him, bound, to Caiaphas the high priest.[c]

As Simon Peter stood there warming himself, someone said to him, 'Aren't you 25
another of his disciples?' He denied it saying, 'I am not.' ·One of the high priest's 26
servants, a relation of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, said, 'Didn't I see you
in the garden with him?' ·Again Peter denied it; and at once a cock crew. 27

Jesus before Pilate

Mt 27:2,11–26
Mk 15:1–5
Lk 23:1–7, 13–25

28 They then led Jesus from the house of Caiaphas to the Praetorium.[d] It was now
morning. They did not go into the Praetorium themselves to avoid becoming
29 defiled[e] and unable to eat the Passover. •So Pilate came outside to them and said, 11:55
30 'What charge do you bring against this man?' They replied, •'If he were not a Mt 26:17d; 27:2,11–14
31 criminal, we should not have handed him over to you.' •Pilate said, 'Take him Mk 15:1–5 Lk 23:1–3
yourselves, and try him by your own Law.' The Jews answered, 'We are not Ac 18:15
32 allowed to put a man to death.'[f] •This was to fulfil the words Jesus had spoken
indicating the way he was going to die. 3:14i

33 So Pilate went back into the Praetorium and called Jesus to him and asked him,
34 'Are you the king of the Jews?' •Jesus replied, 'Do you ask this of your own accord, 19:14seq., 19–22
35 or have others said it to you about me?' •Pilate answered, 'Am I a Jew? It is your
own people and the chief priests who have handed you over to me: what have you
36 done?' •Jesus replied, 'Mine is not a kingdom of this world; if my kingdom were of 1:10g
this world, my men would have fought to prevent my being surrendered to the 6:15b;8:23; 12:32;18: 10–11
37 Jews. As it is, my kingdom does not belong here.' •Pilate said, 'So, then you are a
king?' Jesus answered, 'It is you who say that I am a king. I was born for this, I 3:35t
came into the world for this, to bear witness to the truth; and all who are on the 3:11f
38 side of truth listen to my voice.' •'Truth?' said Pilate. 'What is that?' And so saying 10:26m
39 he went out again to the Jews and said, 'I find no case against him. •But according 1 Jn 3:19h Mt 27:15–18, 20–23
to a custom of yours I should release one prisoner at the Passover; would you like Mk 15:6–14
40 me, then, to release for you the king of the Jews?' •At this they shouted, 'Not this •Lk 23:18–19
man,' they said, 'but Barabbas.' Barabbas was a bandit. Lk 23:22f Ac 3:14

1, 2 **19** Pilate then had Jesus taken away and scourged;[a] •and after this, the soldiers ‖Mt 27:26–31 ‖Mk 15:15–20 ‖Lk 23:16
twisted some thorns into a crown and put it on his head and dressed him in
3 a purple robe. •They kept coming up to him and saying, 'Hail, king of the Jews!'
and slapping him in the face.

4 Pilate came outside again and said to them, 'Look, I am going to bring him out
5 to you to let you see that I find no case against him.' •Jesus then came out wearing Lk 23:4
6 the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said, 'Here is the man.' •When they 1:29,36
saw him, the chief priests and the guards shouted, 'Crucify him! Crucify him!'
7 Pilate said, 'Take him yourselves and crucify him: I find no case against him.' •The
Jews replied, 'We have a Law, and according to that Law he ought to be put to 10:33–36 Lv 24:16
death, because he has claimed to be Son of God.'

8, 9 When Pilate heard them say this his fears increased. •Re-entering the Praeto-
rium, he said to Jesus, 'Where do you come from?'[b] But Jesus made no answer. Is 53:7
10 Pilate then said to him, 'Are you refusing to speak to me? Surely you know I
11 have power to release you and I have power to crucify you?' •Jesus replied, 'You
would have no power over me at all if it had not been given you from above; that is 3:27;10:18j Ws 6:3
why the one who handed me over to you has the greater guilt.'[c] 8:21,44

18 **a.** A detachment from the Roman garrison in Jerusalem.

b. Probably the 'disciple' of 20:2seq., 'whom Jesus loved', the evangelist himself, *see* 19:27*l*.

c. This is all that John has to say about the Jewish trial because this trial, in fact, runs through the whole Gospel from the Baptist's cross-examination, 1:19, to the decision to kill Jesus, 11:49–53.

d. The Roman procurator's judicial court. 18:28–19:16 may be seen as an elaborately balanced drama in which the Jews demand Jesus' condemnation and eventually obtain it. But in fact Jesus is crowned king (19:2–3) and is seated on the chair of judgement (19:13) while the Jews pronounce their own condemnation by denying that Yahweh is their king (19:15).

e. To enter the house of a gentile was to incur legal impurity, cf. Ac 11:2seq.

f. The Romans had withdrawn from the Sanhedrin the power of life and death. Jesus could have been stoned by the Jews, cf. 8:59; 10:31, but not crucified ('lifted up') by them.

19 **a.** Mt and Mk put both mockery and scourging of Jesus after his condemnation, while Jn relates both before the condemnation. Scourging was a standard preliminary to crucifixion and presumably followed the sentence, but it is more likely that the mockery filled the delays of the night than that it intruded between sentence and execution.

b. i.e. not 'what district do you come from?' but 'what is the secret of your origin? Who are you?' First, the people of Cana, 2:9, then the Samaritan woman, 4:11, the apostles, the multitude, 6:5, the Jewish leaders, 7:27seq.; 8:14; 9:29seq., and now Pilate, are faced with the mystery of Jesus, 16:28; 17:25, which is the theme of the whole Gospel, 1:13.

c. The Jewish leaders, Caiaphas in particular, 11:51seq.; 18:14, but also Judas who betrayed him to them, 6:71; 13:2,11,21; 18:2,5.

Jesus is condemned to death

From that moment Pilate was anxious to set him free, but the Jews shouted, 'If you 12
set him free you are no friend of Caesar's; anyone who makes himself king is
Lk 23:2 defying Caesar.' ·Hearing these words, Pilate had Jesus brought out, and seated 13
him on the chair of judgement at a place called the Pavement, in Hebrew
Mt 26:17d Gabbatha.[d] ·It was the Day of Preparation,[e] about the sixth hour.[f] 'Here is your 14
king,' said Pilate to the Jews. ·But they shouted,[g] 'Away with him, away with him, 15
crucify him.' Pilate said, 'Shall I crucify your king?' The chief priests answered,
'We have no king except Caesar.' ·So at that Pilate handed him over to them to be 16
crucified.

‖Mt 27:31,33, 37–38 ‖Mk 15:20,22, 25–27 ‖Lk 23:33,38 Gn 22:6 Is 53:12 3:35t **The crucifixion**

They then took charge of Jesus,[h] ·and carrying his own cross he went out to the 17
Place of the Skull or, as it is called in Hebrew, Golgotha, ·where they crucified 18
him with two others, one on either side, Jesus being in the middle. ·Pilate wrote 19
out a notice and had it fixed to the cross; it ran 'Jesus the Nazarene, King of the
Jews'. ·This notice was read by many of the Jews, because the place where Jesus 20
was crucified was near the city, and the writing was in Hebrew, Latin and Greek.
So the Jewish chief priests said to Pilate, 'You should not write "King of the 21
Jews", but that the man said, "I am King of the Jews". ' ·Pilate answered, 'What I 22
have written, I have written.'

‖Mt 27:35 ‖Mk 15:24 ‖Lk 23:34 **Jesus' garments divided**

When the soldiers had finished crucifying Jesus they took his clothing and divided 23
it into four shares, one for each soldier. His undergarment was seamless,[i] woven in
one piece from neck to hem; ·so they said to one another, 'Instead of tearing it, 24
let's throw dice to decide who is to have it.' In this way the words of scripture were
fulfilled:

Ps 22:18

> *They divide my garments among them*
> *and cast lots for my clothes.*

That is what the soldiers did.

‖Mt 27:55–56 ‖Mk 15:40–41 ‖Lk 23:49 **Jesus and his mother**

Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother[j] and his mother's sister,[k] Mary the wife of 25
Clopas, and Mary of Magdala. ·Seeing his mother and the disciple whom he loved 26
2:4c standing near her, Jesus said to his mother, 'Woman, this is your son.' ·Then to the 27
disciple he said, 'This is your mother.'[l] And from that hour the disciple took her
into his home.

‖Mt 27:48–50 ‖Mk 15:36–37 ‖Lk 23:46 5:39q Ps 22:15;69:21 **The death of Jesus**

After this, Jesus knew that everything had now been completed and, so that the 28
scripture should be completely fulfilled, he said:

> *I am thirsty.*

A jar full of sour wine stood there; so, putting a sponge soaked in the wine on a 29
hyssop stick,[m] they held it up to his mouth. ·After Jesus had taken the wine he 30
4:34k;10:18j; 17:4 said, 'It is fulfilled';[n] and bowing his head he gave up his spirit.[o]
Mt 8:20par.

The pierced Christ

19:14 Dt 21:23 Ga 3:13 It was the Day of Preparation, and to avoid the bodies' remaining on the cross 31
during the Sabbath—since that Sabbath was a day of special solemnity—the Jews
asked Pilate to have the legs broken[p] and the bodies taken away. ·Consequently 32
the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with
him and then of the other. ·When they came to Jesus, they saw[q] he was already 33

34 dead, and so instead of breaking his legs •one of the soldiers pierced his side with a
35 lance; and immediately there came out blood and water. [r] •This is the evidence of 1:33x;7:37–39 Ezk 47:1a 1 Jn 5:6–8
one who saw it [s]—true evidence, and he [t] knows that what he says is true—and he
36 gives it so that you may believe as well. •Because all this happened to fulfil the
words of scripture:

Not one bone of his will be broken; [u] Ex 12:46 Ps 34:20

37 and again, in another place scripture says:

They will look to the one whom they have pierced. [v] Zc 12:10 Rv 1:7

The burial ‖Mt 27:57–60 ‖Mk 15:42–46 ‖Lk 23:50–54

38 After this, Joseph of Arimathaea, who was a disciple of Jesus—though a secret
one because he was afraid of the Jews—asked Pilate to let him remove the body of 7:13+
39 Jesus. Pilate gave permission, so they [w] came and took it away. •Nicodemus came 3:1;7:50
as well—the same one who had first come to Jesus at night-time—and he brought
40 a mixture of myrrh and aloes, weighing about a hundred pounds. •They took the
body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, following the Jewish 11:44
41 burial custom. •At the place where he had been crucified there was a garden, and
42 in this garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been buried. •Since it was the
Jewish Day of Preparation and the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

C: THE DAY OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION

The empty tomb ‖Mt 28:1–8,10f ‖Mk 16:1–8 ‖Lk 24:1–11

1 **20** It was very early on the first day of the week [e] and still dark, when Mary of
Magdala came to the tomb. She saw that the stone had been moved away
2 from the tomb •and came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one 13:22–23; 18:15
whom Jesus loved. 'They have taken the Lord out of the tomb,' she said, 'and we
don't know where they have put him.'

3, 4 So Peter set out with the other disciple to go to the tomb. •They ran together,
5 but the other disciple, running faster than Peter, reached the tomb first; •he bent

d. Probably meaning 'elevated place', 'mound'.

e. In the course of this day, the Passover supper was made ready (it was to be eaten after sunset, *see* Ex 12:6c) and everything necessary prepared so that the feast could be celebrated without violating the rest prescribed by the Law.

f. About noon, the time by which all yeast had to be removed from the house; during the Passover unleavened bread ('azymes') was to be eaten, *see* Ex 12:15seq. It is possible that the evangelist wishes to call attention to this coincidence; cf. 1 Co 5:7.

g. var. 'answered'.

h. add. 'and led him away'. In Jn the chief stress in this passage is on the notice proclaiming Jesus' kingship, which Pilate refuses to modify. The royal dignity of Jesus has been stressed throughout Jn's Passion narrative: Jesus controls his arrest (18:4–11); the trial is an assertion of his kingship (18:28d); he carries his cross like a royal banner (19:17). It is truly the hour of his exaltation (3:35t; 12:32j).

i. Possibly allusion to the priesthood of the crucified: the high-priestly robe was without seam.

j. Her presence is mentioned only by John, *see* 2:1b.

k. Either Salome, mother of the sons of Zebedee (*see* Mt 27:56 and par.) or else, if the phrase refers to what follows, 'Mary, the wife of Clopas'.

l. The reference to the OT (vv. 24,28,36,37) and the unusual term 'woman' suggest that the evangelist sees more in this than the gesture of a dutiful son: namely, a declaration that Mary, the new Eve, is the spiritual mother of all the faithful, of whom the beloved disciple is the type and representative, cf. 15:10–15.

m. conj. 'on a spear'.

n. i.e. the Father's work: the salvation of the world through the sacrifice of Jesus. Jn does not record the desolate cry of Mt 27:46 and Mk 15:34: it is the calm majesty of Jesus' death that he wishes to emphasise, cf. Lk 23:46; Jn 12:27f.

o. The last breath of Jesus is the first moment of the outpouring of the Spirit, 1:33x; 20:22.

p. To hasten death.

q. var. 'when they found'.

r. var. 'water and blood'. The significance of the incident is brought out by two texts of scripture (vv. 36seq.). The blood shows that the lamb has truly been sacrificed for the salvation of the world, 6:51; the water, symbol of the Spirit, shows that the sacrifice is a rich source of grace. Many of the Fathers interpret the water and blood as symbols of baptism and the Eucharist, and these two sacraments as signifying the Church, which is born like a second Eve from the side of another Adam, cf. Ep 5:23–32.

s. The disciple of v. 26, probably the evangelist himself.

t. Referring either to 'the one who saw' or else to God (or Christ) whom 'the one who saw' calls to witness.

u. Two texts are here combined: one from a Psalm describing how God protects the upright in persecution (cf. Ws 2:18–20), of whom the 'servant of Yahweh' (Is 53) is the ideal example; the other, a ritual instruction for the preparation of the Passover lamb, *see* Jn 1:29v and 1 Co 5:7.

v. 'They will look', in the Johannine sense of 'see and understand'. For Jn, the Roman soldier symbolises the gentiles who will be converted, *see* 12:20–21,32 and notes. Similarly, Mt 27:54 and Mk 15:39j, *see also* Mt 24:30; Lk 23:47,48; Rv 1:7.

w. var. 'he'.

20 a. This was to become 'the Lord's Day', the Christian Sunday; *see* Rv 1:10.

down and saw the linen cloths lying on the ground, but did not go in. [b] ·Simon 6
11:44;19:40 Lk 24:12 Peter, following him, also came up, went into the tomb, saw the linen cloths lying on the ground ·and also the cloth that had been over his head; this was not with the 7
linen cloths but rolled up in a place by itself. ·Then the other disciple who had 8
reached the tomb first also went in; he saw and he believed. ·Till this moment they 9
5:39q;14:26r 1 Co 15:4 had still not understood the scripture, [c] that he must rise from the dead. ·The 10
disciples then went back home.

‖Mt 28:9–10 ‖Mk 16:9–11 **The appearance to Mary of Magdala**

But Mary was standing outside near the tomb, weeping. Then, as she wept, she 11
Lk 24:4 stooped to look inside, ·and saw two angels in white sitting where the body of Jesus 12
had been, one at the head, the other at the feet. ·They said, 'Woman, why are you 13
Sg 3:1–3 weeping?' 'They have taken my Lord away,' she replied, 'and I don't know where
they have put him.' ·As she said this she turned round and saw Jesus standing 14
Lk 24:16d there, though she did not realise that it was Jesus. ·Jesus said to her, 'Woman, why 15
are you weeping? Who are you looking for?' Supposing him to be the gardener,
she said, 'Sir, if you have taken him away, tell me where you have put him, and I
10:3–4 will go and remove him.' ·Jesus said, 'Mary!' She turned round [d] then and said to 16
Mk 10:51f him in Hebrew, 'Rabbuni!' [e]—which means Master. ·Jesus said to her, 'Do not 17
Sg 3:4 cling to me, [f] because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go and find my
1:1a;12:32j Ps 89:26 brothers, [g] and tell them: I am ascending to my Father [h] and your Father, to my
God and your God.' ·So Mary of Magdala told the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord,' 18
and that he had said these things to her.

‖Mk 16:14–18 ‖Lk 24:36–49 **Appearances to the disciples**

In the evening of that same day, the first day of the week, the doors were closed in 19
14:27;16:16 1 Co 15:5 the room where the disciples were, [i] for fear of the Jews. Jesus came and stood
among them. He said to them, 'Peace be with you,' ·and, after saying this, he 20
Lk 24:16 15:11;16:22 showed them his hands and his side. The disciples were filled with joy at seeing the
Lord, ·and he said to them again, 'Peace be with you. 21

17:18 Mt 28:19 Mk 16:15
'As the Father sent me,
so am I sending you.'

1:33x Gn 2:7 Ezk 37:9 Lk 24:47seq. Ac 1:8j Mt 16:19i;18:18j After saying this he breathed [j] on them and said: 22

Receive the Holy Spirit.
If you forgive anyone's sins, 23
they are forgiven;
if you retain anyone's sins,
they are retained.

11:16;14:5 Thomas, called the Twin, who was one of the Twelve, was not with them when 24
Jesus came. ·So the other [k] disciples said to him, 'We have seen the Lord,' but he 25
answered, 'Unless I can see the holes that the nails made in his hands and can put
my finger into the holes they made, and unless I can put my hand into his side, I
refuse to believe.' ·Eight days later the disciples were in the house again and 26
Thomas was with them. The doors were closed, but Jesus came in and stood among
14:27 Lk 24:39–40 1 Jn 1:1 19:34r them. 'Peace be with you,' he said. ·Then he spoke to Thomas, 'Put your finger 27
here; look, here are my hands. Give me your hand; put it into my side. [l] Do not be
unbelieving any more but believe.' ·Thomas replied, 'My Lord and my God!' 28
Jesus said to him: 29

4:48 Lk 1:45 1 P 1:8
You believe because you can see me.
Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe. [m]

IV: FIRST CONCLUSION

30 There were many other signs that Jesus worked in the sight of the disciples, but 12:37;21:25
31 they are not recorded in this book. ·These are recorded so that you may believe Dt 34:10:12
that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing this you may have life
through his name. Ac 3:16*l*

D: EPILOGUE[a]

I: THE APPEARANCE ON THE SHORE OF TIBERIAS Mt 26:32 par.;28:7

1 **21** Later on, Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples. It was by the Sea of
2 Tiberias, and it happened like this: ·Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, 11:16;14:5
Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee and two more of his disciples
3 were together. ·Simon Peter said, 'I'm going fishing.' They replied, 'We'll come Lk 5:4–10
with you.' They went out and got into the boat but caught nothing that night.
4 When it was already light, there stood Jesus on the shore, though the disciples
5 did not realise that it was Jesus. ·Jesus called out, 'Haven't you caught anything, 20:14
6 friends?' And when they answered, 'No,' ·he said, 'Throw the net out to starboard Lk 24:16d
and you'll find something.' So they threw the net out and could not haul it in
7 because of the quantity of fish.[b] ·The disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, 'It is 20:8
the Lord.' At these words 'It is the Lord,' Simon Peter tied his outer garment
8 round him (for he had nothing on) and jumped into the water. ·The other disciples
came on in the boat, towing the net with the fish; they were only about a hundred
yards from land.
9 As soon as they came ashore they saw that there was some bread there and a Lk 24:41–43
10 charcoal fire with fish cooking on it. ·Jesus said, 'Bring some of the fish you have
11 just caught.' ·Simon Peter went aboard and dragged the net ashore,[c] full of big
fish, one hundred and fifty-three of them; and in spite of there being so many the
12 net was not broken. ·Jesus said to them, 'Come and have breakfast.' None of the 4:27
disciples was bold enough to ask, 'Who are you?' They knew quite well it was
13 the Lord. ·Jesus then stepped forward, took the bread and gave it to them, 6:11
14 and the same with the fish. ·This was the third time that Jesus revealed himself to 20:19–23, 26–29
the disciples after rising from the dead.
15 When they had eaten, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon son of John, do you
love me more than these others do?' He answered, 'Yes, Lord, you know I love
16 you.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed my lambs.' ·A second time he said to him, 'Simon
son of John, do you love me?' He replied, 'Yes, Lord, you know I love you.' Jesus
17 said to him, 'Look after my sheep.' ·Then he said to him a third time, 'Simon son

b. The disciple acknowledges that Peter has some title to precedence, cf. 21:15–17.

c. The evangelist does not quote any text. He means to underline the unpreparedness of the disciples for the Easter revelation, despite the scriptures, cf. 2:22; 12:16; Lk 24:27,32,44–45.

d. var. 'She recognised him'.

e. A more solemn address than 'Rabbi', and often used when speaking to God; it is therefore some approximation to Thomas' profession of faith, v. 28.

f. Mary has fallen at the feet of Jesus to embrace them, cf. Mt 28:9.

g. var. 'the brothers'.

h. This assertion does not contradict the account of Ac 1:3seq. Christ 'went up' to the Father, that is to say, his body entered into glory, 3:13; 6:62; Ep 4:10; 1 Tm 3:16; Heb 4:14; 6:19seq.; 9:24; 1 P 3:22; cf. Ac 2:33t, 36w, on the day he rose from the tomb, Jn 20:17; Lk 24:51. The significance of the ascension, 40 days later, Ac 1:2seq., 9–11, is that the time of earthly companionship with Jesus is over, that he is now 'seated at the right hand of God' and will not return before his final coming (the *parousia*).

i. add. 'assembled'.

j. The breath of Jesus is a symbol of the Spirit ('breath' in Hebrew); he sends forth the Spirit who will make all things new, Gn 1:2; 2:7; Ws 15:11; Ezk 37:9. *See* 19:30*o* and Mt 3:16n.

k. om. 'other'.

l. In the closing words of his Gospel, John again calls the Christian reader's attention to the wound in Christ's side, *see* 19:34r.

m. On the apostles' witness, *see* 17:20–23; *also see* Ac 1:8k.

21 a. Added either by the evangelist or by one of his disciples.

b. This generosity recalls Cana, 2:6, the miracle of the loaves, 6:11seq., the living water, 4:14; 7:37seq., the life which the good shepherd gives, 10:10, and the richness of the Spirit bestowed on Jesus, 3:34.

c. In the Synoptics, this operation is an image of the kingdom's coming, Mt 13:47seq., or of the apostles' task, Mt 4:19 and par. Here, too, it evidently symbolises the apostolic mission under Peter's direction, cf. Jn 21:15–17.

13:37-38; 18:17,25-27 1:48dd 6:68seq. Mt 16:17-19 Lk 22:31-32

of John, do you love me?' Peter was hurt that he asked him a third time, [d] 'Do you love me?' [e] and said, 'Lord, you know everything; you know I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed my sheep. [f]

In all truth I tell you, 18
when you were young
you put on your own belt
and walked where you liked;
but when you grow old
you will stretch out your hands,
and somebody else will put a belt round you
and take you where you would rather not go.'

12:33 13:31;17:1 13:36

In these words he indicated the kind of death [g] by which Peter would give glory to 19
God. After this he said, 'Follow me.' [h]

Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them—the one 20
13:25 who had leant back close to his chest at the supper and had said to him, 'Lord, who is it that will betray you?' ·Seeing him, Peter said to Jesus, 'What about him, 21
Lord?' ·Jesus answered, 'If I want him to stay behind till I come, [i] what does it 22
matter to you? You are to follow me.' ·The rumour then went out among the 23
brothers that this disciple would not die. Yet Jesus had not said to Peter, 'He will not die,' but, 'If I want him to stay behind till I come.' [j]

B: SECOND CONCLUSION

This disciple is the one who vouches for these things and has written them down, 24
and we know [k] that his testimony is true.

There was much else that Jesus did; if it were written down in detail, I do not 25
suppose the world itself would hold all the books that would be written.

d. It recalls his three denials, 13:38; 18:17,25–27.

e. 'Love' is expressed in the text by two different verbs which denote respectively love and friendship or cherishing. But it is unclear whether this is anything more than a stylistic variation. Similarly with the variation 'lambs'—'sheep'.

f. To the triple profession of love by Peter Jesus replies with a triple investiture. He entrusts to Peter the care of ruling the flock in his name, cf. Mt 16:18; Lk 22:31seq. It is possible that the triple repetition indicates a contract made in due form, according to semitic custom, cf. Gn 23:3–20.

g. Martyrdom.

h. This takes up Jesus' saying to Peter after the washing of the feet, 13:36.

i. A reference perhaps to the Second Coming, cf. 1 Co 11:26; 16:22; Rv 1:7; 22:7,12,17,20.

j. add. 'what does it matter to you?'

k. Possibly the words of a group of John's disciples.

ACTS
OF THE APOSTLES

INTRODUCTION TO
ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

§1 Acts and the third Gospel must originally have been two parts of a book that today we should call 'a history of the rise of Christianity'. About AD 150, when Christians wanted the four gospels bound in one codex, these two parts were separated. The title 'Acts of the Apostles', or 'Acts of Apostles', which may have been given to the second part at this time, follows normal contemporary hellenistic usage as in, e.g., the 'Acts' of Hannibal and the 'Acts' of Alexander, etc. That these two books of the New Testament were once closely associated is suggested: **1** By their Prologues: both are addressed (see Lk 1:1–4) to someone called Theophilus and Ac 1:1, having referred to the Gospel as an 'earlier work', goes on by way of introduction to say why the Gospel was written and to summarise its closing incidents (appearances of the risen Christ, ascension). **2** By their literary affinity: vocabulary, grammar and style are not only consistent all through Acts, showing that it is a literary unity, but they are also characteristic of the third Gospel, which makes it almost certain that both books are by the same author.

The only identification of the author ever suggested by church writers is Luke, and no critic ancient or modern has ever seriously suggested anyone else. This identification was already known to the churches about the year AD 175, as is shown by the Roman canon known as the Muratorian Fragment, by the Anti-Marcionite Prologue, by St Irenaeus, Clement and Origen in Alexandria and by Tertullian; this is supported by internal evidence: the author must have been a Christian of the apostolic age, either a thoroughly hellenised Jew or, more probably, a well-educated Greek very well acquainted with the LXX and with Judaism. The most straightforward (though not the only possible) explanation of the use of the first person plural in some passages of the second part of Acts is that the author accompanied Paul on his journeys. Among Paul's companions tradition has always pointed to Luke, a Syrian from Antioch and a doctor of non-Jewish origin (Col 4:10–14); Paul describes him as a close friend who stuck by him during his captivity in Rome (Col 4:14; Phm 24). To judge from the passages in the first person plural, he accompanied Paul on the second (Ac 16:10seq.) and third (Ac 20:6seq.; cf. perhaps 2 Co 8:18) missionary journeys. The reason why he does not figure in lists like that of Ac 20:4 is that he compiled these lists himself. Various arguments have, however, convinced a number of scholars that the author of Acts, and so also of the third Gospel, cannot have been a companion of Paul, but is a writer whose identity is otherwise completely unknown. Chief among these arguments are differences between Acts and

Paul's letters in theological outlook and in the accounts of some incidents; some explanations for these differences will be suggested below.

There is no clear early tradition about either date or place of writing (Greece, after Paul's death? Rome, before the end of Paul's trial?), and we have to rely on internal evidence. Acts ends with Paul's Roman captivity in 61–63, and it must therefore be later than this, and later also than Mark. A date as late as 80–100, which has been suggested by some critics, is possible, but (as in Luke) there are no conclusive indications in Acts of a date later than AD 70.

§2 The precise date, however, becomes a secondary consideration once the book can establish its credentials either as an eyewitness account for the events that fill a major section or as based on adequate sources at the author's disposal. Analysis of Acts confirms Lk 1:1–4 (meant as prologue to the complete work) by suggesting that Luke must have collected a great deal of detailed evidence from a variety of sources, because in spite of the way Luke has superimposed his own personality in reworking this material he has not succeeded in disguising the various sources he has used. Not only does the flavour of the doctrinal content change according to the context so that in appropriate sections it seems convincingly primitive, but also there is considerable variation in the literary style. In passages where Luke can control the style, for example in the travel diary, the Greek is excellent; but in his description of the early history of the Palestinian community we find that the language becomes full of semitisms, clumsy and even inaccurate. In some places this is not only because he is trying to copy Old Testament LXX Greek, but mostly it is because he is reproducing his various Aramaic sources as closely as possible. In Luke this can be checked by comparing it with two of its sources, but unfortunately there are no texts with which to compare Acts; it is possible, however, to try to determine what kinds of source were used. One suggestion was that the whole of 1–15:35 is based on a single Aramaic document, but this is far too sweeping as it does not account for all the editing that Luke has unmistakably done in these chapters. His sources were more restricted and more varied than this, and it is not even certain (though probable in some cases, such as Stephen's speech) that they were in written form. It is rather a question of oral traditions which he received from various circles. These provided him with partial accounts which he then combined as best he could to compose his book. Without being dogmatic about details, it is possible to classify traditions collected by Luke. **1** Those that relate to the primitive Jerusalem community, ch. 1–5. **2** Biographical notes about individuals: e.g. Peter, 9:32–11:18; ch. 12, or Philip, 8:4–40; these details could have been supplied at first hand by people like Philip, the evangelist whom Luke met at Caesarea, 21:8. **3** Details about the early days of the community in Antioch and its foundation by Hellenists: these were obviously provided by that community, 6:1–8:3; 11:19–30; 13:1–3. **4** Paul's conversion and missionary journeys: these were things Paul himself could have told Luke, 9:1–30; 13:4–14:28; 15:36seq., though places can be found at which Luke's account of an incident differs from the version in Paul's own letters, and it is clear that the lesson he meant to teach was more important to him than literal historicity. **5** For Paul's later journeys Luke seems to have

had his own notes, for this is the most straightforward explanation of the 'we' passages which are precisely the sections where the peculiarities of Luke's own style are most concentrated, 11:28; 16:10–17; 20:5–21:18; 27:1–28:16. Luke managed to organise all this material into a single book by sorting it out chronologically as best he could and linking the episodes together with frequent editorial formulae, e.g. 6:7; 9:31; 12:24.

§3 This excellent documentation gives Acts a unique historical worth. Obviously the process of editing has involved a certain amount of anticipation and fusion. Thus the events of ch. 12 should come before the visit of Barnabas and Saul to Jerusalem mentioned in 11:30; 12:25, unless this visit is to be identified with that of ch. 15; though the account of the 'council of Jerusalem' (ch. 15) may itself be a conflation of two quite distinct debates (*see* notes). Slight adjustments like this do not affect the basic reliability of the work, provided that it is understood within its literary type. Like all historians of his time, Luke does not restrict himself to a material exactitude, but rather seeks to draw a theological lesson from events. This concern has its influence on the way he treats his sources. Thus there is a deliberate parallelism between the miracles of Peter and those of Paul: compare 3:1–10 and 14:8–10; 5:15 and 19:12; 5:19 or 12:6–11,17 and 16:23–26,40; 8:15–17 and 19:2–7; 8:18–24 and 13:6–11; 9:36–42 and 20:7–12. In addition, these miracle stories sometimes have parallels in the Gospel: compare 3:6–7 and Lk 4:39; Mk 1:31; compare 9:33–34 and Lk 5:24b–25; 20:10,12 and Lk 8:52–55; it is also clear that the dying words of Stephen (7:59–60) resemble those of Jesus (Lk 23:34,46). Paul's speech at Antioch in Pisidia (13:16–41) is not without analogies with those of Peter at Jerusalem (2:14–36; 3:12–26; 4:8–12; 5:29–32) and at Caesarea (10:34–43). It is therefore reasonable to suppose that Luke did not receive these speeches just as they are, but composed them freely, using the pattern of the first apostolic preaching, with its basic proclamation and its arguments drawn from the scriptures. This pattern he carefully adapted to the various circumstances in which he placed the speeches. A contrast has often been made between the portrait of Paul drawn by Acts and that which appears in the Pauline epistles. It is true that Luke attributes to the apostle a more conciliatory attitude than is shown by the epistles: compare Ac 21:20–26 with Ga 2:12seq.; Ac 16:3 with Ga 2:3; 5:1–12; but due weight must be given to the different interests which inspired these two literary sources. Paul is an advocate who does not shrink from showing unyielding attitudes (but *see also* 1 Co 9:19–23), while Luke is concerned to show the profound unity which existed among the first brethren.

Nevertheless this conciliatory attitude of Acts must not be exaggerated. The Tübingen school thought Acts was a second-century attempt to smooth over the quarrel between Petrine and Pauline factions. Such a radical attack on the objectivity of Acts would not be put forward by any exegete today, if only because the date it suggests is far too late. To what extent, however, is Acts a piece of special pleading? To what extent does it twist the facts that it records? Was Luke's purpose in writing Acts to present a portrait of Paul that would convince the Roman authorities that Paul was not a political criminal? This is certainly one aspect of Acts but not the only one, and in any case such a portrait of Paul need not necessarily be tendentious. The

two things he stresses are the exclusively religious nature of Paul's battle with the Jews, and Paul's loyalty to the Roman authorities. However, as has been said, Luke was not merely interested in giving a portrait of Paul to serve as evidence for the Roman courts: what he aimed at was to write the history of the beginnings of Christianity.

§4 This assertion is based on the *structure* of the book as summarised in the words of Christ with which it begins, 'You will be my witnesses not only in Jerusalem but throughout Judaea and Samaria, and indeed to the earth's remotest end,' Ac 1:8. Acts begins with Jerusalem where the faith takes firm root and the first community grows in grace and numbers, ch. 1–5. This community begins to expand, under the stimulus of the world-wide outlook of converts from hellenistic Judaism especially after the martyrdom of Stephen when these converts were expelled, 6:1–8:3. The faith spreads north of Jerusalem to Samaria, 8:4–25, south west to the coast and north again to Caesarea, 8:26–40; 9:32–11:18. The insertion here of Paul's conversion shows that the faith had already reached Damascus and indicates that it was soon to reach Cilicia, 9:1–30. Refrains like the one that closes this section (9:31, which adds Galilee to the list) draw attention repeatedly to the spread of the faith. Acts turns next to the reception of the good news in Antioch, 11:19–26, and shows how Antioch became a missionary headquarters, while keeping in touch with Jerusalem, and how Jerusalem reached a solution to the main problems at Antioch connected with the missions, 11:27–30; 15:1–35. This leads on to the spread of the faith to the gentiles. After his imprisonment following the conversion of Cornelius, Peter goes off to some place that is not named, ch. 12, and from that point Paul takes over the leading part in Luke's story. His first journey takes the faith to Cyprus and Asia Minor, ch. 13–14; his next two journeys take it as far as Macedonia and Greece, 15:36–18:22; 18:23–21:17. After each one he returns to Jerusalem where eventually he is arrested and later imprisoned at Caesarea, 21:18–26:32. This leads him to Rome, where, still a missionary in spite of being a prisoner in chains, Paul preaches the good news, ch. 27–28, and since Rome could be taken as 'the ends of the earth' by anyone who thought of Jerusalem as the centre, Luke has reached a point where he can stop.

One may regret that Luke does not write about what the other apostles did, or describe how the Church was founded, for example, in Rome where it had been established before Paul's arrival (*see* Romans, written during Paul's third journey) or in Alexandria. Luke does not even suggest that Peter had an apostolate outside Palestine: the focus of attention shifts to Paul in ch. 13 as the faith is carried by Hellenists to gentiles, and there is little about developments in Jerusalem. His interest lies in: **1** The spiritual energy inside Christianity that motivates its expansion, and **2** The spiritual doctrine he can deduce from the facts at his disposal.

§5 Here it is possible to list only the main points that we learn from Acts. **1** The *kerygma* of the apostles is centred on faith in Christ, and in Acts this is presented with many slight variations that make it possible for us to recover the history of how this teaching developed; e.g. the earliest Christians are shown as feeling no need to go beyond the stage of contemplating the triumph of the human Jesus who has become the Lord by his resurrection, 2:22–36;

but later Paul is made to give him the title 'Son of God', 9:20. **2** From the speeches we know the main scriptural texts that (under the Spirit's guidance) formed the basis both for a systematic Christology and for arguments with the Jews: e.g. the themes of the servant, 3:13,26; 4:27,30; 8:32–33, and the second Moses, 3:22seq.; 7:20seq.; the proof of the resurrection from Ps 16:8–11 (Ac 2:24–32; 13:34–37); and the use of their own history to warn Jews against resisting grace, Ac 7:2–53; 13:16–41. Gentiles, of course, needed a more generalised theological argument, 14:15–17; 17:22–31, and though the apostles are primarily 'witnesses', 1:8k (as such Luke sums up their *kerygma* 2:22h, and records their miraculous 'signs') the most urgent problem facing the new Church was the admission of gentiles, and Acts provides important details about this, without, however, revealing the full extent of the difficulties and disagreements this must have caused within the Christian community, and even between its leaders, *see* Ga 2:11h. The Jerusalem brotherhood led by James remains faithful to the Jewish Law, 15:1,5; 21:20seq.; but the Hellenists, for whom Stephen acts as spokesman, want to break away from Temple worship. In Luke's account, Peter, but even more so Paul, gets the principle of salvation through faith in Christ recognised at the council of Jerusalem. This dispenses the gentiles from the need to be circumcised and from obeying the whole Law of Moses. As it is still true, however, that this salvation comes from Israel, Luke records how Paul always preached to the Jews first, and turned to the gentiles only after his fellow-Jews had rejected him, 13:5e. **3** Acts also provides important details about life in the earliest Christian communities: e.g. the way of prayer and sharing of goods known to the church in Jerusalem; the administration of baptism in water and baptism in Spirit, Ac 1:5f; celebration of the Eucharist, 2:42gg; early attempts at organisation, e.g. 'prophets' and 'teachers', 13:1a, the separate hierarchy appointed for the Hellenists, *see* 6:5f, the 'elders' who preside in the Jerusalem church, 11:30p, and those who are appointed by Paul in the churches he founds, 14:23. **4** All these developments in community life are attributed to the irresistible guidance of the Spirit. As Lk 4:1b insists on the importance of the Holy Spirit, so Acts (1:8j) attributes the spread of the developing Church to the continuous activity of the Holy Spirit—this is why the book has been called 'the gospel of the Spirit', and why it seems so full of spiritual joy and of wonder at God's works. **5** To this wealth of theology we must add the detailed factual information which we should otherwise lack, the psychological tact with which Luke presents his characters, the shrewdness and the craftsmanship of passages like the speech in the presence of Agrippa, ch. 26, and the pathos of scenes like the farewell to the Ephesian elders, 20:17–38. This book, the only one of its kind in the New Testament, is full of treasures.

§6 The texts of the New Testament have come down to us with a great number of minor variants, and for Acts those in the so-called 'Western' Text (Codex Bezae, the old Latin and old Syriac versions, and early ecclesiastical writers) are the most interesting. Because this Western Text, unlike the Alexandrian recension, was not critically edited in ancient times it contains many corrupt readings, but a number of its concrete and vivid details, absent from the other texts, could be authentic. The most important of these readings have been either mentioned in the footnotes or incorporated in the text.

ACTS
OF THE APOSTLES

Prologue

Lk 1:1–4 1 In my earlier work,[a] Theophilus, I dealt with everything Jesus had done and 1
1:22 taught from the beginning ·until the day he gave his instructions to the apostles 2
·Mt 28:19–20 Lk 24:49,51 1 Tm 3:16 10:40–41;13:31 Mt 28:10 Lk 24:42–43 he had chosen through the Holy Spirit,[b] and was taken up to heaven.[c] ·He had 3
2:33u ‖Lk 24:49 Ga 3:14 Ep 1:13 shown himself alive to them after his Passion by many demonstrations: for forty
11:16 Lk 3:16par. days he had continued to appear to them and tell them about the kingdom of God.[d]
While at table with them, he had told them not to leave Jerusalem,[e] but to wait 4
there for what the Father had promised. 'It is', he had said, 'what you have heard
me speak about: ·John baptised with water but, not many days from now, you are 5
going to be baptised[f] with the Holy Spirit.'

The ascension

Now having met together,[g] they asked him, 'Lord, has the time come for you to 6
Dn 2:21 Mt 24:36par. 1 Th 5:1–2 restore the kingdom to Israel?'[h] ·He replied, 'It is not for you to know times or 7
dates[i] that the Father has decided by his own authority, ·but you will receive the 8
4:33n Is 32:15;43:10 ·Mt 28:19 ‖Lk 24:47–48 2 K 2:11 Mk 16:19 ‖Lk 24:50–51 Jn 20:17h Rm 10:6 Ep 4:8–10 1 P 3:22 ·3:20 Zc 14:4 Lk 24:4 power of the Holy Spirit which will come on you,[j] and then you will be my
witnesses[k] not only in Jerusalem but throughout Judaea and Samaria, and indeed
to earth's remotest end.'[l]
As he said this he was lifted up while they looked on, and a cloud[m] took him 9
from their sight. ·They were still staring into the sky as he went when suddenly two 10
men in white were standing beside them ·and they said, 'Why are you Galileans 11
standing here looking into the sky? This Jesus[n] who has been taken up from you
into heaven will come back in the same way[o] as you have seen him go to heaven.'

I: THE CHURCH IN JERUSALEM

The group of apostles

So from the Mount of Olives, as it is called, they went back to Jerusalem, a short 12
distance away, no more than a Sabbath walk; ·and when they reached the city they 13
‖Lk 6:14–16par. went to the upper room where they were staying; there were Peter and John, James
and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of
Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Jude son of James.[p] ·With one heart all these 14
2:42,46;6:4 Rm 12:12 ·Lk 23:49 joined constantly in prayer,[q] together with some women, including Mary the
mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.[r]

Judas is replaced

One day Peter stood up to speak to the brothers[s]—there were about a hundred 15
and twenty people in the congregation, ·'Brothers,' he said, 'the passage of 16
1:20 Lk 22:47 scripture had to be fulfilled in which the Holy Spirit, speaking through David,
foretells the fate of Judas, who acted as guide to the men who arrested Jesus—
after being one of our number and sharing our ministry. ·As you know, he 17, 18

bought a plot of land with the money he was paid for his crime. He fell headlong ‖Mt 27:3–10
19 and burst open, and all his entrails poured out. ·Everybody in Jerusalem heard Ws 4:19
about it and the plot came to be called "Bloody Acre", in their language Hakel-
20 dama.' ·Now in the Book of Psalms it says:

Reduce his encampment to ruin Ps 69:25;
and leave his tent unoccupied.

And again:

Let someone else take over his office. Ps 109:8

21 'Out of the men who have been with us the whole time that the Lord Jesus was

1 **a.** The Gospel of Luke

b. This emphasises the part played by the Spirit in the first missionary activities of the apostles, vv. 5.8 and ch. 2, as in the opening of Christ's ministry, Lk 4:1.14.18.

c. One form of the Western text does not mention the ascension here.

d. The kingdom of God, Mt 4:17f, must be the main subject preached by the apostles, *see* Ac 8:12; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23.31, as it was the main thing preached by Christ, *see* Mt 3:2d.

e. For Luke, Jerusalem is the predestined centre of the whole saving work of God through Christ, Lk 2:22h, 38*o*, the place at which the earthly mission of Jesus culminates, and the starting-point for the universal mission of the apostles, 1:8.

f. The baptism of the Spirit foretold by John the Baptist, Mt 3:11 and par., and here promised by Jesus, will be initiated by the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost, Ac 2:1–4. Subsequently, the apostles, obedient to Christ's command, Mt 28:19, will continue to make use of baptism by water, Ac 2:41; 8:12.38; 9:18; 10:48; 16:15.33; 18:8; 19:5, as the ritual initiation into the messianic kingdom, *see* Mt 3:6e, but it will be 'in the name of Jesus', Ac 2:38y, and through belief in Christ as Saviour, *see* Rm 6:4a, will be able to absolve from sins and to give the Spirit, Ac 2:38. Connected with this Christian baptism by water there is the companion rite of the imposition of hands, 1 Tm 4:14e, the purpose of which is to give the gifts of the Spirit in as manifest a way as that in which they had been given at Pentecost, Ac 8:16–19; 9:17–18; 19:5–6 (but cf. 10:44–48); this is the origin of the sacrament of confirmation. Side by side with these Christian sacraments the baptism of John was for a time still being administered by certain of the less well-instructed early Christians, 19:3.

g. 1:6 takes up the narrative broken off in Lk 24:49.

h. The apostles still expect the messianic kingdom to be the political restoration of David's dynasty, *see* Mt 4:17f.

i. Human history is the unfolding of salvation, and it develops through the 'times and dates', *see* Dn 2:21; 1 Th 5:1, that God has always foreseen (Rm 16:25*l*; 1 Co 2:7; Ep 1:4; 3:9,11; Col 1:26; 2 Tm 1:9; cf. Mt 25:34): first there are the 'times' of preparation, Heb 1:2; 9:9; 1 P 1:11, and of God's patience, Ac 17:30; Rm 3:26; then follows the appointed time, Ga 4:4c, the moment long foretold for the Messiah to come and begin the era of salvation, Rm 3:26m; after this, the time that is to elapse before the final coming, 2 Co 6:2a; lastly, the great and final 'Day', 1 Co 1:8e (preceded by the 'last days', 1 Tm 4:1a) and the Last Judgement itself, Rm 2:6b. However, in the course of the NT itself, the vividness of this hope in a Second Coming, which is founded on the outlook of Jewish apocalyptic, wanes and gives way to a 'realised eschatology', *see* 1 Co 1:8e.

j. The Holy Spirit is a favourite theme of Luke (Lk 4:1b); he talks generally about the Holy Spirit as a Power, 1:8; 10:38; Lk 1:35; 24:49; Rm 15:13.19; 1 Co 2:4.5; 1 Th 1:5; Heb 2:4, sent from God by Christ, Ac 2:33, to broadcast the good news. **1** From the Spirit come the gifts, 1 Co 12:4seq., that guarantee the message: the gift of tongues, Ac 2:1a.4, of miracles, 10:38, of prophecy, 11:27m; 20:23; 21:11, of wisdom, 6:3,5,10. **2** The Spirit gives strength to proclaim Jesus as Messiah in spite of persecution, 4:8,31; 5:32; 6:10; cf. Ph 1:19, and to bear witness to him, 1:8; Mt 10:20 and par.; Jn 15:26; 2 Tm 1:7seq., *see* following note. **3** The Spirit guides the Church in her major decisions: the admission of gentiles, 8:29.40; 10:19.44–47; 11:12–16; 15:8, without obligation to observe the Law, 15:28; Paul's mission to the gentile world, 13:2seq.; 16:6–7; 19:1 (Western text), *see* Mt 3:16n. Ac also mentions the Spirit as received in baptism and forgiving sins, 2:38; *see* Rm 5:5e.

k. The primary function of the apostles is to bear witness: not only to Christ's resurrection, 2:32; 3:15; 4:33; 5:32; 13:31; 22:15; Lk 24:48, but also to the whole of his public life, 1:21; 10:39seq.; Lk 1:2; Jn 15:27.

l. Nothing can limit the apostolic mission, Is 45:14h. The progress outlined here follows the geographical plan of Ac: Jerusalem was destined to receive the good news, to be the centre from which it is now spreading, *see* Lk 2:38*o*.

m. The cloud is part of theophanies in OT, Ex 13:22h, and in NT, Lk 9:34–35 and par. In particular, Dn 7:13, it marks the coming of the Son of man, v. 11 of this passage; Mt 24:30q; cf. 1 Th 4:17; Rv 1:7; 14:14–16.

n. The western text omits 'into heaven'.

o. The glorious coming, the *parousia*, *see* notes on Mt 24 and Lk 17:22–37; 21:5–33.

p. 'Son' (of Alphaeus, of James) is not in the Greek. The apostle Jude is not the Jude 'brother' of Jesus, *see* Mt 13:55; Mk 6:3, and brother of James (Jude 1). Nor is it likely that the apostle James son of Alphaeus was James brother of the Lord, 12:17; 15:13; etc.

q. There are many examples in Acts of the earnest prayer enjoined, Mt 6:5c, and practised, Mt 14:23f, by Jesus. Communal prayer under the apostles is centred on the breaking of bread, Ac 2:42.46; 20:7–11. There is prayer on all important occasions, elections, ordinations and the promulgation of rulings, 1:24; 6:6; 13:3; 14:23, confirmation of the Samaritans, 8:15, on the occasion of persecutions, 4:24–31; 12:5.12. Individuals also are seen praying: Stephen for himself and his executioners, 7:59–60, Paul after his vision of Christ, 9:11, Peter and Paul before their miracles, 9:40; 28:8. Peter when God calls him to Cornelius, 10:9; 11:5, Cornelius himself as a man of prayer, 10:2,4,30–31, Paul and Silas in prison, 16:25, Paul taking leave of his friends at Miletus, 20:36, and at Tyre, 21:5. On most occasions it is a prayer of asking, also to obtain pardon in 8:22–24, prayer of praise, 16:25, thanksgiving, 28:15; finally witness to the faith: 'calling on the name of Jesus' is the hallmark of the Christian, 2:21.38; 9:14.21; 22:16.

r. Close relations of Jesus, *see* Mt 12:46*o*.

s. Besides its strict sense the word 'brother' has often in the Bible wider senses, a relation more or less distant, Gn 9:25; 13:8, a compatriot, Gn 16:12; Ex 2:11; Dt 2:4; 15:2; Ps 22:22. From there it passes to a deeper relationship by communion in the covenant. In the NT it very frequently denotes Christians, disciples of Christ, 6:3; 9:30; 11:1; 12:17; Mt 28:10; Jn 20:17; Rm 1:13, who, like him, do the will of the Father, Mt 12:50 and par., children of the Father of whom he is the First-born, Mt 25:40; Rm 8:29; Heb 2:11,17, between whom brotherly love reigns, Rm 12:10; 1 Th 4:9; 1 P 1:22; 1 Jn 3:14.

t. This account of the death of Judas differs from the version in Mt 27:3–10. It is not a death by hanging, like that of Ahitophel, 2 S 17:23, but is after the pattern of the death of the wicked in Ws 4:19, and the pouring out of his entrails mirrors the death of many a criminal in folk legends. The field 'of blood' is named not after the blood of Jesus, but that of Judas. Both traditions recall the fact of a sudden and ignominious end to the life of a traitor, and attach it with more or less success to the Hakeldama, well known in Jerusalem as a place of ill omen.

living with us, ·from the time when John was baptising until the day when he was 22
1:8k taken up from us—one must be appointed to serve with us as a witness to his resurrection.'

13:9f Having nominated two candidates, Joseph known as Barsabbas, whose surname 23
15:8 was Justus, and Matthias, ·they prayed, " 'Lord, you can read everyone's heart; 24
Jr 11:20+ Lk 16:15 show us therefore which of these two you have chosen ·to take over this ministry 25
Rv 2:23 and apostolate, which Judas abandoned to go to his proper place.' ·They then drew 26
Ex 33:7e 1 S 14:41r lots [v] for them, and as the lot fell to Matthias, he was listed as one of the twelve apostles. [w]

Pentecost [a]

Ex 23:14d 2 When Pentecost day came round, they [b] had all met together, ·when suddenly 1, 2
4:31 there came from heaven a sound as of a violent wind [c] which filled the entire
Ps 33:6;104:30 Jn 3:8d;20:22 house in which they were sitting; ·and there appeared to them tongues as of fire; [d] 3
1:5f Lk 1:15k these separated and came to rest on the head of each of them. ·They were all filled 4
1:8j with the Holy Spirit and began to speak different languages as the Spirit gave them
Mt 28:19 Lk 24:47 power to express themselves.
Col 1:23 Now there were devout men [e] living in Jerusalem from every nation under 5
heaven, ·and at this sound they all assembled, and each one was bewildered to 6
Gn 11:1–9,1a hear these men speaking his own language. ·They were amazed and astonished. 7
'Surely,' they said, 'all these men speaking are Galileans? ·How does it happen 8
that each of us hears them in his own native language? ·Parthians, Medes and 9
Elamites; people from Mesopotamia, Judaea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,
Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya round Cyrene; residents of 10
Rome—·Jews and proselytes [f] alike—Cretans and Arabs; [g] we hear them preaching 11
in our own language about the marvels of God.' ·Everyone was amazed and 12
1 Co 14:23 perplexed; they asked one another what it all meant. ·Some, however, laughed it 13
off. 'They have been drinking too much new wine,' they said.

Peter's address to the crowd

Then Peter stood up with the Eleven [h] and addressed them in a loud voice: 14
'Men of Judaea, and all you who live in Jerusalem, make no mistake about this,
but listen carefully to what I say. ·These men are not drunk, as you imagine; why, 15
2:33u it is only the third hour of the day. [i] ·On the contrary, this is what the prophet [j] 16
was saying:

In the last days [k]—the Lord declares— 17
Is 2:2 J1 3:1–5 *I shall pour out my Spirit on all humanity.*
•Rm 7:5c •11:27m *Your sons and daughters shall prophesy,*
your young people shall see visions,
your old people dream dreams.
Even on the slaves, men and women, 18
shall I pour out my Spirit.
I will show portents in the sky above 19
5:12 *and* signs *on the earth* below.
Mt 24:29par. *The sun will be turned into darkness* 20
and the moon into blood
before the day of the Lord comes, [l]
that great and terrible Day.
Rm 10:9–13 *And all who call on the name of the Lord will be saved.* [m] 21

Mt 2:23l 'Men of Israel, listen to what I am going to say: [n] Jesus the Nazarene was a man 22
10:38 Lk 5:17;24:19 commended to you by God by the miracles and portents and signs that God worked
Jn 5:36 through him when he was among you, as you know. ·This man, who was put into 23
your power by the deliberate intention [o] and foreknowledge of God, you took and
had crucified and killed by men outside the Law. [p] ·But God raised him to life, 24

freeing him from the pangs of Hades;[q] for it was impossible for him to be held in its power since, ·as David says of him:[r] Ps 18:5 13:34–37

I kept the Lord before my sight always, Ps 16:8–11
for with him at my right hand nothing can shake me.
So my heart rejoiced
my tongue delighted;
my body, too, will rest secure,
for you will not abandon me to Hades
or allow your holy one to see corruption.
You have taught me the way of life,
you will fill me with joy in your presence.

'Brothers, no one can deny that the patriarch David himself is dead and buried: his tomb is still with us.[s] ·But since he was a prophet, and knew that God *had sworn him* an oath *to make one of his descendants succeed him on the throne*, ·he spoke with foreknowledge about the resurrection of the Christ: he is the one who was *not abandoned to Hades*, and whose body did not *see corruption*. ·God raised 2 S 7:12 Ps 132:11 Mt 9:27m

u. var. 'He nominated' v. 23 and var. 'he prayed' v. 24, to give greater prominence to Peter's role.

v. This archaic way of electing, Ex 33:7e; 1 S 14:41r; Lk 1:9, will soon be replaced in the community by a less mechanical process, *see* 6:3–6; 13:2–3.

w. 'he was listed as one of the twelve apostles', Western text; *see* Mk 3:14c.

2 a. The phenomenon of Pentecost has elements common to the speaking in tongues experienced by Cornelius (10:46seq.; 11:15) and by the disciples of John at Ephesus (19:6), which Paul discusses in 1 Co 14. In none of these cases is there any question of a continuous speech of instruction, but what happens is praise of God (2:11; 10:46; 1 Co 14:2,16) by ecstatic speech which surprises the listeners (2:13; 1 Co 14:23). Analogous happenings in the ancient contemporary world show that these bursts of praise used words of foreign languages (2:6,11; 1 Co 14:10–11,21). Luke uses this fact to see in this occurrence at the beginning of the Church a foretaste of the preaching which was soon to carry the good news to all the peoples of the world, and thus undo the confusion of languages at the Tower of Babel (Gn 11:6–7). He could have been helped in this by a Jewish tradition which commemorated on the day of Pentecost the theophany at Sinai and which claimed that the voice of God, mediated by flames of fire, was then addressed to all the peoples of the world, but was rejected by all except Israel which accepted the Law. In this new Sinai all the peoples are challenged, and they accept.

b. Not the hundred and twenty, 1:15–26, but the group mentioned in 1:13–14.

c. 'Breath' and 'Spirit' are the same word in Hebrew (and in Greek and Latin), *see* Jn 3:8d.

d. The shape of the flames (Is 5:24; cf. Is 6:6–7) is here associated with the gift of tongues.

e. 'devout men' Sin. Western text 'Now the Jews who were living in Jerusalem were men from every nation under heaven.' The other texts have both 'devout men' and 'Jews'.

f. Gentile converts to Judaism who joined the chosen race by being circumcised. These proselytes are not the same as the God-fearers, 10:2b, who admire the Jewish religion and attend the synagogue but do not accept circumcision or the ritual prescribed by the Law. Jews and proselytes are not here additional classes of people: the terms qualify the nations just enumerated.

g. This list of peoples of the Mediterranean world, which runs roughly from east to west and from north to south, appears to depend on an ancient astrological calendar, known from other sources, in which the peoples were attached to the signs of the zodiac and listed in their order. Luke must have taken it over as a handy description of the inhabited world of his day. The mention of Judaea is hard to explain and has, since ancient times, occasioned many attempts at correction.

h. Peter speaks as leader of the apostolic body, *see* 1:15; 2:37; 3:4,6, 12; 4:8,13; 5:3,8,9,15,29; cf. ch. 10–11. *See* Mt 16:19i; Lk 22:32k. John is often joined to him, but rather as a sort of double, 3:1,3,4,11; 4:13,19; 8:14; cf. Lk 22:8. Peter's speech takes the form of a Jewish sermon, commenting on three texts of scripture in turn and applying them to the present situation. This is a recognised rabbinic technique.

i. About 9 am.

j. add. 'Joel'. • Vv. 17–21 quoted as in Western text; Alexandrian text favours the LXX.

k. The messianic era.

l. The day of the Lord's coming in glory, the 'Day of Yahweh', Am 5:18m. In Christian preaching, this 'Day' is that of Christ's return, Mt 24:1a.

m. The Christians style themselves 'those who invoke the name of the Lord', 9:14,21; 22:16; 1 Co 1:2; 2 Tm 2:22; the title 'Lord' indicates no longer Yahweh but Jesus, *see* Ac 3:16*l*; Ph 2:11. On Judgement Day people will be accepted or rejected according as to whether they have or have not invoked this name, i.e. acknowledged Jesus as Lord: see 4:12 and Rm 10:9.

n. The content of the earliest apostolic preaching (the *kerygma*) is here summarised for the first time (*see* 2:14–39; 3:12–26; 4:8–12; 5:29–32; 10:34–43; the five discourses of Peter and the discourse of Paul): **1** A witness, 1:8k, to Jesus' death and resurrection, 2:24q, and to his exaltation, 2:33t,36w. **2** It also provides certain details of Jesus' ministry; how it was heralded by John the Baptist, 10:37; 13:24, inaugurated by teaching and miracle, 2:22; 10:38, completed by the appearances of the risen Christ, 10:40,41; 13:31, and by the gift of the Spirit, 2:33; 5:32. **3** It places this story in its wider setting: it appeals to the past, adducing the OT prophecies, 2:23*o*,25r, and it surveys the future, the advent of the messianic era, inviting Jews and gentiles to repentance, 2:38x, so that Christ's glorious return may come the sooner, 3:19–21. The gospels, which are developments of the primitive preaching, adopt the same scheme.

o. The OT prophecies demonstrate this divine plan: 3:18; 4:28; 13:29, *see also* 8:32–35; 9:22; 10:43; 17:2–3; 18:5,28; 26:22–23,27; 28:23; Lk 18:31e; 22:22; 24:25–27,44.

p. In this case the Romans. The primitive *kerygma* accused the Jews in the same way, and confronted them with the decisive intervention of God in the raising of Jesus from the dead, 2:32,36; 3:13–17; 4:10; 5:30–31; 7:52; 10:39–40; 13:27–30; 17:31; *see* Rm 1:4c; 1 Th 2:14f.

q. 'of Hades' Western text; 'of death' *Text. rec.*, cf. vv. 27 and 31. 'Hades' in LXX is *sheol*, Nb 16:33f; Mt 16:18h.

r. Quoted according to LXX. In the Hebr. text the psalmist prays only for deliverance from imminent death 'You will not allow your faithful one to see the pit.' Hence the argument presupposes the Greek version which, by translating 'pit' (= grave) as 'corruption', introduces a new idea.

s. On the ancient Mount Sion, at a lower level than the Temple, 1 K 2:10. A wrong interpretation of this verse gave rise to the belief that the tomb of David was at the traditional place of the Last Supper, on the western hill which has been given the name Sion since the early Christian centuries.

1:8j this man Jesus to life, and of that we are all witnesses. ·Now raised to the heights 33
1:4–5;5f by God's right hand,[t] he has received from the Father the Holy Spirit, who was
Ezk 36:27f promised,[u] and what you see and hear is the outpouring of that Spirit. ·For David 34
Jn 15:26
Ep 4:8–11 himself never went up to heaven,[v] but yet he said:

Ps 110:1 *The Lord declared to my Lord,*
take your seat at my right hand,
till I have made your enemies 35
your footstool.

2:23p 'For this reason the whole House of Israel can be certain that the Lord and Christ 36
Ph 2:11p whom God has made is this Jesus whom you crucified.'[w]

The first conversions

Hearing this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, 37
16:30 'What are we to do, brothers?' ·'You must repent,'[x] Peter answered, 'and every 38
Lk 3:10
Mt 3:2c one of you must be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ[y] for the forgiveness of
1:5f your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ·The promise[z] that was 39
2:33u
Is 57:19 made is for you and your children, and for all *those who are far away,*[aa] *for all those*
Jl 3:5 *whom the Lord* our God *is calling to himself.*' ·He spoke to them[bb] for a long time 40
using many other arguments, and he urged them, 'Save yourselves from this
1:5f perverse generation.' ·They accepted what he said and were baptised. That very 41
Dt 32:5
Mt 17:17 day about three thousand were added to their number.[cc]
Lk 9:41
Ph 2:15
4:32–35; **The early Christian community**[dd]
5:12–16

These remained faithful to the teaching of the apostles,[ee] to the brotherhood,[ff] to 42
the breaking of bread[gg] and to the prayers.[hh]

=5:11–12a And everyone was filled with awe: the apostles worked many signs and 43
Lk 1:12g miracles.[ii]

=4:32,34–35 And all who shared the faith owned everything in common; ·they sold their 44, 45
goods and possessions and distributed the proceeds among themselves according
6:1 to what each one needed.

5:12,42 Each day, with one heart, they regularly went to the Temple but met in their 46
Lk 24:53
4:21,33;5:13 houses for the breaking of bread; they shared their food gladly[jj] and generously;
they praised God[kk] and were looked up to by everyone. Day by day the Lord 47
2:41cc added to their community those destined to be saved.[ll]

14:8–10 **The cure of a lame man**

Lk 8:51f 3 Once, when Peter and John were going up to the Temple for the prayers at the 1
ninth hour,[a] ·it happened that there was a man being carried along. He was a 2
cripple from birth; and they used to put him down every day near the Temple
entrance called the Beautiful Gate[b] so that he could beg from the people going in.
When this man saw Peter and John on their way into the Temple he begged from 3
2:14h them. ·Peter, and John too, looked straight at him and said, 'Look at us.' ·He 4, 5
turned to them expectantly, hoping to get something from them, ·but Peter said, 6
3:16/ 'I have neither silver nor gold, but I will give you what I have: in the name of Jesus
Mt 2:23/ 9:41 Christ the Nazarene, walk!'[c] ·Then he took him by the right hand and helped him 7
Mt 8:15+ to stand up. Instantly his feet and ankles became firm, ·he jumped up, stood, and 8
Is 35:6 began to walk, and he went with them into the Temple, walking and jumping and
Lk 7:22par. 2:47*ll* praising God. ·Everyone could see him walking and praising God, ·and they 9, 10
recognised him as the man who used to sit begging at the Beautiful Gate of the
Lk 1:12g Temple. They were all astonished and perplexed at what had happened to him.

2:22n **Peter's address to the people**

Everyone came running towards them in great excitement, to the Portico of 11
5:12 Solomon,[d] as it is called, where the man was still clinging to Peter and John.
Jn 10:23 When Peter saw the people he addressed them, 'Men of Israel, why are you so 12

surprised at this? Why are you staring at us as though we had made this man walk
13 by our own power or holiness? ·It is *the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our ancestors, who has glorified his servant*[e] Jesus whom you handed over[f] and then disowned[g] in the presence of Pilate after he had given his verdict to
14 release him. ·It was you who accused[h] the Holy[i] and Upright[j] One, you who
15 demanded that a murderer should be released to you ·while you killed the prince of life.[k] God, however, raised him from the dead, and to that fact we are witnesses;
16 and it is the name of Jesus which, through faith in him, has brought back the strength of this man whom you see here and who is well known to you. It is faith in him that has restored this man to health, as you can all see.[l]

Ex 3:6,15
Is 52:13 ·2:23*o*
Lk 23:22f
Lk 23:2,5
Lk 23:19,25

17 'Now I know, brothers, that neither you nor your leaders had any idea what you
18 were really doing;[m] ·but this was the way God carried out what he had foretold,
19 when he said through all his prophets that his Christ would suffer. ·Now you must
20 repent and turn to God,[n] so that your sins may be wiped out, ·and so that the Lord

13:27
1 Co 2:8
1 Tm 1:13
·Lk 18:31
2:38*y*
Mt 3:2*c*

t. Words borrowed from Ps 118 (v. 16 LXX 'The right hand of the Lord has raised me up') used in their preaching by the apostles who took it to be messianic: 4:11; Mt 21:9 and par., 42 and par.; 23:39; Lk 13:35; Jn 12:13; Heb 13:6; 1 P 2:7. But it is possible to translate 'Having been raised up to the right hand of God' and to see in this an introduction to the quotation (v. 34) of Ps 110:1, which is another theme of apostolic preaching: 7:55,56; Mt 22:44 and par.; 26:64 and par.; Mk 16:19; Rm 8:34; 1 Co 15:25; Ep 1:20; Col 3:1; Heb 1:3,13; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; 1 P 3:22.

u. According to the prophets, the gift of the Spirit would characterise the messianic era, Ezk 36:27f. Peter explains the miracle his hearers have witnessed as the 'pouring out' of this Spirit, foretold in Jl 3:1–2, by the risen Christ.

v. The argument is, apparently, that David lies in his tomb and therefore did not ascend into heaven; hence God's summons was addressed not to him but to the one who came out from the tomb.

w. Conclusion of the argument from scripture: it is by his resurrection that Jesus has been constituted the 'Lord' of whom Ps 110 speaks, and the 'Messiah' (Christ) to whom Ps 16 refers. From Ps 2:7 (Son of God), Ac 13:33x; Rm 1:4c; Heb 1:5; 5:5 develop a similar argument. *See also* 5:31 (leader and Saviour); 10:42 and Rm 14:9 (Judge and Lord of living and dead); Ph 2:9–11 (glorified Lord). By his resurrection Jesus entered upon the enjoyment of the divine prerogatives which were his by right of birth.

x. Each of the great apostolic discourses closes with a call to repentance (*see* Mt 3:2c) to obtain forgiveness of sins: 3:19,26; 5:31; 10:43; 13:38; *see also* 17:30; 26:20; Lk 1:77; 3:8; 5:32; 13:3.

y. Baptism is administered 'in the name of Jesus Christ' (*see* 1:5f) and the recipient 'invokes the name of the Lord Jesus' (*see* 2:21m; 3:16*f*) 8:16; 10:48; 19:5; 22:16; Rm 6:3; 1 Co 1:13,15; 6:11; 10:2; Ga 3:27; cf. Jm 2:7. Such expressions are not necessarily the actual liturgical formulae of baptism, cf. Mt 28:19; they may simply indicate its significance, namely, that the baptised profess their faith in Christ, and Christ adopts those who thenceforth are dedicated to him.

z. The promise is addressed primarily to the Jews, 3:25–26; 13:46; Rm 9:4.

aa. i.e. the gentiles, alluding to Is 57:19 quoted and explained in Ep 2:13–17; *see also* 22:21.

bb. Or 'he bore witness', cf. 8:25; 28:23.

cc. Luke repeatedly and deliberately notes the Church's numerical growth: v. 47; 4:4; 5:14; 6:1,7; 9:31p; 11:21,24; 16:5; cf. 12:24; 13:48–49; 19:20.

dd. Compare this passage with 4:32–35 and 5:12–16. These three composite editorial 'summaries' paint similar pictures of life in the first Christian community.

ee. Not the proclamation of the good news to non-Christians, cf. 15:35, but instructions for the newly converted in which the scriptures were explained in the light of the Incarnation.

ff. 'Brotherhood' (or 'fellowship'), 1 Co 1:9f, occurs here without further detail, cf. Ga 2:9. It certainly denotes community of goods, v. 44; 4:32–35, which expresses and strengthens community of spirit, v. 46; 4:32, as a result of sharing the gospel and all the benefits received in the apostolic community from God through Jesus Christ. But the sense is not limited to help on the social level, nor to a common ideology or feeling of solidarity.

gg. Cf. v. 46; 20:7,11; 27:35; Lk 24:30,35. In itself the phrase suggests a Jewish meal at which the one who presides pronounces a blessing before dividing the bread. For Christians, however, it implies the Eucharistic service, Lk 22:19 and par.; 24:35h; 1 Co 10:16; 11:24. This, v. 46, was celebrated not in the Temple but in private houses; an ordinary meal would accompany it, cf. 1 Co 11:20–34.

hh. Prayer in common, 1:14,24; 4:24–30; 6:4; 12:5.

ii. add. 'in Jerusalem, and upon all there was great fear.'

jj. Joy is the sequel of faith: 8:8,39; 13:48, 52; 16:34; cf. 5:41; Lk 1:14i; Rm 15:13.

kk. Cf. 3:8,9; 4:21; 13:48; 21:20; Lk 2:20g.

ll. When judgement comes the members of the Christian community are assured of salvation, 2:21m; *see also* 13:48 and Paul's letters. The Church is thus identified with 'the remnant of Israel', Is 4:3c, cf. Rm 9:27.

3 **a.** The time of evening sacrifice, *see* 10:3,30; Ex 29:39–42; Lk 1:8–10f. There is a clear parallel between the miracles of Peter and those of Paul, and also those of Jesus, *see* p. 1795.

b. Probably the gate known as 'Corinthian', which, to the east of the Sanctuary, led from the outer court or Court of the Gentiles, to the first inner court, or Court of Women.

c. var. 'get up and walk', cf. Lk 5:23–24, etc.

d. A porch or cloister along the eastern side of the Temple.

e. The Christians see in Jesus the mysterious 'servant' of Is 52:13–53:12 (quoted in part in Ac 8:32–33), *see* Is 42:1a. See below, v. 26; 4:27,30. His 'glorification' by God is his resurrection, v. 15, *see* Jn 17:5e.

f. Cf. Is 53:12. Same allusion to the servant song in 7:52; Rm 4:25; 8:32; Ga 2:20; Ep 5:2,25.

g. As they disowned Moses, 7:35, himself a figure of Christ.

h. var. 'disowned'.

i. Cf. 4.27,30: Jesus is the 'holy servant' of God. He is also 'the Holy One of God' and 'the Holy One' *par excellence*: 2:27; Mk 1:24j; Lk 1:35; 4:34; Jn 6:69; Rv 3:7.

j. *See* 7:52; 22:14; Is 53:11; *see also* Mt 27:19; Lk 23:47; 1 P 3:18; 1 Jn 2:1.

k. The one who leads his subjects to full life, imparting his own life to them. This same title of 'leader' is given, 7:27,35, to Moses who prefigures Christ, *see* 5:31k; Heb 2:10.

l. The 'name', according to the ancients, is inseparable from the person and shares his prerogatives, *see* Ex 3:13g. By the invocation of the name of Jesus, 2:21m,38y, his power is stirred to action, 3:6; 4:7,10,30; 10:43; 16:18; 19:13; Lk 9:49; 10:17; *see also* Jn 14:13,14; 15:16; 16:24,26; 20:31. Faith is of course required for this invocation to be effective, cf. 19:13–17; Mt 8:10b.

m. Apparently an allusion to Lk 23:34; cf. 7:60.

n. By 'repentance' a person 'comes back' to God, *see* Mt 3:2c. The gentiles must return to God by forsaking idols, cf. 14:15; 15:19–20; 26:18,20; 1 Co 10:7,14; Ga 4:9; 1 Th 1:9; the Jews must turn to the Lord by acknowledging Jesus as Lord; *see* Ac 9:35; 2 Co 3:16. The expression of 11:21, Lk 1:16, cf. 1 P 2:25, is somewhat different, *see also* Is 6:10, quoted in 28:27; Mt 13:15; Mk 4:12, cf. Jn 12:40.

2 P 3:11–13 may send the time of comfort. [o] Then he will send you the Christ he has predestined,
Mt 3:23–24 Mt 17:11 that is Jesus, [p] ·whom heaven must keep till the universal restoration [q] comes which 21
God proclaimed, speaking through his holy prophets. [r] ·Moses, for example, said, 22
7:37 Dt 18:15, 19 Mt 16:14c Jn 1:21t Mt 17:5par Lv 23:29 *"From among your brothers the Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me;*
you will listen to whatever he tells you. ·Anyone who refuses to listen to that prophet 23
shall be cut off from the people." ·In fact, all the prophets that have ever spoken, 24
from Samuel onwards, have predicted these days. [s]

Rm 9:4 2:39aa Gn 12:3b; 22:18 Ga 3:8–29 Rm 1:16 'You are the heirs of the prophets, the heirs of the covenant God made with 25
your ancestors when he told Abraham, *"All the nations of the earth will be*
blessed in your descendants". ·It was for you in the first place that God raised 26
up [t] his servant and sent him to bless you [u] as every one of you turns from his
wicked ways.' [v]

Peter and John before the Sanhedrin

5:17–18,24 Lk 22:4c **4** While they were still talking to the people the priests came up to them, 1
accompanied by the captain of the Temple and the Sadducees. [a] ·They were 2
extremely annoyed at their teaching the people the resurrection from the dead by
23:6–8; 24:15,21 1 Co 15:20–23 2:41cc proclaiming the resurrection of Jesus. ·They arrested them, and, as it was already 3
late, they kept them in prison till the next day. ·But many of those who had listened 4
to their message became believers; the total number of men had now risen to
something like five thousand.

Lk 22:66r Lk 3:2f It happened that the next day the rulers, elders and scribes [b] held a meeting in 5
Jerusalem ·with Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, Jonathan, [c] Alexander and all 6
the members of the high-priestly families. ·They made the prisoners stand in the 7
Lk 20:2 middle and began to interrogate them, 'By what power, and by whose name have
1:8j;2:14h,22n Lk 1:15k;12:12 you men done this?' ·Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, addressed them, 8
'Rulers of the people, and elders! ·If you are questioning us today about an act of 9
kindness to a cripple and asking us how he was healed, ·[d] you must know, all of 10
3:6,16l 2:23–24 you, and the whole people of Israel, that it is by the name of Jesus Christ the
Nazarene, whom you crucified, and God raised from the dead, by this name and by
Ps 118:22 Mt 21:42par. 1 P 2:4,7 no other that this man stands before you cured. ·This is *the stone which* you, *the* 11
builders, rejected but which *has become the cornerstone.* Only in him is there
salvation; ·for of all the names in the world given to men, this is the only one by 12
2:21m J1 3:5 which we can be saved.' [e]

Lk 12:11–12 par.;21; •Jn 7:15 They were astonished at the fearlessness shown by Peter and John, considering 13
that they were uneducated laymen; and they recognised them as associates of
Jesus; ·but when they saw the man who had been cured standing by their side, they 14
could find no answer. ·So they ordered them to stand outside while the Sanhedrin 15
Jn 11:47–48 had a private discussion. ·'What are we going to do with these men?' they asked. 16
'It is obvious to everybody in Jerusalem that a notable miracle has been worked
through them, and we cannot deny it. ·But to stop the whole thing spreading any 17
further among the people, let us threaten them against ever speaking to anyone in
this name again.'

So they called them in and gave them a warning [f] on no account to make 18
statements or to teach in the name of Jesus. ·But Peter and John retorted, 'You 19
5:29 must judge whether in God's eyes it is right to listen to you and not to God. ·We 20
1:8j Jr 20:9 Am 3:8 1 Co 9:16 2 Co 13:8 2 Tm 1:7–8 •2:47ll cannot stop proclaiming what we have seen and heard.' ·The court repeated the 21
threats and then released them; they could not think of any way to punish them,
since all the people were giving glory to God for what had happened. ·The man 22
who had been miraculously cured was over forty years old.

The apostles' prayer under persecution

As soon as they were released they went to the community and told them every- 23
thing the chief priests and elders had said to them. ·When they heard it they lifted 24
14:15l up their voice to God with one heart. 'Master,' they prayed, 'it is you who made

25 sky and earth and sea, and everything in them; •it is you who said through the Holy
Spirit and speaking through our ancestor David, your servant: [g]

Why this uproar among the nations, Ps 2:1–2
this impotent muttering of the peoples?
26 *Kings on earth take up position,*
princes plot together
against the Lord and his Anointed. [h]

27 'This is what has come true: in this very city Herod and Pontius Pilate [i] *plotted* Lk 23:7–12
together with the gentile *nations* and the *peoples* of Israel, against your holy servant 3:13e
28 Jesus whom you *anointed*, [j] •to bring about the very thing that you in your strength 10:38
29 and your wisdom [k] had predetermined should happen. •And now, Lord, take note 2:23*o*
of their threats and help your servants to proclaim your message with all fearless- 13:46gg; 18:9–10
30 ness, •by stretching out your hand to heal and to work miracles and marvels Ep 6:19
31 through the name of your holy servant Jesus.' •As they prayed, the house where 3:16*l*
they were assembled rocked. From this time they were all filled with the Holy
Spirit and began to proclaim the word of God fearlessly. [l] 1:8j

The early Christian community [m] 2:42–47;5: 12–16

32 The whole group of believers was united, heart and soul; no one claimed private Jn 17:11,21 Ph 1:27
ownership of any possessions, as everything they owned was held in common. =2:44–45
33 The apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus with great 1:8k
power, [n] and they were all accorded great respect. [o] 4:30
34 None of their members was ever in want, as all those who owned land or houses Dt 15:4
35 would sell them, and bring the money from the sale of them, •to present it to the Lk 12:33
apostles; it was then distributed to any who might be in need.

The generosity of Barnabas

36 There was a Levite of Cypriot origin called Joseph whom the apostles surnamed
37 Barnabas (which means 'son of encouragement'). [p] •He owned a piece of land and
he sold it and brought the money and presented it to the apostles.

o. This epoch coincides with that of Christ's coming and of 'the restoration of all things', *see* 1:7h; Rm 2:6b, a period which, as the apostles thought, would see the re-establishment of the kingdom in Israel, Ac 1:6–7. Repentance and conversion hasten its coming, cf. 2 P 3:12.

p. Or 'Jesus who has been appointed Christ for you', *see* 2:36w.

q. The return of the captive and scattered Israelites was proclaimed by the prophets as a prelude to the messianic era, Jr 16:15; 23:8; Ho 11:10–11, when happiness and peace would prevail for ever, Is 11:1–9,7e; 65:17–25; Ho 2:20s; Mi 5:6–8. In the same way, at the due time, God will send Jesus, instituted messianic king at the time of his resurrection, 2:36w, who will inaugurate his definitive reign and the renewal of all creation, *see* Rm 8:19j; 1 Co 15:24–25.

r. add. 'from ancient times'.

s. The earliest Christian preaching made a point of showing how Jesus fulfilled OT prophecy, including many texts in Psalms which were regarded as prophetic: he was a descendant of David, 2:29–31; 13:34, he appeared as a prophet, Moses' successor, 3:22seq., *see* Mt 16:14c; Jn 1:21t. He suffered, 2:23*o*, he was the stone rejected by the builders (the Jews) but now set in a place of honour, 4:11, he rose again, 2:25–31; 13:33–37, and is at God's right hand, 2:34seq.

t. Thus implementing the promise recalled in v. 22, because the Greek verb means both 'to raise up' and 'to raise up again'. God by raising Christ from the dead fulfils the promises made to the ancestors, 13:32–34; 24:14–15; 26:6–8.

u. Cf. 26:23; Ga 3:14; 2 Tm 1:10. Christ by his resurrection brought to the world the blessing promised to Abraham, 3:25.

v. Others translate 'so long as each of you turns from his wicked ways'.

4 a. The priestly aristocratic faction opposed the Pharisees who were the pious and popular party, *see* Mt 3:7f. The Sadducees are always represented as denying the doctrine of resurrection, 23:6–8; Lk 20:27–38 and par. More than once the mutual hostility of these two parties produces an alliance of Pharisees with Christians, *see* 5:34; 23:8–9; 26:5–8; Lk 20:39.

b. The Great Sanhedrin of Jerusalem, Israel's supreme court.

c. var. 'John'.

d. For vv. 10–12 we follow the Western text.

e. 'Jesus' means 'God saves', Mt 1:21.

f. Apparently a solemn legal warning. In matters of this kind the accused (unless they were rabbis) could not be imprisoned except for a second offence (the case in 5:28).

g. Text corrupt, translation uncertain. The composition of the Psalter as a whole was attributed to David.

h. 'Anointed': the Greek word is 'Christ'; it is explained here, v. 27, according to its etymological sense.

i. Representing respectively the 'kings' and 'princes' of the Psalm. For 'Herod', *see* Lk 23:6–16.

j. The 'anointing' that has constituted him King Messiah, 'the Christ', *see* Mt 3:16n.

k. lit. 'your hand and counsel'.

l. A miniature Pentecost, cf. the earlier one, 2:1seq.

m. A summary like that of 2:42–47. The prevailing idea is here the pooling of resources; this preludes two examples: Barnabas, Ananias and Sapphira. The emphasis on sacrificing possessions is characteristic of Luke's religious outlook.

n. A power that showed itself by miracles. *See* 2:22; 3:12; 4:7; 6:8; 8:13; 10:38; 1 Co 2:4–5; 1 Th 1:5.

o. By the people: *see* 2:47; 4:21; 5:13.

p. The Greek word means both 'consolation' (often in the strong sense of 'rescue') and 'encouragement' (often in the strong sense of 'support and defend'), *see* 11:23. • 'Son of', a semitic expression here meaning 'with an aptitude for'. • On Barnabas, *see* 9:27; 11:22–30; 12:25; ch. 13–15; 1 Co 9:6; Ga 2; Col 4:10.

Jos 7 **The fraud of Ananias and Sapphira**

5 There was also a man called Ananias. He and his wife, Sapphira, agreed to sell 1
a property; ·but with his wife's connivance he kept back part of the price and 2
brought the rest and presented it to the apostles. ·Peter said, 'Ananias, how can 3
Lk 22:3 Jn 13:2, 27 Satan have so possessed you that you should lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back
Dt 23:22–24 part of the price of the land? ·While you still owned the land, wasn't it yours to 4
keep, and after you had sold it wasn't the money yours to do with as you liked?
What put this scheme into your mind? You have been lying not to men, but to
Lk 1:12g God.' ·When he heard this Ananias fell down dead. And a great fear came upon 5
everyone present. ·The younger men got up, wrapped up the body, carried it out 6
and buried it.

About three hours later his wife came in, not knowing what had taken place. 7
2:14h Peter challenged her, 'Tell me, was this the price you sold the land for?' 'Yes,' 8
she said, 'that was the price.' ·Peter then said, 'Why did you and your husband 9
15:10k 1 Co 10:9; 11:30–32 agree to put the Spirit of the Lord to the test? Listen! At the door are the footsteps
of those who have buried your husband; they will carry you out, too.' ·Instantly 10
she dropped dead at his feet. When the young men came in they found she was
dead, and they carried her out and buried her by the side of her husband. [a] ·And a 11
Lk 1:12g great fear came upon the whole church [b] and on all who heard it.

2:42–47; 4:32–35 **The general situation** [c]

2:19 The apostles worked many signs and miracles among the people. One in heart they 12
=2:46 3:11 all [d] used to meet in the Portico of Solomon. ·No one else dared to join them, but 13
=2:47 2:41cc the people were loud in their praise ·and the numbers of men and women who 14
came to believe in the Lord increased steadily. [e] Many signs and wonders were
Mk 6:56 worked among the people at the hands of the apostles ·so that the sick were even 15
taken out into the streets and laid on beds and sleeping-mats in the hope that at
19:12 least the shadow of Peter might fall across some of them as he went past. ·People 16
even came crowding in from the towns round about Jerusalem, bringing with them
8:6–8 Lk 4:40–41 their sick and those tormented by unclean spirits, and all of them were cured.

The apostles' arrest and miraculous deliverance

4:6 4:1a Then the high priest [f] intervened with all his supporters from the party of the 17
Sadducees. Filled with jealousy, ·they arrested the apostles and had them put in 18
the public gaol.

Mt 1:20g But at night the angel of the Lord opened the prison gates and said as he led 19
12:7–10;16: 25–26 them out, ·'Go and take up position in the Temple, and tell the people all about 20
this new Life.' [g] ·They did as they were told; they went into the Temple at dawn 21
and began to preach.

A summons to appear before the Sanhedrin

When the high priest arrived, he and his supporters convened the Sanhedrin—this
was the full Senate [h] of Israel—and sent to the gaol for them to be brought. ·But 22
when the officials arrived at the prison they found they were not inside, so they
went back and reported, ·'We found the gaol securely locked and the warders on 23
duty at the gates, but when we unlocked the door we found no one inside.' ·When 24
4:1+ the captain of the Temple and the chief priests heard this news they wondered what
could be happening. ·Then a man arrived with fresh news. 'Look!' he said, 'the 25
men you imprisoned are in the Temple. They are standing there preaching to the
people.' ·The captain went with his men and fetched them—though not by force, 26
Lk 20:19par.; 22:2par. for they were afraid that the people might stone them.

When they had brought them in to face the Sanhedrin, the high priest demanded 27
4:18f an explanation. ·'We gave you a strong warning', he said, 'not to preach in this 28
name, [i] and what have you done? You have filled Jerusalem with your teaching,
Mt 27:25 and seem determined to fix the guilt for this man's death on us.' ·In reply Peter and 29

30 the apostles said, 'Obedience to God comes before obedience to men; •it was the God of our ancestors who raised up Jesus, whom you executed by hanging on a
31 tree.[j] •By his own right hand God has now raised him up to be leader and
32 Saviour,[k] to give repentance and forgiveness of sins through him to Israel. •We are witnesses to this, we and the Holy Spirit[l] whom God has given to those who obey
33 him.' •This so infuriated them that they wanted to put them to death.

▶2:14h,22n 2:23p;4:19 2:33t Ps 118:16 4:12e 2:38x 1:8j Jn 15:26–27 •Jn 7:39

Gamaliel's intervention

34 One member of the Sanhedrin, however, a Pharisee called Gamaliel, who was a teacher of the Law respected by the whole people,[m] stood up and asked to have
35 the men taken outside for a time. •Then he addressed the Sanhedrin, 'Men of
36 Israel, be careful how you deal with these people. •Some time ago there arose Theudas. He claimed to be someone important, and collected about four hundred followers; but when he was killed, all his followers scattered and that was the end
37 of them. •And then there was Judas the Galilean, at the time of the census, who attracted crowds of supporters; but he was killed too, and all his followers dis-
38 persed.[n] •What I suggest, therefore, is that you leave these men alone and let them go. If this enterprise, this movement of theirs, is of human origin it will break up of
39 its own accord; •but if it does in fact come from God you will be unable to destroy them. Take care not to find yourselves fighting against God.'[o]

23:9 Jn 7:50par. Lk 2:2b Mt 15:13 Lk 20:4 2 Ch 13:12 2 M 7:19

40 His advice was accepted; •and they had the apostles called in, gave orders for them to be flogged, warned them not to speak in the name of Jesus and released
41 them. •And so they left the presence of the Sanhedrin, glad to have had the honour of suffering humiliation for the sake of the name.[p]

4:18;16:22–23; 22:19 Mt 10:17 Mt 5:10–11+ 1 Co 4:9seq.

42 Every day they went on ceaselessly teaching and proclaiming the good news[q] of Christ Jesus, both in the temple and in private houses.

18:5f

5 **a.** The fault of Ananias and Sapphira is, out of avarice, to have tried to cheat the apostles and through them the Holy Spirit present in the brethren to whom they lied. The purpose of this disturbing story is probably to show Peter's prophetic authority in the community, compare 2 K 2:23–24.

b. The meaning of this term, adopted from the OT, cf. 7:38, to signify the messianic community, Mt 16:18g, expanded as Christianity developed. It originally indicated the mother church in Jerusalem, 8:1; 11:22; later the individual churches throughout Judaea, Ga 1:22; 1 Th 2:14; cf. Ac 9:31, and among the gentiles, Ac 13:1; 14:23; 15:41; 16:5; Rm 16:1,4; 1 Co 1:2a; Jm 5:14; 3 Jn 9; Rv 1:4; 2:1; referring to their 'gatherings', 1 Co 11:18; 14:23,34; cf. Ac 19:32; Phm 2, or to their location or area, Rm 16:5; 1 Co 16:19; Col 4:15. Lastly, it stands for the Church united under God, 20:28; 1 Co 10:32; 12:27–28; for the Church as Body and Bride of Christ, Ep 5:23–32; Col 1:18e, and for the Church as including the whole cosmos, Ep 1:22–23,23t.

c. This third 'summary' stresses the miraculous power of the apostles, cf. 2:43; 4:33. Vv. 12[b]–14 interrupt the development of this theme.

d. Here, it seems, not the apostles but all the faithful.

e. Rather than 'More and more joined (the community) as believers in the Lord,' cf. 11:24.

f. var. 'Annas the high priest', cf. 4:6.

g. lit. 'all the words (cf. 10:36) of this life'. This means the same thing as 'the message of salvation', 13:26. The purpose of Christian preaching is the 'salvation', *see* 4:12; 11:14; 15:11; 16:17,30–31, and 'life', *see also* 3:15; 11:18; 13:46,48, promised to those 'who invoke the name of the Lord', 2:21,40,47; 4:12.

h. The terms 'Sanhedrin' and 'Senate' both indicate the same council, the Great Sanhedrin of Jerusalem, *see* Lk 22:66t. • The motif of miraculous release from prison is frequent in Ac, 12:6–11; 16:26–27, and in Jewish literature. It is a sign of God's special protection.

i. Western text ' "Did we not expressly forbid you to preach in that name? And now . . ." Then Peter answered, "Which must we obey? God or man?" "God," he said. And Peter then replied, "The God of our ancestors . . ." '

j. The phrase is repeated in 10:39 (*see* 13:29). It recalls Dt 21:22–23, quoted in Ga 3:13, *see* 1 P 2:24.

k. The title matches 'Prince of life', 3:15k; it also corresponds to 'leader and redeemer' applied to Moses as a prefiguring of Christ, 7:35 (cf. 7:25). *See also* Heb 2:10; 12:2. There is an implicit comparison of Jesus with Moses.

l. Cf. 1:8; Mt 10:20 and par.; Jn 15:26–27.

m. Gamaliel I, Paul's teacher, 22:3, belonged to the school of Hillel and was the leading exponent of the more liberal and humane interpretation of the Law. The policy he urges here is in line with that of the Pharisaic party, *see* 4:1a.

n. Josephus mentions the revolts of Theudas and of Judas the Galilean but the dates he gives seem unreliable. Both must have taken place about the time Jesus was born.

o. A variant introduces the idea of ritual purity '. . . leave them alone and do not dirty your hands. For if . . . God, not only you but kings and tyrants will be powerless to destroy them. Do not therefore touch these men lest you find yourselves at war with God.'

p. The name for whose sake the apostles suffer, cf. 21:13; 1 P 4:14; 3 Jn 7, the name they preach, 4:10,12,17,18; 5:28,40; cf. 3:6,16; 8:12,16; 9:15,16,27,28, and which the Christians invoke, 2:21; 4:12; 9:14,21; 22:16, is the name, i.e. the person, of Jesus, 3:16*l*, the name he received at his resurrection, 2:36w, 'the name above all other names'. This name was 'Lord', hitherto reserved to God, Ph 2:9–11,11p.

q. The good news of the Kingdom, Mk 1:1a, preached by the disciples, Ac 8:4,25,40; 14:7,15,21; 16:10, or the 'gospel', 15:7; 20:24, receives its concrete embodiment for primitive Christianity in the person of Jesus, 8:35, raised by God, 13:32seq.; 17:18; *see also* 2:23p; 9:20, and become Son of God in power, *see* Rm 1:1b, Christ, 5:42; 8:12; cf. 9:22, and Lord, 10:36; 11:20; 15:35; *see* 2:36w.

II: THE EARLIEST MISSIONS

The institution of the Seven

2:41cc;2:45; 4:35;9:29n

6 About this time, when the number of disciples [a] was increasing, the Hellenists 1
made a complaint against the Hebrews: [b] in the daily distribution their own
widows were being overlooked. ·So the Twelve called a full meeting of the disciples 2
and addressed them, 'It would not be right for us to neglect the word of God so as
Ex 18:17–23 Nb 27:16–18 1 Tm 3:8–10 1:8k Is 11:2c to give out food; ·you, brothers, must select [c] from among yourselves seven men of 3
good reputation, [d] filled with the Spirit and with wisdom, to whom we can hand
over this duty. ·We ourselves will continue to devote ourselves to prayer and to the 4
1:14;2:42 service of the word.' [e] ·The whole assembly approved of this proposal and elected 5
Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, together with Philip, Prochorus,
Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus of Antioch, a convert to Judaism. [f] ·They 6
13:3 1 Tm 4:14e presented these to the apostles, and after prayer they laid their hands on them. [g]

The word of the Lord continued to spread: [h] the number of disciples in Jerusalem 7
2:41cc Rm 1:5d was greatly increased, and a large group of priests made their submission to
the faith.

Stephen's arrest

Stephen was filled with grace and power and began to work miracles and great 8
signs among the people. ·Then certain people came forward to debate with 9
Stephen, some from Cyrene and Alexandria who were members of the synagogue
called the Synagogue of Freedmen, [i] and others from Cilicia and Asia. ·They found 10
1:8j Lk 21:15 they could not stand up against him because of his wisdom, and the Spirit that
prompted what he said. ·So they procured some men to say, 'We heard him using 11
blasphemous language against Moses and against God.' ·Having turned the people 12
against him as well as the elders and scribes, they took Stephen by surprise, and
arrested him and brought him before the Sanhedrin. ·There they put up false 13
witnesses to say, 'This man is always making speeches against this Holy Place and
Mt 2:23l •Mt 26:59–61par. the Law. ·We have heard him say that Jesus, this Nazarene, is going to destroy this 14
Place and alter the traditions that Moses handed down to us.' [j] ·The members of 15
Lk 4:20 the Sanhedrin all looked intently at Stephen, and his face appeared to them like
the face of an angel. [k]

Stephen's speech

7 The high priest asked, 'Is this true?' ·He replied, [a] 'My brothers, my fathers, 1, 2
Ps 29:3 listen to what I have to say. The God of glory appeared to our ancestor
Abraham, while he was in Mesopotamia before settling in Haran, [b] ·and *said to* 3
Gn 12:1 him, "*Leave your country, your kindred and your father's house for this country
which I shall show you.*" ·So he left Chaldaea and settled in Haran; and after his 4
father died God made him leave that place and come to this land where you are
living today. ·God did not give him any property in this land or even a foothold, 5
Gn 12:7c Gn 15:2 yet he promised to *give it to him and after him to his descendants, childless* though
Gn 15:13 he was. ·The actual words God used when he spoke to him are that *his descendants* 6
would be exiles in a land not their own, where they would be enslaved and oppressed
Gn 15:14 *for four hundred years.* ·*"But I will bring judgement on the nation that enslaves* 7
Ex 3:12 *them,"* God said, *"and after this they will leave, and worship me in this* place." [c]
Gn 17:10d Then he made the *covenant of circumcision* with him: and so when his son Isaac 8
Gn 21:4 was born Abraham *circumcised him on the eighth day*; similarly Isaac circumcised
Jacob, and Jacob the twelve patriarchs.

Gn 37:11, 28 'The patriarchs were *jealous of Joseph and sold him into slavery in Egypt.* But 9
Gn 39:2,3, 21,23 *God was with him,* ·and rescued him from all his miseries by making him so wise 10
Gn 41:40–46 Ps 105:21 that he *won the favour* of Pharaoh king of Egypt, who *made him governor of Egypt*
Gn 41:54–55;42:5 and *put him in charge of his household.* ·*Then a famine set in* that caused much 11

suffering *throughout Egypt and Canaan*, and our ancestors could find nothing to
12 eat. ·When Jacob *heard that there were supplies in Egypt*, he sent our ancestors Gn 42:2
13 there on a first visit; ·and on the second *Joseph made himself known to his brothers*, Gn 45:1
14 and Pharaoh came to know his origin. ·Joseph then sent for his father Jacob and
15 his whole family, a total of *seventy-five people*. ·Jacob went down into Egypt and Gn 46:27d
16 after he and our ancestors had died there, ·their bodies were brought back to Gn 23:16;50:13
Shechem and buried in the tomb that Abraham had bought for money from the
sons of Hamor, the father of Shechem. [d]

17 'As the time drew near for God to fulfil the promise he had solemnly made to
18 Abraham, our nation in Egypt *became very powerful and numerous*, ·*there came to* Ex 1:7,8
19 *power in Egypt a new king who had never heard of Joseph*. ·*He took precautions* Ex 1:10,11,22
and wore down our race, forcing our ancestors to expose their babies rather than
20 *letting them live*. ·It was at this time that Moses was born, *a fine child* before God. Ex 2:2
21 He was looked after for *three months* in his father's house, ·and after he had been Heb 11:23seq.
22 exposed, *Pharaoh's daughter adopted* him and brought him up *like a son*. ·So Ex 2:5–10
Moses was taught all the wisdom of the Egyptians and became a man with power Lk 24:19
both in his speech and in his actions.

23, 24 'At the age of forty [e] he decided to visit *his kinsmen, the Israelites*. ·When he Ex 2:11
saw one of them being ill-treated he went to his defence and rescued the man by
25 *killing the Egyptian*. ·He thought his brothers would realise that through him God Ex 2:12
26 would liberate them, but they did not. ·The next day, when he came across some
of them fighting, he tried to reconcile them, and said, "Friends, you are brothers;
27 why are you hurting each other?" ·But *the man who was attacking his kinsman* Ex 2:13
pushed him aside, saying, "*And who appointed you to be prince over us and judge?* [f]
28, 29 *Do you intend to kill me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday?*" ·Moses fled Ex 2:14
when he heard this [g] and *he went to dwell in the land of Midian*, where he fathered Lk 12:14
Ex 2:15
two sons.

6 **a.** 'Disciples': a new use of the term, in certain parts of Ac (not before 6:1 nor after 21:16, an indication of the sources used by Luke) to indicate the Christians who are thus associated with the small circle of those first adherents of Jesus who are called by this name in the gospels.

b. 'Hellenists': Jews from outside Palestine; in Jerusalem they had their own synagogues where the Bible was read in Greek. The 'Hebrews' were native Palestinian Jews; their language was Aramaic but in their synagogues the Bible was read in Hebrew. This distinction made its way into the early Church. Missionary initiative was to come from the hellenistic group.

c. var. 'We shall select'.

d. The Twelve represent the number of the tribes of Israel; seven is the number of the gentile 'nations' inhabiting Canaan, Dt 7:1, quoted in Ac 13:19.

e. When the community met for public worship the apostles had two functions: they led prayers and were responsible also for the *katechesis* (the doctrinal elaboration of the good news).

f. Luke does not call the chosen seven 'deacons', and this term may have been given to the Seven as a title or rank because he twice uses the word *diakonia* ('service' v. 4; translated 'distribution' in v. 1) *see* Ph 1:1a; Tt 1:5c. All seven have Greek names; the last is a proselyte, *see* 2:11n. The hellenistic Christians now have their own organisation independent of the Hebrew group. The functions of the Seven overlap those of the Twelve, for they both preach and baptise. It is possible that the author has smoothed over some bigger disagreement between the two elements in the community which led to this institution of a parallel leadership.

g. Possibly a gesture of the community, cf. 13:1–3, more probably (v. 3) of the apostles.

h. A fresh formula, *see also* 12:24; 19:20.

i. Probably the descendants of Jews carried off to Rome by Pompey in 63 BC who were sold into slavery and later released.

j. The 'false witnesses' at the trial of Jesus similarly brought the accusation that he 'would destroy the Temple'. There is also a similarity in the climax of the two trials, 7:56–57; Mt 26:62–66. The allegations concerning Mosaic practice will be made in Paul's case also, 15:1,5; 21:21,28; 25:8; 28:17.

k. The sight of an angel induces religious awe, *see* Jg 13:6. The face of Moses, reflecting the glory of God as he came down from Sinai, produced the same effect, Ex 34:29–35; 2 Co 3:7–18; so also the appearance of Jesus was changed, Mt 17:2; Lk 9:29. The members of the Sanhedrin in their turn witness a transfiguration, that of Stephen as he contemplates the glory of God, 7:55–56. • The narrative, interrupted by the insertion of Stephen's discourse, 7:1–54, is resumed in 7:55. On theophanies, *see* Ex 13:22; 19:16; 33:20; Mt 17:1; 24:26–31 and notes there.

7 **a.** The speech opens with a summary of the stories of Abraham and Joseph, vv. 2–16; it goes on to expound the history of Moses, vv. 17–43 (*see also* the charge made against Stephen, 6:11). With Moses' divine mission of salvation Stephen contrasts the attitude of Israel: rejection, disobedience, faithlessness—traditional themes (*see* Dt) but here elaborated with the Christian event in mind. When Stephen speaks of Moses he is thinking of Christ whom Moses prefigured: the Jews react now as the Israelites did then. In the history of Israel, Stephen underlines anything which goes against attachment to any particular country, vv. 2–6, against sacrifices, vv. 39–43, and against the construction of a material temple, vv. 44–50, *see* the accusation of 6:13. The spirit of the hellenised Judaism of the Diaspora is discernible.

b. According to Gn 11:31 the apparition took place at Haran. Stephen follows a non-biblical tradition.

c. Mt Horeb, but Stephen says 'this place' (i.e. the Temple) instead.

d. 'father of Shechem': this detail is taken from Gn 33:19. var. 'from the sons of Hemor son of Shechem', 'from the sons of Emmor at Shechem', 'from the sons of Emmor (inhabitants) of Shechem', v. 16 follows a non-biblical tradition.

e. According to Jewish traditions.

f. By raising up Jesus from the dead God has appointed him 'prince', cf. 5:31, and 'judge', cf. 10:42; 17:31.

g. In Ex 2:15 Moses runs away because he is afraid of Pharaoh; here it is because his compatriots reject him.

Ex 3:1–2 'When forty years were fulfilled, *in the desert near Mount* Sinai, *an angel* 30
appeared to him in a flame blazing from a bush that was on fire. ·Moses was amazed 31
Ex 3:4, 6 by what he saw. *As he went nearer to look at it, the voice of the Lord was* heard, ·"I 32
am the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." Moses
Ex 3:5 trembled and *was afraid to look*. ·The Lord said to him, "*Take off your sandals,* 33
Ex 3:7–8 for the place where you are standing is holy ground. ·*I have seen the misery of my* 34
people in Egypt, I have heard them crying for help, and I have come down to rescue
Ex 3:10 *them. So come here; I am sending you into Egypt.*"
Ex 2:14 'It was the same Moses that they had disowned [h] when they said, "*Who appointed* 35
you to be our leader and judge?" whom God sent to be both leader and redeemer
through the angel who had appeared to him in the bush. ·It was this man who led 36
Ex 7:3 them out, after performing *miracles and signs in Egypt* and at the Red Sea and *in*
Nb 14:33 *the desert for forty years*. ·It was this Moses who told the sons of Israel, "*From* 37
Am 5:25
·Dt 18:15 *among your own brothers God will raise up a prophet like me.*" [i] ·When they held 38
Dt 4:10,9:10; the assembly [j] in the desert it was he who was with our ancestors and the angel who
18:16
Jn 1:17 had spoken to him on Mount Sinai; [k] it was he who was entrusted with words of
Ga 3:19f life [l] to hand on to us. ·This is the man that our ancestors refused to listen to; they 39
Nb 14:3 pushed him aside, *went back to Egypt* in their thoughts, [m] ·*and said to Aaron,* 40
Ex 32:1,23 "*Make us a god to go at our head; for that Moses, the man who brought us here from*
Ex 32:4,6 *Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.*" ·It was then that *they made the* 41
Is 2:8 *statue of a calf and offered sacrifice* to the idol. They were perfectly happy with
something they had made for themselves. ·God turned away from them and 42
abandoned them to the worship of the army of heaven, [n] as scripture says in the
book of the prophets:

Am 5:25–27 LXX
> *Did you bring me sacrifices and oblations*
> *those forty years in the desert, House of Israel?*
> *No, you carried the tent of Moloch on your shoulders* 43
> *and the star of the god Rephan,*
> *the idols you made for yourselves* to adore,
> *and so now I am about to drive you into captivity beyond* Babylon.

'While they were in the desert our ancestors possessed the Tent of Testimony 44
that had been constructed according to the instructions God gave Moses, telling
Ex 25:40 Heb 8:5 him to *work to the design* he had been shown. ·It was handed down from one 45
ancestor of ours to another until Joshua brought it into the country that had
belonged to the nations which were driven out by God before us. Here it stayed
Ps 132:5 until the time of David. ·He won God's favour and asked permission *to find a* 46
1 K 6:2 *dwelling for* the House [o] of *Jacob*, ·though it was *Solomon* who actually *built a* 47
17:24
Heb 9:11, 24 *house for God*. ·Even so the Most High does not live in a house that human hands 48
have built: for as the prophet says:

Is 66:1–2
> *With heaven my throne* 49
> *and earth my footstool,*
> *what house could you build me, says the Lord,*
> *what place for me to rest,*
> *when all these things were made by me?* 50

Dt 9:13+ 'You stubborn people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears. You are always 51
2 Ch 30:7–8;
36:14–16 resisting the Holy Spirit, [p] just as your ancestors used to do. ·Can you name a 52
Is 63:10 single prophet your ancestors never persecuted? They killed those who foretold
Jr 4:4a
Mt 23:34–35 the coming of the Upright One, and now you have become his betrayers, his
2:23o:3:14j murderers. ·In spite of being given the Law through angels, you have not kept it.' 53
7:38k;13:38
15:10 They were infuriated when they heard this, and ground their teeth at him. 54
Jb 16:9
Ga 6:13

The stoning of Stephen. Saul as persecutor

Lk 1:15k But Stephen, filled with the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of 55
Ex 24:16f God, and Jesus standing [q] at God's right hand. [r] ·'Look! I can see heaven thrown 56

57 open,' he said, 'and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God.' ·All the members of the council shouted out and stopped their ears with their hands; then
58 they made a concerted rush at him, ·thrust him out of the city and stoned him.[s]
59 The witnesses[t] put down their clothes at the feet of a young man called Saul.[u] ·As they were stoning him, Stephen said in invocation,[v] 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.'
60 Then he knelt down and said aloud, 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them.' And with these words he fell asleep.

Dn 7:13 Mt 8:20h 2:33+ Mt 26:64par.. 64u Heb 13:12e 22:20;26:10 Ga 1:13+ Ps 31:5 Lk 23:46 Lk 23:34 7:58;22:20 Jn 16:2

1 8 [a]Saul approved of the killing.
That day a bitter persecution started against the church in Jerusalem, and everyone[b] except the apostles scattered to the country districts of Judaea and Samaria.[c]
2 There were some devout people, however, who buried Stephen and made great mourning for him.
3 Saul then began doing great harm to the church; he went from house to house arresting both men and women and sending them to prison.

9:1–2;22:4; 26:10–11 1 Co 15:9 Ga 1:13 Ph 3:6 1 Tm 1:13

Philip in Samaria

4 Once they had scattered, they went from place to place preaching the good news. =11:19
5 And Philip went to a Samaritan town[d] and proclaimed the Christ to them.[e] 6:5;21:8 18:5f
6 The people unanimously welcomed the message Philip preached, because they had heard of the miracles he worked and because they saw them for themselves.
7 For unclean spirits came shrieking out of many who were possessed, and several Mt 8:29k
8 paralytics and cripples were cured. ·As a result there was great rejoicing in 2:46jj that town.

Simon the magician

9 Now a man called Simon had for some time been practising magic arts in the town and astounded the Samaritan people. He had given it out that he was someone
10 momentous, ·and everyone believed in him; eminent citizens and ordinary people

h. The Bible does not apply this verb to Moses, but in 3:13–14 it is applied to Jesus. Nor does the Bible give the name 'redeemer' to Moses. The image of Christ shades into that of Moses who prefigured him.

i. A messianic text already cited, 3:22. One other than Moses—the Messiah—is to play a similar part, Mt 16:14c; Jn 1:21t.

j. The word also means 'church', *see* 5:11b; Mt 16:18g. In Dt 4:10 it denoted the assembly of the chosen people in the desert, cf. the sacred assembly, Ex 12:16; Lv 23:3; Nb 29:1. The Church, the new chosen people, 9:13g, is the heir of the old.

k. Moses acted as mediator between 'the angel' and the people. 'The angel of Yahweh' in the earliest texts is identical with Yahweh as manifesting himself, Gn 16:7c, *see also* Mt 1:20g. Later, a distinction was made between Yahweh and his angel in order to emphasise the divine transcendence. Thus Moses is represented as in immediate touch not with God but with one or several angels. There are traces of this idea in Ga 3:19; Heb 2:2.

l. To obey the Law is to live, Lv 18:5; Dt 4:1; 8:1,3; 30:15–16,19–20; 32:46–47, quoted in Rm 10:5; Ga 3:12; the Law, therefore, is referred to as 'the statutes of life', Ba 3:9; Ezk 33:15. For the Christian, the gospel preaching is the 'word of life', Ph 2:16; cf. Ac 5:20, i.e. 'the word of salvation', Ac 13:26. Since life springs from God's word, this word is itself 'living', cf. Heb 4:12; 1 P 1:23. And Jesus is himself 'the Word of life': 1 Jn 1:1.

m. *See* Ex 16:3 and Nb 14:3, *see also* Ezk 20:8–14.

n. Biblical phrase for the stars, often worshipped as gods, *see* Dt 4:19; 17:3; 2 K 21:3–5; Jr 8:2; 19:13; Zp 1:5.

o. var. 'for the God'.

p. Who spoke through Moses and the prophets.

q. Standing rather than seated as in Lk 22:69seq., perhaps as a witness to the martyr.

r. Stephen's vision is to be related to his transfiguration, 6:15k.

s. What is described is not the end of a judicial process, but a lynching by the crowd. It may be that this is historically accurate and the elements of a formal legal hearing are due to Luke's intention of showing the death of the first martyr as a parallel to that of Jesus.

t. The false witness mentioned in 6:13–14. It was for the hostile witnesses to initiate the execution of the sentence, Dt 17:7.

u. The future apostle Paul, 13:9f.

v. Fine example of 'calling upon the name of the Lord', 2:21m. Luke stresses by two features, vv. 59–60, the similarity between Stephen's death and the Passion of Jesus.

8 **a.** Vv. 1–4 are made up of a number of brief remarks: Stephen's burial (v. 2), the natural conclusion of the foregoing narrative; Saul's campaign against the Christians (vv. 1[a] and 3) which links the account of the stoning of Stephen, *see* 7:58[b], with what appears to be its sequel, namely Paul's conversion, 9:1–30; finally a note on the Church persecuted and scattered (vv. 1[b]–4) which introduces the narrative of Philip's mission, 8:5–40, and that of Peter, 9:32–11:18; v. 4 is picked up again in 11:19. We have here, therefore, a preliminary sketch of the various themes developed in the following chapters up to ch. 12.

b. 'everyone': a very general statement. The persecution in fact seems to have been directed principally against the Hellenists, *see* 6:1.5, and it was this group, scattered by persecution, that gave the Church its first missionaries, *see* v. 4; 11:19–20.

c. The second stage of the expansion of the Church, *see* 1:8. The third will start with the foundation of the church of Antioch, 11:20.

d. var. 'the town of Samaria', 'the town of Caesarea'. The reference is probably not to the town called Samaria, by this time a hellenistic city and known as Sebaste, but to the province: those who are evangelised are the 'Samaritans' in the Jewish sense of the word, i.e. akin in blood and religion but cut off from Israel's community and living in heresy, *see* Mt 10:5–6c; Jn 4:9e.

e. The Samaritans, too, expected the Messiah, *see* Jn 4:25.

14:11 alike had declared, 'He is the divine power that is called Great.'[f] ·He had this 11
following because for a considerable period they had been astounded by his
5:42q wizardry. ·But when they came to accept Philip's preaching of the good news about 12
1:5f the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptised, both men
and women, ·and even Simon himself became a believer. After his baptism Simon 13
went round constantly with Philip and was astonished when he saw the wonders
and great miracles that took place.

11:1,22 When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of 14
Lk 8:51f God, they sent Peter and John to them, ·and they went down there and prayed for 15
1:5f;10:44 them to receive the Holy Spirit, ·for as yet he had not come down on any of them: 16
1:5f;2:38y; 19:5–6 they had only been baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus. ·Then they laid hands 17
1 Tm 4:14e on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

When Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' 18
hands, he offered them money, ·with the words, 'Give me the same power so that 19
anyone I lay my hands on will receive the Holy Spirit.' ·Peter answered, 'May your 20
2 K 5:16 Is 55:1 silver be lost for ever, and you with it, for thinking that money could buy what God
Mt 10:8 has given[g] for nothing! ·You have no share, no part, in this: God can see how your 21
heart is warped. ·Repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that this 22
scheme of yours may be forgiven; ·it is plain to me that you are held in the 23
Dt 29:17 Pr 5:22 Jr 4:18 bitterness of gall and the chains of sin.'[h] ·Simon replied, 'Pray to the Lord for me 24
yourselves so that none of the things you have spoken about may happen to me.'[i]

1:8k Having given their testimony and proclaimed the word of the Lord, they went 25
back to Jerusalem, preaching the good news to a number of Samaritan villages.

Philip baptises a eunuch

11:13 Mt 1:20g The angel of the Lord[j] spoke to Philip saying, 'Set out at noon[k] and go along the 26
road that leads from Jerusalem down to Gaza, the desert road.' ·So he set off on 27
1 K 8:41–42 Ps 68:31 Is 56:3–7 Zp 3:10 his journey. Now an Ethiopian[l] had been on pilgrimage to Jerusalem; he was a
eunuch and an officer at the court of the kandake, or queen, of Ethiopia; he was
Is 18:7d Jn 12:20 her chief treasurer. ·He was now on his way home; and as he sat in his chariot he 28
1:8j was reading the prophet Isaiah. ·The Spirit said to Philip, 'Go up and join that 29
chariot.' ·When Philip ran up, he heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, 30
Rm 10:14 'Do you understand what you are reading?' ·He replied, 'How could I, unless I 31
have someone to guide me?' So he urged Philip to get in and sit by his side. ·Now 32
the passage of scripture he was reading was this:[m]

Is 53:7–8 Lk 18:31e
Like a lamb led to the slaughter-house,
like a sheep dumb in front of its shearers,
he never opens his mouth.
In his humiliation fair judgement was denied him. 33
Who will ever talk about his descendants,
since his life on earth has been cut short?

The eunuch addressed Philip and said, 'Tell me, is the prophet referring to 34
Lk 24:27 himself or someone else?' ·Starting, therefore, with this text of scripture Philip 35
5:42q proceeded to explain the good news of Jesus to him.

Further along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, 'Look, 36
10:47 here is some water; is there anything to prevent my being baptised?'[n] ·He ordered 38
the chariot to stop, then Philip and the eunuch both went down into the water and
1:5f he baptised him. ·But after they had come up out of the water again Philip was 39
1 K 18:12c Lk 24:31–32 taken away by the Spirit of the Lord,[o] and the eunuch never saw him again but
2:46jj went on his way rejoicing. ·Philip appeared in Azotus and continued his journey, 40
21:8 proclaiming the good news in every town as far as Caesarea.

The conversion of Saul[a]

8:3; =22:4–16 =26:9–18 Ga 1:12–17
9 Meanwhile Saul was still breathing threats to slaughter the Lord's disciples. He 1
went to the high priest ·and asked for letters addressed to the synagogues in 2

Damascus, that would authorise him to arrest and take to Jerusalem any followers of the Way, [b] men or women, that he might find. [c]

3 It happened that while he was travelling to Damascus and approaching the city,
4 suddenly a light from heaven shone all round him. ·He fell to the ground, and then Ezk 1:28
5 he heard a voice saying, 'Saul, Saul, [d] why are you persecuting me?' ·'Who are you, Dn 8:17
Lord?' he asked, and the answer came, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. [e] Mt 25:40
6, 7 Get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you are to do.' ·The men 1 Co 8:12
travelling with Saul stood there speechless, for though they heard the voice they Dn 10:7
8 could see no one. ·Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he
9 could see nothing at all, and they had to lead him into Damascus by the hand. ·For
three days he was without his sight and took neither food nor drink.

10 There was a disciple in Damascus called Ananias, and he had a vision in which
11 the Lord said to him, 'Ananias!' When he replied, 'Here I am, Lord,' ·the Lord Gn 22:1a
said, 'Get up and go to Straight Street and ask at the house of Judas for someone Ex 3:4
12 called Saul, who comes from Tarsus. At this moment he is praying, ·and has seen [f] 1 S 3:4f
a man called Ananias coming in and laying hands on him to give him 1 S 9:15–17
back his sight.'

9:17;28:8
•1 Tm 4:14e

13 But in response, Ananias said, 'Lord, I have heard from many people about this
14 man and all the harm he has been doing to your holy people [g] in Jerusalem. ·He has
come here with a warrant from the chief priests to arrest everybody who invokes
15 your name.' ·The Lord replied, 'Go, for this man is my chosen instrument to bring 2:21m
16 my name before gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel; [h] ·I myself will 22:21
17 show him how much he must suffer for my name.' ·Then Ananias went. He entered 15:26; 21:13
Mt 10:22+
the house, and laid his hands on Saul and said, 'Brother Saul, I have been sent by 1 Co 4:9–
the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on your way here, so that you may recover 13,13g
22:14;26:16
1 Co 9:1;15:8

f. Or, less probably, 'that is called Megalleh' (Aramaic for 'Revealing'). Evidently it was thought that Simon's supernatural power issued from some indwelling force of the high God.

g. The Holy Spirit is the gift of God *par excellence*, *see* 2:38; 10:45; 11:17; Lk 11:9,13.

h. 'Simony' (trafficking in sacred things) gets its name from this incident.

i. Western text adds 'and he wept bitterly without ceasing'.

j. Angels, *see* Tb 5:4b; Ep 1:21s, appear in the gospels several times ministering to Jesus and his mission, Mt 4:11 and par.; 26:53; Jn 1:51. In Ac they often minister to the Christian community, 1:10; 5:19; 10:3; 11:3; 12:7–10,23; 27:23. Here, the rest of the narrative refers to 'the Spirit', vv. 29 and 39.

k. Or 'towards the south'.

l. 'Ethiopia' began beyond the first cataract of the Nile: Nubia or the Sudan. It was ruled by queens bearing the title *kandake*.

m. Quoted from the LXX, here somewhat obscure and deriving from a Hebr. text itself obscure and probably corrupt. On the use of Is 53 in early Christian preaching, *see* Ac 3:13e.

n. V. 37, omitted here, is a very ancient gloss preserved in the Western text and suggested by the baptismal liturgy 'And Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he replied, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." '

o. var. West. 'the Holy Spirit came down on the eunuch and the angel of the Lord carried Philip away.'

9 **a.** Crucial event in the Church's history. Luke gives three accounts whose discrepancies of detail are explained by their differing literary forms: the second and third accounts are found in Paul's discourses. *See also* Ga 1:12–17. • The accounts have echoes of OT vocation narratives (Gn 31:11–13; 1 S 3:4–14), of a theophany (Dn 10:5–9) and of the conversion of another persecutor of God's people (2 M 3:24–40). The incident took place probably in AD 36, about 12 years (14 if we reckon as the ancients did) before the council of Jerusalem, Ga 2:1seq.; *see* Ac 15, held in 49.

b. The 'Way' is the way of life characteristic of the Christian community. The term is used, by extension, for the community itself. The OT usage, Ps 119:1a, is enriched by the new value of conformity to Christ, Mt 7:13–14; 22:16; 1 Co 4:17; 12:31; Heb 9:8; 10:19–22; 2 P 2:2. Jesus is himself called 'the Way', Jn 14:6d. This unqualified use of the word is peculiar to Ac: 18:25–26; 19:9,23; 22:4; 24:14,22.

c. The Roman authority recognised the high priest's jurisdiction over the members of Jewish communities even outside Palestine; according to 1 M 15:21 this even included right of extradition.

d. Aramaic ('Hebrew', 26:14) form of Saul's name.

e. Whatever is done to the disciples for the sake of the name of Jesus is done to Jesus himself, Mt 10:40.

f. var. 'having had a vision of'. Two corelative revelations, to Paul and to Ananias, *see* 10:11seq. and 30seq.

g. 'your holy people' lit. 'your holy ones' or 'your consecrated people'. Since God is the Holy One *par excellence*, Is 6:3, those consecrated to his service are called 'holy', Lv 17:1a. The term, applied originally to the people of Israel, Ex 19:3c,6, and in particular to the community of the messianic era, Dn 7:18m, is especially apt for the Christians who are the new 'holy race', 1 P 2:5,9, called, Rm 1:7; 1 Co 1:2; Ep 1:4; 2 Tm 1:9, by their baptismal consecration, Ep 5:26seq., to a blameless life, 1 Co 7:34; Ep 1:4; 5:3; Col 1:22, which makes them holy as God is holy, 1 P 1:15seq., *see* 1 Jn 3:3, and like Jesus himself, 'the Holy One of God', Mk 1:24j. In the early community it becomes the usual term for the Christians, in Palestine first, 9:13,32,41; Rm 15:26,31; 1 Co 16:1,15; 2 Co 8:4; 9:1,12, and then in all the churches, Rm 8:27; 12:13; 16:2, 15; 1 Co 6:1seq.; 14:33; 2 Co 13:12; Ep 1:15; 3:18; 4:12; 6:18; Ph 4:21seq.; Col 1:4; 1 Tm 5:10; Phm 5,7; Heb 6:10; 13:24; Jude 3 (and in the introductory formulae of the letters 2 Co 1:1). In Rv 5:8; 8:3 the phrase 'holy ones' is used more specifically of the Christians who witness by their death. At times its application may be restricted to the leaders, the 'apostles and prophets', Ep 3:5 and Col 1:26; Ep 3:8; 4:12; Rv 18:20. Lastly, as in the OT, Jb 5:1a, it may indicate the angels, 10:22; Mk 8:38; Lk 9:26; Jude 14; Rv 14:10, and in some cases it is doubtful whether the reference is to angels or to the saints in glory, Ep 1:18; Col 1:12; 1 Th 3:13; 2 Th 1:10.

h. Cf. Jr 1:10. Paul's mission is 'to all humanity', 22:15, to the gentiles, 26:17; this agrees with what Paul himself writes in Ga 1:16, cf. Rm 1:5; 11:13; 15:16–18; Ga 2:2,8,9; Ep 3:8; Col 1:27; 1 Tm 2:7. On the 'kings', *see* 26:2a.

Tb 11:10–15 your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.'[i] ·It was as though scales fell away 18
from his eyes and immediately he was able to see again. So he got up and was
1:5f baptised, ·and after taking some food he regained his strength. 19

Ga 1:16–17 **Saul's preaching at Damascus**

After he had spent only a few days with the disciples in Damascus, ·he began 20
preaching in the synagogues, 'Jesus is the Son of God.'[j] ·All his hearers were 21
amazed, and said, 'Surely, this is the man who did such damage in Jerusalem to the
9:2 people who invoke this name, and who came here for the sole purpose of arresting
them to have them tried by the chief priests?' ·Saul's power increased steadily, and 22
he was able to throw the Jewish colony at Damascus into complete confusion by
2:36w;18:5,28 the way he demonstrated that Jesus was the Christ.

Some time passed,[k] and the Jews worked out a plot to kill him, ·but news of it 23. 24
2 Co 11:32–33 reached Saul. They were keeping watch at the gates day and night in order to kill
Jos 2:15 him, ·but the disciples[l] took him by night and let him down from the wall, lowering 25
him in a basket.

Ga 1:18–19 **Saul's visit to Jerusalem**[m]

When he got to Jerusalem he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of 26
4:36–37 him: they could not believe he was really a disciple. ·Barnabas, however, took 27
charge of him, introduced him to the apostles, and explained how the Lord had
appeared to him and spoken to him on his journey, and how he had preached
13:46gg 5:41p; fearlessly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. ·Saul now started to go round with 28
them in Jerusalem, preaching fearlessly in the name of the Lord. ·But after he had 29
spoken to the Hellenists[n] and argued with them, they became determined to kill
=22:17–21 him. ·When the brothers got to know of this, they took him to Caesarea and sent 30
him off from there to Tarsus.[o]

A lull

The churches[p] throughout Judaea, Galilee and Samaria were now left in peace, 31
2:41cc 1 Co 8:1 Ep 4:16 building themselves up and living in the fear of the Lord; encouraged by the Holy
Spirit, they continued to grow.

Peter cures a paralytic at Lydda

It happened that Peter visited one place after another and eventually came to 32
God's holy people living down in Lydda. ·There he found a man called Aeneas, a 33
paralytic who had been bedridden for eight years. ·Peter said to him, 'Aeneas, 34
Jesus Christ cures you: get up and make your bed.' Aeneas got up immediately;[q]
everybody who lived in Lydda and Sharon saw him, and they were converted to 35
the Lord.

Peter raises a woman to life at Jaffa

13:9f At Jaffa there was a disciple called Tabitha, or in Greek, Dorcas,[r] who never tired 36
Lk 12:33d of doing good or giving to those in need. ·But it happened that at this time she 37
1 K 17:19 became ill and died, and they washed her and laid her out in an upper room.
Lydda is not far from Jaffa, so when the disciples heard that Peter was there, they 38
sent two men to urge him, 'Come to us without delay.'

Peter went back with them immediately, and on his arrival they took him to the 39
upper room, where all the widows stood round him in tears, showing him tunics
and other clothes Dorcas had made when she was with them. ·Peter sent everyone 40
Mk 5:40–41 out of the room and knelt down and prayed. Then he turned to the dead woman
3:7 Lk 7:15 and said, 'Tabitha, stand up.' She opened her eyes, looked at Peter and sat up.
9:13g Peter helped her to her feet, then he called in the members of the congregation 41
and widows and showed them she was alive. ·The whole of Jaffa heard about it and 42
many believed in the Lord.

Peter stayed on some time in Jaffa, lodging with a leather-tanner called Simon. 43

Peter visits a Roman centurion [a]

10 One of the centurions of the Italica cohort stationed in Caesarea was called Cornelius. ·He and the whole of his household were devout and God-fearing, [b] and he gave generously to Jewish causes and prayed constantly to God. Lk 7:2,4–5 2:11f Lk 12:33d

One day at about the ninth hour he had a vision in which he distinctly saw the angel of God come into his house and call out to him, 'Cornelius!' ·He stared at the vision in terror and exclaimed, 'What is it, Lord?' The angel answered 'Your prayers and charitable gifts have been accepted by God. [c] ·Now you must send some men to Jaffa and fetch a man called Simon, known as Peter, ·who is lodging with Simon the tanner whose house is by the sea.' ·When the angel who said this had gone, Cornelius called two of the slaves and a devout soldier of his staff, ·told them all that had happened, and sent them off to Jaffa. Lk 18:1 3:1a Mt 1:20g 9:10+ Lk 1:12g 2:14h

Next day, while they were still on their journey and had only a short distance to go before reaching the town, Peter went to the housetop at about the sixth hour to say his prayers. ·He felt hungry and was looking forward to his meal, but before it was ready he fell into a trance ·and saw heaven thrown open and something like a big sheet being let down to earth by its four corners; [d] ·it contained every kind of animal, reptile and bird. ·A voice then said to him, 'Now, Peter; kill and eat!' But Peter answered, 'Certainly not, Lord; I have never yet eaten anything profane or unclean.' ·Again, a second time, the voice spoke to him, 'What God has made clean, you have no right to call profane.' [e] ·This was repeated three times, and then suddenly the container was drawn up to heaven again. Jdt 8:5 Dn 6:11 Lv 11 Ezk 4:14 Gn 1:31+

Peter was still at a loss over the meaning of the vision he had seen, when the men sent by Cornelius arrived. They had asked where Simon's house was and they were now standing at the door, ·calling out to know if the Simon known as Peter was lodging there. ·While Peter's mind was still on the vision, the Spirit [f] told him, 'Look! Some men [g] have come to see you. ·Hurry down, and do not hesitate to return with them; it was I who told them to come.' ·Peter went down and said to them, 'I am the man you are looking for; why have you come?' ·They said, 'The centurion Cornelius, who is an upright and God-fearing man, highly regarded by the entire Jewish people, was told by God through a holy angel to send for you and bring you to his house and to listen to what you have to say.' ·So Peter asked them in and gave them lodging. 1:8j Lk 7:4–5

i. Characteristic Lucan phrase, 2:4; 4:8,31; 9:17; Lk 1:15,41,67, *see* Lk 4:1b.

j. 'Son of God' corresponds to 'Christ' in v. 22, *see* Mt 4:3d. We meet the title 'Son of God' only once more in Ac, at 13:33. It is characteristic of Pauline Christology, Rm 1:3–4,9; Ga 1:16; 2:20; 4:4,6; 1 Th 1:10; *see also* Rm 9:5d.

k. Three years, according to Ga 1:17–18; Paul's stay in Arabia belongs to this period. Luke's statement is vague.

l. var. 'his disciples'.

m. Paul mentions this visit, Ga 1:18–19. He observes that at that time the churches in Judaea did not yet know him by sight, but says nothing of the part Barnabas played. He states that, of the apostles, he saw none but Peter, and James the brother of the Lord; Ac, generalising, speaks vaguely of 'the apostles'.

n. var. 'the Greeks' (i.e. the gentiles); same variant in 11:20. The Hellenist Christians (*see* 6:1b) are the most active proselytisers, just as the Hellenist Jews were the most active opponents of Christian propaganda, 6:9seq.; 7:58; 9:1; 21:27; 24:19.

o. Where Barnabas later finds him, 11:25. Compare this with 22:17–21 and with Ga 1:18–21.

p. 'the churches' Western and Antiochene texts; 'the Church' Alexandrian text.

q. For similar miracles: 3:1–10 (and 4:22); 14:8–10; Lk 5:18–26 and par.; 13:11–13; Jn 5:1–14.

r. i.e. 'gazelle'. • The miracle is told in such a way as to bring out the similarity with Jesus' raising to life of the little girl ('Talitha') in Mk 5:38–41, *see* p. 1795.

10 a. For Luke, Cornelius' conversion has a wide application. Its significance for the Church at large appears from the narrative itself and from its emphasis on the two corelative visions of Peter and of Cornelius (as to Paul and Ananias, 9:10–12), but especially from the way the author deliberately links this incident to the decision of the council of Jerusalem, *see* 15:7–11,14. There seem to be two separate lessons here. First, God himself has made it clear that the gentiles are to be received into the Church without being forced to obey the Law, cf. 10:34–35,44–48[a]; 11:1,15–18; 15:7–11,14; and Ga 2:1–10. Secondly, God himself has shown Peter that he must accept the hospitality of the uncircumcised. The problem of social relations between Christians converted from Judaism and Christians converted from paganism underlies the narrative, cf. 10:10–16,28–29; 11:2–14; and Ga 2:11–21.

b. The expressions 'fearing God', 10:2,22,35; 13:16,26, and 'worshipping God', 13:43,50; 16:14; 17:4,17; 18:7, are technical terms for admirers and followers of the Jewish religion who stop short of circumcision, *see* 2:11f.

c. lit. 'has ascended as a memorial before God'. The expression recalls the 'memorial' sacrifice, *see* Lv 2:2,9,16, to which Tb 12:12 compares prayer.

d. Following Western text.

e. Peter is to throw off his scruples of legal purity, 11:9, cf. Mt 15:1–20 and par; Rm 14:14,17. The application is made in 15:9: by faith, God has cleansed the hearts of the gentiles; although their bodies, being uncircumcised, remain unclean. The immediate practical conclusion is that Peter must not fear contact with the uncircumcised, 10:27–28.

f. The intervention of the Spirit is like that of the angel of the Lord, cf. 8:26,29.

g. var. 'Three men', *see* 11:11.

Next day, he was ready to go off with them, accompanied by some of the brothers from Jaffa. 24 They reached Caesarea the following day, and Cornelius was waiting for them. He had asked his relations and close friends to be there, and as Peter reached the house Cornelius went out to meet him, fell at his feet 25 and did him reverence. 26 But Peter helped him up. 'Stand up,' he said, ' after all, I am only a man!' 27 Talking together they went in to meet all the people assembled there, 28 and Peter said to them, 'You know it is forbidden for Jews to mix with people of another race and visit them; but God has made it clear to me that I must not call anyone profane or unclean. 29 That is why I made no objection to coming when I was sent for; but I should like to know exactly why you sent for me.' Cornelius replied, 'At this time three days ago I was in my house saying the 30 prayers for the ninth hour,[k] when I suddenly saw a man in front of me in shining robes. 31 He said, "Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your charitable gifts have not been forgotten by God;[l] 32 so now you must send to Jaffa and fetch Simon known as Peter who is lodging in the house of Simon the tanner, by the sea." 33 So I sent for you at once, and you have been kind enough to come. Here we all are, assembled in front of you to hear all the instructions God has given you.'

3:12;14:15 Rv 19:10 11:3;15:9 Ga 2:12,15–16 3:1a Lk 1:13

Peter's address in the house of Cornelius

Then Peter addressed them, 'I now really understand', he said, 'that God has no 34 favourites, 35 but that anybody of any nationality who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.[j]

'God sent his word[k] to the people of Israel, and it was to them that *the good news* 36 *of peace was brought* by Jesus Christ—he is the Lord of all. 37 You know what happened all over Judaea,[l] how Jesus of Nazareth began[m] in Galilee, after John had been preaching baptism. 38 *God had anointed him with the Holy Spirit* and with power, and because God was with him, Jesus went about doing good and curing all who had fallen into the power of the devil. 39 Now we are witnesses to everything he did throughout the countryside of Judaea and in Jerusalem itself: and they killed him by hanging him on a tree, 40 yet on the third day God raised him to life[n] and allowed him to be seen, 41 not by the whole people but only by certain witnesses that God had chosen beforehand. Now we are those witnesses—we have eaten and drunk with him[o] after his resurrection from the dead— 42 and he has ordered us to proclaim this to his people[p] and to bear witness that God has appointed him to judge everyone, alive or dead.[q] 43 It is to him that all the prophets bear this witness: that all who believe in Jesus will have their sins forgiven through his name.'

2:22n Dt 10:17f Rm 2:11 Ga 2:6 1 P 1:17 Is 52:7 Na 2:1 Rm 10:12 Lk 4:44k 2:22;4:27j Is 61:1 Mt 3:16n;4:1b; 8:29k 1:8j, k,22; 2:22;4:27j 2:23p 1:3–4 Jn 14:22 Lk 13:31;24: 41–43 2:26w 2:38y;3:16l

Baptism of the first gentiles

While Peter was still speaking the Holy Spirit came down[r] on all the listeners. 44 Jewish believers who had accompanied Peter were all astonished that the gift of 45 the Holy Spirit should be poured out on gentiles too, 46 since they could hear them speaking strange languages and proclaiming the greatness of God. Peter himself then said, 47 'Could anyone refuse the water of baptism to these people, now they have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?' 48 He then gave orders[s] for them to be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ. Afterwards they begged him to stay on for some days.[t]

1:8j;8:16 2:33 2:4h,11 8:36;11:17 1:5f;2:38y

Jerusalem: Peter justifies his conduct

11 The apostles and the brothers in Judaea heard that gentiles too had accepted 1 the word of God, 2 and when Peter came up to Jerusalem the circumcised believers protested to him[a] 3 and said, 'So you have been visiting the uncircumcised and eating with them!' 4, 5 Peter in reply gave them the details point by point, 'One day, when I was in the town of Jaffa,' he began, 'I fell into a trance as I was praying and had a vision of something like a big sheet being let down from heaven by its four corners. This sheet came right down beside me. 6 I looked carefully into it and saw four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, reptiles, and birds of heaven.

1:15s;8:14; 15:7 10:28,48t 10:10–48

7, 8 Then I heard a voice that said to me, "Now, Peter; kill and eat!" ·But I answered,
9 "Certainly not, Lord; nothing profane or unclean has ever crossed my lips." ·And
a second time the voice spoke from heaven, "What God has made clean, you have
10 no right to call profane." ·This was repeated three times, before the whole of it
was drawn up to heaven again.
11 'Just at that moment, three men stopped outside the house where we were
12 staying; they had been sent from Caesarea to fetch me, ·and the Spirit told me to 1:8j
have no hesitation about going back with them. The six brothers here came with
13 me as well, and we entered the man's house. ·He told us he had seen an angel
standing in his house who said, "Send to Jaffa and fetch Simon known as Peter;
14 he has a message for you that will save you and your entire household." 2:47*ll*;16:15j
15 'I had scarcely begun to speak when the Holy Spirit came down on them in the 10:44t
16 same way as it came on us at the beginning, ·and I remembered that the Lord had
17 said, "John baptised with water, but you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit." ·I 1:5f
realised then that God[b] was giving them the identical gift he gave to us when we 15:8–9
believed in the Lord Jesus Christ; and who was I to stand in God's way?'[c] 10:47
Mt 16:23k
18 This account satisfied them, and they gave glory to God, saying 'God has clearly 2:47*ll*
granted to the gentiles too the repentance that leads to life.' 13:46seq.; 14:27;17:30; 26:20

Foundation of the church of Antioch

19 Those who had scattered[d] because of the persecution that arose over Stephen 8:1,4
travelled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch,[e] but they proclaimed the
20 message only to Jews. ·Some of them, however, who came from Cyprus and
Cyrene, went to Antioch where they started preaching also to the Greeks,[f] pro-
21 claiming the good news of the Lord Jesus[g] to them. ·The Lord helped them, and a 2:41cc;13:11 Lk 1:66
great number believed and were converted to the Lord. 3:19n
22 The news of them came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem[h] and they sent
23 Barnabas out to Antioch. ·There he was glad to see for himself that God had given 4:36p
grace, and he urged[i] them all to remain faithful to the Lord[j] with heartfelt 13:43;14:22

h. var. 'I was fasting and praying.'

i. This impersonal mode of expression both shows respect for the majesty of God and also alludes to the ministry of angels, *see* Tb 12:12; Mt 18:11,14; Rv 5:8; 8:3.

j. The language of sacrifice (*see* v. 4). The unblemished victim and its offerer are both 'acceptable' to God, Lv 1:3; 19:5; 22:19–27. Isaiah (56:7) had prophesied that when the fullness of time came, the gentiles' sacrifices would be 'acceptable' to God; *see* Ml 1:10–11, cf. Rm 15:16; Ph 4:18; 1 P 2:5.

k. var. 'The word that God has sent'.

l. Vv. 37–42 sum up the gospel story, *see* 1:21–22; 2:22n, emphasising the same points as Luke brought out in his own Gospel.

m. var. 'It began'.

n. Stereotyped formula of the Christian preaching and faith. It appears as early as 1 Co 15:4 (a first stage of the creed) with the addition 'according to the scriptures'. The formula echoes Jon 2:1 (*see* Mt 12:40); *see also* Ho 6:2. It recurs in Mt 16:21; 17:23; 20:19; 27:64; Lk 9:22; 18:33; 24:7,46.

o. add. (Western text) 'and were his companions for forty days after his resurrection from the dead'.

p. i.e. the chosen people, Israel, 10:2; 21:28.

q. Those still alive at the Second Coming and those who have died before the coming but then rise for judgement. Cf. 1 Th 4:13–5:10. By raising up Jesus, God has solemnly invested him as supreme Judge, 17:31; Jn 5:22,27; 2 Tm 4:1; 1 P 4:5; to proclaim the resurrection is therefore to invite people to repentance, cf. Ac 17:30–31.

r. 'The Pentecost of the gentiles'. As Peter notes, v. 47; 11:15; 15:8, it resembles the first Pentecost.

s. It was not usual for the apostles to administer baptism themselves, *see* 19:5; 1 Co 1:14,17. *See also* 1 Jn 4:2.

t. That Peter should lodge with the uncircumcised seems to the Jerusalem 'Hebrews' even more shocking and contrary to the Law than that he should authorise their baptism (11:2–3; cf. 10:28). This same question gave rise to the Antioch incident, Ga 2:11seq.

11 a. Western text 'So after some time Peter determined to set out for Jerusalem. After speaking to the brothers and encouraging them, he set out, delivering many sermons throughout the countryside and instructing the people. When he reached them and told them of the favour God had granted, the circumcised brothers remonstrated with him.'

b. 'God' omitted by Western text (because it is Christ who gives the Spirit).

c. Peter explains why he allowed a gentile to be baptised; he does not answer the objection that he had lodged with the uncircumcised, *see* v. 3, cf. 10:1a. According to Luke, Peter was considered to have been the first to receive gentiles into the Church, in spite of the episode of the Ethiopian eunuch, 8:26–39, and the date of the evangelisation of Antioch to which Luke does not refer till later, vv. 19seq. Against this background the council of Jerusalem, 15:5–29, appears as a kind of sequel to, or repetition of, the discussion in 11:1–18.

d. V. 19 takes up from 8:1 and 8:4 and then presents the founding of the church at Antioch as an immediate sequel to Stephen's martyrdom from which it has been separated by the insertion of the Acts of Philip, 8:5–40, and of Peter, 9:31–11:18. Nevertheless, the narrative presupposes the story of Saul's conversion, 9:1–30, itself a sequel to Stephen's martyrdom.

e. Antioch on the Orontes, capital of the Roman province of Syria, third city of the empire after Rome and Alexandria.

f. var. 'Hellenists', cf. 9:29. • 'Greeks', as opposed to 'Jews', v. 19, includes all the uncircumcised.

g. Not 'Christ', a title more suited to a Jewish audience with its messianic expectation; in preaching to gentiles (Greeks) Jesus was called 'Lord', *see* 25:26h.

h. The church in Jerusalem enjoyed right of supervision over the other churches, *see* 8:14; 11:1, and *see* Ga 2:2b.

i. Apparently a play on the name 'Barnabas', 'son of exhortation', 4:36.

j. var. 'in the Lord'.

devotion; ·for he was a good man, filled with the Holy Spirit and with faith. And a large number of people were won over to the Lord. 24

Barnabas then left for Tarsus to look for Saul, ·and when he found him he brought him to Antioch. And it happened that they stayed together in that church [k] a whole year, instructing a large number of people. It was at Antioch that the disciples were first called 'Christians'. [l] 25, 26

Barnabas and Saul sent as deputies to Jerusalem

While they were there some prophets [m] came down to Antioch from Jerusalem, [n] 27
and one of them whose name was Agabus, seized by the Spirit, stood up and 28
predicted that a severe and universal famine was going to happen. This in fact happened while Claudius was emperor. [o] ·The disciples decided to send relief, each 29
to contribute what he could afford, to the brothers living in Judaea. ·They did this 30
and delivered their contributions to the elders [p] through the agency of Barnabas and Saul.

Peter's arrest and miraculous deliverance [q]

12 It was about this time that King Herod started persecuting certain members 1
of the church. ·He had James the brother of John beheaded, ·and when he 2, 3
saw that this pleased the Jews he went on to arrest Peter as well. ·As it was during 4
the days of Unleavened Bread that he had arrested him, he put him in prison, assigning four sections of four soldiers each to guard him, meaning to try him in public after the Passover. ·All the time Peter was under guard the church prayed to 5
God for him unremittingly.

On the night before Herod was to try him, Peter was sleeping between two 6
soldiers, fastened with two chains, [r] while guards kept watch at the main entrance
to the prison. ·Then suddenly an angel of the Lord stood there, and the cell was 7
filled with light. He tapped Peter on the side and woke him. 'Get up!' he said,
'Hurry!'—and the chains fell from his hands. ·The angel then said, 'Put on your 8
belt and sandals.' After he had done this, the angel next said, 'Wrap your cloak round you and follow me.' ·He followed him out, but had no idea that what the 9
angel did was all happening in reality; he thought he was seeing a vision. ·They 10
passed through the first guard post and then the second and reached the iron gate leading to the city. This opened of its own accord; they went through it [s] and had walked the whole length of one street when suddenly the angel left him. ·It was 11
only then that Peter came to himself. And he said, 'Now I know it is all true. The Lord really did send his angel and save me from Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting.'

As soon as he realised this he went straight to the house of Mary the mother of 12
John Mark, [t] where a number of people had assembled and were praying. ·He 13
knocked at the outside door and a servant called Rhoda came to answer it. ·She 14
recognised Peter's voice and was so overcome with joy that, instead of opening the door, she ran inside with the news that Peter was standing at the main entrance. They said to her, 'You are out of your mind,' but she insisted that it was true. 15
Then they said, 'It must be his angel!' [u] ·Peter, meanwhile, was still knocking. 16
When they opened the door, they were amazed to see that it really was Peter
himself. ·He raised his hand for silence and described to them how the Lord had 17
led him out of prison. He added, 'Tell James [v] and the brothers.' Then he left and went elsewhere.

When daylight came there was a great commotion among the soldiers, who could 18
not imagine what had become of Peter. ·Herod put out an unsuccessful search for 19
him; he had the guards questioned, and before leaving Judaea to take up residence in Caesarea he gave orders for their execution. [w]

The death of the persecutor

Now Herod was on bad terms with the Tyrians and Sidonians. Yet they sent a joint 20

deputation which managed to enlist the support of Blastus, the king's chamberlain,
and through him negotiated a treaty, since their country depended for its food
21 supply on the king's territory. •A day was fixed, and Herod, wearing his robes of
22 state and seated on a throne, began to make a speech to them. •The people
23 acclaimed him with, 'It is a god speaking, not a man!' •and at that moment the
angel of the Lord struck him down, because he had not given the glory to God. He 2 M 9:9
was eaten away by worms and died. [h] Ezk 28:2
Mt 1:20g

Barnabas and Saul return to Antioch

24 The word of God continued to spread and to gain followers. 6:7h
25 Barnabas and Saul completed their task at Jerusalem [i] and came back, bringing 11:29–30
John Mark with them. 12:12d

III: THE MISSION OF BARNABAS AND PAUL
THE COUNCIL OF JERUSALEM

The mission sent out

1 **13** In the church at Antioch the following were prophets and teachers: [a] Bar- 4:36p;11:27m
nabas, Simeon called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen, who had been 13:9f
2 brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. •One day while they were offering

k. Meaning doubtful. Possibly 'they worked together', 'they were received (by the church)', i.e. were guests of the church.

l. i.e. supporters or followers of Christus (or Chrestus). The nickname shows that the gentiles of Antioch took the title of 'Christ' (anointed) for a proper name.

m. Like the OT prophets, Dt 18:18e; Mt 5:12; 2 P 1:21, those of the NT are charismatics, 1 Co 12:1a, who speak in God's name, being inspired by his Spirit. Under the new covenant this charism is bestowed even more generously, 2:17–18, and at times it is enjoyed by the faithful at large, 19:6; 1 Co 11:4–5; 14:26,29–33,37. But particular individuals are so specially endowed with the charisms that they are always referred to as 'prophets', 11:27; 13:1; 15:32; 21:9,10. These normally occupy the second place after the apostles in the order of charisms, 1 Co 12:28–29; Ep 4:11; but *see* Lk 11:49; Rm 12:6; 1 Co 12:10; this is because they are the appointed witnesses of the Spirit, 1 Th 5:19–20; Rv 2:7, whose 'revelations' they communicate, 1 Co 14:6,26,30; Ep 3:5; Rv 1:1, just as the apostles are witnesses to the risen Christ, Ac 1:8k; Rm 1:1b, and proclaim the *kerygma*, Ac 2:22n. They do not simply foretell the future, 11:28; 21:11, or read hearts, 1 Co 14:24–25; *see* 1 Tm 1:18. When they 'edify, exhort, console', 1 Co 14:3; *see* Ac 4:36; 11:23–24, they do so by a supernatural revelation; in this they resemble those who 'speak strange languages', Ac 2:1a,4; 19:6, but their gift is greater because their speech is intelligible, 1 Co 14. Their chief work was evidently to explain the prophecies of scripture under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, especially those of the OT prophets, 1 P 1:10–12, and thus expound the 'mystery' of the divine plan, Rm 16:25*l*; 1 Co 13:2; Ep 3:5. For this reason they are named with the apostles as the foundation of the Church, Ep 2:20s. The Revelation of John is a typical example of this NT 'prophecy', Rv 1:3; 10:11; 19:10; 22:7–10,18–19. For all its dignity, the prophetic charism communicates knowledge that is imperfect and provisional, being bound up with faith, Rm 12:6, which is itself destined to vanish in face of the beatific vision, 1 Co 13:8–12.

n. Western text adds 'and there was great rejoicing. While we were together, one of them . . .' If this reading is correct, this is the first of the 'We-sections', *see* 16:10.

o. In the reign of Claudius (41–54) famine swept through the empire (49–50), through Greece first, and later Rome. Josephus puts it in the time of Tiberius Alexander as procurator (46–48).

p. The apostles are not mentioned, unlike 15:2; they had perhaps left Jerusalem. According to 9:26; 11:29seq.; 15:2, it would seem that Paul made three journeys to Jerusalem before his two visits to Galatia, 16:6; 18:23. Paul himself, however, in Ga 1:18; 2:1seq.; cf. 4:13, mentions only two. The impression produced by Ac arises perhaps from Luke's method of combining his sources. It may be that the journey of 11:29 is the same as that of 15:2. The 'help' which is the purpose of the journey is probably to be distinguished from that which Paul supplied later, 24:17, when the great collection, made at the appeal of the Jerusalem church, was completed, Ga 2:10; cf. Rm 15:31; 1 Co 16:1a; 2 Co 8:4; 9:1,12,13.

12 a. This episode, which 11:30 and 12:25 seem to place at the same time as the visit of Barnabas and Saul to Jerusalem, must in fact have preceded it, for Herod Agrippa I (called 'king' to distinguish him from his uncle Herod Antipas, the tetrarch of the Passion story, and awarded the royal title by Caligula in 37) was not actually king of Judaea and Samaria until 41; he died in 44. The events here described took place, therefore, between 41 and 44. The narrative has been rather clumsily fitted into its present literary context. On miraculous release from prison, *see* 5:21h.

b. Each one to a soldier on each side.

c. add. 'went down the seven steps'.

d. John Mark is mentioned again in 12:25; 13:5, 13; 15:37,39; he was cousin to Barnabas, Col 4:10. During Paul's captivity in Rome Mark was with him, Col 4:10; Phm 24, and shortly before Paul died he asked for Mark's assistance, 2 Tm 4:11. Mark is also named as an assistant to Peter, 1 P 5:13, and tradition names him as author of the second Gospel.

e. It was popularly believed that guardian angels were a kind of spiritual 'double' of their charges.

f. 'James' without qualification means the 'brother of the Lord'. At the time of Paul's first visit to Jerusalem, Ga 1:19 (i.e. probably in 38–39, *see* Ac 9:1a) and afterwards, James was leader of the 'Hebrew' section of the Jerusalem Christians. After Peter's departure, he was in charge of the mother church. *See* 15:13; 21:18; 1 Co 15:7. The Letter of James appears under his name.

g. Soldiers who let their prisoners escape were liable to receive the sentence due to the prisoners, *see* 16:27; 27:42.

h. The scene of Agrippa's apotheosis is described in splendid detail by Josephus. • var. 'When he had come down from the tribune he became food for worms even while he was still alive; and so he died.' His death resembles that of an earlier persecutor of God's people, 2 M 9:9.

i. var. 'came back from Jerusalem', but this seems to be an attempt to simplify.

13 a. On the 'prophets', see 11:27m. The charism of the teacher, or *didaskalos*, was his ability to instruct others on matters of morality and doctrine, instruction usually based on the scriptures, cf. 1 Co 12–14 and notes. The five prophets

1:8j Rm 1:1 worship [b] to the Lord and keeping a fast, the Holy Spirit said, 'I want Barnabas and Saul set apart for the work to which I have called them.' ·So it was that after fasting 3
and prayer they laid their hands on them [c] and sent them off.

Cyprus: the magician Elymas

So these two, sent on their mission by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and 4
from there set sail for Cyprus. [d] ·They landed at Salamis and proclaimed the word 5
9:20;12:12d; 14:1;17:10,17; 18:4,19;19:8 of God in the synagogues of the Jews; [e] John acted as their assistant.
They travelled the whole length of the island, and at Paphos they came in contact 6
with a Jewish magician and false prophet called Bar-Jesus. ·He was one of the 7
attendants of the proconsul Sergius Paulus who was an extremely intelligent man.
The proconsul summoned Barnabas and Saul and asked to hear the word of God,
but Elymas the magician (this is what his name means in Greek) tried to stop 8
them so as to prevent the proconsul's conversion to the faith. ·Then Saul, whose 9
8:20–23 other name is Paul, [f] filled with the Holy Spirit, looked at him intently ·and said, 10
Jn 8:44 'You utter fraud, you impostor, you son of the devil, you enemy of all uprightness,
will you not stop twisting the straightforward ways of the Lord? ·Now watch how 11
the hand of the Lord will strike you: you will be blind, and for a time you will not
see the sun.' That instant, everything went misty and dark for him, and he groped
about to find someone to lead him by the hand. ·The proconsul, who had watched 12
Mt 22:33 Lk 4:32 everything, became a believer, being much struck by what he had learnt about
the Lord.

They arrive at Antioch in Pisidia

Paul and his companions went by sea from Paphos to Perga in Pamphylia where 13
15:38 John left them to go back to Jerusalem. ·The others carried on from Perga till 14
they reached Antioch in Pisidia. Here they went to synagogue on the Sabbath and
13:5e took their seats. ·After the passages from the Law and the Prophets had been 15
read, the presidents of the synagogue sent them a message, 'Brothers, if you would
like to address some words of encouragement [g] to the congregation, please do so.'
Paul stood up, raised his hand [h] for silence and began to speak: 16

Paul's preaching before the Jews [i]

2:22n;10:2b 'Men of Israel, and fearers of God, [j] listen! ·The God of our nation Israel [k] chose 17
Ex 1:7;3–15 Is 1:2 our ancestors and made our people great when they were living in Egypt, a land
not their own; then by divine power he led them out ·and for about forty years 18
Dt 1:31 Dt 7:1a *took care of* [l] them in the desert. ·*When he had destroyed seven nations in Canaan,* 19
Gn 15:13 *he put them in possession* of their land ·for about four hundred and fifty years. [m] 20
Ex 12:40–41 After this he gave them judges, down to the prophet Samuel. ·Then they demanded 21
1 S 8–10 a king, and God gave them Saul son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin. [n]
After forty years, ·he deposed him and raised up David to be king, whom he 22
1 S 13:14 Ps 89:20 Is 44:28 attested in these words, "*I have found David* son of Jesse, *a man after my own*
heart, who will perform my entire will." ·To keep his promise, God has raised up [o] 23
for Israel one of David's descendants, Jesus, as Saviour, ·whose coming was 24
Mt 3:1–2 Lk 1:76 heralded by John when he proclaimed a baptism of repentance for the whole
Mt 3:11par.;11i Jn 1:20–27 people of Israel. ·Before John ended his course he said, "I am not the one [p] you 25
imagine me to be; there is someone coming after me whose sandal I am not
fit to undo."
5:20g 'My brothers, sons of Abraham's race, and all you godfearers, this message of 26
salvation is meant for you. [q] ·What the people of Jerusalem and their rulers did, 27
2:23;3:17m 13:14seq.;15:21 Lk 18:31e though they did not realise it, was in fact to fulfil the prophecies read on every
Sabbath. [r] ·Though they found nothing to justify his execution, [s] they condemned 28
him and asked Pilate to have him put to death. [t] ·When they had carried out 29
5:30 Lk 24:44 everything that scripture foretells about him they took him down from the tree and
buried him in a tomb. [u] ·But God raised him from the dead, ·and for many days he 30, 31

appeared to those who had accompanied him from Galilee to Jerusalem: and it is these same companions of his who are now his witnesses before our people. [v] 1:3 1:8k

32 'We have come here to tell you the good news that the promise made to our 33 ancestors has come about. ·God has fulfilled it to their children [w] by raising Jesus from the dead. As scripture says in the psalms: [x] *You are my son: today I have* 34 *fathered you.* [y] ·The fact that God raised him from the dead, never to return to corruption, is no more than what he had declared: *To you I shall give the holy* 35 *things promised to David which can be relied upon.* [z] ·This is also why it says in 36 another text: *You will not allow your Holy One to see corruption.* ·Now when David in his own time had served God's purposes he died; he was buried with his 37 ancestors and has certainly *seen corruption.* ·The one whom God has raised up, however, has not *seen corruption.* 2:24–31;13:23 2:36w;9:20j Ps 2:7 Is 55:3 Ps 16:10

38 'My brothers, I want you to realise that it is through him that forgiveness of sins 39 is being proclaimed to you. Through him justification from all sins from which the Law of Moses was unable to justify ·is being offered to every believer. 2:38x 15:11 Rm 1:16+; 3:20g

40 'So be careful—or what the prophets say will happen to you. 28:26–27

41 *Cast your eyes around you, mockers;*
be amazed, and perish!
For I am doing something in your own days
that you would never believe if you were told of it.' [aa] Hab 1:5

and teachers here named represent the governing body of the church of Antioch; compare the list of the Twelve, 1:13, and of the Seven, 6:5. Like the latter, the Antiochene Five are, it seems, Hellenist Jews.

b. Or 'holding a service'; the use of the term for Christian prayer in common puts this on a level with the sacrificial worship of the Old Law, *see* Rm 1:9g.

c. It seems, to judge by 14:26 (*see* 15:40), that by this act the community commends to God's grace the new missionaries chosen, v. 2, and sent, v. 4, by the Holy Spirit. The significance of the rite is not, therefore, exactly the same as that of 6:6, by which the Seven receive their commission from the apostles, *see* 1 Tm 4:14e.

d. Barnabas' native country, 4:36.

e. Paul's regular policy, 17:2, is to approach the Jews first, *see* 13:14; 14:1; 16:13; 17:10,17; 18:4,19; 19:8; 28:17,23, on the principle that the Jews have first claim, *see* 3:26; 13:46; Mk 7:27; Rm 1:16; 2:9–10; only after their refusal does Paul turn to the gentiles, *see* Ac 13:46; 18:6; 28:28.

f. The Jews, and the eastern peoples in general, adopted names familiar in the Graeco-Roman world: John took 'Mark', 12:12, Joseph-Barsabbas took 'Justus', 1:23, Tabitha 'Dorcas', 9:36, Simeon 'Niger', 13:1, etc. Luke has given Paul his Roman name for the first time and does not use 'Saul' again. He also gives prominence now to Paul who is no longer a subordinate of Barnabas but the real missionary leader, v. 13.

g. i.e. a sermon based upon the scriptures, cf. Rm 15:4. The synagogue custom mentioned here was followed also when Christians met for worship: the sermons were preached by the 'prophets' or teachers, *see* 11:23; 14:22; 15:32; 16:40; 20:1,2; 1 Co 14:3,31; 1 Tm 4:13; Heb 13:22.

h. The conventional gesture of the public speaker in the ancient world, to invite attention and call for quiet; the right hand was held up with the thumb and little finger bent and the other three fingers extended, *see* 19:33; 21:40; 26:1.

i. The great inaugural discourse of Paul which Luke offers as typical of the apostle's preaching to the Jews. It falls into two parts: vv. 16–25 are a summary of the history of salvation (compare Stephen's sermon, ch. 7) with an appendix recalling John the Baptist's testimony (he is never mentioned in Paul's own letters); vv. 26–39 claim that Jesus who died and has risen is the expected Messiah (thus closely resembling Peter's discourses, though this discourse ends with a suggestion of the Pauline doctrine of justification by faith). The conclusion, vv. 40–41, is a grave warning taken from the scriptures, *see* 28:26–27.

j. The two classes of listeners: Jews by birth and 'god-fearers', 10:2b.

k. lit. 'the God of this people Israel'.

l. var. 'upheld' (or 'bore with').

m. Western (and Antiochene) text 'For about four hundred and fifty years he gave them judges.' The text is obscure.

n. Paul's own name, and he too was of the tribe of Benjamin, Rm 11:1; Ph 3:5.

o. Or 'raised from the dead'. The Greek verb can mean either, and this ambivalence is exploited in the argument, as in 3:20–26: the 'promise' finds fulfilment in Christ's resurrection, vv. 32–33; *see also* 26:6–8; moreover, it is by his resurrection that Jesus is established as Saviour, cf. 5:31; *see also* 2:21; 4:12; Rm 5:9–10; Ph 3:20. Thus the verb which means 'raise up' in v. 22 unequivocally means 'raise from the dead' from v. 30 onwards. In v. 23 it is transitional and ambiguous.

p. var. 'what'.

q. var. 'for us'.

r. Following Western text. Current text 'For those who live in Jerusalem and their leaders did not recognise him or (understand) the prophecies read on every Sabbath: but they fulfilled the prophecies by condemning him.'

s. A recurring element of the Christian plea: the innocence and unjust condemnation of Jesus, *see* 3:13–14; Mt 27:3–10,19,23–24; Lk 23:14,22,47.

t. 'asked Pilate to have him put to death', alternatively (the textual witnesses vary) 'that (he) should be put to death'; or 'that (they might) put him to death'. var. 'handed him over to Pilate that he might be put to death.'

u. Western text '. . . foretells about him, after he had been crucified they asked Pilate for permission to take him down from the tree, and when they received it they took him down and buried him in a tomb.'

v. This appeal to the testimony of the Galilean apostles is a little surprising on Paul's lips. In his own letters he makes no distinction between their testimony and his own, 1 Co 15:3–11. This is one of the differences between the viewpoint of Ac and that of Paul.

w. var. 'for our children'.

x. Western text 'first psalm' (following the ancient custom of reading Ps 1 and 2 as one); var. 'second psalm'.

y. By his resurrection Christ was enthroned as Messiah, and from then on his human nature enjoyed all the privileges of the Son of God, *see* Rm 1:4c.

z. A promise of holiness as a gift kept for the messianic era, stemming from the risen Christ, the new David.

aa. The disbelief and rejection of the Jews (cf. Mt 21:33seq.; 22:1seq, 1a) are a favourite theme of Luke, *see* 13:5e; he uses it again as a conclusion to 28:26–27.

As they left they were urged to [bb] continue this preaching the following Sabbath. 42
10:2b;17:4 When the meeting broke up many Jews and devout converts [cc] followed Paul and 43
11:23;14:22 Barnabas, [dd] and in their talks with them Paul and Barnabas urged them to remain faithful to the grace God had given them. [ee]

Paul and Barnabas preach to the gentiles

The next Sabbath almost the whole town assembled to hear the word of God. [ff] 44
5:17;17:5 When they saw the crowds, the Jews, filled with jealousy, used blasphemies to 45
1 Th 2:14f contradict everything Paul said. ·Then Paul and Barnabas spoke out fearlessly. [gg] 46
13:5e 'We had to proclaim the word of God to you first, but since you have rejected it, since you do not think yourselves worthy of eternal life, here and now we turn to
1:8 the gentiles. ·For this is what the Lord commanded us to do when he said: 47

Is 49:6 Jn 8:12b *I have made you a light to the nations,*
so that my salvation may reach the remotest parts of the earth.' [hh]

2:46jj, 47kk It made the gentiles very happy to hear this and they gave thanks to the Lord for 48
3:15k his message; [ii] all who were destined for eternal life became believers. [jj] ·Thus the 49
6:7h word of the Lord spread through the whole countryside.
10:2b;17:12 But the Jews worked on some of the devout women of the upper classes and the 50
leading men of the city; they stirred up a persecution against Paul and Barnabas
18:6 Lk9:5;10:11par. •2:46jj and expelled them from their territory. ·So they shook the dust from their feet in 51
protest against them and went off to Iconium; but the converts were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit.

Iconium evangelised

13:5e **14** It happened that at Iconium they went to the Jewish synagogue, in the same 1
way, [a] and they spoke so effectively that a great many Jews and Greeks became believers. [b]
1 Th 2:14f (However, the Jews who refused to believe stirred up the gentiles against the 2
brothers and set them in opposition. [c])
4:29–30;13:46gg 20:24,32 Mk 16:17–20 Accordingly Paul and Barnabas stayed on for some time, preaching fearlessly in 3
the Lord; and he attested all they said about his gift of grace, allowing signs and wonders to be performed by them.
The people in the city were divided; [d] some supported the Jews, others the 4
apostles, ·but eventually with the connivance of the authorities a move was made 5
2 Tm 3:11 by gentiles as well as Jews to make attacks on them and to stone them. ·When they 6
came to hear of this, they went off for safety to Lycaonia where, in the towns of Lystra and Derbe and in the surrounding country, [e] ·they preached the good news. 7

3:1–10 **Healing of a cripple**

There was a man sitting there [f] who had never walked in his life, because his feet 8
were crippled from birth; ·he was listening to Paul preaching, and Paul looked at 9
him intently and saw that he had the faith to be cured. [g] ·Paul said in a loud voice, 10
'Get to your feet—stand up,' and the cripple jumped up and began to walk.
When the crowds saw what Paul had done they shouted in the language of 11
28:6 Lycaonia, 'The gods have come down to us in human form.' ·They addressed 12
Barnabas as Zeus, and since Paul was the principal speaker they called him Hermes. [h] ·The priests of Zeus-outside-the-Gate, [i] proposing that all the people 13
should offer sacrifice with them, brought garlanded oxen to the gates. ·When the 14
apostles Barnabas and Paul heard what was happening they tore their clothes, [j] and rushed into the crowd, shouting, ·'Friends, what do you think you are doing? We 15
3:12; 10:26 are only human beings, mortal like yourselves. We have come with good news to
2:38x;3:19n; 1 Th 1:9 make you turn from these empty idols to the living God [k] who made sky and earth
17:22, 30 and notes Dt 5:26 Jr 5:24 and the sea and all that these hold. [l] ·In the past he allowed all the nations to go 16
their own way; ·but even then he did not leave you without evidence of himself in 17
the good things he does for you: he sends you rain from heaven and seasons of

18 fruitfulness; he fills you with food and your hearts with merriment.' ·With this speech they just managed to prevent the crowd from offering them sacrifice.

End of the mission

19 Then some Jews arrived from Antioch and Iconium and turned the people against them. They stoned Paul and dragged him outside the town, thinking he was dead. 2 Co 11:25 1 Th 2:14f
20 The disciples came crowding round him but, as they did so, he stood up and went back to the town. The next day he and Barnabas left for Derbe. 2 Tm 3:11
21 Having preached the good news in that town and made a considerable number
22 of disciples, they went back through Lystra, Iconium and Antioch. ·They put fresh heart into the disciples,[m] encouraging them to persevere in the faith, saying, 15:32,41;18:23
'We must all experience many hardships before we enter the kingdom of God.' 11:23;13:43 Mt 10:22;24:13
23 In each of these churches they appointed elders,[n] and with prayer and fasting they commended them to the Lord in whom they had come to believe. Rm 5:3–4 2 Th 1:4seq. 2 Tm 2:12;3:12 Heb 10:36
24, 25 They passed through Pisidia and reached Pamphylia. ·Then after proclaiming
26 the word[o] at Perga they went down to Attalia ·and from there sailed for Antioch, where they had originally been commended to the grace of God for the work they had now completed. ·13:3 ·13:2–3
27 On their arrival they assembled the church and gave an account of all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith[p] to the gentiles. 15:4,12;21:19
28 They stayed there with the disciples for some time.

Controversy at Antioch

Ga 2:11–14

1 **15** [a]Then some men came down from Judaea[b] and taught the brothers, 'Unless you have yourselves circumcised in the tradition of Moses you cannot be 15:5,24 Gn 17:10d
2 saved.' ·This led to disagreement, and after Paul and Barnabas had had a long argument with these men it was decided that Paul and Barnabas and others of the

bb. var. 'When they left they felt it appropriate to'.

cc. 'converts' or 'proselytes', here in the wide sense, is equivalent to 'those who feared God' or 'those who worshipped God', *see* 10:2b.

dd. add. 'considering it fitting to accept baptism'.

ee. add (Western text) 'And in this way the word of God spread through the whole town.'

ff. var. 'the word of the Lord', or '(to hear) Paul who spoke for a long time about the Lord'.

gg. The 'courage' and 'confidence' of the apostles has been already stressed, 4:13,29,31; Luke repeatedly attributes these qualities to Paul, 9:27–28; 14:3; 19:8; 26:26; 28:31, and Paul himself lays emphasis on them, 2 Co 3:12; 7:4; Ep 3:12; 6:19–20; Ph 1:20; 1 Th 2:2.

hh. LXX text quoted freely. The words may be taken either as referring to Paul himself (cf. 26:17–18), apostle and teacher of the gentiles (cf. Rm 11:13; Ep 3:8; 1 Tm 2:7) or to the risen Christ (cf. Ac 26:23 which also, it seems, is based on Is 49:6; and, cf. Lk 2:32, dependent on Is 49:6): Christ is the light of the gentiles, but since only the apostles' witness can spread this light, *see* Ac 1:8k, Paul considers this prophecy as a command that he must carry out.

ii. var. 'the word of God'.

jj. 'eternal life', cf. v. 46, i.e. the life of the world to come, cf. 3:15; only those achieve it whose names are 'written in heaven', Lk 10:20, in 'the book of life', Ph 4:3; Rv 20:12h. 'Destined for the life of the world to come' was a common rabbinic expression. In Christian teaching the first prerequisite of this predestination to glory is faith in Christ, *see* Jn 10:26m; Rm 8:28–30, and earlier in Ac 2:39.

14 a. Or 'together'.

b. V. 1 is continued in v. 3.

c. Refusal to believe becomes in a short time active opposition, cf. 19:9; 28:24 and 9:23; 13:45,50; 17:5–8,13; 18:6,13.

d. Continuation of v. 2.

e. Lystra, a Roman colony, Timothy's home town, *see* 16:1–2. The events of vv. 8–19 take place in Lystra; Paul is not in Derbe until v. 20.

f. All the MSS have 'in Lystra' but this is evidently an addition, *see* v. 20[b].

g. Others translate 'to be saved'. The condition for the miracle is faith, *see* Mt 8:10b; Mk 2:5; 6:5,6. There is a clear parallelism between Paul's miracles and Peter's, and Jesus', *see* 3:1a and p. 1795.

h. Hermes (the Latin 'Mercury') was the messenger of the gods.

i. His temple was outside the walls.

j. Sign of agonised protest, cf. Mt 26:65.

k. In preaching against polytheism it was customary to contrast the true God with the false, the living God with helpless idols, and to make an appeal for conversion. For a summary of Paul's preaching to the gentiles see Ga 4:9 and 1 Th 1:9–10; cf. Ac 15:19–20; 26:18,20.

l. That God creates the universe shows that he is a living God: this proposition is found in Jewish creeds, cf. 4:24; 17:24; Ex 20:11; Ne 9:6; Ps 146:6; Rv 10:6; 14:7.

m. Cf. Lk 22:32; Rm 1:11; 1 Th 3:2,13.

n. Paul seems to have modelled the structure of his communities on that of any normal Diaspora Jewish community. The first elders in new churches are appointed by the apostles; or, at a later stage, by the overseer whom the apostle has commissioned, Tt 1:5.

o. add. 'of the Lord' or 'of God'.

p. Paul uses a similar metaphor, 1 Co 16:9seq.; 2 Co 2:12; Col 4:3.

15 a. The events of this chapter raise several difficulties: **1** Vv. 5–7[a] repeat vv. 1–2[a] as if the author, having two different accounts of how the controversy started, decided to give both as they stood. **2** V. 6 gives the impression that the community leaders held a private meeting, but vv. 12,22 suggest the debate took place before the whole Christian assembly. **3** The meeting issues a decree about how Christian converts from paganism must observe purity rites, and it entrusts this decree to Paul, vv. 22seq.; later, however (in 21:25), James seems to assume that Paul was then being informed of this decree for the first time. Paul himself does not speak of the decree either in Ga 2:6 (speaking of the Jerusalem meeting) or in Rm 14; 1 Co 8–10 (discussing similar problems). **4** Though the decree of 15:29 was primarily intended for the churches of Syria and Cilicia, 15:23, Luke has nothing to say about Paul's publishing it when he trav-

Ga 2:1–2 church[e] should go up to Jerusalem and discuss the question with the apostles[d] and elders.

20:38;21:5 The members of the church saw them off,[e] and as they passed through Phoenicia 3
and Samaria they told how the gentiles had been converted, and this news was received with the greatest satisfaction by all the brothers. ·When they arrived in 4
Jerusalem they were welcomed by the church and by the apostles and elders, and
14:27b gave an account of all that God had done through them.

Ga 2:1–9 **Controversy at Jerusalem**

But certain members of the Pharisees' party who had become believers objected,[f] 5
insisting that gentiles should be circumcised and instructed to keep the Law of Moses.[g] ·The apostles and elders[h] met to look into the matter, ·and after a long 6, 7
2:14h discussion, Peter stood up[i] and addressed them.

10:1–11:18 and notes **Peter's speech**

'My brothers,' he said, 'you know perfectly well that in the early days God made his choice among you: the gentiles were to learn the good news from me and so
1:24 become believers. ·And God, who can read everyone's heart, showed his approval 8
10:44–47; 11:15–17 of them by giving the Holy Spirit to them just as he had to us. ·God made no 9
10:34+;11:12+ distinction between them and us, since he purified their hearts by faith.[j] ·Why do 10
Mt 11:30;23:4 Ga 5:1 Rm 7 Ga 3:10–12 you put God to the test[k] now by imposing on the disciples the very burden that neither our ancestors nor we ourselves were strong enough to support? ·But we 11
believe that we are saved in the same way as they are: through the grace of the Lord Jesus.'[l]

14:27 The entire assembly fell silent,[m] and they listened to Barnabas and Paul describ- 12
ing all the signs and wonders God had worked through them among the gentiles.

James' speech

12:17f When they had finished it was James[n] who spoke. 'My brothers,' he said, 'listen to 13
13:47;18:10 Dt 7:6b me. ·Simeon[o] has described how God first arranged to enlist a people for his name 14
Rm 9:26;15: 9–12;16:26 out of the gentiles. ·This is entirely in harmony with the words of the prophets, 15
since the scriptures say:[p]

Am 9:11–12

> *After that I shall return* 16
> *and rebuild the fallen hut of David;*
> *I shall make good the gaps in it*
> *and restore it.*
> *Then the rest of humanity,* 17
> *and of all the nations once called mine,*[q]
> *will look for the Lord,*
> *says the Lord who made this* ·known so long ago.[r] 18

'My verdict is, then,[s] that instead of making things more difficult for gentiles 19
3:19n who turn to God, ·we should send them a letter telling them merely to abstain from 20
anything polluted by idols,[t] from illicit marriages,[u] from the meat of strangled
13:27 animals and from blood.[v] ·For Moses has always had his preachers in every town 21
and is read aloud in the synagogues every Sabbath.'

The apostolic letter

Then the apostles and elders, with the whole church, decided to choose delegates 22
from among themselves to send to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They chose Judas, known as Barsabbas,[w] and Silas,[x] both leading men in the brotherhood, and gave them this letter to take with them: 23

'The apostles and elders, your brothers, send greetings to the brothers of
15:1 Ga 2:12 gentile birth in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia. ·We hear that some people coming 24
from here, but acting without any authority from ourselves, have disturbed you

25 with their demands and have unsettled your minds; ·and so we have decided
unanimously to elect delegates and to send them to you with our well-
26 beloved Barnabas and Paul, ·who have committed their lives to the name of our
27 Lord Jesus Christ. ·Accordingly we are sending you Judas and Silas, who
28 will confirm by word of mouth what we have written. ·It has been decided by the 1:8j;5:32
Holy Spirit and by ourselves not to impose on you any burden beyond
29 these essentials: ·you are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood,
from the meat of strangled animals and from illicit marriages. Avoid these,
and you will do what is right. [y] Farewell.'

The delegates at Antioch

30 The party left and went down to Antioch, where they summoned the whole
31 community and delivered the letter. ·The community read it and were delighted
32 with the encouragement it gave them. ·Judas and Silas, being themselves
prophets, spoke for a long time, encouraging and strengthening the brothers. 11:27m
33 These two spent some time there, and then the brothers wished them peace and
35 they went back to those who had sent them. [z] ·Paul and Barnabas, however, stayed 14:28
on in Antioch, and there with many others they taught and proclaimed the good 2:42ee;5:42q
news, the word of the Lord.

elled through those provinces, 15:41. Luke does mention it when speaking about Lycaonia, 16:4, but the terms of 15:19–21; 21:25 suggest that the decree was for all regions. All these difficulties may be explained by supposing that Luke has combined two distinct controversies and their varying solutions (Paul distinguishes them more clearly in Ga 2). One controversy was about the obligations of convert gentiles to observe the Law, and Peter and Paul both took part, *see* Ga 2:1–10; the other controversy which took place later was about the social relations between the groups of Christian converts, those from Judaism and those from paganism, *see* Ga 2:11–14. In this James, in Peter's absence, took the leading part. Any contact with gentiles involved legal impurity for Jews, *see* 15:20u.

b. In Ga 2:12 there are several of them and they come from James.

c. Ga 2:1–3 mentions Titus who had gentile blood.

d. The apostles, who are not mentioned either in 11:30 or in 21:18, are grouped here with the elders, cf. Ga 2:2–9 where Peter and John are grouped with James, 'brother of the Lord', as authorities in the Jerusalem church.

e. Others translate 'provided them with all they needed for the journey', cf. 1 Co 16:11; Tt 3:13.

f. In the current text there seems to be no connection between the Pharisees' intervention at Jerusalem and the events that happened at Antioch. The Western text links them together 'But those who had told them to go up to the elders then stood up . . .'

g. According to Ga 2:3–5 they are thinking particularly of Titus who had accompanied Paul to Jerusalem.

h. add. (West.) 'and the assembly', cf. v. 12.

i. add. (West.) '(inspired) by the Spirit'.

j. An interpretation of God's message to Peter, 10:15; 11:9; cf. 10:28; Si 38:10.

k. To put God to the test (*see* 1 Co 10:13f) is to demand from him proof in the form of an intervention or sign, 5:8–10; Ex 17:2,7; Nb 14:22; Dt 6:16; Jdt 8:12–17; Ps 95:9; Is 7:11–12; Mt 4:7seq.; 1 Co 10:9.

l. A straight answer to the assertion in v. 1. The doctrine is that of Rm 11:32; Ga 2:15–21; 3:22–26; Ep 2:1–10. On this score the Jews' position is not privileged, cf. 13:38; Ga 5:6; 6:15.

m. Western text 'When the elders had expressed their agreement with what Peter had said, the entire assembly . . .'

n. Ga 2:9 witnesses to the importance of the part played by James in this matter especially in the controversy over local problems of social relations, *see* 15:1a and 20u.

o. Semitic form of Simon Peter's name, *see* 2 P 1:1.

p. The text is quoted according to the LXX; the argument depends on variants peculiar to that version and probably comes from Hellenist circles, though here it is ascribed to the leader of the 'Hebrew' party.

q. lit. 'on whom my name has been invoked' (or 'over whom . . . pronounced'). To invoke the name of Yahweh over a people, *see* 2 Ch 7:14, or over a place, *see* 2 Ch 6:34, is to consecrate it to him.

r. lit. 'says the Lord who makes these things known from of old'. var. 'says the Lord who does these things. From of old the Lord knows his work.'

s. James settles the discussion, and the terms of the apostolic letter are those of his own pronouncement. Ga 2:9 also suggests that James at this period occupied the first place in the Jerusalem church, *see* Ac 12:17f. A variant reduces this impression 'And so, for my part . . .'

t. The meat of animals killed for heathen sacrifice, cf. v. 29 and 21:25, *see also* 1 Co 8:10.

u. This word refers to all the irregular marriages listed in Lv 18.

v. Western text omits 'the meat of strangled animals' and adds, after 'blood': 'and not to do to others what one would not have done to oneself' (so also in v. 29). Another omits 'impurity'. The ritual exceptions mentioned by James show clearly the sort of thing that was at issue and answer the question asked in 11:3 and Ga 2:12–14: what gentile Christians must do for Judaeo-Christians to mix with them without incurring legal impurity. James decides to keep only those prescriptions for purity that have a fundamentally religious meaning: **1** To eat idol-meats implies sharing in sacrilegious worship, *see* 1 Co 8–10. **2** Blood symbolises life, and that belongs to God alone. The severity with which the Law forbids it, Lv 1:5e, explains the Jews' reluctance to dispense gentiles from this prohibition. **3** As blood remains in strangled animals, this is part of the previous prohibition. **4** The mention of irregular marriages is included here only because they involved legal impurity, not by way of moral judgement.

w. Not mentioned elsewhere, *see* 1:23.

x. Silas, missionary companion of Paul, 15:40–18:5, is the same as the Silvanus mentioned in 2 Co 1:19; 1 Th 1:1; 2 Th 1:1; 1 P 5:12.

y. Western text adds 'under the guidance of the Holy Spirit'.

z. Western text adds v. 34 'But Silas decided to stay there'. Several MSS further add 'Judas set out by himself.'

IV: PAUL'S MISSIONS

Paul separates from Barnabas and recruits Silas

On a later occasion Paul said to Barnabas, 'Let us go back and visit the brothers in 36
all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord, so that we can see how they
12:12d are doing.' •Barnabas suggested taking John Mark, •but Paul was not in favour of 37, 38
13:13 taking along the man who had deserted them in Pamphylia and had refused to
share in their work.

There was sharp disagreement so that they parted company, and Barnabas sailed 39
14:26;15:22x off with Mark to Cyprus. •Before Paul left, he chose Silas to accompany him and 40
13:3 was commended by the brothers to the grace of God. [aa]

Lycaonia: Paul recruits Timothy

14:22m He travelled through Syria and Cilicia, consolidating the churches. [bb] 41

2 Tm 1:5;3:15 16 From there he went to Derbe, and then on to Lystra, where there was a 1
disciple called Timothy,[a] whose mother was Jewish and had become a
believer; but his father was a Greek. •The brothers at Lystra and Iconium spoke 2
well of him, •and Paul, who wanted to have him as a travelling companion, had 3
him circumcised. This was on account of the Jews in the locality[b] where everyone
knew his father was a Greek.

15:23–29 As they visited one town after another, they passed on the decisions reached by 4
the apostles and elders in Jerusalem, with instructions to observe them.[c]

14:22m •2:41cc So the churches grew strong in the faith, as well as growing daily in numbers. 5

The crossing into Asia Minor

Ga 4:13–15 They travelled through Phrygia and the Galatian country,[d] because they had been 6
told by the Holy Spirit not to preach the word in Asia. •When they reached the 7
Rm 8:9 Ph 1:19 1 P 1:11 frontier of Mysia they tried to go into Bithynia, but as the Spirit of Jesus[e] would
not allow them, •they went through[f] Mysia and came down to Troas. 8

10:9–23 One night Paul had a vision: a Macedonian appeared and kept urging him in 9
these words, 'Come across to Macedonia and help us.' •Once he had seen this 10
vision we[g] lost no time in arranging a passage to Macedonia, convinced that God
had called us to bring them the good news.

Arrival at Philippi

Sailing from Troas we made a straight run for Samothrace; the next day for 11
Neapolis, •and from there for Philippi, a Roman colony and the principal city of 12
13:5e that district of Macedonia.[h] •After a few days in this city we went outside the 13
gates beside a river as it was the Sabbath and this was a customary place for
prayer.[i] We sat down and preached to the women who had come to the meeting.
One of these women was called Lydia, a woman from the town of Thyatira who 14
10:2b was in the purple-dye trade, and who revered God. She listened to us, and the Lord
opened her heart to accept what Paul was saying. •After she and her household 15
1:5f had been baptised[j] she kept urging us, 'If you judge me a true believer in the Lord,'
10:48 she said, 'come and stay with us.' And she would take no refusal.[k]

Imprisonment of Paul and Silas

It happened one day that as we were going to prayer, we were met by a slave-girl 16
who was a soothsayer[l] and made a lot of money for her masters by foretelling the
19:15 Mt 8:29k future. •This girl started following Paul and the rest of us and shouting, 'Here are 17
the servants of the Most High God; they have come to tell you how to be saved!'
She did this day after day until Paul was exasperated and turned round and said 18
3:16l Mk 1:25–26+; 16:17 to the spirit, 'I order you in the name of Jesus Christ to leave that woman.' The
spirit went out of her then and there.

19 When her masters saw that there was no hope of making any more money out of 19:24–27
her, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market place before the
20 authorities. ·Taking them before the magistrates they said, 'These people are
21 causing a disturbance in our city. They are Jews ·and are advocating practices 24:5a
22 which it is unlawful for us as Romans to accept or follow.'[m] ·The crowd joined in
and showed its hostility to them, so the magistrates had them stripped and ordered Ph 1:30
1 Th 2:2
23 them to be flogged. ·They were given many lashes and then thrown into prison, 2 Co 6:5;11:25
24 and the gaoler was told to keep a close watch on them. ·So, following such
instructions, he threw them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in
the stocks.

The miraculous deliverance of Paul and Silas

25 In the middle of the night Paul and Silas were praying and singing God's praises, Col 3:16
26 while the other prisoners listened. ·Suddenly there was an earthquake that shook 4:31
the prison to its foundations. All the doors flew open and the chains fell from all 12:6–11
27 the prisoners. ·When the gaoler woke and saw the doors wide open he drew his 12:18–19;27:42
sword and was about to commit suicide, presuming that the prisoners had escaped.
28 But Paul shouted at the top of his voice, 'Do yourself no harm; we are all here.'
29 He called for lights, then rushed in, threw himself trembling[n] at the feet of Paul
30 and Silas, ·and escorted them out, saying, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?'
31 They told him, 'Become a believer in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, and 2:21m;16:15k
32 your household too.' ·Then they preached the word of the Lord[o] to him and to all
33 his household. ·Late as it was, he took them to wash their wounds, and was
34 baptised then and there with all his household. ·Afterwards he took them into his 1:5f;8:36,38
house and gave them a meal, and the whole household celebrated their conversion 2:46jj
to belief in God.
35 When it was daylight the magistrates sent the lictors with the order: 'Release
36 those men.'[p] ·The gaoler reported the message to Paul, 'The magistrates have sent
37 an order for your release; you can go now and be on your way.'[q] ·'What!' Paul
replied. 'Without trial they gave us a public flogging, though we are Roman 22:25
citizens,[r] and threw us into prison, and now they want to send us away on the quiet!
Oh no! They must come and escort us out themselves.'
38 The lictors reported this to the magistrates, who were terrified when they heard 22:29
39 they were Roman citizens. ·They came and urged them to leave the town.[s]

aa. var. 'the grace of the Lord'.

bb. Western text adds 'passing on to them the injunctions of the elders', *see* 16:4.

16 **a.** Timothy became Paul's constant companion, *see* 17:14seq.; 18:5; 19:22; 20:4; Rm 16:21; 1 Co 4:17; 16:10; 2 Co 1:19; 1 Th 3:2,6. 1 Tm and 2 Tm are 'pastoral epistles' in the form of letters addressed to him.

b. Paul opposed circumcision for converts from the gentiles, Ga 2:3; 5:1–12, but Timothy had a Jewish mother and so, by Jewish law, was an Israelite.

c. This editorial note is consistent with the general impression given in ch. 15 that the decree of the council of Jerusalem was made in the presence of Peter and Paul; but *see* 15:1a.

d. Galatia strictly so called, *see* p. 1856. When he left Iconium, therefore, Paul intended to travel westwards to Ephesus. But the Spirit intervened and he turned north into Phrygia, then in a northwesterly direction to 'Galatian country', where illness kept him for a time, Ga 4:13–15, preached the gospel in these places and returned later to visit the disciples there, Ac 18:23.

e. om. 'of Jesus'.

f. Preferable to 'they skirted'.

g. Sudden transition to first person plural: the first 'We-section' of Ac. but *see* 11:27n, *see also* p. 1793.

h. Philippi, a town in the principal district of the province of Macedonia; it had become a Roman colony and was a Latin city populated largely by veterans of the army, its administration modelled on that of Rome.

i. The Jews had no synagogue in Philippi; they would meet by the side of the River (for ritual ablutions).

j. Lydia's conversion brought her household to the faith; cf. 10:44; 16:31,34; 18:8; 1 Co 1:16.

k. Unusual for Paul: *see* 20:33–35; 1 Co 9; 1 Th 2:9; 2 Th 3:8, though on a later occasion the Philippians persuaded him to accept help again, *see* Ph 4:10–18. He would have accepted it from no one else; it is the greatest compliment to the charity of Lydia and of the other Philippian Christians.

l. lit. 'who had a Python-spirit', so called from the serpent Python of the ancient Delphic oracle.

m. The practices referred to are Jewish, *see* 6:14; 15:1; 21:21; 26:3; 28:17; Jn 19:40; the accusers make no distinction between Christian and Jew. The precise charge is proselytism: though the Jews were allowed to practise their religion, they had no right to proselytise Romans. Christian propaganda could therefore be against the law.

n. This new fear comes from his realising that he has treated as criminals men who are envoys of God.

o. var. 'the word of God'.

p. var. 'When it was daylight the magistrates met in the market place; remembering the earthquake that had taken place they were afraid and sent the officers to say, "Release the men you arrested yesterday." '

q. add. 'in peace'.

r. The *lex Porcia* forbade (under heavy penalties) the scourging of a Roman citizen.

s. Alex. (and Antiochene) text 'They came to apologise, and when they had taken them out they asked them to leave the town.' Western text 'And going with a number of friends to the prison, they urged them to go out, saying, "We had

From the prison they went to Lydia's house where they saw all the brothers and 40
gave them some encouragement; then they left.

Thessalonica: difficulties with the Jews

17 Passing through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they eventually reached Thes- 1
13:5e salonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue. ·Paul as usual went in and 2
Lk 24:25–27, 44–47 for three consecutive Sabbaths developed the arguments from scripture for them,
2:23p;18:5f explaining and proving how it was ordained that the Christ should suffer and rise 3
from the dead. 'And the Christ', he said, 'is this Jesus whom I am proclaiming to
you.' ·Some of them [a] were convinced and joined Paul and Silas, and so did a great 4
10:2b many godfearing people and Greeks, [b] as well as a number of the leading women.
13:45+ 1 Th 2:14f The Jews, full of resentment, enlisted the help of a gang from the market place, 5
stirred up a crowd, and soon had the whole city in an uproar. They made for
Jason's house, [c] hoping to bring them before the People's Assembly; ·however, 6
they found only Jason and some of the brothers, and these they dragged before the
24:5 city council, shouting, 'The people who have been turning the whole world upside
25:8 Lk 23:2 down have come here now; ·they have been staying at Jason's. They have broken 7
Jn 19:12–15 Caesar's edicts by claiming that there is another king, [d] Jesus.' ·Hearing this, the 8
citizens and the city councillors were alarmed, ·and they made Jason and the rest 9
give security before setting them free.

Fresh difficulties at Beroea

When it was dark the brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away to Beroea, [e] 10
13:5e where they went to the Jewish synagogue as soon as they arrived. ·Here the Jews 11
were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, and they welcomed the word
Jn 5:39 very readily; every day they studied the scriptures to check whether it was true.
Many of them became believers, and so did many Greek women of high standing 12
and a number of the men.

When the Jews of Thessalonica came to learn that the word of God was being 13
13:50;14:2c preached by Paul in Beroea as well, they went there to make trouble and stir up the
people. ·So the brothers arranged for Paul to go immediately as far as the coast, 14
leaving Silas and Timothy behind. ·Paul's escort took him as far as Athens, and 15
went back with instructions for Silas and Timothy to rejoin Paul as soon as
they could. [f]

Paul in Athens

Paul waited for them in Athens and there his whole soul was revolted at the sight of 16
13:5e a city given over to idolatry. [g] ·In the synagogue he debated with the Jews and the 17
10:2b godfearing, and in the market place he debated every day with anyone whom he
met. [h] ·Even a few Epicurean and Stoic philosophers [i] argued with him. 18
Some said, 'What can this parrot mean?' [j] And, because he was preaching about
Jesus and Resurrection, [k] others said, 'He seems to be a propagandist for some
outlandish gods.'

They got him to accompany them to the Areopagus, [l] where they said to him, 19
'Can we know what this new doctrine is that you are teaching? ·Some of the things 20
28:22 you say seemed startling to us and we would like to find out what they mean.'
The one amusement the Athenians and the foreigners living there seem to have 21
is to discuss and listen to the latest ideas.

So Paul stood before the whole council of the Areopagus and made this speech: 22

Paul's speech before the council of the Areopagus [m]

'Men of Athens, I have seen for myself how extremely scrupulous you are in all
religious matters, ·because, as I strolled round looking at your sacred monuments, 23
I noticed among other things an altar inscribed: To An Unknown God. [n] In fact,
Jn 4:22 the unknown God you revere is the one I proclaim to you.
14:15l
Is 42:5 'Since the God who made the world and everything in it is himself Lord of 24

heaven and earth, he does not make his home in shrines made by human hands. 7:48–50
25 Nor is he in need of anything, that he should be served by human hands; [o] on the 1 K 8:27
contrary, it is he who gives everything—including life and breath—to everyone. 2 M 14:35
26 From one single principle [p] he not only created the whole human race so that they Ps 50:12
could occupy the entire earth, but he decreed the times and limits of their habita- Gn 2:7e
27 tion. [q] •And he did this so that they might seek the deity [r] and, by feeling their way 2 M 7:23
28 towards him, succeed in finding him; and indeed he is not far from any of us, •since •Gn 1:27seq.
it is in him that we live, and move, and exist, [s] as indeed some of your own writers [t] Gn 10
have said: Dt 32:8
•Dt 4:29
Ws 13:6
Is 55:6
•Ps 145:18
Rm 1:19

We are all his children. [u] 2 P 1:4
Jn 1:12j
2 Co 3:18

29 'Since we are the children of God, we have no excuse for thinking that the deity 19:26
looks like anything in gold, silver or stone that has been carved and designed Rm 1:22–23
by a man. [v]

30 'But now, overlooking the times of ignorance, God is telling everyone every- Rm 3:25–26
31 where that they must repent, •because he has fixed a day when the whole world 2:38x
will be judged in uprightness [w] by a man he has appointed. And God has publicly Lk 24:27
proved this by raising him from the dead.' [x] 10:42q

32 At this mention of rising from the dead, some of them burst out laughing; others
33 said, 'We would like to hear you talk about this another time.' [y] •After that Paul 24:25
34 left them, •but there were some who attached themselves to him and became

not realised what you wanted and that you were holy men." When they had taken them out, they begged them, "Get out of this town in case those who shouted against you get another mob together." '

17 **a.** Aristarchus, one of Paul's most faithful companions, *see* 20:4; Col 4:10, was probably one of them.

b. var. 'Greek worshippers of God'. The reading here preferred distinguishes 'those who worship God', 10:2b, from 'Greeks' not previously influenced by Jewish proselytism. Most of the conversions in Thessalonica were made from the gentiles, *see* 1 Th 1:9–10.

c. Possibly the Jason of Rm 16:21.

d. Actually, the Christians deliberately avoided calling Jesus by the emperor's title *basileus* ('king'); they preferred 'Christ' (Messiah) and 'Lord'.

e. Despite their departure the persecution in Thessalonica went on, cf. 1 Th 2:14.

f. Luke is summarising and simplifying. Timothy must have gone with Paul because Paul later sends him from Athens to Thessalonica, 1 Th 3:1seq.

g. Athens was the intellectual metropolis of Hellenism and to Luke was a symbol. This is evident from the fact that Paul's sermon there, the only sample of his preaching to gentiles, is the only one in which he combats paganism by the use of secular wisdom.

h. The one explicit mention in Ac of this kind of preaching (though cf. 14:7seq.).

i. Representatives of the two prevailing philosophical systems.

j. lit. 'What does this seed-picker want to say?' The local Athenian word *spermologos* was used of birds that peck, crows, etc. It came to mean 'beggar', one who picks up food wherever he can find it, and also a garrulous man who speaks in clichés, parrot-wise.

k. Cf. v. 32. They assume *Anastasis* ('Resurrection') is the name of a goddess, consort of Jesus.

l. A hill to the south of the Agora. The word means also the Athenian supreme council which held its sessions there. The text may be understood in two ways: either the philosophers lead Paul 'on to (the hill of) the Areopagus', away from the city centre for easier listening, or (preferably) they lead him 'before (the council of) the Areopagus'.

m. After a solemn introduction, vv. 22–23, Paul develops his proclamation of the true God by opposition to gentile conceptions: **1** God created the universe, so one cannot suppose that he lives in a temple or needs the worship he is given, vv. 24–25. **2** God created humans and surrounds them with favours; it is absurd to assimilate him to material objects such as statues, vv. 26–29. The speech ends with a call to repentance in the perspective of judgement, vv. 30–31. Both parts of the speech are aimed against idolatry. Paul draws on the habitual arguments of monotheistic propaganda used in Hellenistic Judaism.

n. The Greeks used to dedicate altars 'to the unknown gods' to placate divinities whose names they did not know. Paul turns the practice to his own purpose and thus parries the biblical sense of ignorance of the heathen who do not acknowledge God, Jb 18:21; Ws 13:1; 14:22; Jr 10:25; 1 Co 15:34; Ga 4:8; Ep 4:17–19; 1 Th 4:5; 2 Th 1:8; 1 P 1:14. He thus avoids the charge of preaching outlandish gods.

o. This idea was common in Greek thought and Hellenistic Judaism; it is a form of the old biblical theme in 1 Ch 29:10seq.; Ps 50:9–13; Am 5:21seq.

p. var. 'of one blood', 'of one nation', 'of one race'.

q. The 'times' suggest primarily the seasons, whose regular return provides nourishment, 14:17; cf. Gn 1:14; Ws 7:18; Si 33:8; the 'limits' of human habitation are probably those which divide the habitable world from the waters of the abyss, Gn 1:9–10; Jb 38:8–11; Ps 104:9; Pr 8:28–29; cf. Ps 74:17; Jr 5:22–24. According to another explanation it is a matter of the times and limits which God has allotted to different nations, Gn 10; Dt 32:8seq. In any case it is a question of order in the universe, which leads to knowledge of God.

r. var. 'God' or 'the Lord'.

s. Expression suggested by the poet Epimenides of Cnossos (sixth c. BC).

t. lit. 'of your people'. var. 'of your poets' or 'of your sages'.

u. Quotation from the *Phainomena* of Aratus, a poet of Cilician origin (third c. BC). Cleanthes the Stoic (third c.) used almost identical language. Jewish monotheistic preaching here invoked the fact that man was created in the image and likeness of God, Gn 1:26–27; Ws 2:23; Si 17:1–8, to highlight the absurdity of idolatry.

v. This form of attack on idolatry has ancient precedent, *see* Is 40:20m.

w. Cf. Ps 9:8; 96:13; 98:9. The apostles set their appeal for repentance against the background of judgement, cf. especially 10:42–43; 1 Th 1:10.

x. Christ's resurrection justifies belief in his coming as judge and Saviour at the end of time, *see* Rm 14:9; 2 Tm 4:1; 1 P 4:5.

y. In the Greek world, even among Christians, the doctrine of the resurrection met stubborn resistance from preconceived ideas, *see* 1 Co 15:12seq. The Jerusalem Sanhedrists condemned and attacked this Christian dogma; the Athenians of the Areopagus were content to mock. Paul's failure in Athens was all but complete; from now on he refuses to use the devices of Greek philosophy, 1 Co 2:1–5.

believers, among them Dionysius the Aeropagite[c] and a woman called Damaris, and others besides.

Foundation of the church of Corinth

18 After this Paul left Athens and went to Corinth,[a] ·where he met a Jew 1, 2
called Aquila whose family came from Pontus. He and his wife Priscilla[b]
had recently left Italy because an edict of Claudius had expelled all the Jews from
Rome.[c] Paul went to visit them, ·and when he found they were tentmakers, of the 3
20:33–35 same trade as himself, he lodged with them, and they worked together.[d] ·Every 4
1 Co 4:12
13:5k Sabbath he used to hold debates in the synagogues, trying to convert Jews as well
as Greeks.

17:15 After Silas and Timothy had arrived from Macedonia,[e] Paul devoted all his time 5
1 Th 3:5–7 to preaching, declaring to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ.[f] ·When they turned 6
13:51+ against him and started to insult him, he took his cloak and shook it out in front of
20:26 them,[g] saying, 'Your blood be on your own heads; from now on I will go to the
Ne 5:13
Ezk 18:13;33:4 gentiles with a clear conscience.' ·Then he left the synagogue and moved to the 7
Mt 27:24–25
·13:5k,46– house next door that belonged to a worshipper of God called Justus.[h] ·Crispus, 8
47;28:8 president of the synagogue, and his whole household, all became believers in the
16:15j Lord. Many Corinthians who had heard him became believers and were baptised.[i]
1 Co 1:14
10:2b One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision, 'Be fearless; speak out and do not 9
1:5f keep silence: ·I am with you. I have so many people that belong to me in this city 10
23:11 that no one will attempt to hurt you.' ·So Paul stayed there preaching the word of 11
Jr 1:8
1 Co 2:3 God among them for eighteen months.
Jn 10:16

The Jews take Paul to court

1 Th 2:14f But while Gallio was proconsul of Achaia,[j] the Jews made a concerted attack on 12
Paul and brought him before the tribunal, saying, ·'We accuse this man of persuad- 13
ing people to worship God in a way that breaks the Law.'[k] ·Before Paul could open 14
his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, 'Listen, you Jews. If this were a misdemeanour
or a crime, it would be in order for me to listen to your plea; ·but if it is only 15
23:29;25: quibbles about words and names, and about your own Law, then you must deal
18–19
Jn 18:31 with it yourselves—I have no intention of making legal decisions about these
things.' ·Then he began to hustle them out of the court, ·and at once they all turned 16, 17
on Sosthenes,[l] the synagogue president, and beat him in front of the tribunal.
Gallio refused to take any notice at all.

Return to Antioch and departure for the third journey

After staying on for some time, Paul took leave of the brothers and sailed for 18
Rm 16:1 Syria,[m] accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila. At Cenchreae he had his hair cut off,
because of a vow he had made.[n]

13:5e When they reached Ephesus, he left them, but first he went alone to the 19
10:48 synagogue to debate with the Jews. ·They asked him to stay longer, but he 20
declined, ·though when he took his leave he said, 'I will come back another time, 21
1 Co 4:19 God willing.' Then he sailed from Ephesus.
Jm 4:15

He landed at Caesarea and went up to greet the church.[o] Then he came down to 22
Antioch ·where he spent a short time before continuing his journey through the 23
16:6d Galatian country and then through Phrygia, encouraging all the followers.
14:22m

Apollos

19:1 An Alexandrian Jew named Apollos[p] now arrived in Ephesus. He was an eloquent 24
man, with a sound knowledge of the scriptures, and yet, ·though he had been given 25
9:2b instruction in the Way of the Lord and preached with great spiritual fervour and
was accurate in all the details he taught about Jesus, he had experienced only the
19:3–5 baptism of John. ·He began to teach fearlessly in the synagogue and, when Priscilla 26
13:46gg and Aquila heard him, they attached themselves to him and gave him more detailed
9:2b instruction about the Way.[q]

27 When Apollos thought of crossing over to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him
and wrote asking the disciples to welcome him. [r] When he arrived there he was
28 able by God's grace to help the believers considerably ·by the energetic way he
refuted the Jews in public, demonstrating from the scriptures that Jesus was 9:22
the Christ. 18:5f

The disciples of John at Ephesus

1 **19** It happened that while Apollos was in Corinth, [a] Paul made his way overland
2 as far as Ephesus, [b] where he found a number of disciples. ·When he asked,
'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers?' they answered, 'No, 8:15–17
3 we were never even told there was such a thing as a Holy Spirit.' [c] ·He asked, 'Then Jn 7:39
4 how were you baptised?' They replied, 'With John's baptism.' ·Paul said, 'John's Mt 3:6e
baptism was a baptism of repentance; but he insisted that the people should believe 1:5f;2:38x;
5 in the one who was to come after him—namely Jesus.' ·When they heard this, they 13:24–25+
6 were baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus, ·and the moment Paul had laid hands 2:4+;8:15–17.
on them the Holy Spirit came down on them, and they began to speak with tongues 11:27m
7 and to prophesy. ·There were about twelve of these men in all. 1 Tm 4:14e

Foundation of the church of Ephesus [d]

8 He began by going to the synagogue, where he spoke out fearlessly and argued 13:5e
9 persuasively about the kingdom of God. He did this for three months, ·till the 13:46gg
attitude of some of the congregation hardened into unbelief. As soon as they began 1:3d
attacking the Way in public, he broke with them and took his disciples apart to 9:2b
10 hold daily discussions in the lecture room of Tyrannus. [e] ·This went on for two

z. Luke's readers must have known him. He became the subject of legend, especially after the fifth c. when an author (the 'pseudo-Dionysius') published various mystical writings under his name. Later legend identified him with St Denys, first Bishop of Paris (third c.).

18 a. Corinth, rebuilt by Julius Caesar, became capital of the Roman province of Achaia and was a flourishing city with two ports. Its population was largely Roman and Latin-speaking, but brisk trade had attracted people of all nations. It had a considerable Jewish colony. The immorality of Corinth was proverbial.

b. Also called Prisca, Rm 16:3; 1 Co 16:19; 2 Tm 4:19.

c. This edict, mentioned by Suetonius, was issued in 49 or 50. It was in force only for a very short time, cf. 28:17; Rm 16:3.

d. Though Paul acknowledges the missionary's right to sustenance, 1 Co 9:6–14; Ga 6:6; 2 Th 3:7–9; cf. Lk 10:7, he himself always practised a trade, 1 Co 4:12, not wishing to be a burden on anyone, 2 Co 12:13seq.; 1 Th 2:9; 2 Th 3:8, and in order to prove his singleness of purpose, Ac 20:33seq.; 1 Co 9:15–18; 2 Co 11:7–12. Only from the Philippians did he accept help, 2 Co 11:8seq.; Ph 4:10–18; *see also* Ac 16:15k. He recommended his followers to do the same to supply their own needs, 1 Th 4:11seq.; 2 Th 3:10–12, and those of the poor, Ac 20:35; Ep 4:28.

e. It was after this that Paul wrote his two letters to the Thessalonians. They came from Macedon with the subsidy, 2 Co 11:8–9; Ph :15, and helped Paul evangelise Corinth, 2 Co 1:19.

f. That Jesus was Messiah was the distinctive theme of the preaching to the Jews, cf. 2:36; 3:18,20; 5:42; 8:5,12; 9:22; 17:3; 18:28; 24:24; 26:23.

g. Symbolically breaking off relations. The following sentence is biblical, cf. Lv 20:9–16; 2 S 1:15–16, and means that the Jews must accept full responsibility for the consequences. Their 'blood', i.e. their punishment, is not Paul's affair; his conscience is clear (lit. 'I am clean').

h. var. 'Titus Justus' or 'Titius Justus'.

i. Western text add. 'believing in God through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ', *see* 8:36n. The converts were therefore gentiles.

j. An inscription from Delphi puts Gallio's proconsulate in 51–2. Paul's arraignment before Gallio must have been towards the end (v. 18) of his eighteen-month stay (v. 11) in Corinth: probably the spring of 52.

k. Ambiguous term capable of meaning the Roman Law, *see* 16:21; 17:7, or the Jewish Law which was itself guaranteed by Roman Law. Gallio chooses to see the charge as a question of the interpretation of Jewish Law (v. 15) in which he claims no competence.

l. Possibly the Sosthenes of 1 Co 1:1.

m. Back to Antioch, his base of operations.

n. The Greek is obscure, but apparently it was Paul, not Aquila, who took the vow. To take a vow was to be *nazir*, *see* Nb 6:1a, for the period it covered, usually thirty days, and among other obligations it meant leaving the hair uncut during that time. It is not known whether the vow was taken by Paul at Cenchreae or whether it expired there, cf. 21:23–27, where Paul and four other Jews perform the rites for the fulfilment of a vow.

o. Perhaps the church of Jerusalem.

p. For further information, *see* 1 Co: when he went to Corinth his enormous popularity soon developed into partisanship, *see* 1 Co 1:12; 3:4–11,22; *see also* Tt 3:13. These remarks about Apollos have something in common with the description of John the Baptist's admirers at Ephesus in the following passage: combining these two descriptions of an imperfectly informed Christianity, we may possibly get some idea of Christianity in the church of Alexandria at this time.

q. add. 'of God'.

r. On the use of letters of reference in the early Christian communities, *see* Rm 16:1; 2 Co 3:1seq.; Col 4:10; 3 Jn 9–10,12.

19 a. An editorial link joining two items of information which are inserted in the account of the journey. The Western text has 'When Paul, pursuing his own plan, wanted to set out for Jerusalem, the Spirit told him to go back to Asia. Consequently, he made his way . . .

b. Ephesus at this time was regarded, with Alexandria, as one of the finest cities in the empire; it was a religious, political and commercial centre of mixed population.

c. They were unaware, not that the Spirit existed (evident from the OT to the most casual reader) but that the messianic promises had been fulfilled and the Spirit given in abundance, cf. 2:17–18,33.

d. Resumption of the narrative interrupted by the remarks about Apollos and the followers of John the Baptist: 19:8 follows on 18:23 and 19:1.

e. Western text adds 'from the fifth to the tenth hour' (11 am to 4 pm.).

years,[f] with the result that all the inhabitants of Asia,[g] both Jews and Greeks, were able to hear the word of the Lord.

The Jewish exorcists

5:15 Lk 8:44–47par. So remarkable were the miracles worked by God at Paul's hands 11, 12 ·that handkerchiefs or aprons which had touched him were taken to the sick, and they were cured of their illnesses, and the evil spirits came out of them.

3:16[i] Lk 9:49par. But some itinerant Jewish exorcists[h] too tried pronouncing the name of the Lord 13 Jesus over people who were possessed by evil spirits; they used to say, 'I adjure you by the Jesus whose spokesman is Paul.' ·Among those who did this were seven 14 sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest. ·The evil spirit replied, 'Jesus I recognise, and 15 16:17 Paul I know, but who are you?' ·and the man with the evil spirit hurled himself at 16 them and overpowered first one and then another,[i] and handled them so violently 9:35,42 that they fled from that house stripped of clothing and badly mauled. ·Everybody 17 in Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks, heard about this episode; everyone was filled 3:10 Lk 1:12g;5:26 with awe, and the name of the Lord Jesus came to be held in great honour.

Some believers, too, came forward to admit in detail how they had used spells[j] 18 and a number of them who had practised magic collected their books and made 19 a bonfire of them in public. The value of these was calculated to be fifty thousand silver pieces.

6:7h In this powerful way the word of the Lord spread more and more widely and 20 successfully.[k]

V: THE END OF PAUL'S MISSIONARY JOURNEYS A PRISONER FOR CHRIST

Rm 15:22–32 1 Co 16:1–8 **Paul's plans**

When all this was over Paul made up his mind to go back to Jerusalem through 21 11:30p Macedonia and Achaia. 'After I have been there,' he said, 'I must go on to see 23:11 Rm 1:13 1 Co 4:17 Rome as well.' ·So he sent two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, ahead of him 22 to Macedonia, while he remained for a time in Asia.

Ephesus: the silversmiths' riot[l]

It was during this time that a serious disturbance broke out in connection with the 23 9:2b Way. ·A silversmith called Demetrius, who provided work for a large number of 24 16:19 craftsmen making silver shrines of Diana, ·called a general meeting of them with 25 others in the same trade. 'As you know,' he said, 'it is on this industry that we depend for our prosperity. ·Now you must have seen and heard how, not just in 26 Ephesus but nearly everywhere in Asia, this man Paul has persuaded and converted 17:29v a great number of people with his argument that gods made by hand are not gods at all. ·This threatens not only to discredit our trade, but also to reduce the sanctuary 27 of the great goddess Diana to unimportance. It could end up by taking away the prestige of a goddess venerated all over Asia, and indeed all over the world.' ·This 28 speech roused them to fury, and they started to shout,[m] 'Great is Diana of the Ephesians!' ·The whole town was filled with the uproar and the mob made a 29 concerted rush to the theatre, dragging along two of Paul's Macedonian travelling companions, Gaius and Aristarchus.[n] ·Paul wanted to make an appeal to the 30 people, but the disciples refused to let him; ·in fact, some of the Asiarchs,[o] who 31 were friends of his, sent messages urging him not to take the risk of going into the theatre.

21:34 By now everybody was shouting different things, till the assembly itself had no 32 idea what was going on; most of them did not even know why they had gathered together. ·Some of the crowd prevailed upon[p] Alexander, whom the Jews pushed 33

forward; he raised his hand for silence with the intention of explaining things to the 12:17;13:16;
34 people. •As soon as they realised he was a Jew, they all started shouting in unison, 16:20
35 'Great is Diana of the Ephesians!' and they kept this up for two hours. •When the town clerk eventually succeeded in calming the crowd, he said, 'Citizens of Ephesus! Is there anybody who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is the guardian of the temple of great Diana and of her statue that fell from heaven?
36 Nobody can contradict this and there is no need for you to get excited or do
37 anything rash. •These men you have brought here are not guilty of any sacrilege or
38 blasphemy against our goddess. •If Demetrius and the craftsmen he has with him want to complain about anyone, there are the assizes and the proconsuls; let them
39 take the case to court. •And if you want to ask any more questions you must raise
40 them in the regular assembly. •We could easily be charged with rioting for today's happenings: there is no ground for it all, and we can give no justification for this gathering.' When he had finished this speech he dismissed the assembly.

Paul leaves Ephesus

1 20 When the disturbance was over,[a] Paul sent for the disciples and, after 14:22;16:40
2 speaking words of encouragement to them, said good-bye and set out for Macedonia. •On his way through those areas[b] he said many words of encouragement to them and then made his way into Greece, •where he spent three months.[c]
3 He was leaving by ship for Syria[d] when a plot organised against him by the Jews 9:23;23:12seq. 1 Th 2:14f
4 made him decide to go back by way of Macedonia. •He was accompanied[e] by Sopater, son of Pyrrhus, who came from Beroea; Aristarchus and Secundus who 19:29
came from Thessalonica; Gaius from Derbe, and Timothy, as well as Tychicus and 16:1a;19:22+
5 Trophimus who were from Asia.[f] •They all went on to Troas where they waited for
6 us.[g] •We ourselves left Philippi by ship[h] after the days of Unleavened Bread[i] and joined them five days later at Troas, where we stayed for a week.[j]

Troas: Paul raises a dead man to life

7 On the first day of the week[k] we met for the breaking of bread. Paul was due to 2:42gg
leave the next day, and he preached a sermon that went on till the middle of the
8 night. •A number of lamps were lit in the upstairs room where we were assembled,
9 and as Paul went on and on, a young man called Eutychus who was sitting on the window-sill grew drowsy and was overcome by sleep and fell to the ground three

f. 20:31 says three years. During this stay, Paul wrote the first Letter to the Corinthians, the Letter to the Galatians and, possibly, the Letter to the Philippians. 2 Co 1:8, written soon after his departure, mentions hardships undergone in Asia and a threat of death; but Lk tells us nothing of these here.

g. Not the whole of proconsular Asia (the western half of Asia Minor) but the region centred on Ephesus and including the seven towns of Rv 1:11. Epaphras of Colossae had been appointed by Paul to evangelise his own city, and his mission had spread to Laodicea and Hierapolis, Col 1:7; 4:12–13. Paul was also assisted by Timothy and Erastus, 19:22, Gaius and Aristarchus, 19:29, Titus, whom Ac never mentions, and others, *see* 2 Co 12:18. Luke credits Paul with the achievements of his subordinates.

h. On Jewish exorcisms, *see* Mt 12:27. Jesus himself, and his apostles after him, *see* Ac 5:16; 16:18, frequently exorcised, *see* Mt 8:29k.

i. Or 'both' (two of their number).

j. Occult practices for which Ephesus was well known.

k. Alex. text 'Thus, through the power of the Lord, the word spread even more widely and impressively.'

l. The literary style of this narrative is unusual in Luke; he has taken it from a special source and linked it with his story of the evangelisation of Ephesus.

m. Western text adds 'rushing into the street'.

n. Aristarchus, a native of Thessalonica, 20:4, was a companion of Paul during his imprisonment, 27:2; Col 4:10; Phm 24. This Gaius is probably the one mentioned in 20:4.

o. Members of the 'Asiatic assembly' which supervised the cult of Rome and the emperor on behalf of the cities of Asia.

p. Others translate 'they made him stand away from the crowd'.

20 **a.** The narrative is resumed from 19:22.

b. From here he sent his second letter to the Christians in Corinth.

c. Paul was therefore able to carry out the proposal of 1 Co 16:5–6. During this period in Corinth he wrote the Letter to the Romans. Western text 'When he had been there for three months and the Jews had plotted against him, he intended to set out for Syria, but the Spirit told him to go back through Macedonia.'

d. To take the proceeds of the collection to Jerusalem, *see* 19:21 and 1 Co 16:1a.

e. add. 'as far as Asia'. • Sopater is perhaps the Jew, Sosipater, of Rm 16:21. • 'Derbe'; var. 'Doberus'.

f. Trophimus was an Ephesian, 21:29, cf. 2 Tm 4:20. Tychicus is mentioned several times in the letters, Ep 6:21; Col 4:7; 2 Tm 4:12; Tt 3:12.

g. Narrative in the first person: this continues from Philippi till Jerusalem, *see* 16:10g.

h. From the port of Neapolis, cf. 16:11.

i. Passover week, *see* Ex 12:1a.

j. On Paul's previous ministry in this town (when on the way from Ephesus to Corinth: vv. 1–2) *see* 2 Co 2:12.

k. The first day of the Jewish week, which had become the Christians' day of assembly, *see* Mt 28:1a; 1 Co 16:2, the 'Lord's day', Rv 1:10. This Sunday meeting was held when the Lord's Day began, i.e. on the Saturday evening, because in the Jewish fashion the day was reckoned as beginning at sunset.

9:36–42 floors below. He was picked up dead. •Paul went down and stooped to clasp the 10
1 K 17:17–24 2 K 4:30–37 Mk 5:39–42par. boy to him, saying 'There is no need to worry, there is still life in him.' •Then he 11
went back upstairs where he broke the bread and ate and carried on talking till he
left at daybreak. •They took the boy away alive, and were greatly encouraged. 12

From Troas to Miletus

We were now to go on ahead by sea, so we set sail for Assos, where we were to 13
take Paul on board; this was what he had arranged, for he wanted to go overland.
When he rejoined us at Assos we took him aboard and went on to Mitylene. 14
The next day we sailed from there and arrived opposite Chios. The second day 15
we touched at Samos and, after stopping at Trogyllium, made Miletus the next
day. •Paul had decided to pass wide of Ephesus so as to avoid spending time in 16
Asia, since he was anxious to be in Jerusalem, if possible, for the day of Pentecost.

Farewell to the elders of Ephesus

11:30p From Miletus he sent for the elders of the church of Ephesus. •When they arrived 17, 18
he addressed these words to them: *l*

1 Th 1:5;2:10–12 'You know what my way of life has been ever since the first day I set foot among
2 Co 1:8–9; 11:23–31 Ph 2:3;3:18 you in Asia, •how I have served the Lord in all humility, with all the sorrows and 19
trials that came to me through the plots of the Jews. •I have not hesitated to do 20
20:27 2 Tm 4:2 13:5e anything that would be helpful to you; I have preached to you and instructed you
both in public and in your homes, •urging both Jews and Greeks to turn to God 21
and to believe in our Lord Jesus. *m*

'And now you see me on my way to Jerusalem in captivity to the Spirit; *n* I have 22
1:8j;21:4,11 no idea what will happen to me there, •except that the Holy Spirit, in town after 23
town, has made it clear to me that imprisonment and persecution await me. •But I 24
Ga 1:1–2 Ph 2:16 2 Tm 4:7 do not place any value on my own life, *o* provided that I complete the mission the
Lord Jesus gave me—to bear witness to the good news of God's grace.

26:15–18 'I now feel sure that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming 25
1:3d the kingdom will ever see my face again. *p* •And so on this very day I swear that my 26
18:6g 20:20 conscience is clear as far as all of you are concerned, •for I have without faltering 27
put before you the whole of God's purpose.

Ps 74:1seq. Jn 21:15–17 Ph 1:1a 1 Tm 4:16 1 P 5:1–3 'Be on your guard for yourselves and for all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has 28
made you the guardians, to feed the Church of God *q* which he bought with the
blood of his own Son. *r*

5:11b 1 Co 1:2b Is 43:21 Jn 10:12 Ep 1:14*o* 'I know quite well that when I have gone fierce wolves will invade you and will 29
have no mercy on the flock. •Even from your own ranks there will be men coming 30
forward with a travesty of the truth on their lips to induce the disciples to follow
Mt 7:15 them. •So be on your guard, remembering how night and day for three years I 31
2 P 2:1–2 never slackened in counselling each one of you with tears. •And now I commend 32
1 P 5:8–9 19:10f 14:23 9:31 you to God and to the word of his grace that has power *s* to build you up and to give
you your inheritance among all the sanctified.

1 Co 3:9–15 Ep 2:20–22 Dt 33:3–4 Ep 1:18 18:3d 1 Co 11:1 Ep 4:28 'I have never asked anyone for money or clothes; •you know for yourselves 33, 34
that these hands of mine earned enough to meet my needs and those of my com-
panions. •By every means I have shown you that we must exert ourselves in this 35
way to support the weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, who himself
said, "There is more happiness in giving than in receiving." *t*

When he had finished speaking he knelt down with them all and prayed. •By 36, 37
2 Co 13:12d now they were all in tears; they put their arms round Paul's neck and kissed him;
what saddened them most was his saying they would never see his face again. 38
15:3;20:25; 21:5 Then they escorted him to the ship.

The journey to Jerusalem

21 When we had at last torn ourselves away from them and put to sea, we set a 1
straight course and arrived at Cos; the next day we reached Rhodes, and
from there went on to Patara. *a* •Here we found a ship bound for Phoenicia, so we 2

went on board and sailed in her. ·After sighting Cyprus and leaving it to port, we sailed to Syria and put in at Tyre, since the ship was to unload her cargo there. We sought out the disciples and stayed there a week. Speaking in the Spirit,[k] they kept telling Paul not to go on to Jerusalem, ·but when our time was up we set off. Together with the women and children they all escorted us on our way till we were out of the town. When we reached the beach, we knelt down and prayed; ·then, after saying good-bye to each other, we went aboard and they returned home.

The end of our voyage from Tyre came when we landed at Ptolemais, where we greeted the brothers and stayed one day with them. ·The next day we left and came to Caesarea. Here we called on Philip the evangelist, one of the Seven, and stayed with him. ·He had four unmarried daughters who were prophets. ·When we had been there several days a prophet called Agabus arrived from Judaea. ·He came up to us, took Paul's belt and tied up his own feet and hands,[c] and said, 'This is what the Holy Spirit says, "The man to whom this girdle belongs will be tied up like this by the Jews in Jerusalem and handed over to the gentiles." '[d] ·When we heard this, we and all the local people urged Paul not to go on to Jerusalem. ·To this he replied, 'What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For my part, I am ready not only to be bound but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.' ·And so, as he would not be persuaded, we gave up the attempt, saying, 'The Lord's will be done.'

20:23;21:11; 21:12
20:36–38
6:5f;8:4seq.,40
2:4+, 17
11:27–28
1:8j
21:4
5:41p;20:24o Lk 22:33
Mt 6:10 Lk 22:42par.

Paul's arrival in Jerusalem

After this we made our preparations and went on up to Jerusalem. ·Some of the disciples from Caesarea accompanied us and took us to the house of a Cypriot with whom we were to lodge;[e] he was called Mnason and had been one of the earliest disciples.

On our arrival in Jerusalem the brothers gave us a very warm welcome. ·The next day Paul went with us[f] to visit James, and all the elders were present. ·After greeting them he gave a detailed account of all that God had done among the gentiles through his ministry. ·They gave glory to God when they heard this. Then they said, 'You see, brother, how thousands of Jews have now become believers, all of them staunch upholders of the Law;[g] ·and what they have heard about you is that you instruct all Jews living among the gentiles to break away from Moses,[h]

1:15s
12:17f
14:27;15:4,12
11:18+
6:11,14; 15:1;28:17

l. The third great discourse of Paul in Ac. The first, ch. 13, exemplified his preaching to the Jews; the second, ch. 17, his preaching to the gentiles; the third, vv. 18–35, is as it were the last testament of the departing pastor, compare 1 S 12:2–5. Many of the details of this third discourse are found in his letters; its tone is that of the Pastoral Letters. After referring to his mission in Asia, vv. 18–21, he speaks of this as a final parting and seems to hint at his death, vv. 22–27. Paul's last advice to the elders of Ephesus (and through them to all the pastors in every church) is vigilance, vv. 28–32, selflessness, charity, vv. 33–35. In all of this Paul appeals to his own example: the discourse therefore draws a faithful portrait of the apostle himself.

m. Summary of Pauline preaching, to be compared with 17:30–31; 1 Co 8:4–6; 1 Th 1:9–10. 'Repent and believe' have been coupled since the first preaching of Jesus, Mk 1:15.

n. On his way to captivity Paul speaks of himself as a prisoner; in his heart he is one already. Others translate 'a prisoner of the Spirit', i.e. morally prisoner.

o. Cf. 15:26; 21:13; Ph 1:21–23; 1 Th 2:8. Others translate 'But I do not count my life of any value, as if it were precious to me.'

p. Cf. v. 38. From Jerusalem Paul intended to visit Spain, Rm 15:23–28. His long imprisonment affected his plans and he may have revisited Ephesus despite the presentiment expressed here.

q. var. 'the Church of the Lord'. • 1 P 2:9–10 speaks of the people which God made his own (following Is 43:21); this people was the 'Congregation (= Church) of God', Ac 5:11b, one of Paul's favourite expressions, *see* 1 Co 1:2; 10:32; 11:22.

r. lit. 'which he acquired for himself by his own blood'. Since this cannot be said of God, either it must mean 'by the blood of his own (i.e. own Son)' or Paul's thought slips from the action of the Father to that of the Son, cf. Rm 8:31–39. For the notion, *see* Ep 5:25–27; Heb 9:12–14; 13:12.

s. 'to God', var. 'to the Lord'. 'that has power', or 'who has power', referring to God, cf. Rm 16:25.

t. This saying has not come down to us in the gospels.

21 **a.** add. 'and Myra'.

b. The command does not come from the Spirit, but the Spirit has revealed to them Paul's fate which their love for him seeks to avert.

c. Prophecy in mime like that used by the prophets in the past, *see* Jr 18:1a.

d. The forecast corresponds only approximately to the narrative of Paul's arrest (*see* 21:31–33; 28:17) but it resembles the prophecy of Jesus' Passion in Lk 18:31–34; cf. Ph 3:10; Col 1:24.

e. The Western text indicates, perhaps correctly, that this was half-way to Jerusalem.

f. The last 'we' until 27:1 (the departure for Rome): *see* 16:10g.

g. For its observances by others as well as by themselves, *see* 11:2; 15:1,5; Ga 2:12; 5:1seq.

h. Paul's doctrine of faith as the one source of justification, *see* Rm 1:16h; 3:22h, did indeed lead to this, since it meant that the Mosaic Law no longer gave the Jew superiority over the gentile. But Paul's purpose in expounding this principle was to leave converts from paganism free of Jewish observance, *see* Ga 2:11seq., not to dissuade devout Jews from it.

authorising them not to circumcise their children[i] or to follow the customary
Mk 7:1–13 practices. •What is to be done? A crowd is sure to gather, for they will hear that 22
you have come.[j] •So this is what we suggest that you should do; we have four men 23
18:18n;24:17 here who are under a vow; •take these men along and be purified with them and 24
pay all the expenses connected with the shaving of their heads.[k] This will let
everyone know there is no truth in the reports they have heard about you, and that
15:19seq., 28seq. you too observe the Law by your way of life. •About the gentiles who have become 25
15:1a believers, we have written giving them our decision[l] that they must abstain from
things sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from
illicit marriages.'

So the next day Paul took the men along and was purified with them, and he 26
visited the Temple to give notice of the time when the period of purification would
be over and the offering would have to be presented on behalf of each of them.[m]

Paul's arrest

The seven days were nearly over when some Jews from Asia caught sight of him in 27
14:2c the Temple and stirred up the crowd and seized him, •shouting, 'Men of Israel, 28
•18:13–15;21: 21;24:5seq., 14;25:8 help! This is the man who preaches to everyone everywhere against our people,
against the Law and against this place.[n] He has even profaned this Holy Place by
Ezk 44:9 bringing Greeks into the Temple.' •They had, in fact, previously seen Trophimus 29
20:4 the Ephesian in the city with him and thought that Paul had brought him into the
Temple.

This roused the whole city; people came running from all sides; they seized Paul 30
and dragged him out of the Temple, and the gates were closed behind them.
26:21 While they were setting about killing him, word reached the tribune of the 31
cohort[o] that there was tumult all over Jerusalem. •He immediately called out 32
soldiers and centurions and charged down on the crowd, who stopped beating
Paul when they saw the tribune and the soldiers. •When the tribune came up he 33
20:23;21:11; 22:29j took Paul into custody, had him bound with two chains and enquired who he was
and what he had done. •People in the crowd called out different things, and since 34
the noise made it impossible for him to get any positive information, the tribune
ordered Paul to be taken into the fortress. •When Paul reached the steps, the 35
crowd became so violent that he had to be carried by the soldiers; •and indeed the 36
22:22;25:24 Lk 23:18 whole mob was after them, shouting 'Do away with him!'

Just as Paul was being taken into the fortress, he asked the tribune if he could 37
have a word with him. The tribune said, 'You speak Greek, then? •Aren't you the 38
Egyptian who started the recent revolt and led those four thousand cut-throats[p]
out into the desert?' •'I?' said Paul, 'I am a Jew and a citizen of the well-known city 39
of Tarsus in Cilicia. Please give me permission to speak to the people.' •The man 40
12:17;13:16 gave his consent and Paul, standing at the top of the steps, raised his hand to the
people for silence. A profound silence followed, and he started speaking to them
in Hebrew.[q]

Paul's address to the Jews of Jerusalem[a]

7:2 22 'My brothers, my fathers, listen to what I have to say to you in my defence.' 1
When they realised he was speaking in Hebrew, the silence was even 2
26:4–5 2 Co 11:22 greater than before. •'I am a Jew', Paul said, 'and was born at Tarsus in Cilicia. I 3
5:34m was brought up here in this city. It was under Gamaliel that I studied and was
Rm 10:2a taught the exact observance of the Law of our ancestors. In fact, I was as full of
Ga 1:13–14 Ph 3:5–6 duty towards God as you all are today. •I even persecuted this Way[b] to the death 4
8:3;9:2 and sent women as well as men to prison in chains •as the high priest and the whole 5
=9:1–18,1a; =26:9–18 council of elders can testify. I even received letters from them to the brothers in
Damascus, which I took with me when I set off to bring prisoners back from there
to Jerusalem for punishment.

'It happened that I was on that journey and nearly at Damascus when in the 6
middle of the day a bright light from heaven suddenly shone round me. •I fell to 7

the ground and heard a voice saying, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?"
8 I answered, "Who are you, Lord?" and he said to me, "I am Jesus the Nazarene, Mt 2:23*l*
9 whom you are persecuting." ·The people with me saw the light but did not hear the
10 voice which spoke to me. ·I said, "What am I to do, Lord?" The Lord answered,
"Get up and go into Damascus, and there you will be told what you have been
11 appointed to do." ·Since the light had been so dazzling that I was blind, I got to
Damascus only because my companions led me by the hand.
12 'Someone called Ananias, a devout follower of the Law and highly thought of by
13 all the Jews living there,[c] ·came to see me; he stood beside me and said, "Brother
Saul, receive your sight." Instantly my sight came back and I was able to see him.
14 Then he said, "The God of our ancestors has chosen you to know his will, to see 9:17;26:16
15 the Upright One[d] and hear his own voice speaking, ·because you are to be his 1 Co 9:1;15:8h
16 witness before all humanity, testifying to what you have seen and heard.[e] ·And 1:8k
now why delay? Hurry and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his Mt 13:16–17par.
1 Jn 1:1,3
name." 2:38y
17 'It happened that, when I got back to Jerusalem,[f] and was praying in the Temple, 9:26;10:10
18 I fell into a trance ·and then I saw him. "Hurry," he said, "leave Jerusalem at once; Ga 1:18
19 they will not accept the testimony you are giving about me."[g] ·"Lord," I answered, 9:29–30
"they know that I used to go from synagogue to synagogue, imprisoning and
20 flogging those who believed in you; ·and that when the blood of your witness[h]
Stephen was being shed, I, too, was standing by, in full agreement with his 7:58;8:1
21 murderers, and in charge of their clothes." ·Then he said to me, "Go! I am sending
you out to the gentiles far away." '[i] 2:39aa;9:15h

Paul the Roman citizen

22 So far they had listened to him, but at these words they began to shout, 'Rid the 21:36+
23 earth of the man! He is not fit to live!' ·They were yelling, waving their cloaks and
24 throwing dust into the air, ·and so the tribune had him brought into the fortress
and ordered him to be examined under the lash, to find out the reason for the
25 outcry against him. ·But when they had strapped him down Paul said to the
centurion on duty, 'Is it legal for you to flog a man who is a Roman citizen and has
26 not been brought to trial?' ·When he heard this the centurion went and told the 16:37r
tribune; 'Do you realise what you are doing?' he said. 'This man is a Roman
27 citizen.' ·So the tribune came and asked him, 'Tell me, are you a Roman citizen?' 16:37r; 21:33

i. *See* Rm 2:25–29; 4:9–12; 1 Co 7:17–20.

j. var. 'They are bound to hear that you have come.'

k. The discharging of the nazirite vow had to be celebrated with expensive sacrifices, Nb 6:14–15.

l. Western text 'Of the gentiles who have become believers they have nothing to say to you. For our part, we have sent our decisions, namely that they have no observance to practise but that of abstaining from things sacrificed to idols, from blood, and from impurity.'

m. Text obscure: it seems to presuppose before the nazirite sacrifice a period of seven days devoted to certain rites of purification; there is no other evidence for this practice.

n. Cf. the charges against Stephen, 6:11–14, and against Jesus, Mt 26:61; 27:40.

o. A Roman garrison consisting of an auxiliary cohort was stationed in the fortress called Antonia overlooking the Temple area from the northwest corner.

p. Or 'four thousand *sikarioi*'; the term strictly means the extremist nationalist Zealots. This revolt is mentioned by Josephus.

q. i.e. Aramaic: Hebrew was barely spoken after the return from exile.

22 a. After the three discourses which sum up the preaching of Paul, ch. 13; 17; 20, Ac records three apologias: before the Jewish people in Jerusalem, ch. 22, before the procurator Felix, ch. 24, before King Agrippa, ch. 26; each is cleverly adapted to the audience, *see* 9:1a. Before the people Paul defends his conduct as being that of a devout Jew.

b. The Church, *see* 9:2b. On Paul's career as persecutor, *see* 7:58; 8:1,3; 9:1–2,21; 22:19–20; 26:10–11; 1 Co 15:9; Ga 1:13,23; Ph 3:6; 1 Tm 1:13.

c. Paul describes Ananias simply as a pious Jew without adding that he was a Christian, 9:10, or mentioning his vision, 9:10–16.

d. Christ, cf. 3:14; 7:52.

e. *See* 9:15h. Ananias here speaks in the name of 'the God of our ancestors', like an OT prophet. Paul is to be a witness 'before all humanity', but the gentiles are not explicitly mentioned until v. 21.

f. Paul passes over the three years which elapsed before his return, *see* 9:23k. The trance he speaks of is not mentioned elsewhere; it is not to be confused with that of 2 Co 12:1–4.

g. It is a main theme of Luke's understanding of Paul's apostolate that he turns to the gentiles because the Jews will not believe him, *see* 13:46–48; 18:6; 28:25–28. Speaking in the Temple he stresses that it was only under divine duress that he abandoned the Jewish mission.

h. The Greek word, *martyr*, had not yet acquired its restricted meaning but was beginning to, the supreme testimony being that of blood, *see* Rv 2:13; 6:9; 17:6.

i. Since 'apostle' means 'envoy', Christ's words imply that Paul is in fact an apostle, *see* 1 Co 9:1; 2 Co 12:11–12; Ga 1:1, and in particular, an apostle of the gentiles, Ga 1:16; 2:7–8, though Ac (with the exception of 14:4, 14) reserves the term 'apostle' to the Twelve.

Paul answered 'Yes'. ·To this the tribune replied, 'It cost me a large sum to acquire 28
this citizenship.' 'But I was born to it,' said Paul. ·Then those who were about to 29
examine him hurriedly withdrew, and the tribune himself was alarmed when he
realised that he had put a Roman citizen in chains.[j]

His appearance before the Sanhedrin[k]

The next day, since he wanted to know for sure what charge the Jews were 30
bringing, he freed Paul and gave orders for a meeting of the chief priests and the
entire Sanhedrin; then he brought Paul down and set him in front of them.

23 Paul looked steadily at the Sanhedrin and began to speak, 'My brothers, to 1
24:16 this day I have conducted myself before God with a perfectly clear con-
Jn 18:22 science.'[a] ·At this the high priest Ananias[b] ordered his attendants to strike him on 2
the mouth. ·Then Paul said to him, 'God will surely strike you, you whitewashed 3
Ex 13:10–15 Mt 23:27 wall! How can you sit there to judge me according to the Law, and then break the
Law by ordering a man to strike me?' ·The attendants said, 'Are you insulting the 4
high priest of God? ·Paul answered, 'Brothers, I did not realise it was the high 5
Ex 22:27 priest; certainly scripture says, "*You will not curse your people's leader.*" '

Now Paul was well aware that one party was made up of Sadducees and the other 6
26:5 2 M 7:9c Ph 3:5 of Pharisees, so he called out in the Sanhedrin, 'Brothers, I am a Pharisee and the
son of Pharisees. It is for our hope in the resurrection of the dead that I am on
24:15,21; 26:6seq.;28:20 trial.' ·As soon as he said this, a dispute broke out between the Pharisees and 7
·2 M 7 Sadducees, and the assembly was split between the two parties. ·For the Sadducees 8
Dn 12:1–3 say there is neither resurrection, nor angel, nor spirit,[c] while the Pharisees accept
·4:1a all three. ·The shouting grew louder, and some of the scribes from the Pharisees' 9
Mt 22:23 5:34seq. party stood up and protested strongly, 'We find nothing wrong with this man.
Suppose a spirit has spoken to him, or an angel?'[d] ·Feeling was running high, and 10
the tribune, afraid that they would tear Paul to pieces, ordered his troops to go
down and haul him out and bring him into the fortress.

18:9–10;27:24 19:21 Next night, the Lord appeared to him and said, 'Courage! You have borne 11
witness for me in Jerusalem, now you must do the same in Rome.'

9:23;20:3 1 Th 2:14f **The conspiracy of the Jews against Paul**

When it was day, the Jews held a secret meeting at which they made a vow[e] not to 12
eat or drink until they had killed Paul. ·More than forty of them entered this pact, 13
and they went to the chief priests and elders and told them, 'We have made a 14
solemn vow to let nothing pass our lips until we have killed Paul. ·Now it is up to 15
you and the Sanhedrin together to apply to the tribune to bring him down to you,
as though you meant to examine his case more closely; we, on our side, are
prepared to dispose of him before he reaches you.'

But the son of Paul's sister heard of the ambush they were laying and made his 16
way into the fortress and told Paul, ·who called one of the centurions and said, 17
'Take this young man to the tribune; he has something to tell him.' ·So the man 18
took him to the tribune, and reported, 'The prisoner Paul summoned me and
requested me to bring this young man to you; he has something to tell you.' ·Then 19
the tribune took him by the hand and drew him aside and questioned him in
private, 'What is it you have to tell me?' ·He replied, 'The Jews have made a plan 20
to ask you to take Paul down to the Sanhedrin tomorrow, as though they meant to
enquire more closely into his case. ·Do not believe them. There are more than 21
forty of them lying in wait for him, and they have vowed not to eat or drink until
they have got rid of him. They are ready now and only waiting for your order to be
given.' ·The tribune let the young man go with this order, 'Tell no one that you 22
have given me this information.'

Paul transferred to Caesarea

Then he summoned two of the centurions and said, 'Get two hundred soldiers 23
ready to leave for Caesarea by the third hour of the night with seventy cavalry and

two hundred auxiliaries; ·provide horses for Paul, and deliver him unharmed to
Felix the governor.'[f] ·He also wrote a letter in these terms:

'Claudius Lysias to his Excellency the governor Felix, greetings. ·This man had been seized by the Jews and would have been murdered by them, but I came on the scene with my troops and got him away, having discovered that he was a Roman citizen. ·Wanting to find out what charge they were making against him, I brought him before their Sanhedrin. ·I found that the accusation concerned disputed points of their Law,[g] but that there was no charge deserving death or imprisonment.[h] ·Acting on information that there was a conspiracy against the man, I hasten to send him to you, and have notified his accusers that they must state their case against him in your presence.'[i]

21:31–33 22:25–29 18:15;25:18–19

The soldiers carried out their orders; they took Paul and escorted him by night to Antipatris. ·Next day they left the mounted escort to go on with him and returned to the fortress. ·On arriving at Caesarea the escort delivered the letter to the governor and handed Paul over to him. ·When he had read it, he asked Paul what province he came from. Learning that he was from Cilicia he said, ·'I will hear your case as soon as your accusers are here too.' Then he ordered him to be held in Herod's praetorium.[j]

The case before Felix

24 Five days later the high priest Ananias came down with some of the elders and an advocate named Tertullus, and they laid information against Paul before the governor. ·Paul was called, and Tertullus opened for the prosecution, 'Your Excellency, Felix, the unbroken peace we enjoy and the reforms this nation owes to your foresight ·are matters we accept, always and everywhere, with all gratitude. ·I do not want to take up too much of your time, but I urge you in your graciousness to give us a brief hearing. ·We have found this man a perfect pest; he stirs up trouble among Jews the world over and is a ringleader of the Nazarene sect.[a] ·He has even attempted to profane the Temple. We placed him under arrest.[b] ·If you ask him[c] you can find out for yourself the truth of all our accusations against this man.' ·The Jews supported him, asserting that these were the facts.

16:20;17:6 Lk 23:2 ·Mt 2:23*l* ·21:28

When the governor motioned him to speak, Paul answered:[d]

j. Nevertheless, Paul is left in chains, v. 30; 23:18; 24:27; 26:29. Possibly a distinction is to be made between the heavy chains, a torture in themselves (of which Paul may have been relieved), and the lighter chains to prevent the prisoner from escaping.

k. As Jesus foretold to his disciples, Mk 13:9–10 = Mt 10:17–18; Lk 21:12. Paul is to appear before 'councils' 22:30–23:10, 'governors' (Felix, ch. 24), 'kings' (Agrippa, ch. 25–26).

23 **a.** The 'clear conscience' is a feature of Paul's moral teaching: 1 Co 4:4; 2 Co 1:12; 1 Tm 1:5,19; 3:9; 2 Tm 1:3; *see also* Heb 13:18.

b. Ananias son of Nedebaios became high priest about AD 47. He was arrested, sent to Rome and probably deprived of office in 51 or 52, then reinstated; he was assassinated in 66 at the beginning of the Jewish War.

c. The resurrection of the body, *see* 2 M 7:9, and the doctrine of angels, *see* Tb 5:4, were not part of Jewish teaching until a comparatively late date. From the text it appears that the Sadducees rejected the latter as well as the former (they certainly denied the doctrine of retribution in the world to come). On both questions Paul and the Pharisees were in agreement, *see* 4:1 seq., 1a. Paul uses this point of disagreement between his opponents to throw them into confusion.

d. This hypothesis seems to be intended to explain the vision on the road to Damascus.

e. By calling down God's vengeance on themselves should they weaken.

f. Antonius Felix, a freedman, brother of Pallas, Agrippina's favourite; he was procurator of Judaea from 52 to 59 or 60.

g. Western text '. . . points of the Law of Moses, and a man called Jesus'.

h. Luke emphasises such statements which attest Paul's innocence, *see* v. 9; 25:18.25; 26:31; 28:18, as he did in the case of Jesus, *see* 3:13; 13:28; Lk 23:14–15,22.

i. add. 'Farewell'.

j. A palace built by Herod the Great which had become the official residence of the Roman procurator.

24 **a.** The opponents of Christianity see in it only a sect, cf. 5:17, within Judaism, cf. v. 14; 28:22.

b. The Jews claim that this is their affair, *see* 25:9; Jn 18:31f. Several witnesses add 'intending to judge him according to our Law,[7] • but the tribune Lysias intervened and took him out of our hands by force,[8] • ordering the accusers to appear before you.'

c. 'him' is Paul, according to the short text adopted here; according to the long text (*see* note **b**) it could be Lysias.

d. Paul denies the charge of inciting to riot (*see* v. 5), vv. 11–13. He then explains how being a 'Nazarene' (*see* v. 5) in no way prevents him from being a faithful Jew, vv. 14–16. He goes on to refute the charge of profaning the Temple, vv. 17–19. Finally he reminds them that it had been found impossible to convict him when he appeared before the Sanhedrin, vv. 20–21.

Paul's speech before the Roman governor

'I know that you have administered justice over this nation for many years, and I
can therefore speak with confidence in my defence. ·As you can verify for 11
11:30p;20:16 yourself, it is no more than twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem on pilgrimage,[e]
and it is not true that they ever found me arguing with anyone or stirring up the 12
mob, either in the Temple, in the synagogues, or about the town; ·neither can they 13
give you any proof of the accusations they are making against me now.

9:2b 'What I do admit to you is this: it is according to the Way, which they describe as 14
a sect, that I worship the God of my ancestors, retaining my belief in all points of
Mt 5:17h Rm 3:31;10:4 the Law and in what is written in the prophets;[f] ·and I hold the same hope in God 15
23:6+ as they[g] do that there will be a resurrection of the upright and the wicked alike. ·In 16
Dn 12:2b Jn 5:29f these things, I, as much as they, do my best to keep a clear conscience at all times
23:1a before God and everyone.

'After several years[h] I came to bring relief-money to my nation[i] and to make 17
offerings;[j] ·it was in connection with these that they found me in the Temple; I 18
had been purified, and there was no crowd involved, and no disturbance. ·But 19
21:27 some Jews from Asia—these are the ones who should have appeared before you
and accused me of whatever they had against me. ·At least let those who are 20
present say what crime they held against me when I stood before the Sanhedrin,
unless it were to do with this single claim, when I stood up among them and 21
23:6+ called out, "It is about the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial before
you today." '[k]

Paul's captivity at Caesarea

9:2b At this, Felix, who was fairly well informed about the Way, adjourned the case, 22
saying, 'When Lysias the tribune comes down I will give judgement about your
case.' ·He then gave orders to the centurion that he should be kept under arrest 23
but free from restriction, and that none of his own people should be prevented
from seeing to his needs.[l]

Some days later Felix came with his wife Drusilla who was a Jewess.[m] He sent 24
18:5f for Paul and gave him a hearing on the subject of faith in Christ Jesus. ·But when 25
he began to treat of uprightness, self-control and the coming Judgement, Felix
Mk 6:17–20 took fright[n] and said, 'You may go for the present; I will send for you when I find
17:32 it convenient.' ·At the same time he had hopes of receiving money from Paul, and 26
for this reason he sent for him frequently and had talks with him.

25:9 When two years[o] came to an end, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus[p] and, 27
being anxious to gain favour with the Jews,[q] Felix left Paul in custody.

Paul appeals to Caesar

25 Three days after his arrival in the province,[a] Festus went up to Jerusalem 1
from Caesarea. ·The chief priests and leaders of the Jews informed him of 2
23:12–15 the case against Paul,[b] ·urgently asking him to support them against him, and to 3
have him transferred to Jerusalem. They were preparing an ambush to murder him
on the way. ·But Festus replied that Paul was in custody in Caesarea, and that he 4
would be going back there shortly himself. ·He said, 'Let your authorities come 5
down with me, and if there is anything wrong about the man, they can bring a
charge against him.'

After staying with them for eight or ten days at the most, he went down to 6
Caesarea and the next day he took his seat on the tribunal and had Paul brought in.
As soon as Paul appeared, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem sur- 7
17:6–7 Mt 26:59par.; 27:12–14 Lk 23:10 rounded him, making many serious accusations which they were unable to substan-
·21:18f;24:14f tiate. ·Paul's defence was this, 'I have committed no offence whatever against 8
24:27 either Jewish law, or the Temple, or Caesar.' ·Festus was anxious to gain favour 9
with the Jews, so he said to Paul, 'Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and be
tried on these charges before me there?'[c] ·But Paul replied, 'I am standing before 10

the tribunal of Caesar and this is where I should be tried. I have done the Jews no
11 wrong, as you very well know. •If I am guilty of committing any capital crime, I do
not ask to be spared the death penalty. But if there is no substance in the
accusations these persons bring against me, no one has a right to surrender me to
12 them. I appeal to Caesar.'[d] •Then Festus conferred with his advisers and replied,
'You have appealed to Caesar; to Caesar you shall go.' 26:32;28:19

Paul appears before King Agrippa

13 Some days later King Agrippa and Bernice[e] arrived in Caesarea and paid their
14 respects to Festus. •Their visit lasted several days, and Festus put Paul's case
before the king, saying, 'There is a man here whom Felix left behind in custody,
15 and while I was in Jerusalem the chief priests and elders of the Jews laid
16 information against him, demanding his condemnation. •But I told them that
Romans are not in the habit of surrendering any man, until the accused confronts
17 his accusers and is given an opportunity to defend himself against the charge. •So
they came here with me, and I wasted no time but took my seat on the tribunal the
18 very next day and had the man brought in. •When confronted with him, his
19 accusers did not charge him with any of the crimes I had expected; •but they had
some argument or other with him about their own religion and about a dead man 18:15;23:29
20 called Jesus whom Paul alleged to be alive. •Not feeling qualified to deal with 23:6+ Lk 24:5,23 1 Co 15:12–20 2 Co 13:4
questions of this sort, I asked him if he would be willing to go to Jerusalem to be
21 tried there on this issue. •But Paul put in an appeal for his case to be reserved for
the judgement of the emperor,[f] so I ordered him to be remanded until I could send
22 him to Caesar.' •Agrippa said to Festus, 'I should like to hear the man myself.'[g]
He answered, 'Tomorrow you shall hear him.'

23 So the next day Agrippa and Bernice arrived in great state and entered the
audience chamber attended by the tribunes and the city notables; and Festus
24 ordered Paul to be brought in. •Then Festus said, 'King Agrippa, and all here
present with us, you see before you the man about whom the whole Jewish
community has petitioned me, both in Jerusalem and here, loudly protesting that
25 he ought not to be allowed to remain alive. •For my own part I am satisfied that he 21:36+
has committed no capital crime, but when he himself appealed to the emperor I 23:29h
26 decided to send him. •But I have nothing definite that I can write to his Imperial
Majesty[h] about him; that is why I have produced him before you all, and before

e. lit. 'to worship', cf. 8:27.

f. Christianity is not a different religion, it is Judaism with its ancient hope fulfilled. If the Jews reject Christ, they reject their own religious tradition. Compare the discourse before Agrippa, ch. 26, the early Christian argument from prophecy, 2:23*o*; 3:24*s*, and Paul's own assertions, Rm 1:2; 3:31; 10:4; 16:26; 1 Co 15:3–4; Ga 3.

g. The Pharisees, *see* 23:6 and refs.

h. The visit of 18:22 must have been at least four years earlier and the 'council of Jerusalem' visit eight or nine years earlier.

i. The only allusion in Ac to the real purpose of the journey, namely to deliver in Jerusalem the collection made among the churches in gentile territory, *see* 1 Co 16:1a.

j. Sacrifices, cf. 21:24, 26.

k. A doctrine of the Pharisees: Paul shrewdly implies that Christians and Pharisees have something in common.

l. The same conditions as for Paul's imprisonment in Rome.

m. Youngest daughter of Herod Agrippa I (12:1a). She had left her first husband, the king of Emesa, to marry Felix.

n. Felix was avaricious, cruel and dissolute. Compare the attitude of John the Baptist before Herod Antipas.

o. Roman law prescribed penalties for accusers who failed to follow up their charges, but there is no suggestion that the accused should be released in such a case.

p. Appointed probably in 60, died in 62.

q. 'being anxious to gain favour with the Jews'; Western text 'And he left Paul in prison on account of Drusilla.'

25 **a.** Or 'after taking office'.

b. Same procedure as in 24:1, cf. 25:15.

c. Festus realises that the dispute is about religious matters, a case not for him but for the Sanhedrin (*see* vv. 19–20). But as a Roman citizen Paul could not be committed to the Sanhedrin without his own consent. To secure this, Festus promises to attend and to preside over the discussion.

d. Since Festus has disclaimed jurisdiction, Paul cannot escape trial before the Sanhedrin except by claiming the Roman citizen's privilege of trial before the imperial tribunal.

e. Agrippa, Bernice and Drusilla (*see* 24:24) were children of Herod Agrippa I, *see* 12:1a. The eldest, later Agrippa II, was born in 27. At this time Bernice was living with her brother and their relationship became matter for gossip; some years later Bernice became the mistress of Titus, the Roman general, later emperor.

f. lit. 'Augustus'; so also in v. 25. The title 'Augustus', like 'Caesar', was borne by the ruling emperor, in this case Nero (54–68).

g. Just as his great-uncle Herod Antipas had wanted to see Jesus, Lk 9:9; 23:8.

h. Term for the emperor considered as a king whose power was absolute and universal, and therefore practically divine.

you in particular, King Agrippa, so that after the examination I may have something to write. •It seems to me pointless to send a prisoner without indicating the 27
charges against him.'

13:16 **26** Then Agrippa said to Paul, 'You have leave to speak on your own behalf.' 1
And Paul held up his hand and began his defence:

Paul's speech before King Agrippa [a]

'I consider myself fortunate, King Agrippa, in that it is before you I am to answer 2
today all the charges made against me by the Jews, •the more so because [b] you are 3
an expert in matters of custom and controversy among the Jews. So I beg you to
listen to me patiently.

22:3+ 'My manner of life from my youth, a life spent from the beginning among my 4
own people and in Jerusalem, is common knowledge among the Jews. •They have 5
known me for a long time and could testify, if they would, that I followed the
23:6+ strictest party in our religion and lived as a Pharisee. •And now it is for my hope in 6
the promise made by God to our ancestors that I am on trial, •the promise that our 7
2 M 7:9 Dn 12:1–3 twelve tribes, constant in worship night and day, hope to attain. [c] For that hope,
Your Majesty, I am actually put on trial by Jews! •Why does it seem incredible to 8
Rm 4:17 2 Co 1:9 Heb 11:19 you that God should raise the dead? [d]

'As for me, I once thought it was my duty to use every means to oppose the name 9
=9:1–18; =22:5–16 of Jesus the Nazarene. •This I did in Jerusalem; I myself threw many of God's holy 10
Mt 2:23*l* people into prison, acting on authority from the chief priests, and when they were
9:13*g* being sentenced to death I cast my vote against them. •I often went round the 11
8:1;22:20 synagogues inflicting penalties, trying in this way to force them to renounce their
faith; my fury against them was so extreme that I even pursued them into foreign
cities.

'On such an expedition I was going to Damascus, armed with full powers and a 12
commission from the chief priests, •and in the middle of the day as I was on my 13
way, Your Majesty, I saw a light from heaven shining more brilliantly than the sun
round me and my fellow-travellers. •We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice 14
21:40*q* 1 Co 9:16*seq.* saying to me in Hebrew, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for
you, kicking against the goad." [e] •Then I said, "Who are you, Lord?" And the 15
Ezk 2:1 Dn 10:11 Lord answered, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. •But get up and stand on 16
your feet, for I have appeared to you for this reason: to appoint you as my servant
1:8*k*;20:24 and as witness of this vision in which you have seen me, and of others in which I
Jr 1:5–8 shall appear to you. •*I shall rescue you* from the people and from *the nations to* 17
9:17–18 Is 42:7,16 Jn 8:12*b* Col 1:12–14 1 P 2:9 *whom I send you* •*to open their eyes*, so that they may turn *from darkness to light*, [f] 18
from the dominion of Satan to God, and receive, through faith in me, forgiveness
of their sins [g] and a share in the inheritance of the sanctified."

•Dt 33:3–4 •Ga 1:16 'After that, King Agrippa, I could not disobey the heavenly vision. •On the 19, 20
contrary I started preaching, first to the people of Damascus, then to those of
2:38*x* Lk 3:8*par.* Jerusalem and all Judaean territory, and also to the gentiles, urging them to repent
and turn to God, proving their change of heart by their deeds. •This was why the 21
21:30–31 Jews laid hands on me in the Temple and tried to do away with me. •But I was 22
blessed with God's help, and so I have stood firm to this day, testifying to great and
2:23*o* small alike, saying nothing more than what the prophets and Moses himself said
1 Co 15:20–23 would happen: •that the Christ was to suffer and that, as the first to rise from the 23
13:47 dead, he was to proclaim a light for our people and for the gentiles.'

His hearers' reactions

He had reached this point in his defence when Festus shouted out, 'Paul, you are 24
out of your mind; all that learning of yours is driving you mad.' [h] •But Paul 25
Jn 18:37–38 answered, 'Festus, your Excellency, I am not mad: I am speaking words of sober
truth and good sense. •The king understands these matters, and to him I now speak 26
13:46*gg* fearlessly. I am confident that nothing of all this comes as a surprise to him; after
all, these things were not done in a corner. [i] •King Agrippa, do you believe in the 27

28 prophets? I know you do.' ·At this Agrippa said to Paul, 'A little more, and your
29 arguments would make a Christian[j] of me.' ·Paul replied 'Little or much,[k] I wish
before God that not only you but all who are listening to me today would come to
be as I am—except for these chains.' 28:20
30 At this the king rose to his feet, with the governor and Bernice and those who sat
31 there with them. ·When they had retired they talked together and agreed, 'This
32 man is doing nothing that deserves death or imprisonment.' ·And Agrippa re- 23:29h
marked to Festus, 'The man could have been set free if he had not appealed to 25:11;28:19
Caesar.'

The departure for Rome

1 27 When it had been decided that we[a] should sail to Italy, Paul and some other 16:10g
prisoners were handed over to a centurion called Julius, of the Augustan
2 cohort. ·We boarded a vessel from Adramyttium bound for ports on the Asiatic
coast and put to sea; we had Aristarchus with us, a Macedonian of Thessalonica. 19:29n
3 Next day we put in at Sidon, and Julius was considerate enough to allow Paul to
go to his friends to be looked after.
4 From there we put to sea again, but as the winds were against us we sailed under
5 the lee of Cyprus, ·then across the open sea off Cilicia and Pamphylia, taking a
6 fortnight[b] to reach Myra in Lycia. ·There the centurion found an Alexandrian ship
leaving for Italy and put us aboard.
7 For some days we made little headway, and we had difficulty in making Cnidus.
The wind would not allow us to touch there, so we sailed under the lee of Crete off
8 Cape Salmone ·and struggled along the coast until we came to a place called Fair
Havens, near the town of Lasea.

Storm and shipwreck

Jon 1:4–16
Mt 8:23–27p

9 A great deal of time had been lost, and navigation was already hazardous, since it
10 was now well after the time of the Fast,[c] so Paul gave them this warning, ·'Friends,
I can see this voyage will be dangerous and that we will run considerable risk of
11 losing not only the cargo and the ship but also our lives as well.' ·But the centurion
took more notice of the captain and the ship's owner than of what Paul was saying;
12 and since the harbour was unsuitable for wintering, the majority were for putting
out from there in the hope of wintering at Phoenix—a harbour in Crete, facing
south-west and north-west.
13 A southerly breeze sprang up and, thinking their objective as good as reached,
14 they weighed anchor and began to sail past Crete, close inshore. ·But it was not

26 a. A flattering address, vv. 2–3; cf. 24:2–3,10, is followed by Paul's assertion that his Christian faith in bodily resurrection is shared by the Pharisees, vv. 4–8; *see* Mt 3:7f. Paul then describes the circumstances of his conversion, vv. 9–18; cf. 9:1–18; 22:3–16, and ends with a summary of his preaching which presents the Christian faith simply as the fulfilment of the scriptures, vv. 19–23; cf. 13:15–41. Behind the actual point of difference lies the whole question of the relationship between Judaism and Christianity, *see* 24:14f.

b. Others translate 'more than anyone'.

c. The messianic hope takes definite shape in the belief in the resurrection of the upright who are to have their place in the kingdom at the end of time, *see* 2 M 7:9c; Dn 12:1–3. This hope has its initial fulfilment in the resurrection of Christ which is the ground of Christian hope, 1 Co 15:15–22; Col 1:18.

d. var. vv. 7–8 'the promise for which our twelve tribes assiduously worship God day and night in the hope of attaining it; it is for this that I am now arraigned by the Jews: namely, that God raises the dead.'

e. Greek proverb for useless resistance: the ox kicking against the goad succeeds only in wounding itself.

f. Paul's missionary vocation is described here in OT terms used about two great prophetic figures, Jeremiah and the servant of Yahweh.

g. In 9:17–18, Paul, his sight restored, passes from darkness to light; in 22:16 (cf. 9:18) Paul is ordered to wash away his sins by baptism. Thus his own experience is a symbol of his mission to others.

h. Festus is taken aback by Paul's biblical erudition and probably by the Jewish method of argument. Agrippa is silent; he is clearly shaken, *see* his evasive reply in v. 28.

i. The scriptures are being fulfilled by events (v. 23; the passion and death of Christ; the widespread apostolic preaching) which all the world can see.

j. The word is still a nickname, *see* 11:26*l*. • var. 'In a little while you will persuade me to become a Christian!' or, 'In a little while you will persuade yourself you have made me a Christian!'

k. A play on Agrippa's phrase.

27 a. The narrative in the first person resumes and now continues till Paul reaches Rome, *see* 16:10g. The precision of the narrative suggests a carefully kept diary. Alternatively the author may have used a neutral account of a sea voyage ending in shipwreck, and inserted those passages where the prisoner Paul unexpectedly assumes command, vv. 9b–11, 21–26, 30b–31, 33–36.

b. lit. 'for fifteen days', Western text.

c. Another name for the feast of Expiation, the only fast-day prescribed by the Law, Lv. 16:29–31. It was celebrated about the time of the autumn equinox.

long before a hurricane, the 'north-easter' as they call it, burst on them from across
the island. ·The ship was caught and could not keep head to wind, so we had to 15
give way to the wind and let ourselves be driven. ·We ran under the lee of a small 16
island called Cauda and managed with some difficulty to bring the ship's boat
under control. ·Having hauled it up they used it to undergird the ship; then, afraid 17
of running aground on the Syrtis banks, they floated out the sea-anchor and so let
themselves drift. ·As we were thoroughly storm-bound, the next day they began to 18
jettison the cargo, ·and the third day they threw the ship's gear overboard with 19
their own hands. ·For a number of days both the sun and the stars were invisible 20
and the storm raged unabated until at last we gave up all hope of surviving.

27:33 Then, when they had been without food for a long time,[d] Paul stood up among 21
the men. 'Friends,' he said, 'you should have listened to me and not put out from
Crete. You would have spared yourselves all this damage and loss. ·But now I ask 22
27:34 you not to give way to despair. There will be no loss of life at all, only of the ship.
18:9;23:11 Last night there appeared beside me an angel of the God to whom I belong and 23
10:3+ Jon 1:9 whom I serve, ·and he said, "Do not be afraid, Paul. You are destined to appear 24
before Caesar,[e] and God grants you the safety of all who are sailing with you."
So take courage, friends; I trust in God that things will turn out just as I was told; 25
but we are to be stranded on some island.' 26

On the fourteenth night we were being driven one way and another in the 27
Adriatic,[f] when about midnight the crew sensed that land of some sort was near.
They took soundings and found twenty fathoms; after a short interval they 28
sounded again and found fifteen fathoms. ·Then, afraid that we might run aground 29
somewhere on a reef, they dropped four anchors from the stern and prayed for
daylight. ·When the crew tried to escape from the ship and lowered the ship's boat 30
into the sea as though they meant to lay out anchors from the bows, Paul said to
the centurion and his men, ·'Unless those men stay on board you cannot hope to 31
be saved.' ·So the soldiers cut the boat's ropes and let it drop away. 32

27:21 Just before daybreak Paul urged them all to have something to eat. 'For fourteen 33
days', he said, 'you have been in suspense, going hungry and eating nothing. ·I 34
27:22, 24 urge you to have something to eat; your safety depends on it. Not a hair of any of
Lk 24:30 your heads will be lost.' ·With these words he took some bread, gave thanks to 35
God in view of them all, broke it and began to eat.[g] ·They all plucked up courage 36
and took something to eat themselves. ·In all we were two hundred and seventy- 37
six souls on board that ship. ·When they had eaten what they wanted they lightened 38
the ship by throwing the corn overboard into the sea.

When day came they did not recognise the land, but they could make out a bay 39
with a beach; they planned to run the ship aground on this if they could. ·They 40
slipped the anchors and let them fall into the sea, and at the same time loosened
the lashings of the rudders; then, hoisting the foresail to the wind, they headed for
the beach. ·But the cross-currents carried them into a shoal and the vessel ran 41
aground. The bows were wedged in and stuck fast, while the stern began to break
up with the pounding of the waves.

12:19g The soldiers planned to kill the prisoners for fear that any should swim off and 42
escape. ·But the centurion was determined to bring Paul safely through and would 43
not let them carry out their plan. He gave orders that those who could swim should
jump overboard first and so get ashore, ·and the rest follow either on planks or on 44
pieces of wreckage. In this way it happened that all came safe and sound to land.

Waiting in Malta

28 Once we had come safely through, we discovered that the island was called 1
Malta. ·The inhabitants treated us with unusual kindness. They made us all 2
welcome by lighting a huge fire because it had started to rain and the weather was
cold. ·Paul had collected a bundle of sticks and was putting them on the fire when 3
a viper brought out by the heat attached itself to his hand. ·When the inhabitants 4
saw the creature hanging from his hand they said to one another, 'That man must

be a murderer; he may have escaped the sea, but divine justice [a] would not let him
5 live.' ·However, he shook the creature off into the fire and came to no harm, Mk 16:18 Lk 10:19
6 although they were expecting him at any moment to swell up or drop dead on the spot. After they had waited a long time without seeing anything out of the ordinary happen to him, they changed their minds and began to say he was a god. 14:11

7 In that neighbourhood there were estates belonging to the chief man of the island, whose name was Publius. He received us and entertained us hospitably for
8 three days. ·It happened that Publius' father was in bed, suffering from fever and dysentery. Paul went in to see him, and after a prayer he laid his hands on the man 5:15–16;8: 7–8; 9:12
9 and healed him. ·When this happened, the other sick people on the island also Lk 4:40;19: 9par.
10 came and were cured; ·they honoured us with many marks of respect, and when 1 Tm 4:14c we sailed they put on board the provisions we needed.

From Malta to Rome

11 At the end of three months we set sail in a ship that had wintered in the island; she
12 came from Alexandria and her figurehead was the Twins. ·We put in at Syracuse
13 and spent three days there; ·from there we followed the coast up to Rhegium. After one day there a south wind sprang up and on the second day we made
14 Puteoli, [b] ·where we found some brothers and had the great encouragement of staying a week with them. And so we came to Rome.

15 When the brothers there heard about us they came to meet us, as far as the Forum of Appius and the Three Taverns. When Paul saw them he thanked God
16 and took courage. ·On our arrival in Rome Paul was allowed to stay in lodgings of his own with the soldier who guarded him. [c]

Paul makes contact with the Roman Jews [d]

17 After three days he called together the leading Jews. When they had assembled, he said to them, 'Brothers, although I have done nothing against our people or the customs of our ancestors, I was arrested in Jerusalem and handed over to the 21:21h;24:14f
18 Romans. ·They examined me and would have set me free, since they found me
19 guilty of nothing involving the death penalty; ·but the Jews lodged an objection, 23:29h and I was forced to appeal to Caesar, though not because I had any accusation to 25:11;26:32
20 make against my own nation. [e] ·That is why I have urged you to see me and have a discussion with me, for it is on account of the hope of Israel that I wear this chain.' 23:6+;26:6–8 •26:29

21 They answered, [f] 'We have received no letters from Judaea about you, nor has Lk 4:44k any of the brothers arrived here with any report or story of anything to your
22 discredit. ·We think it would be as well to hear your own account of your position; 17:19–20 all we know about this sect is that it encounters opposition everywhere.' 24:5.14

Paul's declaration to the Roman Jews [g]

23 So they arranged a day with him and a large number of them visited him at his lodgings. He put his case to them, testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to 13:16–41 •1:3d persuade them about Jesus, arguing from the Law of Moses and the prophets from •2:23o
24 early morning until evening; ·and some were convinced by what he said, while the

d. Paul's second speech (vv. 33seq.) would follow naturally on this observation. This first speech (vv. 21–26) seems to have been rather clumsily introduced into this context and to be partly a doublet of the second.

e. Not before Nero in person but before his tribunal.

f. The name was used for all that part of the Mediterranean between Greece, Italy and Africa.

g. Western text add. 'giving it to us also'. • All Jews said a blessing when about to eat; nevertheless, the terms Luke uses seem to suggest the Eucharist. *see* 2:42gg.

28 **a.** lit. 'justice', *dike*, divine justice personified.

b. Pozzuoli on the Gulf of Naples. There was already a Christian colony in this busy port.

c. Western text (adopted by the Antiochene recension) . . . Rome, the centurion handed the prisoners over to the commander. But Paul was allowed to live outside the (Praetorian) camp.' This additional information agrees with what in fact must have happened. By the concession of *custodia militaris* the prisoner had his own lodgings, but his right arm was chained to the left of the soldier in charge.

d. Paul wants to establish good relations with the Jews of Rome as soon as possible. He gives a brief account of his trial, and for the last time protests his loyalty to Judaism.

e. Western text add. 'but merely wished to escape death'.

f. The reply is cautious.

g. In Rome also Paul preaches the gospel first to the Jews. *see* 13:5e. The summary of this preaching should be compared with the opening discourse in Pisidian Antioch. 13:15–41.

13:46–47; 14:4; 17:4–5 rest were sceptical. ·So they disagreed among themselves and, as they went away, 25
Paul had one last thing to say to them.[h] ·'How aptly the Holy Spirit spoke when he
told your ancestors through the prophet Isaiah:

Is 6:9–10

Go and say to this people: 26
Listen and listen but never understand!
Look and look but never perceive!
This people's heart is torpid, 27
their ears dulled, they have shut their eyes tight,
to avoid using their eyes to see, their ears to hear,
using their heart to understand,
changing their ways and being healed by me.

18:6 'You must realise, then, that this salvation of God has been sent to the gentiles; 28
and they will listen to it.'[i]

Epilogue[j]

He spent the whole of the two years[k] in his own rented lodging. He welcomed all 30
who came to visit him, ·proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching the truth 31
13:46gg about the Lord Jesus Christ with complete fearlessness and without any hindrance
Ph 1:12–13 from anyone.[l]

h. Paul's words are reminiscent of those following his discourse at Antioch, 13:46–47. They constitute the finale of Ac, and sound its predominant note, *see* 13:41aa. They recall the vision of the future offered by Jesus at the end of his discourse in Nazareth, Lk 4:23–27, and in his last words to the apostles, Lk 24:27. The text from Is 6:9–10 (LXX) is also used in Mt 13:14–15 (cf. Mk 4:12 and par.) and, in part, in Jn 12:40. Both theme and text are commonplaces of early Christianity.

i. The Western text (followed by the Antiochene recension) adds v. 29 'And when he had said this, the Jews left, arguing hotly between themselves.'

j. Thus Paul arrived in Rome, which brings one period of evangelisation to a close, *see* 1:8i; Lk 24:47, and is presented as the starting-point for a further advance of Christianity. Before Luke had finished his Gospel he had opened up wide horizons to the apostolic mission; his Book of Acts ends with the same prospect for the future.

k. The same term as in 24:27o. The NT gives no clear indication what happens after this period, though Phm 22 (if it was written now) shows that Paul hoped to be released soon. But Nero was given to occasional acts of clemency and Paul may have benefited from one of these.

l. Western text add, 'saying that this is he, Jesus, the son of God, by whom the whole world is destined to be judged,' *see* 17:31. • On Paul's ministry after his discharge, his second imprisonment, and his death, *see* p. 1850.

THE LETTERS OF PAUL

INTRODUCTION TO
THE LETTERS OF PAUL

§1 CHRONOLOGY

Through the Acts of the Apostles and through his own letters Paul is more familiar to us than any other figure of the New Testament. Even though allowance must be made for Luke's particular method of historical writing and his theological interests, there is no reason to believe that the broad outlines of his presentation of Paul's ministry are unreliable. We can therefore construct a fairly exact chronology of Paul's life by reference to events in secular history whose dates are known, such as Gallio's proconsulate in Corinth, Ac 18:12, and the year Festus succeeded Felix, Ac 24:27–25:1. These give us two fixed points relative to which other dates in the life of the Apostle may be established more or less accurately.

Paul, born at Tarsus in Cilicia, Ac 9:11; 21:39; 22:3, about AD 10—possibly in the first decade of our era—of a Jewish family of the tribe of Benjamin, Rm 11:1; Ph 3:5, was a Roman citizen, Ac 16:37seq.; 22:25–28; 23:27. As a young man he received the thorough grounding in the scriptures of an educated Pharisee, with the all-embracing Law as its basis. According to Acts he received this education in Jerusalem from Gamaliel, one of the most distinguished teachers of his generation. Acts also tells us how Paul persecuted the young Christian Church (Ac 22:4seq.; 26:9–12; Ga 1:13; Ph 3:6), played some part in the martyrdom of Stephen (Ac 7:58; 22:20), and became a bitter persecutor of the Hellenist Christians, who had dissociated themselves from the Judaism centred on the Temple in Jerusalem, Ac 8:3; 22:4; Ga 1:13. But on the road to Damascus, *c.* AD 34, a vision of the risen Jesus changed his whole life. The risen Lord opened his mind to the truth of the Christian faith and revealed that he had chosen him to be the apostle of the gentiles, Ac 9:3–16 and par.; Ga 1:12, 15seq. From then on, Paul dedicated his life to serving Christ who had personally chosen him as his follower, Ph 3:12. After spending some time in Arabia he returned to Damascus, Ga 1:17, and began his preaching there, Ac 9:20. In about AD 39, after a brief visit to Jerusalem, Ac 9:26–29; Ga 1:18, Paul went to Syria and Cilicia, Ac 9:30; Ga 1:21, till Barnabas fetched him back to Antioch where they preached together, Ac 11:25seq. and cf. 9:27.

During Paul's first missionary journey (45–9) to Cyprus, Pamphilia, Pisidia and Lycaonia, Ac 13–14, he started using his Greek name Paul instead of his Jewish name Saul, Ac 13:9, and, because of his more important role in preaching, he began to take the lead over Barnabas, Ac 14:12. In AD 49,

fourteen years after his conversion, he went to Jerusalem, Ga 2:1, and he and Barnabas were recognised as the apostles to the gentiles by the leaders of the church there, who were 'the apostles to the circumcised', Ga 2:90. The dates of his second (AD 50–2; Ac 15:36–18:22) and third missionary journeys (AD 53–8; Ac 18:23–21:17) are discussed later under the letters he wrote at intervals during those journeys. In AD 58, Paul was arrested in Jerusalem, Ac 21:27–23:22, and imprisoned at Caesarea Palestinae until AD 60, Ac 23:23–26:32. In the autumn of AD 60, Festus the procurator sent him to Rome under escort, Ac 27:1–28:16 where he lived for two years, AD 61–3, Ac 28:30. There our certain knowledge of Paul's life ends. Ancient tradition, relying to some extent on the Pastoral Letters (on whose historical value *see* below), teaches that after two years his case was dismissed for lack of evidence, and Paul travelled again in the East, though he may well have made his projected (Rm 15:24, 28) visit to Spain. Tradition also holds that a subsequent imprisonment in Rome ended in martyrdom, in AD 67.

§2 THE CHARACTER OF PAUL

As well as this chronology, it is possible to recover quite a detailed portrait of Paul from his letters and from Acts.

He was a person of great dedication, capable of pursuing an ideal with a complete disregard for the cost. For him, the only thing that mattered was God, and as God's servant, Paul refused any sort of compromise. It was with equally single-minded determination that he had persecuted those he considered God's enemies, *see* Ac 24:5, 14, and later preached Christ as the one, universal Saviour. This Saviour he served passionately and selflessly for the rest of his life. He knew what work he had been given to do, 1 Co 9:16, and he let nothing stop him from doing it: hard work, exhaustion, suffering, poverty, danger of death, 1 Co 4:9–13; 2 Co 4:8seq.; 6:4–10; 11:23–27. Far from letting these things weaken his love for God or Christ, Rm 8:35–39, he welcomed them, since they helped him to grow into the image of his suffering and crucified Master, 2 Co 4:10seq.; Ph 3:10seq. The knowledge that his vocation was unique gave him an enormous ambition, but it did not make him arrogant. It was with holy humility that Paul felt a personal pride in being responsible for so many churches, 2 Co 11:28, compare Col 1:24seq., and claimed to have done more missionary work than others, 1 Co 15:10, compare 2 Co 11:5, and offered himself as a model to his converts, 2 Th 3:7b. He never forgot that, having persecuted the Church of Christ, he was the unworthiest of all the apostles. All the great things he succeeded in doing he attributed to God's grace working through him, 1 Co 15:10; 2 Co 4:7; Ph 4:13; Col 1:29.

Paul had a sensitive temperament that showed itself in his attitude to those he had converted. He had a childlike trust in the converts at Philippi, Ph 1:7seq.; 4:10–20, a deep affection for those at Ephesus, Ac 20:17–38; he was furious with those in Galatia who were on the verge of apostasy, Ga 1:6; 3:1–3, and deeply upset when he thought that the Christians in Corinth had become vain and unstable, 2 Co 12:11–13:10. When he was being ironical with people he considered superficial, 1 Co 4:8; 2 Co 11:7; 12:13, or when he was outspoken, 1 Co 3:1–3; 5:1–2; 6:5; 11:17–22; 2 Co 11:3seq.; Ga 3:1–

3; 4:11, it was only for their own good, 2 Co 7: 8–13, and after these outbursts he soon became tender, 2 Co 11:1–2; 12:14seq., and fatherly, 1 Co 4:14seq.; 2 Co 6:13, compare 1 Th 2:11; Phm 10, even motherly, Ga 4:19; 1 Th 2:7, and anxious to restore the earlier affection, 2 Co 7:11–13; Ga 4:12–20.

Paul's fiercest outbursts of indignation were directed against anybody who tried to seduce his converts, whether they were strict Jews, who were bitterly opposed to Hellenist Christianity and opposed him wherever he went, Ac 13:45, 50; 14:2, 19; 17:5, 13; 18:6; 19:9; 21:27, or judaising 'Hebrew' Christians who wanted all followers of Christ to follow the Law, Ga 1:7; 2:4; 6:12seq. He never minced his words with either of these groups, Ga 5:12; Ph 3:2; 1 Th 2:15seq. and, however unprepossessing, he felt himself to be an irresistible weapon wielded by divine power against ambitious, arrogant and unspiritual opponents, 2 Co 10:1–12:12. God's weapon was Paul's selfless sincerity, Ac 18:3d. It has been suggested that the people against whom he inveighs were in fact the senior apostles in Jerusalem, but in fact it seems clear from Ga 2 that Paul respected their authority in the Jewish Christian churches of the Jerusalem region while firmly resisting the influence of some of their followers in the gentile Christian churches that he had founded; he claimed only that he was just as much a witness to Christ as they were, 1 Co 9:1; 15:8–11; Ga 1:11seq. Even after his disagreement with Peter, Ga 2:11–14, his attitude was conciliatory. The collection which he organised for the poor Christians of Jerusalem, Ga 2:10, was intended as the proof that his gentile converts were truly one with the Christians of the mother church, Rm 15:25seq.; 2 Co 8:14; 9:12–13, however coolly it was received, Ac 21:17–25.

§3 PAUL AS PREACHER

What Paul proclaimed was in all essentials the apostolic *kerygma*, Ac 2:22n, i.e. that Christ had been crucified and raised from the dead and that this had been foretold in the scriptures, 1 Co 2:2; 15:3–4; Ga 3:1; what he calls 'his' gospel, Rm 2:16; 16:25, was identical to the faith held by the other apostles, Ga 1:6–9; Col 1:5–7, but he had no reservations about the admission of gentiles, and his first missionary activity, according to Ac 11, was at Antioch among gentile converts of the Hellenists 'scattered in the troubles over Stephen', Ga 1:16; 2:7–9. Paul accepts and sometimes appeals to the apostolic tradition, 1 Co 11:23; 15:3–7, to which he was deeply indebted. Though he probably never met Jesus during his earthly life, *see* 2 Co 5:16g, Paul was familiar with his teaching, Ac 20:35; 1 Co 7:10seq.; 1 Th 4:15, and confidently claimed to have seen the risen Christ, not only on the Damascus road, Ac 9:17; 22:14seq.; 26:16; 1 Co 9:1; 15:8, but on several occasions subsequently, Ac 22:17–21; 26:16. He also had revelations and ecstasies, 2 Co 12:1–4, but everything he had received from apostolic tradition he could also attribute, and justly, to direct communication from the Lord, 1 Co 11:23; Ga 1:12.

These mystical experiences have sometimes been attributed to Paul's excitable and morbid temperament, yet this is hardly likely. The disease that detained him in Galatia, Ga 4:13–15, cannot now be determined, but the 'thorn in my side', 2 Co 12:7, may well be the persistent hostility of Jews,

his brothers 'according to the flesh', Rm 9:3. Paul does not seem to have had a very vivid imagination, to judge from his sparing and pedestrian use of imagery: the sportsground, 1 Co 9:24–27; Ph 3:12–14; and the sea. Two images, farming, 1 Co 3:6–8, and building, Rm 15:20; 1 Co 3:10–17, are so basic that he often mixes them, 1 Co 3:9; Col 2:7, compare Col 2:19. His genius was much more intellectual than imaginative, his enthusiasm was never divorced from the rigid logic with which he explains his teaching and adapts it to the needs of his audience. It is to this intellectual need to adapt his teaching to the occasion that we owe the remarkable theological analysis to which he repeatedly submits the *kerygma*. His logic, which is based on the rabbinical method in which he had been trained, may be unfamiliar today (e.g. Ga 3:16; 4:21–31). His genius, however, was never restricted by the tradition he inherited, so that these ancient conventions do not obscure the profundity of his teaching.

Paul was a Jew with a Greek cultural background probably acquired during his boyhood in Tarsus; this influence is obvious not only in his logical method but also in his language and style. He sometimes quotes Greek writers, Ac 17:28; 1 Co 15:33, and was familiar with popular Stoic-based philosophy from which he borrows concepts (e.g. of the soul separated from the body and bound for another world, 2 Co 5:6–8; the cosmic *pleroma* in Col) and clichés (Rm 11:36; 1 Co 8:6). From the Cynics and Stoics he borrowed the rapid question and answer method (*diatribe*), Rm 3:1–9, 27–31, and the rhetorical device of heaping word on word, 2 Co 6:4–10. Even the use of long, packed phrases in wave after wave, Ep 1:3–14; Col 1:9–20, has a precedent in Hellenist religious literature. The Greek that was a second mother tongue to Paul (*see* Ac 21:40), that he was able to use so familiarly with only occasional semitisms, was a cultured form of the *koine*, i.e. the popular Greek of his own day. Paul never attempted Attic elegance, and he deliberately avoided rhetoric, so that his audience would be convinced not by the form but by the content of his message of faith and by the signs the Spirit had promised to provide to confirm it, Rm 15:18; 1 Co 2:4seq.; 1 Th 1:5. This is one reason why his grammar is sometimes wrong and his sentences unfinished, 1 Co 9:15; another is that he sometimes thought too fast or too emotionally; a third is that with rare exceptions, Phm 19, he normally dictated his letters, Rm 16:22 (a common practice at the time), and wrote only the final greeting by way of signature, 1 Co 16:21; Ga 6:11; Col 4:18; 2 Th 3:17. Some passages in his letters were obviously written only after long and careful thought, e.g. Col 1:15–20, but mostly his letters suggest spontaneity and lack of revision. In spite of, or perhaps because of these literary faults, Paul's sentences are dynamic and packed with meaning. He is not easy to read, 2 P 3:16; profound thoughts expressed by an urgent writer never are; however, some passages have an extraordinary religious and literary power.

It is important to remember that Paul's letters were not meant as theological treatises: most of them represent his response to a particular situation in a particular church. They begin according to the usual epistolary convention, Rm 1:1a, but cannot be classed either as private letters, or as literary 'epistles'; they are Pauline instructions intended for a specific circle of readers and, in a general way, for all the faithful. Paul's letters do not give any

systematic and exhaustive exposition of his teaching; they presuppose the oral teaching which preceded them, and enlarge and comment only upon certain points of that. This does not detract from their value: the depth and range of his letters give us all the essentials of Paul's message. No matter what the reason was for writing or who the people were to whom he was writing, his basic teaching remained the same: that Christ died and was raised from the dead. The apostle who was all things to all people, 1 Co 9:19–22, adapts this, his one basic doctrine, to the listener; he develops and enriches it. Paul has sometimes been accused of being an eclectic, in the sense of adopting not only different but contradictory opinions according to the circumstances in which he found himself, of being interested less in truth than in persuading people to believe in Christ. He has also been accused of not having an open mind, of being obsessed by the vision that converted him, and of never having allowed his ideas to develop. The truth between these extremes seems to be that Paul's theology remains homogeneous but that it did develop under the guidance of the Spirit, who inspired everything he did as an apostle. To show this development of Paul's thought, his letters have to be read in the order in which they were written; the order, however, in which they are printed here is the traditional one that arranges them in order of diminishing length.

§4 PAUL'S JOURNEYS AND LETTERS

§4a 1 and 2 Thessalonians: AD 50–1

The first letters to be written were to the converts Paul had made in Thessalonica in the summer of AD 50, during his second missionary journey, Ac 17:1–10. As a result of the hostility of some Jews he went on to Beroea, and from there to Athens and Corinth where, it seems, he wrote 1 Th during the winter of 50–1. When he wrote this letter, his companions were Silas and Timothy. Timothy had paid a second visit to Thessalonica, and brought back the good news of their faith under persecution, whence the affectionate tone of the opening chapters, 1–3; these are followed by a series of practical recommendations, 4:1–12; 5:12–28, including an answer to their questions about the destiny of the dead and about Christ's *parousia*, 4:13–5:11. It was at Corinth a few months later that 2 Th was probably written, making further practical recommendations, 1; 2:13–3:15, and offering fresh instruction on the time of the *parousia* and the signs that were to come before it, 2:1–12.

The literary resemblance between 1 and 2 Th is so close that some critics consider 2 Th a forgery made by one who had absorbed Paul's ideas and style; but it is hard to explain why this should have been done. A more obvious explanation is that when Paul wished to clarify and tidy up his teaching on eschatology, he used a number of expressions from the first letter in writing a second. The two letters are not contradictory but complementary and the earliest authorities accepted them both as written by Paul.

These two letters are particularly important because of their eschatological teaching, but they also introduce many points elaborated in subsequent letters. At this early stage, Paul's ideas were structured around the question of how the resurrection and *parousia* of Christ can bring salvation to his

followers whether alive or dead, 1 Th 4:13–18. Paul described this *parousia* in the traditional terms of Jewish and the earliest Christian apocalyptic writings (e.g. the eschatological discourses in the Synoptic Gospels, especially in Mt). At one time he so emphasises, 1 Th 5:1–11, the unpredictable imminence of the coming and the necessity for vigilance, as to give the impression that he and his readers would live to see it, 4:17; at other times (2 Th 2:1–12) he tries to allay the anxiety naturally aroused and reminds his readers that the Day could not come till certain signs had preceded it. What these signs were to be is not as clear to us as it must have been to the first readers. Paul seems to consider the 'Adversary' to be an individual person who had to wait till the end of the age before he could appear; some writers consider that by the phrase 'what is still holding him back', 2 Th 2:6, Paul meant the Roman empire, others that he meant the preaching of the gospel; no certainty is possible.

§4b 1 and 2 Corinthians: AD 57

Paul wrote the letters to Thessalonica during the eighteen months he spent evangelising Corinth, Ac 18:1–18, from the end of AD 50 to the middle of 52. His policy was always to establish the Christian faith in a centre of population, and here he chose the great and populous port of Corinth, so that it could spread from there into the whole of Achaia, 2 Co 1:1; 9:2. The Christian community he established grew strong and was composed mostly of poor people, 1 Co 1:26–28, but Corinth was not only a great centre of Hellenism and a magnet to every sort of philosophy and religion, it was also a notorious centre of immorality; it was a *milieu* that could create awkward problems for the newly converted. It was to the solution of these problems that Paul addressed himself when he wrote his two letters to the Christians of Corinth.

How these two letters came to be written is clear enough, though some details are still disputed. There had been an earlier letter than these two canonical ones, 1 Co 5:9–13, but the date at which this first letter was written is unknown and it has not survived. Before the end of the two and a half years he spent at Ephesus (54–7) on his third missionary journey, Ac 19:1–20:1, a Corinthian delegation arrived to ask Paul certain questions, 1 Co 16:17; and as he had also received news of Corinth from Apollos, Ac 18:27seq.; 1 Co 16:12, and from Chloe's household, 1 Co 1:11, he felt obliged to write a second letter. This is 1 Co, and it was written at some time possibly near Easter, 57 (1 Co 5:7seq.; 16:5–9, compare Ac 19:21). Shortly afterwards, some sort of crisis developed in Corinth, and Paul was forced to pay a brief and painful visit, 2 Co 1:23–2:1; 12:14; 13:1–2. While there, he promised another and a longer visit, 2 Co 1:15–16, which never in fact took place. Instead, Paul sent a representative to whom he delegated his authority, but the only result was a second crisis; Paul's authority, committed to this delegate, had been flouted, 2 Co 2:5–10; 7:12. Paul still did not pay the promised visit, but sent a severe letter written 'in agony of mind', 2 Co 2:3seq., 9; this third letter had the desired effect, 2 Co 7:8–13. This good news that he heard from Titus reached Paul only after he had gone to

Macedonia, 2 Co 2:12seq.; 7:5–16, having left Ephesus as a result of serious disturbances of which we know little, Ac 19:23–40; 1 Co 15:32; 2 Co 1:8–10. At this stage, towards the end of AD 57, he wrote 2 Co, or at least part of it, 1:1–6:13; 7:2–16 (*see* below). He must subsequently have travelled via Corinth, Ac 20:1seq., *see* 2 Co 9:5; 12:14; 13:1, 10, to Jerusalem, where he was arrested at Pentecost.

It has however been suggested that 2 Co 6:14–7:1 is a fragment of the lost first letter, and 2 Co 10–13 part of the letter written 'in agony of mind'. It would be hard to prove that they were parts of these two particular letters, but it is quite certain that these two sections are not in their original contexts. The first section reads like an insertion: 2 Co 7:2 follows naturally on 6:13, and the whole passage, 6:14–7:1, has remarkable affinity with some of the Essene literature discovered at Qumran. The vehemence of the second section, 2 Co 10–13, is certainly not in place after the friendly tone of the first nine chapters. To these two dislocations should be added the fact that 9:1 does not make sense after what has been said in ch. 8 about the collection, and is probably part of a completely different note on the subject. These were written on different occasions and were joined together only later when the collection of the apostle's writings was being made.

In these letters to Corinth, even the details about Paul and the way he treated his converts are important doctrinally. In particular, 1 Co contains a great deal of information about urgent problems that faced the church and about the decisions made to meet them: internally there were questions of moral conduct, 1 Co 5:1–13; 6:12–20, of marriage and virginity, 7:1–40, of liturgical and eucharistic meetings, of the charisms, 12:1–14:40; and also matters concerning the Church in the world, questions of appeals to civil courts, 6:1–11, and eating foods sacrificed to idols, ch. 8–10. It was Paul's religious genius to turn what might have remained cases of conscience or liturgical instruction into a vehicle for the profound doctrine of Christian liberty, the sanctification of the body, the supremacy of love, union with Christ. When forced to defend his apostolate, 2 Co 10–13, he writes a magnificent passage about the dignity of the apostle's mission, 2 Co 1:12–6:10; and when he brings up the business of collecting money, 2 Co 8–9, this is illuminated by the ideal of union betwen the churches. The eschatological basis of his doctrine is always present in Paul's mind, and provides the perspective in which he explains the resurrection of the body, 1 Co 15; here, however, the apocalyptic imagery of 1 and 2 Th gives place to a philosophical discussion intended to justify a doctrine that the Greek mind found so unsympathetic. This adaptation of the gospel to the new world which it is entering is seen above all in the contrast between the folly of the cross and Greek wisdom. The apostle's converts at Corinth had split into factions, each proud of its own leader and boasting about his talents; Paul reminded them that there is only one master, Christ, and only one message, the cross, and that there is only one true wisdom, 1 Co 1:10—4:13. Quite naturally, through the way events had developed, without surrendering anything of the primacy of his eschatological thought, the inner development of Paul's ideas led him to the point where he had to stress how the life we lead here and now is already a life of union between Christ and his followers, and that this union is achieved by faith, which is the only way to know him. But Paul was yet to reach a still

deeper understanding of the life given by faith, and this time in relation to Judaism, in the wake of the crisis in Galatia.

§4c Galatians, Romans: AD 57–8

The letters Paul wrote to the Christians of Galatia and Rome need to be discussed together, since both letters analyse the same problem. The first was Paul's immediate reaction to a particular situation, but the second is an orderly exposition, both calmer and fuller, of the thinking stimulated by the controversy. The very close relationship between the two letters is really the strongest reason against the early dating of Ga (pre-AD 49, the council of Jerusalem) which some scholars have suggested. They argue that Paul's second visit to Jerusalem, Ga 2:1–10, was the second visit mentioned in Ac 11:30; 12:25, not the third, Ac 15:2–30, since several details here differ from Paul's account, and that, as Paul seems unaware of the decree of the council, Ac 15:20, 29 (*see* Ga 2:6), this letter must have been written before it. All difficulties disappear, it is argued, if it is supposed that the 'Galatians' are the Christians of Lycaonia and Pisidia, evangelised by Paul on his first missionary journey when he returned by the way he had come; this would explain the double visit that Ga 4:13 seems to imply. This hypothesis has little to support it, apart from the fact that Lycaonia and Pisidia had been part of the province of Galatia in 36–25 BC; in the first century AD, however, 'Galatia' normally referred to Galatia properly so called, which lay to the north of Lycaonia and Pisidia, and it is unlikely that the inhabitants of each district were *both* called 'Galatians', Ga 3:1. This hypothesis is in any case quite unnecessary. The second visit of Ga 2:1–10 may much more easily be identified with the third visit mentioned in Ac 15, than with the second visit of Ac 11:30; 10:25. The explanation of any discrepancies is therefore either that Paul considered this intermediate visit so unimportant that he omitted to mention it in Ga, or that the visit is simply the product of a literary duplication by Luke (*see* Introduction to Acts of the Apostles p. 1796, and Acts 11:30p). Thus the letter to the Galatians was indeed written well after the council of Jerusalem. The reason why Paul does not mention the decree could, perhaps, be that its date was later than that of Galatians, or that Paul learned about the decree only on his return to Jerusalem in AD 58. This would explain Peter's conduct that Paul says he criticised, Ga 2:11–14. The converts to whom the letter was addressed would then be the inhabitants of the 'Galatian territory' (i.e. North Galatia) through which Paul passed on his second and third journeys, Ac 16:6; 18:23. The letter may have been written at Ephesus, or even in Macedonia, about the year 57.

The letter to the Christians of Rome must, in this case, have been written soon after. In the winter of 57–8 Paul was at Corinth preparing to go to Jerusalem and from there to visit Rome on the way to Spain, Rm 15:22–32; cf. 1 Co 16:3–6; Ac 19:21; 20:3. He had not founded the Roman church, and any information he had about it (from people like Aquila, Ac 18:2) was not considerable: all we learn from occasional allusions in the letter is that it was a mixed community and that there was a danger of Jewish and non-Jewish converts looking down on one another. In view of this danger, Paul thought it would be prudent to pave the way for his visit by sending a letter (through

Phoebe the deaconess, Rm 16:1) in which he gave the solution to the problem of the relationship between Judaism and Christianity, developed by him as a result of the Galatian crisis. To do this he takes up again the ideas first expressed in Ga, but in a manner both better arranged and more subtle. While Ga gives the impression of a cry from the heart, in which explanation of his own conduct 1:11–2:21, is joined to theological argument, 3:1–4:31, and forceful admonition 5:1–6:18, Rm is a carefully planned whole; it has only a few main sections, and these are linked harmoniously together by the announcement in the preliminary section of the themes which will subsequently be taken up.

Like Corinthians and Galatians, the authenticity of the letter to Roman Christians is not seriously disputed, though it is suggested that ch. 15 and 16 are later insertions. Ch. 16 has many greetings, and it may quite easily have been a separate note for the church at Ephesus, but in spite of certain MSS ch. 15 cannot be amputated so easily. Critics who keep ch. 16 as part of the original letter suggest that it was quite possible for Paul to have met a great many Christians who, as Jews, had eight years previously been expelled under Claudius and then later gone back to Rome, and that it was diplomatic for him to mention their names in a letter to a church he had not yet visited. The unusual style of the doxology, 16:25–27, certainly suggests that it could be a later insertion, but this in itself is not sufficient argument against the authenticity of the chapter.

The first letter to the Corinthians contrasted Christ as the Wisdom of God with the human wisdom of philosophers, but in the letters to Galatia and Rome, Paul contrasted the uprightness people can achieve by purely human effort with Christ who is the Uprightness of God. There Paul had striven to correct the proud reliance of the Greek mind on reason; now he sets out to correct the Jews' proud reliance on the Law. Judaising Christians who had visited Galatia advised the gentile converts to have themselves circumcised to ensure their salvation. This would have meant adopting all the prescriptions of the Law, Ga 5:2seq., the implications of which, to Paul, made nonsense of Christ's redemptive work, Ga 5:4, and it was for this reason that he opposed the circumcision of his converts so violently. He maintained that the true value of the Law could be appreciated only by seeing its place in the development of God's plan, Ga 3:23–25. The Mosaic Law was good and holy, Rm 7:12, because it revealed God's will to the Jews, but without providing the spiritual power necessary to obey it: all the Law could do was make people aware of sin and of the need they have for God to help them, Rm 3:20; 7:7–13; Ga 3:19–22. All human beings need this help, and it is necessarily a gift from God: it was promised to Abraham long before the Law was formulated, Rm 4; Ga 3:16–18, and has now been given in Jesus Christ: his death and resurrection have destroyed the old humanity which was corrupted by Adam's sin, and created a new humanity of which Christ himself is the prototype, Rm 5:12–21. All human beings, united to Christ by faith, and living a new life by sharing the Spirit of Christ, without any merit on their part, are made upright and enabled to carry out God's will, Rm 8:1–4. This faith must result in 'good works', but these will not be at all the same as those 'good works' commanded by the Law, on which Jews were so proud to rely; they will be works prompted by the presence of the Spirit, Rm 8:5–13; Ga 5:22–25. And they can be done by all

who have faith, whether Jews or gentiles, Ga 3:6–9, 14. The preparatory or Mosaic stage of religion is over, and Jews who claim they are continuing to fulfil the Law are in fact putting themselves outside the pale of salvation. God allowed their blindness only to bring the gentiles to salvation. But it is out of the question that they should permanently fail to live up to their original choice, for God is faithful to his promises. Some of them, the 'remnant' foretold by the prophets, have already become believers, and one day all of them will, Rm 9–11. Meanwhile, all converts without exception, whether they are Jews or not, must love and help one another as one family, Rm 12:1–15:13. The general outlines of this thesis were sketched in Ga; the details added in Rm are much deeper insights into mysteries such as the position of the human race while waiting for salvation, Rm 1:18–3:20; the spiritual struggle of each individual to be saved, Rm 7:14–25; God's gift of salvation, Rm 3:24 and *passim*; what the death and resurrection of Jesus actually achieved, Rm 4:24seq.; 5:6–11, and how Christians share in this by dying and rising by faith and baptism, Rm 6:3–11; Ga 3:26seq.; the vocation of the whole human race to be children of God, Rm 8:14–17; Ga 4:1–7; the love and wisdom of God who, being perfect and faithful to his promises, guides each different stage in the plan of salvation Rm 3:21–26; 8:31–39. Paul's thought is still basically eschatological—we are saved 'in hope', Rm 5:1–11; 8:24—but, as in his letters to Corinth, the stress is on the already present reality of salvation: the Spirit that was promised is already possessed, as 'first-fruits', Rm 8:23, by the Christian who from now on lives in Christ, Rm 6:11, as Christ lives in him, Ga 2:20.

The letter to the Romans is a magnificent synthesis of Paul's theology: it does not, however, exhaust his doctrine. It would be unfortunate if the importance accorded to it by the Lutheran controversy isolated it and led to a failure to complete it by its integration into the larger synthesis provided by the other letters.

§4d Philippians: AD 56–7

The Roman colony of Philippi was one of the principal cities of Macedonia; it had been evangelised by Paul in AD 50, during his second missionary journey, Ac 16:12–40, and he revisited it twice during his third: in the autumn of 57, Ac 20:1–2, and at Passover in AD 58, Ac 20:3–6. His converts there had proved their affection by contributing to his support first at Thessalonica, Ph 4:16, then at Corinth, 2 Co 11:9, and later still had commissioned Epaphroditus to take further contributions to him, Ph 4:10–20. Normally, Paul was afraid of doing anything that might give the impression that he was trying to make money out of his preaching, Ac 18:3d; so, by accepting their gift, he shows that he has a unique confidence in them.

If Philippians is accepted at its face value, as being a single letter, it must be said that at the time of writing, Paul was under arrest, Ph 1:7, 12–17, and for a long time this was assumed to be the first Roman captivity. Rome, however, was so far away that it seems unlikely that communications between Paul (with whom Epaphroditus was staying) and Philippi could have been as frequent or as easy as they appear to have been, 2:25–30. Nor is it clear why, if Paul was under arrest in Rome or in Caesarea, Ac 23:23, the Philippians should say that

the contribution brought by Epaphroditus was the first chance they had had since the second missionary journey (*see* the mention of the gifts in Ph 4:10, 16) of helping the apostle, since Paul had visited them twice on his third journey. It is easier to suppose that Paul actually wrote this letter during the third journey, before reaching Philippi, i.e. while he was at Ephesus, the capital of Roman Asia, in 56–7, hoping to visit Macedonia after his liberation (compare Ph 1:26; 2:19–24 and Ac 19:21seq.; 20:1; 1 Co 16:5). The 'praetorium', Ph 1:13, and 'Caesar's household', 4:22, do not necessarily refer to Rome, since there were praetoria in all the major cities and there were most certainly detachments of the praetorian guard in Ephesus. It is true that there is no reference anywhere to an Ephesian captivity; but Luke says very little about Paul's three years there, Ac 19:1–20:1, and Paul himself mentions the very grave trials he underwent there, 1 Co 15:32; 2 Co 1:8–10.

If we accept this hypothesis we shall have to dissociate Ph from Col, Ep and Phm and group it with the 'great letters', notably with 1 Co. The style and content of the letter are quite consistent with this. It is not particularly doctrinal, but is just a friendly letter, giving some news to his converts at Philippi, warning them against the 'bad workmen' who are ruining his work in other places and might turn on them next, and, above all, appealing for the unity of corporate humility. As part of this appeal Paul gives us, Ph 2:6–11, the poem on the humility of the Messiah; and whether he wrote it or is quoting it, this poem is an important witness to developments in the early Christian understanding of the nature of Jesus.

Recently the thesis has gained ground that Ph is, in fact, a collection of three originally separate letters. One of the most satisfactory divisions is as follows: A=4:10–20; B=1:1–3:1 plus 4:2–9, 21–23; C=3:2–4:1. Letter A fits well with the beginning of Paul's stay at Ephesus, for the Philippians would not have delayed long before sending Paul help (4:10), nor he before thanking them. Letter B accords better with a time near the end of his stay there (2:19, compare Ac 19:22; 1 Co 16:10).

§4e Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon: AD 61–3

The letters to the Christians of Ephesus and Colossae (both in Roman Asia) and the letter to Philemon are closely related: the mission on which Onesimus is sent in Col 4:9 is the same as that in Phm 10–12; the same is true of Tychicus in Col 4:7seq. and Ep 6:21seq.; Paul's companions in Col 4:10–14 are the same as in Phm 23–24; Col and Ep are very similar in style and doctrine. The author says that he is in prison, Phm 1, 9seq., 13, 23; Col 4:3, 10, 18; Ep 3:1; 4:1; 6:20. If it is granted that this author is Paul, as tradition has long held, this imprisonment would be the one in Rome (61–3) rather than in Caesarea (58–60) where it would be difficult to account for the presence of Mark and of Onesimus, or in Ephesus (56–7) since there is nothing to suggest that Luke was ever there with Paul. The degree to which Paul's style has changed, and his doctrine developed, suggests some interval between Col, Ep and the 'great letters' Rm, Co, Ga. In the meantime a crisis had occurred and Epaphras, Col 1:7, Paul's delegate, arrived from Colossae (a church Paul had not founded) 1:4; 2:1, with disturbing news. Paul promptly wrote a letter to the Christians there, and gave it to Tychicus to deliver. On the traditional view of

the authorship of Ep the inherent dangers of this new situation stimulated Paul to rethink things at a deeper level, and just as Rm had systematised the ideas outlined in Ga, so now, at about the same time as Col, Paul wrote another letter in which he restructured his teaching from the new angle that he had been forced by the recent developments at Colossae to adopt. This new synthesis is referred to as the letter he wrote to the Christians at Ephesus. The title, however, is misleading, and has very scanty MS support, *see* Ep 1:1a. This is a general letter addressed to the whole Church and not just to the church at Ephesus where Paul had spent three years, Ep 1:15; 3:2–4, though it is meant in a special way for Colossae and the other Christian communities of the Lycus valley among whom it is to be circulated, Col 4:16.

The interpretation just outlined respects the tradition which attributes Col and Ep to Paul; it retains considerable probability. But since the middle of the nineteenth century critics have contested the authenticity of these two letters. The heavy and repetitious style, they maintain, is not that of Paul; the theological ideas, notably those concerning the Body of Christ, Christ head of the Body, the universal Church, are different from those of previous letters, the errors opposed are later than Paul's time and belong rather to the gnostic ideas of the second century. These objections deserve serious consideration. They are put forward by numerous scholars, even Catholic ones. Nevertheless, they are not incontestable. In fact, for Col the balance is now in favour of Paul, with good justification. Not only does it retain his basic ideas but the new ideas in it are satisfactorily explained by the circumstances mentioned above. The same may be true of Ep although doubt about it still lingers. Among arguments in favour of Paul are: **1** That Ep is the work not of any derivative thinker, but of someone with a genius for creative thinking. **2** That the leisurely, rich and overloaded style of Col and Ep which contrasts so much with the quick, jerky discussions of earlier letters, can probably be explained by these wide new horizons that Paul was opening for himself. **3** That the style of the earlier letters is not itself wholly consistent, and two early examples of this later contemplative, semi-liturgical manner can be found already in Rm 3:23–26; 2 Co 9:8–14. The only real difficulty springs from the many passages in which Ep seems to borrow phrases from Col in a manner slavish and even awkward; but this might be because Paul was not in the habit of composing every word of his letters, and on this occasion may have allowed a disciple to play a greater part than usual. But it must be admitted that the phenomena noted in these second and third points could be explained more economically on the hypothesis of an author other than Paul, if such could be found, who was at the same time a creative thinker of genius similar to Paul's own, and yet content to borrow slavishly whole phrases from other, Pauline, letters. The difficulty of postulating such a hybrid as author of Ephesians is one of the main factors which has led some scholars to suppose that Colossians too, from which the vast majority of the borrowed phrases are taken, is also non-Pauline.

In the knowledge, then, that the genuine Pauline authorship of these two letters is the strongest but not the only possible hypothesis, we can attempt to reconstruct the genesis of Paul's thought in Col and Ep.

The errors at Colossae opposed by Paul are not yet those of the second-century gnostics, but rather ideas common among the Jewish Essenes. The danger at Colossae was the result of the basically Jewish (Col 2:16) specula-

tions which the Christians at Colossae had taken up about the celestial or cosmic powers. These were the powers thought to be responsible for the regular movement of the cosmos, and the speculations about them, much influenced by Hellenist philosophy, attached an importance to these powers that threatened the supremacy of Christ. The author of the letter accepts these cosmological premises and, far from expressing any doubts about these powers, he associates them with the angels of Jewish tradition, Col 2:15; he is concerned only to show their subordinate place in the scheme of salvation. Their task had been to 'mediate' the Law and to administer it, and that task is now accomplished: *Christos Kyrios*, Christ the Lord, has established a new order of things and he now governs the cosmos. Raised up to heaven, he is above all the cosmic powers and has stripped them of their ancient dignities, Col 2:15. Because he is the Son, the Father's image, he was their Lord already when the world was made; now in the new creation he is their confirmed and absolute Master, for gathered into him is the *pleroma*, the fullness of Being, that is to say the fullness both of God and of all that exists through God's creative power, Col 1:13–20. Christians have been set free from these 'principles' of the world', Col 2:8, 20, through being united with their Master and thus sharing in his fullness, 2:9–10, Christians must never again accept their tyranny by submitting to outworn and ineffective observances, Col 2:16–23. United to the risen Christ by baptism, Col 2:11–13, they are parts of his Body and receive a new life from him, as from their life-giving Head, 2:19. Paul's primary interest had always been in the salvation of Christians; the new perspective provoked by the arguments at Colossae embraced the effects of Christ's work on the entire cosmos. Since the human race forms part of the cosmos, the cosmos itself must be influenced by the saving act of the one and only Lord of all creation. In this perspective, a whole new breadth is given to the concept of the 'Body of Christ', which was an idea that, a few years previously, Paul had only touched on. Three aspects of this broader view, which focuses on the function of Christ as Head, are: that the scope of salvation is seen to be cosmic; that Christ, into whom the Church has to structure itself, is the victor who has triumphed over the whole cosmos; and finally that the conception of the future, eschatological, promise as already realised, becomes very much more central, *see* Ep 2:6e.

When the letter we know as Ephesians was written it followed the same lines, but this time the author can assume the conclusions of the previous letter about the subordinate place of the powers, Ep 1:20–22, and give further thought to how the Church as the Body of Christ embraces the whole of the new universe, 'the fullness of him who is filled, all in all', 1:23. This supreme vision forms the high point of the author's work. It forms the new focus round which many Pauline insights are synthesised. In particular the author reconsiders some of the problems he had already dealt with in Rm, the high point of Paul's previous period of thought. In a few phrases he recalls the survey of humanity under the shadow of sin and the central teaching that salvation is a gift given by God through Christ, Ep 2:1–10. Next, he re-examines the problem of Jew and gentile that previously caused Paul so much distress, Rm 9–11; but now in the light of eschatology realised in the exalted Christ, he is aware of the unity of Jews and gentiles, who are now reconciled, since each is equally part of the New Humanity, and who advance towards the Father together,

Ep 2:11–22. The opening to the gentiles of the salvation promised to Israel is the great 'mystery', Ep 1:9; 3:3–6, 9; 6:19; Col 1:27; 2:2; 4:3. The author writes about the infinite wisdom of this 'mystery', Ep 3:9seq.; Col 2:3, about how it proves Christ's love to be inexhaustible, Ep 3:17seq., and about how God had made the unexpected choice of him, who was 'the least of all', to proclaim this mystery, Ep 3:2–8. This plan of salvation was revealed gradually, according to God's eternal designs, Ep 1:3–14, and its culmination is the wedding of Christ to the saved humanity constituted by the Church, 5:22–32.

The short letter Paul wrote at about the same time as Col is to tell Philemon of Colossae, v. 18, one of Paul's converts, that Onesimus, a runaway slave belonging to Philemon, and also one of Paul's converts, had returned. It is a very short note, and Paul wrote it in his own handwriting, v. 19. The letter reveals a gentle, affectionate side of the apostle, and also shows how he applies his views on slavery to a particular case, Rm 6:15g: as far as society is concerned, the master still owns his slave, but the two of them should live as brothers serving the same Master, Phm 16; compare Col 3:22; 4:1.

§4f 1 Timothy, Titus, 2 Timothy: AD 65–80

The three letters generally known as the Pastoral Epistles are all closely related in substance, form and historical background; two are addressed to Timothy and one to Titus, and all three have the form of letters from Paul to his most loyal followers, Ac 16:1; 2 Co 2:13d, giving them instruction and advice about the organisation and governing of the communities which he had entrusted to their care. Both 1 Tm and Tt seem to have been written from Macedonia, Timothy being at that time in Ephesus, 1 Tm 1:3, where Paul hoped to join him in the near future, 3:14; 4:13. Titus was in Crete, where he had been left by Paul, Tt 1:5, who planned to winter at Nicopolis in Epirus where Titus was to join him, Tt 3:12. In 2 Tm Paul is represented as a prisoner in Rome, 1:8, 16seq.; 2:9, after visits to Troas, 4:13, and Miletus, 4:20. In this threatening situation, 4:16, he feels that death is not far off, 4:6–8, 18, 4:9–16, 21. These circumstances correspond neither to the Roman captivity of Ac 28 nor to the journey that preceded it. Although Acts has nothing to tell us of any later activities, it is not impossible that at the end of the two years of this captivity he was set free and that he made the journey to the East projected in Phm 22. Tradition places the writing of 1 Tm and Tt on that journey, in AD 65, through Crete, Asia Minor, Macedonia and Greece. Similarly 2 Tm with its background of a new captivity, ending probably in Paul's death, is placed shortly before the traditional date of his martyrdom in AD 67.

The historical difficulties combine, however, with problems of thought and language to suggest that another solution to the question of authorship must be found. There is little reference any more to some of the great mysteries of Christianity on which Paul's thought had hinged (the cross, the Body of Christ, Christ as 'the Son'). The method of arguing has changed radically: no longer does Paul argue against false teaching, he simply condemns it. In addition the fiery, enthusiastic and vivid style has gone, and the confidence in his Christian flock has been replaced by a certain timidity of outlook. There is also considerable difference of vocabulary; many of the words common in the Pauline epistles have disappeared and there is a much higher proportion of words not

used elsewhere by Paul, or even not used at all elsewhere in the New Testament. It has been argued that these phenomena can be explained either through a lack of confidence and elasticity in the tired and ageing apostle, or by Paul's leaving greater latitude than he does elsewhere to a secretary. But the historical difficulties remain, and the best explanation may be that the Pastoral Epistles are letters written by a follower of Paul, conscious of inheriting his mantle and seeking to give advice and instruction for the administration of local churches. This adoption of a revered name in such circumstances was a literary convention of the times, and the illusion could, as here, be supported by the mention of persons and places associated with the chosen figure. Some critics believe that in these letters such references, e.g. 2 Tm 1:15–18; 4:9–17, 19–21 and Tt 3:12–14, spring from the incorporation of fragments from genuine Pauline letters.

It must on the other hand be noted that the ecclesiastical hierarchy appears in these letters in a stage of evolution which cannot be very distant from that of Paul's time. The titles of *episkopos* and *presbyteros* are still practically synonymous, Ti 1:5–7, as formerly, Ac 20:17 and 28, in the primitive situation of communities governed by a body of elders, Tt 1:5c. There is as yet no trace of the monarchical 'bishop' of whom Ignatius was to write at the beginning of the second century. Nevertheless this development is not far distant, for Timothy and Titus, those delegates of Paul, although responsible for several communities without being attached to any single one, Tt 1:5, represent this apostolic authority which is being transmitted to fill the gap left by the disappearance of the apostles themselves, and which is soon to come to reside in each community in the bishop—the head of the college of presbyters. This intermediate stage of organisation is an argument against dating the letters later than the years 80–90. The same is true of the errors of doctrine opposed in the letters. One purpose of the letters is to fight dangerous new ideas which were already circulating, 1 Tm 1:19, and would later become important features of the Gnostic teaching which flourished in the second century. But most of the ideas, the idle questions, 1 Tm 6:4, empty problems, 'myths and endless genealogies', 1 Tm 1:4, 'Jewish myths', Tt 1:14, 'disputes about the Law', Tt 3:9, and the various ascetical practices they seemed to involve, 1 Tm 4:3, would all appear to belong to those hellenised and syncretistic ideas affecting Judaism, which formed part of the crisis in Colossae.

§5 Hebrews: AD 70–80

The question of who wrote this letter to the Jewish Christians has, unlike the disputed authorship of the pastoral letters, been a subject of debate from the earliest times. Not that its canonical status was often questioned, but up to the end of the fourth century the Western Church denied that Paul had written it, and the Eastern Church affirmed Pauline authorship only with many reservations about its literary composition (Clement of Alexandria, Origen). Its vocabulary and style have a simplicity and a distinction quite uncharacteristic of Paul; the way in which it quotes and uses the Old Testament is different from Paul's; the usual Pauline greetings and introduction are lacking, and though its doctrine has Pauline overtones, it is so original that its immediate attribution to Paul is difficult. Most critics agree that Paul could not have been

its author in the same sense as he was author of the other letters, but he is felt to have had sufficient indirect influence to warrant its inclusion from early times in the *corpus Paulinum*.

No sort of agreement exists as to who actually wrote the letter; Barnabas, Silas, Aristion and others, have been suggested; perhaps the most likely is Apollos, the Alexandrian Jew who is praised by Luke for his eloquence, apostolic zeal and knowledge of the scriptures, Ac 18:24–28. Not only are these qualities reflected in the letter itself, but its language and thought, with their marked affinity with Philo, also suggest Alexandrian culture. The argument of the letter, pleaded with rhetorical skill, is founded entirely on the Old Testament.

The place and date of writing are equally uncertain, and the intended recipients are also unknown. But the author seems to be writing from Italy, 13:24, and he speaks as if the Temple were still open for worship, 8:4seq., warning his readers against the temptation of going back to it; when he emphasises the transitory nature of the Mosaic cult, he makes no reference to the destruction of the Temple which would have made a decisive argument for him. This suggests he was writing before AD 70. On the other hand, he certainly makes use of Paul's letters from prison and therefore wrote after 63. If the crisis behind the author's urgent appeal for unshakable faith, 10:25, is the first threat of the Jewish War, the letter could be dated AD 67.

The title 'to the Hebrews' dates from the second century and is well chosen. The letter clearly assumes not only that its readers are thoroughly familiar with the old covenant but that they are Jewish Christians, perhaps even Jewish priests, cf. Ac 6:7, to judge by the emphasis on public worship and ceremonial. Having become Christians, they seem to have left Jerusalem and gone for shelter to some coastal town like Caesarea or Antioch. They are tired of exile and think longingly of the splendour of Temple worship and of the part they played in it; their new faith is not very strong, and they have not yet properly understood it; persecution discourages them and they are tempted to revert to Judaism.

The letter was written to them to try to prevent this from happening, 10:19–39. To these exiles the author presents Christian life in the perspective of the Exodus, marching to the place of rest, the Promised Land of heaven, an exodus guided not by Moses but by Christ, an incomparably superior leader, 3:1–6, and led by the same light of faith and hope that had guided their ancestors in the Exodus and had illumined all the saints of old, 3:7–4:11; 11 *passim*. Christ himself replaces the old priesthood and being a priest like Melchizedek, he is higher than Aaron, 4:14–5:10; 7. The many ineffectual sacrifices of levitical worship are replaced by the one uniquely efficacious sacrifice of Christ himself, 8:1–10:18. To prove this, the author shows how Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God, is, as Leader and Priest, higher than all the angels and is ruler of all things, ch.1–2.

In this letter, strictly theological and exegetical passages alternate with passages of exhortation, but the main themes themselves are interwoven in a very intricate and oriental way, as disconcerting to some modern Western readers as its method of using scripture. For this reason the letter is most illuminating about typology, showing how the earliest Christians conceived the harmony of the Old and New Testaments, and how they understood the

redemptive work of Jesus in terms of God's whole plan of salvation. This, and the profound intuitions about the central points of Christian belief, combine to make this unsigned document one of the most important books of the New Testament.

ROMANS

THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE CHURCH IN ROME

Address [a]

Ga 1:10 Ph 1:1 Ac 26:16–18 Ga 1:15

1 From Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, [b] •set apart for the service of the gospel that God promised long ago through his prophets in the holy scriptures. 1, 2

2 S 7:1a Mt 9:27m 2 Tm 2:8 Rv 22:16 9:5d Ga 4:4 Ac 9:15 Ga 2:7,9

This is the gospel concerning his Son who, in terms of human nature •was born a descendant of David and who, in terms of the Spirit and of holiness was designated Son of God in power by resurrection from the dead: [c] Jesus Christ, our Lord, through whom we have received grace and our apostolic mission of winning the obedience of faith [d] among all the nations for the honour of his name. •You are among these, and by his call you belong to Jesus Christ. •To you all, God's beloved in Rome, called to be his holy people. Grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 3, 4 5 6 7

Ac 9:13g 1 Co 8:6

Thanksgiving and prayer

.16:19 1 Th 1:8 15:16 •2 Co 1:23 Ph 1:8 1 Th 2:5,10

First I give thanks to my God through Jesus Christ for all of you because your faith is talked of all over the world. •God, whom I serve [e] with my spirit [f] in preaching the gospel of his Son, is my witness that I continually mention you in my prayers, asking always that by some means I may at long last be enabled to visit you, if it is God's will. •For I am longing to see you so that I can convey to you some spiritual gift that will be a lasting strength, •or rather that we may be strengthened together through our mutual faith, yours and mine. •I want you to be quite certain too, brothers, that I have often planned to visit you—though up to the present I have always been prevented—in the hope that I might work as fruitfully among you as I have among the gentiles elsewhere. •I have an obligation to Greeks [g] as well as barbarians, to the educated as well as the ignorant, •and hence the eagerness on my part to preach the gospel to you in Rome too. 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15

15:23 Ac 19:21

SALVATION BY FAITH

I: JUSTIFICATION

The theme stated

1 Co 1:18–25; 2:1–5 2 Co 12:9seq. 1 Th 2:13 1:16h

For I see no reason to be ashamed of the gospel; it is God's power for the salvation of everyone who has faith [h]—Jews first, [i] but Greeks as well—•for in it is revealed the saving justice of God: a justice [j] based on faith [k] and addressed to faith. As it says in scripture: *Anyone who is upright through faith will live.* 16 17

▶Hab 2:4
Ga 3:11
Heb 10:38

A: THE RETRIBUTION OF GOD AGAINST GENTILE AND JEW[l]

God's retribution against the gentiles

18 The retribution[m] of God from heaven is being revealed against the ungodliness and Ps 85:3–5; 69:24
19 injustice of human beings who in their injustice hold back the truth. ·For what can Mi 7:9
be known about God is perfectly plain to them, since God has made it plain to Zp 1:15

1 a. Adopting the convention of his time Paul begins letters with an introductory paragraph (names of sender and receiver, good wishes) followed by thanks and a prayer. He colours this, however, in a unique way with a Christian spirit, and often includes theological ideas in it so as to anticipate the principal themes of each letter. In Rm these themes are: God's freedom to choose his people; the connection between faith and justification; salvation through Christ's death and resurrection; the harmony of the two Testaments.

b. 'apostle' corresponds to a Jewish title that means 'envoy', cf. Jn 13:16; 2 Co 8:23; Ph 2:25, sometimes used in the NT for the Twelve chosen by Christ, Mt 10:2; Ac 1:26; 2:37; etc.; 1 Co 15:7; Rv 21:14, to be his witnesses, Ac 1:8k, sometimes in a wider sense for those sent to preach the gospel, Rm 16:7; 1 Co 12:28; Ep 2:20; 3:5; 4:11. Though Paul was not a member of the Twelve, the fact that he had been appointed missionary to the gentiles by God, 11:13; Ac 26:17; 1 Co 9:2; Ga 2:8; 1 Tm 2:7, constitutes him an apostle of Christ, Rm 1:1; 1 Co 1:1; etc., equal to the Twelve, Ac 10:41, because like them he had seen the risen Christ, 1 Co 9:1, and been sent by him, Rm 1:5; Ga 1:16, to be his witness, Ac 26:16seq. In spite of being 'the least of the apostles', 1 Co 15:9, he is their equal, 1 Co 9:5; Ga 2:6–9, because it was not from them that he learnt the gospel that he preaches, Ga 1:1,17,19.

c. For Paul, Christ rose only because God raised him, 4:25; 10:9; Ac 2:24q; 1 Co 6:14; 15:15; 2 Co 4:14; cf. Ga 1:1; 1 Th 1:10; compare 1 P 1:21, thus displaying his 'power', Rm 6:4; 2 Co 13:4; Ep 1:19seq.; Col 2:12; Ph 3:10; Heb 7:16; and because God raised him to life, Rm 8:11, Christ is established in glory as *Kyrios*, Ph 2:9–11,9*l*; Ac 2:36; Rm 14:9, deserving anew, this time in virtue of his messianic work, the name he had from eternity, 'Son of God', Ac 13:33, Heb 1:1–5; 5:5. *See* Rm 8:11g, 9:5d.

d. The obedience implicit in the virtue of faith, rather than the obedience owed to the gospel message. Cf. 6:16–17; 10:16; 15:18; 16:19,26; Ac 6:7; 2 Co 10:5–6; 2 Th 1:8; Heb 5:9; 11:8; 1 P 1:22.

e. lit. 'I offer worship in my spirit.' The apostolic ministry is an act of worship offered to God, *see* 15:16, like any Christian life in which the ruling motive is the love of others, 12:1; Ac 13:2; Ph 2:17r; 3:3; 4:18; 2 Tm 1:3; 4:6; Heb 9:14; 12:28; 13:15; 1 P 2:5.

f. By spirit (*pneuma*) Paul sometimes means the highest element in a human being, Rm 1:9; 8:16; 1 Co 2:11; 16:18; 2 Co 2:13; 7:13; Ga 6:18; Ph 4:23; Phm 25; 2 Tm 4:22; cf. Mt 5:3; 27:50; Mk 2:8; 8:12; Lk 1:47,80; 8:55; 23:46; Jn 4:23seq.; 11:33; 13:21; 19:30; Ac 7:59; 17:16; 18:25. He distinguishes it from the body (1 Co 5:3seq.; 7:34; cf. Rm 7:24; Jm 2:26) and from the *psyche* also (1 Th 5:23h; cf. Heb 4:12; Jude 19); it bears some relationship to *nous* (Rm 7:25; Ep 4:23). *See also* 'dispositions of the spirit' in 2 Co 12:18; Ga 6:1; Ph 1:27. It is contrasted with 'the flesh', which is human nature without the inspiration of the Spirit of God (1 Co 5:5; 2 Co 7:1; Col 2:5; *see* Mt 26:41par.; Rm 7:5; 1 P 4:6) and by choosing this traditional term (*see* Is 11:2c) instead of the *nous* of the Greek philosophers, the NT can suggest a deep affinity between the human spirit and the Spirit of God that stimulates and guides it, Ac 1:8j; Rm 5:5e. There are many texts where it is hard to tell whether it is the natural or supernatural spirit that is referred to, the personal or the indwelling spirit—*see* e.g. Rm 12:11; 2 Co 6:6; Ep 4:3,23; 6:18; Ph 3:3 var.; Col 1:8; Jude 19.

g. In contrast to 'barbarians', 'Greeks' means the inhabitants of the hellenic world (including the Romans, who had adopted the Greek culture); in contrast to 'Jews' it means the gentiles in general, 1:16; 2:9–10; 3:9; 10:12; 1 Co 1:22–24; etc.

h. Faith, which is the response of a human being to God as truth and goodness and so the one source of salvation, is reliance on the truth of God's promises and on God's faithfulness to them (3:3seq.; 1 Th 5:24; 2 Tm 2:13; Heb 10:23; 11:11) and on his power to implement them (Rm 4:17–21; Heb 11:19). After the long OT period of preparation (Heb 11) God has spoken through his Son (Heb 1:1). We must believe the Son (*see* Mt 8:10b; Jn 3:11seq., 11e) and the *kerygma* or proclamation (Rm 10:8–17; 1 Co 1:21; 15:11,14; *see* Ac 2:22n) of the gospel (Rm 1:16; 1 Co 15:1–2; Ep 1:13; Ph 1:27) made by the apostles (Rm 1:5; 1 Co 3:5; *see* Jn 17:20). The *kerygma* proclaims that God raised Jesus from the dead, made him *Kyrios* (4:24seq.; 10:9; Ac 17:31; 1 P 1:21; cf. 1 Co 15:14,17), and through him offers life to all who believe in him (Rm 6:8–11; 2 Co 4:13seq.; Ep 1:19seq.; Col 2:12; 1 Th 4:14). Faith in the name, or person, of Jesus (3:26; 10:13; cf. Jn 1:12; Ac 3:16; 1 Jn 3:23); who is the Messiah (Ga 2:16; cf. Ac 24:24; 1 Jn 5:1), the Lord (Rm 10:9; 1 Co 12:3; Ph 2:11; cf. Ac 16:31) and Son of God (Ga 2:20; cf. Jn 20:31; Ac 9:20; 1 Jn 5:5) is thus the necessary condition of salvation (Rm 10:9–13; 1 Co 1:21; Ga 3:22; *see* Is 7:9e; Jn 3:15–18; Ac 4:12; 16:31; Heb 11:6). Faith is not only intellectual assent, it is trust and obedience (6:17; 10:16; 16:26; cf. Ac 6:7) to the lifegiving truth (2 Th 2:12seq.). Faith which thus unites a person with Christ (2 Co 13:5; Ga 2:16,20; Ep 3:17) also confers the Spirit on him (Ga 3:2,5,14; cf. Jn 7:38seq.; Ac 11:17), the Spirit of the children of God (Ga 3:26; cf. Jn 1:12). Faith is reliance on God and not on self (3:27; Ep 2:9) and thus contrasts with the old order of the Law (Rm 7:7d) with its vain search (Rm 10:3–4; Ph 3:9) for holiness by works (Rm 3:20,28; 9:31seq.; Ga 2:16; 3:11seq.): only faith can effect true holiness, the saving holiness of God himself (Rm 1:17j; 3:21–26), received as a free gift from him (Rm 3:24; 4:16; 5:17; Ep 2:8; cf. Ac 15:11). Faith relates to the promise made to Abraham (4; Ga 3:6–18) and so makes salvation accessible to everyone, gentiles included (Rm 1:5,16; 3:29seq.; 9:30; 10:11seq.; 16:26; Ga 3:8). It is coupled with baptism (6:4a), calls for public profession (10:10; 1 Tm 6:12), and expresses itself in charity (Ga 5:6; *see* Jm 2:14f). Faith is unsupported by the senses or other proof (2 Co 5:7; Heb 11:1; cf. Jn 20:29), and involves hope as its concomitant (Rm 5:2c). It must be allowed to grow (2 Co 10:15; 1 Th 3:10; 2 Th 1:3) amid struggles and sufferings (Ep 6:16; Ph 1:29; 1 Th 3:2–8; 2 Th 1:4; Heb 12:2; 1 P 5:9), demanding fortitude (1 Co 16:13; Col 1:23; 2:5,7) and tenacity (2 Tm 4:7; cf. 1:14; 1 Tm 6:20) right up to the vision and possession of God (1 Co 13:12; cf. 1 Jn 3:2).

i. In the actual development of salvation-history the Jews come first, either for their glory or for their condemnation: 'salvation comes from the Jews' (Jn 4:22). *See* 2:9–10; Mt 10:5seq.; 15:24; Mk 7:27; Ac 13:5e.

j. Not 'distributive' justice, the recompense for actions, but the saving justice (cf. Is 56:1) of God, *see* Rm 3:26, which fulfils the promise of salvation by grace, Rm 4:25j.

k. Faith is the necessary and only condition of this revelation.

l. By way of antithesis, the subject of the gospel being the revelation of God's saving justice, 1:16–17 (resumed in 3:21seq.), is interrupted to consider what the human race is like before it hears the good news. In it both gentile, 1:18–32, and Jew, 2:1–3:20, are subject to God's 'retribution', which is first shown by the multiplication of sins and which will reach its climax in the Last Judgement, 2:6b; Mt 3:7h.

m. lit. 'anger'. In the OT, though the prophet or psalmist may pray that 'God's anger' (Nb 11:1a) should be averted, it is recognised that it is provoked by sin, Ps 85:5–12; Mi 7:9. Here too (2:5–8; 4:15; 9:22h; Ep 5:6; Col 3:6; cf. Jn 3:36; 1 Th 2:16) but now there is deliverance from 'retribution' through faith in Christ which brings justification from sin, Rm 5:9, cf. 1 Th 1:10; 5:9.

Ws 13:1–9 Si 17:8 Ac 17:24–29 1 Co 1:21 Is 40:26–28 them: ·ever since the creation of the world, the invisible existence of God and his 20
everlasting power have been clearly seen by the mind's understanding of created
things. And so these people have no excuse: ·they knew God [n] and yet they did not 21
honour him as God or give thanks to him, but their arguments became futile and
Ep 4:17–18 1 Co 1:19–20 Jr 2:5,11 their uncomprehending minds were darkened. ·While they claimed to be wise, in 22
fact they were growing so stupid ·that *they exchanged the glory* of the immortal 23
Gn 1:26–27 Ex 32 Dt 4:16–18 Ps 106:20 Ws 11:15; 12:24;13:10 God *for an imitation*, for the image of a mortal human being, or of birds, or
animals, or crawling things.

1 Tm 1:17 ·Ep 4:19 ·16:27n That is why God abandoned them [o] in their inmost cravings to filthy practices of 24
dishonouring their own bodies—·because they *exchanged God's truth* for a lie and 25
have worshipped and served the creature instead of the Creator, who is blessed for
ever. Amen. [p]

That is why God abandoned them to degrading passions: ·why their women have 26, 27
exchanged natural intercourse for unnatural practices; and the men, in a similar
Lv 18:22 fashion, too, giving up normal relations with women, are consumed with passion
for each other, men doing shameful things with men and receiving in themselves
due reward for their perversion.

In other words, since they would not consent to acknowledge God, God aban- 28
doned them to their unacceptable thoughts and indecent behaviour. ·And so now 29
they are steeped in all sorts of injustice, [q] rottenness, greed and malice; [r] full of
envy, murder, wrangling, treachery and spite, ·libellers, slanderers, enemies of 30
God, [s] rude, arrogant and boastful, enterprising in evil, rebellious to parents,
without brains, honour, love [t] or pity. ·They are well aware of God's ordinance: 31, 32
that those who behave like this deserve to die—yet they not only do it, but even
applaud others who do the same. [u]

The Jews are not exempt from the retribution of God [a]

2 So no matter who you are, if you pass judgement you have no excuse. It is 1
yourself that you condemn when you judge others, since you behave in the
same way as those you are condemning. ·We are well aware that people who 2
behave like that are justly condemned by God.' ·But you—when you judge those 3
who behave like this while you are doing the same yourself—do you think you will
escape God's condemnation? ·Or are you not disregarding his abundant goodness, 4
Ws 11:23 Ep 1:7;2:7 2 P 3:9 ·Ac 7:51 ·Zp 1:14–18 2 Th 1:5–10 tolerance and patience, failing to realise that this generosity of God is meant to
bring you to repentance? ·Your stubborn refusal to repent is only storing up 5
retribution for yourself on that Day of retribution when God's just verdicts will be
made known. ·*He will repay everyone as their deeds deserve.* [b] ·For those who aimed 6, 7
Ps 62:12e Ezk 18:21–32,21g Heb 11:6c for glory and honour and immortality by persevering in doing good, there will be
eternal life; ·but for those who out of jealousy have taken for their guide not truth 8
1 P 1:17 but injustice, there will be the fury of retribution. ·Trouble and distress will come 9
1 P 1:7 to every human being who does evil—Jews first, but Greeks as well; ·glory and 10
1:16i honour and peace will come to everyone who does good—Jews first, but Greeks as
Dt 10:17f Ac 10:34+ well. ·*There is no favouritism with God.* 11

The Law will not save them

All those who have sinned without the Law will perish without the Law; and those 12
Jm 2:12 under the Law who have sinned will be judged by the Law. ·For the ones that God 13
Mt 7:26–27 Lk 8:21 will justify are not those who have heard the Law but those who have kept the
Jm 1:22–25 Law. ·So, when gentiles, not having the Law, still through their own innate sense [c] 14
behave as the Law commands, then, even though they have no Law, they are a law
Jr 31:33 for themselves. ·They can demonstrate the effect of the Law engraved on their 15
hearts, to which their own conscience bears witness; since they are aware of various
considerations, some [d] of which accuse them, while others provide them with a
2:6b defence . . . on the day when, [e] ·according to the gospel that I preach, God, 16
1 Co 4:5 through Jesus Christ, judges all human secrets.

Is 48:1–4 If you can call yourself a Jew, and you really trust in the Law, and are proud of 17

18 your God, ·and know his will, and tell right from wrong because you have been ▶Am 5:21n
19 taught by the Law; ·if you are confident that you are a guide to the blind and a Mt 3:8–9
20 beacon to those in the dark, ·that you can teach the ignorant and instruct the Jn 8:33seq.
21 unlearned because the Law embodies all knowledge and all truth—·so then, in 12:2+
teaching others, do you teach yourself as well? You preach that there is to be no ·Mt 23
22 stealing, but do you steal? ·You say that adultery is forbidden, but do you commit Lk 18:9–12
adultery? You detest the worship of objects, but do you desecrate holy things Jn 9:40–41
23 yourself? ·If, while you are boasting of the Law, you disobey it, then you are Ps 50:16–21
24 bringing God into contempt. ·As scripture says: *It is your fault that the name of* Is 52:5
God is held in contempt among the nations. Ezk 36:20–22
Jm 2:7d
2 P 2:2

Circumcision will not save them

25 Circumcision has its value if you keep the Law; but if you go on breaking the Law, 1 Co 7:19
26 you are no more circumcised than the uncircumcised. ·And if an uncircumcised Ga 5:3
man keeps the commands of the Law, will not his uncircumcised state count as Jr 9:24–25
27 circumcision? ·More, the man who, in his native uncircumcised state, keeps the
Law, is a condemnation of you, who, by your concentration on the letter and on Mt 12:41seq.
28 circumcision, actually break the Law. ·Being a Jew is not only having the outward
appearance of a Jew, and circumcision is not only a visible physical operation. 9:6–8
29 The real Jew is the one who is inwardly a Jew, and real circumcision is in the Ep 2:11
heart, a thing not of the letter but of the spirit. He may not be praised by any Ph 3:2seq.
human being, but he will be praised by God. Dt 10:16
Jr 4:4a
Col 2:11g
7:6;8:2seq.
2 Co 3:6

God's promises will not save them

1 3 Is there any benefit, then, in being a Jew?[a] Is there any advantage in being
2 circumcised? ·A great deal, in every way. First of all, it was to the Jews that the 9:4–5

n. To know there is one personal God means to know that one must pray to him and adore him.

o. The biblical formula 'God abandoned them', thrice repeated, emphasises that religious error brings in its train the worst moral and social disorders. Sin produces its own consequences and its own punishment; cf. Ws 11:15–16; 12:23–27; Is 64:6; Ezk 23:28–29. Though Paul judges and condemns gentile society he does not condemn individuals (whose intentions God alone must judge, 2:16; 1 Co 4:5; 5:12–13) since he presupposes, Rm 2, that there are gentiles who obey the natural law written in their hearts 2:14–15. But human beings must admit that they are sinners.

p. The Hebrew word *amen, see* Ps 41:13f, passed into Christian usage, 9:5; 11:36; 1 Co 14:16; Rv 1:6–7; 22:20–21. Used by Jesus for emphasis (translated as 'truly' or 'in truth'), the word is later given to him as a proper name (2 Co 1:20; Rv 3:14) because he is the true witness to God's promises.

q. Here, as he frequently does elsewhere, Paul uses lists of vices taken from current gentile and (even more so) Jewish literature: 13:13; 1 Co 5:10–11; 6:9–10; 2 Co 12:20; Ga 5:19–21; Ep 4:31; 5:3–5; Col 3:5–8; 1 Tm 1:9–10; 6:4; 2 Tm 3:2–5; Tt 3:3. (*See also* Mt 15:19par.; 1 P 4:3; Rv 21:8; 22:15.)

r. add. 'fornication'.

s. Others translate 'hateful to God', but cf. 5:10; 8:7.

t. add. 'loyalty', *see* 2 Tm 3:3.

u. The Latin text tradition reads 'They know that God is just, and yet they did not understand that those who behave like this deserve to die, and not only those who do this but those who encourage them.'

2 a. Here Paul turns to the Jews, vv. 1–16, not actually naming them until 2:17–3:20. He is aware, as he condemns others, that he is condemning himself if he behaves in the way they do, vv. 1–5; 17–24. Nothing can take the place of personal virtue: not the Law, vv. 12–16, not circumcision, vv. 25–29, not even the scriptures, 3:1–8. The Jew as well as the gentile will be individually judged by God, 2:6–11, since both are equally liable to sin, 3:9–20.

b. The prophecy of a 'Day of Yahweh' which will be a day of retribution and salvation, Am 5:18m, will be fulfilled eschatologically in the 'Day of the Lord', when Christ returns in glory, 1 Co 1:8e. On this 'Day of Judgement' (*see* Mt 10:15; 11:22,24; 12:36, 2 P 2:9; 3:7; 1 Jn 4:17) the dead will rise again, 1 Co 15:12–23,51seq.; 1 Th 4:13–18, and the whole human race will be judged in God's court, Rm 14:10, and in Christ's, 2 Co 5:10; cf. Mt 25:31seq. This trial is inescapable, 2:3; Ga 5:10; 1 Th 5:3, and impartial, Rm 2:11; Col 3:25; cf. 1 P 1:17; it is conducted by God, Rm 12:19; 14:10; 1 Co 4:5; cf. Mt 7:1par. Through Christ, v. 16; 2 Tm 4:1; cf. Jn 5:22; Ac 17:31, God will judge 'the living and the dead', 2 Tm 4:1; cf. Ac 10:42; 1 P 4:5. He examines the heart, Rm 2:16; 1 Co 4:5; cf. Rv 2:23, and his trial is by fire, 1 Co 3:13–15; he will treat all people according to their works, 1 Co 3:8; 2 Co 5:10; 11:15; Ep 6:8; cf. Mt 16:27; 1 P 1:17; Rv 2:23; 20:12; 22:12. What has been sown will be reaped, Ga 6:7–9; cf. Mt 13:39; Rv 14:15. Angrily he will destroy, 9:22, evil powers, 1 Co 15:24–26; 2 Th 2:8, and evil people, 2 Th 1:7–10; cf. Mt 13:41; Ep 5:6; 2 P 3:7; Rv 6:17; 11:18. But for the chosen, i.e. those who by grace have done good, there will be freedom, Ep 4:30; cf. Rm 8:23, rest, Ac 3:20; cf. 2 Th 1:7; Heb 4:5–11, reward, *see* Mt 5:12; Rv 11:18, salvation, 1 P 1:5, honour, 1 P 5:6, praise; 1 Co 4:5, and glory, Rm 8:18seq.; 1 Co 15:43; Col 3:4; cf. Mt 13:43.

c. i.e. guided by conscience, not by revealed law. As Jews are meant not to be saved by the Law but to be guided by it to salvation, so the natural law in his conscience can guide any human being.

d. Or 'both what will accuse them and what will excuse them'.

e. Anacoluthon: v. 16 follows grammatically on v. 13. Alternative translation 'in the court where God judges . . .', cf. 1 Co 4:3.

3 a. There is one last resort for the Jews: if Israel is the people chosen by God to receive the promise, then how can they have strayed from the way to salvation? Later, ch. 9–11, Paul develops at great length the brief answer he gives here: however much human beings are unfaithful to the pact, this cannot abrogate God's promises; indeed the way human beings behave only makes the promises more remarkable, a fact, however, which does not protect the sinner from God's retribution (v. 6), or absolve his sin (v. 8). The dialogue used here seems as if it may echo some of Paul's debates in the synagogues.

Ps 89:30–37
2 Tm 2:13
message of God was entrusted. ·What if some of them were unfaithful? Do you 3
think their lack of faith could cancel God's faithfulness? ·Out of the question! God 4
Ps 116:11
Ps 51:4
will always be true even if *no human being can be relied on*. As scripture says: *That you may show your saving justice when you pass sentence and your victory may appear when you give judgement*. ·But if our injustice serves to bring God's saving 5
Jb 34:12.17
justice [b] into view, can we say that God is unjust when—to use human terms—he
1:8m
brings his retribution down on us? ·Out of the question! It would mean that God 6
could not be the judge of the world. ·You might as well say that [c] if my untruthful- 7
9:19g
ness makes God demonstrate his truthfulness, to his greater glory, then I should
not be judged to be a sinner at all. ·In this case, the slanderous report some people 8
6:1.15
are spreading [d] would be true, that we teach that one should do evil that good may
come of it. In fact such people are justly condemned.

All are guilty

Well: are we any better off? [e] Not at all: we have already indicted Jews and Greeks 9
11:32
as being all alike under the dominion of sin. ·As scripture says: 10

Ps 14:1–3
Not one of them is upright, not a single one,
not a single one is wise, 11
not a single one seeks God.
All have turned away, all alike turned sour, 12
not one of them does right, not a single one.
Ps 5:9
Their throats are wide-open graves, 13
their tongues seductive.
Ps 140:3
Viper's venom behind their lips;
Ps 10:7
their speech is full of cursing and bitterness. 14
Pr 1:16
Is 59:7–8
Their feet quick to shed innocent blood, 15
wherever they go there is havoc and ruin. 16
They do not know the way of peace, 17
Ps 36:1
there is no fear of God before their eyes. 18

Now we are well aware that whatever the Law says [f] is said for those who are 19
Ga 3:22
subject to the Law, so that every mouth may be silenced, and the whole world
7:7
Ps 143:2
brought under the judgement of God. ·So then, *no human being can be found* 20
Ac 13:38
upright at the tribunal of God by keeping the Law; [g] all that the Law does is to tell
us what is sinful.

B: FAITH AND THE JUDGEMENT OF GOD

The revelation of God's judgement

God's saving justice was witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, but now it has 21
1:16h
Ga 2:16:3
been revealed altogether apart from law: ·God's saving justice given through faith 22
in Jesus Christ to all who believe. ·No distinction is made: all have sinned and lack 23
Ep 2:8
God's glory, [h] ·and all are justified by the free gift of his grace [i] through being set 24
1 Jn 2:2;4:10
free [j] in Christ Jesus. ·God appointed him as a sacrifice for reconciliation, through 25
Ac 17:30
faith, [k] by the shedding of his blood, and so showed his justness; first for the past,
when sins went unpunished because he held his hand; [l] ·and now again for the 26
Is 53:11
present age, [m] to show how he is just [n] and justifies everyone who has faith in Jesus.

What faith does

2:17;4:2–3;
5:2c;11:18
Ga 6:13–14
Ep 2:9
So what becomes of our boasts? [o] There is no room for them. On what principle— 27
that only actions count? No; that faith is what counts, [p] ·since, as we see it, a 28
person is justified by faith and not by doing what the Law tells him to do. ·Do you 29
think God is the God only of the Jews, and not of gentiles too? Most certainly of
gentiles too, ·since there is only one God; he will justify the circumcised by their 30

31 faith, and he will justify the uncircumcised through their faith. •Are we saying that
the Law has been made pointless by faith? Out of the question; we are placing the
Law on its true footing. ᵠ

b. The argument compares the group: faithfulness, truth (truthfulness), integrity, with its anti-group: faithlessness, falsehood, sinfulness.

c. 'You might as well say that', var. 'in fact'.

d. By twisting Paul's words as in 5:20; Ga 3:22; cf. Rm 6:1,15.

e. Disputed translation; some prefer 'what excuse then can we offer?' or 'Are we worse off, then?'

f. 'Law' here means all the OT, cf. 1 Co 14:34; Jn 10:34; etc.

g. Since Ps 143 says that no human being would ever be forgiven if God judged everyone by their actions, there must be something else that will account for justification, and Paul finds this in God's promises to save his people: this is the 'saving justice of God' which was promised for the messianic era and which, as Paul says, v. 22, is manifest in Jesus Christ. The Law, which merely regulates behaviour, was meant by God not to eliminate sin but to make sinners aware of the fact, *see* Jn 1:16h; 7:7d.

h. 'Glory' in OT sense, Ex 24:16f, that is to say God as present to human beings and communicating himself to them more and more, a process that can reach its climax only in the messianic era, cf. Ps 84:9; Is 40:5.

i. This word (*charis*) when used with reference to human relationships can either mean the quality that makes a person attractive (Ac 2:47), or it can mean thanks for a gift (Lk 6:32–34; 17:9), or it can mean something given free and unearned (1 Co 16:3; 2 Co 8:6–7,19). This last sense predominates in the NT and especially in Paul (John uses *agape*) who uses the word to describe the way God saves through Jesus: it is a work of spontaneous love to which no one had any claim. It was an act of 'grace' for Jesus to come on earth (Jn 1:14,17; 2 Co 8:9; Tt 2:11) to die (Heb 2:9), for his Father to give him up as a gift to us, a gift that includes all divine favours (Rm 8:32; cf. 1 Co 2:12; Ep 1:6seq.): justification, salvation, and the right to inherit by having faith in him without having to perform the works of the Law (Rm 3:24; 4:4seq.; Ep 2:5,8; Tt 3:7; cf. Ac 15:11); it will also be an act of 'grace' for Christ to come again at the end of the world and for us to receive everlasting glory 2 Th 1:12; 1 P 1:13. It was by grace that Abraham received the promise (4:16; Ga 3:18) and that a few Israelites were chosen to survive (Rm 11:5seq.). Since grace is God's love for us, it is inexhaustible (Ep 1:7; 2:7; cf. 2 Co 4:15; 9:8,14; 1 Tm 1:14) and it conquers sin (Rm 5:15,17,20–21). The one word 'grace' is so useful and full of meaning that it can be used to indicate the entire messianic era (Rm 5:21) that succeeds the era of the Law (6:14; Ga 2:21; 5:4), the same messianic era that was once proclaimed by the prophets (1 P 1:10) and is now proclaimed as the gospel (Col 1:6; compare Ac 14:3; 20:24,32). The word sums up the gifts of God so well that Paul begins and ends his letters by wishing 'grace' to all his readers (1 Th 1:1 and 5:28; etc.; *see also* 1 P 1:2; 5:10,12; 2 P 1:2; 3:18; 2 Jn 3; Rv 1:4; 22:21). It is by an act of grace that 'the God of all grace' (1 P 5:10) calls all people to salvation (Ga 1:6; 2 Tm 1:9; 1 P 3:7), loads them with all spiritual gifts (1 Co 1:4–7; *see* Ac 6:8; 2 Th 2:16), makes Paul an apostle of the gentiles (Rm 1:5; 15:15seq.; 1 Co 3:10; Ga 1:15seq.; 2:7–9; Ep 3:1–2,7,8; Ph 1:7) and assigns to each Christian a part in the life of the Church (Rm 12:6; 1 Co 12:1a; 2 Co 8:1; Ep 4:7; 1 P 4:10); similarly, it is a 'grace' to suffer for Christ (Ph 1:29; 1 P 2:19–20). Mary 'found grace' with God (Lk 1:30; cf. Ac 7:46 and LXX *passim*); Jesus himself received the 'grace' of the highest name of all (Ph 2:9; cf. Lk 2:40). For human beings to be agreeable to God depends primarily on God's initiative and secondarily on human response. It is possible to receive grace in vain (2 Co 6:1) to fall from grace (Ga 5:4), to forfeit grace (Heb 12:15), and thus to insult the Spirit of grace (Heb 10:29). Grace obtained must be carefully guarded (5:2; Heb 12:28; 1 P 5:12) and used wisely (1 P 4:10); it is not enough to remain in grace (Ac 13:43; cf. 14:26; 15:40), it must increase (2 P 3:18), to strengthen us (2 Tm 2:1), and help us to persist in our good intentions (Heb 13:9). This divine help is given to the humble (Jm 4:6; 1 P 5:5) and is obtained by prayer, since this is to approach 'the throne of grace' confidently (Heb 4:16). Grace will be granted and will be found sufficient; it is the power of Christ operating in weak human beings (2 Co 12–9; cf. 1 Co 15:10), and this grace of Christ triumphs over unspiritual wisdom (2 Co 1:12). The same word *charis* is also used for thanksgiving (6:17; 7:25; 1 Co 10:30; 15:57; 2 Co 2:14; 8:16; 9:15; Col 3:16; 1 Tm 1:12; 2 Tm 1:3; and compare the verb *eucharistein*), since gratitude to God is the fundamental and necessary disposition for grace. From all these shades of meaning it is clear that the word *charis* is always used to emphasise that the gift is absolutely free; to bring out its power and its inwardness Paul also uses the word *pneuma* (*see* Rm 5:5e). *See* 1:h and the emphasis on holiness as something received as a free gift from God. *See also* p. 1857.

j. Yahweh had 'redeemed' Israel by delivering her from the slavery of Egypt, to provide himself with a nation for his 'inheritance', Dt 7:6b. When the prophets spoke of the 'redemption' from Babylon, Is 41:14g, they hinted at a deliverance more profound and less restricted, the forgiveness that is deliverance from sin, Is 44:22; cf. Ps 130:8. This messianic redemption is fulfilled in Christ, 1 Co 1:30; cf. Lk 1:68; 2:38. God the Father through Christ—and indeed Christ himself—has 'delivered' the new Israel from the slavery of the Law, Ga 3:13; 4:5; and of sin, Ep 1:7; Col 1:14; Heb 9:15, by 'acquiring' her, Ac 20:28, making her his own, Tt 2:14; purchasing her 1 Co 6:20; 7:23; cf. Ga 3:13; 4:5; cf. 2 P 2:1. The price was the blood of Christ, Ac 20:28; Ep 1:7; Heb 9:12; 1 P 1:18seq.; Rv 1:5; 5:9. This redemption, begun on Calvary and guaranteed by the present gift of the Spirit, Ep 1:14; 4:30, will be complete only at the *parousia*, Lk 21:28, when deliverance from death is secured by the resurrection of the body, Rm 8:23.

k. lit. 'whom God put forward as (or: destined to be) a propitiatory through faith by his blood'. For the 'propitiatory', or 'throne of mercy', *see* Ex 25:17h; and compare Heb 9:5. On the Day of Expiation, Lv 16:1a, this was sprinkled with blood, Lv 16:15. The blood of Christ has performed what the ancient ritual could only symbolise: purification from sin. Compare the blood of the covenant, Ex 24:8c; Mt 26:28h.

l. A quasi-forgiveness; God declined to attach guilt (a *paresis* or 'passing over'); such 'non-imputation' would be an idle procedure if positive forgiveness were not to follow, i.e. the utter destruction of sin by justification. Others translate 'with a view to the remission of sins'.

m. This 'present age' is in God's plan of salvation the 'time appointed'. Ac 1:7i, for Christ's redemptive work, Rm 5:6; 11:30; 1 Tm 2:6; Tt 1:3, which comes in the appointed time, Ga 4:4c, once for all, Heb 7:27g, and inaugurates the eschatological era. Cf. Mt 4:17 par.; 16:3 par.; Lk 4:13; 19:44; 21:8; Jn 7:6,8.

n. i.e. exercising his (saving, *see* 1:17j) justice, as he had promised, by justifying humanity.

o. The Gk word expresses the attitude of one who boasts of his own achievements, relies on them, and claims to accomplish his supernatural destiny by his own strength. This attitude is ruled out, since one does not win God's acquittal by superior strength, one receives it as a gift. The act of faith excludes self-sufficiency because in it human beings explicitly attest their radical insufficiency.

p. That is, the principle that consists in believing. Paul contrasts the Law engraved on stone, 2 Co 3:3, with faith, Rm 1:16h, an interior Law, written in human hearts, cf. Jr 31:33, which works through love, Ga 5:6, and is the 'law of the Spirit', Rm 8:2.

q. lit. 'we establish (the) Law': it is only by means of the regime of faith that the Law achieves what it was intended to do, viz. to make people holy, *see* 7:7d.

C: THE EXAMPLE OF ABRAHAM

Abraham justified by faith

Gn 12:1a;15:6c Si 44:19–21k Ga 3:6–9 Jm 2:14f: 20–24 3:27o

4 Then what do we say about Abraham,[a] the ancestor from whom we are descended physically?[b] 1
•If Abraham had been justified because of what he had done, then he would have had something to boast about.[c] 2
But not before God: does not scripture say: *Abraham put his faith in God and this was reckoned to him as uprightness*?[d] 3
•Now, when someone works, the wages for this are not considered as a favour but as due; 4
•however, when someone, without working, puts faith in the one who justifies the godless, it is this faith that is reckoned as uprightness. 5
•David, too, says the same: he calls someone blessed if God attributes uprightness to that person, apart from any action undertaken: 6

Ps 32:1–2

> *How blessed are those whose offence is forgiven,* 7
> *whose sin is blotted out.*
> *How blessed are those to whom the Lord imputes no guilt.* 8

Justified before circumcision

Is this blessing only for the circumcised, or is it said of the uncircumcised as well? 9
Well, we said of Abraham that *his faith was reckoned to him as uprightness*. 10
•Now how did this come about? When he was already circumcised, or before he had been circumcised? Not when he had been circumcised, but while he was still uncircumcised; 11
•and *circumcision* was given to him later, *as a sign* and a guarantee[e] that the faith which he had while still uncircumcised was reckoned to him as uprightness. In this way, Abraham was to be the ancestor of all believers who are uncircumcised, so that they might be reckoned as upright; 12
•as well as the ancestor of those of the circumcision who not only have their circumcision but who also follow our ancestor Abraham along the path of faith that he trod before he was circumcised.

Gn 17:10d

Ga 3:7

Not justified by obedience to the Law

Ga 3:16–18 Gn 12:7+

For the promise to Abraham and his descendants that he should inherit the world was not through the Law, but through the uprightness of faith.[f] 13
•For if it is those who live by the Law who will gain the inheritance, faith is worthless and the promise is without force; 14
•for the Law produces nothing but God's retribution, and it is only where there is no Law that it is possible to live without breaking the Law. 15
That is why the promise is to faith, so that it comes as a free gift and is secure for all the descendants, not only those who rely on the Law but all those others who rely on the faith of Abraham, the ancestor of us all 16
•(as scripture says: *I have made you the father of many nations*). 17
Abraham is our father in the eyes of God, in whom he put his faith, and who brings the dead to life and calls into existence what does not yet exist.[g]

Ga 3:10 5:13;7:7d

Gn 17:5c Dt 32:39+ Is 48:13 Heb 11:19

Abraham's faith a model of Christian faith

Though there seemed no hope, he hoped and believed that he was to become 18
father of many nations in fulfilment of the promise: *Just so will your descendants be*. 19
•Even the thought that his body was as good as dead—he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah's womb was dead too did not shake his faith.[h]
Counting on the promise of God, he did not doubt or disbelieve, but drew 20
strength from faith[i] and gave glory to God, 21
•fully convinced that whatever God promised he has the power to perform. 22
•This is the faith that was *reckoned to him as uprightness*. 23, 24
•And the word 'reckoned' in scripture applies not only to him; 25
•it is there for our sake too—our faith, too, will be 'reckoned'
•because we believe in him who raised from the dead our Lord Jesus who was *handed over to death for our sins* and raised to life for our justification.[j]

Gn 15:5 Gn 17:17f

Mk 9:23 Heb 11:1seq. Jr 32:17 Lk 1:37 1 Co 10:6d 1 P 1:21 •1:4c •Is 53:6

II: SALVATION

Faith guarantees salvation [a]

1 5 So then, now that we have been justified by faith, we are at peace [b] with God
2 through our Lord Jesus Christ; •it is through him, by faith, that we have been
admitted into God's favour in which we are living, and look forward exultantly to 3:27o
3 God's glory. [c] •Not only that; let us exult, too, in our hardships, understanding that 3:23h
4 hardship develops perseverance, •and perseverance develops a tested character, 2 Co 12:9–10 Jm 1:2–4 1 P 4:13–14 Rv 1:9
5 something that gives us hope, •and a hope which will not let us down, because the •1 Co 13:13e
love of God [d] has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been •8:4–16 Ga 4:4–6 3:26m
6 given to us. [e] •When we were still helpless, at the appointed time, Christ died for

4 **a.** var. 'What then shall we say that Abraham has gained?'

b. The recurrence of the fatherhood-of-Abraham theme marks the stages in the argument, vv. 1,12,16–22.

c. Jewish tradition, preoccupied with Abraham's loyalty and his fortitude under trial, had made him the outstanding example of justification by works, 1 M 2:52; Ws 10:5; Si 44:20seq., and cf. especially the *Book of Jubilees*, 11–12; 16:19 seq.; *see also* Jm 2:21j, cf. Rm 2:14c. Paul, however, finds that this justification and these works have their source in Abraham's faith, Gn 12:1a and 15:6c. Cf. Heb 11:8seq.

d. The words themselves are capable of various interpretations: by reason of his faith Abraham was reckoned an upright man by God, though in fact he was not so; or, by reason of his faith Abraham had conferred upon him gratuitously by God an uprightness (or 'justice') that had not been his when he came to believe; or thirdly, in God's eyes (and hence in fact) faith and uprightness are so interdependent as to be inseparable. The first of these interpretations is, however, incompatible with Pauline teaching as a whole; so also, it would seem, is the second; the third is completely consistent with it.

e. This word, *sphragis*, (lit. 'seal' or 'impression of a seal') came very soon to be analogically used of baptism, the sacrament of Christian faith, 2 Co 1:22; Ep 1:13; 4:30; *see* Jn 6:27g; Rv 7:2–8; 9:4.

f. lit. 'the uprightness of faith', i.e. that uprightness which is precisely the act of believing with a living faith. The inheritance is conferred not to reward people for observing the clauses of a contract (a law), but to fulfil a promise. The promises, Gn 12:1a, having been offered to faith, the fulfilment of them can be known and welcomed only by faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ, 9:4–8; 15:8; Jn 8:56; Ac 2:39; 13:23; Ga 3:14–19; Ep 1:13,14; 2:12; 3:6; Heb 11:9–10,13. Compare 3:27.

g. As at the creation; the two striking reminders of God's power prepare the reader (or the hearer) for the reference to Christ's resurrection in v. 25.

h. *Text. rec.* 'His faith was not shaken, nor did he give a thought to his own body that was dead already.'

i. Faith is all-powerful, Mk 9:23. It allows God's power true play in us, *see* 2 Co 12:9–10.

j. Paul never thinks of the death of Jesus in isolation from his resurrection. 'Justification' is the entering into the life of the risen Christ, 6:4; 8:10. The God who in the OT gives saving justice by means of judgement, Ps 9:8, is in the NT expected to be the judge at the Last Day, Rm 2:6; 'justification' (= acquittal) by Christ is conferred in consideration of faith only, Rm 1:17k, and not 'works' of the Law, Rm 3:27p; 7:7d.

5 **a.** The theme of the second section, ch. 5–11: for the Christian who has received justification, *see* ch. 1–4, God's love and the gift of the Spirit are a pledge of salvation. After the contrast of 5:12–7:25 this theme is resumed in ch. 8.

b. var. 'let us be at peace'.

c. For a Christian to hope is to be confident of receiving the eschatological gifts: the resurrection of the body, 8:18–23; 1 Th 4:13seq.; cf. Ac 2:26; 23:6; 24:15; 26:6–8, the rich inheritance of the saints, Ep 1:18; cf. 1 P 1:3seq., eternal life, Tt 1:2; cf. 1 Co 15:19, glory, Rm 5:2; in short, salvation, 1 Th 5:8; cf. 1 P 1:3–5, of self and neighbour, 2 Co 1:6seq.; 1 Th 2:19. Though it means primarily this virtue of expectation, 'hope' is used sometimes for the expected gifts themselves, Ga 5:5; Col 1:5; Tt 2:13; Heb 6:18. Of old, this hope was given to Israel, Ep 1:11–12; cf. Jn 5:45; Rm 4:18, and not to the gentiles, Ep 2:12; cf. 1 Th 4:13; but it was a step towards a higher hope, Heb 7:19, offered now to the gentile world also, Col 1:27; Ep 1:18; cf. Mt 12:21; Rm 15:12, through the 'mystery' of Christ, Rm 16:25*l*. The basis of this hope is God himself, 1 Tm 5:5; 6:17; 1 P 1:21; 3:5, his love. 2 Th 2:16, his invitation, 1 P 1:13–15; cf. Ep 1:18; 4:4, his power, Rm 4:17–21, truthfulness, Tt 1:2; Heb 6:18, fidelity, Heb 10:23, in implementing the promises declared in the written word, Rm 15:4, and in the gospel message, Col 1:23, promises fulfilled in Christ's person, 1 Tm 1:1; 1 P 1:3,21. The hope is therefore not illusory, 5:5. Since the gifts it expects are in the future, 8:24; Heb 11:1, faith is its prop, Rm 4:18; 5:1seq.; 15:13; Ga 5:5; Heb 6:11seq.; 1 P 1:21; charity is its food, Rm 5:5; 1 Co 13:7; hope and faith and charity, the three theological virtues, are closely allied. Hope's superlative source is the Holy Spirit, cf. Ga 5:5, greatest of all the eschatological gifts and in part already conferred, Rm 5:5e; Ac 1:8j; this enlightens, Ep 1:17seq., and strengthens hope, Rm 15:13, and inspires its prayer, Rm 8:26–27, effecting the unity of the Body, for this hope is common, Ep 4:4. And because hope is built on justification through faith in Christ, 5:1seq.; cf. Ga 5:5, it is rich in confidence, 2 Co 3:12; Heb 3:6, consolation, 2 Th 2:16; Heb 6:18, joy, Rm 12:12; 15:13; 1 Th 2:19, and is a thing to be proud of, Rm 5:2; 1 Th 2:19; Heb 3:6. The sufferings of this present time are inconsiderable in comparison, 8:18; on the contrary they sustain it, giving it a constancy, 8:25; 12:12; 15:4; 1 Th 1:3; cf. 1 Co 13:7, that tests, Rm 5:4, and fortifies it, 2 Co 1:7.

d. God's love for us; of this the Holy Spirit is a pledge and to this, by his active presence within us, he bears witness: cf. 8:15 and Ga 4:6. In him, we speak to God as a child to his father; love is mutual. In him, too, our love for our brothers is the same love with which the Father loves the Son and loves us, *see* Jn 17:26; 1 Jn 4:7seq.

e. The promised Spirit, Ep 1:13, *see* Ac 2:33u; Ga 3:14, distinctive of the new covenant as contrasted with the old, Rm 2:29; 7:6; Ezk 36:27f; 2 Co 3:6; cf. Ga 3:3; 4:29; is not merely an exhibition of healing or charismatic power, Ac 1:8j; it is also, and especially, an inward principle of new life, a principle that God 'gives', 1 Th 4:8, etc., cf. Lk 11:13; Jn 3:34; 14:16seq.; Ac 1:5; 2:38; etc.; 1 Jn 3:24, 'sends', Ga 4:6; cf. Lk 24:49; Jn 14:26; 1 P 1:12, 'pours out', Rm 5:5; Tt 3:5seq.; cf. Ac 2:33. Received into the Christian by faith, Ga 3:2,14; cf. Jn 7:38seq.; Ac 11:17, and baptism, 1 Co 6:11; Tt 3:5; cf. Jn 3:5; Ac 2:38; 19:2–6, it dwells within the Christian, Rm 8:9; 1 Co 3:16; 2 Tm 1:14; cf. Jm 4:5, in the spirit, Rm 8:16; *see* Rm 1:9e, and even in the body, 1 Co 6:19. This Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, 8:9; Ga 4:6; Ph 1:19; cf. Jn 14:26; 15:26; 16:7,14; Ac 16:7; 2 Co 3:17, makes the Christian a child of God, Rm 8:14–16; Ga 4:6seq., and establishes Christ in the heart, Ep 3:16. For the Christian (as for Christ himself, 1:4c) this Spirit is a principle of resurrection, 8:11g, in virtue of an eschatological gift which even in life acts as with a seal, 2 Co 1:22; Ep 1:13; 4:30, and which is present by way of pledge, 2 Co 1:22; 5:5; Ep 1:14, and of first-fruits, Rm 8:23. It takes the place of the ungodly principle in human beings that is 'the flesh', 7:5c, and becomes a principle of supernatural knowledge, 1 Co 2:10–16; 7:40; 12:8seq.; 14:2seq.; Ep 1:17; 3:16,18; Col 1:9; *see* Jn 14:26r, of love, Rm 5:5; 15:30; Col 1:8, of sanctification, Rm 15:16; 1 Co 6:11; 2 Th 2:13; cf. 1 P 1:2, of moral conduct, Rm 8:4–

1 P 3:18 the godless. ·You could hardly find anyone ready to die even for someone upright; 7
though it is just possible that, for a really good person, someone might undertake
8:32 to die. ·So it is proof of God's own love for us, that Christ died for us while we were 8
Jn 15:13
1 Jn 3:16;4:10 still sinners. ·How much more can we be sure, therefore, that, now that we have 9
2 Co 5:18–21 been justified by his death, we shall be saved through him from the retribution of
1 Th 1:10 God. ·For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death 10
of his Son, how much more can we be sure that, being now reconciled, we shall be
Col 1:21–22j saved by his life. ·What is more, we are filled with exultant trust in God, through 11
Jn 14:20k
Col 3:3–4b our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have already gained our reconciliation.

A: DELIVERANCE FROM SIN AND DEATH AND LAW

Adam and Jesus Christ[f]

6:23 Well then; it was through one man that sin *came into the world*, and through sin 12
Gn 3:17,19
Ps 51:5c death,[g] and thus death has spread through the whole human race because everyone
Ws 2:24
1 Co 15:21–22 has sinned.[h] ·Sin already existed in the world before there was any law, even 13
3:23
4:15;7:7d though sin is not reckoned when there is no law. ·Nonetheless death reigned over 14
all from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sin was not the breaking of a
commandment, as Adam's was. He prefigured[i] the One who was to come . . .

There is no comparison between the free gift and the offence. If death came to 15
many[j] through the offence of one man, how much greater an effect the grace of
God has had, coming to so many and so plentifully as a free gift through the
one man Jesus Christ! ·Again, there is no comparison between the gift and the 16
offence of one man. One single offence brought condemnation, but now, after
many offences, have come the free gift and so acquittal! ·It was by one man's 17
offence that death came to reign over all, but how much greater the reign in life of
those who receive the fullness of grace and the gift of saving justice, through the
one man, Jesus Christ. ·One man's offence brought condemnation on all humanity; 18
and one man's good act has brought justification and life to all humanity. ·Just as
Is 53:11 by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience
7:7d are many to be made upright.[k] ·When law[l] came on the scene, it was to multiply 20
Ga 3:19 the offences. But however much sin increased, grace was always greater; ·so that 21
11:32 as sin's reign brought death, so grace was to rule through saving justice that leads
to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Col 2:12–13 ### Baptism
Tt 3:5–7
1 P 3:21–22
3:8;6:15;
1 P 4:1–2 6 What should we say then? Should we remain in sin so that grace may be given 1
the more fully? ·Out of the question! We have died to sin; how could we go on 2
living in it? ·You cannot have forgotten that all of us, when we were baptised into 3
Ac 2:38y Christ Jesus, were baptised into his death. ·So by our baptism into his death we 4
Ga 3:27
Col 2:12 were buried with him,[a] so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the Father's
1:4c glorious power, we too should begin living a new life. ·If we have been joined to 5
Ex 24:16f
2 Co 5:17h him by dying a death like his, so we shall be by a resurrection like his; ·realising 6
Ph 3:10–11
8:11g that our former self was crucified with him, so that the self which belonged to sin
Ep 2:6e should be destroyed and we should be freed from the slavery of sin.[b] ·Someone 7
Col 3:9–10,10e who has died, of course, no longer has to answer for sin.

Col 3:5c But[c] we believe that, if we died with Christ, then we shall live with him too. 8
Ga 5:24;6:14
2 Tm 2:11 We know that Christ has been raised from the dead and will never die again. 9
Death has no power over him any more. ·For by dying, he is dead to sin[d] once and 10
Ac 13:34
1 Co 15:26 for all, and now the life that he lives is life with God. ·In the same way, you must 11
2 Tm 1:10
Heb 2:14seq., see yourselves as being dead to sin but alive for God in Christ Jesus.[e]
14h
↗Rv 1:18p
Heb 7:27g

Holiness, not sin, to be the master

7:14–24 That is why you must not allow sin to reign over your mortal bodies[f] and make you 12

13 obey their desires; ·or give any parts of your bodies over to sin to be used as 12:1
instruments of evil. Instead, give yourselves to God, as people brought to life from
the dead, and give every part of your bodies to God to be instruments of upright-
14 ness; ·and then sin will no longer have any power over you—you are living not
under law, but under grace.

The Christian is freed from the slavery of sin[g]

15 What is the implication? That we are free to sin, now that we are not under law but 3:8;6:1
16 under grace? Out of the question! ·You know well that if you undertake to be
somebody's slave and obey him, you are the slave of him you obey: you can be the Jn 8:34
slave either of sin which leads to death, or of obedience which leads to saving 1:5d
17 justice. ·Once you were slaves of sin, but thank God you have given whole-hearted 16:18
18 obedience to the pattern of teaching to which you were introduced; ·and so, being
19 freed from serving sin, you took uprightness as your master. ·I am putting it in Jn 8:36 Ga 5:13
human terms because you are still weak human beings: as once you surrendered

9,13; Ga 5:16–25. of apostolic courage. Ph 1:19; 2 Tm 1:7seq.; *see* Ac 1:8j. of hope. Rm 15:13; Ga 5:5; Ep 4:4. of prayer. Rm 8:26seq.; cf. Jm 4:3,5; Jude 20. The Spirit must not be quenched. 1 Th 5:19, or grieved. Ep 4:30. It unites human beings with Christ. 1 Co 6:17. and thus secures the unity of his Body. 1 Co 12:13; Ep 2:16,18; 4:4.

f. Sin 'lives in' humanity. 7:14–24. Death. the reward of sin. came into the world as a result of Adam's disobedience. Ws 2:24: from this Paul concludes that sin itself entered into all humanity through that first fall. This is the doctrine of original sin and by introducing it here Paul is able to draw the contrast between the deadly work of the first Adam and the more than sufficient compensation of the 'second Adam'. vv. 15–19; 1 Co 15:21seq.,25. It is as the new head of the human race. the image in which God remakes his creation. 8:29n; 2 Co 5:17h. that Christ is Saviour of humanity. *see* 1 Co 15:22m.

g. Sin makes a division from God. This separation is 'death'. death spiritual and eternal; physical death is the symbol of it. *see* Ws 2:24; Heb 6:1b.

h. The exact meaning is a matter of debate. Perhaps 'everyone has sinned in Adam'. i.e. by participation in Adam's sins. or perhaps the reference is to everyone sinning through their personal sins. In this instance. the Gk phrase would be best translated 'by the fact that everyone has sinned'. referring to the actual situation by which eternal death has extended to everyone. In fact. in the case of adults (who alone are considered here) the power of sin which entered the world with Adam had its effects through personal sins which in some way ratify Adam's revolt. Alternative translation: 'because of which everyone has sinned'.

i. 'prefigured'. *see* 1 Co 10:6d: the likeness. therefore. is not complete—hence the comparison. begun in v. 12 and interrupted by the long parenthesis of vv. 13 and 14. becomes a contrast in v. 15.

j. The word 'many' means all people. *see* v. 18; *see* Mt 20:28h.

k. Not only in the remote future of the Last Judgement (for Paul regards justification as a present condition. *see* 5:1; etc.) but progressively as each individual becomes reborn in Christ.

l. 'law' without the definite article. i.e. a state of things in which Law is the governing factor.

6 **a.** Baptism is not contrasted with faith but goes with it. Ga 3:26seq.; Ep 4:5; Heb 10:22. cf. Ac 8:12seq.,37; 16:31–33; 18:8; 19:2–5. and gives it outward expression by the operative symbolism of the baptismal ceremonial. For this reason Paul ascribes to faith and to baptism the same effects (cf. Rm 6:3–9 and Ga 2:16–20). The sinner is immersed in water (the etymological meaning of 'baptise' is 'dip') and thus 'buried' with Christ. Col 2:12. with whom also the Christian emerges to resurrection. Rm 8:11g. as a 'new creature'. 2 Co 5:17h. a 'new person'. Ep 2:15n. a member of the one Body animated by the one Spirit. 1 Co 12:13; Ep 4:4seq. This resurrection will not be complete or final until the end of time. 1 Co 15:12 (but *see* Ep 2:6e). but is already taking place in the form of a new life lived 'in the Spirit'. Rm 8:2f,8–11,13; Ga 5:16–24. The death-resurrection symbolism of baptism is particularly Pauline. but this initial rite of the Christian life. Heb 6:2. is also spoken of in the NT as a cleansing bath. Ep 5:26; Heb 10:22; cf. 1 Co 6:11; Tt 3:5. a new birth. Jn 3:5; Tt 3:5; cf. 1 P 1:3; 2:2. an enlightenment. Heb 6:4; 10:32; cf. Ep 5:14. On baptism of water and baptism of the Spirit. cf. Ac 1:5f: these two aspects of the consecration of the Christian are seen as the 'anointing' and the 'seal' of 2 Co 1:21seq. According to 1 P 3:20–21 the ark of Noah is a type of baptism.

b. Possibly in the sense of no longer having the means to sin. having lost the 'sinful body'. v. 6: being no more 'in the flesh'. 8:9. and so freed from sin once and for all. cf. 1 P 4:1. Possibly in the sense that in law the death of the accused cancels legal proceedings. Cf. 7:1.

c. var. 'For'.

d. Christ was sinless. 2 Co 5:21. but having a physical body like our own. Rm 8:3. he belonged to the order of sin: when he became 'spiritual'. 1 Co 15:45–46. he belonged only to the divine order. Similarly. the Christian. though remaining 'in the flesh' for a time. already lives by the Spirit.

e. *Text. rec.* 'Christ Jesus our Lord'. Cf. 14:7seq.; 1 Co 3:23h; 2 Co 5:15; Ga 2:20; 1 P 2:24.

f. Though baptism has destroyed human sin. as long as the body has not been 'clothed with immortality' 1 Co 15:54. sin may still find a way to reassert itself in a 'mortal' body. still open to the natural human inclination.

g. Christ has freed human beings from evil so as to restore them to God. Paul develops the biblical ideas of 'redemption'. 3:24j. and of liberation from death. 7:1b. and in order to bring out their implications makes frequent use of a metaphor that his contemporaries would find impressive: the slave redeemed and set free who can be a slave no longer but must serve the new master freely and faithfully. Christ has paid for our redemption with his life. 1 Co 6:20; 7:23; Ga 3:13; 4:5; and he has made us permanently free. Ga 5:1,13. The Christian must be careful not to let himself be caught again by those who once owned him. Ga 2:4seq.; 4:9; 5:1. i.e. by sin. Rm 6:18–22; the Law. Rm 6:14; 8:2; Ga 3:13; 4:5; cf. Rm 7:1seq. with its ritual observance. Ga 2:4; the principles of the world. Ga 4:3,8. *see also* Col 2:20–22; and corruption. Rm 8:21–23. He is free. 1 Co 9:1. the child of a free mother. i.e. the spiritual Jerusalem. Ga 4:26,31. This liberty is not licence to sin. Ga 5:13; cf. 1 P 2:16; 2 P 2:19–21. It means serving a new master. God. 6:22; cf. 1 Th 1:9; 1 P 2:16. the Lord Christ. Rm 1:1; 14:8; 16:8; Jm 1:1; 2 P 1:1; Jude 1; etc., to whom the Christian now belongs. 1 Co 6:19; 3:23. for whom he lives and dies. Rm 7:1b; this obedient service is prompted by faith and leads to uprightness and holiness. Rm 6:16–19. This is the sort of freedom a son has. Ga 4:7. once he has been set free by 'the law of the Spirit'. Rm 8:2; cf. 7:6; 8:14seq.; 2 Co 3:17 (and *see* Jm 1:25; 2:12). and he must be prepared to surrender it to serve his neighbour in charity. Ga 5:13; cf. 2 Co 4:5. respect for someone else's scruples may require it. Rm 14; 1 Co 10:23–33; cf. 1 Co 6:12–13; 1 Co 9:19. Slavery as a social institution may be tolerated in a society that is. after all. transient. 1 Co 7:20–24,31. it has no real significance in the new order established by Christ. 1 Co 12:13; Ga 3:28; Col 3:11. the Christian slave has been enfranchised by the Lord Christ. and slave and master are equally servants of Christ. 1 Co 7:22; cf. Ep 6:5–9; Col 3:22–4:1; Phm 16.

yourselves as servants to immorality and to a lawlessness which results in more
1 P 1:14–15 lawlessness, now you have to surrender yourselves to uprightness which is to result in sanctification. [h]

The reward of sin and the reward of uprightness

When you were the servants of sin, you felt no obligation to uprightness, ·and what 20, 21
did you gain from living like that? Experiences of which you are now ashamed, [i] for
that sort of behaviour ends in death. ·But, now you are set free from sin and bound 22
Jn 15:8,16 to the service of God, your gain will be sanctification and the end will be eternal
5:12,21 life. ·For the wage paid by sin is death; the gift freely given by God is eternal life in 23
Ga 6:7–9
Jm 1:15 Christ Jesus our Lord.

The Christian is freed from slavery to the Law [a]

7 As people who are familiar with the Law, brothers, you cannot have forgotten 1
that the law can control a person only during that person's lifetime. [b] ·A 2
1 Co 7:39 married woman, for instance, is bound to her husband by law, as long as he lives,
but when her husband dies all her legal obligation to him as husband is ended. ·So 3
if she were to have relations with another man while her husband was still alive,
she would be termed an adulteress; but if her husband dies, her legal obligation
comes to an end and if she then has relations with another man, that does not make
her an adulteress. ·In the same way you, my brothers, through the body of Christ 4
6:5–6 have become dead to the Law and so you are able to belong to someone else, that
Ga 2:19*l*
6:8–11,22 is, to him who was raised from the dead to make us live fruitfully for God. ·While 5
Jn 15:8 we were still living by our natural inclinations, [c] the sinful passions aroused by the
7:7seq..7d Law were working in all parts of our bodies to make us live lives which were fruitful
6:7 only for death. ·But now we are released from the Law, having died to what was 6
2:29 binding us, and so we are in a new service, that of the spirit, and not in the old
Mt 9:16–17
2 Co 3:6 service of a written code.

The function of the Law [d]

What should we say, then? That the Law itself is sin? Out of the question! All the 7
same, if it had not been for the Law, I should not have known what sin was; for
instance, I should not have known what it meant to covet if the Law had not said:
Ex 20:17 *You are not to covet.* ·But, once it found the opportunity through that command- 8
Jm 1:14–15
4:15;5:13 ment, sin produced in me all kinds of covetousness; as long as there is no Law,
1 Co 15:56 sin is dead.

Once, when there was no Law, I used to be alive; [e] but when the commandment 9
Gn2:17;3:1seq. came, sin came to life ·and I died. The commandment was meant to bring life but 10
Lv 18:5
Ezk 20:11 I found it brought death, ·because sin; finding its opportunity by means of the 11
Gn 3:13 commandment, *beguiled* me and, by means of it, killed me.
Dt 4:8 So then, the Law is holy, and what it commands is holy and upright and good. 12
Does that mean that something good resulted in my dying? Out of the question! 13
But sin, [f] in order to be identified as sin, caused my death through that good
5:20 thing, and so it is by means of the commandment that sin shows its unbounded
sinful power.

The inward struggle [g]

Jb 14:4c We are well aware that the Law is spiritual: but I am a creature of flesh and blood 14
Ps 51:5c
Ws 9:15f sold as a slave to sin. ·I do not understand my own behaviour; I do not act as I 15
Ga 5:17 mean to, but I do things that I hate. ·While I am acting as I do not want to, I still 16
acknowledge the Law as good, ·so it is not myself acting, but the sin which lives in 17
7:5 me. ·And really, I know of nothing good living in me—in my natural self, that is— 18
for though the will to do what is good is in me, the power to do it is not: ·the good 19
thing I want to do, I never do; the evil thing which I do not want—that is what I do.
Ga 2:20 But every time I do what I do not want to, then it is not myself acting, but the sin 20
that lives in me. [h]

21 So I find this rule: [i] that for me, where I want to do nothing but good, evil is close
22, 23 at my side. [j] In my inmost self I dearly love God's law, [k] but I see that acting on
my body there is a different law which battles against the law in my mind. So I am Jm 1:14–15
brought to be a prisoner of that law of sin which lives inside my body.

h. The holiness proper to God, Lv 17:1a, which he communicated to his people, Ex 19:3c,6, is communicated to those who have faith in Christ, Ac 9:13g; Col 1:12c. If it was formal or ritual, it is no longer so; it is 'being made like Christ, the Holy One of God'. The Christian, sanctified because justified and, by belonging to the holy people, inhabited by the Holy Spirit, 5:5c, has still to live out this holiness in practice and progress in sanctification, v. 22; 1 Th 4:3–7.3c; 2 Th 2:13.

i. Or 'what did you get from actions that now you regret?'

7 **a.** Paul now approaches a subject which has been in his mind for some time, 3:20; 4:15; 5:20; 6:14: the emancipation of the Christian from the Law, and this leads him to explain the role of the Law as God intended it, *see* 7:d.

b. Elsewhere Paul refers to the liberation of the Christian either biblically as 'redemption', 3:24j or hellenistically as 'enfranchisement', 6:15g. He also describes it frequently as a deliverance through death, since death frees a person from the past with all its tyrannical demands, 6:7; 7:1–3. The Christian, in union with the dead and risen Christ, 8:11g, and by virtue of faith, 1:16h, and baptism, 6:4a, is now dead to sin, 6:2,11, cf. 1 P 4:1, to the Law, Rm 7:6; Ga 2:19*l*; to the principles of the world, Col 2:20, and so lives under the new order of grace and the Spirit, Rm 8:5–13. Like slaves emancipated and enslaved to a new master, 6:15g, Christians, risen in Christ, live no longer for themselves but for Christ and for God, 6:11–13; 14:7seq., cf. 2 Co 5:15; Ga 2:20.

c. **1** The primary meaning of 'flesh' is the matter of which the body is made, 1 Co 15:39; cf. Lk 24:39; Rv 17:16; 19:18; it is the opposite of spirit, Rm 1:9e, it is the body with its senses, Col 2:1,5, and especially the medium of sexual union, 1 Co 6:16; 7:28; Ep 5:29,31; cf. Mt 19:5par.; Jn 1:13; Jude 7, by which people become parents and heirs, Rm 4:1; 9:3,5; 11:14; cf. Heb 12:9. Thus 'flesh', like *basar* in biblical usage, emphasises the weak and perishable side of human beings, 6:19; 2 Co 7:5; 12:7; Ga 4:13seq., cf. Mt 26:41par., and their insignificance in comparison with God, Rm 3:20 and Ga 2:16; 1 Co 1:29; cf. Mt 24:22par.; Lk 3:6; Jn 17:2; Ac 2:17; 1 P 1:24. So, in order to distinguish what belongs to human nature from what belongs to grace, the words 'according to the flesh' are used for the first, 1 Co 1:26; 2 Co 1:17; Ep 6:5; cf. Jn 8:15; Phm 16, 'flesh and blood', 1 Co 15:50; Ga 1:16; Ep 6:12; Heb 2:14; cf. Mt 16:17, and 'fleshly', 1 Co 3:1,3; 9:11; 2 Co 1:12; 10:4. **2** Since the sending of the Spirit is what gives this eschatological age its character, Paul can use the word 'flesh' to signify the old dispensation as opposed to the new, 9:8; Jn 3:6; 6:63; Ga 3:3; 6:12seq.; Ph 3:3seq.; Ep 2:11; cf. Heb 9:10,13, so also the phrase 'according to the flesh', 2 Co 11:18; Ga 4:23,29; cf. Rm 1:3seq.; 2 Co 5:16, and 'fleshly', Heb 7:16; but *see* 1 Co 10:3seq. **3** For Paul the 'flesh' is especially the sphere in which the passions and sin operate, 7:5,14,18,25; 13:14; 2 Co 7:1; Ga 5:13,19; Ep 2:3; Col 2:13,18,23; cf. 1 P 2:11; 2 P 2:10,18; 1 Jn 2:16; Jude 8,23, condemned to corruption, 1 Co 15:50; Ga 6:8; cf. Ac 2:26–27,31; Jm 5:3, and to death, Rm 8:6,13; 1 Co 5:5; 2 Co 4:11; *see* 1 P 4:6, so much so that 'flesh' becomes personified as a Power of evil hostile to God, Rm 8:7seq., and to the Spirit, Rm 8:4–9.12seq.; Ga 5:16seq. Christ has defeated this Power by assuming 'sinful flesh', 8:3; cf. Jn 1:14; 1 Tm 3:16; 1 Jn 4:2; 2 Jn 7, and putting it to death on the cross, Rm 8:3; Ep 2:14–16; Col 1:22; cf. Heb 5:7seq.; 10:20; 1 P 3:18; 4:1. Being united with him, Jn 6:51seq., Christians are no longer 'in the flesh' Rm 7:5; 8:9, since they have crucified the flesh, Ga 5:24; cf. 1 P 4:1, and cast it off by baptism, Col 2:11; more precisely, they are still 'in the flesh' as long as they remain in this world, Ph 1:22–24; cf. 1 P 4:2, but are not slaves to the flesh any more, 2 Co 10:3; they are its masters through their union with Christ by faith, Ga 2:20, and suffering, Col 1:24. In this theological note, for the sake of clarity, the term 'flesh' is used throughout; in the translation of the biblical text, however, a variety of terms has been used: 'body', 'human nature', 'human ideals', 'natural inclinations', 'physical descent', to render the various facets of this concept.

d. In itself the Law is holy and good since it expresses God's will, 7:12–25; 1 Tm 1:8; it is the glorious prerogative of Israel, Rm 9:4; but *see* 2:14seq. And yet it seems to have been a failure: in spite of the Law the Jews are sinners like everyone else, 2:21–27; Ga 6:13; Ep 2:3, and obedience to it even makes them so confident, Rm 2:17–20; 3:27; 4:2,4; 9:31seq.; Ph 3:9; Ep 2:8, that they are shut off by it from the grace of Christ, Ga 6:12; Ph 3:18; cf. Ac 15:1. In short, the Law is powerless to make anyone justified as upright, 3:20; Ga 3:11,21seq.; cf. Heb 7:19. Paul's argument, to which polemic lends a tone of paradox, is that this apparent failure of the Law is due to the nature of the Law itself and to the part it was meant to play in the history of salvation. The Law gives information—it does not give spiritual strength. No law, whether Mosaic or otherwise, not even the primordial command given to Adam, *see* vv. 9–11, can prevent sin, in fact law makes it worse: **1** Because though law is not the source of sin it becomes the instrument of sin by 'multiplying offences' 7:7seq. **2** Because by informing the mind it increases the fault, which becomes a conscious transgression, 4:15; 5:13. **3** Because the only remedy law can offer is punishment, 4:15, curse, Ga 3:10, condemnation, 2 Co 3:9, death, 2 Co 3:6; hence it can be called 'the law of sin and death', Rm 8:2; cf. Rm 7:13; 1 Co 15:56. Nevertheless God willed this defective system, though as a temporary period of schooling, Ga 3:24, to make people conscious of their sin, Rm 3:19seq.; 5:20; Ga 3:19, and to teach them to look for justification solely to the grace of God, Rm 11:32; Ga 3:22. Since this state of things is only provisional it has to give way before the fulfilment of the promise made, before the Law, to Abraham and his descendants, Ga 3:6–22; Rm 4. Christ has put an end to the Law, Ep 2:15; cf. Rm 10:4, by 'fulfilling', *see* Mt 3:15; 5:17, all in it that is of positive value, Rm 3:31; 9:31, notably by his death, the supreme expression of his love, Rm 5:8; 8:35,39; Ga 2:20; Ph 2:5–8; and also the satisfaction of the Law's demands over sinners, with whom he was identifying himself, Rm 8:3c; Ga 3:13e; Col 2:14. He emancipates the sons from the guardianship of the tutor, Ga 3:25seq. With him, they are dead to the Law, 7:4–6; Ga 2:19; cf. Col 2:20, from which he has 'redeemed' them, Ga 3:13, to make them children by adoption, Ga 4:5. Through the promised Spirit, he gives to humanity thus renewed, Ep 2:15n, the inward strength to do all the good things prescribed by the Law, Rm 8:4seq. This order of grace, superseding that of the old Law, may still be termed a law in the sense of a rule, but it is 'the law of faith', 3:27, 'the law of Christ', Ga 6:2, 'the law of the Spirit', Rm 8:2, and love is its essential precept, Rm 13:8–10; Ga 5:14; cf. Jn 13:34; Jm 2:8, a sharing in the love of the Father and the Son, Rm 5:5d; Ga 4:6.

e. Paul speaks in the person of humanity before the Law was given, cf. 5:13.

f. Sin personified, cf. 5:12, here takes the place of the snake of Gn 3:1 and the Devil of Ws 2:24.

g. Paul now speaks in the person of humanity still under the empire of sin and not yet justified, whereas in ch. 8, he speaks in the name of the justified Christian with the gift of the Spirit who, nevertheless, is conscious of an inward struggle while on earth, Ga 5:17seq.

h. Paul is not denying personal responsibility for evil done, any more than for the good, in Ga 2:20.

i. lit. 'law', in the sense of regular experience.

j. This 'inmost self' is the reasoning part of human nature as opposed to the 'outer self', 2 Co 4:16[a], the perishable body. This distinction which has its origin in Greek thought is not the same as that between the 'old' and the 'new' self, Col 3:9–10e, which derives from Jewish eschatology. There are texts, however, where Paul speaks of the 'inmost self' in the Christian sense of the 'new self', 2 Co 4:16[b]; Ep 3:16.

k. var. 'reason's law' as in v. 23.

What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body doomed to death? [l] 24
5:21;6:23 •God—thanks be to him—through Jesus Christ our Lord. 25
So it is that I myself with my mind [m] obey the law of God, but in my disordered nature I obey the law of sin. [n]

B: THE CHRISTIAN'S SPIRITUAL LIFE

Ezk 36:27f

The life of the spirit

8 Thus, condemnation will never come to those who are in Christ Jesus, 1
because the law of the Spirit which gives life in Christ Jesus has set you [a] free 2
from the law of sin and death. [b] •What the Law could not do because of the 3
7:7d Ac 13:38–39; 15:10–11 •6:10d 2 Co 5:21 Ga 3:13 Heb 2:14–18 3:31q;9:30–31, 31o;10:4 weakness of human nature, [c] God did, sending his own Son in the same human nature as any sinner to be a sacrifice for sin, and condemning sin in that human nature. [d] •This was so that the Law's requirements [e] might be fully satisfied in us as 4
we direct our lives not by our natural inclinations but by the spirit. •Those who are 5
living by their natural inclinations have their minds on the things human nature desires; those who live in the spirit have their minds on spiritual things. •And 6
Ga 5:16–23 human nature has nothing to look forward to but death, while the spirit looks
6:21 Ga 6:8 forward to life and peace, •because the outlook of disordered human nature is 7
opposed to God, since it does not submit to God's Law, and indeed it cannot, •and 8
1 Jn 2:15–16 7:5–6 those who live by their natural inclinations can never be pleasing to God. •You, 9
however, live not by your natural inclinations, but by the spirit, since the Spirit of God has made a home in you. Indeed, anyone who does not have the Spirit of
Jn 3:5–6 1 Co 2:23h •5:12g 1:4c;6:4a,8–11 Ezk 37:10d Christ does not belong to him. •But when Christ is in you, the body is dead because 10
of sin but the spirit is alive because you have been justified; [f] •and if the Spirit of 11
him who raised Jesus from the dead has made his home in you, then he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your own mortal bodies through his Spirit living in you. [g]
Gn 6:3 Ga 6:8 Ep 4:22–24 So then, my brothers, we have no obligation to human nature to be dominated 12
by it. •If you do live in that way, you are doomed to die; but if by the Spirit you put 13
to death the habits originating in the body, you will have life.

Ga 4:4–7

Children of God

Ga 5:18 Jn 1:12 •Jn 15:15 1 Jn 4:18 5:5f Ga 3:16,26–29 All who are guided [h] by the Spirit of God are sons of God; •for what you received 14, 15
was not the spirit of slavery to bring you back into fear; you received the spirit of adoption, enabling us to cry out, '*Abba*, Father!' [i] •The Spirit himself joins with 16
our spirit to bear witness that we are children of God. •And if we are children, then 17
we are heirs, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, provided that we share his suffering, so as to share his glory.
Lk 22:28–30; 24:26 Ph 3:10–11 1 P 4:13 Rv 21:7

Glory as our destiny

5:2–5 Ws 3:5d 2 Co 4:17 1 P 5:1b,c Col 3:3–4,4b 1 Jn 3:2 Gn 3:17;6:20h Ho 4:3a 2 P 3:12–13 Rv 21:1b In my estimation, all that we suffer in the present time is nothing in comparison 18
with the glory which is destined to be disclosed for us, •for the whole creation is 19
waiting with eagerness for the children of God to be revealed. [j] •It was not for its 20
own purposes that creation had frustration imposed on it, but for the purposes of him who imposed it— [k] •with the intention that the whole creation itself might be 21
freed from its slavery to corruption and brought into the same glorious freedom as the children of God. •We are well aware that the whole creation, until this time, 22
has been groaning in labour pains. •And not only that: we too, who have the first- 23
2 Co 5:2–5 fruits of the Spirit, even we are groaning inside ourselves, waiting with eagerness
3:24o;7:24l Ph 3:20–21 •5:2c for [l] our bodies to be set free. •In hope, we already have salvation; in hope, not 24
visibly present, or we should not be hoping—nobody goes on hoping for something
2 Co 5:7c Heb 11:1a which he can already see. •But having this hope for what we cannot yet see, we are 25
able to wait for it with persevering confidence.

26 And as well as this, the Spirit too comes to help us in our weakness, for, when we 5:5f;8:15 Ga 4:6
do not know how to pray properly, then the Spirit personally makes our petitions Jm 4:3,5,5c
27 for us in groans that cannot be put into words; •and he who can see into all hearts Jr 11:20+
knows what the Spirit means because the prayers that the Spirit makes for God's
holy people are always in accordance with the mind of God. [m] Ep 1:4–14

God has called us to share his glory

28 We are well aware that God works with those who love him, those who have been Jm 1:12
29 called in accordance with his purpose, and turns everything to their good. [n] •He Ac 13:48jj
decided beforehand who were the ones destined to be moulded to the pattern of Jr 1:5
30 his Son, [o] so that he should be the eldest of many brothers; •it was those so 1 Co 15:49 Ph 3:21

l. lit. 'from the body of this death'. Paul is concerned with the body and its component members, 12:4; 1 Co 12:12,14seq., that is to say with the human being actually existing, a sentient creature, 1 Co 5:3; 2 Co 10:10, with a sexual life, Rm 4:19; 1 Co 6:16; 7:4; Ep 5:28, because it is in the body that people live morally and religiously. The body, though tyrannised by the 'flesh', 7:5c, by sin, 1:24; 6:12c; 7:23; 8:13; 1 Co 6:18, by death, Rm 8:10, and therefore a 'body of flesh', Col 2:11; cf. a 'body of sin', Rm 6:6, and a 'body of death', 7:24, is not, however, doomed to perish, as Greek philosophy would have it, but, in accordance with the biblical tradition, 2 M 7:9c; Ezk 37:10d, destined to live, Rm 8:13; 2 Co 4:10, through resurrection, Rm 8:11g. The principle of this renewal is the Spirit, 5:5e, which takes the place of the *psyche*, 1 Co 15:44w, and transforms the body of the Christian into the likeness of the risen body of Christ, Ph 3:21. Until this ultimate deliverance takes place, 8:23, the body of the Christian, provisionally delivered from the 'flesh' by its union with Christ's death, 6:6; 8:3seq., is even now the home of the Holy Spirit, 1 Co 6:19, who produces in it a new life of uprightness and holiness, Rm 6:13,19; 12:1; 1 Co 7:34, which is praiseworthy, 2 Co 5:10, and gives glory to God, 1 Co 6:20; Ph 1:20.

m. The *nous*, human reason or mind, is a Greek idea very different from the *pneuma* or supernatural Spirit, 5:5e, and even from the spirit in the biblical sense of the higher self, 1:9e. It is the principle of understanding, 1 Co 14:14,15,19; Ph 4:7; 2 Th 2:2; cf. Luke 24:45; Rv 13:18; 17:9, and of moral judgement, Rm 14:5; 1 Co 1:10. Usually it is reliable, 7:23,25, but at times it is perverted, 1:28; Ep 4:17–19; 1 Tm 6:5; 2 Tm 3:8; Tt 1:15, by the 'flesh', Col 2:18; *see* Rm 7:5c, and has to be renewed, Rm 12:2, within the human spirit by the Spirit of God, Ep 4:23seq.; cf. Col 3:10.

n. This sentence, which would come more naturally before v. 24, seems to have been added—perhaps by Paul

8 **a.** var. 'me', 'us'.

b. Paul contrasts the order of sin and death with the new order of the Spirit. The word 'spirit' here means either the Holy Spirit in person (as it does more clearly in v. 9) or the human spirit made new by its presence, *see* 5:5e; 1:9f.

c. The Mosaic Law, imposed from without, could not be an inward principle of salvation, 7:7d. Christ alone, who by his death destroyed our unspiritual nature (lit. 'flesh') in his own person, could destroy sin whose domain the 'flesh' was.

d. lit. 'sending his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and in that flesh . . .'

e. These requirements of the Law, which can be satisfied only through faith and union with Christ, are summed up in the command of love, cf. 13:10; Ga 5:14, and already Mt 22:40. *See* 7:7d.

f. Because of sin, 5:12h, the body is doomed to physical death and is the instrument of spiritual death also; but the Spirit is Life, a power of resurrection; *see* following note

g. The resurrection of Christians is intimately dependent on that of Christ, 6:5; 1 Co 6:14; 15:20seq.; 2 Co 4:14; 13:4; Ep 2:6; Col 1:18; 2:12seq.; 1 Th 4:14; 2 Tm 2:11. It is by the same power and the same gift of the Spirit, *see* Rm 1:4c, that the Father will raise them to life in their turn. This operation is already being prepared: a new life is making the Christians into sons (v. 14) in the likeness of the Son himself, 8:29n, and they are being incorporated into the risen Christ by faith, 1:16h, and baptism, 6:4a.

h. More than just an 'internal guide', the Spirit is the principle of a divine life in Christ, *see* 5:5e; Ga 5:20.

i. The prayer of Christ in Gethsemane, Mk 14:36.

j. The material world, created for humanity, shares its destiny. It was cursed for sin, Gn 3:17, and is consequently deformed, subject to 'frustration', v. 20, a moral condition resulting from sin, and 'corruption', v. 21, a physical condition. But like the human body, destined to be glorified, it too is to be redeemed, v. 21. For some of the Greek philosophers matter was evil and the spirit must be delivered from it; Christianity regards matter as itself enslaved and to be set free. In other texts also salvation is extended to creatures (especially angels) other than humanity, *see* Col 1:20; Rv 21:1–5. On the new creation *see* 2 Co 5:17h.

k. Probably humanity through sin. Alternatively God by way of punishment, or God as Creator.

l. Add. 'adoption as sons (and)' which would here have an eschatological sense, but cf. v. 15.

m. Paul insists on the necessity of constant prayer (12:12; Ep 6:18; Ph 4:6; Col 4:2; 1 Th 5:17; 1 Tm 2:8; 5:5; cf. 1 Co 7:5) taught by Jesus himself (Mt 6:5; 14:23f) and practised by the early Christians (Ac 2:42hh). Paul is always praying for the faithful (1:10; Ep 1:16; Ph 1:4; Col 1:3,9; 1 Th 1:2; 3:10; 2 Th 1:11; Phm 4) and asks them to do the same for him (Rm 15:30; 2 Co 1:11; Ep 6:19; Ph 1:19; Col 4:3; 1 Th 5:25; 2 Th 3:1; Phm 22; Heb 13:18), and for each other (2 Co 9:14; Ep 6:18; on prayer for sinners and the sick, *see* 1 Jn 5:16; Jm 5:13–16). These prayers must ask for growth in holiness but also for the removal of all external (1 Th 2:18 and 3:10) and internal (2 Co 12:8–9) obstacles to it; we have to pray, too, for the orderly conduct of the country's business (1 Tm 2:1–2). Paul lays special stress on prayers of thanksgiving (2 Co 1:11e; Ep 5:4; Ph 4:6; Col 2:7; 4:2; 1 Th 5:18; 1 Tm 2:1) for every gift of God (Ep 5:20; Col 3:17) and particularly for the food God gives us (Rm 14:6; 1 Co 10:31; 1 Tm 4:3–5); he begins all his own letters with a prayer of thanks (Rm 1:8, etc.) and he wants the spirit of thanksgiving to pervade all the Christians' dealings with each other (1 Co 14:17; 2 Co 1:11; 4:15; 9:11–12). In liturgical gatherings prayers of thanksgiving and praise must predominate (1 Co 11–14) and these sentiments must inspire the hymns that the Christians compose for these occasions (Ep 5:19; Col 3:16). It is the Holy Spirit who inspires the prayer of the Christian, and Paul prefers to emphasise this rather than repeat the traditional Wisdom themes, namely the necessary conditions for prayer and its efficacy (*see* Jm 1:5–8; 4:2–3; 5:16–18; 1 Jn 3:22; 5:14–16) which Paul guarantees by the presence of the Spirit of Christ within the Christian, enabling the Christian to pray as a child to a father (Rm 8:15,26–27; Ga 4:6; cf. Ep 6:18; Jude 20), while Christ himself intercedes at the right hand of God (Rm 8:34; cf. Heb 7:25; 1 Jn 2:1). The Father's response is therefore most generous (Ep 3:20). Hence Christians are called 'those who invoke the name of Jesus Christ', 1 Co 1:2; cf. Rm 10:9–13; Ac 2:21m; 9:14,21; 22:16; 2 Tm 2:22; Jm 2:7. On the attitude to be adopted when praying, *see* 1 Co 11:14–16; 1 Tm 2:8.

n. Some interpretations make 'everything', or 'the Spirit' (following v. 27) the subject of the sentence: e.g., 'for those who love God, . . . everything turns to their good.'

o. Christ, the image of God in the primordial creation, Col 1:14d, cf. Heb 1:3, has now come, by a new creation, 2 Co 5:17n, to restore to fallen humanity the splendour of that image which has been darkened by sin, 5:12h; Gn 1:26m; 3:22–24. He does this by forming humanity in the still more splendid image of a child of God (8:29); thus, true

destined that he called; those that he called, he justified, and those that he has justified he has brought into glory. [p]

1 Co 13:1a **A hymn to God's love**

Ps 118:6 Is 50:7–9 5:6–11 Gn 22:16 Jn 3:16 2 Co 5:14–21 1 Jn 4:10 Zc 3:1seq. Is 50:8 Ps 110:1 Ac 2:23 Heb 7:25f

After saying this, what can we add? If God is for us, who can be against us? ·Since 31, 32
he did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for the sake of all of us, then can we
not expect that with him he will freely give us all his gifts? ·Who can bring any 33
accusation against those that God has chosen? *When God grants saving justice*
who can condemn? Are we not sure that it is Christ Jesus, who died—yes and 34
more, who was raised from the dead and is at God's right hand—and who is adding
his plea for us? ·Can anything cut us off from the love of Christ—can hardships or 35
distress, or persecution, or lack of food and clothing, or threats or violence; ·as 36
scripture says:

Ps 44:22 1 Th 3:4 2 Tm 3:12

> *For your sake we are being massacred all day long,*
> *treated as sheep to be slaughtered?*

Jn 16:33 No; we come through all these things triumphantly victorious, by the power of him 37
who loved us. ·For I am certain of this: neither death nor life, nor angels, nor 38
Ep 1:21s principalities, nothing already in existence and nothing still to come, nor any
power, ·nor the heights nor the depths, [q] nor any created thing whatever, will 39
be able to come between us and the love of God, known to us in Christ Jesus
our Lord.

C: THE PLACE OF ISRAEL [a]

The privileges of Israel

2 Co 12:7b Ex 4:22;32:32 Ep 2:12 1:3+

9 This is the truth and I am speaking in Christ, without pretence, as my con- 1
science testifies for me in the Holy Spirit; ·there is great sorrow and unremit- 2
ting agony in my heart: ·I could pray that I myself might be accursed [b] and cut off 3
from Christ, if this could benefit the brothers who are my own flesh and blood. [c]
They are Israelites; it was they who were adopted as children, the glory was theirs 4
and the covenants; to them were given the Law and the worship of God and the
promises. ·To them belong the fathers and out of them, so far as physical descent 5
is concerned, came Christ who is above all, God, blessed for ever. [d] Amen.

3:3+ **God has kept his promise**

Nb 23:19 Is 55:10–11 2:28–29 Mt 3:9par. Gn 21:12

It is not that God's promise has failed. Not all born Israelites belong to Israel, [e] 6
and not all the descendants of Abraham count as his children, for 7

> *Isaac is the one through whom your Name will be carried on.*

Jn 8:31–44 Ga 4:21–31 Gn 18:10 11:5–6 Gn 25:23 •Ml 1:2–3

That is, it is not by being children through physical descent that people become 8
children of God; it is the children of the promise that are counted as the heirs. ·The 9
actual words of the promise were: *I shall come back to you at this season, and Sarah*
will have a son. ·Even more to the point is what was said to Rebecca when she was 10
pregnant by our ancestor, Isaac, ·before her children were born, so that neither 11
had yet done anything either good or bad, but in order that it should be God's
choice which prevailed, ·—not human merit, but his call—she was told: *the elder* 12
one will serve the younger. ·Or as scripture says elsewhere: *I loved Jacob but hated* 13
Esau.

3:5 **God is not unjust**

Dt 32:4 Ex 33:19

What should we say, then? That God is unjust? Out of the question! ·For speaking 14, 15
to Moses, he said: *I am gracious to those to whom I am gracious and I take pity on*
those on whom I take pity. ·So it is not a matter of what any person wants or what 16

17 any person does, but only of God having mercy. ·Scripture says to Pharaoh:
I raised you up for this reason,[f] to display my power in you and to have my name Ex 9:16
18 talked of throughout the world. ·In other words, if God wants to show mercy on
someone, he does so, and if he wants to harden someone's heart, he does so.
19 Then you will ask me, 'How then can he ever blame anyone, since no one can
20 oppose his will?'[g] ·But you—who do you think you, a human being, are, to answer Ws 12:12
back to God? *Something that was made, can it say to its maker: why did you make* Is 29:16g
21 *me* this shape? ·A potter surely has the right over his clay to make out of the same Ws 15:7
Is 45:9;64:7
lump either a pot for special use or one for ordinary use. Jr 18:6
22 But suppose that[h] God, although all the time he wanted to reveal his retribution
and demonstrate his power, has with great patience gone on putting up with those 2:4;3:25–26
23 who are the instruments of his retribution and designed to be destroyed; ·so that[i] Pr 16:4 Ws 12:20–21
he may make known the glorious riches ready for the people who are the instru-
24 ments of his faithful love and were long ago prepared for that glory.[j] ·We are that 8:29
people, called by him not only out of the Jews but out of the gentiles too. Ep 2:1–7

moral judgement is restored to the 'new self', Col 3:10e, as is also the claim to glory which had been forfeited by sin, Rm 3:23h. This glory, which Christ as the image of God possesses by right, 2 Co 4:4, is progressively communicated to the Christians, 2 Co 3:18, until the Christian's body is itself clothed in the image of the 'heavenly' man, 1 Co 15:49.

p. Everything has been directed by God to the glory of his elect: it was for this they were called to faith and justified through baptism; with this, it can be said by anticipation, they are already clothed.

q. The 'principalities', like 'angels' and 'princes' are among the mysterious cosmic or elemental forces which to the mind of antiquity were in general hostile to humanity. *see* Ep 1:21; 3:18. The 'heights' and 'depths' represent Heaven and Hell, also conceived as powers.

9 **a.** To expound the theme of justification by faith, Paul founded his argument on the uprightness of Abraham, ch. 4. Similarly, the theme of salvation as the free gift of God through the Spirit demands that he consider the case of Israel, ch. 9–11, a people which has not responded with faith although it was given the promise of salvation. These chapters, then, explore not the predestination of the individual to glory, or even to faith, but the problem of Israel's part in the history of salvation—a problem raised by the statements in the OT.

b. lit. *anathema*, a thing accursed, under a curse of destruction, *see* Jos 6:17c and Lv 27:28e.

c. Actual descendants of Jacob (called 'Israel', Gn 32:29). All the other privileges derive from this: adoptive sonship, Ex 4:22; *see* Dt 7:6b; the glory of God, Ex 24:16f, who dwells with his people, Ex 25:8f; Dt 4:7b; *see* Jn 1:14m; the covenant with Abraham, Gn 15:1a; 15:17f; 17:1a, with Jacob-Israel, Gn 32:29, with Moses, Ex 24:7–8; the worship of the one true God; the Law which embodies his will; the messianic promises, 2 S 7:1a, and physical relationship with Christ.

d. The context and the internal development of the sentence show that the doxology is addressed to Christ. Paul rarely gives Jesus the title 'God', though *see* Tt 2:11–14, or addresses a doxology to him, cf. Heb 13:21, but this is because he usually keeps this title for the Father, *see* Rm 15:6; etc., and considers the divine persons not so much with an abstract appreciation of their nature as with a concrete appreciation of their functions in the process of salvation. Moreover, he has always in mind the historical Christ in his concrete reality as God made man, *see* Ph 2:5d; Col 1:15d. For this reason he presents Christ as subordinated to the Father, 1 Co 3:23; 11:3, not only in the work of creation, 1 Co 8:6, but also in that of eschatological renewal, 1 Co 15:27seq.; cf. Rm 16:27; etc. Nevertheless, the title 'Lord', *Kyrios*, received by Christ at his resurrection, Ph 2:9–11; *see* Ep 1:20–22; Heb 1:3seq., is the title given by the LXX to Yahweh in the OT, Rm 10:9,13; 1 Co 2:16. For Paul, Jesus is essentially 'the Son of God', Rm 1:3–4,9; 5:10; 8:29; 1 Co 1:9; 15:28; 2 Co 1:19; Ga 1:16; 2:20; 4:4,6; Ep 4:13; 1 Th 1:10; *see also* Heb 4:14, his 'own Son', Rm 8:3,32, 'the Son of his love', Col 1:13, who belongs to the sphere of the divine by right, the sphere from which he came, 1 Co 15:47, being sent by God, Rm 8:3; Ga 4:4. The title 'Son of God' became his in a new way with the resurrection, Rm 1:4c; cf. Heb 1:5; 5:5, but it was not then that he received it since he pre-existed not only as prefigured in the OT, 1 Co 10:4, but ontologically, Ph 2:6; cf. 2 Co 8:9. He is the Wisdom, 1 Co 1:24,30, and the Image, 2 Co 4:4, by which and in which all things were created, Col 1:15–17; cf. Heb 1:2; 1 Co 8:6; and have been re-created, Rm 8:29; cf. Col 3:10; 1:18–20, because into his own person is gathered the fullness of the godhead and of the universe, Col 2:9e. In him God has devised the whole plan of salvation, Ep 1:3seq., and he, no less than the Father, is its accomplishment (cf. Rm 11:36; 1 Co 8:6 and Col 1:16,20). The Father raises to life and judges, so does the Son raise to life (*see* Rm 1:4c; 8:11g and Ph 3:21) and judge (cf. Rm 2:16 and 1 Co 4:5; Rm 14:10 and 2 Co 5:10). In short, he is one of the three persons enumerated in the trinitarian formulae, 2 Co 13:13e.

e. For example, Ishmaelites, and above all the Edomites, descendants of Esau, Gn 36:1, and in the later OT times the archetypal enemy of Israel, Dt 23:8; Ps 137:7d.

f. Like the OT writers Paul attributes to God as their ultimate cause (stressing the phrase of Ex: 'I raised you up') the good and bad actions of human beings, cf. 1:24seq.

g. If human perversity thus becomes part of God's design, how can anyone be accused of not doing the will of God? Paul replies, as before in a similar case (3:7; 6:1,15), by disallowing the objection. God being the absolute master of what he has made, the question of injustice cannot arise. Cf. Mt 20:15.

h. lit. 'But if', an obscure phrase here, to be interpreted by the context. Paul is explaining how the hardening of Pharaoh's heart then, and the unbelief of Israel now, are not acts of injustice if regarded as elements in the plan of God. God could destroy the Jewish people, as he could have destroyed Pharaoh, but he patiently tolerates them: thus (while allowing time to repent, 2:4) he 'shows his anger' (by permitting sins to multiply, *see* ch. 1–3, though even this paves the way to conversion); he 'displays his power' by brushing such obstacles aside, v. 17, as the present antagonism of the Jews towards the gospel; but above all he carries out his merciful plan for the gentiles, *see* 11:11–12, to whom the gospel is preached once the Jews have rejected it, *see* Ac 13:5e.

i. var. 'and he has disclosed'.

j. In the Greek, vv. 22–24, the sentence is left in the air. Supply 'How, if this supposition is correct, could we speak of injustice in God?' In the long run everything is directed to the salvation of both Jews and gentiles, *see* 11:32.

All has been foretold in the Old Testament

Ho 2:25y
1 P 2:10
•Ho 2:1
11:5
Is 10:22–23
Is 1:9
1:16h;3:22
10:20;11:7
Ga 2:16
10:11
Is 8:14;28:16
1 P 2:6–8

Just as he says in the book of Hosea: *I shall tell those who were not my people, 'You* 25
are my people,' and I shall take pity on those on whom I had no pity. •*And in the* 26
very place where they were told, 'You are not my people,' they will be told that they
are 'children of the living God'. [k] •And about Israel, this is what Isaiah cried out: [l] 27
Though the people of Israel are like the sand of the sea, only a remnant will be saved;
•*for without hesitation or delay the Lord will execute his sentence on the earth.* [m] 28
•As Isaiah foretold: *Had the Lord Sabaoth not left us a few survivors, we should be* 29
like Sodom, we should be the same as Gomorrah.

What should we say, then? [n] That the gentiles, although they were not looking 30
for saving justice, found it, and this was the saving justice that comes of faith;
while Israel, looking for saving justice by law-keeping, did not succeed in fulfilling 31
the Law. [o] •And why? Because they were trying to find it in actions and not in faith, 32
and so they stumbled over the *stumbling-stone*—•as it says in scripture: *Now I am* 33
laying in Zion a stumbling-stone, a rock to trip people up; but he who relies on this
will not be brought to disgrace.

Israel fails to see that it is God who makes us holy

Pr 19:2
Ph 3:9
9:30–31,31o
Mt 5:17h
2 Co 3:14
Ga 3:24
3:21;4

10 Brothers, my dearest wish and my prayer to God is for them, that they may 1
be saved. •I readily testify to their fervour for God, but it is misguided. [a] 2
Not recognising God's saving justice they have tried to establish their own, 3
instead of submitting to the saving justice of God. [b] •But the Law has found its 4
fulfilment in Christ so that all who have faith will be justified.

The testimony of Moses

Lv 18:5+
Ga 3:12d
Dt 9:4;30:
12 seq.
Heb 13:20
1 P 3:19h
Dt 30:14
Si 21:26
Ac 2:36w
1 Co 12:3
1:4c
Mt 10:32par.
1:16;3:22–23;
9:33
Is 28:16
Jl 3:5
Ac 2:21m

Moses writes of the saving justice that comes by the Law and says that *whoever* 5
complies with it will find life in it. •But the saving justice of faith says this: [c] *Do not* 6
think in your heart, *'Who will go up to heaven?'*•—that is to bring Christ down; or 7
'Who will go down to the depths?' [d]—that is to bring Christ back from the dead.
What does it say, then? *The word is very near to you; it is in your mouth and in your* 8
heart, that is, the word of faith, the faith which we preach, • that if you declare with 9
your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and if you believe with your heart that God raised
him from the dead, [e] then you will be saved. •It is by believing with the heart that 10
you are justified, and by making the declaration with your lips that you are saved.
When scripture says: *No one who relies on this will be brought to disgrace,* 11
it makes no distinction between Jew and Greek: the same Lord is the Lord of all, 12
and his generosity is offered to all who appeal to him, •for *all who call on the name* 13
of the Lord will be saved.

Israel has no excuse

Heb 11:6c
Ac 8:31
Is 52:7
1:5d
Is 53:1
Ga 3:2,5
Ps 19:4
11:11
Dt 32:21h
9:30
Is 65:1
Is 65:2

How then are they to call on him if they have not come to believe in him? [f] And 14
how can they believe in him if they have never heard of him? And how will they
hear of him unless there is a preacher for them? •And how will there be preachers 15
if they are not sent? As scripture says: *How beautiful are the feet of the messenger of*
good news. [g]

But in fact they have not all responded to the good news. As Isaiah says: *Lord,* 16
who has given credence to what they have heard from us? •But it is in that way faith 17
comes, from hearing, and that means hearing the word of Christ. [h]

Well then, I say, is it possible that they have not heard? Indeed they have: *in the* 18
entire earth their voice [i] *stands out, their message reaches the whole world.* •Well, 19
another question, then: is it possible that Israel did not understand? In the first
place Moses said: *I rouse you to jealousy with a non-people, I shall exasperate you*
with a stupid nation. [j] •And Isaiah is even bold enough to say: *I have let myself be* 20
found by those who did not seek me; I have let myself be seen by those who did not
consult me; •and referring to Israel, he says: *All day long I have been stretching out* 21
my hands to a disobedient and rebellious people. [k]

The remnant of Israel

1 **11** What I am saying is this: is it possible [a] that *God abandoned his people*? Out Ps 44:9seq.; 94:14
of the question! I too am an Israelite, descended from Abraham, of the Jr 31:37
2 tribe of Benjamin. •God never abandoned his own people to whom, ages ago, he •2 Co 11:21i
had given recognition. Do you not remember what scripture says about Elijah and
3 how he made a complaint to God against Israel: •*Lord, they have put your prophets* 1 K 19:10,14
to the sword, torn down your altars. I am the only one left, and now they want to kill
4 *me*? •And what was the prophetic answer given? *I have spared* for myself *seven* 1 K 19:18
5 *thousand men that have not bent the knee to Baal.* •In the same way, then, in our
6 own time, there is a remnant, set aside by grace. •And since it is by grace, it cannot Is 4:3c
now be by good actions, or grace would not be grace at all! 9:12–17
7 What follows? Israel failed to find what it was seeking; only those who were 9:30–31
8 chosen found it and the rest had their minds hardened; •just as it says in scripture:
God has infused them with a spirit of lethargy; until today they have not eyes to see Dt 29:3 •Is 29:10
9 *or ears to hear.* •David too says: *May their own table [b] prove a trap for them,* a pitfall Mt 13:13e
10 and *a snare; let that be their retribution.* •*May their eyes grow so dim they cannot* Ps 69:22seq
see, and their backs be bent for ever.

The Jews to be restored in the future

11 What I am saying is this: Was this stumbling to lead to their final downfall? [c] Out of
the question! On the contrary, their failure has brought salvation for the gentiles, [d] Mt 8:11seq 21:43
12 in order to stir them to envy. •And if their fall has proved a great gain to the world, Ac 13:5e
and their loss has proved a great gain to the gentiles—how much greater a gain will 10:19 •1:5
come when all is restored to them! Ac 9:15;22
13 Let me say then to you gentiles [e] that, as far as I am an apostle to the gentiles, I
14 take pride in this work of service; •and I want it to be the means of rousing to envy
15 the people who are my own blood-relations and so of saving some of them. •Since
their rejection meant the reconciliation of the world, do you know what their re-
acceptance will mean? Nothing less than life from the dead! [f]

k. The history of an Israel welcomed back by God despite its unfaithfulness thus becomes the antetype of the invitation to the gentiles, who had no claim, to the messianic feast.

l. The texts cited here proclaim both the infidelity of Israel and the return of a 'remnant', *see* Is 4:3c, in which the promises are safeguarded. They are thus a preparation for ch. 11.

m. One var. (Vulg.) makes the quotation follow the LXX text, which Paul abbreviates.

n. This conclusion introduces the argument of the following chapter where the cause of Israel's infidelity is examined not now as seen in God's plan but as seen in Israel's conduct.

o. Only the Christian can do this, 3:31; 8:4; 10:4; cf. 7:7d; Ac 13:39.

10 a. Like that of Paul before his conversion, Ac 22:3; Ga 1:14; Ph 3:6; cf. 1 Tm 1:13.

b. Uprightness is not something to be won: it is a favour received through faith in Christ, *see* 1:16h; 7:7d.

c. The argument is odd at first reading, because the passage of Dt is a eulogy of uprightness according to the Law. But Paul sees in this text, which sums up the whole Law in the precept of love and the 'circumcision of the heart', Dt 30:6,16,20, a presentiment of the new law, an equivalent to the gift of Law 'written on the heart', Jr 31:33.

d. Of the sea in Dt 30:13, of Sheol in Paul's applied sense. In connection with this text, already the Targum spoke of the descent of Moses from Sinai and the ascent of Jonah from the depths of the sea.

e. Profession of faith, such as is made at baptism, is the outward expression of the inward commitment of the 'heart'.

f. As in other places, Paul puts himself here into the position of a listener who makes qualifications or criticisms of his argument.

g. lit. 'How beautiful the feet of those who bring good news.'

h. var. 'word of God'.

i. Of those who preach the gospel.

j. This allusion to Israel's jealousy prepares the way for 11:11,14.

k. In the Hebr. both texts (vv. 20 and 21) refer to the Jewish people, but in the first of these the prophet speaks of Israel 'not invoking the name of Yahweh' and therefore no better than the gentiles. Paul's application of v. 20 to the gentiles (*ethne*) is the more easily made in that the Greek version uses *ethnos* ('nation') in Is 65:1, and not *laos* (i.e. Israel, the 'people' of God) as in Is 65:2.

11 a. This phrase, used in 10:18,19 to introduce a denunciation of Israel, now prefaces an announcement of its salvation (so also in v. 11); Israel, though unbelieving, 10:21, is still a chosen people, 11:2. The 'remnant', Is 4:3c, its temporary representative, is the pledge of future restoration.

b. This psalm quotation describes the punishment of those who, because they themselves were sated, had no compassion for the sufferings or thirst of the faithful. There may be a reference (as in the Targum) to sacrificial meals; if so, the prophecy is fulfilled to the letter: the Jews are incapable of acknowledging a suffering Messiah precisely because they are so attached to their formal worship.

c. lit. 'have they stumbled so as to fall (without hope of rising)?'

d. The present unbelief of the Jews is only a false step which God has permitted with a view to the conversion of the gentiles, 9:22; 11:12,19,25,30, and ultimately of the Jews themselves: for their own good God will make them 'envious', 10:19, of the gentiles.

e. i.e. the converts to Christianity from the gentiles. Thus even as apostle of the gentiles Paul is working for the salvation of his own people (lit. his 'flesh').

f. This sentence has been variously interpreted. The meaning seems to be that if a comparison may be drawn between the conversion of the gentiles and 'the reconciliation of the world' (the first stage in the redemptive plan), the conversion of Israel will be such a favour from God that it could be compared only with the final resurrection (the

Ep 2:11–22

The Jews are still the chosen people

Nb 15:18–21 When the first-fruits are made holy, so is the whole batch;[g] and if the root is holy, 16
so are the branches. •Now suppose that some branches were broken off, and you[h] 17
are wild olive, grafted among[i] the rest to share with[j] the others the rich sap of the
3:27*o*;5:2c olive tree; •then it is not for you to consider yourself superior to the other branches; 18
1 Co 1:31 and if you start feeling proud, think: it is not you that sustain the root, but the root
that sustains you. •You will say, 'Branches were broken off on purpose for me to 19
be grafted in.' True; •they through their unbelief were broken off, and you are 20
established through your faith. So it is not pride that you should have, but fear: •if 21
Jr 49:12 God did not spare the natural branches, he might not spare you either.[k] •Remem- 22
Lk 23:31 ber God's severity as well as his goodness: his severity to those who fell, and his
goodness to you as long as you persevere in it; if not, you too will be cut off. •And 23
they, if they do not persevere in their unbelief, will be grafted in; for it is within the
power of God to graft them back again. •After all, if you, cut off from what was by 24
nature a wild olive, could then be grafted unnaturally on to a cultivated olive, how
much easier will it be for them, the branches that naturally belong there, to be
grafted on to the olive tree which is their own.

The conversion of the Jews

16:25*l* I want you to be quite certain, brothers, of this mystery, to save you from 25
Pr 3:7 *congratulating yourselves on your own good sense*: part of Israel had its mind
•2 Co 3:14 hardened, but only until the gentiles have wholly come in;[l] •and this is how all 26
11:11d Israel will be saved. As scripture says:[m]

Is 59:20–21 *From Zion will come the Redeemer,*
he will remove godlessness from Jacob.
And this will be my covenant with them, 27
Is 27:9 *when I take their sins away.*

As regards the gospel, they are enemies, but for your sake; but as regards those 28
who are God's choice,[n] they are still well loved for the sake of their ancestors.
9:6 There is no change of mind on God's part about the gifts he has made or 29
Nb 23:19+ of his choice.
1 S 15:29
3:26m Just as you were in the past disobedient to God but now you have been shown 30
mercy, through their disobedience; •so in the same way they are disobedient now, 31
11:11d so that through the mercy shown to you they too will receive mercy. •God has 32
Ezk 18:23+ imprisoned all human beings in their own disobedience only to show mercy to
Ga 3:22 them all.

A hymn to God's mercy and wisdom

Jb 15:8 How rich and deep are the wisdom and the knowledge of God! We cannot reach to 33
Ps 139:6,17seq. the root of his decisions or his ways. •*Who has ever known the mind of the Lord?* 34
Col 2:3 *Who has ever been his adviser?* •*Who has given anything to him, so that his presents* 35
Is 40:13,28 *come only as a debt returned?* •Everything there is comes from him and is caused 36
1 Co 2:11,16 by him and exists for him. To him be glory for ever! Amen.
1 Co 8:6
Col 1:16–17

EXHORTATION

Spiritual worship[a]

1:9f;6:13,16,19 **12** I urge you, then, brothers, remembering the mercies of God, to offer your 1
Ac 10:35j bodies as a living sacrifice, dedicated and acceptable to God; that is the kind
1 P 2:5 of worship for you, as sensible people.[b] •Do not model your behaviour on the 2
8:5,14,26seq. contemporary world, but let the renewing of your minds transform you, so that
Ep 4:23seq. you may discern for yourselves what is the will of God—what is good and accept-
2:18 able and mature.
Ep 5:10,17
Ph 1:10
Heb 5:14

Humility and charity

3 And through the grace that I have been given, I say this to every one of you: never pride yourself on being better than you really are, but think of yourself dispassion- Ph 2:3
4 ately, recognising that God has given to each one his measure of faith.[c] ·Just as 1 Co 12:9;13:2
each of us has various parts in one body, and the parts do not all have the same Ep 4:7b
5 function: ·in the same way, all of us, though there are so many of us, make up one 1 Co 12:12i
6 body in Christ, and as different parts we are all joined to one another.[d] ·Then since
the gifts that we have differ according to the grace that was given to each of us: if it 1 Co 12:8,10, 28–30
7 is a gift of prophecy, we should prophesy as much as our faith[e] tells us; ·if it is a gift Ep 4:7–11
of practical service, let us devote ourselves to serving; if it is teaching, to teaching; Ac 11:27m
8 if it is encouraging, to encouraging. When you give, you should give generously
from the heart; if you are put in charge, you must be conscientious; if you do works Tt 1:5c
9 of mercy, let it be because you enjoy doing them. ·Let love be without any
10 pretence. Avoid what is evil; stick to what is good. ·In brotherly love let your 1 P 1:22 Jn 13:34
feelings of deep affection for one another come to expression and regard others as Ph 2:3
11 more important than yourself.[f] ·In the service of the Lord, work[g] not half-
12 heartedly but with conscientiousness and an eager spirit. ·Be joyful in hope, 1 Co 13:13e
13 persevere in hardship; keep praying regularly; ·share with any of God's holy Ac 1:14;6:4 Col 4:2 1 Th 5:17
people who are in need; look for opportunities to be hospitable. Ac 9:13g 1 Co 16:1a

Charity to everyone, including enemies[h]

Mt 5:38–48+
14, 15 Bless your persecutors; never curse them, bless them. ·Rejoice with others when Si 7:34
16 they rejoice, and be sad with those in sorrow. ·Give the same consideration to all
others alike. Pay no regard to social standing, but meet humble people on their
17 own terms. *Do not congratulate yourself on your own wisdom.* ·Never pay Pr 3:7 Pr 3:4
18 back evil with evil, but *bear in mind the ideals that all regard with respect.* ·As 2 Co 8:21 1 Th 5:15 1 P 3:9
much as is possible, and to the utmost of your ability, be at peace with everyone.
19 Never try to get revenge: leave that, my dear friends, to the Retribution.[i] As Lv 19:18 Pr 20:22
20 scripture says: *Vengeance is mine—I will pay them back*, the Lord promises. ·And 1 Co 6:6–7 Gn 50:19 Dt 32:35
more: *If your enemy is hungry, give him something to eat; if thirsty, something to*
21 *drink. By this, you will be heaping red-hot coals on his head.*[j] ·Do not be mastered Pr 25:21–22+
by evil, but master evil with good.

second stage). If this is true, Paul is thinking of the general resurrection at the end of time; but he does not say that this is to take place immediately after Israel's conversion. On the other hand some translate 'life from those who were dead'. To bring back someone from the dead is an extraordinary prodigy of which only the power of God is capable, *see* 4.17g; 2 Co 1:9. The return of Israel, the prodigal (and, in this case) the elder son, will be no less marvellous, compare Lk 15:24, 32.

g. The future conversion of Israel, vv. 11–15 and more explicitly vv. 25–26, will show that the faithful minority is a true 'remnant' and a reliable 'sign' that the nation will be restored. The unbelieving majority retains some measure of solidarity with the faithful minority and so must to some extent share its holiness, as the handful of dough offered as 'first-fruits' makes the whole baking holy (Nb 15:19–21).

h. The gentile who is now a Christian.

i. Or 'in place of'.

j. Add, 'the root and'.

k. lit. 'perhaps he will not spare you'; var. 'he will not spare you'.

l. Paul is still speaking of peoples, not of individuals: the Jews *en masse*, and the gentile world as a whole.

m. The OT prophesied that as a result of the Messiah's coming Israel would be cleansed of all her sins. Paul teaches (calling it, lit., a 'mystery', v. 25) that this prophecy, partially fulfilled already in the conversion of the gentiles, implies the conversion of the Jewish people also.

n. A clear distinction between the two great stages in the history of salvation, traditionally known as 'Election' and 'Gospel'. In this time of the gospel the Jews rejecting Christ have become the enemies of God, and God has permitted this while the gentiles are converted, *see* 9:22h; 11:11c; but in the earlier times of the Fathers, the Jews were the only chosen people.

12 a. The Christian community has taken the place of the Temple in Jerusalem, Ps 2:6b; 40:8c, and the indwelling of the Spirit gives a new intensity to the presence of God among his holy people, 1 Co 3:16–17; 2 Co 6:16; Ep 2:20–22. This is also the inspiration of a new, spiritual cult, Rm 1:9f; 12:1, for believers are members of Christ, 1 Co 6:15–20, who has become, in his crucified and risen body, the dwelling-place of a new presence of God and a new cult, Mt 12:6–7; 26:61 par., 6a; 27:40 par.; Jn 2:19–22.21i; 4:20–21; Ac 6:13–14; 7:48; Heb 10:4–10a; Rv 21:22.

b. Or 'a spiritual kind'; the contrast is with the ritual sacrifices of Jews and gentiles, cf. Ho 6:6; compare Rm 1:9f.

c. 'Faith' is used here to mean the spiritual gifts bestowed by God on the members of the Christian community to ensure its life and growth.

d. The sentence emphasises not so much the identification of Christians with Christ, 1 Co 12:27 as their dependence on one another.

e. Another translation, less likely, is 'according to the rule of faith', that is, the common teaching of the Church, as in 1 Co 12:3, where the 'confession of faith' is the criterion of authentic gifts of the Spirit'.

f. Or 'outdo each other in mutual esteem'.

g. lit. 'Serve the Lord'; var. 'Be ready when opportunity arises' (lit. 'Serve the time').

h. The perspective now, particularly from v. 17 onwards, embraces all humanity.

i. Presumably the indignation of God waiting to punish sin.

j. The Christian takes vengeance on an enemy by doing good. The image of red-hot coals, symbol of burning pain, stands for the remorse which will bring the sinner to repentance.

Mt 22:16–21par, 1 Tm 2:1–2, Tt 3:1, 1 P 2:13–15, Pr 8:15, Ws 6:3, Jr 27:5

Submission to civil authority [a]

13 Everyone is to obey the governing authorities, because there is no authority 1
except from God and so whatever authorities exist have been appointed by
God. ·So anyone who disobeys an authority is rebelling against God's ordinance; 2
and rebels must expect to receive the condemnation they deserve. ·Magistrates 3
bring fear not to those who do good, but to those who do evil. So if you want to live
with no fear of authority, live honestly and you will have its approval; ·it is there to 4
serve God for you and for your good. But if you do what is wrong, then you may
well be afraid; because it is not for nothing that the symbol of authority is the
sword: it is there to serve God, too, as his avenger, to bring retribution to
wrongdoers. ·You must be obedient, therefore, not only because of this retribu- 5
tion, but also for conscience's sake. ·And this is why you should pay taxes, too, 6
because the authorities are all serving God as his agents, even while they are busily
Mt 22:21par; occupied with that particular task. ·Pay to each one what is due to each: taxes to 7
the one to whom tax is due, tolls to the one to whom tolls are due, respect to the
one to whom respect is due, honour to the one to whom honour is due.

Mt 22:34–40, Jn 13:34, Ga 5:14

Love and Law

The only thing you should owe to anyone is love for one another, for to love the 8
Col 3:14 other person is to fulfil the law. [b] ·All these: *You shall not commit adultery, You* 9
Ex 20:13–17, Dt 5:17–21 *shall not kill, You shall not steal,* [c] *You shall not covet*, and all the other command-
Lv 19:18, Ga 5:14 ments that there are, are summed up in this single phrase: *You must love your*
1 Co 13:4–7 *neighbour* [d] as yourself. ·Love can cause no harm to your neighbour, and so love is 10
the fulfilment of the Law.

1 Th 5:4–8, 1 Co 7:26,29–31, Ep 5:8–16, Col 4:5

Children of the light

Besides, you know the time [e] has come; the moment is here for you to stop sleeping 11
and wake up, because by now our salvation is nearer than when we first began to
believe. ·The night is nearly over, daylight is on the way; so let us throw off 12
Jn 8:12b everything that belongs to the darkness and equip ourselves for the light. ·Let us 13
Ep 6:11b, 1:29q live decently, as in the light of day; with no orgies or drunkenness, no promiscuity
Ga 3:27 or licentiousness, and no wrangling or jealousy. ·Let your armour be the Lord 14
Ep 4:24 Jesus Christ, and stop worrying about how your disordered natural inclinations
may be fulfilled.

6:15g, 1 Co 8:10:14–33

Charity towards the scrupulous

14 Give a welcome to anyone whose faith is not strong, [a] but do not get into 1
arguments about doubtful points. ·One person may have faith enough to 2
eat any kind of food; another, less strong, will eat only vegetables. ·Those who 3
Col 2:16–21 feel free to eat freely are not to condemn those who are unwilling to eat freely; nor
must the person who does not eat freely pass judgement on the one who does—
Mt 7:1, Jm 4:12 because God has welcomed him. ·And who are you, to sit in judgement over 4
somebody else's servant? Whether he deserves to be upheld or to fall is for his own
master to decide; and he shall be upheld, for the Lord has power to uphold him.
Ga 4:10, Col 2:16 One person thinks that some days are holier than others, and another thinks them 5
all equal. Let each of them be fully convinced in his own mind. ·The one who 6
makes special observance of a particular day observes it in honour of the Lord. So
the one who eats freely, eats in honour of the Lord, making his thanksgiving to
God; and the one who does not, abstains from eating in honour of the Lord and
makes his thanksgiving to God. ·For none of us lives for himself and none of us 7
6:10–11, Lk 20:38, Ga 2:19, Ph 1:20, Ac 10:42, 2 Co 5:15 dies for himself; ·while we are alive, we are living for the Lord, and when we die, 8
we die for the Lord: and so, alive or dead, we belong to the Lord. ·It was for this 9
purpose that Christ both died and came to life again: so that he might be Lord of
both the dead and the living. ·Why, then, does one of you make himself judge over 10
his brother, and why does another among you despise his brother? All of us will

have to stand in front of the judgement-seat of God: [b] ·as scripture says: *By my own life* says the Lord, *every knee shall bow before me, every tongue shall give glory to God.* ·It is to God, then, that each of us will have to give an account of himself.

Let us each stop passing judgement, therefore, on one another and decide instead that none of us will place obstacles in any brother's way, or anything that can bring him down. ·I am sure, and quite convinced in the Lord Jesus, that no food is unclean in itself; it is only if someone classifies any kind of food as unclean, then for him it is unclean. ·And indeed, [c] if through any kind of food you are causing offence to a brother, then you are no longer being guided by love. You are not to let the food that you eat cause the ruin of anyone for whom Christ died. ·A privilege [d] of yours must not be allowed to give rise to harmful talk; ·for it is not eating and drinking that make the kingdom of God, but the saving justice, the peace and the joy brought by the Holy Spirit. ·It is the person who serves Christ in these things that will be approved by God and respected by everyone. ·So then, let us be always seeking the ways which lead to peace and the ways in which we can support one another. ·Do not wreck God's work [e] for the sake of food. Certainly all foods are clean; but all the same, any kind can be evil for someone to whom it is an offence to eat it. [f] ·It is best to abstain from eating any meat, or drinking any wine, or from any other activity which might cause a brother to fall away, or to be scandalised, or to weaken.

Within yourself, before God, hold on to what you already believe. [g] Blessed is the person whose principles do not condemn his practice. ·But anyone who eats with qualms of conscience is condemned, because this eating does not spring from faith [h]—and every action which does not spring from faith is sin.

15 It is for us who are strong to bear with the susceptibilities of the weaker ones, and not please ourselves. ·Each of us must consider his neighbour's good, so that we support one another. ·Christ did not indulge his own feelings, either; indeed, as scripture says: *The insults of those who insult you fall on me.* And all these things which were written so long ago were written so that we, learning perseverance and the encouragement which the scriptures give, should have hope. ·Now the God of perseverance and encouragement give you all the same purpose, [a] following the example of Christ Jesus, ·so that you may together give glory to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ with one heart.

Accept one another, then, for the sake of God's glory, as Christ accepted you. I tell you that Christ's work was to serve the circumcised, fulfilling the truthfulness

2:6b 2 Co 5:10 Is 45:23;49:18 Ph 2:10–11
1 Co 8:9
Mt 15:10–20par. Ac 10:15 1 Co 8:10 1 Tm 4:4 ·1 Co 13:1a
1 Co 8:8 Ga 5:22 1 Th 1:6 12:17–18
Tt 1:15 1 Co 8:13
1 Co 8:7
1 Co 9:22 Ga 6:2 1 Th 5:14 1 Co 10:33 14:19 1 Co 8:1 1 Co 13:5 Ps 69:9 1 Co 10:6d 2 Tm 3:16 1 M 12:9 2 M 15:9 1 Co 1:10 2 Co 13:11 Ph 2:2seq. Mt 15:24 Ac 3:25–26

13 a. Paul here enunciates the principle that all lawful authority derives from God. The Christian religion is not in opposition to civil life, 13:1–7, and the Christian is not absolved from the duties and obligations of a citizen. This principle is still maintained even after the first persecutions, Tt 3:1; 1 Tm 2:1,2.

b. Probably law in general rather than the Law of Moses.

c. Add. 'you shall not bear false witness'.

d. In Lv the 'neighbour' was a fellow countryman, here it is any member of the human family which is made one in Christ, Mt 25:40; Ga 3:28.

e. The thought is a fundamental one in Paul's moral teaching. The 'time' (*kairos*) is the eschatological era or 'Last Days', introduced by Christ's death and resurrection and coextensive with the age of the Church on earth, the age of salvation, 2 Co 6:2a. It is opposed to the era that preceded it by a difference not so much of time as of nature. The Christian, henceforward a 'child of the day', emancipated from the wicked world, Ga 1:4, and from the empire of darkness, belongs to the kingdom of God and of his Son, Col 1:13, is already a citizen of heaven, Ph 3:20. This entirely new status dominates the whole moral outlook, *see* 6:3seq.

14 a. Christians not yet securely grounded in the faith and therefore without the firm convictions that would give them a sure conscience, vv. 2,5,22. These considered themselves bound to observe certain days, v. 5, and to abstain from meat or from wine, vv. 2,21, perhaps as a permanent obligation, v. 21. Such ascetical practices were familiar to the gentile world (the Pythagoreans) and the Jewish (the Essenes, John the Baptist). Paul lays down the same general rule as in the similar case of 1 Co 8; 10:14–33: each must act 'for the Lord' as conscience dictates, vv. 5–6, provided it is not a doubtful conscience, v. 23; but above all, charity must govern the conduct of those 'strong' in the faith, vv. 1.15,19–21 and 15:1–13.

b. Who alone knows the secrets of the heart, cf. 2:16; 1 Co 4:3seq.

c. 'And indeed'; var. 'But' or 'Now'.

d. Probably the privilege of Christian liberty of which the 'strong' make use but which may be brought into disrepute, *see* 3:8d.

e. Refers to the weaker brothers, v. 15, or the Christian community, cf. 1 Co 3:9.

f. lit. 'by eating it with a cause of stumbling' *see* v. 13; that is, according to the context (v. 21 deals with the duties of the 'strong'), while giving 'scandal'.

g. var. 'Have you a belief? Hold on to it.' Because such faith is correct it has genuine value before God; but love may be an even higher principle.

h. Here in the sense of right conscience, *see* 14:1a. Other translations 'since he does not act from conviction', or, 'since his action is not prompted by a conviction of faith'.

15 a. i.e. to be thoughtful for one another. Others interpret 'to live in good understanding of one another', 'to live in agreement with one another'.

of God by carrying out the promises made to the fathers, ·and his work was also for 9
the gentiles, so that they should give glory to God for his faithful love [b]; as scripture
Ex 34:6 Ps 18:49 says: *For this I shall praise you among the nations and sing praise to your name.*
Dt 32:43 And in another place it says: *Nations, rejoice, with his people*, ·and in another place 10, 11
Ps 117:1 again: *Praise the Lord, all nations, extol him, all peoples.* ·And in Isaiah, it says: 12
Is 11:10 *The root of Jesse will appear, he who rises up to rule the nations, and in him the nations will put their hope.*

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in your faith, so that in the 13
power of the Holy Spirit you may be rich in hope. [c]

EPILOGUE

Paul's ministry

My brothers, I am quite sure that you, in particular, are full of goodness, fully 14
instructed and capable of correcting each other. ·But I have special confidence in 15
writing on some points to you, to refresh your memories, [d] because of the grace
1:9e Is 66:20 Ac 9:15h that was given to me by God. ·I was given grace to be a minister of Christ Jesus to 16
the gentiles, dedicated to offer [e] them the gospel of God, so that gentiles might
become an acceptable offering, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

3:27o So I can be proud, in Christ Jesus, of what I have done for God. ·Of course I 17, 18
can dare to speak only of the things which Christ has done through me to win the
1:5d 2 Co 12:12+ Ac 1:8j allegiance of the gentiles, using what I have said and done, ·by the power of signs 19
and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God. In this way, from Jerusalem and
Col 1:25 all round, even as far as Illyricum, [f] I have fully carried out the preaching of the
gospel of Christ; ·and what is more, it has been my rule to preach the gospel only 20
2 Co 10:15–16 1 Co 3:10seq. where the name of Christ has not already been heard for I do not build on
Is 52:15 another's foundations; ·in accordance with scripture: *Those who have never* 21
been told about him will see him, and those who have never heard about him will understand.

Paul's plans

1:10 seq. That is why I have been so often prevented from coming to see you; ·now, however, 22, 23
as there is nothing more to keep me in these parts, [g] I hope, after longing for many
years past to visit you, to see you when I am on the way to Spain—·and after 24
enjoying at least something of your company, to be sent on my way with your
12:13 Ac 19:21 support. ·But now I have undertaken to go to Jerusalem in the service of the holy 25
1 Co 16:1a people of God there, ·since Macedonia and Achaia have chosen to make a gener- 26
ous contribution to the poor among God's holy people at Jerusalem.

Yes, they chose to; not that they did not owe it to them. For if the gentiles have 27
11:17seq. 1 Co 9:11 Ga 6:6 been given a share in their spiritual possessions, then in return to give them help
with material possessions is repaying a debt to them. ·So when I have done this, 28
8:27m Col 4:12 and given this harvest into their possession, [h] I shall visit you on the way to Spain.
I am sure that, when I do come to you, I shall come with the fullest blessing 29
of Christ.

Meanwhile I urge you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the 30
Spirit, that in your prayers to God for me [i] you exert yourselves to help me;
Ac 20:3,23; 21:10seq.; 17seq.,27seq. praying that I may escape the unbelievers in Judaea, and that the aid I am 31
carrying to Jerusalem will be acceptable to God's holy people. ·Then I shall come 32
to you, if God wills, for a happy time of relaxation in your company. ·The God of 33
peace be with you all. Amen.

Greetings and good wishes

Ac 18:18 **16** [a]I commend to you our sister Phoebe, [b] a deaconess of the church at 1
Cenchreae; ·give her, in the Lord, a welcome worthy of God's holy people 2

and help her with whatever she needs from you—she herself has come to the help of many people, including myself.

3, 4 My greetings to Prisca and Aquila, my fellow-workers in Christ Jesus, ·who risked their own necks to save my life;[c] to them, thanks not only from me, but 5 from all the churches among the gentiles; ·and my greetings to the church at their house.

Ac 18:2seq.,26
1 Co 16:19
2 Tm 4:19
1 Co 16:19
Col 4:15
Phm 2

Greetings to my dear friend Epaenetus, the first of Asia's offerings to Christ.[d]

1 Co 16:15

6, 7 Greetings to Mary, who worked so hard for you. ·Greetings to those outstanding apostles, Andronicus and Junias, my kinsmen and fellow-prisoners,[e] who were in 8 Christ before me. ·Greetings to Ampliatus, my dear friend in the Lord. 9 Greetings to Urban, my fellow-worker in Christ, and to my dear friend Stachys. 10 Greetings to Apelles, proved servant of Christ. Greetings to all the household of 11 Aristobulus. ·Greetings to my kinsman, Herodion, and greetings to those who 12 belong to the Lord in the household of Narcissus. ·Greetings to Tryphaena and Tryphosa who work hard in the Lord; greetings to my dear friend Persis, also a 13 very hard worker in the Lord. ·Greetings to Rufus,[f] chosen servant of the Lord, 14 and to his mother—a mother to me too. ·Greetings to Asyncritus, Phlegon, 15 Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, and the brothers who are with them. ·Greetings to Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas and all God's holy people 16 who are with them. ·Greet each other with the holy kiss. All the churches of Christ send their greetings.[g]

2 Co 13:12d

A warning and first postscript

Ga 6:11

17 I urge you, brothers, be on your guard against the people who are out to stir up disagreements and bring up difficulties against the teaching which you learnt. 6:17
18 Avoid them.[h] ·People of that sort are servants not of our Lord Christ, but of their own greed; and with talk that sounds smooth and reasonable they deceive the Ph 3:19
19 minds of the unwary. ·Your obedience has become known to everyone, and I am 1:5d,1:8
very pleased with you for it; but I should want you to be learned only in what is Mt 10:16
1 Co 14:20
20 good, and unsophisticated about all that is evil. ·The God of peace will soon crush Gn 3:15
Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.[i]

Last greetings and second postscript

21 Timothy, who is working with me, sends greetings to you, and so do my kinsmen Ac 16:1a
22 Lucius, Jason and Sosipater. ·I, Tertius, who am writing this letter, greet you Ac 13:1;17:5; 20:4
23 in the Lord. ·Greetings to you from Gaius, my host here, and host of the whole church. Erastus, the city treasurer, sends greetings to you, and our brother Quartus. 1 Co 1:14

b. Christ welcomed the gentiles and thus gave glory to God. But by confining his work while on earth to the evangelisation of Israel, cf. Mt 15:24, Christ gave evidence of God's loyalty to his promise, the converted gentiles being living evidence rather of God's mercy. Let these in their turn be merciful to their brothers in the faith, *see* 12:1.

c. This blessing recalls in summary the main themes of Paul's teaching in this letter.

d. Towards the end of this letter, Paul once again gives his claim to write to a church which he has not founded, compare 1:13.

e. The apostolate, even more than the ordinary Christian life, 12:1; cf. Ph 2:17, is a liturgical function, *see* 1:9, the apostle—or rather, through him, Christ, v. 18—makes an offering of the whole human race to God.

f. The two extremes of Paul's missionary journeys at the time of writing; whether he had actually been to Illyricum is disputed.

g. Not that all the gentiles there have been converted, but that Paul's task is to lay foundations; he leaves his disciples to build on them, *see* 1 Co 3:6,10; Col 1:7; etc.

h. lit. 'sealed'.

i. Paul often asks his communities to pray for him, *see* 8:27m. On prayer conceived as a struggle with God, see the examples of Abraham, Gn 18:17seq., Jacob, Gn 32:29, Moses, Ex 32:11–14,30–32; Dt 9:18,25, and the gospel, Mk 7:24–30; Lk 11:1–8.

16 **a.** This chapter may not have formed part of the original epistle, *see* p. 1857.

b. Probably the bearer of the letter.

c. Presumably in Ephesus, either at the time of the riot described in Ac 19:23seq., or during Paul's imprisonment there (*see* v. 7); *see* p. 1857.

d. lit. 'the first-fruits of Asia for Christ'. This probably means the first convert in the province of Asia.

e. Paul had been imprisoned several times already, *see* 2 Co 11:23. Andronicus and Junias (var. Julias) are apostles in the wide sense, Rm 1:1b.

f. Possibly the son of Simon of Cyrene, Mk 15:21.

g. This form of greeting, not found elsewhere in Paul's letters, shows special respect for the church in Rome.

h. The curt warning is reminiscent of Ga 6:12–17. It probably refers to judaising preachers, cf. Ga 5:7–12 and particularly Ph 3:18–19.

i. Omit v. 24 'The grace . . .' This formula (add. 'all') is placed by some authorities (Vulg.) after v. 23 or v. 27.

1 Co 16:23 **Doxology** [j]
2 Co 13:14
Ga 6:18
Ph 4:23
1 Th 5:28
2 Th 3:18
Rv 22:21

And now to him who can make you strong [k] 25
in accordance with the gospel that I preach
and the proclamation of Jesus Christ,
in accordance with that mystery [l]
which for endless ages was kept secret
but now (as the prophets wrote) is revealed, 26
as the eternal God commanded,
to be made known to all the nations,
1:5d so that they obey in faith:
1:25 to him, the only wise [m] God, 27
give glory through Jesus Christ
for ever and ever. Amen. [n]

j. Most authorities place this doxology here, but in some it appears at the end of ch. 15 or 14; others omit. A solemn presentation, cf. Ep 3:20; Jude 24-25, of the main points of the letter.

k. Firmly grounded in doctrine and strong in Christian practice, cf. 1:11; 1 Co 1:8; 2 Co 1:21; Col 2:7; 1 Th 3:2,13; 2 Th 2:17; 3:3.

l. The idea of a 'mystery' of wisdom, v. 27; 1 Co 2:7; Ep 3:9; Col 2:2-3, long hidden in God and now revealed, Rm.16:25-26; 1 Co 2:7,10; Ep 3:5,9seq.; Col 1:26, is borrowed by Paul from Jewish apocalyptic, Dn 2:18-19,18e, but he enriches the content of the term by applying it to the climax of the history of salvation: the saving cross of Christ, 1 Co 2:8; the call of the gentiles, Rm 11:25;16:26; Col 1:26-27, Ep 3:6, to this salvation preached by Paul, Rm.16:25; Col 1:23; 4:3; Ep 3:3-12; 6:19, and finally the restoration of all things in Christ as their one head, Ep 1:9-10. *See also* Mt 13:11par.; 1 Co 4:1; 13:2; 14:2; 15:51; Ep 5:32; 2 Th 2:7; 1 Tm 3:9,16; 2 Tm 1:9-10; Rv 1:20; 10:7; 17:5-7.

m. Cf. 11:33-36; 1 Co 1:24; 2:7; Ep 3:10; Col 2:3; Rv 7:12.

n. The NT adopts the blessings and doxologies of Israel, Gn 14:19h; Ps 41:13f; but often calls God Father and associates Jesus Christ with him, 9:5; 11:35-36; 1 Co 8:6; cf. Ga 1:5; Ep 3:21; Ph 4:20; 1 Tm 1:17; 6:16; 2 Tm 4:18; Heb 13:21; 1 P 4:11; 2 P 3:18; Jude 25; Rv 1:6k. Later doxologies commonly name all three 'Persons', *see* 2 Co 13:13e.

1 CORINTHIANS

THE FIRST LETTER OF PAUL TO THE CHURCH AT CORINTH

INTRODUCTION

Address and greetings. Thanksgiving

Rm 1:1a

1 Paul, called by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, and Sosthenes, Ac 18:17
2 our brother, ·to the church of God[a] in Corinth, to those who have been Ac 5:11b
consecrated in Christ Jesus and called to be God's holy people, with all those Ac 9:13g
everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord as well as Ac 2:21m
3 ours.[b] ·Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
4 I am continually thanking God about you, for the grace of God which you have
5 been given in Christ Jesus; ·in him you have been richly endowed in every kind of 2 Co 8:7,9
6, 7 utterance and knowledge; ·so firmly has witness to Christ taken root in you. ·And 12:8e
so you are not lacking in any gift as you wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be 2 Co 6:10
8 revealed;[c] ·he will continue to give you strength till the very end, so that you will
9 be irreproachable[d] on the Day[e] of our Lord Jesus Christ. ·You can rely on God, 2 Co 1:21
who has called you to be partners[f] with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.[g] Col 2:7
Dt 7:9
Ph 3:10seq.
1 Jn 1:3

1 **a.** One of Paul's favourite expressions: 10:32; 11:16,22; 15:9; 2 Co 1:1; Ga 1:13; 1 Th 2:14; 2 Th 1:4; 1 Tm 3:5,15; *see also* Ac 20:28. Cf. 'the churches of Christ', Rm 16:16. *See* Mt 16:18g; Ac 5:11b.

b. Alternative translation: 'with all those who in every place, theirs as well as ours, pray in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.'

c. When the hidden plans of God are to be made known. Rm 16:25–26. 25*l*. Christ will reveal himself at the end of time, the time of his *parousia*, 15:23n, and his appearing. 1 Tm 6:14f; Cf. Lk 17:30; 2 Th 1:7; Heb 9:28; 1 P 1:5,7,13; 4:13.

d. Cf. Ep 1:4; Ph 1:10; 2:15seq.; Col 1:22; 1 Th 3:13; 5:23; Jude 24.

e. This 'Day of the Lord'. 5:5; 2 Co 1:14; 1 Th 5:2; 2 Th 2:2; cf. 2 P 3:10, called also the 'Day of Christ', Ph 1:6,10; 2:16, or simply the 'Day', 1 Co 3:13; 1 Th 5:4; cf. Heb 10:25, or 'that Day', 2 Th 1:10; 2 Tm 1:12,18; 4:8; cf. Mt 7:22; 24:36; Lk 10:12; 21:34, or 'the Day of the Son of man', Lk 17:22–24; cf. v. 26, or 'the Day of God', 2 P 3:12, or 'the Day of visitation', 1 P 2:12, or 'the great Day', Jude 6; Rv 6:17; 16:14, or 'the last Day', Jn 6:39,40,44,54; 11:24; 12:48, is the fulfilment in the eschatological era, ushered in by Christ, of the 'Day of Yahweh' foretold by the prophets. Am 5:18m. This eschatological imagery of the prophets, so widely used in first-century Judaism, is largely current also in the NT. The fulfilment begins with the first coming of Christ, Lk 17:20–24, and the punishment of Jerusalem, Mt 24:1a; and this final stage in the history of salvation, *see* Ac 1:7i, will be completed by the glorious second coming, 1 Co 1:7 and notes; 15:23n; 1 Tm 6:14f, of the Sovereign Judge, Rm 2:6b; Jm 5:8–9. A cosmic upheaval and renewal will accompany it (*see* Am 8:9h). Mt 24:29 and par., 29*o* Heb 12:26seq.; 2 P 3:10–13; Rv 20:11; 21:1; cf. Mt 19:28; Rm 8:20–22. This Day of light is coming, Rm 13:12; Heb 10:25; Jm 5:8; 1 P 4:7; cf. 1 Th 5:5,8, but exactly when is uncertain, 1 Th 5:1a, meanwhile we must prepare for it, 2 Co 6:2a. But this eschatological imagery also receives a different interpretation in the 'realised eschatology' of Jn. *see* p. 1739; Ep 2:6e.

f. '*Koinonia*', frequently translated as 'communion', or as here 'being partners with', which has a basic meaning which, underlying a variety of usages, is the sharing of possessions. Amongst Christians, it is not spiritual possessions alone which are shared, Rm 15:26–27; 2 Co 8:4; 9:13; Ga 6:6; Ph 4:15–17. They must be united in actions and concerns, 2 Co 1:7; 6:14; 2 Jn 9; Rv 1:9. The communion from which all other forms derive is the partnership of grace from God, 9:23; Ph 1:5; Phm 6; it unites us to the Father and his Son Jesus Christ, 1 Co 1:9; 1 Jn 1:3b, 7e; to Christ himself, 1 Co 10:16; Ph 3:10; 1 P 4:13; to the Spirit, 2 Co 13:13e; Ph 2:1. Because Christ is our partner in human nature, we are his in the divine nature, 2 P 1:4g. The word becomes characteristic of the Christian community, Ac 2:42ff.

g. Cf. 10:13; 2 Co 1:18; 1 Th 5:24; 2 Th 3:3; 2 Tm 2:13; Heb 10:23; 11:11.

I: DIVISIONS AND SCANDALS

A: FACTIONS IN THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH

Dissensions among the faithful

Brothers, I urge you, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, not to have factions among yourselves but all to be in agreement in what you profess; so that you are
Rm 15:5 Ph 2:2seq. perfectly united in your beliefs and judgements. 11 From what Chloe's people [h] have been telling me about you, brothers, it is clear that there are serious differences among you. 12 What I mean is this: every one of you is declaring, 'I belong to
3:22–23g Jn 1:42 Paul,' or 'I belong to Apollos,' or 'I belong to Cephas,' [i] or 'I belong to Christ.' [j]
Ac 18:24p 13 Has Christ been split up? Was it Paul that was crucified for you, or was it in Paul's
Ac 2:38aa Ep 4:5 name that you were baptised? 14 I am thankful I did not baptise any of you, except
Ac 18:8 15 Crispus and Gaius, so that no one can say that you were baptised in my name.
Rm 16:23 16:15–17 Ac 16:15j 16 Yes, I did baptise the family of Stephanas, too; [k] but besides these I do not think I baptised anyone.

The true wisdom and the false

17 After all, Christ sent me not to baptise, but to preach the gospel; and not by means of wisdom of language, [l] wise words which would make the cross of Christ pointless. [m]
18 The message of the cross is folly for those who are on the way to ruin, but
Rm 1:16 19 for those of us who are on the road to salvation it is the power of God. As scripture
Ps 33:10 Is 29:14 Mt 11:25 says: *I am going to destroy the wisdom of the wise and bring to nothing the understanding of any who understand.* [n] 20 *Where are the philosophers? Where are the*
Is 19:12;33:18 *experts?* And where are the debaters of this age? 21 Do you not see how God has shown up human wisdom [o] as folly? Since in the wisdom of God the world was
Rm 1:19–20+ unable to recognise God through wisdom, [p] it was God's own pleasure to save
Mt 12:38par. Jn 2:18+ believers through the folly of the gospel. 22 While the Jews demand miracles and the
Ac 17:19–23 Greeks look for wisdom, [q] 23 we are preaching a crucified Christ: to the Jews an
Jn 12:34 Ga 5:11 obstacle they cannot get over, to the gentiles foolishness, [r] 24 but to those who have been called, whether they are Jews or Greeks, a Christ who is both the power of
Jn 6:35k God and the wisdom of God. 25 God's folly is wiser than human wisdom, and God's
2 Co 12:10;13:4 weakness is stronger than human strength. [s] 26 Consider, brothers, how you were
Dt 7:7 Rm 7:5k called; not many of you are wise by human standards, [t] not many influential, not
1 Sam 16:7 Jg 7:2 Mt 11:25 many from noble families. 27 No, God chose those who by human standards are
2 Co 4:7 Jm 2:5 fools to shame the wise; he chose those who by human standards are weak to shame the strong, 28 those who by human standards are common and contemptible—indeed those who count for nothing—to reduce to nothing all those that do count
Dt 8:16–18+ Rm 3:27o Ep 2:9 for something, 29, 30 so that no human being might feel boastful before God. It is by him that you exist [u] in Christ Jesus, who for us was made wisdom from God, [v] and
Jr 9:22–23 2 Co 10:17 saving justice and holiness and redemption. [w] 31 As scripture says: *If anyone wants to boast, let him boast of the Lord.*

2 Co 11:6 Rm 16:25l 2 Now when I came to you, brothers, I did not come with any brilliance of oratory or wise argument to announce to you the mystery of God. [a] 2 I was resolved that the only knowledge I would have while I was with you was knowledge
Ga 3:1;6:14 of Jesus, and of him as the crucified Christ. 3 I came among you in weakness, in fear
and great trembling [b] 4 and what I spoke and proclaimed was not meant to convince
Ac 1:8j 2 Co 12:12 by philosophical argument, but to demonstrate the convincing power of the Spirit, [c] so that your faith should depend not on human wisdom but on the power of God. [d] 5

But still, to those who have reached maturity, [e] we do talk of a wisdom, not, it is 6
2 Co 4:7 true, a philosophy of this age or of the rulers of this age, [f] who will not last long
Rm 8:29–30q; 16:25l now. 7 It is of the mysterious wisdom [g] of God that we talk, the wisdom that was hidden, which God predestined to be for our glory before the ages began. 8 None
Is 19:11,13 of the rulers of the age recognised it; for if they had recognised it, they would not

9 have crucified the Lord of glory;[h] ·but it is as scripture says:[i] *What no eye has seen*
and no ear has heard, what the mind of man cannot visualise; all that God has
10 *prepared for those who love him,* ·to us, though, God has given revelation through
the Spirit, for the Spirit explores the depths of everything, even the depths of God.
11 After all, is there anyone who knows the qualities of anyone except his own
spirit, within him; and in the same way, nobody knows the qualities of God except
12 the Spirit of God. ·Now, the Spirit we have received is not the spirit of the world
but God's own Spirit, so that we may understand the lavish gifts God has given us.
13 And these are what we speak of, not in the terms learnt from human philosophy,
but in terms learnt from the Spirit, fitting spiritual language to spiritual things.[j]
14 The natural person[k] has no room for the gifts of God's Spirit; to him they are
folly; he cannot recognise them, because their value can be assessed only in the
15 Spirit. ·The spiritual person, on the other hand, can assess the value of everything,
16 and his own value cannot be assessed by anybody else.[l] ·For: *who has ever known*
the mind of the Lord? Who has ever been his adviser? But we are those who have
the mind of Christ.

1 3 And so, brothers, I was not able to talk to you as spiritual people; I had to talk
to you as people still living by your natural inclinations,[a] still infants in Christ;
2 I fed you with milk and not solid food, for you were not yet able to take it—and

▶Ba 3:14
▶Ep 3:10
▶1 P 1:12
Is 64:3
Jr 3:16
Si 1:10
2 Co 13:13e
Jn 14:26r
Pr 20:27
Rm 11:33seq.
15:44w
Mt 16:23
Jn 10:26m
15:44w
Is 40:13
Rm 11:34
7:40
Jn 16:12
Heb 5:12–14
1 Th 2:7
1 P 2:2

h. It is not known who this Chloe was; the phrase suggests that she may have been a trader with a staff of slaves or freedmen.

i. Either because Cephas (Peter) had visited the church of Corinth, or because some members of that church paid special allegiance to Peter's authority acknowledged in other churches.

j. Perhaps they claimed to have seen Christ on earth, cf. Ac 1:21seq.; 10:41, and so claimed preference over others, cf. 1 Co 9:1; 2 Co 5:16g; 11:5,23; 12:11.

k. This correction to the previous sentence indicates that Paul is dictating, cf. 16:21.

l. This human wisdom (here philosophical speculation and tricks of rhetoric) will be contrasted with the wisdom of God, v. 24 and 2:6seq.

m. Paul develops this point in 2:1–5.

n. The same point is made in Is 29:14: God promises a people who are being terrorised by the Assyrian threat that the workings of a purely human mind will not be able to save them.

o. Nowhere in this passage does Paul condemn genuine human wisdom, the gift of God and a means to knowledge of God, v. 21*p*; what he condemns is an arrogant wisdom which fails of its object.

p. That is, in the works of God which make his wisdom known, *see* Ws 13:1–9; Rm 1:19–20. Other interpretations are possible: by deliberate arrangements of God's wisdom; or, at the time of God's wisdom, that is of the old economy which was under the standard of good sense, as opposed to the new economy where God reveals himself by seemingly senseless paradox.

q. It is 'human' to want a proof, whether miracles guaranteeing the truth of the message, or a logical argument resting on philosophical axioms. This desire is not in itself reprehensible, and the cross of Christ, paradoxically, responds to it, v. 23r. But it is unacceptable if it becomes a condition without which the mind refuses to believe.

r. From the human point of view the cross goes against all the expectations both of Jews and of Greeks; it is a rejection rather than a glorious manifestation, foolishness instead of wisdom. But to the eyes of faith the cross is the climax and overflow of the expectations, the power and wisdom of God.

s. The paradox of God's action (1:18–25) is fulfilled in the choice of the Corinthians (1:26–30) and in Paul's preaching (2:1–5).

t. i.e. from a purely human point of view.

u. You who formerly, in the eyes of the world, did not exist (v. 28) now exist in Jesus Christ, while those who in the eyes of the world exist are reduced to nothing. It is about this new existence in Jesus Christ, and this alone, that you should boast (*see* vv. 29,31).

v. So Christian wisdom is not the fruit of human effort 'according to the flesh'. It is found in a member of the human race who appeared in 'the fullness of time' (Ga 4:4), Christ, whom we must 'win' (Ph 3:8) in order to find in him all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col 2:3). This wisdom is that of an all-embracing salvation, 'saving justice and holiness and redemption'.

w. These three last concepts form the basic themes of the future letter to the Romans, which was surely already taking shape in Paul's mind, *see* Rm 1:17; 6:19,22; 3:24.

2 **a.** var. 'the witness of God'.

b. 'fear and trembling': a biblical cliché, cf. 2:3; Jg 7:3; Ps 2:11seq.; 55:5; Ezk 12:18; Mk 5:33; 2 Co 7:15; Ph 2:12.

c. An allusion to the miracles and outpouring of the Spirit which went with Paul's preaching (cf. 1:5 and 2 Co 12:12).

d. Words of human wisdom are persuasive by themselves (v. 4). They evoke in their listeners a purely human response (v. 5). It is just this that Paul will not accept. His word is indeed a demonstration (v. 4) but shows the action of the Spirit and demands a response on a different plane, that of the Spirit.

e. The 'mature' or 'perfect' (*teleioi*) are not an exclusive group of initiates but those who have reached maturity in Christian life and thought. Cf. 14:20; Mt 19:21g; Ph 3:15; Col 4:12; Heb 5:14. They are the same as the 'spiritual people' whom Paul contrasts with the 'infants in Christ', 3:1.

f. Perhaps human rulers or governments; more probably, the evil powers or demons that control the world, cf. 15:24–25; Ep 6:12. *See also* Lk 4:6 and Jn 12:31i; but the reference is perhaps to both, the latter using the former as their tools.

g. lit. 'in mystery', not an enigmatic wisdom, but a wisdom whose object is a mystery, the secret of the plan of salvation realised in Christ, Rm 16:25*l*.

h. The 'glory' is the manifestation of Yahweh's power, Ex 24:16f, the incommunicable attribute of God. The title 'Lord of glory' implies the same dignity for Jesus as that of Yahweh himself.

i. A free combination of Is 64:3 and Jr 3:16, or possibly a quotation from the *Apocalypse of Elijah*.

j. A difficult passage. It can also be understood 'showing how spiritual things fit spiritual people' or 'spiritual things thus fitting spiritual people' or 'allowing spiritual people to judge spiritual things'.

k. *psychikos*: a human being left to his own natural resources. *See* the note on *soma psychikon*, *see* 15:44w.

l. Possibly a defensive remark: Paul, a 'spiritual' man, is not to be judged by the Corinthians who are 'sensual', 3:1–3. In ch. 14, Paul lays down rules to be obeyed by the 'spiritual'; *see also* 1 Th 5:19–22.

3 **a.** lit. 'in the flesh'. For the distinction between 'spirit' and 'flesh', *see* Rm 1:9f.

even now, you are still not able to, ·for you are still living by your natural 3
Ga 5:19–20 inclinations. As long as there are jealousy and rivalry[b] among you, that surely
means that you are still living by your natural inclinations and by merely human
1:12 principles. ·While there is one that says, 'I belong to Paul' and another that says, 4
'I belong to Apollos' are you not being only too human?

The place of the Christian preacher

2 Co 6:4
Ac 18:24–27 For what is Apollos and what is Paul? The servants through whom you came to 5
believe, and each has only what the Lord has given him. ·I did the planting, 6
Apollos did the watering, but God gave growth. ·In this, neither the planter nor 7
the waterer counts for anything; only God, who gives growth. ·It is all one who 8
does the planting and who does the watering, and each will have the proper pay for
2 Co 6:1 the work that he has done. ·After all, we do share in God's work;[c] you are God's 9
Ep 2:20–22
1 P 2:5 farm, God's building.

By the grace of God which was given to me, I laid the foundations like a trained 10
master-builder, and someone else is building on them. Now each one must be
Ps 118:22
Is 28:16 careful how he does the building. ·For nobody can lay down any other foundation 11
Ac 4:11–12
1 P 2:4 than the one which is there already, namely Jesus Christ. ·On this foundation, 12
different people may build in gold, silver, jewels, wood, hay or straw ·but each 13
1:8e person's handiwork will be shown for what it is. The Day which dawns in fire will
Mt 3:11–12par.
1 P 1:7 make it clear and the fire itself will test the quality of each person's work. ·The one 14
whose work stands up to it will be given his wages; ·the one whose work is burnt 15
down will suffer the loss of it, though he himself will be saved; he will be saved as
someone might expect to be saved from a fire.[d]

6:19
2 Co 6:16
Ep 2:20–22 Do you not realise that you are a temple[e] of God with the Spirit of God living 16
in you? ·If anybody should destroy the temple of God, God will destroy that 17
person,[f] because God's temple is holy;[g] and you are that temple.

Conclusions

1:17–25 There is no room for self-delusion. Any one of you who thinks he is wise by 18
worldly standards must learn to be a fool in order to be really wise. ·For the 19
Jb 5:13 wisdom of the world is folly to God. As scripture says: *He traps the crafty in the*
Ps 94:11 *snare of their own cunning* ·and again: *The Lord knows the plans of* the wise *and* 20
how insipid they are. ·So there is to be no boasting about human beings: everything 21
1:12 belongs to you, ·whether it is Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, the world, life or death, 22
11:3 the present or the future—all belong to you; ·but you belong to Christ and Christ 23
2 Co 10:7 belongs to God.[h]

Lk 12:42–44 4 People should think of us as Christ's servants, stewards entrusted with the 1
mysteries of God. ·In such a matter, what is expected of stewards is that each 2
one should be found trustworthy. ·It is of no importance to me how you or any 3
Jb 9:2.15
2 Co 5:10–11 other human court[a] may judge me: I will not even be the judge of my own self. ·It 4
is true that my conscience does not reproach me,[b] but that is not enough to justify
Mt 7:1 me: it is the Lord who is my judge. ·For that reason, do not judge anything before 5
Lk 12:2–3
Rm 2:16 the due time, until the Lord comes; he will bring to light everything that is hidden
in darkness and reveal the designs of all hearts. Then everyone will receive from
God the appropriate commendation.

I have applied all this to myself and Apollos for your sakes, so that you can learn 6
how the saying, 'Nothing beyond what is written'[c] is true of us: no individual
among you must become filled with his own importance and make comparisons, to
Jr 3:27 another's detriment. ·Who made you so important? What have you got that was 7
not given to you? And if it was given to you, why are you boasting as though it were
Ho 12:9
Rv 3:17 your own? ·You already have everything—you are rich already—you have come 8
into your kingdom,[d] without any help from us! Well, I wish you were kings and we
2 Co 4:8–12;
6:4–10;11:
23–33 could be kings with you! ·For it seems to me that God has put us apostles on show 9
2 Tm 3:10–11 right at the end, like men condemned to death: we have been exhibited as a
spectacle[e] to the whole universe, both angelic and human. ·Here we are, fools for 10

Christ's sake, while you are the clever ones in Christ; we are weak, while you are
11 strong; you are honoured, while we are disgraced.[f] •To this day, we go short of 2 Co 11:27
12 food and drink and clothes, we are beaten up and we have no homes; •we earn our Ac 18:3d
living by labouring with our own hands; when we are cursed, we answer with a
13 blessing; when we are hounded, we endure it passively; •when we are insulted, we
give a courteous answer. We are treated even now as the dregs of the world, the Lm 3:45
very lowest scum.[g]

An appeal

14 I am writing all this not to make you ashamed but simply to remind you, as my dear
15 children; •for even though you might have ten thousand slaves to look after you[h] 2 Co 6:13
in Christ, you still have no more than one father, and it was I who fathered you in Ga 4:19
16 Christ Jesus,[i] by the gospel. •That is why I urge you to take me as your pattern 1 Th 2:11
17 and why I have sent you Timothy, a dear and faithful son to me in the Lord, who Phm 10
will remind you of my principles of conduct[j] in Christ, as I teach them everywhere 11:1
in every church. Ph 3:17
1 Th 1:6
2 Th 3:7b
Ac 16:1a;19:22

18 On the assumption that I was not coming to you, some of you have become filled
19 with your own self-importance; •but I shall be coming to you soon, the Lord
willing, and then I shall find out not what these self-important people say, but what Ac 18:21
20 power they have.[k] •For the kingdom of God consists not in spoken words but in
21 power. •What do you want then? Am I to come to you with a stick in my hand or in 2:4c
love, and with a spirit of gentleness? 2 Co 10:2

B: INCEST IN CORINTH

1 5 It is widely reported that there is sexual immorality among you, immorality of
a kind that is not found even among gentiles: that one of you is living with his Lv 18:8;20:11
Dt 27:20

b. add. 'and dissension'.

c. Or 'We are God's labourers'.

d. i.e., he will escape 'by the skin of his teeth', as one who has run through the flames. Purgatory is not directly envisaged here, but this text is one of those on the basis of which the Church has made this doctrine explicit.

e. It is the Christian community, the Body of Christ (12:12i), which is the Temple of the new covenant, and the Spirit that lives in it makes a reality of what was prefigured by the Temple of Jerusalem in which lived 'the glory' of God, 1 K 8:10–13; *see* Jn 2:21i; Rv 21:22; and 1 Co 6:19; 2 Co 6:16.

f. Paul distinguishes three kinds of preachers: those who build solidly (v. 14), those who build in non-resistant materials (v. 15), and those who destroy instead of building (v.17). These last are sacrilegious and should be punished accordingly.

g. i.e. consecrated and reserved to God: to lay hands on it is sacrilege.

h. vv. 21–23 deliberately echo the terms of 1:12 'Every one of you is declaring, "I belong to Paul" or "I belong to Apollos" or "I belong to Cephas." ' It is exactly the opposite, retorts Paul. You do not belong to them; they belong to you as your servants. And they are at your service, as is all creation, so that you may belong to Christ, who in his turn belongs to God the Father.

4 **a.** lit. 'day'. Paul is being ironical, suggesting that people are making their own 'Day of the Lord', *see* 1:8e, by passing a judgement which only God has a right to make.

b. The word *syneidesis*, *see* 1 S 25:31; Ws 17:11c, acquired a Christian value in Paul. Whatever may be the external norms, human conduct springs only from personal judgement. Ac 23:1; 24:16; Rm 2:14–15; 9:1; 13:5; 2 Co 1:12; but this judgement is subject to God's judgement, 1 Co 8:7–12; 10:25–29; 2 Co 4:2, cf. 1 P 2:19. Conscience is good and pure if it is inspired by faith and love, 1 Tm 1:5; 19, etc.; 1 P 3:16,21, and purified by Christ's blood, Heb 9:14; 10:22.

c. Obscure. Perhaps a citation of a proverb familiar to the Corinthian Jews; perhaps a gloss deprecating some insertion by a copyist.

d. Without any help from us, you are already installed in the kingdom of Heaven and enjoy all its riches to your complete satisfaction.

e. Like the men condemned to death in the arena with wild animals, with spectators crowding to watch as though at a sport.

f. At the end of this passage, vv. 6–10, Paul takes up again, ironically, the themes of ch. 1–2; you are, or claim to be, sensible, strong, honoured; but this is in the eyes not of God but of the world, which considers us foolish, weak and contemptible, and consequently persecutes us (vv. 11–13); the reality, in the eyes of God, is exactly the opposite.

g. The words translated 'dregs' and 'scum' are also used for the unfortunates who were used as expiatory victims in public calamities. Paul often returns to the subject of his sufferings, the persecutions he underwent in his apostolate and the way God enabled him to overcome them: 2 Co 4:7–12; 6:4–10; 11:23–33; 1 Th 3:4; 2 Tm 3:10–11. In his view, the weakness of the apostle shows the power of him by whom he was sent, 2 Co 12:9–10; Ph 4:13, because the greatness of the work done cannot be attributed entirely to the envoy, 2 Co 4:7c.

h. 'slaves'. This refers to a type of slave whose business was to take the child, and later the young man, to his teachers, to watch over him and keep him within bounds. Since the nuance is pejorative, perhaps the best translation is 'nursemaids' even though the original reference is to males.

i. This spiritual fatherhood corresponds to what Paul says in 3:6, 'I did the planting'; I sowed in you the new life of the Spirit which conforms you to Christ; *see* v. 17; Ga 4:19; Phm 10. Elsewhere it is his tenderness for his converts that Paul likens to that of a father or mother, 1 Th 2:7,11, *see* 2 Co 12:15e.

j. Cf. Ps 119:1; Jn 14:6d; Ac 9:2b.

k. Paul is referring to effects of the power of the Spirit (*see* 2:4; 1 Th 1:5), and especially conversion and life according to the Spirit.

stepmother.[a] ·And you so filled with your own self-importance! It would have 2
Lv 18:29 Dt 13:6 been better if you had been grieving bitterly, so that the man who has done this
Col 2:5 thing were turned out of the community. ·For my part, however distant I am 3
physically, I am present in spirit and have already condemned the man who
behaved in this way, just as though I were present in person. ·When you have 4
Mt 18:20 gathered together in the name of our Lord Jesus,[b] with the presence of my spirit,[c]
1:8e 1 Tm 1:20 and in the power of our Lord Jesus, ·hand such a man over to Satan, to be 5
destroyed as far as natural life is concerned, so that on the Day of the Lord[d] his
spirit may be saved.

Ga 5:9 Your self-satisfaction is ill founded. Do you not realise that only a little yeast[e] 6
leavens the whole batch of dough? ·Throw out the old yeast so that you can be the 7
Jn 1:29 1 P 1:19 Rv 5:6 fresh dough, unleavened as you are. For our Passover has been sacrificed, that is,
Ex 12:19 Christ; ·let us keep the feast, then, with none of the old yeast and no leavening of 8
evil and wickedness, but only the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.[f]

2 Co 6:17 In my letter,[g] I wrote to you that you should have nothing to do with people 9
1 Jn 5:19 living immoral lives. ·I was not including everybody in this present world who is 10
sexually immoral, or everybody who is greedy, or dishonest or worships false
Jn 17:15 gods—that would mean you would have to cut yourselves off completely from the
world. ·In fact what I meant was that you were not to have anything to do with 11
Rm 1:29q anyone going by the name of brother[h] who is sexually immoral, or is greedy, or
worships false gods, or is a slanderer or a drunkard or dishonest; never even have
a meal with anybody of that kind. ·It is no concern of mine to judge outsiders.[i] 12
It is for you to judge those who are inside, is it not? ·But outsiders are for 13
God to judge.

Dt 13:6 *You must banish this evil-doer from among you.*

C: RECOURSE TO THE GENTILE COURTS[a]

6 Is one of you with a complaint against another so brazen as to seek judgement 1
Ac 9:13f from sinners and not from God's holy people?[b] ·Do you not realise that the 2
Dn 7:22,26 Mt 19:28 Rv 20:4 holy people of God are to be the judges of the world?[c] And if the world is to be
judged by you, are you not competent for petty cases? ·Do you not realise that we 3
Jude 5–6 shall be the judges of angels?—then quite certainly over matters of this life. ·But 4
when you have matters of this life to be judged, you bring them before those who
are of no account in the Church![d] ·I say this to make you ashamed of yourselves. 5
Can it really be that it is impossible to find in the community one sensible person
capable of deciding questions between brothers, ·and that this is why brother goes 6
to law against brother, and that before unbelievers? ·No; it is a fault in you, by 7
itself, that one of you should go to law against another at all: why do you not prefer
Mt 5:38–42par. Rm 12:17–19 1 Th 5:15 to suffer injustice, why not prefer to be defrauded? ·And here you are, doing the 8
injustice and the defrauding, and to your own brothers.

Do you not realise that people who do evil will never inherit the kingdom of 9
Rm 1:29q God? Make no mistake—the sexually immoral, idolaters, adulterers, the self-
indulgent, sodomites, ·thieves, misers, drunkards, slanderers and swindlers, none 10
of these will inherit the kingdom of God.[e] ·Some of you used to be of that kind: 11
Jn 3:5 Ep 2:1–6 Tt 3:3–7 1 Jn 2:12 but you have been washed clean, you have been sanctified, and you have been
justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and through the Spirit
of our God.[f]

D: SEXUAL IMMORALITY

10:23 Rm 6:15g Gn 4:7 'For me everything is permissible';[g] maybe, but not everything does good. True, 12
for me everything is permissible, but I am determined not to be dominated by
anything. ·Foods are for the stomach, and the stomach is for foods; and God 13

14 will destroy them both. But the body is not for sexual immorality; [h] ·it is for the
Lord, and the Lord is for the body. God raised up the Lord and he will raise [i]
15 us up too by his power. ·Do you not realise that your bodies are members of
Christ's body; do you think one can take parts of Christ's body and join them to
16 the body of a prostitute? Out of the question! ·Or do you not realise that anyone
who attaches himself to a prostitute is one body with her, since *the two*, as it is
17 said, *become one flesh*. ·But anyone who attaches himself to the Lord is one
spirit with him. [j]
18 Keep away from sexual immorality. All other sins that someone may commit are
done outside the body; [k] but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body.
19 Do you not realise that your body is the temple [l] of the Holy Spirit, who is in you
20 and whom you received from God? ·You are not your own property, then; you
have been bought at a price. [m] So use your body for the glory of God.

Col 2:22
10:31
15:12seq.
Rm 1:4c;8:11g
1 Co 12:12i
Rm 6:12–13
Gn 2:24
Rm 8:9–10
3:16–17
Rm 5:5e
1 Th 4:4–8
3:23
7:23
Rm 3:24j;6:15j
Ph 1:20

II: ANSWERS TO VARIOUS QUESTIONS

A: MARRIAGE AND VIRGINITY [a]

1 7 Now for the questions about which you wrote. Yes, it is a good thing for a man
2 not to touch a woman; [b] · yet to avoid immorality every man should have his

5 **a.** 'His father's wife'. Marriage to a stepmother was forbidden by the OT (Lv 18:8) and Roman Law, but such a union was tolerated by the majority of rabbis in converted gentiles; and this may explain the indulgence of the Corinthian community, who were not subject to Roman civil law. The council of Jerusalem forbade such unions, Ac 15:20u.

b. var. 'of our Lord Jesus Christ'.

c. Paul is asking the church to confirm a decision he has already taken, and make it a verdict of the whole community in the name of Jesus; cf. Mt 18:18.

d. This is not precisely 'excommunication'; the word does not occur in the Bible (it does not exactly correspond to 'anathema', the curse of destruction 16:22h; Jos 6:17b). Punishment by exclusion was practised in the OT, in Judaism and at Qumran. The NT shows several cases where the motives and ways of carrying it out are different. Sometimes the guilty person is kept temporarily apart from the community, 5:2.9–13; 2 Th 3:6–14; Ti 3:10; cf. 1 Jn 5:16–17; 2 Jn 10; sometimes he is 'handed over', here and 1 Tm 1:20, to Satan, deprived of the support of God's people, the Church, and so left exposed to the power which God allows the Adversary, 2 Th 2:4, *see* Jb 1:6g; even in these extreme cases there is hope of repentance and final salvation, as here and 2 Th 3:15. Such a discipline presupposes that the Church has a certain degree of power over its members, *see* Mt 18:15–18,18j.

e. Yeast is here a symbol of corruption, as in Mt 16:6 and par.; Ga 5:9, and contrary to Mt 13:33 and par. Unleavened bread is the symbol of purity, v. 8. We have here a typical example of Pauline moral teaching: become what you are already. 'You are pure; purify yourselves.' Do in your lives what Christ did in you when you became Christians; cf. Rm 6:11–12; Col 3:3–5.

f. At Passover time, according to the Jewish ritual, all leavened bread was removed from the house (Ex 12:15), the paschal lamb was sacrificed (Ex 12:6) and unleavened bread was eaten (Ex 12:18–20). These were the symbolic preparations for the Christian mystery. By his sacrifice, Christ, the true paschal lamb, destroys the old leaven of sin and makes possible a life holy and pure, of which unleavened bread is the symbol. It is possible that this imagery was suggested to Paul by the time of year at which he was writing.

g. The 'pre-canonical' letter, *see* pp. 1854–5.

h. That is, a member of the Christian community, Ac 1:15s.

i. Those who do not belong to the community, cf. Mk 4:11; Col 4:5; 1 Th 4:12; 1 Tm 3:7. The expression is of Jewish origin, *see* Si, prologue v. 5.

6 **a.** In the following eight verses, Paul's disapproval of the Christians' recourse to the gentile magistrates is expressed with a sarcastic irony which contrasts with his more sober thoughts on gentile courts in Rm 13:1–7.

b. The gentile magistrates. Not that the Corinthian judges were more corrupt than others but they had not been 'justified' by God through faith in Christ. Hence Paul's play on words: how could they administer 'justice' for those who were 'justified', i.e. the consecrated people, or members of the Christian community?

c. Side by side with Christ, the sovereign judge.

d. That is, gentile judges, compare Mt 5:25; 18:17. Alternative translation: 'If you have matters in this life to be judged, bring them, etc . . .', that is, before more lowly Christians, who are perfectly capable of judging 'petty cases.'

e. Cf. 15:50; Ga 5:21; Ep 5:5; Rv 21:8; 22:15.

f. Note the trinitarian formula, *see* 2 Co 13:13e.

g. This may be one of Paul's own sayings which has been quoted against him.

h. A direct answer to the libertines, who maintained that sexual intercourse was as necessary to the body as food and drink. Paul replies that food and drink are linked to the present world and will disappear with it (v. 13); but, cf. 10:31, sexual conduct touches our belonging to Christ and must be such as to befit a member of Christ, vv. 15–17, *see* Ep 5:21–33,23f.

i. var. 'has raised'. This fits the theology of Col 2:12 better than that of Rm 6:4–8, and seems anachronistic in 1 Co.

j. One would expect 'is one body with him', but Paul is careful to avoid too materialistic an understanding of the physical realism of union to Christ (v. 15).

k. This contrast is fairly familiar to Semitic literature, cf. Mt 12:31; Lk 14:26; Rm 9:13. A debauchee sins more against his own body than one who commits another less physical sin; he turns his body away from its true vocation which is to make a relationship with a life other than his own.

l. *See* 3:16e; Jn 2:21i.

m. *See* Rm 3:24j.

7 **a.** Paul does not consider marriage and virginity in general, but gives answers, seemingly point by point, to the questions put to him. He considers in turn: married people (the Christian couple, vv. 1–11, marriage between Christian and gentile, vv. 12–16) and unmarried people (virgins, vv. 23–35, engaged couples, vv. 36–38, widows, vv. 39–40). The general principle of solution is given in vv. 17,20,24: Everyone should remain in the condition in which he was when called. But this plan is not inflexible: virginity is often mentioned with regard to marriage and vice versa. In this way Paul suggests that the two conditions are complementary and cannot be understood in isolation.

Ep 5:22–33,23f own wife and every woman her own husband. [c] ·The husband must give to his wife 3
what she has a right to expect, and so too the wife to her husband. ·The wife does 4
not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; and in the same way,
the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. [d] ·You 5
must not deprive each other, except by mutual consent for a limited time, to leave
Ex 19:15f yourselves free for prayer, and to come together again afterwards; otherwise Satan
may take advantage of any lack of self-control to put you to the test. ·I am telling 6
Mt 19:12 you this as a concession, [e] not an order. ·I should still like everyone to be as I am 7
myself; but everyone has his own gift from God, one this kind and the next
something different. [f]

To the unmarried [g] and to widows I say: it is good for them to stay as they are, 8
like me. [h] ·But if they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry, since it is better 9
to be married than to be burnt up.

Mt 5:32par.; 19:9 To the married I give this ruling, and this is not mine but the Lord's: a wife must 10
1 P 3:1 not be separated from her husband—·or if she has already left him, she must 11
remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband—and a husband must not
divorce his wife.

For other cases these instructions are my own, not the Lord's. If one of the 12
brothers has a wife who is not a believer, and she is willing to stay with him, he may
not divorce her; ·and if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is 13
willing to stay with her, she may not divorce her husband. ·You see, the unbelieving 14
husband is sanctified through his wife and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through
the brother. If this were not so, your children would be unclean, whereas in fact
they are holy. [i] ·But if the unbeliever chooses to leave, then let the separation take 15
place: [j] in these circumstances, the brother or sister is no longer tied. But God has
called you [k] to live in peace: ·as a wife, how can you tell whether you are to be 16
the salvation of your husband; as a husband, how can you tell whether you are to
be the salvation of your wife?

7:20,24 ·Anyway let everyone continue in the part which the Lord has allotted to him, as 17
he was when God called him. This is the rule that I give to all the churches. ·If a 18
1 M 1:15 man who is called has already been circumcised, then he must stay circumcised;
Rm 2:25–29 Ga 5:6;6:15 when an uncircumcised man is called, he may not be circumcised. ·To be circum- 19
cised is of no importance, and to be uncircumcised is of no importance; what is
7:17,24 important is the keeping of God's commandments. ·Everyone should stay in 20
whatever state he was in when he was called. ·So, if when you were called, you 21
Rm 6:15g Ep 6:5–9 were a slave, [l] do not think it matters—even if you have a chance of freedom, you
Col 3:22–4:1 should prefer to make full use of your condition as a slave. ·You see, anyone who 22
was called in the Lord while a slave, is a freeman of the Lord; and in the same way,
Rm 6:18,22 •6:20 anyone who was free when called, is a slave of Christ. ·You have been bought at a 23
Rm 3:24j price; do not be slaves now to any human being. [m] ·Each one of you, brothers, is 24
7:17,20 to stay before God in the state in which you were called.

About people remaining virgin, [n] I have no directions from the Lord, but I give 25
my own opinion as a person who has been granted the Lord's mercy to be faithful.
Well then, because of the stress which is weighing upon us, [o] the right thing seems 26
to be this: it is good for people to stay as they are. ·If you are joined to a wife, do 27
not seek to be released; if you are freed of a wife, do not look for a wife.
However, if you do get married, that is not a sin, and it is not sinful for a virgin to 28
enter upon marriage. But such people will have the hardships consequent on
human nature, [p] and I would like you to be without that.

2 Co 6:2a What I mean, brothers, is that the time has become limited, [q] and from now on, 29
2 Co 6:8–10 those who have wives should live as though they had none; ·and those who mourn 30
as though they were not mourning; those who enjoy life as though they did not
enjoy it; those who have been buying property as though they had no possessions;
and those who are involved with the world as though they were people not 31
1 P 4:7 1 Jn 2:16–17 engrossed in it. [r] Because this world as we know it is passing away.
Mt 6:25 I should like you to have your minds free from all worry. The unmarried man 32

33 gives his mind to the Lord's affairs and to how he can please the Lord; ·but the
man who is married gives his mind to the affairs of this world and to how he can
34 please his wife, and he is divided in mind. ·So, too, the unmarried woman, and the
virgin, gives her mind to the Lord's affairs [s] and to being holy in body and spirit;
but the married woman gives her mind to the affairs of this world and to how she
35 can please her husband. ·I am saying this only to help you, not to put a bridle on
you, but so that everything is as it should be, and you are able to give your
undivided attention to the Lord.
36 If someone with strong passions thinks that he is behaving badly towards his
fiancée and that things should take their due course, he should follow his desires.
37 There is no sin in it; they should marry. ·But if he stands firm in his resolution,
without any compulsion but with full control of his own will, and decides to let her
38 remain as his fiancée, then he is acting well. ·In other words, he who marries his
fiancée [t] is doing well, and he who does not, better still.
39 A wife is tied as long as her husband is alive. But if the husband dies, she is free Rm 7:2
40 to marry anybody she likes, only it must be in the Lord. [u] ·She would be happier if
she stayed as she is, to my way of thinking—and I believe that I too have the Spirit 2:16
of God.

B: FOOD OFFERED TO FALSE GODS [a]

General principles

1 8 Now about food which has been dedicated to false gods. We are well aware
that all of us have knowledge; but while knowledge puffs up, love is what builds Rm 15:2

b. Or 'Now for the questions about which you wrote, namely that it is a good thing for a man not to touch a woman.' In any case Paul recognises the validity of this opinion for the unmarried (it is better that they should remain so, v. 8), but contests its application to married people, for whom he does not recommend continence, vv. 2–5.

c. An invitation to married people to make use of marriage, rather than advice to those who have not received the vocation to celibacy.

d. Every selfish use of marriage is ruled out. What is demanded is the gift of self; in Ep 5:25 it is the example of Christ in his sacrifice which is put before married people.

e. This concession applies to periods of abstinence within marriage. For others the concession is to marry, *see* v. 7.

f. For Paul the distinction of virginity from marriage is not that it is a special gift from God, for both conditions are gifts from God.

g. Paul includes in this category separated couples, *see* v. 11.

h. The expression recalls Gn 2:18 and seems to contradict it, 'It is not good for man to be alone.' But this contradiction is only superficial: for the Christian united to Christ and to his brothers, the solitude of Adam is an impossibility.

i. 'Sanctification' and 'holiness' here, as frequently in the Bible, mean not so much the perfection of life as its precondition—dedication to God and adoption by him, *see* Ac 9:13g. By marrying one of God's people a pagan is brought into a special relationship with the true God and with his Church. The children born of such a marriage are members of the holy people by right. It is to be noted that no mention is made of baptism.

j. The same word as at v. 11, where remarriage is explicitly excluded; but in this case Paul does not explicitly envisage a new marriage.

k. var. 'us'.

l. lit. 'rather make good use'. Some supply 'of the chance', but this does not fit the context.

m. Spiritually, by their point of view and morals.

n. This applies to both sexes.

o. The 'time of troubles' between the first coming of Christ and his return, *see* 2 Co 6:2a.

p. Not the trials of concupiscence, 7:2,9, but the upsets of married life.

q. A technical term: 'time has been put under full sail'. Whatever the interval before the *parousía*, it loses its importance in view of the fact that, in the risen Christ, the world to come is already present.

r. A piece of rhetoric where the overall effect is more important than the individual elements. Paul does not recommend indifference with regard to earthly things, he wishes only to prevent his readers from becoming engrossed in them and forgetting that they have a value only relatively to Christ and his coming Kingdom.

s. var. v. 33: '. . . what pleases his wife; v. 34: And there is a difference between the married and the unmarried woman. The unmarried woman gives her mind to the Lord's affairs.'

t. 'his fiancée', lit. 'his virgin'. • The old interpretation of this text sees in it the dilemma of conscience for a father wondering whether he should dispose of his daughter's hand in marriage. The translation then reads

> Still, if there is anyone who feels that it would not be fair to his daughter to let her grow too old for marriage, and that he should do something about it, he is free to do as he likes: he is not sinning if there is a marriage. On the other hand, if someone has firmly made his mind up, without any compulsion and in complete freedom of choice, to keep his daughter as she is, he will be doing a good thing. In other words, the man who sees that his daughter is married has done a good thing but the man who keeps his daughter unmarried has done something even better.

But this interpretation raises such difficulties that it is progressively being abandoned. It is surely a question not of girls who put their virginity under the protection of a trustworthy man with whom they live in dangerous intimacy, but of fiancées. After speaking of married people and of virgins, and before raising the question of widows, Paul discusses those who were engaged at the time of their conversion, to whom the thrice-repeated principle (vv. 17,20,24) 'Let everyone stay as he was when he received the call' obviously cannot apply. Paul's solution agrees with what he said in vv. 8–9.

u. She should marry a Christian.

8 **a.** When food, especially meat, was offered to the gods, part of it went to the priests and the donor, and what remained might be eaten at a sacred meal or might be sold in the shops and markets. The Corinthians were divided on this matter: could one eat such food without compromising with

up. ·Someone may think that he has full knowledge of something and yet not 2
know it as well as he should; ·but someone who loves God is known by God. 3
On the subject of eating foods dedicated to false gods, we are well aware that 4
Dt 6:4b none of the false gods exists in reality and that there is no God other than the One.
Though there are so-called gods, in the heavens or on earth—and there are plenty 5
Ex 20:2–3.3b of gods and plenty of lords [b]—·yet for us there is only one God, the Father from 6
Jn 1:3
Rm 11:36 whom all things come and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ,
Ep 4:5–6
Col 1:16–17 through whom all things come and through whom we exist. [c]
1 Tm 2:5
Heb 1:2

The claims of knowledge

Rm 14:15:1–2.7 However, not everybody has this knowledge. There are some in whose consciences 7
1 Th 5:14 false gods still play such a part [d] that they take the food as though it had been
dedicated to a god; then their conscience being vulnerable, is defiled, ·But of 8
Rm 14:17 course food cannot make us acceptable to God; [e] we lose nothing by not eating it,
Col 2:21seq.
Heb 13:9 we gain nothing by eating it. ·Only be careful that this freedom of yours does not in 9
Rm 6:15g any way turn into an obstacle to trip those who are vulnerable. ·Suppose someone 10
Rm 14:15 sees you, who have the knowledge, sitting eating in the temple of some false god,
do you not think that his conscience, vulnerable as it is, may be encouraged to eat
foods dedicated to false gods? ·And then it would be through your knowledge that 11
Mt 10:40+; 18:6+ this brother for whom Christ died, vulnerable as he is, has been lost. ·So, sinning 12
Ac 9:5 against your brothers and wounding their vulnerable consciences, you would be
sinning against Christ. ·That is why, if food can be the cause of a brother's downfall, 13
Rm 14:13, 20seq. I will never eat meat any more, rather than cause my brother's downfall.

Paul invokes his own example [a]

Rm 1:1b;6:15g 9 Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you 1
2 Co 12:12 15:8 not my work in the Lord? ·Even if to others I am not an apostle, to you at any 2
Ac 9:17i rate I am, for you are the seal of my apostolate in the Lord. ·To those who want to 3
2 Co 3:3
Mt 8:14 interrogate me, this is my answer. ·Have we not every right to eat and drink? [b] 4
Lk 8:2–3 And every right to be accompanied by a Christian wife, [c] like the other 5
Mt 8:14; 12:46p apostles, like the brothers of the Lord, and like Cephas? ·Are Barnabas and I the 6
Jn 1:42
Ac 4:36p only ones who have no right to stop working? ·What soldier would ever serve in 7
Dt 20:6 the army at his own expense? And who is there who would plant a vineyard and
Ac 18:3d
2 Tm 2:6 never eat the fruit from it; or would keep a flock and not feed on the milk from his
flock? ·Do not think that this is merely worldly wisdom. Does not the Law say 8
Dt 25:4 exactly the same? It is written in the Law of Moses: ·*You must not muzzle an ox* 9
1 Tm 5:18
Lk 12:6.24 *when it is treading out the corn.* Is it about oxen that God is concerned here, ·or is 10
10:6d it not said entirely for our sake? Clearly it was written for our sake, because it is
right that whoever ploughs should plough with the expectation of having his share,
Rm 15:27 and whoever threshes should thresh with the expectation of having his share. ·If 11
we have sown the seed of spiritual things in you, is it too much to ask that we should
receive from you a crop of material things? ·Others have been given such rights 12
over you and do we not deserve more? In fact, we have never exercised this right;
4:12 on the contrary, we have put up with anything rather than obstruct the gospel of
Christ in any way. ·Do you not realise that the ministers in the Temple get their 13
Dt 18:1a food from the Temple, and those who serve at the altar can claim their share from
Mt 10:10par. the altar? ·In the same way, the Lord gave the instruction that those who preach 14
the gospel should get their living from the gospel.

However, I have never availed myself of any rights of this kind; and I have not 15
written this to secure such treatment for myself; I would rather die than that . . .
No one shall take from me this ground of boasting. [d] ·In fact, preaching the gospel 16
gives me nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion and I should be in trouble
Ac 4:20;9:15–16; 22:14–15; 26:16–18 if I failed to do it. ·If I did it on my own initiative I would deserve a reward; but if I 17
Ga 2:7 do it under compulsion I am simply accepting a task entrusted to me. ·What reward 18
2 Co 11:7 do I have, then? That in my preaching I offer the gospel free of charge to avoid
using the rights which the gospel allows me.

19 So though I was not a slave to any human being, I put myself in slavery to all Rm 6:15g
20 people, to win as many as I could. ·To the Jews I made myself as a Jew, to win the Mt 20:26par.
Jews; to those under the Law as one under the Law (though I am not), in order to
21 win those under the Law; ·to those outside the Law as one outside the Law, though
I am not outside the Law but under Christ's law,[c] to win those outside the Law. Ac 21:23–26 Ga 4:4–5+
22 To the weak, I made myself weak, to win the weak. I accommodated myself to 2 Co 11:29
people in all kinds of different situations, so that by all possible means I might bring
23 some to salvation. ·All this I do for the sake of the gospel, that I may share its
benefits with others.
24 Do you not realise that, though all the runners in the stadium take part in the Ga 5:7d
25 race, only one of them gets the prize? Run like that—to win. ·Every athlete Ws 4:2c;5:16 Ph 3:14 2 Tm 4:7–8 Jm 1:12 1 P 5:4 Rv 2:10;3:11
concentrates completely on training, and this is to win a wreath that will wither,
26 whereas ours will never wither. ·So that is how I run, not without a clear goal;
27 and how I box, not wasting blows on air. ·I punish my body and bring it under
control, to avoid any risk that, having acted as herald for others, I myself may
be disqualified.[f]

A warning and the lessons of Israel's history[a]

1 **10** I want you to be quite certain, brothers, that our ancestors all had the cloud Ex 13:21;14:22
2 over them and all passed through the sea. ·In the cloud and in the sea they Ex 16:4–35
3, 4 were all baptised into Moses; ·all ate the same spiritual food ·and all drank the Ex 17:5–6 Nb 20:7–11
same spiritual drink,[b] since they drank from the spiritual rock which followed
5 them,[c] and that rock was Christ. ·In spite of this, God was not pleased with most of
6 them, and their corpses *were scattered over the desert.* ·Now these happenings were Nb 14:16 Heb 3:17
examples,[d] for our benefit, so that we should never set our hearts, as they did, on Nb 11:4.34
7 evil things;· nor are you to worship false gods, as some of them did, as it says in
scripture: *The people sat down to eat and drink, and afterwards got up to amuse* Ex 32:6
8 *themselves.* ·Nor, again, are we to fall into sexual immorality; some of them did Nb 25:1–9
9 this, and twenty-three thousand met their downfall in one day. ·And we are not to Nb 21:5–6
put the Lord[e] to the test; some of them put him to the test, and they were killed by
10 snakes. ·Never complain; some of them complained, and they were killed by the Nb 17:6–15
11 Destroyer. ·Now all these things happened to them by way of example, and they Ex 12:23j 10:6d
were described in writing to be a lesson for us, to whom it has fallen to live in the Rm 15:4

idolatry? Paul answers as in Rm 14–15: the Christian is free, but love requires him to respect the susceptibilities of his brothers who have scruples. He does not mention the decree of Jerusalem, Ac 15:20.29, and indeed seems ignorant of it. For a discussion of the problems *see* Ac 15:1a.

b. Paul is simply stating a fact. The 'gods' are the mythical gods of Olympus, the 'lords' are divinised human beings.

c. Or possibly 'only one God, the Father, from whom all things (come) and to whom we (go), and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things (come) and through whom we (go to the Father).' The parentheses indicate words supplied to make this sentence, devoid of verbs, intelligible. Note the affirmation of the pre-existence of Christ, *see* Ph 2:6f; Col 1:15d.

d. var. 'because of the conception of false gods which they still have'.

e. Or 'bring us to judgement before God'.

9 a. Paul has been showing how, though free to do whatever he thinks best about food dedicated to false gods, a Christian should be guided by love. There follows a fairly long description of how he himself has given up some of his rights as an apostle, out of consideration for others.

b. At the expense of the Christian congregations.

c. Or 'a wife who is a believer'. In any case, for the work of attending to their material welfare, married apostles like Cephas (Peter) presumably took their wives.

d. lit. 'I would rather die than . . . No one shall take away something that I can boast of.' Aposiopesis.

e. In the sense explained in 11:1 and Ga 2:20m.

f. This passage uses the sporting vocabulary of the day. Paul invites 'the strong' to imitate him by sacrificing their rights for love, in order to receive a heavenly reward, just as athletes deprive themselves of everything to win the prize.

10 a. vv. 1–13 are a commentary on 'disqualified', in the previous sentence. The examples from Israel's history show there is a real danger of being rejected. The cause of the disqualification was arrogance and presumption, so the 'strong' should beware of these vices.

b. Paul recalls the cloud and the passing through the Sea of Reeds (or Red Sea), images of baptism, and manna and water from the rock, images of the Eucharist, to spur the Corinthians to prudence and humility. The Hebrews in the desert enjoyed, in some sense, the same privileges as themselves, but nevertheless most of them failed to please God, v. 5.

c. According to a rabbinic tradition, the rock of Nb 20:8 followed Israel in the desert. For Paul this rock symbolises the pre-existent Christ already active in Israel's history.

d. The purpose in the events, intended by God, was to prefigure in the history of Israel the spiritual realities of the messianic age (which are known as 'antitypes', 1 P 3:21, but *see* Heb 9:24). These 'typological' (or less accurately, 'allegorical', Ga 4:24) meanings in the OT narrative, though not consciously intended by the authors, are nevertheless valid and necessary for the understanding of scripture intended by God, the author of scripture as a whole. Typological meanings of OT events are often pointed out by the authors of the NT, as though the sole purpose of Israel's written history had been to provide types for the instruction of Christians. Paul does this, v. 11 and 9:9; Rm 4:23 seq.; 5:14; 15:4; cf. 2 Tm 3:16, and some books like John and Hebrews are based on a typological interpretation of the OT.

e. var. 'Christ'.

last days of the ages. ·Everyone, no matter how firmly he thinks he is standing, 12
Ga 6:1 must be careful he does not fall. ·None of the trials which have come upon you is 13
more than a human being can stand. You can trust that God will not let you be put
1:9f to the test[f] beyond your strength, but with any trial will also provide a way out by
Si 15:11–20 Mt 6:13;26:41 Jm 1:13–14 enabling you to put up with it.

Sacrificial feasts. No compromise with idolatry

For that reason, my dear friends, have nothing to do with the worship of false gods. 14
I am talking to you as sensible people; weigh up for yourselves what I have to 15
11:23–26+ Mt 26:26–28 par.+ Ac 2:42+ say. ·The blessing-cup,[g] which we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ; 16
and the loaf of bread which we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ?
And as there is one loaf, so we, although there are many of us, are one single 17
12:12i body, for we all share in the one loaf.[h] ·Now compare the natural people of 18
Lv 3:1a Israel:[i] is it not true that those who eat the sacrifices share the altar? ·What does 19
this mean? That the dedication of food to false gods amounts to anything? Or that
false gods themselves amount to anything? ·No, it does not; simply that when 20
Dt 32:17 pagans sacrifice, *what is sacrificed by them is sacrificed to demons who are not God.*
2 Co 6:14–16 I do not want you to share with demons. ·You cannot drink the cup of the Lord 21
and the cup of demons as well; you cannot have a share at the Lord's table and the
Dt 4:2f demons' table as well.[j] ·Do we really want to arouse the Lord's jealousy;[k] are we 22
stronger than he is?

Food sacrificed to idols. Practical solutions

6:12g •Rm 14:19;15:2 10:33 Ph 2:4 'Everything is permissible'; maybe so, but not everything does good. True, every- 23
thing is permissible, but not everything builds people up. ·Nobody should be 24
looking for selfish advantage, but everybody for someone else's. ·Eat anything that 25
is sold in butchers' shops; there is no need to ask questions for conscience's sake,
Ps 24:1 since *To the Lord belong the earth and all it contains*. ·If an unbeliever invites you 26, 27
Col 3:17 1 P 4:11 to a meal, go if you want to, and eat whatever is put before you; you need not ask
questions of conscience first. ·But if someone says to you, 'This food has been 28
offered in sacrifice,' do not eat it, out of consideration for the person that told you,
for conscience's sake—·not your own conscience, I mean, but the other person's. 29
Why should my freedom be governed by somebody else's conscience?[l] ·Provided 30
that I accept it with gratitude, why should I be blamed for eating food for which I
give thanks? ·Whatever you eat, then, or drink, and whatever else you do, do it all 31
9:19–23 for the glory of God. ·Never be a cause of offence, either to Jews or to Greeks or to 32
1:2a •Rm 15:2 •2 Co 10:24+ the Church of God, ·just as I try to accommodate everybody in everything, not 33
looking for my own advantage, but for the advantage of everybody else, so that
they may be saved.

2 Th 3:7b **11** Take me as your pattern, just as I take Christ for mine. 1

C: DECORUM IN PUBLIC WORSHIP

Women's behaviour at services

I congratulate you for remembering me so consistently and for maintaining the 2
15:1–3 1 Th 2:13d; 4:1–2 2 Th 2:15l traditions exactly as I passed them on to you. ·But I should like you to understand 3
•Gn 3:16 Ep 5:23c Col 1:18+ •3:23 that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of
Christ is God. ·For any man to pray or to prophesy with his head covered shows 4
disrespect for his head.[a] ·And for a woman to pray or prophesy with her head 5
Ac 11:27m 2 Co 3:18 11:15 uncovered shows disrespect for her head; it is exactly the same as if she had her
hair shaved off. ·Indeed, if a woman does go without a veil, she should have her 6
hair cut off too; but if it is a shameful thing for a woman to have her hair cut off or
shaved off, then she should wear a veil.
Gn 1:26–27 But for a man it is not right to have his head covered, since he is the image of 7

8 God and reflects God's glory; but woman is the reflection of man's glory. ·For man
9 did not come from woman; no, woman came from man; ·nor was man created for Gn 2:21–23
10 the sake of woman, but woman for the sake of man: ·and this is why it is right for a
woman to wear on her head a sign of the authority over her, because of the angels. [b] 14:34
11 However, in the Lord, though woman is nothing without man, man is nothing
12 without woman; ·and though woman came from man, so does every man come
from a woman, and everything comes from God.
13 Decide for yourselves: does it seem fitting that a woman should pray to God
14 without a veil? ·Does not nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a
15 disgrace to him, ·but when a woman has long hair, it is her glory? After all, her
hair was given to her to be a covering.
16 If anyone wants to be contentious, I say that we have no such custom, nor do any
of the churches of God. 1:2a;4:17;7:17;14:33

The Lord's Supper

17 Now that I am on the subject of instructions, I cannot congratulate you on the
18 meetings you hold; they do more harm than good. ·In the first place, I hear that
when you all come together in your assembly, there are separate factions among 1:10
19 you, and to some extent I believe it. ·It is no bad thing, either, that there should be
differing groups among you so that those who are to be trusted among you can be
20 clearly recognised. ·So, when you meet together, it is not the Lord's Supper that
21 you eat; ·for when the eating begins, each one of you has his own supper [c] first, and
22 there is one going hungry while another is getting drunk. ·Surely you have homes
for doing your eating and drinking in? Or have you such disregard for God's
assembly that you can put to shame those who have nothing? What am I to say to 1:2a
you? Congratulate you? On this I cannot congratulate you.
23 For the tradition I received from the Lord [d] and also handed on to you is that on 10:16–17;15:3+
24 the night he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took some bread, ·and after he had given ‖Mt 26:26–29 ‖Mk 14:22–25 ‖Lk 22:14–20
thanks, he broke it, and he said, 'This is my body, which is for you; [e] do this in
25 remembrance of me.' ·And in the same way, with the cup after supper, saying, ·Ex 12:14 Dt 16:3 Ex 24:8e Jr 31:31 Heb 8:6–13
'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Whenever you drink it, do this as a
26 memorial of me.' [f] ·Whenever you eat this bread, then, and drink this cup, you are 16:22 Rv 22:17,20
27 proclaiming the Lord's death until he comes. ·Therefore anyone who eats the

f. In the NT, the aim of being put to the test is that the reality behind the appearance may be found. God 'tempts' someone although he knows the heart, 2 Ch 32:31; Jr 11:20, to give that person the chance to reveal the very deepest attitudes, Gn 22:1a; Ex 16:4; Dt 8:12.16; 13:4; Jdt 8:25–27. More often, this testing is initiated by external circumstances, or by the Devil, the 'Tempter', 7:5; Jb 1:8–12; Mt 4:1 and par.; 1 Th 3:5; Rv 2:10, or by greed, 1 Tm 6:9; Jm 1:13–14, which gives the word the sense of a seduction, an attraction towards evil, over which, however, the faithful can triumph with God's help, Si 44:20; Mt 6:13seq.; 26:41seq.; Lk 8:13; 1 P 1:6–7. Jesus allowed himself to be tempted in order to emphasise his submission to the will of the Father, Mt 4:1 and par.; 26:39–41 and par.; Heb 2:18; 4:15. Anyone who 'tempts' God, however, is guilty of blasphemy, Ex 17:2.7; Ac 15:10k.

g. i.e. the cup of wine for which we thank God, like Christ at the Last Supper.

h. By sharing in the Body of Christ, Christians are united to Christ and to one another. The Eucharist makes the unity of the Church in Christ a reality, *see* 12:12j.

i. The Israel of history, cf. Rm 7:5, as compared with the Israel 'of God', Ga 6:16, the true Israel, the Christian community.

j. In vv. 16–18, eucharistic communion with Christ is compared with the sacrificial meals of the OT, at which the participants were in communion with the altar. Here the table of the Eucharist is contrasted with the table of the sacred meals which conclude pagan sacrifices. For Paul, the Eucharist can clearly be regarded as a sacrificial meal.

k. The jealousy of God, Ex 20:5; Dt 4:24, which the OT compares with the jealousy of a husband for his wife, Ho 2:21seq., 21u.v., is touched on in several places in the NT. Here the word has its full meaning: worship of the true God must exclude all 'communion' with idolatry, and it implies a loyalty to be preserved at all costs, 2 Co 11:2, and zeal in the service of the faith, Ac 22:3; Rm 10:2; Ga 1:13–14; Ph 3:6.

l. One should not do violence to the erroneous conscience of another, but also not submit to its false judgement.

11 a. That is, Christ, from whom he appears to hide instead of 'reflecting his brightness with his face unveiled', 2 Co 3:18. Paul is playing here on the two meanings of the Greek word *kephale*, 'head' or 'master'. His argument is so directly based on the customs to which he is used (v. 16) that his conclusions must be understood in that context.

b. The guardians of order and decorum in public worship, according to a Jewish interpretation of the end of Dt 23:15 (Qumran).

c. Their 'own supper' is contrasted with the 'Lord's Supper' of v. 20, which demands a common celebration in love rather than a selfish division into groups.

d. Not by a direct revelation, but from a tradition going back to the Lord. Here, as in 15:3–7, *see* 15:3b, Paul is using the technical terminology of the rabbis for the passing on of tradition; he seems to be quoting the earliest Christian tradition about the Eucharist, couched in terms and phrases untypical of Paul.

e. var. 'This is my body, broken for you,' 'given for you'.

f. Paul's text is close to that of Lk 22:19–20.

bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily is answerable for the body and blood of the Lord.

Everyone is to examine himself and only then eat of the bread or drink from the 28
cup; ·because a person who eats and drinks [g] without recognising the body [h] is 29
eating and drinking his own condemnation. ·That is why many of you are weak and 30
ill and a good number have died. [i] ·If we were critical of ourselves we would not be 31
Dt 8:5+ condemned, ·but when we are judged by the Lord, we are corrected by the Lord to 32
save us from being condemned along with the world. [j]

So then, my brothers, when you meet for the Meal, wait for each other; ·anyone 33, 34
who is hungry should eat at home. Then your meeting will not bring your condemnation. The other matters I shall arrange when I come.

Spiritual gifts [a]

12 About the gifts of the Spirit, brothers, I want you to be quite certain. ·You 1, 2
remember that, when you were pagans, you were irresistibly drawn to
inarticulate heathen gods. [b] ·Because of that, I want to make it quite clear to you 3
Jn 14:26r
1 Jn 4:1–3 that no one who says 'A curse on Jesus' can be speaking in the Spirit of God, and
Ac 2:21m,36w
Rm 10:9
Ph 2:11 nobody is able to say, 'Jesus is Lord' except in the Holy Spirit.

The variety and the unity of gifts

There are many different gifts, but it is always the same Spirit; ·there are many 4, 5
different ways of serving, but it is always the same Lord. ·There are many different 6
forms of activity, but in everybody it is the same God who is at work in them all. [c]
12:28–30
Ac 1:8j The particular manifestation of the Spirit granted to each one is to be used for the 7
Rm 12:6–8 general good. ·To one is given from the Spirit the gift of utterance expressing 8
wisdom; [d] to another the gift of utterance expressing knowledge, [e] in accordance
with the same Spirit; ·to another, faith, [f] from the same Spirit; and to another, the 9
gifts of healing, through this one Spirit; ·to another, the working of miracles; to 10
Ac 2:4+;
11:27m another, prophecy; to another, the power of distinguishing spirits; [g] to one, the gift
1 Jn 4:1–3 of different tongues [h] and to another, the interpretation of tongues. ·But at work 11
in all these is one and the same Spirit, distributing them at will to each individual.

The analogy of the body [i]

Rm 12:4–5 For as with the human body which is a unity although it has many parts—all the 12
parts of the body, though many, still making up one single body—so it is with
Ga 3:28
Ep 4:4–6
Col 3:11 Christ. [j] ·We were baptised into one body in a single Spirit, Jews as well as Greeks, 13
·Phm 16f slaves as well as free men, and we were all given the same Spirit to drink. ·And 14
indeed the body consists not of one member but of many. ·If the foot were to say, 15
'I am not a hand and so I do not belong to the body,' it does not belong to the body
any the less for that. ·Or if the ear were to say, 'I am not an eye, and so I do not 16
belong to the body,' that would not stop its belonging to the body. ·If the whole 17
body were just an eye, how would there be any hearing? If the whole body were
hearing, how would there be any smelling?

As it is, God has put all the separate parts into the body as he chose. ·If they 18, 19
were all the same part, how could it be a body? ·As it is, the parts are many but the 20
body is one. ·The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you,' and nor can 21
the head say to the feet, 'I have no need of you.'

What is more, it is precisely the parts of the body that seem to be the weakest 22
which are the indispensable ones. ·It is the parts of the body which we consider 23
least dignified that we surround with the greatest dignity; and our less presentable
parts are given greater presentability ·which our presentable parts do not need. 24
God has composed the body so that greater dignity is given to the parts which were
without it, ·and so that there may not be disagreements inside the body but each 25
Rm 12:15 part may be equally concerned for all the others. ·If one part is hurt, all the parts 26
share its pain. And if one part is honoured, all the parts share its joy.

12:7–11 Now Christ's body is yourselves, each of you with a part to play in the whole. 27

28 And those whom God has appointed in the Church are, first apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly teachers[k]. . . after them, miraculous powers, then gifts of heal- 29 ing, helpful acts,[l] guidance,[m] various kinds of tongues. 30 Are all of them apostles? Or all prophets? Or all teachers? Or all miracle-workers? Do all have the gifts of healing? Do all of them speak in tongues and all interpret them? ▶Rm 12:6–8 ▶Ep 4:11 Rm 1:1b Ac 11:27m

The order of importance in spiritual gifts. Hymn to Love[n]

31 Set your mind on the higher gifts. And now I am going to put before you the best way of all.

1 **13** Though I command languages both human and angelic—if I speak without love,[a] I am no more than a gong booming or a cymbal clashing.

g. add. 'unworthily'.

h. var. 'The Body of the Lord'. This v. is most naturally taken as referring to failures to recognise Christ's presence and activity in the Eucharist (cf. v. 27). However, the emphasis in this letter on the Church as the Body of Christ suggests that there may be also a reference to selfish individuals who ignore needy fellow-members of the Christian family (cf. vv. 11 and 33).

i. Evidently Paul considers the sickness and death of some Corinthians to have been a punishment for irreverence to 'the body and blood of the Lord'.

j. The punishments are sent as a lesson so that people may reform themselves before the Last Judgement. They would not have been necessary if the guilty person had examined and corrected himself, particularly on the occasions of sharing in the Body of Christ (v. 31).

12 a. Chapters 12 to 14 deal with making the proper use of the gifts of the Spirit (charisms), granted to the community as visible evidence of the presence of the Spirit and to help the young community whose faith had not transformed a mentality shot through with paganism. The Corinthian Christians have been tempted to value and develop the more spectacular gifts, and to exercise them at the assemblies of the church in an undisciplined atmosphere reminiscent of certain pagan ceremonies. Paul's response is to declare that charisms are given for the good of the community; they should never give rise to the forming of rival parties (ch. 12). In fact, Christian love surpasses all other gifts (ch. 13). Finally, he explains that the hierarchy of charisms is established according to the contribution that each of them makes to the building up of the community (ch. 14).

b. There is probably an allusion here to the incoherence and disorderliness which were held to be a sign of the authenticity of certain pagan cults; this is contrasted in v. 3 with the meetings of the Christians, at which the content of the sermon or prophecy, not the mere appearance of being inspired, is the sign of its truth.

c. Note again the triadic formulation, cf. 6:11; 2 Co 13:13e.

d. Probably the gift of preaching the deepest Christian truths about God and God's life in us: this is the 'perfect teaching' of Heb 6:1; *see also* 2 Co 2:6–16.

e. The gift of preaching elementary Christian truths: 'the elementary teaching concerning Christ' of Heb 6:1.

f. An unusually intense faith, cf. 13:2.

g. The gift of knowing if *charismata* were spiritual, natural, or evil.

h. The gift of 'tongues', or glossolalia, is the power of praying, especially praising God, under the action of the Spirit and under the pressure of ecstasy, by making sounds which, though continuous and syllabled, are not intelligible as language. This is what Paul calls 'speaking in tongues' (14:5,6,18,23,39) or 'speaking in a tongue' (14:2,4,9,13, 14,19,26,27). This gift was one of the first visible effects of the outpouring of the Spirit in the primitive Church. *See* Ac 2:3–4; 10:44–46; 11:15; 19:6.

i. Paul uses the classical analogy of society as a single body with many parts, but his concept of the Body of Christ goes back to the memory of his own conversion, *see* Ac 9:4seq.; Ga 1:15seq., to faith in Jesus whose body, raised from the dead and given life by the Spirit, Rm 1:4c, became the 'first-fruits' of a new creation, 1 Co 15:23. The words spoken by the Lord at Paul's conversion, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,' imply that Christians are identified with the risen Christ. In Paul's writings, Christians are bodily united with the risen body, Rm 8:11, by baptism, 1 Co 12:13; cf. Rm 6:4a, and the Eucharist, 1 Co 10:16seq., which make them parts of Christ's body, 1 Co 6:15, united in such a way that he and they together form the Body of Christ (what is now called 'the mystical body'), 1 Co 12:27; Rm 12:4seq. This wholly realistic teaching of 1 Co is taken up later on and developed in the Letters of the Captivity, where the basic idea remains the same, i.e. human beings are reconciled to God by becoming parts of, Ep 5:30, Christ's body which was physically dead but is now spiritually alive, Ep 2:14–18; Col 1:22. The stress, however, is on the unity of the Body that brings all Christians together in one Spirit, Ep 4:4; Col 3:15, and on the identification of the Body with the Church, Ep 1:22seq.; 5:23; Col 1:18,24. Having thus personified the body, Ep 4:12seq.; Col 2:19, Paul asserts that Christ is its Head, Ep 1:22; 4:15seq.; 5:23; Col 1:18; 2:19 (cf. 1 Co 12:21). This assertion probably developed from the concept of Christ as Head of all Powers, Col 2:10. Eventually, in its widest sense, Paul includes in his concept of the Body the entire cosmos as unified under the Lord Christ, Ep 1:23t; *see* Jn 2:21i.

j. As the human body gives plurality of its parts, so Christ, the principle of unity in his Church, brings all Christians into the unity of his Body.

k. The regular teachers appointed for each separate church, *see* Ac 13:1a.

l. lit. 'helpings': possibly those who collected or dispensed grants to the poor; or persons appointed to assist regularly at the meetings.

m. The gift of administering and directing the churches.

n. Three parts: superiority of love (vv. 1–3), its works (vv. 4–7), its never-ending duration (vv. 8–13). It is about love between brothers. Love for God is not directly envisaged, but is present implicitly, especially in v. 13, in connection with faith and hope.

13 a. Love (*agape*) has no possessiveness and is not a desire for satisfaction: it wants to satisfy the other. The supreme love is God's love for us, 1 Jn 4:19, that made him give his Son so that sinners might be reconciled, Rm 5:8; 8:32–39; 2 Co 5:18–21; Ep 2:4–7; *see* Jn 3:16seq.; 1 Jn 4:9–10, and become not only God's chosen ones, Ep 1:4, but God's sons, 1 Jn 3:1. This love is attributed to God (the Father), Rm 5:5; 8:39; 2 Co 13:11,13; Ph 2:1; 2 Th 2:16; cf. 1 Jn 2:15, but as it is identical with God's nature, 1 Jn 4:7seq., 16, it is found in the Son, Rm 8:35,37,39; 2 Co 5:14; Ep 3:19; 1 Tm 1:14; 2 Tm 1:13, so the Son loves the Father as the Son is loved by the Father, Ep 1:6; Col 1:13; cf. Jn 3:35; 10:17; 14:31, and as the Father loves us, so the Son loves the human race, Jn 13:1,34; 14:21; 15:9, which he was sent to save, 2 Co 5:14seq.; Ga 2:20; Ep 5:2,25; 1 Tm 1:14seq.; cf. Jn 15:13; 1 Jn 3:16; Rv 1:5. This is the same love that the Holy Spirit, Rm 15:30; Col 1:8, gives Christians, Rm 5:5; cf. Ga 5:22. To love friends and enemies, Mt 5:43–48 and par., is not only the necessary consequence of God's love for us, but actually proves that God loves us, 1 Jn 3:17; 4:20seq., and it is the new commandment laid down by Christ, Jn 13:34seq.; 15:12,17; 1 Jn 3:23; etc., and constantly emphasised by his disciples, Rm 13:8; Ga 5:13seq.; Ep 1:15; Ph 2:2seq.; Col 1:4; 1 Th 3:12; 2 Th 1:3; Phm 5–7; cf. Jm 2:8; 1 P 1:22; 2:17; 4:8; 1 Jn 2:10; 3:10seq., 14; etc. This is how Paul loves the Christians of his own churches, 2 Co 2:4; 12:15;

Mt 7:22 And though I have the power of prophecy, to penetrate all mysteries and 2
Mt 17:20 knowledge, and though I have all the faith necessary to move mountains—if I am
Jm 2:14–17 Mt 6:2 without love, I am nothing. ·Though I should give away to the poor all that I 3
Dn 3:28 (95) possess, and even give up my body to be burned[b]– if I am without love, it will do me no good whatever.

Rm 12:9–10; 13:8–10 1 Th 5:14–15 Love is always patient[c] and kind; love is never jealous; love is not boastful or 4 conceited, ·it is never rude and never seeks its own advantage, it does not take 5 offence or store up grievances. ·Love does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but finds its 6 Pr 10:12 joy in the truth. ·It is always ready to make allowances, to trust, to hope and to 7 endure whatever comes.

13:13c Ac 2:4+; 11:27m Love never comes to an end.[d] But if there are prophecies, they will be done 8 away with; if tongues, they will fall silent; and if knowledge, it will be done away with. ·For we know only imperfectly, and we prophesy imperfectly; ·but once 9, 10 perfection comes, all imperfect things will be done away with. ·When I was a 11 child, I used to talk like a child, and see things as a child does, and think like a child; but now that I have become an adult, I have finished with all childish ways.

Nb 12:8 2 Co 5:7 ·Ga 4:9 1 Jn 3:2 Now we see only reflections in a mirror, mere riddles, but then we shall be seeing 12 face to face. Now, I can know only imperfectly; but then I shall know just as fully as I am myself known.

As it is, these remain:[e] faith, hope and love, the three of them; and the greatest 13 of them is love.

Spiritual gifts: their respective importance in the community

14 Make love your aim; but be eager, too, for spiritual gifts, and especially for 1
1 Th 5:20 ·Ac 2:4+ prophesying. ·Those who speak in a tongue speak to God, but not to other 2
Rm 1:9f people, because nobody understands them; they are speaking in the Spirit and the meaning is hidden. ·On the other hand, someone who prophesies speaks to other 3 people, building them up and giving them encouragement and reassurance. Those who speak in a tongue may build themselves up, but those who prophesy 4 build up the community. ·While I should like you all to speak in tongues, I would 5
Nb 11:29 much rather you could prophesy; since those who prophesy are of greater importance than those who speak in tongues, unless they can interpret what they say so that the church is built up by it.

Now suppose, brothers, I come to you and speak in tongues, what good shall I 6 do you if my speaking provides no revelation or knowledge or prophecy or instruction? ·It is the same with an inanimate musical instrument. If it does not 7 make any distinction between notes, how can one recognise what is being played on flute or lyre? ·If the trumpet sounds a call which is unrecognisable, who is going 8 to get ready for the attack? ·It is the same with you: if you do not use your tongue 9 to produce speech that can be readily understood, how can anyone know what you are saying? You will be talking to the air. ·However many the languages used in 10 the world, all of them use sound;[a] ·but if I do not understand the meaning of the 11 sound, I am a barbarian[b] to the person who is speaking, and the speaker is a barbarian to me. ·So with you, as you are eager to have spiritual powers, aim to be 12 rich in those which build up the community.

That is why anybody who speaks in a tongue must pray that he may be given the 13 interpretation. ·For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit may be praying but my mind 14 derives no fruit from it.[c] ·What then? I shall pray with the spirit, but I shall pray 15 with the mind as well: I shall sing praises with the spirit and I shall sing praises with the mind as well. ·Otherwise, if you say your blessing only with the spirit, how is 16
1 Ch 16:36 Ne 5:13;8:6 Ps 106:48 2 Co 1:20 the uninitiated person[d] going to answer 'Amen' to your thanksgiving, without understanding what you are saying? ·You may be making your thanksgiving well, 17 but the other person is not built up at all. ·I thank God that I speak with tongues 18 more than any of you; ·all the same, when I am in the assembly I would rather say 19 five words with my mind, to instruct others as well, than ten thousand words in a tongue.

20 Brothers, do not remain children in your thinking; infants in wickedness— Ep 4:14
21 agreed, but in your thinking grown-ups. ·It says in the written Law: *In strange* Rm 16:19
tongues and in a foreign language I will talk to this nation, and even so *they will* Is 28:11–12
22 *refuse to listen*, says the Lord.[e] ·So then, strange languages are significant not for
believers, but for unbelievers; whereas on the other hand, prophesying is not for
23 unbelievers, but for believers.[f] ·Suppose that, if the whole congregation were
meeting and all of them speaking in tongues, and some uninitiated people or Ac 2:4,13
unbelievers were to come in, don't you think they would say that you were all
24 raving? ·But if you were all prophesying when an unbeliever or someone uniniti-
25 ated came in, he would find himself put to the test by all and judged by all ·and the
secrets of his heart revealed; and so he would fall down on his face and worship
God, declaring that *God is indeed among you.* Is 45:14 Zc 8:23

Regulating spiritual gifts

26 Then what should it be like, brothers? When you come together each of you brings
a psalm or some instruction or a revelation, or speaks in a tongue or gives an
interpretation. Let all these things be done in a way that will build up the com-
27 munity. ·If there are to be any people speaking in a tongue, then let there be only
two, or at the most three, and those one at a time, and let one of these interpret.
28 If there is no interpreter, then let each of them be quiet in the assembly, and
29 speak only internally and to God. ·Let two prophets, or three, speak while the rest
30 weigh their words; ·and if a revelation comes to someone else who is sitting by, the
31 speaker should stop speaking. ·You can all prophesy, but one at a time, then all
32 will learn something and all receive encouragement. ·The prophetic spirit is to be
33 under the prophets' control,[g] ·for God is a God not of disorder but of peace.
34 As in all the churches of God's holy people, ·women are to remain quiet in the 11:16d Ac 9:13+
assemblies, since they have no permission to speak:[h] theirs is a subordinate part,
35 as the Law itself says. ·If there is anything they want to know, they should ask their 11:3,9 Gn 3:16
husbands at home: it is shameful for a woman to speak in the assembly. 11:5 1 Tm 2:11–12
36 Do you really think that you are the source of the word of God? Or that you are
37 the only people to whom it has come?[i] ·Anyone who claims to be a prophet, or to
have any spiritual powers must recognise that what I am writing to you is a

etc., and how they love him, Col 1:18; 1 Th 3:6; etc. Love presupposes sincerity, humility, selflessness and self-sacrifice, vv. 4–7; Rm 12:9seq.; 2 Co 6:6; Ph 2:2seq., service, Ga 5:13; cf. Heb 6:10, mutual help, Ep 4:2; cf. Rm 14:15; 2 Co 2:7seq. Love shows itself in the way we behave, 2 Co 8:8–11,24; cf. 1 Jn 3:18, and the way we obey the Lord's commands, Jn 14:15; 1 Jn 5:2seq.; etc., and give effect to our faith, Ga 5:6; cf. Heb 10:24. Love holds the community together, Col 3:14; cf. 2 P 1:7, and it 'covers up many sins', 1 P 4:8; cf. Lk 7:47. Since love of neighbour springs from love of God, its motive cannot be fear, Rm 8:28–39; cf. 1 Jn 4:17seq. Nor can we be charitable without truth, Ep 4:15–16; cf. 2 Th 2:10, and it is this that enables us to make moral judgements, Ph 1:9, and gives us spiritual understanding of the divine mystery, Col 2:2; cf. 1 Jn 4:7, and spiritual knowledge of the otherwise unknowable love of Christ, Ep 3:17–19; cf. 8:1–3; 13:8–12. Since Christ, Ep 3:17, and the whole Trinity, 2 Co 13:13e; cf. Jn 14:15–23; 1 Jn 4:12, live in the soul that has this love, it fosters the theological virtues, *see* Rm 1:16h; 5:2c, in any person where it is the dominant characteristic, 1 Co 13:3. Love is the only eternal virtue, v. 8, and will be perfect in the vision, v. 12; cf. 1 Jn 3:2, only when God gives his lovers the gifts he has promised, 1 Co 2:9; Rm 8:28; Ep 6:24; 2 Tm 4:8; cf. Jm 1:12; 2:5.

b. var. 'I may give all my goods to the poor so that I can boast of it.'

c. In vv. 4–7, Christian love is defined with the use of a series of fifteen verbal phrases, not abstract nouns, i.e. it is not an abstract quality, but is known by the actions to which it gives rise.

d. When our imperfect (v. 11) and indirect (v. 12) knowledge of God disappears before the direct sight of God, love will remain the same as it was in this life.

e. This association of the three theological virtues, which is found earlier in 1 Th 1:3 and which may well have been in use before Paul's time, recurs frequently in his letters, though the order varies: 13:7,13; Rm 5:1–5; 12:6–12; Ga 5:5seq.; Ep 1:15–18; 4:2–5; Col 1:4–5; 1 Th 5:8; 1 Tm 6:11; Tt 2:2. Cf. Heb 6:10–12; 10:22–24; 1 P 1:3–9,21seq. Faith and love are associated in 1 Th 3:6; 2 Th 1:3; Phm 5. faith and fortitude in 2 Th 1:4, love and fortitude in 2 Th 3:5; cf. 2 Co 13:13.

14 **a.** Or 'none of them is gibberish'.

b. A barbarian was someone who did not understand Greek.

c. This prayer of ecstatic utterance is so freed by 'the spirit' that it contains nothing limited enough to be grasped by the 'mind'.

d. One who is not granted similar gifts.

e. The quotation is very free.

f. An obscure text: the vv. 23–24 seem to be in contradiction to v. 22.

g. Incoherence in a prophecy would prove that the prophet was a false prophet.

h. The attitude in 11:5 is more positive, which diminishes the importance of this prohibition, linked as it is with the social context of the time.

i. Since the answer is negative, Paul is asking the Corinthians to accept the practice of other churches.

2:16;7:40 15:34 commandment from the Lord. ·If anyone does not recognise this, it is because that 38
person is not recognised himself.[j]

So, my brothers, be eager to prophesy, and do not suppress the gift of 39
speaking in tongues. ·But make sure that everything is done in a proper and 40
orderly fashion.

III: THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD[a]

The fact of the resurrection

1 Th 2:13d **15** I want to make quite clear to you, brothers, what the message of the gospel 1
that I preached to you is; you accepted it and took your stand on it, ·and 2
you are saved by it, if you keep to the message I preached to you; otherwise your
11:2+,23 Lk 1:2 Ac 2:23o coming to believe was in vain. ·The tradition I handed on to you in the first place, 3
a tradition which I had myself received,[b] was that Christ died for our sins,[c] in
accordance with the scriptures, ·and that he was buried; and that on the third day, 4
Mt 28:10+ Lk 24:34seq. he was raised to life, in accordance with the scriptures;[d] ·and that he appeared to 5
Cephas; and later to the Twelve; ·and next he appeared to more than five hundred 6
of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still with us,[e] though some
Ac 9:3–6; 12:17f Rm 1:1b have fallen asleep;[f] ·then he appeared to James, and then to all the apostles.[g] ·Last 7, 8
of all he appeared to me too, as though I was a child born abnormally.[h]
Ep 3:8 1 Tm 1:15–16 Ac 8:3+ Ga 1:13–14 For I am the least of the apostles and am not really fit to be called an apostle, 9
because I had been persecuting the Church of God; ·but what I am now, I am 10
through the grace of God, and the grace which was given to me has not been
2 Co 11:23seq. wasted. Indeed, I have worked harder than all the others—not I, but the grace of
Ac 2:22n God which is with me. ·Anyway, whether it was they or I, this is what we preach 11
and what you believed.

Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you be 12
saying that there is no resurrection of the dead? ·If there is no resurrection of the 13
dead, then Christ cannot have been raised either,[i] ·and if Christ has not been 14
Ac 2:22n raised, then our preaching is without substance,[j] and so is your faith. ·What is 15
Ac 1:8k;26:16 more, we have proved to be false witnesses to God, for testifying against God that
he raised Christ to life when he did not raise him—if it is true that the dead are not
Rm 4:24–25;10:9 raised. ·For, if the dead are not raised, neither is Christ; ·and if Christ has not been 16, 17
raised, your faith is pointless and you have not, after all, been released from your
sins.[k] ·In addition, those who have fallen asleep in Christ are utterly lost. ·If 18, 19
our hope in Christ has been for this life only,[l] we are of all people the
most pitiable.

Rm 8:11g Col 1:18 1 Th 4:14 15:45–49 Jn 11:25 Rm 5:12–21+ Rm 6:23 •1 Th 4:16 In fact, however, Christ has been raised from the dead, as the first-fruits of all 20
who have fallen asleep. ·As it was by one man that death came, so through one 21
man has come the resurrection of the dead. ·Just as all die in Adam, so in Christ all 22
will be brought to life;[m] ·but all of them in their proper order: Christ the first-fruits, 23
and next, at his coming,[n] those who belong to him.[o] ·After that will come the end, 24
when he will hand over the kingdom to God the Father, having abolished every
Ps 110:1 principality, every ruling force and power.[p] ·For he is to be king *until he has made* 25
Rv 20:14;21:4 his enemies his footstool, ·and the last of the enemies to be done away with is 26
death, for *he has put all things under his feet.* ·But when it is said[q] everything is 27
Ph 3:21 Ps 8:6 subjected, this obviously cannot include the One who subjected everything to him.
When everything has been subjected to him, then the Son himself will be subjected 28
Rm 9:5d Ep 4:6 Col 3:11 to the One who has subjected everything to him, so that God may be all in all.

Otherwise, what are people up to who have themselves baptised on behalf of the 29
2 M 12:44 dead?[r] If the dead are not raised at all, what is the point of being baptised on their
behalf? ·And what about us? Why should we endanger ourselves every hour of our 30
2 Co 4:10:12 lives? ·I swear by the pride that I take in you, in Christ Jesus our Lord, that I face 31
death every day. ·If I fought wild animals at Ephesus[s] in a purely human perspec- 32
Is 22:13 tive, what had I to gain by it? ·If the dead are not going to be raised, then *Let us eat* 33

34 *and drink, for tomorrow we shall be dead.'* ·So do not let anyone lead you astray.
'Bad company corrupts good ways.' " Wake up from your stupor as you should and
leave sin alone; some of you have no understanding of God; I tell you this to instil 14:38
some shame in you.

The manner of the resurrection

35 Someone may ask: How are dead people raised, and what sort of body do they
36 have when they come? ·How foolish! What you sow must die before it is given new Jn 12:24
37 life; ·and what you sow is not the body that is to be, but only a bare grain, of wheat
38 I dare say, or some other kind; ·it is God who gives it the sort of body that he has
chosen for it, " and for each kind of seed its own kind of body.
39 Not all flesh is the same flesh: there is human flesh; animals have another kind of
40 flesh, birds another and fish yet another. ·Then there are heavenly bodies and
earthly bodies; the heavenly have a splendour of their own, and the earthly a
41 different splendour. ·The sun has its own splendour, the moon another splendour,
and the stars yet another splendour; and the stars differ among themselves in
42 splendour. ·It is the same too with the resurrection of the dead: what is sown is
43 perishable, but what is raised is imperishable; ·what is sown is contemptible but

j. Or, he is unnoticed by God who does not acknowledge him as his own; var. 'if he refuses to recognise this, well let him refuse' (Paul losing patience). For a similar way of putting an end to discussion, *see* 11:16; Ph 3:15seq.

15 a. Some of the Christians at Corinth rejected the resurrection of the dead, v. 12. Greeks found it a materialistic idea, Ac 17:32y, while the Jews had first gradually perceived it, Jb 19:25g; Ps 16:10; Ezk 37:10d, and then taught it explicitly, 2 M 7:9c; Dn 12:2,3c. To combat the Corinthians' error, Paul starts from the fundamental assertion of the gospel proclamation, the paschal mystery of Christ's death and resurrection, vv. 3–4 (cf. Rm 1:4; Ga 1:2–4; 1 Th 1:10), which he develops by enumerating the appearances of the Risen Lord, vv. 5–11; *see* Ac 1:8k. Starting from there he shows the absurdity of the opinion which he is opposing, vv. 12–34, *see* v. 13i. Christ is the first-fruits and the effective cause of the resurrection of the dead, vv. 20–28; *see* Rm 8:11g. Finally Paul answers objections about the mode of resurrection of the dead, vv. 35–53, and ends with a hymn of thanks, vv. 54–57.

b. In the phrases, 'keep it unchanged', 'passed on . . .', 'what I had been taught', Paul is adopting the vocabulary of the rabbinic tradition, cf. 11:23. But in addition, the gospel, unlike this tradition, is announced, vv. 1–2, proclaimed (v. 11); cf. Mt 4:23; etc.; the object of faith, 1 Co 15:2,11, cf. Mk 1:15, and the bringer of salvation, 1 Co 15:2; cf. Ac 11:14; 16:17. In the vv. that follow the vocabulary and turn of phrase are uncharacteristic of Paul, which suggests that he is quoting the most ancient tradition of the Church about the resurrection appearances, formulae that were learnt by new converts, cf. 11:23d.

c. The expiation effected by Christ's *death* is a part of the gospel proclamation even before Paul; cf. Rm 6:3.

d. These three clauses, which will have a place in the creeds of the future, seem already to have a fixed formulation.

e. Paul implies that they can still attest what they have seen, and that their faith in Christ's resurrection rests on sure witness.

f. i.e. have died; Paul's usual expression, vv. 18,20,51; 1 Th 4:13g.

g. 'The apostles' apparently comprise a larger group than 'the Twelve' of v. 5.

h. An allusion to the abnormal, sudden and *surgical* nature of Paul's birth into the apostolic family. He makes no distinction in kind between the appearance to himself that took place on the Damascus road and the appearances of Jesus that took place between the resurrection and the ascension.

i. Denial of the resurrection of the dead brings with it denial of the particular case of the resurrection of Christ. Alternatively, the resurrection of Christ makes no sense except as the first-fruits of our resurrection. But this consideration enters only at v. 20.

j. None of the aspects of the Christian message and of the faith which corresponds to it makes sense except in function of the central reality, the risen Christ. Without this, everything collapses.

k. What makes sin disappear is the new life, participation in the life of the risen Christ, *see* Rm 6:8–10; 8:2b.

l. Or 'If in this life we have done nothing but hope in Christ'.

m. Contemporary Jewish thought envisaged two Adams, first a perfect, heavenly model of Adam, and second the earthly, historical Adam. Paul turns this thinking on its head: the historical Adam was the first and Christ, the refounder of humanity, is the second, perfect, heavenly Adam. He is the perfect fulfilment of the ideal of Adam, and his exaltation reverses the fall of Adam, *see* Rm 5:12f,h; Ph 2:6d.

n. A Greek word adopted by early Christians to indicate the glorious coming of Christ on his 'Day', 1:8e, at the end of time, Mt 24:3b; *see also* 1 Th 2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23; 2 Th 2:1; Jm 5:7,8; 2 P 1:16; 3:4,12; 1 Jn 2:28. In 2 Th 2:8,9 the same word is used to indicate the coming of the Lawless One; *see* the similar terms 'revelation', 1 Co 1:7c, and 'appearing', 1 Tm 6:14f.

o. The perspective is not merely physical and biological, but includes the whole person, spiritual death to sin and risen life in justice and love. Paul's perspective does not include a resurrection of sinners; contrast Jn 5:29; Ac 24:15; cf. Dn 12:2.

p. All the forces hostile to the sovereignty of God, 2:6; Ep 1:21; Col 1:16; 2:15; 1 P 3:22.

q. When the whole cosmos has been subjected to him, Jesus will go to the Father and say his task is complete. The translation '*scripture* says' is incorrect.

r. What this practice was is unknown: Paul does not say whether he approved of it or not; he merely says that it is absurd if the dead do not rise again.

s. This must be metaphorical. The event is not otherwise known to us, but *see* 2 Co 11:23–26.

t. Cf. Qo 9:7–10. It is possible to give up material pleasures from purely human motives; Paul has himself just said so, 9:25.

u. Quoted from Menander's *Thaïs*: it may have become a popular proverb.

v. In popular thought germination was a process dependent on the goodwill of the divinity, not a natural phenomenon, cf. 2 M 7:22–23. In the relationship between the present and the glorified body Paul stresses change much more than continuity. No doubt he wishes to answer the objection (v. 35) which rightly refused to take the imagery of Ezk 37:1–10,10d too literally.

what is raised is glorious; what is sown is weak, but what is raised is powerful; ·what 44
is sown is a natural body, and what is raised is a spiritual body. [w]

Gn 2:7 If there is a natural body, there is a spiritual body too. ·So the first *man*, Adam, 45
15:20–28,23n as scripture says, *became a living soul*; [x] and the last Adam has become a life-giving
spirit. ·But first came the natural body, not the spiritual one; that came only 46
afterwards. ·The first man, being made of earth, is earthly by nature; the second 47
Dn 7:13 man is from heaven. ·The earthly man is the pattern for earthly people, the 48
Jn 3:13 heavenly man for heavenly ones. ·And as we have borne the likeness of the earthly 49
Jn 3:5–6 man, so we shall bear the likeness of the heavenly one. [y]
Rm 8:29n
Ph 3:21 What I am saying, brothers, is that mere human nature cannot inherit the 50
6:10c kingdom of God: what is perishable cannot inherit what is imperishable. ·Now I 51
am going to tell you a mystery: we are not all going to fall asleep, ·but we are all 52
Nb 10:3 going to be changed, instantly, in the twinkling of an eye, when the last trumpet
Jl 2:1b
Mt 24:31r sounds. [z] The trumpet is going to sound, and then the dead will be raised imperish-
1 Th 4:15–17+ able, and we shall be changed, [aa] ·because this perishable nature of ours must put 53
2 Co 5:1–5 on imperishability, this mortal nature must put on immortality.

A hymn of triumph. Conclusion

And after this perishable nature has put on imperishability [bb] and this mortal nature 54
has put on immortality, then will the words of scripture come true: [cc] *Death is*
Is 25:8 *swallowed up in victory.* ·*Death, where is your* victory*? Death, where is your sting?* 55
Ho 13:14
Rv 20:14 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin comes from the Law. [dd] ·Thank 56, 57
Heb 6:1b God, then, for giving us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Rm 7:7d
Jn 16:33 So, my dear brothers, keep firm and immovable, always abounding in energy for 58
the Lord's work, being sure that in the Lord none of your labours is wasted. [ee]

CONCLUSION

Commendations. Greetings

Ac 9:13g 16 Now about the collection for God's holy people; [a] you are to do the same as 1
Ga 2:10 I prescribed for the churches in Galatia. ·On the first day of the week, [b] each 2
Mt 28:1a of you should put aside and reserve as much as each can spare; do not delay the
collection till I arrive. ·When I come, I will send to Jerusalem with letters of 3
introduction those people you approve to deliver your gift; ·if it is worth my going 4
too, they can travel with me.

In any case, I shall be coming to you after I have passed through Macedonia, as 5
Ac 19:21;20: 1seq. I have to go through Macedonia; ·and I may be staying some time with you, 6
perhaps wintering, so that you can start me on my next journey, wherever I may be
going. ·I do not want to make only a passing visit to you, [c] and I am hoping to spend 7
quite a time with you, the Lord permitting. ·But I shall remain at Ephesus until 8
Pentecost, ·for a very promising door is standing wide open to me [d] and there are 9
many against us.

4:17 If Timothy comes, make sure that he has nothing to fear from you; he is doing 10
Ac 16:1a the Lord's work, just as I am, ·and nobody is to underrate him. Start him off in 11
peace on his journey to come on to me: the brothers and I are waiting for him.
Ac 18:24p As for our brother Apollos, I urged him earnestly to come to you with the 12
brothers, but he was quite firm that he did not want to go yet, [e] and he will come
when he finds an opportunity.

1 P 5:8–9 Be vigilant, stay firm in the faith, be brave and strong. ·Let everything you do 13, 14
be done in love.

There is something else I must urge you to do, brothers. You know how the 15
1:1f Stephanas family have been the first-fruits of Achaia and have devoted themselves
to the service of God's holy people; ·I ask you in turn to put yourselves at the 16

17 service of people like this and all that work with them in this arduous task. ·I am delighted that Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus have arrived;[f] they have
18 made up for your not being here. ·They have set my mind at rest, just as they did yours; you should appreciate people like them.

Ph 2:29–30
1 Th 5:12–13

19 The churches of Asia[g] send their greetings. Aquila and Prisca send their best
20 wishes in the Lord, together with the church that meets in their house. ·All the brothers send their greetings. Greet one another with the holy kiss.

Ac 18:2b
Rm 16:5+
2 Co 13:12d

21 This greeting is in my own hand—PAUL.

Ga 6:11e
Phm 19

22 If there is anyone who does not love the Lord, a curse on such a one.[h] *Maran atha.*[i]

Rm 16:20+

23 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.
24 My love is with you all in Christ Jesus.

w. In Paul, as in the OT, *psyche* (Hebr. *nephesh*; cf. Gn 2:7) is what gives life to animals, to the human body, 1 Co 15:45; or it is the actual 'life' of the body, Rm 16:4; Ph 2:30; 1 Th 2:8; cf. Mt 2:20; Mk 3:4; Lk 12:20; Jn 10:11; Ac 20:10; etc., its 'living soul', 2 Co 1:23. The term can also mean any human being, Rm 2:9; 13:1; 2 Co 12:15; etc. As it gives only natural life, 2:14; cf. Jude 19, it is less important than *pneuma* by which a human life is divinised by a process that begins through the gift of the Spirit, Rm 5:5e; *see* Rm 1:9e, and is completed after death. Greek philosophers thought of the higher soul (the *nous*) escaping from 'the body', to survive immortally. Christians thought of immortality more in terms of the restoration of the whole person, involving a resurrection of the body effected by the Spirit or divine principle which God withdrew from human beings because of sins, Gn 6:3, but restored to all who are united to the risen Christ, Rm 1:4c; 8:11, who is the 'heavenly' man and life-giving Spirit, 1 Co 15:45–49. The 'body' is no longer *psychikon* but *pneumatikon*, it is incorruptible, immortal, v. 53, glorious, v. 43; cf. Rm 8:18; 2 Co 4:17; Ph 3:21; Col 3:4, no longer subject to the laws of matter, Jn 20:19,26; it does not even answer the description of matter, Lk 24:16. *Psyche* can be used in a wider sense as the opposite of the body to indicate what it is in a human being that behaves and feels, Ep 6:6; Ph 1:27; Col 3:23; *see* Mt 22:37 and par.; 26:38 and par.; Lk 1:46; Jn 12:27; Ac 4:32; 1 P 2:11; etc., or even to indicate the spiritual and immortal soul, Mt 10:28,39 and par.; Ac 2:27; Jm 1:21; 5:20; 1 P 1:9; Rv 6:9; etc.

x. Something that is alive because it has a *psyche* giving it a merely natural life, subject to decay and corruption.

y. var. 'we would be able to'.

z. Since the time of Sinai, Ex 19:16,19, the trumpet has been among the symbols of God's intervention, Mt 24:31; 1 Th 4:16j. A trumpet will mark the stages in God's plan for the End; cf. the seven trumpets of Rv 8:6–11:19.

aa. i.e. those who are alive at the time, among whom Paul may be included, *see* 1 Th 5:1a.

bb. om. 'because this perishable nature has put on imperishability'.

cc. A free quotation.

dd. The compressed thought of this sentence is made explicit in Rm 5–7.

ee. A reference back to v. 14; this verse marks the end of the instruction which began at that point. The certainty of victory gives the believer the strength to go forward. For Paul there can be no faith without advance in life.

16 a. On this collection *see* Ac 24:17; Rm 15:26–28; 2 Co 8–9; Ga 2:10. God's holy people (*see* 2 Co 8:4) are the Christians in Jerusalem who from the earliest days were in need of help, Ac 11:29–30. Paul was very anxious to have this collection made, since he regarded it as a sign and a pledge of unity between the churches he had founded and those of the Judaeo-Christians.

b. i.e. 'The Lord's Day', cf. Mt 28:1; Ac 20:7; Rv 1:10.

c. It has been thought that this verse suggests a previous short visit and this translation has been conjectured: 'I do not want on this occasion to make this only a passing visit.' But this is unlikely.

d. The same image is used in 2 Co 2:12; it indicates Paul's missionary opportunities, cf. Ac 14:27; Rv 3:8.

e. In case his presence aggravated party feeling among his own supporters, 1:12; 3:4–6; 4:6.

f. Probably these had brought the letter from the Corinthians to Paul, 7:1.

g. The Roman province is meant.

h. 'Let him be *anathema*.' The word usually corresponds to the OT Hebrew word *herem*, Jos 6:17e. In the NT it is used once, Lk 21:5, of votive offerings in the Temple. More often it acknowledges a curse on the speaker himself, should he not keep a solemn promise, Rm 9:3, or it endorses a curse on another person for a serious sin, here, 1 Co 16:22; Ga 1:8,9; *see* 12:3; Rv 22:3.

i. These Aramaic words ('the Lord is coming') had passed into liturgical use: they expressed the hope that the *parousia* would not be long delayed. An alternative reading is *Marana tha* (Lord, come!), Rv 22:20; cf. Rm 13:12; Ph 4:5; Jm 5:8; 1 P 4:7.

2 CORINTHIANS

THE SECOND LETTER OF PAUL TO THE CHURCH AT CORINTH

INTRODUCTION

Rm 1:1a **Address and greetings. Thanksgiving**

Ac 16:1a 1 Paul, by the will of God an apostle of Christ Jesus, and Timothy, our brother, 1
1 Co 1:2a to the church of God in Corinth and to all God's holy people in the whole of
Ac 9:13g Achaia. 2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 2
Rm 1:7
Ep 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the merciful Father and 3
1 P 1:3 the God who gives every possible encouragement;[a] 4 he supports us in every 4
hardship, so that we are able to come to the support of others, in every hardship of
theirs because of the encouragement that we ourselves receive from God. 5 For just 5
Ph 1:20i as the sufferings of Christ overflow into our lives; so too does the encouragement
Col 1:24l we receive through Christ. 6 So if we have hardships to undergo, this will contribute 6
to your encouragement and your salvation; if we receive encouragement, this is to
gain for you the encouragement which enables you to bear with perseverance the
same sufferings as we do. 7 So our hope for you is secure in the knowledge that you 7
share the encouragement we receive, no less than the sufferings we bear.[b]

So in the hardships we underwent in Asia,[c] we want you to be quite certain, 8
1 Co 15:32 brothers, that we were under extraordinary pressure, beyond our powers of endur-
ance, so that we gave up all hope even of surviving. 9 In fact we were carrying the 9
4:7 sentence of death within our own selves, so that we should be forced to trust not in
Rm 1:4c;4:17g; 8:11g ourselves but in God, who raises the dead. 10 He did save us from such a death and 10
Rm 15:30i will save us[d]—we are relying on him to do so. 11 Your prayer for us will contribute 11
to this, so that, for God's favour shown to us as the result of the prayers of so many,
4:15;9:12 thanks[e] too may be given by many on our behalf.'[f]

I: SOME RECENT EVENTS REVIEWED

Why Paul changed his plans

There is one thing that we are proud of, namely our conscientious conviction that 12
we have always behaved towards everyone, and especially towards you, with that
1 Co 1:17; 2:1seq. unalloyed holiness[g] that comes from God, relying not on human reasoning but on
the grace of God. 13 In our writing, there is nothing that you cannot read clearly and 13
understand; 14 and it is my hope that, just as you have already understood us 14
Ph 2:16;4:1 partially, so you will understand fully that you can be as proud of us as we shall be
1 Th 2:19–20 of you when the Day of our Lord Jesus comes.
1 Co 1:8e

It was with this assurance that I had been meaning to come to you first, so that 15
you would benefit doubly;[h] 16 both to visit you on my way to Macedonia, and then 16

to return to you again from Macedonia, so that you could set me on my way to Act 19:21
17 Judaea. [i] ·Since that was my purpose, do you think I lightly changed my mind? Or
that my plans are based on ordinary human promptings and I have in my mind 1:12
18 Yes, yes at the same time as No, no? ·As surely as God is trustworthy, [j] what we Rm 7:5c
19 say to you is not both Yes and No. ·The Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was 1 Co 1:9g
proclaimed to you by us, that is, by me and by Silvanus [k] and Timothy, was never Ac 16:1a;18:5
20 Yes-and-No; his nature is all Yes. ·For in him is found the Yes to all God's Mt 5:37
promises [l] and therefore it is 'through him' that we answer 'Amen' [m] to give praise 1 Co 14:16
21, 22 to God. ·It is God who gives us, with you, a sure place in Christ ·and has both Rv 3:14g
anointed us and marked us with his seal, [n] giving us as pledge the Spirit in 13:13e
our hearts. Rm 16:27n
1 Co 1:6+
1 Jn 2:20, 27
Rm
23 By my life I call on God to be my witness that it was only to spare you that I did 5:5e,f;6:4a
24 not come to Corinth again. ·We have no wish to lord it over your faith, but to work Ep 1:13–14
with you for your joy; for your stand in the faith is firm. 1 P 5:3

1 2 I made up my mind, then, that my next visit to you would not be a painful one [a],
2 for if I cause you distress I am causing distress to my only possible source of
3 joy. ·Indeed, I wrote as I did [b] precisely to spare myself distress when I visited you,
from the very people who should have given me joy, in the conviction that for all of
4 you my joy was yours too. ·I wrote to you in agony of mind, not meaning to cause
you distress but to show you how very much love I have for you.

5 If anyone did cause distress, he caused it not to me, but—not to exaggerate—in
6 some degree to all of you. ·The punishment already imposed by the majority was
7 quite enough for such a person; [c] ·and now by contrast you should forgive and Col 3:13
encourage him all the more, or he may be overwhelmed by the extent of his
8 distress. ·That is why I urge you to give your love towards him definite expression.
9 This was in fact my reason for writing, to test your quality and whether you are
10 completely obedient. ·But if you forgive anybody, then I too forgive him; and
whatever I have forgiven, if there is anything I have forgiven, I have done it for
11 your sake in Christ's presence, ·to avoid being outwitted by Satan, whose scheming Ep 4:27
we know only too well.

1 **a.** This 'support' is the 'consolation' announced by the prophets and seen as a characteristic of the messianic age. Is 40:1, and brought by the Messiah. Lk 2:25. It consists essentially in an end to trials and the beginning of an era of peace and joy. Is 40:1seq., Mt 5:5. In the NT the new age is present in the old, and the Christian united to Christ is comforted even while his trials continue, 1:4–7; 7:4; cf. Col 1:24. This support is not received passively, but is at once comfort, encouragement, exhortation (the same Greek word, *paraklesis*). Its sole source is God, 1:3,4, through Christ, 1:5, and through the Spirit, Ac 9:31p, and the Christian is to communicate it to others, 2 Co 1:4,6; 1 Th 4:18. Among its causes the NT enumerates: progress in the Christian life, 7:4,6,7, conversion, 7:13, the Scriptures, Rm 15:4. It is the source of hope, Rm 15:4.

b. In 2 Co. Paul frequently emphasises the presence of contradictory or paradoxical realities in Christ, and thus in the apostle and the Christian; here suffering and support or consolation, also 7:4; death and life, 4:10–12; 6:9; poverty and riches, 6:10; 8:9; weakness and strength, 12:9–10. It is the paschal mystery, the presence of the risen Christ in the old world of sin and death, *see* 1 Co 1–2.

c. One of the many trials referred to in 11:23seq.

d. var. 'and saves us still'.

e. Thanksgiving plays an important part in Paul's theology, *see* the beginning of the letters, where he thanks God for the faith of his correspondents, Rm 1:8; 1 Co 1:4; Ph 1:3; Col 1:3; 1 Th 1:2; 2 Th 1:3; Phm 4. It is no empty formula; its absence in Ga is significant, Ga 1:1a. Thanksgiving gives life to all the actions of the Christian done in the name of Christ and taken up by him in his thanksgiving to the Father, Ep 5:20; Col 3:17. It is a duty corresponding to God's will, not only for Christians, 1 Th 5:18, but even for gentiles, Rm 1:21. For thanksgiving 'gives', even though imperfectly, thanks to God (1 Th 3:9, literally). It is therefore the ultimate goal of the prayer that asks for grace, 1:11; 4:15, and of the expression of fraternal love, 9:11–15. Hence its importance in the liturgy, 1 Co 14:16; Ep 5:19seq.; Col 3:16, and in personal prayer, Ph 4:6; 1 Th 5:18.

f. var. 'on your behalf'.

g. var. 'simplicity'.

h. var. 'to give you a double pleasure'.

i. Paul must therefore have changed the plan mentioned in 1 Co 16:5–6.

j. God's faithfulness is primarily his 'firmness'. He is the rock of Israel, Dt 32:4, and provides a wholly secure support. This firmness explains the constancy of his plans, his faithfulness to his promises, Ps 89:1–8.24seq; and, especially in the NT God's faithfulness to his plan of mercy and salvation, 1 Co 1:9f; 10:13; 1 Th 5:24; 2 Th 3:3.

k. Silvanus is the disciple called Silas in Ac.

l. God's promises are seen as waiting for fulfilment until perfect obedience and assent to his will are offered by Jesus Christ. The implication is that Paul 'in Christ' is guided only by the will of God for him, and is not to be thought of as consulting his own wishes or changing his mind on a personal impulse, 1:17–18j.

m. *Amen* means 'that which is solid, trustworthy'; it is the reply of human faithfulness to God's faithfulness in Jesus Christ. Cf. Rm 1:25p.

n. The anointing and the seal mean either the gift of the Spirit to all believers (possibly with an allusion to initiation rites), *see* Ep 1:13n; 4:30m; 1 Jn 2:20k,27p; or the special gift of the spirit to the apostolic ministry (making a distinction between the 'us' and 'you' of this verse) by a special gift of the Spirit, which makes the apostle the faithful messenger of God's fidelity in Christ (vv. 17–20). Note the trinitarian formulation of vv. 21–22.

2 **a.** An allusion to a painful visit which Paul must have made to Corinth before writing 2 Co, *see* p. 1854.

b. An allusion to the 'severe letter' of 2:3,4.9; 7:8,12; *see* p. 1854.

c. The man who had given offence to Paul or to Paul's representative, *see* p. 1854.

From Troas to Macedonia. The apostolate: its importance

Ac 16:8;20:6 1 Co 16:9d
When I came to Troas for the sake of the gospel of Christ and a door was opened 12
for me there in the Lord, ·I had no relief from anxiety, not finding my brother 13
7:6 Titus[d] there, and I said goodbye to them and went on to Macedonia. ·[e] But, 14
Ep 5:2 Ph 4:18 Col 2:15 thanks be to God who always gives us in Christ a part in his triumphal procession,[f]
and through us is spreading everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of himself.
1 Co 1:18 To God we are the fragrance of Christ, both among those who are being saved 15
and among those who are on the way to destruction; ·for these last, the smell of 16
death leading to death, but for the first, the smell of life leading to life. Who is
equal to such a task? ·At least we do not adulterate the word of God, as so many[g] 17
do, but it is in all purity, as envoys of God and in God's presence, that we speak
in Christ.

5:12;10:12seq.; 11:18seq. Ac 18:27 1 Co 9:2
3 Are we beginning to commend ourselves to you afresh—as though we needed, 1
like some others, to have letters of commendation either to you or from you?[a]
You yourselves are our letter, written in our[b] hearts, that everyone can read and 2
understand; ·and it is plain that you are a letter from Christ, entrusted to our care, 3
Ex 24:12d Jr 31:33 Ezk 11:19; 36:26 written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God; not on stone tablets but
on the tablets of human hearts.[c]

Such is the confidence we have through Christ in facing God; ·it is not that we 4, 5
Jn 3:27 are so competent that we can claim any credit for ourselves; all our competence
1 Co 11:25 Ep 3:7 Col 1:23,25 comes from God. ·He has given us the competence to be ministers of a new 6
Heb 8:8 covenant, a covenant which is not of written letters, but of the Spirit; for the
Rm 2:29 written letters kill, but the Spirit gives life.[d] ·Now if the administering of death, 7
Ex 32:16; 34:29–35 engraved in letters on stone, occurred in such glory that the Israelites could not
look Moses steadily in the face, because of its glory, transitory though this glory
was, ·how much more will the ministry of the Spirit occur in glory! ·For if it is 8, 9
glorious to administer condemnation, to administer saving justice is far richer in
glory. ·Indeed, what was once considered glorious has lost all claim to glory, by 10
contrast with the glory which transcends it. ·For if what was transitory had any 11
glory, how much greater is the glory of that which lasts for ever.

With a hope like this, we can speak with complete fearlessness; ·not like Moses 12, 13
who put a veil over his face so that the Israelites should not watch the end of what
was transitory.[e] ·But their minds were closed; indeed, until this very day, the 14
same veil remains over the reading of the Old Testament: it is not lifted, for only in
Rm 10:4 Christ is it done away with.[f] ·As it is, to this day, whenever Moses is read, their 15
Ex 34:34 Rm 11:7–10 hearts are covered with a veil, ·and this veil will not be taken away till they turn to 16
the Lord. ·Now this Lord is the Spirit[g] and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is 17
Is 61:1–2 Ga 5:1,13 4:6+ Rm 8:29n 1 Jn 3:2 freedom. ·And all of us, with our unveiled faces like mirrors reflecting[h] the glory 18
of the Lord,[i] are being transformed into the image[j] that we reflect in brighter and
brighter glory; this is the working of the Lord who is the Spirit.[k]

Rm 1:16
4 Such by God's mercy is our ministry, and therefore we do not waver ·but have 1, 2
renounced all shameful secrecy.[a] It is not our way to be devious, or to falsify
the word of God; instead, in God's sight we commend ourselves to every human
being with a conscience by showing the truth openly. ·If our gospel seems to be 3
1 Th 2:10 veiled at all, it is so to those who are on the way to destruction, ·the unbelievers 4
whose minds have been blinded by the god of this world,[b] so that they cannot see
Rm 8:29n Col 1:15 shining the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. ·It is 5
not ourselves that we are proclaiming, but Christ Jesus as the Lord, and ourselves
Gn 1:3 Jn 8:12b Ep 1:18 as your servants for Jesus' sake. ·It is God who said, 'Let light shine out of 6
darkness,' that has shone into our hearts to enlighten them with the knowledge of
Rm 3:23h Heb 1:3 God's glory, the glory on the face of Christ.

The hardships and hopes of the apostolate

12:9 6:4–10 1 Co 4:9–13
But we hold this treasure in pots of earthenware, so that the immensity of the 7
power is God's and not our own.[c] ·We are subjected to every kind of hardship, but 8

never distressed;[d] we see no way out but we never despair; ·we are pursued but
never cut off; knocked down, but still have some life in us; always ·we carry with
us in our body the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus, too, may be visible in our Col 1:24*l*
body. ·Indeed, while we are still alive, we are continually being handed over to 2 Tm 2:11
death, for the sake of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus, too, may be visible in our 1 Co 15:31
mortal flesh. ·In us, then, death is at work; in you, life.

But as we have the same spirit of faith as is described in scripture—*I believed and* Ps 116:10
therefore I spoke—we, too, believe and therefore we, too, speak, ·realising that he Rm 1:4c;8:11g
who raised up the Lord Jesus will raise us up with Jesus in our turn, and bring us to
himself—and you as well. ·You see, everything is for your benefit, so that as grace
spreads, so, to the glory of God, thanksgiving may also overflow among more and 1:11
more people.

That is why we do not waver; indeed, though this outer human nature of ours Rm 7:22j
may be falling into decay, at the same time our inner human nature is renewed day
by day. ·The temporary, light burden of our hardships is earning us for ever an Ws 3:5
utterly incomparable, eternal weight of glory, ·since what we aim for is not visible Mt 5:11–12
but invisible. Visible things are transitory, but invisible things eternal. Rm 8:18+
Rm 8:24–25
Heb 11:1,3

5 For we are well aware[e] that when the tent that houses us on earth is folded up, Jb 4:19
there is a house for us from God, not made by human hands but everlasting, in Ws 9:15f
the heavens. ·And in this earthly state we do indeed groan, ·longing to put on our Is 38:12
heavenly home over the present one; if indeed we are to be found clothed rather 2 P 1:13–14
than stripped bare.[b] ·Yes, indeed, in this present tent, we groan under the burden, 1 Co 15:44–49
Ph 3:20
Col 3:3–4
Rm 8:23
1 Co 15:51–53
1 Th 4:15

d. A Christian of gentile birth, possibly converted by Paul, Tt 1:4, whom he accompanies on Paul's second journey to Jerusalem, Ga 2:1. He was commissioned by Paul to visit Corinth and to settle its problems; in this he was entirely successful, 7:5–7. Soon afterwards Paul sent him to Corinth to organise the collection. If we are to accept the historical data of the Pastoral Letters as genuine (but *see* pp. 1862–3), he appears again in Crete (63–4) controlling the communities Paul had founded there after his release from the first Roman captivity. It was from there that Paul wrote to Titus asking him to meet him again at Nicopolis in Epirus, Tt 3:12. During Paul's second Roman captivity (66–7) Titus was in Dalmatia, 2 Tm 4:10. Titus with his shrewdness and his strong, well-balanced character, seems to have made an admirable colleague for Paul.

e. The account of events is interrupted by a digression on the apostolic ministry, 2:14–7:4. It continues again in 7:5.

f. Like a victorious general making his solemn entry into Rome. The imagery is taken from the custom familiar to all: incense burns before the victor, his lieutenants are given a place in the procession, and the vanquished leaders are put to death. Cf. Col 2:15.

g. var. 'the others'.

3 **a.** Presumably Paul has been accused of boastful claims, cf. 5:12, whereas other preachers present letters of commendation from their communities, *see* Ac 18:27r. His answer is that the churches founded by him and animated by the Spirit make written commendations unnecessary just as the new covenant of the Spirit has made the old covenant 'of written letters' superfluous. There is much more here than a play on words, especially if, as is most likely, Paul's opponents are Judaisers, cf. 11:22.

b. var. 'your'.

c. Besides the reference to the tablets of stone at Sinai, Ex 24:12, there may also be an allusion here to Ezk 36:26.

d. *See* Rm 7:7d. This is not an observation about the 'letter' as opposed to the 'spirit' of a text: the contrast is between the written external Law of the OT, and the Spirit, the interior law of the NT.

e. Cf. Ex 34:30. The transitory character of the glory which lights up the face of Moses shows, according to Paul, the transitoriness of the old covenant, v. 11.

f. Alternative translation 'nor is it revealed to them that this covenant has been abolished by Christ'.

g. A condensed formula which, without denying the distinction between Christ and the Spirit which is so clearly underlined in the letter, 1:20–23; 13:13e, nevertheless affirms their identity in the work of salvation in both covenants. In the same line, later theology will assert that the works of God are common to the three divine Persons. Another interpretation identifies the Lord of v. 17 with the one of v. 16, namely God; it was when he turned to God that Moses took off his veil, Ex 34:34. Paul means that the Lord to whom Moses turned is already in fact the Holy Spirit to whom Christians turn.

h. Rather than 'contemplate'. The comparison of vv. 7–15 continues. By contrast to Moses, our faces are unveiled and we reflect the divine glory in a permanent rather than transitory way, *see* 3:13e. The privilege which only Moses enjoyed is granted to all.

i. The 'glory of the Lord' is that of Jesus Christ, for the glory of the Lord is on the face of Christ, 4:6.

j. *See* Rm 8:29n. A final contrast with Moses, whose glory weakened and disappeared as it shone, vv. 7,13. On the contrary, the Christian is transformed into an increasingly faithful image of God in Christ.

k. Alternative translation 'of the Spirit of the Lord'.

4 **a.** Presumably the lack of courage which leads to concealment of those elements in the gospel which could provoke opposition or persecution: Mk 8:38 and par.; Rm 1:16; 2 Tm 1:8; cf. Ac 20:27.

b. Satan, cf. Ep 2:2. Cf. Lk 4:6; Jn 12:31; 14:30; 16:11.

c. A favourite theme of Paul's, often stressed in this letter: 3:5–6; 10:1,8; 12:5,9–10; 13:3,4. Cf. 1 Co 1:26; 2:5; 4:13g; Ph 4:13; already present in the OT Jg 7:2; 1 S 14:6; 17:47; 1 M 3:19.

d. These four sentences owe their imagery to the gladiatorial contest.

5 **a.** 5:1–10 continues the contrast of 4:16–18 between the progressive ruin of the exterior nature and the progress of the interior nature, v. 16, *see* Rm 7:22j. This interior nature, identical with the new humanity, Col 3:10e, is the pledge of the Spirit, 2 Co 5:5, cf. Rm 8:23, whose fullness will be given at the resurrection, when believers will be clothed with their heavenly habitation, 2 Co 5:2, that is the spiritual body, cf. 1 Co 15:44. Hence the burning longing, 5:2, for this fullness and the desire not to be deprived of it even for a time, by death before the *parousia*, 5:4, and so to be still alive at the coming of the Lord. But *see* 5:8d.

b. That is to say, on the supposition that we are still alive when Christ returns in glory. Paul wants to be of the number of those who will live to see the coming of the Lord and whose bodies will be transformed without having to die. Over the 'natural body' they will, as it were, 'put on' the 'spiritual body'. 1 Co 15:44,53,54, which will be 'absorbed' by the former. Alternative translation: 'having put it on, we shall not be found bare'.

not that we want to be stripped of our covering, but because we want to be covered with a second garment on top, so that what is mortal in us may be swallowed up by life. ·It is God who designed us for this very purpose, and he has given us the Spirit as a pledge.

1:22n Rm 8:23

We are always full of confidence, then, realising that as long as we are at home in the body we are exiled from the Lord, ·guided by faith and not yet by sight; [c] ·we are full of confidence, then, and long instead to be exiled from the body and to be at home with the Lord. [d] ·And so whether at home or exiled, we make it our ambition to please him. ·For at the judgement seat of Christ we are all to be seen for what we are, so that each of us may receive what he has deserved in the body, matched to whatever he has done, good or bad.

1 P 1:1a ·Rm 8:24 1 Co 13:12 Ph 1:21–23 Mt 25:19,31seq. Jn 5:27 Rm 14:10 Heb 11:6c

The apostolate in action

And so it is with the fear of the Lord always in mind that we try to win people over. But God sees us for what we are, and I hope your consciences do too. ·Again we are saying this not to commend ourselves to you, but simply to give you the opportunity to take pride in us, so that you may have an answer for those who take pride in appearances and not inner reality. ·If we have been unreasonable, it was for God; if reasonable, for you. [e] ·For the love of Christ overwhelms us when we consider that if one man died for all, then all have died; [f] ·his purpose in dying for all humanity was that those who live should live not any more for themselves, but for him who died and was raised to life for them.

3:1a Rm 6:4–11 and notes Ga 2:20 Rm 6:11e;7:1b Rm 1:3,9;5 7:5c

From now onwards, then, we will not consider anyone by human standards: even if we were once familiar with Christ according to human standards, we do not know him in that way any longer. [g] ·So for anyone who is in Christ, there is a new creation: [h] the old order is gone and a new being is there to see. [i] ·It is all God's work; he reconciled us to himself through Christ and he gave us the ministry of reconciliation. ·I mean, God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not holding anyone's faults against them, but entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

Is 43:18–19 Rm 5:10

So we are ambassadors for Christ; it is as though God were urging you through us, and in the name of Christ we appeal to you to be reconciled to God. ·For our sake he made the sinless one a victim for sin, [j] so that in him we might become the uprightness of God.

Is 53:5–12 Rm 8:3 Ga 3:13 Heb 4:15 1 P 2:24 1 Jn 3:5 1 Co 3:9

6 As his fellow-workers, we urge you not to let your acceptance of his grace come to nothing. ·As he said, '*At the time of my favour I have answered you; on the day of salvation I have helped you*;' well, now is the real time of favour, now the day of salvation [a] is here. ·We avoid putting obstacles in anyone's way, so that no blame may attach to our work of service; ·but in everything we prove ourselves authentic servants of God; by resolute perseverance in times of hardships, difficulties and distress; ·when we are flogged or sent to prison or mobbed; labouring, sleepless, starving; ·in purity, in knowledge, in patience, in kindness; in the Holy Spirit, in a love free of affectation; ·in the word of truth and in the power of God; by using the weapons of uprightness for attack and for defence: ·in times of honour or disgrace, blame or praise; taken for impostors and yet we are genuine; ·unknown and yet we are acknowledged; dying, and yet here we are, alive; scourged but not executed; ·in pain yet always full of joy; poor and yet making many people rich; having nothing, and yet owning everything.

Is 49:8 8:21 4:8–10;11: 23–27 1 Co 4:9–13 10:4 Ep 6:11b 1 Co 7:29–31 ·4:11 Rm 8:32 1 Co 1:7

A warning

People of Corinth, we have spoken frankly and opened our heart to you. ·Any distress you feel is not on our side; the distress is in your own selves. ·In fair exchange—I speak as though to children of mine—you must open your hearts too.

7:3 Ga 4:19

[b]Do not harness yourselves in an uneven team with unbelievers; how can uprightness and law-breaking be partners, or what can light and darkness have in common? ·How can Christ come to an agreement with Beliar and what sharing can

Dt 22:10 Ep 5:11 Jn 8:12b Dt 13:14b

16 there be between a believer and an unbeliever? •The temple of God cannot compromise with false gods, and that is what we are[c]—the temple of the living God. We have God's word for it: *I shall fix my home among them and live among* 17 *them; I will be their God and they will be my people.* •*Get away from them, purify yourselves,* says the Lord. *Do not touch anything unclean, and then I shall welcome* 18 *you.* •*I shall be father to you, and* you *will be sons* and daughters *to me*, says the almighty Lord.

1 Since these promises have been made to us, my dear friends, we should wash ourselves clean of everything that pollutes either body or spirit, bringing our sanctification to completion in the fear of God.

2 Keep a place for us in your hearts.[a] We have not injured anyone, or ruined 3 anyone, or taken advantage of anyone. •I am not saying this to condemn anybody; as I have already told you, you are in our hearts—so that together we live and 4 together we die. •I can speak with the greatest frankness to you; and I can speak with the greatest pride about you: in all our hardship, I am filled with encouragement and overflowing with joy.

1 Co 3:16–17

Lv 26:11–12
Ezk 37:27
•Is 52:11
Jr 51:45

2 S 7:14
Is 43:6
Jr 31:9
Jn 1:12+
Heb 10:22
Rm 1:9e;7:5c

6:11–13

8:24;9:2;12:10
Col 1:24

Paul in Macedonia; he is joined by Titus

5 Even after we had come to Macedonia, there was no rest for this body of ours.[b] Far from it; we were beset by hardship on all sides, there were quarrels all around 6 us and misgivings within us. •But God, who encourages all those who are dis- 7 tressed, encouraged us through the arrival of Titus; •and not simply by his arrival only, but also by means of the encouragement that you had given him, as he told us of your desire to see us, how sorry you were and how concerned for us; so that I was all the more joyful.

Dt 32:25

2:13

8 So now, though I did distress you with my letter,[c] I do not regret it. Even if I did 9 regret it—and I realise that the letter distressed you, even though not for long—•I am glad now, not because you were made to feel distress, but because the distress that you were caused led to repentance; your distress was the kind that God 10 approves and so you have come to no kind of harm through us. •For to be distressed

c. Cf. 1 Co 13:12. Faith is compared to clear vision as the imperfect is to the perfect. This passage is important because it stresses the cognitive aspect of faith.

d. Here and in Ph 1:23 Paul has in mind a union of Christians with Christ on the death of each individual. Without running counter to the OT doctrine of a final general resurrection, Rm 2:6b; 1 Co 15:44w, this expectation of a blessedness for the separated soul shows the influence of Greek thought which was already present in Judaism, cf. Lk 16:22; 23:43; 1 P 3:19h. But *see also* the texts referring to ecstatic states when the soul is 'out of the body', 12:2seq.; cf. Rv 1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10.

e. An allusion to earlier events. Paul was no doubt 'unreasonable' in his letter written 'with many tears', 2:4, but this was 'for God', to show the uncompromising demands of God. If he is 'reasonable' it is 'for you', to make an impression on his reader, in his desire to 'win people over'. In both cases he is 'compelled' by the love of Christ, 5:14.

f. Christ dies for all, that is, in the name of all, as head representing the whole of humanity. But the value of this death comes from the loving obedience which it shows, the sacrifice of the total gift of life, Rm 5:19k; Ph 2:8; cf. Lk 22:42 and par.; Jn 15:13; Heb 10:9–10. Believers participate in this death through baptism, Rm 6:3–6, and must ratify this offering of Christ by their own lives (2 Co 5:15 and Rm 6:8–11).

g. Paul does not claim to have known Jesus personally. He maintains that no one, even those who could have known him ('we') may attribute any importance to any connection 'according to human standards', family relationship, acquaintance, race. *See* Mk 3:31–35 and par. Others consider that Paul is contrasting his present knowledge of Christ, the Lord of Glory, with that which he had before his conversion, when he considered Christ an enemy.

h. God who created all things through Christ, cf. Jn 1:3, has restored his work, deformed by sin, by re-creating it in Christ, Col 1:15–20d. The central figure of this 'new creation', here and Ga 6:15—which extends to the whole universe, Col 1:19f; cf. 2 P 3:13; Rv 21:1—is the 'new humanity' created in Christ, Ep 2:15n, to lead a new life, Rm 6:4, of virtue and holiness, Ep 2:10; 4:24k; Col 3:10e. Cf. the 'new birth' of baptism, Rm 6:4a.

i. var. 'everything is new'.

j. God made Christ one with sinful humanity in order to make the human race one with his obedience and saving justice, *see* 5:14e; Rm 5:19*l*. Perhaps 'victim for sin' should here be taken as meaning 'sin', since the same Hebr. word *hatta't* can have both senses, *see* Lv 4:1–5;13.

6 **a.** There is an intermediary period, Rm 13:11e, between the time of Christ's coming, Rm 3:26m, and his return, 1 Co 1:8e. This period is the 'day of salvation', a time allowed for conversion, Ac 3:20seq.; it is granted to the 'remnant', Rm 11:5, and to the gentiles, Rm 11:25; Ep 2:12seq.; *see* Lk 21:24; Rv 6:11. Though the duration is uncertain, 1 Th 5:1a, this time of pilgrimage must be regarded as being short, 1 P 1:17; 1 Co 7:26–31; cf. Rv 10:6; 12:12; 20:3, and full of trials, Ep 5:16; 6:13, and sufferings which are a prelude to the glory to come, Rm 8:11. The end is at hand, 1 P 4:7; *see* Rv 1:3e and 1 Co 16:22; Ph 4:5; Jm 5:8, the Day approaches, Rm 13:11, and it is necessary to be on the watch, 1 Th 5:6; cf. Mk 13:33, and to use the time well that remains, Col 4:5; Ep 5:16, for one's own salvation and that of others, Ga 6:10, leaving the final vindication to God, Rm 12:19; 1 Co 4:5.

b. 6:14–7:1 is a warning against the infiltration of gentile practices which would split the church and cut it off from its founder. This section is somewhat alien to the context, *see* p. 1855.

c. var. 'you'. *See* Rm 12:1a; 1 Co 3:16e.

7 **a.** lit. 'Make room for us', which could also be translated 'you must understand us.'

b. That is, his person considered in its weakness, *see* Rm 7:5c.

c. The 'severe letter'; *see* 2:3b.

in a way that God approves leads to repentance and then to salvation with no regrets; it is the world's kind of distress that ends in death. ·Just look at this present 11
case: at what the result has been of your being made to feel distress in the way that God approves—what concern, what defence, what indignation and what alarm; what yearning, and what enthusiasm, and what justice done.[d] In every way you have cleared yourselves of blame in this matter. ·So although I wrote a letter to 12
you, it was not for the sake of the offender, nor for the one offended,[e] but only so that you yourselves should fully realise in the sight of God what concern you have for us. ·That is what I have found encouraging. 13

In addition to all this to encourage us, we were made all the more joyful by Titus' joy, now that his spirit has been refreshed by you all. ·And if I boasted about you 14
to him in any way, then I have not been made to look foolish; indeed, our boast to
1:18–19 Titus has been proved to be as true as anything we said to you. ·His personal 15
affection for you is all the stronger when he remembers how obedient you have all
1 Co 2:3b been, and how you welcomed him with fear and trembling. ·I am glad that I have 16
every confidence in you.

II: ORGANISATION OF THE COLLECTION[a]

Why the Corinthians should be generous

8 Next, brothers, we will tell you of the grace[b] of God which has been granted to 1
1 Co 16:5 the churches of Macedonia, ·and how, throughout continual ordeals of hard- 2
ship, their unfailing joy and their intense poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. ·I can testify that it was of their own accord that they made 3
their gift, which was not merely as far as their resources would allow, but well beyond their resources; ·and they had kept imploring us most insistently for the 4
Ac 9:13g privilege of a share in the fellowship of service to God's holy people—·it was not 5
Rm 15:31
1 Co 16:1a something that we expected of them, but it began by their offering themselves to the Lord and to us at the prompting of the will of God. ·In the end we urged Titus, 6
since he had already made a beginning, also to bring this work of generosity to completion among you. ·More, as you are rich in everything—faith, eloquence, 7
understanding, concern for everything, and love for us too[c]—then make sure that
1 Co 7:6 you excel in this work of generosity too. ·I am not saying this as an order, but 8
testing the genuineness of your love against the concern of others. ·You are well 9
aware of the generosity[d] which our Lord Jesus Christ had, that, although he was
Mt 5:3d;8:20 rich, he became poor for your[e] sake, so that you should become rich through his
Ph 2:6–7 poverty.[f] ·I will give you my considered opinion in the matter; this will be the 10
right course for you as you were the first, a year ago, not only to take any action but also even to conceive the project. ·Now, then, complete the action as well, so that 11
the fulfilment may—so far as your resources permit—be proportionate to your enthusiasm for the project. ·As long as the enthusiasm is there, the basis on which 12
it is acceptable is what someone has, not what someone does not have. ·It is not 13
that you ought to relieve other people's needs and leave yourselves in hardship;
Rm 15:26–27 but there should be a fair balance—·your surplus[g] at present may fill their deficit, 14
and another time their surplus[h] may fill your deficit. So there may be a fair balance;
Ex 16:18 ·as scripture says: *No one who had collected more had too much, no one who* 15
collected less had too little.

The delegates recommended to the Corinthians

Thank God for putting into Titus' heart the same sincere concern for you. ·He 16, 17
certainly took our urging to heart; but greater still was his own enthusiasm, and he went off to you of his own accord. ·We have sent with him the brother[i] who is 18
praised as an evangelist in all the churches ·and who, what is more, was elected by 19
the churches to be our travelling companion in this work of generosity, a work to

be administered by us for the glory of the Lord and our complete satisfaction.[j]
20 We arranged it this way so that no one should be able to make any accusation
21 against us about this large sum we are administering. ·And so *we have been careful* Pr 3:4 LXX
22 *to do right* not only *in the sight of the Lord* but also *in the sight of people.* ·Along Rm 12:17
with these, we have sent a brother of ours[k] whose eagerness we have tested over
and over again in many ways and who is now all the more eager because he has so
23 much faith in you. ·If Titus is in question—he is my own partner and fellow-worker
in your interests; and if our brothers—they are the emissaries[l] of the churches and
24 the glory of Christ. ·So then, in full view of all the churches, give proof that you
love them, and that we were right to boast of you to them.

1 **9** About the help to God's holy people, there is really no need for me to write to
2 you;[a] ·for I am well aware of your enthusiasm, and I have been boasting of it to
the Macedonians that 'Achaia has been ready for a year'; your enthusiasm has
3 been a spur to many others. ·All the same, I have sent the brothers, to make sure
that our boast about you may not prove hollow in this respect and that you may be
4 ready, as I said you would be; ·so that if by chance some of the Macedonians came
with me and found you unprepared we—to say nothing of yourselves—would not
5 be put to shame by our confidence in you. ·So I have thought it necessary to
encourage the brothers to go to you ahead of us and make sure in advance of the
gift that you have already promised, so that it is all at hand as a real gift and not
an imposition.

Blessings to be expected from the collection

6 But remember: anyone who sows sparsely will reap sparsely as well—and anyone Pr 11:24–25
7 who sows generously will reap generously as well. ·Each one should give as much Lk 6:38
as he has decided on his own initiative, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for
8 *God loves a cheerful giver.* ·God is perfectly able to enrich you with every grace, so Pr 22:8 LXX
9 that you always have enough for every ·conceivable need, and your resources
overflow in all kinds of good work. As scripture says: *To the needy he gave without* Ps 112:9
stint, his uprightness stands firm for ever.
10 The one who so freely provides *seed for the sower and food to eat* will provide Is 55:10
you with ample store of seed for sowing and make *the harvest of your uprightness* a Ho 12:12
11 bigger one: ·you will be rich enough in every way for every kind of generosity that
12 makes people thank God for what we have done. ·For the help provided by this
contribution not only satisfies the needs of God's holy people, but also overflows 1:11
13 into widespread thanksgiving to God; ·because when you have proved your quality
by this help, they will give glory to God for the obedience which you show in 1 Co 16:1a
professing the gospel of Christ, as well as for the generosity of your fellowship Ac 2:42
14 towards them and towards all. ·At the same time, their prayer for you will express
the affection they feel for you[b] because of the unbounded grace God has given
15 you. ·Thanks be to God for his gift that is beyond all telling![c] 8:9
Rm 5:15–16

d. The feelings and conduct of the Corinthians towards Paul and the offender after his severe letter, *see* 2:5–8.

e. The one offended was probably an envoy of Paul's. On him and the offender, 2:6c; we have no idea what the actual offence was.

8 **a.** On this collection, particularly dear to Paul, *see* 1 Co 16:1a.

b. Various favourite themes are used by Paul to persuade the Corinthians to be generous: poverty as a source of enrichment to others here and 6:10; following Christ's example, v. 9; the gift of God, v. 1, giving rise to the gift of the Christians, v. 4 and 5; cf. 9:8.

c. var. 'the love towards us which unites us to you'.

d. Or 'grace'.

e. var. 'our'.

f. Christ is seen as stripping himself of the glory and privileges which were rightly his in order to share to the full our life, our suffering and our death. The theme is the same as Ph 2:6–11, but here the emphasis is on Christ's saving work, enriching us with the privileges he renounced, whereas in Ph 2 it is on his ultimate glorification by the Father.

The exhortation to model Christian conduct on the example of Christ is characteristic of Pauline morality. Cf. Rm 14:8; Ep 5:1; 5:25; Ph 2:5; *see also* 2 Th 3:7b.

g. Paul asks the Corinthians to give only from their surplus, whereas the Christians of Macedonia, in their 'intense poverty' had given 'well beyond their resources', v. 2–3. Cf. Mk 12:44 and par. But by setting before them the example of Christ, v. 9, Paul discreetly invites them to imitate the generosity of their brothers in Macedon.

h. Either material goods in the future when the situations could be reversed, or spiritual goods already now, cf. 9:14; Rm 15:27.

i. Traditionally supposed to be Luke.

j. Alternative translation: 'as evidence of our goodwill' or 'as we desired'.

k. This brother cannot be identified.

l. Greek *apostoloi*, apostles, *see* Rm 1:1b. They are 'the glory of Christ' because they show it by their actions, v. 19, by arousing in Christians conduct like his, v. 9.

III: PAUL'S APOLOGIA [a]

Paul's reply to accusations of weakness

Mt 11:29 Ph 2:1,3 1 Co 2:3
10 I urge you by the gentleness and forbearance of Christ—this is Paul now speaking personally—I, the one who is so humble when he is facing you but full of boldness at a distance. [b] 1 ·Yes, my appeal to you is that I should not have to 2
1 Co 4:21 be bold when I am actually with you, or show the same self-assurance as I reckon
Rm 7:5c to use when I am challenging those who reckon that we are guided by human motives. ·For although we are human, it is not by human methods that we do 3
6:7 Ep 6:11b battle. ·The weapons with which we do battle are not those of human nature, but 4
1 Co 1:25 they have the power, in God's cause, [c] to demolish fortresses. It is ideas that we
Is 2:11–18 demolish, ·every presumptuous notion that is set up against the knowledge of God, 5
Rm 1:5d and we bring every thought into captivity and obedience to Christ; ·once you have 6
given your complete obedience, we are prepared to punish any disobedience.
11:23+ Rm 14:7 1Co 1:12;3:23+ Look at the evidence [d] of your eyes. Anybody who is convinced that he belongs to 7
Christ should go on to reflect that we belong to Christ [e] no less than he does.
Maybe I have taken rather too much pride in our authority, but the Lord gave 8
13:10 Jr 1:10 us that for building you up, not for knocking you down, and I am not going to be
shamed ·into letting you think that I can put fear into you only by letter. [f] 9
Someone said, 'His letters are weighty enough, and full of strength, but when you 10
see him in person, he makes no impression and his powers of speaking are
negligible.' ·I should like that sort of person to take note that our deeds when we 11
are present will show the same qualities as our letters when we were at a distance.

His reply to the accusation of ambition

3:1c We are not venturing to rank ourselves, or even to compare ourselves with certain 12
people who provide their own commendations. By measuring themselves by them-
Ga 6:4 selves and comparing themselves to themselves, they only show their folly. ·By 13
contrast we do not intend to boast beyond measure, [g] but will measure ourselves by
Rm 15:20–21 Col 1:25 the standard which God laid down for us, namely that of having come all the way
to you. ·We are not overreaching ourselves as we would be if we had not come all 14
the way to you; in fact we were the first to come as far as you with the good news of
Christ. [h] ·So we are not boasting beyond measure, about other men's work; in fact, 15
we hope, as your faith increases, to grow greater and greater by this standard of
ours, [i] ·by preaching the gospel to regions beyond you, rather than boasting about 16
Jr 9:22–23 1 Co 1:31 work already done in someone else's province. [j] ·*Let anyone who wants to boast,* 17
boast of the Lord. ·For it is not through self-commendation that recognition is won, 18
but through commendation.

Paul is driven to sound his own praises

11 I wish you would put up with a little foolishness from me—not that you 1
Dt 4:24f Ho 1:2b Ep 5:27 Rv 21:2,9 Gn 3:1–6 don't do this already. [a] ·The jealousy that I feel for you is, you see, God's 2
own jealousy: I gave you all in marriage to a single husband, a virgin pure for
presentation to Christ. [b] ·But I am afraid that, just as the snake with his cunning 3
seduced Eve, your minds may be led astray from single-minded [c] devotion to
Christ. ·Because any chance comer has only to preach a Jesus [d] other than the one 4
we preached, or you have only to receive a spirit different from the one you
Ga 1:6–9 received, or a gospel different from the one you accepted—and you put up with
that only too willingly. ·Now, I consider that I am not in the least inferior to the 5
12:11 1 Co 2:1–5 super-apostles. [e] ·Even if there is something lacking in my public speaking, this is 6
not the case with my knowledge, as we have openly shown to you at all times and
before everyone. [f]
Have I done wrong, then, humbling myself so that you might be raised up, by 7
Ac 18:3d 1 Co 9:18 preaching the Gospel of God to you for nothing? ·I was robbing other churches, 8

9 taking wages from them in order to work for you. ·When I was with you and needed money, I was no burden to anybody, for the brothers from Macedonia brought me as much as I needed when they came; I have always been careful not to 10 let myself be a burden to you in any way, and I shall continue to be so. ·And as Christ's truth is in me, this boast of mine is not going to be silenced in the regions of 11, 12 Achaia. ·Why should it be? Because I do not love you? God knows that I do. ·I will go on acting as I do at present, to cut the ground from under the feet of those who 13 are looking for a chance to be proved my equals in grounds for boasting. [g] ·These people are counterfeit apostles, dishonest workers disguising themselves as 14 apostles of Christ. ·There is nothing astonishing in this; even Satan disguises 15 himself as an angel of light. ·It is nothing extraordinary, then, when his servants disguise themselves as the servants of uprightness. They will come to the end appropriate to what they have done.

8:1–2 Ph 4:12,15

12:15

16 To repeat: [h] let no one take me for a fool, but if you do, then treat me as a fool, 17 so that I, too, can do a little boasting. ·I shall not be following the Lord's way in what I say now, but will be speaking out of foolishness in the conviction that I have 18 something to boast about. ·So many people boast on merely human grounds that I 19 shall too. ·I know how happy you are to put up with fools, being so wise your- 20 selves; ·and how you will still go on putting up with a man who enslaves you, eats up all you possess, keeps you under his orders and sets himself above 21 you, or even slaps you in the face. ·I say it to your shame; perhaps we have been too weak. [i]

Rm 7:5c

3:1c

Whatever bold claims anyone makes—now I am talking as a fool—I can make 22 them too. [j] ·Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they 23 descendants of Abraham? So am I. ·Are they servants of Christ? I speak in utter folly—I am too, and more than they are: I have done more work, I have been in prison more, I have been flogged more severely, many times exposed to death.

Ph 3:4–6
Ac 22:3
Rm 11:1
Ga 1:13–14

6:5;10:7

9 **a.** Paul has, however, just done so at length. Ch. 9 may perhaps be a separate note to the churches of Achaia, inserted here later because of its similarity to the exhortation to the church at Corinth in ch. 8. *See* p. 1855.

b. Paul puts his teaching of 1 Co 13:5 into practice, for certain members of this community had made life difficult for him, Ga 2:4seq. By this collection he aims to disarm such hostility by showing the deference and support of the churches of gentile origin to the mother Church from which they received their spiritual goods. Rm 15:27.

c. The redemption.

10 **a.** If 2 Co is a single letter, at least there is here a sudden change of subject and tone: *see* p. 1855. One possibility is that there was an interruption in the dictation of the letter, and that after completing Ch. 9, Paul received new information about the Corinthians' state of mind and their feelings towards him; perhaps including the comment quoted in v. 10, and alluded to in 10:1. *See also* 12:16,20.

b. An allusion to the sarcastic reproaches of his enemies, *see* v. 10.

c. Or 'in the eyes of God'.

d. Or 'You look only at appearances'.

e. Either 'Christ's party' as in 1 Co 1:12j or, more likely, believers who claimed to have a monopoly of Christ.

f. Cf. v. 11. The Corinthians are not to think that Paul's severity is confined to words.

g. var. 'Oh no; by measuring ourselves against ourselves and comparing ourselves with our own selves, we shall be doing no unmeasured boasting.'

h. The meaning of vv. 12–14 is: My opponents' sole cause for boasting is the power and the gifts that they claim to possess in themselves, v. 12, whereas I am able to produce the evidence that I have done the work that God set me to do, of founding the church at Corinth, vv. 13–14.

i. Alternative translation 'we are trusting, when your faith has developed, to grow further in your esteem and to continue to grow according to the standard allotted to us.'

j. It was Paul's rule not to build on the foundations of another, Rm 15:20seq.

11 **a.** Or perhaps 'Go on! Be indulgent to me!' On this foolishness of Paul *see* 5:13e; 11:17; 12:11.

b. Paul, the friend of the bridegroom, presents to him his fiancée. Since Ho 2, the love of Yahweh for his people has been represented by the love of husband for wife: Ex 16:23; Is 49:14–21; 50:1; 54:1–10; 62:4–5; Jr 2:1–7; 3; 31:22; 51:5. The NT takes up the same image: Mt 22:2seq.; 25:1seq.; Jn 3:28–29; Ep 5:25–33; Rv 19:7; 21:2.

c. add. 'and pure'.

d. Presumably Jesus presented from an earthly point of view, *see* 5:16g, with less emphasis on the risen Lord, head of the new creation, 5:17h. The phrase can also be understood as a conditional: if this happened you would accept it. In any case the situation seems to be less serious than in Ga 1:6–9; but it could become serious.

e. 'Super-apostles'; the term recurs in 12:11, where it is contrasted with 'true apostles' and the same men are termed 'counterfeit apostles' in 11:13. The use of the word is sarcastic, and it must not be taken to mean the Twelve, whose authority may be implicitly admitted by Paul, Ga 1:17; 2:9. By the time of this Letter, the circle of apostles was wider than the Twelve, 1 Co 15:7g. Paul could also mean those who claimed the title without any right to do so.

f. Or 'in every way'.

g. Paul's opponents, the 'super-apostles' of v. 5, would never dare to challenge the selflessness which is the mark of Paul's apostolic mission.

h. In fact, however, he has never said it—contrast 11:1. Paul writes with such a passion of rhetoric that there is no time for precision. His foolishness (a word that rankles) 11:1,17,19,21,23; 12:11, which is not madness 11:16; 12:6, will consist of boasting on merely human grounds 11:18, that is, of his race, 11:22, his labours and sufferings, 11:23–26, his daily care for the churches, 11:28. He will add a boast of the revelations made to him, 12:1–5. This is to meet his opponents on their own ground. But his real boast is his weakness, 11:30; 12:5,9, because it is that which calls forth the strength of Christ, 12:9, proving that the power which is active in his apostolic work comes not from him but from God, 4:7c.

i. var. 'I say it to our shame.'

j. The needs of controversy several times compelled Paul, as here, to recall his past as a practising Jew, Rm 11:1; Ga 1:13–14; Ph 3:4–6; cf. Ac 22:3seq.; 26–4–5.

Dt 25:2–3 Five times I have been given the thirty-nine lashes by the Jews; 24, 25
Ac 16:22 Act 14:19 •three times I have been beaten with sticks; once I was stoned; three times I have been shipwrecked, and once I have been in the open sea for a night and a day; 26
•continually travelling, I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from brigands, in danger from my own people and in danger from the gentiles, in danger in the towns and in danger in the open country, in danger at sea and in danger from people masquer-
1 Co 4:11 ading as brothers; 27
•I have worked with unsparing energy, for many nights without sleep; I have been hungry and thirsty, and often altogether without food or drink; I have been cold and lacked clothing. 28
•And, besides all the external things, there
Rm 9:2 is, day in day out, the pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches. 29
•If any-
1 Co 9:22 one weakens, I am weakened as well; and when anyone is made to fall, I burn in agony myself.

If I have to boast, I will boast of all the ways in which I am weak. 30, 31
•The God and Father of the Lord Jesus—who is for ever to be blessed—knows that I am not lying.
Ac 9:23–25 When I was in Damascus, the governor who was under King Aretas put guards 32
round Damascus city to catch me, 33
•and I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and that was how I escaped from his hands.

12 I am boasting because I have to. Not that it does any good, but I will move 1
on to visions and revelations from the Lord. 2
•I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—still in the body? I do not know; or out of the body? I do not know: God knows—was caught up right into the third heaven. [a] 3
•And I know that
Ex 33:20i this man—still in the body? or outside the body? I do not know, God knows— 4
•was
Lk 23:35+ caught up into Paradise and heard words said that cannot and may not be spoken by any human being. 5
•On behalf of someone like that I am willing to boast, but I am not going to boast on my own behalf except of my weaknesses; 6
•and then, if I do choose to boast I shall not be talking like a fool because I shall be speaking the truth. But I will not go on in case anybody should rate me higher than he sees and hears me to be, because of the exceptional greatness of the revelations.

11:29 Rm 9:2 Wherefore, so that I should not get above myself, I was given a thorn in the 7
flesh, [b] a messenger from Satan to batter me and prevent me from getting above
Mt 26:39,42,44 myself. [c] 8
•About this, I have three times pleaded with the Lord that it might leave me; 9
•but he has answered me, 'My grace is enough for you: for power is at full
4:7 Is 40:29 stretch in weakness.' It is, then, about my weaknesses that I am happiest of all to
•7:4 Col 1:24 •Ph 4:13 Col 1:29 boast, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me; 10
•and that is why I am glad of weaknesses, insults, constraints, persecutions and distress for Christ's sake. For it is when I am weak that I am strong.

I have turned into a fool, but you forced me to it. It is you that should have been 11
11:5 1 Co 15:10 commending me; those super-apostles had no advantage over me, even if I am nothing at all. 12
•All the marks characteristic of a true apostle have been at work
Ac 1:8k Rm 15:19 1 Co 2:4 1 Th 1:5 among you: complete perseverance, signs, marvels, demonstrations of power. 13
•Is there any way in which you have been given less than the rest of the churches,
•Ac 18:3d except that I did not make myself a burden to you? Forgive me for this unfairness! [d]
13:1 Here I am, ready to come to you for the third time and I am not going to be a 14
burden on you: it is not your possessions that I want, but yourselves. Children are not expected to save up for their parents, but parents for their children, 15
•and I am more than glad to spend what I have and to be spent for the sake of your souls. Is it because I love you so much more, that I am loved the less? [e]

All right, then; I did not make myself a burden to you, but, trickster that I am, I 16
caught you by trickery. 17
•Have I taken advantage of you through any of the people
8:16–22 I have sent to you? 18
•Titus came at my urging, and I sent his companion with him. Did Titus take advantage of you? Can you deny that he and I were following the guidance of the same Spirit and were on the same tracks?

Paul's fears and anxieties

All this time [f] you have been thinking that we have been pleading our own cause 19
before you; no, we have been speaking in Christ and in the presence of God—and

20 all, dear friends, to build you up. •I am afraid that in one way or another, when I
come, I may find you different from what I should like you to be, and you may find
me what you would not like me to be; so that in one way or the other there will be
rivalry, jealousy, bad temper, quarrels, slander, gossip, arrogance and disorders; Rm 1:29q 1 Co 1:11
21 and when I come again, my God may humiliate me in front of you and I shall be
grieved by all those who sinned in the past and have still not repented of the 1 Co 5:1
impurities and sexual immorality and debauchery that they have committed.

1 13 This will be the third time[a] I have confronted you. *Whatever the mis-* 12:14 •Dt 19:15
demeanour, the evidence of two or three witnesses is required to sustain a Mt 18:16
2 *charge.* •I gave you notice once, and now, though I am not with you, I give notice 1 Tm 5:19
again, just as when I was with you for a second time, to those who sinned before,
and to all others; and it is to this effect, that when I do come next time, I shall have
3 no mercy. •Since you are asking for a proof that it is Christ who speaks in me; he
4 is not weak with you but his power is at work among you; •for, though it was out of
weakness that he was crucified, he is alive now with the power of God. We, too, Rm 1:4c
are weak in him, but with regard to you[b] we shall live with him by the power of God. Rm 8:11g
5 Put yourselves to the test to make sure you are in the faith. Examine yourselves.
Do you not recognise yourselves as people in whom Jesus Christ is present?— Rm 8:10
6 unless, that is, you fail the test. •But we, as I hope you will come to recognise, do
7 not fail the test. •It is our prayer to God that you may do nothing wrong—not so
that we have the credit of passing a test, but because you will be doing what is right,
8 even if we do not pass the test.[c] •We have no power to resist the truth; only to Ac 4:20+
9 further the truth; •and we are delighted to be weak if only you are strong. What we
10 ask in our prayers is that you should be made perfect. •That is why I am writing this
while still far away, so that when I am with you I shall not have to be harsh, with
the authority that the Lord has given me, an authority that is for building up and 10:8
not for breaking down. Jr 1:10

CONCLUSION

Recommendations, greetings, final good wishes

11 To end then, brothers, we wish you joy; try to grow perfect; encourage one
another; have a common mind and live in peace, and the God of love and peace Rm 15:33
will be with you.

12 Greet one another with the holy kiss.[d] All God's holy people send you their Ph 4:22i
greetings.

13 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Rm 16:20+
Holy Spirit be with you all.[e]

12 **a.** That is, to the highest heaven.

b. Perhaps a disease with severe and unforeseeable attacks; perhaps the resistance of Israel, Paul's brothers by physical descent, to the Christian faith.

c. om. 'and prevent me from getting above myself' (lit. 'so that I should not be too proud'). Possibly also the beginning of v. 7 should be read as the conclusion of v. 6. The clause is awkwardly phrased and the text critically uncertain.

d. A good example of Paul's irony at its heaviest.

e. var. '. . . souls, even if, loving you the more, I must be loved the less'. Paul is often explicit about his love for the Christians in the churches to which he is writing: 2:4;6:12,11:11;12:15; 1 Co 16:24; Ga 4:19; Ph 1:8; 1 Th 2:8, comparing it with mother-love, Ga 4:19; 1 Th 2:8, or paternal love, 1 Co 4:14seq.; 2 Co 6:13. He asks the faithful to give him the same love, 6:13; but in the name of this love, he will unhesitatingly correct and reprove the churches, even though this may cool their feelings of love for him, 7:8; 12:15; Ga 4:16.

f. var. 'Once again'.

13 **a.** The first time was at the foundation of the church there, the second formed the 'intermediate visit', *see* p. 1854.

b. 'Towards you', omitted by some authorities.

c. This test will be the conduct of Paul and the Corinthians at his approaching visit, when Paul will give proof that Christ is acting through him, 13:3seq. This proof will be to the Corinthians' disadvantage, 13:6, unless they change their ways; Paul will triumph through the sanctions he applied, 13:7. But if they do change their ways, Paul will not have to make use of his power, and will give the impression of being weak beside their strength, 13:9; he will appear to fail in the test, 13:7, for they will be able to say that his threats are only a matter of words, *see* 10:9seq. He nevertheless accepts the possibility with joy; it will be humiliating for him but magnificent for his beloved disciples.

d. The kiss of peace, familiar in the liturgy of the Eucharist as the symbol of Christian fellowship and unity, Rm 16:16; 1 Co 16:20; 1 Th 5:26.

e. This trinitarian formula, probably derived from liturgical usage, *see also* Mt 28:19, is echoed in many passages of the epistles where the several functions of the three Persons are referred to as the various contexts suggest: 1:21seq.; Rm 1:4c; 15:16,30; 1 Co 2:10–16; 6:11,14,15,19; 12:4–6; Ga 4:6; Ep 1:3–14; 2:18,22; 4:4–6; Ph 2:1; Tt 3:5seq.; Heb 9:14; 1 P 1:2; 3:18; 1 Jn 4:2; Rv 1:4seq.; 22:1; cf. Ac 10:38; 20:28; Jn 14:16,18,23. Note in 1 Co 6:11; Ep 4:4–6 the triple formulations emphasising the trinitarian thought. *See also* the trio of theological virtues in 1 Co 13.13e.

GALATIANS

THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE CHURCH IN GALATIA

Address [a]

1:11seq. Rm 1:1a,b Rm 1:4c

1 From Paul, an apostle appointed not by human beings nor through any human 1
being but by Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised him from the dead,
and all the brothers who are with me, to the churches of Galatia. ·Grace and 2, 3
peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ ·who gave himself for our 4
Col 1:13–14 ·1 Jn 5:19 sins to liberate us from this present wicked world, [b] in accordance with the will of
Rm 16:27n our God and Father, ·to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. 5

A warning [c]

2 Th 2:2 I am astonished that you are so promptly turning away from the one who called 6
2 Co 11:4 you in the grace of Christ and are going over to a different gospel—·not that it is 7
another gospel; [d] except that there are trouble-makers among you who are seeking
to pervert the gospel of Christ. ·But even if we ourselves or an angel from heaven 8
Rm 9:3b preaches to you a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let God's curse be
on him. [e] ·I repeat again what we declared before: anyone who preaches to you a 9
1 Co 11:2+ gospel other than the one you were first given is to be under God's curse. ·Whom 10
1 Th 2:4 Rm 1:1 am I trying to convince now, human beings or God? Am I trying to please human
beings? [f] If I were still [g] doing that I should not be a servant of Christ.

I: PAUL'S APOLOGIA

God's call

Now [h] I want to make it quite clear to you, brothers, about the gospel that was 11
Mt 16:17 preached by me, that it was no human message. ·It was not from any human being 12
that I received it, and I was not taught it, but it came to me through a revelation of
2 Co 11:21c Ac 8:1–3,1a Jesus Christ. [i] ·You have surely heard how I lived in the past, within Judaism, 13
and how there was simply no limit to the way I persecuted the Church of God in
Ac 26:4–5 my attempts to destroy it; ·and how, in Judaism, I outstripped most of my Jewish 14
Mk 7:3seq. contemporaries in my limitless enthusiasm for the traditions of my ancestors.
Is 49:1 Jr 1:5 Lk 1:15 But when God, who had set me apart from the time when I was *in my mother's* 15
womb, called me through his grace and chose ·to reveal his Son in me, [j] so that I 16
Ac 9:3–19par. and notes should preach him to the gentiles, I was in no hurry to confer with any human
Mt 16:17 Rm 1:1b being, ·or to go up to Jerusalem [k] to see those who were already apostles before 17
Ac 9:26–30,26m me. Instead, I went off to Arabia, [l] and later I came back to Damascus. ·Only after 18
three years did I go up to Jerusalem to meet Cephas. I stayed fifteen days with him
Ac 12:17f ·but did not set eyes on any of the rest of the apostles, only James, [m] the Lord's 19
Mt 12:46o Rm 1:9e brother. ·I swear before God that what I have written is the truth. ·After that I went 20, 21
to places in Syria and Cilicia; ·and was still unknown by sight to the churches of 22

23 Judaea which are in Christ, •they simply kept hearing it said, 'The man once so ▶Ac 9:30; 11:25–26
24 eager to persecute us is now preaching the faith that he used to try to destroy,' •and they gave glory to God for me.

The meeting at Jerusalem

Ac 11:30p;15:1a

1 2 It was not until fourteen years[a] had gone by that I travelled up to Jerusalem
2 again, with Barnabas, and I took Titus with me too. •My journey was inspired Ac 4:36p 2 Co 2:13d
by a revelation and there, in a private session with the recognised leaders, I expounded the whole gospel that I preach to the gentiles, to make quite sure that
3 the efforts I was making and had already made should not be fruitless.[b] •Even 5:7d
then, and although Titus, a Greek, was with me, there was no demand that he
4 should be circumcised;[c] •but because of some false brothers who had secretly insinuated themselves to spy on the freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, intending Rm 6.15g
5 to reduce us to slavery—•people we did not[d] defer to for one moment, or the truth
6 of the gospel preached to you might have been compromised. . .•but those who were recognised as important people—whether they actually were important or not: *There is no favouritism with God*—those recognised leaders, I am saying, had Dt 10:17f
7 nothing to add to my message.[e] •On the contrary, once they saw that the gospel for Ac 15:3seq., 12 Rm 15:17–19
the uncircumcised had been entrusted to me, just as to Peter the gospel for the
8 circumcised •(for he who empowered Peter's apostolate to the circumcision also
9 empowered mine to the gentiles), •and when they acknowledged the grace that had been given to me, then James and Cephas and John,[f] who were the ones recognised 1:19+ Ac 12:17f
as pillars, offered their right hands to Barnabas and to me as a sign of partnership:
10 we were to go to the gentiles and they to the circumcised.[g] •They asked nothing

1 **a.** This opening is shorter and less friendly than in any other letter: there is not a single word of praise for the Galatians. In vv. 1 and 4, Paul brings in the two main themes of his letter: **1** He is a true apostle, ch. 1–2. **2** He brings the good news that we are saved through faith in Jesus Christ, and that Christians are therefore free, ch. 3–5.

b. The present world, or present age, as opposed to the 'world to come' of the messianic era. It coincides with the rule of Satan, Ac 26:18, 'god of this world', 2 Co 4:4; cf. Jn 8:12; 12:31i; Ep 2:2; 6:12, and with the rule of sin and Law, Ga 3:19. By dying and rising Christ has freed us from these forces and made us members of his kingdom, of God's kingdom, Rm 14:17; Ep 5:5; Col 1:13, though we shall not be completely freed till we also rise from the dead at the second coming, *see* Rm 5–8.

c. This warning takes the place of the thanksgiving with which Paul's letters usually begin, Rm 1:1a.

d. There is only one gospel, 2 Co 11:4, preached by all the apostles, 1 Co 15:11, for the service of which Paul has been set apart by God, Rm 1:1; 1 Co 1:17; cf. Ga 1:15,16. As in the gospels, Mk 1:1a, and Acts 5:42q, it is the good news proclaimed by word of mouth and listened to. Its content is the revelation of the Son Jesus Christ, Rm 1:1–4, risen from the dead, 1 Co 15:1–5; 2 Tm 1:10, after his crucifixion, 1 Co 2:2, which has inaugurated for the benefit of all sinners, whether Jewish or gentile, Rm 3:22–24, the time of justification, Rm 1:16h, and salvation, Ep 1:13, announced by the prophets, Rm 16:25,26; 1 P 1:10. 'The gospel' or the 'good news' can refer both to the apostle's vocation and to the message which he preaches, 2 Co 2:12; 8:18; Ph 1:5,12; 4:3,15; 1 Th 3:2; Phm 13. The effective power of the proclamation is from God, 1 Th 1:3 (*see also* 2:13). As the Word of truth which discloses the grace of God, Ac 14:3; 20:24,32; 2 Co 6:1; Ep 1:13; Col 1:5,6, it brings salvation to those who receive it with faith, Rm 1:16,17k; 3:22; 10:14,15; Ph 1:28, and obey it, Rm 1:5; 10:16; 2 Th 1:8. It bears fruit and grows, Col 1:6, and the ministry of the apostle who 'fully carries it out', Rm 15:19, is the main source of all Christian hope, Col 1:23.

e. lit. *anathema*, *see* Rm 9:3b. In this context, cursed, *see* Dt 7:26; 1 Co 5:5d.

f. It appears that the Judaisers accused Paul of trying to make the gentiles' conversion easier by not insisting on circumcision. But on this occasion at least, he retorts, he cannot be suspected of a conciliatory attitude.

g. As formerly, before his conversion, when Paul used to preach circumcision.

h. var. 'But'.

i. Jesus Christ was both source and content of this revelation, v. 16. Paul does not mean that he learnt everything by direct revelation, still less all at once on the road to Damascus; he is thinking of the doctrine of salvation by faith without the works of the Law; this alone is here at issue.

j. Others translate 'reveal his Son to me'. Paul is not denying that his vision was real, 1 Co 9:1; 15:8; *see also* Ac 9:17; 22:14; 26:16, he is stressing that it was personal to himself, and he relates to this his call to be apostle of the gospel to the gentiles, 2:8,9; Rm 1:1b; Ep 3:2–3; 1 Tm 2:7.

k. var. 'leave for', 'go to'.

l. Probably the kingdom of the Nabataean Arabs to the south of Damascus, 1 M 5:25h, where Paul took refuge from Aretas, 2 Co 11:32.

m. Others translate 'except James'; but to do so presumes that either Paul supposed him to be one of the Twelve or that the term 'apostles' is here used with a less precise meaning, *see* Rm 1:1b.

2 **a.** Reckoning from the last meeting with Peter or else, more probably, from Paul's conversion. It is possible that the 'three years' of 1:18 and the 'fourteen' of 2:1 are no more than just over one and twelve respectively, since it was customary to count even the last few days or the first few days of a year as a whole year.

b. lit. 'for fear I was running or had run to no purpose'. Paul is not in any doubt of the truth of his gospel, but the foundation of the churches made it essential that there should be no break of the link to the mother church, here represented by the three 'recognised leaders', the 'pillars' of v. 9; that is why he felt the collection for the 'poor' in Jerusalem to be important, *see* 1 Co 16:1a; *see also* v. 10.

c. On another occasion, Paul did have Timothy circumcised; but Timothy's mother was a Jewess, and so he was by definition a Jew, Ac 16:3, cf. 1 Co 9:20.

d. By omitting 'not', the Old Latin version makes Paul admit that he gave way for a moment. Papyrus Beatty has 'yield' rather than 'defer'.

e. lit. 'laid down nothing more for me', *see* v. 2.

f. 'James, Cephas and John'; var. 'James, Peter and John', 'Peter, James and John' or 'James and John'.

g. Not, as it seems, a racial distinction, but a recognition of different geographical territories. 'The circumcised' (lit. 'the circumcision') refers to the Jews in Palestine; in the territory of 'the gentiles', the resident Jews were always Paul's first concern, Ac 13:5e.

1 Co 16:1a more than that we should remember to help the poor, as indeed I was anxious to do in any case.

Ac 15:1a **Peter and Paul at Antioch**

However, when Cephas came to Antioch, then I did oppose him to his face since 11
Ac 10:1a he was manifestly in the wrong.[h] ·Before certain people from James came, he used 12
to eat with gentiles;[i] but as soon as these came, he backed out and kept apart from them, out of fear of the circumcised. ·And the rest of the Jews put on the same act 13
as he did, so that even Barnabas was carried away by their insincerity.

When I saw, though, that their behaviour was not true to the gospel, I said to 14
Cephas in front of all of them, 'Since you, though you are a Jew, live like the gentiles and not like the Jews, how can you compel the gentiles to live like the Jews?'

The gospel as preached by Paul[j]

We who were born Jews and not gentile sinners[k] ·have nevertheless learnt that 15, 16
someone is reckoned as upright not by practising the Law but by faith in Jesus Christ; and we too came to believe in Christ Jesus so as to be reckoned as upright
Ph 3:9f Ps 143:2 Rm 3:20g by faith in Christ and not by practising the Law: since no human being *can be found* upright by keeping the Law. ·Now if we too are found to be sinners on the grounds 17
that we seek our justification in Christ, it would surely follow that Christ was at the service of sin. Out of the question! ·If I now rebuild everything I once demolished, 18
Rm 6:11e; 7:1b;14:8 2 Co 5:15 I prove that I was wrong before. ·In fact, through the Law I am dead to the Law[l] so 19
that I can be alive to God. ·I have been crucified with Christ and yet I am alive; yet 20
Rm 8:10–11 Ph 1:21 Col 3:3–4 it is no longer I, but Christ living in me.[m] The life that I am now living, subject to the limitation of human nature, I am living in faith,[n] faith in the Son of God[o]
2 Co 5:14 Ep 5:2,25 who loved me and gave himself for me. ·I am not setting aside God's grace as of 21
5:4 no value;[p] it is merely that if saving justice comes through the Law, Christ died needlessly.

II: DOCTRINAL MATTERS

The Christian experience

1 Co 2:2 3 You stupid people in Galatia! After you have had a clear picture of Jesus Christ 1
crucified,[q] right in front of your eyes, who has put a spell on you? ·There is 2
4:6 Rm 5:5f only one thing I should like you to tell me: How was it that you received the Spirit—was it by the practice of the Law, or by believing in the message you heard?
Having begun in the Spirit, can you be so stupid as to end in the flesh?[b] ·Can all 3, 4
the favours you have received[c] have had no effect at all—if there really has been
Ac 1:8k no effect? ·Would you say, then, that he who so lavishly sends the Spirit to you, 5
and causes the miracles among you, is doing this through your practice of the Law or because you believed the message you heard?

Rm 1:16h;7:7d **Witness of scripture: faith and the Law**

Gn 15:6 Rm 4:3c *Abraham*, you remember, *put his faith in God*, and this was reckoned to him as 6
uprightness. ·Be sure, then, that it is people of faith who are the children of 7
Abraham. ·And it was because scripture foresaw that God would give saving 8
justice to the gentiles through faith, that it announced the future gospel to Abra-
Gn 12:3b Ac 3:25 ham in the words: *All nations will be blessed in you.* ·So it is people of faith who 9
receive the same blessing as Abraham, the man of faith.

The curse brought by the Law

Rm 7:7d On the other hand, all those who depend on the works of the Law are under a 10
Dt 27:26 curse, since scripture says: *Accursed be he who does not make what is written in the*
5:3 Jm 2:10 *book of the Law effective, by putting it into practice.* ·Now it is obvious that nobody 11

is reckoned as upright in God's sight by the law, since *the upright will live through* Hab 2:4 Rm 1:17
12 *faith*; ·and the Law is based not on faith[d] but on the principle, *whoever complies* Lv 18:5
13 *with it will find life in it.* ·Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law by being Rm 3:24j Dt 21:23
14 cursed for our sake[e] since scripture says: *Anyone hanged is accursed*, ·so that the Act 5:30j Ep 1:3
blessing of Abraham might come to the gentiles in Christ Jesus, and so that we Rm 5:5f
might receive the promised Spirit[f] through faith.

The Law did not cancel the promise

15 To put it in human terms, my brothers: even when a will is only a human one, once
16 it has been ratified nobody can cancel it or add more provisions to it. ·Now the
promises were addressed to Abraham *and to his progeny*. The words were not *and* Gn 12:7c
to his progenies in the plural, but in the singular; *and to your progeny*,[g] which
17 means Christ. ·What I am saying is this: once a will had been long ago ratified by
God, the Law, coming four hundred and thirty years later, could not abolish it and Ex 12:40
18 so nullify its promise.[h] ·You see, if the inheritance comes by the Law, it no longer
comes through a promise; but it was by a promise that God made his gift to Rm 11:6
Abraham.

The purpose of the Law

Rm 7:7d

19 Then what is the purpose of the Law? It was added to deal with crimes[i] until the
'*progeny*' to whom the promise had been made should come;[j] and it was promul-
20 gated through angels,[k] by the agency of an intermediary. ·Now there can be an 4:3b Ac 7:38;53+
21 intermediary only between two parties, yet God is one[l].·Is the Law contrary, Col 2:15m Heb 2:2
then, to God's promises? Out of the question! If the Law that was given had been
capable of giving life, then certainly saving justice would have come from the Law.
22 As it is, scripture makes no exception when it says that sin is master everywhere; Ps 14:1–3 Rm 3:9–20,23; 11:32
so the promise can be given only by faith in Jesus Christ to those who have
this faith.[m]

h. In itself, Peter's behaviour could be justified; Paul will do the same in other circumstances, Ac 16:3; 21:26; 1 Co 8:13; Rm 14:21; cf. 1 Co 9:20. But in the present circumstances it implied that only convert Jews who practised the Law were real Christians, and this might produce two distinct communities, separate even in their eucharistic meals. Above all, Peter's conduct was 'insincere', v. 13, precisely when he should have made his principles clear.

i. Gentile converts, so also in v. 14, as opposed to the 'circumcised' of v. 12 and 'the Jews' of v. 13, who are converts from Judaism.

j. This paragraph begins as a continuation of Paul's argument to Peter; but it is in fact addressed to all Judaisers and particularly to those in Galatia.

k. 'gentile sinners' is a technical term, perhaps used with a touch of irony; though of course Paul never doubted that Israel kept a privileged position, Rm 1:16; 3:1; 9:4–5, even though unfaithful for a time, Rm 11:12seq.

l. So laconic as to be obscure; it can be understood in two ways: **1** Christians, crucified with Christ, are dead with Christ and therefore, like Christ, dead to the Mosaic Law, *see* Rm 7:1seq.—and indeed in virtue of that Law, 3:13; this is why Christians already share the life of the risen Christ, Rm 6:4–10; 7:4–6 with notes. **2** Christians are dead to the Mosaic Law only in obedience to a higher law, the law of faith and of the Spirit, Rm 8:2.

m. By faith, Rm 1:16, Christ becomes in a sense the subject of all the living acts of a Christian, Rm 8:2,10–11,10f; Ph 1:21; cf. Col 3:3.

n. Though still living 'in the flesh', Christians already have the life of the Spirit, Rm 7:5c; cf. Ep 3:17; on this paradox, *see* Rm 8:18–27.

o. var. 'faith in God and in Christ'.

p. By returning to the Law, *see* 3:17.

3 **a.** The foundation of everything Paul teaches is the idea that we are redeemed because Christ died and rose again, *see* 1:1–4; 6:14; Ac 13:26–39; 1 Co 1:17–25; 2:2; 15:1–4,1a; 1 Th 1:9,10.

b. The immediate reference may be to circumcision which had been urged by Judaising preachers.

c. Others translate 'all the sufferings you have undergone'.

d. The Law demands a whole way of life, v. 10 and 5:3; cf. Jn 2:10, which it is insufficient to produce of itself, cf. Ac 15:10; Rm 7:7d.

e. To free the human race from the curse which it had incurred by disobedience to the Law, Christ made himself answerable for the curse, *see* Rm 8:3c; 2 Co 5:21; Col 2:14. The curse from Dt 21:23, which is part of the old code of criminal law, is introduced in the rabbinical manner, which permits any isolated quotation, or even a single word, to be adduced from scripture to support an argument; Christ was content to be termed a criminal by the Jews, like the servant of Is 53.

f. lit. 'the promise of the Spirit', var. 'the blessing of the Spirit'.

g. The use in scripture of a collective capable of indicating an individual enables Paul to illustrate his argument with a play on words.

h. God's promise to the Fathers, Gn 12:1a; 15:1a; Rm 4:13f; Heb 11:8, is here regarded as an unconditional bequest, or will, *see* Heb 9:16,17, made or 'affirmed' before the Law was 'given'. If, long afterwards, he had made fulfilment of his promise depend on observance of the Law, this would have been to make the promise a promise no longer, but a bilateral contract, v. 20, and God would be contradicting himself. In fact, the Law was given for quite a different purpose, vv. 19,24; namely to unmask sin and lead consciences towards faith in Christ vv. 24–25.

i. 'It was added to deal with crimes.' On the meaning of this terse statement, *see* note **h** above, and Rm 7:7d.

j. lit. 'Why then the Law? It was added on account of crimes until that progeny came. . . .' var. 'Why then the law of works? It was added until that progeny came. . . .'

k. In Jewish tradition angels were present at Sinai when the Law was given. The 'intermediary' is Moses, *see* Ac 7:38k.

l. The Law was given through an intermediary; the promise came directly from God.

m. Saving justice is a free gift; it may not be claimed as a due, or as earned by obedience.

The coming of faith

But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the Law, locked up to wait for 23
the faith which would eventually be revealed to us. ·So the Law was serving as a 24
slave to look after us,[n] to lead us to Christ, so that we could be justified by faith.
But now that faith has come we are no longer under a slave looking after us; 25
4:5–7 Jn 1:12 for all of you[o] are the children of God, through faith, in Christ Jesus, ·since 26, 27
Rm 8:14seq..29 ·Rm 6:4a;13:14 Ep 4:24 ·Rm 10:12 1 Co 12:13 Col 3:11 ·Jn 17:21seq. every one of you that has been baptised[p] has been clothed in Christ. ·There can be 28
neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither slave nor freeman, there can be
neither male nor female—for you are all one in Christ Jesus.[q] ·And simply by 29
being Christ's, you are that *progeny* of Abraham,[r] the heirs named in the promise.

Sons of God

4 What I am saying is this:[a] an heir, during the time while he is still under age, is 1
no different from a slave, even though he is the owner of all the property; ·he 2
is under the control of guardians and administrators until the time fixed by his
father. ·So too with us, as long as we were still under age, we were enslaved to the 3
Ep 1:10 elemental principles of this world;[b] ·but when the completion of the time[c] came, 4
Rm 1:3 ·Rm 3:24j God sent his Son, born of a woman, born a subject of the Law, ·to redeem the 5
Rm 8:15–17 subjects of the Law, so that we could receive adoption as sons.[d] ·As you are sons, 6
Mk 14:36 Jn 15:15 God has sent into our hearts the Spirit of his Son crying, '*Abba*, Father'; ·and so 7
you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir, by God's own act.
1 Co 12:2 But formerly when you did not know God, you were kept in slavery to things 8
1 Co 8:4–5 1 Th 1:9 ·1 Co 13:12 which are not really gods at all, ·whereas now that you have come to recognise 9
God—or rather, be recognised by God—[e] how can you now turn back again to
those powerless and bankrupt elements whose slaves you now want to be all over
Col 2:16,20 again? ·You are keeping special days, and months, and seasons and years—·I am 10, 11
Ph 2:16 1 Th 3:5 beginning to be afraid that I may, after all, have wasted my efforts on you.

A personal appeal

2 Th 3:7b 1 Co 9:21 I urge you, brothers,—be like me,[f] as I have become like you. You have never 12
been unfair to me; ·indeed you remember that it was an illness[g] that first gave me 13
the opportunity to preach the gospel to you, ·but though my illness was a trial to 14
Mt 10:40+ you, you did not show any distaste or revulsion; instead, you welcomed me as a
messenger of God, as if I were Christ Jesus himself. ·What has happened to the 15
utter contentment you had then? For I can testify to you that you would have
plucked your eyes out, were that possible, and given them to me. ·Then have I 16
2 Co 12:15e turned into your enemy simply by being truthful with you? ·Their devotion to you 17
has no praiseworthy motive; they simply want to cut you off from me, so that you
may centre your devotion on them. ·Devotion to a praiseworthy cause is praise- 18
worthy at any time,[h] not only when I am there with you. ·My children, I am going 19
1 Co 4:14–15 2 Co 6:13 1 Th 2:7–8 Phm 10 through the pain of giving birth to you all over again, until Christ is formed in you;
and how I wish I could be there with you at this moment and find the right way of 20
talking to you: I am quite at a loss with you.

The two covenants: Hagar and Sarah

Tell me then, you are so eager to be subject to the Law, have you listened to what 21
Gn 16:15;21:2 the Law says?[i] ·Scripture says that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave girl 22
and one by the freewoman. ·The son of the slave girl came to be born in the way of 23
Gn 17:16 Rm 9:7–9 1 Co 10:6d human nature;[j] but the son of the freewoman came to be born through a promise.
There is an allegory here: these women stand for the two covenants. The one given 24
on Mount Sinai—that is Hagar, whose children are born into slavery; ·now Sinai is 25
Jn 8:32seq. a mountain in Arabia[k] and represents Jerusalem in its present state, for she is in
Rv 21:2 Ps 87:5c,d slavery together with her children.[l] ·But the Jerusalem above is free, and that is 26
Is 54:1 the one that is our mother; ·as scripture says: *Shout for joy, you barren woman* 27
who has borne no children! Break into shouts of joy, you who were never in labour.

For the sons of the forsaken one are more in number than the sons of the wedded
28, 29 *wife.* •Now you, brothers, are like Isaac, children of the promise; •just as at that
time, the child born in the way of human nature persecuted the child born through Gn 21:9
30 the Spirit, so now.[m] •But what is it that scripture says? *Drive away that slave girl* •1 Th 2:14f
and her son; the slave girl's son is not to share the inheritance with the son of the •Gn 21:10
31 freewoman. •So, brothers, we are the children not of the slave girl but of the
freewoman.

III: EXHORTATION

Christian liberty

Rm 6:15g

1 5 Christ set us free, so that we should remain free. Stand firm, then, and do not Jn 8:36
let yourselves be fastened again to the yoke of slavery.[a] Mt 11:29
Ac 15:10
2 I, Paul, give you my word that if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no 2:21
3 benefit to you at all. •I give my assurance once again to every man who accepts
4 circumcision that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law; •once you seek to 3:10
be reckoned as upright through the Law, then you have separated yourself from Jm 2:10
5 Christ, you have fallen away from grace. •We are led by the Spirit to wait in the
6 confident hope of saving justice through faith,[b] •since in Christ Jesus it is not being Rm 5:2c
circumcised or being uncircumcised that can effect anything—only faith working 6:15
through love.[c] 1 Co 7:19
•1 Co 13:13e
7 You began your race well;[d] who came to obstruct you and stop you obeying the Jm 2:14
8, 9 truth? •It was certainly not any prompting from him who called you! •A pinch of 1 Co 5:6
10 yeast ferments the whole batch. •But I feel sure that, united in the Lord, you[e] will Ph 2:1–5
not be led astray, and that anyone who makes trouble with you will be condemned, 1:7
11 no matter who he is. •And I, brothers—if I were still preaching circumcision,[f] why 1 Co 3:17

n. The educated slave whose duty was to escort the child to his tutor's, and supplement the teaching as they went. His real work is finished when he has conducted the children to their teacher. This was the function, preparatory and strictly temporary, of the Law, brought to completion by faith in Christ and by grace, Rm 6:14–15g; *see* Mt 5:17h.

o. All, i.e. not only 'we', who are Jews, but 'you', who are gentiles.

p. Far from being opposed to each other, faith and baptism correspond to each other, *see* Rm 6:4a.

q. var. 'you are all of Christ Jesus.'

r. Paul returns to the theme of the progeny of Abraham, vv. 6–9. It is no longer Abraham's physical descendants, but it is now constituted by the children of God who believe in Jesus Christ and belong to him, *see* Ph 3:3.

4 a. A further comparison, again taken from the law courts. Though the Jews are chosen as the heir presumptive, yet they are only slaves, v. 3, to the Law. Any Christian who wants to submit to this slavery is going back to a state of childhood, *see* v. 9.

b. As elsewhere, Paul is here regarding 'the Law and all its works' as part of the material world, Col 2:8,20; we were, he says, slaves to the elements that make up the physical universe, the field in which the Law operates, v. 10; Col 2:16, and to the spirits which made use of the Law, Ga 3:19k; Col 2:15,18, to dominate the universe.

c. lit. 'the fullness of time'; this phrase refers to the coming of the messianic or eschatological era, which completes the long wait of the centuries, like a measure filled at last; *see* Mk 1:15 and Ac 1:7i; 1 Co 10:11; Ep 1:10; Heb 1:2; 9:26; 1 P 1:20.

d. The two aspects of redemption: the negative, freedom from slavery, and the positive, adoption as sons. But notice that adoption is not only legal accession to the inheritance, v. 7 (*see* 3:29), but is first the real gift of new life, in which the three Persons are associated, v. 6 (*see* 2 Co 13:13e).

e. The Galatians were converted by God who 'knew' them before they 'knew' him.

f. Presumably by putting aside observance of the Law, cf. 1 Co 9:21.

g. This probably prolonged Paul's stay in Galatia, and he took the opportunity to preach the gospel.

h. var. 'Pursue good at any time.'

i. i.e. the witness of the scriptures, *see* Rm 3:19f; to inherit the promise it is not enough just to be a descendant of Abraham, *see* Mt 3:9; it is not enough to be descended from Abraham like Ishmael, it is necessary to be descended as the result of promise, like Isaac, Ga 4:23; it is necessary to be a spiritual descendant, not just a genealogical one, Ga 4:29; thus Isaac's birth prefigured the rebirth of Christians, Ga 4:28; cf. Rm 9:6seq. This basic argument is embellished with other more contrived comparisons.

j. lit. 'according to the flesh', i.e. in the ordinary course of nature, *see* Rm 7:5c, without God's working a miracle to fulfil his promise.

k. 'now Sinai is a mountain in Arabia'; var. 'Hagar stands for Sinai in Arabia' (or 'in Arabic').

l. i.e. enslaved to the Law, as opposed to the messianic Jerusalem, cf. Is 2:2, long barren, now a mother, v. 27; cf. Is 54:1–6; Rv 21:1–3.

m. Having demonstrated the Ishmael-Jews, Isaac-Christians, parallel, Paul makes two observations, vv. 29 and 30. According to some Jewish traditions Ishmael 'persecuted' Isaac, and according to the Bible, Sarah sees Ishmael as her son's rival and demands Hagar's expulsion, Gn 21:9.

5 a. To return to circumcision would be to renounce the freedom brought by faith in Christ, *see* Rm 6:15g. The Law and faith are mutually exclusive, vv. 2–6.

b. Or else 'The saving justice that was hoped for'.

c. Faith is the principle of the new life, 4:5;5:5, but 'through the Spirit' it is bound up with hope, v. 5, and love; *see* v. 6, 13–14; Rm 5:5e; 13:8; 1 Co 13:13e. It is the practice of love which shows that faith is a living faith, *see* 1 Jn 3:23–24.

d. One of Paul's favourite images, *see* 2:2, 1 Co 9:24–26; Ph 2:16; 3:12–14; 2 Tm 4:7; Heb 12:1.

e. Or else 'I have confidence in the Lord that you'.

f. As Paul's enemies apparently claimed, but *see* 1:10; 2:3c.

1 Co 1:23 should I still be persecuted? For then the obstacle which is the cross would have no point any more. 12 •I could wish that those who are unsettling you would go further
Ph 3:2 and mutilate themselves. [g]

Liberty and love [h]

Rm 6:15g After all, brothers, you were called to be free; do not use your freedom as an 13
1 P 2:16 Jude 4 opening for self-indulgence, but be servants to one another in love, 14 •since the
Lv 19:18 Mt 22:40 Rm 13:8–10.10d whole of the Law is summarised in the one commandment: *You must love your neighbour as yourself.* [i] 15 •If you go snapping at one another and tearing one another to pieces, take care: you will be eaten up by one another.

Rm 8:5seq. Instead, I tell you, be guided by the Spirit, and you will no longer yield to self- 16
Rm 7:14seq. indulgence. [j] 17 •The desires of self-indulgence are always in opposition to the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are in opposition to self-indulgence: they are opposites, one against the other; that is how you are prevented from doing the things that you want to. 18, 19 •But when you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. •When
Rm 1:29q self-indulgence is at work the results are obvious: sexual vice, impurity, and sensuality, 20 •the worship of false gods and sorcery; antagonisms and rivalry, jealousy, bad temper and quarrels, disagreements, 21 •factions and malice, drunkenness, orgies and all such things. And about these, I tell you now as I have told you in the
1 Co 6:10a past, that people who behave in these ways will not inherit the kingdom of God.
1 Co 13:4–7 2 Co 6:6 Ep 5:9 1 Tm 4:12 2 P 1:5–7 On the other hand the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, 22 goodness, trustfulness, 23 •gentleness and self-control; [k] no law can touch such things as these. [l] 24 •All who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified self with all its passions and its desires.

1 Tm 1:9 Rm 6:6 Col 3:5 Rm 8:14 Ph 2:3 Since we are living by the Spirit, let our behaviour be guided by the Spirit 25, 26 •and let us not be conceited or provocative and envious of one another.

On kindness and perseverance

Mt 18:15 2 Th 3:14–15 2 Tm 2:25 Jm 5:19seq. •1 Co 10:12 6 Brothers, even if one of you is caught doing something wrong, those of you 1 who are spiritual should set that person right in a spirit of gentleness; and watch yourselves that you are not put to the test in the same way. 2 •Carry each other's
Jn 13:34 Rm 8:2 burdens; that is how to keep [a] the law of Christ. 3 • Someone who thinks himself
1 Co 4:7 important, when he is not, only deceives himself; 4 •but everyone is to examine his own achievements, and then he will confine his boasting to his own achievements,
Rm 14:12 not comparing them with anybody else's. 5 •Each one has his own load to carry.
Rm 15:27 When someone is under instruction in doctrine, he should give his teacher a 6
Jb 13:9 share in all his possessions. 7 •Don't delude yourself: God is not to be fooled;
Jn 3:6 Rm 6:21–22 1 Co 15:35–49 whatever someone sows, that is what he will reap. 8 •If his sowing is in the field of self-indulgence, then his harvest from it will be corruption; if his sowing is in the Spirit, then his harvest from the Spirit will be eternal life. 9 •And let us never slacken in doing good; for if we do not give up, we shall have our harvest in due time. 10 •So
1 Th 5:15 then, as long as we have the opportunity [b] let all our actions be for the good [c] of everybody, and especially of those who belong to the household of the faith. [d]

Postscript

Notice what large letters I have used in writing to you with my own hand. [e] 11, 12 •It is
Rm 16:17h Col 2:18 those who want to cut a figure by human standards who force [f] circumcision on you, simply so that they will not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. 13 •Even though
Rm 2:21seq. they are circumcised they still do not keep the Law themselves; they want you to
Rm 3:27o be circumcised only so that they can boast of your outward appearance. [g] 14 •But as
3:1 for me, it is out of the question that I should boast at all, except of the cross [h] of our
2:19l Lord Jesus Christ, through whom the world [i] has been crucified to me, and I to the
5:6c world. [j] 15 •It is not being circumcised or uncircumcised that matters; but what
2 Co 5:17h matters is a new creation. 16 •Peace and mercy to all who follow this as their rule and to the Israel of God. [k]

17 After this, let no one trouble me; I carry branded on my body the marks
of Jesus. *l*
18 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, my brothers. Amen. Rm 16:20+

g. lit. 'I wish that those who are disturbing you might go even further (than circumcision) and castrate themselves.' Perhaps an allusion to the castration which was practised in the cult of Cybele. For similar sarcasm *see* Ph 3:2.

h. The new life of faith is fulfilled in love, v. 6; Rm 13:8; 1 Co 13:1a, and love is its only 'Law', *see* Rm 7:7d, producing the fruit of the Spirit, v. 22; *see* Rm 5:5e; Ph 1:11, not the works of self-indulgence, Ga 5:19; 6:8; *see also* Rm 13:12

i. The neighbour is no longer, as in Lv, 'a member of the same people'; all members of the human family are neighbours, cf. Lk 10:29–37, identified with Christ in person, Mt 25:40,45. Thus for Paul the second commandment inescapably includes the first.

j. It is to be noted that in vv. 16–21, in which self-indulgence and Spirit are contrasted, 'self-indulgence' does not mean 'originating in, or limited by the physical body' but it includes the total resources of humanity *without* the Spirit. 'The desires of self-indulgence' does not mean exclusively, or even primarily, the desire for sensual or bodily gratification, vv. 19,20. *See* Rm 7:5c.

k. add. 'chastity'.

l. For the believer united to Christ, there is no longer any external law dictating all his outward behaviour. Though Paul can use the phrase, the 'law of Christ', 6:2; Rm 8:1, it is no more than an indication that the Spirit has completely superseded and replaced the Law.

6 **a.** var. 'you will keep'.

b. Possibly alluding to the time that still remains before the second coming, *see* Rm 13:11e; 2 Co 6:2a.

c. var. 'all our actions are for the good'.

d. Christian love is first exercised within the community, Rm 14:15; 1 Th 4:9–10; 2 Th 1:3, but it is shown to all, Rm 12:18seq.; 1 Th 5:15, even one's enemies, Rm 12:20, and can serve as a testimony to all people, Rm 12:17.

e. As usual, Paul adds a few words in his own hand, cf. 1 Co 16:21–24; Col 4:18; 2 Th 3:17, and possibly Rm 16:17–20. Large letters were used for emphasis.

f. lit. 'It is those who want to make a fair show in the flesh who force . . .'

g. lit. 'glory in your flesh'.

h. Cross, *see* 3:1; crucified, *see* 2:19.

i. This present sinful world, cf. 1:4; 4:5; Jn 1:10g; 1 Co 1:20; 2 Co 4:4; Ep 2:2.

j. add. 'in Christ Jesus'.

k. The Christian community, the true Israel, heir of the promises, cf. 3:6–9, 29; 4:21–31; Rm 9:6–8, as opposed to the natural people of Israel, 1 Co 10:18.

l. The marks of ill-treatment suffered for Christ, *see* 2 Co 6:4–5; 11:23seq.; Col 1:24. In Paul's eyes, these marks are incomparably more glorious than any other fleshly sign could be, vv. 13–14; cf. 2 Co 11:18; Ph 3:7.

EPHESIANS

THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE CHURCH AT EPHESUS

Address and greetings

Rm 1:1a,b
Ac 9:13g

1 Paul, by the will of God an apostle of Christ Jesus, to God's holy people,[a] 1
faithful in Christ Jesus. ·Grace and peace to you from God our Father and 2
from the Lord Jesus Christ.

I: THE MYSTERY OF SALVATION AND OF THE CHURCH

God's plan of salvation

Blessed be God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, 3
Ga 3:14 who has blessed us with all the spiritual blessings of heaven in Christ.[b]
Jn 17:24
Ac 1:7i;5:27
1 Co 1:8e
1 P 1:20
•Jn 1:12
Rm 8:29
1 Jn 3:1
Thus he chose us in Christ before the world was made 4
to be holy and faultless before him in love,[c]
marking us out for himself beforehand, to be adopted sons,[d] 5
through Jesus Christ.
Such was his purpose and good pleasure,
to the praise of the glory of his grace,[e] 6
Mt 3:17o his free gift to us in the Beloved,
Rm 3:24j
‖Col 1:13–14
in whom, through his blood, we gain our freedom, 7
the forgiveness of our sins.[f]
2:7 Such is the richness of the grace
which he[g] has showered on us 8
in all wisdom and insight.
Rm 16:25l He has let us know the mystery of his purpose,[h] 9
according to his good pleasure which he determined beforehand in Christ,
Mk 1:15
Ga 4:4c
for him to act upon when the times had run their course:[i] 10
that he would bring everything together under Christ, as head,
Col 1:16.20 everything in the heavens and everything on earth.[j]
Dt 7:6b And it is in him[k] that we have received our heritage,[l] 11
marked out beforehand as we were,
Is 46:10
Ep 3:11
Col 1:12
Dn 4:32
Rv 4:11
under the plan of the One who guides all things
as he decides by his own will,
chosen to be, 12
for the praise of his glory,
the people who would put their hopes in Christ before he came.
Now you too,[m] in him, 13
‖Col 1:5
1 Th 2:13d
have heard the message of the truth and the gospel of your salvation,
and having put your trust in it
4:30
Ac 2:33u
you have been stamped with the seal of the Holy Spirit of the Promise,[n]

14 who is the pledge of our inheritance,
for the freedom of the people whom God has taken for his own, [o]
for the praise of his glory.

▶Rm 5:5f
▶2 Co 1:22n
•Rm 3:24j
•Is 43:21 LXX
1 P 2:9

The triumph and the supremacy of Christ

15 That is why I, having once heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus, and your love [p]
16 for all God's holy people, •have never failed to thank God for you and to remember
17 you in my prayers. •May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory,
give you a spirit [q] of wisdom and perception of what is revealed, to bring you to full
18 knowledge of him. •May he enlighten the eyes of your mind [r] so that you can see
what hope his call holds for you, how rich is the glory of the heritage he offers
19 among his holy people, •and how extraordinarily great is the power that he has
20 exercised for us believers; this accords with the strength of his power •at work in
Christ, the power which he exercised in raising him from the dead and enthroning
21 him at his right hand, in heaven, •far above every principality, ruling force, power
or sovereignty, [s] or any other name that can be named, not only in this age but also
22 in the age to come. •*He has put all things under his feet*, and made him, as he is
23 above all things, the head of the Church; •which is his Body, the fullness of him
who is filled, all in all. [t]

‖Col 1:3–4,9
Phm 4–5
•1 Co 13:13e
Ac 9:13g
Rm 1:9
2 Tm 1:3
3:14,16
Ex 24:16f
1 Jn 5:20
2 Co 4:6

Ac 9:13g

Rm 1:4c
Col 2:12
Ac 2:33u
1 P 3:22
Col 1:16;2:15
Ph 2:9
Ps 8:6
1 Co 15:24–28
Col 1:18e,19f

Salvation in Christ a free gift

1, 2 **2** And you were dead, through the crimes and the sins •which used to make up
your way of life when you were living by the principles of this world, obeying

‖Col 2:13;3:7

1 **a.** add. 'who are at Ephesus'. The words 'at Ephesus' were probably not part of the original text. The words 'who are' could be part of a very early addition. Some critics think they are authentic, that they were followed by a blank to be filled in with the name of whichever church was being sent the letter.

b. Right from the beginning Paul raises the discussion onto the heavenly plane where it remains throughout the letter, 1:20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12. The 'spiritual blessings' listed in the following verses belong to heaven from all eternity and will there be fully realised at the end of time.

c. First blessing: the call of God's chosen ones to eternal happiness, already begun in a hidden sort of way by the union of the faithful to the glorified Christ. 'Love' here is primarily the love God has for us, and that leads him to 'choose' us and to call us to be 'holy', cf. Rm 11:28; Col 3:12; 1 Th 1:4; 2 Th 2:13, but does not exclude our love for God that results from and is a response to his own love for us, cf. Rm 5:5.

d. Second blessing: the means of becoming holy, divine sonship, of which Jesus Christ, the only Son, is source and model, cf. Rm 8:29.

e. The word 'grace' (*charis*) as it is used here emphasises not so much the interior gift that makes a human being holy, as the fact that God's favour and the way he manifests his glory, *see* Ex 24:16f, are given freely. These are the two themes that run through this account of God's blessings: their *source* is God's liberality, and their *purpose* is to make his glory appreciated by creatures. Everything comes from him, and everything should lead to him.

f. Third blessing: our redemption by an event in time, i.e. the death of Jesus.

g. God the Father.

h. Fourth blessing: the revelation of the 'mystery', 3:2–3; Rm 16:25*l*.

i. lit. 'for a dispensation of the times' fullness', *see* Ga 4:4seq.

j. The main theme of this letter is how the whole body of creation, having been cut off from the Creator by sin, is decomposing, and how its rebirth is effected by Christ's reuniting all its parts into an organism with himself as the head, so as to re-attach it to God. The human (Jew and gentile) and the angelic worlds are united in the same salvation, *see* 4:10seq.

k. Christ.

l. Fifth blessing: the choice of Israel to be God's own, a witness in the world of the messianic hope. Paul, being a Jew, here uses 'we'.

m. Sixth blessing: the call of the non-Jews to share the salvation that had, till then, been reserved for the Jews; that they will be saved is proved by the fact that they receive the Spirit as was promised.

n. Paul completes his trinitarian account of God's plan with the Spirit, since the giving of the Spirit shows the plan has reached its final stage. Nevertheless, though this gift has already begun, it is given only in a hidden way while the unspiritual world lasts, and will be given fully only when the kingdom of God is complete and Christ comes in glory, cf. Lk 24:49; Jn 1:33k; 14:26d.

o. lit. 'the setting free of that (enslaved people) which has been acquired' i.e. by God, and at the cost of the life of his Son. This is one of the occasions when Paul widens an OT concept, 'the chosen people' (like 'blessing', 'saint', 'choice', 'adoption', 'share', 'promise') by applying it to the Church as the new Israel and the body of the saved.

p. 'and your love for' var. 'and in'.

q. This gift is what technically would be called (actual) grace.

r. lit. 'heart': used in the Bible for the seat of knowledge and understanding as well as of love, conscience and emotions; sometimes to be translated 'mind'. The moral and spiritual connotations of 'heart' in the OT, Gn 8:21c, persist in the NT. God knows the heart, Lk 16:15; Ac 1:24; Rm 8:27. Human beings love God with their whole heart, Mk 12:29–30 and par. God's gift of the Spirit is put in the human heart, Rm 5:5e; 2 Co 1:22; Ga 4:6. Christ makes his home there, 3:17. Hearts which are simple 6:5; Ac 2:46; 2 Co 11:3; Col 3:22, upright Ac 8:21, pure Mt 5:8; Jm 4:8, are open without reservation to the presence and action of God. The first believers in Jerusalem have one heart and one mind, Ac 4:32.

s. Names of cosmic powers attested in Jewish apocryphal writing. Without any discussion of the mode of existence of these celestial beings, Paul insists that they are under the dominion of Christ, Col 1:16; 2:10. By associating them with the angels of OT tradition who were concerned in the giving of the Law, Ga 3:19k, he sees a place for them in salvation-history, but with an increasingly pejorative moral qualification, Ga 4:3b; Col 2:15m, which finally assimilates them with demonic forces, Ep 2:2a; 6:12d; *see* 1 Co 15:24p.

t. The Church, as the body of Christ, 1 Co 12:12seq., can be called the fullness (*pleroma; see* below 3:19; 4:13) in so far as it includes the whole new creation that shares (since it forms the setting of the human race) in the cosmic rebirth under Christ its ruler and head, *see* Col 1:15–20seq. The adverbial phrase 'all in all' is used to suggest something of limitless size, cf. 1 Co 12:6; 15:28; Col 3:11.

Jn 12:31 2 Co 4:4 Ep 6:12d Rm 2;3:9.23 5:6 Rm 1:18;2:8 Ex 34:6c Rm 5:8 ‖Col 2:13 Rm 8:11g Col 2:12;3:1–4 Ps 22:31–32 Rm 9:23 1:7 Rm 9:23 Rm 1:16h Rm 3:27o 1 Co 1:29+ 2 Co 5:17h

the ruler who dominates the air,[a] the spirit who is at work in those who rebel. We[b] too were all among them once, living only by our natural inclinations, 3
obeying the demands of human self-indulgence and our own whim; our nature
made us no less liable to God's retribution than the rest of the world. ·But God, 4
being rich in faithful love, through the great love with which he loved us, ·even 5
when we[c] were dead in our sins, brought us to life with Christ[d]—it is through grace
that you have been saved—·and raised us up with him and gave us a place with him 6
in heaven, in Christ Jesus.[e]
This was to show for all ages to come, through his goodness towards us in Christ 7
Jesus, how extraordinarily rich he is in grace. ·Because it is by grace that you have 8
been saved, through faith; not by anything of your own, but by a gift from God;
not by anything that you have done, so that nobody can claim the credit. ·We 9, 10
are God's work of art, created in Christ Jesus for the good works which God has
already designated to make up our way of life.

Reconciliation of the Jews and the gentiles with each other and with God

Do not forget, then, that there was a time when you[f] who were gentiles by physical 11
descent, termed the uncircumcised by those who speak of themselves as the
circumcised by reason of a physical operation, ·do not forget, I say, that you were 12

Col 1:21,27 Rm 9:4–5 2:17 Is 9:5 Mi 5:4 Ga 3:28+ Col 2:14l Col 3:14–15 Is 57:19 Zc 9:10 3:12+;4:4 2 Co 13:13e Ex 12:48e Ac 9:13g ·4:11–12 Is 28:16 Rm 15:20 1 Co 3:10seq. 2 Co 6:16 Rv 21:14 Mt 16:18g 1 Co 3:16e 1 P 2:5

at that time separate from Christ[g] and excluded from membership of Israel, aliens
with no part in the covenants of the Promise,[h] limited to this world, without hope[i]
and without God.[j] ·But now in Christ Jesus, you that used to be so far off have 13
been brought close, by the blood of Christ.[k] ·For he is the peace between us, and 14
has made the two into one entity and broken down the barrier which used to keep
them apart,[l] by destroying in his own person the hostility, ·that is, the Law of 15
commandments with its decrees.[m] His purpose in this was, by restoring peace, to
create a single New Man[n] out of the two of them, ·and through the cross, to 16
reconcile them both to God in one Body;[o] in his own person he killed the hostility.
He came[p] to bring the good news of *peace to you who were far off and peace to* 17
those who were near. ·Through him, then, we both in the one Spirit[q] have free 18
access to the Father.
So you[r] are no longer aliens or foreign visitors; you are fellow-citizens with the 19
holy people of God and part of God's household. ·You are built upon the 20
foundations of the apostles and prophets,[s] and Christ Jesus himself is the corner-
stone. ·Every[t] structure knit together in him grows into a holy temple in the Lord; 21
and you too, in him, are being built up into a dwelling-place of God in the Spirit. 22

Paul, a servant of the mystery

‖Col 1:24–29 4:1 Ph 1:13,17 Col 4:18 2 Tm 2:9 Rm 16:25l ·1 Co 7:40 2 Co 11:5seq. ·1 P 1:12 4:11 Jn 14:26r 2:12–19 2 Co 3:6 Col 1:23 1 Th 2:4 1 Co 15:8seq. Ga 2:8 Ph 4:13 Col 1:29 Rm 16:25l 1 Co 2:7–9+ 1 P 1:12 1:4 2:18

3 It is because of this that I, Paul, a prisoner of the Lord Jesus on behalf of you 1
gentiles. . . ·You have surely heard the way in which God entrusted me with 2
the grace[a] he gave me for your sake; ·he made known to me by a revelation[b] the 3
mystery I have just described briefly—·a reading of it will enable you to perceive 4
my understanding of the mystery of Christ. ·This mystery, as it is now revealed in 5
the Spirit to his holy apostles and prophets[c], was unknown to humanity in previous
generations: ·that the gentiles now have the same inheritance[d] and form the same 6
Body and enjoy the same promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. ·I have been 7
made the servant of that gospel by a gift of grace from God who gave it to me by
the workings of his power. ·I, who am less than the least of all God's holy people, 8
have been entrusted with this special grace, of proclaiming to the gentiles the
unfathomable treasure of Christ ·and of throwing light on the inner workings of 9
the mystery kept hidden through all the ages in God, the Creator of everything.
The purpose of this was, that now, through the Church, the principalities and 10
ruling forces should learn[e] how many-sided God's wisdom is, ·according to the 11
plan which he had formed from all eternity in Christ Jesus our Lord. ·In him we are 12
bold enough to approach God in complete confidence, through our faith in him;

13 so, I beg you, do not let the hardships I go through on your account make you waver;[f] they are your glory.[g]

Rm 5:1seq.
Col 1:22
Heb 4:16
1 P 3:18
Col 1:24

Paul's prayer

14. 15 This, then, is what I pray, kneeling before the Father, •from whom every father-
16 hood,[h] in heaven or on earth, takes its name. •In the abundance of his glory may
he, through his Spirit, enable you to grow firm in power with regard to your inner
17 self, •so that Christ may live in your hearts through faith, and then, planted in love
18 and built on love, •with all God's holy people you will have the strength to grasp
19 the breadth and the length, the height and the depth;[i] •so that, knowing the love of Christ,[j] which is beyond knowledge,[k] you may be filled with the utter fullness of God.[l]

Ac 1:8j
Rm 5:5f;7:22k
Jn 14:23
Col 1:23;2:7
•Ac 9:13g
•Jb 11:7–9
Col 2:9e

20 Glory be to him whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can
21 ask or imagine; •glory be to him from generation to generation in the Church and in Christ Jesus for ever and ever. Amen.

1:19seq.
Ph 2:13
Rm 16:27n

2 **a.** Air is the habitat of demons and of their ruler Satan.

b. Paul writes as a Jew.

c. 'We' here means both the gentiles, *see* vv. 1–2, and the Jews, cf. v. 3. • V. 3 is a parenthesis.

d. 'with Christ'; • var. 'in Christ'. 'it is through grace'; var. (Vulg) 'through whose grace'.

e. Here as in Col 2:12; 3:1–4 the use of the past tense shows that the resurrection and triumph of Christians in heaven is considered as actually existing, whereas the future tense in Rm 6:3–11; 8:11,17seq., treats it as something that has still to take place. Treating the eschatological reality as already existing is a characteristic of the captivity epistles.

f. The description of this past that Paul now gives is meant to apply to all gentiles in a general way—not specifically to those he is writing to.

g. i.e. you had no Messiah.

h. The successive covenants made by God with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David; *see* Gn 12:1a; 15:1a; Ex 19:1a; Lv 26:42,45; 2 M 8:15; Ws 18:22; Si 44–45; Rm 9:4, which contained the promise of salvation through the Messiah.

i. Hope of a Messiah, which was hitherto confined to Israel, 1:12.

j. The non-Jews had many gods but not the one true God, 1 Co 8:5seq.

k. The crucifixion of Christ that brought together Jews and non-Jews, vv. 14–15, and reconciled both with the Father, vv. 16–18.

l. Visibly symbolised by the wall separating the court of the Jews from the court of the non-Jews in the Temple, cf. Ac 21:28seq.

m. The Mosaic Law gave the Jews a privileged status and separated them from gentiles. Jesus abolished this Law by fulfilling it once for all on the cross, Col 2:14*l*.

n. This New Man is the prototype of the new humanity that God re-created (2 Co 5:17i) in the person of Christ, the second Adam (1 Co 15:45), after the sinfully corrupt race of the first Adam had died in the crucifixion (Rm 5:12seq.; 8:3; 1 Co 15:21). This New Adam has been created in 'the goodness and holiness of the truth', 4:24, and he is unique because in him the boundaries between any one group and the rest of the human race all disappear, Ga 3:27seq.; Col 3:10seq.

o. This 'one Body' is both the physical body of Jesus that was sacrificed on the cross, Col 1:22j, and the Church or 'mystical' body of Christ in which, once they are reconciled, all the parts function in their own places, 1 Co 12:12i,j.

p. Through the apostles who in his name preached the good news of salvation and peace.

q. The one Spirit that gives life to the single Body (of Christ who is one with his Church) is the Holy Spirit. The trinitarian structure of this section is repeated in v. 22.

r. Paul inserts vv. 14–18 (how Christ has united gentiles and Jews) between his contrasting descriptions of gentiles before (vv. 11–13) and after (19–22) conversion.

s. The NT prophets, cf. 3:5; 4:11; Ac 11:27m, together with the apostles, are the witnesses to whom the divine plan was first revealed and who were the first to preach the good news, cf. Mt 10:41; 23:34; Lk 11:49. This is why the Church, as well as being founded on Christ, 1 Co 3:10seq., is also said to be founded on them.

t. 'every'; var. 'the entire'.

3 **a.** On the grace given to the apostle to empower him to preach to the gentiles, *see* 3:7seq.; Rm 1:5; 15:15seq.; 1 Co 3:10. Notice, however, that 'grace' in this sentence is granted to him for him to dispense, not as a possession.

b. Cf. 2 Co 12:1,7. The immediate reference is to what was revealed to Paul on the way to Damascus, *see* Ac 9:15; 22:21; 26:16–18; Ga 1:16.

c. The NT prophets, *see* 2:20s. The OT prophets had only an obscure and imperfect knowledge of the mystery of the Messiah, cf. Mt 13:17; 1 P 1:10–12.

d. i.e. as the Jewish Christians, *see* 2:19.

e. The evil spirits were unaware of God's plan for salvation and so they persuaded human beings to crucify Christ, 1 Co 2:8, and it is only the existence of the Church that makes them aware of it now; cf. 1 P 1:12.

f. An alternative (and less likely) translation: 'so I pray not to lose confidence'.

g. var. 'our glory'.

h. The Gk word here translated 'fatherhood' has a more concrete sense than this English rendering might imply. It denotes any social group which owes its existence and unity to one ancestor. The origin of every human, or even angelic, grouping is in God.

i. Stoics used this expression to mean the totality of the cosmos. Paul uses it to suggest the cosmic function of Christ in the rebirth of the world. (Notice too the eschatological dimensions of the Temple and Promised Land, Ezk 40–45; Rv 21:9seq.) Here the dimensions may be those of the mystery of salvation, or more probably those of Christ's universal love on which (next verse) the mystery depends. As in the case of Wisdom, they surpass all human standards of measurement, 1:17–19,23; 2:7; 3:8; Jb 11:8–9seq.; Col 2:2seq.

j. This love for us that Christ proved by accepting death, 5:2,25; Ga 2:20, is identical with the love the Father has, 2:4,7; Rm 8:35,37,39; 2 Co 5:14,18–19. *See* 1 Co 13:1a.

k. The love of God cannot be 'grasped' (v. 18, using a philosophical term technical in Greek) but can be 'known' by spiritual awareness of it through love, cf. 1:17seq.; 3:3seq.; Ho 2:22v; Jn 10:14g. This awareness is something deeper than scientific knowledge, *see* 1 Co 13, and is less a matter of knowledge than of awareness of being loved, cf. Ga 4:9. Even awareness of this sort, however, can never 'grasp' this sort of love.

l. lit. 'in order that you may be filled to all the fullness (*pleroma*) of God'. (var. 'in order that all the fullness of God may be filled'.) • Christ who is filled with the divine life fills Christians with it, Col 2:9, and in this way Christians enter both the Church and the new cosmos which they help to build and which is the fullness of the total Christ, 1:23; 2:22; 4:12–13; Col 2:10f.

II: EXHORTATION

A call to unity [a]

‖Col 3:12–15

3:1a Ph 1:27 **4** I, the prisoner in the Lord, urge you therefore to lead a life worthy of the vocation to which you were called. 1
1 Co 13:13e •With all humility and gentleness, and with patience, support each other in love. 2
Rm 12:5 1 Co 10:17; 12:12i •Take every care to preserve the unity of the Spirit by the peace that binds you together. 3
•There is one Body, one Spirit, just as one hope is the goal of your calling by God. 4
1 Co 1:13 1 Co 8:6;12:4–6 2 Co 13:13e •There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 5
•and one God and Father of all, over all, through all and within all. 6
On each one of us God's favour [b] has been bestowed in whatever way Christ 7
•Rm 12:3,6 allotted it. 8
•That is why it says:

Ps 68:18 Ac 2:33 *He went up to the heights, took captives,*
he gave gifts to humanity. [c]

1 P 3:19h When it says, 'he went up', it must mean that he had gone down to the deepest 9
levels of the earth. [d] 10
•The one who went down is none other than the one who went up above all the heavens to fill all things. [e] 11
•And to some, his 'gift' was that they 1 Co 12:28+ should be apostles; to some prophets; to some, evangelists; to some, pastors and teachers; [f] 12
•to knit God's holy people [g] together for the work of service to build up 2:21;4:16 Tt 1:5c the Body of Christ, 13
•until we all reach unity in faith and knowledge of the Son of God and form the perfect Man [h] Col 1:23+;3:11 fully mature with the fullness of Christ himself.
1:23t Then we shall no longer be children, or tossed one way and another, and carried 14
•1 Co 14:20 Heb 13:9 5:6 hither and thither by every new gust of teaching, at the mercy of all the tricks
Col 2:4,8 people play and their unscrupulousness in deliberate deception. 15
‖Col 2:19 •If we live by the truth and in love, we shall grow completely into Christ, who is the head 16
•by whom the whole Body is fitted and joined together, every joint adding its own strength, for each individual part to work according to its function. So the body grows until it has built itself up in love.

The new life in Christ

So this I say to you and attest to you in the Lord, do not go on living the empty- 17
Rm 1:18–32 1 P 4:3 ‖Col 1:21 headed life that the gentiles live. 18
•Intellectually they are in the dark, and they are estranged from the life of God, because of the ignorance which is the consequence of closed minds. 19
•Their sense of right and wrong once dulled, they have abandoned all self-control and pursue to excess every kind of uncleanness. [i] 20
•Now that is hardly the way you have learnt Christ, 21
•unless you failed to hear him properly when you ‖Col 3:9–10 Col 3:5c were taught what the truth is in Jesus. [j] 22
•You were to put aside your old self, which belongs to your old way of life and is corrupted by following illusory desires. 23
•Your 2:15n Rm 13:14 Col 3:10e Ws 9:3 Zc 8:16 mind was to be renewed in spirit 24
•so that you could put on the New Man that has been created on God's principles, in the uprightness and holiness of the truth. [k]
So from now on, there must be no more lies. *Speak the truth to one another*, since 25
Rm 12:5c Col 3:9 we are all parts of one another. 26
•*Even if you are angry, do not sin*: never let the •Ps 4:4 LXX Mt 5:22 sun set on your anger 27, 28
•or else you will give the devil a foothold. 1 Co 12:12i 2 Co 2:11 Mt 15:11 •Anyone who was a thief must stop stealing; instead he should exert himself at some honest job with his own hands [l] Ac 18:3d;20: 34–35 so that he may have something to share with those in need.
No foul word should ever cross your lips; let your words be for the improvement 29
1 Th 4:11 Jm 3:10–12 •1:13n Is 63:10 of others, as occasion offers, and do good to your listeners; 30
•do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God who has marked you with his seal, ready for the day when we shall be set free. [m] 31
•Rm 1:29q Col 3:8 •Any bitterness or bad temper or anger or shouting or abuse must be far removed from you—as must every kind of malice. 32
•Mt 6:12,14–15par. Col 3:13 Jm 2:13 •Be generous to one another, sympathetic, forgiving each other as readily as God forgave you [n] in Christ.
•Mt 5:48 2 Th 3:7b **5** As God's dear children, then, take him as your pattern, 1, 2
•and follow Christ by loving as he loved you, giving himself up for us *as an offering and a sweet-*

3 *smelling sacrifice to God.* ·Among you there must be not even a mention of sexual
4 vice or impurity in any of its forms, or greed: this would scarcely become the holy
5 people of God! ·There must be no foul or salacious talk or coarse jokes—all this is
wrong for you; there should rather be thanksgiving. ·For you can be quite certain
that nobody who indulges in sexual immorality or impurity or greed—which is
6 worshipping a false god[a]—can inherit the kingdom of God. ·Do not let anyone
deceive you with empty arguments: it is such behaviour that draws down God's
7 retribution on those who rebel against him. ·Make sure that you do not throw in
8 your lot with them. ·You were darkness once, but now you are light in the Lord;
9 behave as children of light, ·for the effects of the light are seen in complete
10 goodness and uprightness and truth. ·Try to discover what the Lord wants of you,
11 take no part in the futile works of darkness but, on the contrary, show them up for
12 what they are. ·The things which are done in secret are shameful even to speak of;
13, 14 but anything shown up by the light will be illuminated ·and anything illuminated is
itself a light.[b] That is why it is said:[c]

Ps 40:6
Ga 2:20
Heb 7:27g
1 Jn 3:16
Ex 29:18
Ga 5:19+
Ac 9:13g
5:20+
Mt 6:24
Col 2:4,8;3:5
Heb 13:4–5
1 Co 6:9–10,10e
‖Col 3:6
4:18
Jn 8:12b
2 Co 4:6;6:14
Col 1:12–13
1 Th 5:4–8
Rm 12:2+
Col 3:10e
Jn 3:20–21

> Wake up, sleeper,
> rise from the dead,
> and Christ will shine on you.[d]

Is 26:19;60:1
Heb 10:32e

15 So be very careful about the sort of lives you lead, like intelligent and not like
16 senseless people. ·Make the best of the present time,[e] for it is a wicked age.
17 This is why you must not be thoughtless but must recognise what is the will of the
18 Lord. ·*Do not get drunk with wine;* this is simply dissipation; be filled with the
19 Spirit. ·Sing psalms and hymns and inspired songs among yourselves, singing and
20 chanting to the Lord in your hearts, ·always and everywhere giving thanks to God
who is our Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Col 4:5
Rm 12:2+
Col 1:9
Pr 23:31 LXX
‖Col 3:16–17
Col 3:15–17
1 Th 5:18

The morals of the home

21, 22 Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ. ·Wives should be subject to
23 their husbands as to the Lord, ·since,[f] as Christ is head of the Church and saves
24 the whole body, so is a husband the head of his wife; ·and as the Church is subject

Col 3:18
1 P 3:1–6
1:22–23
1 Cor 11:3

4 **a.** Paul lists three different threats to the Church's unity: arguments between Christians vv. 1–3, diversity of service in the Church vv. 7–11, unorthodox teaching vv. 14–15. These threats are all averted by applying the principle of unity in Christ, vv. 4–6,12–13,16.

b. Charisms or special graces given to individuals for the benefit of the whole community, *see* 1 Co 12:1a.

c. Following rabbinic practice Paul quotes this text for the sake of two phrases: 'he ascended' vv. 9–10, and 'he gave gifts' v. 11 which he interprets as the ascension of Jesus and the descent of the Spirit.

d. The subterranean regions where the realms of the dead were placed; *see* Nb 16:33f, and where Christ descended before his resurrection and ascension 'above the heavens'; *see* 1 P 3:19h. Or, according to others, the death, said to be 'lower' in relation to the heavens.

e. By ascending through all the cosmic spheres Christ takes possession of them all one after another, and becomes the head of the whole *pleroma* or total cosmos 1:10j, and makes the entire universe acknowledge him as 'Lord', *see* 1:20–23; Ph 2:8–11; Col 1:19.

f. Paul limits his list to charisms that relate to teaching; these are the only ones that apply in this context, vv. 13–15.

g. The particular holy people of God Paul mentions here seem to be missionaries and other teachers, cf. 3:5, but may include all the faithful in so far as they all help to build up the Church, *see* Ac 9:13v.

h. This does not refer primarily to the individual Christian. The sense is collective. It can be taken as referring to Christ himself, the New Man, the archetype of all who are reborn 2:15n, or else (and this sense is to be preferred) as referring to the total Christ, i.e. the whole body, 1 Co 12:2i,j; made up of head, Ep 1:22; 4:15; Col 1:18; and the rest of the body, Ep 4:16; 5:30.

i. Or 'sexuality and every kind of indecency and greed'.

j. As in Col 2:6, the true Christ is the historic Jesus, who died and rose again to renew our lives in him.

k. Each human being needs to 'put on the New Man', 2:15n (here, as in v. 22, translated 'self'), so as to be re-created in him, cf. Rm 13:14; Ga 3:27. In some places Paul talks in the same way about the 'new creature', 2 Co 5:17i.

l. lit. 'working the good thing with his own hand'. 'Good' and '(own) hand' are omitted or interchanged in various readings: the original text may have been ambiguous.

m. The one Holy Spirit that keeps the one Body of Christ united, 4:4; 1 Co 12:13, is 'grieved', cf. Ep 4:30; Is 63:10, by anything that harms the unity of the Body.

n. 'you'; var. 'us'. The same in 5:2.

5 **a.** Uncontrolled desires pay to creatures, especially money, a worship due to God alone and thus turn them into idols.

b. The wrong sort of way to talk about sexual immorality is the way that leaves the subject in a dangerous obscurity, v. 3. To talk about it in such a way, however, that it is recognised for what it is will lead to its being corrected; this sort of light is the light of Christ that puts an end to darkness.

c. This (like 1 Tm 3:16) seems to be an extract from an early Christian hymn. On baptism as an enlightening, *see* Heb 6:4; 10:32 (*see* Rm 6:4a).

d. var. 'and you will touch Christ'.

e. lit. 'redeem the present time'.

f. By drawing a parallel between a marriage and the marriage of Christ to his Church, vv. 23–32, Paul makes these two concepts illumine each other. Christ is the husband of the Church because he is her head and because he loves the Church as man loves his own body when he loves his wife. In its turn, this comparison naturally suggests an ideal for human marriage. The symbol of Israel as the wife of Yahweh is common in the OT, Ho 1:2c.

to Christ, so should wives be to their husbands, in everything. ·Husbands should 25
5:2 love their wives, just as Christ loved the Church and sacrificed himself for her ·to 26
Ezk 16:9 Rm 6:4a make her holy by washing her in cleansing water with a form of words,[g] ·so that 27
2 Co 11:2 Col 1:22;‖3:19 when he took the Church to himself she would be glorious, with no speck or
Tt 2:14;3:5–7 wrinkle or anything like that, but holy and faultless.[h] ·In the same way, husbands 28
pl P 3:7 Rv 19:7–8; must love their wives as they love their own bodies; for a man to love his wife is for
21:2,9–11 him to love himself. ·A man never hates his own body, but he feeds it and looks 29
1 Co 12:12i after it; and that is the way Christ treats the Church, ·because we are parts of his 30
Gn 2:24 Mt 19:5par. Body. ·*This is why a man leaves his father and mother and becomes attached to his* 31
Rm 16:25l *wife, and the two become one flesh.* ·This mystery has great significance, but I am 32
applying it to Christ and the Church.[i] ·To sum up: you also, each one of you, must 33
love his wife as he loves himself; and let every wife respect her husband.

Pr 6:20 Si 3:1–16 ‖Col 3:20–21 6 Children, be obedient to your parents in the Lord[a]—that is what uprightness 1
demands. ·The first commandment that has a promise attached to it is: *Honour* 2
Ex 20:12 *your father and mother,* ·and the promise is: *so that you may have long life* 3
and prosper in the land. ·And parents, never drive your children to resentment but 4
Pr 13:24+ bring them up with correction and advice inspired by the Lord.

‖Col 3:22–4:1 Tt 2:9–10 1 P 2:18 ·1 Co 2:3 Slaves, be obedient to those who are, according to human reckoning, your 5
masters, with deep respect and sincere loyalty, as you are obedient to Christ: ·not 6
only when you are under their eye, as if you had only to please human beings, but
Rm 6:15g as slaves of Christ who wholeheartedly do the will of God. ·Work willingly for the 7
sake of the Lord and not for the sake of human beings. ·Never forget that everyone, 8
Ga 3:28 Col 3:11 whether a slave or a free man, will be rewarded by the Lord for whatever work he
has done well. ·And those of you who are employers, treat your slaves in the same 9
Jb 31:13–15 spirit; do without threats, and never forget that they and you have the same Master
Dt 10:17f in heaven and there is no favouritism with him.

The spiritual war

Finally, grow strong in the Lord, with the strength of his power. ·Put on the full 10, 11
Rm 13:12 armour of God[b] so as to be able to resist the devil's tactics. ·For it is not against 12
2 Co 6:7;10:4 Jm 4:7 human enemies that we have[c] to struggle, but against the principalities and the
1 P 5:8–9 Mt 4:1c ruling forces who are masters of the darkness in this world, the spirits of evil in the
1:21q Mt 16:17c heavens.[d] ·That is why you must take up all God's armour, or you will not be able 13
to put up any resistance on the evil day, or stand your ground even though you
exert yourselves to the full.

Ws 5:18 Is 11:5;40:3, 9;52:7;59:17 So stand your ground, with *truth a belt round your waist,* and *uprightness a* 14
breastplate, ·wearing for shoes on your feet *the eagerness to spread the gospel of* 15
peace ·and always carrying the shield of faith so that you can use it to quench the 16
1 Jn 2:14+ burning arrows of the Evil One. ·And then you must take *salvation as your helmet* 17
and the sword of the Spirit, that is, the word of God.

Lk 18:1a;21:36 ‖Col 4:2–4 Jude 20 In all your prayer and entreaty keep praying in the Spirit on every possible 18
occasion. Never get tired of staying awake to pray for all God's holy people, ·and 19
Rm 15:30i pray for me to be given an opportunity to open my mouth[e] and fearlessly make
Rm 16:25l known the mystery of the gospel[f] ·of which I am an ambassador in chains; pray 20
that in proclaiming it I may speak as fearlessly as I ought to.

‖Col 4:7 ### Personal news and final salutation

So that you know, as well, what is happening to me and what I am doing, my dear 21
Ac 20:4f friend Tychicus, my trustworthy helper in the Lord, will tell you everything. ·I am 22
sending him to you precisely for this purpose, to give you news about us and
encourage you thoroughly.

May God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ grant peace, love and faith to all 23
the brothers. ·May grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ, in life 24
imperishable.

g. Baptism has no value unless it is accompanied by proclamation of the Word, expressed through evangelisation by the minister and the recipient's profession of faith, 1:13, cf. Mk 16:15seq.; Ac 2:38y; Rm 6:4a; 1 P 1:23m.

h. It was customary in the Middle East, at the time this letter was written, for the 'sons of the wedding' to escort the bride to her husband after she had bathed and dressed. As applied mystically to the Church, Christ washes his bride himself in the bath of baptism, and makes her immaculate (note the mention of a baptismal formula) before taking her to himself. Cf. 1 Th 5:8.

i. Paul finds in this Gn text a prophecy of the marriage of Christ and the Church: a mystery, like that of the salvation of the gentiles, that has been hidden but is now revealed, cf. 1:9f; 3:3seq.

6 **a.** om. 'in the Lord'.

b. God in the OT arms himself against his enemies, *see* Ws 5:17–23; Is 11:4–5; 59:16–18. These are the arms of Yahweh with which, Paul says, the Christian is to arm himself.

c. var. 'you have'.

d. These are the spirits who were thought to move the stars and, consequently, the universe. They lived in 'the heavens', 1:20seq.; 3:10; Ph 2:10, or in 'the air', Ep 2:2, i.e. the space between the surface of the earth and the heaven where God lives. Some of them are among the 'elemental principles of the world', Ga 4:3. They disobeyed God and want to enslave the human race to themselves in sin, 2:2. We used to be their slaves but Christ came to free us, 1:19–21; Col 1:13; 2:15,20, and if Christians are armed with the power of Christ, they will be able to fight them.

e. Hebraism, cf. Ps 51:15; Ezk 3:27; cf. Col 4:3.

f. om. 'of the gospel'.

PHILIPPIANS

THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE CHURCH AT PHILIPPI

Address

Ac 9:13g;16:1a
Rm 1:1 a,b

1 Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all God's holy people in Christ 1
Jesus at Philippi, together with their presiding elders [a] and the deacons. ·Grace 2
and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thanksgiving and prayer

I thank my God whenever I think of you, ·and every time I pray for you all, I 3, 4
always pray with joy [b] ·for your partnership in the gospel [c] from the very first 5
day [d] up to the present. ·I am quite confident that the One who began a good work 6
1:10;2:16
1 Co 1:8e
in you will go on completing it until the Day of Jesus Christ comes. ·It is only right 7
that I should feel like this towards you all, because you have a place in my heart,
Ep 3:2
since you have all shared together in the grace that has been mine, both my chains
Rm 1:9
and my work defending and establishing the gospel. ·For God will testify for me 8
how much I long for you all with the warm longing of Christ Jesus; ·it is my prayer 9
Col 1:9–10
that your love for one another may grow more and more with the knowledge and
Rm 12:2+
Heb 5:14
complete understanding ·that will help you to come to true discernment, [e] so that 10
you will be innocent and free of any trace of guilt when the Day of Christ comes,
3:9g
Jn 15:8
He 12:11
Jm 3:18
entirely filled with the fruits of uprightness through Jesus Christ, for the glory and 11
praise of God.

Paul's own circumstances

Now I want you to realise, brothers, that the circumstances of my present life [f] are 12
Ep 3:1+
helping rather than hindering the advance of the gospel. ·My chains in Christ have 13
become well known not only to all the Praetorium, [g] but to everybody else, ·and so 14
most of the brothers in the Lord have gained confidence from my chains and are
getting more and more daring in announcing the Message [h] without any fear. ·It is 15
true that some of them are preaching Christ out of malice and rivalry; but there are
many as well whose intentions are good; ·some are doing it out of love, knowing 16
that I remain firm in my defence of the gospel. ·There are others who are proclaim- 17
ing Christ out of jealousy, not in sincerity but meaning to add to the weight of my
Ep 3:1+
chains. ·But what does it matter? Only that in both ways, whether with false 18
1:4b
motives or true, Christ is proclaimed, and for that I am happy; ·and I shall go on 19
Jb 13:16 LXX
being happy, too, because I know that *this is what will save me*, with your prayers
and with the support of the Spirit of Jesus Christ; ·all in accordance with my most 20
confident hope and trust that I shall never have to admit defeat, but with complete
1 Co 6:20
fearlessness I shall go on, so that now, as always, Christ will be glorified in my
Ga 2:20
Col 3:3par.
body, [i] whether by my life or my death. ·Life to me, of course, is Christ, but then 21
death would be a positive gain. ·On the other hand again, if to be alive in the body 22
gives me an opportunity for fruitful work, I do not know which I should choose. ·I 23
2 Co 5:6–9
am caught in this dilemma: I want to be gone and to be with Christ, [j] and this is by
far the stronger desire—·and yet for your sake to stay alive in this body is a more 24
urgent need. ·This much I know for certain, that I shall stay and stand by you all, [k] 25

26 to encourage your advance and your joy in the faith, •so that my return to be among you may increase to overflowing your pride in Jesus Christ on my account. 1:4b;2:16 1 Co 15:31 2 Co 1:14;5:12 1 Th 2:19

Fight for the faith

27 But you must always behave in a way that is worthy of the gospel of Christ, [l] so that whether I come to you and see for myself or whether I only hear all about you from a distance, I shall find that you are standing firm and united in spirit, battling, as a 28 team with a single aim, for the faith of the gospel, •undismayed by any of your opponents. This will be a clear sign, for them that they are to be lost, and for you 29 that you are to be saved. •This comes from God, for you have been granted the privilege for Christ's sake not only of believing in him but of suffering for him as 30 well; •you are fighting the same battle which you saw me fighting for him and which you hear I am fighting still. [m] Ep 4:1 Col 1:10 1 Th 2:12 Col 2:5 2 Th 1:4–7 1:7 Col 1:24*l*

Preserve unity in humility

1 2 So if in Christ there is anything that will move you, any incentive in love, [a] any 2 fellowship in the Spirit, [b] any warmth or sympathy—I appeal to you, •make my joy complete by being of a single mind, one in love, one in heart and one in mind. [c] 2 Col 13:13e 1:4b
3 Nothing is to be done out of jealousy or vanity; instead, out of humility of mind 4 everyone should give preference to others, •everyone pursuing not selfish interests 5 but those of others. •Make your own the mind of Christ Jesus: [d] 1 Co 1:10seq. 1 Co 10:24

6 Who, being in the form of God, [e]
did not count equality with God
something to be grasped. [f] Jn 1:1seq.;5:18; 10:33 Col 1:15–20 Heb 1:3

7 But he emptied himself, [g]
taking the form of a slave, [h]
becoming as human beings are; [i] 2 Co 8:9 Mt 20:28 Rm 8:3 Ga 4:4 Heb 2:17

1 **a.** The word *episkopos* (overseer) has not yet acquired the meaning 'bishop', *see* Tt 1:5seq. The 'deacons' are their assistants, Ac 6:1–6; 1 Tm 3:8–13.

b. Joy is one of the chief characteristics of this letter; *see* vv. 18,25; 2:2,17,28,29; 3:1; 4:1,4,10.

c. Not only by sending money, 4:14–16, but also by their joining in the work of witness, 1:7; cf. 2:15–16, when they have suffered as he has for the gospel, 1:29–30.

d. Since the day they were converted, *see* Ac 16:12–40.

e. The fruit, cf. Ho 14:9 and Ga 5:22; Ep 5:9, of growing love is knowledge and discernment of 'what is important', Rm 2:18; its rectitude and warmth continue to grow to maturity, v. 11, transcending the limits of all legislation, Ga 5:23*l*.

f. i.e. Paul's arrest and imprisonment awaiting trial.

g. If Paul is writing from his house-arrest in Rome, this must refer to members of the Praetorian Guard (who were quartered just outside the city wall). If Paul is writing from Ephesus or Caesarea, he is referring to the staff of the Praetorium which was the name of the official residence of the governor in each of those cities.

h. add. 'of the Lord'.

i. By baptism and Eucharist a Christian is so closely united to Christ, *see* 1 Co 6:15–16; 10:17; 12:12seq.,27; Ga 2:20; Ep 5:30, that his life, sufferings and death can be attributed mystically to Christ living in him and being glorified in him, *see* Rm 14:8; 1 Co 6:20. This union would be particularly close in the case of an apostle like Paul, *see* 2 Co 4:10seq.; Col 1:24.

j. For death as a way of being with Christ, *see* Rm 14:8; Col 3:3; 1 Th 5:10. Paul does not explain what is the 'positive gain' that death will bring, nor why to be with Christ in death is 'the stronger desire'; he may possibly be envisaging a more direct relationship with Christ than is possible in the body. As in 2 Co 5:8d, his words suppose that the state of being 'with Christ' follows immediately after death, with no temporal interval of waiting for the general resurrection.

k. This presentiment (it was no more than that, *see* 2:17) was not mistaken, *see* Ac 20:1–6, unlike that expressed by Paul at Miletus, Ac 20:25.

l. The Greek term means primarily 'to lead the life of a citizen', according to the laws of a city. The new City of the Kingdom of God has Christ as its King, the gospel as its Law and Christians as its citizens, *see* 3:20; Ep 2:19.

m. The first reference is to the persecution Paul had to put up with when he was with them in Philippi, Ac 16:19seq.; 1 Th 2:2; the second is to his present imprisonment.

2 **a.** lit. 'If there is any ground for appeal in Christ, etc', an affectionate invocation of all that is most sacred.

b. Perhaps to be taken as a trinitarian reference; in this case 'love' is appropriated to the Father, *see* 2 Co 13:13e.

c. This urgent plea for unity suggests that internal divisions threatened the peace of the church at Philippi, *see* 1:27; 2:14; 4:2. Note how Paul keeps insisting that he is addressing all of them, 1:1,4,7,25; 2:17,26; 4:21.

d. Vv. 6–11 are probably an early Christian hymn quoted by Paul, as Ep 5:14; Col 1:15–20; 2 T 2:11–13 etc. It has been understood of Christ's *kenosis* in emptying himself of his divine glory in order to live a human life and undergo suffering. More probably Jesus is here contrasted as the second with the first Adam, *see* Rm 5:12f, h; 1 Co 15:22m. The first Adam, being in the form or image of God, attempted to grasp equality with God and, by this pride, fell. By contrast, Jesus, through his humility, was raised up by God to the divine glory.

e. The contrast is with Adam, who was created 'in the image of God' but misused this.

f. Adam sought illegitimately to be like God; Jesus humbled himself.

g. In the traditional but less probable interpretation, this emptying or *kenosis* expressed Jesus' voluntary self-deprivation, during his earthly life, of the divine glory. But this interpretation is not only less scriptural but also anachronistic for the development of christology at this moment of Paul's thinking.

h. A reference to the 'servant' of Is 52:13–53:12 which contains the same movement of exaltation through humiliation; *see* Is 42:1a.

i. There is probably a reference here to the 'one like a son of man' who receives honour and glory from God in Dn 7:13.

and being in every way like a human being,[j]
he was humbler yet, 8
Mt 26:39seq. Jn 10:17seq. Rm 5:19 Heb 5:8;12:2 •Mt 23:12 Ac 5:41p Ep 1:20–23 even to accepting death, death on a cross.

And for this God raised him high,[k] 9
and gave him the name[l]
which is above all other names;[m]

so that *all beings* 10
Ep 4:10 Rv 5:3 Is 45:23 in the heavens, on earth and in the underworld,[n]
should bend the knee at the name of Jesus

and that *every tongue should acknowledge*[o] 11
Ac 2:36w Rm 1:4;10:9; 14:19 1 Co 12:3 Jesus Christ as Lord,[p]
to the glory of God the Father.[q]

Work for salvation

2 Co 7:15 So, my dear friends, you have always been obedient; your obedience must not be 12
limited to times when I am present. Now that I am absent it must be more in
1 Co 2:3b Ep 2:10 evidence, so work out your salvation in fear and trembling. •It is God who, for his 13
Ac 17:28 Ep 3:20 own generous purpose, gives you the intention and the powers to act. •Let your 14
Heb 13:21 Dt 32:5 Mt 17:17 behaviour be free of murmuring and complaining •so that you remain faultless and 15
Gn 1:14–16 Mt 5:14–16 1:26+ pure, *unspoilt children of God* surrounded by *a deceitful and underhand brood*,
shining out among them like bright stars in the world, •proffering to it the Word of 16
life. Then I shall have reason to be proud on the Day of Christ, for it will not be for
1 Co 1:8e Ga 2:2; 4:11;5:7d nothing that I have run the race and toiled so hard. •Indeed, even if my blood has 17
to be poured as a libation over your sacrifice and the offering of your faith,[r] then I
Rm 1:9e 2 Tm 4:6 1:4b shall be glad and join in your rejoicing—•and in the same way, you must be glad 18
and join in my rejoicing.

The mission of Timothy and Epaphroditus

Ac 16:1a I hope, in the Lord Jesus, to send Timothy to you soon, so that my mind may be set 19
at rest when I hear how you are. •There is nobody else that I can send who is like 20
1:15–17 him and cares as sincerely for your well-being; •they all want to work for them- 21
selves, not for Jesus Christ. •But you know what sort of person he has proved 22
Ga 1:7 himself, working with me for the sake of the gospel like a son with his father.
That is the man, then, that I am hoping to send to you immediately I can make 23
1:25–26 out what is going to happen to me; •but I am confident in the Lord that I shall come 24
myself, too, before long. •Nevertheless I thought it essential to send to you 25
4:18 Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow-worker and companion-in-arms since he
came as your representative to look after my needs; •because he was missing you 26
all and was worrying because you had heard that he was ill. •Indeed he was 27
seriously ill and nearly died; but God took pity on him—and not only on him but
also on me, to spare me one grief on top of another. •So I am sending him back as 28
promptly as I can so that you will have the joy of seeing him again, and that will be
1:4b some comfort to me in my distress. •Welcome him in the Lord, then, with all joy; 29
hold people like him in honour, •because it was for Christ's work[s] that he came so 30
near to dying, risking his life to do the duty to me which you could not do
yourselves.

1:4b 2 Co 13:11 3 Finally, brothers, I wish you joy in the Lord.[a] 1

The true way of Christian salvation

To write to you what I have already written before is no trouble to me and to you
will be a protection. •Beware of dogs![b] Beware of evil workmen! Beware of self- 2
2:17r Jr 4:4a mutilators![c] •We are the true people of the circumcision since we worship by the 3
Rm 2:25–29 Ga 6:14–15 Spirit of God[d] and make Christ Jesus our only boast, not relying on physical

qualifications,[e] •although, I myself could rely on these too. If anyone does claim to rely on them, my claim is better. •Circumcised on the eighth day of my life, I was born of the race of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrew parents.[f] In the matter of the Law, I was a Pharisee; •as for religious fervour, I was a persecutor of the Church; as for the uprightness embodied in the Law, I was faultless. •But what were once my assets I now through Christ Jesus count as losses. Yes, I will go further: because of the supreme advantage of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, I count everything else as loss. For him I have accepted the loss of all other things, and look on them all as filth if only I can gain Christ •and be given a place in him, with the uprightness I have gained not from the Law, but through faith in Christ, an uprightness from God, based on faith,[g] •that I may come to know him and the power of his resurrection, and partake of his sufferings by being moulded to the pattern of his death, •striving towards the goal of resurrection from the dead.[h] •Not that I have secured it already, not yet reached my goal, but I am still pursuing it in the attempt to take hold of the prize for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.[i] •Brothers, I do not reckon myself as having taken hold of it; I can only say that forgetting all that lies behind me, and straining forward to what lies in front, •I am racing towards the finishing-point to win the prize of God's heavenly call in Christ Jesus. •So this is the way in which all of us who are mature[j] should be thinking,[k] and if you are still thinking differently in any way, then God has yet to make this matter clear to you. •Meanwhile, let us go forward from the point we have each attained.[l]

Brothers, be united in imitating me. Keep your eyes fixed on those who act according to the example you have from me. •For there are so many people[m] of whom I have often warned you, and now I warn you again with tears in my eyes, who behave like the enemies of Christ's cross. •They are destined to be lost; their god is the stomach;[n] they glory in what they should think shameful,[o] since their minds are set on earthly things. •But our homeland is in heaven and it is from there that we are expecting a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, •who will transfigure the wretched body of ours into the mould of his glorious body, through the working of the power which he has, even to bring all things under his mastery.

▶Col 2:11 ▶Rm 7:5c •2 Co 11:21i •Gn 17:10d Mt 3:7f Ac 8:1,3+

Rm 10:3

Rm 1:16h Ga 2:16 Rm 1:4c;6:4a, 11+,17

2:16 Ga 5:7d

Lk 9:62

1 Co 9:25+

1 Co 4:15–17 2 Th 3:7b

Rm 16:18

Ac 3:20–21 Col 3:1–4 Heb 11:13–16 1 Tm 1:1a Rm 8:23 1 Co 15:47–49,49y 1 Jn 3:2 •1 Co 15:23–28

j. lit 'and in fashion found as a human being'.

k. lit. 'super-raised him': by the resurrection and ascension. The resurrection is the prime work of the power of God.

l. Imposition of a name confers a real quality, cf. Ep 1:21; Heb 1:4. This name is 'Lord', v. 11; or more profoundly the unspeakable divine name which, in the triumph of the Risen Christ, is expressed by the title 'Lord'; *see* Ac 2:21m; 3:16*l*.

m. Greater even than the angels, cf. Ep 1:21; Heb 1:4; 1 P 3:22. 'in the underworld' refers to those who dwell in Sheol, Nb 16:33f, rather than to demons.

n. The three cosmic divisions that cover the entire creation, cf. Rv 5:3,13.

o. var. 'and every tongue will acclaim'.

p. om. 'Christ'. This proclamation is the essence of the Christian creed, Rm 10:9; 1 Co 12:3; cf. Col 2:6. The use of Is 45:23 (in which this homage is addressed to Yahweh himself) is a clear indication of the divine character that is meant to be understood by the title *Kyrios*, cf. Jn 20:28; Ac 2:36w. God exalted Jesus, and his glory is therefore increased by the Son's humiliation, 2:7.

q. Vulg. interpretation is 'proclaim that Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father'.

r. Libations were common to both Greek and Jewish sacrifices. Paul merely applies this custom metaphorically to the spiritual worship of the new creation, cf. 3:3; 4:18; Rm 1:9g.

s. var. 'the Lord's work', or 'the work'.

3 **a.** This appears to be the conclusion of the letter, interrupted by the verses which follow, and not resumed until 4:4, *see* p. 1859.

b. Term of abuse applied by Jews to gentiles, Mt 15:26 (and possibly 7:6) which Paul ironically applies to non-Christian Jews.

c. lit. 'for the gash'. Paul uses this term (*katatomē*) as a contemptuous pun on 'circumcision (*peritomē*), implying a comparison between physical circumcision and the self-inflicted gashes in pagan cults, cf. 1 K 18:28; cf. Ga 5:12.

d. var. 'we who worship God in spirit'.

e. lit. 'the flesh', which stands here for the whole system of the old Law with its physical observances, of which circumcision is a typical example. *See* Rm 7:5c. Paul often recalls his Jewish past, 2 Co 11:21j, but nowhere else in such detail.

f. Of Palestinian stock, Ac 23:6, and speaking the language of his ancestors, Ac 21:40, by contrast to the 'Hellenists', Ac 6:1b.

g. The differences between these two sorts of 'uprightness' form the entire subject of Paul's letters to the Christians of Galatia and Rome.

h. Paul is not referring to the general resurrection of both saved and damned, Jn 5:29, but to the true resurrection of the saints who are separated from the 'spiritually' dead to life with Christ, Lk 20:35c.

i. On the road to Damascus.

j. Christians who are mature, *see* 1 Co 2:6e, but who are not totally perfect, Ph 3:12.

k. 'should be thinking' var. 'think'.

l. var. 'let us be united in our convictions (cf. 2:2) and let us follow the same rule of life,' cf. Ga 6:16.

m. The Judaisers, against whom this whole chapter is a warning.

n. The dietary laws loomed large in the Jewish practice of religion, Lv 11; cf. Mt 15:10–20 and par.; 23:25–26; Ac 15:20; Rm 14:17; 16:18; Ga 2:12; Col 2:16,20seq.

o. Probably an allusion to the circumcised member.

1:4b
1 Th 2:19–20 **4** So then, my brothers and dear friends whom I miss so much, my joy and my crown, hold firm in the Lord, dear friends. 1

Last advice

I urge Euodia, and I urge Syntyche to come to agreement with each other in the Lord; 2
•and I ask you, Syzygus,[a] really to be a 'partner' and help them. These women 3
have struggled hard for the gospel with me, along with Clement and all my
Dn 12:1a
Rv 20:12i other fellow-workers, whose names are written in the book of life.
1:4b Always be joyful, then, in the Lord; I repeat, be joyful. •Let your good sense be 4, 5
1 Co 16:22i obvious to everybody. The Lord is near. •Never worry about anything; but tell 6
Mt 6:25–34 God all your desires of every kind in prayer and petition shot through with
•Ep 5:20+ gratitude, •and the peace of God which is beyond our understanding will guard your 7
Jn 14:27
Col 3:15 hearts and your thoughts[b] in Christ Jesus. •Finally, brothers, let your minds be 8
filled with everything that is true,[c] everything that is honourable, everything that is
upright and pure, everything that we love and admire[d]—with whatever is good and
1 Th 2:13d praiseworthy. •Keep doing everything you learnt from me and were told by me 9
2 Th 3:7b and have heard or seen me doing. Then the God of peace will be with you.

Thanks for help received[e]

1:4b As for me, I am full of joy in the Lord, now that at last your consideration for me 10
has blossomed again; though I recognise that you really did have consideration
before, but had no opportunity to show it. •I do not say this because I have lacked 11
Heb 13:5 anything; I have learnt to manage with whatever I have. •I know how 12
to live modestly, and I know how to live luxuriously too: in every way now I
have mastered the secret of all conditions: full stomach and empty stomach, plenty
2 Co 12:9–12
Col 1:29 and poverty. •There is nothing I cannot do in the One[f] who strengthens me. 13
All the same, it was good of you to share with me in my hardships. •In the early 14, 15
Ac 16:12seq. days of the gospel, as you of Philippi well know, when I left Macedonia, no church
other than yourselves made common account with me in the matter of expenditure
and receipts.[g] You were the only ones; •and what is more, you have twice sent me 16
Ac 17:1 what I needed in Thessalonica. •It is not the gift that I value most; what I value is 17
the interest that is mounting up in your account. •I have all that I need and more: 18
2:25 I am fully provided, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the offering that
2:17r
Gn 8:21 you sent, *a pleasing smell*, the sacrifice which is acceptable and pleasing to God.
Heb 13:16 And my God will fulfil[h] all your needs out of the riches of his glory in Christ 19
Rm 16:27n Jesus. •And so glory be to God our Father, for ever and ever. Amen. 20

Greetings and final wish

My greetings to every one of God's holy people in Christ Jesus. The brothers who 21
Ac 9:13g are with me send you their greetings. •All God's holy people[i] send you their 22
greetings, especially those of Caesar's household.[j]
Rm 16:20+ May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.[k] 23

4 **a.** 'Syzygus' means yoke-fellow, partner, second of a pair, colleague, companion; a play on words as in Phm 10–11.
b. var. 'your bodies'.
c. In this verse the ideas commended by Paul are expressed in terms current among the Greek moralists of his time; but in v. 9 he returns to his more usual practice of telling his readers to follow him as their example, 3:17, *see* 2 Th 3:7b.
d. add. 'everything there is of knowledge', or 'of discipline'.
e. At the same time as repeating his gratitude for the gifts he has received, v. 18; 2:25–30, Paul insists on the independence of his mission; the essential element remains the spiritual good of everyone, vv. 17,19; 1:5, cf. 1 Co 9:11.
f. 'the One', var. 'Christ'.
g. Paul was usually unwilling to do anything to leave the impression that he took money for his preaching, 1 Co 9:15; 1 Th 2:5; his acceptance of presents from the Philippians is a mark of his special feeling for them and confidence in their understanding, cf. Ac 16:15; 18:3d; 2 Co 11:8.
h. var. 'may my God fulfil'.
i. All the Christians of the place from which Paul is writing.
j. The 'household' of Caesar was a wide term that covered anybody employed in the service of the emperor, either in Rome or in any of the chief towns of the empire.
k. add. 'Amen'.

COLOSSIANS

THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE CHURCH AT COLOSSAE

PREFACE

Address

1 1 From Paul, by the will of God an apostle of Christ Jesus, and from our brother Rm 1:1b
2 Timothy ·to God's holy people in Colossae, our faithful brothers in Christ. Ac 16:1a
Grace and peace to you from God our Father. [a] Ac 9:13g;

Thanksgiving and prayer

3 We give thanks for you to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, continually in Ep 1:15–16
4 our prayers, ·ever since we heard about your faith in Christ Jesus and the love that Phm 4–5
5 you show towards all God's holy people ·because of the hope which is stored up for 1 Co 13:13e
you in heaven. News of this hope reached you not long ago through the word of
6 truth, the gospel ·that came to you in the same way as it is bearing fruit and growing ‖Ep 1:13
throughout the world. It has had the same effect among you, ever since you heard Ga 1:7d
7 about the grace of God and recognised it for what it truly is. ·This you learnt from
Epaphras, our very dear fellow-worker [b] and a trustworthy deputy for us as Christ's Ac 14:3;20:
8 servant, ·and it was he who also told us all about your love in the Spirit. 24,32
2 Co 6:1
1 Co 13:1a
9 That is why, ever since the day he told us, we have never failed to remember you ‖Ep 1:15
in our prayers and ask that through perfect wisdom and spiritual understanding
10 you should reach the fullest knowledge of his will ·and so be able to lead a life 3:10e
worthy of the Lord, a life acceptable to him in all its aspects, bearing fruit in every Rm 12:2+
11 kind of good work and growing in knowledge of God, ·fortified, in accordance with
12 his glorious strength, with all power always to persevere and endure, ·giving thanks Act 26:18
with joy to the Father who has made you able to share the lot of God's holy people Ep 1:11–13;
and with them to inherit the light. [c] 5:8
1 P 2:9
13 Because that is what he has done. It is he who has rescued us from the ruling
14 force of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of the Son that he loves, ·and Jn 8:12b
in him we enjoy our freedom, the forgiveness of sin. Ga 1:4
2 P 1:11j
·Rm 3:24j
‖Ep 1:6–7

I: FORMAL INSTRUCTION

Christ is the head of all creation [d]

Ws 7:26

15 He is the image of the unseen God, 1:18e
the first-born of all creation, Rm 8:29
Heb 1:3
16 for in him were created all things Jn 1:3
in heaven and on earth: Ep 1:10

1 **a.** add. 'and the Lord Jesus Christ'.
b. lit. 'A faithful servant of Christ on behalf of us'; var. 'on behalf of you'.
c. 'Made you (var. 'us') able to'; var. 'called you (var. 'us') to . . .' • The 'lot of God's holy people' is the salvation once reserved to Israel, to which the gentiles are now called, cf. Ep 1:11–13. The expression 'God's holy people' here can mean either Christians, called to live while still on earth in the light of salvation, Rm 6:19h; 13:11–12e, or it can mean the angels who live with God in the eschatological 'light', *see* Ac 9:13g.

everything visible and everything invisible,
Ep 1:21s thrones, ruling forces, sovereignties, powers—
1 Co 8:6c all things were created through him and for him.
Pr 8:22–31e He exists before all things 17
and in him all things hold together,
1:24 and he is the Head [e] of the Body, 18
Ep 1:22–23; 5:23seq. that is, the Church.

He is the Beginning,
1 Co 15:20 Rv 1:5 the first-born from the dead,
so that he should be supreme in every way;
2:9e because God wanted all fullness to be found in him [f] 19
Ep 1:10;2:14,16 and through him to reconcile all things to him, [g] 20
everything in heaven and everything on earth, [h]
by making peace through his death on the cross.

The Colossians have their share in salvation

Ep 2:1seq.; 4:18–19 You were once estranged and of hostile intent [i] through your evil behaviour; ·now 21, 22
Ep 2:14–16 he [j] has reconciled you, by his death and in that mortal body, to bring you before
1 Co 1:8e Ep 5:27h himself holy, faultless and irreproachable—·as long as you persevere and stand 23
1:5seq. firm on the solid base of the faith, never letting yourselves drift away from the hope
Mk 16:15 promised by the gospel, which you have heard, which has been preached to every
Ep 3:7 creature under heaven, [k] and of which I, Paul, have become the servant.

Paul's labours in the service of the gentiles

2:1 It makes me happy to be suffering for you now, and in my own body to make up all 24
Mt 5:11 2 Col 7:4;12:10 the hardships that still have to be undergone by Christ for the sake of his body, the
1:18e Church, [l] ·of which I was made a servant with the responsibility towards you that 25
2 Co 3:6 Ep 3:2a God gave to me, that of completing God's message, ·the message which was a 26
Rm 15:19 mystery hidden for generations and centuries and has now been revealed to his
holy people. ·It was God's purpose to reveal to them how rich is the glory of this 27
Rm 16:25*l* Ac 9:13g mystery among the gentiles; it is Christ among you, your hope of glory: [m] ·this is 28
3:4 the Christ we are proclaiming, admonishing and instructing everyone in all wisdom,
1 Co 2:6 ·Ep 4:13h to make everyone perfect in Christ. ·And it is for this reason that I labour, striving 29
·Ph 2:13;4:13 2 Th 1:11 with his energy which works in me mightily.

Paul's concern for the Colossians' faith

1:24 2 I want you to know, then, what a struggle I am having on your behalf and on 1
behalf of those in Laodicea, and on behalf of so many others who have never
seen me face to face. ·It is all to bind them together in love and to encourage their 2
Ep 3:18–19 resolution until they are rich in the assurance of their complete understanding and
Rm 16:25*l* have knowledge of the mystery of God [a] ·in which [b] all the jewels of wisdom and 3
Pr 2:4–5 Is 11:2d;45:3 knowledge are hidden.
Ep 5:6 I say this to make sure that no one deceives you with specious arguments. [c] ·I 4, 5
1 Co 5:3–4 may be absent in body, but in spirit I am there among you, delighted to find how
well-ordered you are and to see how firm your faith in Christ is.

II: A WARNING AGAINST SOME ERRORS

Live according to the true faith in Christ, not according to false teaching

Ac 2:22n Ep 4:2 So then, as you received Jesus as Lord and Christ, now live your lives in him, ·be 6, 7
1 Th 2:13d rooted in him and built up on him, held firm by the faith you have been taught, and
overflowing with thanksgiving.

8 Make sure that no one captivates [d] you with the empty lure of a 'philosophy' of the kind that human beings hand on, based on the principles of this world and not on Christ. Ep 5:6 Rm 6:15g Ga 4:3b

Christ alone is the true head of all humanity and the angels

9, 10 In him, in bodily form, lives divinity [e] in all its fullness, ·and in him you too find your own fulfilment, in the one who is the head of every sovereignty and ruling force. [f] 1:19f Ep 1:13;3:19; 4:12–13

11 In him you have been circumcised, with a circumcision performed, not by human hand, but by the complete stripping of your natural self. [g] This is circumcision 12 according to Christ. [h] ·You have been buried with him by your baptism; by which, too, you have been raised up with him through your belief in the power of God 13 who raised him from the dead. ·You were dead, because you were sinners and uncircumcised in body: he [i] has brought you [j] to life with him, he has forgiven us [k] every one of our sins. Jr 4:4 Rm 2:25–29 Ph 3:3 Rm 6:4a Rm 1:4c;8:11g Ep1:19seq.;2:6c ‖Ep 2:1,5seq.

14 He has wiped out the record of our debt to the Law, which stood against us; he 15 has destroyed it by nailing it to the cross; [l] ·and he has stripped the sovereignties Ep 2:15 1 P 3:22

d. In this poem Paul explains, in the form of a diptych, how Christ is the 'head' of everything that exists: **1** He is the head of creation, of all that exists naturally, vv. 15–17. **2** He is the head of the new creation and of all that exists supernaturally through redemption, vv. 18–20. The subject of the poem is the pre-existent Christ, but considered as manifested in the unique historic person who is the 'image of God', i.e. his human nature was the visible manifestation of God who is invisible, *see* Rm 8:29n, and it is he who must be said to be a creature, but the First-born in the order of creation, not only in time but also with a causal primacy and a primacy of honour.

e. On the Church as Christ's body, *see* 1 Co 12:12seq.; he is called the 'head' of his own body both in a temporal sense (v. 18, i.e. he was the first to rise from the dead) and by his role as Principal in the order of salvation (v. 20).

f. The exact meaning of the word *pleroma* (i.e. the thing that fills up a gap or hole, like a patch, *see* Mt 9:16) is not certain here. Some writers have thought it must mean the same as in 2:9 (the fullness of divinity that filled Jesus), but since vv. 15–18 have already dealt with the divinity of Jesus, it seems likely that the reference here is to the biblical concept of the entire cosmos as filled with the creative presence of God, *see* Ps 24:1; 50:12; 72:19; Ws 1:7; Si 43:27; Is 6:3; Jr 23:24. This concept was also widespread in the Graeco-Roman world because of Stoic pantheism. Paul teaches that the Incarnation and Resurrection make Christ head not only of the entire human race, but of the entire created cosmos, for everything that was involved in the fall is equally involved in salvation, *see* Rm 8:19–22; 1 Co 3:22seq.; 15:20–28; Ep 1:10; 4:10; Ph 2:10seq.; 3:21; Heb 2:5–8; cf. Col 2:9f.

g. i.e. through and for Christ, cf. the parallel 'through him and for him', *see* v. 16. Alternatively, it could read 'God wanted everything . . . to be reconciled to himself, through him who made peace . . .' cf. Rm 5:10; 2 Co 5:18seq.

h. This reconciliation of the whole universe (including angels as well as human beings) means, not the individual salvation of the whole human race but the collective salvation of the world by its return to the right order and peace of perfect submission to God. Any individuals who do not through grace join this new creation will be forced to join it, *see* 2:15; 1 Co 15:24–25 (the heavenly spirits) and Rm 2:8; 1 Co 6:9–10; Ga 5:21; Ep 5:5; 2 Th 1:8–9 (human beings).

i. The context suggests that there is a closer parallel with Ep 4:18seq. (foreigners to God and therefore God's enemies) than with Ep 2:12 (foreigners in Israel).

j. 'he', i.e. the Father. The human, mortal body is that of his Son (lit. 'body of his flesh'); this provides the locus where the reconciliation takes place. Into this body the entire human race is effectively gathered, cf. Ep 2:14–16, because Christ has assumed its sin, 2 Co 5:21. The 'flesh' is the body subject to sin, *see* Rm 7:5c; 8:3; Heb 4:15.

k. That is, to all humanity.

l. Jesus suffered in order to establish the reign of God, and anyone who continues his work must share this suffering. Paul is not claiming to add anything to the redemptive value of the cross (to which in any case nothing is lacking); but he associates himself with the trials of Jesus, by his sufferings in his apostolate, *see* 2 Co 1:5; Ph 1:20i. These are the sufferings predicted for the messianic era, Mt 24:8f; Ac 14:22m; 1 Tm 4:1a, and are all part of the way in which God had always intended the Church to develop; Paul feels that, being the messenger Christ has chosen to send to the gentiles, he has been specially called on to complete these sufferings.

m. Previously, when it had seemed (to the Jews) that gentiles could never be saved, as salvation was restricted to 'Israel', gentiles had seemed to be without a Messiah and consequently to be deprived of all hope, Ep 2:12. The 'mystery' or secret of God that had now been revealed was that the gentiles, too, were called to salvation and the glory of heaven through union to Christ, *see* Ep 2:13–22; 3:3–6.

2 **a.** var. 'the mystery of Christ', cf. 4:3; Ep 3:4; or 'God's mystery of Christ', or 'the mystery of God the Father of Christ', or 'the mystery of God the Father, and of Christ', etc.

b. 'in which', i.e. in the 'mystery' that revealed what till then had been 'hidden', namely the 'infinite wisdom' of God, *see* Rm 16:25*l*; 1 Tm 3:16e. That it is Christ who is revealed in the mystery, 1:27, is of course true, and he himself is also the Wisdom of God, 1 Co 1:24,30, and he is also the Mystery, 1 Co 2:7, that is hard to understand, Ep 3:8,19.

c. This will be developed in v. 8seq.

d. To deny Christ after he has liberated them from the tyranny of 'darkness', 1:13seq., by going back to error, would be nothing but a new slavery, cf. Ga 4:8seq.; 5:1.

e. The sense of the word 'fullness' here is clarified by 'bodily' and 'of divinity'. In the risen Christ are united the divine sphere, to which he belongs by his pre-existence and his glory, and the whole created world which, by his incarnation and resurrection, he has taken to himself either directly (human nature) or indirectly (the cosmos). In this way he himself is the *pleroma* of all possible categories of being.

f. A Christian shares this *pleroma* of Christ by being part of it, i.e. part of Christ's body, *see* (text and notes) 1:19; Ep 1:23; 3:19; 4:12–13, and associated thus with the Head of Heavenly Powers, he is superior to them all. The following verses develop these two ideas: disciples of Christ share his triumph, vv. 11–13, even the heavenly powers are submitted to his triumph, vv. 14–15.

g. Surgical circumcision removes only a piece of skin.

h. The 'circumcision' instituted by Christ, i.e. baptism.

i. God the Father. Cf. 1:22.

j. 'you'; var. 'us'.

k. 'us'; var. 'you'.

l. The Law was able to do nothing about a sinner except condemn him to death, Rm 7:7d; this death sentence is what God suppressed by means of the death of his own Son, and it was for this very reason that God's Son was 'made a victim for sin', 2 Co 5:21, 'subject to the Law', Ga 4:4, and 'cursed by the Law', Ga 3:13. In the person of his Son, whom he allowed to be executed, God nailed up and destroyed the document which contained our debt and condemned us.

Is 53:12
2 Co 2:14
and the ruling forces, and paraded them in public, behind him in his triumphal procession. [m]

Ga 4:3b
Against the false asceticism based on the 'principles of this world'

Then never let anyone criticise you for what you eat or drink, or about observance 16
Rm 14:5 of annual festivals, New Moons or Sabbaths. ·These are only a shadow of what was 17
coming: the reality is the body of Christ. [n] ·Do not be cheated of your prize by 18
Ga 6:12 anyone who chooses [o] to grovel to angels and worship them, [p] pinning every hope
on visions received, [q] vainly puffed up by a human way of thinking; ·such a person 19
|Ep 4:15–16 has no connection to the Head, [r] by which the whole body, given all that it needs
and held together by its joints and sinews, grows with the growth given by God.

Ga 4:3b If you have really died with Christ to the principles of this world, why do you still 20
let rules dictate to you, as though you were still living in the world? ·—'Do not pick 21
1 Co 6:13;8:8 up this, do not eat that, do not touch the other,' ·and all about things which perish 22
Is 29:13
Mt 15:9 even while they are being used—according to merely *human commandments and doctrines*! ·In these rules you can indeed find what seems to be good sense—the 23
cultivation of the will, and a humility which takes no account of the body; but in fact they have no value against self-indulgence. [s]

Life-giving union with the glorified Christ

Ep 2:6e
Ac 2:33t
Ph 3:20
3 Since you have been raised up to be with Christ, you must look for the things 1
that are above, where Christ is, sitting at God's right hand. ·Let your thoughts 2
be on things above, not on the things that are on the earth, ·because you have died, 3
2:12 and now the life you have is hidden with Christ in God. ·But when Christ is 4
1:27
Rm 8:19
1 Jn 3:2
revealed—and he is your [a] life—you, too, will be revealed with him in glory. [b]

III: ENCOURAGEMENT

General rules of Christian behaviour

Rm 1:29q;
6:11seq.
That is why you must kill everything in you that is earthly: [c] sexual vice, impurity, 5
uncontrolled passion, evil desires and especially greed, which is the same thing as
Rm 1:18m
|Ep 5:6
worshipping a false god; ·it is precisely these things which draw God's retribution 6
||Ep 2:2–3
Tt 3:3
upon those who resist. [d] ·And these things made up your way of life when you were 7
living among such people, ·but now you also must give up all these things: human 8
Ep 4:31
|Ep 4:22–24
anger, hot temper, malice, abusive language and dirty talk; ·and do not lie to each 9
other. You have stripped off your old behaviour with your old self, ·and you have 10
Rm 12:2+
Gn 1:26–27
put on a new self which will progress towards true knowledge the more it is
renewed in the image of its Creator; [e] ·and in that image there is no room for 11
Gn 11:1a
1 Co 12:13
Ga 3:27–28
distinction between Greek and Jew, between the circumcised and uncircumcised,
or between barbarian and Scythian, slave and free. There is only Christ: he is
1 Co 15:28
everything and he is in everything. [f]

As the chosen of God, then, the holy people whom he loves, you are to be 12
|Ep 4:1–2.32
clothed in heartfelt compassion, in generosity and humility, gentleness and
Mt 6:14;18;
21–35
patience. ·Bear with one another; forgive each other if one of you has a complaint 13
against another. The Lord has forgiven you; now you must do the same. ·Over all 14
Rm 13:8–10.8b
1 Co 13:1a
Jn 14:27
Ph 4:7
these clothes, put on love, the perfect bond. ·And may the peace of Christ reign 15
in your hearts, because it is for this that you were called together in one body.
Always be thankful.
1 Co 12:12i
Ep 2:16;4:3–4
Let the Word of Christ, [g] in all its richness, find a home with you. Teach each 16
Ep 5:20
Ep 4:29
other, and advise each other, in all wisdom. With gratitude in your hearts sing
||Ep 5:19–20
psalms and hymns and inspired songs to God; [h] ·and whatever you say or do, let it 17
1 Co 10:31
be in the name of the Lord Jesus, in thanksgiving to God the Father through him.

|Ep 5:21–6:9
1 P 3:1–7
The morals of the home and household [i]

Wives, be subject to your husbands, as you should in the Lord. ·Husbands, love 18, 19

20 your wives and do not be sharp with them. •Children, be obedient to your parents
21 always, because that is what will please the Lord. •Parents, do not irritate your
children or they will lose heart.
22 Slaves, be obedient in every way to the people who, according to human
reckoning, are your masters; not only when you are under their eye, as if you had
only to please human beings, but wholeheartedly, out of respect for the Master.[j]
23 Whatever your work is, put your heart into it as done for the Lord and not for
24 human beings, •knowing that the Lord will repay you by making you his heirs.[k] It
25 is Christ the Lord that you are serving. •Anyone who does wrong will be repaid in
kind. For there is no favouritism.

Rm 6:15g
1 Co 7:21–23
Tt 2:9–10
Phm 16f
1 P 2:18

1 4 Masters, make sure that your slaves are given what is upright and fair, knowing
that you too have a Master in heaven.

The apostolic spirit

2, 3 Be persevering in your prayers and be thankful as you stay awake to pray. •Pray
for us especially, asking God to throw open a door for us to announce the message
4 and proclaim the mystery of Christ,[a] for the sake of which I am in chains; •pray
that I may proclaim it as clearly as I ought.
5, 6 Act wisely with outsiders, making the best of the present time. •Always talk
pleasantly and with a flavour of wit[b] but be sensitive to the kind of answer each
one requires.

Rm 12:12
||Ep 6:18–20
•1 Th 5:6,17seq.
•Rm 15:30i
•1 Co 16:9d
Rm 16:25l
•1 Co 5:12i
||Ep 5:15
•2 Co 6:2a
Ep 5:16
•Ws 8:9

Personal news

Ep 6:21

7 Tychicus will tell you all the news about me. He is a very dear brother, and a
8 trustworthy helper and companion in the service of the Lord. •I am sending him to
you precisely for this purpose: to give you news[c] about us and to encourage you
9 thoroughly. •With him I am sending Onesimus, that dear and trustworthy brother
who is a fellow-citizen of yours. They will tell you everything that is happening here.

Ac 20:4f

Phm 10seq.

m. The tradition is that the Law was brought down to Moses by angels, Ga 3:19k, and by honouring them as the lawgivers, *see* Col 2:18, people were distracted from the true Creator. Now that God has brought the régime of that Law to an end, by means of the crucifixion, these angelic Powers have lost the one thing that had given them power, and so they too must acknowledge that Christ has triumphed.

n. lit. 'but the body is Christ'—a pun on the word *soma* ('body') as being both that which is more real than any shadow or reflection, and the body of the risen Christ which is the essential eschatological reality and the seed from which the new universe will grow.

o. Or 'Do not let anyone give himself the pleasure of condemning you.'

p. Dietary and cultic practices, v. 16, attribute too much importance to material things and therefore to the 'spirits' that are supposed to control them, cf. Ga 4:3seq.

q. var. 'which he has not seen'. Paul is explaining where the teachers at Colossae have gone wrong, which is either because they attach a false importance to their 'visions' or, at a more general level, because they base all their religion on visible things.

r. Christ, Ep 4:15.

s. This may mean either that they are of no real value in subduing 'self-indulgence', or else that 'they are of no value and help only to satisfy self-indulgence'.

3 **a.** var. 'our'.

b. Through union with Christ in baptism, 2:12, his followers already live the identical life he lives in heaven, *see* Ep 2:6e, but this spiritual life is not manifest and glorious as it will be at the *parousia*.

c. At the mystical level of union with the glorified Christ, participation in his death and resurrection through baptism is instantaneous and total, 2:12seq.,20; 3:1–4; Rm 6:4e, but at the practical level of life on earth, this union has to be grown into gradually. Already 'dead' in theory, the Christian must still put this death into practice by 'killing' day after day the old, sinful self which still lives in him.

d. The words 'upon those who resist', omitted by some ancient witnesses and several modern editions, are required to explain the literary genesis of Ep 2:2–3 and 5:6, on the basis of this passage of Col.

e. The human race, that was to have been 'the image of God', Gn 1:26m, lost its way trying to locate the 'knowledge of good and evil' outside and apart from the will of God, Gn 2:17j, and became the slave of sin and sinful urges, Rm 5:12g. This is the 'old self' that must die, Rm 6:6; Ep 4:22; the 'new self' is reborn in Christ, Ep 2:15n, who is the true image of God, Rm 8:29n. In this way the human race can both recover its original justice and reach true knowledge of what is right and wrong, 1:9; Heb 5:14.

f. The new creation will not be divided into races and religions and cultures and social classes in the way the present creation has been since the Fall; this unity is based on Christ.

g. var. 'of the Lord' or 'of God'; possibly the text originally read simply 'the Word', cf. Ph 1:14; 2:30.

h. These 'inspired songs' could be charismatic improvisations suggested by the Spirit during liturgical assembly, cf. 1 Co 12:7seq.; 14:26.

i. Paul christens these simple precepts of ordinary morality by introducing his phrase 'in the Lord' which must be taken here as meaning 'according to the Christian way of life'. These Christian applications are further developed in Ep 5:21seq.

j. 'your masters . . . the Master': Paul uses the same word each time, i.e. Christ is the master equally of both slave and slave-owner.

k. That a slave should inherit, cf. Mt 21:35–38; Lk 15:19; Ga 4:1–2, is a striking sign of the new order in Christ, *see* Rm 8:15–17; Ga 4:3–7; Phm 16.

4 **a.** var. 'of God', cf. 2:2.

b. lit. 'with a seasoning of salt', a classical Gk cliché, cf. Mk 9:50.

c. var. 'to get your news'.

Greetings[d] and final wishes

Ac 19:29n
Phm 23seq.
•Ac 12:12d
Aristarchus, who is here in prison with me, sends his greetings, and so does Mark, 10
the cousin of Barnabas—you were sent some instructions about him; if he comes to
you, give him a warm welcome—•and Jesus Justus adds his greetings. Of all those 11
who have come over from the circumcision, these are the only ones actually
working with me for the kingdom of God. They have been a great comfort to me.
Epaphras, your fellow-citizen, sends his greetings; this servant of Christ Jesus 12
Rm 15:30
never stops battling for you, praying that you will never lapse but always hold
perfectly and securely to the will of God. •I can testify for him that he works hard 13
for you, as well as for those at Laodicea and Hierapolis. •Greetings from my dear 14
friend Luke, the doctor, and also from Demas.

Please give my greetings to the brothers at Laodicea and to Nympha and the 15
Rm 16:5+
•1 Th 5:27
church which meets in her house. •After this letter has been read among you, send 16
it on to be read in the church of the Laodiceans; and get the letter[e] from Laodicea
Phm 2
for you to read yourselves. •Give Archippus this message, 'Remember the service 17
that the Lord assigned to you, and try to carry it out.'

1 Co 16:21
Ga 6:11
2 Th 3:17
•Ep 3:1+
This greeting is in my own hand—PAUL. Remember the chains I wear. Grace be 18
with you.[f]

d. On Aristarchus, *see* Ac 19:29. On Mark, *see* Ac 12:12d. 'Jesus Justus' is not mentioned anywhere else; his surname was quite common among Jews and Jewish converts, *see* Ac 1:23; 18:27. Epaphras, born at Colossae (and therefore not the same person as Epaphroditus, who came from Philippi, Ph 2:25; 4:18) had been sent by Paul to evangelise Colossae, his own native town, Col 1:7. Luke is the evangelist and author of Ac: he had joined Paul towards the end of his third journey, Ac 20:5seq., had been with him till they reached Rome. Ac 27:1seq., and now, with Paul under arrest, he is still by his side, *see* Phm 24, as he will be again (if the historical data of the Pastoral Epistles are reliable) after Paul has been arrested a second time, 2 Tm 4:11. On Demas, *see* 2 Tm 4:10; Phm 24. Who the woman was called Nympha (or man, if the correct spelling is Nymphas) is unknown. Archippus, v. 17, is probably a son of Philemon, Phm 2; what the service was the Lord wanted him to do is not known.

e. Paul expected his letters to be read in public to the assembled brothers, 1 Th 5:27, and then passed on to the neighbouring churches, *see* 2 Co 1:1. The letter that was to be brought back from Laodicea to Colossae was probably the one that Paul wrote to Ephesus.

f. var. add. 'Amen', Ph 4:20, *see* Ph 4:23.

1 THESSALONIANS

THE FIRST LETTER OF PAUL TO THE CHURCH IN THESSALONICA

Address

Rm 1:1a
2 Th 1:1–2
Ac 15:22x; 16:1a

1 **1** Paul, Silvanus and Timothy, to the Church in Thessalonica which is in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace to you and peace. [a]

Thanksgiving and congratulations

Ph 1:3
2 Th 1:3

2, 3 We always thank God for you all, mentioning you in our prayers continually. •We remember before our God and Father how active is the faith, how unsparing the love, how persevering the hope which you have from our Lord Jesus Christ. [b]

5:8
1 Co 13:13e

4, 5 We know, brothers loved by God, that you have been chosen, •because our gospel [c] came to you not only in words, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with great effect. And you observed the sort of life we lived when we were with

Rv 2:2
Ac 1:8j
1 Co 2:4
2 Co 12:12+
2 Th 2:13

6 you, which was for your sake. •You took us and the Lord as your model, welcoming

Mt 13:20–21
Ac 17:1–9

7 the word with the joy of the Holy Spirit in spite of great hardship. •And so you

2 Th 3:7b

8 became an example to all believers in Macedonia and Achaia •since it was from you that the word of the Lord rang out—and not only throughout Macedonia and Achaia, for your faith in God has spread everywhere. We do not need to tell other

Rm 14:17
Ga 5:22
Rm 1:8

9 people about it: [d] •other people tell us how we started the work among you, how you broke with the worship of false gods when you were converted to God and

Ac 3:19n;14:15

10 became servants of the living and true God; •and how you are now waiting for Jesus, his Son, whom he raised from the dead, to come from heaven. It is he who saves us from the Retribution [e] which is coming.

Jr 10:10
4:16–17
Mt 3:7g
Rm 1:18; 2:5seq.

Paul's example in Thessalonica

1 **2** You know yourselves, my brothers, that our visit to you has not been pointless.

2 Although, as you know, we had received rough treatment and insults at Philippi, God gave us the courage to speak his gospel to you fearlessly, in spite of

Ac 16:19–40
Ph 1:30

3 great opposition. •Our encouragement to you does not come from any delusion or

Ac 13:46gg

4 impure motives or trickery. •No, God has approved us to be entrusted with the gospel, and this is how we preach, seeking to please not human beings but God

2 Co 3:12
2 Co 4:2
•Ep 3:7
1 Tm 1:11

5 who *tests* our *hearts*. •Indeed, we have never acted with the thought of flattering

•2 Co 5:9

6 anyone, as you know, nor as an excuse for greed, God is our witness; •nor have we ever looked for honour from human beings, either from you or anybody else,

Ga 1:10
Jr 11:20
Ac 20:33
Rm 1:9
Jn 5:41,44

1 a. add. 'from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ', cf. 2 Th 1:2.

b. Note that faith, hope and love, which Paul distinguishes in 1 Co 13:13 as the three enduring virtues of the Christian, are here found at work in the life of the Church.

c. var. 'the gospel of God', or 'of our God'. The gospel is more than a proclamation, it is the whole new economy of salvation.

d. Even allowing for some exaggeration one can discern that the life of Christians in accordance with the gospel by itself achieves the spread of their faith; it is one form of the Word of God.

e. Vv. 9–10 seem to give an extremely condensed summary of Paul's proclamation. The gospel he preached revolves round two central themes: a vigorous stress on monotheism, Mk 12:29b; 1 Co 8:4–6; 10:7,14; Ga 4:8–9, and a Christology stressing the coming of the risen Lord, *see* 1 Co 1:7; 15:23n. • Note the title 'his Son' applied to Jesus in the earliest of all Paul's letters.

when we could have imposed ourselves on you with full weight,[a] as apostles of Christ. 7

1 Co 3:2 Ga 4:19 Instead, we lived unassumingly among you.[b] Like a mother feeding and looking after her children, ·we felt so devoted to you, that we would have been happy to 8
Rm 9:3 Ga 2:20+ share with you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, so dear had you become. ·You remember, brothers, with what unsparing energy we used to work, 9
4:11 Ac 18:3d 2 Th 3:6–12 slaving night and day so as not to be a burden on any one of you while we were
Rm 1:9 proclaiming the gospel of God to you. ·You are witnesses, and so is God, that our 10
treatment of you, since you believed, has been impeccably fair and upright. ·As 11
1 Co 4:15i you know we treated every one of you as a father treats his children, ·urging you, 12
5:24 Mt 4:17f 2 Th 1:11 1 P 5:10 encouraging you and appealing to you to live a life worthy of God, who calls[c] you into his kingdom and his glory.

The faith and the patience of the Thessalonians

1 Co 11:2+ Another reason why we continually thank God for you is that as soon as you heard 13
the word that we brought you as God's message, you welcomed it for what it really
Rm 1:16 Heb 4:12 is, not the word of any human being, but God's word[d], a power that is working[e]
1 Co 1:2a 2 Th 3:7b among you believers. ·For you, my brothers, have modelled yourselves on the 14
Mt 23:29–37 Ac 2:23–24,23p churches of God in Christ Jesus which are in Judaea, in that you have suffered the same treatment from your own countrymen as they have had from the Jews,[f]
1 P 5:9 who put the Lord Jesus to death, and the prophets too, and persecuted us also. 15
Their conduct does not please God, and makes them the enemies of the whole
Ac 14:2c human race, ·because they are hindering us from preaching to gentiles to save 16
Gn 15:16 Mt 23:32 them. Thus all the time they are *reaching the full extent of* their *iniquity*, but
Rm 1:18m retribution[g] has finally overtaken them.

Paul's anxiety

Col 2:1,5 Although we had been deprived of you for only a short time in body but never in 17
Rm 1:10–11 affection, brothers, we had an especially strong desire and longing to see you face
to face again, ·and we tried hard to come and visit you; I, Paul, tried more than 18
2 Th 2:9h once, but Satan prevented us. ·What do you think is our hope and our joy, and 19
Pr 16:31 Ezk 16:12;23:42 what *our crown of honour* in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes?
1 Co 9:25+ Ph 2:16;4:1 You are, for you are our pride and joy. 20

1:10e 1 Co 15:23n 2 Co 1:14+

Timothy's mission to Thessalonica

3 When we could not bear it any longer, we decided it would be best to be left 1
without a companion at Athens, and ·sent our brother Timothy, who is God's 2
Ac 17:14–16,15f 1 Co 3:9 2 Co 6:1 helper[a] in spreading the gospel of Christ, to keep you firm and encourage you
about your faith ·and prevent any of you from being unsettled by the present 3
1:6 hardships. As you know, these are bound to come our way: ·indeed, when we were 4
Mt 16:24par. Ac 14:22 2 Tm 3:12 Heb 10:32,36 with you, we warned you that we are certain to have hardships to bear, and that is
what has happened now, as you have found out. ·That is why, when I could not 5
Ga 4:11 Ph 2:16 bear it any longer, I sent to assure myself of your faith: I was afraid the Tester[b] might have put you to the test, and all our work might have been pointless.

Paul thanks God for good reports of the Thessalonians

Ac 18:5e 2 Co 7:7 2 Th 1:3 However, Timothy has returned from you and has given us good news of your faith 6
and your love, telling us that you always remember us with pleasure and want to
see us quite as much as we want to see you. ·And so, brothers, your faith has been 7
a great encouragement to us in the middle of our own distress and hardship; ·now 8
2 Th 2:15 Rv 2:9–10 we can breathe again, as you are holding firm in the Lord. ·How can we thank God 9
enough for you, for all the joy we feel before our God on your account? ·We are 10
2:17 earnestly praying night and day to be able to see you face to face again and make up any shortcomings[c] in your faith.

May God our Father himself, and our Lord Jesus, ease our path to you. ·May 11, 12
5:15 Rm 12:17seq. the Lord increase and enrich your love for each other and for all[d], so that it matches

13 ours for you. ·And may he so confirm your hearts in holiness that you may be blameless in the sight of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes *with all his holy ones.*[c]

▶Ga 6:10 ▶2 Th 1:3 ▶Tt 3:2 5:23 1 Co 1:8e; 15:23n Zc 14:5

Live in holiness and charity

1 4 Finally, brothers, we urge you and appeal to you in the Lord Jesus[a]; we instructed you how to live in the way that pleases God, and you are so living;[b]
2 but make more progress still. ·You are well aware of the instructions we gave you on the authority of the Lord Jesus.

2 Th 3:6 2:13d Rm 12:1–2 1 Co 11:2+

3 God wills you all to be holy. [c]He wants you to keep away from sexual immorality,
4 and each one of you to know how to control his body[d] in a way that is holy and
5 honourable, ·not giving way to selfish lust like *the nations who do not acknowledge*
6 *God.* ·He wants nobody at all ever to sin by taking advantage of a brother in these matters; the Lord always *pays back* sins of that sort, as we told you before
7, 8 emphatically. ·God called us to be holy, not to be immoral; ·in other words, anyone who rejects this is rejecting not human authority, but God, *who gives you his* Holy *Spirit.*[e]

Mt 6:10 Ep 1:4 1 Co 6:12–20 Ps 79:6 Jr 10:25 Dt 32:35 Ps 94:1–2 Jn 17:19 Lk 10:16 Ezk 37:14

9 As for brotherly love, there is no need to write to you about that, since you have
10 yourselves learnt from God to love one another, ·and in fact this is how you treat all the brothers throughout the whole of Macedonia. However, we do urge you,
11 brothers, to go on making even greater progress ·and to make a point of living quietly, attending to your own business and earning your living, just as we told
12 you to, ·so that you may earn the respect of outsiders and not be dependent on anyone.

Is 54:13 Jr 31:33–34 Jn 6:45;13:34u 2 Th 1:3 Ac 18:3d Ep 4:28 2 Th 3:6–12 ·1 Co 5:12i

The dead and the living at the time of the Lord's coming[f]

13 We want you to be quite certain, brothers, about those who have fallen asleep,[g] to
14 make sure that you do not grieve for them, as others do who have no hope. ·We believe that Jesus died and rose again, and that in the same way God will bring

Ep 2:12 Col 1:27 Rm 1:4c; 8:11g;10:9e 1 Co 15:1a

2 **a.** lit. 'make our weight felt': interpreted morally, this can mean that Paul could have insisted on his own dignity and prestige, or that materially he could have expected to have been fed and kept at their expense, cf. 2:9; 2 Co 11:9; 2 Th 3:8.

b. 'unassumingly'; var. 'as babes'.

c. var. 'called you'. • The Kingdom of God, Ep 5:5; 2 Th 1:5; Mt 4:17; Rv 19:8, and its glory are properly divine entities, but to them God calls, 4:7; 5:24, and guides his chosen ones, 1:4.

d. A brief summary of the apostolic tradition, the message is first 'received', 4:1; 2 Th 3:6; 1 Co 15:1; Ga 1:9; Ph 4:9; Col 2:6, or 'heard', Rm 10:17h; Ep 1:13; Ac 15:7. It then penetrates the mind or heart, Rm 10:8–10, where if it is welcomed, 1 Th 1:6; Mk 4:20; Ac 8:14; 2 Co 11:4; 2 Th 2:10, it proves that the hearer acknowledges that God has been speaking through his missionary, 1 Th 4:1seq.; 2 Co 3:5; 13:3.

e. Or 'has come to be at work'; God acts through his message that has been welcomed by the believer, cf. 1:8; 2 Th 3:1.

f. The harsh tone of vv. 15–16 gives a good idea of how bitter the atmosphere was in Jerusalem, Mt 5:12; 21:33–46; 23:29–37; Ac 2:23*o*, owing to the way Paul upset the Jewish community by preaching to gentiles, 1 Th 2:16; *see* Ac 13:5e. Later on Paul was able to take a more balanced attitude than he takes here, by frequent references to the special position of God's chosen people, cf. Rm 9:11; Ga 4:21–31. He tried hard to reconcile convert gentile with Jewish Christian, *see* 1 Co 16:1a; Ep 2:11–22.

g. add. 'from God'.

3 **a.** om. 'who is God's helper', or var. 'who is God's slave' or 'God's slave and our helper'.

b. 'Tester', i.e. 'Satan' as in 2:18, *see* Mk 1:13.

c. This would refer to gaps in their knowledge of Christian doctrine, as well as gaps in their code of Christian behaviour, cf. Rm 14:1; 2 Co 10:15; Ph 1:25.

d. Brotherly love of one another in the Christian community is only the beginning of charity; it has to spread to love for the whole human race.

e. add. 'Amen'. • Holiness, 4:3c, begins with brotherly love but will not be perfect till the *parousia*. In this context 'holy ones' can refer to the chosen, the saved or the angels, Ac 9:13g.

4 **a.** Paul speaks 'in' (v. 1) 'by' (v. 2) or 'in the name of' Christ, cf. 4:15; 2 Th 3:6,12. His doctrine on moral behaviour which is based on the earliest Christian teaching invests ordinary day-to-day life with a new depth: it has the seal of Christ on it, Col 3:18i.

b. om. 'and you are so living'.

c. It is the will of God, cf. Mt 6:10, that makes people holy, 1 Th 4:3,7; 2 Th 2:13; Ep 1:4. It is God who makes them holy, 5:23; 1 Co 6:11; *see* Jn 17:17; Ac 20:32. Christ has made himself our 'holiness', 1 Co 1:30. The Holy Spirit is involved in making us holy, v. 8; 2 Th 2:13; 1 Co 6:11. Christians, however, must make use of this gift, Rm 6:19h. The title 'the holy ones', is common, Ac 9:13h.

d. Either a man's own body, 5:23, cf. Rm 12:1; 1 Co 6:19, or that of his wife, as in several rabbinic texts and 1 P 3:7.

e. Ezekiel foretold that the Spirit would be given to the messianic people: this reference draws attention to the continuity between the church of Thessalonica and the giving of this gift to the early Christian community, Ac 2:16seq., 33,38; etc. On the gift of the Spirit to the spirit of each believer, *see* Rm 5:5e.

f. The converts in Thessalonica had obviously been worried about friends and relations who had died and would not be there to see the coming of the Lord. Replying to their questions Paul affirms the fundamental doctrine of the resurrection so as to strengthen their faith and hope.

g. lit. 'we do not wish you to be ignorant, brothers, concerning the sleeping'. The euphemism was common in the OT, the NT and in Greek literature: the natural concomitant was to call the resurrection (to new life or from death) an 'awakening'.

with him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. ·We can tell you this from the 15
Si 48:11 Lord's own teaching, [h] that we [i] who are still alive for the Lord's coming will not
1 Co 15:23,51
Mt 24:30–31,31r have any advantage over those who have fallen asleep. ·At the signal given by the 16
1 Co 15:52z voice of the Archangel and the trumpet of God, the Lord himself will come down
2 Th 1:7seq. from heaven; [j] those who have died in Christ will be the first to rise, ·and only 17
Jn 14:2–3; 17:24 after that shall we who remain alive [k] be taken up in the clouds, together with them,
Dn 2:21 to meet the Lord in the air. This is the way we shall be with the Lord for ever. [l]
Dn 2:21
Ac 1:7h With such thoughts as these, then, you should encourage one another. 18

Watchfulness while awaiting the coming of the Lord [a]

5 About times and dates, brothers, [b] there is no need to write to you ·for you are 1, 2
Mt 24:36,43 well aware in any case that the Day of the Lord is going to come like a thief in
1 Co 1:8e
2 P 3:10 the night. ·It is when people are saying, 'How quiet and peaceful it is' that sudden 3
Rv 3:3 destruction falls on them, as suddenly as labour pains come on a pregnant woman;
Jr 6:14
Lk 21:34–55 and there is no escape.
·Jr 4:31+
Mt 24:8f But you, brothers, do not live in the dark, that the Day [c] should take you 4
Ep 5:8+ unawares like a thief. ·No, you are all children of light and children of the day: we 5
Jn 8:12b do not belong to the night or to darkness, ·so we should not go on sleeping, as 6
Rm 13:12–13
Mt 24:42+ everyone else does, but stay wide awake and sober. ·Night is the time for sleepers 7
1P1:13;4:7;5;8 to sleep and night the time for drunkards to be drunk, ·but we belong to the day 8
1:3 and we should be sober; let us put on faith and love for a *breastplate*, and the hope
Is 59:17
1 Co 13:13e of *salvation* for a *helmet*. ·God destined us not for his retribution, but to win 9
Ep 6:11b
1:10e salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, ·who died for us so that, awake or asleep, [d] 10
4:14+ we should still live united to him. ·So give encouragement to each other, and keep 11
Ep 2:20s strengthening one another, as you do already.

1 Co 16:16 We appeal to you, my brothers, to be considerate to those who work so hard 12
Ga 6:6
1 Tm 5:17 among you as your leaders in the Lord and those who admonish you. [e] ·Have the 13
Tt 1:5b
Heb 13:17 greatest respect and affection for them because of their work.
·Rm 14:1
2 Th 3:6–12 Be at peace among yourselves. ·We urge you, brothers, to admonish those who 14
are undisciplined, encourage the apprehensive, support the weak and be patient
Ep 21:25f with everyone. ·Make sure that people do not try to repay evil for evil; always aim 15
Mt 5:38seq.
Rm 12:17 at what is best for each other and for everyone. ·Always be joyful; ·pray con- 16, 17
Ga 6:10
Col 3:12–13 stantly; [f] ·and for all things give thanks; this is the will of God for you in 18
Lk 18:1a Christ Jesus.
·Ep 5:20
·4:3 Do not stifle the Spirit [g] ·or despise the gift of prophecy with contempt; ·test 19, 20, 21
1 Co 12:1a
1 Co 12:10g everything and hold on to what is good ·and *shun every* form of *evil*. 22
Jb 1:1,8;2:3

Closing prayer and farewell

Is 11:6e May the God of peace make you perfect and holy; and may your spirit, life and 23
2 Th 3:16
3:13e body [h] be kept blameless for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ·He who has 24
1 Co 1:9f called you is trustworthy and will carry it out.
2 Th 3:3
Rm 15:30i Pray for us, my brothers. 25
2 Th 3:1
2 Co 13:12+ Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss. ·My orders, in the Lord's name, are that 26, 27
Col 4:16 this letter is to be read to all the brothers. [i]
Rm 16:20+ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. 28

h. *See* Mt 25:32f. Perhaps it is no more than a recourse to the Lord's authority, *see* Dn 7:1,13,16.

i. 'us'; Paul includes himself among those who will be present at the *parousia*: more by aspiration, however, than by conviction, *see* 5:1a.

j. The trumpet, voice and clouds were traditional signs that accompanied manifestations of God, *see* Ex 13:22h; 19:16g and they were adopted as conventional elements of apocalyptic literature, *see* Mt 24:30seq.; 2 Th 1:8b.

k. om. 'who remain alive'.

l. Of all the details given here: that the dead will answer the summons by returning to life, that they and the living will be taken to meet the Lord, and that they will accompany him to the judgement with which the eternal kingdom begins, the essential one is the last: eternal life with Christ, *see* 5:10; 2 Th 2:1. That is to be the 'salvation', the 'glory', the 'kingdom' that Jesus shares among his chosen followers.

5 **a.** Paul asserts that he has no idea when the Last Day will come, and he merely repeats what the Lord said, Mt 24:36 and par.; Ac 1:7, about having to stay awake till it comes, Mt 24:42 and par., 50; 25:13. The Day of the Lord, 1 Co 1:8e, will come like a thief, cf. Mt 24:43 and par., so it is necessary to stay alert, 1 Th 5:6, cf. Rm 13:11; 1 Co 16:13; Col 4:2; 1 P 1:13; 5:8; Rv 3:2seq.; 16:15. It will come soon, 2 Co 6:2a. At first Paul expected he would live to see the Last Day, 4:17; cf. 1 Co 15:51; he later realised he might die before it, 2 Co 5:3; Ph 1:23, and he warns people it will not come as soon as they thought, 2 Th 2:1seq. More than anything, the prospect of how long it would take to convert the gentiles Rm 11:25, made it certain that the Last Day would not come for a very long time, *see* Mt 25:19; Lk 20:9; 2 P 3:4,8–10, cf. 1 Co 8:8e.

b. 'about times and dates': a cliché, *see* Ac 1:7i, underlying which is the idea of God as outside time and yet as controlling it and its divisions, Ac 17:26.

c. Mention of 'the Day' without further qualification, 1 Co 1:8e, helps Paul to introduce the mention of light and day and contrast 'wakefulness' with the dark, night and sleep (in a different sense from 1 Th 4:13seq.), and also make the contrast between Christians (children of light) and others (children of darkness), *see* Jn 8:12b. A very concise summary of Paul's preaching: God saves us by Christ who died for us.

d. 'Awake or asleep' means 'alive or dead', as in 4:14–17; all the faithful will share in final salvation.

e. We know little of these 'teachers'; their devotion exercised in the name of Christ earns them esteem and love.

f. This brief instruction has had an enormous influence on Christian spirituality, *see* 1:2; 2:13; Lk 18:1a; Rm 1:10; 12:12; Ep 6:18; Ph 1:3–4; 4:6; Col 1:3; 4:2; 2 Th 1:11; 1 Tm 2:8; 5:5; 2 Tm 1:3.

g. The gift of the Spirit, 4:8, is a feature of the messianic era, and discernment of its inspirations is one of its gifts, 1 Co 12:10; 14:29; 1 Jn 4:1; cf. 2 Th 2:2. *See* 1 Co 12:1a.

h. This is the only reference made by Paul to a tripartite division of body (*see* Rm 7:24*l*), soul (*see* 1 Co 15:44w) and spirit (which can be taken in two ways: as the divine presence in a human being, giving new life in union with Christ, Rm 5:5e, or more probably as the innermost depths of the human being, open and awake to the Spirit, *see* Rm 1:9e). The accent is on the totality of the effects of the sanctifying action of God, 3:13; 4:3c, the effect of his fidelity.

i. This is the earliest reference to the public reading of an apostle's letter. Paul wanted to address and teach the whole Church and not merely its appointed leaders. 2 Co 1:1 and Col 4:16 also ask that the letters should be passed on to other churches; but it was not for many years that the apostolic writings were put on the same footing as the gospel and the scriptures. 2 P 3:15–16; *see* 1 M 12:9c; 1 Tm 5:18–19, 18g.

2 THESSALONIANS

THE SECOND LETTER OF PAUL TO THE CHURCH IN THESSALONICA

1 Th 1:1

Address

Ac 15:22x; 16:1a

1 Paul, Silvanus and Timothy, to the Church in Thessalonica which is in God our 1
Father and the Lord Jesus Christ ·Grace to you and peace from God the Father 2
and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thanksgiving and encouragement. The Last Judgement

1 Th 1:2

We must always thank God for you, brothers; quite rightly, because your faith is 3
1 Th 3:6–12 growing so wonderfully and the mutual love that each one of you has for all never
·1 Th 4:9–10 stops increasing. ·Among the churches of God we take special pride in you for your 4
·1 Co 1:2a perseverance and faith under all the persecutions and hardships you have to bear.
1 Th 1:7–8; 2:19–20 It all shows that God's judgement is just, so that you may be found worthy of the 5
Mt 4:17f kingdom of God; it is for the sake of this that you are suffering now.
1 Th 2:14;3:4+ Ph 1:28 For God's justice will surely mean hardship being inflicted on those who are now 6
Rv 14:13 inflicting hardship on you, ·and for you who are now suffering hardship, relief 7
1 Co 1:7b with us, [a] when the Lord Jesus appears from heaven with the angels of his power.
Ex 3:2 He will come *amid flaming fire* [b]; *he will impose a penalty* on those who *do not* 8
Is 66:4,15 Jr 10:25 *acknowledge God* and *refuse to accept* the gospel of our Lord Jesus. [c] ·Their 9
Rm 1:5d punishment is to be lost eternally, excluded *from the presence of the Lord and from*
Is 2:10 *the glory of his strength* ·*on that day* when he comes *to be glorified among his holy* 10
Is 2:11–17 Ps 68:34 LXX; 89:7 LXX *ones* and *marvelled at* by all who believe in him; [d] and you are among those who
Is 49:3;66:5 believed our witness. [e]
Is 2:11–17 In view of this we also pray continually that our God will make you worthy of his 11
1 Th 2:12e call, and by his power fulfil all your [f] desires for goodness, and complete all that
Ph 2:13;4:13 Is 24:15;66:5 you have been doing through faith; ·so that the *name* of our Lord Jesus Christ 12
Jn 17:10,24 *may be glorified* in you and you in him, by the grace of our God and the Lord
Jesus Christ.

The coming of the Lord and the prelude to it [a]

Mt 24:31s

2 About the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, brothers, and our being gathered 1
1 Co 15:23 1 Th 4:15–17 to him: ·please do not be too easily thrown into confusion or alarmed by any 2
3:17 manifestation of the Spirit or any statement or any letter claiming to come from us,
1 Co 1:8e suggesting that the Day of the Lord has already arrived. ·Never let anyone deceive 3
you in any way.

It cannot happen until the Great Revolt [b] has taken place and there has appeared
Rv 13:1–8 Is 14:13 the wicked One, the lost One, ·the Enemy, [c] who *raises himself above every* so- 4
Ezk 28:2 called *God* or object of worship to *enthrone himself in God's* sanctuary and flaunts
the claim that he is God. ·Surely you remember my telling you about this when I 5
was with you? ·And you know, too, what is still holding him back [d] from appearing 6
before his appointed time. ·The mystery of wickedness is already at work, [e] but let 7
him who is restraining it once be removed, ·and the wicked One will appear 8

openly. [f] The Lord [g] *will destroy him with the breath of his mouth* and will annihilate him with his glorious appearance at his coming. Ps 33:6 Is 11:4 Rv 19:11–21

9 But the coming of the wicked One will be marked by Satan being at work [h] in all
10 kinds of counterfeit miracles and signs and wonders, ·and every wicked deception aimed at those who are on the way to destruction because they would not accept
11 the love of the truth and so be saved. ·And therefore God sends on them a power
12 that deludes people so that they believe what is false, ·and so that those who do not believe the truth and take their pleasure in wickedness may all be condemned. [i] Ep 2:2 Rv 13:13–17 Jn 8:44 Mt 24:12 1 K 22:22 Is 6:10 Jn 3:19;9:39

Encouragement to persevere

13 But we must always thank God for you, brothers whom the Lord loves, because God chose you from the beginning [k] to be saved by the Spirit who makes us holy
14 and by faith in the truth. ·Through our gospel he called you to this so that you
15 should claim as your own the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. ·Stand firm, then, brothers, and keep the traditions that we taught you, whether by word of mouth or
16 by letter. [l] ·May our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father who has given us his love and, through his grace, such ceaseless encouragement and such sure
17 hope, ·encourage you and strengthen you in every good word and deed. Ep 1:4 1 Th 1:4–5; 4:3c,8 1 P 1:1–2 3:6 1 Co 11:2+ 1 Th 3:8,11–13 Rm 5:2c

1 3 Finally, brothers, pray for us that the Lord's message may spread quickly, and
2 be received with honour as it was among you; ·and pray that we may be
3 preserved from bigoted and evil people, for not everyone has faith. ·You can rely
4 on the Lord, who will give you strength and guard you from the evil One, [a] ·and we, in the Lord, have every confidence in you, that you are doing and will go on
5 doing all that we tell you. ·May the Lord turn your hearts towards the love of God and the perseverance of Christ. Ps 147:15 1 Th 5:25 Ep 6:19seq. Col 4:3 ·Rm 10:16 ·1 Th 5:24 Mt 6:13 1 Co 1:9g 2 Co 7:16 1 Jn 2:14+ 1 Co 13:13e

1 **a.** In such phrases, Paul often reveals his ideal of a solidarity between the churches and himself and his anxiety that the churches should preserve it, *see* 1 Co 4:8; Ph 1:30.

b. Heaven, cf, 1 Th 4:16, the angels, cf. Mt 13:39, 41,49; 16:27 and par.; 24:31; 25:31; Lk 12:8seq. (and probably the 'holy ones' of 1 Th 3:13), the 'fire' of various theophanies, *see* Ex 13:22h; 19:16g, are all conventional elements of apocalyptic literature, *see* 1 Th 4:16f.

c. i.e. both gentiles, 1 Th 4:5, and Jews, Rm 10:16. The condemnation of those who reject the gospel is described in severe and implacable terms perhaps to be explained by a persistent persecution.

d. Paul here seems to be thinking of angels (the 'holy ones', *see* Ac 9:13g) and Christians ('those who believe').

e. Vv. 6–10 form a parenthesis, v. 11 follows on from v. 5.

f. Or 'his'.

2 **a.** In 1 Th 4:13–5:11 Paul avoided suggesting anything that would indicate when the *parousia* would take place, *see* 1 Th 5:1b. Obviously replying to further questions, Paul does not now repeat all he said about what would happen to the living and the dead: all he is concerned with is to emphasise that the coming is not imminent, and that it cannot take place till certain specific signs have preceded it.

b. The way this revolt (*apostasia*) is mentioned here shows that the Thessalonians had already been told something about it. The word is used here in its usual sense of 'secession' or 'defection' but with a specifically religious reference, Ac 5:37; 21:21; Heb 3:12. It seems that the rebels are not only those who have never belonged to Christ but also those who have given up the faith, cf. 1 Tm 4:1; 2 Tm 4:3fseq.

c. The apostasy will be due to a being who is given three names. He is the wicked One (lit. 'man of lawlessness' or 'man of sin'). He is a being destined to be lost (lit. 'son of perdition') vv. 9–10; Jn 17:12; cf. 1 Th 5:5. He is the enemy of God and is described here in terms reminiscent of the description of the Great Rebel in Dn 11:36. Later on in Christian traditions, based on Dn, he is called the Antichrist, cf. 1 Jn 2:18; 4:3; 2 Jn 7. Unlike Satan, whose tool he is, and who is already at work in 'secret' (lit. 'the mystery') v. 7, the lawless One is represented as a person who will be revealed at the 'end of time', and whose power will persecute and seduce Christians. On the final 'test', that will come to an end only with the *parousia* of Christ, cf. Mt 24:24; Rv 13:1–8.

d. Paul does not name the cause that delays the *parousia* of Christ. All he says is that there is something, v. 6, or someone, v. 7, that can 'delay' it. This person or power blocks the coming of Christ by preventing the manifestation of the Messiah's enemy who must precede the coming of the Messiah himself. The allusion would have been understood, v. 4, by the community to whom he was writing.

e. Wickedness (lit. 'lawlessness') is going on, but it is underground, secretly preparing for the great revolt. When the obstacle, whatever it is, is removed, lawlessness (or the lawless one) will work unmasked.

f. The revealing of the wicked One, vv. 6–8, is the counterpart of the revealing of Christ, 1:7; 1 Co 1:7, in the same way as his *parousia* is the counterpart of Christ's *parousia*, v. 8. The enemy of God becomes the enemy of Christ, but Christ will conquer his enemy.

g. add. 'Jesus'.

h. The wicked One is the instrument through which Satan works, *see* 1 Th 2:18, and whom he endows with superhuman power rather as Christ endows his followers with his own Spirit. Compare the Dragon and the Beast, Rv 13:2,4.

i. Truth and untruth here have a religious as well as an intellectual reference because they involve the whole of human life and activity, *see* Jn 8:32j, 44p; 1 Jn 3:19g.

j. This passage, 2:13–3:5, is closely linked to the description of the *parousia*. Having corrected the false ideas of the Thessalonians, Paul goes on to describe the positive consequences of his conception. Notice that the thought is firmly trinitarian, 2 Co 13:13e; cf. 1 Th 4:6–8.

k. var. 'as first-fruits'.

l. What Paul taught them when he was in Thessalonica and what he had written to them since he returned from there, 2:2,5; 1 Th 3:4; 4:2,6; 5:27, includes, in the message of the good news, *see* 1 Th 2:13d, the principles by which a Christian should live, cf. 1 Co 11:2,23–25; 1 Th 4:1.

3 **a.** Or perhaps 'from evil'. Christians will be tempted but not beyond their powers of resistance, 1 Co 10:13.

Against idleness and disunity

1 Th 4:1a 2:15i 1 Th 4:11–12;5:14 Ac 18:3d 1 Th 2:9+ Mt 6:11 Mt 10:10 Gn 3:19 Ga 6:9 3:6 1 Co 5:5,9–11;5:5 2 Co 2:7 Ga 6:1 1 Th 5:14 •Mt 18:15–18

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we urge you, brothers, to keep away from 6
any of the brothers who lives an undisciplined life, not in accordance with the
tradition you received from us.

You know how you should take us as your model: [b] we were not undisciplined 7
when we were with you, •nor did we ever accept food from anyone without paying 8
for it; no, we worked with unsparing energy, night and day, so as not to be a burden
on any of you. •This was not because we had no right to be, but in order to make 9
ourselves a model for you to imitate.

We urged you when we were with you not to let anyone eat if he refused to 10
work. [c] •Now we hear that there are some of you who are living lives without any 11
discipline, doing no work themselves but interfering with other people's. •In the 12
Lord Jesus Christ, we urge and call on people of this kind to go on quietly working
and earning the food that they eat.

My brothers, never slacken in doing what is right. •If anyone refuses to obey 13, 14
what I have written in this letter, take note of him and have nothing to do with him,
so that he will be ashamed of himself, •though you are not to treat him as an 15
enemy, but to correct him as a brother.

Prayer and farewell wishes

1 Th 5:23

May the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The 16
Lord be with you all.

2:2 Ga 6:11+ Rm 16:20+

This greeting is in my own hand—PAUL. It is the mark of genuineness 17
in every letter; this is my own writing. •May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be 18
with you all. [d]

b. By imitating Paul, 1 Co 4:16; Ga 4:12; Ph 3:17, Christians will be imitating Christ, 1 Th 1:6; Ph 2:5; cf. Mt 16:24; Jn 13:15; 1 P 2:21; 1 Jn 2:6, who is himself the one that Paul is imitating, 1 Co 11:1. Christians must also imitate God, Ep 5:1 (cf. Mt 5:48), and they must imitate each other, 1 Th 1:7; 2:14; Heb 6:12. Behind this community of life is the idea of a model of doctrine, Rm 6:17, that has been received by tradition, 2 Th 3:6; 1 Co 11:2; 1 Th 2:13d. The leaders who transmit the doctrine must themselves be 'models' v. 9; Ph 3:17; 1 Tm 1:16; 4:12; Tt 2:7; 1 P 5:3, whose faith and life are to be imitated, Heb 13:7.

c. This rule, which aims only at deliberate refusal to work, comes either from a saying of Jesus, or perhaps simply from a popular saying. It constitutes 'the rule of Christian work'.

d. add. 'Amen', cf. 1 Th 3:13; 5:28.

1 TIMOTHY

THE FIRST LETTER FROM PAUL TO TIMOTHY

Address

1 **1** Paul, apostle of Christ Jesus appointed by the command [a] of God our Saviour [b] Rm 1:1a,b
2 and of Christ Jesus our hope, ·to Timothy, true child of mine in the faith. Ac 16:1a
Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and from Christ Jesus our Lord.

Suppress the false teachers

3 When I was setting out for Macedonia I urged you to stay on in Ephesus to instruct
4 certain people not to spread wrong teaching ·or to give attention to myths and 4:7;6:4,20
unending genealogies; [c] these things only foster doubts instead of furthering God's 2 Tm 2:14, 16,23;4:4
5 plan [d] which is founded on faith. ·The final goal at which this instruction aims is Tt 1:14;3:9
6 love, issuing from a pure heart, a clear conscience and a sincere faith. ·Some 1 Co 4:4b
7 people have missed the way to these things and turned to empty speculation, ·trying
to be teachers of the Law; but they understand neither the words they use nor the
matters about which they make such strong assertions.

The purpose of the Law

8 We are well aware that the Law [e] is good, but only provided it is used legitimately, [f] Rm 7:7d,12seq.
9 on the understanding that laws are not framed for people who are upright. [g] On the Ga 5:23
contrary, they are for criminals and the insubordinate, for the irreligious and the Rm 1:29q
wicked, for the sacrilegious and the godless; they are for people who kill their
10 fathers or mothers and for murderers, ·for the promiscuous, homosexuals, kidnap- Rv 18:13
pers, for liars and for perjurers—and for everything else that is contrary to the
11 sound teaching [h] ·that accords with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God, the Jn 1:14n 2 Co 4:4
gospel that was entrusted to me. Tt 1:3

Paul on his own calling

12 I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength. By calling me into his
13 service he has judged me trustworthy, ·even though I used to be a blasphemer Ac 8:3+
and a persecutor and contemptuous. Mercy, however, was shown me, because
14 while I lacked faith I acted in ignorance; ·but the grace of our Lord filled me with Mt 9:13par.
15 faith and with the love that is in Christ Jesus. ·Here is a saying that you can rely Jn 16:2 Ac 3:17m 1 Co 15:9seq. 2 P 3:15

1 **a.** var. 'the promise'.

b. The title 'Saviour', rare in the letters of Paul, Ep 5:23; Ph 3:20, is in the Pastoral Letters applied to the Father, 1 Tm 2:3; 4:10; Tt 1:3; 2:10; 3:4. The work of Christ the Saviour fulfilled the design of the Father.

c. Genealogies of OT patriarchs and heroes constructed by Jewish writers in the same style as those in the *Book of Jubilees*.

d. var. 'the building-up of God's house.

e. The 'Law of Moses'.

f. lit. 'Now the Law is good if anyone uses it as a law', i.e. without asking it to be more than it claims to be.

g. The Law, here, is good not because it gives knowledge of sin, Rm 7:7d,12–14, nor because it prepares for the coming of Christ, Ga 3:24–25, but because it is necessary for the correction of sinners.

h. The epithet 'sound' in 'sound teaching' is characteristic of the Pastoral Letters, *see* 6:3; 2 Tm 1:13; 4:3; Tt 1:9,13; 2:1,8. It is the apostolic preaching with all its qualities of soundness, and taken in connection with ethical conduct (*see* Rm 12:1–2; Ph 4:8–9).

on [i] and nobody should doubt: that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.
I myself am the greatest of them; ·and if mercy has been shown to me, it is 16
2 Th 3:7b because Jesus Christ meant to make me the leading example of his inexhaustible
patience for all the other people who were later to trust in him for eternal life.
6:16 To the eternal King, the undying,[j] invisible and only God, be honour and glory 17
Rm 16:27n for ever and ever. Amen.
Col 1:15

Timothy's responsibility

Timothy, my son, these are the instructions that I am giving you, in accordance 18
4:14+ with the words once spoken over you by the prophets,[k] so that in their light you
2 Tm 4:7 may fight like a good soldier ·with faith and a good conscience for your weapons. 19
Some people have put conscience aside and wrecked their faith in consequence.
2 Tm 2:17;4:14 I mean men like Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan[l] 20
1 Co 5:5d so that they may learn not to be blasphemous.

Liturgical prayer

2 I urge[a] then, first of all that petitions, prayers, intercessions and thanksgiving 1
Rm 13:1–7,1a should be offered for everyone, ·for kings and others in authority,[b] so that we 2
Tt 3:1 may be able to live peaceful and quiet lives with all devotion and propriety. ·To do 3
1:1b this is right, and acceptable to God our Saviour: ·he wants everyone to be saved[c] 4
Ezk 18:23+ and reach full knowledge of the truth.[d] ·For there is only one God, and there is 5
•Jn 8:32 only one mediator between God and humanity, himself a human being, Christ
1 Co 8:6c Jesus, [e] ·who offered himself as a ransom for all. This was the witness[f] given at the 6
Heb 8:6b appointed time, ·of which I was appointed herald and apostle and—I am telling 7
Mt20:28par,28g the truth and no lie—a teacher of the gentiles in faith and truth.
Ac 9:15 In every place, then, I want the men to lift their hands up reverently in prayer, 8
Rm 3:26m with no anger or argument.
2 Co 5:15
Ga 1:4;2:7
Ep 5:2
2 Tim 1:11
Tt 2:14

Women in the assembly

Is 3:16seq. Similarly, women are to wear suitable clothes and to be dressed quietly and 9
1 P 3:2–4 modestly, without braided hair or gold and jewellery or expensive clothes; ·their 10
adornment is to do the good works that are proper for women who claim to be
Gn 3:16 religious. ·During instruction, a woman should be quiet and respectful. I give no 11, 12
1 Co 14:34–35 permission for a woman to teach or to have authority over a man. A woman ought
1 Co 11:3, 8–12 to be quiet, ·because Adam was formed first and Eve afterwards, and it was not 13, 14
Gn 2:18,21seq.; 3:12–13 Adam who was led astray but the woman who was led astray and fell into sin.
•Nb 31:16 Nevertheless, she will be saved by child-bearing,[g] provided she lives a sensible life 15
•1 Co 13:13e and is constant in faith and love and holiness.
•Tt 1:6–9

The elder-in-charge

1:15i 3 Here is a saying that you can rely on: to want to be a presiding elder[a] is to 1
2 Tm 2:24 desire a noble task. ·That is why the presiding elder must have an impeccable 2
3:12 character. Husband of one wife,[b] he must be temperate, discreet and courteous,
Tt 2:6b hospitable and a good teacher; ·not a heavy drinker, nor hot-tempered, but gentle 3
and peaceable, not avaricious, ·a man who manages his own household well and 4
brings his children up to obey him and be well-behaved: ·how can any man who 5
1 Co 1:2a does not understand how to manage his own household take care of the Church of
God? ·He should not be a new convert, in case pride should turn his head and he 6
incur the same condemnation as the devil. ·It is also necessary that he be held 7
1 Co 5:12i in good repute by outsiders, so that he never falls into disrepute and into the
devil's trap.

Ac 6:1–6 ### Deacons

Similarly, deacons must be respectable, not double-tongued, moderate in the 8
amount of wine they drink and with no squalid greed for money. ·They must hold 9
Rm 16:25l to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. ·They are first to be examined, 10

11 and admitted to serve as deacons only if there is nothing against them. ·Similarly,
women[c] must be respectable, not gossips, but sober and wholly reliable.
12 Deacons must be husbands of one wife and must be people who manage their 3:2,4
13 children and households well. ·Those of them who carry out their duties well as
deacons will earn a high standing for themselves and an authoritative voice in
matters concerning faith in Christ Jesus.

The Church and the mystery of the spiritual life

14, 15 I write this to you in the hope that I may be able to come to you soon; ·but in case
I should be delayed, I want you to know how people ought to behave in God's Tt 1:7
household—that is, in the Church of the living God, pillar and support of the ·1 Co 1:2a
16 truth.[d] ·Without any doubt, the mystery of our religion is very deep indeed: Ep 2:20s
Rm 16:25*l*

He[e] was made visible in the flesh, Jn 1:14*l*
justified in the Spirit, Rm 1:3–4
seen by angels, Jn 16:10
proclaimed to the gentiles, Ep 3:10
believed in throughout the world, 1 P 1:12
taken up in glory.[f] Mk 16:19
Ac 1:2,11

False teachers

1 **4** The Spirit has explicitly said that during the last times[a] some will desert the Mt 24:23–24
faith and pay attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines that come from devils, Ac 20:29–30
2 seduced by the hypocrisy of liars whose consciences are branded as though with 2 Tm 3:1
3 a red-hot iron:[b] ·they forbid marriage and prohibit foods which God created to be 2 P 2:1;3:3
accepted with thanksgiving by all who believe and who know the truth.[c] 1 Jn 2:18
4 Everything God has created is good, and no food is to be rejected, provided it is ·Col 2:16–23
5, 6 received with thanksgiving: ·the word of God and prayer make it holy. ·If you put Gn 9:3
all this to the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus and show that you 2:4
have really digested the teaching of the faith and the good doctrine which you have Gn 1:31+
7 always followed. ·Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales. Mt 15:11seq.par.
Rm 14:14,20
1Co10:25seq., 30seq.
Ac 10:15e
2 Tm 2:15
1:4d

i. This is one of the characteristic phrases of the Pastoral Letters, *see* 3:1; 4:9; 2 Tm 2:11; Tt 3:8. It is a way of attracting attention, perhaps of stressing an allusion or quotation which the readers will recognise.

j. lit. 'incorruptible' or 'imperishable'; var. 'immortal'. • This solemn doxology may be of liturgical origin. Doxologies are frequent in the Pauline letters, Rm 16:27n.

k. Here and in 4:14 Paul reminds Timothy of the part played by the 'prophets' when the college of elders laid their hands on his head, Ac 13:1–3; 11:27m.

l. The penalty of exclusion which will give the guilty a chance to amend, *see* 1 Co 5:5d.

2 **a.** 'I urge'; var. 'Urge'.

b. On Paul's political loyalty, *see* Rm 13:1–7. The end of the verse perhaps reflects the apostle's fears for the future.

c. Many theological implications have been drawn from this statement, and it has been used to interpret or correct some difficult passages in Romans, Rm 9:18,21. It is founded, v. 5, on an appeal to the oneness of God, cf. Mt 12:29; Rm 3:29–30; Ep 4:6, and to the unique position of Christ as divine and human, cf. Heb 2:17; 8:6b. Paul received from the Saviour, v. 7, the mission to preach a salvation offered to all, Ac 9:15h; Rm 1:1b.

d. Salvation is knowledge of the truth, 4:3; 2 Tm 2:25; 3:7; Tt 1:1. But this knowledge entails total commitment, *see* Ho 2:22v; Jn 8:32j; 2 Th 2:12.

e. Jesus is mediator precisely as a human being, and it is this which enables him to be Saviour of all, v. 4, by his death to ransom them, v. 6. Cf. Heb 2:14–17,15i.

f. Cf. 6:13. By accepting to die for humanity Jesus made clear to the world God's plan to save all humanity. Witness to the Father by his whole life, he was supremely so by his death (later the Gk word for 'witness' comes to be used also for 'martyr'). *See* Jn 3:11; Rv 1:5; 3:14.

g. Perhaps it was a point made against false teachers who forbade marriage, 4:3, that the primary vocation of women was giving life and raising children.

3 **a.** 'Bishop' and 'presbyter' are not mentioned here. *See* Tt 1:5seq., 5c.

b. This list of qualities, and the one which follows in vv. 8–12, have nothing specific about them. They draw on the classic lists of qualities required of those who hold office in the Church.

c. This instruction is probably intended for deaconesses, *see* Rm 16:1, rather than for the wives of deacons.

d. The Church of the living God, Dt 5:26d; 2 Co 6:16, is his house, that is, both his dwelling and his family, Nb 12:7; Heb 3:6; 10:21; 1 P 4:17, where the saving gospel is firmly preserved, v. 16.

e. He, i.e. Christ: many authorities (e.g. Vulg.) read 'It', i.e. the 'mystery', *see* Col 2:3a. There follows a fragment from a hymn or a liturgical profession of faith, composed of six brief statements grouped in pairs. Cf. 6:15–16; 2 Tm 2:11–13. Also *see* Ep 1:3–14; Ph 2:6–11; Col 1:15–20.

f. The holiness and divinity of Christ were proved by the fact that he rose in glory, *see* Rm 1:4c. 'Taken up in glory', i.e. at the ascension.

4 **a.** On the crisis that will characterise the 'last times' *see* 2 Th 2:3–12; 2 Tm 3:1; 4:3–4; 2 P 3:3; Jude 18. Also *see* Mt 24:6seq. and par.; Ac 20:29–30. As the 'last times' have already begun, Rm 3:26m, we are already living in this final epoch of crisis, cf. 1 Co 7:26; Ep 5:6; 6:13; Jm 5:3; 1 Jn 2:18; 4:1,3; 2 Jn 7.

b. i.e. branded like runaway slaves.

c. The rejection of marriage was to be one of the hallmarks of Gnosticism; dietary regulations were more specifically Jewish, *see* Col 2:16–23.

Train yourself for religion.[d] •Physical exercise is useful enough, but the usefulness 8
of religion is unlimited, since it holds out promise both for life here and now and
1:15i for the life to come; •that is a saying that you can rely on and nobody should doubt 9
it. •I mean that the point of all our toiling and battling is that we have put our trust 10
1:1b in the living God and he is the Saviour of the whole human race but particularly of
all believers. •This is what you are to instruct and teach. 11

2 Th 3:7b Tt 2:7–8 Let no one disregard you because you are young, but be an example to all the 12
believers in the way you speak and behave, and in your love, your faith and your
purity. •Until I arrive, devote yourself to reading to the people, encouraging and 13
6:11 Ga 5:22+ 1:18k teaching. •You have in you a spiritual gift which was given to you when the 14
prophets spoke and the body of elders laid their hands on you;[e] do not neglect it.
Let this be your care and your occupation, and everyone will be able to see your 15
progress. •Be conscientious about what you do and what you teach; persevere in 16
this, and in this way you will save both yourself and those who listen to you.

Pastoral practice

Lv 19:32 5 Never speak sharply to a man older than yourself, but appeal to him as you 1
would to your own father; treat younger men as brothers, •older women as 2
mothers and young women as sisters with all propriety.

Widows

Be considerate to widows—if they really are widowed.[a] •If a widow has children or 3, 4
grandchildren, they are to learn first of all to do their duty to their own families and
repay their debt to their parents, because this is what pleases God. •But a woman 5
Jdt 8:4–5 Lk 2:37 who is really widowed and left on her own has set her hope on God and perseveres
night and day in petitions and prayer. •The one who thinks only of pleasure is 6
Rv 3:1 already dead while she is still alive: •instruct them in this, too, so that their lives 7
may be blameless. •Anyone who does not look after his own relations, especially if 8
they are living with him, has rejected the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

Enrolment as a widow is permissible only for a woman at least sixty years old 9
who has had only one husband. •She must be a woman known for her good works— 10
Jn 13:14 whether she has brought up her children, been hospitable to strangers and washed
Ac 9:13g the feet of God's holy people,[b] helped people in hardship or been active in all kinds
of good work. •Do not accept young widows because if their natural desires distract 11
them from Christ, they want to marry again, •and then people condemn them for 12
being unfaithful to their original promise.[c] •Besides, they learn how to be idle and 13
go round from house to house; and then, not merely idle, they learn to be gossips
and meddlers in other people's affairs and to say what should remain unsaid. •I 14
think it is best for young widows to marry again[d] and have children and a household
Tt 2:8 to look after, and not give the enemy any chance[e] to raise a scandal about them;
there are already some who have turned aside to follow Satan. •If a woman believer 15, 16
has widowed relatives, she should support them and not make the Church bear the
expense but enable it to support those who are really widowed.

Tt 1:5c ### The elders

1 Th 5:12e Elders who do their work well while they are in charge earn double reward,[f] 17
Dt 25:4 1 Co 9:9 especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. •As scripture says: *You* 18
Lk 10:7 *must not muzzle an ox when it is treading out the corn*; and again: *The worker deserves his wages.*[g] •Never accept any accusation brought against an elder unless 19
Dt 19:15 Mt 18:16 it is supported *by two or three witnesses*. •If anyone is at fault, reprimand him 20
2 Co 13:1 publicly, as a warning to the rest. •Before God, and before Jesus Christ and the 21
angels he has chosen, I charge you to keep these rules impartially and never to be
influenced by favouritism. •Do not be too quick to lay hands on anyone,[h] and 22
never make yourself an accomplice in anybody else's sin; keep yourself pure.

You should give up drinking only water and have a little wine for the sake of 23
your digestion and the frequent bouts of illness that you have.

24 The faults of some people are obvious long before they come to the reckoning,
25 while others have faults that are not discovered until later. ·Similarly, the good Mt 5:16
that people do can be obvious; but even when it is not, it cannot remain hidden. Mt 10:26par.

Slaves

Rm 6:15g
1 Co 7:21–22
Ep 6:5–8
Col 3:22–25
Tt 2:9–10
Phm 16f

1 6 All those under the yoke of slavery must have unqualified respect for their
masters, so that the name of God and our teaching are not brought into
2 disrepute. ·Those whose masters are believers are not to respect them less because Rm 2:24+
they are brothers; on the contrary, they should serve them all the better, since
those who have the benefit of their services are believers and dear to God. [a]

The true teacher and the false teacher

3 This is what you are to teach and urge. ·Anyone who teaches anything different
and does not keep to the sound teaching which is that of our Lord Jesus Christ, the 1:10h
4 doctrine which is in accordance with true religion, ·is proud and has no under-
standing, but rather a weakness for questioning [b] everything and arguing about 1:4d
words. All that can come of this is jealousy, contention, abuse and evil mistrust; Rm 1:29q
5 and unending disputes by people who are depraved in mind and deprived of
6 truth, and imagine that religion is a way of making a profit. ·Religion, of course,
does bring large profits, but only to those who are content with what they have.
7, 8 We brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it; ·but as Jb 1:21
9 long as we have food and clothing, we shall be content with that. ·People who long Ps 49:17
to be rich are a prey to trial; they get trapped into all sorts of foolish and harmful Qo 5:14
10 ambitions which plunge people into ruin and destruction. ·'The love of money is Mt 6:24
the root of all evils' [c] and there are some who, pursuing it, have wandered away
from the faith and so given their souls any number of fatal wounds.

Timothy's vocation recalled

2 Tm 4:1

11 But, as someone dedicated to God, avoid all that. You must aim to be upright and 2 Tm 2:22
12 religious, filled with faith and love, perseverance and gentleness. ·Fight the good ·Ga 5:22+
Tt 2:2
fight of faith and win the eternal life to which you were called and for which you 1 Co 13:13e
13 made your noble profession of faith [d] before many witnesses. ·Now, before God, ·2 Tm 4:7
the source of all life, and before Jesus Christ, who witnessed to his noble profession 2:6f
14 of faith before Pontius Pilate, [e] I charge you ·to do all that you have been told, Jn 18:36–37
with no faults or failures, until the appearing [f] of our Lord Jesus Christ,

d. The word translated 'religion' occurs ten times in the Pastoral Epistles, 2:2; 3:16; 4:7,8; 6:3,5,6,11; 2 Tm 3:12; Tt 2:12. It sums up the Christian attitude; connected with the knowledge of faith which is the core of common life in Christ Jesus, it has the sense also of devotion and seriousness for the things of God.

e. Some translate 'the imposition of hands for the office of presbyter'. The 'imposition of hands' can be the rite for transmitting grace or a charism, Heb 6:2, or it can be the gesture used when blessing, Mt 19:15, or curing, Mt 9:18 and par.; Mk 6:5; 7:32; 8:23–25; 16:18; Lk 4:40; 13:13; Ac 9:12,17; 28:8, or imparting the Holy Spirit to the newly baptised, Ac 1:5f. It can also be the rite for consecrating a person for a particular public function, Ac 6:6; 13:3, as in this passage and 1 Tm 5:22h; 2 Tm 1:6. Since the day on which he received the imposition of hands, Timothy has had a permanent charism ('grace-gift') that consecrates him to his ministry. For the part played by the prophets, *see* 1:18.

5 **a.** Three categories of widow are mentioned here: those who do not need assistance from the Church since they have relations to look after them, v. 4; those who are 'true widows' because they have no one to look after them, and whom the Church is obliged to help, vv. 3–5,16; and those who (whether helped by the Church or not) are called by the Church to fulfil certain official functions. Widows in this third category have to satisfy quite severe regulations, vv. 9–15.

b. The normal courtesy then shown to guests.

c. i.e. their vow or promise to consecrate themselves to God.

d. The caution expressed here stands in marked contrast to the high ideals put before young widows in 1 Co 7:8.

e. Either a malicious person, hostile to Christians, or, less probably, Satan.

f. Or 'double honour'.

g. Or 'his keep', *see* Mt 10:10. To the quotation from Dt 25:4 is added a saying of Jesus which is known to us only through Lk 10:7. But this does not imply that Luke's Gospel was already completed and recognised as scripture. *See* 2 Tm 3:15d.

h. i.e. to confer a function in the Church, *see* 4:14e. Some commentators have suggested that this refers to the giving of absolution to a sinner.

6 **a.** Or 'and dear brothers'.

b. lit. 'seeking'. With the search for God which in the OT summed up the whole attitude of fidelity to God, Dt 4:29; Ps 27:8b; Jr 29:13–14 and which retains its value in the NT, Mt 6:33; 7:7–8; Ac 17:27 the apostle here contrasts, *see* 1:4; 2 Tm 2:16,23; Tt 3:9, subtle and pointless delvings, unending because indiscreet, an illness fatal to sound teaching, 1 Tm 1:10h; 6:3, because of an inquisitiveness which claims to go further than the mystery of faith, cf. 2 Jn 9.

c. A contemporary proverb.

d. We do not know to what incident in Timothy's life this refers: possibly baptism or consecration for the ministry.

e. The proclamation of his royal messiahship and his office as revealer of Truth, Jn 18:36–37. The mention of Pontius Pilate lends strength to the official tone of this

who at the due time will be revealed 15
by God, the blessed and only Ruler of all,
Dt 10:17 the King of kings and the Lord of lords,
2 M 13:4
Ps 136:3 who alone is immortal, 16
Rv 17:14
whose home is in inaccessible light,
Ex 33:20i whom no human being has seen or is able to see:
Jn 1:17–18+ to him be honour and everlasting power. Amen.[g]

Rich Christians

Instruct those who are rich in this world's goods that they should not be proud and 17
Lk 12:17–21 should set their hopes not on money, which is untrustworthy, but on God who
Jn 1:10 gives us richly all that we need for our happiness. ·They are to do good and be rich 18
in good works, generous in giving and always ready to share—·this is the way they 19
Mt 6:20 can amass a good capital sum for the future if they want to possess the only life that
Ph 4:17 is real.

Final warning and conclusion

My dear Timothy, take great care of all that has been entrusted to you.[h] Turn away 20
1:4c from godless philosophical discussions and the contradictions of the 'knowledge'
2 Tm 1:12,14; which is not knowledge at all;[i] ·by adopting this, some have missed the goal of 21
2:2;3:14
Tt 2:1 faith. Grace be with you.[j]

witness, which is exemplary for the Christian's profession of faith at baptism or in the face of persecution.

f. The word 'epiphany' ('appearing', used in 2 Th 2:8 with reference to the Great Rebel) is adopted in the Pastoral Letters in preference to *parousia* ('coming', 1 Co 15:23n), or 'apocalypse' ('revealing', 1 Co 1:7c), as the technical term, 2 Tm 4:1,8; Tt 2:13; Heb 9:28. It is used both for the manifestation of Christ in his triumph at the end of the world, and for his first appearance in the world for the saving action of his life, death and resurrection (2 Tm 1:10; Tt 2:11; 3:4).

g. This impressive doxology may be inspired by a liturgical hymn, cf. 1:17. It comprises seven scriptural phrases transposed into Hellenistic language, the themes being that God is the only object of worship and that no one may claim to fathom the mystery of God.

h. The deposit entrusted is an important theme of the Pastoral Letters, 2 Tm 1:12,14. Its content is that of faith, 4:6; 2 Tm 1:13; Tt 1:9, or tradition, 2 Th 2:15i; 3:6. But the notion is legal in origin and stresses the recipient's duty to keep and hand on intact the deposit which has been entrusted to him. Compare 'Hold on firmly to what you have,' Rv 2:25; 3:11.

i. This pseudo-science is that which will later be refuted by Irenaeus.

j. 'you', plural; var. 'you', singular. add. 'Amen'.

2 TIMOTHY

THE SECOND LETTER FROM PAUL TO TIMOTHY

Greeting and thanksgiving

1 From Paul, apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God in accordance with
2 his promise of life in Christ Jesus, ·to Timothy, dear son of mine. Grace, mercy
and peace from God the Father and from Christ Jesus our Lord.

Rm 1:1a,b
Ac 16:1a

3 Night and day I thank God whom I serve with a pure conscience as my
4 ancestors did. I remember you in my prayers constantly night and day; ·I remember
5 your tears [a] and long to see you again to complete my joy. ·I also remember your
sincere faith, a faith which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois, and your mother
Eunice, and I am sure dwells also in you. [b]

Rm 1:9f
Ph 3:5
4:9,21
3:14–15
Ac 16:1

The gifts that Timothy has received

6 That is why I am reminding you now to fan into a flame the gift [c] of God that you
7 possess through the laying on of my hands. ·God did not give us a spirit of timidity,
8 but the Spirit of power and love and self-control. ·So you are never to be ashamed
of witnessing to our Lord, or ashamed of me for being his prisoner; but share in my
9 hardships for the sake of the gospel, relying on the power of God ·who has saved
us and called us to be holy [d]—not because of anything we ourselves had done but
for his own purpose and by his own grace. This grace had already been granted to
10 us, in Christ Jesus, before the beginning of time, ·but it has been revealed only by
the appearing [e] of our Saviour Christ Jesus. He has abolished death, and he has
11 brought to light immortality and life through the gospel, ·in whose service I have
been made herald, apostle and teacher. [f]

1 Tm 4:14e
·Ac 1:8j
Rm 8:15
1 Jn 4:18
Lk 9:26
Rm 1:16; 5:3seq.
Ep 3:13
Tt 3:5
Rm 8:28;16:25*l*
Tt 2:11;3:4
Rm 6:9;8:2
Heb 2:14–15
1 Tm 2:7

12 That is why I am experiencing my present sufferings; [g] but I am not ashamed,
because I know in whom I have put my trust, and I have no doubt at all that he is
able to safeguard until that Day what I have entrusted to him. [h]

1 Co 1:8e
1 Tm 1:10h; 6:20h

13 Keep as your pattern the sound teaching you have heard from me, in the faith
14 and love that are in Christ Jesus. ·With the help of the Holy Spirit who dwells in us,
look after that precious thing given in trust.

Rm 5:5e

15 As you know, Phygelus and Hermogenes and all the others in Asia have deserted
16 me. ·I hope the Lord will be kind to all the family of Onesiphorus, because he has
17 often been a comfort to me and has never been ashamed of my chains. ·On the
contrary, as soon as he reached Rome, he searched hard for me and found me.

4:19
1:8+

1 **a.** Possibly when they parted at Ephesus, 1 Tm 1:3.

b. This verse is a happy complement to Ac 16;1. We have not much evidence in the NT of the benefits of education in the faith in the bosom of a Christian family. Cf. 3: 14–15.

c. The charism had already been received, 1 Tm 4:14e, and Timothy must fan it into a flame with the help of the Spirit.

d. This may be taken in two ways here: the calling of Christians to salvation, cf. Rm 1:6–7; 8:28; 1 Co 1:2,24; Ep 1:18; 4:4; Ph 3:14; Col 3:15, or (by metonymy) the state ('vocation') to which Christians have been called.

e. The 'appearing' ('epiphany'), *see* 1 Tm 6:14f, here refers to the incarnation and redemption.

f. add. 'to the non-Jews', cf. 1 Tm 2:7.

g. A second captivity at Rome.

h. The context suggests that this indicates Christian doctrine kept intact, 1 Tm 6:20h, rather than Paul's good deeds, 4:7–8; 1 Tm 6:19.

May the Lord grant him to find the Lord's mercy on that Day.[i] You know better than anyone else how much he helped me at Ephesus. 18

How Timothy should face hardships

2 As for you, my dear son, take strength from the grace which is in Christ Jesus. 1
Pass on to reliable people what you have heard from me through many 2
1 Tm 4:14;6:12 witnesses so that they in turn will be able to teach others.[a]
Bear with your share of difficulties, like a good soldier of Christ Jesus.[b] 3, 4
•No one on active service involves himself in the affairs of civilian life, because he must win the approval of the man who enlisted him; 5
•or again someone who enters an 1 Co 9:25+ athletic contest wins only by competing in the sports—a prize can be won only by 1 Co 3:6–9; 9:7,10 competing according to the rules; 6
•and again, it is the farmer who works hard that has the first claim on any crop that is harvested. 7
•Think over what I have said, and the Lord will give you full understanding.
Ac 13:22–23 Remember the gospel that I carry, 'Jesus Christ risen from the dead, sprung 8
Rm 1:3–4 Lk 23:32 from the race of David'; 9
•it is on account of this that I have to put up with suffering, Ep 3:1+ Ph 1:13–17 even to being chained like a criminal. But God's message cannot be chained up.
Col 1:24*l* So I persevere for the sake of those who are chosen, so that they, too, may obtain 10
1 Th 2:12 the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.
1 Tm 1:15i Here is a saying that you can rely on:[c] 11

Rm 6:5f If we have died with him, then we shall live with him.
Rm 8:17 If we persevere, then we shall reign with him. 12
Mt 10:33 If we disown him, then he will disown us.
Nb 23:19+ Rm 3:3+ 1 Co 1:9f If we are faithless, he is faithful still, 13
for he cannot disown his own self.

The struggle against the immediate danger from false teachers

Remind them of this; and tell them in the name of God[d] that there must be no 14
1 Tm 1:4c wrangling about words: all that this ever achieves is the destruction of those who
1 Tm 4:6–7 are listening. 15
•Make every effort to present yourself before God as a proven worker who has no need to be ashamed, but who keeps the message of truth on a straight
1 Tm 1:4c path. 16
•Have nothing to do with godless philosophical discussions—they only lead further and further away from true religion. 17
•Talk of this kind spreads corruption
1 Tm 1:20 like gangrene, as in the case of Hymenaeus and Philetus, 18
•the men who have gone astray from the truth, claiming that the resurrection has already taken place.[e] They are upsetting some people's faith.
Ep 2:20s However, God's solid foundation-stone stands firm,[f] and this is the seal on it: 19
Nb 16:5,26 Is 26:13 '*The Lord knows those who are his own*' and 'All who *call on the name of the Lord* must avoid evil.'[g]
Not all the dishes in a large house are made of gold and silver; some are made of 20
Is 29:16g Rm 9:21 wood or earthenware: the former are held in honour, the latter held cheap. 21
•If someone holds himself aloof from these faults I speak of, he will be a vessel held in honour, dedicated and fit for the Master, ready for any good work.
1 Tm 6:11 Ga 5:22+ Turn away from the passions of youth, concentrate on uprightness, faith, love 22
and peace, in union with all those who call on the Lord with a pure heart. 23
•Avoid 1 Tm 1:4c these foolish and undisciplined speculations, understanding that they only give rise
Is 42:3 Mt 12:19seq. 1 Tm 3:2seq. to quarrels; 24
•and a servant of the Lord must not engage in quarrels, but must be kind to everyone, a good teacher, and patient. 25
•He must be gentle when he corrects Ga 6:1 people who oppose him, in the hope that God may give them a change of mind so that they recognise the truth 26
•and come to their senses, escaping the trap of the 1 Jn 2:1,3g devil who made them his captives and subjected them to his will.

The dangers of the last days

1 Tm 4:1a 3 You may be quite sure that in the last days there will be some difficult times. 1
Rm 1:29q People will be self-centred and avaricious, boastful, arrogant and rude; 2

3 disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, irreligious; ·heartless and intractable;
they will be slanderers, profligates, savages and enemies of everything that
4 is good; ·they will be treacherous and reckless and demented by pride, preferring
5 their own pleasure to God. ·They will keep up the outward appearance of religion [a] Mt 7:15;24: 4seq., 24 Col 2:23
but will have rejected the inner power of it. Keep away from people like that.
6 Of the same kind, too, are those men who insinuate themselves into families in
order to get influence over silly women who are obsessed with their sins and follow Ac 17:21
7 one craze after another, ·always seeking learning, but unable ever to come to Jn 8:32 1 Tm 2:4
8 knowledge of the truth. ·Just as Jannes and Jambres defied Moses, [b] so these men
9 defy the truth, their minds corrupt and their faith spurious. ·But they will not be
able to go on much longer: their folly, like that of the other two, must become
obvious to everybody.
10 You, though, have followed my teaching, my way of life, my aims, my faith, my 1 Co 13:13e
11 patience and my love, my perseverance ·and the persecutions and sufferings that
came to me in places like Antioch, Iconium and Lystra—all the persecutions I Ac 13:44–14:22
12 have endured; and the Lord has rescued me from every one of them. ·But anybody 2 Co 11:23seq.
13 who tries to live in devotion to Christ is certain to be persecuted; ·while these Jn 16:33 Ac 14:22+ 1 Th 3:4–5
wicked impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving others, and themselves
deceived.
14 You must keep to what you have been taught and know to be true; remember 2:2
15 who your teachers were, [c] ·and how, ever since you were a child, you have known 1:5
the holy scriptures [d]—from these you can learn the wisdom that leads to salvation 2 Co 3:14–18
16 through faith in Christ Jesus. ·All scripture is inspired by God and useful [e] for Rm 15:4 1 Co 10:6d
17 refuting error, for guiding people's lives and teaching them to be upright. ·This is 2 P 1:20–21
how someone who is dedicated to God becomes fully equipped and ready for any
good work.

A solemn charge [a]

1 Tm 1:10h; 4:1a

1 4 Before God and before Christ Jesus who is to be judge of the living and the Ac 10:42q 1 Tm 6:14f
dead, [b] I charge you, in the name of his appearing and of his kingdom: 1 P 4:5
2 proclaim the message and, welcome or unwelcome, insist on it. Refute falsehood,
correct error, give encouragement—but do all with patience and with care to
3 instruct. ·The time is sure to come when people will not accept sound teaching, but 1 Tm 1:10h; 4:1a
their ears will be itching for anything new and they will collect themselves a whole
4 series of teachers according to their own tastes; ·and then they will shut their ears

i. 'Lord' can be taken in either case as a reference either to the Father or to the Son.

2 a. The process of transmission of this 'precious trust', or tradition, is here seen at work, in four successive stages.

b. Vv. 4–6 are three short parables: the soldier, the athlete, the farm labourer.

c. Vv. 11–13 are part of a Christian hymn, *see* 1 Tm 3:16e.

d. var. 'the Lord'.

e. The Greek mind found the resurrection particularly hard to accept, Ac 17:32; 1 Co 15:12. Hymenaeus and Philetus may well have given it a purely spiritual interpretation as the mystical resurrection that occurs in baptism, Rm 6:4; Ep 2:6e, or as a mystical ascent to God. Paul had put the Corinthians on their guard against too material a conception, 1 Co 15:35–53 and notes.

f. Details about a building were often inscribed on its foundation-stone: as the building here is the Church, the foundation-stone could be either Christ himself, 1 Co 3:11, or the apostles, Ep 2:20; cf. Rv 21:14, or faith in the unbreakable promise of God, cf. 2:13.

g. The scriptural texts complement each other: God looks after those he loves, Nb 16:5, and these must live in uprightness, Nb 16:26; Ps 6:8; Is 26:13; 52:11.

3 a. This is reminiscent of the 'false prophets' foretold in Mt 7:15; 24:4–5,24. A fresh outbreak of irreligion is one of the characteristics of the 'last times', *see* 1 Tm 4:1a.

b. The magicians of Egypt in Ex 7:11–13,22 are not named. In Jewish writings Jannes and Jambres (or 'Mambres'), represented as the leaders of the Egyptian magicians, are said to be the disciples (or even sons) of Balaam, Nb 22:2b.

c. These teachers were Lois, Eunice, 1:5, and, above all, Paul himself.

d. This was the name given by hellenistic Jews to the books of the Bible, *see* 1 M 12:9c. The NT often quotes 'the scriptures' or 'scripture' or individual books. Rm 1:2 has 'the holy scriptures'; 2 Co 3:14f has 'the old covenant or Testament' (but the sense is not limited to the books of scripture, *see* 1 Th 5:27i; 2 P 3:16).

e. Or (less probably) 'all scripture that is inspired by God can . . .' (Vulg.). This affirmation about the inspiration of the OT, cf. 2 P 1:21, probably includes some Christian writings also. It is by assiduously studying scripture that the Christian nourishes faith and apostolic zeal, vv. 15–17.

4 a. This appeal to a cherished disciple, at the end of the last of the epistles, can be compared, in a different tonality, to the discourse at Miletus, Ac 20:18–36. Dominated by the thought of approaching death and the coming of the Lord, Paul charges Timothy to carry on untiringly the mission he bequeaths to him.

b. Christ will judge all, both those who are alive at his coming and those who will rise again, *see* Mt 25:31e; Jn 5:26–29; 1 Th 4:15–17. This claim surely formed part of the earliest *kerygma*, Ac 10:42; 1 P 4:5, and has been included in the Creed.

1 Tm 1:4c to the truth and will turn to myths. •But you must keep steady all the time; put up with suffering; do the work of preaching the gospel; fulfil the service asked of you. [c] 5

Paul in the evening of his life

Ph 2:17r As for me, my life is already being poured away as a libation, [d] and the time has 6
1 Co 9:24 come for me to depart. •I have fought the good fight to the end; I have run the race 7
1 Tm 1:18 to the finish; I have kept the faith; •all there is to come for me now is the crown of 8
Ac 20:24 uprightness which the Lord, the upright judge, will give to me on that Day; and not
Ga 5:7d only to me but to all those who have longed for his appearing. [e]
2:4–5
1 Co 9:25+
1 Tm 6:14f

Final advice

Col 4:14 Make every effort to come and see me as soon as you can. •As it is, Demas has 9, 10
Phm 24 deserted me for love of this life and gone to Thessalonica, Crescens has gone to
Col 4:10 Galatia [f] and Titus to Dalmatia; •only Luke [g] is with me. Bring Mark [h] with you; I 11
Tt 3:12+ find him a useful helper in my work. •I have sent Tychicus to Ephesus. •When you 12, 13
come, bring the cloak I left with Carpus in Troas, and the scrolls, especially the
1 Tm 1:20 parchment ones. •Alexander the coppersmith has done me a lot of harm; *the Lord* 14
Ps 5:10c;28:4; 62:12e *will repay him as his deeds deserve.* •Be on your guard against him yourself, because 15
Pr 24:12 he has been bitterly contesting everything that we say.

The first time I had to present my defence, [i] no one came into court to support 16
me. Every one of them deserted me—may they not be held accountable for it.
Mt 10:19seq. Ph 1:19seq. Col 4:3seq. But the Lord stood by me and gave me power, so that through me the message 17
might be fully proclaimed for all the gentiles to hear; and so I was *saved from the*
Ps 22:21 Dn 6:17 *lion's mouth.* •The Lord will rescue me from all evil attempts on me, and bring me 18
Rm 16:27n safely to [j] his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. [k] Amen.

Farewells and final good wishes

Ac 18:2b;19; 22; 20:4 Greetings to Prisca and Aquila, and the family of Onesiphorus. •Erastus stayed 19, 20
behind at Corinth, and I left Trophimus ill at Miletus. •Make every effort to come 21
before the winter.

Greetings to you from Eubulus, Pudens, Linus, Claudia and all the brothers.

The Lord [l] be with your spirit. Grace be with you. 22

c. Vulg. adds 'Be sober'.

d. Libations of wine, water or oil were poured over the victims not only in gentile sacrifices but also in Jewish ones, *see* Ex 29:40; Nb 28:7.

e. Paul is sure that he has fulfilled his mission. With him will be crowned all those who have accepted the gospel, Ph 4:1; 2 Th 1:7,10.

f. var. 'Gaul'. • At that time the name 'Galatia' was used for the Roman province in Asia, which had been settled by Gallic ex-servicemen.

g. Presumably Luke the evangelist, *see* Col 4:14.

h. Presumably Mark the evangelist, Ac 12:12d. His old quarrel with Paul, Ac 15:37–39, seems to have been forgotten.

i. At some recent hearing of his case, which gave the Apostle the chance to proclaim the faith entirely on his own, v. 17; Ac 9:15h.

j. Or 'and keep me safe for'.

k. Note that this doxology is addressed to Christ the Saviour and Redeemer, *see* Rm 16:25*l*; Ga 1:5.

l. Some witnesses add 'Jesus Christ', and (at the end) 'Amen'

TITUS

THE LETTER FROM PAUL TO TITUS

Address [a]

1 From Paul, servant of God, an apostle of Jesus Christ to bring those whom God has chosen to faith and to the knowledge of the truth that leads to true
2 religion, ·and to give them the hope of the eternal life that was promised so long
3 ago by God. He does not lie ·and so, in due time, he made known his message by a proclamation which was entrusted to me by the command of God our Saviour.
4 To Titus, true child of mine in the faith that we share. Grace and peace from God the Father and from Christ Jesus our Saviour.

Rm 1:1a,b
Nb 23:19+
2 Tm 2:13
Ac 1:7i
Rm 3:26
2 Co 2:13d
1 Tm 1:1b,11

The appointment of elders

5 The reason I left you behind in Crete was for you to organise everything that still had to be done [b] and appoint elders [c] in every town, in the way that I told you,
6 that is, each of them must be a man of irreproachable character, husband of one wife, and his children must be believers and not liable to be charged with disorderly
7 conduct or insubordination. ·The presiding elder has to be irreproachable since he is God's representative: never arrogant or hot-tempered, nor a heavy drinker or
8 violent, nor avaricious; ·but hospitable and a lover of goodness; sensible, upright,
9 devout and self-controlled; ·and he must have a firm grasp of the unchanging message of the tradition, so that he can be counted on both for giving encouragement in sound doctrine and for refuting those who argue against it.

1 Tm 3:2–7
1 Tm 3:15
Heb 3:2seq.
2 Tm 2:24
1 P 5:2
1 Tm 1:10h

Opposing the false teachers

10 And in fact there are many people who are insubordinate, who talk nonsense and
11 try to make others believe it, particularly among those of the circumcision. ·They must be silenced: people of this kind upset whole families, by teaching things that

1 Tm 4:1
2 Tm 3:13
2 Tm 3:6

1 **a.** This address, vv. 1–3, contains a whole theology of salvation and of the apostolate.

b. As usual, Paul had begun the work of evangelisation and then left it to be completed by others, *see* Rm 15:23g; 1 Co 3:6,10; Col 1:7b.

c. In the earliest days each Christian community was governed by a body of elders ('presbyters', whence English word 'priests') or prominent people. This was the case both in Jerusalem (Ac 11:30; 15:2seq.; 21:18) and in the Dispersion (Ac 14:23; 20:17) and it merely continued both the ancient practice of the OT, Ex 18:13seq.; Nb 11:16; Jos 8:10; 1 S 16:4; Is 9:14; Ezk 8:1,11–12, and the more recent practice of the Jews, Ezr 5:5; 10:14; Jdt 6:16; Lk 7:3; 22:66; Ac 4:5, *see* Josephus, Philo, etc. These *episkopoi* (presiding elders) who are not yet 'bishops' and who are mentioned in connection with the *diakonoi* (servants, attendants, assistants, deputies, ministers: 'deacons': Ph 1:1; 1 Tm 3:1–13; the Apostolic Fathers) seem in some passages, Tt 1:5,7; Ac 20:17,28, to be identical with the elders. The Greek word *episkopos*, taken over from the gentile world probably as an equivalent for a semitic title (cf. the *mebaqqer* of the Essenes, and *see* Nb 4:16; 31:14; Jg 9:28; 2 K 11:15,18; 12:11) indicated the duty of an officer, while *presbyteros* indicated the status or dignity of the same officer. The *episkopoi* in the college of presbyters may have taken turns to carry out their official duties, cf. 1 Tm 5:17. It is quite certain that Christian *presbyteroi* or *episkopoi* were not merely concerned with the practical side of organising things: they had to teach. 1:9; 1 Tm 3:2; 5:17, and govern, Tt 1:7; 1 Tm 3:5. They were appointed by the apostles, Ac 14:23, or their representatives, Tt 1:5, by the imposition of hands, 1 Tm 5:22, *see* 1 Tm 4:14e; 2 Tm 1:6; their powers derived from God, Ac 20:28, and were charismatic, 1 Co 12:28. The word *episkopos* eventually replaced analogous titles like *proistamenos* (official), Rm 12:8; 1 Th 5:12, *poimen* (pastor, shepherd), Ep 4:11, *hegoumenos* (guide, leader), Heb 13:7,17,24. These heads of the local community who developed into our priests (*presbyteroi*) and bishops (*episkopoi*) were helped by *diakonoi* (deacons). The transformation of a local assembly ruled by a body of bishops or presbyters, into an assembly ruled by a single bishop set over a number of priests (a stage reached in some churches by the time of Ignatius of Antioch, who died *c.* AD 107) may have involved the intermediate stage when a single *episkopos* in the community was given the same powers over that local community which had previously been exercised over several communities by the apostles or their representatives like Timothy or Titus.

1 Tm 6:10 they ought not to, and doing it for the sake of sordid gain. 12 •It was one of themselves, one of their own prophets, who said,[d] 'Cretans were never anything but liars, dangerous animals, all greed and laziness'; 13 •and that is a true statement. So be severe in correcting them, and make them sound in the faith 14 •so that they stop 1 Tm 1:4c, 10 taking notice of Jewish myths and the orders of people who turn away from the truth.

Mt 15:11,18–20par.; 23:25–26par. Rm 14:14–20 To those who are pure themselves, everything is pure;[e] but to those who have 15 been corrupted and lack faith, nothing can be pure—the corruption is both in their minds and in their consciences. 16 •They claim to know God but by their works they deny him; they are outrageously rebellious and quite untrustworthy for any good work.

Some specific moral instruction

1 Tm 1:10h; 5:1–2 1 Co 13:13e **2** It is for you, then, to preach the behaviour which goes with healthy doctrine. 1 Older men should be reserved, dignified, moderate, sound in faith and love 2 and perseverance. 3 •Similarly, older women should behave as befits religious people, with no scandal-mongering and no addiction to wine—they must be the Ep 5:22 Col 3:18 1 Tm 2:12 teachers of right behaviour 4 •and show younger women how they should love their husbands and love their children, 5 •how they must be sensible and chaste, and how to work in their homes, and be gentle, and obey their husbands, so that the message 1 Tm 6:1 of God is not disgraced. 6 •Similarly, urge younger men to be moderate[a] in every- 1 Tm 4:12 2 Th 3:7b thing that they do, 7 •and you yourself set an example of good works, by sincerity and earnestness, when you are teaching, and by a message sound and irreproach- 1 Tm 1:10h; 5:14e able • 8 so that any opponent will be at a loss, with no accusation to make against us. 1 Tm 6:1+ Slaves must be obedient to their masters in everything, and do what is wanted 9 without argument; 10 •and there must be no pilfering—they must show complete honesty at all times, so that they are in every way a credit to the teaching of God 1 Tm 1:1b our Saviour.

The basis of the Christian moral life

3:4 1 Tm 2:4c You see, God's grace has been revealed to save the whole human race;[b] 11, 12 •it has taught us that we should give up everything contrary to true religion and all our 1 Jn 2:16 worldly passions; we must be self-restrained and live upright and religious lives in this present world, 13 •waiting in hope for the blessing which will come with the 1 Tm 1:11+ appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Christ Jesus.[c] 14 •He offered Ex 19:5 Dt 7:6h Ps 130:8 himself for us in order to ransom us from all our *faults* and *to purify a people to be* Rm 3:24j *his very own* and eager to do good.

Ep 5:25seq. 1 Tm 2:6f 1 Tm 4:12 This is what you must say, encouraging or arguing with full authority; no one 15 should despise you.

General instruction for believers

Rm 13:1–7 1 Tm 2:2b 1 P 2:13–14 **3** Remind them to be obedient to the officials in authority; to be ready to do good 1 at every opportunity; 2 •not to go slandering other people but to be peaceable Ph 4:5 1 Th 3:12 and gentle, and always polite to people of all kinds. 3 •There was a time when we too Rm 1:29q; 3:21–26 were ignorant, disobedient and misled and enslaved by different passions and 1 Co 6:11 Ep 2:3–10 dissipations; we lived then in wickedness and malice, hating each other and hateful ourselves.

1 Tm 1:1b 2 Tm 1:9 •2:11 Jn 3:3,5,8 2 Co 13:13e Rm 5:5;6:4a;7:6 Ep 4:23seq.; 5:26 •Rm 3:24 1 Tm 1:1b •Rm 8:17,24 1 Tm 1:15i But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour for humanity were revealed, 4 it was not because of any upright actions we had done ourselves; it was for no 5 reason except his own faithful love that he saved us, by means of the cleansing water of rebirth and renewal in the Holy Spirit 6 •which he has so generously poured over us through Jesus Christ our Saviour; 7 •so that, justified by his grace, we should become heirs in hope of eternal life.[a] 8 •This is doctrine that you can rely on.

Personal advice to Titus

I want you to be quite uncompromising in teaching all this, so that those who now

believe in God may keep their minds constantly occupied in doing good works. All
9 this is good, and useful for everybody. •But avoid foolish speculations, and those 1 Tm 1:4c
genealogies, and the quibbles and disputes about the Law—they are useless and
10 futile. •If someone disputes what you teach,[b] then after a first and a second Mt 18:15–17par.
11 warning, have no more to do with him: •you will know that anyone of that sort is
warped and is self-condemned as a sinner.

Practical recommendations, farewells and good wishes

12 As soon as I have sent Artemas or Tychicus to you, do your best to join me at Ac 20:4f
13 Nicopolis, where I have decided to spend the winter. •Help eagerly on their way
Zenas the lawyer and Apollos, and make sure they have everything they need. Ac 18:24p
14 All our people must also learn to occupy themselves in doing good works for
their practical needs,[c] and not to be unproductive.
15 All those who are with me send their greetings. Greetings to those who love us
in the faith. Grace[d] be with you all.

d. Quotation attributed to the Cretan poet Epimenides of Cnossos (sixth century BC); first half quoted by Callimachus of Alexandria (early third century BC).

e. A proverb which takes on a Christian sense, Mt 15:10–20 par.; Rm 14:14–23; *see* Jn 13:10i; Heb 9:10.

2 **a.** This instruction to be 'sensible' or 'moderate', here aimed at young people, is characteristic of Greek moral advice, vv. 5,12; 1 Tm 2:9,15; 3:2; 2 Tm 1:7. 'In everything' can alternatively be put at the beginning of v. 7, 'set an example in everything'.

b. Grace, the effective mercy of God, Ho 2:2c, and his goodness, his love for mankind, 3:4, have appeared as a prelude to his 'appearing', v. 13, 1 Tm 6:14f. Again (as vv. 1–3), vv. 11–14 and 3:4–7 are two extremely close-knit treatments of the work of salvation, its demands and effects.

c. A clear statement of the divinity of Christ, *see* Rm 9:5d. The Saviour is here called also the great God, *see* 1 Tm 1:1b.

3 **a.** The effects of baptism are: rebirth, free forgiveness by Christ, reception of his Holy Spirit, *see* Rm 5:5e, and the immediate enjoyment of all rights as heir to eternal life (the presence of the Holy Spirit being a pledge of this, cf. 2 Co 1:22).

b. lit. 'a heretic', etymologically, one who makes a choice. The word occurs only here in the Bible, and is borrowed from the terminology of contemporary philosophical schools. In Christian terminology, cf. 1 Co 11:19; Ga 5:20, 'heresy' is a choice made from among truths of faith, which creates separation and division. For the procedure prescribed by Paul *see* 1 Co 5:5d.

c. Or 'for urgent needs'.

d. Some witnesses add 'of the Lord' or 'of God' and, at the end, 'Amen'.

PHILEMON

THE LETTER FROM PAUL TO PHILEMON

Rm 1:1a **Address**

Ac 16:1a From Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus and from our brother Timothy; to our dear 1
Col 4:17 fellow worker Philemon, 2 our sister [a] Apphia, our fellow soldier Archippus and the 2
2 Tm 2:3
Rm 16:5+ church that meets in your house. 3 Grace and the peace of God our Father and 3
the Lord Jesus Christ.

‖Ep 1:15–16 **Thanksgiving and prayer**
‖Col 1:3seq.
1 Co 13:13e I always thank my God, mentioning you in my prayers, 5 because I hear of the love 4, 5
Ac 9:13g and the faith which you have for the Lord Jesus and for all God's holy people. 6 I 6
Ph 1:9–11
Col 1:9–11 pray that your fellowship in faith [b] may come to expression in full knowledge of all
2 Jn 4–6 the good we can do for Christ. 7 I have received much joy and encouragement by 7
your love; you have set the hearts of God's holy people at rest.

The request about Onesimus

Therefore, although in Christ I have no hesitations about telling you what your 8
duty is, 9 I am rather appealing to your love, being what I am, Paul, an old man, 9
Ep 3:1;4:1 and now also a prisoner of Christ Jesus. 10 I am appealing to you for a child of mine, 10
Col 4:18
•Ga 4:19+ whose father I became [c] while wearing these chains: I mean Onesimus. 11 He was of 11
no use to you before, but now he is useful [d] both to you and to me. 12 I am sending 12
him back to you—that is to say, sending you my own heart. 13 I should have liked to 13
keep him with me; he could have been a substitute for you, to help me while I am
in the chains that the gospel has brought me. 14 However, I did not want to do 14
anything without your consent; it would have been forcing your act of kindness,
which should be spontaneous. 15 I suppose you have been deprived of Onesimus for 15
a time, [e] merely so that you could have him back for ever, 16 no longer as a slave, but 16
Rm 6:15g something much better than a slave, a dear brother; especially dear to me, but how
Ep 6:5–9
Col 3:22–4:1 much more to you, both on the natural plane and in the Lord. [f] 17 So if you grant me 17
1 Tm 6:2
any fellowship with yourself, welcome him as you would me; 18 if he has wronged 18
you in any way or owes you anything, [g] put it down to my account. 19 I am writing 19
Col 4:18f this in my own hand: I, Paul, shall pay it back—I make no mention of a further
debt, that you owe your very self to me! [h] 20 Well then, brother, I am counting on 20
you, in the Lord; set my heart at rest, in Christ. 21 I am writing with complete 21
confidence in your compliance, [i] sure that you will do even more than I ask.

A personal request. Good wishes

There is another thing: will you get a place ready for me to stay in? I am hoping 22
through your prayers to be restored to you.

Col 4:10d Epaphras, a prisoner with me in Christ Jesus, sends his greetings; 24 so do my 23, 24
fellow-workers Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke.

Ac 12:12d May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. [j] 25

a. var. 'our beloved Apphia', or 'our beloved sister Apphia'.

b. That is, the sense of fellowship with Christ and with the brothers in Christ (*see* 1 Co 1:9f), which faith establishes in the hearts of the faithful. From this faith, shot through with love (v. 5), *see* Ga 5:6b, Paul expects practical results.

c. He became his 'father' by converting him, cf. 1 Co 4:15; Ga 4:19.

d. A pun: 'Onesimus' means 'useful', cf. Ph 4:3.

e. 'Deprived' of him by God who allowed the slave to escape only so that everyone might subsequently benefit.

f. To the natural ties 'in the flesh' (such is the literal sense of the Greek, *see* Rm 7:5c) between slave and master are added ties 'in the Lord'. Without ceasing to be a slave, cf. 1 Co 7:20–24, although Paul does suggest to Philemon that he should set Onesimus free, vv. 14–16,21, Onesimus will henceforth be a brother to Philemon. Before the one heavenly Lord, Ep 6:9, there is neither slave nor free man any more, 1 Co 12:13; Col 3:22–25.

g. It looks as if Onesimus had not only run away but had stolen something from Philemon as well.

h. Since he was one of Paul's converts.

i. To Paul obviously, but more radically to the demands of the faith.

j. add. 'Amen', cf. Ph 4:23.

THE LETTER TO THE HEBREWS

PROLOGUE

The greatness of the incarnate Son of God

Ga 4:4c
1 Tm 4:1a
Ws 7:22i
Mt 4:3d
Jn 1:18q; 10:34q
Col 1:15d,17
Ep 1:7
Col 1:14
Ac 2:33t
Ph 2:9–11,9*l*

1 At many moments in the past and by many means, God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets; but 1
·in our time, the final days,[a] he has spoken to us in the person of his Son,[b] whom he appointed heir of all things[c] and through whom 2
he made the ages.[d] ·He is the reflection of God's glory and bears the impress of God's own being,[e] sustaining all things by his powerful command; and now that he 3
has purged sins away, he has taken his seat at the right hand of the divine Majesty on high. ·So he is now as far above the angels as the title which he has inherited is higher than their own name. 4

I: THE SON IS GREATER THAN THE ANGELS

Proof from the scriptures

To which of the angels, then, has God ever said: 5

2 S 7:14e
1 Ch 17:13
Ps 2:7
Ac 13:33y

You are my Son, today I have fathered you,

or:

I shall be a father to him and he a son to me?

Col 1:15d Again, when he brings the First-born into the world,[f] he says: 6

Dt 32:43 LXX
Ps 97:7

Let all the angels of God pay him homage.[g]

To the angels, he says: 7

Ps 104:4

appointing the winds his messengers and flames of fire his servants,[h]

but to the Son he says: 8

Ps 45:6–7

Your throne, God, is for ever and ever;

and:

the *sceptre of*[i] his *kingdom* is *a sceptre of justice;*
you love uprightness and detest evil. 9
This is why God, your God, has anointed you
with the oil of gladness, as none of your rivals.[j]

And again: 10

Ps 102:25–27

Long ago, Lord, you laid earth's foundations,
the heavens are the work of your hands.

11 *They pass away but you remain,*
they all wear out like a garment.
12 *Like a cloak you will roll them up*, like a garment,
and they will be changed.
But you never alter and your years are unending.

13 To which of the angels has God ever said:

Take your seat at my right hand Ps 110:1
till I have made your enemies your footstool? Ac 2:33–35+

14 Are they not all ministering spirits, sent to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation? [k] Tb 5:4b Mt 4:11;18:10; 26:53 Lk 1:26

An exhortation

1 2 We ought, then, [a] to turn our minds more attentively than before to what we 2 P 3:17
2 have been taught, so that we do not drift away. ·If a message that was spoken Ac 7:38,53+ Ga 3:19k;4:3b
through angels [b] proved to be so reliable that every infringement and disobedience
3 brought its own proper punishment, ·then we shall certainly not go unpunished if
we neglect such a great salvation. It was first announced by the Lord himself, and Ac 10:37
4 is guaranteed to us by those who heard him; ·God himself confirmed their witness
with signs and marvels and miracles of all kinds, and by distributing the gifts of the
Holy Spirit in the various ways he wills. Ac 1:8j

Redemption brought by Christ, not by angels

5 It was not under angels that he put the world to come, about which we are speaking. Col 2:15m
6 Someone witnesses to this somewhere with the words:

What are human beings that you spare a thought for them, Ps 8:4–6 LXX
a child of Adam that you care for him?
7 *For a short while you have made him less than the angels;*
you have crowned him with glory and honour,
8 *put all things under his feet.* 1 Co 15:25 Ep 1:20–23 Ph 3:21

For in *putting all things under* him he made no exceptions. At present, it is true,
9 we are not able to see that *all things are under him*, [c] ·but we do see Jesus, who was Ph 2:6–11
for a short while made less than the angels, now *crowned with glory and honour*
because he submitted to death; [d] so that by God's grace [e] his experience of death
should benefit all humanity.

1 **a.** In the fullness of time, Mk 1:15; Ga 4:4c, the last times or the last days begin, Ac 2:17; 1 P 1:20.

b. After the prophets, God sends an envoy who is no longer a mere messenger like the others; he is 'Son', cf. Mk 12:2–6; Rm 1:4c, he is even the Word, Jn 1:1a,14m.

c. To be a son implies having the right to inherit, cf. Mt 21:38; Ga 4:7. Here, however, God is credited with the handing over of the whole creation because the inheritance in question is messianic and eschatological.

d. Hebraism for the whole of creation.

e. These two metaphors are borrowed from the *sophia* and *logos* theologies of Alexandria. Ws 7:25–26; they express both the identity of nature between Father and Son, and the distinction of person. The Son is the brightness, the light shining from its source, which is the bright glory, *see* Ex 24:16f, of the Father ('Light from Light'). He is also the replica, *see* Col 1:15d, of the Father's substance, like an exact impression made by a seal on a clay or wax, cf. Jn 14:9.

f. Either at the incarnation or at his enthronement in glory, cf. v. 3; 2:5; Ep 1:20–21; Ph 2:9–10. 'First-born' is a title of honour, Col 1:15,18; Rv 1:5.

g. The quotation is from Dt 32:43, in 'the Song of Moses'.

h. The author, thinking perhaps of the theophany on Sinai, 2:2b, takes this LXX text as a description of the nature of angels, subtle and changeable and therefore inferior to that of the Son reigning from his eschatological throne.

i. var. 'your', *see* Ps 45:6 LXX.

j. The godhead, attributed in the Psalms to the priest-king by way of hyperbole, is here attributed to Jesus the Messiah as of pre-eminent right, v. 3. The divine Christ enjoys an eternal kingship.

k. Compared with the Son, angels are only servants used to save human beings.

2 **a.** If God speaks to us by a Son who saves us and who is superior to the angels, how can we not take notice of such an initiative?

b. The Law, given through the intermediary of angels, *see* Ga 3:19*l*, and sanctioned by severe penalties.

c. The first Christians, despised and persecuted, are still waiting for the coming of God's reign on earth, 2 P 3:4. Although Christ has already entered his glory, his reign on earth has to continue in time till he has conquered all his enemies (1:13) before his full and final triumph. 1 Co 15:25; Ep 1:21–22; Ph 3:20–21.

d. Christ was glorified precisely because he suffered, and his triumph seals the redeeming value of his death.

e. 'God's grace'; rare var. 'without God' which may have been a gloss meant to emphasis that the Messiah could suffer only in his human, not in his divine, nature; but it could be an allusion to what Jesus cried out from the cross (Mt 27:46), or it could be taken as meaning that Christ died for all people, but not for God, cf. 1 Co 15:27.

Rm 11:36
1 Co 8:6
5:9e
Ac 3:15k
Jn 17:19
Ps 22:22
Jn 17:6
•Is 8:17
•Is 8:18
Mt 16:17e

It was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should, 10
in bringing many sons to glory, make perfect through suffering the leader of their
salvation.[f] •For consecrator and consecrated are all of the same stock;[g] that is why 11
he is not ashamed to call them *brothers* •in the text: *I shall proclaim your name to* 12
my brothers, praise you in full assembly; or in the text: •*I shall put my hope in him*; 13
followed by *Look, I and the children whom God has given me.*

Jn 12:31i
Rm 5:12seq.

Since all the *children* share the same human nature, he too shared equally in it, 14
so that by his death he could set aside him who held the power of death, namely the
devil,[h] •and set free[i] all those who had been held in slavery all their lives by the 15
fear of death. •For it was not the angels that he took to himself; he took to himself 16
Is 41:8–9
the line of Abraham. •It was essential that he should in this way be made completely 17
Rm 8:3,29
Ph 2:7
3:1a;4:15;
5:7b
Mt 4:1a
Rm 3:25
1 Co 10:13f
1 Jn 2:2;4:10
like his brothers so that he could become a compassionate and trustworthy high
priest for their relationship to God, able to expiate the sins of the people. •For the 18
suffering he himself passed through while being put to the test enables him to help
others when they are being put to the test.

II: JESUS THE FAITHFUL AND MERCIFUL HIGH PRIEST

Christ higher than Moses

11:16;12:22
Ep 1:18
Ph 3:14
•4:14;10:23

3 That is why all you who are holy brothers and share the same heavenly call 1
should turn your minds to Jesus, the apostle and the high priest[a] of our
profession of faith. •He was *trustworthy* to the one who appointed him, just like 2
Nb 12:7 LXX
Moses, who remained trustworthy *in all his household*; •but he deserves a greater 3
2 Co 3:7seq.
glory than Moses, just as the builder of a house is more honoured than the house
itself. •Every house is built by someone, of course; but God built everything that 4
exists. •It is true that Moses was *trustworthy in the household* of God, as a *servant* 5
is, acting as witness to the things which were yet to be revealed, •but Christ is 6
1:2b
Jn 8:35
•1 Co 3:9
Ep 2:19seq.
1 Tm 3:15
trustworthy as a son is, over his household. And we are his household, as long as
we fearlessly maintain the hope in which we glory.[b]

How to reach God's land of rest

That is why, as the Holy Spirit says: 7

Ps 95:7–11

If only you would listen to him today!
Do not harden your hearts, as at the rebellion, 8
as at the time of testing in the desert,
when your ancestors challenged me, 9
and put me to the test, and saw what I could do
for forty years. 10

That was why

that generation sickened me
and I said, 'Always fickle hearts,
that cannot grasp my ways!'
Nb 14:21–23
And then in my anger I swore 11
that they would never enter my place of rest.

2 Th 2:3b
•10:25
2 Th 2:10

Take care, brothers, that none of you ever has a wicked heart, so unbelieving as to 12
turn away from the living God. •Every day, as long as this *today* lasts, keep 13
encouraging one another so that none of you is *hardened* by the lure of sin,
because we have been granted a share with Christ only if we keep the grasp of 14
our first confidence firm to the end. •In this saying: *If only you would listen to him* 15
today; do not harden your hearts, as at the Rebellion, •who was it who *listened* and 16
then *rebelled*? Surely all those whom Moses led out of Egypt. •And with whom was 17
Nb 14:29
1 Co 10:5
he *angry for forty years*? Surely with those who sinned and whose *dead bodies fell*

18 *in the desert.* ·To whom did he *swear they would never enter his place of rest*? Surely
19 those who would not believe. ·So we see that it was their refusal to believe which
prevented them from entering.

1 **4** Let us beware, then: since the promise never lapses, none of you must think
2 that he has come too late for the promise of *entering his place of rest.* [a] ·We
received the gospel exactly as they did; but hearing the message did them no good 1 Co 10:1–13
3 because they did not share the faith of those who did listen. [b] ·We, however, [c] who
have faith, are *entering* a *place of rest*, as in the text: *And then in my anger I swore* Ps 95:11
that they would never enter my place of rest. Now God's work was all finished at the
4 beginning of the world; ·as one text says, referring to the seventh day: *And God* Gn 2:2
5 *rested on the seventh day after all the work he had been doing.* ·And, again, the
6 passage above says: *They will never reach my place of rest.* ·It remains the case, Ps 95:11
then, that there would be some people who would reach it, and since those who
first heard the good news were prevented from entering by their refusal to believe,
7 God fixed another day, a *Today*, when he said through David in the text already
8 quoted: *If only you would listen to him today; do not harden your hearts.* ·If Joshua Ps 95:7seq.
had led them into this place of rest, God would not later have spoken of another Dt 31:7
9 day. ·There must still be, therefore, a seventh-day rest reserved for God's people, Jos 22:4
10, 11 since to *enter the place of rest* is to *rest after your work*, as God did after his. ·Let Rv 14:13
us, then, press forward to *enter this place of rest*, or some of you might copy this
example of refusal to believe and be lost.

12 The word of God [d] is something alive and active: it cuts more incisively than any 1 P 1:23
two-edged sword: it can seek out the place where soul is divided from spirit, or Is 49:2
13 joints from marrow; it can pass judgement on secret emotions and thoughts. ·No Ep 6:17
created thing is hidden from him; everything is uncovered and stretched fully open Rv 1:16
to the eyes of the one to whom we must give account of ourselves. Jn 12:48
Rm 1:9e
1 Co 15:44w
Jb 34:21–22
Ps 33:13–15+
Ws 1:6

Jesus the compassionate high priest

14 Since in Jesus, the Son of God, we have the supreme high priest who has gone 9:11,24
15 through to the highest heaven, [e] we must hold firm to our profession of faith. ·For 3:1;10:23
the high priest we have is not incapable of feeling our weaknesses with us, but has 2:17–18
16 been put to the test in exactly the same way as ourselves, apart from sin. ·Let us, 5:7b
then, have no fear in approaching the throne of grace to receive mercy and to find Jn 8:46
Rm 8:3
grace when we are in need of help. 2 Co 5:21
1 P 2:22
1 **5** Every high priest is taken from among human beings and is appointed to act on 1 Jn 3:5
2 their behalf in relationships with God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins; [a] ·he 10:19b
can sympathise with those who are ignorant or who have gone astray, because he 8:3

f. By dying and fulfilling the will of God, Christ becomes the one perfect Saviour, responsible for the entry of human beings into the glory of God, 2:17–18; 4:15; 5:2–3. The verb 'makes perfect' comes frequently in the letter to denote the various effects of Christ's work on the relationship of humanity to God, 11:40i.

g. From the context, the translation could read 'form a single whole'. The following verses stress this union in the flesh and blood, v. 14, which the Son of God took upon himself, and so they introduce the central theme of the letter, the high-priesthood of Christ, v. 17.

h. Sin and death are related because both derive from Satan whose reign is the opposite of the reign of Christ.

i. By his resurrection, which is the guarantee to believers that they will rise, Rm 8:11g.

3 **a.** Christ is both 'apostle', i.e. someone 'sent' by God to the human race, *see* Jn 3:17,34; 5:36; 9:7; Rm 1:1b; 8:3; Ga 4:4, and high priest representing the human race before God, *see* Heb 2:17; 4:14; 5:5,10; 6:20; 7:26; 8:1; 9:11; 10:21.

b. add. 'unwavering right till the end', *see* v. 14.

4 **a.** The comparison between Moses and Jesus, 3:1seq., cf. Ac 7:20; Jn 1:21t, now develops into one between Israelites and Christians. The Israelites, who doubted the word of God, did not enter the place of rest which was the Promised Land, 3:17–19. But God's promise cannot remain unfulfilled, so it applies to Christians, invited to enter into the repose of heavenly blessedness, of which the Promised Land was only a type.

b. e.g. Joshua and Caleb. *see* Nb 13–14. • var. 'because (the message) was not accompanied by faith in what they heard'.

c. 'however'; var. 'therefore'. • 'a place of rest', var. 'the place of rest'.

d. The word of God mediated by the prophets and then by the Son, of which an instance has just been given in Ps 95:7–11, is living and active in believers, 1 Th 2:13e. It is this word which judges, cf. Jn 12:48; Rv 19:13, the movements and secret intentions of the heart, in its quest for the 'rest' of God. On soul and spirit, see 1 Th 5:26g.

e. First mention of heaven where, according to the letter, Christ exercises his priestly function. Seated at the right hand of God, 1:3; 8:1, he belongs no less than God to the eternal realities; his sacrifice, accomplished once and for all, 7:26–27g, takes on a perfect and eternal value, 8:1–4a; 9:11–12,11e,23–24. The God of Christian hope is the fulfilment of this salvation in the heavenly city, 9:28; 12:23–24.

5 **a.** The priest's office of sacrificing (*see* Lv 1; 4; 9), connected with Aaron rather than with Moses, is to be the subject of a full development. Sacrifice, related to sin, shows that the priest is in solidarity with believers before God.

Lv 9:7;16:6 too is subject to the limitations of weakness. 3 ·That is why he has to make sin
Jn 8:27 offerings for himself as well as for the people. 4 ·No one takes this honour on
Ex 28:1 himself; it needs a call from God, as in Aaron's case. 5 ·And so it was not Christ who gave himself the glory of becoming high priest, but the one who said to him: *You*
Ps 2:7 Jn 8:54 *are my Son, today I have fathered you,* 6 ·and in another text: *You are a priest for*
Ps 110:4 *ever, of the order of Melchizedek.* 7 ·During his life on earth, [b] he offered up prayer
Mt 26:36 seq.par. and entreaty, with loud cries and with tears, to the one who had the power to save
Rm 7:5c him from death, [c] and, winning a hearing by his reverence, [d] 8 ·he learnt obedience,
Ph 2:8 Son though he was, through his sufferings; 9 ·when he had been perfected, [e] he
2:10f;7:28 Jn 17:19 became for all who obey him the source of eternal salvation 10 ·and was acclaimed by
Rm 1:5d God with the title of high *priest of the order of Melchizedek.* [f]

III: THE AUTHENTIC PRIESTHOOD OF JESUS CHRIST

Christian life and theology

On this subject we have many things to say, and they are difficult to explain because 11
1 Co 3:1–3 you have grown so slow at understanding. 12 ·Indeed, when you should by this time have become masters, you need someone to teach you all over again the elements of the principles of God's sayings; you have gone back to needing milk, and not
1 P 2:2 solid food. 13 ·Truly, no one who is still living on milk can digest the doctrine of saving
1 Co 2:6e justice, [g] being still a baby. 14 ·Solid food is for adults with minds trained by practice
Gn 3:22f Ph 1:10e Col 3:10e to distinguish between good and bad.

The author explains his intention

6 Let us leave behind us then [a] all the elementary teaching about Christ and go 1 on to its completion, without going over the fundamental doctrines again: the
9:14 Mt 3:2c •Ac 2:38y Rm 1:16h •1 Tm 4:14e •Rm 2:6b 10:32e turning away from dead actions, [b] faith in God, 2 ·the teaching about baptisms [c] and the laying-on of hands, about the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgement.
This, God willing, is what we propose to do. 3

As for those people who were once brought into the light, and tasted the gift 4
2 Co 4:4,6 Ep 5:14 Rm 5:5e from heaven, and received a share of the Holy Spirit, 5 ·and tasted the goodness of
10:26–31;12:17 1 Jn 5:16 God's message and the powers of the world to come 6 ·and yet in spite of this have fallen away [d]—it is impossible for them to be brought to the freshness of repentance a second time, since they are crucifying the Son of God again for themselves, and making a public exhibition of him. 7 ·A field that drinks up the rain that has fallen
2 Tm 2:6 frequently on it, and yields the crops that are wanted by the owners who grew
Gn 3:17–18 them, receives God's blessing; 8 ·but one that grows brambles and thistles is worthless, and near to being cursed. It will end by being burnt.

Words of hope and encouragement

But you, my dear friends—in spite of what we have just said, we are sure you are in 9
a better state and on the way to salvation. 10 ·God would not be so unjust as to forget
10:32–34 all you have done, the love that you have for his name or the services you have
Ep 1:15par. done, and are still doing, for the holy people of God. [e] 11 ·Our desire is that every one of you should go on showing the same enthusiasm till the ultimate fulfilment of your hope, 12 ·never growing careless, but taking as your model those who by their
Rm 4:20 Ga 3:14,29 Ep 1:13–14 2 Th 3:7 faith and perseverance are heirs of the promises.

When God made the promise to Abraham, he *swore by his own self,* since there 13
•Gn 22:16seq. was no one greater he could swear by: 14 ·*I will shower blessings on you and give you many descendants.* 15 ·Because of that, Abraham persevered and received fulfilment of the promise. 16 ·Human beings, of course, swear an oath by something greater than themselves, and between them, confirmation by an oath puts an end to all dispute.
In the same way, when God wanted to show the heirs of the promise even more 17
clearly how unalterable his plan was, he conveyed it by an oath 18 ·so that through
Nb 23:19+ two unalterable factors [f] in which God could not be lying, we who have fled to him

might have a vigorous encouragement to grasp the hope held out to us. •This is the anchor our souls have,[g] as sure as it is firm, reaching right through *inside the curtain* •where Jesus has entered as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high *priest for ever, of the order of Melchizedek.*

▶2 Tm 2:13 ▶Tt 1:2 •Lv 16:2 •9:3;10:20 Mt 27:51par. 5:10 Ps 110:4

A: CHRIST'S PRIESTHOOD HIGHER THAN LEVITICAL PRIESTHOOD

Melchizedek[a]

Gn 14:18g Ps 110:4+

7 *Melchizedek, king of Salem, a priest of God Most High, came to meet Abraham when he returned from defeating the kings*, and *blessed him*; •and Abraham gave him *a tenth of everything.* By the interpretation of his name, he is, first, 'king of saving justice' and also *king of Salem*, that is, 'king of peace'; •he has no father, mother or ancestry, and his life has no beginning or ending; he is like the Son of God. He remains a priest for ever.

Gn 14:17–20 1:2b Jn 7:27

Melchizedek accepted tithes from Abraham

Now think how great this man must have been, if the patriarch *Abraham gave him a tenth* of the finest plunder.[b] •We know that any of the descendants of Levi who are admitted to the priesthood are obliged by the Law to take tithes from the people, that is, from their own brothers although they too are descended from Abraham. •But this man, who was not of the same descent, took his tithe from Abraham, and he gave his blessing to the holder of the promises. •Now it is indisputable that a blessing is given by a superior to an inferior. •Further, in the normal case it is ordinary mortal men who receive the tithes, whereas in that case it was one who is attested as being alive. •It could be said that Levi himself, who receives tithes, actually paid tithes, in the person of Abraham, •because he was still in the loins of his ancestor when *Melchizedek came to meet him.*

Gn 14:20 Dt 14:22d Gn 14:17

From levitical priesthood to the priesthood of Melchizedek[c]

Now if perfection had been reached through the levitical priesthood—and this was the basis of the Law given to the people—why was it necessary for a different kind

b. The emphasis of this section is on humanity: a priest must be human since he represents human beings, and he must share their sufferings since he must feel compassion for them, *see* 2:17–18; 4:15. Jesus suffered in this way all through his life on earth, and especially in his agony and death.

c. Not saved from dying, since that was the whole purpose of his life, Jn 12:27seq., but rescued from death after dying, Ac 2:24seq. God transformed his death by raising him to glory after it, 2:9; Jn 12:27seq.; 13:31seq.; 17:5; Ph 2:9–11.

d. The term implies respect and submission. It was because the prayer of Christ in Gethsemane was a prayer of total submission to the will of his Father, Mt 26:39,42, that it was heard and answered.

e. Perfected in his office of Priest and Victim.

f. This sets off all the themes developed in ch. 6–10.

g. 'The doctrine of saving justice', like 'God's prophecies', can mean either the OT, cf. 2 Tm 3:16, or the whole body of doctrine. Here it seems to mean all that Christ taught about the saving justice of God as applied to humanity, Rm 3:21–26, and especially about his own priesthood of mediation, prefigured by Melchizedek, the 'king of saving justice' Heb 7:2.

6 a. In spite of the difficulties his readers will have, the author is going to challenge them by formulating the difficult doctrine already mentioned in 5:11.

b. Anything done without faith and the divine life is called a 'dead' action because it is done in the context of sin, Rm 1:18–3:20, which leads to death, Rm 5:12,21; 6:23; 7:5; 1 Co 15:56; Ep 2:1; Col 2:13; Jm 1:15; cf. Jn 5:24; 1 Jn 3:14.

c. Not only Christian baptism, *see* Ac 1:5f; Rm 6:4a, but all the washings, lustrations and purificatory rites then practised, including the 'baptism of John', Ac 18:25; 19:1–5.

d. The irreparable apostasy of rejecting Christ and ceasing to believe in the power of his sacrifice to save.

e. The same phrase is used, Rm 15:25,31; 2 Co 8:4; 9:1,12, about a collection for the church in Jerusalem. 'God's holy people' means all Christians, but especially members of the mother church at Jerusalem, and in particular the apostles, *see* Ac 9:13g.

f. The promise of God and the oath joined to it, *see* Gn 12:1a; Rm 4:11e, for God does not deceive, 10:23; 11:11; 2 Tm 2:13; Tt 1:2.

g. Anchor: symbol of stability in the classical world, adopted in Christian iconography of 2nd century as a symbol of hope.

7 a. Melchizedek the priest-king: here seen as an OT type of Christ. Gn 14 is oddly silent about any ancestors or descendants of Melchizedek and this suggested the idea that he represented the eternal priesthood, vv. 1–3, cf. vv. 15–17 and Ps 110:4. He was superior to Abraham in so far as Abraham offered him, Gn 14:20, a tithe of everything that had been captured, so *a fortiori*, the argument goes, he was superior to all the descendants of Abraham, including the Levites, v. 4seq.

b. The tithe paid to levitical priests, Dt 14:22d, was both the stipend for their ministry at the altar and acknowledgement that as priests they were members of a higher class than those who paid. Levi (in the person of Abraham) could have paid his tithe only if Melchizedek were a priest of an even higher class than himself.

c. The argument here is based on Ps 110:4. The Psalm, in praise of a Davidic king, is interpreted as a prophecy of

Ps 110:4 of priest to arise, spoken of as being *of the order of Melchizedek* rather than of the
8:6seq. order of Aaron? ·Any change in the priesthood must mean a change in the Law as 12
well.

So our Lord, of whom these things were said, belonged to a different tribe, the 13
8:4 members of which have never done service at the altar; ·everyone knows he came 14
Gn 49:10 from Judah, a tribe which Moses did not mention at all when dealing with priests.
Mt 1:1seq.;2:6
Rm 1:3
Rv 5:5

The abrogation of the old law

This becomes even more clearly evident if another priest, of the type of Melchize- 15
dek, arises who is a priest ·not in virtue of a law of physical descent, [d] but in virtue 16
Rm 1:4c of the power of an indestructible life. ·For he is attested by the prophecy: *You are* 17
Ps 110:4 *a priest for ever of the order of Melchizedek.* ·The earlier commandment is thus 18
11:40 abolished, because of its weakness and ineffectiveness ·since the Law could not 19
Rm 7:7d make anything perfect; but now this commandment is replaced by something
10:19b better—the hope that brings us close to God.

Christ's priesthood is unchanging

Now the former priests became priests without any oath being sworn, ·but this one 20, 21
Ps 110:4 with the swearing of an oath by him who said to him, *The Lord has sworn an oath*
he will never retract: you are a priest for ever; [e] ·the very fact that it occurred with 22
8:6–13 the swearing of an oath makes the covenant of which Jesus is the guarantee all the
greater. ·Further, the former priests were many in number, because death put an 23
end to each one of them; ·but this one, because he remains *for ever*, has a perpetual 24
9:24;10:19b priesthood. ·It follows, then, that his power to save those who come to God 25
Rm 8:34 through him [f] is absolute, since he lives for ever to intercede for them.
1 Jn 2:1
Rv 1:18

The perfection of the heavenly high priest

3:1a Such is the high priest that met our need, holy, innocent and uncontaminated, set 26
apart from sinners, and raised up above the heavens; ·he has no need to offer 27
5:3+ sacrifices every day, as the high priests do, first for their own sins and only then for
9:25–28; those of the people; this he did once and for all [g] by offering himself. ·The Law 28
10:11–14 appoints high priests who are men subject to weakness; but the promise on oath,
5:9e which came after the Law, [h] appointed the Son who is made perfect *for ever*.

B: SUPERIORITY OF THE WORSHIP, SANCTUARY AND MEDIATION OF CHRIST

The new priesthood and the new sanctuary

3:1a 8 The principal point of all that we have said is that we have a high priest of 1
Ps 110:1 exactly this kind. He *has taken his seat at the right* of the throne of divine
Ac 2:33t Majesty in the heavens, ·and he is the minister of the sanctuary and of the true 2
Nb 24:6 LXX *Tent* which *the Lord*, and not any man, *set up*. [a] ·Every high priest is constituted to 3
5:1 offer gifts and sacrifices, and so this one too must have something to offer. ·In fact, 4
7:13seq. if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, since there are others who make
the offerings laid down by the Law, ·though these maintain the service only of a 5
9:23;10:1 model or a reflection of the heavenly realities; just as Moses, when he had the Tent
Col 2:17n to build, was warned by God who said: *See that you work to the design that was*
Rv 11:19 *shown you on the mountain.*
Ex 25:40

Christ is the mediator of a greater covenant

9:15;12:24 As it is, he has been given a ministry as far superior as is the covenant of which he 6
1 Tm 2:5 is the mediator, [b] which is founded on better promises. ·If that first covenant had 7
been faultless, there would have been no room for a second one to replace it.
And in fact God does find fault with them; he says: 8

Look, the days are coming, the Lord declares, Jr 31:31–34
when I will make a new covenant Mt 26:28i
with the House of Israel and the House of Judah, 1 Co 11:25
9 *but not a covenant like the one I made with their ancestors,*
the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of Egypt,
which covenant of mine they broke,
and I too abandoned them, the Lord declares.
10 *No, this is the covenant I will make with the House of Israel,* 10:16–17
when those days have come, the Lord declares:
In their minds I shall plant my laws
writing them on their hearts.
Then I shall be their God,
and they shall be my people.
11 *There will be no further need for each to teach his neighbour,*
and each his brother, saying 'Learn to know the Lord!'
No, they will all know me,
from the least to the greatest,
12 *since I shall forgive their guilt*
and never more call their sins to mind.

13 By speaking of a *new* covenant, he implies that the first one is old. And anything old and ageing is ready to disappear. 2 Co 5:17 Rv 21:4–5

Christ enters the heavenly sanctuary

1 9 The first covenant also[a] had its laws governing worship and its sanctuary, a
2 sanctuary on this earth. ·There was a tent which comprised two compartments: Ex 25:8d, 25–26
3 the first, in which the lamp-stand, the table and the loaves of permanent offering
4 were kept, was called the Holy Place;[b] ·then beyond the second veil, a second
compartment which was called the Holy of Holies ·to which belonged the gold altar Ex 30:1a
of incense,[c] and the ark of the covenant, plated all over with gold. In this were Ex 25:10e
kept the gold jar containing the manna, Aaron's branch that grew the buds, and Ex 16:1a Nb 17:25
5 the tables of the covenant. ·On top of it were the glorious winged creatures, over- Ex 24:12+ Ex 25:17h,18i
shadowing the throne of mercy. This is not the time to go into detail about this.

the King-Messiah, declaring that he will not be descended from Levi and that his priesthood will therefore be 'of the order of Melchizedek' and eternal. This implies that when Christ comes, his sort of priesthood will replace the levitical priesthood, and this in turn will necessitate a new law since the old one was concerned only with the levitical priesthood, vv. 12,16seq., 21.

d. The law that restricted the priesthood of Levi to his physical descendants, *see* Nb 1:47seq.; 3:5seq.; Dt 10:8seq.; 18:1seq.; 33:8seq.

e. add. 'of the order of Melchizedek'.

f. Christ the eternal priest exercises his office of mediator and intercessor, *see* Rm 8:34; 1 Jn 2:1. His entreaty is analogous to that of the Holy Spirit approaching God on behalf of the faithful, Rm 8:27.

g. The unique sacrifice of Jesus is the culmination of salvation-history, Ac 1:7i. It closes a long epoch of preparation, 1:1seq.; cf. Rm 10:4; it occurs at 'the appointed time', Rm 3:26m; Ga 4:4c, and it begins the eschatological epoch. Though the Last Day, Rm 2:6b; 1 Co 1:8e, will follow, 2 Co 6:2a, only at some unspecified, 1 Th 5:1b, time in the future; salvation for the human race has been in essence certain from the moment when, in the person of Jesus, it died to sin and rose to live again. Heb makes a special point of how the whole of this hope flows from the unique, unrepeatable sacrifice of Jesus, 7:27; 9:12,26,28; 10:10; cf. Rm 6:10; 1 P 3:18. Being unrepeatable, 10:12–14, this sacrifice is different from all others in the OT, since these had to be repeated again and again because they were unable actually to save anyone.

h. Cf. the promise made before the Law was given, Ga 3:17.

8 **a.** The argument so far has been to prove that what Christ is, i.e. an eternal and perfect priest, is superior to what the levitical priests are, since they are all mortals and sinners, ch. 7; now the argument goes on to show that what Christ does is equally superior to what the levitical priests do: Christ's sanctuary is better because it is in heaven, 8:1–5, *see* 9:11seq., while the one on earth is only a copy of it, Ex 25:40; and the covenant brought by the mediation of Christ is a better covenant, Heb 6–13.

b. Technically Christ is the one and only true mediator: he is truly human and truly divine, Col 2:9, and so the one and only intermediary, Rm 5:15–19; 1 Tm 2:5; cf. 1 Co 3:22–23; 11:3, between God and the human race. He unites and reconciles them, 2 Co 5:14–20. Through him came grace, Jn 1:16–17; Ep 1:7, and complete revelation, 1:1–2. In heaven he continues to intercede for those who are faithful to him, 7:25f.

9 **a.** om. 'also'.

b. In the desert Tent-Sanctuary, Ex 25–26 (compare the Temple of Solomon, 1 K 6) a curtain hung between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies, Ex 26:33. Only the high priest ever went into the Holy of Holies and he did so only once a year on *yom kippur*, the Day of Expiation, *see* Lv 16:1a,2.

c. Ex 30:6; 40:26 says that the incense altar, Ex 30:1a, was in the Holy of Holies. Heb follows a different liturgical tradition.

Under these provisions, priests go regularly into the outer tent to carry out their 6
7:27g Ex 30:10 Lv 16:2–29 acts of worship, ·but the second tent is entered only once a year, and then only by 7
the high priest who takes in the blood to make an offering for his own and the
people's faults of inadvertence. ·By this, the Holy Spirit means us to see that as 8
10:20 long as the old tent stands, the way into the holy place is not opened up; ·it is a 9
1 Co 10:6d symbol for this present time. [d] None of the gifts and sacrifices offered under these
11:40i regulations can possibly bring any worshipper to perfection in his conscience;
Mk 7:4 Col 2:16–17 they are rules about outward life, connected with food and drink and washing at 10
various times, which are in force only until the time comes to set things right.

But now Christ [e] has come, as the high priest of all the blessings which were to 11
4:14;9:24; 10:20 come. [f] He has passed through the greater, the more perfect tent, not made by
7:27g human hands, that is, not of this created order; ·and he has entered the sanctuary [g] 12
Ac 20:28r Mt 26:28 once and for all, taking with him not the blood of goats and bull calves, but his own
Rm 3:24j blood, having won an eternal redemption. ·The blood of goats and bulls and the 13
Nb 19:2–10, 17–20 ashes of a heifer, sprinkled on those who have incurred defilement, may restore
10:10+ 2 Co 13:13e their bodily purity. ·How much more will the blood of Christ, who offered himself, 14
1 P 1:18–19 blameless as he was, to God through the eternal Spirit, [h] purify our conscience
6:1b;8:28 Rm 1:9e from dead actions so that we can worship the living God.

Christ seals the new covenant with his blood [i]

8:6b This makes him the mediator of a new covenant, so that, now that a death has 15
occurred to redeem the sins committed under an earlier covenant, those who have
Ga 4:1–7 been called to an eternal inheritance may receive the promise. ·Now wherever a 16
will is in question, the death of the testator must be established; ·a testament 17
comes into effect only after a death, since it has no force while the testator is still
alive. ·That is why even the earlier covenant was inaugurated with blood, ·and 18, 19
why, after Moses had promulgated all the commandments of the Law to the
Ex 24:6–8,8c people, he took the calves' blood, the goats' blood and some water, and with these
he sprinkled the book itself and all the people, using scarlet wool and hyssop;
Mt 26:28par. saying as he did so: *This is the blood of the covenant that God has made with you.* 20
And he sprinkled both the tent and all the liturgical vessels with blood in the 21
same way. ·In fact, according to the Law, practically every purification [j] takes 22
place by means of blood; and if there is no shedding of blood, there is no remission.
8:5 Only the copies of heavenly things are purified in this way; the heavenly things 23
9:11seq. themselves have to be purified [k] by a higher sort of sacrifice than this. ·It is not as 24
1 Co 10:6d though Christ had entered a man-made sanctuary which was merely a model of the
Rm 8:34 real one; he entered heaven itself, so that he now appears in the presence of God
7:25f on our behalf. ·And he does not have to offer himself again and again, as the high 25
priest goes into the sanctuary year after year with the blood that is not his own,
or else he would have had to suffer over and over again since the world began. 26
7:27g •Jn 1:29 Ga 4:4c As it is, he has made his appearance once and for all, [l] at the end of the last age, to
do away with sin by sacrificing himself. ·Since human beings die only once, after 27
Is 53:12 which comes judgement, ·so Christ too, having offered himself only once *to bear* 28
Ac 3:20–21 Ph 3:20–21 *the sin of many*, will manifest himself a second time, sin being no more, to those
1 Tm 6:14f who are waiting for him, to bring them salvation. [m]

SUMMARY: CHRIST'S SACRIFICE SUPERIOR TO THE SACRIFICES OF THE MOSAIC LAW

The old sacrifices ineffective

8:5 Col 2:17 7:19 Rm 7:7d 10:19b;11:40i **10** So, since the Law contains no more than a reflection of the good things 1
which were still to come, and no true image of them, it is quite incapable of
bringing the worshippers to perfection, by means of the same sacrifices repeatedly
offered year after year. ·Otherwise, surely the offering of them would have 2

stopped, because the worshippers, when they had been purified once, would have
3 no awareness of sins. ·But in fact the sins are recalled year after year in the
4, 5 sacrifices. ·Bulls' blood and goats' blood are incapable of taking away sins,[a] ·and 9:13
that is why he said, on coming into the world:

Ps 40:6–8, 6b LXX

You wanted no sacrifice or cereal offering,
but you gave me a body.
6 *You took no pleasure in burnt offering or sacrifice for sin;*
7 *then I said, 'Here I am, I am coming,'*
in the scroll of the book it is written of me,
to do your will, God.

8 He says first *You did not want* what the Law lays down as the things to be offered, 1 S 15:22
that is: *the sacrifices, the cereal offerings, the burnt offerings and the sacrifices for*
9 *sin,* and *you took no pleasure* in them; ·and then he says: *Here I am! I am coming to* Mt 26:39,42par. Jn 6:38; 10:17seq.
10 *do your will.* He is abolishing the first sort to establish the second. ·And this *will* 7:27g;9:14,28; 10:12,14
was for us to be made holy by the *offering* of the *body* of Jesus Christ made once Jn 17:19
and for all. Ep 5:2

The efficacy of Christ's sacrifice

11 Every priest stands at his duties every day, offering over and over again the same 10:1–4
12 sacrifices which are quite incapable of taking away sins. ·He, on the other hand,
has offered one single sacrifice for sins, and then *taken his seat for ever, at the right* 7:27g;10:10+ ·Ps 110:1
13 *hand of God,* ·where he is now waiting *till his enemies are made his footstool.* Ac 2:33t
14 By virtue of that one single offering, he has achieved the eternal perfection of all 11:40i
15 who are sanctified. ·The Holy Spirit attests this to us, for after saying: Jn 17:19m

16 *No, this is the covenant I will make with them,* 8:10,12
when those days have come. Jr 31:33–34

the Lord says:

In their minds I will plant my Laws
writing them on their hearts,
17 *and I shall never more call their sins to mind,*
or their offences.

18 When these have been forgiven, there can be no more sin offerings.

d. The spiritual meaning of this ceremonial arrangement is that under the old covenant the people had no access to God. Under the new covenant, Christ himself is the way to the Father, Jn 14:6; *see* Heb 10:19b. The abrogation of the old worship can thus be appropriately symbolised by the Temple curtain splitting wide open at the death of Jesus, Mt 27:51 and par.

e. The Jewish ceremonial of expiation, v. 7; Lv 16, is replaced by the unique sacrifice, Heb 7:27g, of Christ's blood, Heb 9:14; Rm 3:24j, which reopens the way to God, Heb 10:1f,19; cf. Jn 14:6d; Ep 2:18.

f. var. 'blessings already won'.

g. In his ascension Christ 'passed through' all the successive heavenly spheres that form the 'Holy Place' of the celestial Tent, and so came into the presence of God in the celestial 'Holy of Holies'.

h. var. 'the Holy Spirit', cf. Rm 1:4c.

i. This section is parallel to 8:6–13: it shows that the death of Christ was essential for him to act as mediator. It does this by making use of a pun: the Greek word *diatheke* can mean 'pact', as in vv. 15,18–20, or 'last will and testament', as in vv. 16–17; this makes it possible for the author to argue that a 'pact' or covenant suggests the death of a 'testator'. All pacts were sealed with the shedding of blood, Ex 24:6–8. Hence Christ had to die to found the new covenant, *see* 7:22; 8:6–10; 12:24; Mt 26:28i.

j. e.g. the altar, Lv 8:15; 16:18–19; the priests, Lv 8:24–30; the Levites, Nb 8:15; the sinful people, Lv 9:15–18; a mother, Lv 12:7–8, etc.; one exception, *see* Lv 5:11.

k. The 'purification' of the sanctuary, whether the earthly or the heavenly one, does not necessarily imply any previous 'impurity': it is a consecratory and inaugural rite.

l. The sacrifice of Christ is unique, 7:27g: being offered 'at the end of the last age' (lit. 'at the completion of the aeons'), i.e. the end of human history, there is no need for it to be repeated, since it wipes out sin, not with non-human ('alien') blood, but with Christ's own blood, *see* 9:12–14, so its effect is unconditional.

m. The first coming of Christ gave him a direct relationship to sin, Rm 8:3; 2 Co 5:21. The second coming of Christ will, since the redemption is complete, have no connection with sin. Christians wait for this *parousia* that will take place at the Judgement, Rm 2:6b; 1 Co 1:8e.

10 a. Going beyond the prophets who called for purity at heart in the cult, Is 1:11–13; Jr 6:20; 11:15; Ho 6:6; Am 5:21n, the letter declares that the old sacrifices were ineffective, *see* 9:13–14. Only Christ's spiritual sacrifice can sanctify mankind, vv. 12–14.

IV: PERSEVERING FAITH

The Christian opportunity

6:19–20;9:8, 11–12 Jn 14:6 3:1a,6;4:14 Zc 6:11–12 Rm 6:4a 2 Co 7:1 1 P 3:21 11:11 1 Co 1:9f 3:13 1 Co 1:8e

We have then, brothers, complete confidence through the blood of Jesus in entering the sanctuary, [b] ·by a new way which he has opened for us, a living opening through the curtain, that is to say, his flesh. ·And we have the *high priest* over all *the sanctuary of God*. ·So as we go in, let us be sincere in heart and filled with faith, our hearts sprinkled and free from any trace of bad conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. ·Let us keep firm in the hope we profess, because the one who made the promise is trustworthy. ·Let us be concerned for each other, to stir a response in love and good works. ·Do not absent yourself from your own assemblies, as some do, but encourage each other; the more so as you see the Day [c] drawing near.

The danger of apostasy

6:4–6;12:17 Is 26:11 LXX Dt 17:6 6:6d;9:20 Ex 24:8 Dt 32:35–36 Mt 10:28par.; 12:31–32par.

If, after we have been given knowledge of the truth, we should deliberately commit any sins, then there is no longer any sacrifice for them. [d] ·There is left only the dreadful prospect of judgement and of *the fiery wrath* that is to *devour your enemies*. ·Anyone who disregards the Law of Moses is ruthlessly *put to death on the word of two witnesses or three*; ·and you may be sure that anyone who tramples on the Son of God, and who treats *the blood of the covenant* which sanctified him as if it were not holy, and who insults the Spirit of grace, will be condemned to a far severer punishment. ·We are all aware who it was that said: *Vengeance is mine; I will pay them back*. And again: *The Lord will vindicate his people*. ·It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Motives for perseverance

6:4+ Ep 5:14 1 Co 4:9 13:3 •Mt 5:40 Mt 6:20 Ac 14:22+

Remember the great challenge of the sufferings that you had to meet after you received the light, [e] in earlier days; ·sometimes by being yourselves publicly exposed to humiliations and violence, and sometimes as associates of others who were treated in the same way. ·For you not only shared in the sufferings of those who were in prison, [f] but you accepted with joy being stripped of your belongings, knowing that you owned something that was better and lasting. ·Do not lose your fearlessness now, then, since the reward is so great. ·You will need perseverance if you are to do God's will and gain what he has promised.

Is 26:20 LXX Hab 2:3–4 LXX Rm 1:17

> Only *a little while now, a very little while,*
> *for come he certainly will before too long.*
> *My upright person will live through faith*
> *but if he draws back, my soul will take no pleasure in him.*

1 P 1:9

We are not the sort of people who *draw back*, and are lost by it; we are the sort who keep *faith* until our souls are saved.

The exemplary faith of our ancestors

Rm 1:16h

11 Only faith can guarantee the blessings that we hope for, or prove the existence of realities that are unseen. [a] ·It is for their faith that our ancestors are acknowledged.

Gn 1 Rm 1:20

It is by faith that we understand that the ages were created by a word from God, so that from the invisible the visible world came to be. [b]

Gn 4:4 Gn 4:10 Jb 16:18f

It was because of his faith that Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain, and for that he was acknowledged as upright when *God* himself made acknowledgement of *his offerings*. Though he is dead, he still speaks by faith.

Mt 23:35 Gn 5:22–24

It was because of his faith that Enoch was taken up and did not experience death: *he was no more, because God took him*; because before his assumption he was acknowledged to *have pleased God*. ·Now it is impossible to please God without

faith, since anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and rewards those who seek him. [c]

Ex 3:14+
Jr 29:12–14

7 It was through his faith that Noah, when he had been warned by God of something that had never been seen before, took care to build an ark to save his family. His faith was a judgement on the world, [d] and he was able to claim the uprightness which comes from faith.

Gn 6:8–22
Mt 24:37–39
1 P 3:20
2 P 2:5

8 It was by faith that Abraham obeyed the call to *set out* for a country that was the inheritance given to him and his descendants, and that *he set out* without knowing
9 where he was going. ·By faith he *sojourned* in the Promised Land as though it were not his, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same
10 promise. ·He looked forward to the well-founded city, designed and built by God.

Rm 1:16h;4:13f
Gn 12:1–4+
Rm 1:5a

Gn 23:4;26:3; 35:12

Rv 21:10–20

11 It was equally by faith that Sarah, in spite of being past the age, was made able to conceive, because she believed that he who had made the promise was faithful to
12 it. ·Because of this, there came from one man, and one who already had the mark of death on him, descendants *as numerous as the stars of heaven and the grains of sand on the seashore which cannot be counted.*

10:23
Gn 17:19;21:2
Rm 4:19–21

Gn 22:17
Ex 32:13
Dn 3:36 LXX

13 All these died in faith, before receiving any of the things that had been promised, but they saw them in the far distance and welcomed them, recognising that they
14 were only *strangers and nomads on earth*. ·People who use such terms about
15 themselves make it quite plain that they are in search of a homeland. ·If they had meant the country they came from, they would have had the opportunity to return
16 to it; ·but in fact they were longing for a better homeland, their heavenly homeland. That is why God is not ashamed to be called their God, since he has founded the city for them.

Jn 8:56

Gn 23:4
Ps 39:12;119:19

13:14
Ph 3:20
Rv 21:2

17 It was by faith that Abraham, *when put to the test, offered up Isaac*. He offered to sacrifice *his only son* even though he had yet to receive what had been promised,
18 and he had been told: *Isaac is the one through whom your name will be carried*
19 *on*. ·He was confident that God had the power even to raise the dead; and so, figuratively speaking, [e] he was given back Isaac from the dead.

Gn 22:1–14
Jm 2:21–22

Gn 21:12
Rm 4:17–21
1 Co 10:6d

20 It was by faith that this same Isaac gave his blessing to Jacob and Esau for the
21 still distant future. ·By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of Joseph's
22 sons, *bowed in reverence, as he leant on his staff*. ·It was by faith that, when he was about to die, Joseph mentioned the Exodus of the Israelites and gave instructions about his own remains.

Gn 27:27seq.,39
Gn 48:15seq.
Gn 47:31
Gn 50:24–25

23 It was by faith that Moses, when he was born, *was kept hidden by his parents for three months*; because they *saw* that he was a *fine* child; they were not afraid of the
24 royal edict. [f] ·It was by faith that, *when he was grown up*, Moses refused to be
25 known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter ·and chose to be ill-treated in company

Ex 2:2
Ac 7:20

Ex 2:11

b. Only the high priest could enter the Holy of Holies, i.e. the presence of God, and he could do so only once a year. From now on, all who are faithful will be able to reach God through Christ, *see* 4:14–16; 7:19,25; 9:11; 10:9; Rm 5:2; Ep 1:4; 2:18; 3:12; Col 1:22.

c. When Christ returns at the end of history, *see* 1 Co 1:8e. This verse may refer to the signs preceding the *parousia*, *see* 2 Th 2:1a.

d. The sin of apostasy or deliberate revolt against God, *see* 6:6d. The fire, v. 27, is the traditional weapon God uses in anger. Is 26:11; Mt 3:11–12; Mk 9:48–49f; Rv 11:5.

e. 'Enlightenment' or 'illumination' in NT, as in patristic writers, always refers to baptism, 6:4; Ep 5:14 (*see* Rm 6:4a).

f. var. 'of my chains', which would be an allusion to Paul's captivity, Ph 1:7; Col 4:18.

11 **a.** var. 'Faith is the assurance of things hoped for (heaven) and the conviction of things unwanted (hell).' The Jewish Christians to whom the author is writing have been discouraged by persecution, so he emphasises that it is only what is future and what is invisible that concerns hope. This verse was adopted as a theological definition of faith, i.e. the anticipated and assured possession of heavenly realities, *see* 6:5; Rm 5:2; Ep 1:13seq. The examples taken from the lives of OT saints are meant to illustrate how faith is the source of patience and strength.

b. Creation seen with the eye of faith reveals 'unseen reality'; before creation everything real existed in God from whom everything comes.

c. The faith that is essential for salvation has two objects: belief in the existence of one personal God, Ws 13:1, who by his very nature cannot be seen, Jn 1:18; 20:29; Rm 1:20; 2 Co 5:7; Col 1:15; 1 Tm 1:17; 6:16, and belief that God will reward all effort spent in searching for him; cf. Mt 5:12 and par.; 6:4,6,18; 10:41seq., and par.; 16:27; 20:1–16; 25:31–46; Lk 6:35; 14:14; Rm 2:6; 1 Co 3:8,14; 2 Co 5:10; Ep 6:8; 2 Tm 4:8,14; 1 P 1:17; 2 Jn 8; Rv 2:23; 11:18; 14:13; 20:12–13; 22:12. *See also* Ps 62:12e. The absence of all mention of Christ is explained by the fact that Enoch precedes any of the covenants, cf. Jn 17:3; 20:31.

d. Noah's confidence in what God had said 'convicts' a sinner, cf. Ws 4:16; Mt 12:41.

e. lit. 'by a parable'. The saving of Isaac from death prefigures the general resurrection and, according to traditional exegesis, the death and resurrection of Jesus.

f. Some authorities insert the story of the murdered Egyptian here, *see* Ex 2:11–12; Ac 7:24.

with God's people rather than to enjoy the transitory pleasures of sin. 26
Ps 89:50seq. ·He considered that the humiliations offered to the Anointed[g] were something more precious than all the treasures of Egypt, because he had his eyes fixed on the reward. 27
Ex 2:15 1 Tm 1:17 ·It was by faith that he left Egypt without fear of the king's anger; he held to his purpose like someone who could see the Invisible. 28
Ex 12:11, 22–23 Ex 14:22,27 ·It was by faith that he kept *the Passover* and sprinkled *the blood* to prevent *the Destroyer* from touching any of their first-born sons. 29
·It was by faith they crossed the Red Sea as easily as dry land, while the Egyptians, trying to do the same, were drowned.

Jos 6:20 Jos 2:1seq.;6:17 It was through faith that the walls of Jericho fell down when the people had marched round them for seven days. 30 31
·It was by faith that Rahab the prostitute welcomed the spies and so was not killed with the unbelievers.

What more shall I say? There is not time for me to give an account of Gideon, 32
Barak, Samson, Jephthah, or of David, Samuel and the prophets. 33
·These were men who through faith conquered kingdoms, did what was upright and earned the promises. They could keep a lion's mouth shut, 34
Dn 3:49–50;6:23 ·put out blazing fires and emerge unscathed from battle. They were weak people who were given strength to be brave in war and drive back foreign invaders. 35
1 K 17:23 2 K 4:36 2 M 6:18;7:42 ·Some returned to their wives from the dead by resurrection; and others submitted to torture, refusing release so that they would rise again to a better life. 36
Jr 20:2;37:15seq. ·Some had to bear being pilloried and flogged, or even chained up in prison. 37
·They were stoned, or sawn in half,[h] or killed by the sword; they were homeless, and wore only the skins of sheep and goats; they were in want and hardship, and maltreated. 38
·They were too good for the world and they wandered in deserts and mountains and in caves and ravines. 39
·These all won acknowledgement through their faith, but they did not receive what was promised, 1 P 1:10–12; 3:19+ since God had made provision for us to have something better, and they were not to reach perfection except with us.[i] 40

The example of Jesus Christ

12 With so many witnesses in a great cloud all around us, we too, then, should throw off everything that weighs us down and the sin that clings so closely, 1
Gn 4:7 Ga 5:7d 2:10 and with perseverance keep running in the race which lies ahead of us. 2
·Let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, who leads us in our faith and brings it to perfection: for the Mt 4:3–11par. Jn 6:15 sake of the joy which lay ahead of him, he endured the cross, disregarding the 2 Co 8:9 Ph 2:6–8 shame of it, and *has taken his seat at the right* of God's throne. 3
·Think of the way he persevered against such opposition from sinners[a] and then you will not lose heart Ps 110:1 Ac 2:33t Lk 2:34 10:32seq. and come to grief. 4
·In the fight against sin, you have not yet had to keep fighting to the point of bloodshed.

God's fatherly instruction

Have you forgotten that encouraging text in which you are addressed as sons? 5

Pr 3:11–12 LXX
> *My son, do not scorn correction from the Lord,*
> *do not resent his training,*
Rv 3:19
> *for the Lord trains those he loves,* 6
> *and chastises every son he accepts.*

Perseverence is part of your *training*;[b] God is treating you as his *sons*. Has there 7
Dt 8:5+ ever been any *son* whose father did not *train* him? 8
·If you were not getting this training, as all of you are, then you would be not *sons* but bastards. 9
·Besides, we have all had our human fathers who punished us, and we respected them for it; all Nb 16:22;27:16 2 M 3:24 Lv 17:1a 2 P 1:4 Jn 16:20 2 Co 7:8–11 Jm 1:2–4 1 P 1:6–7 the more readily ought we to submit to the Father of spirits, and so earn life. 10
·Our human fathers were training us for a short life and according to their own lights; but he does it all for our own good, so that we may share his own holiness. 11
·Of course, any discipline is at the time a matter for grief, not joy; but later, in those who have undergone it, it bears fruit in peace and uprightness. 12
·Pr 4:26 LXX Is 35:3 ·So *steady all weary hands and trembling knees* 13
·and make your crooked paths straight; then the injured limb will not be maimed, it will get better instead.

Unfaithfulness is punished

14 *Seek peace* with all people, and the holiness without which no one can ever see the
15 Lord. ·Be careful that no one is deprived of the grace of God and that no *root of*
bitterness should begin to grow and make trouble; this can poison a large number.
16 And be careful that there is no immoral person, or anyone worldly minded like
17 Esau, [c] *who sold his birthright* for one single meal. ·As you know, when he wanted
to obtain the blessing afterwards, he was rejected and, though he pleaded for it
with tears, he could find no way of reversing the decision.

Ps 34:14 Mt 5:8–9 Rm 12:18 1 Jn 3:2 Dt 29:17 LXX Ac 8:23 Gn 25:33 Gn 27:30–40

The two covenants [d]

18 What you have come to is nothing [e] known to the senses: not a *blazing fire*, or
19 *gloom* or *total darkness*, or a *storm*; ·or *trumpet-blast* or the *sound of a voice*
speaking which made everyone that heard it beg that no more should be said to
20 them. ·They could not bear the order that was given: *If even a beast touches the*
21 *mountain, it must be stoned.* ·The whole scene was so terrible that Moses said, 'I
22 am afraid and trembling.' ·But what you have come to is Mount Zion and the city
of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem where the millions of angels have
23 gathered for the festival, ·with the whole Church of first-born sons, enrolled as
citizens of heaven. You have come to God himself, the supreme Judge, and to the
24 spirits of the upright who have been made perfect; ·and to Jesus, the mediator of
a new covenant, and to purifying blood which pleads more insistently than Abel's.
25 Make sure that you never refuse to listen when he speaks. If the people who on
earth refused to listen to a warning could not escape their punishment, how shall
we possibly escape if we turn away from a voice that warns us from heaven? [f]
26 That time his voice made the earth shake, but now he has given us this promise:
I am going to shake the earth once more and not only the earth but *heaven as well.*
27 The words *once more* indicate the removal of what is shaken, since these are
28 created things, so that what is not shaken remains. [g] ·We have been given
possession of an unshakeable kingdom. Let us therefore be grateful and use our
gratitude to worship God in the way that pleases him, in reverence and fear. [h]
29 For our *God* is a *consuming fire*.

Ex 19:16,18 Dt 4:11 Ex 20:19 Ex 19:12seq. Dt 9:19 Rv 14:1;21:10 Rm 2:6b 11:40i •8:6b 11:4+ Gn 4:10 2:2–3 Ex 19:18 Jg 5:4–5 Ps 68:8 Hg 2:6 •Mt 24:35par. 2 P 3:12–13 Rv 21:1 Dn 7:18 9:14 Rm 1:9f Dt 4:24f Is 33:14

APPENDIX

Final recommendations

1, 2 **13** Continue to love each other like brothers, [a] ·and remember always to
welcome strangers, for by doing this, some people have entertained angels

Gn 18:2seq.; 19:1seq. Jg 6:11–24; 13:3–23 Tb 5:4 Rm 12:13

g. In the psalm, God's 'Anointed' who is 'insulted' refers to the people of God, v. 25, consecrated to Yahweh, Ex 19:6. The author of Heb applies the text to Christ himself on whose account Moses (through faith, since the Messiah was still in the future) suffered, *see* 10:33; 13:13.

h. Some apocryphal books say this was how King Manasseh had Isaiah executed. • add. 'put to the test'.

i. The eschatological epoch of 'perfection' was inaugurated by Christ, 2:10; 5:9; 7:28; 10:14, and access to the divine life has been made available only by him, 9:11seq.; 10:19seq. The OT saints, who could not be 'perfected' by the Law, 7:19; 9:9; 10:1, had thus to wait until the resurrection of Christ before they could enter the perfect life of heaven, 12:23; cf. Mt 27:52seq.; 1 P 3:19h.

12 a. lit. 'endured contradictions of sinners against himself'; var. '. . . against themselves'.

b. The trials of life are regarded here as part of the 'correction' or 'punishment' which are the basis of a father's education of his son, according to the OT tradition, particularly in the later books, Jb 5:17; 33:19; Ps 94:12; Si 1:27; 4:17; 23:2. The trials, being sent by God, reveal and prove that he is our Father.

c. This refers to the sin committed by Esau when he surrendered the position that was his by birth, of being heir to the messianic promises.

d. The approach to God, 4:16; 10:22, no longer occurs, v. 18, in an awe-inspiring theophany as on Sinai, but, v. 22, in a city built by God, for which the OT saints yearned, 11:10,16, the heavenly city, 4:14; Rv 21:1a. With the angels are assembled round the triumphant Mediator all Christians, cf. Lk 10:20; Jm 1:18, whom he has sanctified and perfected, Heb 10:14; 11:40i; 12:14.

e. var. 'a mountain'.

f. The contrast is not between Moses and Christ so much as between the beneficiaries of the two covenants. The old covenant regulated life on earth, as a pale shadow of the heavenly life introduced by the new one. Hence to turn away from the latter merits a more severe punishment.

g. Cosmic upheavals are traditional metaphors in apocalypses for the time when God intervenes to introduce a new régime, *see* Am 8:9h; Mt 24:1a; 1 Co 1:8e.

h. This is the real conclusion, and an apt one for a letter that lays such emphasis on the liturgy. The 'unshakeable' kingdom summarises vv. 22–24. God reigns over both his angels and his saints in the Kingdom of Heaven, the eternal and spiritual Jerusalem. From now on Christians are able to enter this kingdom and live there a life that is a eucharistic liturgy.

13 a. For love between the brothers, *see* Rm 12:10; 1 Th 4:9; 1 P 1:22; 2 P 1:7; 1 Jn 3:14–18.

without knowing it. •Keep in mind those who are in prison, as though you were in 3
10:34 prison with them; and those who are being badly treated, since you too are in the
Mt 25:36 Ws 3:13 body. •Marriage must be honoured by all, and marriages must be kept undefiled, 4
Ep 5:5seq. because the sexually immoral and adulterers will come under God's judgement.
Mt 6:25seq. Ph 4:12 Put avarice out of your lives and be content with whatever you have; God himself 5
Dt 31:6 has said: *I shall not fail you or desert you,* •and so we can say with confidence: 6
Ps 27:1–3; 118:6 Rm 8:31–39 *With the Lord on my side, I fear nothing: what can human beings do to me?*

Faithfulness

Tt 1:5c Remember your leaders, [b] who preached the word of God to you, and as you reflect 7
2 Th 3:7b on the outcome of their lives, take their faith as your model. •Jesus Christ is the 8
Ep 4:14 same today as he was yesterday and as he will be for ever. [c] •Do not be led astray by 9
all sorts of strange doctrines: it is better to rely on grace for inner strength than on
1 Co 8:8e food, which has done no good to those who concentrate on it. •We have our own 10
altar [d] from which those who serve the Tent have no right to eat. •The bodies of the 11
Lv 3:1a animals *whose blood is taken into the sanctuary* by the high priest *for the rite of*
Lv 16:27 *expiation are burnt outside the camp*, •and so Jesus too suffered outside the gate to 12
10:14 Mt 21:39par. sanctify the people with his own blood. [e] •Let us go to him, then, *outside the camp*, 13
Jn 19:20 Ac 7:58 and bear his humiliation. •There is no permanent city for us here; we are looking 14
11:10,14–16,26 for the one which is yet to be. •Through him, *let us offer God* an unending *sacrifice* 15
1 Co 7:29–31 Ph 3:20 of praise, the fruit of the lips of those who acknowledge his name. •Keep [f] doing 16
Ps 50:14,23 Ho 14:3 good works and sharing your resources, for these are the kinds of sacrifice that
Rm 1:9f;10:9 Ac 2:21m please God.
•Am 5:21n Ph 4:18

Obedience to religious leaders

•Ezk 3:18 1 Co 16:16 1 Th 5:12e Obey your leaders and give way to them; they watch over your souls because they 17
•Rm 15:30 Ep 6:19 must give an account of them; make this a joy for them to do, and not a grief—you
Col 4:3 1 Th 5:25 yourselves would be the losers. •Pray for us; we are sure that our own conscience is 18
2 Th 3:1 •Ph 2:24 clear and we are certainly determined to behave honourably in everything we do.
Phm 22 I ask you very particularly to pray that I may come back to you all the sooner. 19

EPILOGUE

News, good wishes and greetings

Is 63:11;55:3 Ezk 37:26;34:1a Zc 9:11 Jn 10:11 I pray that the God of peace, *who brought back* from the dead [g] our Lord Jesus, the 20
1 P 2:25;5:4 •Ph 2:13 great *Shepherd of the sheep, by the blood that sealed an eternal covenant*, •may 21
•Rm 16:27n prepare you to do his will in every kind of good action; effecting in us all what-
ever is acceptable to himself through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever
and ever, Amen.

I urge you, brothers, [h] to take these words of encouragement kindly; that is why 22
I have written to you briefly.

Ac 16:1a I want you to know that our brother Timothy has been set free. If he arrives in 23
time, he will be with me when I see you. •Greetings to all your leaders and to all 24
God's holy people. God's holy people in Italy send you greetings. •Grace be with 25
you all.

b. The first leaders of the community, responsible for proclaiming the word of God, v. 7, and guiding conduct, v. 17.

c. This declaration, introduced by the mention of the word of God and of faith, v. 7, underlines the central theme of the leaders' preaching. They may change or disappear, but Christ remains, and it is to him that Christians owe their allegiance. The recommendations which follow take up again the themes of the letter, stressing the presence of Jesus and the firm confidence of believers.

d. Not the table used for the Eucharist, but either the cross on which Christ was sacrificed, or Christ himself through whom we offer the sacrifice of prayer to God. Non-Christian Jews who still 'served the tabernacle' cannot participate.

e. On the Day of Expiation the high priest went into the Holy of Holies and sprinkled it with the blood of animals that had been killed, and the bodies of these animals were burnt outside the camp. This prefigured how Jesus as expiatory victim was to be killed outside the walls of Jerusalem. The lesson drawn from this is that Christians should break with Judaism.

f. add. 'therefore'.

g. The resurrection is here mentioned explicitly, but it is always implied when Heb mentions the glorified Christ, 1:3.

h. These last lines form a kind of tail-piece to the letter.

THE LETTERS TO ALL CHRISTIANS

INTRODUCTION TO
THE LETTERS TO ALL CHRISTIANS

There are seven New Testament letters which are not Pauline and which, in spite of having no other obvious connection, were very soon grouped together. Three of these letters are attributed to John, two to Peter and the other two to James and Jude, but these attributions must in each case be evaluated in the light of the literary convention of the time by which literary works could be attributed to great figures of the past who were not concerned, at any rate directly, with their composition. These letters were already given the title 'universal' or 'catholic' by the end of the second century; it is not certain why, possibly because most are addressed to the whole Christian Church and not to particular communities or individuals.

The *Letter of James* became accepted in the Church only gradually. If its canonicity seems to have been no problem in Egypt, where Origen quotes it as inspired scripture, Eusebius of Caesarea at the beginning of the fourth century recognises that it is still contested by some people. In the Syriac-speaking Churches it was only in the course of the fourth century that it was inserted in the canon of the NT. In Africa Tertullian and Cyprian have no knowledge of it, Mommsen's *Catalogue (c.* 360*)* still does not include it. At Rome it does not feature in the Canon of Muratori attributed to St Hippolytus (*c.* 200) and it is very doubtful whether Clement of Rome and the Shepherd of Hermas (*see* below) quote it. One may conclude therefore that it was not universally recognised in the Churches of East and West until near the end of the fourth century.

When the Churches do come to accept the canonical nature of this letter, they generally identify its author with the James, 'brother of the Lord', Mt 13:55; cf. 12:46 and par., who played an important part in the earliest Christian community in Jerusalem, Ac 12:17f; 15:13–21; 21:18–26; 1 Co 15:7; Ga 1:19; 2:9,12, and who was put to death by Jews about the year 62 (Josephus, Hegesippus). He is obviously not the apostle James, son of Zebedee, Mt 10:2 and par., martyred by Herod in 44, Ac 12:2, though he could theoretically be identified with the apostle James, son of Alphaeus, Mt 10:3 and par.; even early writers, however, were doubtful and most critics nowadays reject authorship by the apostle. Paul's turn of phrase in Ga 1:19 is ambiguous.

But the real problem is a different one, and deeper. It concerns the ascription itself of the letter to James 'brother of the Lord' . The ascription

is not without its difficulties. If the letter had really been written by this outstanding personality, the difficulty it had in winning a place in the Church as inspired Scripture is difficult to understand. Further, it was composed in Greek, and with an elegance, wealth of vocabulary and sense of rhetoric (*diatribe*) which are surprising for a Galilaean; certainly James could have secured the help of a disciple of good hellenistic culture, but this is a guess which cannot be proved. Finally, and above all, the letter shows a very marked affinity to writings whose composition is dated to the very end of the first century or the beginning of the second, notably the first letter of Clement of Rome and the Shepherd of Hermas. It has often been claimed that these two letters made considerable use of the letter of James, but recognition is today growing more and more widespread that these affinities are explained by the use of common sources and by the fact that the authors of these different works had to face up to similar problems. Consequently many scholars today place the composition of the letter of James at the end of the first century or the beginning of the second. The archaic character of its Christology would then be due not to the antiquity of its composition but to the fact that it issues from Judaeo-Christian circles, heirs to the thought of James, brother of the Lord, unaffected by the development of early Christian theology.

If, however, the authenticity of the letter is maintained, its composition must be placed before 62, the date of James' death. In this case two hypotheses are possible, according to the view adopted of the relationships between Jm and Ga/Rm on the subject of justification by faith (*see* below). For some scholars it is James who is engaging in polemic against Paul, or rather against Christians who deform the teaching of Paul. For others, less and less numerous, it is Paul who wanted to oppose the ideas of James, whose letter must in this case have been written about the years 45–50; this would explain the archaic character of its Christology. But the observations we have made above make such an early date most unlikely.

The letter is addressed to the 'twelve tribes of the Dispersion', 1:1, i.e. to the Jewish Christians scattered all over the Graeco-Roman world but concentrated in countries near Palestine like Syria and Egypt. The whole tone of the letter shows that it was intended for Jewish converts and presumes that the readers are familiar with the Old Testament since, unlike Paul and the author of the letter to the Hebrews, James hardly ever makes use of direct quotations but argues from the imprecise and rather general allusions that underlie the whole text. His two chief sources are the Old Testament Wisdom literature, on which he bases his moral lessons, and the teaching found in the gospels. Some critics have thought of the letter as an exclusively Jewish product, but, on the contrary, ideas and even characteristic expressions of Jesus can be detected all through it, not so much by explicit quotations from written texts, as by reference to a living, oral tradition. James is a Judaeo-Christian sage who has rethought the maxims of the Jewish Wisdom tradition in the light of his Master's teachings and is able to re-present them in an original way.

More a sermon than a letter, it probably reflects the regular teaching of Judaeo-Christian assemblies and consists of a series of moral exhortations linked either by a common theme or sometimes by nothing more than verbal

assonances. The sort of subjects dealt with are: how to behave in time of trial, Jm 1:1–12; 5:7–11; the origin of temptation, 1:13–18; how to control the tongue, 1:26; 3:1–18; good relations and sympathy with one's neighbour, 2:8,13; 3:13–4:2; 4:11seq.; the power of prayer, 1:5–8; 4:2seq.; 5:13–18 etc. In 5:14seq. is the *locus classicus* on the sacramental anointing of the sick.

There are two main themes. The first praises the poor and threatens the rich, 1:9–11; 1:27–2:9; 4:13–5:6, showing a concern for the lowly, God's favoured ones, that follows an Old Testament tradition but particularly the Beatitudes, Mt 5:3d. The second insists that Christians must do good and not be content with a faith that produces nothing, 1:22–27; 2:10–26; this leads on to a section, 2:14–26, that ridicules the preaching of a faith completely unrelated to good works, and some have seen this as aimed against Paul. Jm and Ga/Rm have many significant points of contact, particularly noticeable in the different ways they interpret Old Testament texts on Abraham. James may be opposing Paul himself or, more probably, certain Christians who drew pernicious conclusions from Paul's teaching. Two points are worth remembering: first, that beneath the clash between their different positions, Paul and James agree on essentials, *see* 2:14f; secondly, that the problem of relating faith to works is inherent in the data of Jewish religion and may have been a traditional topic that James and Paul dealt with independently of each other.

Jude who calls himself 'brother of James', v. 1, is also, it appears, one of the 'brothers of the Lord', Mt 13:55 and par. There is no reason to identify him with the apostle of the same name, Lk 6:16; Ac 1:13; cf. Jn 14:22, especially as he refers to himself as being outside the apostolic body, v. 17. Nor is it likely that an anonymous author would have adopted the name, since Jude was not sufficiently prominent to lend authority to a letter. The letter was accepted as canonical by many of the Churches as early as 200, though its use of two apocryphal sources, the *Book of Enoch* in vv. 6,14seq., and the *Assumption of Moses* in v. 9, had prompted certain hesitations; but to quote contemporary Jewish writings is hardly equivalent to recognising their inspiration.

Jude's purpose in writing this letter is to denounce the false teachers who are a danger to Christian faith. He threatens them with the divine punishments familiar from Jewish tradition, vv. 5–7, and also seems to base his description of their false teaching on the same traditions, v. 11. He nowhere states precisely what these doctrines were, so they cannot be identified with second-century Gnosticism. He accuses them of irreligion and immorality, in particular of blasphemies against the Lord Christ and the angels, vv. 4,8–10. These may have been part of the syncretistic tendencies denounced in Colossians, the Pastoral Letters and Revelation.

The letter must be dated fairly late in the first century: the apostles are quoted as belonging to the past, vv. 17seq.; the faith is now something fixed and 'handed on once for all', v. 3; and the author appears to be acquainted with Paul's letters. It is true that 2 Peter borrows from Jude and is therefore later, but the 'Second Letter of Peter' could have been written after Peter's death (*see below*). It can be firmly dated to the last years of the apostolic age.

Two of these 'universal' letters are attributed to Peter. 1 Peter introduces the name of the apostle in the opening verse, 1:1, and has always been

accepted in every part of the Church. Clement of Rome seems to have used it; Polycarp certainly did, and since the time of Irenaeus it has been expressly attributed to Peter. The apostle writes from Rome (Babylon, 5:13), and calls Mark, who is with him, his 'son'. Very little is known about Peter's last years; according to tradition he went to Rome and was martyred there under Nero (in 64 or possibly 67). His letter is addressed to the Christians 'of the Dispersion', and names five provinces, 1:1, which represent practically the whole of Asia Minor. From what he says, 1:14,18; 2:9seq.; 4:3, it seems that most of them were converted pagans, though there may have been some Judaeo-Christians among them. He was obviously obliged to send them a letter in Greek—James had done the same with less reason—and though Peter's Greek is unsophisticated it is too accurate and fluent for a fisherman from Galilee. Unlike the letter from James, the name of a disciple and secretary is mentioned who may have helped: this is Silvanus, 5:12, usually identified with the Silvanus who had been a companion of Paul, Ac 15:22x.

The purpose of the letter is to help its readers' faith in a time of trial. Some critics think this may refer to a persecution under Domitian or Trajan, which would date the letter much later than Peter; but the allusions in the letter are not strong enough to make this conclusion inevitable, since it seems that this 'time of trial' could refer rather to the personal malice and spiteful calumnies caused by the strictly moral life led by converts among those whose sins they no longer shared, 2:12; 3:16; 4:4,12–16.

Another argument against Petrine authorship is based on the liberal use the letter makes of John, Romans and Ephesians, and on the surprisingly little direct use it makes of the gospel. There are, however, many reminiscences of the gospel, but these are so implicit as to constitute an argument against the idea that the author merely wanted to pretend the apostle had written it. There is a tendency perhaps to exaggerate the number of points of contact with James and Paul. Specifically Pauline themes, e.g. the abolition of the Jewish Law, the Body of Christ, etc., do not appear at all, and though some themes appear that are best known from Paul's letters, yet these are themes common to all early Christian theology, e.g. the redemptive nature of the death of Jesus; faith and baptism, etc. Certain formulae and certain Old Testament quotations which were common in the primitive preaching are being increasingly identified by critics, and any early writings could well have drawn on these independently. It is also worth remembering that Silvanus was a disciple of both apostles and that some scholars detect affinities not only between 1 Peter and Paul but also between 1 Peter and two groups of writings whose climate is Petrine: i.e. Mark and the discourses of Peter in Acts.

If the substance of the letter had been in existence before Peter's death in 64 or 67, Silvanus could still have given it its present form some years later, working on Peter's instructions and authority. This hypothesis would be more likely if it could be proved that the letter was made up of fragments. It is suggested that, for example, a baptismal homily, 1:13–4:11, is one such fragment, but these identifications remain very tentative.

Though a very practical letter, it is also a valuable summary of apostolic theology. The dominating theme is fortitude in trial, for which Christ himself is the model, 2:21–25; 3:18; 4:1. Christians must suffer patiently like him

when their trials are due to their faith and to their saintly lives, 2:19seq.; 3:14; 4:12–19; 5:9, i.e. if, in return for evil, they offer charity, obedience to civil authority, 2:13–17, and gentleness to all, 3:8–17; 4:7–11,19. There is one obscure passage, 3:19seq., cf. 4:6; the 'preaching' of Christ can be taken as an announcement either of salvation or of punishment; the 'spirits in prison' can be taken either as the wicked who were drowned in the Flood or as the fallen angels of biblical and apocalyptic tradition. On either view, this passage refers the 'preaching' to the moment Jesus died and is the chief source for the doctrine of the Descent into Hell.

The Second Letter of Peter claims to have been written by the apostle himself. He is named in the opening address, 1:1, the prediction of Peter's death is made by Jesus to the author himself, 1:14, who also claims to have witnessed the transfiguration, 1:16–18, and who alludes to a former letter that is obviously meant to be 1 Peter.

The purpose of the letter is twofold: to warn against false teachers, ch. 2, and to allay anxiety due to the delay of the *parousia*, ch. 3. It is possible that both these difficulties existed before Peter's death, but other considerations make Petrine authorship doubtful and suggest a later date. The vocabulary is notably different from that of 1 Peter; the whole of ch. 2 is obviously a free repetition of Jude; an accepted Pauline corpus seems to be already in existence, 3:15seq.; the apostolic body is referred to, with the prophets, as a thing of the past and as if the author did not belong to it. These difficulties caused early writers to hesitate, and there is no sure evidence that the letter was accepted at all before the third century, and some, according to Origen, Eusebius and Jerome, explicitly refused to accept it. Most critics nowadays also reject the Petrine authorship, though the writer may have had some claim to represent Peter: perhaps he belonged to a group of Peter's disciples, perhaps he filled out one of Peter's writings with ideas from the letter of Jude. This is what we should call forgery, but the ancients had different conventions about authorship and pseudonymity.

The letter has been definitely accepted by the Church as canonical, and Christians accept it as an authoritative document from the apostolic age. The doctrine it teaches supports this: note especially the vocation of all Christians to the 'share in the divine nature', 1:4; the way scriptural inspiration is defined, 1:20seq.; the assurance that eventually the *parousia* will come though no one can know when; the prediction of a new world free of all injustice after the old world has been destroyed by fire, 3:3–13.

For the three letters of John, *see* the Introduction to the Gospel and Letters of John, p. 1743.

THE LETTER OF
JAMES

Address and greetings

Ac 12:17f
Jn 7:35
Ac 26:7
1 P 1:1

1 From James, servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. Greetings [a] to the twelve tribes of the Dispersion. [b] 1

Trials a privilege

Mt 5:11+
1 P 4:13–14
Rm 5:3–5
Heb 12:11
1 P 1:6–7
Rm 5:3–5
Mt 5:48

My brothers, consider it a great joy when trials of many kinds come upon you, 2
for you well know that the testing of your faith produces perseverence, ·and perse- 3, 4
verence must complete its work [c] so that you will become fully developed, com-
plete, not deficient in any way.

Prayer with confidence

1 K 3:7seq.
Pr 2:6+
Ws 8:21seq.
Mt 7:7;21:
21par.
Is 57:20
4:8

Any of you who lacks wisdom must ask God, who gives to all generously [d] and 5
without scolding; it will be given. ·But the prayer must be made with faith, and no 6
trace of doubt, because a person who has doubts is like the waves thrown up in
the sea by the buffeting of the wind. ·That sort of person, in 7
two minds, ·inconsistent in every activity, [e] must not expect to receive anything 8
from the Lord.

The lot of the rich

Jr 9:22–23
Is 40:6–7

It is right that the brother in humble circumstances should glory in being lifted 9
up, [f] ·and the rich in being brought low. For the rich will last no longer than *the wild* 10
flower; ·the scorching sun comes up, [g] and the *grass withers*, its *flower falls*, its 11
beauty is lost. It is the same with the rich: in the middle of a busy life, the rich
will wither.

Temptation

Dn 12:12
Mt 5:3c
1 Co 9:25+
Rv 2:10

Blessed is anyone who perseveres when trials come. Such a person is of proven 12
worth and will win the prize of life, the crown that the Lord [h] has promised to those
who love him. [i]

Pr 19:3
Si 15:11–20
Rm 7:8–10
1 Co 10:13

Never, when you are being put to the test, [j] say, 'God is tempting me'; God 13
cannot be tempted by evil, and he does not put anybody to the test . ·Everyone is 14
put to the test by being attracted and seduced by that person's own wrong desire.

Jb 15:35
Rm 5:12;6:23
Heb 6:1b

Then the desire conceives and gives birth to sin, and when sin reaches full growth, 15
it gives birth to death.

Receiving the Word and putting it into practice

Mt 7:11
Jn 3:3,27
Jn 8:12b
1 Jn 1:5
•Jn 1:12–13
1 P 1:23m
Rv 14:4

Make no mistake about this, my dear brothers: ·all that is good, all that is perfect, 16, 17
is given us from above; it comes down [k] from the Father of all light; [l] with him there
is no such thing as alteration, no shadow caused by change.

By his own choice he gave birth to us by the message of the truth [m] so that we 18
should be a sort of first-fruits of all his creation. [n]

True religion

19 Remember this, my dear brothers: everyone should be *quick to listen* but *slow* to
20 speak and slow to human anger; ·God's saving justice is never served by human
21 anger; · so do away with all impurities and remnants of evil. Humbly welcome the
Word which has been planted in you and can save your souls.
22 But you must do what the Word tells you and not just listen to it and deceive
23 yourselves. ·Anyone who listens to the Word and takes no action is like someone
24 who looks at his own features in a mirror and, ·once he has seen what he looks like,
25 goes off and immediately forgets it. ·But anyone who looks steadily at the perfect
law of freedom [o] and keeps to it—not listening and forgetting, but putting it into
practice—will be blessed in every undertaking.
26 Nobody who fails to keep a tight rein on the tongue can claim to be religious; this
27 is mere self-deception; that person's religion is worthless. ·Pure, unspoilt religion,
in the eyes of God our Father, [p] is this: coming to the help of orphans and widows
in their hardships, and keeping oneself uncontaminated by the world.

Pr 10:19;14:17
Si 5:11
Mt 5:22
Ga 5:19+
1 P 2:1–2
Mt 11:29
Jn 3:11e
Mt 7:24–27 par.
Lk 8:21
Rm 2:13
1 Jn 3:17 seq.
Ps 19:7
Mt 5:17
Rm 6:15g; 7:21; 8:2
•Jn 13:17
•3:2seq.
Ex 22:21+

Respect for the poor

1 2 My brothers, do not let class distinction enter into your faith in Jesus Christ,
2 our glorified Lord. [a] ·Now suppose a man comes into your synagogue, [b] well-
dressed and with a gold ring on, and at the same time a poor man comes in, in
3 shabby clothes, ·and you take notice of the well-dressed man, and say, 'Come this
way to the best seats'; then you tell the poor man, 'Stand over there' or 'You can sit
4 on the floor by my foot-rest.' ·In making this distinction among yourselves have
you not used a corrupt standard?
5 Listen, my dear brothers: it was those who were poor according to the world that
God chose, to be rich in faith [c] and to be the heirs to the kingdom which he
6 promised to those who love him. ·You, on the other hand, have dishonoured the
7 poor. Is it not the rich who lord it over you? ·Are not they the ones who drag you
into court, who insult the honourable name which has been pronounced over you? [d]
8 Well, the right thing to do is to keep the supreme Law of scripture: *you will love*
9 *your neighbour as yourself*; ·but as soon as you make class distinctions, you are
committing sin and under condemnation for breaking the Law.
10 You see, anyone who keeps the whole of the Law but trips up on a single point,

Dt 1:17d

Zp 2:3d
1 Co 1:26–29
Rv 2:29
•1:12
Mt 4:17+
Ga 3:29

Is 52:5
Rm 2:24

Lv 19:18
Mt 22:39par.
Rm 13:8–10
Dt 1:17
Pr 24:23e
Dt 27:26
Mt 5:19
Ga 3:10

1 **a.** lit. 'Be joyful' or 'Rejoice', a normal Gk greeting. V. 2 makes a pun with the word.

b. In OT days the 'Dispersion' (*diaspora*) was used to describe the Jews who had emigrated from their country, cf. Jdt 5:19; Ps 147:2; *see also* Jn 7:35. Here the reference is to the Jewish Christians living in the Graeco-Roman world, *see* Ac 2:5–11. The twelve tribes prefigured the new People of God, Ac 26:7; Rv 7:4b.

c. For James, as for Judaism, faith must, for perfection, issue in deeds, 2:14f, cf. 1 Th 1:3. The central message of 2:14–26 is already hinted at.

d. i.e. simply, or unreservedly.

e. This inconsistency contrasts with simplicity of heart, Gn 8:21c, and the firmness of attitudes which results from it.

f. The rich are to share in the exaltation of the poor, 1 S 2:7–8; Ps 72:4,12; 113:7–9; Lk 1:52; *see* Zp 2:3d, but only by humbling themselves with them.

g. Or 'The sun comes up with a scorching wind.'

h. om. 'the Lord'.

i. At the outcome of temptation, vv. 2–4, anyone who loves God will receive a reward, 1 Co 9:25; 1 P 5:4; Rv 2:10.

j. *See* 1 Co 10:13f. One who allows himself to be drawn into evil must not blame the fault on God who cannot desire evil. Sin comes from within, Rm 7:8, and culminates in a state wholly opposed to the crown of life, v. 12; Rm 6:23.

k. om. (*Vet. Lat.*) 'from above'.

l. i.e. the maker of the stars, Gn 1:14–18, and source of spiritual light, cf. 1 P 2:9; 1 Jn 1:5. The imagery following this phrase is suggested by astronomy. • var. 'no such thing as alteration due to the movement of a shadow'.

m. This 'word of truth' is everything God has revealed to the human race, it is also called the law of freedom or the supreme Law, *see* 1:21–25; 2:8.

n. Jm speaks of 'grace' only in 4:6. He mentions here the equivalent of it in the new birth through the Word of God, Jn 1:12j; 3:3; 1 P 1:23, which creates the People of God as its first-born, cf. Dt 18:4; 1 Co 15:20; Rv 8:23; 16:5. This Word is planted in human hearts by the saving preaching of the gospel, v. 21, and the faith which is the acceptance of such preaching, *see* 1 Th 2:13d. There are traces here of baptismal catechesis.

o. Like the word of truth, v. 18, this law is Christian revelation accepted and put into practice, *see* Mt 5:17–19h; 7:24–27; Jn 13:17. It sets people free, 2:12, by the keeping of the commandments. Paul will see in the liberty of the Christian a privilege of the New Law, of faith, Rm 3:27; 6:15g; 7:1; Ga 4:21seq.

p. Cf. Mt 6:9; 1 Co 15:24; Ep 5:20. The OT uses the phrase in Dt 32:6; cf. Ws 2:16; Si 23:1,4; Is 63:16. Worship in the Spirit which is acceptable to God takes a concrete form in right conduct and the service of the weak, *see* Dt 27:19; Is 11:17; Jr 5:28.

2 **a.** lit. 'our Lord Jesus Christ of glory', *see* 1 Co 2:8h.

b. James is writing to Jewish Christians; it is possible that they may even have still been attending Jewish synagogues, or it may be his word for the Christian 'assembly' for liturgical services.

c. i.e. poor in money, rich in faith, *see* 1:9f.

d. In the OT the name of Yahweh pronounced over someone dedicated that person to the divine protection, Is 43:7; Am 9:12. In the NT the only means of salvation is the name of Jesus invoked, e.g. at baptism, Ac 2:21m. Alternative translation 'the honourable name you bear'.

Ex 20:13–14 Dt 5:17–18
is still guilty of breaking it all. ·He who said, '*You must not commit adultery*' said also, '*You must not kill.*' Now if you commit murder, you need not commit adultery as well to become a breaker of the Law. ·Talk and behave like people who are going to be judged by the law of freedom. ·Whoever acts without mercy will be judged without mercy [e] but mercy can afford to laugh at judgement.

Rm 2:12;6:15g Mt 6:14–15; 18:35 Lk 6:36seq.

Faith and good deeds [f]

1 Jn 4:18

How does it help, my brothers, when someone who has never done a single good act claims to have faith? Will that faith bring salvation? ·If one of the brothers or one of the sisters is in need of clothes and has not enough food to live on, ·and one of you says to them, 'I wish you well; keep yourself warm and eat plenty,' without giving them these bare necessities of life, then what good is that? ·In the same way faith: if good deeds do not go with it, it is quite dead. [g]

1 Co 13:3 Ga 5:6 Mt 7:21; 25:41–45 1 Jn 3:17

But someone may say: [h] So you have faith and I have good deeds? Show me this faith of yours without deeds, then! It is by my deeds that I will show you my faith. You believe in the one God—that is creditable enough, but even the demons have the same belief, and they tremble with fear. [i] ·Fool! Would you not like to know that faith without deeds is useless? ·Was not Abraham our father [j] justified by his deed, because he *offered his son Isaac on the altar?* ·So you can see that his faith was working together with his deeds; his faith became perfect by what he did. [k] ·In this way the scripture was fulfilled: *Abraham put his faith in God, and this was considered as making him upright*; and he received the name 'friend of God'.

Mt 8:29k Gn 22:9 Heb 11:17 Gn 15:6 Rm 4:3 Ga 3:6 Is 41:8f

2:14f

You see now that it is by deeds, and not only by believing, that someone is justified. ·There is another example of the same kind: Rahab the prostitute, was she not justified by her deeds because she welcomed the messengers [l] and showed them a different way to leave? ·As a body without a spirit is dead, so is faith without deeds. [m]

Jos 2:1seq. Heb 11:31

Uncontrolled language

Mt 23:8 1 Co 12:28k

3 Only a few of you, my brothers, should be teachers, [a] bearing in mind that we shall receive a stricter judgement. ·For we all trip up in many ways.

Pr 10:19;18:21 Si 5:9–15;14:1; 28:13–26

Someone who does not trip up in speech has reached perfection and is able to keep the whole body on a tight rein. [b] ·Once [c] we put a bit in the horse's mouth, to make it do what we want, we have the whole animal under our control. ·Or think of ships: no matter how big they are, even if a gale is driving them, they are directed by a tiny rudder wherever the whim of the helmsman decides. ·So the tongue is only a tiny part of the body, but its boasts are great. Think how small a flame can set fire to a huge forest; ·the tongue is a flame too. Among all the parts of the body, the tongue is a whole wicked world: [d] it infects the whole body; catching fire itself from hell, it sets fire to the whole wheel of creation. [e] ·Wild animals and birds, reptiles and fish of every kind can all be tamed, and have been tamed, by humans; but nobody can tame the tongue—it is a pest that will not keep still, full of deadly poison. ·We use it to bless the Lord and Father, but we also use it to curse people who are made in God's image: ·the blessing and curse come out of the same mouth. [f] My brothers, this must be wrong—·does any water supply give a flow of fresh water and salt water out of the same pipe? ·Can a fig tree yield olives, my brothers, or a vine yield figs? No more can sea water yield fresh water.

Dn 7:8+,20 Pr 16:27; 26:18–21 Si 28:22 Mt 15:18 Mt 3:12j;5:22+ Gn 1:26;9:2 Ps 140:3 Gn 1:27+ Ep 4:29 Mt 7:16

Real wisdom and its opposite

Si 19:20–30 Ep 4:1–2

Anyone who is wise or understanding among you [g] should from a good life give evidence of deeds done in the gentleness of wisdom. ·But if at heart you have the bitterness of jealousy, or selfish ambition, do not be boastful or hide the truth with lies; ·this is not the wisdom that comes from above, but earthly, human and devilish. ·Wherever there are jealousy and ambition, there are also disharmony and wickedness of every kind; ·whereas the wisdom that comes down from above

1 Co 3:3 2 Co 1:12 1:5d

is essentially something pure; it is also peaceable, kindly and considerate; it is full of mercy and shows itself by doing good; nor is there any trace of partiality or
18 hypocrisy in it. ·The peace sown by peacemakers brings a harvest of justice.

1 Co 13:4–7
Ph 1:11
Heb 12:11
Mt 5:9

Disunity among Christians

1 4 Where do these wars and battles between yourselves first start? Is it not
2 precisely in the desires fighting inside your own selves? ·You want something and you lack it; so you kill. You have an ambition that you cannot satisfy; so you fight to get your way by force.[a] It is because you do not pray that you do not
3 receive; ·when you do pray and do not receive, it is because you prayed wrongly, wanting to indulge your passions.

Rm 7:23
Ga 5:17
1 P 2:11
Ps 66:18
Mt 6:5–13,33
Rm 8:26

4 Adulterers![b] Do you not realise that love for the world is hatred for God?
5 Anyone who chooses the world for a friend is constituted an enemy of God. ·Can you not see the point of the saying in scripture, 'The longing of the spirit he sent to
6 dwell in us is a jealous longing.'?[c] ·But he has given us an even greater grace, as scripture says: *God opposes the proud but he accords his favour to the humble.*
7,8 Give in to God, then; resist the devil, and he will run away from you. ·The nearer you go to God, the nearer God will come to you. Clean your hands, you sinners,
9 and clear your minds, you waverers. ·Appreciate your wretchedness, and weep for it in misery. Your laughter must be turned to grief, your happiness to gloom.[d]
10 Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will lift you up.

Mt 6:24par.
Jn 15:19
1 Jn 2:15–17
Gn 2:7
Pr 3:34 LXX
1 P 5:5–9
Ep 6:11
2 Ch 15:2
Zc 1:3
Ml 3:7
1:8
Mt 23:12

11 Brothers, do not slander one another. Anyone who slanders a brother, or condemns one, is speaking against the Law and condemning the Law. But if you condemn the Law, you have ceased to be subject to it and become a judge over it.

Lv 19:16
Mt 7:1–5

12 There is only one lawgiver [e]and he is the only judge and has the power to save or to destroy. Who are you to give a verdict on your neighbour?[f]

1 S 2:6+
Mt 10:28par.
Rm 14:4

e. Judgement in the sense of condemnation. Judgement belongs to God alone, author of the Law, 4:11–12; 5:9; cf. Ps 9:8. He will reward the practice of the Law, 1:25; 2:8, which is summed up as being that which mercy requires.

f. The different points of view of James and Paul, Rm 3:20–31; Ga 2:16; 3:2,5,11seq.; Ph 3:9, are not wholly irreconcilable. Paul is anxious to rule out the view that a human being can earn salvation without having faith in Christ, since such a reliance on self-made sanctity would be contradicted by the radical sinfulness of unredeemed humanity, Rm 1:18–3:20; Ga 3:22, and would make faith in Christ superfluous, Ga 2:17; *see* Rm 1:16h. But Paul does not deny that God's chosen one who has been made holy by grace must show faith by actually loving, Ga 5:6; cf. 1 Th 1:3; 2 Th 1:11; Phm 6, and in this way obeying the Law, Rm 8:4, i.e. the Law or commandment of Christ and his Spirit, Rm 8:2; Ga 6.2, which is the commandment to love, Rm 13:8–10; Ga 5:14. It is perfectly true, however, that in order to teach the same truth as Paul, James in a different context and under different circumstances explains the case of Abraham in a completely different way from Paul.

g. lit. 'it is dead by itself'.

h. The same opponents as in vv. 14 and 16.

i. The refusal of the demons to believe in the God they recognise, *see* Mk 1:24,34, does not prevent them from fearing his future anger.

j. Jewish tradition thought of Abraham as the just man faithful to God, Si 44:19–21k, friend of God, 2 Ch 20:7; Is 41:8, father of believers, cf. Mt 3:8; Jn 8:39. On this point Jm agrees with Paul, Rm 4:1,16.

k. No more than Paul does Jm regard Abraham's faith as a deed, Gn 15:6, quoted v. 23; Rm 4:3; Ga 3:6. But he lays more stress on the deeds to which faith, the perfect law, gives birth, 1:25; 2:8.

l. 'messengers'; var. 'spies'. The story of the two spies sent by Joshua was popular among the Jews, *see* Heb 11:31.

m. Vv. 17,20,24 all point to the comparison of a body deprived of the breath of life.

3 a. Those who aspire to this respected office, Mt 23:8; Ac 13:1; 1 Co 12:28k, must weigh the responsibility which falls on them. The whole of ch. 3 seems to have been written with them in mind.

b. Several images are going to teach the lesson that control of the tongue is the mark of complete self-control. The theme is a classic one both in the Gk moralists and in the wisdom literature.

c. var. 'Look!', cf. v. 4.

d. Alternative punctuation, 'The tongue is a fire, a whole wicked world in itself.'

e. The expression 'wheel (or cycle) of the created world', appears to have come from the Gk orphic mysteries.

f. The antithesis 'bless-curse' is common in the OT, Gn 12:3; 27:29; Nb 23:11; 24:9; Jos 8:34. But the Christian cannot curse, *see* Lk 6:28; Rm 12:4; 1 P 3:9.

g. Continuing the writer's advice to those who aspire to be teachers, v. 1. Wisdom is seen in its effects, *see* 1:22–25; 2:14–26.

4 a. Alternative translation (textual corrections): 'You want something and you lack it; you are envious and jealous and you cannot get it; you fight to get your way by force.' This fight is not the interior struggle in each individual, *see* Rm 7:23; 1 P 2:11, but dissension and rancour among believers, perhaps real conflicts in which Christians took an active part.

b. The Gk term is feminine and so recalls the imagery of Israel, the unfaithful wife of Yahweh, and is traditional in the OT, Ho 1:2b, cf. 2 Co 11:2.

c. The quotation is hard to identify. On God's jealousy, *see* Dt 4:24f. Probably these are reminiscences drawn for example from Gn 2:7; 6:3 or Ezk 36:27, cf. 1 Th 4:8. Rm 8:26–27 draws its inspiration from the same source: God has put in us his Spirit which makes us desire what he desires; therefore our requests are granted, *see* Mt 18:19–20; Jn 14:13.

d. Cf. Is 32:11seq.; Jr 4:13seq.; Mi 2:4; Zc 11:2seq.

e. var. 'There is only one: the lawgiver . . .'

f. Judgement belongs to God alone, 1:12; 2:4; 5:7–8; Mt 7:1 and par., 1a; cf. Ps 5:10c; 9:8. Whoever judges a neighbour goes against the golden rule of love, 2:8, and usurps the place of divine justice.

A warning for the rich and self-confident

Pr 27:1 Lk 12:19–20
Well now, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow, we are off to this or that town; we are going to spend a year there, trading, and make some money.' 13
Jb 14:2+ Ac 18:21 Rm 1:10 1:22–25,25o
•You never know what will happen tomorrow: you are no more than a mist that appears for a little while and then disappears. [g] 14
•Instead of this, you should say, 'If it is the Lord's will, we shall still be alive to do this or that.' 15
•But as it is, how boastful and loud-mouthed you are! Boasting of this kind is always wrong. 16
•Everyone who knows what is the right thing to do and does not do it commits a sin. 17

Lk 6:24seq.
5 Well now, you rich! Lament, weep for the miseries that are coming to you. 1
Your wealth is rotting, your clothes are all moth-eaten. 2, 3
Pr 11:4,28; 16:27 Si 29:10–12 Mt 6:19–21 Rm 12:20
•All your gold and your silver are corroding away, and the same corrosion will be a witness against you and eat into your body. It is like a fire which you have stored up for the final days. [a]
Lv 19:13 Dt 24:14–15 •Ex 22:22
Can you hear crying out against you the wages which you kept back from the labourers mowing your fields? The cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord Sabaoth. 4
•On earth you have had a life of comfort and luxury; in the time of slaughter you went on eating to your heart's content. [b] 5
Ws 2:10–20
•It was you who condemned the upright and killed them; they offered you no resistance. 6

The coming of the Lord

1 Co 15:23n Dt 11:14
Now be patient, brothers, until the Lord's coming. Think of a farmer: how patiently he waits for the precious fruit of the ground until it has had the autumn rains [c] and the spring rains! 7
•You too must be patient; do not lose heart, because the Lord's coming will be soon. [d] 8
Mt 24:33par. Rm 2:6b 2 Co 6:2a Rv 1:3
•Do not make complaints against one another, brothers, so as not to be brought to judgement yourselves; the Judge is already to be seen waiting at the gates. 9
•For your example, brothers, in patiently putting up with persecution, take the prophets who spoke in the Lord's name; 10
Mt 5:11–12par.
•remember it is those who had perseverance that we say are the blessed ones. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and understood the Lord's purpose, realising that *the Lord is kind and compassionate.* 11
1:2–3,12 Ex 34:6+ Jb 42:10–17 Ps 103:8

Mt 5:34–37
Above all, my brothers, do not swear by heaven or by the earth or use any oaths at all. If you mean 'yes', you must say 'yes'; if you mean 'no', say 'no'. Otherwise you make yourselves liable to judgement. 12

Any one of you who is in trouble should pray; [e] anyone in good spirits should sing a psalm. 13
Tt 1:5c
•Any one of you who is ill should send for the elders of the church, 14
Mk 6:13 Ac 3:16*l* Mt 9:2par.
and they must anoint the sick person with oil in the name of the Lord [f] and pray over him.
•The prayer of faith will save the sick person and the Lord will raise him up again; and if he has committed any sins, he will be forgiven. 15
Pr 28:13d Si 4:26 1 Jn 1:8–10
•So confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another to be cured; [g] the heartfelt prayer of someone upright works very powerfully. 16
Ex 32:11e
•Elijah [h] was a human being as frail as ourselves— he prayed earnestly for it not to rain, and no rain fell for three and a half years; 17
1 K 17:1; 18:1,41seq. Rv 11:6
•then he prayed again and the sky gave rain and the earth gave crops. 18

Gn 6:1+ Mt 18:15 1 Jn 5:16 Tb 12:9 Pr 10:12 1 P 4:8
My brothers, if one of you strays away from the truth, and another brings him back to it, 19
•he may be sure [i] that anyone who can bring back a sinner from his erring ways will be saving his soul from death and *covering over many a sin.* 20

g. The wisdom theme of human frailty, Ps 39:5–7,11; 102:3; Ws 2:4; 5:9–14, which obliges a person to submit and trust to God.

5 a. The misfortunes of the rich will be apparent only at the Judgement, 5:7–9. We, however, are living already in the Last Days, cf. 2 Co 6:2a; cf. Is 5:8–10; Am 2:6–7; 8:4–8; Mt 6:19.

b. Perhaps an allusion to the acts of violence with which the rich oppressed the just, v. 6; cf. Ps 44:22; Ws 2:10–20; Jr 12:1–3.

c. 'rains', var. 'fruits'.

d. The expectation of the coming (*parousia*, 1 Co 15:23n) is the ultimate motive of Christian patience, 1:2–4,12; 1 Th 3:13; 1 P 4:7; 5:10. The comparison with the labourer recalls Mk 4:26–29.

e. The common factor in vv. 13–18 is prayer, with stress on the case of the sick and the sinner; then vv. 16 [b]–18, on the power of those who pray well.

f. om. 'of the Lord'. • Jm assumes that the practice of which he speaks is well known. In this anointing in the name of the Lord, with prayers said by the 'elders', Ac 11:30p, for the relief of illness and the remission of sins, the Church has seen the earliest form of the sacrament of Anointing of the Sick.

g. This mutual confession and prayer for each other, instead of being recommendations only to the sick, v. 15, are here urged on all Christians. Nothing special, however, may be deduced about sacramental confession.

h. The figure of Elijah was as popular with Christians as with Jews. Jm underlines that this man of prayer was like ourselves.

i. var. 'you can be sure'. • Fraternal love and pardon can bring back those who have strayed, *see* Mt 18:15,21–22k; 1 Th 5:14, and in return will bring advantage on the Day of Judgement to anyone who exercises them, 1 P 4:8; cf. Ezk 3:19; 33:9; Dn 12:3. So ends the letter, without the normal greeting.

1 PETER

THE FIRST LETTER OF PETER

Address. Greetings

1 1 Peter, apostle of Jesus Christ, to all those living as aliens [a] in the Dispersion [b] of
2 Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, who have been chosen, ·in
the foresight of God the Father, to be made holy by the Spirit, obedient to Jesus
Christ and sprinkled with his blood: [c] Grace and peace be yours in abundance.

Jn 7:35
Jm 1:1b
Rm 8:29
Ep 1:4
1 Th 4:3c
2 Th 2:13
Ex 24:6–8
Mt 26:28i

Introduction. The inheritance of Christians

3 Blessed be God [d] the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who in his great mercy has
given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from
4 the dead ·and into a heritage that can never be spoilt or soiled and never fade away.
5 It is reserved in heaven for you ·who are being kept safe by God's power through
faith until the salvation which has been prepared is revealed at the final point
of time. [e]

2 Co 1:3
Ep 1:3
1:23
Jn 3:5
Rm 1:4c
1 Jn 2:29;3:9
Mt 6:19–20par.
Col 1:5,12; 3:3–4
Ep 1:19seq.
1 Jn 3:2

Faithfulness to Christ and love of Christ

6 This is a great joy to you, even though for a short time yet you must bear all sorts of
7 trials; ·so that the worth of your faith, more valuable than gold, which is perishable
even if it has been tested by fire, may be proved—to your praise and glory and
8 honour when Jesus Christ is revealed. ·You have not seen him, yet you love him;
and still without seeing him you believe in him and so are already filled with a joy
9 so glorious that it cannot be described; ·and you are sure of the goal of your faith,
that is, the salvation of your souls. [f]

Jn 16:20
Heb 12:11
Jm 1:2–3
Ml 3:2–3
1 Co 3:13
·Rm 2:7
1 Jn 4:20

The hope of the prophets

10 This salvation was the subject of the search and investigation of the prophets who
11 spoke of the grace you were to receive, ·searching out the time and circumstances
for which the Spirit of Christ, [g] bearing witness in them, was revealing the sufferings
12 of Christ and the glories to follow them. ·It was revealed to them that it was for

Ac 11:27m
Ac 1:7*i*;2:23*o*
Is 52:13–53:12
Mt 13:16–17par.
Lk 18:31e

1 **a.** The world belongs to God (Ps 24:1); human beings live there as passing aliens (Lv 25:23) because at their death they must leave it (1 Ch 29:10–15; Ps 39:12seq.; 119:19). After the revelation of the resurrection of the dead (2 M 7:9c) this theme receives its complement: our true homeland is in heaven (Ph 3:20; Col 3:1–4; Heb 11:8–16; 13:14). On earth we live in exile (*paroikia*, the word from which 'parish' comes, 1:17; 2 Co 5:1–8) in the midst of a gentile world whose vices we must avoid (1 P 2:11; 4:2–4) just as the Jews of the Dispersion did.

b. Dispersion, *Diaspora*: convert Jews, Jm 1:1b; or simply Christians living among gentiles, 1 P 5:9.

c. Cf. Heb 9:18seq. The people promise to obey God's commandments (v. 7) and, to seal the covenant, Moses sprinkles them with the blood of the victims (v. 8). On the Christian use of this text with reference to the blood of Christ, *see* Mt 26:28; Heb 9:18seq.

d. The blessing formula inherited from the OT (Gn 14:19–20h; Lk 1:68; Rm 1:25; 2 Co 11:31), has become Christian as in Rm 9:5; 2 Co 1:3; Ep 1:3, and the benefits for which God is thanked with praises are tied to the person of Christ, most prominently his resurrection, Rm 1:4–5c.

e. The last age, the end of history, has begun; it will be completed by the 'appearance', or second coming of Jesus, the *parousia*, vv. 7,13; 4:13; 5:1; *see* 1 Co 1:7–8e.

f. Amid their persecutions, v. 8; 2:12,19; 3:13–17; 4:12–19, Christians draw from their faith in Christ and their love for him the joyful certainty that God is storing up salvation for them (for souls, i.e. persons, 1:22; 2:11; *see* 1 Co 15:44w).

g. The role of the prophets was to announce the mystery of Christ, v. 10. Their inspiration is attributed to the Spirit of Christ, *see* Lk 24:27,44; 1 Co 10:1–11,6d; just as is the preaching of the apostles, v. 12. Thus the unity of the two covenants is highlighted.

your sake and not their own that they were acting as servants delivering the
Rm 16:25† message which has now been announced to you by those who preached to you the
Ep 3:10+ gospel through the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even the angels long to catch a glimpse of these things.

The demands of the new life
Holiness of the newly baptised

Lk 12:35–40 Your minds, then, must be sober and ready for action; put all your hope in the 13
grace brought to you by the revelation of Jesus Christ. ·Do not allow yourselves 14
Rm 6:19 to be shaped by the passions of your old ignorance, [h] ·but as obedient children, be 15
Is 43:1 yourselves holy in all your activity, [i] after the model of the Holy One who calls us,
Mt 5:48 since scripture says, '*Be holy, for I am holy.*' ·And if you address as Father him 16, 17
Ac 9:13g who judges without favouritism according to each individual's deeds, live out the
1 Jn 3:3 time of your exile here in reverent awe. ·For you know that the price of your 18
Lv 19:2;17:1a ransom from the futile way of life handed down from your ancestors was paid, not
Heb 11:6c in anything perishable like silver or gold, ·but in precious blood as of a blameless 19
Dt 10:17f and spotless lamb, Christ. [j] ·He was marked out before the world was made, and 20
2 Co 5:6 was revealed at the final point of time for your sake. ·Through him you now have 21
Is 52:3 faith in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory for this very
1 Co 6:20;7:23 purpose—that your faith and hope should be in God. [k]

Regeneration by the Word

Jn 1:29v Since by your obedience to the truth you have purified yourselves so that you can 22
Rm 3:24–25,24j experience the genuine love of brothers, love each other intensely from the heart; [l]
Rv 5:9 for your new birth was not from any perishable seed but from imperishable 23
Jn 17:24 seed, the living and enduring Word of God. [m] ·For *all humanity is grass, and* 24
Rm 1:4c;1:16h; *all its beauty like the wild flower's. As grass withers, the flower fades,* ·*but the Word* 25
8:11g *of the Lord remains for ever.* And this Word is the Good News that has been
Ga 4:4 brought to you.
Heb 1:2
·Jn 17:17
Rm 1:5d
1:3
Jm 1:18
1 Jn 3:9;5:1
Dn 6:27
Jn 3:11e
·Is 40:6–8

Jm 1:21 2 Rid yourselves, then, of all spite, deceit, hypocrisy, envy and carping criticism. 1
1 Co 3:2 Like new-born babies all your longing should be for milk—the unadulterated 2
spiritual milk—which will help you to grow up to salvation, [n] ·at any rate if *you* 3
Ps 34:8 *have tasted that the Lord is good.*

The new priesthood

Ex 19:23 [b]He is the living stone, rejected by human beings but chosen by God and precious 4
Mt 21:42par. to him; set yourselves close to him ·so that you, too, may be living stones making a 5
Ac 4:11 spiritual house as a holy priesthood to offer the spiritual sacrifices made acceptable
Ep 2:20–22 to God through Jesus Christ. ·As scripture says: *Now I am laying a stone in Zion,* 6
Ex 19:6+ *a chosen, precious cornerstone* and *no one who relies on this will be brought to*
·Rm 1:9f *disgrace.* ·To you believers it brings honour. But for unbelievers, it is rather a *stone* 7
Is 28:16 *which the builders rejected that became a cornerstone,* ·*a stumbling stone, a rock to* 8
Rm 9:33;10:11 *trip people up.* They stumble over it because they do not believe in the Word; it
Ps 118:22 was the fate in store for them. [c]
Is 8:14seq.

Ex 19:5–6+ But you [d] are *a chosen race, a kingdom of priests, a holy nation, a people to be a* 9
Is 43:20–21 *personal possession* to sing the praises of God who called you out of the darkness
Ac 26:18 into his wonderful light. ·Once you were *a non-people* and now you are the People 10
Rm 3:24j of God; once you were *outside his pity*; now you *have received pity.*
Ep 1:14o
Col 1:12–13
Ho 1:6–9; 2:3,25

The obligations of Christians: towards unbelievers

Gn 23:4 I urge you, my dear friends, as *strangers and nomads,* [e] to keep yourselves free 11
Ps 39:12 from the disordered natural inclinations that attack the soul. ·Always behave 12
Heb 11:13 honourably among gentiles [f] so that they can see for themselves what moral lives
·Ga 5:24 you lead, and when the day of reckoning comes, give thanks to God for the things
Jm 4:1 which now make them denounce you as criminals.
Mt 5:16
Ex 3:16h
Is 10:3

Towards civil authority

Rm 13:1–7
Tt 3:1

13 For the sake of the Lord, accept the authority of every human institution: [g] the
14 emperor, as the supreme authority, ·and the governors as commissioned by him to
15 punish criminals and praise those who do good. ·It is God's will that by your good
16 deeds you should silence the ignorant talk of fools. ·You are slaves of no one
except God, so behave like free people, and never use your freedom as a cover for Ga 5:13
Jude 4
17 wickedness. ·Have respect for everyone and love for your fellow-believers; fear Pr 24:21
God and honour the emperor. Mt 22:21par.

Towards masters

18 Slaves, you should obey your masters respectfully, not only those who are kind Ep 6:5–8+
19 and reasonable but also those who are difficult to please. ·You see, there is merit [h] 3:14;4:14
if, in awareness of God, you put up with the pains of undeserved punishment; Jm 5:7–11
20 but what glory is there in putting up with a beating after you have done something
wrong? The merit in the sight of God is in putting up with it patiently when you are
punished for doing your duty.

21 This, in fact, is what you were called to do, because Christ suffered [i] for you and Mt 11:29;16:2
22 left an example for you to follow in his steps. [j] ·He had done nothing wrong, and 2 Th 3:7b
23 *had spoken no deceit.* ·He was insulted and did not retaliate with insults; when he Jn 8:46
24 was suffering he made no threats but put his trust in the upright judge. ·He was Is 53:9
bearing our sins in his own body on the cross, so that we might die to our sins and Mt 5:39;26:62
25 live for uprightness; *through his bruises you have been healed.* ·You had *gone astray* Rm 12:19
like sheep [k] but now you have returned to the shepherd and guardian of Is 53: 9,12
your souls. Rm 6:11,18
2 Co 5:21
Is 53:5,6
Ezk 34:1a

h. They had crossed over from ignorance to knowledge of God, Ps 78:6; Jr 10:25; 1 Th 4:5, and their behaviour, 1 P 1:18; Ep 4:17–19, had thereby been completely transformed.

i. All must imitate the holiness of God (Lv 19:2). It is by loving others (cf. Lv 19:15), explains Jesus, that the Christian does that, is distinguished from gentiles, and becomes a child of God (Mt 5:43–48 and par.). But whence comes the strength to do this? The apostolic tradition reverses the situation and understands that it is because we are children of God (1:23m) that we can imitate God (1:14–16; Ep 5:1seq.; 1 Jn 3:2–10), for the God who is love (1 Jn 4:8) becomes the principle of our activity. Paul sees in this imitation of God the restoration of the work of creation (Ep 4.24; Col 3: 10–13).

j. Or 'by the precious blood of the Christ, this spotless lamb'.

k. The redemption, Rm 3:25k, by the blood of Christ (Mt 26:28i; Rv 1:5; 5:9) and the resurrection were the outcome of the eternal plan of the Father, 1 P 1:20, who in this way consecrated his new people, the believers, *see* 1 Th 1:7; 2:10,13. In 1:13–21 there are hints of a baptismal catechesis or even baptismal liturgy.

l. var. 'from a pure heart'.

m. Or 'the Word of the living and enduring God'. Seed of life, the Word of God is the principle of our divine rebirth and gives us the power to act according to the will of God, 1:22–25; Jn 1:12seq.; Jm 1:18n; cf. 1 P 2:13seq.; 5:18, because it is endowed with power, 1 Co 1:18; 1 Th 2:13; Heb 4:12. For Jm the Word is still the Law of Moses, 1:25; for 1 P it is the gospel-preaching, 1 P 1:25 (cf. Mt 13:18–23p); for Jn it is the Son of God in person, 1:1a. Paul sees in the Spirit the principle which makes us the children of God, Rm 6:4a, but the Spirit is the dynamism of the Word.

2 **a.** Birth, 1:23m, is followed by growth, due also to the Word on which Christians feed so avidly.

b. The allusions are to Ex 19, and the covenant constituting Israel a holy people, at Sinai, though the people were forbidden to go near the mountain itself. The new holy people are founded on another Rock, the living stone, to which they may, as a holy priesthood, come close. Instead of the sacrifices which sealed the old covenant, Ex 24:5–8, Christians offer spiritual sacrifices, 1 P 2:5. • The imagery of growth gives way to that of building. Jesus himself had, Mt 21:42 and par., compared himself to the stone rejected, Ps 118:22, and then chosen by God, Is 28:16. Christians, living stones, v. 5, like Christ, v. 4, are built into a spiritual dwelling, 1 Co 3:16–17; 2 Co 6:16; Ep 2:20–22, where they pay God worship worthy of him, Jn 2:21i; Rm 1:9g; Heb 7:27g.

c. lit. 'to this indeed they were appointed'. By rejecting the gospel the Jews have lost their prerogatives, which have been transferred to Christians, 3:9; Ac 28:26–28; cf. Jn 12:37seq. These texts need to be completed by Rm 11:32; 1 Tm 2:4; and this text does not prove the final, eschatological rejection of the Jews.

d. Another series of biblical allusions gives to the Church the titles of the chosen people, to underline its relationship with God and its responsibility in the world, *see* Rv 1:6; 5:10; 20:6. By belonging to Christ this nation gains a unity which defies all classification, *see* Ga 3:28; Rv 5:9.

e. The quotation from Ps 39:12 also occurs in Heb 11:13 and may have been in regular use among early Christian teachers as a conventional reminder that the Christian's life on earth is to be lived as a life of exile. But the reference here may be only to the readers, as living 'in the Dispersion' surrounded by gentiles, *see* 1:1,17; Ph 3:20; Col 3:1–4.

f. By belonging to another city, 1:1a, Christians are not freed from all earthly obligations. Their condition as children of God, citizens of heaven, imposes on them numerous duties which will gain for them the good opinion of their detractors, vv. 12,15.

g. Or 'every human creature'. In both versions opposition to the gentile idea of the divinised monarch may be perceived. The whole of the following passage, 2:13–3:12, is addressed to various social categories, cf. Ep 5:22–6:9; Col 3:18–4:1; Ti 2:1–10.

h. add. 'in the sight of God', cf. v. 20.

i. var. 'died', cf. 3:18.

j. The 'grace' of putting up with injustice, vv. 19–20, is based on the example of Christ, *see* Jn 13:15; 1 Co 11:1; Ph 2:5; 2 Th 3:7b. vv. 21–25, with their allusions to Is 53, could come from a hymn. Christians, ill-treated, should remember Jesus crucified for our sins, 3:18; Ac 2:23, innocent and patient, Lk 23:41; Jn 8:46; 2 Co 5:21; Heb 4:15.

k. var. 'you were like stray sheep'. These sheep are now in the flock of which Jesus is the shepherd, 5:2–4; Jn 10, and the *episkopos*, the inspector or overseer, cf. Ti 1:5.

In marriage

Gn 3:16d
Ep 5:22–24
Col 3:18
1:25
1 Co 7:12–16
Is 3:16seq.+
1 Tm 2:9–15

3 In the same way, you wives should be obedient to your husbands. Then if there 1
are some husbands who do not believe the Word, they may find themselves
won over, without a word spoken, by the way their wives behave, ·when they see 2
the reverence and purity of your way of life. ·Your adornment should be not an 3
exterior one, consisting of braided hair or gold jewellery or fine clothing, ·but the 4
interior disposition of the heart, consisting in the imperishable quality of a gentle
and peaceful spirit, so precious in the sight of God. ·That was how the holy women 5
of the past dressed themselves attractively—they hoped in God and were submis-
Gn 18:12 sive to their husbands; ·like Sarah, who was obedient to Abraham, and called him 6
Ga 4:28 her *lord.* You are now her children, as long as you live good lives free from fear
and worry.

Ep 5:25–33
Col 3:19

In the same way, husbands must always treat their wives with consideration in 7
their life together, respecting a woman as one who, though she may be the weaker
partner, is equally an heir[a] to the generous gift of life. This will prevent anything
from coming in the way of your prayers.

Love the brothers

Rm 12:14–18
Mt 5:38seq.,
43seq.
Lk 6:28

Finally:[b] you should all agree among yourselves and be sympathetic; love the 8
brothers, have compassion and be self-effacing. ·Never repay one wrong with 9
another, or one abusive word with another; instead, repay with a blessing. That is
what you are called to do, so that you inherit a blessing. ·For 10

Ps 34:12–16

Who among you delights in life,
longs for time to enjoy prosperity?
Guard your tongue from evil,
your lips from any breath of deceit.
Turn away from evil and do good, seek peace and pursue it. 11
For the eyes of the Lord are on the upright, 12
his ear turned to their cry.
But the Lord's face is set against those who do evil.

In persecution

Mt 5:10
Is 8:12
Pr 3:25
Mt 10:26–31
Is 8:13

No one can hurt you if you are determined to do only what is right; ·and blessed 13, 14
are you if you have to suffer for being upright. *Have no dread of them; have no*
fear.[c] ·Simply *proclaim*[d] *the Lord*[e] Christ *holy* in your hearts, and always have 15
your answer ready for people who ask you the reason for the hope that you have.
But give it with courtesy and respect and with a clear conscience, so that those 16
who slander your good behaviour in Christ may be ashamed of their accusations.
And if it is the will of God that you should suffer, it is better to suffer for doing 17
right than for doing wrong.

The resurrection and the descent into hell[f]

2:21–24
Is 53:11
Ac 3:14i
Rm 5:6;6:10
Heb 9:26–28
Rm 1:3–4,4c
2 P 3:9
Gn 7:7
2 P 2:5
Rm 6:4seq.,4a
Col 2:12–13
Heb 10:22seq.
1 Co 15:24p
Ac 2:33t
Ep 1:20–21
Col 2:15m

Christ himself died once and for all for sins,[g] the upright for the sake of the guilty, 18
to lead us to God. In the body he was put to death, in the spirit he was raised to life,
and, in the spirit, he went to preach to the spirits in prison.[h] ·They refused to 19, 20
believe long ago, while God patiently waited to receive them, in Noah's time when
the ark was being built. In it only a few, that is eight souls, were saved through
water. ·It is the baptism corresponding to[i] this water which saves you now—not 21
the washing off of physical dirt[j] but the pledge[k] of a good conscience given to God
through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ·who has entered heaven and is at God's 22
right hand, with angels, ruling forces and powers subject to him.[l]

The break with sin

2:21;3:18

4 As Christ has undergone bodily suffering, you too should arm yourselves with 1
the same conviction, that anyone who has undergone bodily suffering has

broken with sin, •because for the rest of life on earth that person is ruled not by human passions but only by the will of God. •You spent quite long enough in the past living the sort of life that gentiles choose to live, behaving in a debauched way, giving way to your passions, drinking to excess, having wild parties and drunken orgies and sacrilegiously worshipping false gods. •So people are taken aback that you no longer hurry off with them to join this flood which is rushing down to ruin, [a] and then abuse you for it. •They will have to answer for it before the judge who is to judge the living and the dead. •And this was why the gospel was brought to the dead as well, [b] so that, though in their bodies they had undergone the judgement that faces all humanity, in their spirit they might enjoy the life of God.

Rm 6:2,7 Rm 7:14seq. 1 Jn 2:16–17 Tt 3:3 Ep 4:17–18 Rm 1:29q

Ac 10:42 2 Tm 4:1 3:19h Rm 1:9f 2 Co 5:5+

The revelation of Christ is close

The end of all things is near, [c] so keep your minds calm and sober for prayer. Above all preserve an intense love for each other, since *love covers over many a sin*. •Welcome each other into your houses without grumbling. •Each one of you has received a special grace, so, like good stewards responsible for all these varied graces of God, put it at the service of others. [d] •If anyone is a speaker, let it be as the words of God, [e] if anyone serves, [f] let it be as in strength granted by God; so that in everything God may receive the glory, through Jesus Christ, since to him alone belong all glory and power for ever and ever. [g] Amen.

1:5–7;4:17 2 Co 6:2a Tb 12:9 Jm 5:20i Rm 12:6–8 1 Co 12:4–11 Lk 12:42

1 Co 10:31 Rm 9:5;16:27n

Suffering for Christ

My dear friends, do not be taken aback at the testing by fire which is taking place among you, as though something strange were happening to you; •but in so far as you share in the sufferings of Christ, be glad, so that you may enjoy a much greater gladness when his glory is revealed. [h] •If you are insulted for bearing Christ's name, blessed are you, for *on* you *rests the Spirit of God*, [i] the Spirit of glory.

1:7 Mt 5:11–12 Rm 5:3–5 Ph 3:10–11h •Jm 1:2–3 •1:21 Col 3:4 •Is 11:2 LXX

3 **a.** '(she) is equally an heir', var. 'you are equally heirs'. 'the generous gift', var. 'the varied and generous gift'. Husband and wife have received the same gift from God which demands mutual respect and devotion in love, cf. Ep 5:33; Col 3:19, and makes shared prayer possible and effective.

b. This last exhortation sums up all the others: brotherhood, 2:17, union of hearts, *see* Rm 12:9–13; forgiveness of enemies, Mt 5:44 and par.; Rm 12:14,17–21; 1 Th 5:15.

c. om. 'or to worry about them'.

d. lit. 'sanctify'.

e. 'Lord'; var. 'God'. 'hope', add. 'and faith'. • Christians bear witness to their adherence to Christ, cf. Lk 12:11–12; 1 Tm 6:12–15; 2 Tm 4:17, before gentiles who have no hope, Ep 2:12; 1 Th 4:13. The opportunity occurs through local persecutions.

f. This paragraph, 3:18–4:6, contains the elements of an ancient profession of faith: death of Christ, descent to hell, resurrection, enthronement at the right hand of God, and judgement of the living and the dead.

g. om. 'to God'.

h. Probably alludes to the descent of Christ to Hades between his death and resurrection, Mt 12:40; Ac 2:24,31; Rm 10:7; Ep 4:9; Heb 13:20. He went there 'in spirit', or 'according to the Spirit', Rm 1:4c, his 'flesh' being dead on the cross, Rm 8:3seq. The 'spirits in prison' to whom he 'preached' (or 'proclaimed') salvation are identified by some writers as the chained demons mentioned in the *Book of Enoch* (some texts are corrected so as to make Enoch, and not Christ, preach to them). These spirits have thus been put under the authority of Christ as *Kyrios*, v. 22, cf. Ep 1:21seq.; 4:9; Ph 2:8–10, and this subjection to him is to be confirmed later on, 1 Co 15:24seq. Others interpret this passage of the souls of the dead who, punished at the time of the Flood, are nevertheless called by the 'patience of God' to life, cf. 4:6. Mt 27:52seq. has a similar allusion to Christ's deliverance, between his death and his resurrection, of the 'holy ones', that is the upright who were waiting for him, cf. Heb 11:39seq.; 12:23, to enter the eschatological 'holy city'.

i. lit. '. . . that is the antitype to', the reality prefigured by the 'type' (*see* 1 Co 10:6d). In this case the type is the passing through the waters by means of the ark.

j. As so few were saved from drowning, the Flood is taken to symbolise the OT purificatory rites that were, almost without exception, limited to an *external* 'bodily' purity, whereas the baptism by which a person is reborn can have no limits to its efficacy.

k. The 'pledge' (alternative translation: 'the request') made by a convert at his baptism.

l. 'Ruling forces and powers' referred to civil dignitaries, Lk 12:11; 20:20; Ti 3:1. The court of heaven is compared to an earthly court, Ep 3:10; Col 2:10. These 'ruling forces' had charge especially of judicial matters, which explains the role of accuser which Satan had before God, Jb 1; Zc 3:1–5; Rv 12:7–12. Conversely, Jesus will be called our 'advocate' with God, 1 Jn 2:1–2.

4 **a.** lit. 'this flood of un-salvation', by contrast to the saving Flood, cf. 3:20. Alternative translation: 'this flood of debauchery'.

b. For the proclamation of the gospel to the dead, *see* 3:19h.

c. The closeness of the *parousia* is a spur to the Christian, 1:5–7; 4:17; 5:10; Mt 24:42; 1 Co 16:22i; Jm 5:8d.

d. All the gifts (lit. 'charismata') are for the service of the Church as a whole, 3:7; 1 Co 12:1–11 and notes; cf. 1 Co 4:1–2.

e. This includes the inspired utterances of prophecy and glossolalia, *see* Ac 2:4g; 11:27m; 1 Co 14:2–19, but also the functions of teaching and exhorting, Rm 12:7–8, and even the preaching or defence of the gospel.

f. Presumably the various forms of help, Rm 12:7, and particularly liturgical service.

g. This doxology is the only one in the NT which is addressed to God *through* Jesus Christ and then *to* Christ himself, *see* Rm 16:27m.

h. Those who through baptism have received a share in the sufferings of Christ, 2 Co 1:5,7; Ph 3:10, are assured also of a share in his glory, 1:11; 5:1; Rm 8:17; 2 Co 4:17; Ph 3:11.

i. add. 'and power'; add. at end of verse '(the Spirit) blasphemed by them but honoured by you'. A new trinitarian formula, 1:2c.

None of you should ever deserve to suffer for being a murderer, a thief, a 15
Ac 11:26*l* criminal or an informer; ·but if any one of you should suffer for being a Christian, 16
then there must be no shame but thanksgiving to God for bearing this name. ·The 17
Jr 25:29 time has come for the judgement to begin at the household of God; and if it begins
Lk 23:31
Pr 11:31 LXX with us, what will be the end for those who refuse to believe God's gospel? ·*If it is* 18
hard for the upright to be saved, what will happen to the wicked and to sinners?
So even those whom God allows to suffer should commit themselves to a Creator 19
who is trustworthy, and go on doing good.[j]

Instructions: to the elders

Ac 11:30p **5** I urge the elders[a] among you, as a fellow-elder myself and a witness[b] to the 1
sufferings of Christ, and as one who is to have a share in the glory that is to be
Jn 21:15–17 revealed:[c] ·give a shepherd's care to the flock of God that is entrusted to you: 2
Ac 20:28*q*
Col 3:4 watch over it, not simply as a duty but gladly, as God wants;[d] not for sordid money,
1 Tm 3:8 but because you are eager to do it. ·Do not lord it over the group which is in your 3
Tt 1:7
2 Co 1:24 charge, but be an example for the flock.[e] ·When the chief shepherd[f] appears, you 4
Ezk 34:1a
1 Co 4:16+; will be given the unfading crown of glory.
Tt 2:7–8

Is 40:10–11
1 Co 9:25+ **To the faithful**

1 Jn 2:12–14 In the same way, younger people,[g] be subject to the elders. Humility towards one 5
Jb 22:29 another must be the garment you all wear constantly, because *God opposes the*
Pr 3:34 LXX
Jn 13:14 *proud but accords his favour to the humble*. ·Bow down, then, before the power of 6
Ph 2:8–9
Jm 4:6–10 God now, so that he may raise you up in due time; ·*unload* all *your burden on to* 7
Ps 55:22
Si 2:1–18 *him*, since he is concerned about you. ·Keep sober and alert, because your enemy 8
Mt 6:25seq. the devil[h] is on the prowl like a *roaring lion*, looking for someone to devour.
·Ps 22:13
1 Co 16:1 Stand up to him, strong in faith and in the knowledge that it is the same kind of 9
Ep 6:11
1 Th 2:14 suffering that the community of your brothers throughout the world is undergoing.
Rm 8:18
2 Co 4:17 You will have to suffer only for a little while: the God of all grace who called you 10
1 Th 2:12;5:24 to eternal glory in Christ will restore you, he will confirm, strengthen and support
4:11
Rv 1:8;11:17 you. ·His[i] power lasts for ever and ever. Amen. 11

Last words. Greetings

Ac 15:22x I write these few words to you through Silvanus, who is a trustworthy brother, to 12
encourage you and attest that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it!

2 Jn 1b Your sister in Babylon, who is with you among the chosen,[j] sends you greetings; 13
Rv 17:5
Ac 12:12d so does my son, Mark.

2 Co 13:12d Greet one another with a kiss of love. 14

Peace to you all who are in Christ.

j. Here God is trustworthy, 1 Co 1:9f, as Creator, Gn 1:1a, which implies his omnipotence and his command of events. Persecuted Christians can base their unshakeable hope on this thought, cf. Ps 31:6; Lk 23:46.

5 **a.** These elders are to be identified with the 'presbyters' of Ti 1:5c, *see* 1 P 5:5g. But the term keeps also its etymological sense, contrasting with the 'younger men' of 5:5.

b. Not necessarily a claim as apostle, 1:1, to have been present at the Passion of Christ; it could also be a claim to have borne witness to Christ by his own sufferings.

c. At the *parousia*, *see* 1:5,13; 4:7,17; 5:10.

d. om. 'watch over it' and 'as God wants'.

e. om. 'over the group which is in your charge'. Jesus had already warned his disciples against the instinct to domineer, Mt 20:25–28 and par.; 23:8; cf. 2 Co 1:24; 4:5; 1 Th 2:7.

f. The figure of the shepherd, for Jesus, is frequent in the later writings in the NT, Jn 10:11f; Heb 13:20; and is used in 1 P 2:25. Only here is he called the chief shepherd, when the work of a shepherd has been defined in a context of service.

g. Possibly young people (often turbulent, especially in groups) as opposed to adults, cf. Ep 6:1–4; Col 3:20–21; 1 Tm 4:12; 5:1; possibly the newly baptised of the body of the faithful as opposed to the 'elders', 5:1.

h. Or the 'Accuser' according to the etymology which corresponds to the role of prosecuting counsel here attributed to the devil, *see* 3:22*l*; Mt 4:1c; 24:42,45w.

i. add. 'glory and'.

j. The title 'chosen one', in the feminine, *see* 2 Jn 1,13, designates the Church of the chosen, 1:1–2; 2:9. • 'Babylon' designates Rome, *see* Rv 14:8; 16:19; 17:5.

2 PETER

THE SECOND LETTER OF PETER

Greetings

1 Simeon Peter, servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have received a faith as precious as our own, given through the saving justice of our God and
2 Saviour Jesus Christ.[a] ·Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of our Lord.[b]

Ac 15:14+
Rm 1:17
‖Jude 2
Ph 3:8–10
Col 2:6

The generosity of God

3 By his divine power, he has lavished on us all the things we need for life and for true devotion, through the knowledge of him who has called us by his own glory
4 and goodness.[c] ·Through these,[d] the greatest and priceless promises have been lavished on us,[e] that through them[f] you should share the divine nature[g] and escape
5 the corruption rife in the world through disordered passion. ·With this in view, do your utmost to support your faith with goodness, goodness with understanding,
6 understanding with self-control, self-control with perseverance, perseverance
7 with devotion, ·devotion with kindness to the brothers, and kindness to the
8 brothers with love. ·The possession and growth of these qualities will prevent your
9 knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ from being ineffectual or unproductive. ·But without them,[h] a person is blind or short sighted, forgetting how the sins of the
10 past were washed away. ·Instead of this, brothers, never allow your choice or
11 calling to waver; then there will be no danger of your stumbling, ·for in this way you will be given the generous gift of entry to the eternal kingdom[i] of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Ep 3:16–19
Jn 1:14n
Jn 1:12
Ac 17:28
2 Co 3:18
Jn 1:10g
1 Jn 2:15seq.; 5:19
Ga 5:22+
1:2
2 Th 1:11
1 Jn 3:6d
•Lk 1:33

The apostolic witness

12 That is why I will always go on recalling the same truths[j] to you, even though you
13 already know them and are firmly fixed in these truths. ·I am sure it is my duty, as
14 long as I am in this tent, to keep stirring you up with reminders, ·since I know the time for me to lay aside this tent is coming soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ made

‖Jude 5
1 Jn 2:21
Is 38:12
Ws 9:15
2 Co 5:1

1 a. Or 'of our God and of the Saviour Jesus Christ'.

b. var. 'through knowing God and Jesus (or Jesus Christ) our Lord'. All through this letter it is Christ who is proposed as the object of a Christian's knowledge, 1:3,8; 2:20; 3:18, cf. Ho 2:22v; Jn 17:3; Ph 3:10. This knowledge includes moral discernment and the practice of virtue, vv. 5–6,8.

c. 'glory' here refers to the miracles done by Jesus as a sign of his divinity, *see* Jn 1:14n, but in particular it refers to the transfiguration, 2 P 1:16–18. 'goodness' could refer to his powers both natural and miraculous. These two divine attributes give all that is needed for a life in accord with the demands of piety, 1 Tm 4:7d.

d. The 'glory' and 'goodness' of Christ, the links between the call received and the promised future, cf. 1 Tm 4:8.

e. 'us', var. 'you'. • What has been promised is the 'Day of the Lord', *see* 3:4,9–10,12–13.

f. i.e. as a result of the glory and goodness of Christ.

g. An expression of Gk origin, unique in the Bible and surprising by its impersonal tone. The author expresses by it the fullness of divine life in Christ, the communication by God of a life which is his own. For the basic idea *see* e.g. Jn 1:12; 14:20; 15:4–5; Rm 6:5; 1 Co 1:9f; 1 Jn 1:3b. It is one of the starting-points for the doctrine of 'deification' in the Gk Fathers.

h. This is the same sort of warning against Gnosticism that is given in the Johannine letters, *see* 1 Jn 1:8f. Gnostics claimed to know God without keeping his commandments.

i. This, like 1:4; 3:4,9–10, looks forward to the *parousia*. The kingdom of Christ is also that of the Father, Ep 5:5; 2 Tm 4:1; Rv 11:15.

j. Cf. 1 P 1:10–12. The reminder concerns the foundations of Christian faith and the *parousia*: Christ and the apostles, vv. 14–18, then the prophets, vv. 19–21.

Jn 21:18–19 clear to me. ·And I shall take great care that after my own departure you will still 15
have a means to recall these things to mind.

1 Co 15:23n When we told you about the power and the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, we 16
Lk 9:31–32par. Jn 1:14 were not slavishly repeating [k] cleverly invented myths; no, we had seen his majesty
with our own eyes. [l] ·He was honoured and glorified by God the Father, when a 17
Mt 17:5par. voice came to him from the transcendent Glory, *This is my Son, the Beloved; he*
enjoys my favour. ·We ourselves heard this voice from heaven, when we were with 18
him on the holy mountain. [m]

The value of prophecy

So we have confirmation of the words of the prophets; [n] and you will be right to pay 19
attention to it as to a lamp for lighting a way through the dark, until the dawn
Lk 1:7–8 Rv 2:28t comes and the morning star rises in your minds. ·At the same time, we must 20
Ac 3:21 2 Tm 3:16 recognise that the interpretation of scriptural prophecy is never a matter for the
1 P 1:10–12 individual. ·For no prophecy ever came from human initiative. When people spoke 21
for God it was the Holy Spirit that moved them. [o]

False teachers [a]

Dt 13:2–6 3:3c Mt 24:24 ‖Jude 4 Rm 3:24j Ac 9:2b Is 52:5 Rm 2:24

2 As there were false prophets in the past history of our people, so you too will 1
have your false teachers, who will insinuate their own disruptive views and, by
disowning the Lord who bought them freedom, will bring upon themselves speedy
destruction. ·Many will copy their debauched behaviour and the Way of Truth will 2
be brought into disrepute on their account. ·In their greed they will try to make a 3
profit out of you with untrue tales. But the judgement made upon them long ago is
not idle, and the destruction awaiting them is forever on the watch. [b]

Lessons of the past

Gn 6:17 Mt 8:29 ‖Jude 6 Ws 10:4 1 P 3:20 Gn 19 Ws 10:6–8 Si 16:7–8 Mt 10:15par. ‖Jude 7 2 Th 1:5–10 Rm 2:6b Jude 8

When angels sinned, God did not spare them: [c] he sent them down into the 4
underworld and consigned them to the dark abyss to be held there until the
Judgement. ·He did not spare the world in ancient times: he saved only Noah, 5
the preacher of uprightness, along with seven others, when he sent the Flood over
a world of sinners. ·He condemned the cities of Sodom and Gemorrah by reducing 6
them to ashes [d] as a warning to future sinners; ·but rescued Lot, an upright man 7
who had been sickened by the debauched way in which these vile people behaved—
for that upright man, living among them, was outraged in his upright soul by the 8
crimes that he saw and heard every day. ·All this shows that the Lord is well able to 9
rescue the good from their trials, and hold the wicked for their punishment until
the Day of Judgement, ·especially those who follow the desires of their corrupt 10
human nature and have no respect for the Lord's authority. [e]

The punishment to come

‖Jude 8–10 ‖Jude 12 Nb 22:2b ‖Jude 11 Rv 2:14–15 Nb 22:28–33 ‖Jude 12–13 Ps 49:12–14

Such self-willed people with no reverence are not afraid of offending against the
glorious ones, [f] ·but the angels in their greater strength and power make no 11
complaint or accusation against them in the Lord's presence. ·But these people 12
speak evil of what they do not understand; they are like brute beasts, born only to
be caught and killed, and like beasts they will be destroyed, being injured in return
for the injuries they have inflicted. ·Debauchery even by day they make their 13
pleasure; [g] they are unsightly blots, and amuse themselves by their trickery even
when they are sharing your table; ·with their eyes always looking for adultery, 14
people with an insatiable capacity for sinning, they will seduce any but the most
stable soul. Where greed is concerned they are at their peak of fitness. They are
under a curse. ·They have left the right path and wandered off to follow the path of 15
Balaam son of Bosor, [h] who set his heart on a dishonest reward, but soon had his
fault pointed out to him: ·a dumb beast of burden, speaking with a human voice, 16
put a stop to the madness of the prophet.

People like this are dried-up springs, fogs swirling in the wind, and the gloom of 17

darkness is stored up for them. •With their high-sounding but empty talk they
tempt back people who have scarcely[i] escaped from those who live in error, by
playing on the disordered desires of their human nature and by debaucheries. ‖Jude 16
They may promise freedom[j] but are themselves slaves to corruption; because if Jn 8:34
anyone lets himself be dominated by anything, then he is a slave to it; •and anyone Rm 6:16–17
who has escaped the pollution of the world by coming to know our Lord and
Saviour Jesus Christ, and who then allows himself to be entangled[k] and mastered
by it a second time, ends up by being worse than he was before. •It would have Mt 12:45par.
been better for them never to have learnt the way of uprightness, than to learn it
and then desert the holy commandment that was entrusted to them.[l] •What they 1 Co 11:2+
have done is exactly as the proverb rightly says: *The dog goes back to its vomit* and: Pr 26:11
As soon as the sow has been washed, it wallows in the mud.

The Day of the Lord; the prophets and the apostles

3 My dear friends, this is the second[a] letter I have written to you, trying to
awaken in you by my reminders an unclouded understanding. •Remember ‖Jude 17
what was said in the past by the holy prophets and the command of the Lord and 1:18–20
Saviour given by your apostles.

False teachers

First of all, do not forget[b] that in the final days[c] there will come sarcastic scoffers 1:16;2:1
whose life is ruled by their passions. •'What has happened to the promise of his 1 Tm 4:1a
coming?' they will say, 'Since our Fathers[d] died everything has gone on just as it ‖Jude 18
has since the beginning of creation!' •They deliberately ignore the fact that long Is 5:19
ago there were the heavens and the earth, formed out of water and through water Gn 1:2,6–9
by the Word of God,[e] •and that it was through these same factors that the world of Gn 7–9
those days was destroyed by the floodwaters. •It is the same Word which is Mt 24:38–39
reserving the present heavens and earth for fire, keeping them till the Day of Mt 3:12j
Judgement and of the destruction of sinners. Rm 2:6b

But there is one thing, my dear friends, that you must never forget: that with the
Lord, a day is like a thousand years, and *a thousand years are like a day*. •The Lord Ps 90:4
is not being slow in carrying out his promises, as some people think he is; rather is Si 35:19
he being patient with you, wanting nobody to be lost and everybody to be brought Hab 2:2–3
to repentance.[f] •The Day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then with a roar Lk 18:7
•Ezk 18:23+
Rm 2:4–5
1 P 3:20
Mt 24:43par.
1 Th 5:2

k. This is another warning against Gnostics who had a doctrine of the *parousia* based not on logical proofs, but on an elaborate mythological system, cf. 3:4seq. Peter and the apostles pass on facts of which they are eyewitnesses, *see* Lk 1:2; Ac 1:8k; 1 Jn 1:1–3, and which the Father himself has confirmed.

l. At the transfiguration.

m. 'holy mountain' should perhaps be taken as Zion, Ps 2:6; Is 11:9, or as a suggestion that the mountain of transfiguration was the antitype of Sinai.

n. The transfiguration is a preliminary glimpse of scriptural prophecy being fulfilled.

o. The way in which the inspiration of the scriptures by the Spirit, 2 Tm 3:15–16,16e, is mentioned suggests that the reading of scripture also is done under the guidance of the Spirit and the apostolic tradition.

2 **a.** All this passage 2:1 to 3:3 echoes Jude, although the two developments differ in details.

b. These false teachers have already been condemned, *see* Jude 4.

c. The antediluvian world.

d. om. 'to extinction'.

e. All these events show a stability in God's justice which will remain unchanged at the Last Judgement, vv. 10–22.

f. The angels. These false teachers usurp the right to judge them, which belongs to God alone, Rm 12:19; 1 P 2:23.

g. var. 'happy to give themselves up to debauchery in broad daylight'.

h. var. 'Beor', *see* Nb 22:5.

i. The reference is to the 'unstable souls' of 2:14; many of them copy the shameful behaviour of the false teachers, 2:2.

j. Faith in Christ begets right conduct and true liberty, Rm 6:15g; Jm 1:25o; 1 P 2:16. By contrast, the heretics, on the plea of liberty, absolve themselves from the moral law, *see* Jude 4. But sin is a slavery, *see* Jn 8:34; Rm 6:16–17.

k. This refers to those who have been seduced by the false teachers, not to the teachers themselves.

l. Better never to have known faith, Jude 3, with all its demands, than to abandon it.

3 **a.** Alludes probably to 1 P.

b. The prediction that follows seems to be based more on the teaching of the apostles than on OT prophecy, cf. Ac 20:29; 2 Tm 3:1–5. It fits into Jude 18 better than it fits here.

c. That heretics should exist is itself proof that the Last Days are near, Mt 24:24; Ac 20:29–31; 2 Th 2:3–4,9; 1 Tm 4:1.

d. The Christians of the first generation.

e. God created the world by his Word. His Word will play a similar part in the final catastrophe. God does not need to submit to the so-called laws of the universe.

f. God's mercy is an alternative explanation for the alleged delay of the *parousia*, cf. Ws 11:23seq.; 12:8d.

Mt 24:29o
Rv 20:11;21:1
the sky will vanish, the elements will catch fire and melt away, the earth and all that it contains will be burned up. [g]

Fresh call to holiness. Doxology

Since everything is coming to an end like this, what holy and saintly lives you 11
Ac 3:19–20 should be living ·while you wait for the Day of God to come, and try to hasten its 12
Is 34:4
Heb 12:27g coming: on that Day the sky will dissolve in flames and the elements melt in the
heat. ·What we are waiting for, relying on his promises, is the new heavens and 13
Is 60:21;65:17;
66:22
Rm 8:19j new earth, where uprightness will be at home. ·So then, my dear friends, while you 14
Rv 21:1,27 are waiting, do your best to live blameless and unsullied lives so that he will find
‖Jude 24 you at peace. ·Think of our Lord's patience as your opportunity to be saved; our 15
1 Tm 1:15–16 brother Paul, who is so dear to us, told you this when he wrote to you with the
wisdom that he was given. ·He makes this point too in his letters as a whole 16
wherever he touches on these things. In all his letters there are of course some
passages which are hard to understand, [h] and these are the ones that uneducated
and unbalanced people distort, in the same way as they distort the rest of scrip-
Heb 2:1 ture [i]—to their own destruction. ·Since you have been forewarned about this, my 17
dear friends, be careful that you do not come to the point of losing the firm ground
that you are standing on, carried away by the errors of unprincipled people.
Instead, continue to grow in the grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and 18
Rm 16:27n Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory, in time and eternity. Amen.

g. 'burned', corr.; 'uncovered' (Gk). This destruction of the world by fire was, in Graeco-Roman times, a common topic for philosophers, as it was also in Jewish apocalyptic writings and the documents of Qumran. Here all this traditional vocabulary is pressed into the service of the Christian message about the Day, *see* 1 Co 1:8e.

h. About the *parousia*, presumably, since that is the subject under discussion. But other questions also were debated in the churches where Paul's letters were known.

i. This comparison of the collection of letters, as already formed and known, with the rest of scripture, is one of the first indications that the Christian writings are comparable as scripture to the books of the OT; *see* 1 M 12:9c; 1 Th 5:27i.

1 JOHN

THE FIRST LETTER OF JOHN

INTRODUCTION

The Incarnate Word and sharing with the Father and the Son

1 **1** Something which has existed since the beginning, 2:13;4:14 Jn 1:1–5;19:35
which we have heard,
which we have seen with our own eyes, Lk 24:39 Jn 20:20
which we have watched
and touched with our own hands,
the Word of life [a]— Jn 1:1a;3:11e
this is our theme.
2 That life was made visible;
we saw it and are giving our testimony, 5:20 Jn 1:14n;15:27
declaring to you the eternal life,
which was present to the Father
and has been revealed to us.
3 We are declaring to you
what we have seen and heard, Ac 4:20;26:16
so that you too may share [b] our life. Ac 2:42seq.
Our life is shared with the Father
and with his Son Jesus Christ. 1 Co 1:9
4 We are writing this to you so that our [c] joy may be complete. Jn 15:11;16:22–24 2 Jn 12

I: TO WALK IN THE LIGHT

5 This is what we have heard from him 3:11
and are declaring to you:
God is light, and there is no darkness in him at all. Dn 2:22 Jn 8:12b
6 If we say that we share in God's [d] life 1 Tm 6:16 Jm 1:17
while we are living in darkness,
we are lying, because we are not living the truth. Jn 3:21
7 But if we live in light,
as he is in light,

1 **a.** The Word of God was the source of life. Dt 4:1; 32:47; Mt 4:4; 5:20; Ph 2:16. Here the title of 'Word' is given to the Son of God with whom the apostles lived. 'Word of life' alludes to the wish of 1:3; 5:11–13; *see* Jn 1:1a,14i.

b. This union, and sharing of life, *see* 1 Co 1:9f; 2 P 1:4, is the idea most central to John's mysticism, Jn 14:20; 15:1–6; 17:11,20–26; union between all Christians results from the union created by Christ between each Christian and God. This union is referred to in different ways: a Christian 'lives in' God and God 'lives in' him, 2:5,6,24,27; 3:6,24; 4:12,13,15,16; a Christian is begotten by God, has new life from him, 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1,18; the Christian is from God, is his child, 3:10; 4:4–6; 5:19; the Christian knows God, 2:3,13,14; 3:6; 4:7,8 (on knowledge and presence, cf. Jn 14:17; 2 Jn 1:2). This union with God shows itself in a person's faith and in love for the brothers, *see* 1:7e; Jn 13:34u. The witness of the apostles is the tool of this union, v. 5; 2:7,24,25; 4:6; Jn 4:38; 17:20n; *see* Ac 1:8k,21,22.

c. 'our own', var. 'your'.

d. Union and sharing with God, 1:3b, who is light, 1:5; and love, 4:8,16, expresses itself in faith and fraternal love, 2:10,11; 3:10,17,23; 4:8,16.

we have a share in one another's life, [e]
Mt 26:29par. Rm 3:24–25,24k Rv 1:5 and the blood of Jesus, his Son,
cleanses us from all sin.

First condition: to break with sin

Pr 20:9 Qo 7:20 If we say, 'We have no sin,' 8
we are deceiving ourselves,
and truth has no place in us; [f]
Ps 32:1b Pr 28:13d Mt 6:12par. Jm 5:16+ if we acknowledge our sins, 9
he is trustworthy and upright,
so that he will forgive our sins
and will cleanse us from all evil.
If we say, 'We have never sinned,' 10
we make him a liar,
and his word has no place in us.

3:6+ 2 My children, I am writing this to prevent you from sinning; 1
but if anyone does sin,
Jn 14:16 Rm 8:34 1 Tm 2:5 Heb 7:25;8:6b we have an advocate with the Father,
Jesus Christ, the upright.
•Ac 3:14j 4:10 Rm 3:25k Jn 4:42n He is the sacrifice to expiate our sins, 2
and not only ours,
but also those of the whole world.

Second condition: to keep the commandments, especially that of love

1:3b In this way we know 3
that we have come to know him, [a]
1:7e if we keep his commandments.
Jn 10:14g Whoever says, 'I know him' 4
without keeping his commandments,
4:20 is a liar,
3:19h Jn 8:32j and truth [b] has no place in him.
Jn 14:21,23 But anyone who does keep his word, 5
in such a one God's love truly reaches its perfection. [c]
This is the proof
that we are in God.
Whoever claims to remain in such a person [d] 6
Jn 13:15,34 Ep 5:2 must act as he [e] acted.
2 Th 3:7b My dear friends, 7
this is not a new commandment I am writing for you,
Lv 19:18+ Dt 6:5 Mt 22:37–40 but an old commandment
that you have had from the beginning;
the old commandment is the message you have heard.
Jn 13:34u Yet in another way, I am writing a new commandment for you [f] 8
—and this is true for you, just as much as for him—
Rm 13:12 for darkness is passing away
Jn 1:5 Jn 8:12b and the true light is already shining.
Whoever claims to be in light 9
but hates his brother
is still in darkness.
Jn 12:35–36 Anyone who loves his brother remains in light 10
Pr 4:19 and there is in him nothing to make him fall away.
But whoever hates his brother is in darkness 11
and is walking about in darkness
not knowing where he is going,
Mt 15:14par. because darkness has blinded him.

Third condition: detachment from the world

12 I am writing to you, children,
because your sins have been forgiven through his name. 1:7;2:2 Ac 3:16*l* 1 Co 6:11
13 I am writing to you, fathers,
because you have come to know the One who has existed since the beginning. 1:1 Jn 1:1
I am writing to you, young people,
because you have overcome the Evil One.[e] Ep 6:16
14 I have written to you, children,
because you have come to know the Father.
I have written to you, parents,
because you have come to know the One who has existed since the beginning.
I have written to you, young people,
because you are strong,
and God's word remains in you, Jn 3:11e;5:38
and you have overcome the Evil One.
15 Do not love the world Jn 1:10g
or what is in the world.
If anyone does love the world, Jm 4:4
the love of the Father finds no place in him, Jn 5:42
16 because everything there is in the world—
disordered bodily desires, Pr 27:20 Mt 6:24par.
disordered desires of the eyes,
pride in possession—[h] Jm 4:16
is not from the Father
but is from the world.
17 And the world, with all its disordered desires, 1 Co 7:31 1 P 4:2
is passing away.
But whoever does the will of God Mt 7:21
remains for ever. Pr 10:25 Is 40:8

Fourth condition: to be on guard against Antichrists

18 Children, this is the final hour; 1 Tm 4:1a
you have heard that the Antichrist[i] is coming, 2 Th 2:4c 2 Jn 7
and now many Antichrists have already come;
from this we know that it is the final hour.

e. God is in Christians, 1:3b, as the principle of their new life. Since God is light, 1:5, uprightness, 2:29, and love, 4:8,16, whoever lives in union with God must live a life of light, virtue and love, and keep God's commandments, especially the commandment to love all human beings, 2:10,11; 3:10; 4:8,16. Faith and love are thus the visible evidence of true union with God, 1:6,7; 2:3,6; 3:6,10,17,24; 4:6,8,13,16,20.

f. This is possibly an allusion to the sect that called themselves 'spirituals', *pneumatikoi*, and who were the forerunners of the Gnostics of the second century. These looked down on other people as being either *psychikoi* or *hylikoi* (*see* 1 Co 15:44w). Jn is here speaking of transient failures, although union to God, who has taken sin away, 2:2; 3:5, entails a holy and sinless life, 3:3,6,9; 5:18.

2 **a.** This knowledge, Ho 2:22v, is faith, Jn 3:12g, and embraces a whole way of life, 3:23, 51, in such a way that conduct is the criterion by which life in Christ may be recognised, v. 5; 3:10; 4:13; 5:2.

b. add. 'of God'.

c. This refers more to God's love for us than to our love for him.

d. 'To be in', 'to remain in' are expressions characteristic of Jn, *see* Jn 6:56q.

e. lit. 'as that One'; Jesus is repeatedly referred to in this way, 3:3,5,7,16; 4:17; *see* Jn 2:21; 19:35.

f. This commandment is prepared for in the old Law, Lv 19:18, and was known to Christians from their first initiation, v. 7; 3:11, but it received the special stamp of Jesus Christ, Jn 13:34u.

g. The devil is still the Tempter as in Gn 3:1–6; Jb 1:6g, who incites human beings to wickedness, 1 Jn 3:8d. Christians, however, have 'known' the Son; the Son lives in them, 1:3b, and 'clothes' them in light, virtue and love, 1:7e; and as this protects them from sinning, 1 Jn 3:6,9, it constitutes their victory over the devil, 5:18; Jn 17:15, preventing them from sinning, 1 Jn 2:13–14, and over this transient world, 1 Jn 4:4; 5:4–5; cf. Mt 6:13; Jn 1:9f; 12:31; 14:30; 16:33; Ga 6:14; Jm 4:4.

h. Motives which dominate the 'world', sensuality, the lure of appearances, pride which comes from earthly possessions. The true realities are totally different, *see* 2 Co 4:18; Heb 11:1,3,27.

i. var. 'The Antichrist', 'an Antichrist'. • On this Enemy of the last times, of whom Jn here speaks in the plural, *see* 2 Th 2:3–4c. He sets himself against all authentic faith in Christ, Son of God, v. 22,4:2-3; cf. 5:5; Jn 1:18q.

2 Co 6:14–18
They have gone from among us, 19
but they never really belonged to us;[j]
1:3b
Jn 5:22j
if they had belonged to us, they would have stayed with us.
But this was to prove
that not one of them belonged to us.
Lv 17:1a
Is 6:3g
Mk 1:24g
Jn 14:26r
2 Co 1:21
But you have been anointed[k] by the Holy One, 20
and have all received knowledge.[l]
I have written to you 21
2 P 1:12
2 Jn 1–2
not because you are ignorant of the truth,
but because you are well aware of it,
3:19h
and because no lie can come from the truth.[m]
Who is the liar, 22
if not one who claims that Jesus is not the Christ?
2 Th 2:4c
This is the Antichrist,
who denies both the Father and the Son.[n]
Whoever denies the Son cannot have the Father either; 23
Jn 14:7–9;
17:6g
whoever acknowledges the Son has the Father too.
Let what you heard in the beginning remain in you;[o] 24
as long as what you heard in the beginning remains in you,
1:3b
you will remain in the Son
and in the Father.
Jn 5:24;
6:40,68;17:2
And the promise he made you himself 25
is eternal life.
So much have I written to you 26
about those who are trying to lead you astray.
2:20
But as for you, the anointing you received from him 27
remains in you,
Jr 31:34
Jn 6:45;14:26r
and you do not need anyone to teach you;[p]
since the anointing he gave you teaches you everything,
and since it is true, not false,
remain in him just as it has taught you.
Therefore remain in him now, children, 28
4:17
so that when he appears we may be fearless
2 Th 1:9
and not shrink from him in shame
Mt 24:3b
1 Co 15:23o
at his coming.

II: TO LIVE AS GOD'S CHILDREN

If you know that he is upright 29
1:7e
you must recognise that everyone whose life is upright
1:3b
is a child of his.
3 You must see what great love the Father has lavished on us 1
Jn 1:12
Rm 8:14–17,
37–39
Ep 1:5
by letting us be called God's children—
which is what we are![q]
Jn 15:21;16:3;
17:24–5
The reason why the world does not acknowledge us
is that it did not acknowledge him.
My dear friends, we are already God's children, 2
but what we shall be in the future has not yet been revealed.
Rm 8:29
Ph 3:21
Col 3:4
We are well aware that when he appears
we shall be like him,
1 Co 13:12
2 Co 3:18h
Rv 22:4
because we shall see him as he really is.

First condition: to break with sin

Whoever treasures this hope of him 3
2:6
Mt 5:48+
purifies himself, to be as pure as he is.[b]

4 Whoever sins, acts wickedly,
because all sin is wickedness.
5 Now you are well aware that he has appeared in order to take sins away, [c] Heb 9:26 Jn 1:29v
and that in him there is no sin. Jn 8:46
6 No one who remains in him sins, [d] Heb 7:26 •1:3b;2:14
and whoever sins Mt 7:18
has neither seen him nor recognised him.
7 Children, do not let anyone lead you astray.
Whoever acts uprightly is upright,
just as he [e] is upright.
8 Whoever lives sinfully belongs to the devil, [f] 3:12
since the devil has been a sinner from the beginning. Gn 3:15 Jn 8:44
This was the purpose of the appearing of the Son of God,
to undo the work of the devil. 3:5 Jn 12:31–32
9 No one who is a child of God sins 3:6d
because God's seed [g] remains in him.
Nor can he sin, because he is a child of God. 2:12+
10 This is what distinguishes
the children of God from the children of the devil: 1:7e;3:8e Mt 4:1a
whoever does not live uprightly
and does not love his brother 3:23
is not from God.

Second condition: to keep the commandments, especially that of love

11 This is the message
which you heard from the beginning, 2:7
that we must love each other, Jn 13:24
12 not to be like Cain, who was from the Evil One 3:8e
and murdered his brother. Gn 4:8 Jn 8:44
And why did he murder his brother?
Because his own actions were evil and his brother's upright. [h]
13 Do not be surprised, brothers,
if the world hates you. Mt 24:9 Jn 15:18–21
14 We are well aware that we have passed over from death to life Jn 5:24
because we love our brothers.
Whoever does not love, remains in death. Heb 6:1a
15 Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer,
and you are well aware that no murderer
has eternal life remaining in him.

j. Though they seemed to belong to the community, they lacked the spirit of Christ.

k. This is the Spirit given to the Messiah, Is 11:2c; 61:1, and by him to believers, 3:24; 4:13; cf. 2 Co 1:21, to instruct them in all things, v. 27; Jn 16:13f; cf. 1 Co 2:10,15, in virtue of which the words of Jesus are 'spirit and life', Jn 6:63.

l. var. 'you know all things'.

m. Or 'because you know that the lies cannot have come from truth'.

n. It is not easy to name the heretics envisaged (probably Cerinthus, whose error persisted in a diluted form in Gnosticism). Here the title of Christ is not merely a translation of 'Messiah', but calls for the complete faith of 'Christians' in him who 'has come in human nature'.

o. The apostolic teaching concerning the mystery of Christ.

p. Christians are taught by the apostles, 1:3,5; 2:7,24, but merely hearing what is said is not enough, the message must penetrate them and this it cannot do except through the grace of the Holy Spirit.

3 **a.** om. 'and that is what we are'.
b. Jesus.

c. lit. 'sins'; var. 'our sins'.

d. Jn stylises somewhat. From hope of vision, v. 2, and perfect holiness, v. 3, there now flows by the action of Jesus Christ, v. 5; 2:2, that abstinence from all evil befitting children of God, v. 9; 5:18; cf. Ga 5:16, who have been 'justified', v. 7; 2:29; *see* Rm 3:24–25,24i. This does not in fact exclude the possibility of sin, 1:8–10,9g, which breaks such a union, cf. 2:3–5.

e. *See* note 2:e.

f. Having used expressions like: 'of God', 'from Truth', 'child of God', to show how a Christian lives under the influence of God living in him, John now uses expressions like: 'of the devil', 3:8; 'of the Evil One', 3:12, from, or of, the impermanent world, 2:16; 4:5, 'children of the devil' to indicate those who live under the influence of the devil and allow themselves to be seduced by him.

g. The 'seed' of God could be a reference to Christ, cf. Ga 3:16; 1 Jn 5:18, but some commentators take it as a reference to the Spirit, cf. 2:20–27, or to the seed of divine life introduced into us by God.

h. The antithesis between the children of God who live in truth and love and the world ruled by sin and hate continues until 4:6.

2:6 Mt 20:28 Jn 15:12–13 Ep 5:2
This is the proof of love, 16
that he laid down his life for us,
and we too ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.
Dt 15:7,11 Jm 2:16
If anyone is well off in worldly possessions 17
and sees his brother in need
but closes his heart to him,
2:5;4:12 Jn 5:42
how can the love of God be remaining in him?
Children, 18
Mt 7:21 Jm 1:22
our love must be not just words or mere talk,
but something active and genuine.
This will be the proof that we belong to the truth, [i] 19
and it will convince us in his presence,
even if our own feelings condemn us, 20
4:4
that God is greater than our feelings and knows all things. [j]
My dear friends, 21
if our own feelings do not condemn us,
we can be fearless before God,
Mt 7:7–11par. Jn 14:13–14
and whatever we ask 22
we shall receive from him,
because we keep his commandments
Jn 8:29
and do what is acceptable to him.
His commandment is this, 23
that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ
and that we should love each other
Jn 13:34;15:17
as he commanded us.
Whoever keeps his commandments 24
1:3b,7e Jn 14:21–23
remains in God, and God in him.
And this is the proof that he remains in us:
4:13
the Spirit that he has given us.

Third condition: to be on guard against Antichrists and against the world

4 My dear friends, 1
Dt 13:1–6; 18:20–22 1 Co 12:10g 1 Th 5:19g 2:18
not every spirit is to be trusted,
but test the spirits to see whether they are from God,
for many false prophets are at large in the world. [a]
Mt 24:24 1 Tm 4:1a 1 Co 12:3 1 Th 5:21
This is the proof of the spirit of God: 2
any spirit which acknowledges Jesus Christ, come in human nature,
is from God,
and no spirit which fails to acknowledge Jesus [b] 3
is from God;
2:22 2 Th 2:4c
it is the spirit of Antichrist,
whose coming you have heard of;
he is already at large in the world.
Children, you are from God 4
2:14+
and have overcome them,
because he who is in you
3:20 Jn 10:29
is greater than he who is in the world.
3:8e
They are from the world, 5
Jn 3:31
and therefore the world inspires what they say,
and listens to them.
1:3b Jn 10:26m
We [c] are from God; 6
whoever recognises God listens to us;
anyone who is not from God refuses to listen to us.
This is how we can distinguish
3:10 Jn 14:17
the spirit of truth from the spirit of falsehood. [d]

III: THE SOURCE OF LOVE AND FAITH

The source of love

7 My dear friends,
let us love each other, 1 Th 4:9
since love is from God
and everyone who loves is a child of God and knows God. [e] 1:3b
8 Whoever fails to love does not know God, 1:7e
because God is love. [f] 4:16
9 This is the revelation of God's love for us,
that God sent his only Son into the world Jn 3:16
that we might have life through him.
10 Love consists in this: Rm 8:31seq.
it is not we who loved God,
but God loved us and sent his Son 4:19
Dt 7:8
to expiate our sins. Rm 5:8
•2:2
11 My dear friends, Rm 3:25k
if God loved us so much, Mt 18:33
we too should love each other.
12 No one has ever seen God, [g] Ex 33:20i
Jn 1:18;6:46
but as long as we love each other
God remains in us 1:3b
and his love comes to its perfection in us.
13 This is the proof that we remain in him
and he in us, 1:7e
that he has given us a share in his Spirit. [h] 3:24
Rm 5:5e
14 We ourselves have seen and testify
that the Father sent his Son Jn 3:17
as Saviour of the world. Jn 4:42n
15 Anyone who acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God,
God remains in him and he in God.
16 We have recognised for ourselves,
and put our faith in, the love God has for us. Jn 17:6g
God is love, 4:7–8
and whoever remains in love remains in God
and God in him. 1:3b
17 Love comes to its perfection in us
when we can face the Day of Judgement fearlessly, 2:28
Rm 8:15
Jm 2:13

i. In the Johannine writings 'truth', 2:4, has a very wide sense which embraces faith and love, 3:23; 5:1. They 'belong to the truth' who believe, 2:21–22, and who love, 3:18–19. *See* Jn 3:21; 8:32k; 18:37; 2 Jn 4–6; 3 Jn 3–8.

j. The person whose conscience (lit. 'heart') reproaches him, will find that God as a judge is both more acute and more lenient than his conscience, providing (it is understood) that charity has been practised. Another translation could be 'In the presence of God we shall prove to our conscience, if it has been accusing us, that God is greater than our conscience is, and that he knows everything.'

4 **a.** One must be certain that those who lay claim to the Spirit of God are not in fact motivated by the spirit of the world. They may be known by their fruits, Mt 7:15–20, by their relationships, cf. 1 Jn 2:3–6,13–14, and especially by what they say of Christ, vv. 2–3. The apostles are capable of this discernment, v. 6.

b. var., supported by several authorities, 'which dissolves (or breaks, splits, divides) Jesus'.

c. 'we' = the Christian prophets, recognised evangelists and preachers with apostolic authority.

d. The theme of the two spirits is well known in Judaism (e.g. Qumran), and is similar to that of the two ways, Dt 11:26–28; Mt 7:13–14,13d. A human being is situated between two worlds, and belongs to one or the other by partaking of their spirit, 3:8,19. The final victory of believers is certain, v. 4; 2:13–14; 5:4–5.

e. Love is characteristic of the children of God, v. 16.

f. God loved Israel, Is 54:8c. The sending of his only Son as Saviour of the world, v. 9; Jn 3:16; 4:42; cf. Rm 3:24–25,24i; 5:8; etc, makes the love of God visible, v. 7, because God himself is love, v. 16; 3:16, and makes the believer who is the child of God, 1:3b, participate in love, vv. 10,19.

g. This is directed against the *pneumatikoi* who held that by intuition a human being can 'reach' God.

h. This gift of the Spirit promised for the last times, Ac 2:17–21,33, has been poured into our hearts, *see* Rm 5:5e; 1 Th 4:8, and there engenders the inner certainty which the apostles proclaimed exteriorly, 5:6–7; cf. Ac 5:32. Here this concerns divine Sonship, Rm 8:15–16; Ga 4:6.

2:6e;3:2–3 2 Th 3:7b
because even in this world
we have become as he is.
In love there is no room for fear, 18
2 Tm 1:7 but perfect love drives out fear,
because fear implies punishment
and whoever is afraid has not come to perfection in love. [i]
Let us love, then, 19
4:9–10 because he first loved us.
Anyone who says 'I love God' 20
and hates his brother,
is a liar,
since no one who fails to love the brother whom he can see
1 P 1:8 can love God whom he has not seen.
Mt 22:36–40 Jn 14:15,21; 15:17 Indeed this is the commandment we have received from him, 21
that whoever loves God, must also love his brother.

5

1:3b Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ 1
is a child of God,
and whoever loves the father
loves the son. [a]
In this way we know that we love God's children, 2
Rm 13:9 when we love God and keep his commandments.
3:23 Ga 5:14 2 Jn 6 This is what the love of God is: 3
keeping his commandments.
Dt 30:11 Mt 11:30 Nor are his commandments burdensome,
because every child of God 4
Jn 16:33 overcomes the world.
And this is the victory that has overcome the world—
2:14+ our faith.

The source of faith

Who can overcome the world 5
but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? [b]
Jn 19:34 He it is who came by water and blood, [c] 6
Jesus Christ,
Jn 4:1a 2:20,27 Jn 1:33x;14:26r not with water alone
but with water and blood,
and it is the Spirit that bears witness,
for the Spirit is Truth.
So there are three witnesses, [d] 7
the Spirit, water and blood; 8
and the three of them coincide. [e]
If we accept the testimony of human witnesses, 9
Jn 5:32,37 God's testimony is greater,
for this is God's testimony
which he gave about his Son.
Whoever believes in the Son of God 10
Jn 3:33 has this testimony within him,
and whoever does not believe
is making God a liar,
because he has not believed
the testimony God has given about his Son.
Jn 3:11f This is the testimony: 11
1:2;5:20 Jn 1:4;5:21,26 God has given us eternal life,
and this life is in his Son.
Whoever has the Son has life, 12
Jn 3:36 and whoever has not the Son of God has not life.

13 I have written this to you
who believe in the name of the Son of God — Jn 1:12;20:31
so that you may know that you have eternal life.

SUPPLEMENTS[f]

Prayer for sinners

14 Our fearlessness towards him consists in this,
that if we ask anything in accordance with his will — 3:22
he hears us. — Mt 7:7par. Jn 14:13–14
15 And if we know that he listens to whatever we ask him,
we know that we already possess whatever we have asked of him.
16 If anyone sees his brother commit a sin — Jm 5:19
that is not a deadly sin,
he has only to pray, and God will give life to this brother
—provided that it is not a deadly sin.
There is sin that leads to death[g] — Jn 15:22–24
and I am not saying you must pray about that.
17 Every kind of wickedness is sin,
but not all sin leads to death.

Summary of the letter[h]

18 We are well aware that no one who is a child of God sins, — 1:3b •3:6d
because he who was born from God protects him,
and the Evil One has no hold over him. — 2:14+ Jn 17:15
19 We are well aware that we are from God,
and the whole world is in the power of the Evil One.
20 We are well aware also that the Son of God has come
and has given us understanding — Jr 24:7
so that we may know the One who is true.[i] — Jn 17:3
We are in the One who is true
as we are in his Son, Jesus Christ.
He is the true God
and this is eternal life. — 1:2
21 Children, be on your guard against false gods.[j]

i. Love presupposes the filial element of religious fear, Dt 6:2a; Pr 1:7a, but it excludes servile fear, the fear of being condemned by God, 3:20, who has in his Son given such proof of love, *see* v. 8f.

5 **a.** Whoever loves God loves also his children. The love of God is expressed in love of neighbour, the criterion of its sincerity, 3:14,17–19; 4:20, and the first of the commandments to which one is committed by the love of God, vv. 2–3; cf. 2:3–5; 3:22–24; Mt 22:26–40 and par.; Jn 13:34 = 15:10–14; Rm 13:9; Ga 5:14. Finally, then, it is faith which judges love, the faith by which a person is born of God, 3:1; Jn 1:12j.

b. This argument is based on two previous ones: whoever believes is begotten by God, v. 1, and to be begotten by God is to be the conqueror of the 'world', v. 4, *see* Rm 1:4c.

c. The water and the blood that came from the side of Jesus when it was opened by the lance.

d. Vulg. vv. 7–8 read as follows: 'There are three witnesses *in heaven: the Father, the Word and the Spirit, and these three are one; there are three witnesses on earth*: the Spirit, the water and the blood.' The words in italics (not in any of the early Gk MSS, or any of the early translations, or in the best MSS of the Vulg. itself) are probably a gloss that has crept into the text.

e. The three testimonies converge. Blood and water join the Spirit, 2:20k,27; Jn 3:5; 4:1, to bear witness, *see* Jn 3:11f, in favour of the mission of the Son who gives life, v. 11; Jn 3:15h.

f. As in the gospel, *see* Jn 21, the conclusion is followed by a postscript.

g. No doubt the recipients of the letter knew what this exceptionally grave sin was. Perhaps the sin against the Spirit, against truth, *see* Mt 12:31–32,32h, or the apostasy of the Antichrists, 2:18–29; Heb 6:4–8.

h. Three sentences beginning 'we are well aware' sum up the great Christian certainties and hopes developed in the letter.

i. God the only true One, Jn 17:3d; cf. 8:31; 1 Th 1:19, and the only One known for what he is in truth, i.e. Life and Love.

j. A last warning, no doubt occasioned by the mention of the only true God. The 'false gods', surely in a metaphorical sense, can denote paganism, or the 'false gods of the heart' (Qumran) which turn people away from faith and love.

2 JOHN

THE SECOND LETTER OF JOHN

1 P 5:13
3 Jn 1
Jn 8:32k;14:17

From the Elder: [a] my greetings to the Lady, the chosen one, [b] and to her children, 1
whom I love in truth—and I am not the only one, for so do all who have come to
know the Truth—•because of the truth that remains in us and will be with us for 2
ever. •In our life of truth and love, we shall have grace, faithful love [c] and peace 3
from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father.

The law of love

Phm 7
3 Jn 3
1 Jn 3:19h
Jn 14:15h
1 Jn 2:7–11

It has given me great joy to find that children of yours have been living the life of 4
truth [d] as we were commanded by the Father. •And now I am asking you—dear 5
lady, not as though I were writing you a new commandment, but only the one
which we have had from the beginning—that we should love each other.

1 Jn 5:3

To love is to live according to his commandments: this is the commandment 6
which you have heard since the beginning, [e] to live a life of love.

The enemies of Christ

1 Jn 2:18
1 Jn 4:2–3
1 Jn 2:22

There are many deceivers at large in the world, refusing to acknowledge Jesus 7
Christ as coming in human nature. They are the Deceiver; they are the Antichrist.
Watch yourselves, or all our work [f] will be lost and you will forfeit your full 8
reward. •If anybody does not remain in the teaching of Christ [g] but goes beyond 9
it, [h] he does not have God with him: only those who remain in what he taught can
have the Father and the Son with them. •If anyone comes to you bringing a 10
different doctrine, you must not receive him into your house or even give him a
greeting. •Whoever greets him has a share in his wicked activities. 11

3 Jn 13seq.

There are several things I have to tell you, but I have thought it best not to trust 12
them to paper and ink. I hope instead to visit you and talk to you in person, so that
our joy [i] may be complete.

Jn 15:11e
1 Jn 1:4

Greetings to you from the children of your sister, [j] the chosen one. 13

a. The elders were the leaders in each community, *see* Tt 1:5c. Here John the Apostle, the outstanding leader of the communities of Asia Minor is in question.

b. The 'Chosen Lady' or 'Sovereign Lady', cryptic references to one of the local churches under the jurisdiction of the Elder and threatened by the propaganda of false teachers. We do not know which it was.

c. 'Faithful love' occurs nowhere else in the Johannine writings.

d. lit. 'walk in the truth', through observance of the commandments in love.

e. Or 'you must obey that commandment as you learnt it at the beginning'.

f. var. 'your work'.

g. Teaching either by, or about, Christ.

h. Teaching pure speculation as apostolic doctrine, cf. 2 Tm 2:16; Tt 3:9.

i. var. 'your joy'.

j. The church (perhaps Ephesus) from which the letter is being written.

3 JOHN

THE THIRD LETTER OF JOHN

1, 2 From the Elder: greetings to my dear friend Gaius,[a] whom I love in truth. •My dear friend, I hope everything is going happily with you and that you are as well
3 physically as you are spiritually. •It was a great joy[b] to me when some brothers
4 came and told of your faithfulness to the truth, and of your life in the truth. •It is always my greatest joy to hear that my children are living according to the truth.
5 My dear friend, you have done loyal work in helping these brothers, even though
6 they were strangers to you.[c] •They are a proof to the whole Church of your love and it would be a kindness if you could help them on their journey as God would
7 approve. •It was entirely for the sake of the name[d] that they set out, without
8 depending on the non-believers for anything: •it is our duty to welcome people of this sort and contribute our share to their work for the truth.

2 Jn 1a
2 Jn 4
1 Jn 3:19h
Jn 8:24g
Ac 5:41p
Mt 18:5par.; 10:10,41
1 Tm 5:18

Beware of the example of Diotrephes[e]

9 I have written a note[f] for the members of the church, but Diotrephes, who enjoys
10 being in charge of it, refuses to accept us.[g] •So if I come, I shall tell everyone how he has behaved, and about the wicked accusations he has been circulating against us. As if that were not enough, he not only refuses to welcome our brothers, but prevents from doing so other people who would have liked to, and expels them
11 from the church. •My dear friend, never follow a bad example, but keep following the good one; whoever does what is right is from God, but no one who does what is wrong has ever seen God.

1 Jn 1:3b;7e

Commendation of Demetrius

12 Demetrius[h] has been approved by everyone, and indeed by Truth itself. We too will vouch for him and you know that our testimony is true.

1 Jn 5:6
Jn 19:35;21:24

Epilogue

13 There were several things I had to tell you but I would rather not trust them to
14, 15 pen and ink. •However, I hope to see you soon and talk to you in person. •Peace be with you; greetings from your friends; greet each of our friends[i] by name.

2 Jn 12seq.

a. A fairly common name. The bearer is a faithful disciple to whom the Elder sees fit to address the letter.

b. 'Joy', var. 'privilege'.

c. Probably missionaries sent by 'the Elder' to the communities of Asia Minor.

d. The name of the Lord; *see* Ac 5:41p, expressing the mystery of his divinity, cf. Ph 2:9; 1 Jn 3:25; 5:13; Jm 2:7.

e. By contrast to Gaius, this leader of a community envisaged by the letter fails in submission to the Elder, and so seems to threaten the faith. The Elder intends to intervene when he visits soon, vv. 10,14.

f. Perhaps 2 Jn.

g. In the persons of the apostle's envoys.

h. Either a leading member of that community or one of the missionaries recommended to Gaius (the bearer of the letter?).

i. Those who resist Diotrephes because they recognise the authority of the Elder.

THE LETTER OF
JUDE

Address

Ac 12:17f From Jude, servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James; to those who are called, 1
Jn 17:11j to those who are dear to [a] God the Father and kept safe for Jesus Christ, ·mercy, 2
‖2 P 1:2 peace and love be yours in abundance.

The reason for this letter

My dear friends, at a time when I was eagerly looking forward to writing to you 3
about the salvation that we all share, I felt that I must write to you encouraging you
1 Tm 6:12 to fight hard for the faith which has been once and for all entrusted to God's holy
2 Tm 4:7
Ac 9:13g people. [b] ·Certain people have infiltrated among you, who were long ago marked 4
‖2 P 2:1 down for condemnation on this account; [c] without any reverence they pervert the
Ga 5:13 grace of our God to debauchery and deny all religion, rejecting our only Master
1 P 2:16
1 Jn 4:1 and Lord, Jesus Christ. [d]
2 Jn 10

The false teachers: the certainty of punishment

‖2 P 1:12 I should like to remind you—though you have already learnt it once and for all [e]— 5
Nb 14:26–35 that the Lord [f] rescued the nation from Egypt, but afterwards he still destroyed
1 Co 10:5
·Gn 6:1–2 the people who refused to believe him; ·and the angels who did not keep to the 6
‖2 P 2:4 authority they had, but left their appointed sphere, [g] he has kept in darkness in
Gn 19 eternal bonds until the judgement of the great Day. ·Sodom and Gemorrah, too, 7
Mt 10:15par. and the neighbouring towns, who with the same sexual immorality pursued unnatu-
‖2 P 2:6–9 ral lusts, [h] are put before us as an example since they are paying the penalty of
eternal fire.

Their violent language

Nevertheless, these people [i] are doing the same: in their delusions they not only 8
2 P 2:10–12 defile their bodies and disregard Authority, but abuse the Glories [j] as well. ·Not 9
Dn 10:13b even the archangel Michael, when he was engaged in argument with the devil
about the corpse of Moses, [k] dared to denounce him in the language of abuse; all he
Zc 3:2 said was, '*May the Lord rebuke you.*' ·But these people abuse anything they do not 10
understand; and the only things they do understand—merely by nature [l] like
unreasoning animals—will turn out to be fatal to them.

Their vicious behaviour

Gn 4:8 Alas for them, because they have followed Cain; they have thrown themselves into 11
‖2 P 2:15
1 Jn 3:12 the same delusion as Balaam for a reward; they have been ruined by the same
Nb 22:2b rebellion as Korah—and share the same fate. ·They are a dangerous hazard [m] at 12
Rv 2:14
Nb 16 your community meals, coming for the food and quite shamelessly only looking
Pr 25:14 after themselves. They are like the clouds blown about by the winds and bringing
‖2 P 2:13,17–18
Is 57:20 no rain, or like autumn trees, barren and uprooted and so twice dead; ·like wild 13
sea waves with their own shame for foam; or like wandering stars [n] for whom the

14 gloom of darkness is stored up for ever. •It was with them in mind that Enoch, the
seventh patriarch from Adam, made his prophecy when he said, 'I tell you, the
15 Lord will come with his holy ones in their tens of thousands, •to pronounce Dn 7:10
judgement on all humanity and to sentence the godless for all the godless things
they have done, and for all the defiant things said against him by godless sinners.'[o]
16 •They are mischief-makers, grumblers governed only by their own desires,[p] with
mouths full of boastful talk, ready to flatter others for gain. Lv 19:15 Dn 7:8, 20 ‖2 P 2:18

A warning

17 But remember, my dear friends, what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ ‖2 P 3:2–3
18 foretold.[q] •'At the final point of time', they told you, 'there will be mockers who 1 Tm 4:1a
19 follow nothing but their own godless desires.'[r] •It is they who cause division, who
live according to nature and do not possess the Spirit. 1 Co 15:44w

The duties of love

20 But you, my dear friends, must build yourselves up on the foundation of your most 1 Co 3:9–17 Ep 2:20–22
21 holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit;[s] •keep yourselves within the love of God
22 and wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to give you eternal life. •To some 2 Co 13:13e
23 you must be compassionate because they are wavering; •others you must save by
snatching them from the fire;[t] to others again you must be compassionate but wary,
hating even the tunic stained by their bodies.

Doxology

24 To him who can keep you from falling and bring you safe to his glorious presence,
25 innocent and joyful, •to the only God, our Saviour, through Jesus Christ ‖2 P 3:14 •Rm 16:27i Rv 5:13
our Lord, be glory, majesty, authority and power, before all ages, now and
for ever. Amen.[u]

a. 'To those who are', var. 'to the nations who are' • 'dear to'; var. 'made holy by'.

b. No change must be made, v. 5, in the tradition of the faith of the apostles, v. 17. the foundation of the Christian life, v. 20; cf. 1 Co 11:2; 2 Th 2:15*l*; 1 Tm 6:20.

c. var. 'for this sin'.

d. var. 'rejecting God, the only Master and our Lord Jesus Christ'.

e. The faith entrusted 'once and for all', v. 3, to God's holy people must never be changed.

f. God the Father, *see* 2 P 2:4. var. (Vulg.) 'Jesus', i.e. a reference to Christ in his divine pre-existence, cf. 1 Co 10:4.

g. They let themselves be seduced by the 'daughters of men', Gn 6:1–2; the subject is elaborated in the *Book of Enoch*.

h. They lusted not after human beings, but after the strangers who were angels, Gn 19:1–11. The apocryphal *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*, like Jude 6–7, also compares the sin of the angels with the sin of the Sodomites.

i. Heretics living at the same time as the writer, who are not deterred by the punishment of the fallen angels, vv. 6–7.

j. 'Authority' var. 'Authorities', i.e. angels, *see* Ep 1:21s; Col 1:16. The Glories would also be such cosmic powers.

k. Almost certainly a reference to the apocryphal *Assumption of Moses*, in which Michael (Dn 10:13b) has an altercation with the devil as to who claims Moses' body after his death.

l. Their lack of knowledge results from the fact that they do not possess the Spirit, they know nothing except what they have learnt through their unaided natural powers, *see* Rm 1:9e; 1 Co 15:44. They were despised by the Gnostics.

m. 'community meals' (*agapai*), var. 'deceits', cf. 2 P 2:13. • So the heretics still participated in the life of the Church; their conduct had only recently been noticed. Whether Jude is referring to the Eucharist or to the *agape* which preceded it, their attitude recalls 1 Co 11:17–22.

n. In Jewish apocrypha, e.g. the *Book of Enoch*, 'stars' often stand for 'angels'.

o. *Enoch* 1:9, probably quoted from memory.

p. Suggested by *Enoch* 5:5.

q. The apostolic preaching received through the tradition, v. 3.

r. No saying is found in this exact form, but *see* Ac 20:29–31; 1 Tm 4:1; 2 Tm 3:1–5; 4:3, and already Mt 24:24; Mk 13:22.

s. Vv. 20–21 mention the three Persons, cf. 2 Co 13:13, in connection with faith, prayer, love, hope, *see* 1 Co 13:13e.

t. Love dictates different treatment of those who are more or less tainted by the heresy. • var. 'Be kind to some, those who are hesitating; save them, snatch them from the fire.'

u. The solemn doxology, cf. Rm 16:25–27,27n; Ep 3:20; Rv 1:6k, comes perhaps from the liturgy.

THE BOOK OF
REVELATION

INTRODUCTION TO THE REVELATION TO JOHN

The Greek title of this book is literally 'The Apocalypse of John' or 'The Revelation of John'. (The word 'apocalypse' is merely a transliteration into English of the Greek word for 'Revelation'.) The title phrase is shown in Rv 1:1 and 2 to mean 'The Revelation to John'. Any writing under the title 'Apocalypse' claims to include a revelation of hidden things, imparted by God, and particularly a revelation of events hidden in the future. It is not easy to draw an exact dividing line between prophecy and apocalypse, and the writers of apocalyptic are in some ways the successors of the prophets; but we can at least make the distinction that the Old Testament prophets characteristically received the message by 'hearing the word of God' and passed it on by word of mouth, whereas the author of a written apocalypse was given his revelation in a vision and passed it on in writing.

The language of apocalyptic writing is richly symbolic, and the importance of the visions which are described is never in their immediate literal meaning. It can be taken as a rule that every element in this kind of writing has symbolic value—persons, places, animals, actions, objects, parts of the body, numbers and measurements, stars, constellations, colours and garments—and if we are not to misunderstand or distort the writer's message, we must appreciate the imagery at its true value and do our best to translate the symbols back into the ideas which he intended them to convey. There are parts of the text in which this will involve our distinguishing a direct allegorical interpretation of the images that are used. There are other parts, however, in which no single interpretation can be confidently adopted, since a single group of images will be found to draw its meaning from various different associations.

Apocalyptic writing became very popular in some Jewish circles (including the Essenes of Qumran) in the two centuries before Christ. The visions of prophets like Ezekiel and Zechariah paved the way, and apocalypse as a literary form was already fully developed by the time of Daniel and in the many apocryphal writings about the beginning of the Christian era. The New Testament includes only one apocalypse; its author says he was called John, 1:9, and that at the time of writing he was an exile for his Christian faith on the island of Patmos. A tradition as early as Justin and widespread by the end of the second century (Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, the Canon of Muratori) identified this John with the apostle, author of the fourth

Gospel. On the other hand, it is almost certain that the Churches of Syria, Cappadocia and even Palestine did not include The Revelation in the canon of scripture until the fifth century; evidently they did not believe it to be the work of an apostle. At the beginning of the third century a priest of Rome, Caius by name, attributed it to Cerinthus the heretic, though this may have been merely an attempt to justify his attack on it. Internal evidence shows that The Revelation to John has some affinity with the other Johannine writings, but it is so sharply distinguished from them by language, style, and some theological positions, notably its view of the second coming, that it is impossible to identify the author of The Revelation to John as it stands with the author of the rest of the Johannine literature. Nevertheless, it makes use of the Johannine vocabulary of theological thinking, and it must have issued from a church in which the tradition preserved was that of John. As for its date, the most common opinion is that it was written in the reign of Domitian, about AD 95; others, with considerable justification, believe that parts of it, if not all, were composed shortly after Nero's death, between AD 68 and 70.

Whatever its precise date, we cannot understand The Revelation without taking into account the historical conditions that gave birth to it. It is first and foremost a tract for the times, like the apocalypses (particularly Daniel) that preceded it and on which it draws. It was written during a period of disturbance and bitter persecution to increase the hope and determination of the infant Church. Jesus had said, 'Be brave: I have conquered the world,' Jn 16:33; how, therefore, could God permit this mortal attack on his own Church? John's answer begins by recalling the classical themes of the prophets, notably that of the great 'Day of Yahweh' (*see* Am 5:18, note m). When the chosen people had been enslaved to the Assyrians, Chaldaeans, and Greeks, when they had been scattered abroad and nearly annihilated by persecution, the prophets had promised: the day is coming, and soon, when God will liberate his people from their oppressors, and restore their independence, and help them to conquer their enemies, after he has punished them and brought them to the point of extinction. When John wrote The Revelation, the Church, the new chosen race, had just been decimated by persecution, ch. 6:10–11; 13; 16:6; 17:6; Rome and its empire (the Beast) was only a tool, but a tool wielded by Satan, ch. 12; 13:2,4, the great and only real enemy of Christ and his people. In the opening vision John describes God as Emperor, enthroned in heaven; he is Master of human destiny, ch. 4, and to the Lamb he gives the scroll that foretells the doom of the persecutors, ch. 5; the vision then proclaims a foreign invasion (the Parthians) and its familiar concomitants, war, famine, plague, ch. 6. During this, God's faithful will be preserved, 7:1–8; *compare* 14:1–5, and eventually rejoice triumphantly in heaven, 7:9–17; *compare* 15:1–5. God, however, wants to save their enemies as well, so instead of destroying them immediately, he warns them, as he had warned Egypt and its Pharaoh, by a series of plagues, ch. 8–9; *compare* 16. The persecutors are only hardened in their evil determination, and God is forced to destroy them, ch. 17. Their aim was to corrupt the world and get it to worship Satan (an allusion to emperor-worship in pagan Rome). After this comes a lament over fallen Babylon (Rome), ch. 18, and hymns of victory in heaven, 19:1–10. There is a second vision of the des-

truction of the Beast (Rome the persecutor) this time by Christ in glory, 19:11–21, that begins an era of prosperity for the Church, 20:1–6, which is to end in a new assault by Satan 20:7seq., followed by the annihilation of the Enemy, the resurrection and judgement of the dead, 20:11–15, and ultimately by the definitive establishment of the kingdom of perfect happiness in heaven when death itself has been destroyed, 21:1–8. A final vision glances back to the period just before this consummation and describes the beauty of the new Jerusalem, or Church, on earth, 21:9seq.

The significance of The Revelation is wider than this primary, basic meaning derived by historical interpretation: the book portrays the unchanging realities on which faith relies in any period of history. God's promise to be 'with his people', *see* Ex 25:8, note d, protecting them and saving them, had always been the foundation of their confidence in him in the Old Testament, and it is this presence that has now been perfected by the marriage of God and his new chosen people in the person of his Son, Immanuel (God-with-us). The promise of the risen Christ, 'I am with you always; yes, to the end of time,' is what gives life to the Church, Mt 28:20. As a result, those who are faithful to Jesus have nothing to fear: they may suffer a while for him but in the end they will triumph over Satan and his schemes.

In its present state the text of The Revelation presents a certain number of repetitions or even double repetitions, breaks of continuity between the visions, passages seemingly out of context (especially in ch. 20–22). Commentators have tried to explain these anomalies in various ways: compilation from different sources, accidental displacement of certain passages, etc. There is general agreement that the letters to the seven Churches (1:9–3:22) were added at the time of the final edition of the book. As for the strictly prophetic part of the book (ch. 4–22), it could have joined together two distinct apocalypses, written by the same author but at different dates. A more complex solution, using three partially distinct apocalypses, could also be envisaged. Whatever the truth of the matter, it is nevertheless possible to read The Revelation as it has been handed down to us, concentrating on the message of certainty and hope expressed by the complex but powerful imagery of the book. The sacrifice of the Lamb has won the final victory. Whatever evils the Church may undergo, its confidence in God's faithfulness remains unshaken; the Lord will 'soon' come (1:1; 22:20). The Revelation is an epic of Christian hope, the victory song of the persecuted Church.

THE REVELATION TO JOHN

Prologue

1 A revelation of Jesus Christ[a], which God gave him so that he could tell his 1
22:6seq.;16 Dn 2:28 servants[b] *what is* now *to take place* very soon; he sent his angel to make it
19:10e known[c] to his servant John, ·and John has borne witness to the Word of God and 2
Jn 19:35 to the witness of Jesus Christ, everything that he saw. ·Blessed[d] is anyone who 3
22:7 reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed those who hear them, if they treasure
Rm 13:11g 2 Co 6:2a the content, because the Time[e] is near.

I: THE LETTERS TO THE CHURCHES OF ASIA

Address and greeting[f]

Ex 3:14+ John, to the seven churches of Asia: grace and peace to you from him who is, who 4
was, and who is to come,[g] from the seven spirits who are before his throne, ·and 5
Ps 89:37 Is 55:4 from Jesus Christ, *the faithful witness, the First-born* from the dead, *the highest of*
1 Tm 6:13e *earthly kings.*[h] He loves us and has washed away[i] our sins with his blood, ·and 6
Ps 89:27 Ex 19:6 made us a *Kingdom of Priests* to serve[j] his God and Father; to him, then, be glory
1 P 2:9 ·Rm 16:27n and power for ever and ever. Amen.[k] ·Look, he *is coming on the clouds*; 7
·Dn 7:13 ·Zc 12:10,14 everyone will see him, even *those who pierced him*, and *all the races of the earth will*
Mt 24:30q Jn 19:37 *mourn over him*. Indeed this shall be so. Amen. ·'I am the Alpha and the Omega,'[l] 8
says the Lord God, who is, who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.

Preliminary vision

Rm 5:3 2 Tm 2:12 I, John, your brother and partner in hardships, in the kingdom and in perseverance 9
in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos[m] on account of the Word of God and of
Ac 20:7k witness to Jesus; ·it was the Lord's Day and I was in ecstasy, and I heard a loud 10
voice behind me, like the sound of a trumpet, saying, ·'Write down in a book all 11
that you see, and send it to the seven churches of Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum,
Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea.' ·I turned round to see who was 12
1:20 ·Ex 25:37 Dn 7:13 speaking to me, and when I turned I saw seven golden lamp-stands ·and, in the 13
Dn 10:5 Dn 7:9 Dn 10:6 middle of them, one *like a Son of man*,[n] dressed in a long robe tied at the waist
with a *belt of gold.* ·*His head* and *his hair were white with the whiteness of wool,* 14
like snow, his eyes like a *burning* flame, ·*his feet like burnished bronze* when it has 15
Ezk 43:2 been refined in a furnace, and *his voice like the sound of the ocean.* ·In his right 16
2:12+ hand he was holding seven stars, out of his mouth came a sharp sword, double-
edged, and his face was like the sun shining with all its force.
Dn 8:18; 10: 15–19 When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead, but he laid his right hand on me 17
Ezk 1:28seq. and said, 'Do not be afraid; it is I, *the First* and *the Last*; I am the Living One,[o] ·I 18
1:8l Is 44:6; 48:12 was dead and look—I am alive for ever and ever, and I hold the keys of death and
Heb 7:25 of Hades.[p] ·Now write down all that you see of present happenings[q] and *what is* 19

20 *still to come.* ·The secret of the seven stars you have seen in my right hand, and of the seven golden lamp-stands, is this: the seven stars are the angels [r] of the seven churches, and the seven lamp-stands are the seven churches themselves.' ▶Mt 16:18i ▶4:1 ▶Dn 2:28

1 Ephesus [a]

1 2 'Write to the angel of the church in Ephesus [b] and say, "Here is the message of
the one who holds the seven stars in his right hand and who lives among the 1:16
2 seven golden lamp-stands: ·I know your activities, your hard work and your 1:12 ·1 Th 1:3
perseverance. I know you cannot stand wicked people, and how you put to the test
3 those who were self-styled apostles [c] and found them false. ·I know too that you 2 Co 11:13,15
have perseverance, and have suffered for my name [d] without growing tired.
4 Nevertheless, I have this complaint to make: you have less love now than formerly.
5 Think where you were before you fell; repent, and behave as you did
at first, or else, if you will not repent, I shall come to you and take your lamp-stand
6 from its place. [e] ·It is in your favour, nevertheless, that you loathe as I do the way
7 the Nicolaitans are behaving. ·Let anyone who can hear, listen to what the Spirit is 2:15m
saying to the churches: [f] those who prove victorious I will feed *from the tree of life* 13:9 Mt 13:9
set *in* God's *paradise*." 22:2 Gn 2:9 Lk 23:43+

2 Smyrna

8 'Write to the angel of the church in Smyrna and say, "Here is the message of *the*
9 *First* and *the Last*, who was dead and has come to life again: ·I know your 1:17–18,18p Is 44:6; 48:12

1 a. Jesus Christ is both author and subject of this revelation.

b. 'His servants' are the prophets in the early Church, *see* 10:7; 11:18; 22:6; Ac 11:27m and Am 3:7; but the same word is regularly used for all followers and disciples of Christ, 2:20; 7:3; 19:2,5; 22:3,6.

c. God sends the angel (messenger) 22:16, *see* Gn 16:7c; Ezk 40:3d, who probably represents Christ himself, in accordance with Rv 1:13 and 14:14,15.

d. The first of the seven 'beatitudes' of Rv, *see* 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7; 22:14.

e. When Jesus returns; *see* 1:7 and 3:11; 22:10,12,20.

f. This section makes use of many OT allusions to suggest the King-Messiah's glorious return, solemn enthronement and future reign over God's people in fulfilment of the promise made to David. This is basically what the whole book is about.

g. A stereotyped expression, 1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 16:5, similar to others in Jewish Literature which develop the name revealed to Moses, interpreted as 'He who is', Ex 3:14.

h. The Messiah is the 'witness' to the promise that was made to David, 2 S 7:1a; Ps 89; Is 55:3–4; Zc 12:8, both in his person and in his work; as he fulfils this promise he is the efficacious Word, God's 'Yes', 3:14; 19:11,13; 2 Co 1:20. Not only is he heir to David, 5:5; 22:16, but by his Resurrection he is the 'First-born', Col 1:18, who will reign over the universe when his enemies have been destroyed, Rv 19:16; Dn 7:14.

i. var. 'released us from'.

j. Those who turn to the Messiah and whose sins he forgives, v. 5, will be a royal line of priests, Ex 19:3c,6; kings because they will rule over all the nations, Is 54:11–17; Dn 7:22,27; Zc 12:1–3; cf. Rv 2:26; 5:10; 20:6; 22:5; priests because in union with Jesus the messianic Priest they will consecrate the universe to God in a sacrifice of praise.

k. The doxologies frequent throughout Rv are plainly echoes of an ancient liturgy. They include precious christological material, for the Lamb is associated with the Father in many ways, *see* 5:6e. At the time, they would certainly have been read as a protest against the imperial cult of the state and emperor.

l. The first and last letters of the Gk alphabet, 21:6; 22:13; a quality of God, originator of all things, Is 41:4; 44:6, is transferred to Christ, cf. Rv 1:17; 2:8.

m. Presumably deported there for being a Christian.

n. The Messiah as Judge (cf. Dn 7:13, also 10:6). The long robe symbolises his priesthood (*see* Ex 28:4; 29:5; Zc 3:4), the golden cord round the waist his royalty, *see* 1 M 10:89, the white hair his eternity (*see* Dn 7:9), the burning eyes (to probe minds and 'hearts', *see* Rv 2:23) his divine knowledge, the feet of bronze (*see* Dn 2:31–45) his permanence; the brightness of his legs and face, and the strength of his voice symbolise the fear inspired by his majesty. In his power (his 'right hand') he holds the seven churches (the 'stars', *see* v. 20); he is prepared to sentence faithless Christians to death (the 'double-edged sword'), *see* 2:16; 19:15*l*; and Is 49:2; Ep 6:17; Heb 4:12. One or other of his attributes as Judge is used, at the beginning of each of the seven letters, to suggest the situation of the particular church addressed.

o. The one who has life 'in himself', *see* Jn 1:4; 3:15j; 5:21,26. The accent is on the fact that the risen Christ is alive here and now.

p. lit. 'Death and Hades'. Hades was the place of the dead, the Gk word corresponding to the *sheol* of the OT, *see* Nb 16:33f. Christ has the power to release souls from Hades, Jn 5:26–28.

q. 'present happenings' refers to the letters of ch. 2 and 3; 'things that are still to come': the revelations of ch. 4–22.

r. In Jewish thought not only the material world, *see* 7:1; 14:18; 16:5, was ruled by angels, but even individuals and communities, *see* Ex 23:20i. Hence each church is considered to be ruled by an angel responsible for it, to whom the letter is addressed. But the churches are also in the hand of Christ, that is, in his power and under his protection.

2 a. The seven letters all follow the same pattern. Statements on the condition of the churches ('I know') are followed by eschatological promises or threats. They are very rich in doctrine especially on Jesus Christ, who is presented throughout as speaking. They also give us a picture of Christian life in the Province of Asia at the end of the first century.

b. Metropolis of the Province of Asia; the other six churches of the letters that follow were located in the same province. Numerous pagan cults flourished there, including that of Artemis, Ac 19:24–40.

c. Probably the Nicolaitans of v. 6, *see* 2:15m, *see also* 2 Co 11:5,13.

d. Allusion to some previous persecution.

e. Ephesus will cease to be the religious capital.

f. This formula, which marks the conclusion of each of the letters to the churches, stresses the role of the Spirit in the relation of Christ with his Church.

Jm 2:5 hardships and your poverty, and —though you are rich [g]—the slander of the people
3:9 who falsely claim to be Jews [h] but are really members of the synagogue of Satan.
Lk 22:31–33 Jn 8:37–44 Do not be afraid of the sufferings that are coming to you. Look, the devil will 10
Dn 1:12,14seq. •1 Co 9:25+ send some of you to prison *to put you to the test*, and you must face hardship for *ten days*. [i] Even if you have to die, keep faithful, and I will give you the crown of life for your prize. •Let anyone who can hear, listen to what the Spirit is saying to the 11
churches: for those who prove victorious will come to no harm from the
20:14; 21:8 second death."

3 Pergamum

'Write to the angel of the church in Pergamum and say, "Here is the message of the 12
1:16; 19:15 one who has the sharp sword, double-edged: •I know where you live, in the place 13
where Satan is enthroned, and that you still hold firmly to my name, and did not disown your faith in me even when my faithful witness, Antipas, was killed among you, where Satan lives. [j]

"Nevertheless, I have one or two charges against you: some of you are followers 14
Nb 22:2b of Balaam, who taught Balak to set a trap for the Israelites [k] so that they committed
2:6 adultery [l] by eating food that had been sacrificed to idols; •and among you too 15
Nb 25:1–2 1 Co 8–10 there are some also who follow the teaching of the Nicolaitans. [m] •So repent, or I 16
2 P 2:15 shall soon come to you and attack these people with the sword out of my mouth.
Let anyone who can hear, listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches: to 17
those who prove victorious I will give some hidden manna and a white stone, [n] with
3:12f; 19:12 Is 56:5; 62:2; 65:15 *a new name* written on it, known only to the person who receives it."

4 Thyatira

'Write to the angel of the church in Thyatira and say, "Here is the message of the 18
1:14–15 Son of God who has eyes like a burning flame and feet like burnished bronze: •I 19
know your activities, your love, your faith, your service and your perseverance, and I know how you are still making progress. •Nevertheless, I have a complaint to 20
make: you tolerate the woman Jezebel [o] who claims to be a prophetess, and by her
2:14+ teaching she is luring my servants away to commit the adultery of eating food which has been sacrificed to idols. •I have given her time to repent but she is not willing to 21
repent of her adulterous life. •Look, I am consigning her to a bed of pain, and all 22
her partners in adultery to great hardship, unless they repent of their practices; [p] and I will see that her children [q] die, so that all the churches realise that it is I who 23
Jr 11:20+; 17:10 Ps 62:12 *test motives and thoughts and repay* you *as your deeds deserve*. •But on the rest of 24
you in Thyatira, all of you who have not accepted this teaching or learnt the deep secrets of Satan, [r] as they are called, I am not laying any other burden; •but hold on 25
3:8–11 firmly to what you already have [s] until I come. •To anyone who proves victorious, 26
Ps 2:8–9 and keeps working for me until the end, *I will give* the authority over *the nations*
1:6k; 12:5; 19:15 which I myself have been given by my Father, *to rule them with an iron* 27
sceptre and shatter them like so many pots. •And I will give such a person the 28
22:16 Is 14:12 2 P 1:19 Morning Star. [t] •Let anyone who can hear, listen to what the Spirit is saying to 29
the churches."

5 Sardis

3 'Write to the angel of the church in Sardis and say, "Here is the message of the 1
1:16 one who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars [a]: I know about your
behaviour: how you are reputed to be alive and yet are dead. •Wake up; put some 2
resolve into what little vigour you have left: it is dying fast. So far I have failed to notice anything in your behaviour that my God could possibly call perfect; remember how you first heard the message. Hold on to that. Repent! If you do not 3
Mt 24:42–44par. Mk 13:33 1 Th 5:2 •7:14 wake up, I shall come to you like a thief, and you will have no idea at what hour I
shall come upon you. •There are a few in Sardis, it is true, who have kept their 4
robes unstained, and they are fit to come with me, dressed in white. •Anyone who 5
proves victorious will be dressed, like these, in white robes; [b] I shall not blot that

name out of the book of life, but acknowledge it in the presence of my Father
6 and his angels. •Let anyone who can hear, listen to what the Spirit is saying to
the churches."

20:12i
1 S 25:29i
Mt 10:32
Lk 9:26

6 Philadelphia

7 'Write to the angel of the church in Philadelphia and say, "Here is the message of
the holy and true one who *has the key of David*, so that *when he opens, no one will*
8 *close, and when he closes, no one will open:* •I know about your activities. Look,
I have opened in front of you a door that no one will be able to close [c]—and I know
that though you are not very strong, you have kept my commandments and not
9 disowned my name. •Look, I am going to make the synagogue of Satan—those
who falsely claim to be Jews, but are liars, because they are no such thing—I will
make them *come and fall at your feet* and recognize that *I have loved you.*
10 Because you have kept my commandment to persevere, I will keep you safe in
the time of trial which is coming for the whole world, to put the people of the world
11 to the test. [d] •I am coming soon: hold firmly to what you already have, and let no
12 one take your victor's crown away from you. •Anyone who proves victorious I will
make into a pillar in the sanctuary of my God, and it will stay there for ever; I
will inscribe on it the name of my God [e] and the name of the city of my God, the
new Jerusalem which is coming down from my God in heaven, and my own new
13 name as well. [f] •Let anyone who can hear, listen to what the Spirit is saying to
the churches."

1:18
Lv 17:1a
Is 6:3g; 22:22
2:9h
Is 43:3;45:14; 60:14
2 P 2:9
2:25s
2 Co 6:2a
Ga 2:9
1 Tm 3:15
Ezk 48:35
•21:2seq.
•2:17n

7 Laodicea

14 'Write to the angel of the church in Laodicea and say, "Here is the message of the
15 Amen, [g] the trustworthy, the true witness, the Principle of God's creation: [h] •I
know about your activities: how you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were one
16 or the other, •but since you are neither hot nor cold, but only lukewarm, I will spit
17 you out of my mouth. •You say to yourself: I am rich, I have made a fortune and
have everything I want, never realising that you are wretchedly and pitiably poor,
18 and blind and naked too. [i] •I warn you, buy from me the gold that has been tested
in the fire [j] to make you truly rich, and white robes to clothe you and hide your

1:5h
2 Co 1:20
Jn 1:3
Ho 12:9
1 Co 4:8
Is 55:1

g. Smyrna's spiritual wealth contrasts with her material poverty.

h. Henceforth the Church of Christ is the true Israel, *see* Rm 9:8; Ga 6:16.

i. i.e. of short duration.

j. Emperor-worship, and the worship of other false gods, flourished in Pergamum, and are always represented in Rv as the antithesis of faith in Christ.

k. According to one Jewish tradition, *see* Nb 31:16, Balaam suggested to Balak that he should persuade Israel to idolatry with the help of the women of Moab, Nb 25:1–3.

l. The prophets used this as a common figure of speech for idolatry, religious infidelity, *see* Ho 1:2b.

m. This doctrine had some affinity with the errors already attacked by Paul in the Captivity Letters (notably in Col); it heralded the gnostic speculations of the second century, but also tolerated a measure of compromise with heathen cults, e.g. participation in sacred banquets, cf. v. 14.

n. The manna (hidden, together with the ark, by Jeremiah, 2 M 2:4–8 *see also* Heb 9:4) will be brought out as the food of those who are saved in the heavenly kingdom, *see* Jn 6:31.49, compare Rv 15:8d. The white stone (white is the colour of triumph and joy) alludes to various ancient usages (badges of honour,'tablets of discharge or admission) and symbolises entry into the kingdom. The 'new name' (3:12f; 19:12) signifies the Christian's spiritual rebirth, *see* Is 1:26n.

o. 'Jezebel'; var. 'your wife Jezebel'. A self-styled prophetess of the Nicolaitan sect; her name is symbolic, cf. 2 K 9:22.

p. var. 'their practices'.

q. Those who follow her teaching.

r. The letter takes issue with vain pretensions to penetrate the mystery of God which led to moral laxity.

s. The true faith in Christ.

t. The morning star is the symbol both of power, Nb 24:17; Is 14:12, and also of the glorification of the Christian by Christ the Lord, 22:16; *see* 1:5h; Ac 2:36w; Rm 1:4c.

3 a. In the letter to Ephesus, the seven stars represented the angels guiding the seven churches.

b. A symbol of purity but also of victory and joy. The robe is the conventional image for the profound reality of something, Is 51:9; 52:1; Rm 13:14; 1 Co 15:53–54; Col 3:9–12.

c. Free exercise of the apostolate, *see* Ac 14:27p.

d. In Rv the world always stands for the gentile world, as 'the world' is hostile in Jn 1:10; 17:9. The servants of God are not counted among its inhabitants, but will be preserved, 7:1seq., from the scourges described in ch. 8–9; 16 (cf. 18:4).

e. Cf. 2:17; 14:1; 19:12,13; and Is 56:5; 62:2; 65:15; *see also* Is 1:26n.

f. Either a name that will not be known until the second coming, or the name 'the Word', cf. 19:13.

g. Reference to Is 65:16 where 'God of truth' is literally 'God of Amen'; *see* 1:5h.

h. Christ is here identified with the creative Word and creative Wisdom. Cf. Pr 8:22; Ws 9:1seq.; Jn 1:3; Col 1:16seq.; Heb 1:2.

i. Unlike Smyrna, 2:9, Laodicea was rich in worldly goods, but spiritually poor.

j. The true riches that are of the spirit.

shameful nakedness, and ointment to put on your eyes to enable you to see. [k] •I 19
Pr 3:12 *reprove* and *train those whom I love*: so repent in real earnest. •Look, I am standing 20
1 Co 11:32 at the door, knocking. If one of you hears me calling and opens the door, I will
Heb 12:4–11 come in to share a meal [l] at that person's side. •Anyone who proves victorious I will 21
Sg 5:2 allow to share my throne, just as I have myself overcome and have taken my seat
Is 50:2 with my Father on his throne. •Let anyone who can hear, listen to what the Spirit is 22
Lk 12:36; 22:29–30 saying to the churches." '
Jn 14:2
1:6k; 20:4
Mt 19:28

II: THE PROPHETIC VISIONS

A: THE PRELUDE TO THE GREAT DAY OF GOD

God entrusts the future of the world to the Lamb [a]

4 Then, in my vision, I saw a door open in heaven and heard the same voice 1
1:10 speaking to me, the voice like a trumpet, saying, 'Come up here: I will show
Ex 19:16 you *what is to take place* in the future.' •With that, I fell into ecstasy and I saw a 2
1:1,19 throne standing in heaven, and the *One* who was *sitting on the throne*, •and the 3
Dn 2:28 One sitting there looked like a diamond and a ruby. There was a rainbow encircling
Is 6:1 the throne, and this looked like an emerald. [b] •Round the throne in a circle were 4
Ezk 1:26–28; 10:1 twenty-four thrones, and on them twenty-four elders [c] sitting, dressed in white
Gn 9:12–17 robes with golden crowns on their heads. •Flashes of lightning were coming from 5
Is 24:23 the throne, and the sound of peals of thunder, [d] and in front of the throne there
8:5; 11:19; 16:18 were seven flaming lamps burning, the seven Spirits [e] of God. •In front of the 6
Ex 19:16 throne was a sea [f] as transparent as crystal. *In the middle* of the throne and around
Zc 4:2 5:6 it, [g] were *four living creatures* [h] *all studded with eyes*, in front and behind. •*The first* 7
Ex 24:10 living creature was like *a lion, the second* like *a bull, the third* living creature had *a*
Ezk 1:5–21; 10:14 *human face*, and *the fourth* living creature was like a flying *eagle*. •*Each* of the four 8
Is 6:2 living creatures had *six wings* and *was studded with eyes all the way round* as well as
Ezk 10:12 inside; and day and night they never stopped singing:

Is 6:3 *Holy, Holy, Holy*
is the Lord God, the Almighty;
1:4g who was, and is and is to come.' [i]

Every time the living creatures glorified and honoured and gave thanks to the One 9
Dn 4:31 sitting on the throne, *who lives for ever and ever*, •the twenty-four elders prostrated 10
themselves before him to worship the One *who lives for ever and ever*, and threw
down their crowns in front of the throne, [j] saying:

You are worthy, our Lord and God, 11
to receive glory and honour and power,
for you made the whole universe;
14:7 by your will, when it did not exist, it was created.
Ps 115:3
Rm 4:17
Ep 1:11

5 I saw that in the right hand of the One sitting on the throne there was *a scroll* 1
•Is 29:11 *that was written on back and front* and was sealed with seven seals. [a] •Then I 2
Ezk 2:9 saw a powerful angel who called with a loud voice, 'Who is worthy [b] to open
Dn 12:4,9 the scroll and break its seals?' •But there was no one, in heaven or on the 3
Ph 2:10 earth or under the earth, [c] who was able to open the scroll and read it. •I wept 4
bitterly because nobody could be found to open the scroll and read it, •but one of 5
Lk 7:13–15 •Gn 49:9 the elders said to me, 'Do not weep. Look, *the Lion* of the tribe *of Judah, the Root*
•Is 11:1,10 Rm 15:12 of David, has triumphed, [d] and so he will open the scroll and its seven seals.'
Then I saw, in the middle of the throne with its four living creatures and the circle 6
Jn 1:29v of the elders, a Lamb standing that seemed to have been sacrificed;[e] it had seven
Zc 4:10 4:5e horns, and it had seven eyes,[f] which are the seven Spirits that God has *sent out*
over the whole world, •The Lamb came forward to take the scroll from the right 7

8 hand of the One sitting on the throne, ·and when he took it, the four living
creatures prostrated themselves before him and with them the twenty-four elders;
each one of them was holding a harp and had a golden bowl full of incense which
9 are the prayers of the saints. ·They sang a new hymn: 14:3c Ac 9:13g

You are worthy to take the scroll
and to break its seals,
because you were sacrificed, and with your blood 14:4 Rm 3:24j
you bought [g] people for God
of every race, language, people and nation [h]
10 and made them *a line of kings and priests* for God, 1:6k Ex 19:6 Is 61:6
to rule the world.

11 In my vision, I heard the sound of an immense number of angels gathered round
the throne and the living creatures and the elders; there were *ten thousand times* Dn 7:10 Jude 14–15
12 *ten thousand of them* and *thousands upon thousands*, ·loudly chanting:

Worthy is the Lamb that was sacrificed
to receive power, riches, wisdom, Ph 2:7–9
strength, honour, glory and blessing.

13 Then I heard all the living things in creation—everything that lives in heaven, and 5:3
on earth, and under the earth, and in the sea, crying:

To the One seated on the throne and to the Lamb,
be all praise, honour, glory and power,
for ever and ever.

14 And the four living creatures said, 'Amen'; and the elders prostrated themselves
to worship.

k. The clothing and the eye ointment are, of course, needed to repair the 'blindness and nakedness' of v. 17; but there may be a special point in this as an allusion to the local products for which Laodicea was known.

l. Intimacy with Jesus, a foretaste of the messianic banquet, *see* Mt 8:11c. Very probably a liturgical allusion.

4 **a.** God on his throne is glorified by the heavenly court, ch. 4, then the horizon broadens to the whole universe, whose destiny is handed over to the Lamb in the form of a sealed book, ch. 5. There follow great symbolic visions which form a prelude to the 'Great Day' when the retribution of God will fall on the persecuting unbelievers, ch. 17–19.

b. John is careful not to describe God anthropomorphically; he prefers to give an impression of light. The whole scene draws heavily on Ezk 1 and 10; *see also* Is 6.

c. These elders, grouped round the throne of God as elders were grouped round the altar at the Eucharist of a local church, have a priestly and royal function; they praise and adore God, 4:10; 5:9; 11:16,17; 19:4, and offer him the prayers of the faithful; they assist in the government of the world (thrones) and share his royal power (crowns). The number 24 perhaps corresponds to the 24 orders of priests in 1 Ch 24:1–19.

d. Thunder is frequently associated with theophanies, *see* Ex 19:16g; Ezk 1:4,13.

e. Not the sevenfold Spirit of medieval tradition but the seven 'angels of the presence', *see* 3:1a; 8:2; Tb 12:15. God's messengers, cf. Rv 5:6 and *passim*; Tb 12:15; Zc 4:10; Lk 1:26.

f. Either the 'waters above' of Gn 1:7; Ps 104:3, or the prototype of the 'Sea' in the great Temple, 1 K 7:23–26.

g. The arrangement is difficult to imagine. 'In the middle of the throne and' is possibly a gloss from Ezk 1:5.

h. The symbolism derives from Ezk 1:5–21. The 'animals' are the four angels responsible for directing the physical world. 'Four' symbolises the universe; their many eyes symbolise God's omniscience and providence. They give unceasing glory to God for his creation. The figures of lion, bull, man, eagle suggest all that is noblest, strongest, wisest, swiftest, in the created world. Since Irenaeus, these four creatures have been used as symbols of the four evangelists.

i. The doxology of Isaiah was already in use in synagogue worship and was taken up by the Christian liturgies. Worship on earth is seen to be a participation in worship in heaven.

j. The elders do homage to God for the power which they have received from him, which the kings of the earth will refuse to do, 17:2.

5 **a.** A roll of papyrus in which God's hitherto secret decrees are written. The contents are made known in ch. 6–9. The presentation of the Lamb at the throne of God, ch. 5, occurs in the course of the eternal liturgy of ch. 4.

b. He alone will be worthy who has shown himself to be such in the testing, 5:9,12.

c. In Hades, 1:18p.

d. Over Satan and the world, *see* Jn 3:35t; 1 Jn 2:13g, 13, 14.

e. Taking over from the messianic titles of v. 5, the title of 'Lamb' which first occurs here will be used of Christ some thirty times in Rv. It is the Lamb sacrificed for the salvation of the chosen people, *see* Jn 1:29v; Is 53:7. He bears the wounds of his passion, but has triumphed and therefore stands erect, cf. Ac 7:55, as victor of death, Rv 1:18, and therefore associated with the Father as master of all humanity, *see* v. 13, etc, cf. ch. 21–22; Rm 1:4c.

f. Symbolising the fullness (number seven) of the Messiah's power (horns) and knowledge (eyes).

g. var. 'you bought us', 'you bought us for God'. The reading 'us' supposes that the elders are human beings, possibly the OT patriarchs, lit. 'you were killed and you bought for God by your blood'.

h. Stereotyped expression for 'the whole world'; *see* Dn 3:4,7,96.

The Lamb breaks the seven seals [a]

Jr 15:2–4
Ezk 5:17;14:13–21
Zc 1:8–10; 6:1–3

6 Then, in my vision, I saw the Lamb break one of the seven seals, and I heard 1
one of the four living creatures shout in a voice like thunder, 'Come!'
Immediately I saw a white horse appear, and its rider was holding a bow; he was 2
given a victor's crown and he went away, to go from victory to victory. [b]

When he broke the second seal, I heard the second living creature shout, 'Come!' 3
And out came another horse, bright red, and its rider was given this duty: to take 4
Ezk 21:14–16 away peace from the earth and set people killing each other. He was given a
huge sword. [c]

When he broke the third seal, I heard the third living creature shout, 'Come!' 5
Immediately I saw a black horse appear, and its rider was holding a pair of scales; [d]
and I seemed to hear a voice shout from among the four living creatures and say, 6
Lv 26:26
Ezk 4:16seq. 'A day's wages for a quart of corn, and a day's wages for three quarts of barley, but
do not tamper with the oil or the wine.'

When he broke the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature 7
shout, 'Come!' ·Immediately I saw another horse appear, deathly pale, and its 8
1:18p rider was called Death, [e] and Hades followed at its heels. [f]
Ezk 14:21 They were given authority over a quarter of the earth, *to kill by the sword, by famine, by plague and through wild beasts.*

When he broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of all the 9
people who had been killed on account of the Word of God, [g] for witnessing to it.
Dt 32:43
Jb 16:18f
Ps 5:10c
Zc 1:12–13
Lk 18:7
3:10d They shouted in a loud voice, 'Holy, true Master, how much longer will you wait 10
before you pass sentence and take vengeance for our death on the inhabitants of
the earth?' ·Each of them was given a white robe, [h] and they were told to be patient 11
a little longer, until the roll was completed of their fellow-servants and brothers
who were still to be killed as they had been.

In my vision, when he broke the sixth seal, there was a violent earthquake and 12
Is 50:3b
Mt 24:29 the sun went as black as coarse sackcloth; the moon turned red as blood all over,
Is 34:4 and *the stars of the sky fell* onto the earth *like figs* dropping from a fig tree when a 13
high wind shakes it; ·the *sky disappeared like a scroll rolling up* and all the 14
16:20 mountains and islands were shaken from their places. [i] ·Then all the kings of the 15
earth, the governors and the commanders, the rich people and the men of influ-
Is 2:10,19 ence, the whole population, slaves and citizens, *hid in caverns and among the rocks*
Ho 10:8
Lk 23:30 *of the mountains.* ·*They said to the mountains* and the rocks, '*Fall on us* and hide 16
us away from the One who sits on the throne and from the retribution of the Lamb.
Jl 2:11;3:4
Rm 1:18
1 Co 1:8e For *the Great Day of his retribution* [j] has come, *and who can face it*?' 17

God's servants will be preserved

7 Next I saw four angels, standing at *the four corners of the earth*, holding back 1
Jr 49:36
Ezk 7:2
Zc 6:5 the four winds of the world to keep them from blowing over the land or the sea
or any tree. ·Then I saw another angel rising where the sun rises, carrying the seal 2
of the living God; he called in a powerful voice to the four angels [a] whose duty was
to devastate land and sea, ·'Wait before you do any damage on land or at sea or to 3
3:12;22:4
Ex 12:7–14
Is 44:5b
Ezk 9:4
=14:1 the trees, until we have put the *seal on the foreheads* of the servants of our God.'
And I heard how many had been sealed: a hundred and forty-four thousand, [b] out 4
of all the tribes of Israel.

Nb 1:20–43 From the tribe of Judah, twelve thousand had been sealed; from the tribe of 5
Reuben, twelve thousand; from the tribe of Gad, twelve thousand; ·from the tribe 6
of Asher, twelve thousand; from the tribe of Naphtali, twelve thousand; from the
tribe of Manasseh, twelve thousand; ·from the tribe of Simeon, twelve thousand; 7
from the tribe of Levi, twelve thousand; from the tribe of Issachar, twelve thou-
sand; ·from the tribe of Zebulun, twelve thousand; from the tribe of Joseph, twelve 8
thousand; and from the tribe of Benjamin, twelve thousand had been sealed.

The rewarding of the saints

=15:2–5
Gn 15:5 After that I saw that there was a huge number, impossible for anyone to count, of 9

people from every nation, race, tribe and language; [c] they were standing in front of the throne and in front of the Lamb, dressed in white robes and holding palms in
10 their hands. [d] They shouted in a loud voice, •'Salvation to our God, who sits on the
11 throne, and to the Lamb!' •And all the angels who were standing in a circle round the throne, surrounding the elders and the four living creatures, prostrated themselves before the throne, and touched the ground with their foreheads, worshipping
12 God •with these words:

=5:9h

Amen. Praise and glory and wisdom,
thanksgiving and honour and power and strength
to our God for ever and ever. Amen.

13 One of the elders then spoke and asked me, 'Who are these people, dressed in
14 white robes, and where have they come from?' •I answered him, 'You can tell me, sir.' Then he said, [e] 'These are the people who have been through the great trial; [f] they have washed their robes white again in the blood of the Lamb. [g]
15 That is why they are standing in front of God's throne and serving him day and night in his sanctuary; and the One who sits on the throne will spread his tent over
16 them. •*They will never hunger or thirst* again; *sun and scorching wind will never*
17 *plague them*, •because the Lamb who is at the heart of the throne *will be their shepherd and will guide them to springs of living water*; and God *will wipe away all tears from their eyes.*' [h]

=15:2
Dn 12:1
1:5;22:14
Gn 49:11
Ex 19:10
21:3;22:3
Is 4:5seq.;25:4–5;49:10
Is 49:10
=21:4
Is 25:8

The seventh seal

1 8 The Lamb then broke the seventh seal, and there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. [a]

Hab 2:20
Zp 1:7
Zc 2:17

The prayers of the saints bring the coming of the Great Day nearer

2 Next I saw seven trumpets being given to the seven angels who stand in the
3 presence of God. •Another angel, who had a golden censer, [b] came and stood at the altar. [c] A large quantity of incense was given to him to offer with the prayers of
4 all the saints on the golden altar that stood in front of the throne; •and so from the angel's hand the smoke of the incense went up in the presence of God and with it
5 the prayers of the saints. •Then the angel took the censer and *filled it from the fire*

4:5e
5:8;6:9
Ps 141:2
Ezk 30:1–10
Ex 19:16g
Lv 16:12
Ezk 10:2

6 **a.** Ch. 6–9 make a homogeneous whole. As the Lamb unseals the book, 6–8:1, and the trumpets sound, 8:2–9, the vision unfurls of the events which announce and prepare the overthrow of the Roman empire, prototype of God's enemies, cf. Mt 24seq. The four horsemen of this first vision are modelled on Zc 1:8–10 and 6:1–3; but they further symbolise the four scourges with which God, through the prophets, threatened a faithless Israel: wild animals, war, famine, plague, cf. Lv 26:21–26; Dt 32:24; Ezk 5:17; 14:13–21; and also Ezk 6:11–12; 7:14–15; 12:16; 33:27.

b. The rider on the white horse (symbol of victory) represents the Parthians, identified by the bow, their favourite weapon. They were the terror of the Roman world in the first century. These are the 'wild beasts' of v. 8 (i.e. victorious gentile nations, cf. Dt 7:22; Jr 15:2–4; 50:17; Ezk 34:28). The Parthian invasion is described in the vision of 9:13seq. One tradition identified the rider with the Messiah, as in 19:11–16.

c. Symbol of war.

d. Symbol of famine: food is rationed and sold at a prohibitive price.

e. The colour is that of a corpse decomposing, especially as a result of plague.

f. To swallow up the victims.

g. The altar, 8:3; 9:13; 14:18; 16:7, corresponds in this liturgy to the altar of burnt offerings, 1 K 8:64s. The martyrs, witnesses to the Word, are associated with their Master's sacrifice, *see* Ph 2:17r.

h. Symbolising triumphant joy, 3:5b; 7:9,13–14; 19:8.

i. In the prophets, these cosmic events signalise the Day of Yahweh, *see* Am 8:9h. They are to be understood not as physical realities but as symbols of God's retribution, *see* Mt 24:1a.

j. var. 'their retribution'.

7 **a.** The angels of v. 1.

b. Twelve (the sacred number) squared and multiplied by one thousand represents the totality of all who have been faithful to Christ (the new Israel, cf. Ga 6:16). Marked with God's seal, Rm 4:11e, in the end they will escape the plagues to come, cf. Ex 12:7–14.

c. All the Christian martyrs now in heaven, v. 14.

d. The palms of victory form an allusion to the joyful feast of Shelters, Lv 23:33–34; in v. 15 they will live in God's tent.

e. For this form of dialogue *see* Zc 4:4–13 and 6:4–5.

f. The persecutions, of which Nero's was the prototype.

g. Blood is the symbol of the effectiveness of the death of Jesus, Rm 3:25k; 1 Co 11:25; Ep 1:7. Here the gift is given to those who receive its effects.

h. Common metaphors in the prophetic tradition, used to symbolise eschatological bliss, *see* Is 11:6e; Ho 2:20v; they recur in Rv 21:4.

8 **a.** As in the prophetic tradition a solemn silence precedes and heralds the coming of the Lord. The decrees contained in the open book are now going to be carried out in a new celestial liturgy, marked by seven trumpet-blasts, ch. 8–9; 11:15–18.

b. This was in the shape of a scoop or shovel, and was also used for carrying the live coals from the altar of burnt offering to the altar of incense.

c. The altar of incense, *see* Ex 30:1; 1 K 6:20–21.

of the altar, which he then hurled down onto the earth; immediately there came
4:5 peals of thunder and flashes of lightning, and the earth shook.

=16:1–9 **The first four trumpets**

Jl 2:1b The seven angels that had the seven trumpets now made ready to sound them. 6
Ex 9:24 Jl 3:3 The first blew his trumpet and, with that, hail and fire, mixed with blood, were 7
hurled on the earth: a third of the earth was burnt up, and a third of all trees, and
every blade of grass was burnt. [d] ·The second angel blew his trumpet, and it was as 8
Jr 51:25 though a great mountain blazing with fire was hurled into the sea: a third of the sea
Ex 7:20 turned into blood, ·a third of all the living things in the sea were killed, and a third 9
Is 14:12 of all ships were destroyed. ·The third angel blew his trumpet, and a huge star fell 10
from the sky, burning like a ball of fire, and it fell on a third of all rivers and on the
Jr 9:14 springs of water; ·this was the star called Wormwood, and a third of all water 11
turned to wormwood, so that many people died; the water had become so bitter.
The fourth angel blew his trumpet, and a third of the sun and a third of the moon 12
and a third of the stars were blasted, so that the light went out of a third of them
Ex 10:21–23 and the day lost a third of its illumination, and likewise the night.
14:6 Ezk 7:5,26; 9:12;11:14 In my vision, I heard an eagle, calling aloud as it flew high overhead, 'Disaster, 13
disaster, disaster, on all the people on earth at the sound of the other three
trumpets which the three angels have yet to blow!'

The fifth trumpet

Is 14:12 9 Then the fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star [a] that had fallen from 1
heaven onto the earth, and the angel was given the key to the shaft leading
Gn 19:28 Ex 19:18 down to the Abyss. [b] ·When he unlocked the shaft of the Abyss, *smoke rose* out of 2
the Abyss *like the smoke from a* huge *furnace* so that the sun and the sky were
Ex 10:12,15 Ws 16:9 Jl 1–2 darkened by the smoke from the Abyss, ·and out of the smoke dropped locusts 3
onto the earth: they were given the powers that scorpions have on the earth: [c]
they were forbidden to harm any fields or crops or trees [d] and told to attack only 4
7:3 Ezk 9:6 those people who were without God's seal on their foreheads. ·They were not to 5
kill them, but to give them anguish for five months, and the anguish was to be the
Jb 3:21 anguish of a scorpion's sting. ·When this happens, *people will long for death and* 6
not find it anywhere; they will want to die and death will evade them.
Jl 2:4 These locusts *looked like horses* armoured *for battle*; they had what looked like 7
gold crowns on their heads, and their faces looked human, ·and their hair was like 8
Jl 1:6 women's hair, and *teeth like lion's teeth*. ·They had body-armour like iron breast- 9
Jl 2:5 plates, and the noise of their wings sounded like *the racket of chariots with many*
horses charging. ·Their tails were like scorpions' tails, with stings, and with their 10
tails they were able to torture people for five months. ·As their leader they had 11
their emperor, the angel of the Abyss, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in
Greek Apollyon. [e]
8:13 That was the first of the disasters; there are still two more to come. 12

The sixth trumpet

The sixth angel blew his trumpet, and I heard a single voice issuing from the four 13
Ex 30:1–3 horns of the golden altar [f] in God's presence. ·It spoke to the sixth angel with the 14
=16:12 trumpet, and said, 'Release the four angels that are chained up at the great river
6:17 1 Co 1:8e Euphrates.' [g] ·These four angels had been ready for this hour of this day of this 15
month of this year, and ready to destroy a third of the human race. ·I learnt how 16
many there were in their army: twice ten thousand times ten thousand mounted
men. ·In my vision I saw the horses, and the riders with their breastplates of flame 17
colour, hyacinth-blue and sulphur-yellow; the horses had lions' heads, and fire,
Jb 41:10–13 Ws 11:17–18 smoke and sulphur were coming from their mouths. ·It was by these three plagues, 18
the fire, the smoke and the sulphur coming from their mouths, that the one third of
the human race was killed. ·All the horses' power was in their mouths and their 19
tails: their tails were like snakes, and had heads which inflicted wounds. ·But the 20

rest of the human race, who escaped death by these plagues, refused either to abandon *their own handiwork* or to stop worshipping devils, the *idols made of*
21 *gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood* that can neither see nor hear nor move. ·Nor did they give up their murdering, or witchcraft, or fornication or stealing.

Am 4:6f
Is 17:8
Ps 135:15–17
Dn 5:4

The imminence of the last punishment

1 **10** Then I saw another powerful angel coming down from heaven, wrapped in
cloud, with a rainbow over his head; his face was like the sun, and his legs
2 were pillars of fire. ·In his hand he had a small scroll, unrolled;[a] he put his right
3 foot in the sea and his left foot on the land ·and he shouted so loud, it was *like a*
4 *lion roaring*. At this, the seven claps of thunder made themselves heard[b] ·and
when the seven thunderclaps had sounded, I was preparing to write, when I heard
a voice from heaven say to me, 'Keep the words of the seven thunderclaps secret
5 and do not write them down.'[c] ·Then the angel that I had seen, standing on the
6 sea and the land, *raised his right hand to heaven*,[d] ·and *swore by him who lives for*
ever and ever, *and made heaven and all that it contains*, and *earth and all it contains*,
7 and *the sea and all it contains*, 'The time of waiting is over; ·at the time when the
seventh angel is heard sounding his trumpet, the mystery of God[e] will be fulfilled,
just as he announced in the gospel to *his servants the prophets*.'

Am 1:2d;3:8
Ps 29:3–9
22:10
Dn 8:26; 12:4,9
Dt 32:40
Dn 12:7
Ex 20:11
Ne 9:6
Rm 16:25*l*
Am 3:7

The seer eats the small scroll[f]

8 Then I heard the voice I had heard from heaven speaking to me again. 'Go', it said,
9 'and take that open scroll from the hand of the angel standing on sea and land.' ·I
went to the angel and asked him to give me the small scroll, and he said, 'Take it
10 and eat it; it will turn your stomach sour, but it will taste as sweet as honey.' ·So I
took it out of the angel's hand, and *I ate it and it tasted sweet as honey*, but when I
11 had eaten it my stomach turned sour.[g] ·Then I was told, 'You are to prophesy
again, this time against many different nations and countries and languages and
kings.'

Ezk 3:1–13a

The two witnesses

1 **11** Then I was given a long cane like a measuring rod,[a] and I was told, 'Get up
and measure God's sanctuary, and the altar, and the people who worship
2 there;[b] ·but exclude the outer court and do not measure it, because it has been
handed over to gentiles—they will trample on the holy city for forty-two months.[c]

Ezk 40:3d
Zc 2:5–9
Lk 21:24

d. For the symbolism of these disasters see 6:1a. In addition they seem to recall the plagues of Egypt, Ex 7–10; Ws 11:5–12:2; cf. 15:5seq.

9 a. One of the fallen angels, perhaps Satan himself, *see* v. 11 and Lk 10:18.

b. Where the fallen angels are imprisoned until their final punishment.

c. The vision of locusts is suggested by Jl 1–2 which, according to Jerome, the Jews interpreted historically: the four armies of locusts being successive invaders, Assyrian, Persian, Greek and Roman; *see* Jr 51:27. Here the locusts probably indicate the Parthians. Another suggestion is that the locusts symbolise spiritual torments inflicted by demons.

d. Possibly symbols of upright, faithful Christians, *see* 7:1seq.

e. Destruction, or ruin, personified.

f. This is to show that the vengeance on unbelievers follows the prayer of the martyrs described in 6:9,10 (*see* 8:2seq.).

g. The Euphrates was the eastern border of the Roman empire, beyond which were the Parthians, at this time a dreaded enemy and the nightmare of the Roman rulers. The description in v. 19 of the warhorses whose power was in their mouths and in their tails recalls the Parthian mounted archers, who having attacked, turned to retreat and fired a 'Parthian shot'—a salvo over their horses' tails.

10 a. Unlike the sealed book given to the Lamb, 5:2, the one offered to John is small and open.

b. The voice of God, cf. Ps 29:3–9.

c. Keep it secret, cf. Dn 12:4; 2 Co 12:4, because the time of its fulfilment, v. 7, has not yet come. It is used in a different sense in 1:11,19; etc; 22:10.

d. The angel, in contact with air, sea and land, the three regions of the universe, is about to swear by him who made them; cf. Gn 14:22; Ex 20:11; Dt 32:40; Ne 9:6.

e. The definitive establishment of the kingdom; the sign of this is the destruction of the enemies of God's people, 17; 18; 20:7–10. On the 'mystery' or 'secret' of God in the eschatological sense, *see* Rm 11:25; 16:25*l*; 2 Th 2:6seq.

f. The incident draws on the prophetic call of Ezekiel, Ezk 2:8–3:3, cf. Jr 15:16. It renews the mission of John, 1:1–2,9–20, and defines it more closely.

g. The news is sweet because it announces the Church's victory, bitter because it foretells her suffering, 11:1–13.

11 a. Some MSS insert 'and the angel stood there'.

b. The Temple, centre of the holy city Jerusalem, represents the people of God, 20:9; 21:1a; 1 Co 3:16–17,16c. It is to be 'measured', cf. Jr 31:39; Ezk 40:1–6; Zc 2:5–9. Surrounded by unbelievers, v. 2, those who are faithful to Christ will be spared, *see* 7:4; 14:1–5, like the remnant of Israel, *see* Is 4:3.

c. This period (three-and-a-half years) taken from Dn, had become the symbol for any persecution, cf. Lk 4:25; Jm 5:17. Here it is the Roman persecution (the Beast of 13; 17:10–14).

Dn 7:25p But I shall send my two witnesses to prophesy for twelve hundred and sixty days, 3
Zc 4:3,14 wearing sackcloth. 4 These are the *two olive trees* and the two lamps *in attendance*
2 K 1:10 Jr 5:14 *on the Lord of the world.* [d] 5 Fire comes from their mouths and consumes their
enemies if anyone tries to harm them; and anyone who tries to harm them will
1 K 17:1 certainly be killed in this way. 6 They have the power to lock up the sky so that it
Ex 7:17;11:10 does not rain as long as they are prophesying; they have the power to turn water
into blood and strike the whole world with any plague as often as they like. 7 When
they have completed their witnessing, the beast that comes out of the Abyss [e] *is*
Dn 7:21 *going to make war on them and overcome them* and kill them. 8 Their corpses lie in
the main street of the great city [f] known by the symbolic names Sodom and Egypt,
in which their Lord was crucified. 9 People of every race, tribe, language and nation
stare at their corpses, for three-and-a-half days, not letting them be buried, 10 and
the people of the world are glad about it and celebrate the event by giving presents
to each other, because these two prophets have been a plague to the people of
the world.'

Ex 37:5,10 After the three-and-a-half days, *God breathed life into them and they stood up* 11
on their feet, and everybody who saw it happen was terrified; 12 then I heard [g] a loud
2 K 2:11 Ac 1:9m voice from heaven say to them, 'Come up here,' and while their enemies were
watching, they went up to heaven in a cloud. 13 Immediately, there was a violent
earthquake, and a tenth of the city collapsed; seven thousand persons [h] were killed
in the earthquake, and the survivors, overcome with fear, could only praise the
God of heaven.

8:13;9:12 That was the second of the disasters; the third is to come quickly after it. [i] 14

The seventh trumpet

Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and voices could be heard shouting in 15
1:5h heaven, calling, 'The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord
Ps 2:22:29 Dn 7:14,27 and his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever.' 16 The twenty-four elders,
enthroned in the presence of God, prostrated themselves and touched the ground
with their foreheads worshipping God 17 with these words, 'We give thanks to you,
1:4g Almighty Lord God, He who is, He who was, for assuming your great power and
Ps 2:1,5 beginning your reign. 18 *The nations were in uproar* and now the time has come for
Am 3:7 your retribution, and for the dead to be judged, and for *your servants the prophets*,
Ps 115:13 for the saints and for *those who fear* your name, *small and great alike*, to be
rewarded. The time has come to destroy those who are destroying the earth.'

Ex 25:8–10,8d Then the sanctuary of God in heaven [j] opened, and the ark of the covenant could 19
1 K 8:1–6,4c 2 M 2:5–8 be seen inside it. Then came flashes of lightning, peals of thunder and an earth-
8:5 quake and violent hail.

The vision of the woman and the dragon [a]

Gn 37:9 **12** Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman, [b] robed with the sun, 1
standing on the moon, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. 2 She was
Gn 3:16 Mi 4:9–10 pregnant, and in labour, crying aloud in the pangs of childbirth. 3 Then a second
Dn 7:7 sign appeared in the sky: there was a huge red dragon with seven heads and ten
horns, and each of the seven heads crowned with a coronet. [c] 4 Its tail swept a third
Dn 8:10 of *the stars from the sky and hurled them to the ground*, [d] and the dragon stopped in
front of the woman as she was at the point of giving birth, so that he could eat the
Is 66:7 child as soon as it was born. 5 The woman *was delivered of a boy*, [e] the son who was
1:6k;2:27 Ps 2:9 *to rule all the nations with an iron sceptre*, and the child was taken straight up to
God and to his throne, [f] 6 while the woman escaped into the desert, [g] where God
11:3+;12:14 Dn 10:13b;12:1 had prepared a place for her to be looked after for twelve hundred and sixty days.

And now war broke out in heaven, when *Michael* [h] with his angels attacked the 7
20:2–3 Gn 3:1–4 dragon. The dragon fought back with his angels, 8 but they were defeated and
Mt 4:1c driven out of heaven. 9 The great dragon, the primeval serpent, known as the devil
Lk 10:18 Jn 12:31 or Satan, who had led all the world astray, was hurled down to the earth and his
angels were hurled down with him. 10 Then I heard a voice shout from heaven,

'Salvation and power and empire for ever have been won by our God, and all authority for his Christ, now that the accuser, who accused our brothers day and 11:15
11 night before our God, has been brought down. ·They have triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word to which they bore witness, because even in
12 the face of death they did not cling to life. ·So let the heavens rejoice and all who Jn 12:25
live there; but for you, earth and sea, disaster is coming—because the devil has 20:3
gone down to you in a rage, knowing that he has little time left.'

13 As soon as the dragon found himself hurled down to the earth, he sprang in 2 Co 6:2a
14 pursuit of the woman, the mother of the male child, ·but she was given a pair of the Gn 3:15
great eagle's wings to fly away from the serpent into the desert, to the place where Ex 19:4
15 she was to be looked after for *a time, two times and half a time.* [i] ·So the serpent Is 40:31 11:3c Dn 7:25p
vomited water from his mouth, like a river, after the woman, to sweep her away in
16 the current, [j] ·but the earth came to her rescue; it opened its mouth and swallowed Nb 16:30–34
17 the river spewed from the dragon's mouth. ·Then the dragon was enraged with the woman and went away to make war on the rest of her children, who obey God's commandments and have in themselves the witness of Jesus. [k]

The dragon delegates his power to the beast [l]

Dn 7
2 Th 2:3–12

18 And I took my stand [m] on the seashore.

1 **13** Then I saw *a beast emerge from the sea*: it had seven heads and ten horns, =17:3,8 Dn 7:3
with a coronet on each of its ten horns, and its heads were marked with
2 blasphemous titles. ·I saw that the beast *was like a leopard*, with paws like *a bear* 7:4–6
and a mouth like *a lion*; the dragon had handed over to it his own power and his Lk 4:6
3 throne and his immense authority. [a] ·I saw that one of its heads seemed to have had a fatal wound but that this deadly injury had healed [b] and the whole world had
4 marvelled and followed the beast. ·They prostrated themselves in front of the dragon because he had given the beast his authority; and they prostrated themselves in front of the beast, saying, 'Who can compare with the beast? [c] Who can

d. In Zc the two olive trees symbolise Joshua and Zerubbabel, the religious and the civil leaders of the repatriated community who restored Temple and city after the Exile. Here they probably stand for the two champions who are to build up the new Temple, Christ's Church; they are described, vv. 5–6,11–12, by means of the features of Moses and Elijah, cf. Mt 17:3seq.,3e. They can hardly be identified, but Peter and Paul, martyred at Rome under Nero, *see* vv. 7–8, have been suggested.

e. The emperor Nero, type of Antichrist, cf. 13:1,18; 17:8 with notes.

f. The great city here is Babylon, i.e. Rome, *see* 16:19; 17:18; 18:10,16,18,19; it is called Sodom and Egypt for its two great crimes: refusing God's messengers and oppressing the people of Christ, *see* 17:4–6. Here it is identified with Jerusalem which is not only the holy city, 11:1, but which 'killed the prophets', Mt 23:37.

g. var. 'they heard'.

h. The figure symbolises people of all classes of society (seven) and in great numbers (thousands).

i. The second disaster was described (the sixth trumpet) in 9:15–19. The third is to be the fall of Babylon (Rome) in ch. 17–18.

j. As opposed to the Jerusalem Temple referred to in vv. 1 and 2, it contains the ark (Ex 25) of the new covenant, permanent home of God among his people, *see* 2 M 2:5–8; Ws 9:8d.

12 a. This chapter is made up of two separate visions: the attack of the dragon on the woman and her children, vv. 1–6 and 13–17; the attack of Michael on the dragon, vv. 7–12.

b. This scene looks back to Gn 3:15–16. The woman gives birth in pain, v. 2, to a child who will be the Messiah, v. 5. Satan tests her, v. 9, *see* 20:2, persecutes both her and her offspring, vv. 6,13,17. She represents the holy people of the messianic era, Is 54; 60; 66:7; Mi 4:9–10, and so the Church militant. It is possible that the author was thinking also of Mary, the new Eve, the daughter of Zion, who gave birth to the Messiah, *see* Jn 19:25j.

c. The dragon is 'Satan', *see* v. 9 and 20:2, a word which the LXX renders as 'devil'. The Hebr. word means 'accuser', *see* v. 10 and Zc 3:1–2; *see also* Jb 1:6g. In the Jewish tradition the Serpent or Dragon represented the power of evil, hostile to God and his people, and God was to destroy it at the end of time, *see* Jb 3:8e and 7:12f.

d. Allusion to the fall of the angels seduced by Satan.

e. The Messiah considered simultaneously as an individual person and as head or leader of the new Israel, cf. the 'Son of man' of Dn 7:13, and the 'servant of Yahweh' of Is 42:1a.

f. The ascension and the triumph of the Messiah that will result in the dragon's fall. The child's triumph is here described immediately after its birth.

g. Traditional OT refuge for the persecuted, *see* Ex 2:15; 1 K 17:2seq.; 19:3seq.; 1 M 2:29,30. To exist, the Church must depend not on the world but on her own divine life, cf. Ex 16; 1 K 17:4,6; 19:5–8; Mt 4:3–4, 14:13 seq.

h. According to Jewish tradition (Dn 10:12–21; 12:1) he is God's champion. The name means 'Who (is) like God?'

i. lit. 'a time and times and half a time'. Three and a half years, *see* 11:2c.

j. The Roman empire, like a flood let loose by Satan, cf. Is 8:7–8, will try to engulf the Church, *see* Rv 13.

k. Two marks of the faithful, 14:1; cf. 14:12; 20:4; already 1:1, and Rm 8:29.

l. This vision draws on Dn 7 (in the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes). According to Rv 17:10,12–14, the Beast from the (Mediterranean) sea is the Roman empire, type of all forces in opposition to Christ and the Church, because it claims divine powers (its titles, Rv 1, cf. Dn 11:36; 2 Th 2:4). The seven heads and the ten horns recur in 17:3,7–12.

m. var. 'he stood', which would join v. 18 to the preceding passage.

13 a. It is from Satan, 12:3c, that he receives all his power, cf. Mt 4:8–9; Jn 12:31i; 2 Th 2:9.

b. The allusion may be to the empire recovering after some temporary set-back, or to the expectation of Nero *redivivus*. The risen beast is a caricature of the risen Christ.

c. A parody of the name Michael, 12:7.

Dn 7:8,11 fight against him?' ·The beast was allowed *to mouth its boasts* and blasphemies and 5
11:2c to be active for forty-two months; ·and it mouthed its blasphemies against God, 6
against his name, his heavenly Tent and all those who are sheltered there. ·It was 7
Dn 7:21 allowed *to make war against the saints and conquer them, and given power* over
Dn 7:6 every race, people, language and nation; ·and all people of the world will worship 8
it, that is, everybody whose name has not been written down since the foundation
20:12i of the world in the sacrificial Lamb's book of life. ·Let anyone who can hear, listen: 9
Jr 15:2 *Those for captivity to captivity; those for* death[d] by *the sword to* death by *the* 10
Mt 13:9 *sword.*[e] ·This is why the saints must have perseverance and faith.

The false prophet as the slave of the beast

Mt 7:15 Then I saw a second beast, emerging from the ground;[f] it had two horns like a 11
lamb, but made a noise like a dragon. ·This second beast exercised all the power of 12
the first beast, on its behalf making the world and all its people worship the first
Dt 13:2–4 beast, whose deadly injury had healed. ·And it worked great miracles, even to 13
1 K 18:38+ calling down fire from heaven onto the earth while people watched. ·Through the 14
Mt 24:24
2 Th 2:9–10 miracles which it was allowed to do on behalf of the first beast, it was able to lead
astray the people of the world and persuade them to put up a statue in honour of
the beast that had been wounded by the sword and still lived. ·It was allowed to 15
breathe life into this statue, so that the statue of the beast was able to speak, and to
Dn 3:5–7,15 have *anyone who refused to worship the statue* of the beast put to death.[g] ·It 16
compelled everyone—small and great alike, rich and poor, slave and citizen—to
7:13;14:9,11; 16:2;19:20; 20:4 be branded on the right hand or on the forehead, ·and made it illegal for anyone to 17
buy or sell anything unless he had been branded with the name of the beast or with
the number of its name.
17:9 There is need for shrewdness here: anyone clever may interpret the number of 18
the beast: it is the number of a human being, the number 666.[h]

=7:1–8,4b **The companions of the Lamb**[a]

2 K 19:30–31 14 Next in my vision I saw Mount Zion, and standing on it the Lamb[b] who had 1
Jl 3:5 with him a hundred and forty-four thousand people, all with his name and
Ob 17
·Zp 3:12–13 his Father's name written on their foreheads. ·I heard a sound coming out of 2
Ac 2:21m heaven like the sound of the ocean or the roar of thunder; it was like the sound of
harpists playing their harps. ·There before the throne they were singing a new 3
5:9 hymn[c] in the presence of the four living creatures and the elders, a hymn that could
Ps 33:3;98:1
Is 42:10;43:19 be learnt only by the hundred and forty-four thousand who had been redeemed
3:10 from the world. ·These are the ones who have kept their virginity[d] and not been 4
Jr 2:2–3
Zp 3:13 defiled with women; they *follow* the Lamb wherever he goes;[e] they, out of all
people, have been redeemed to be *the first-fruits for God* and for the Lamb. ·*No* 5
lie was found in their mouths and no fault can be found in them.[f]

Angels announce the Day of Judgement[g]

8:13 Then I saw another angel, flying high overhead, sent to announce the gospel of 6
eternity to all who live on the earth, every nation, race, language and tribe. ·He 7
Mt 10:28par. was calling, 'Fear God and glorify him, because the time has come for him to
Ex 20:11 sit in judgement; worship *the maker of heaven and earth and sea* and the springs
of water.'
=18:2–3 A second angel followed him, calling, '*Babylon has fallen, Babylon the Great* 8
Is 21:9
Is 51:17h *has fallen,*[h] Babylon which gave the whole world *the wine of retribution* to drink.'[i]
Jr 25:15;51:7–8
·13:15–17,15h A third angel followed, shouting aloud, 'All those who worship the beast and his 9
statue, or have had themselves branded on the hand or forehead, ·will be made to 10
drink the wine of God's fury which is ready, undiluted, in his cup of retribution; in
Gn 19:24 *fire and brimstone*[j] they will be tortured in the presence of the holy angels and the
19:3 Lamb ·and *the smoke* of their torture *rise for ever and ever.* There will be no 11
Is 34:9–10
respite, *night or day*, for those who worship the beast or its statue or accept
Ac 9:13g branding with its name.' ·This is why there must be perseverance in the saints who 12

13 keep the commandments of God and faith in Jesus. •Then I heard a voice from heaven say to me, 'Write down: Blessed are those who die in the Lord! Blessed indeed, the Spirit says; now they can rest for ever after their work, since their good deeds go with them.'

12:17
1:3e
1 Co 15:18
•Is 57:1–2
Mt 11:28–29
Heb 4:10

The harvest and vintage of the gentiles [k]

Jl 4:12–13

14 Now in my vision I saw a white *cloud* and, *sitting on it, one like a son of man* with a
15 gold crown on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand. •Then another angel came out of the sanctuary and shouted at the top of his voice to the one sitting on the cloud, '*Ply* your *sickle* and reap: harvest time has come and *the harvest* of the earth
16 *is ripe*.' •Then the one sitting on the cloud set his sickle to work on the earth, and the harvest of earth was reaped.

1:7
Dn 7:13
Jr 51:33
Jl 4:13
Mt 13:36–43
Jn 4:35
Rm 2:6b

17 Another angel, who also carried a sharp sickle, came out of the temple in
18 heaven, •and the angel in charge of the fire left the altar [l] and shouted at the top of his voice to the one with the sharp sickle, 'Put your sickle in and harvest the
19 bunches from the vine of the earth; all its grapes are ripe.' •So the angel set his sickle to work on the earth and harvested the whole vintage of the earth and put it
20 into a huge winepress, the winepress of God's anger, •outside the city, [m] where it was trodden until the blood that came out of the winepress was up to the horses' bridles as far away as sixteen hundred furlongs.

6:9–10;8:3–5
Is 63:1–6
19:15
19:14,21

The hymn of Moses and the Lamb [a]

1 **15** And I saw in heaven another sign, great and wonderful: seven angels were bringing the seven plagues that are the last of all, because they exhaust the
2 anger of God. •I seemed to be looking at a sea of crystal suffused with fire, and standing by the lake of glass, those who had fought against the beast and won, and against his statue and the number which is his name. They all had harps from God,
3 and they were singing the hymn of Moses, [b] the servant of God, and the hymn of the Lamb:

=7:9;
13:15–18
14:3c
Ex 15:1–21

d. var. 'he who kills by the sword must die . . .'

e. There are two interpretations of this quotation from Jr 15:2: that persecution is ordained and must be endured; or that the punishment of the persecutors is inevitable and will be inexorable, cf. 14:11–12; Ps 5:10c; Mt 26:52.

f. This beast is later referred to as 'false prophet', 16:13; 19:20; 20:10. Before describing the return of the Son of man, 14:14–20, cf. 19:11seq. and Mt 24:30, the author shows the activity of the false messiahs (first beast) and the false prophets (second beast) foretold in the gospel, Mt 24:24; cf. 2 Th 2:9.

g. The second beast mimics the Spirit who works miracles in the Church to encourage faith in Christ. Similarly, the first beast had imitated the risen Messiah, v. 3. The Dragon, the first beast and the second beast form a caricature of the Trinity.

h. var. '616'. In both Gk and Hebr., letters are used for numbers, the value corresponding to the place in the alphabet; by adding up the values of component letters that total 'number of a person's name' is obtained. In Hebr. the letters of Caesar Nero add up to 666, and in Gk the letters of Caesar-God add up to 616 (the alternative reading).

14 a. The followers of the beast who are branded with his name and number, 13:16–17, are now contrasted with the followers of a Lamb marked with his name and the name of his Father. This is the 'remnant' of the new Israel, Is 4:3c, the faithful Christians who have survived persecution and who are to begin the restoration of God's kingdom when its enemies have been destroyed. Mount Zion is God's throne, *see* 21:1a.

b. var. 'a Lamb'.

c. Moses had celebrated the deliverance from Egypt, Ex 15:1–21; cf. 15:3–5; the new hymn celebrates the new deliverance of God's people and of the new order introduced by the Lamb that was sacrificed.

d. Metaphorically. In the OT marital infidelity is a metaphor for idolatry, *see* Ho 1:2b, in this case the worship of the beast, *see* 17:1, etc. The hundred and forty-four thousand redeemed, 5:9, have remained faithful and true, and have rejected worship of false gods, and so can be betrothed to the Lamb, *see* 19:9; 21:2; 2 Co 11:2.

e. Just as Israel followed Yahweh at the Exodus, so the new Israel, newly redeemed, follows the Lamb into the desert, cf. Jr 2:2–3, where the marriage rites are renewed (Ho 2:16–25).

f. i.e. they have not invoked false gods, the beast. The vocabulary of vv. 4,5 is that of sacrifices: the first-fruits represent the whole harvest; the acceptable sacrifice is without blemish, Ex 12:5; 1 P 1:19.

g. Before God's vengeance strikes, the angels appear to give a final warning of Judgement; but it goes unheeded, *see* 16:2,9,11,21. *See also* 15:5c.

h. The tense is the prophetic perfect.

i. corr. 'drink the wine of the anger of her adultery' Gk, as in 17:2; 18:3. The 'wine of anger' is a familiar image, *see* Is 51:17h, for the divine anger especially on worshippers of false gods.

j. The lake of burning sulphur is where the wicked are punished, *see* 19:20; 20:10; 21:8.

k. The destruction of the gentile nations. The fulfilment of this prophecy is described in 19:11seq.

l. From the altar arise the prayers of the saints, 8:3–5; 9:13, which the angel carries to God to ask for justice.

m. The gentiles are to be destroyed outside Jerusalem according to Ezk 38–39; Zc 14:2seq., 12seq.; *see* Lv 4:12c; Heb 13:11.

15 a. The vision of seven cups picks up that of the seven trumpets, 8:2seq. Between vv. 1 and 5 is inserted the hymn sung by the saved to the praise of him who saves them.

b. Like the hymn of Moses, Ex 15, this is a song of deliverance, 14:1. It is woven from biblical allusions and dwells less on the severity of the punishments than on the triumph of the Lord and those who belong to him.

Ps 92:5;98:1 How great and wonderful are all your works,
Lord God Almighty;
Dt 32:4 Ps 145:17 upright and true are all your ways,
King of nations.
Jr 10:7 *Who does not revere* and *glorify your name, O Lord?* 4
For you alone are holy,
Ps 86:9 *and all nations will come and adore you*
for the many acts of saving justice you have shown.

The seven bowls of plagues [c]

Ex 25:16g After this, in my vision, the sanctuary, the tent of the Testimony, opened in 5
19:8 heaven, ·and out came the seven angels with the seven plagues, wearing pure white 6
linen, fastened round their waists with belts of gold. ·One of the four living 7
14:8i creatures gave the seven angels seven golden bowls filled with the anger of God
1 K 8:10 Is 6:4 who lives for ever and ever. ·*The smoke from the glory* and the power *of God filled* 8
the temple so that no one could go into it [d] until the seven plagues of the seven
angels were completed.

=8:6–12 16 Then I heard a loud voice from the sanctuary calling to the seven angels, 1
'Go, and empty the seven bowls of God's anger over the earth.'

The first angel went and emptied his bowl over the earth; at once, on all the 2
13:15–17 people who had been branded with the mark of the beast and had worshipped its
Ex 9:8–11 statue, there came disgusting and virulent sores.

The second angel emptied his bowl over the sea, and it turned to blood, like the 3
blood of a corpse, and every living creature in the sea died.

Ex 7:14–24 The third angel emptied his bowl into the rivers and springs of water and they 4
1:20r turned into blood. ·Then I heard the angel of water say, 'You are the Upright One, 5
1:4g;11:17 He who is, He who was, the Holy One, for giving this verdict: ·they spilt the blood 6
=18:24 Mt 23:35 of the saints and the prophets, and blood is what you have given them to drink; it is
6:9;8:3–4 what they deserve.' ·And I heard the altar itself say, 'Truly, Lord God Almighty, 7
the punishments you give are true and just.'

The fourth angel emptied his bowl over the sun and it was made to scorch people 8
9:20 Am 4:6f with its flames; ·but though people were scorched by the fierce heat of it, they 9
cursed the name of God who had the power to cause such plagues, and they would
not repent and glorify him.

The fifth angel emptied his bowl over the throne of the beast [a] and its whole 10
Ex 10:21–23 Is 8:22 empire was plunged into darkness. People were biting their tongues for pain, ·but 11
instead of repenting for what they had done, they cursed the God of heaven
because of their pains and sores.

=9:14 The sixth angel emptied his bowl over the great river Euphrates; all the water 12
dried up so that a way was made for the kings of the East [b] to come in. ·Then from 13
the jaws of dragon and beast and false prophet I saw three foul spirits come; they
Ex 8:2–3 looked like frogs ·and in fact were demon spirits, able to work miracles, going out 14
17:13–14;19:19 1 Co 1:8e to all the kings of the world to call them together for the war of the Great Day of
God the Almighty. [c]—·Look, I shall come like a thief. Blessed is anyone who has 15
1:3e;3:3–4,18 Mt 24:42+ kept watch, and has kept his clothes on, so that he does not go out naked and
=20:8 expose his shame.—·They called the kings together at the place called, in Hebrew, 16
Armageddon. [d]

4:5;21:6 Is 66:6 The seventh angel emptied his bowl into the air, and a great voice boomed out 17
from the sanctuary, [e] 'The end has come.' ·Then there were flashes of lightning and 18
Dn 12:1 Mk 13:19 peals of thunder and a violent earthquake, *unparalleled since* humanity *first came*
into existence. ·The Great City was split into three parts and the cities of the world 19
14:8,10 collapsed; Babylon the Great was not forgotten: God made her drink the full
6:14 winecup of his retribution. ·Every island vanished and the mountains disap- 20
Ex 9:22–26 peared; [f] ·and hail, with great hailstones weighing a talent each, [g] fell from the sky 21
on the people. They cursed God for sending a plague of hail; it was the most
terrible plague.

B: THE PUNISHMENT OF BABYLON

The great prostitute

Ezk 16:23
Na 3:4

1 17 One of the seven angels that had the seven bowls came to speak to me, and
said, 'Come here and I will show you the punishment of the great prostitute [a]
2 *who* is *enthroned beside abundant waters*, [b] ·with whom all the kings of the earth Jr 51:13
have prostituted themselves, and who has made all the population of the world Is 23:17
3 drunk with the wine of her adultery.' [c] ·He took me in spirit to a desert, [d] and there Jr 51:7
I saw a woman riding a scarlet beast which had seven heads and ten horns [e] and had Is 21:1seq.
4 blasphemous titles written all over it. ·The woman was dressed in purple and =13:1
scarlet and glittered with gold and jewels and pearls, and she was holding a gold Jr 51:7
5 winecup filled with the disgusting filth of her prostitution; ·on her forehead was
written a name, a cryptic name: 'Babylon the Great, the mother of all the prosti- 2 Th 2:7
6 tutes and all the filthy practices on the earth.' ·I saw that she was drunk, drunk with
the blood of the saints, and the blood of the martyrs of Jesus; [f] and when I saw her,
7 I was completely mystified. ·The angel said to me, 'Do you not understand? I will
tell you the meaning of this woman, and of the beast she is riding, with the seven
heads and the ten horns.

The symbolism of the beast and the prostitute [g]

8 'The beast you have seen was once alive and is alive no longer; it is yet to come up =13:3–4
from the Abyss, but only to go to its destruction. And the people of the world,
whose names have not been written since the beginning of the world in the book of 20:12i
life, will be astonished when they see how the beast was once alive and is alive no
longer, and is still to come.
9 'This calls for shrewdness. The seven heads are the seven hills, on which the 13:18
10 woman is sitting. ·The seven heads are also seven emperors. [h] Five of them have
already gone, one is here now, and one is yet to come; once here, he must stay for
11 a short while. ·The beast, who was alive and is alive no longer, is at the same time
the eighth and one of the seven, and he is going to his destruction.
12 '*The ten horns* which you saw *are ten kings* who have not yet been given their Dn 7:24
royal power but will have royal authority only for a single hour and in association
13 with the beast. ·They are all of one mind in putting their strength and their powers
14 at the beast's disposal, ·and they will go to war against the Lamb; but because the 19:11–21

c. Before finally destroying Babylon (Rome), 16:18–19, God sends a series of plagues on the wicked (several are reminiscent of the Egyptian plagues, Ex 7–10). The angels who accomplish them issue from the Tent which is the true Temple in heaven, 11:19. They execute justice within the liturgical framework of a theophany.

d. According to 2 M 2:4–8 the reappearance of the sacred tent and the manifestation of God's glory as in the time of Moses, Ex 40:34–35, and of Solomon, 1 K 8:10, were to herald the coming of the messianic age and the rebirth of the chosen people. The 'glory' (*see* Ex 24:16f) is the sign of God's presence (*compare* the appearance of the ark of the covenant in Rv 11:19).

16 **a.** Rome, type of all gentile powers hostile to God.

b. If the Euphrates dries up, the Romans lose all defences against the Parthian warriors, 9:14.

c. The work of these evil spirits is foreordained to bring the gentile nations to Judgement.

d. i.e. 'the mountains of Megiddo'. The defeat of King Josiah near this town, 2 K 23:29seq., made the place symbolise disaster for any armies assembling there, cf. Zc 12:11.

e. add. '(proceeding) from the throne' or 'from God'.

f. These cosmic phenomena symbolise the powers of this world withering under God's anger.

g. About 88 lb (40 kg).

17 **a.** As Jerusalem will be, 21:9, Babylon is personified by a woman, *see* 12:1; Dn 4:27k. Here it is Rome the idolatrous, 2:14k; 18:3; Ho 1:2b; *see* Rv 14:4. After its brilliant career, vv. 3–7, it will suffer the condemnation proclaimed and prepared by the previous visions.

b. A literal description of Babylon, metaphorically explained in v. 15.

c. All gentile nations and their kings who have adopted the imperial cult.

d. Where unclean beasts live, *see* Lv 26:8b; 17:7c.

e. The seven heads are the seven hills of Rome, v. 9, and the ten horns are subject kings, v. 12, who shake off the yoke of the Empire, v. 16. The beast, vv. 3,7–8, represents an emperor, presumably Nero, whom popular belief expected to return to life and power before the coming of the Lamb, *see* 2 Th 2:8–9. The beginning of v. 8 is a parody of the titles of God, 1:4, and of Christ, 1:18.

f. Like Jerusalem (Ezk 16:36–38 and 23:37–45) Rome is guilty of a double crime: idolatry, v. 4, and murder, v. 6.

g. In the symbolism of the beast two distinct senses can be discerned, vv. 8–9,15–18, and vv. 10,12–14. The woman who is sitting on it thinks herself powerful, but is riding to her destruction.

h. Seven Roman emperors, of whom the sixth is reigning at the moment. Seven is a number symbolic of totality, and the author does not intend to say anything about the number and chronology of the historical Roman emperors.

14:4 Dt 10:17 2 M 13:4 1 Tm 6:15
Lamb is *Lord of lords* and *King of kings*, he will defeat them, he and his followers, the called, the chosen, the trustworthy.' [i]

The angel continued, 'The waters you saw, beside which the prostitute was 15
sitting, are all the peoples, the populations, the nations and the languages. ·But 16
Ezk 16:39–41; 23:25–29
the ten horns and the beast will turn against the prostitute, and *tear off her clothes* and leave her stark naked; then they will eat her flesh and burn the remains in the fire. ·In fact, God has influenced their minds to do what he intends, to agree 17
together to put their royal powers at the beast's disposal until the time when God's
11:8f
words shall be fulfilled. ·The woman you saw is the great city which has authority 18
over all the rulers on earth.'

An angel announces the fall of Babylon [a]

Jr 18:1a Ezk 43:2
18 After this, I saw another angel come down from heaven, with great author- 1
ity given to him; *the earth shone with his glory*. ·At the top of his voice he 2
=14:8 Is 21:9
shouted, '*Babylon has fallen, Babylon* the Great *has fallen*, and has become *the*
Is 13:21–22; 34:11–14 Jr 50:39
haunt of devils and a lodging for every foul spirit and dirty, loathsome bird. ·All 3
the nations have drunk deep of the wine of her prostitution; [b] every king on the
17:2 Jr 51:7
earth has prostituted himself with her, and every merchant grown rich through her debauchery.'

The people of God summoned to flee

16:17 Is 48:20;52:11 Jr 51:6
Another voice spoke from heaven; I heard it say, 'Come out, my people, away 4
from her, so that you do not share in her crimes and have the same plagues to bear.
Gn 18:20 Jr 51:9
Her sins have reached up to the sky, and God has her crimes in mind: *treat her as* 5
she has treated others. ·She must be paid double the amount she exacted. She is to 6
Jr 50:15;16:18
have a doubly strong cup of her own mixture. ·Every one of her pomps and orgies 7
Is 47:8
is to be matched by a torture or an agony. *I am enthroned as queen, she thinks; I am*
Is 47:9
no widow and will never know bereavement. ·For that, *in one day*, the plagues will 8
fall on her: disease and mourning and famine. She will be burned to the ground. The Lord God who has condemned her is mighty.'

The people of the world mourn for Babylon [c]

Ezk 26–28
'There will be mourning and weeping for her by the kings of the earth who have 9
prostituted themselves with her and held orgies with her. They see the smoke as
she burns, ·while they keep at a safe distance through fear of her anguish. They 10
will say:

> Mourn, mourn for this great city,
> Babylon, so powerful a city,
> in one short hour your doom has come upon you.

'There will be weeping and distress over her among all the traders of the earth 11
when no one is left to buy their cargoes of goods; ·their stocks of gold and silver, 12
jewels and pearls, linen and purple and silks and scarlet; all the sandalwood, every piece in ivory or fine wood, in bronze or iron or marble; ·the cinnamon and spices, 13
the myrrh and ointment and incense; wine, oil, flour and corn; their stocks of cattle, sheep, horses and chariots, their slaves and their human cargo.

Mi 7:1
'All the fruits you had set your hearts on have failed you; gone for ever, never to 14
return again, is your life of magnificence and ease.

'The traders who had made a fortune out of her will be standing at a safe distance 15
through fear of her anguish, mourning and weeping. ·They will be saying: 16

> Mourn, mourn for this great city;
> for all the linen and purple and scarlet that you wore,
> 17:4
> for all your finery of gold and jewels and pearls;
> your huge riches are all destroyed within a single hour.' 17

All the captains and seafaring men, sailors and all those who make a living from Ezk 27:27–29
18 the sea kept a safe distance, •watching the smoke as she burned, and crying out,
19 'Has there ever been a city as great as this!' •They threw dust on their heads and 13:4
said, with tears and groans:

'Mourn, mourn for this great city
whose lavish living has made a fortune
for every owner of a sea-going ship,
ruined within a single hour.

20 'Now heaven, celebrate her downfall, and all you saints, apostles and prophets: =19:1–2
God has given judgement for you against her.' Dt 32:43
Is 44:23
21 Then a powerful angel picked up a boulder like a great millstone, and as he Jr 51:63–64
hurled it into the sea, he said, 'That is how the great city of Babylon is going to
be hurled down, never to be seen again. [d]

22 Never again in you Is 24:8
will be heard the song of harpists and minstrels, Ezk 26:13
the music of flute and trumpet;
never again will craftsmen of every skill be found in you
or *the sound of the handmill* be heard; Jr 25:10
23 never again will shine *the light of the lamp* in you,
never again will be heard in you
the voices of bridegroom and bride. Jr 7:34;16:9
Your traders were the princes of the earth, Is 23:8
all the nations were led astray by your sorcery.

24 In her was found the blood of prophets and saints,and all the blood that was ever =16:6
shed on earth.' Mt 23:35–37

Songs of victory in heaven [a]

1 19 After this I heard what seemed to be the great sound of a huge crowd in 18:20
heaven, singing, 'Alleluia! [b] Salvation and glory and power to our God!
2 He judges fairly, he punishes justly, and he has condemned the great prostitute =16:7
who corrupted the earth with her prostitution; he has avenged the blood of his •6:9;11:18
3 servants which she shed.' •And again they sang, 'Alleluia! *The smoke* of her *will* Dt 32:43
4 *rise for ever and ever.*' •Then the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures Ps 5:10c
threw themselves down and worshipped God seated on his throne, and they cried, 14:11
'Amen, Alleluia.' Is 34:10

5 Then a voice came from the throne; it said, 'Praise our God, you servants of his
6 and *those who fear him, small and great alike.*' •And I heard what seemed to be the 11:18
voices of a huge crowd, like the sound of the ocean or the great roar of thunder, Ps 115:13
7 answering, 'Alleluia! The reign of the Lord our God Almighty has begun; •let us 11:17
be glad and joyful and give glory to God, because this is the time for the marriage Is 61:10
8 of the Lamb. [c] •His bride is ready, and she has been able to dress herself in dazzling Ep 5:25+
9 white linen, because her linen is made of the good deeds of the saints.' •The angel 2:17;3:5;
said, 'Write this, "Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding feast of the 21:2d
1:3e
Mt 8:11+;
22:1–14

i. A reference back to 14:4 and forward to 19:11–21.

18 **a.** The punishment prophesied in cryptic terms, ch. 17, is now imminent. It will occur when the faithful have been set apart from sinners, v. 4, *see* 3:10d.

b. 'her prostitution'; var. 'the anger of her prostitution', cf. 14:8.

c. Triple lamentation by the kings of the earth, vv. 9–10, by the merchants of the world, vv. 11–17[a], and by seafarers, vv. 17[b]–19. It draws on Jr 50–51 and even more Ezk 26–28.

d. A symbolic gesture after which the lament is taken up again, vv. 22–23; v. 21 is continued in v. 24. The description of 18:1–3 is completed here: Babylon is to be destroyed for its idolatry, *see* 17:4; and for persecuting Christians, 18:24.

19 **a.** The prelude of songs of joy in 18:20, contrasting vividly with the laments of ch. 18, was for the fall of Babylon. The first song, vv. 1–4, comes from heaven; in the second, vv. 5–9, join the saints of the whole Church, invited to the wedding of the Lamb.

b. The only uses of the word in the NT are in 19:1,3,4,6; this liturgical acclamation ('Praise God') was already used in Jewish worship, Ps 111:1; 113:1a.

c. The wedding of the Lamb symbolises the beginning of the heavenly kingdom described in 21:9seq. *See* Ho 1:2b and Ep 5:22–23f.

22:8–9 Lamb," ' and he added, 'These words of God are true.' ·Then I knelt at his feet to 10
worship him, but he said to me, 'Never do that: [d] I am your fellow-servant and the
fellow-servant of all your brothers who have in themselves the witness of Jesus.
God alone you must worship.' The witness of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. [e]

C: THE DESTRUCTION OF THE UNBELIEVERS

=20:7–10 **The first eschatological battle** [f]

And now I saw heaven open, and a white horse [g] appear; its rider was called 11
1:5;3:7,14 Is 11:4 1:14;2:18 Trustworthy and True; *in uprightness he judges* and makes war. ·His eyes were 12
flames of fire, and he was crowned with many coronets; [h] the name written on him
Lk 10:22 Is 63:1 Jn 1:1a was known only to himself, ·*his cloak was soaked in blood.* [i] He is known by the 13
name, The Word of God. [j] ·Behind him, dressed in linen of dazzling white, rode 14
1:16 the armies of heaven [k] on white horses. ·From his mouth came a sharp sword [l] with 15
2:27+ Ps 2:9 which to strike the unbelievers; he is the one *who will rule them with an iron sceptre*,
14:19 Is 63:3 Dt 10:17 and tread out the wine of Almighty God's fierce retribution. [m] ·On his cloak and on 16
his thigh a name was written: *King of kings* and *Lord of lords*. [n]

2 M 13:4 Ezk 39:17 I saw an angel standing in the sun, and he shouted aloud to all the birds that were 17
flying high overhead in the sky, 'Come here. *Gather together at* God's *great feast.*
You will eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of great generals and heroes, the 18
flesh of horses and their riders and of all kinds of people, citizens and slaves, small
and great alike.'

17:12–14 Then I saw the beast, with all the kings of the earth and their armies, gathered 19
Mt 26:53 together to fight the Rider and his army. ·But the beast was taken prisoner, 20
together with the false prophet who had worked miracles on the beast's behalf and
by them had deceived those who had accepted branding with the mark of the beast
and those who had worshipped his statue. [o] These two were hurled alive into the
14:10j; 20:10,14 Dn 7:11 Ezk 39:20 fiery lake of burning sulphur. ·All the rest were killed by the sword of the Rider, 21
which came out of his mouth, and *all the birds glutted themselves with their flesh.*

The reign of a thousand years

9:1b 12:7,9 Mt 12:28–29 20 Then I saw an angel come down from heaven with the key of the Abyss in 1
his hand and an enormous chain. ·He overpowered the dragon, that prime- 2
val serpent which is the devil and Satan, and chained him up for a thousand years.
He hurled him into the Abyss and shut the entrance and sealed it over him, to 3
2 Co 6:2a 2 Th 2:8seq.,8h make sure he would not lead the nations astray again until the thousand years had
passed. At the end of that time he must be released, but only for a short while.

Dn 7:22 Then I saw thrones, where they took their seats, and *on them was conferred the* 4
power to give judgement. I saw the souls of all who had been beheaded for having
19:10d witnessed for Jesus and for having preached God's word, [a] and those who refused
13:15–17 to worship the beast or his statue and would not accept the brand-mark on their
5:10 foreheads or hands; they came to life, and reigned with Christ for a thousand
years. [b] ·The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were 5
1:3e over; this is the first resurrection. ·Blessed and holy are those who share in the first 6
2:11+ resurrection; the second death has no power over them [c] but they will be priests of
1:6k God and of Christ and reign with him for a thousand years. [d]

=19:11–21 When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison ·and 7, 8
=16:14,16 Ezk 38:2,9,15 will come out to lead astray all the nations in the four quarters of the earth, *Gog*
and Magog, [e] and mobilise them for war, his armies being as many as the sands of
Lk 21:24 the sea. ·They came swarming over the entire country and besieged the camp of 9
9:13g =Ezk 38:22 19:20 the saints, which is the beloved City. [f] *But fire rained down on them from heaven*
and consumed them. ·Then the devil, who led them astray, was hurled into the 10
lake of fire and sulphur, where the beast and the false prophet are, and their torture
will not come to an end, day or night, for ever and ever.

The Last Judgement

Rm 2:6b

11 Then I saw a great white throne and the One who was sitting on it. [g] In his presence,
12 earth and sky vanished, leaving no trace. ·I saw the dead, great and small alike, 21:1 2 P 3:7,10,12 3:5;13:8;17:8
standing in front of his throne while *the books lay open.* And another book was Dn 7:10i
opened, which is the book of life, and the dead were judged from what was written
in the books, as their deeds deserved. [h]
13, 14 The sea gave up all the dead who were in it; ·Death and Hades were emptied of 21:4 1 Co 15:26,54
the dead that were in them; and every one was judged as his deeds deserved. Then 1:18p
Death and Hades were hurled into the burning lake. [i] This burning lake is the
15 second death; ·and anybody whose name could not be found written in the book of 2:11+
life was hurled into the burning lake. 14:10j

D: THE JERUSALEM OF THE FUTURE

The heavenly Jerusalem [a]

=7:15–17

1 21 Then I saw *a new heaven and a new earth;* [b] the first heaven and the first Is 65:17 Rm 8:19–23
2 earth had disappeared now, and there was no longer any sea. [c] ·I saw the 2 P 3:13
holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as ·Jb 7:12f
3 a bride dressed for her husband. [d] ·Then I heard a loud voice call from the throne, 19:7–8

d. Possibly there is in this incident a warning against the worship of heavenly 'powers', Col 2:18; Heb 1:14; 2:5.

e. The 'witness of Jesus' is the word of God to which Jesus testifies and which is implanted in every Christian, *see* 1:2; 6:9; 12:17, and which inspires the prophets.

f. After the fall of Babylon prophesied 14:8,14–15, and described 16:19–20; 17:12–14, Christ the faithful witness, 3:14, brings about the Day of Yahweh, Am 5:18m, by annihilating the enemies of the Church. The account, as previous descriptions, 12:5; 14:6–20; 17:14, draws on a variety of prophecies.

g. The colour symbolises victory.

h. Because he is King of kings, *see* v. 16.

i. Alluding (*see* v. 15) to Is 63:1. Symbol of the mortal ruin he deals his enemies, *see* 5:5.

j. The names of the victorious horseman, vv. 12,13,16, express different aspects of his nature. To the transcendent divine name, v. 12, are here added the Word, which indicates that he effectively reveals God, cf. Jn 1:1,14, and, more exactly, that he carries out his judgements, Rv 20:11–12; 22:12; *see also* Ws 18:14–18.

k. The angels, cf. Mt 26:53, or preferably, following Rv 14:5 and 17:14, the white-robed martyrs, *see* 3:5,18; 6:11; 16:15; 19:8 and also Mt 22:11seq.

l. Symbol of the destroying Word; cf. Ws 18:16; Is 11:4; and also Rv 1:16; Ho 6:5; 2 Th 2:8; Heb 4:12.

m. The winepress is a common image in prophetic literature for God's destruction of his people's enemies on the Great Day of his revenge; cf. Gn 49:9–12; Is 63:1–6; Jr 25:30; Jl 4:13. On the 'wine of retribution', *see* Is 51:17h.

n. A title of dignity, *see* 17:14; Ph 2:9–11, which infinitely surpasses the blasphemous titles of the beast, Rv 13:1; 17:3.

o. This long parenthesis echoes the events described in ch. 13.

20 a. This difficult verse is one of those where traces may remain of different stages and revisions in the editing of this book. Is 20:1–6 another version of 19:11–21? Cf. Mt 19:28; 1 Co 6:23.

b. One interpretation makes this 'resurrection' of the martyrs (cf. Is 26:19; Ezk 37) symbolise the recovery of the Church after the Roman persecution; the 'reign of a thousand years' is then the period of the kingdom of Christ on earth from the end of persecution (the fall of Rome) to the Last Judgement (in 20:11seq.). According to Augustine and others who follow him, the 'reign of a thousand years' is reckoned from Christ's Resurrection, and the 'first resurrection' is baptism, cf. Jn 5:25–28; Rm 6:1–11. From the time of the early Church there have been some readers who have taken this as a literal forecast: after a first resurrection, that of the martyrs, Christ would come to reign on earth with his faithful for a thousand years. But this literal interpretation has never won acceptance in the Church.

c. The first death is on earth, the second 'death' is failure to win eternal life.

d. The messianic rule of Christians on earth is foretold in 5:9–10, and under the symbol of the new Jerusalem, in 21:9–22:2 and 22:6–15, although this passage comes after the description of the Last Judgement, 20:13–15.

e. Ezk 38–39 (*see* notes) mentions 'Gog, king of Magog'; here the two names symbolise all the gentile nations leagued against the Church at the end of time.

f. A new promised land of which Jerusalem is the capital, 21:2d; it withstands the final invasion, cf. Lk 21:24. But it also symbolises the whole Church.

g. After the general resurrection occurs the Judgement, 2:23; 3:5; *see* 19:13j; Dn 7:10. This created universe is to be replaced by another, wholly new, 21:1a.

h. The first scrolls list human deeds; the scroll of life, the last to be opened, is the list of the predestined, *see* Dn 7:10i; 12:1a; Ac 13:48jj.

i. After the Last Judgement death itself will lose its power, *see* 20:10; 21:4 and 20:6.

21 a. The city of the elect, in total contrast with Babylon, ch. 17, is a gift of God. The outlook is an entirely celestial one, as in 7:15–17. The opening draws on Isaiah (especially ch. 51 and 65). Jerusalem, city of David, political and religious centre of Israel, 2 S 5:9f; 24:25; 1 K 6:2; Ps 122, city of God, Ps 46:4, holy city, Is 52:1; Dn 9:24; Mt 4:5, whose heart was the mountain, Ps 2:6b, where the Temple stood, Dt 12:2–3b, was considered in Israel as the destined metropolis of the messianic people, Ps 87:1a; 122; Is 2:1–5; 54:11d; 60; Jr 3:17; Lk 2:38*o*. It is there that the Holy Spirit founded the Christian Church, Ac 1:4, 8j; 2; 8:1–4. In this passage the city is transferred to heaven where the saving plan of God finds its fulfilment, 3:12; 11:1; 20:9; 22:19; *see also* Ac 2:22–24*o*; Ga 4:26; Ph 3:20, when the wedding of the Lamb is celebrated, Rv 19:7–8c; cf. Is 61:10; 62:4–5; Ho 1:2b; 2:16.

b. In Is 65:17; 66:22 the phrase is merely a symbol of the new messianic age: the fresh start for which the later prophets long. For Paul the shape of the eventual future has become clearer: all creation will be freed from the dominance of corruption and transformed, Rm 8:19j.

c. The sea, home of the Dragon and symbol of evil, *see* Jb 7:12f, will disappear as at the time of the Exodus, but this time for ever, before the victorious advance of the new Israel, cf. Jb 26:12–13; Ps 74:13,14; Is 27:1; 51:9–10.

d. The new and joyful wedding of Jerusalem and her God has taken place, cf. Is 61:10; 62:4–5; 65:18; the Exodus ideal has at last been achieved, *see* Ho 2:16p.

7:15–17 •Ezk 37:27 Is 7:14f •Is 25:8 •Is 35:10 'Look, here God lives among human beings. He will make *his home among them; they will be his people*, and he will be their God, *God-with-them.*[c] •*He will wipe* 4
away all *tears from their eyes*; there will be no more death, and no more mourning
or sadness or pain. The world of the past has gone.'

2 Co 5:17 Then the One sitting on the throne spoke. 'Look, I am making the whole of 5
Dn 8:26 creation new. Write this, "What I am saying is trustworthy and will come true." '
1:8*l* Then he said to me, 'It has already happened. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the 6
22:17 Is 55:1 Beginning and the End. I will give water from the well of life free to anybody who
2 S 7:14 is thirsty;[f] •anyone who proves victorious will inherit these things; and *I will be his* 7
=22:15 Rm 1:29q God and *he will be my son.*[g] •But the legacy for cowards, for those who break their 8
word, or worship obscenities, for murderers and the sexually immoral, and for
sorcerers, worshippers of false gods or any other sort of liars, is the second death[h]
in the burning lake of sulphur.'

The messianic Jerusalem[i]

One of the seven angels that had the seven bowls full of the seven final plagues 9
came to speak to me and said, 'Come here and I will show you the bride that the
Ezk 40:2 Lamb has married.' •*In the spirit, he carried me to the top of a very high mountain,* 10
21:2 and showed me Jerusalem, the holy city, coming down out of heaven from God.
Is 60:1–2 It had *all the glory of God* and glittered like some precious jewel of crystal-clear 11
7:1–8 Ezk 48:31–35 diamond. •Its wall was of a great height and had twelve gates; at each of the twelve 12
gates there was an angel, and over the gates were written the names *of the twelve*
tribes of Israel; •*on the east there were three gates, on the north three gates, on the* 13
Ep 2:20 *south three gates, and on the west three gates.* •The city walls stood on twelve 14
foundation stones, each one of which bore the name of one of the twelve apostles
of the Lamb.[j]

The angel that was speaking to me was carrying a gold measuring rod to measure 15
the city and its gates and wall. •The plan of the city is perfectly square, its length 16
the same as its breadth.[k] He measured the city with his rod and it was twelve
thousand furlongs, equal in length and in breadth, and equal in height.[l] •He 17
measured its wall, and this was a hundred and forty-four cubits high—by human
Tb 13:17 measurements. •The wall was built of diamond, and the city of pure gold, like clear 18
Is 54:11–12 glass. •The foundations of the city wall were faced with all kinds of precious stone:[m] 19
the first with diamond, the second lapis lazuli, the third turquoise, the fourth
crystal, •the fifth agate, the sixth ruby, the seventh gold quartz, the eighth mal- 20
achite, the ninth topaz, the tenth emerald, the eleventh sapphire and the twelfth
amethyst. •The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate being made of a single 21
pearl, and the main street of the city was pure gold, transparent as glass. •I could 22
Jn 2:19–21 not see any temple in the city[n] since the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb were
Is 60:1–2, 19–20 2 Co 3:18 themselves the temple, •and the city did not need the sun or the moon for light, 23
since it was lit by the radiant glory of God, and the Lamb was a lighted torch for it.
Is 60:3 *The nations will come to its light* and the kings of the earth will bring it their 24
treasures. •Its *gates will never be closed by day*—and there will be no night 25
Is 60:3,11 there[o]—•and *the nations will come, bringing their treasure* and their wealth. 26
Is 35:8;52:1 Zc 13:1–2 2 P 3:13 Nothing unclean may come into it: no one who does what is loathsome or false, but 27
only those who are listed in the Lamb's book of life.

Ezk 47:1–12 Jn 4:1a **22** Then the angel showed me the river of life, rising from the throne of God 1
and of the Lamb[a] and flowing crystal-clear. •Down the middle of the city 2
Ezk 47:12 street, *on either bank*[b] *of the river were the trees of life, which bear twelve crops*
of fruit in a year, one in each month, and the leaves of which are the cure for
the nations.

Zc 14:11 *The curse of destruction will be abolished.*[c] The throne of God and of the Lamb 3
=7:15 will be in the city; his servants will worship him, •they will see him face to face, and 4

5 his name will be written on their foreheads. •And night will be abolished; they will not need lamplight or sunlight, because the Lord God will be shining on them. They will reign for ever and ever.

6 The angel said to me, [d] 'All that you have written is sure and will come true: the Lord God who inspires the prophets has sent his angel to reveal to his servants
7 *what is soon to take place.* •I am coming soon!' Blessed are those who keep the prophetic message of this book.

8 I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. When I had heard and seen them all, I knelt at the feet of the angel who had shown them to me, to worship
9 him; •but he said, 'Do no such thing: I am your fellow-servant and the fellow-servant of your brothers the prophets and those who keep the message of this book. God alone you must worship.'

10 This, too, he said to me, 'Do not keep the prophecies in this book a secret,
11 because the Time is close. •Meanwhile let the sinner continue sinning, and the unclean continue to be unclean; let the upright continue in his uprightness, and
12 those who are holy continue to be holy. [e] •*Look, I am coming* soon, and my
13 *reward is with* me, *to repay everyone as their deeds deserve.* •I am the Alpha and the
14 Omega, *the First and the Last*, the Beginning and the End. •Blessed are those who will have washed their robes clean, so that they will have the right to feed on the
15 tree of life and can come through the gates into the city. [f] •Others must stay outside: dogs, fortune-tellers, and the sexually immoral, murderers, idolaters, and everyone of false speech and false life.'

Ps 17:15d
1 Co 13:12
1 Jn 3:2
•Ps 36:9
19:9;21:5
Dn 8:26
1:1;22:16
Dn 2:28
•1:3e
19:10d
10:4
Dn 12:10
Is 40:10
Ps 62:12e
1:8*l*
Is 41:4;44:6
7:14;12:1b;
22:2
=21:8
Nb 5:1–4
Rm 1:29q

e. var. 'and God himself will be their God' or 'and God himself will be with them'. This is the classic formula of the covenant, Gn 17:8; Lv 26:11–12; Jr 31:33; Ezk 37:27; cf. 2 Co 6:16. The intimate presence of God is the mark of God's covenant with his people, *see* Ex 25:8d and Jn 1:14m. It will reach its consummation at the end of time. Cf. Is 12:6; Jl 4:17,21; Zp 3:15–17; Zc 2:14.

f. In the OT, fresh water is the regular symbol of life-saving refreshment and is a feature of the messianic age. In the NT, it becomes a symbol of the Spirit, *see* Jn 4:1a.

g. The title 'Son of God' was to be conferred on King-Messiah, David's heir, on the day of his enthronement, 2 S 7:14e; hence Jesus was proclaimed 'Son of God' in virtue of his resurrection, Ac 2:36w; Rm 1:4c. He also extended this title to those who believe in him, Jn 1:12j.

h. Eternal death. The fire, like the water of v. 6, is symbolic.

i. It is the messianic Jerusalem because the gentile nations still exist, 21:24, and can be converted to the true God, 22:2. But it is already the heavenly Jerusalem and awaits only its eternal development. The elements of this description are drawn primarily from Ezk 40–48.

j. All the numbers which are multiples of 12 express the idea of perfection, and the new people of God inherits the total perfection of the old. The twelve apostles, *see* Mt 19:28seq.; Mk 3:14seq.; Ep 2:20, correspond to the twelve tribes of Israel, Rv 7:4–8.

k. The symbol of (terrestrial) perfection. Information concerning ancient weights and measures will be found in the Tables of measures and money.

l. Symbolic number: twelve (for the new Israel) multiplied by one thousand (for immensity).

m. These precious stones and their colours are intended to give an overall impression of solidity and splendour, the reflection of God's glory (*see* 2 Co 3:18). Cf. Is 54:11–12; Ezk 28:13, and the description of the high priest's pectoral, Ex 28:17–21; 39:10–14.

n. The Temple where God used to reside at the heart of the earthly Jerusalem, 11:19; 14:15–17; 15:5–16:1, has now disappeared. Now the new spiritual worship takes place in the body of Christ sacrificed and raised to life, *see* Jn 2:19–22i; 4:23–24; Rm 12:1a.

o. The risen Christ provides the shadowless light of his holiness, v. 27, on all the assembled nations, 22:5; cf. Jn 8:12b; 2 Co 4:6.

22 **a.** Allusion to the Trinity, since the river of living water is a symbol of the Spirit (Jn 4:1a), *see* Rv 21:6f.

b. Or punctuate '. . . crystal-clear, down the middle of the street . . . on either side'.

c. Vv. 3–5 follow on directly after 21:4. These vv. are in the future tense, a firm promise of the kingdom and the vision which will never come to an end, cf. 1 Co 13:12; 1 Jn 3:2, of the servants of God and of the Lamb, Rv 3:12; 7:3; 14:1.

d. All the rest of the book is a sort of epilogue. It is a conversation between the Angel (or Jesus) and the seer, a commentary on the visions written down in the book and the use to be made of them.

e. Whatever anyone may do, God's plan will still be accomplished.

f. Jerusalem, as described in 21:9seq.

EPILOGUE

1:11seq. 2:28t I, Jesus, have sent my angel to attest these things to you for the sake of the churches. I am the sprig from the root of David and the bright star of the morning. 16

The Spirit and the Bride[g] say, 'Come!' Let everyone who listens answer, 'Come!'[h] Then *let all who are thirsty come*: all who want it may *have the water* of life, and have it *free*. 17

21:6 Is 55:1

This is my solemn attestation to all who hear the prophecies in this book:[i] if anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him every plague mentioned in the book; 18

Dt 4:2

•if anyone cuts anything out of the prophecies in this book, God will cut off his share of the tree of life and of the holy city, which are described in the book. 19

The one who attests these things says: I am indeed coming soon. 20

Ac 3:20–21 1 Co 15:23*o* Amen; come, Lord Jesus.[j]

Rm 16:20+ May the grace of the Lord Jesus be with you all.[k] Amen. 21

g. The Church, bride of the Messiah, *see* 21:10.

h. The appeal is addressed to the Messiah; it is 'O Lord, come', *marana tha*, the refrain of the liturgical assemblies, 1 Co 16:22, expressive of the Christians' longing for the Second Coming, *see* 1 Th 5:1a.

i. This very ancient formula, Dt 4:2; 13:1; Pr 30:6; cf. Qo 3:14, is a way of protecting sacred writings against falsification.

j. Jesus confirms in vv. 7.12, and already in 1:3.7, that his coming is near. Thus he responds to the call of the Church and of believers. Their 'Amen', Rm 1:25p, expresses their joyful faith and their yearning.

k. var. 'with the saints' or 'with all the saints'.

SUPPLEMENTS

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

The columns to the right of the date column concern Palestinian and biblical history; those to the left concern general history; but this distinction is less strict from the Christian era onwards. In the right-hand column, extra-biblical writings are in *italics*, and (before the Roman period) extra-biblical facts or those not taken from Josephus are also in *italics*.

The names of rulers, kings, governors and high priests are in SMALL CAPITALS or CAPITALS according to their importance. In the list of the kings of Judah the succession is from father to son unless anything different is indicated. The names of prophets, and of biblical books when mentioned at the time of their composition, are in **bold type**; and the most important of other items are also in **bold type**.

I: THE BEGINNINGS Gn 1–11

	BC	FOLK TALES
Homo habilis and the 'Pebble Culture' (small stones adapted as tools). Gradual development (worked flints, fire, cave paintings, language)	2 000 000	The beginnings, Gn 1–11. Adam, a living, intelligent and free being, Gn 1:26. The Fall. Ten symbolic generations between Adam and the Flood, Gn 5
End of the Second Ice Age; development of food-gathering; expansion of the human race	13 000	The table of peoples, Gn 10
Stock raising and agriculture; villages	9000	Abel and Cain, Gn 4:2; Enoch 4:17
Painted pottery	5000	
Metallurgy (copper); beginning of writing (Sumerian tablets of Uruk = Erech in Gn 10:10)	3500	Tubal-Cain ancestor of all blacksmiths, Gn 4:22

II: THE PATRIARCHS Gn 12–50

		Palestine: early Bronze Age, 3100–2100. **The Canaanites** Abraham's ancestors nomads in Mesopotamia
Writing, properly so called; more widespread use of bronze. Egypt, **Old Kingdom** (Great Pyramids) (Capital: Memphis) Mesopotamia: Sumerians, followed by Accadians	3000	
		Middle Bronze Age: 2100 to 1550 The Amorites. In the 21st and 20th centuries Egypt controlled the Syro-Palestinian coast but not the interior (Memoirs of Sinuhe the Egyptian)
	2000	
Egypt: **Middle Kingdom:** 2030 to approximately 1720 Mesopotamia: Sumerian revival (3rd dynasty of Ur), followed by growing importance of the **Amorites**—Execration rites		
		About 1850: **arrival of** ABRAHAM **in Canaan**, Gn 12

	BC	
About this time the *Accadian poems of Creation* (Enuma Elish) *and of the Flood* (Gilgamesh)		
18th and 17th centuries: 1st Babylonian dynasty (Amorite) HAMMURABI: about 1750, his code Egypt, **The Hyksos**, 1720 to about 1552 (Capital: Tanis)		
	1700	**The Patriarchs in Egypt**

III: MOSES AND JOSHUA
Ex/Nb/Dt/Jos

Egypt: **New Kingdom**, 18th to 20th dynasties, 1552–1070 (Capital: Thebes) THUTMOSES III, 1468–1436 (campaigns in Palestine and Syria)	1500	*Late Bronze Age: about 1550–1200. Hurrians in Palestine*
	1400	
AKHNATON (= Amenophis IV): 1377–1358. His exclusive worship of the god Aton. The great hymn to Aton (Capital: Tell el-Amarna)		*The el-Amarna Letters (the Habiru; Abdihepa King of Jerusalem)*
In Asia Minor and northern Syria, the **Hittites**: SHUPPILULIUMASH 1370–1336	1350	
TUTANKHAMON: 1347–1338 Egypt: 19th dynasty, 1304–1184 SETI I: 1304–1290		*Alphabetical tablets of Ugarit (14th to 13th century)*
	1300	*Stelae of Seti I and Rameses III at Beth-Shean*
RAMESES II: 1290–1224. Residence at Pi-Rameses. Struggle, followed by alliance, with the Hittites		Hebrews as forced labour for the building of Pi-Rameses, Ex 1:11
	1250	The **Exodus**: about 1250 MOSES, **the Law at Sinai**
MERNEPTAH: 1224–1204. His fifth year: stele recording a victory over the 'people of Israel'		
Mesopotamia: 13th and 12th centuries, Assyrian preponderance		Between about 1220 and 1200: JOSHUA invades Palestine. *Excavations at the level of this period (at Hazor, for example, Jos 11:10) show ruins and impoverishment of dwellings and utensils*

IV: FROM THE JUDGES TO SOLOMON 1200–931
Jg / 1 S /2 S / 1 K 1–11 / 1 Ch / 2 Ch 1–9

	1200	*Iron Age I: about 1200 to 900. The Philistines, repulsed by Rameses III, occupy the Palestinian coast. Use of iron gradually spreads*
		The JUDGES: *c.* 1200 to 1025
Egypt: 20th dynasty, 1184–1070. RAMESES III, about 1175, victory over the **Peoples of the Sea** who try to force an entry into Egypt		
		About 1125: Deborah and Barak triumph over the Canaanites at Taanach
Mesopotamia: about 1100, Assyrian hegemony under TIGLATH-PILESER I, followed by the decline of Assyria and appearance of the **Aramaean kingdoms**, Damascus, Zobah, Hamath, temporarily Babylon, etc.	1100	

	BC	
Egypt: 21st dynasty 1070–945. (Capital: Tanis) Wenamon's voyage to Byblos		
	1050	About 1050: victory of the Philistines at Aphek and death of Eli
		SAMUEL appears about 1040. The sanctuary at Shiloh
		SAUL: 1030 to about 1010. Resides at Gibeah. Victories over the Ammonites and Philistines. Defeat at Gilboa and death of Saul
		DAVID: 1010–970
	1000	**Capture of Jerusalem** about 1000. Victories over the Philistines, Moabites, King of Zobah, Aramaeans of Damascus, Ammonites, Amalekites, Edomites. Alliance with Hamath, 2 S 8
SIAMON: 975–955		
REZON king of Damascus, 1 K 11:23seq.		SOLOMON: about 970–931. Marries Pharaoh's daughter. In his 4th year, **the building of the Temple**, 1 K 6:1. Commercial contacts with Phoenicia and Arabia. Literary activity: proverbs, writing of history (2 S 9–1 K 2)
PSUSENNES II: 955–950		

V: JUDAH AND ISRAEL: 931–721
1 K 12–22 / 2 K 1–17 / 2 Ch 10–28 / Am / Ho / Is / Mi

		Iron Age II about 900–600	
Egypt: 22nd dynasty, about 945–725 (Libyan). Capital: Bubastis			
SHESHONK I: 945–925			
		Assembly at Shechem **and schism** 1 K 12, about 931	
		ISRAEL	JUDAH
Sheshonk's campaign in Palestine (the Karnak list)		JEROBOAM I: 931–910. Residence at Tirzah. Worship at Dan and Bethel	REHOBOAM: 931–913. In his 5th year, Temple pillaged by Sheshonk, 1 K 14:25seq. (*Sheshonk's stele at Megiddo*)
OSORKON I: about 925–889			ABIJAH: 913–911
TABRIMMON (son of Hezion) king of Damascus, 1 K 15:18			ASA: 911–870. Struggle against idolatry. Allies with Ben-Hadad against Baasha
		NADAB: 910–909	
		BAASHA: 909–886. Massacre of the House of Jeroboam	
BEN-HADAD I his son, 1 K 15:18	900		
		ELAH: 886–885	
		ZIMRI: 7 days	
		OMRI: 885–874. Founds **Samaria**. Controls territory of Moab	
Revival of **Assyria**: ASSURNASIRPAL II: 883–859			
Egypt's weakness in 9th century and first half of 8th			

	BC		
		AHAB: 874–853. Marries Jezebel daughter of Ittobaal king of Tyre and Sidon. Temple of Baal. Enlarges his palace	
BEN-HADAD II king of Damascus		*Samaria ivories*, *see* 1 K 22:39. **Elijah** and the Yahwist reaction, 1 K 17–19; 21; 2 K 1. Wars against Ben-Hadad II, 1 K 20 and 22. Battles of Aphek and Ramoth	JEHOSHAPHAT: 870–848. Struggle against idolatry. Allied to Ahab. Controls Edom
SHALMANESER III: 858–824. In 853, victory at **Kharkah** on the Orontes over 12 kings, including Hadadezer (= Ben Hadad) and Ahab		AHAZIAH: 853–852	
	850	JEHORAM: 852–841, his brother. Campaigns with the king of Judah against Mesha. **Elisha**, 2 K 2–13. Jehoram defends Ramoth-Gilead with Ahaziah of **Judah** against HAZAEL. Put to death, with all his family, by Jehu	JEHORAM: 848–841. Marries Ataliah daughter of Omri. Baal-worship. Edom set free
			AHAZIAH: 841. Put to death on Jehu's orders
841: Shalmaneser III defeats Hazael, reaches the sea and receives tribute from Jehu and the kings of Tyre and Sidon		JEHU: 841–814. Yahwist reaction. Hazael secures Gilead	ATHALIAH: 841–835. Massacre of the king's sons, except Joash. Jehoiada's plot and death of Athaliah
			JOASH: 835–796. Son of Ahaziah. Repairs the Temple. Hazael captures Gath
		JEHOAHAZ: 814–798. Son of Jehu. Harassed by Ben-Hadad III, 1 K 13:3, cf. 2 K 6:24i	
BEN-HADAD III king of Damascus. Defeated by Shalmaneser III			
ADADNIRARI III: 810–783. In 805 receives tribute from Ben-Hadad III and the king of Israel			
	800		
		JOASH: 798–783. Death of Elisha. Joash regains lost cities from Ben-Hadad, 2 K 13:25. Defeats Amaziah at Beth-Shemesh. **Samaria ostraca**	AMAZIAH: 796–781. Victory over Edom. Defeated by Joash of Israel. Killed at Lachish
ZAKIR king of Hamath			
Between 783 and 745: Assyria weak		JEROBOAM II: 783–743. Re-establishes Israel's boundaries	UZZIAH: 781–740 (= Azariah). Re-establishes his authority as far as Elath. Develops agriculture
	750	750: **Amos** and, a little later, **Hosea**	
Egypt: rivalry between 22nd dynasty (Bubastis) and 23rd (Thebes)			
TIGLATH-PILESER III: 745–727 (= Pulu in Babylon). **Conquered territories reduced to provinces and populations exchanged**		ZECHARIAH: 743	
		SHALLUM: 743	

	BC		
		MENAHEM: 743–738. Tribute to Pul, 2 K 15:19	
RAZON king of Damascus			740: call of **Isaiah**, Is 6:1
			JOTHAM: 740–736. First appearance of **Micah**
About 738: Tiglath-Pileser receives tribute from Razon, Menahem and the princes of the west		PEKAHIAH: 738–737. Killed by Pekah	
		PEKAH: 737–732. Loses Galilee and Gilead, 2 K 15:29	
			AHAZ: 736–716
About 734: Tiglath-Pileser captures part of Galilee. Ahaz pays him tribute			734: Razon and Pekah besiege Jerusalem. **Isaiah's prophecy of Emmanuel**. Appeal to Tiglath-Pileser who takes Damascus and kills Razon, 2 K 16:9
About 732: Tiglath-Pileser's campaign against Razon. **End of Damascus' independence.** He replaces Pekah by Hoshea		HOSHEA: 732–724. Makes alliance with Egypt	
SHALMANESER V: 726–722		Samaria besieged by Shalmaneser V	
SARGON II: 721–705. Captures Samaria (or claims his father's victory as his own) and founds the Assyrian province of Samerina. Puts an end to the kingdom of Hamath (720)		722 or 721: capture of **Samaria**, deportation of inhabitants, installation of foreigners; religious syncretism, 2 K 17:5seq	

VI: END OF THE KINGDOM OF JUDAH 721–587
2 K 18–25 / 2 Ch 29–36 / Zp / Na / Hab / Jr / Ezk

Sargon defeats Sibê the Egyptian at Raphia	EGYPT 24th dynasty. Capital: Sais		
His palace at Khorsabad, near Nineveh			
721–711 and in 703: the Chaldaean Mardukapaliddina king of Babylon			
	BOCCHORIS: 715–709 25th dynasty (Nubian)		HEZEKIAH: 716–687. Sargon's army captures Ashdod, Is 20:1. Embassy of Merodach-Baladan, 2 K 20:12seq.
711: Sargon captures Ashdod			
	SHABAKAH: 710–696		
	TIRHAKAH: born about 710		
SENNACHERIB: 704–681			
701: victory of ELTEKEH over the Ekronites aided by Egyptians and Ethiopians (Nubians). He takes 46 towns from Hezekiah and imposes a tribute		700	Hezekiah's building programme at Jerusalem and *inscription in the tunnel of Siloam*. Sennacherib invades Judaea. Hezekiah's tribute, 2 K 18:13–16
	SHABATOKA: 696–685		
About 690: Eltekeh's campaign in Arabia as far as Dumah. On his return, capture of Lachish (Nineveh relief, undated)	Tirhakah his brother, co-regent about 690		Literary activity, Pr 25:1

		BC	
			Second (?) campaign of Sennacherib in Palestine, capture of Lachish, threat of Tirhakah, retreat of Sennacherib, 2 K 18:17–19:37
			MANASSEH: 687–642. Non-Yahwist cults in the Temple. Captivity in Babylon according to 2 Ch 33:11
	TIRHAKAH king: 685–664		
ESARHADDON: 680–669 About 671: Esarhaddon takes Lower Egypt from Tirhakah. Tribute from the kings of the West, including Manasseh			
ASHURBANIPAL: 669–630?			
668: tribute from Manasseh; Egyptian campaign: Tirhakah pushed back beyond Thebes	TANUTAMON: 664–656		
About 663: second campaign by Ashurbanipal in Egypt against Tanutamon; sack of Thebes	26th dynasty: 663–525. Capital: Sais		
	PSAMMETICHUS I: 663–609	650	
The library of Ashurbanipal	About 650: Assyrians driven from Egypt by Psammetichus I		
			AMON: 642–640
			JOSIAH: 640–609
ASHURETILILANI: 630–623			About 630: **Zephaniah**
SHINSHARISHKUN: 627–612 king of Assyria			627: call of **Jeremiah** Jr 25:3
Babylon: **neo-Babylonian dynasty**, 626–539			
NEBUPOLASSAR: 626–605			
	About 625: Ashuretililani checks the **Scythian invasion**		
			622: discovery of 'The Book of the Law' (2 K 23:25). **Religious reform** which spreads to Samaria Editing of historical documents in the spirit of Dt. 1st revision of the Books of **Joshua, Judges, Samuel** and **Kings**
612: CYAXARES king of the Medes, and Nebupolassar take and destroy Nineveh			About 612: **Nahum**
ASHURUBALLIT II: 612–609; reigns in Haran; in 609 is expelled from Mesopotamia			
609: Nebupolassar repulses the army of Necho coming to the aid of Assyria. **In 606 he puts an end to the Assyrian Empire**	NECHO: 609–594		609: Josiah is killed while opposing the advance of Necho's armies

		BC	
			609: JEHOAHAZ: replaced at the end of three months by his brother at Necho's instigation
			JEHOIAKIM: 609–598
605: the king's son Nebuchadnezzar defeats Necho's armies at Carchemish and seizes Syria			605: Nebuchadnezzar defeats Necho at **Carchemish**, Jr 46:2, cf. 2 K 24:1,7; **prophecy of the 70 years of exile**, Jr 25:1,11
NEBUCHADNEZZAR: Sept 605–562	Aramaic letter from the Philistine king Adon to Pharaoh (Necho)		Invasion of Philistia, Jr 47:1–7; Jehoiakim a vassal for 3 years, 2 K 24:1; 2 Ch 36:6; Dn 1:1
605–604: 2nd campaign in Syria, 604–603: 3rd campaign and capture of Ashkelon (Dec. 604)			
		600	About 600: revolt of Jehoiakim and incursion of bands of Chaldaeans and Aramaeans, 2 K 24:2. The prophet **Habakkuk** (?)
End of 601: Nebuchadnezzar is defeated in Egypt			
599–598: raids against the Arabs			
			JEHOIACHIN: 598–597
Beginning of 597: Nebuchadnezzar besieges the capital of Judah and captures it on 16 March. Takes the king prisoner and replaces him by another. Tablets mention Jehoiachin among those receiving rations at Nebuchadnezzar's court	PSAMMETICHUS II: 594–589		Siege of Jerusalem. After a reign of 3 months, Jehoiachin surrenders to Nebuchadnezzar. **Deportation to Babylon**. Jehoiachin replaced by his uncle, **Zedekiah**, 597–587 or 586 (son of Josiah). Jeremiah and the false prophets. **Ezekiel** predicts the ruin of Jerusalem, Ezk 1–23
	HOPHRA (Apries): 589–566		589: revolt of Zedekiah. In Dec. or Jan. beginning of the siege of Jerusalem
587: siege of Tyre; lasted 13 years			
			Early 587: diversion by Hophra Siege of Tyre, Ezk 26seq.; Jr 37:5,11. June–July 587 or 586: **capture of Jerusalem**. Zedekiah taken
Nebuzeriddinam heads a list of royal functionaries			One month later, Nebuzaradan destroys the Temple and the city. Fresh deportations. Gedaliah as governor; assassinated Sept./Oct. Jeremiah taken to Egypt, Jr 42seq.
			582/581: fresh deportations, Jr 52:30
	569: AMASIS co-regent 566–526 (?): king		Jr 46:13
568/567: campaign against Amasis			
562–560: AVILMARDUK			
560–556: NERIGLISSAR			561: Evil-Merodach pardons Jehoiachin

556: LABASHIMARDUK

556–539: NABONIDUS. During his stay at Teima he is replaced by the crown prince BELSHAZZAR

555: CYRUS, King of the **Persians** revolts against his overlord Astyages king of the Medes

546: he captures Sardis (Croesus)

525 PSAMMETICHUS III

BC

550 **Is ch. 40–55**

VII: THE RESTORATION AT THE PERSIAN PERIOD 538–323
Ezr / Ne / Hg / Zc / Ml

539: the army of Cyrus enters Babylon. Cyrus gives back to their original cities the sacred objects carried off to Babylon

The palace of Pasargadae

Summer 530: death of Cyrus

CAMBYSES: 529–522. Son of Cyrus. Conquers Egypt, which remains under Persian rule until 400 (27th dynasty)

DARIUS I: 522–486. Organises the Persian empire: Syria and Palestine form the 5th satrapy and Egypt the 6th.

520–515: building of the **Second Temple**, Ezr 6:15; Hg 1:15. High Commissioner ZERUBBABEL; High Priest JOSHUA. The prophets **Haggai** and **Zechariah**

The palace of Persepolis

500

490: battle of Marathon

XERXES I: 486–465 (Ahasuerus)

480: he captures Athens but is defeated at Salamis

ARTAXERXES I LONGIMANUS: 464–423. Revolts in Egypt and Syria

Athens: Pericles

ARSAMES satrap of Egypt (455/4 to about 403)

450

538: **The Edict of Cyrus**. Return from exile. SHESHBAZZAR high commissioner, Ezr 5:14

Autumn, restoration of the altar of burnt offerings, Ezr 3:3

537: Spring, Foundation of the **Second Temple**, Ezr 3:8; 5:16

498–399: *papyri from the Jewish colony of Elephantine*

Opposition of the Samaritans to the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem, Ezr 4:6seq.

458: Ezra's mission (if Ezr 7:7 refers to Artaxerxes I)

445–443: the 1st mission of NEHEMIAH, Ne 2:1; 5:14, and the restoration of the walls. Hostility of Sanballat (*governor of Samaria, according to Elephantine papyrus*), of Tobiah the Ammonite and Geshem the Arab

Under Xerxes and Artaxerxes, **Malachi** and probably **Obadiah**, possibly also **Job, Proverbs, Song of Songs** and **Ruth** and many **Psalms**

	BC	
		(428, Ezra's mission, if we read 37th in place of 7th year in Ezr 7:7seq.)
		Before the death of Artaxerxes: 2nd mission of Nehemiah and the reforms inspired by Deuteronomy, Ne 13:6seq.
XERXES II: 423		
DARIUS II NOTHUS: 423–404		
		419: *Rescript of Darius on the Passover* (Elephantine papyrus)
		About 410: the incident at the temple of Yaho at Elephantine
ARTAXERXES II MNEMON: 404–358		*Prosperity of the Jews in Babylon* (archives of the banking family of Murashu)
401: Revolt of Cyrus the Younger and expedition of the Ten Thousand		
About 400: Egypt wins its freedom (28th–30th dynasties: 400–342)	400	
		(398: EZRA'S mission, if Ezr 7:7 refers to Artaxerxes II. The legislation of the Pentateuch, unified by Ezra, is sanctioned by Artaxerxes, Ezr 7:26)
Plato		
359/8–338/7: ARTAXERXES III OCHUS		
	350	Judaea is formed into a theocratic state with its own coinage (*drachmas inscribed YHD, Judah*)
342: reconquest of Egypt (31st Dynasty: 342–332) PHILIP OF MACEDON. Aristotle		Before Alexander, the prophet **Joel** and probably the work of the Chronicler: the Books of **Chronicles** and **Ezra-Nehemiah**. At the time of Alexander, **Zc 9–14**
338–336: ARSES		
DARIUS III CODOMAN: 336/5–330		
ALEXANDER THE GREAT: 336–323		End of the Persian period, or beginning of the hellenistic period: **Jonah, Tobit**
333: conquest of Syria		
332: capture of Tyre and Gaza; entry into Egypt		
331: foundation of **Alexandria**		
331: ends the Persian empire by his victory at **Arbela**		
330–326: conquest of the Eastern satrapies and India		
323: Alexander dies in Babylon		

VIII: THE HELLENISTIC PERIOD 323–63
1 M / 2 M / Dn 11

In Egypt: the LAGIDES	In Syria and Babylonia: the SELEUCIDS		**Judaea ruled by the Lagides** until 200
PTOLEMY I SOTER: 323–285			
Foundation of the 'Museum' at Alexandria. At Athens, a little before 300: foundation of the Epicurean and Stoic Schools	SELEUCUS I NICATOR: 305/4–281. In 300, the foundation of **Antioch** on the Orontes	300	Jews established in Egypt by Ptolemy I and in Antioch by Seleucus (Josephus)

		BC	
PTOLEMY II PHILADELPHUS: 285–246	ANTIOCHUS I SOTER: 281–261. Defeats the Galatian invaders of Asia Minor		PTOLEMY II orders Greek translation of the Law by the **Seventy** *(apocryphal letter of Aristeas)*
276–273: war with Syria which continues intermittently until the arrival of the Romans	ANTIOCHUS II THEOS: 261–246		Tobiah governor of Ammanitis (his building operations at Arak el-Emir). Archives of Zeno. Active hellenisation in Palestine
About 253: Ptolemy II gives his daughter Berenice to Antiochus II, who repudiates Laodice, *see* Dn 11:6		250	
	247: start of the Arsacid (Parthian) era		
PTOLEMY III EUERGETES: 246–221	246: Laodice has Berenice and her son assassinated, *see* Dn 11:6		Possibly the books of **Esther** and **Ecclesiastes**
	SELEUCUS II CALLINICUS: 246–226		
Supremacy of Egypt, *see* Dn 11:7	SELEUCUS III CERAUNUS: 226–223		
	ANTIOCHUS III THE GREAT: 223–187		The victorious Ptolemy III and IV offer sacrifices at Jerusalem (3M and Josephus)
PTOLEMY IV PHILOPATOR: 221–205			
217: victory over Antiochus at Raphia	Numerous campaigns, for the most part successful		
PTOLEMY V EPIPHANES: 204–180			
	202–200: Antiochus reconquers Palestine; siege and capture of Gaza, compare Dn 11:15(?)		
	200: Antiochus defeats Scopas at Panion	200	
			199–198: Scopas, Ptolemy's general, returns to the offensive Besieged in Sidon, Scopas surrenders, compare Dn 11:10–16
Egypt, after Panion, plays a minor role			**Judaea ruled by the Seleucids:** 200–142, cf. 1 M 13:41
197: Flaminius beats Philip V of Macedonia at Cynoscephalae, *see* 1 M 8:5			The charter of Antiochus III confirms the theocratic status of the Jews, *see* 2 M 4:11
193: Antiochus III gives his daughter Cleopatra I to Ptolemy V, *see* Dn 11:17			
189: At **Magnesia** of Sipyle Antiochus III is defeated by the Scipios, *see* Dn 11:18. The onerous Peace of Apamea (188). His son Antiochus IV a hostage at Rome, *see* 1 M 8:6seq.			
187: Antiochus III killed at Elymais, *see* Dn 11:19			SIMON II the Just, high priest. Building works at Jerusalem, Si 50. Jesus Ben Sira writes **Ecclesiasticus**
SELEUCUS IV PHILOPATOR his son: 187–175 killed by his minister HELIODORUS			ONIAS III high priest: episode of Heliodorus. 2 M 3; Dn 11:20
PTOLEMY VI PHILOMETOR: 180–145			
ANTIOCHUS IV EPIPHANES brother of Seleucus; Demetrius (I) hostage at Rome			

BC

175/4: Philometor marries his sister Cleopatra II (2 M 4:21?)

175

175/4: JASON brother of Onias III high priest; Jerusalem now a Greek city named Antioch, 2 M 4:9

172: MENELAUS high priest. Has Onias III killed in the summer of that year (Dn 9:25seq.; 11:22; 2 M 4:30seq.)

171–138: MITHRIDATES I ARSACES VI King of the Parthians

170: co-regency of Philometor, Cleopatra II and their brother Ptolemy VII Physcon

169: First campaign by Antiochus in Egypt. On his return he pillages the Temple (Polybius)

First campaign in Egypt, Dn 11:24seq.; 1 M 1:16seq. (2 M 5:15seq.: pillaging of the Temple)

168: Second campaign in Egypt. Aemilius Paulus defeats Perseus king of Macedon at Pydna in June, *see* 1 M 8:5. Near Alexandria, Antiochus forces Caius Popilius Laenas to retire from Egypt, *see* Dn 11:29 seq.

Second campaign in Egypt, Dn 11:29; 2 M 5:1

167–164: **The Great Persecution**; construction of the **Citadel (Acra)**, 1 M 1:33. **In the Temple,** sacrifices made to **Olympian Zeus**, 25 Chislev 145, Seleucid Era 1 M 1:59; 2 M 10:5; Dn 11:31x

Revolt of the priest MATTATHIAS. The Hasidaeans join him, 1 M 2:42, *see also* Dn 11:32

JUDAS MACCABAEUS his son succeeds him: 166–160

164: expedition of Antiochus IV into Armenia and Persia

About November 164: death of Antiochus IV at Tabae (Polybius)

Beginning of 164: First campaign of Lysias, 1 M 4:28seq.; 2 M 11 (except vv. 22–26)

Book of Daniel; the Book of Dreams (*Enoch* 83–90). Death of Antiochus IV, 1 M 6:1seq.; 2 M 9

ANTIOCHUS V EUPATOR his son: 164–162. Power wielded by Lysias

Accession of Antiochus V, 1 M 6:17; 2 M 10:11. Dec 164 (25 Chislev): **Purification of the Temple** and dedication, 1 M 4:36 seq.; 2 M 1:10seq.; 10:1seq.; compare Dn 7:25*o*

163: 2nd campaign of Lysias; Antiochus V restores religious freedom to the Jews, 1 M 6:31seq.; 2 M 11:22–26 and ch. 13

161–150: DEMETRIUS I SOTER son of Seleucus IV has Antiochus V and Lysias put to death

The high priest ALCIMUS asks Demetrius to take action against Judas Maccabaeus

Judas allies himself with Rome, 1 M 8

March 160: Nicanor defeated and killed at **Adasa** (13 Adar), 1 M 7; 2 M 15

Jason of Cyrene writes the work (2 M 2:19seq.) subsequently adapted about 124 (1:9seq.) as **Second Book of Maccabees**

April–May 160: Judas Maccabaeus killed at **Beer Zeth**

JONATHAN succeeds his brother Judas: 160–143

Tyranny of Bacchides

157–152: Jonathan 'judge' at Michmash, 1 M 9:73

152–150: Alexander Balas (son of Antiochus IV?) disputes the throne with Demetrius I who dies in battle

Autumn 152: JONATHAN named high priest by Alexander Balas. Onias son of Onias III, builds a temple at Leontopolis (*Jewish Antiquities*, Josephus, xiii, 62seq; *Jewish War*, vii, 420seq.)

	BC	
		Formation of the **Essene Community at Qumran** (?), *see* Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities,* xiii. 171seq.; *Manual of Discipline*
About 150: Mithridates I ruler of almost all Persia	150	
ALEXANDER BALAS: 150–145. Marries Cleopatra Thea daughter of Ptolemy VI		Jonathan at Ptolemais attends the marriage of Cleopatra Thea and Alexander Balas who names him *strategos* and meridarch, 1 M 10:65
148: Macedonia becomes a Roman province 147–145: Demetrius II son of Demetrius I disputes the throne of Syria with Alexander Balas and marries Cleopatra Thea. Battle of the Oenoparos near Antioch; Ptolemy VI mortally wounded, Alexander killed soon afterwards		Jonathan defeats Apollonius, governor of Coele-Syria on behalf of Demetrius the Younger, and seizes the coastal towns, 1 M 10:67seq.
146: Destruction of Carthage and Corinth		
DEMETRIUS II: 145–140 and 129–125		145: charter of Demetrius II confirming Jonathan as ruler of Judaea and southern Samaria, 1 M 11:30seq.
PTOLEMY VIII PHYSCON: 145–116		
ANTIOCHUS VI: 144–142. Young son of Alexander Balas, installed in Antioch by Diodotus (Trypho)		144: Antiochus VI confirms Jonathan in his functions. Renewal of alliances with Rome and Sparta, 1 M 11:54seq.
		143: Jonathan captured and later killed by Trypho. SIMON, his brother, succeeds him: 143–134
TRYPHO king: 142–138. He does away with Antiochus VI in 142 or 138		142: Simon rallies to Demetrius II, who confirms the charter of 145
141: Seleucia on the Tigris and Babylon taken by Mithridates		June 141: the **Citadel surrenders to Simon**; end of the Seleucid occupation, 1 M 13:51
140/139: counter-offensive by Demetrius II in Persia. He is captured by the Parthians		Renewal of alliances with Rome and Sparta, 1 M 14:16seq. and 15:15seq.
		Feb 134: Simon killed by his son-in-law Ptolemy. His son Hyrcanus escapes the assassins. End of First Book of Maccabees
133: ATTALUS III king of Pergamum bequeaths his states to Rome, which, in 129, organises the province of Asia		134–104: JOHN HYRCANUS (I)
129–64: the successors of Sidetes destroy themselves in fratricidal feuds; they have lost control of Palestine		John Hyrcanus conquers Moab and Samaria. Destruction of the temple at Gerizim
		ARISTOBULUS I: 104–103. He takes the title of king
		ALEXANDER JANNAEUS: 103–76. New conquests. Struggle against the Pharisees
	100	Between 100 and 50, the book of **Judith**
95–88 (at Damascus): DEMETRIUS III About 84, ARETAS III King of Nabataea occupies Coele-Syria		
70: TIGRANES King of Armenia dominates the whole of Syria		ALEXANDRA: 76–67. Her son HYRCANUS II is high priest: 76–67, and again 63–40. In 67 he succeeds his mother as king but is soon supplanted by his younger brother
67: Roman province of Crete-Cyrenaica		ARISTOBULUS II: 67–63, king and high priest
66–62: POMPEY in the East. Pontus and Bithynia become Roman provinces		

BC Passover 65: Hyrcanus II and Aretas III besiege Jerusalem but, on instructions from Pompey, retire and are subsequently defeated by Aristobulus II

64: at Antioch, Pompey deposes Philip II, last of the Seleucids, and makes **Syria a Roman province**

IX: ROMAN PALESTINE TO THE TIME OF HADRIAN 63 BC–AD135

63: Pompey at Damascus. Arrogance of Aristobulus and incapacity of Hyrcanus

Summer or autumn 63: **Pompey takes Jerusalem**, names Hyrcanus high priest and sends Aristobulus and his son Antigonus to Rome

The Idumaean ANTIPATER minister of Hyrcanus, the real ruler of Judaea. Rebellion of the last Hasmonaeans

53: Crassus defeated by the Parthians

54: Crassus pillages the Temple

CLEOPATRA VII queen of Egypt: 51–30

50

About 50: in Alexandria, the book of **Wisdom**

48: JULIUS CAESAR defeats Pompey at Pharsalia. Pompey is killed in Egypt

The Psalms of Solomon

47: Caesar names Hyrcanus ethnarch (47–41). Herod son of Antipater is named *strategos* of Galilee. The revolt of Hezekiah is suppressed

44: Julius Caesar assassinated

43: Antipater dies of poisoning

41–30: ANTONY in the East

41: Antony names Herod and his brother Phasael as tetrarchs

40: the Parthians in Syria and Palestine

40: the Parthians name ANTIGONUS king and high priest Herod flees to Rome

End of 40: the Senate names Herod king

Hyrcanus is mutilated

39–37: struggle between Herod and Antigonus

38: Parthians driven from Syria and Palestine
38–37 SOSIUS governor of Syria

Early 37: Herod marries MARIAMNE I granddaughter of Aristobulus II and Hyrcanus II

June (?) 37: **capture of Jerusalem** by **Sosius and Herod**

37–4 BC: HEROD THE GREAT effectively king

31: OCTAVIAN defeats Antony at the naval battle of **Actium**

30: Suicide of Antony and Cleopatra. Egypt becomes a Roman province

30: Herod executes Hyrcanus II

29: Octavian, Imperator for life

29: Herod executes Mariamne I and builds the Antonia

27: Octavian named AUGUSTUS
Syria an imperial province with a legate from Augustus

Herod '*rex socius*'

25: Galatia a Roman province

23: Herod is given Trachonitis, Batanaea and Auranitis

23: Herod builds the Palace in the upper city. Founds, or rebuilds, Antipatris, Phaselis, Samaria (Sebaste), the Herodion and **Caesarea**
Numerous wives: in 23, Mariamne II daughter of the High Priest Simon son of Boethos

20: Herod is given Paneas

12–6: SULPICIUS QUIRINIUS as legate of Syria (?), subdues the Homonades of Taurus. Several indications of a census throughout the empire

9: ARETAS IV succeeds his father Obodas II as king of Nabataea and reigns until AD 39

9–6: SENTIUS SATURNINUS legate in Syria

According to Tertullian, it is Saturninus who initiates the census of Judaea

6–4: QUINTILIUS VARUS legate in Syria

SABINUS procurator for Augustus' estates in Syria

ARCHELAUS ethnarch of Judaea and Samaria: 4BC–AD6

HEROD ANTIPAS tetrarch of Galilee and Peraea: 4BC–AD39

PHILIP tetrarch of Gaulanitis, Batanaea, Trachonitis, Auranitis, and of Paneas (Ituraea): 4BC–AD34

End of year 4: Augustus confirms Herod's last will, but refuses Archelaus the title of king

3–2 BC: the successor to Varus is unknown. Possibly Quirinius legate now

AD 1/2–4: Quirinius is counsellor to young GAIUS CAESAR, grandson of Augustus, during his mission to the East

4–5: VOLUSIUS SATURNINUS legate in Syria

BC

Winter of 20–19: start of the **rebuilding of the Temple**

The Pharisees Hillel and Shammai and their rival schools

The **census** of Lk 2:1*seq*. *See* the *lapis Venetus* inscription, undated, giving evidence of a census in Apamaea (Syria) by order of Quirinius. 'legate in Syria'; *see* Lk 2:2b

9–8: Herod penetrates into the territory of the Nabataeans to capture the brigands of Trachonitis, given asylum by the minister SYLLAIOS, who complains to Augustus. Temporary disgrace of Herod

About the year 7: Herod has Alexander and Aristobulus, his two sons by Mariamne I, strangled

More than 6,000 Pharisees refuse to take the oath to Augustus on the occasion of a census (?) (which continues that of Quirinius)

7–6 (?): **Birth of** JESUS

March of the year 4: the affair of the golden eagle in the Temple. Execution of Antipater, eldest son of Herod. Herod's will in favour of the sons of Malthace the Samaritan (Archelaus and Herod Antipas) and the son of Cleopatra (Philip)

End of March beginning of April 4 BC: **death of Herod** at Jericho. Archelaus takes his body to the Herodion

4 At the Passover (11 April), Archelaus puts down a rebellion at Jerusalem and then goes to Rome to receive the title of king from Augustus

Sabinus comes to Jerusalem to make an inventory of the resources of the kingdom of Herod: sharp opposition and trouble throughout the country. At this time, possibly, the rebellion of Judas the Galilean, *see* Ac 5:37, and of the Pharisee Saddok who urged disobedience to Rome and refusal to pay taxes. (Origin of the **Zealots**, *see* Mt 22:17.) Sabinus appeals to Varus who pursues the rebels; 2000 are crucified

The *Assumption of Moses* (apoc.)

If Quirinius is legate from 3 to 2, he could have continued the census begun by Sabinus and ordered the census of Apamaea (the undated *lapis Venetus*)

AD

1

Philip the tetrarch builds Julias (Bethsaida). He enriches the shrine of Pan (Paneas, the *Paneion*), which he names Caesarea in honour of Augustus

AD

Between 5 and 10: birth of Paul at Tarsus; pupil of Gamaliel the Elder, Ac 22:3, compare 5:34

6: Augustus deposes Archelaus who is exiled to Vienne (Gaul)

6: According to Josephus, Quirinius legate in Syria (?)

6: According to Josephus, Quirinius comes to Judaea to make an inventory of possessions of Archelaus; this could have provoked the rebellion of Judas and Saddok. (But for the year 6 Josephus repeats events he has described for the year 4)

6–8: Coponius prefect

6 (?)–15: Annas son of Seth, High Priest

6–41: Judaea a **prefectorial province** (with Caesarea as the capital)

14 (19 August): death of Augustus.

14–37: TIBERIUS emperor

15: Valerius Gratus deposes Annas. Three high priests follow

Valerius Gratus prefect: 15–26

17–19: GERMANICUS adopted son of Tiberius, in the East

About 17: foundation of **Tiberias** by Antipas
Under Tiberius, Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, Lk 3:1, and *inscriptions*

18: Cappadocia becomes a Roman province

26–36: Pontius Pilate prefect

About 27: Herod Antipas, married to the daughter of Aretas, marries Herodias the wife of his brother Herod (son of Mariamne II)

The preaching of JOHN THE BAPTIST and the beginning of the ministry of Jesus, *see* Lk 3:2f

Easter 28: Jesus at Jerusalem, Jn 2:13. The 46 years of Jn 2:20 begin from 20/19 BC

In the 15th year of Tiberius, Lk 3:1: 19 Aug. 28 or 18 Aug. 29—but according to the Syrian calculation, Sept.–Oct. 27 to Sept.–Oct. 28

'(The) Christ condemned to death by Pontius Pilate under the Emperor Tiberius' (Tacitus, *Annals*)

Easter 30: on the eve of the Passover, i.e. 14 Nisan, a Friday, **death of Jesus**, Jn 19:31seq. (The Passover fell on the Saturday, 8 April in 30 and 4 April in 33: the second date is too late, *see* Jn 2:20.) *See* Mt 26:17c

Pentecost 30: outpouring of the Spirit on the Church, Ac 2. The first community, Ac 2:42, etc.

33–34: Philip dies without an heir, and Tiberius merges his tetrarchy into the province of Syria

Pontius Pilate has difficulties with the Jews; the incident of the standards and shields (Philo). Pilate's aqueduct

Election of the seven Hellenist ministers, Ac 6:1seq.

Martyrdom of Stephen and **dispersion** of the community; conversion of Paul; Paul in Arabia

35–39: L. Vitellius legate in Syria, father of the emperor Vitellius. He is given full powers in the East

About 35: Pontius Pilate orders the massacre of the Samaritans at Gerizim

Easter 36: Vitellius in Jerusalem. He replaces Caiaphas by Jonathan son of Annas

Paul returns to Damascus, he escapes from there, 2 Co 11:32seq. and visits the elders of the church, Ga 1:18seq. (Cephas and James, the brother of the Lord), Ac 9:25seq.

Autumn 36: Pontius Pilate leaves for Rome, sent thither by Vitellius to justify his conduct. He dies a violent death

	AD	
Winter 36–37: Vitellius concentrates the legions at Ptolemais in order to attack Aretas IV		
March 37: death of Tiberius. Vitellius breaks off his campaign against Aretas		37: Vitellius, on his way to Petra, stops at Jerusalem. He replaces Jonathan by his brother THEOPHILUS, high priest from 37 to 41
		Foundation of the church at Antioch, Ac 11:19seq.
37–41: CALIGULA emperor MARCELLUS prefect		
37: Caligula gives AGRIPPA I son of Aristobulus the tetrarchies of Philip and Lysanias, with title of king (37–44)		
38: persecution of the Jews in Alexandria		
39–42: P. PETRONIUS legate in Syria		
39: the Jewish philosopher Philo ambassador to Rome. He died after 41		
39: Caligula exiles Antipas and gives, at the beginning of 40, his tetrarchy to Agrippa I		39: Caligula orders the erection of his statue in the Temple. Thanks to Petronius and Agrippa I the affair drags on until Caligula's assassination
		PETER in Samaria (Simon the Magician), in the coastal plain (Cornelius the centurion), and at Jerusalem, Ac 8:14–11:18
41–54: CLAUDIUS emperor. Agrippa I, now in Rome contributes to his success: Claudius concedes him Judaea and Samaria. His brother Herod becomes King of Chalcis (41–48) and marries Berenice (daughter of Agrippa)		Herod the Great's kingdom is reconstituted. Agrippa builds the 3rd wall of Jerusalem, but Claudius has the work discontinued. Many buildings, in particular at Berytus (Beirut)
41: edict and letter from Claudius to the Alexandrians		
42–44: VIBIUS MARSIUS legate in Syria		
Spring 44: on Herod Agrippa's death, Judaea once again becomes a **prefectorial province**, 44–66		Before Passover 44: Agrippa orders the beheading of JAMES BROTHER OF JOHN (James the Great); during the feast he imprisons Peter, Ac 12
44–46: CUSPIUS FADUS prefect		28 June 45: a rescript of Claudius gives the Jews the custody of the priestly vestments. Herod of Chalcis is named inspector of the Temple, with the right to nominate the high priest. In 47 he nominated Ananias son of Nebadius (47–59), *see* Ac 23:2seq.
		Fadus and the false prophet, Theudas, *see* Ac 5:36
46–48: TIBERIUS ALEXANDER prefect. Nephew of Philo, but an apostate. At this time, several famines throughout the empire		Between 45 and 49: **1st mission by Paul**: Antioch, Cyprus, Antioch in Pisidia, Lystra, . . . Antioch, Ac 13:1seq.
48–52: VENTIDIUS CUMANUS prefect		About 48: famine in Judaea, worsened by the sabbatical year 47–48. Visit to Jerusalem by HELEN queen of Adiabene, a convert to Judaism; she brings relief to the population, Paul and Barnabas bring help to the communities at Antioch and Jerusalem. The **council of Jerusalem**: gentile Christians exempt from the Law, Ac 15:5seq.; Ga 2:1seq.
48–53: AGRIPPA II son of Agrippa I, king of Chalcis.		
49: Claudius 'drives from Rome the Jewish agitators stirred up by Chrestos' (Suetonius), *see* Ac 18:2		49–52: 2nd mission by Paul: Lystra (Timothy), Phrygia, Galatia, Philippi, Thessalonica, Athens (sermon on the Areopagus)
	50	Earliest oral tradition of the gospel put in written form
50–60: UMMIDIUS QUADRATUS legate in Syria		Winter of 50 to summer of 52; Paul in Corinth: the **Letters to the Thessalonians**; and, in the spring of 52, summoned to appear before Gallio

	AD	
52 (rather than 51): GALLIO, brother of Seneca, proconsul of Achaia		Summer 52: Paul goes to Jerusalem (?) and then to Antioch, Ac 18:22
Agrippa in favour in Rome. Claudius exiles Cumanus		
52–60: ANTONIUS FELIX prefect, brother of the freedman Pallas. Marries DRUSILLA sister of Agrippa II, already married to Aziz king of Emesa, *see* Ac 24:24		The Jews in their struggle against the Samaritans are supported by Cumanus. He is sent to Rome by Quadratus, who visits Jerusalem, Passover of 52
		Felix checks brigandage
		52–59: JONATHAN high priest
53: Claudius gives to Agrippa II, in exchange for Chalcis, the tetrarchies of Philip and Lysarias (53–95), and the heptarchy of Varus (North Libya)		53–58: 3rd mission by Paul; APOLLOS at Ephesus, then at Corinth
54–68: NERO emperor		54–57: after passing through Galatia and Phrygia. Paul stays at Ephesus for 2 years and 3 months
55: Nero adds a part of Galilee and Peraea to Agrippa's kingdom		
		After 56 (?): **Letter to the Philippians**
		About Passover 57: **First Letter to the Corinthians**, followed by a quick visit to Corinth, 2 Co 12:14. Return to Ephesus (and **Letter to the Galatians**?)
		End of 57: passes through Macedonia. **Second letter to the Corinthians**
		Winter 57–58: at Corinth, Ac 20:3, compare 1 Co 16:6; **Letter to the Galatians** (?); **Letter to the Romans**
		Passover 58: at Philippi, Ac 20:6, then, by sea, to Caesarea (Philip and Agabus)
		Summer 58: in Jerusalem. JAMES THE BROTHER OF THE LORD heads the Judaeo-Christian community
		About 58: Felix disbands the followers of the false Egyptian prophet on the Mount of Olives, *see* Ac 21:28
		Pentecost 58: Paul arrested in the Temple and brought before Ananias and the Sanhedrin. Taken to Caesarea, he is brought before Felix
Between 59 and 67: Agrippa II nominates six high priests, including ANAN SON OF ANNAS (62)		58–60: Paul a captive at Caesarea, the scene of serious troubles between Jews and Syrians
		59: Felix has the former high priest Jonathan assassinated in spite of the fact that he owed his position to Jonathan
60–62: PORCIUS FESTUS prefect		60: Paul appears before Festus and appeals to Caesar. He pleads his cause before Agrippa and his sister Berenice
60–63: CORBULO legate in Syria		
		Autumn of 60: Paul's voyage to Rome, the storm, he winters in Malta
		61–63: Paul in Rome under military guard. His apostolate, **Letters to Colossians, Ephesians, Philemon** and **Philippians**(?)
62–64: LUCCEIUS ALBINUS prefect		62: the High Priest Anan has **James** the brother of the Lord **stoned to death** (after the death of Festus and before the arrival of Albinus). SIMEON, son of Cleopas and of Mary succeeds James as head of the church of Jerusalem (Eusebius)
		Anan deposed by Agrippa II

	AD	
63–66: CESTIUS GALLUS legate in Syria		63: Paul is set free. Perhaps further journeys, possibly to Spain (Rm 15:24seq.)? Asia Minor? **I Timothy** and **Letter to Titus?**
July 64: burning of Rome and persecution of the Christians		**Gospel of Mark** and **1 Peter** **Letter of James**
64–66: GESSIUS FLORUS prefect. Nominated through the influence of Poppaea, the Jewish wife of Nero		64 (or 67): **martyrdom of Peter** at Rome
66: rising of the Alexandrine Jews. Tiberius Alexander, at that time prefect of Egypt, massacres several thousand of them		Summer 66: in Jerusalem, Florus crucifies some Jews, but a rising compels him to leave the city. Troubles in Caesarea and throughout the country
66–67: spectacular tour of Greece by Nero. He appoints VESPASIAN and his son TITUS to restore order in Palestine		Sept 66: Jerusalem attacked by Cestius Gallius. He retires with heavy losses. Rebel government
		Exodus of people of importance and probably some Christians, *see* Lk 21:20seq., who take refuge in **Pella** (Eusebius)
67–69: MUCIANUS legate in Syria		67: Vespasian, with 60 000 men, reconquers Galilee (Josephus, its rebel governor, is taken prisoner)
		About 67: Paul, prisoner in Rome, writes **2 Timothy** (?) A little later he is beheaded(?)
		Letter to the Hebrews
March 68: in Gaul the revolt of the legate VINDEX		67–68: the Zealots of JOHN OF GISCHALA, escaped from Galilee, are masters of Jerusalem with the Idumaeans. Anan and the leading people are massacred
April 68: GALBA emperor		
June 68: Nero's suicide		68: Vespasian occupies the maritime plain and the Valley of the Jordan (destruction of Qumran). On Nero's death the siege of Jerusalem is broken off
January 69: OTHO proclaimed Emperor by the Praetorians and VITELLIUS by the legions in Germany		69: SIMON BAR-GIORA and the *sicarii* in Jerusalem. Vespasian subdues the rest of Judaea; the *sicarii* hold out in Jerusalem, and in the Herodion, Masada and Machaerus
July 69: Tiberius Alexander declares his support for Vespasian. His lead is followed by all the East		
End of 69: Vespasian in sole command of the empire		
		Passover 70: Many pilgrims in Jerusalem. **Titus lays siege** to the city with four legions. Tiberius Alexander is second in command
		Capture of the 3rd wall, then of the 2nd. Circumvallation. Capture of the Antonia. Famine
		Beginning of August, sacrifices cease
		29 August 70: capture of the Inner Court and **burning of the Temple** (the 10th of Lous, i.e. the 10th of the 5th month, the day when Nebuzaradan set fire to the first Temple, Jr 52:12 and Josephus)
		Sacrifice to the standards, in front of the Temple, cf. Mt 24:15. Titus hailed as Imperator
70, end of the year: Judaea an imperial province; under the rule of the legate of the Xth Legion based in Jerusalem. Caesarea a Roman colony		September 70: capture of the Upper City and the palace of Herod. The inhabitants killed, sold into slavery or condemned to hard labour
		Titus in Syria; many Jews killed in the gladiatorial games
71–72: LUCILIUS BASSUS legate in Judaea		Summer 71: triumph of Vespasian and Titus in Rome (with the Temple furnishings): execution of Simon Bar-Giora. The Arch of Titus

	AD	
		The didrachma formerly subscribed to the Temple is now paid to Jupiter Capitolinus
72: foundation of **Flavia Neapolis** (Nablus)		Capture of the Herodion and Machaerus, by L. Bassus
73: FLAVIUS SILVA legate in Judaea		Passover 73: Siege of **Masada** by F. Silva: Eleazar (descendant of Judas the Galilean) and his *sicarii* kill each other rather than yield
A number of *sicarii* take refuge in Egypt, but are handed over to the Romans. Closing of the temple founded by Onias at Leontopolis		**Return** to Jerusalem of a group **of Judaeo-Christians** (Epiphanius). Rabbi Eleazar re-opens the synagogue of the Alexandrians
		Rabbi Johanan ben-Zakkai founds the **Academy of Jabneh** (Jamnia), successor to the Sanhedrin. GAMALIEL II succeeds him; origins of the Mishnah
		Before 70? or about 80: **Gospel of Matthew** in Greek, **Gospel of Luke** and **Acts of Apostles**
		The Letter of Jude; IV Esdras (apocryphal)
		About 78: *The Jewish War* (Josephus)
79–81: TITUS emperor		
81–96: DOMITIAN emperor (brother of Titus)		
		About 93: *The Antiquities of the Jews* (Josephus)
95: Domitian has his cousin FLAVIUS CLEMENS condemned to death as a Christian and exiles his wife Flavia Domitilla to Pandataria		About 95: Final text of **Revelation.** *Letter of Clement,* bishop of Rome, *to the Corinthians*
96–98: NERVA emperor		**Gospel of John**, then **1 John** (**3 John** and **2 John** are possibly earlier). He opposes Cerinthus and his Docetism
98–117: TRAJAN emperor		
		2 Peter
		The *Didache* (end of first century)
	100	
106: CORNELIUS PALMA, legate in Syria, occupies the kingdom of Nabataea which becomes the **province of Arabia**, capital: Bostra (Bozrah)		
CLAUDIUS ATTICUS HERODES governor of Judaea		107: **martyrdom of Simeon**, 2nd bishop of Jerusalem. From now until the Second Revolt there are 13 other bishops, likewise Judaeo-Christians
		About 110: the seven *letters* of IGNATIUS, bishop of Antioch, and his martyrdom at Rome
111–113: PLINY THE YOUNGER legate in Bithynia. His letter on the persecution of the Christians and the **rescript of Trajan**		A little later, the *Letter to the Philippians* of Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna and disciple of John (died in 156)
114–116: annexation of Armenia, Assyria Mesopotamia		
The Roman Empire at the height of its power		
		The Odes of Solomon (apocryphal)
117: **rising of the Jews** throughout the East and revolt of the new provinces. The latter are recaptured by the Moor LUSIUS QUIETUS; he is named legate of Judaea		Quietus erects the statue of Trajan in front of the altar of the Temple (Hippolytus). He is deposed and subsequently put to death by Hadrian

AD

117–138: HADRIAN emperor. Establishes the frontier of the empire on the Euphrates

128–134: Hadrian's second tour of the Empire. At Athens the completion of the Temple of Olympian (or 'Capitoline') Zeus; Antiochus Epiphanes had contributed to its construction. Hadrian claims title 'Olympian' or 'Capitoline'

About 130: the *Letter of Barnabas* (apocryphal). At Hierapolis in Phrygia, the bishop PAPIAS. In Alexandria, the gnostic BASILIDES

TINEIUS RUFUS legate in Judaea and PUBLICIUS MARCELLUS legate in Syria

130: Hadrian in Jerusalem. He decides to rebuild the city (Aelia Capitolina) and the Temple, now dedicated to Jupiter

131–135: **second Jewish rebellion**

SIMEON BEN KOSIBA (*letters of Murabbaat*) seizes Jerusalem; Eleazar high priest. Ben Kosiba acknowledged by RABBI AKIBA as Messiah and as the Star of Nb 24:17, whence his name of Bar Kocheba (Son of the Star). He persecutes the Christians because they refuse to join the revolt

In spite of the reinforcements of Marcellus, Rufus is overrun by the rebels; Hadrian sends them the legate of Britain, JULIUS SEVERUS, and comes in pèrson

Beginning of 134: **capture of Jerusalem**

After the conquest of nearly 50 strongholds, Severus seizes **Bether**, where Bar Kocheba perishes in August 135

The captives are sold at Mamre and Gaza

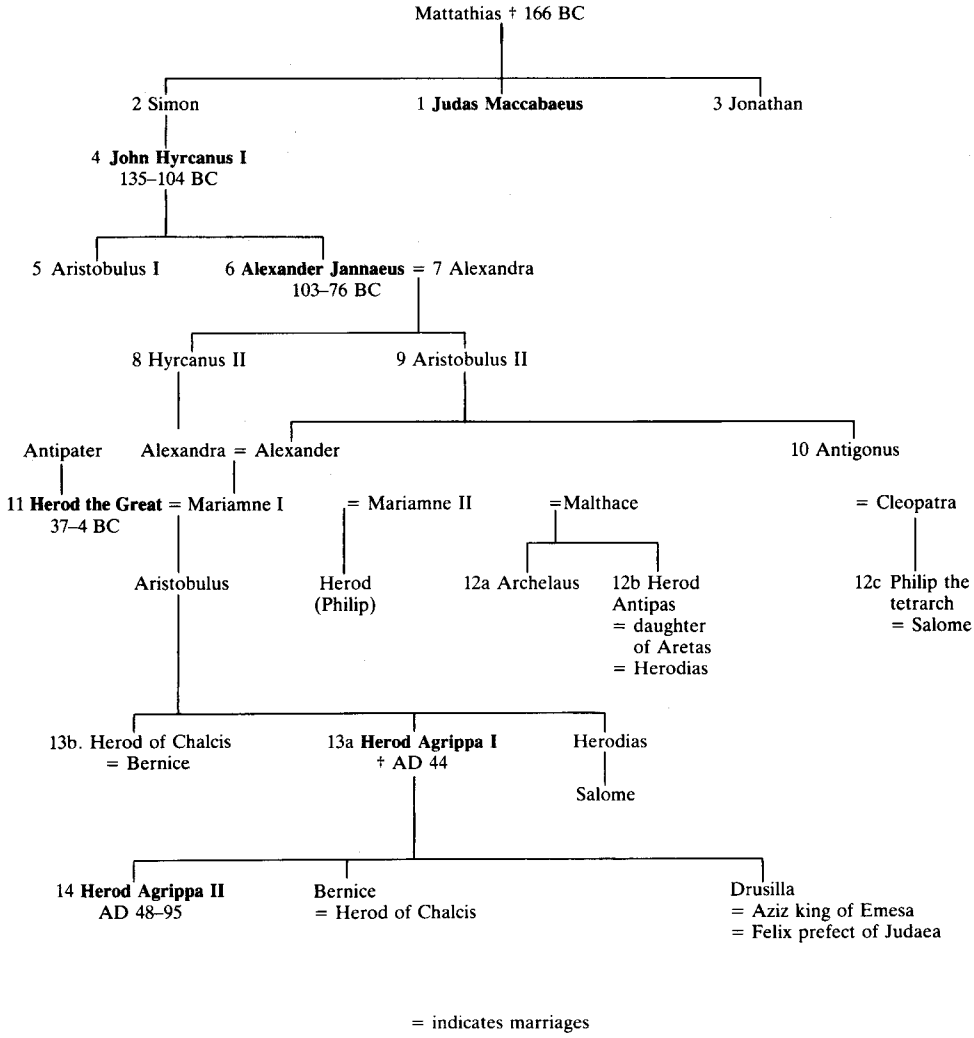
The province of Judaea becomes the **province of Syria-Palestine**. Jerusalem a Roman colony, forbidden to the Jews

135: Rufus builds Aelia (the temple of Jupiter, Juno and Venus on the site of Calvary and the tomb of Christ). **The Temple is made into a sanctuary of Zeus and Hadrian**

The temple of Zeus Hypsistos at Gerizim and the sacred grove of Adonis around the Cave at Bethlehem

The bishop Mark (about 135–155) and the new Christian community. The Judaeo-Christians, dispersed in Transjordan and Syria, in time form the sect of the **Ebionites** (the 'Poor'), with the *Gospel of the Hebrews*; they do not accept the divinity of Christ and reject the Pauline Letters

THE HASMONAEAN AND HERODIAN DYNASTIES



= indicates marriages

THE CALENDAR

The year was based upon a dual lunar-solar calculation: 12 months of 29 or 30 days, with a supplementary month every second or third year to correct the lag of the lunar cycle behind the solar cycle. From 367 BC, the Babylonian experts, by inserting 7 supplementary months at fixed intervals into a 19-year cycle, reduced the lag to approximately two hours. This system was adopted by Seleucus I when, on 1 October (Macedonian reckoning) of the year 312, he inaugurated the 'Grecian Era' (*see* 1 M 1:10), which prevailed throughout the East. In Babylon the spring New Year's Day was retained, and there the Seleucid Era began on 1 *Nisan* 311 (= 3 April in the Julian Calendar).

With the Jews also, the religious calendar began in the spring. The Jewish civil calendar by contrast began in the autumn, but the numbering of the months began in the spring as in Babylon. 1 K 6:8 has preserved three Phoenician month-names and Exodus an old west-semitic name (*Abib*). After the Exile the Jews adopted Babylonian names for the months (*Nisan, Iyyar*, etc.), and the intercalary month was usually inserted before *Nisan (Ve-Adar)*. Seleucus also introduced the use of Macedonian names, the month of *Dius*, corresponding to *Tishri*. By about AD 30, things had got out of gear, with *Dius* corresponding to *Marheshvan* and *Xanthicus* corresponding to *Nisan*. The observation of the new moon of *Nisan* determined the Jewish liturgical calendar, and normally occurred after the spring equinox (in the Seleucid period, about 25 March); the interval could be as much as 29 days. The Jewish week was not geared to the moon—and consequently feast-days on which work was forbidden, such as the Passover, rarely fell on the Sabbath. As the new moon rose in the evening, the day was reckoned from one sunset to the next. The day of the full moon of *Nisan* (Passover) therefore began on the evening of the 14th.

The night was divided into three watches, Ex 14:24; Jg 7:19; 1 S 11:11. The Roman system had four watches, dividing the period from sunrise to sunset into 12 hours, the sixth hour thus falling at midday.

OT	BABYLONIAN NAMES	SOLAR MONTHS	MACEDONIAN NAMES	ANNUAL FEASTS MENTIONED IN THE BIBLE (*see* Ex 23:14d)
1st	*Nisan = Abib* Ex 13:4 etc.	Mar./Apr.	*Artemisius*	The 14/15th day: Passover Ex 12seq.; 23:15; 34:18; Lv 23:5; Nb 28:16; Dt 16:1seq.; feast of Unleavened Bread for 7 days. Offering of the first sheaf 'on the day after the Sabbath' Lv 23:11
2nd	*Iyyar = Zif* 1 K 6:1	Apr./May	*Daisius*	
3rd	*Sivan*	May/June	*Panemus*	7 weeks after the Offering of the first sheaf; feast of Weeks (Harvest, First-fruits, Pentecost), Ex 23:16; 34:22; Lv 23:15seq.; Nb 28:26; Dt 16:9seq.; Ac 2:1
4th	*Tammuz*	June/July	*Lous*	
5th	*Ab*	July/Aug.	*Gorpaius*	
6th	*Elul*	Aug./Sep.	*Hyperberetaius*	
7th	*Tishri* = Ethanim 1 K 8:2	Sep./Oct.	*Dius*	New Moon: Day of Acclamation Lv 23:23seq.; Nb 29:1seq. (*rosh hashanah* or the Jewish New Year) 10th day: *yom hakkippurim*. Day of Expiation, Lv 16; 23:26seq.; Nb 29:7seq. The Fast, *see* Ac 27:9
7th				From the 15th day to the 23rd: feast of Shelters (Tabernacles) or *Scenopegie* (the Greek title), Lv 23:33seq.; Nb 29:12seq.; Dt 16:13; Jn 7:2. This was the 'feast of the Ingathering at the end of the year' Ex 23:16, at the 'turn of the year', Ex 34:22, i.e. an autumnal New Year's day as in Canaan
8th	*Marheshvan = Bul* 1 K 6:38	Oct./Nov.	*Apellaius*	
9th	*Chisleu*	Nov./Dec.	*Audunaius*	25th day: The Dedication (of the Temple) with an octave, 1 M 4:52; 2 M 10:5; Jn 10:22. *hanukkah* in Hebrew, the feast of Lights (in Josephus)
10th	*Tebet*	Dec./Jan.	*Peritius*	
11th	*Shebat*	Jan./Feb.	*Dystrus*	
12th	*Adar*	Feb./Mar.	*Xanthicus*	13th day: Day of Nicanor, 1 M 7:49; 2 M 15:36. 14/15th day: feast of *purim* or Lots, Est 9:21seq., or Day of Mordecai, 2 M 15:36

TABLES OF MEASURES AND MONEY
APPROXIMATE EQUIVALENTS

I: DISTANCE

	RATIO	INCHES	CENTIMETRES
'ammah (cubit)	1	18.0	45.7
zeret (span)	1:2	8.8	22.3
tofah (palm)	1:6	3.0	7.6
'etzba' (finger)	1:24	0.75	1.9

The old cubit of Ezekiel measured 7 palms or handsbreadth (= 21 in/53 cm), *see* Ezk 40:5 note e; the human measuring rod was 6 old cubits = 10 ft 3 in/315 cm. The NT has, besides the cubit, the arm-span of approximately 6 ft/1.83 m., and the *stadion* of approximately 202 yds/185 m. The Roman mile was 8 *stadia* or some 1616 yds/1.5 km. The *schoinos* of 2 M 11:5 equals 30 *stadia*, or about 3.5 modern miles/5.6 km

II: CAPACITY (Dry)

	RATIO	BUSHELS/GALLONS	LITRES
homer/kor	10	12.50 bus.	450.0
letek (Ho 3:2)	5	6.25 bus.	225.0
'eiphah (ephah)	1	1.25 bus.	45.0
se'ah (seah) (measure)	1/3	3.33 UK gal. 4.00 US gal.	15.0
'issaron	1/10	1.00 UK gal. 1.25 US gal.	4.5

(Liquid)

	RATIO	GALLONS		LITRES
		UK	USA	
kor	10	100.00	120.00	450.0
bat	1	10.00	12.00	45.0
hin	1:6	1.66	2.00	7.5
		pints	quarts	
qab (2 K 6:25)	1:18	4.50	2.50	2.5
			fl. oz	
log	1:72	1.00	20.00	0.6

The *artabē* in Dn 14:3 is a Persian measure of about 12.33 (UK)/14.75 (US) gallons or 56 litres
In the NT there are: the 'measure' (*metrētē*) of 8.67 (UK)/10.50 (US) gallons or 39.4 litres which is equivalent to the *bat*; the 'sixth' (*sextarius* or *xestes*) of 0.75 (UK) pint/15 (US) fl. oz or 0.46 litres as an equivalent to the *log*; the *modion* is 2 (UK)/2.33 (US) gallons or 8.75 litres which is two-thirds of the *seah*; and the *choinix* of Rv 6:6 which is 2 (UK) pints/1.67 (US) quarts or 1.1 litres. The NT also uses the words *seah*, *kor*, and *bat* in Greek forms

III: WEIGHT

	RATIO	LB /OZ	KILOGRAMS
kikkar (talent)	3000	75.00 lb	34.02
maneh (mina)	50	1.25 lb	0.571
shekel	1	0.39 oz	0.011
beqa(half-shekel)	1:2	0.19 oz	0.0054
gerah	1:20	0.02 oz	0.0006

The *mina* of Ezk 45:12 is 60 shekels (1.50 lb or 0.68 kg). The NT has the Roman pound (Lat. *libra* = Gr. *litra*) of approximately 11.50 oz /0.317 kg

IV: MONEY

1: BEFORE DARIUS I: Coinage first appeared in the 7th century BC in Anatolia and then in Greece. Before this date the value of metal was gauged only by its weight. The gold *drachma* of Ne 7:69 = Ezr 2:69, was probably the Attic half-stater (see table of monetary equivalents). The silver *mina* mentioned at the same place was only nominal money, perhaps the Babylonian *maneh* of about 1 lb or 0.505 kg
2: DARIUS, soon after 515 BC, issued the gold *daric* having the weight of the Babylonian shekel of 0.29 oz or 8.22 grams (Ezr 8:27), and a silver shekel one-twentieth of the value of the gold coin and thus weighing 0.20 oz or 5.67 grams, gold being then worth 13.3 times as much as silver. It is this shekel that is mentioned in Ne 5:15, whereas the

reference in Ne 10:33 is presumably to the shekel-weight. The minting of silver coinage seems to have been permitted throughout the Persian empire; silver coins have been found in Palestine with the inscription YHD = Judah

3: HELLENISTIC AND ROMAN PERIOD: Alexander extended the Attic system throughout his empire, with a gold-to-silver value-ratio of 10 to 1 and a silver-to-copper value-ratio of 50:1. Later the Romans introduced their currency; they reckoned large sums in *sesterces* (*see* table). Coinage was also weighed by the talent and Attic mina (approximately 26kg and 436gr respectively), i.e. by the 6000 and by the 100 *drachma*. The shekel of 1 M 10:40 was the *didrachma* (*see* usage in LXX)

MONETARY EQUIVALENTS

GREEK MONEY	WEIGHT		VALUE RATIO		WEIGHT		ROMAN MONEY
	OZ	GRAMS	GREEK	ROMAN	GRAMS	OZ	
Attic *stater* (= gold standard)	0.3	8.5	20[a]:1	25:1	7.8	0.27	gold *aureus*, under Augustus
Attic silver *tetradrachma*	0.6	17.0	4:1				
Tyrian *tetradrachma*[b] 126 BC to AD 195 sometimes called *stater*, Mt 21:27; 26:15 (D), cf. Zc 11:12	0.5	14.2	3:1				
Attic silver *didrachma:*	0.3	8.5	2:1				
Under the empire Mt 17:24	0.25	7.0	1.5:1				
Attic *drachma* (= silver standard):	0.15	4.25	1		4.55	0.16	silver *denarius*, appears 269 BC; good quality till the start of 3rd cent. AD
Under Antiochus IV, 2 M 12:43:	0.14	4.0		1	3.69	0.13	From 216 BC up to Nero
Under the empire:	0.12	3.5	3:4		3.41	0.12	From Nero onwards
				1:4	25.4	0.9	latten alloy *sesterce*; under Augustus = 4 *as* (weight 1 oz)
Attic silver *obol*:	0.025	0.71	1:6	1:8	12.4	0.44	latten alloy *dipondium*: under Augustus = 2 *as* Lk 12)
							as or *assarius* (= bronze standard) originally a Roman pound i.e. 12 oz or 340 grams
				1:16	10.8	0.38	Under Augustus
Attic bronze *chalkos:*	0.3	8.6	1:48	1:32	4.5	0.16	bronze *semis*, under Augustus
Under Antiochus IV	0.21	6.0					
Attic bronze *lepton*: one-seventh of the *chalkos*; sometimes called *obol, chalkos*, etc. Mk 12:42; Lk 12:59 = Mt 5:26			1:336	1:64	3.1	0.11	bronze *quadrans*, under Augustus. In the East, coinage of small values was locally minted by the ruling dynasty, by prefects or by cities, in rough conformity with the *chalkos* and *as*

Silver coinage in Palestine during the Graeco-Roman Period (issued only during the First and Second Revolts):

FIRST REVOLT: AD 66–70:			SECOND REVOLT: AD 133–135	
tetradrachma	0.49 oz/14 gr	inscribed 'shekel of Israel'	*tetradrachma*	0.49 oz/14 gr
didrachma	0.25 oz/7 gr	inscribed 'half-shekel'	*denarius*	re-struck
drachma	0.12 oz/3.4 gr	inscribed 'quarter-shekel'		

NOTES

a Before Alexander

b This *tetradrachma* or Phoenician shekel corresponded in purchasing power to the old Israelite shekel-weight. Hence, the *didrachma* annually levied for the Temple corresponded to the half-shekel of Ex 30:13, and to the third-of-a-shekel of Ne 10:33. The rabbis stipulated that these should conform to the standard of Tyre, the *stater* (*tetradrachma*) of which city-state was held in high repute

ALPHABETICAL TABLE OF THE MAJOR FOOTNOTES

A list is given here of the more important biblical names, places and biblical concepts on which a major footnote, or a footnote giving a number of cross-references, is to be found.

Proper names of persons and places (ABRAHAM, JERUSALEM etc.) are shown in small capitals, while Hebrew, Aramaic or Greek words (*sheol, phragis* etc.) are given in italics.

Footnotes are referred to by the biblical passage to which they are attached; if the relevant verse has more than one footnote attached to it, the letter of the note is also shown (e.g. Rm 5:12h). Where several references are given the most important are printed in heavy type. Page references refer to the introductions.

Abba	Mk 14:36
abomination, the appalling	Dn 9:27w; Mt 24:15
ABRAHAM	*see* Index of Persons
acclamation (*teru'ah*)	Nb 10:5; Ps 33:3
ADAM – *see also* creation –	*see* Index of Persons
adoption	Gn 48:12; Ga 4:5
adultery	Pr 2:16
adulterous woman	Jn 7:53
= religious infidelity	Ho 1:2b
adversary	*see* Satan
agape	*see* love
alleluia	Rv 19:1b
almsgiving	Mt 6:1; Lk 12:33
Alpha and *Omega*	Rv 1:8
altar	
of burnt offering	Ex 27:1
of incense	Ex 30:1; Heb 9:4
Solomon's	1 K 8:64; 2 K 16:14; 1 Ch 21:18
horns of	Ex 27:2
symbolism of	Ex 24:8
the cross	Heb 13:10
heavenly	Rv 6:9
non-Jewish altars	Ac 17:23
angel	**Tb 5:4**
representing God	Gn 19:1; Ml 3:1b
of Yahweh	Gn 16:7; Mt 1:20g; Ac 7:38k
as mediators	Jb 5:1; **33:23**; Tb 12:12; Ga 3:19k
as messengers	Rv 4:5e
as guardians	Ex 23:20; **Dt 32:8**; Tb 5:4; Dn 10:3b; Rv 1:20; 4:9h
as courtiers of God	Jb 1:6f; Ps 18:10; Dn 4:10; Heb 1:7; Rv 4:5e
as interpreters	Ezk 40:3
names of	Tb 12:15
and Christ	**Ep 1:21**; Heb 1:14
sin of	Gn 6:1; Jude 7

anger
  Yahweh slow to — Ps 103:8
  cup of — Ps 11:6d; Is 51:17
  Day of — Am 5:18
  God's — **Nb 11:1**; Na 1:5; Rm 1:18*l*, m
ANNAS — *see* Index of Persons
anointing
  priestly — Ex 30:22
  royal — 1 S 9:26
  as gesture of hospitality — Ps 23:5
  of the whole people — Ps 28:8
  of the sick — Jm 5:14
  of Christians — 1 Jn 2:20k
  Yahweh's anointed – *see also* Messiah – — Ps 132:10; Is 45:1a; Zc 4:14
antichrist — 2 Th 2:4
Apocalypse — Ezk 38:1; pp. 1178–9, 2027–8
APOLLOS — *see* Index of Persons
apostasy — Dn 1:8; 2 Th 2:3, 4; Heb 10:26
apostle — **Rm 1:1b**
  Jesus model of apostles — Mk 1:17; Jn 4:34; Heb 3:1
  list of the Twelve — Mt 10:2
  Paul apostle — Ac 22:21; Ep 3:2
  boldness of — Ac 13:46
  doubts of — Mt 28:17
  slowness to understand — Mk 4:13
  mission of — **Ac 1:8k,*l***; 2:22; 6:4
  apostolate as liturgy — Rm 1:9f
  and elders — Ac 15:2d
appearances
  to Abraham — Gn 18:1
  angelic — 2 M 5:4; Ezk 3:3; Mt 1:20g
  of risen Christ — Mt 28:10
ark of the covenant — **Ex 25:8d**; 1 S 4:4; 2 S 6:1, 7
ascension – *see also* Glory – — Lk 9:51; Jn 20:17h; Ac 1:9; Heb 9:12d
assembly — Ac 7:38j
asylum — Ex 21:13e; 27:2; Jos 20:1; Ne 6:11; Ob 17
authority
  divine source of — Ws 6:3
  of Christ — Mt 28:18; Jn 3:35; 5:22j
  of leaders — Mt 16:19; 18:18
  respect for civil — Ezr 6:10; Rm 13:1

BAAL — *see* Index of Persons
BABYLON — *see* Index to the Maps
baptism
  John's — Mt 3:6; Jn 3:22
  of Jesus — Mt 3:15k; Jn 1:33
  Christian — Mt 28:19; **Ac 1:5; 2:38y; Rm 6:4, 12**; Ep 5:26; Tt 3:7; Heb 10:32
  of Spirit and fire — Mt 3:11
  symbol of the Passion — Mk 10:38
  figures of — Jon 2:2; Jn 19:34; Rm 4:11; 1 Co 10:4b, c; 1 P 3:21i, j
  for the dead — 1 Co 15:29
barrenness
  Mesopotamian laws on — Gn 16:2

dishonour of	Jg 11:37; Ps 113:9; Ws 3:13k; Lk 1:25
sulphur as symbol of	Jb 18:15
beatitudes	Si 14:1; **Mt 5:3c**; Lk 6:20e; Rv 1:3d
BEELZEBUL	*see* Index of Persons
BELIAL	*see* Index of Persons
blessing	Gn 12:3; **14:19**; Dt 28:1; Ac 3:26u; Ep 1:3; 1 Tm 4:14; **Jm 3:10**; 1 P 1:3
eucharistic	Mt 26:27; Ac 2:42gg, hh; 1 Co 10:16
blood	
life-principle	Lv 1:5e
belongs to God	Gn 9:6; Ac 15:20v
cries to God	Jb 16:18
vengeance for	Ex 21:13e; **Nb 35:19**; Jb 16:18; Mt 27:25
of the covenant	Ex 24:8; Mt 26:28j; Heb 9:15
of Jesus	Mt 26:28i; Jn 19:34; Ac 20:28r; Rm 3:24j, 25*l*; Heb 9:11e; 1 Jn 5:6
of reconciliation	Rm 3:25*l*
body	Dn 12:3; Rm 6:12; **7:24**
and soul	1 Co 15:44
soul and spirit	Rm 1:9f; 1 Th 5:23
of risen Christ	Lk 24:16
of Christ as temple	Mt 26:61
of Christ	**1 Co 12:12i,j**; Ep 1:23; 2:16; 4:13, 24; **Col 2:10**
of the Christian	Rm 5:5e; Ph 1:20; **1 Co 15:44**; 2 Co 5:1, 3; 2 Tm 2:18
branch	Nb 17:17; Ps 72:17; Is 4:2; 45:8d; Jr 23:5; Zc 3:8; 6:12
bread	
of offering	Ex 25:23
of life	Jn 6:22
multiplication of	Mt 14:13c
feast of unleavened	Ex 12:1; **23:14**; Lv 23:5, 9; 1 Co 5:8
of angels	Ws 16:20*l*
symbol of purity	1 Co 5:6
breath – *see* Spirit	
bride	
Israel, bride of Yahweh	Is 54:1; Ezk 16:1; Ho 1:2
Church, bride of Christ	Ps 45:1; Mt 25:1; **Jn 3:29**; Ac 5:10; Ep 5:23; Rv 21:2
brothers	
of Jesus	Mt 12:46–47*o*; Ac 1:14
= Christians	Ac 1:15; 2 Co 13:12; Phm 6
brotherhood of prophets	1 S 10:5e; 2 K 2:3
CAIAPHAS	*see* Index of Persons
CAIN	*see* Index of Persons
calling	
of the younger	Gn 4:5
of Christians	2 Tm 1:9
CANAAN	*see* Index to the Maps
Canon of Scripture	1 M 12:9
canticles – *see also* hymns –	Lk 1:46, 67ee,ff; 2:32
CEPHAS	*see* under Peter in Index of Persons
chaos	Gn 1:2c; Jb 7:12; Ps 46:3b
charisms (gifts of Spirit) – *see also* Spirit –	1 Co 12:1
cherubim – see great winged creatures	

chosen people — Gn 12:1; **Dt 7:6; Am 3:2**
  circumcision as sign of — Gn 17:10
  holiness of — Ex 19:3; Ho 2:21t; Am 5:25
  Jerusalem as personification of — 2 S 5:9f; Ps 122:1
  unity of — 2 Ch 34:9
  God's possession — Is 44:5; Ws 1:16
  ingratitude of — Is 43:22
  restoration of — **Is 4:3; Ho 2:20s**; Jl 2:1b; Am 5:18; **Mt 4:17**; 24:1; **Ac 2:6**; Rm 9:1; 11:1
  punishment of — Am 5:18; Mt 24:1; **Ac 2:21**
  testing of — Mt 4:1a
  opposition to Jesus — Lk 4:16g; Jn 1:11
  opposition to Paul — Ac 13:5, 41
Christ – *see also* anointing – Jesus, Messiah — Lk 2:26; Ac 11:26
Church — **Mt 16:18g**; Ac 5:11; 7:38j; 20:28q; Ep 1:14
  body of Christ – *see* Body
  bride of Christ – *see* Bride
  of God — 1 Co 1:2
  growth of — Ac 2:41; 8:1b
  mission of — Mt 16:18g
  authority in — Mt 16:19; 18:18; Ep 2:19; 1 Co 5:4c; 2 Tm 2:19
  presence of Christ in — Jn 14:3
  OT figures of — Jos 2:11; Ps 87:1; 122:3
circumcision — **Gn 17:10**; Ex 4:24; Lv 19:23
  of the heart — Jr 4:4; Rm 10:6
cloud
  sign of God's presence — **Ex 13:22**; Si 14:27; Hab 3:3; **Mt 24:30q**; Ac 1:9
collection for Church of Jerusalem — 1 Co 16:1
coming – *see also* Day – — 1 Co 15:23n; Heb 2:8
  second coming of Christ — Mt 24:30q; Lk 21:5; Jn 8:56r; Ac 1:7i; **1 Co 1:8e**; 1 Tm 6:14; **Heb 2:8**
  parousia — **Mt 24:3**; 1 Co 15:23n; 1 Th 5:1a; Rv 22:17h
  false hopes of — Mt 20:21; Ac 1:6h; 2 Th 2:1
  intervening period — Rm 3:26m; 2 Co 6:2; Ga 1:4; Col 3:4b; 2 Th 2:1
commandment – *see* Law
communion – *see also* Eucharist – — Ac 2:42gg; 1 Co 1:9f; 10:17
  sacrifice — Lv 3:1
  with God — Ps 16:10; Ho 1:2c; 2 P 1:4f; 1 Jn 1:1
  with Christ — 1 Co 5:8; Ph 1:20
confession of sin — Lv 5:5; 2 Ch 29:6; Ps 106:1; Pr 28:13; Si 4:26; Jm 5:16
Confessions of Jeremiah — Jr 15:10
conquest of Palestine — Gn 34:1; Nb 13:1; Jos 3:1a; 10:1; 11:20; Jg 1:1
  slowness of — Dt 7:22; Jg 2:6
conscience — Ac 23:1; Rm 2:14; 14:1; 1 Co 4:4; 1 Jn 3:20
conversion — Ezk 18:21; **Mt 3:2c**; Jn 3:5, 6; Ac 2:38y; **3:19**
  in desert — Jr 31:2; Ho 14:3
  liturgy of — Jl 1:13
covenant
  old — Gn 9:9; 15:1; 17:1a; Ex 19:1; 32:1a; Nb 1:18
  renewed — Jos 24:1a; 2 K 22:8
  extended — Ps 47:9
  with Noah — Gn 6:18; 9:9; Is 24:4

with Abraham	Gn 12:1
old rite of	Gn 15:17
new and eternal	Is 11:6; 55:3; 59:21; **Jr 31:31; Ezk 36:27**; Ho 2:20; Zc 2:15; Ml 3:1b; Mt 26:28h; **Rm 5:5e**; Heb 9:15; Rv 21:3
Book of the	Ex 20:22
of salt	Lv 2:13
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Creator	Ws 13:1b; Is 42:8; Jr 10:1; Ac 17:22
new creation	Is 11:6; **Rm 8:19, 29**; 2 Co 5:17h; Ep 1:10j; Col 3:10; Rv 21:1b
to create	Ps 51:10
first-fruits of	Pr 8:22f; Col 1:15; Rv 3:14h
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cup of anger	Is 51:17; Mt 20:22; Mk 10:38
curse	Rt 1:17; 1 K 8:31
cursing Psalms	Ps 5:10; 35:1
curse of destruction (= *herem*)	Lv 27:28; **Jos 6:17**; 1 S 15:9; 1 Co 16:22h
darkness – *see* light	
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Day of Judgement	Gn 6:5 **Rm 2:6**
of Salvation	Rm 13:11; **2 Co 6:2**
prefigured	Gn 6:5
of the Son of man	Lk 17:22
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the last days	Ac 1:7; **1 Tm 4:1**; Heb 7:27
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characteristics of	Jl 21:1b; 4:1b; **Am 5:18;** Zp 1:7, 14k; Ml 3:19
cosmic signs of	**Am 8:9;** Mt 24:1; Lk 17:22; 1 Th 5:1a; Rv 6:14i
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deacons	Ac 6:5
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the dead unclean	Lv 21:1a
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Christian	2 Co 5:8; **Ph 1:20, 23**; Col 3:5
and sin	Ps 55:15; Qo 3:14; Ws 2:24; **4:7**; Rm 5:12g
and redemption	Mt 20:28g; **Rm 7:1b**; 7:24
second death	Rv 20:6c
development of doctrine in OT	**Nb 16:33**; 2 M 7:9; Jb 7:9; Ps 16:10; 49:15g; Ws 3:4; 16:13; Si 11:28
mourning rites	**Lv 19:27**; 1 S 31:13; 2 Ch 16:14e; Si 7:33; 38:16j
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DECAPOLIS	*see* Index to the Maps
dedication of Temple	1 M 4:59
'descended to the dead'	Mt 27:53; 1 P 3:19; 4:6
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abode of evil spirits	Lv 16:8; 17:7c; Ps 72:9; Mt 12:43
refuge of fugitives	Ps 44:19; Ac 12:6
lost ideal	Ho 2:16p; Am 5:25; Rv 14:4e
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devil – *see* evil spirits, Satan	

diaspora Si 36:10c; 1 P 1:1a,b
Christian communities of Tt 1:5c; Jm 1:1a
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successors of the prophets Mt 5:12
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contrasted with 'the world' Jn 1:10; 15:18
= Christians Mt 10:27d; Ac 6:1a; 9:5; Col 2:10
divination Is 2:6e; Zc 10:2; Ac 16:16
dominions – *see* powers
doxologies Ps 41:13; **Rm 16:27n**; 2 Co 13:13; 1 Tm 6:16
dreams Gn 37:5; 40:8; **1 K 3:5**; **Si 34:1**; Dn 2:1; **Mt 1:20h**
dwelling-place of God **Ex 24:16; 25:8d**, 10e, 17; 26:1; Dt 4:7; 12:2; 1 K 8:12; Ps 29:2; 93:2; Ws 9:8; Lm 2:1b; Ezk 1:28; **Am 7:17**; Heb 4:14; 12:18
of the Word Jn 1:14m
of the Christian in Christ 2 Co 5:8
– *see also* Body of Christ

EDEN Gn 2:8
elders Tt 1:5c
of the people Lk 22:66
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ephod
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eschatology – *see* coming, Day, death
eschatological discourse Mt 24:1; Mk 13:1
Eucharist Mt 14:13; 26:17; Lk 22:15, 16; 24:35; **Jn 6:22**, 57; 15:1; 19:34; **Ac 2:42gg**; 1 Co 10:17; Ph 1:20
in Old Testament Gn 14:18; Ps 23:1
evil
power of **Dt 13:14**; Jb 1:6g; Mt 16:18h; Lk 4:6; Jn 1:5; 8:12; 13:2e; Rm 6:15; 1 Jn 3:8; Rv 12:3; 21:1c
evil spirits – *see also* powers – 1 S 16:16; **Mt 8:29**; 12:43; Mk 1:23; 1 Co 2:6f; Ep 3:10; 6:12d; 1 P 3:19
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as punishment Dt 1:5
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sacrifice of	Lv 1:4
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of Abraham	Gn 12:1; 15:6; 22:1; Si 44:20; Rm 4:3
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, hope and charity	Rm 5:2; 1 Co 13:13
door to	Ac 14:27
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and signs	Jn 2:11; 3:11e
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faithful (fidelity)	**Hab 2:4e**; Jn 1:14*o*; 8:32; Rm 1:16h; **3:20**; Rv 1:13
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Saviour	1 Tm 1:1b
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